WITTGENSTEIN'S

LASTING SIGNIFICANCE

EDITED BY MAX KÖLBEL AND
BERNHARD WEISS

WITTGENSTEIN'S LASTING SIGNIFICANCE

In *Wittgenstein's Lasting Significance*, twelve major contemporary philosophers explore the issues surrounding Wittgenstein's importance and relevance to modern thought. Published here for the first time, the articles cover all of Wittgenstein's major works: the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, *Philosophical Investigations*, *On Certainty* and *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics.*

Wittgenstein's Lasting Significance opens with three essays on how to read the *Tractatus*, including the first extended defence of what has come to be called the 'resolute' reading, by James Conant and Cora Diamond. Further papers attempt, in different ways, to come to terms with the transition in Wittgenstein's philosophy. These are followed by explorations of the pluralism in Wittgenstein's later philosophy of language, his remarks on Gödel's theorem, and the roles played by truth, certainty and scepticism in his theory of knowledge. The collection closes with an analysis of Wittgenstein's relation to Kant and the 'continental' tradition of philosophical thought.

The international set of contributors includes Wittgenstein specialists as well as leading figures in other areas of philosophy, making *Wittgenstein's Lasting Significance* an important collection for anyone interested in contemporary philosophy.

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Edited by

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TO PHILOSOPHY'S FOOT SOLDIERS

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INTRODUCTION

This book has its origins in a conference[1] of the same title held to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Wittgenstein's death. We felt that, since half a century had elapsed since Wittgenstein had last put pen to paper, it was an apt moment for an assessment of how the philosophical tradition was coming to terms with arguably its major twentieth-century figure. Our aim was to invite contributions from a range of philosophers, all of whom had a serious interest in Wittgenstein but who would not be labelled either as Wittgensteinians or as pure Wittgenstein scholars. The reason for this is simple: we were aiming at a sense of how current philosophy was accommodating itself to Wittgenstein's corpus. Although a motive for our invitations was to achieve a well-rounded examination of his work —in terms of both chronology and areas of interest—we left our contributors with considerable freedom to concentrate on whichever areas they felt most warranted their attentions. The result at the conference was something of a mixed bag. Some writers chose to develop Wittgensteinian themes in a contemporary setting, while others sought to achieve a more historical understanding of the man and his work. One thing surprised both us and many participants at the conference. The *Philosophical Investigations* which, we think it is fair to say, has predominated work on Wittgenstein was pushed into the background.[2] What replaced that work in centre-stage was, first, a debate about the correct reading of the *Tractatus* and, second, a focus on Wittgenstein's contribution to epistemology in his late work, *On Certainty*. This surely doesn't evidence any mature philosophical appraisal of Wittgenstein's work or of the *Investigations* in particular. Rather, it seems to reveal an interesting facet of our current engagement with his work.

When putting together this volume in the wake of the conference, we invited additional contributions to do justice to those aspects of Wittgenstein's work that had attracted less attention at the conference. Hopefully, the papers collected here provide a more rounded picture of Wittgenstein's impact on philosophy today: the *Investigations* receives more attention as do Wittgenstein's later views about mind, language and logic.

The book begins with two papers by Meredith Williams and Peter Sullivan which focus critically on what has come to be called the Resolute reading of the *Tractatus*. The Resolute reading was introduced to us by Cora Diamond and

has since been developed by others, notably James Conant and Warren Goldfarb. The body of the *Tractatus* seems to advance a metaphysical view and theory of meaning. But according to the latter the supposed propositions used in advancing these are nonsensical. Traditional readings have attempted to read the body of the book as nevertheless conveying something, a something which, once conveyed, would enable the reader to see the nonsensicality of 'propositions' in the body. The distinction between saying and showing occupies a crucial place in the attempt to explain such a reading. The Resolute reading insists that the propositions of the body are strictly nonsensical, they cannot be seen in any way as illuminating nonsense. In her piece Williams attempts to defend a traditional reading, arguing that the Resolutists cannot explain how the *Tractatus* is supposed to work, how the body of the book is to be worked through in coming to see things aright. Since the traditional reading has an interesting story to tell here, to be sure, one which involves attributing to Wittgenstein a certain toleration of paradox, we should accept this cost as the price of arriving at the most successful reading. In addition, she claims, Resolutists won't be able to explain Wittgenstein's introduction of the distinction between saying and showing. In their first extended response to the many discussions of their reading of the *Tractatus,* Diamond and Conant explain how they conceive the 'propositions' of the body as functioning and, importantly, how Resolutists understand the distinction between saying and showing.

Sullivan engages with Resolutists in a slightly more oblique way. He offers a reading of the *Tractatus* which agrees on many fundamentals with the Resolutists. However, he finds at the heart of the *Tractatus* a preoccupation not with the possibility of doing philosophy but with a certain philosophical vision. It is Wittgenstein's aim to reject this vision, not by revealing its propositions to be false, but by showing how a serious attempt to think through its consequences fails to achieve sense. Diamond and Conant welcome the prospect of further conversation which Sullivan's paper invites but still see the *Tractatus* as having a therapeutic aim: it aims to dispel us of those philosophical illusions which we are prone to *even when* we take ourselves to have seen the illusion in a certain philosophical vision. So Sullivan's reading, according to them, doesn't free itself of its own philosophical illusions.

The next three chapters—those by Paul Horwich, Jim Hopkins and Laurence Goldstein—in very different ways deal with the transition in Wittgenstein's thinking from his early to his later writings. Horwich argues that there is a continuity in Wittgenstein's thought: in both his early and later work Wittgenstein thinks that it is impossible to advance philosophical theses. The impulse for a rethinking arises from a paradox in his early work, namely that of arriving at this view on the basis of a philosophical thesis. There he diagnoses the origin of philosophical confusion as a tendency to confuse the surface grammar of language for its underlying logical form. In the later work he gives up this paradoxical stance in favour of the view that confusions arise from mistaken analogies drawn between different regions of language. So the development

in Wittgenstein's thinking isn't motivated by a change in his views about meaning but in this shift in his metaphilosophy.

In contrast Hopkins focuses on the change in Wittgenstein's thought about the life of signs, of what it is for a sign to be meaningful. In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein had espoused a view according to which the meaningfulness of thought explained meaning in language, and meaning itself is to be explained in terms of correlations between signs—in the case of thought: psychic elements—and aspects of the world, correlations of which, *qua* speaker, one need not be aware. As Wittgenstein came to see, the problem with this view is that it cannot explain the distinction between correlations which are correct and those which are incorrect. Resolution of this problem led Wittgenstein to an account which prioritises the practice of interpretation against a background of regularities holding between verbal and non-verbal behaviour. And this reverses the direction of explanatory dependence between thought and language. Hopkins goes on to investigate the consequences of the interpretative view for the first person perspective, consciousness and reference.

Wittgenstein's lasting significance is to be found in his originality. So Goldstein asks himself what is truly original in Wittgenstein's work. Although he concedes that the early work shows some brilliance, Goldstein claims it lacks originality; its fundamental ideas are to be found in the work of Frege, Russell, Bolzano, Hertz and others. Rather, Wittgenstein's originality is to be found in his discovery of a new method in philosophy, a method which emerges as the result of rejecting his early work. In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein had attempted,—and failed—to advance a theory about the nature of representation. The later work introduces a method which is geared towards disabusing us of the illusions—'the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language'—from which the temptations to construct philosophical theories spring—illusions of which the author of *Tractatus* was a prominent victim. So, like Horwich, Goldstein sees the later work as metaphilosophically innovative but, unlike Horwich, he sees this as marking not a development of but a dislocation with his early work.

Huw Price places Wittgenstein's linguistic pluralism—the idea that elements of language, despite formal similarities, fulfil a wide range of roles—in a thoroughly contemporary setting. He suggests that we should incorporate the Wittgensteinian lesson into linguistic theorising by eschewing representationalism. Our linguistic theory will then adopt a bipartite form. On the one hand we shall have a content-specifying theory, which, since it is non-representationalist, will be purely deflationary about semantic concepts and, as a consequence, will be, in Dummett's terms, modest. However, linguistic theorising is not limited to this modest achievement for there is another explanatory role: we can explain content in a different way by explaining how there come to be these particular thoughts and concepts expressible in a given language. Such an account would explain concepts in terms, not of their semantic properties, but in terms of their use: it gives a pragmatic account of the origin of the semantic. In particular, one crucial role for such an account will be to give a

pragmatic account of the origin of linguistic forms such as assertion. The account will of course need to be given in non-semantic terms and, importantly, will explain the origin of these forms without denying their functional plurality.

Wittgenstein's remarks about Gödel's theorems have not, in the main, been well received. Graham Priest here attempts to offer the most plausible, sympathetic interpretation of them. In doing so, it is essential to take on board the sort of concerns which Gödel's theorems would have raised for Wittgenstein, given (i) his adoption of a redundancy account of truth, (ii) his repudiation of the notion that mathematical sentences have propositional content, and (iii) his view that the meaning of such sentences was determined by their proof conditions. Priest argues that in this context we can find in Wittgenstein's remarks an interesting interpretation of Gödel's theorems, provided we take seriously his hints at the possibility of paraconsistent logics.

Wittgenstein's remarks in *On Certainty* are in large part a response to Moore's 'proof' of an external world. In Chapter 9, Crispin Wright starts by offering a diagnosis of why Moore's proof fails: its premise's warrant fails to be transmitted to its conclusion. Even though the argument is valid—it follows from there being a hand that there is an external world—we nevertheless cannot base our belief in an external world on the belief that there is a hand here, because any warrant we might have for there being a hand is conditional upon precisely the existence of an external world. Wright then constructs a general pattern of sceptical argument on the basis of this: some propositions are such that belief in any evidence one might use to justify them will itself require assuming precisely those propositions. The insight Wright extracts from *On Certainty* is that we are sometimes *entitled* to make such unwarranted assumptions, namely when we must carry out an enquiry, and carrying it out is possible only when one makes these assumptions.

Michael Williams examines the status Wittgenstein apportions to precisely these 'basic-certainties', i.e. the propositions we believe as part of our framework of enquiry. Are they candidates for truth and falsehood? There seem to be tensions in *On Certainty,* for example, between the view that basic certainties cannot be true or false, because they do not aim to 'tally with' reality, and the view that they can be true in the sense that we can be certain of them. Williams argues that one can resolve these tensions by keeping in mind Wittgenstein's deflationary attitude to truth.

Pirmin Stekeler, making use of Kambartel's work, places Wittgenstein in the current of continental philosophy. Kambartel argues that Kant should be read as ushering in a second wave of enlightenment whose main goal was to investigate the limits of scientific enquiry. The later Wittgenstein can be read as extending this Kantian lesson by attacking and illustrating an alternative to the adoption of quasi-scientific methodology in philosophy, in particular, and in the humanities in general.

Bibliographical details of works referred to have been listed at the end of each article, with the exception of the works of Wittgenstein, which are listed separately at the end of the book.

Notes

1 The Conference was held at the University of Wales Conference Centre, Gregynog on 14–16 July 2001. The conference was made possible by generous funding, for which we are very grateful, from the British Academy, Mind Association, Analysis Trust, the Gregynog Colloquia Fund and the University of Wales, Lampeter. The original idea of a conference to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of

2 Wittgenstein's death was Laurence Goldstein's. This was even more pronounced at the conference, where only one paper engaged with the *Investigations*.

1
NONSENSE AND COSMIC EXILE
The austere reading of the *Tractatus*

Meredith Williams

A new approach to Wittgenstein's philosophy, both early and late, is emerging. This approach I shall call "the austere reading" of Wittgenstein, "austere" because its guiding interpretive claim privileges Wittgenstein's metaphilosophical remarks above all others. It is a "reading" because it involves considerable hermeneutic ingenuity to render the whole of Wittgenstein consistent with his explicit metaphilosophical commitments. An esoteric reading of the *Tractatus* and a quietist reading of the *Investigations* converge in the austere reading. The esoteric reading resonates to the allure that the mystical had for Wittgenstein as a young man. And the quietist reading harmonizes well Wittgenstein's breaking free of the pull of the mystical to return to the ordinary. An important component of this new reading is its reassessment of the degree of continuity between the early and later Wittgenstein. Goal and method of the early and late periods are held to converge not only nominally but substantively That goal is to establish that language is in order as it is. This goal is achieved by showing that philosophical attempts to ground or justify ordinary language result in the production of nonsense in the strictest sense. If there is a difference, it is that the *Tractatus* offers an architectonic conception of philosophical theorizing and its deconstruction while the *Investigations* offers an array of overlapping reminders and arguments directed against specific forms of philosophical theorizing. Importantly on this reading, the *Tractatus* does not end philosophy by solving the fundamental problem of representationality and the *Investigations* does not develop any alternative picture of language.

In this paper I shall focus on the austere reading of the *Tractatus,* a reading that I think is mistaken but nevertheless has very real attractions. It emphasizes, correctly, the importance to Wittgenstein throughout his philosophical life of showing that the philosophical temptation to cosmic exile, to use Quine's phrase, is an illusory quest. The temptation to cosmic exile is the search for a point from which we can view the relation between language (or thought) and the world independently of our own situation in the world. The deep motivation behind philosophical theorizing is the desire to achieve such a god's eye understanding.

This drive to understanding is fed, according to the austere reading, by an intellectualized imagination that gives rise to the illusion of making sense. In reality, all philosophy, including the corpus of the *Tractatus,* is plain nonsense.

The only locus of meaningfulness is ordinary language. The interest of the austere reading, it seems to me, lies with its attempt to come to terms with the drive to cosmic exile and the nature of philosophical illusion as well as to find a persuasive method for bringing philosophical theorizing to an end. Nonetheless, I shall argue, it fails both in its interpretation of Wittgenstein and in its attempt to bring philosophy to an end. But it does so in ways that illuminate an important dimension in Wittgenstein's treatment of the drive to cosmic exile.

1.
Nonsense: the austere reading of the *Tractatus*

In these first two sections of the paper, I shall present Cora Diamond's influential argument for the austere reading with an eye to bringing out the appeal of this approach.[1] She has developed a striking way to read the *Tractatus* that contrasts sharply with key features of the so-called standard interpretation.[2] I shall begin discussion by contrasting the austere reading with the standard interpretation, but, as my argument against the austere reading will show, it is a contrast that needs to be set aside. According to the standard interpretation, the *Tractatus* as a whole presents a transcendental argument establishing the conditions necessary for the possibility of language. Those conditions are realized in the ontology of simple objects (1s and 2s) and the picture theory of meaning (3s). Ontologically, there must exist absolutely simple objects whose internal (essential) properties determine the space of possibility: that is, the space of possible combinations of objects into states of affairs. Linguistically, language must constitute a system that is isomorphic to reality in such a way that what is expressible in language mirrors what is possible in reality. The requisite isomorphism thus requires that language and reality share logical form such that the range of permissible propositions mirrors the range of possible combinations of objects. Language is a fully articulated system, such that every meaningful proposition is analyzable into a set of elementary propositions that directly mirror possible states of affairs in virtue of their shared logical form with reality (pictorial form) and their pictorial relationship to the world (constituent names denote simple objects). The conditions for meaningfulness reveal that only sentences having the requisite logical syntax and referential relation to reality are genuinely meaningful: that is, say something about the world. All other sentences, except for tautologies and contradictions (the limit of meaningfulness), are meaningless.

The paradoxical consequence of this conception is that the sentences describing and defending this theory of meaning are themselves meaningless according to the theory. To address this, Wittgenstein introduces his distinction between saying and showing. The philosophical propositions of the *Tractatus* are an attempt to say what can only be shown through what we can say successfully. Though meaningless, these philosophical propositions are illuminating in that they lead us to a proper understanding of the conditions for meaningfulness.

And since meaningless, they are to be abandoned once their elucidating work is complete. Thus, philosophy is brought to an end by solving the fundamental philosophical problem: that is, the problem of representation. Traditional metaphysics can be eliminated as plain nonsense. Epistemology is turned over to its proper science, psychology. And ethics, and the mysticism with which it is properly associated, is revealed to be of the greatest importance, and yet it too can only be shown. Diagnosis is offered along the way to show how philosophers go wrong in their misguided pursuit of philosophical theory building.

In sum, the ontology and theory of meaning lie at the core of the *Tractatus,* revealing just what problems in philosophy can be solved, which are to be allocated to the natural sciences, and which must be dissolved, their lack of meaning revealed through proper philosophical analysis. Yet these core theories result in the paradoxical consequence that they themselves are nonsensical. The doctrine of showing is enlisted to reveal how the propositions of the *Tractatus* illuminate otherwise ineffable truths. This distinguishes them from the plain nonsense that has been the stuff of traditional metaphysics and epistemology On this standard reading, the paradoxical consequences follow from the theory of meaning and explain the importance of the saying—showing distinction to the early Wittgenstein.

Diamond argues that this story of how to read the *Tractatus* is mistaken through and through.[3] The heart of the *Tractatus* is not the ontology and picture theory of the 1s, 2s and 3s, but what she calls the frame which consists of the preface and the final passages, according to which we throw away the ladder we have been using and endorse a complete exit from philosophy (*T* 6.53, 6.54 and 7). These passages provide instruction for how to read this work. We are to attend to subtle clues concerning the author's intentions rather than to what I shall refer to as the corpus of the work. The task of the *Tractatus* is to deconstruct its own sentences, making plain that they are gibberish. To understand the *Tractatus* aright is to grasp that at no point does Wittgenstein endorse, provisionally or otherwise, the apparent theories of the *Tractatus*.

There are four major components to this reading.[4]

The nonsense thesis The *Tractatus* conception of nonsense is the central driving idea, not the unwelcome but unavoidable consequence of the theory of representation. And nonsense is plain nonsense, gibberish. There is no room in the *Tractatus* for distinguishing between gibberish and illuminating nonsense. The propositions of the *Tractatus* are gibberish in the way that "neither unless consider says" is gibberish. Indeed, there is no doctrine of showing in the *Tractatus,* according to which Wittgenstein tries to intimate truths about reality and language that cannot be said. Rather, Wittgenstein takes us on a journey in which we come to realize that what philosophy wants to say cannot be said because it is literally nonsensical. Recognizing this, we can exit from the philosophical project altogether. This is an esoteric journey in that few will be able to undertake it successfully, because few can resist all temptations to an illusory

understanding and because the method for climbing the ladder in order to throw it away must be "lived through," experienced for oneself. But those few who do will come to appreciate the full adequacy of ordinary language, standing without need for philosophical support.

Rejection of the metaphysical interpretation In denying any distinction between plain nonsense and illuminating nonsense, the austere reading thereby repudiates the view that it is possible to say, in some sense, what our ordinary propositions show about logic and reality. There are no ineffable "truths" about the nature of language and the world; there is nothing to be shown. And so the ontology of the 1s and 2s is, as is all metaphysics, plain nonsense. Nothing is being said, shown or expressed in these passages. Once we take the charge of nonsense to be the fundamental claim in the *Tractatus,* we acquire an understanding of that puzzling claim that realism and idealism converge. They occur at different moments in the dialectic process. The focus, however, of austere readers to date has been on the metaphysical realism associated with talk of simple objects, logical form and necessity The completed interpretation must, presumably, show that idealism is equally nonsensical.[5] In overcoming the dispute, we recognize that our ordinary speaking in a realistic spirit has been fully acceptable all along, having no need for philosophical buttressing or examination.

The strong consistency thesis The austere reading brings a consistency to the *Tractatus* that the standard interpretation cannot accommodate. In privileging Wittgenstein's methodological remarks, Diamond insists that anything short of holding the propositions of the *Tractatus* to be plain nonsense is "chickening out."[6] By being resolute, we do not have to attribute an unavoidable contradiction to the very fabric of the *Tractatus.* The paradoxical character of the *Tractatus* is only apparent, arising from a failure to understand the method that Wittgenstein is using. There is no conflict internal to the *Tractatus* and so no need for a distinction between saying and showing to relieve it. The corpus consists (almost) entirely of gibberish. It must be understood then solely in methodological therapeutic terms rather than substantive explanatory terms.

The strong continuity thesis The austere reading highlights a deep continuity in aim and method (or point and task) between the early and late philosophy Wittgenstein was always engaged in the project of overcoming philosophy in order to accept the ordinary. The idea that in his early period he offers a general theory of meaning that enables him to end philosophy by solving its legitimate problems, and dissolving the rest, is profoundly mistaken. He always held the same view of his aim, its method and the need to overcome philosophy. His was the therapeutic method always. It falls out of this reading that Wittgenstein was never really mistaken in his philosophical views, except perhaps in underestimating how strong the appeal is to reach cosmic exile, and so how difficult it is to eradicate. His youthful optimism that philosophy can be put to rest once and for all, as well as his own desire for peace of mind perhaps, misled him in this calculation. This therapeutic task is directed against what

Wittgenstein took to be the deep and yet profoundly mistaken motivation for philosophical enquiry: the desire to stand outside the world and language and see the relation between the two. It is against the work of a rationalized imagination, then, that the therapeutic method must be directed.[7]

The appeal of the austere reading is, in many ways, great, particularly in its conception of Wittgenstein's overarching goal to undermine the lure of cosmic exile by understanding how an illusion of sense can make one suspicious of the adequacy of ordinary language and explanation. But the heart of the austere reading, the nonsense thesis, is suspect both philosophically and as an interpretation. It contends that the corpus of the *Tractatus* is an imaginative entering into the game of philosophy, in which the apparent internal logic of the game itself is illusory. The corpus is revealed to be a disguised syntactic mess. Both its apparent content and logical structure are illusions of the philosophical imagination, abetted by the psychologically satisfying appearance of these letter strings as "sentences." It is to the argument for this striking thesis that we turn now.

2.
The austere conception of nonsense

To assess the austere reading of the *Tractatus,* we need to be clear about the austere conception of nonsense, a conception that has its source, according to Diamond, in Frege. Indeed, she refers to this conception as "the Frege—Wittgenstein view of nonsense," but I'll refer to it more simply as the Fregean view.[8] It is a consequence of Frege's context principle, according to which the fundamental unit of meaning is the sentence or proposition. This, she suggests, is Frege's deepest philosophical insight, one that is taken over, albeit in modified form, by Wittgenstein.[9] The integrity of a proposition is secured by Frege's context principle. This principle states that the constituent expressions (the Logical Parts) of a proposition have a meaning (a sense and a referent) only within the context of a proposition. This is because the internal logical structure of a proposition is complex, consisting minimally of two kinds of expressions that play very different but complementary roles within the proposition. Frege uses an arithmetic analogy to describe these complementary roles. Naming expressions are those that can be substituted as arguments for variable positions within a proposition while predicate expressions are functions operating upon those arguments. Just as an arithmetic expression without arguments is incomplete or "unsaturated" and so says nothing mathematical, so a predicate expression without names can say nothing. Equally, an expression is a name only insofar as it is an argument for a predicative function. The context principle, in making the proposition the semantically smallest unit, ensures that the unity of the proposition is logically primitive. Nonsense occurs when this unity is violated, even if the natural language sentence string has all the appearance of being syntactically well-formed. The key features that Frege provides for

displaying the distinctive functionality of the sentence, as Diamond puts it, are the context principle, an explanation in terms of the subsentential argument-function structure of the proposition, and Frege's anti-psychologism and anti-naturalism which require distinguishing a mental idea or mere word (letter strings or vocables) from the logical constituents of a proposition (namely, proper names and predicative functions).

On Diamond's reading, the *Tractatus* implicitly combines an endorsement of Frege's insight with a rejection of Frege's assimilation of sentences to the logical category of proper names. For Frege, a meaningful proposition is one in which a specific name completes a predicate function to determine a specific value. That value is the True or the False. So, every meaningful proposition is determinately true or false, and differs from all other meaningful propositions that share its truth-value only in its sense. The proposition determines a truth-value in the way in which an arithmetic equation determines a numeric value. In doing so the sentence is revealed to belong to the logical category of a name referring to an object. The decisive turn for the early Wittgenstein, according to Diamond, is to accept the sentence as the fundamental semantic unit but to repudiate the arithmetic model of the sentence as name for an object (the True or the False).[10]

Russell is credited with directing Wittgenstein to this non-Fregean account of the functionality of the sentence. The functionality of the sentence (and so what marks it off as a distinct logical category from names and predicates) consists in its meeting two conditions: (1) The sentence is capable of comparison with reality regardless of the truth or falsity of any other sentence. This is the independence condition of the *Tractatus:* Elementary propositions are truth-functionally independent of any other elementary proposition (cf. *T* 4.211 and 5. 134–5.135). (2) The sentence is capable of comparison with reality regardless of whether it is true or false (cf. *T* 2.21). This is the bipolarity condition: every meaningful sentence can be true or false. Russell's theory of definite descriptions showed Wittgenstein "a method of analysis of sentences, a way of rewriting them, that made their kind of functionality clear" (Diamond 1991: 187). Here is what Diamond sees as important in Wittgenstein's preference for Russell's way of analyzing sentences containing definite descriptions as opposed to Frege's. Frege treated definite descriptions as names; and as such, any sentence having an empty definite description could not determine a truth-value, for the variable position within the sentence remains empty. Russell, on the other hand, takes the truth-valuedness of sentences with empty definite descriptions to show that the surface grammar of the sentence does not reveal its true logical form. In the proper analysis, the definite description disappears and the sentence is shown to be straightforwardly false.

Diamond's point is not just the familiar one that Wittgenstein sought ways of showing that apparently referring expressions really function quite differently. It is rather to highlight the significance of the way in which the *Tractatus* modifies the use of Frege's key semantic concepts, sense and reference. What Russell had done, from Wittgenstein's perspective, was to show that if sentences

containing definite descriptions are true or false, their being so valued does not depend on whether the definite description has a referent or not. The general significance of Russell's treatment of definite descriptions, if I understand Diamond correctly, is that what is fundamental is the meaningfulness of the *sentence,* not the roles of its constituents. This is the lesson of the context principle. If the identification of the constituents of a sentence indicates that a meaningful sentence (that is, one that is true or false) fails to be true or false, then the constituents have been wrongly identified.[11] This is what the distinctive functionality of sentences consists in. A sentence just is a sign with the capacity to say something that can be true or false.[12] An analysis must respect that capacity. A perspicuous notation can make this transparent. It is important to note that, *pace* the standard interpretation, the picture theory of meaning plays no role at all. The argument that Diamond attributes to Wittgenstein is at best implicit in aspects of the *Tractatus,* but it is certainly not the way that the context principle, the independence thesis or the bipolarity thesis are reached on the standard interpretation. For those who seek to relate this general argument to the sentences of the *Tractatus,* a compensating advantage, perhaps, though Diamond does not make this point, is that it might shed light on why the *Tractatus* is so cryptic in its discussion of the pictorial relationship between the propositional sign and reality: "That is how a picture is attached to reality; it reaches right out to it" (*T* 2.1511). The explanation would be that the intrinsic functionality of sentences ensures this "reaching out." A sentence just is true or false of reality The bipolarity condition is taken to be a feature of the intrinsic functionality of the sentence.[13]

Nonsense is construed, then, in terms of these essential features of the proposition. A nonsensical "sentence" fails to *be* a sentence, and this can be shown through its failure to have the requisite internal logical structure or failure to be bipolar. This is a negative conception of nonsense. The standard interpretation, on Diamond's view, has mistakenly assigned a positive conception of nonsense to the *Tractatus*. Leaving aside the colloquial use of "nonsense" to express strong disagreement or the philosophical view that nonsense is outrageous falsehood and nothing more, we can contrast a positive (or substantive) account of nonsense with Diamond's negative plain nonsense.[14] The only kind of nonsense is syntactic nonsense. An obvious example of such nonsense is the string, "what those view Paradise 5 between of."[15] This is simply a "syntactic mess" that is transparently meaningless. The substance of the Fregean view of nonsense that Diamond attributes to the *Tractatus* lies in showing that philosophical sentences like "A is an object" or "The world is all that is the case" are nonsense in just this way. They too are syntactic messes. They are not obviously nonsensical, but on the contrary seem to be syntactically well-formed meaningful propositions. The challenge is to show how such apparently well-formed sentences are nonetheless syntactic gibberish.

In order to get clearer about Diamond's negative conception of nonsense, let's consider two more familiar positive philosophical strategies for explaining how

apparently syntactically well-formed sentences are in fact nonsense. The first strategy is incompatible with the context principle. It holds that given the meanings words have, they belong to logical categories which constrain the range of sentences within which the words may occur. To take Carnap's example, "Caesar is a prime number," the name "Caesar" designates a particular individual who is a member of the logical category of person. The predicate expression "is a prime number" is applicable only to members of the logical category of number. The logical constituents of Carnap's sentence are meaningful and the sentence is syntactically well formed, yet it is nonetheless nonsense. This is because the logical categories brought into play exclude combination. There is, as Diamond is fond of putting it, a clash of categories that renders the sentence meaningless. On this view, the logical constituents of the sentence are meaningful, the sentence as a whole is syntactically acceptable, but the whole is nonsense in virtue of the clash of categories.

Diamond rejects this kind of explanation of nonsense. The fundamental mistake of this view is to take the words "Caesar" and "is a prime number" to be meaningful logical constituents *prior* to their occurrence within a sentence. But words, considered as words, are not logical parts nor do they have meaning nor do they, of themselves, implicate logical categories. The context principle states that words have the status of logical parts only given their role within a sentence. "Caesar is a prime number" might thus be quite in order if, for example, the word "Caesar" is taken to name the number 53. Taken this way it is not nonsense. But if "Caesar" is taken to be the proper name of a particular Roman general and if "is a prime number" is taken to mean what it means in a sentence like "53 is a prime number," then the sentence is nonsense. But not because there is a clash of logical categories, persons and numbers. Rather, and here is the ingenuity of the view, because the sentence is a syntactic mess when one looks more closely. Failure to recognize this is a failure to keep distinct mere words (letter strings or vocables) and logical parts. The upshot of this is that we don't count a word-string as a sentence at all if it isn't meaningful. An analogy will help.

Suppose we have an old-fashioned cog and spring clock. The cogs, springs and other structural components are all connected in such a way that the hands of the clock move to keep time. These components are clock components in virtue of the functional roles that they each play. These functional roles can, of course, only be identified within the context of the clock-system as a whole. This is a familiar point, but it is one that is crucially exploited in Diamond's account of negative nonsense. Suppose we now remove some of the structural components from this clock—say, a cog and a spring—and we replace these components with components from another machine—say, a camshaft and a spark plug from a car. Thus, we have placed a valve and a gas igniter in the place where a cog and a spring were. We now have a machine mess, for which it would be a mistake to say that the structural components nonetheless carry their functions with them. They have no functions. They are not, then, valves or gas igniters.

Analogously, considering the words of a sentence to be its structural components which achieve the status of being meaningful logical parts only provided they play an appropriate functional role within the sentence as a whole. When we construct a sentence with words whose normal functional role cannot be met within the new sentence, unless we assign a non-standard or non-normal role to these words, the sentence that is produced is a syntactic mess. It looks like a sentence, but the words of which it is composed are no more its *logical parts* than the structural components of a machine mess realize the functional roles (of their typical machine environment) within their new environment The words are not really words any more than the spark plug or the camshaft is a gas igniter or a valve. They are illusions of sentences; they are gibberish.

Note two important caveats to Diamond's position. First, whether a sentence is a syntactic mess must be determined by close examination of that particular sentence in order to assess whether its constituents have meaning or not. This is crucial since we can assign meanings to words other than their normal or ordinary meanings. Second, we perceive the nonsense of the sentence by taking a second closer look at the sentence itself, not by discovering its deep underlying logical form.[16] This is not a matter of surface illusion of meaningfulness disguising deep underlying illogicality. The nonsense sentence is not an attempt to think the illogical. Rather, it is a string of words that are a mess in the way that our earlier string "what those view Paradise 5 between of" is a mess. It doesn't look that way at first because we are taken in by its similarity to quite familiar and acceptable sentences of ordinary language. This is a psychological point about our relation to what is linguistically familiar, and not a logical point about what can be thought. Diamond's conclusion is that anything that can be said is thereby logically in order. There is no such thing as an illogical thought. Her claim is that we reach this understanding not by drawing a principled positive line between what is meaningful and what is not, but by coming to see that certain sentence strings aren't sentences at all, and so we haven't said anything at all when we utter these strings. The view turns on a denial that individual words (as letter strings or vocables) are logical parts (roughly, the structure-function distinction) or are meaningful in isolation (tied to substantive logical categories). This is taken to be the consequence of endorsing the context principle. This concludes the discussion of Diamond's general account of nonsense.

The next stage of her project is to show that this negative conception of nonsense is the central driving idea behind the *Tractatus*. The corpus of this work consists of plain nonsense. With the exception of the frame, the entire work is a syntactic mess. This, of course, is meant to be an indictment of traditional philosophy. Philosophical sentences are meaningless jumbles of words. They are no more sentences than "that what those view Paradise 5 between of" is. This interpretative hypothesis sets the research program for the austere reader, which is to provide the detailed examination of the sentences of the *Tractatus,* showing that they are indeed gibberish. The real question becomes, how does one

establish that apparently well-formed sentences in a natural language are not sentences at all? Not by way of a robust conception of logical categories that clash when combined. And not by way of a privileged form of analysis that can be held to reveal the true underlying logical form of natural language sentences. There is only surface grammar. Philosophical "sentences" must be shown to fail to achieve the distinctive functionality of sentences. This can only be done by showing that the words of the candidate sentence are not genuinely logical parts. This calls for close examination of particular sentences. This is the work of what Diamond calls the transitional passages of the *Tractatus*.

Transition talk is a tool enabling the reader to appreciate how whole strings of apparently connected and contentful sentences are nonetheless nonsense. We can see this through the examination of a paradigmatic philosophical sentence, "A is an object." In *T* 4.126–4.1272, Wittgenstein argues that "A is an object" is not a meaningful sentence. The bipolarity condition for sentencehood is violated because if this sentence is meaningful, it is necessarily true. This is because its being true is a necessary condition of its being meaningful, since the name expression "A" must refer to object A if "A" is to be a meaningful constituent. Yet a necessarily true sentence is one that cannot be false, and so it violates the condition of bipolarity. Philosophical "object" talk is really a way of introducing existential quantification. A perspicuous analysis of the sentence reveals this transparently: "(Ex)A" is transparent nonsense.[17] To make this kind of argument, we must accept that the direction of semantic explanation is from the sentence to its constituents. Analysis is governed by this order of explanation. Analysis doesn't discover some deeper hidden logical form. Rather, analysis makes perspicuous the precise way in which a linguistic string realizes the argumentfunction subsentential structure or fails to do so. In establishing that philosophical sentences, namely sentences that are about what we say in the ordinary course of our lives or in doing science or mathematics, are meaningless, Wittgenstein thereby shows that we cannot but speak our home language. This is not an acquiescence in our home language on pragmatic grounds, as, say, Quine argues. That suggests that there is a problem with our so acquiescing, that we cannot find the theoretical grounds for our acceptance of our ordinary ways of talking. It is the attempt to picture, as John McDowell (1994:34) puts it, "the system's adjustments to the world from sideways on," a position in which we try to look outside language, in Quinean cosmic exile. For the austere reader, what the nonsense thesis shows is that attempts to explain, justify or doubt the legitimacy of the way we speak are gibberish.

The great attractiveness of the austere reading, it seems to me, is to be found in just this treatment of our "acquiescence" in ordinary language. It is not pragmatic resignation resulting from the failure to achieve *the* final objective view. Rather, it is shown to be perfectly in order as it is. Attractive and important though this claim is, I don't believe that it is achieved in the *Tractatus* and not in the way envisioned by the austere reader. For the austere reader, showing that "A is an object" is nonsensical impugns the meaningfulness of all sentences apparently

concerned with an ontology of objects. The thought is that close examination of the 1s, 2s and much of 3s will reveal that the occurrences of the letter string "object" cannot function as logical constituents of the "propositions" within which the expression occurs; and so the sentences in which tokens of "object" occur will be revealed to be plain nonsense. The transition talk of *T* 4.126–4. 1272 is taken to show the reader how to see through the illusion of subsentential logical structure to the reality of word salads. Certainly the diagnosis of the way in which "A is an object" fails to be a sentence at all is in the *Tractatus.* What is in question is whether Wittgenstein uses it to show the sentences that purport to describe an ontology of simple objects and the picture theory of meaning are word salads.

And that, Diamond urges, is the point of the *Tractatus*. The attempt to find in the *Tractatus* a metaphysical necessity that underwrites the success of our language in saying something is "chickening out." Wittgenstein aims to free us from precisely this illusion. We do not need to find our language anchored in necessity, since there can be no such thing as violating the logic of language (1991:194–5). Nothing underlies or explains the necessity implicit in our ordinary sentences. Thus, Diamond concludes:

> The very idea of the philosophical perspective from which we consider as sayable or unsayable necessities that underlie ordinary being so, or possibilities as themselves objective features of reality, sayably or unsayably: that very perspective itself is the illusion, created by sentences like "A is an object," which we do not see to be simply nonsense, plain nonsense.
> (1991:197)

Any attempt to say or show something about a necessary structure underlying language, of its very nature, violates the conditions for being a sentence. "What those view Paradise 5 between of" obviously violates the conditions for being a sentence, but so do "There must be simple objects," "The space of possibilities determines the limit of the sayable," "Logical form is determined by the intrinsic properties of simple objects," and any other purported ontological statement, albeit not so obviously. Wittgenstein neither says it nor shows it, but uses the ontological statements of the 2s as the lures that lead us to recognize, in the end, their failure to mean anything at all because they fail to be sentences. "Wittgenstein's philosophy throughout his life," as Diamond summarizes this point,

> is directed against certain ways of imagining necessity. Throughout his life, his treatment of logic aims at letting us see necessity where it does lie, in the use of ordinary sentences. The trouble with chickening out… is that it holds on to exactly the kind of imagination of necessity, necessity imaged as fact, that Wittgenstein aimed to free us from.

(1991:195)

3.
Criticism of the austere reading

I shall develop the internal problems in three connected stages, corresponding to the first three components of the austere reading–the nonsense thesis, the repudiation of the metaphysical interpretation, and the strong consistency thesis. The point is to show that the task Wittgenstein sets himself, as understood by Diamond and others, namely to establish that the corpus is a syntactic mess, fails to realize the philosophical goal attributed to the *Tractatus,* namely to show that ordinary language is in order as it is, that logic takes care of itself. The nonsense thesis cannot be made to do the work assigned it. I hope to show that this is for reasons that support the claim that ineliminable paradox lies at the heart of the *Tractatus*. That paradox is a commitment to saying what must also be denied, with strong philosophical reasons for doing both. The standard interpretation tries to remove the paradox by exploiting the saying-showing distinction. This only moves the problem, a point the austere reader emphasizes by charging the standard interpreter with being irresolute or chickening out. But as I shall show, the austere reader cannot remove the paradox either. Once again it is moved rather than removed, not by exploiting the saying—showing distinction (though a version of this distinction re-emerges as well), but by moving the substantive philosophical commitments outside the text itself to be drawn upon in the frame and transition moments of the *Tractatus*. That paradox must be tolerated or even relished on any reading of the *Tractatus,* I shall argue, is indicative of a deep discontinuity between the early and later work, This central feature of the *Tractatus* is what Wittgenstein later comes to see as a clear mark of being in the grip of a picture.

Nonsense thesis

Again, according to Diamond, the corpus of the *Tractatus* is plain nonsense. It gives the illusion of intelligibility, perhaps in the way that incoherent dreams can seem significant to the dreamer.[18] Yet the general argument for the nonsense thesis and the particular diagnoses for the nonsensicality of propositions of the *Tractatus* involve explanatory notions and methods that are part and parcel of the *Tractatus* itself (on the standard interpretation) and rely on the intelligibility of at least some passages from the corpus. As we have seen in the previous section, the general argument that Diamond imputes to Wittgenstein is held to illuminate features that arise from the semantic primacy of the sentence, which is taken to require that sentences have subsentential argument-function structure and that sentences are individually bipolar. This is precisely where the difficulty for the austere reading arises.

On this reading, as for the standard interpretation, Wittgenstein is committed to the logical articulation of language, the bipolar condition for meaningfulness, Russellian analysis, and crucially the claim that the argument-function structure is logically primitive. The general account of negative nonsense draws on these features, and the particular diagnosis of philosophical sentences uses these features as integral to the arguments showing these sentences to be word salads. In other words, Diamond does not get nonsense from nothing any more than other advocates of the sense—nonsense divide. The difference, then, must lie with the reasons attributed to Wittgenstein for this endorsement and in how they are used in the relevant transitional passages where diagnosis occurs.[19] The logical positivists rely on the principle of verifiability to draw the line; Frege, or at least some Fregeans, draw upon a substantive notion of logical category; the *Tractatus,* on the standard interpretation, relies on the picture theory of meaning. Can the austere reader justify the charge of nonsense without some (implicit) theory of meaning or language? I do not see how.

To assess this, we will turn to the treatment of the transitional passages, for these passages provide the grounds for judging apparently well-ordered philosophical sentences to be word salads. The austere reading sees these passages as rungs up the ladder. There are two ways to treat them. They can be taken to offer sound arguments against metaphysical enticement, in which case they are indeed meaningful sentences. Or they themselves have only an illusory meaningfulness, which is seen through as one progresses higher up the ladder in the escape from philosophical theorizing. These two possibilities pose a dilemma for the austere reading. If the transitional passages are meaningful, then the nonsense thesis is seriously compromised. Indeed, it is reduced to the claim that certain philosophical sentences can be shown to be nonsense relative to a certain (philosophical) conception of language, namely, the modified Frege-Russell picture. The charge of nonsense, then, does not fall out of a philosophically innocuous set of considerations.

This relocates the debate between the austere reading and traditional readings. It becomes a debate concerning the grounds for subscribing to some aspects of the Frege-Russell picture while rejecting other aspects. Are the grounds the picture theory and the ontology of simple objects, as the standard interpretation has it? Or are the grounds to be found outside the *Tractatus* in Frege's characterization of the context principle and its implications, as Diamond has it? Or are they, perhaps, to be found in the later passages that focus on the application of logic? This turns the debate, both interpretive and philosophical, to the grounds for the picture of language as a logically articulated structure. It is not the nonsense thesis, then, but the adequacy of the metaphysical interpretation that is the focus. Such a debate may lead to a revisionist treatment of the *Tractatus,* but not necessarily to an austere one. If the passages, on the other hand, are themselves plain nonsense, then there is no argument or rational defense for the austere reading. This leads to an esoteric reading of the *Tractatus* that closes it to rational scrutiny and invites insight into Wittgenstein's intentions.

At this point, external evidence becomes crucial in assessing the austere reading. In either case, the claim for a *strong* continuity between the early and late philosophy is forfeited. Let's now pursue the dilemma the austere reading faces.

The first horn: the rejection of the metaphysical interpretation

If the transitional passages offer diagnoses for the errors made in making certain metaphysical claims, then they cannot be plain nonsense. These arguments draw essentially upon a modified Frege-Russell picture of language. Moreover, the particular arguments and diagnoses of philosophical nonsense, as constructed by the austere reader, can be used just as effectively within the standard interpretation. The important point is this: The same picture of language, as a fully logically articulated structure, is implicated in both the standard and austere interpretation, even though the grounds for commitment to this picture are not the same. This narrows the gulf between the standard interpretation and the austere reading. Further, Diamond's transitional talk is talk about what can only be shown on the standard interpretation. So, what is the difference in the use of these arguments? For the standard interpretation, the distinction between saying and showing is crucial and is supported by the picture theory of meaning, which requires an ontology of simple objects. For the austere reading, there is no such distinction and the conditions for meaningfulness are inherent in sentences in virtue of sentences having a distinctive functionality. This distinctive functionality just is Frege's context principle, properly understood.

Let's return to the paradigm example of philosophical nonsense, the sentence "A is an object." This sentence fails to be meaningful, it will be recalled, because it violates the bipolar condition. The diagnosis is that the expression "is an object" appears to be a predicate, but is really a way of expressing the existential quantifier. Its proper analysis is "(Ex)A" which is a sign salad. My point is not that the bipolar condition should be rejected (or affirmed). Rather, it is that it stands in need of justification, a conception or theory of language that requires it. That justification, as I have pointed out, cannot come from within the *Tractatus,* the place that the standard interpretation looks. The justification must be external to the *Tractatus.* The austere reading hasn't eliminated a theory of language to justify the divide between the meaningful and the nonsensical. Rather, it has relocated that theory even though in stating the "external" theory the austere reader must say things that are also "said" in the *Tractatus.* The paradox returns.

Diamond prefers a somewhat different strategy for establishing the nonsensicality of philosophical sentences, one that calls for trying to *assign* a meaning to the constituent expressions.[20] If one cannot do so, then the sentence is revealed to be a word salad and the constituents are only word strings and not logical parts. How does one know whether one can assign meanings or not to the constituent expressions? Once again, let us consider "Caesar is a prime number." This sentence is nonsense, according to Diamond, not because the expressions

are tied to ontologically distinct logical categories that clash, but because we can't mean what we ordinarily mean by these expressions and put them together in this way. But perhaps we are looking too narrowly at this sentence. Suppose we were members of a Pythagorean society, believing that the essence of all things is captured by numbers. Within such a society, there may be nothing nonsensical about saying that Caesar is a prime number. If we do not work with a robust notion of logical categories, why should this sentence be ruled out as nonsensical? Diamond's argument must be that the philosopher has not created a context within which his sentences can be meaningful.

Let us return to "A is an object." There seems to be a straightforward way to render this intelligible, by bringing out the alternatives with which this sentence might be contrasted. This is the strategy Wittgenstein employs in the *Philosophical Investigations* when criticizing the idea that analysis of a sentence will reveal its intrinsic logical form (cf. *PI* ßß 19–20). "A is an object" is a second-order sentence that contrasts with "A is a relation or property or an event." This is not, however, the rationale of the *Tractatus.* The early Wittgenstein rejects this because there he rejects the theory of types, but this is a philosophically motivated rationale. Both the general argument for the negative conception of nonsense and particular arguments intended to show the nonsensicality of philosophical sentences draw on substantive philosophical commitments and theories, the rationale for which must lie outside the *Tractatus.* The paradox has not been eliminated, only relocated. This is the first objection.

The justification for the modified Frege-Russell picture, on the standard interpretation, is given in terms of the picture theory and the realist ontology with which it is associated. All adherents of the austere reading repudiate precisely this justification. The real target of the austere reading, then, may not be all philosophy, but the metaphysical realism of the 1s, 2s and 3s. This suggests that much of the *Tractatus* is meaningful, but it needs to be reinterpreted in a way that respects the rejection of realism. But repudiation of the metaphysical interpretation is not tantamount to an endorsement of the austere reading. There are other revisionist interpretations of the *Tractatus* that also reject the metaphysical interpretation (cf. McGinn 1999). Indeed, much in Diamond's interpretation aligns quite naturally with the revisionist interpretation offered by H.Ishiguro in her 1969 paper "Use and Reference of Names."[21] In that paper Ishiguro argues that the *Tractatus* develops a substitutionalist theory of quantification rather than an objectual theory The domain of objects does not set the criteria for the correct use of names. Quite the reverse. The substitution rules for names fix the identity conditions for objects. But this interpretation engages in a philosophical debate concerning the order of explanation between inference/ substitution rules, on the one hand, and representation/reference, on the other. Opting for the former is not an exit from philosophy even though it rejects the reification of Tractarian "objects." The rejection of the metaphysical interpretation, one of the most interesting issues brought to light by Diamond and others, does not require endorsing the nonsense thesis, the strong consistency

thesis or the strong continuity thesis. Indeed, the arguments supporting this militate against the nonsense thesis, and so undermine strict consistency. This is the second objection.

If, however, we respect the demands of the metaphilosophy as understood by the austere reading, we must treat the transitional passages along with the 1s, 2s and 3s as nonsense. But then in what way can they be transitional aids to the reader? It would seem that we must allow that they are illuminating in some way. If so, we have reintroduced the idea of a contrast between plain nonsense and illuminating nonsense. The doctrine of showing is not eliminated; it is moved. What is shown are not deep truths about reality but deep truths about language. Consider the following claims made by Diamond that support this:

> So, for Wittgenstein, the sign for what is the case (or is not the case) is the sentence, a sign to whose functional character it belongs that no sentence's truth or falsity can rob it of its capacity for comparison with reality. (Diamond 1991:200)

> The logical relations of sentences to each other enter the way we tell what sentence our sentence is, what expressions, how combined. The whole of logic is internal to the logical character of every referring expression. (1991:201)

Presumably these sentences are nonsense, for they violate the bipolar condition. They attempt to say what cannot be false if they are true. Yet surely Diamond intends them to substantiate her claim about what Wittgenstein rejects in Frege and to show us something about what it is for logic to take care of itself, These are things that cannot be said, and yet they show that "the whole of logic is internal to any referring expression" (p. 201). This aligns the *Tractatus* more closely with inferentialist theories of meaning rather than representationalist theories. But once again we have a revisionist treatment of the *Tractatus,* one that is as much at odds with privileging the metaphilosophy as the standard interpretation. This is the third objection.

In sum, if the transitional passages are allowed to be meaningful, then they require an alternative justification for the logical articulation of language; or they involve a revisionist interpretation of the *Tractaus'* theory of meaning; or they require the contrast between saying and showing. To preserve what is distinctive of the austere reading, namely the nonsense thesis, the austere reader cannot allow that any of the passages of the corpus are meaningful. All are strict nonsense. Identification of the transitional passages must then arise from the instructions provided for how to read the *Tractatus.* On those instructions a proper reading is obtained only when one recognizes the nonsensicality of all the sentences of the corpus. In short, the instructions commit the reader to finding strong consistency in the *Tractatus* as a whole. This should involve giving up any commitment to the Frege-Russell picture of language.

The second horn: the strong consistency thesis

Strict adherence to the nonsense thesis yields the strong consistency thesis. This is not a surprising result since finding the corpus to be nonsense is the criterion for having read the work correctly: that is, in accordance with the metaphilosophical instructions of the frame. Transitional passages, then, are those that are especially useful in bringing the reader to a recognition of nonsense. These passages themselves, in turn, are revealed to be nonsense. This indeed is the claim of the penultimate passage of the *Tractatus.* There are no conflicting elements within the *Tractatus.* That the standard interpretation finds the work inherently paradoxical is a criticism of that approach. The appearance of conflict is a measure of how deeply enthralled the reader is to philosophical illusions. The appearance of conflict should become, not an intellectual problem, but a spur to recognizing that the propositions in conflict are nonsense. Reading the *Tractatus* is thus an activity, not a source of knowledge about the structure of language and reality. The metaphilosophical remarks trump content.

This requires the austere reader to approach the transitional passages in a new way. They are neither meaningful, implicating a Frege-Russell picture of language, nor are they illuminating in some special way, as this retains the saying-showing distinction. The analyses developed in the transitional passages do not show something about the structure of language that justifies the reader in rejecting the metaphysical hypotheses as nonsense. Rather, they are *effective* in changing the views of philosophers, in bringing them to stop theorizing. That is the point of the *Tractatus.*

Diamond offers what I shall call a romantic defense of strong consistency. Why should the metaphilosophical remarks to the effect that philosophy is nonsense be allowed to trump all other considerations? Indeed, this seems to reverse the proper relation between the content of a philosopher's writings and his remarks on what he takes himself to be doing. A philosopher's methodological remarks in general are evaluated in relation to what he actually argues. But when it comes to Wittgenstein, given his own passionate commitment to devaluing much of professional philosophy as the engagement in nonsensical puzzles, his metaphilosophy is allowed to take on a greater significance than is warranted. As Diamond puts it, "You are to understand not the propositions but the author. Take that directive to you as reader" (2000:155). It is more important to believe *him* than to assess the content of what he says. The aim is to grasp Wittgenstein's true intentions. When we come to understand these intentions correctly, Diamond maintains, we can see that Wittgenstein never fundamentally changes his views nor alters his method. The illusion of conflict, mistake or change in Wittgenstein's writings results from his demanding and poorly understood method of submitting to the philosophical imagination in order to free oneself from philosophical fantasy. It is this conception of what Wittgenstein is doing that leads one to describe the austere reading as an esoteric or gnostic reading.

As a hermeneutic strategy for defending the austere reading, this approach is proof against argument. Perhaps this is why Diamond admits that she does not know how such an interpretation can be evaluated.[22] In privileging the metaphilosophical remarks, we are to construe the frame as providing instructions for reading the *Tractatus* such that the nonsense thesis is borne out. That is a requirement of reading it aright. The point of transitional talk is to bring one to recognize the nonsense that the philosophical will and imagination has created. Since all the propositions of the corpus are nonsense, they have neither content nor logical structure. Strictly, then, any appeal to internal support for an interpretation is utterly moot. Taking Wittgenstein's intentions to be the key to interpretation invites the search for external evidence from other writings, conversations and lecture notes. Here there is much that tells against the austere reading.[23]

Yet simply to call this strategy esoteric isn't to say that wasn't what Wittgenstein was doing. The passage on which the austere reader places great weight is the penultimate passage of the *Tractatus:*

> 6.54 My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them—as steps—to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.)

Here Wittgenstein does ask the reader to understand *him,* and in doing so to recognize his propositions as nonsense. The key to interpreting this passage lies with Wittgenstein's relation to the paradoxical core of the *Tractatus.* Romanticized strong consistency removes paradox at the cost of an esoteric reading. There is, however, an alternative defense of strong consistency that is compatible with the corpus, but does not involve an endorsement of the nonsense thesis. This alternative involves seeing an argumentative strategy in the *Tractatus* that is crucial to the later philosophy. That is the distinctive form of *reductio ad absurdum* argument one finds in several places in the *Investigations,* notably the paradox of interpretation argument and the private language argument. These are arguments directed against philosophical theories that reveal a special kind of contradiction within the theory itself. W.Goldfarb has suggested that the *Tractatus* as a whole can be viewed as developing such a *reductio ad absurdum* argument directed against the modified Frege-Russell picture of language. This way of resolving the apparent inconsistency of the *Tractatus* transforms it from a transcendental argument for the necessary conditions for representation into a *reductio* of itself.[24] The rejection of the corpus is based on the emergence of contradiction, not because the sentences are syntactic word salads. Moreover, the *reductio* reading leads to a repudiation of the very principles the austere reader uses in constructing arguments against the meaningfulness of particular philosophical sentences. On this reading, all of the passages used by the austere reading to support the nonsense thesis and the therapeutic aim of the work are

equally well accounted for. This neutralizes the evidence between the two interpretations.

What the dilemma shows is how problematic the nonsense thesis is for the austere reading. What should be clear by now is that the argumentative strategy of the austere reading is incompatible with its goal. The strong distinction that Diamond and others want to draw between nonsense and meaningfulness requires a theory of meaning (or language). Granted that word salads are indeed nonsense, the challenge is to show that sentences in apparently good standing really are word salads, and for this a theory of meaningfulness (if not a theory of meanings) is required. The first horn of the dilemma reveals this. The need for a theory of meaning is avoided only by running into the second horn of the dilemma, which turns the thesis into something ineffable but recognized by those who successfully maneuver the *Tractatus.* Neither strategy is a return to ordinary language or shows how language takes care of itself. Indeed, the very expression "nonsense" has become a term of art far removed from anything like our ordinary usage. To give up a theory of meaning or meaningfulness is to give up the centrality of the nonsense thesis in combating philosophical theorizing.

4.
Conclusion

What implications do these arguments against the nonsense thesis have for the strong continuity thesis? Certainly, at a high enough level of abstraction, one can maintain a continuity of goal and method whether one accepts the austere reading, a revisionist reading, or the standard interpretation. In both the early and late periods, Wittgenstein sought to bring philosophical theorizing to an end and to do so (in part) through dissolving problems and diagnosing philosophical error. Such shallow continuity of goal and method is compatible with the claim that the later philosophy marks a decisive break with the earlier conception both methodologically and theoretically. The austere reading purports to expose a more robust continuity than is supported by this thin description. This strong continuity requires that Wittgenstein's aim and substantive philosophical task in both periods remain the same. That aim is to show that ordinary language is in order as it is, and does not require philosophical theorizing, justification or explanation. And the task, the actual work to be done to realize this aim, is to show that philosophical attempts to ground, justify or explain ordinary language result in plain nonsense (word salads). This is a radical dissolution of philosophical problems and theories. The salient difference, the austere reader concurs, is that the *Tractatus* realizes these in an architectonic way whereas the *Investigations* engages in a heterogeneous piecemeal way of arguing. Yet this difference, I maintain, undermines the claim to continuity in task.

The architectonic structure of the *Tractatus,* even on the austere reading, extends both to its conception of traditional philosophical problems and solutions as well as to how that tradition is to be dismantled. The problem of

representationality is seen as the deep problem of traditional philosophy, the development of which culminates with the (apparent) theories of the *Tractatus.* In diagnosing certain pivotal philosophical statements as gibberish (such as "A is an object"), the way is prepared for taking down entire systems of propositions that constitute a "theory" of objects or meaning. These are not the propositions of ordinary language, but philosophical sentences that aim to specify the necessary conditions for the possibility of representation *tout court.* The grounds that reveal each of these sentences to be a syntactic mess are the context principle and what is involved in assigning meaning to the constituents of a sentence. As I argue above, both the philosophic tradition and the means for unraveling it are committed to the logical articulation of language, the primacy of assertoric form, and some form of the analytic-synthetic distinction. These commitments are repudiated in the later philosophy. Thus, even if Wittgenstein's goal throughout his philosophical career remained the same—to establish the adequacy of language by showing philosophical theorizing to be nonsensical— the task he sets for himself cannot remain the same. The argumentative strategy of the *Tractatus* is not that of the *Investigations,* and it is this claim that is at the heart of the strong continuity thesis.

This is not just the difference of replacing an architectonic conception of the task with a piecemeal one. It involves a critique of the very tools used in constructing the *Tractatus* theory and mounting its deconstruction. The Frege-Russell picture of language, the use of analysis, the conception of logic, the bipolarity condition, and the conception of philosophical theories all change and come under attack either explicitly or implicitly. While Wittgenstein does not repudiate Russellian analysis *tout court*—the later Wittgenstein allows that it can have particular successes (as with identity or definite descriptions)—the important explanatory role given logical form and so analysis is repudiated. The bipolarity condition is identified as a truism, a reflection of the fact that the predicates "true" and "false" are introduced with the notion of a proposition *(PI ß136).* This is not a discovery about propositions and their relation to the world or the primacy of assertoric form, but rather points to the fact that these expressions are introduced and learned together.

There is a further, deeper reason for discontinuity The opening passages of the *Investigations* reverse the *Tractatus* judgment, it seems to me, concerning the pictorial relationship (reference) and the significance of learning. In the *Tractatus,* the pictorial relationship is unproblematic and learning is irrelevant. The reason for this is that the problem of representationality is taken to be the fundamental problem for philosophy in the early period. The key to addressing that problem is the context principle and the explanatory role assigned logical form. The *Investigations* criticizes the philosophical significance accorded these. Wittgenstein's particular criticisms are tied to his view that the explanatory and argumentative work to be done by the context principle and logical form are blind to the problem of normative similarity: that is, of what constitutes sameness in the application of an expression or of going on in the same way. In

sum, then, the task of the *Tractatus,* its argumentative tools for realizing this task, and the Fregean theory of language that guides the deconstructive work according to the austere reading are all challenged in the later work.

Let me conclude by turning to the key claim that binds many to the austere reading. It concerns Wittgenstein's relation to paradox and so nonsense. The fact that the ostensible theory of the *Tractatus* leads to paradox of such a deep and abiding sort that it leads Wittgenstein to say, in the penultimate passage, that "anyone who understands me eventually recognizes [my propositions] as nonsensical" (*T* 6.54) requires one to look for a way of freeing Wittgenstein from the charge of contradiction. We now have three ways to interpret *T* 6.54 and three ways to understand Wittgenstein's relation to the paradoxical core of the *Tractatus.* The standard interpretation construes *T* 6.54 as Wittgenstein's acknowledgement that his theory of meaning undercuts the meaningfulness of the sentences used to state that theory. Here Wittgenstein tolerates paradox, using the doctrine of showing to ameliorate its irrationality. The austere interpretation construes the passage as the key to understanding the *Tractatus* as a whole. Paradox is no part of the *Tractatus,* but is an illusion created by the meaningless word strings that constitute the corpus of the text. The *reductio* interpretation makes paradox the point of the work, which is to repudiate the entire picture of language on the grounds that it is self-defeating. Does Wittgenstein tolerate paradox as an unavoidable consequence of a necessarily correct theory of meaning? Does he show that paradox is an illusion generated by nonsensical word salads that are nonetheless psychologically congenial? Or does he use paradox as a critical tool for attacking the very picture of language that is in play in the first two accounts (albeit in different ways)? We must conclude that some version of the standard interpretation is correct, although I shall offer a different way of understanding the early Wittgenstein's tolerance for contradiction. This first requires seeing what lessons we have learned from the austere reading.

The price for achieving strong consistency by way of the nonsense thesis is the gnostic interpretation of the corpus. This price is clearly too high since it leaves philosophical understanding, even of a diagnostic sort, behind in favor of esoteric insight. Avoiding the esoteric interpretation results in relocating, but not eliminating, contradiction, and so strong consistency is not achieved. But though the reading fails, Diamond and others bring fresh insights to the work. They raise serious questions about taking the metaphysical realism of the early passages at face value. And they highlight the way in which the work is a dialectical one rather than a linear construction of a theory of language. But the lesson to be drawn from this, it seems to me, is not that the penultimate *T* 6.54 is the key to interpreting the *Tractatus.* Rather, *T* 5.64, I would argue, is the pivotal passage for understanding the dialectical structure of the *Tractatus:*

> Here it can be seen that solipsism, when its implications are followed out strictly, coincides with pure realism. The self of solipsism shrinks to a point without extension, and there remains the reality co-ordinated with it.

What Wittgenstein seeks to show, it seems to me, is that whether we begin with realist premises or idealist premises, given the constraints imposed by the new logic, we are led to the same picture of language and its relation to the world, a picture that requires the primacy of assertion, the logical articulation of language, and its sharing an isomorphic structure with the world. In other words, it is not the primary task of the *Tractatus* to show philosophical sentences to be word salads, but to reveal what the structure of language and reality must be no matter with which metaphysical premises one begins. The repudiation of both realism and solipsism (idealism) derives from understanding how the two coincide. The method is dialectical, the conclusion is that language takes care of itself, and the superstitious picture that drives the argument is the subliming of the new logic.

This leaves, of course, inconsistency at the heart of the *Tractatus.* This result, according to the austere reader, diminishes Wittgenstein's philosophical genius and is unacceptable. But it is a mistake to draw this inference, and we can see this in the way in which Wittgenstein characterizes the phenomenology of philosophical puzzlement and conviction in the *Investigations.* In this later work, Wittgenstein comes to identify tolerating contradiction as indicative of being in the grip of a picture. Being in the grip of a philosophical picture is not a mistake, he insists, but rather is akin to superstition (*PI* 110). The chemist who believes in the transubstantiation of wine and bread into the blood and flesh of Christ is not being stupid or failing to note certain empirical facts about the chemical composition of wine and bread (cf. *On Certainty* 239, 336). Similarly for the philosopher who is committed to a particular picture of language or mind. The religious believer and the philosopher are wrong, but they are not making mistakes of intelligence.

Notes

1 Cora Diamond (1991), especially "Frege and Nonsense," "What Nonsense Might Be," "Throwing Away the Ladder:How to Read the *Tractatus*"; and (2000). For other defenses of the austere reading, see (Conant 1989 and 1992) and (Goldfarb 1997); and Part II of (Crary and Read 2000).

2 A disclaimer or qualification is needed here. What is called "the standard interpretation" is abstracted from the details of particular interpretations of the *Tractatus,* which can vary significantly. Those repeatedly identified with the standard interpretation are (Fogelin 1976); (Hacker 1972); (Pears 1987); and (Stenius 1960).

3 In what follows in this paragraph, I shall be presenting a reconstruction of what I see as the key ideas to be found in (Diamond 1991 and 2000).

4 I shall present these components as theses, but it must be noted that Diamond and other austere readers would repudiate the language of "thesis" in connection with their interpretation. It suggests that the interpretation is more theoretical than its advocates intend. Diamond stresses Wittgenstein's view that philosophy properly

pursued is an activity, not a set of theses. Nonetheless, I find it useful to identify the primary components of the austere reading in this manner. I trust that it will not distort my characterization of Diamond's position.

5 Cf. (Sullivan 1996).

6 (Diamond 1991:194). Goldfarb (1997:64), following a suggestion by T.Ricketts, recommends calling this the resolute interpretation.

7 This characterization of the *Tractatus* and its relation to the later philosophy leads some to characterize this as the "therapeutic interpretation." See McGinn (1999). But, understandable though this suggestion is, it is misleading. There are reasons to prefer calling it the austere reading. A therapeutic overcoming of philosophy is fully compatible with having robust philosophical theories from which the diagnoses of error are derived. If classic psychoanalytic therapy for neurosis is our model for this conception of philosophical activity, then both general theory and a specific account of the origins and character of the neurosis from which the patient suffers are part and parcel of the therapeutic process. What Diamond envisions for the *Tractatus* is not the therapeutic relief from (traditional) philosophy but an exit from philosophy, both traditional and Tractarian, altogether. The austere reading is a radical interpretation of the *Tractatus,* more so than its being therapeutic would suggest. One has only to think of how the logical positivists appropriated the *Tractatus,* reading into it an articulation of their own criterion for cognitive meaningfulness, the principle of verifiability. This criterion was used therapeutically by the positivists to eliminate metaphysics as nonsense, a task pursued by analyzing the underlying structure of metaphysical propositions and thus revealing their failure to satisfy the conditions of meaningfulness. Wittgenstein is well known for his own distancing of himself from the logical positivists, a fact that serves to support Diamond's reading.

8 Diamond, "What Nonsense Might Be" (1991). I make no attempt to assess the correctness of Diamond's interpretation of Frege. The focus in this paper is solely on her interpretation of Wittgenstein.

9 Diamond 1991: "Throwing Away the Ladder," section I.

10 Also, see Hacker's (2001: "Frege and the Early Wittgenstein") discussion of this same point.

11 Diamond is getting at something very important here. It is an issue that is at the heart of the debate between inferentialist and representationalist theories of meaning. Though Diamond does not note this, she in effect is attributing an inferentialist conception of meaningfulness to the *Tractatus.* I will discuss this further in Section 3. Here I wish to point out that in doing so, she has (perhaps unintentionally and/or unwittingly) found a continuity between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations.* In holding that the sentence is explanatorily more fundamental than its constituent parts, she thereby implies that subsentential structure is semantically a late-comer. Diamond doesn't note this because she holds that logical syntax and Russellian analysis are crucial to the *Tractatus.* Insofar as they are crucial, this undermines the continuity with the *Investigations,* for both notions are under attack there. But insofar as we take the sentence to be semantically fundamental, then we can identify a continuity with the early passages of the *Investigations.* The point of the builders' game, it seems to me, is just to show that what is fundamental to meaningfulness is normative structure which is realized in the use of the simple holophrastic expressions of the game. Syntactic complexity is

not as fundamental. This idea could be seen to be continuous with a notion of the intrinsic functionality of sentences. Of course, this is not what Diamond has in mind since she takes the *Tractatus* distinction between sense and reference to remain wedded to an ideal of the logical articulation of language.

12 Goldfarb refers to this conception of the functionality of sentences—that it is essential to their nature that they be true or false—as the contrastive theory of meaning. He takes the explanation for this to lie with Wittgenstein's conception of logic, whereas Diamond identifies it with his modified conception of sense. There is an interesting difference in these two ways of putting the matter. For Wittgenstein, a proposition is a propositional sign (a sentence) in its projective relation to the world (*T* 3.12). What it represents through such a projection is its sense. Propositions have a sense, but, *pace* Frege, no reference. To say that their truth-valuedness is internal to sentences is to say that they cannot but stand in a projective relation to the world. To say that logic explains the essential bipolarity of sentences is to say that the logical form of sentences (revealed through proper analysis) is that of saying something true or false. The difference is between holding that the truth-valuedness of sentences is a matter of the sentential sign standing in a projective relation to the world (that is, being applied); or holding that it is a matter of the logical form of sentences: that is, their subsentential logical structure. I'll return to the significance of this difference in the two accounts later. For now, we note the difference and continue with Diamond's argument that the propositions of the *Tractatus* are plain nonsense.

13 Such an explanation may seem wanting in the way that Frege's explanation of the unity of the proposition is wanting. To hold that the predicate expression is unsaturated or incomplete does seem only to name the problem and not to solve it (as Davidson (1984) objects). That is my view of how Wittgenstein came to view the *Tractatus*' appeal to the pictorial relationship. The emptiness of this explanation shows that the treatment of reference in the *Tractatus* is its Achilles' heel. This is why Wittgenstein begins with an examination of the relation between words and objects in the *Investigations*.

14 See Diamond (1991) "Frege and Nonsense" and, especially, "What Nonsense Might Be."

15 Here I use Diamond's recommended recipe for constructing nonsensical syntactic strings: string together the first words of successive pages of a book. These words are derived from (1991:164–71).

16 See Diamond, "Frege and Nonsense" (1991), 86ff.

17 Warren Goldfarb (1997), who endorses aspects of the austere reading, builds on the argument found in the *Tractatus*. Insofar as "A is an object" is taken as meaningful (and so having the form "(Ex)x is A"), it brings with it a conception of metaphysical necessity. But as a statement purporting to describe that metaphysical necessity, the sentence "(Ex)x is A" only contingently obtains relative to some higher order metaphysical position. A sentence having this logical structure could only be part of a higher order language describing the relation between linguistic expressions and objects in its object domain. One can see that the final stage of this argument is quite close to Quine's argument for the inscrutability of reference that he develops in his (1969). Quine argues that a regress of ontological theories is unavoidable because ontology cannot be specified within the object language itself. The only response available to us, according to Quine, is pragmatic, namely to

acquiesce in our home language. The austere reader, in contrast, concludes that in showing that the sentence "A is an object" is meaningless, Wittgenstein has shown that we cannot but speak our home language. To attempt otherwise is to speak gibberish.

18 Wittgenstein does sometimes speak of the illusory intelligibility of dreams. See, for example, L.Wittgenstein, *Zettel,* G.E.M.Anscombe and G.H.von Wright, eds (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967):

> 197 I tell myself "Of course that's a…" and give myself a nonsensical explanation, which at the moment seems to me to make sense. (Like in a dream.)

19 Passages identified as transitional include *T* 3.323, 4.0621, 4.063 from (1991: "Throwing Away the Ladder"); and *T* 4.5, 5, 5.473, 5.4733, 6.42, 6.421, 6.43 from (2000). Goldfarb in his support of Diamond's interpretation identifies a fourth: *T* 5. 525. What distinguishes these passages from the others? *T* 3.323 makes a claim about the occurrence of semantic ambiguity in ordinary language, citing the three uses of the word "is" (as the copula, as a sign for identity and as an expression for existence). This passage makes Frege's point that "the same word has different modes of signification—and so belongs to different symbols." *T* 4.0621 and *T* 4. 063 are discussions of Wittgenstein's treatment of negation, particularly that the negation sign does not signify anything. The senses of both "p" and "- p" are the same. Negation must be understood in terms of the inherent bipolarity of "p" itself. *T* 4.126–4.1272 are especially noted by defenders of the austere reading. These are the passages, discussed above, which show why the sentence "A is an object" is nonsensical. The passages from the 5s identify the source of nonsense (of at least some nonsensical sentences) with our failure "to give a meaning to some of [the] constituents" of the proposition. The example Wittgenstein uses in these passages is the sentence "Socrates is identical." It is nonsense because we have not given adjectival meaning to "identical." Though the sign "identical" appears to function adjectivally to identify a property of Socrates, that is an illusion of the surface structure only. Again, a perspicuous symbolism can reveal this: "a =" is transparently nonsensical. The 6s concern ethics, which Diamond along with others takes to be the real point of the *Tractatus.* She cites Wittgenstein's remark to that effect in a letter to L.von Ficker: "my work consists of two parts: of the one which is here, and of everything which I have *not* written. For the Ethical is delimited from within, as it were, by my book" (Luckhardt 1979:94).

20 See (Diamond 1991:99–104).

21 Also see (McGuinness 1981). For criticism from the perspective of the standard interpretation, see (Pears 1987: Ch. 5).

22 Diamond, "Ethics, Imagination and the Method of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*" (2000: 165).

23 P.M.S.Hacker has presented the external problems for the austere reading quite forcefully and fully in "Was He Trying to Whistle It?" and "When the Whistling had to Stop" in his (2001). "Some Remarks on Logical Form," Wittgenstein's 1929 paper questioning the independence thesis, and much of Part I of the *Investigations,* Wittgenstein's critical scrutiny of the explanatory roles for

reference, sense, logical form and analysis, become profoundly obscure if not unintelligible. "Some Remarks on Logical Form" raises problems for the thesis that the meaningfulness of any elementary proposition is independent of the truth or falsity of any other proposition. Predicates of gradation are identified as important exceptions to the theory of the *Tractatus.* Much of Part I of the *Investigations* is presented as a criticism of ideas held in the *Tractatus,* ideas that the austere reading denies were ever endorsed. Wittgenstein decries his own errors in correspondence and conversation. Correspondence, notes on conversations, journal entries support the standard interpretation's central claim that there is an important discontinuity in Wittgenstein's development.

24 This transformation, it should be noted, involves attributing to the *Tractatus* an argumentative strategy that is used repeatedly in the *Investigations.* The paradox of interpretation argument, the private language argument, and the paradox of consciousness argument (beetle in the box argument), all can be construed as antitranscendental arguments. They each bring out contradictory features of philosophical theories. Not just any contradiction, however. Rather, the very phenomena the theories were introduced to explain are rendered impossible by the theory itself. They are self-defeating theories. The *reductio* interpretation of the *Tractatus* turns it into such a self-defeating theory. The very theory that best (or only) explains the limits of thought in a principled way self-destructs. The moral to be drawn is that such limits cannot be specified. There is no principled distinction between nonsense and what is meaningful. That is, it seems to me, just the argument of the later work. To import this strategy into the *Tractatus* is anachronistic. It achieves a spurious continuity by reading the aims and argumentative strategies of the later work into the earlier. The *Tractatus,* as we can see from the emphasis placed on the nonsense thesis by the austere reading, takes nonsense seriously in a way that is missing in the *Investigations.* Appeals to nonsense in the *Investigations* are not principled and universally applicable, but *ad hoc* and directed to specific remarks. I develop this fully in "Method and Metaphilosophy in the *Philosophical Investigations*" (unpublished manuscript).

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2
WHAT IS THE *TRACTATUS* ABOUT?
Peter M.Sullivan

I

The *Tractatus* is in many ways a perplexing and obscure book. But it presents a philosophical system of the world, and thought about the world, that is disturbingly simple. In barest outline the system is this.[1]

The world, as that to which thought answers, and that whose layout settles whether one thinks truly or falsely, whatever one thinks, comprises everything that is so.

Among things that are so, some are simple, in the sense that for them to be so is just that: their being so is not a matter of further, more basic or more immediately comprehensible things being so, and thus no illuminating elucidation is possible of what it is for them to be so or of how it is that they are so. That something like this is so is an *elementary* fact.

For anything else that is so, an elucidation is available: what it is for such a thing to be so is a matter of certain more basic things' being so; how it is that they are in fact so is that some specific selection of more basic things are so; and if these things in turn are only *more* basic, the same will apply again. Thus it holds of anything at all that is so that its being so consists, finally, in the obtaining of certain elementary facts.

Amongst facts, elementary facts are simple. But for any fact to obtain is for things to be a certain way, and in that sense any fact is complex. Supposing it to be an elementary fact that Stirling is north of Edinburgh, one cannot in any illuminating way spell out what it is for that to be so. But one can, as I just did and will again, spell it out: for that to be so is for Stirling to be north of Edinburgh. What one mentions in spelling that out are the things that must be a certain way for this fact to obtain. They are *objects.*

For this reason objects—those things whose being a certain way constitutes the fact—might be termed the constituents of elementary facts. But this would be altogether different from the sense in which—as one might also say—elementary facts are the constituents of whatever else is so. What that means, recall, is that any such thing's being so consists in certain elementary facts' being so. But there is nothing, except itself, in whose being so an elementary fact consists. So to talk

of the constituents of an elementary fact cannot be to allude to anything's being so. It is inviting, then, to say that an object is not anything that is *so,* or *is the case;* it just *is.* But even to say *that it is* would seemingly be to say that something is so, and thus the invitation is best declined.

To think is to think that something is so; it may be—nothing essential yet turns on whether it is—to say, or to write, that it is so. To think that something is so when it is so is to think truly. Whether one thinks truly or not, of course, one still thinks. But again, if one does think truly, then what one thinks to be so is precisely what is so. Thus a thought needs at once to be independent of, and to be internally related to, the fact that obtains if it is true. Both needs are met, in part, by the objects: even if one thinks things to be a way they are not, it is still *these* things one thinks to be that way. For the rest those needs are met by the notion of the *form* of thought: the *way* these things are thought to be, *the way one thinks them,* is a way those things could be, and will be if one thinks truly. Thus to think that anything is so is to prefigure, in one's thinking, its being so: it is to *picture* it. Objects and form are both involved in this, but not independently. To prefigure in one's thinking a possibility for these things is, tautologously, to prefigure what is a possibility for them. The internal connection between one's thinking and how one thinks things to be—between the picture and what it pictures—is the possibility that things are as they are thought to be; the independence of one's thinking from how things are lies in this connection's requiring no more than that possibility

For things to be as they are, then—for them to be as they might truly be thought or said to be—is for them to be in one of the ways they could have been. For an elementary fact, this is, simply and uniquely, for them to be so rather than, as was also possible for them, not so. For anything else that is so—for anything whose being so consists, as things are, in the obtaining of certain elementary facts —is for some such selection of elementary facts to obtain as might constitute its being so. It may be that for a certain non-elementary fact only one selection of elementary facts could do that, but this is not in general the case. In general, that is, the selection of elementary facts which, as things are, constitutes the obtaining of a non-elementary fact is just one of those which might have done so. Thus to think that a certain non-elementary fact obtains is to think that things are in one of those various ways and not in any of the other ways they might have been.

The ways things might have been constitute, in the extended mathematical sense, a space: all ways in which objects might have been combined with one another constitute a totality of elementary states of affairs; all ways of dividing this totality into those that obtain and those that do not constitute the totality of possible worlds; and all ways of dividing that totality into those which accord with one's thinking and those which do not constitute the totality of thoughts. One might use the terminology of *logical space* to speak, in different connections, of any of these totalities.

What holds of thinking in general holds in particular of thought that is overtly conducted in speech or writing. A proposition is a thought. A proposition to the effect that something is basically or elementarily so is an elementary proposition. It consists of names, whose immediate combination in the proposition itself prefigures, and in that way contains the possibility of, the named objects' being so combined; the proposition is true if those objects are so combined, and otherwise false. A non-elementary proposition is true if certain selections of elementary propositions are true; otherwise it is false. It is, in the now-standard terminology, a *truth-function* of elementary propositions.

As thoughts, propositions display the same duality of independence from, and internal connection with, the reality they describe. Their independence, metaphorically, is a freedom to determine at will the logical space which surrounds the facts; the connection, as before, is already contained in this: the space thus freely determined surrounds the facts. However, because overt thinking issues in something readily grasped—an utterance or inscription—but which, considered just as such, lacks this duality, it provides a standing temptation to neglect or to distort the duality. The notion of entailment or inference will do to provide an example of this.

Co-ordinate with the internal relations between propositions and what they represent are internal relations amongst propositions. Suppose *P* is true if any one of such-and-such selections *{P}* of elementary propositions are true, and correspondingly for *Q* and *{Q};* and suppose *{P}* is included in *{Q}*. Then *P* entails *Q*. Now, that *P* entails *Q* is not anything that is so, in the way we first thought of this. It is not the obtaining of some elementary fact, nor yet something whose truth consists, as things are, in the obtaining of a certain selection of elementary facts. To think or say that anything is so, as we have so far understood this, is to exploit the space of possibilities surrounding the facts to represent that space as determined, or occupied, in such-and-such a way. But that *P* entails *Q* is not a matter of logical space's being filled out in this way or that. It has to do with, if anything, the geometry of the space—that is, with the totality of ways in which it might be filled out. Even so, this seems to be something worth reporting, and so something we can report. Yet to imagine that we can report this in the way we have so far understood reporting—as a matter of saying that, of the ways things could be, they are *this* way—would be to imagine that what we just called the geometry of logical space is also a matter of the way some space is filled out; that is, it would be to imagine that the geometry of logical space is just one of those it might have had; or, again equivalently, it would be to imagine a broader space of merely-possible-possibilities of which what is actually possible is just one determination. That *P* and *Q* can be apprehended merely as signs helps to sustain these imaginings; since, so conceived, any relation between the two is merely external, and might indeed have been otherwise. But this will not of course serve to make such imagining coherent, since equally, so conceived, *P* and *Q* lack that internal relation to reality which is co-ordinate with the one's entailing the other.

What we have just seen in connection with entailment is a single and simple illustration of a kind of phenomenon which the *Tractatus* holds to be characteristic of philosophical discourse. It might be termed a characteristically philosophical kind of 'double-think'. We can approach the kind by successively more general descriptions of the instance. First, and most specifically, the double-think consists in a double-take on propositions: we regard them as mere signs to get the freedom to report on a relation between them as something that is just so; but we must also regard them as intrinsically meaningful symbols for the relation we report to be entailment. Second, and less specifically, this instance involves a double-take on possibilities and facts: for P to entail Q is for a transition from P to Q to be truth-preserving in *all* the possibilities; to present it as a fact that P entails Q to present those possibilities as *just some* of the ways things could have been. Third, and most generally, the double-think concerns one's own perspective as reporter. Logical space is a framework for description that provides at once for thought's connection with and independence from reality. It constitutes, Wittgenstein says, one's standpoint on reality. What the double-think amounts to in these terms is the idea of a standpoint on that standpoint, which on the one hand makes itself independent of the first, but on the other retains the first's connection with the facts; otherwise put, it is the idea of an external perspective on thought whose object is, nonetheless, the perspective of all thought.

In other instances the specific descriptions would have to be different, of course, but the most general description would still apply. What is most characteristic of philosophy is to lapse through such double-thinking into nonsense. What makes such nonsense characteristically philosophical is not the kind of nonsense it is—nonsense is just nonsense—but the kind of ambition that leads someone to engage in it, and the kind of way someone engaging in it hides it from himself that that is what he is doing: the ambition is to achieve a standpoint *on* thought to complement, or in a certain sense to complete, the standpoint *of* thought; the covering illusion is that when one attempts to drag one's words to a new location and a new application, one's words will in turn drag their meanings with them. The proper, critical task of philosophy is, generally, to dispel that illusion; specifically, to expose as such the various pieces of nonsense that have sheltered under it; and finally, to still the ambition that leads to the production of such nonsense.

II

That outline, as I remarked, is very simple. The first, by no means negligible but still tractable aspect of the difficulty Wittgenstein's book presents is to fill in the outline, locating and interrelating the book's various detailed discussions. But in calling the outline 'disturbingly' simple I had in mind a subsequent and less tractable difficulty. Suppose the hard work done, the system filled out, every detail located. Now what is one to do with it?

Here is one line of response. The system begins with an account of what kind of facts there are, or of what it is for anything to be so. From this there immediately follows an account of what kind of reports there are, of what it is to say that anything is so. From this it follows in turn that some of the things we are moved to advance—such as, for instance, that one proposition entails another—are not genuinely reports: because of what it is for anything to be so, and hence of what it is to say or think that anything is so, there is no fact on whose obtaining such a seeming-claim could report; in view of what kinds of fact there are, there is no such fact; because of what a report essentially is, there is no such report. But now at this point we first encounter the question: what of the premises of these inferences? About the seeming-claim that P entails Q we remarked that it does not present logical space as filled out this way rather than that, but concerns itself with the geometry of the space. Just the same must hold of the premises from which we reached that conclusion. That anything that is so consists finally in the obtaining of a certain selection of elementary facts is not something which consists finally in the obtaining of a certain selection of elementary facts. In seemingly-reporting that any report will present one of various selections of elementary facts, rather than any other, as obtaining we are not issuing such a report. Thus, in view of what a report is, there is no such report. And because of what kinds of facts there are, there is no such fact as there being just these kinds of facts.

From this realization the response we have been considering splits into two.

1 The subsequent development of the first branch is brief and apparently straightforward. It argues as follows. Since the system itself implies that, in advancing it, one does not say what is so, no one advancing the system could say what is so. Presuming that the point of any system is to say what is so, this first development concludes that the system must be rejected.[2]

2 Developments of the second branch are both more complex and more various, but they have in common the aim of distinguishing between the roles of the statements that constitute the system and those on which it comments. The questions which then immediately arise are where, and how, this dividing line is to be drawn. It is enough at this stage to limit our attention to two extremes among the possible answers to these questions.

2a One answer, so one development of this second branch, employs a notion of *factual* discourse. It holds (i) that the thoughts and statements the system concerns are those belonging to factual discourse; (ii) that the system itself is not advanced as a contribution to such discourse; (iii) that what it is for a thought or statement to be 'factual' is defined by the system. It thus provides an intelligible account of the significance of the system, but one that disables its critical thrust. All that remains of that, on this account, is that there is no factual description or explanation of the nature, structure, conditions or purposes of factual discourse. But

that, if it is not objectionable, is empty. It would be objectionable if it ruled out substantive empirical investigation—by the human sciences hard and soft—of the character and conditions of actual thought. If it does not rule that out, the critical claim reduces to the tautology that no description or explanation of factual discourse can be both necessary and contingent. The upshot of this first answer, then, is to preserve the system at the cost of its interest.[3]

2b The answer at the opposite extreme aims to reverse this, sacrificing the system while retaining its interest. It countenances no division *within* discourse, so its separation of the system from what it concerns is inevitably a denial that the system amounts to a form of discourse in any sense. Even so, the presentation of the system has a point. We grasp that point just in recognizing that the system—and any system like this one except perhaps that its indulgence of the ambition to describe or explain the essence of thought is less self-conscious and less knowing— cannot amount to a form of discourse, and so cannot itself be thought.[4]

If we are to be faithful to Wittgenstein's own concluding description of how his book can be helpful, then we will have to find a way of accepting something from this last account. But it seems plain that, coming where it does, it comes too late. That is to say that from the point of divergence noted above, the first, uncompromising rejection of the system is more honest. How the last account fails to be completely honest becomes obvious—if it is not already so—when we ask what could be meant there by describing Wittgenstein's presentation of his system as 'knowing', or how the point we grasp from its presentation extends to 'any system like' his. Knowing *what?* Alike in what respect? Evidently, the answer in each case is to be drawn from the system itself, or from what was presented as the system up to the point of realization that the system condemns itself. The subsequent denial that the system amounts to a form of discourse is in that way shown still to rely on the system's own account of what discourse is. That is again a kind of double-think.[5]

There are labels in Wittgenstein—the labels 'say' and 'show'—that might be (and have been) drawn over this instance of double-thinking to give it a superficial respectability. The system (the newly so-dressed story would run) does not and cannot *say* that by reason of which it can say nothing. Rather, the remarks that constitute the system impotently gesture towards what is *shown*— shown, in the first instance, by ordinary thoughts and sayings which lack any higher pretensions, and shown again by the inevitable shortfalls of remarks which attempt to describe what the first achieve.[6] But the cover these labels provide here is transparently thin. Showing, as it figures in this story, is patently a matter of showing *that something is so.* So long as that is the case, 'show' will serve only as an alternative to 'say' when, without it, we would openly and obviously contradict ourselves. Aside from that in itself ineffective change of

word, we are still maintaining something of the general pattern: because of what it is for anything to be so, there is no such fact as that…; because of what it is to say anything, there is no such statement as the statement that…But nothing of that shape can be maintained.

This suggests an important corollary regarding the notion of nonsense, and hence for the idea that it is characteristic of philosophy to lapse into nonsense. Taken straight, as it were, nonsense is simply, and open-endedly, a failure to make sense. When, however, there is in play some specialized or theoretically developed conception of what it is to make sense, it is natural to parse 'nonsense' as non-*sense,* and so to mean (or to seek to mean) by it, determinately, a failure to achieve whatever on that specialized conception counts as making sense. It is essential to what I called a fully honest acceptance that the system itself is nonsense that, in this acceptance, 'nonsense' must be taken straight, and cannot be understood in the second of these ways: it cannot be understood to acknowledge that the system fails to meet specific standards of meaningfulness laid down by the system itself. That, again, would be double-think. And of course the same must hold, though less convolutedly, of any other-directed accusation of nonsense that encounter with the system leads one to issue. If it is to be fully honest, such an accusation of nonsense cannot mean anything of the kind: failure to meet such-and-such specific standard for meaningfulness. This is not to deny that we may be led by the system rightly to issue such an accusation. There are various intelligible models for this. For instance, a piece of nonsense appropriately displayed may well serve as an object of comparison, and lead us to recognize as similarly nonsensical something we previously thought we understood. But what does have to be given up is the notion that accusations of this kind are theoretically informed and unified.[7]

We have been considering difficulties that face variants of the second general way of moving past the realization that the system fails by its own lights to state what is the case, namely by dividing in some way between what the system conveys and what it systematizes. Those difficulties might lead us to reconsider the first broad alternative, taking that realization to amount to the crucial step in a kind of *reductio*.[8] Despite its apparent simplicity, there are again different ways of filling out this idea.

A genuine argument by *reductio* establishes a positive result. For instance, a renowned Pythagorean argument, by deriving a contradiction from the hypothesis that there is some rational number which when multiplied by itself yields 2, establishes the clear and significant result that there is no rational square-root of 2. The line of thought we are now considering, though reasonably called a kind of *reductio,* is not exactly of that kind. It does not purport to show that some hypothesis implies its own falsehood, and thereby to establish the negation of that hypothesis. Instead, the core of the argument is that Wittgenstein's system, adopted as hypothesis, implies its own meaninglessness. To show this is not to establish the negation of the hypothesis, or the falsehood of the system, since something meaningless has no significant negation, and can

no more be false than true. Instead, what the argument shows is that the hypothesized system fails to be true. But what kind of result is that?

The question again points to a tempting kind of double-think. It is tempting to hold, that is, that it is what the system *says* that is meaningless; or else, that it is what the system *would* say, if it said anything, that is meaningless. The second of these is only less obviously incoherent than the first. If the system is meaningless there is nothing that it says; and if there were something it would say, then *that* could not be meaningless. What makes this particular bit of double-thinking tempting despite the obviousness of these points is that without it our effort in exploring the system brings too slight a reward: without it, that is, all we seem entitled to conclude is that a certain series of words fails to be true.[9] Whilst that may be a clear result, it is clearly not much of a result. Perhaps this result would be made to seem less meagre if it could be shown that there was something special about that particular series of words. More specifically, suppose we could establish the following: that if there is a successful theory of such-and-such a kind, then that theory will take the form…(where the dots are to be filled by a specification of that series of words). In that case our result would become the more significant one, that there is no successful theory of that kind. This points to an abstract possibility, but it is hardly promising. It is far from obvious, for instance, how in any interesting case the various parts of an argument like this could be cotenable: how the theory's claim to be the best of its kind could fail to be undermined by its necessarily failing to be true.

III

We have found no way of proceeding beyond what I called the point of realization (the self-application of the system's strictures) that holds out any real prospect of our being able to make something of the book—or at any rate, of our being able to do so without lapsing into just the kind of double-thinking that the book seems keen to expose. This strongly suggests that something went wrong at an earlier stage. But what? All that occurred to that point, or rather all that we imagined occurring, was the careful and detailed setting out of the system and the acknowledgement of its immediate consequences. If there was any mistake in that, it is hard to see what else it could have been apart from our treating what Wittgenstein offers us *as* a philosophical system. But now is there any other option? Here it is useful to quote a passage I have already mentioned.

> My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has climbed through them, on them, over them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.)
> (*TLP* 6.54)

Two aspects of what Wittgenstein says here are immediately relevant to our puzzle. First, Wittgenstein speaks of a reader who has been helped by the book in the way he intends as one who understands *him,* not one who understands his propositions.[10] In this way he carefully avoids offering any ground for an accusation of double-think. It is perfectly intelligible that the utterance of nonsense may serve in some context to convey a point which the utterance itself does not express, and in such a case to appreciate that point will be to understand the utterer, though not his utterance. Second, Wittgenstein describes here the way an understanding reader will be helped, not by his *system,* but by his *propositions* —plural. This suggests that the difficulties we have found in providing room for the intellectual efficacy of the book might be evaded by a shift of perspective towards a more piecemeal approach.[11] So far we have imagined that as readers and interpreters we must first get hold of the whole system, with all its parts in rational interconnection, and only then raise questions about its purpose and status. The problems we have encountered in answering those questions are a direct consequence of this approach, which concedes too much to our initial understanding of the system for us later to repudiate that understanding with full honesty. If what we are finally to recognize is correct—if Wittgenstein's propositions are really nonsensical—then it cannot be required that we should, en route to that recognition, understand them. What we should rather expect is that, at various points as we work through the book, and in various ways, the seeming-claims that seemingly-constitute the 'system' will frustrate our every effort to find in them a stable sense consistent with their apparent intent: they will, as Goldfarb expresses it, 'fall apart' in our hands as we try to work with them (1997: 66 and 71). They will be nonsense, not because of what they say, *a fortiori* not because of what they claim sense to be, but just because we cannot work with them in the way we imagined.

To adopt this more piecemeal approach is not to treat each piece of nonsense in isolation; nor is it to abandon the responsibility to develop the interconnections Wittgenstein indicates between his remarks and to supply the argument which he omits. To avoid double-thinking we must insist that a verdict of nonsense can only be an acknowledgement of one's failure to interpret certain words, and not a comment on the interpretation reached. But this verdict—that the words mean *nothing*—is no more available at the beginning of the interpretive effort than any other. One interprets a meaningful remark in part by fixing its inferential relations, as well as other less readily systematized connections, with other remarks: what it follows from and what follows from it; which options it closes down and which it leaves open; how it works in context to resolve a possible ambiguity elsewhere in a train of thought; and so on indefinitely. This same process must be gone through, and the same kinds of connections traced, in the case of remarks that eventually defeat interpretation. This would not be feasible if those remarks were such as to strike us as mere gibberish, or were, like the rustlings of leaves or the remnants of chewing gum scattered across a London pavement, configurations without even the

physiognomy of meaning. So it is not at all incidental that we are presented with words, that these words occur in the pattern of sentences, and that those patterns license certain transforma tions but not others. Making those transformations and interweaving those patterns might be described as pursuing a line of thought which, because of where it leads (or because it leads nowhere), will then be judged not to have been a line of thought at all. But despite the suggestion of that slanted description, the pursuit described is not engaged in the kind of double-thinking we have been concerned to avoid. It is no more than an acknowledgement that what we have before us is, after all, a text.

Once that is granted it will be apparent that only pedantry would be served by constantly marking one's distance from, or lack of commitment to, the line of putative or quasi-thought being pursued. One *could say*: if '…' is the expression of a thought, then we should expect'—' also to be one; or, Wittgenstein writes '***'. But there is no serious reason to prefer such coy formulations to their less cluttered equivalents: if…then—; or, Wittgenstein holds that ***. Operating in the material mode will of course imply that, when the remarks explored lack significance, so will some of those by which they are explored. So what? We follow Berkeley tracing the lines of thought running through Locke's remarks on substance; following Berkeley doing this involves constantly assessing whether Berkeley makes the best sense that is to be made of Locke's words; only if we agree that he has done so will we countenance Berkeley's conclusion, that Locke's words are 'without a meaning in 'em'. This is so much a part of the common experience of philosophy that to find an impassable paradox in it would be worse than absurd. Do we imagine ourselves purer than the Bishop? (Wittgenstein perhaps did; but then it was in his nature to distort integrity into a vice.)

IV

The double-thinking approach—which pretended to concede the meaninglessness of Wittgenstein's words while grasping what they 'show' to be the case—did at least promise to find a point for all this nonsense. The piecemeal alternative just sketched can avoid what is wrong with that, but can hardly be recommended over it unless it too can find some point—perhaps not in Wittgenstein's words, but certainly in his having written them. But if there is nothing but nonsense in the nonsense, nothing it shows to be so, no kind of quasi-thought whose quasitruth it leads us to acknowledge, what could the point be?

One could make it intrinsic to a piecemeal approach to refuse this question, holding that it demands in response a generalization that we could not endorse without falling again into the double-thinking the approach rejects. But I think it would be wrong to refuse the question in that way. In the first place, it is clear that there is something *unitary* in the way the book sets out to expose philosophical error and illusion, and something right in the idea that it promises a single solution to philosophical problems. Those who have contrasted Wittgenstein's early and later thought in this respect cannot be charged with

groundless invention: they have the plain meaning of Wittgenstein's Preface (especially its second paragraph) on their side. In the second place, it would be a mistake to assume that the only generalization we could offer would begin in some such fashion as, 'Any claim that attempts to say that…' Nonsense generalized is still nonsense, of course. But a remark *about* a piece of nonsense, about its motivation and intended role, can be straightforwardly significant, and nothing we have said rules out there being illuminating generalizations from such remarks.

The question of the point of all this nonsense is thus a reasonable one. And while a response to it should properly arise from, and certainly could only be justified by reference to, the various results of the piecemeal exploration of the text, we might as a preliminary shortcut ask: What would we be left with if the double-thinking approach to which this nonsense constantly tempts us were in fact the only possible approach? What species of philosophy would it be that left us maintaining such as the following:

> that empirical reality is limited by the totality of objects;
>
> that however the world is its being that way consists in those objects' being configured in one of the ways possible for them;
>
> that all genuine thought is contingent and consists in representing objects as configured in one or another of those ways;
>
> that we can nonetheless somehow appreciate, or be shown that, these things are so;
>
> that our appreciating or being shown such things is not in the proper sense knowledge, and that in attempting to voice what we thus appreciate or are shown we are attempting the impossible, to say what is ineffable;
>
> that what we thus attempt, impossibly, to say concerns not the layout of reality but its essential form;
>
> that the essential form of reality is also the essential form of thought; that it is only in virtue of this inexpressible essential commonality of form between thought and reality that we can describe reality;
>
> that this is so is in turn something that we can appreciate by, or are shown in, reflection on the nature of thought; that the proper response to this reflection is to acknowledge and respect the constraints on thought imposed by its essential commonality of form with reality, to abandon the confusions that inevitably result from the attempt to overstep these constraints in describing their source, and to say only what can, non-philosophically, be said?

Now *what kind* of a philosophical vision is that?

It is, of course, a vision according to which there is *something* that cannot be said. But that really isn't much of an answer. The purpose of the question was to make clear to ourselves what kind of philosophical vision we recognize to be untenable in rejecting the double-thinking required to sustain it. The answer just

offered, while true, is next to useless for that purpose. Suggesting it as the key to a reading of Wittgenstein's text would be still weaker than offering, as a full account of what we appreciate in reading some such richly drawn nightmare as *Erewhon,* the take-home message that utopias are impossible. That only just makes for a passing mark in high-school, but at least it does say more than that there is *something* we recognize to be impossible. Perhaps it is true that to say anything very much more helpful we would need to begin to attend to some of the detail of Butler's text in a way that, for the present exercise, we are not attending to the detail of Wittgenstein's. But even within present constraints we should at least be able to do as well as that high-school answer.

In the vision just sketched the possibility of thought is grounded in, and its limits determined by, something that transcends those limits and therefore cannot itself be thought. The vision is thus of a transcendental philosophy. Of what nature is this grounding, this unitary source of the possibility and limits of thought? The vision settles this by the manner in which it holds that source to be recognized through appreciation of internal features of thought itself. The limits of the thinkable world are set by its requirement to be *thinkable*.[12] More particularly, the vision has it that the world is limited by its requirement to be thinkable in its totality and as a totality. The method of the vision's working out identifies the source of the world's limits with the ground of its unity, and each of these with the requirement to satisfy the mind's need to sustain its conception of itself as the unitary focus of everything that can be thought. The vision is therefore a vision of transcendental idealism. So what we come to recognize in rejecting the double-thinking inherent in our every attempt to sustain the vision, to explore the grounding it demands, is the untenability of transcendental idealism. As a take-home message this is, of course, no more an adequate substitute for engagement with the detail of Wittgenstein's text than is the minimally passing comment mentioned above about the message of Butler's. Unlike the key to interpretation just canvassed, however, it does at least tell us something of what the book is about.

But now isn't that exactly the problem with it? Can one move even this far beyond what 'resolute austerity' allows without falling back once again into double-thinking, double-thinking that we are shown that transcendental idealism is false yet not shown anything? No, and yes, respectively. The dialectic above having been run through, there is really no need to run through it again. If Wittgenstein's book is successful it will show us—show us, in an unproblematic sense of demonstrating in practice for us—that transcendental idealism is untenable. It will show us that by bringing us to appreciate and to reject the double-thinking involved in holding that, while transcendental idealism cannot be formulated within the limits it itself imposes, we are none the less shown by by what is so formulable, and by the nonsense produced in the effort to say what is so shown, that transcendental idealism is true.

For the book to be successful in this end we of course have to know what transcendental idealism is. But this need not and should not be equated with

understanding what transcendental idealism says. Knowing what transcendental idealism is is perfectly and straightforwardly compatible with holding that there is no intelligible thought that its advocates have managed to formulate. Knowing what the position is, to put it very blandly, is a matter of being able to recognize the character of a brand of philosophical theorizing, the pressures and explanatory demands that lead to it, the kind of ambition that makes one responsive to those pressures. We do not have to count it an intelligible theory to count it an intelligible phenomenon. So there need be no double-thinking at all in knowing what transcendental idealism is. It is a state of understanding manifest in various recognitional and other abilities. As with any complex state of understanding, there would no point in trying to draw up a definite list of the abilities that would manifest it. But were one to try, then one that should certainly be on the list is the ability to recognize transcendental idealism as at the centre of Wittgenstein's concerns in the *Tractatus*.

Notes

1 Since the following outline is intentionally uncontroversial, I will not litter the exposition with textual references.

2 This is the reaction Geach had in mind when speaking of 'Ludwig's self-mate' (Geach 1977:54).

3 This response is intended to represent the 'traditional' interpretation spoken of by Diamond, Conant, Kremer and others. Though the 'traditional' interpretation is, in my view, largely a construction of its critics, there are appeals to the notion of 'factual' discourse in e.g. Pears (1986) and Kenny (1973) that invite this summary.

4 Very partially and roughly this represents a 'new-Wittgensteinian' response, as exemplified in Diamond (1991), Conant (2000) and Kremer (2001).

5 In recent literature the charge of double-thinking is most commonly made *by* the 'new-Wittgensteinian' interpretation (2b in the above scheme) *against* the 'traditional' reading (2a). One important and evidently correct point made by the 'traditional' counter-attack (e.g. Hacker 2000, §3) is that 'new-Wittgensteinians', just as much as their rivals, need an account of how Wittgenstein's words are to be effective in bringing about *any* realization. (Sullivan (2002, §4) criticizes Kremer (2001) on this ground.)

6 It would of course be a mistake to equate this second 'showing'—something supposed to be effected by the failure of philosophical discourse—with the first— something supposed to be effected in the success of non-philosophical discourse. Conant (2000) has been greatly concerned to combat such a mistake; I do not believe the mistake to be as widespread as he does—see e.g. Hacker's criticism of Black on this issue, at (1986:25) and again at (2000:356).

7 I do not believe it follows from this that the understanding borne by 'nonsense', when it is said that the system itself is nonsense, is *untouched by* one's encounter with the system, nor therefore that it would be right to insist that the system may be counted nonsense only on a 'pre-theoretical' understanding. (Indeed, I doubt whether, 'pre-theoretically', the notion of nonsense is committed enough to do any

interesting work.) Nonsense is a failure to make any kind of sense, and the most relevant apparent ways of making sense will be suggested by—i.e. will emerge in one's efforts to make sense of—the system itself.

8   Although I have located the 'new-Wittgensteinian' interpretation on the second branch, some of its advocates are also drawn to compare Wittgenstein's strategy to an argument by *reductio;* see e.g. Kremer (2001, §VIII).

9   Sullivan (2002, note 31) makes this point in criticizing certain formulations in Conant (1989, 1992 and 2000).

  10 Diamond and Conant have stressed this point; it had also clearly been recognized by some 'traditionalists' (e.g. Hacker 1986: 26).

11   This step is recommended, and the need for it compellingly argued, by Goldfarb (1997: 70–1).

12   As Anscombe made the point, in a delightful translation of *TLP* 5.61: an *impossible* thought is an impossible *thought.*

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3
ON READING THE *TRACTATUS* RESOLUTELY
Reply to Meredith Williams and Peter Sullivan

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1.
Introductory remarks

Wittgenstein gives voice to an aspiration that is central to his later philosophy, well before he becomes later Wittgenstein, when he writes in §4.112 of the *Tractatus* that philosophy is not a matter of putting forward a doctrine or a theory, but consists rather in the practice of an activity—an activity he goes on to characterize as one of elucidation or clarification—an activity which he says does not result in *philosophische Sätze,* in propositions of philosophy, but rather in *das Klarwerden von Sätzen,* in our attaining clarity in our relation to the sentences of our language that we call upon to express our thoughts.[1] To say that early Wittgenstein already aspired to such a conception of philosophy is not to gainsay that to *aspire* to practice philosophy in such a manner and to *succeed* in doing so are not the same thing. It is therefore not to deny that, by Wittgenstein's later lights, the *Tractatus* is to be judged a work that is marked by forms of failure tied to its having failed fully to live up to such an aspiration. But if it is thus to be judged, then it is to some degree a failure even by Wittgenstein's own earlier lights. This means that if one wants to understand the fundamental turn in Wittgenstein's thinking as he moves from his earlier to his later philosophy, and why it is that he wanted the *Tractatus* to be published and read together with *Philosophical Investigations,* one needs to understand what sort of failure this is —and that requires coming to terms with the *Tractatus*'s own understanding of what sort of work it was trying to be. We think that readers of the *Tractatus*—be they admirers or detractors of Wittgenstein—have, on the whole, failed to do this.

In our own efforts to try to do this, we have been led to a way of reading the *Tractatus* that has come to be known as 'resolute'.[2] Most criticisms of resolute readings of the *Tractatus* are meant to show that, despite the attractions of such readings, the standard sort of reading is preferable. This has led to a controversy in which both critics and fans of such a resolute way of reading the book have tended in their attacks and defenses to speak of '*the* resolute reading'.[3] Though the word 'resolute' is not a term either of us originally employed to

characterize our manner of reading the *Tractatus,* we are happy to accept it as aptly encapsulating certain general features of our reading. But it is important to see that the features of a reading that make it appropriate for it to be thus characterized are of quite a general nature, sufficiently so as to leave a great many questions about just how the *Tractatus* ought to be read in detail unanswered. There is no reason why there should not be a variety of resolute readings. Indeed, as more and more scholars of Wittgenstein's work come to find themselves dissatisfied with the standard sort of reading, and especially now that some of them are also drawn to the possibility of a resolute alternative—and as our own continuing attempts, partly prompted by this recent explosion of work on the *Tractatus,* to think through our earlier suggestions about how to read the book have led us to reformulate and sometimes rethink some of the details of our own reading–it is becoming evident not only that a variety of resolute readings is possible, but that *Tractatus* scholarship is entering a stage in which that possibility is actual.[4]

So a resolute reading is better thought of as a *program* for reading the book, and not only for the reason just given (namely, that a variety of such readings is possible) but also because conformity to the basic features of such a reading leaves undetermined exactly how a great deal of the book works in detail. To be a resolute reader is to be committed at most to a certain programmatic conception of the lines along which those details are to be worked out, but it does not deliver a general recipe for reading the book—a recipe that one could apply to the various parts of the book in anything like a straightforward or mechanical way.[5] And we do not apologize for this. For we think that this is just how it should be. There should be no substitute for the hard task of working through the book on one's own. A resolute reading does not aim to provide a skeleton key for unlocking the secrets of the book in a manner that would transform the ladder into an elevator; so that one just has to push a button (say, one labeled 'austere nonsense') and one will immediately be caused to ascend to Tractarian heights, without ever having to do any ladder-climbing on one's own.

There are two interrelated general features that suffice to make a reading 'resolute', in the sense of that term that we are concerned with here. The first is that it does not take those propositions of the *Tractatus* about which Wittgenstein said, at §6.54, that they are to be recognized as 'nonsensical' to convey ineffable insights.[6] The second feature is a rejection of the idea that what such recognition requires on the part of a reader of the *Tractatus* is the application of a theory of meaning that has been advanced in the body of the work—a theory that specifies the conditions under which a sentence makes sense and the conditions under which it does not. (Notice: both of these features of a resolute reading say something about how the book ought *not* to be read, thereby still leaving much undetermined about how the book ought to be read.) Taken together, these features rule out two central interrelated features of the (standard) sort of reading, according to which the truths of the theory supposedly advanced in

the body of the book prescribing what can and cannot make sense are themselves supposed to be necessarily ineffable.

It is a corollary of the second of these features that a resolute reading is committed to rejecting the idea that the *Tractatus* holds that there are two logically distinct kinds of nonsense: the garden-variety kind (cases of which we are able to identify prior to our initiation into the teachings of the *Tractatus*) and a logically more sophisticated kind (the nonsensicality of which is due to their logically internally flawed character). Resolute readings are committed to rejecting not only various previously fashionable accounts of the details of Wittgenstein's putative theory of why the sentences of philosophers are afflicted with a special sort of nonsensicality, but also any subsequent account that attributes to the author of the *Tractatus* an indefeasible commitment to a theory of this sort. From the vantage of a resolute reader, it makes little difference whether the account given of the supposed theory be one that rests on an appeal to verifiability, bipolarity, logical syntax, or some other putative respect in which 'philosophical propositions' are to be identified as nonsensical because of having been put together in some special kind of logically or conceptually illegitimate manner. All such accounts will qualify equally as instances of an irresolute reading, if they are committed to ascribing to the *Tractatus* a theory which its author must endorse and rely upon (if he is to be able to prosecute his program of philosophical critique) and yet which he must also regard as nonsense (if he thinks through the commitments of his own theory).[7]

Many critics of resolute readings notice that resolute readers are committed to one or another of the corollaries of this second feature, without ever managing to get this second feature itself clearly into view. Such critics notice that resolute readers are committed to rejecting some particular putatively Tractarian account of what makes some sentences nonsensical (say, an account based on illegitimate syntactical combination), while assuming that a resolute reader must share with the proponent of a standard sort of reading the idea that the charge of nonsense leveled at the end of the *Tractatus* is to be underwritten by *some* theory—be it one that is advanced within the body of the work or one that is imported into the work from the outside. These critics thereby assume that resolute readers must want to substitute some alternative theoretical account of the grounds of sense for the particular one under criticism.[8] These critics then become understandably very puzzled about how a resolute reading can possibly be thought to be sustainable. For they assume that the discovery that there are no logically distinct kinds of nonsense is itself arrived at through the elaboration and application of a theory of sense that resolute readers are now committed to viewing as having somehow been successfully articulated by the author of the *Tractatus,* even though the propositions by means of which it is to have been articulated have been relegated to the status of mere nonsense. This then leads to the criticism that a resolute reading renders the propositions of the book too semantically impoverished to be able to articulate the theoretical conceptions about the nature of nonsense that resolute readers are committed to ascribing to the work.

Whatever one thinks of the project of trying to read the *Tractatus* resolutely—for there are a variety of grounds on which one might want to oppose such a reading[9]—it is important to come to see that the preceding sort of criticism misses the mark. A resolute reading does not take Wittgenstein's aim in the book to have been the communication of a theory of meaning, a theory of logic, or any other theory. The sort of resolute reading that we accept rather takes as central Wittgenstein's ideas about clarification as the aim of philosophy. Our understanding of this aim hangs together with 'resolution', in that we take clarification not to be something that the author of the *Tractatus* sought to achieve through the putting forward of effable or ineffable doctrines. In our replies to both Meredith Williams and Peter Sullivan below, we will attempt to bring out how we take the author of the *Tractatus* to have conceived clarification to be possible in the absence of a commitment to such doctrines.[10]

2.
Reply to Meredith Williams's defense of standard readings

Any comparison of the resolute and standard sorts of reading of the *Tractatus,* of the sort which Williams wishes to make, must show awareness of what the problems may be thought to be with *each* of the two types of reading, since it is hardly possible to convince anyone of the superiority of one sort of approach if one ignores or plays down the problems with that reading. Here it matters both that Williams's account of what is involved in a resolute reading of the *Tractatus* is inaccurate and that she does not seriously confront the problems inherent in the standard sorts of approach. We shall consider both of these points. We shall address some of the problems with the standard approach first. We shall take up some of Williams's criticisms of resolute readings in section 3.

The most fundamental problem with the standard approach to reading the book lies in its, on the one hand, wanting to take the content of the charge of nonsense to be underwritten by a theory that is advanced within the body of the book, and on the other hand, wanting to take the charge of nonsense to apply to the propositions that articulate that theory If the propositions articulating the theory which is to entitle us to conclude that certain other propositions are nonsense are themselves nonsense, then that would appear to undercut our entitlement to the conclusion. If we really come to see that the propositions that comprise the theory are *nonsense,* then are we not thereby also obliged to concede that those propositions fail to furnish us with adequate grounds for believing in the truth of the theory, or for that matter in anything else? This problem gives rise to the dilemma at the heart of standard approaches to the book: either (1) one must tell a story that waters down what it means to say of the propositions of the work that they are 'nonsense' or (2) one must accept the characterization of these propositions as nonsense at face value. If a proponent of the standard reading seizes the first horn of the dilemma, then he may well be able to appear to furnish himself with resources for allowing enough light into his story about what it is for

something to be nonsense so that it can now appear to be the case that someone can, after all, 'grasp' what is 'meant' by a nonsensical proposition. The only problem then is that much of what is originally advertised as original in the doctrines of the *Tractatus* (e.g. about the relation between the limits of thought and the limits of language) either turns out to be false (because it turns out we can, after all, think all kinds of things that cannot be said) or to be reinterpreted in a manner that renders those doctrines vacuous (because terms such as 'nonsense', 'showing', etc., turn out to be mere *fagons-de-parler* for designating ways in which perfectly intelligible—and therefore only 'strictly speaking' nonsensical—propositions can be employed to communicate apparently perfectly expressible truths). If a proponent of the standard reading firmly seizes the second horn of the dilemma, and tries to hold on to the thought that nonsense is nonsense, then she is faced with the problem that the lights will threaten to go out on her enterprise as she conceives it: the theory in question (that she takes it to be the central concern of the work to advance) will turn out not really to be intelligible, after all. Given the unattractive consequences that attend seizing either of the horns of this dilemma, perhaps it is not surprising that what we are most frequently offered, instead, is a sort of 'reading' of the book that hovers between the horns, wanting to take to heart the idea that certain things cannot be said, but also wanting to *tell* us what it is that cannot be said, and why, where the reasons why are themselves held to be unsayable.

Proponents of the standard sort of reading will sometimes acknowledge that their reading faces some such difficulty, but they will then transfer the blame to the author of the *Tractatus*. 'I am not denying that the *Tractatus* is an incoherent work,' they will say, 'but don't blame me, blame Wittgenstein! And, after all, he eventually came to see himself that it was a failed work. Does this not provide evidence that something like my reading must be right?' Williams introduces a new wrinkle to this line of defense by appealing to *Philosophical Investigations* §110 for support for a reading of the *Tractatus* that finds that work to exhibit a significant degree of tolerance for contradiction. She says that, in his later work, Wittgenstein identifies toleration of contradiction as indicating that one is in the grip of a picture. But the passage she cites does not say or imply anything about tolerance of contradiction.[11] Wittgenstein was a man of quite exceptionally high standards, throughout his life, when it came to carrying through a line of thought which might appear to run into difficulty; he was not at any point a willing tolerator of inconsistency or logical mess.[12] It might be suggested that the inconsistencies ascribed to Wittgenstein by those who give a standard reading of the *Tractatus* were ones of which he was not aware, because he was in the grip of a picture. But the inconsistencies and logical messes which we are going to describe below are not of a sort which it seems likely that early Wittgenstein would have been able to overlook simply in virtue of his being 'in the grip of a picture'.[13] If you are in the grip of a picture, you may indeed construe every case as fitting the picture, even when it may seem obviously not to do so, as in Wittgenstein's example, from 1939, of someone who is committed to the idea that everyone in Cambridge

has a telephone, and who construes absences of telephones as presences of invisible phones.[14] That sort of interpretation of everything as fitting one's picture can account for a number of features of Wittgenstein's early thought, such as his treatment of all inference as truth-functional. But the picture of inference as truth-functional would not, for example, have enabled him to construe the meaningless sentences of the *Tractatus* as standing in logical relations of a truth-functional character. If he had taken the book to provide logically structured argument and his sentences to stand in logical relations, his account of logic would have been in a sort of trouble that no 'picture' would have enabled him to gloss over. We do not wish to deny that later Wittgenstein did come to view the author of the *Tractatus* as in various ways in the grip of a philosophical picture. But we do wish to urge that anyone who is in too much of a hurry to rely on this bit of knowledge about later Wittgenstein in advancing a reading of his early book is bound to evade the real difficulties that lie in the path of coming to see what it was that early Wittgenstein took himself to be trying to do in the *Tractatus.*

To claim that Wittgenstein's own later view of the author of the *Tractatus* as in the grip of a picture cannot satisfactorily account for the sorts of confusion attributed to that book by Williams is, however, not to deny that a philosopher far less careful and acute than Wittgenstein might well be prey to a picture of a sort that would allow him to fall into just these sorts of confusion. Someone might picture 'the limits of logical thought' in quasi-geometric terms, imagining such limits on the model of the limits of a geographical territory (and therefore as a region of space that has an inside and an outside); so that just as there is something which is traversing the limit (and thus moving into the region which lies beyond the territory circumscribed by the limit), so, too, there must be something which counts as transgressing 'the limits of thought' (and thus thinking outside or beyond the region of thinking 'circumscribed' by the laws of logic).[15] But to be in the grip of that sort of a picture requires not merely glossing over but completely jettisoning many of the characteristic commitments of Wittgenstein's early thought.[16] The kind of incoherence to be found in Wittgenstein's early philosophy on the standard reading is therefore not really explicable by appeal to the idea that he was in the grip of a picture and saw everything in the terms provided by the picture. Such an appeal can seem to alleviate the sort of trouble the standard reading allows itself to discover the *Tractatus* in, only if one, in effect, ceases to take seriously the thought that *early* Wittgenstein was, after all, early *Wittgenstein.*

According to Williams's brief summary of the standard reading, Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* 'tolerates paradox', in particular, by putting forward in the book a theory of meaning that 'undercuts the meaningfulness of the sentences used to state that theory'. He uses, she says 'the doctrine of showing to ameliorate its irrationality'. In that statement and in Williams's earlier summary of the standard sort of reading, there is a failure to distinguish between, on the one hand, the *showing* which is spoken of in the *Tractatus* (where senseful propositions,

tautologies and contradictions are said to show things, but nonsensical propositions are not spoken of as showing anything) and, on the other, the supposed conveying of ineffable insights by the propositions of the *Tractatus* itself. We shall turn below to the question what a resolute reading can make of 'saying versus showing'. But what *any* satisfactory reading must do is not run together the *showing* done by senseful propositions, tautologies and contradictions with the 'illuminating' supposedly done by the propositions of the *Tractatus* itself.[17] If a reader of the *Tractatus* believes that *showing,* in the sense in which that term (i.e. the term *zeigen*) occurs in the *Tractatus,* is relevant to the question how sentences taken to be neither senseful nor tautologies nor contradictions can illuminate anything, that needs to be explained; but Williams does not seem to see that there is a problem here. There are versions of the standard reading that do not blur the distinction between *showing,* as that term is applied to senseful propositions, tautologies and contradictions, and the supposed conveying of illumination about things which cannot be said by the propositions of the *Tractatus.* Any hope of attaining clarity concerning the difficulties confronted by various versions of the standard reading requires, at a minimum, that no assumption be made that 'the doctrine of showing' somehow carries with it an account of how the propositions of the *Tractatus* are able to do what they are supposed to—an account of what it is for a book of propositions which do not say anything to communicate something nevertheless. There is no obvious connection between what senseful, tautologous and contradictory propositions do (when they *show* what they do) and anything that those propositions that we are eventually to recognize as nonsensical can be said to do (the *Tractatus* says they *elucidate*)—that is, there is no obvious connection of the sort that Williams implies is readily available.[18]

She wants to describe resolute readers as accepting a thesis about the *Tractatus* that it is consistent but point-missing, while standard readings are willing to accept a degree of paradox in the way in which the book is supposed to work—a degree of paradox that makes it a more interesting book. They are willing to accept that there is this irremediable paradox involved in the capacity of the book to communicate anything—a capacity supposedly tied to the doctrine of showing—because it supposedly makes better sense of the book as a whole. But her description, involving as it does an unexplained reference to work supposedly done by the 'doctrine of showing', is not so much a description of a book with paradox at its core as it is a description of a book with a big *gap* at its center—a gap which cannot be papered over or otherwise concealed by invoking 'the doctrine of showing'. For what Wittgenstein says about *showing* in the *Tractatus* has no obvious or direct application to those propositions of his book that are not senseful, tautologous, or contradictory If the remarks in the book that speak of 'showing' are supposed indirectly to account for the communicative power of the propositions of the book that are to be recognized as nonsensical (but which do not show anything in the sense in which Wittgenstein speaks of 'showing'), how they do it is, for all Williams says, a total mystery.[19]

Suppose, however, we consider, for a moment, standard readings of the *Tractatus* that do not blur the issues here in the way Williams blurs them. There is still a question, for any version of the standard reading, about the way in which Wittgenstein thought his sentences worked—the way in which they were supposed to convey the insights that (according to this sort of reading) he intended them to convey. If one has a sentence S, which is meaningless and which is supposed (alone or together with other meaningless sentences) to convey some particular insight I, there presumably has to be some connection between the words actually used in S (and the other meaningless sentences) and its being I, and not some other insight, that is supposed to be conveyed. If Wittgenstein's supposed theory of meaning disallows the meaningfulness of S, is there some further view that can be ascribed to him which would make it at least plausible that he took sentences that were not meaningful to be capable of conveying insights in a way that depended on what the sentences themselves *were?* But any kind of system for reading such sentences (or in some other way extracting insights from them) would appear to explain in what way they were meaningful, and thus would not be consistent with regarding them as meaningless.[20] If Wittgenstein is supposed to have thought that specific sentences of the *Tractatus* conveyed specific insights, in such a way that different people should in principle be able to grasp the same insight from any specific insight-conveying sentence, but is supposed not to have had any idea at all about how this conveying of insights worked, what sort of paradox would that be? It would simply be a case of failure to think about a very obvious problem. Alternatively, if Wittgenstein is supposed to have had some idea (even a rough and general sort of idea) about how the sentences were to be read as conveying specific insights, dependent on the structure and wording of the sentences, such an idea would appear to be straightforwardly inconsistent with views which even standard readings ascribe to the *Tractatus.* If this straightforward inconsistency is in no way addressed, then what we have is not an interpretation which makes his views 'paradoxical' but one which makes them just plain incoherent. But, if it is to be addressed, it is by no means clear how this might be done; it is not clear that there is any available account that would not ascribe to Wittgenstein views of a sort that he was himself concerned to reject.

Williams, along with many other proponents of the standard sort of reading, is not averse to ascribing a considerable degree of inconsistency to Wittgenstein; but one ought to be averse to making the book out to involve plain failure to deal with such an obvious problem as how meaningless sentences might convey specific insights. If specific sentences are not in some way tied down to specific insights then, in truth, there is no such thing as the standard reading. For such a reading requires not just that there be a right way to grasp the *Tractatus* propositions and to connect them with insights, despite their meaninglessness, it requires also that *Wittgenstein* took there to be a right way to grasp his propositions and connect them with insights, despite their meaninglessness.[21] In some of our papers on the *Tractatus* we have canvassed a number of proposals

previous commentators have put forward about how to connect specific meaningless propositions with specific insights and discussed the difficulties—both exegetical and philosophical—that such proposals tend to run into. Williams manages to avoid such difficulties altogether by leaving it utterly vague how, according to her take on the *Tractatus,* particular bits of nonsense are to be correlated with and convey particular insights. But, without some proposal in place for how to get around this problem, it hard to see how one can go about assessing the relative merits of the 'reading' on offer.

There are other deep problems with the standard readings that go unmentioned by Williams. It would take us well beyond the appropriate scope of this reply to go into all of them. We will conclude this part of the paper by simply mentioning some further problems and reminding the reader of some of the parts of Wittgenstein's text that Williams does not discuss (but that should matter) in assessing the relative merits of resolute readings.

A first such problem is that the theory of meaning that the book is taken to express must have consequences not only for the topic of the meaningfulness of the sentences that are used to argue for and express the theory, but also for a great many other of the tightly intertwined topics of which the book treats. If we suppose, with the standard sort of reading, that the book does put forward such a theory, the theory would have consequences not just for what can be *said* but also for what can be *thought,*[22] for what can be *grasped* or *understood,*[23] for what can be *conveyed,* etc. If a consequence of the supposed theory is that the sentences of the book are nonsensical, a further consequence would appear to be that anything that the sentences might at first be taken to convey is not graspable, including the supposed theory of meaning. To take Wittgenstein to have intended his book to convey certain insights, including a theory with the supposed consequence that the insights in question cannot be grasped (that there is no such thing as *thinking* them), is not to describe Wittgenstein as willing to put up with 'paradox'; it is to leave yet another big gap in the center of one's reading. If the 'doctrine of showing' is supposed to fill the gap, this needs to be explained. The interpretation would need to spell out how one might get from the 'showing' done by senseful propositions to the graspability of the supposed insights conveyed by the nonsensical sentences of the book. Without such an account, it will not be clear whether a reading of Wittgenstein with any plausibility can be given along the lines that Williams suggests. Some proponents of the standard sort of interpretation have struggled valiantly with this sort of problem, but their struggles tend to run into characteristic and unsatisfying sorts of dead-end (which we and other resolute readers have documented and discussed at considerable length elsewhere). Williams offers no indication of how she would address the problems that such accounts face. But absent some concrete suggestions about how to make the *Tractatus's* treatments of topics such as saying, thinking, understanding, etc., hang together as a coherent whole, there must remain some question as to whether the proffered interpretation is to be regarded as being as clearly superior as she suggests it is.

A second such problem, briefly touched on above, concerns the supposed theory of logic to which Wittgenstein is committed on standard readings. It is difficult to see how to square the claim that the propositions of the book are nonsense with the claim that those propositions are able to provide logically structured argumentation. Their providing such arguments is taken by standard readings to be an essential element in the way in which the book is meant to enable readers to reach the insights that it supposedly conveys. The standard reading depends, in its various versions, either on not confronting the problems here (this present one and the others to which the reading leads[24]) but stopping short wherever they crop up, or on ascribing to Wittgenstein a quite uncharacteristic failure to take seriously the problems to which his views would plainly lead on the standard reading, or on an un-worked out idea about how an appeal to 'showing' contains some sort of solution to these problems, and frequently on some combination of these strategies. One therefore does not have to accept some expository thesis of 'strong consistency', as Williams suggests, in order to arrive at the view that standard readings are deeply problematic. There have to be limits, on any reasonable understanding of what is involved in exposition, on how logically problematic you can make a text by Wittgenstein out to be, where the problematic character in question would not have been hard for him to see, supposing him to have accepted the view ascribed to him. Standard readings in general understate or ignore the problems here.

The following bears repeating: taking Wittgenstein to have been in the grip of a picture, in the way Williams does, provides no account at all of why he might have been willing to tolerate the various sorts of problems mentioned above. They arise for anyone who accepts precisely the picture that is ascribed to Wittgenstein by the standard reading. These problems are salient, given that reading; they are not made invisible or tolerable through an acceptance of the picture of language that that reading ascribes to him. Critics of resolute readings that represent the state of play in *Tractatus* scholarship, as Williams does, as one in which a perfectly viable reading of that work has long been available and no reasons have yet to surface for not resting content with the previously prevailing *status quo*—critics, that is, who, in the light of the problems with standard readings that have been raised by resolute readers, are unwilling to reopen the question of their viability far enough at least to say *something* about how these problems are to be addressed—ask us, in effect, to assess the merits of a resolute approach to the book without ever really entering into the interpretative issues that give rise in the first place to the impulse to see if one might not be able to come up with a way of reading the book that makes these problems disappear. Such a blinkered approach to assessing the relative merits of alternative ways of reading the book is bound to generate more heat than light.

In concluding this part of the paper, it is worth noting that, in our above discussion, in stating these problems, we have entirely left to one side the many problems that arise if one goes on to take into account those portions of the text of the *Tractatus* that standard readings tend to underplay or brush entirely to one

side. There are various sorts of passage that matter here, of which the following two are perhaps the least awkward to adduce without any further interpretative stage-setting: first, there are those passages in the text that would appear to repudiate precisely the view of nonsense on which the standard reading depends (most notably perhaps, §§5.473–5.4733); second, there are those moments where the author's way of characterizing his sentences and what a reader is to do with them would appear to conflict with the standard sort of reading (most notably perhaps, in the Preface and the concluding sections). One obvious instance of this sort is the remark in the Preface that 'what lies on the other side of the limit will be *simply* nonsense' (our emphasis). A more neglected, but equally striking instance of this sort is the author's speaking, in §6.54, of his propositions as something we are meant to *overcome*. This seems to suggest, at any rate, that the road to 'paradox' and incoherence, which we take when we refuse to overcome the propositions but try instead to hold on to them as somehow managing to communicate ineffable insights, is not the road that Wittgenstein envisaged as the one the reader is to take if she is finally to arrive at the point (that forms the opening topic of §6.54) at which she understands the author of the book by having come to recognize his sentences as nonsensical.

There are numerous other sorts of passage in the text (that we and other resolute readers have highlighted in our writings) that put pressure on a standard sort of construal of the work as a whole. Someone with imagination and sympathy for the standard sort of approach may well be able to find ways to come to its aid and make something of these passages, giving reasons why Wittgenstein's text is worded in just the ways it ought to be at these junctures. We invite those with such sympathies to help push the debate forward by giving such reasons. And we will continue to try to make the best overall sense we can of those passages in the text that most confound us. Only through a combined effort of this sort will it be possible to achieve a fair assessment of the relative merits of these and other approaches to the text.

3.
Reply to Meredith Williams's criticisms of resolute readings

We turn now to a discussion of some of Williams's central criticisms of resolute readings, and, in particular, to some of the inaccuracies in her remarks about resolute readings in general and about Diamond's views in particular. We will discuss these under four headings: (1) *the 'you, too' objection,* (2) *the covert theory of nonsense objection,* (3) *the 'what about showing?' objection,* and (4) *the methodological objection.*[25] (We will mostly defer discussion of the 'strong continuity thesis' that Williams ascribes to us until section 5.) We are grateful to Williams for affording us this opportunity to clear up certain misunderstandings of our views, especially as there is every reason to think that these misunderstandings are not yet as uncommon as we would like to see them become.

The 'you, too' objection

Williams frequently employs what we will call *the 'you, too' argument.* It is a central argument of hers and depends on a pervasive misunderstanding of what is involved in a resolute view of nonsense. The argument goes as follows: resolute readings, although they claim to avoid the kind of paradox which standard readings find in the *Tractatus,* are in fact no less committed to a reading that involves just this kind of paradox. The paradox, Williams argues, can be moved from one point to another but cannot really be diminished.

Let us begin with the following question: why does she think that any reading of the *Tractatus* will involve a commitment to paradox *somewhere*? The standard readings of the *Tractatus* locate paradox in the fact that Wittgenstein puts forward a theory of meaning in the book which has as its consequence that the propositions of the book are nonsensical; the response to the paradox ascribed by standard readings to Wittgenstein (according to Williams) is that Wittgenstein attempts to mitigate the paradoxicality by using the 'doctrine of showing' to explain the communicative power of his own propositions. (Her account fits only some standard readings; as we have noted, not all standard readings share Williams's willingness to muddle together the 'showing' of which Wittgenstein speaks and the conveying of insights by the propositions of the *Tractatus*.) According to Williams, resolute readings of the *Tractatus* equally depend on substantial philosophical commitments, on which they take Wittgenstein to draw. The resolute reading, too, takes Wittgenstein to accept a theory of what nonsense is; and it must be an account of nonsense powerful enough to be able to bring about a deconstruction of the text of the *Tractatus*. But, she thinks, on any reading, the philosophical commitments that underpin the view of nonsense must not themselves be taken to be undercut by the theory itself. Therefore something akin to a 'saying-showing' distinction (of the sort ascribed to Wittgenstein by standard readers) must be in play, she thinks, on any reading, if such commitments are to remain secure in the face of the book's attack on philosophical nonsense, including its own unmasking of the propositions of the *Tractatus* as nonsense. As Williams sees the 'saying-showing' distinction, what it does is enable some theses to serve as genuine bases for philosophical critique; the paradoxicality lies in the attempt to exempt from the critique some set of theses to which the critique would appear to be applicable. The standard reading (what she regards as the standard reading) takes the theses that escape full demolition to be expressed within the book; the resolute reading (what she takes to be the resolute reading) must, on her view, locate the theses that escape full demolition *somewhere*. There is no way to read the *Tractatus* which does not involve some such paradoxical willingness to cling to certain theses which underwrite a project of philosophical critique—theses that have been made exempt from the full blast of philosophical critique—even though the critique would appear to be applicable to them. So the only real difference between standard readings and resolute readings is in how each sort of reading identifies the theses in question

and in what story they tell about why these theses in particular are exempt from the full blast of philosophical critique.

The 'you, too' argument rests on a fundamental misconception of what is involved in a resolute reading, and in the view of nonsense that forms part of it. One of the main sources of this misconception stems from her reading of certain isolated remarks in Throwing Away the Ladder'.[26] She reads Diamond's view of nonsense to have at its heart the idea that sign-constructions are nonsensical if they violate certain specifiable conditions for being a sentence. She takes Diamond to hold that some sign-combinations, like 'What those view Paradise 5 between of', are nonsensical because they transparently fail to fulfill the relevant conditions. They transparently fail to have the appropriate sort of syntactic structure. And, supposedly, Diamond then holds that there are less obvious syntactic conditions on being a sentence which are violated by sentences like 'A is an object' and by the sentences of the *Tractatus* itself. The crucial condition is that of bipolarity: it is the failure to meet the bipolarity condition that explains (on Diamond's view as Williams presents it) why such sentences can be recognized to be nonsensical. Such a recognition is in fact a recognition that they are like 'What those view Paradise 5 between of' in being syntactic messes, although this is not obvious on the surface. This reading of Diamond is closely tied to Williams's argument that Diamond's reading, and other resolute readings, cannot dispense with paradox. For, if it is the case that Diamond is extracting, either from the *Tractatus* or from somewhere else, a theory of meaning which enables her to formulate general conditions which sentences must meet, such that sign-combinations can be recognized to be nonsensical through failure to meet those conditions, then indeed there is something puzzling or paradoxical at the heart of her reading. It looks as if she is dependent on a theory powerful enough to generate substantial claims about violations of essential conditions of meaningfulness, while at the same time trying to distance Wittgenstein from all substantial theorizing.

Here we come to one of the fundamental points in resolute readings, that we mentioned in section 1: resolute readings reject the idea that nonsense is the result of the violation of some or other kind of logical condition on legitimate sentence-construction. Williams discusses in detail the example 'A is an object', and ascribes to Diamond the view that that sentence is nonsensical because if it is meaningful it would be necessarily true and hence would violate the bipolarity condition. Two things are wrong with this as an account of Diamond's view, or indeed of any other version of a resolute approach: (1) the ascribed account of nonsense rests on an appeal to features that sentences would have if they were meaningful; (2) the account is taken to rest at certain points on an appeal specifically to a principle of bipolarity

1 You cannot establish the nonsensicality of a sentence by any appeal to features that it would have if it were meaningful. If a sentence is nonsensical, then, on the view of nonsense that forms a part of any

resolute reading, it contains a word or words to which no meaning has been given. Meaning can be given to that sign in many different ways. What it would say if it were meaningful might be a million different things. To suggest that there is something you can get hold of which is what it would say if it were meaningful, something that is logically problematic in some way, and which would be at the root of the meaninglessness you would be able to go on to ascribe to the sentence, is to see in it some logically faulty sort of sense. This is exactly the approach rejected by both of us in our writings on the *Tractatus*. The approach is described by Diamond in her discussion of 'A is an object',[27] but it is the approach that she is criticizing. The idea of there being something the sentence would mean if it meant anything is exactly what she treats as characteristic of a wrong approach to sentences like 'A is an object'. In the pages of hers (in 'Throwing Away the Ladder') that seem to have inspired Williams's reading of her, Diamond explicitly says that she has just presented a wrong account of Wittgenstein's view in her discussion of the idea that, given Wittgenstein's view of what sentences are, there must be a violation of conditions of meaningfulness by the sentence 'A is an object'. Discussions of the sort of approach to nonsense that Williams attributes to resolute readers figure equally in Conant's work, but, again, always only as a target (and never as the doctrine) of the work: 'The *Tractatus* does not aim to show us that certain sequences of words possess an intrinsically flawed sense by persuading us of the truth of some theoretical account of where to locate "the limits of sense".'[28]

2 We hold that you cannot establish the nonsensicality of a sentence or would-be sentence by establishing that it violates a condition of bipolarity.[29] Suppose someone claimed that, from the recognition that a particular proposition lacked bipolarity, and was neither a tautology nor a contradiction, that it therefore had to be nonsensical, from the *Tractatus* point of view. The question then is: *what* supposedly lacks bipolarity? No mere sign has or lacks bipolarity. And, again, if we call something a tautology, we are taking it that the names in it have a particular use: if two occurrences of the same letter, say, are not names for the same thing, the sense cannot 'cancel out' as it does in a tautology. Take a typical *Tractatus* proposition, of the sort that appears to lack bipolarity, 'Propositions are truth-functions of elementary propositions.' What use do we want to give the first word of that proposition, as it occurs there? It is hardly meant to refer to all things that look like propositions. Nor do we intend to use the word 'propositions' to mean truth-functions of elementary propositions; we don't want to use the quoted propositional sign to say that truth-functions of elementary propositions are truth-functions of elementary propositions. In order to make this *Tractatus* proposition out as lacking bipolarity, and as not being a mere tautology, we should have to specify some other sort of use for that first word. If there is no specifiable use that we will accept as what we

want there, we can recognize a kind of failure, but it is a failure to give any meaning to one of the words we are using. The idea we may have, that 'absence of bipolarity' might be directly available to us as we consider a proposition, comes from failure to take seriously that a sign does not itself determine a use. We have to make clear that use of the propositional sign such that we want to say: the sign *used that way* expresses something that is not bipolar. Before there is any attempt to apply some general doctrine about non-bipolar propositions, we've got to have such a proposition. But what will happen if we attempt to spell out the use we mean is that the attempt at clarification will show us that there is nothing we will accept as what we mean. The attempt at clarification has to precede the supposed application of doctrine; and, if indeed the proposition-like thing in question is philosophically problematic, what will happen is that the attempt will bring out a kind of failure to mean anything clear at all. We shall never get as far as the supposed application of doctrine. What does the work is the attention to the particular problematic sentence itself, the attempt to clarify it, and the failure of that attempt.[30]

You can try to show that a sentence is nonsensical by trying to clarify it, and revealing in the course of that attempt that there is some word or words in it to which the person uttering the sentence (who may indeed be yourself) has given no determinate meaning. But the absence of meaning is not something that can be inferred in an argument from some criterion of logical illegitimacy. On our view of the *Tractatus,* we are not supposed to derive from some theory of meaning (or from anything else) conditions of logical legitimacy of some sort, violation of which would put us into a position to infer nonsensicality or to infer that some word or words in a sentence lacked meaning. As we read the *Tractatus,* no combination of signs that we can put together can be faulted on grounds of logical illegitimacy. If 'Socrates Plato' has no meaning, the reason is that we have not given meaning to the fact that 'Socrates' stands to the left of 'Plato' (that one name stands to the left of another). We could do so. (Question: 'Who taught whom?'; answer: 'Socrates Plato.') There is no logical condition that is violated by 'Socrates Plato', or even by 'Socrates Abracadabra'.[31] Any string of signs can be taken to be a fact in various ways; and that those signs stand in these or those relations can then be taken to signify this or that. They do not, messy as they may look, violate any conditions in such a way as to allow us simply to conclude that they are nonsensical; we cannot conclude that, because of some supposedly specifiable violation, the signs thus related cannot be meaningful. (§5.4732: 'We cannot give a sign the wrong sense.')

It is central to our reading of Wittgenstein that he did not think that any combination of signs could be held, as such, to be logically illegitimate. He says that, if a sign is possible, it is also capable of signifying. When he says (at §5. 473) that, in a certain sense, we cannot make mistakes in logic, one of the things he means is that we cannot diagnose nonsense by picking out violations, by some

combination of signs, of conditions for being a sentence, for meaning anything. There is no way to arrive at a diagnosis of a sentence as nonsensical by deriving from the *Tractatus* (or from anything outside the *Tractatus,* but accepted by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*) some conditions for being a sentence, and then noting that some sentence fails to meet those conditions. In particular, there is no way to arrive at a diagnosis of a sentence as nonsensical by deriving from the *Tractatus* a condition that sentences, if they are not to be nonsensical, must be bipolar, tautologies or contradictions. The view of nonsense that we ascribe to Wittgenstein does not depend on a theory of meaning that seeks to establish conditions for meaningfulness that could be thus employed in diagnosing nonsensicality.[32]

Williams also ascribes to Diamond the view that 'A is an object' can be shown to be nonsense by a perspicuous analysis, which would reveal it as having the form '(x)A', and thus to be transparently nonsense. Williams's account here is hard to follow, and does not correspond to anything Diamond has held. (It also does not appear to be consistent with the view that she ascribes to Diamond that we have just discussed: for if I write on the blackboard '(x)A', I can hardly be held to have written something that, if it were meaningful, would be necessarily true and supposedly therefore a violation of a bipolarity condition. It should be quite obscure, by anyone's lights, in such a case to speak of what this string of signs would mean 'if it were meaningful'.) There is indeed a use of the word 'object', as a formal-concept word, in which it corresponds to a use of the quantifier-variable notation. Thus 'An object fell' goes over to '(x)(x fell)', unlike 'A tortoise fell', which goes over to '(x)(x is a tortoise and x fell).' But someone who says 'A is an object' would appear to be using 'object' in a different way, namely as an ordinary predicate, like 'tortoise'. 'A is a tortoise' goes over to 'Tortoise (A)'; and it may seem that someone who says 'A is an object' wants to utter something which will go over into logical notation in the way that 'A is a tortoise' does. There is nothing whatever the matter with that. 'Object' can indeed be used as an ordinary predicate: we can certainly say of someone that he is an object, meaning (perhaps) that he is contemptible, or beneath contempt; or, alternatively that if we drop him out the window he will fall at 32 feet per second per second. The problem with the philosophical utterance of 'A is an object' is not that it somehow combines an existential quantifier with a name.[33] The problem is rather that what the meaning of 'object' is supposed to be when used in a way that appears to be meant to parallel 'tortoise' has not been made clear. It's not clear *what* predicate-meaning the utterer wants it to have, if any. That does not say that it cannot be made clear, or that the sentence cannot make sense. It can. But someone who utters 'A is an object' may have two desires which appear to be able to coexist because they are not brought fully to awareness: she may want to use 'object' so that it is the ordinary-language term for a logical kind, in which case it would go over in logical notation to a combination of quantifier and variable, and she may also want to use it in a way that is parallel to 'tortoise' in 'A is a tortoise'. (The latter desire comes out in the form of words

she uses; the former is involved in the failure to notice that the word 'object', in her use of it as predicate, has been given no meaning.) We are familiar in ordinary critical thinking with procedures in which such unclarity is brought to a person's notice. Thus, an equivocation involving 'or' in ordinary English might be brought to the speaker's notice, if he spoke Latin, by asking whether he wanted to translate what he said with *aut* or with *vel;* or, if he had been taught a logical notation, exactly the same clarification could be effected using the notation. It is important here that, if a person says 'A is an object' without definitely wanting to use 'object' either as a formal-concept word or as a predicate but is vaguely and confusedly hovering between both uses, the sentence has *no* translation into a formal notation. It would hardly translate into '(x)A'. Confusions don't have translations into logical notation, any more than does a vague hovering between inclusive and exclusive 'or'. The elucidatory insight that logical notation can help us attain, for early Wittgenstein, comes not through our coming to see how what a sentence 'says' goes into the notation *in the wrong way* (because it has a logically flawed sense), but rather through our coming to see how 'it' (i.e. what we imagine the sentence to be trying to say) *fails to go into the notation at all* (because there is nothing determinate that we are here imagining).

So what we have seen thus far is the following: in her deployment of the 'you, too' argument, Williams ascribes to Diamond the idea that a philosophical sentence can be shown to be nonsensical through its violating certain conditions on meaning—that, once certain stipulations of meaning are in place, the resulting combinations of words are such that they cannot be given a logically permissible sense. The only reason for thinking that Diamond believes in such a 'cannot' would be the ascription to her of the idea that philosophical sentences violate some or other condition for meaningfulness. But, as we have noted, it is central in all resolute readings that nonsensical sentences are not rendered nonsensical by the violation of conditions for meaningfulness, and, as we have seen, Williams's supposed textual evidence that Diamond holds otherwise is based on a misreading of Diamond's remarks. The supposed 'dilemma' for resolute readings that Williams presents depends on failure to grasp this central point. We turn now to the second misconception on which her argument depends.

The covert theory of nonsense objection

Independently of ascribing a particular theory of nonsense to Diamond, Williams is concerned to argue, as we have seen, that even if we resolute readers do not think we rely upon such a theory, in fact, we do, too. It is not unlikely that she will read through our discussion above of why the 'you, too' argument involves a misreading of Diamond and come to the following conclusion: 'OK, maybe they really do think they can do without a theory of nonsense here. But, of course, they cannot. In order to charge someone with speaking nonsense, you have to presuppose a theory of nonsense.' Williams fails here to see how deep our break

with standard readings is meant to be. Standard readings of the *Tractatus* have at their heart the idea that Wittgenstein intended, in the *Tractatus,* to put forward a metaphysical conception of language and thought in relation to the possibilities of the world; and their commitment to this idea leads to their understanding of the inconsistency that they see in the work. Wittgenstein is committed at one and the same time, as they see it, to putting forward a meta-physical view and to putting logical obstacles in the way of putting forward metaphysical views. And he is supposed to have had some sort of technique (albeit a 'paradoxical' one) for getting round this. Williams's 'you, too' argument involves taking resolute readers to ascribe a similar inconsistency to Wittgenstein, but (allegedly) failing to recognize that they are doing so. But her argument depends on the idea that resolute readers ascribe to Wittgenstein substantial doctrines about language, from which conclusions about the nonsensicality of certain sentence-constructions can be drawn. This makes of 'nonsense' a quasi-technical term, which is then taken (on Williams's account of resolute readings) to be the crucial term of the *Tractatus*. Williams thus sees resolute readers as dependent on taking Wittgenstein to have a theory of nonsense. The dependence of the resolute reading on such a theory, though, would merely relocate the inconsistency of the book. Thus, in Williams's summary of her dilemmatic argument, she claims that a theory of meaning must be available if resolute readers are to show that philosophical sentences, which look meaningful, are not; so resolute readers are committed to ascribing to Wittgenstein such a theory, if not by taking some of his sentences to express such a theory then by ascribing to him some ineffable thesis which will do the work of generating conditions of meaningfulness which philosophical sentences fail to meet. We think this involves a failure to see what is involved in the activity of clarification that the author of the *Tractatus* seeks to practice. What we want to emphasize now is the following: part of what Williams misses here is that this activity does not presuppose any special conception of nonsense: 'nonsense' is not a technical term for the author of the *Tractatus*.

In the process of philosophical clarification, the use (or lack thereof) that we are making of a sentence (or group of sentences) is meant to become more open to view. This can be done quite informally, as when we ask someone simply whether, by a particular word in a sentence, she means this or that. What is done in that informal way could also be done by inviting her to translate what she wants to say into a notation in which it is no longer possible to put together a sentence understandable in the two (or more) different ways in which her original sentence was. But the attempt at clarification of the thought she is expressing may fail, and, instead of the thought's becoming clear, what the attempt may bring out is that no determinate meaning had been given to some word in the context in which she used it. She may come to see that her own having taken herself to be saying something rested on a kind of illusion of sense. Part of our ordinary capacity to think and speak is our capacity to recognize such things as that 'Jane meringued the eggs' does not use 'meringue' in the way we had

already learned; we might, if we have the vocabulary to reflect on this, say that we had previously used it as a word for a kind of stuff, not for an action. If we can take the sentence not to be meaningless, although it uses a familiar word in a different way, that's because we cotton on to the new use: it means to make something into the kind of stuff we had called 'meringue' before. If, on the other hand, we are told that 'Jane meringued the equations', we might say that we don't yet understand it, and unless we can guess, or are given, some explanation of the verb 'to meringue' in this sort of context, we might suspect that we had a bit of nonsense. This suspicion rests on no theory of meaning. If 'Jane meringued the equations' is meaningless, it is not because there are some conditions which the sentence violates, conditions which we could get from some theory of meaning. The suspicion of meaninglessness may be unfounded, if the person uttering the sentence can make clear the relevant use of 'meringue'. A 'negative' or 'austere' view of nonsense holds simply that, if there is no such use, the sentence is nonsensical through containing a meaningless word or words (compare *Tractatus* 5.47321).

Resolute readers hold that Wittgenstein, when he wrote the *Tractatus,* did not take the procedure of clarification, as he then conceived it, to depend on anything more than the logical capacities that are part of speaking and thinking. Through the use of those capacities, we could, he thought, come to recognize that the sentences of the book itself failed to say anything, and that the very questions that we are initially inclined to take him to be addressing are themselves not questions at all. The activity of clarification did not, as he conceived it, depend on doctrines about the nature of language. The activity of truth-functional analysis was taken by him not to depend on any theory of language put forward in the book; similarly with the use of translation into a 'concept-script' in which logical equivocation was impossible. It is important here to distinguish between taking Wittgenstein to have unwittingly failed to have got free of metaphysical preconceptions (as resolute readers may) and taking him to have *intended* to put forward a metaphysical view (as standard readers do).[34] Many of Williams's arguments presuppose that there is no room to draw such a distinction.

We have suggested that what the *Tractatus* is meant to enable us to do is to use ordinary logical capacities to engage in what one might call the 'interrogation' of philosophical sentences, including the sentences of the book itself.[35] This is a quite different picture of what is involved in the discovery of nonsensicality from the picture that Williams takes to be at work in the resolute reading. We have tied the 'interrogation' of sentences to the activity of philosophical clarification, an activity meant to bring more fully into view the use of a sentence (in the way in which Russellian analysis can be taken to bring more fully into view the use of sentences containing definite descriptions). The attempt at clarification can bring out that no use has been fixed on for some or other sign, or indeed that we have been in an unclear way trying to run together two quite different sorts of use, wanting neither the one nor the other but both. Clarification is taken to depend upon ordinary logical capacities—capacities that

(resolute readers are free to hold) Wittgenstein misconceived in accordance with a picture. Thus, for example, he saw all inference in terms of a picture; he took translation into formal notation to be a far more generally applicable tool than it is. To say that Wittgenstein was not, when he wrote the *Tractatus,* as free of metaphysical preconceptions as he thought he was, or to say that he was in the grip of a picture, is indeed to find the book a flawed work. It matters, though, how we locate the flaws and how we understand them in the context of an understanding of Wittgenstein's aims. Our understanding of where later Wittgenstein saw the flaws to lie can go deeper, we would argue, precisely by taking seriously Wittgenstein's own attempt to take the distinction between saying and showing deeply enough, and not construing the aim of Wittgenstein's own propositions as being that of gesturing at things that can't be said. This, we believe, enables us to take seriously, in a way standard readers do not, Wittgenstein's remark, at §6.54, about throwing away the ladder.

The 'what about showing?' objection

In the previous paragraph, we speak of 'taking seriously Wittgenstein's own attempt to take the distinction between saying and showing deeply enough'. Here is how we imagine some of our critics, including Williams, responding to our speaking thus: 'What? It is we standard readers who are the ones who want to take the distinction between saying and showing seriously. You resolute readers want to throw it away!' This common reaction to resolute readings is, we think, due to a tendency on the part of commentators on the *Tractatus* to mistake the bathwater for the baby here: what we want to throw away is only *a particular way* of understanding the distinction—namely, the sort of understanding of it that figures in standard readings and that we have criticized above. It is itself a noteworthy sign of how deep the attachment to the bathwater goes here, that so many critics of resolute readings (and even some resolute readers themselves) cannot see how there can be any room left for anything properly termed 'a distinction between saying and showing', once the standard sorts of ways of understanding what such a distinction ought to come to are discarded. The only thing in connection with this topic that a resolute reading, as such, would be committed to is the rejection of any account of *showing* as a revealing of ineffable content. One reason why people who accept a standard reading have generally taken resolute readers to reject altogether the very idea of showing is that they assume that the only possible understanding of it takes it to be a matter of revealing an ineffable content.[36]

Diamond says: 'To grasp that what you were trying to say shows itself in language is to cease to think of it as an inexpressible *content: that which* you were trying to say.'[37] Conant says: 'The *Tractatus* shows what it shows (i.e. what it is to make sense) by *letting language show itself,* through *das Klarwenden von Sätzen.*'[38] These remarks, and others like them in our writings—remarks that involve such unembarrassed invocations of the idea of showing—

crop up in contexts in which we seek to indicate that throwing away the ladder need not require throwing away the idea of showing *per se,* while very much insisting that it does require throwing away the idea of 'showing' to which standard readers wish to cling. But, so far, all that this indicates is the following: the features that make a reading 'resolute' (in the sense of that term explained in section 1) do not, as such, require one to give up on every possible way of drawing a distinction between saying and showing. Resolute readers are not obliged to throw away *showing* while throwing away the idea of 'showing' as part of a *Tractatus* theory involving our supposed access to a special realm, the denizens of which are supposed to be officially unthinkable, but somehow graspable (in a way that doesn't count officially as thinkable) when 'shown'. All a resolute reading commits one to here is: (1) drawing the distinction in such a way that it applies only to *sinnvolle* and *sinnlose Sätze* and never to *unsinnige* propositional signs; and (2) drawing it in such a way that showing ceases to require an irresolute waffle between wanting to claim that the content of that which is shown cannot be said (because that's what Wittgenstein says) and wanting to *hint* at what the content in question *is* (in ways that, in effect, turn it into a kind of quasi-sayable quasi-content).[39] To fail to draw the distinction deeply enough here means: to construe the 'showing' side of the distinction as a kind of 'conveying' of a quasi-propositional content that we can at least attempt to say (though 'strictly speaking' we are unable to say it). To draw the distinction deeply enough means: no longer being tempted to construe 'showing' on the model of a funny kind of saying. This still leaves it open to different resolute readers to develop different understandings of how showing works. It is important, therefore, to note that other resolute readers may not wish to accept the suggestion we shall now put forward merely to indicate one way in which the notion can be understood.[40]

There are activities, like swimming, about which one might say that the practical mastery of the activity does not have a logical side. Further, unlike the activity of inference, an activity like swimming can be taken in by someone who is unable to engage in it himself. One can imagine a judge of good and bad swimming who himself could not swim. There are other activities, like becoming a physicist, which do have a logical side, but part of the mastery of these activities is the mastery of certain theories; no one who did not know any of these theories herself could judge whether someone had reached, say, a basic level of participation in the activity Speaking and thinking are different from activities the practical mastery of which has no logical side; and they differ from activities like physics the practical mastery of which involves the mastery of content specific to the activity. On Wittgenstein's view, speaking and thinking do not differ from such activities as physics in that in the former the content that is internal to mastery of the activity is ineffable. That would make the difference too slight. Linguistic mastery does not, as such, depend on even an inexplicit mastery of some sort of content.[41] Philosophical clarification makes us more aware of the logic of our language, of what is present in (what Goldfarb

describes as) 'our understanding of and our operating with the sensical sentences of our language'.[42] The logical articulation of the activity itself can be brought more clearly into view, without that involving our coming to awareness *that* anything. When we speak about the activity of philosophical clarification, grammar may impose on us the use of 'that'-clauses and 'what'-constructions in the descriptions we give of the results of the activity. But, one could say, the final 'throwing away of the ladder' involves the recognition that that grammar of 'what'-ness has been pervasively misleading us, even as we read through the *Tractatus*. To achieve the relevant sort of increasingly refined awareness of the logic of our language is not to grasp a content of any sort. 'What can be shown cannot be said' (§4.1212): to take the difference between saying and showing deeply enough is not to give up on showing but to give up on picturing it as a 'what'.

The methodological objection

Many of Williams's comments are addressed to methodological issues. In particular, she challenges the idea that it is sound methodology to privilege a philosopher's metaphilosophical remarks. She says that this approach 'seems to reverse the proper relation between the content of a philosopher's writings and his remarks on what he takes himself to be doing'. She is there introducing a general maxim which has its force in connection with philosophers the content of whose writings can be fairly straightforwardly taken in. People who accept a resolute reading of the *Tractatus* do not have any particular tendency to privilege anybody's metaphilosophical remarks, including Wittgenstein's. Even if we were to subtract from the *Tractatus* remarks such as §6.54, and regardless of which and how many such remarks we were to subtract, it is not as if we would be left with a body of statements which our ordinary philosophical techniques of reading can straightforwardly accommodate. (For example, as we will see in section 4, the *Tractatus* contains remarks about the sorts of propositional contexts in which propositions can occur; the book also has remarks about the relation between sentences with and without quantification. These remarks, taken together, create a problem for the reading of any *Tractatus* proposition which appears to quantify over propositions; that's to say, they create a problem for the reading of a substantial part of the book.) Since it is fairly obvious, and not disputed by Williams, that the *Tractatus,* taken as a body of propositions, does not lend itself to straightforward reading, it is not clear what the relevance is supposed to be of a methodological maxim the background for the application of which is the more or less straightforward availability of the philosophical content of a philosopher's non-methodological remarks. Although the standard reading recognizes the existence of problems reading the *Tractatus,* it underestimates these problems, as we have argued. The importance of Wittgenstein's own methodological remarks has to be decided, not on the basis of general principles about 'privileging' or 'not privileging' this or that, but on the capacity of those

remarks to help us, in the particular context of a very puzzling book which forces on us the question how we are meant to read it.

There is a further related point about methodology that it may be useful to clear up. Williams says that Diamond's supposed 'privileging' of Wittgenstein's metaphilosophical remarks makes it a test of a correct reading that it treats nonsense in the way that she recommends. Williams says that this may be why Diamond 'admits that she does not know how such an interpretation can be evaluated'. The remark of Diamond's here in question (having to do with the difficulty of evaluation) has nothing to do, however, with 'the' resolute reading as such.[43] It concerns the activity of imaginative articulation of Wittgenstein's views on ethics. Diamond, in that remark, is discussing the danger of projecting into Wittgenstein's remarks one's own favored ethical views, and her remark is specifically concerned with the difficulty of judging whether one has succeeded in avoiding that danger. It has nothing to do with the idea that one should privilege Wittgenstein's metaphilosophical remarks, and then, based on these remarks, make some independently ascribable thesis about nonsense a condition of reading the *Tractatus* rightly.

We have, in our writings, stressed the importance of our being able, as readers, to distinguish certain remarks (such as the Preface and the concluding sections) that serve to 'frame' the work as a whole (and hence the activity of clarification practiced by the author in the work) from the remarks in the 'body' of the work that serve to exemplify that activity (and hence furnish the reader with a ladder that she is meant to climb and, eventually, throw away). But such a distinction does not commit us to 'privileging' the remarks that can be read as framing the activity practiced within the body of the work. The viability of such a construal of any particular remark (as furnishing a frame through which to view the activity practiced in the course of the bulk of the work) depends upon the viability of the reading of the rest of the book that such a construal helps to make possible, and vice versa. Conant has been explicit about the methodological issues here. He notes that, at §6.54, we are told that the sentences of the work have succeeded as *elucidations* when we recognize them as *Unsinn*. But, he argues, we cannot understand what §6.54 asks us to do, independently of an appreciation of the structure and method of the work as a whole, through which alone we can come to some understanding of what Wittgenstein meant by 'elucidation' and of how he was deploying the term 'nonsense' in the book.[44] Conant explicitly rejects the idea that we should work with a two-part methodological maxim, to the effect that first, we ought to try to get a fix on the central metaphilosophical doctrine of the book (by basing it, say, on an independently ascertainable interpretation of what §6.54 says about how we should read the book), and then, second, we ought to try to interpret the rest of the book in the light of that fixed point, ignoring anything that gets in the way of such a reading. On the contrary, his point is that we cannot get a handle on what a remark such as §6.54 says apart from a detailed understanding of much that happens along the way in the book (such as an understanding of what the book

seeks to show us along the way about nonsense and the exemplifications of the practice of elucidation it thereby affords). We must interpret a remark such as §6. 54 in the light of what we find in the body of the book; and vice versa. These two forms of understanding must come with each other or not at all. There is no forced choice here of the sort that Williams suggests. There is no forced choice between fixing upon an antecedent interpretation of Wittgenstein's more general hints and instructions to the reader (and then working out to a reading of the rest of the book only once such an interpretation is in place) and ignoring Wittgenstein's more general remarks about how the work is to be read (and concentrating instead on the rest of the book to the exclusion of such remarks). Rather they— the remarks about the book and the book that they are about— must be interpreted in the light of each other.

4.
Reply to Peter Sullivan

Sullivan has written a number of interesting articles on the *Tractatus* that we regrettably cannot afford to discuss on this occasion. Our comments here will be mostly restricted to replying to his essay 'What is the *Tractatus* About?' But, before turning to this task, we would like to make one general remark about his larger body of work on these issues: we find Sullivan to be the most perceptive and helpful critic of resolute readings to have come along thus far. His criticisms of such readings avoid many of the most common misunderstandings of them and thereby open up the possibility of a constructive continuing conversation between those who view such readings with sympathy and those who view them with suspicion. In his other writings (that we mostly do not address below) some of Sullivan's more local remarks—for example, about particular moments in the writings of one or another resolute reader—are very astute. He identifies revealing moments in which resolute readers fail to agree among themselves (and in which a given reader fails to remain in agreement with him- or herself, sometimes over a series of articles and sometimes within a single article).[45] Taken together, these remarks point up possible tensions and significant differences in the ways in which resolute readings can be and have been developed. They also bear witness to a serious attempt on Sullivan's part to come to terms with such readings and to see what they can and cannot accomplish. Moreover, one senses that, whatever their differences, Sullivan shares with many resolute readers a genuine fascination with and affection for the *Tractatus:* he, too, wants to give the book the best run for its money; and he is not at all inclined to ascribe a high degree of tolerance for inconsistency or 'paradox' to its author.

   Many of the issues here are complex and elusive, so the conversation will be, no doubt, a long one. Our remarks here are intended merely to take up Sullivan's invitation to such a conversation and hopefully move it forward another step or two. One reason, no doubt, dialogue seems more readily possible here is that Sullivan's interpretative starting point is not quite as far removed from that of a

resolute reading as is usually the case among critics of such a reading. He appears, for example, to share with resolute readers the sense that there is much in the *Tractatus* that Wittgenstein commentary has yet to understand, and that acquiring the resources for such an understanding will require going beyond the standard sort of reading. There is also important agreement on some very crucial points of detail. Thus, for example, Sullivan's attitude towards resolute readings is very different from Williams's. While Williams is almost exclusively concerned to criticize 'the core commitments' of a resolute reading, Sullivan takes these to be 'clearly correct'.[46] Many of Sullivan's reservations about what resolute readers have claimed on behalf of their readings are connected to a skepticism about how much of the *Tractatus* one can really come to understand merely by coming to see that the author of that work is indeed committed to a project that is properly characterized by the core commitments of such readings.[47] Therefore, whereas Williams primarily faults resolute readings for their glaring commissions (their positive misreadings of the book), Sullivan primarily faults them for their glaring *omissions* (their failure to deliver anything that really deserves to be called a *reading* of the book).[48]

We suspect that there may be some misunderstanding here. In particular, we suspect that some of what Sullivan takes us to want (and to have failed) to deliver may turn on a misunderstanding concerning how much we take our criticisms of standard readings to deliver, without supplementation, in the way of a complete reading of the *Tractatus*.[49] But this is not to deny that some part of Sullivan's sense of the gross insufficiency of resolute readings (his sense that essential elements of a proper reading of the *Tractatus* simply go missing on such readings) is due not just to what resolute readers do *not* say but also to some of the things that they *do* say—and hence to genuine disagreements about how much the author of the *Tractatus* himself intended to deliver. It will, no doubt, probably take some time to unravel where our differences really lie here—i.e. where our apparent differences are due merely to the first sort of gap (between how much Sullivan thinks we think resolution alone can deliver in the way of a detailed reading of the text and how much we think resolution, without supplementation, can deliver) and where our differences are really due to the second sort of gap (between how much he thinks the author of the *Tractatus* has to deliver in order to be able to carry out his program of philosophical critique and how much we think he has to deliver in order to be able to do this). We do not, in our remarks below, take the time to sort out misunderstandings that may be due to the first sort of gap.[50] We focus, instead, on the second gap—on where (at least some of) the real disagreement between us lies—in the hope that, as the conversation proceeds, the first gap will gradually close of its own accord.

No one, we think, could disagree with Sullivan's initial remark (in 'What is the *Tractatus* About?') that the *Tractatus* is in many ways a perplexing and obscure book. The question he raises is what the book is *about,* and he hopes to be able to provide a significant part of the answer. A key to the reading of the book is, he suggests, the identification of a philosophical vision, a vision of the

relation between thought and world, with which the book is centrally concerned. The vision is that of transcendental idealism, and a main aim of the *Tractatus,* on Sullivan's view, is to make plain to readers the kind of double-think involved in attempting to hold on to such a vision, and indeed the kind of double-think involved in attempting to hold on to it while maintaining that it cannot be put into words, but shows itself.

How does Sullivan get there? He begins with what is intended to be an uncontroversial account of 'the philosophical system of the world, and thought about the world', presented by the *Tractatus*. Part of this intentionally uncontroversial account is a story about how, in the light of the ideas in the book, we might think about the proposition that P entails Q.[51] And what we are supposed to see in the case of the proposition about P and Q is meant to illustrate the lesson we are taught by the *Tractatus* about philosophical discourse more generally. So, part of Sullivan's intentionally uncontroversial account of the *Tractatus* is this: the system of the *Tractatus* is meant to reveal how discourse motivated by characteristically philosophical ambitions involves a kind of double-thinking and lapses into nonsense. The question for him then becomes how one gets from that lesson to some deeper understanding of the philosophical aims of the *Tractatus*.

In the middle of his essay, Sullivan discusses very briefly a different kind of approach to the *Tractatus,* which rejects the idea that some grasp of the *Tractatus* system will put us into a position to see what is the matter with philosophical discourse in general. So the idea (included in the supposedly uncontroversial account of the *Tractatus*) that the system provides a general lesson about double-thinking and nonsensicality, applicable to any bit of philosophical discourse, is not, Sullivan seems here to be suggesting, entirely uncontroversial. He provides, as an example of the quite different approach, a summary of Warren Goldfarb's view. Goldfarb argues that, if we attempt to work through *Tractatus* ideas, like the idea of possibility that figures in §§2. 0122–3, we shall find that these notions fall apart on us.[52] Goldfarb reads Wittgenstein as having intended us to recognize that his propositions collapse; he meant us to try to follow through on what they seem to mean, and thereby to find that they mean nothing. This would be a 'piecemeal' understanding of how the book undermines its own propositions.

At this stage, we want to leave the question open whether one should see the *Tractatus* as providing a general lesson applicable to all philosophical discourse or a piecemeal approach to philosophical propositions. We turn back to Sullivan's initial summary of how the book is supposed to work. Because he intends his account to be uncontroversial, he omits textual references. The first part of his account concerns objects, facts, thoughts, and propositions, as they are discussed in the *Tractatus;* and, indeed, for everything Sullivan says about these matters, textual references could be provided. But what is striking is that, when he goes on to explain how 'the system', as he has thus far explained it, applies to 'P entails Q' (the case which is supposed to exemplify for us the application of

the system to philosophical discourse), there is no longer the kind of obvious and close connection with textual passages which was available for the first part of his exposition. This is important, we think, because one's whole approach to the *Tractatus* will be shaped by one's answer to the question whether 'the system' enables us to see, in a fairly direct way, that there is a kind of double-think inherent in philosophical discourse.[53] And this is much more controversial, we think, than Sullivan recognizes.

Let us look harder at 'P entails Q', and Sullivan's account of how the *Tractatus*-system enables us to raise questions about that proposition, since so much is made to depend on that. The account starts with this point: *that P entails Q* is not the obtaining of an elementary fact nor something the truth of which consists in the obtaining of a certain selection of elementary facts. *That P entails Q* appears not to be a reporting of something that is the case, in the way in which the system of the *Tractatus* has enabled us to grasp what it is to report something. Sullivan is here suggesting that the 'system' provides a general method of identifying propositions that are at any rate problematic in that they appear to be reports but do not appear to state the obtaining of an elementary fact or of any selection of such facts.[54] We want to get to a better way of thinking about 'P entails Q' in the hope that the example will help us to reach greater clarity about the *Tractatus* and its aims. Our attempt to do so will come in three steps. We shall turn to the task of trying to get clearer about 'P entails Q' after two preliminary points.

1 The attempt to apply the *Tractatus*-system to the proposition that P entails Q takes us to have a grasp, at least some grasp, of what that proposition says to be so or attempts to say to be so. Sullivan has argued elsewhere that one cannot simply infer from some general principle about nonsense that we cannot see what a genuinely nonsensical proposition attempts to say to be so.[55] But no such inference need be involved, though we do indeed think that Sullivan's discussion of attempts to do what is impossible is not relevant to the question whether remarks of the general sort 'The proposition…is an attempt to say something which there is no such thing as the saying of' are nonsensical. To raise doubts about Sullivan's claims concerning what 'P entails Q' attempts to do, one doesn't need a general principle about impossible attempts, but rather a general suspicion about philosophers: when a philosopher discussing the *Tractatus* claims to discern what some proposition or would-be proposition is attempting to say, that philosopher may be discovered not to have carried out any attempt at clarification of the proposition or would-be proposition in question.

2 Suppose, instead of considering what the implications are of the system of the *Tractatus* for 'P entails Q', we first consider instead *Tractatus* §5.54: 'In the general propositional form, propositions occur in other propositions only as bases of truth-operations.' At first it may seem as if *Tractatus* §5.54 gives us a *direct* method of criticizing 'P entails Q'. 'P' and 'Q' are intended to be markers of the occurrence of propositions; but 'entails' is plainly not a truth-

functional connective. So it looks as if §5.54 suggests that 'P' and 'Q', as they occur in 'P entails Q', are not being used as propositional signs. Since no other use has been assigned to them, the whole, 'P entails Q', is nonsensical. That argument is inadequate, as the *Tractatus* indicates. For, immediately after §5.54, Wittgenstein tells us, in §5.541, that a proposition may merely *appear* to be one in which propositions occur non-truth functionally. What needs to be done in such a case is that the appearance of non-truth-functional occurrence has to be investigated. We need to attempt to clarify the proposition which appears to be one in which propositions occur non-truth-functionally. The moral of the story so far is two-fold: first, we may easily reach a point in our dealing with a proposition at which it may seem as if the proposition in question says that something is so and yet also appears not to 'fit' some part of what we take to be the *Tractatus*'s official view of propositions; and, second, we should not be too hasty in drawing any conclusions at this point in our investigation. What happens in §5.541 is that we are given a *kick.* What being kicked does is indicate that we need to try to clarify the particular proposition in question, not apply to it as it stands some bit of the *Tractatus*'s doctrine or system.

We now turn to the task of trying to get clearer about 'P entails Q'. The *Tractatus* says that philosophy is an activity of clarification. What would it be to clarify, or to attempt to clarify, 'P entails Q'? What we shall sketch is one possible approach, drawing on some work of Michael Kremer's.[56] It will be helpful to consider a more specific version of Sullivan's example: suppose that we want to say of the proposition formed by conjoining two propositions p and q that it entails p. To clarify '(p . q) entails p', we might begin by re-writing it: '[(p . q) p] is a tautology'. We need to ask (following Wittgenstein's suggestion at §6. 211) what the use might be of a proposition like '[(p . q) p] is a tautology'. Here we should note that the 6.1s, the 6.2s and the 6.3s all contain discussion of the use of different groups of propositions which are not senseful propositions: tautologies, equations, and principles of mechanics.[57] Wittgenstein is engaged in clarification of the use of these propositions; we take this to indicate that clarification, as Wittgenstein understands it, is not limited to senseful propositions. Wittgenstein says (at §6.1221) that, although we can see from two propositions themselves that one follows from the other, we can also see that the one follows from the other by combining them with one as antecedent and the other as consequent of and calculating that the combination is a tautology. Calculating that the combination is a tautology can then be useful in enabling us to recognize what can be inferred from what, though we could indeed grasp what can be inferred from the propositions themselves. The justification of the inference will lie in the propositions themselves, but this may not be immediately evident, and keeping a record of the calculation that shows what can be inferred from what may thus be useful. Keeping such a record of our logical calculations is analogous to keeping a record of arithmetical calculations. Arithmetical

calculations have their use in that they guide us in passing from one ordinary (non-mathematical) proposition to another (§6.211). Michael Kremer suggests that we understand the use of mathematical equations as records of calculations. If we are able to pass from one non-mathematical proposition to another, the justification lies in the two propositions themselves, but a calculation can make this plain to us; and keeping a record of the calculation, in the form of an equation, can serve as a kind of short-cut (as Kremer puts it) for use in future passings from one non-mathematical proposition to another. If we want to keep a record of the calculation through which we recognize that '(p . q) p' is a tautology, there are various ways in which we might do this. We might write '[(p . q) p] = TTTT(p,q)', using two bits of *Tractatus* terminology. The equal sign there comes from §4.241 (cf. also §6.23), where Wittgenstein says that the equal sign indicates that the two expressions on either side can be substituted for each other; and 'TTTT(p,q)' uses the notation described at §4.442; it is a sign for the same proposition as '(p . q) p', but written in such a way as to make it perspicuous that it is a tautology. The use of '[(p . q) p]=TTTT(p,q)' would simply be as a record of the calculation that shows that '(p . q) p' is a tautology. The equation marks the point of view from which we consider the expressions on either side (§6.2323): they are substitutable. The equation in which we mark their substitutability records the calculation through which we recognized the tautological character of the original expression; the equation thus can serve as a record that can be used in guiding future inferences. Our suggestion is that '…is a tautology' and '…=taut' should be understood as generalizing (for any number of arguments) the approach that we have suggested for the case in which the tautology that records a calculation involves two truth-arguments. The use of such propositions is essentially as records of calculations that such-and-such propositions, so combined, yield a tautology. (In other words, we are suggesting that 'taut' in '= taut' is a propositional sign that could also be written out, in any actual case, as 'TTTT…T(p,q,r …)'[58] and that'…is a tautology' be understood as a way of writing '…=taut'.) That the propositions in question, thus combined, do yield a tautology is recognizable from the propositions themselves, but records of such calculations have a use in making it unnecessary for us to recalculate, and thereby giving us a short-cut to be used in inferences from one or more non-logical propositions to a non-logical proposition. We would further suggest that 'P entails Q' can have the same function as 'P Q is a tautology'. The equal sign which occurs between propositions in our account has a function not far from the function of putting alongside each other *'On kutsut'* and 'There's a party' in *Finnish for Travelers.* When Wittgenstein wrote that propositions occur in other propositions only as truth-arguments, he was speaking of the general propositional form, in which propositions are used to say that something or other is the case. A proposition with an equal sign in it does not do that; it is a 'pseudoproposition' (see §§6.21–6.211). But this does not mean that such propositions are nonsensical; they have a use, just as does the production of a pair of sentences alongside each other in *Finnish for Travelers.* (Writing 'p q is a

tautology' as 'p q=taut' is useful in that the latter bears on its face, in the presence of the equal sign, that it is a 'pseudo-proposition', and that we need to pay attention to its use to understand how it is different from nonsensical pseudo-propositions.) Similarly, 'P entails Q' has a use and is not nonsensical, though it equally is not the expression of a thought that anything is the case.[59] We should not, that is, read it as if it were clear that it was trying to express some kind of relation between P and Q. If someone did not want to use it in the way we have described, nor in any other way, one might then indeed infer that she was speaking nonsense. But such a charge of speaking nonsense would then apply only to what she was attempting to do with the propositional sign, not to some flaw resident in the propositional symbol that we can see in the sign when it is put to the sort of use we have attempted to characterize above (see §3.326).

We may seem to be a long way from Sullivan's question: 'What is the *Tractatus* about?' But, just as his argument moved from his story about how the *Tractatus* is supposed to teach us something about 'P entails Q' to a story about what the book is about, we hope that our alternative story about how the *Tractatus* teaches us something about 'P entails Q' will help us to respond to Sullivan's question about the book as a whole and what it is about. To that we now turn.

We mentioned that, after Wittgenstein says that propositions occur in other propositions only truth-functionally, what he does is attempt to clarify certain propositions that at first appear to contain non-truth-functional occurrences of other propositions. The clarification (of the kinds of proposition with which he is concerned there) will make more perspicuous the kind of use they have. One thing that we can gather from Wittgenstein's handling of those propositions is that it will not in general be immediately obvious whether a proposition constitutes some kind of counter-example to something that we take the *Tractatus* to say. It is therefore quite unclear how we are going to be able *in general* to cotton on to some proposition's being an expression of some kind of double-thinking. A particular proposition may have some use that is not immediately obvious, and the various procedures of philosophical clarification are meant to come into play in helping us to discover what the use might be of some proposition about which we might take ourselves to have suspicions. As came out in our treatment above of Sullivan's own example, a proposition may appear to be eminently eligible for *Tractatus*-style unmasking as a bit of double-think, but may then turn out not to be so after all. There are three separate points that are all worth making here:

1 It is central to the teaching of the *Tractatus* that there is no straightforward way to read off a propositional sign whether or not it is in accord with the system of the *Tractatus*. We cannot just take ourselves to be able to 'spot' the ambition with which a stretch of discourse has been uttered, and thereby to be in a position to unmask the stretch of discourse as involving characteristically philosophical double-think. Sullivan takes himself to be

able to read precisely such an 'ambition' off the innocuous 'P entails Q'. (We will return below to the topic of the philosopher as would-be 'spotter' of philosophical illusions.) One thing the *Tractatus* is about is how we are vulnerable to philosophical illusion in the course of trying to satisfy our ambitions as illusion-spotters. Perhaps better put: the *Tractatus* is 'about' the activity of philosophy as clarification; and part of its being about clarification is its enabling us to recognize that, and how, we ourselves may fail to see a need to clarify what we wish to say especially when we seek to take up the office of the critic of philosophy.

2 More particularly, the *Tractatus* holds that we cannot take ourselves to be able to 'spot' nonsensicality in a proposition simply by noticing that a word or words in it is not used in the way in which it is normally used and that, as far as we can see, it has been given no other use. We cannot tell, merely from the fact that some word or words is not given the use that it normally has (or that its surface grammar suggests that it ought to have) that it has been given no other use. The idea that a nonsensical would-be proposition is nonsensical only through containing some word or words to which no meaning has been given does not provide any kind of principle for the immediate identification of some sentence or stretch of discourse as nonsensical.

3 A readiness to identify a stretch of philosophical discourse as nonsensical may come from a sense that we know what it is trying to say, and that we can identify the stretch of discourse as nonsense through identifying that aim. But if we identify a stretch of discourse as nonsensical, we cannot be claiming to understand it. And if there is a stretch of discourse produced by someone, a stretch that we do not understand, we are not in general licensed merely on that ground alone (this should be obvious enough from ordinary non-philosophical discourse) to conclude that the stretch of discourse is nonsensical. As a general point, few would contest this. But many readers of Wittgenstein unwittingly fall into the trap of taking themselves to be able to declare that something is nonsense simply on the grounds that the words are being used in a way that differs from how they would ordinarily expect those words to be used.[60] Wittgenstein, in his later philosophy, in which he does not write with the concision of the *Tractatus,* makes plain that the sentences that are used in philosophy frequently have perfectly senseful uses. 'When would we say this?' he frequently asks. 'I am the only one who feels real pain' is an example he subjects to this sort of investigation in the *Blue Book.* If claims made by a solipsist are nonsensical, that can be shown only through the solipsist's rejecting possible ways of using the sentences in question, and coming to see that he has no alternative use in mind, and not because there are no possible uses of the sentences in question. Neither in his later philosophy nor in the earlier philosophy is there some quickie principle that will enable us to identify a stretch of discourse as nonsensical; there is nothing that can enable us to pass such a verdict on a stretch of discourse apart from an engagement in a process of clarification in which an

interlocutor comes to see *for herself* that no available use of a sentence will satisfy the 'ambition' that draws her to the form of words in question.

In case it is not apparent, it should be noted that our discussion so far has been guided in part by a reading of *Tractatus* §6.53. It is therefore perhaps worth noting that Sullivan, in an earlier essay, writes that §6.53 is not one of Wittgenstein's better remarks.[61] He thinks that, so far as it provides a conception of how the philosopher ought to proceed, we ought to drop that conception. The criticisms that he makes of §6.53 depend on a particular reading of that passage. According to his reading, to follow out the suggestion of §6.53 would be to seize on any sentence which a philosopher comes out with and to demonstrate to the philosopher by an immediate application of a general principle about nonsense (that a sentence is nonsensical if it contains a sign or signs to which no meaning has been given) that what the philosopher has said is nonsensical. Sullivan objects that this would be a procedure that resembled the pernicketiness of ordinary-language philosophers, some of whom attacked anyone who took a word and used it in a philosophical context in some way different from its ordinary use.[62] A further criticism that Sullivan makes is that an approach of the sort recommended at §6.53 (the immediate-pounce approach, as he sees it) would never allow the philosopher in question fully to develop the view she was attempting to put forward to the point at which a genuinely telling criticism could be put forward. The §6.53 approach would just snap into action after the first sentence uttered by the philosopher containing a word apparently with no meaning, and the line of thought to which the philosopher was attracted would never genuinely be confronted.[63] But we think that Sullivan's reading of §6.53 misses what is involved in demonstrating to another person that she has given no meaning to some word or other that she has used. This certainly cannot be demonstrated in the 'pernickety' way that Sullivan reads into §6.53. The pernickety Wittgensteinian critic who follows 'the strictly correct method' of §6.53 as Sullivan construes it says to the would-be metaphysician: 'Here and here and here in what you have said there are words which have been given a use in their occurrence in such-and-such contexts, and you are not using them in those contexts. So: you are talking nonsense!' That 'pernickety' method would indeed be dissatisfying to the person on whom you tried to use it; but it is in any case no demonstration that the person has come out with nonsense. For the pernickety method makes no attempt at all to clarify what the person has tried to say, or to invite the person to participate in such attempted clarifications. The pernickety method provides no demonstration of nonsensicality; what would genuinely be a demonstration isn't in view in Sullivan's remarks at all: namely, the attempted clarification of the person's claims, the attempt leading to a recognition by the person that there is nothing meant by some sign or signs in what she has said, nothing which she wants to use that sign or those signs to mean. This kind of demonstration involves patience and a willingness to try to understand what the person who comes out with the apparently metaphysical remarks might be trying

to express.[64] In light of the delicacy with which Wittgenstein characterizes the task of clarification elsewhere in the *Tractatus,* and given the difficulties that he evidently thinks attend such a task, we find Sullivan's reading of §6.53 (and, in particular, his reading of the pernickety method into that remark) to be uncharacteristically uncharitable on his part and to obstruct his view of how that remark is meant to shed light on the conception of clarification that the *Tractatus* itself aims to practice.[65]

The kind of attempt to clarify what someone has said, which can reveal to her, in its failure, that she had nothing really in mind, does not have to rely on identifying her philosophical ambitions as ambitions that show a wrong kind of perspective. It does not have to rely on ascribing to her a desire to take up a perspective on language, or anything of the kind.[66] It can proceed through offering possible paraphrases, and through inviting paraphrases. It may use what it claims to be translations of some of what is said into some supposedly more revealing linguistic form, as in the case of Russell's theory of descriptions, and in the case of the paraphrase we offered above of 'P entails Q'. It may involve attempts to follow through on inferential patterns involving the proposition. Attempting clarification, and allowing such attempts to reveal, in their failure, that nothing was meant by some stretch of discourse, can demonstrate to a person that she had meant nothing. Why, though, should such a method be regarded as the only correct one? To answer this question, we need to notice a surprisingly frequently ignored feature of the philosophical situation, but a feature that Wittgenstein has in view in placing §6.53 together with §6.54. When we think about the application of the *Tractatus* to philosophical confusions, we frequently think of ourselves as addressing someone whom we believe to be in such a state of philosophical confusion, a would-be metaphysician. We think of ourselves as trying to derive from the *Tractatus* an approach that will make clear to that person that she is engaged in double-thinking, in thumb-catching, or something of the kind. The feature of the situation that we thereby ignore is that we ourselves, the would-be enlighteners of the metaphysician, may be equally deeply enmeshed in philosophical difficulty or confusion. In the scenario, we ourselves are invisible. We grasp what is at bottom wrong with the view of the other; the question for us, we think, is how we are to make the illusion from which the other person suffers available to her. What we see, or think we see, to be at bottom wrong with the view of the other is not the failure of her words to say anything, but the philosophical thoughts to which she is driven, the kind of way in which she thinks she can think philosophically about the world and thought. We see her, not our own thought about her, nor how far, in that thought about her, we remain ourselves in the grip of undiagnosed illusion. We see her thought as what the *Tractatus* shows to be no thought at all. We don't see what *that* shows about us.

'Resolution', as we said in our opening remarks to this part of the paper, does not itself furnish a 'reading' of the *Tractatus;* nor, as we said in our opening remarks in section 1, do 'resolute readers' have on offer some kind of key to a reading. Wittgenstein is certainly concerned in the *Tractatus* with various forms

of philosophical confusion, including the transcendental idealism that Sullivan puts in the center of his attempt to explain what the book is about. What convinced Wittgenstein of the significance of his achievement in the book was (among other things) that it provided a critical approach that would be applicable to *many* different philosophical views, including views as far from each other as those of Schopenhauer, Russell and Frege. But how in detail it is to be applied to this or that particular view of Schopenhauer's, or Frege's, or Russell's, still has to be carefully worked out. 'Resolution' says nothing about how to do this, only how not to. To pick up a phrase from Sullivan (which we use in a somewhat different way from Sullivan), resolution is a kind of constraint on a reading, rather than a reading.[67]

Conant describes (in the closing pages of The Method of the *Tractatus'*) what happens if the *Tractatus* is successful in its aim with a particular reader: its success lies in that reader's recognizing that the philosophical sentences of the work *are* nonsense. But it very much matters here that included within this recognition is the recognition that many of the sentences that we ourselves may be initially inclined to come up with, in explaining how the book dispels philosophical illusions, will themselves also turn out to be nonsensical. If the book is successful with us, we give up the idea of our enlightened perspective on the thought of would-be metaphysicians, realists, transcendental idealists, and solipsists. We see our perspective of enlightenment about what they are attempting as itself illusory. This doesn't mean that we have no way to engage with them; it doesn't mean we have no way to read the book. But adhering to an 'austere' conception of nonsense is not itself going to be a guide to the book, or a guide to what to say to would-be metaphysicians. In particular, it does not tell us how far, and in what way, we may in some particular case be able usefully to employ forms of expression that we might recognize as nonsensical. But the allowance is not a matter of the providing of general principles, or a 'system', from which nonsensicality can be inferred. The importance of §6.53, and its placement immediately before §6.54, is that it pushes us to recognize what is involved in our own use of expressions that are themselves nonsensical. We need to recognize how easy it is to wish to 'demonstrate' nonsensicality through appeal to nonsense, or to quantifications that apparently 'go over' nonsense, as in talk of someone attempting to say 'something' that cannot be said, as if using quantifiers enabled one to pick out a range of nonsensical would-be sayings or thinkings, without one having oneself actually to engage in the production of nonsense.

In summary, then, of our reply to Sullivan, we can say that our disagreement with him goes back behind his initial way of setting out possible sorts of responses to the recognition that the philosophical system of the *Tractatus* appears to be vulnerable to the criticisms of philosophy that we can see to follow from the system itself. A 'resolute' reading is not, on our view, one sort of response to such a recognition. For we reject the explanation Sullivan gives of how 'the system' gives rise to criticisms of philosophical discourse. The critical

standpoint on such discourse depends, as Sullivan sees it, on applying to philosophical discourse a characterization of senseful discourse from which it immediately follows that philosophical discourse, including that in which the *Tractatus* system is supposedly put forward, is problematic. On our reading, if many of the propositions in the *Tractatus* are vulnerable to a form of criticism that reveals them to be nonsensical, this can't be deduced from 'the system' of the book, but has to be established by looking at the propositions themselves and subjecting them to the kind of critical examination we have described, which involves coming to see how attempts to make clearer what they say collapse. There may be generalizations that we are drawn to make about how such investigations proceed and what to look out for, but no such generalization provides a principle by which the propositions of the *Tractatus* (or any other sequence of propositional signs) can simply be inferred to be nonsensical.[68] 'Austerity' is certainly not such a principle, nor have we ever meant to suggest that it is. Indeed, we do not wish to suggest anything as a 'key' to reading the book (i.e. as a 'guide' of the sort that Sullivan thinks must be required and that he imagines resolute readers must think austerity provides), but we do think highlighting the character of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy as an activity of clarification is something that can help one to make progress in reading this deeply obscure and difficult, but also immensely stimulating and rewarding work.

5.
Continuities and discontinuities in Wittgenstein's thought

As we have already indicated above, a resolute reader of the book need not be committed to the idea that Wittgenstein's own conception of what he was doing in the *Tractatus* was accurate or otherwise unproblematic. Resolute readers may ascribe to Wittgenstein misconceptions—misconceptions that they take to have been embodied in his ideas about the activity of philosophical clarification. A resolute reader may hold that, when Wittgenstein wrote the *Tractatus,* his conception of philosophical clarification reflected his being in the grip of a picture of language, although he did not then realize it. Such a reader may hold, for example, that Wittgenstein's having taken himself to have dissolved the 'big question' of the nature of language (and thus to have solved the problems of philosophy 'in essentials' by having demonstrated a method through which *all* confusions could be clarified) itself reflected a kind of philosophical confusion which colored also his ideas about philosophical method. The question that divides resolute readers from non-resolute readers is not: are there no important differences between early and later Wittgenstein? Or: was later Wittgenstein mistaken in regarding the author of the *Tractatus* to have been committed to problematic metaphysical theses? The question that divides them is: did the author of the *Tractatus* understand himself (rightly or wrongly) to have found a way to do philosophy that eschews any commitment to a metaphysical thesis?[69]

Williams identifies, as one consequence of a resolute reading, the rejection of one sort of account of how Wittgenstein's thought changed. A resolute reading will reject the idea that he changed his views by giving up, in his later thought, a theory of meaning that he had put forward in the *Tractatus,* and that he thought could be used 'to end philosophy by solving its legitimate problems and dissolving the rest'. If, as resolute readings have it, he did not put forward a theory of meaning in the *Tractatus,* that account of the change in his thought must be rejected. But it certainly does not follow that a resolute reading commits one to holding that Wittgenstein did not change his views about the aim of his philosophizing or about its method, or about what was involved in liberating us from philosophical confusions or illusions. If one says that the resolute reading commits its holder to saying that Wittgenstein's aim in his earlier philosophy was therapeutic, and that his aim in his later philosophy was therapeutic, that alone would not show that there is no deep and significant change in his aim. The word 'therapy' says very little (as Williams herself explicitly recognizes). Nor does the absence of significant change follow from anything else that Conant or Diamond or most other resolute readers have said. Diamond in fact discusses important differences between Wittgenstein's earlier and later philosophy in the two introductory essays of *The Realistic Spirit.*[70] (We will quote something she says there in a moment.) Conant and others who accept some sort of resolute reading have also discussed the deep changes in Wittgenstein's thought.[71] The important issue here is not how they have done it, but that a resolute reading is committed to rejecting only those accounts of the change in Wittgenstein's thought that depend on not reading the *Tractatus* in a resolute way, and is not committed to any 'strong' thesis of continuity. If one assumes that the *only* way to account for the profound changes in Wittgenstein's thought is in terms of his having put forward a metaphysical theory or a theory of meaning or both in his earlier thought, and his having given up the theory or theories later, then one will take resolute readings to be committed to 'strong continuity'; but the idea that that is the only way to understand the profound changes in Wittgenstein's thought should in any case be rejected. Not only are resolute readers, as such, not precluded from taking there to be profound discontinuities between Wittgenstein's early and later thought, but, on the contrary, if later Wittgenstein viewed his early work as an exemplary illustration of how, in philosophy, one can take oneself to have resolutely eschewed all metaphysical commitments while still remaining knee-deep in them, then a resolute reading may help us to attain a better understanding of why later Wittgenstein took his early work to be the expression of the metaphysical spirit in philosophy *par excellence.*

Williams says that Diamond maintains that a correct understanding of Wittgenstein's intentions will enable us to see that he 'never fundamentally changes his views nor alters his methods'. Williams gives no citation for this statement. In 'Throwing Away the Ladder', Diamond does, as Williams notes, write about Wittgenstein's continuing desire to free us of the illusion we may have of needing a kind of external perspective on thought or language.[72] But

neither there nor anywhere else in any of our writings does either of us ever say that Wittgenstein never changed his views nor altered his methods. We have, however, both written many things that say the contrary. The following is an example of something one of us has written,[73] and of the sort of thing that we take reading the *Tractatus* in the manner we recommend to put one in a position to be able to say, about the relation between Wittgenstein's early and later philosophy:

> [T]here is a sense in which the *Tractatus* might be described as metaphysical, even though it is not concerned with features of reality underlying sense, with things that are the case although they cannot intelligibly be said or thought to be the case. It is metaphysical…in holding that the logical relations of our thoughts to each other can be shown, completely shown, in an analysis of our propositions. It is metaphysical in holding that it is possible for propositions to be rewritten in such a way that the logical relations are all clearly visible, and that, by rewriting them in that way, *what* propositions our propositions are, what combinations of signs, would also be clear, as would be what all propositions have in common. This is not a view about what there is, external to language or thought, but about what they essentially are (despite appearances), and about what we can do, what it must be possible to do. The belief that there must be a certain kind of logical order in our language (the belief reflected in our seeing that order as already there, given the understanding we have of the signs we use (*Philosophical Investigations,* I, §§101–2)): this is a belief also in what we must be able to do, given that we understand sentences and use them, where using them is saying things in determinate logical relations to each other; and these relations are what (totally laid out) shows us *what* sentences we use, as Russell's analysis of sentences containing definite descriptions showed us in part.
>
> What is metaphysical there is not the content of some belief but *the laying down of a requirement,* the requirement of logical analysis. We do make sense, our propositions do stand in logical relations to each other. And such-and-such *is required* for that to be so. The metaphysics there is not in something other than language and requiring that it be like this or like that: *that* sort of metaphysics the *Tractatus* uses only ironically: it uses apparently metaphysical sentences, but in a way which is disposed of by the sentences which frame the book, in the Preface and the final remarks. The metaphysics of the *Tractatus*—metaphysics not ironical and not cancelled—is in the requirements which are internal to the character of language as language, in there being a general form of sentence, in all sentences having this form. The metaphysics of the *Tractatus* is a kind of metaphysics that does not involve what is unsayably the case outside language, except so far as sentences which, as one might say, 'appear to be

about such things' help us understand the requirements which are internal to a sentence's having a use.[74]

The following metaphysical commitments (underlying the conception advanced in the *Tractatus* of how the activity of clarification must proceed) are all touched on here:

- The logical relations of our thoughts to each other can be *completely* shown in an analysis of our propositions.
- These relations can be displayed through the employment of a logically *absolutely perspicuous* notation.
- Through the employment of such a notation, it is possible for propositions to be rewritten in such a way that the logical relations are *all* clearly visible.
- A proposition *must* be complex.[75]
- *Every* proposition can be analyzed.[76]
- There is such a thing as *the* logical order of our language.
- Antecedent to logical analysis, there must be this logical order—one that is *already there* awaiting discovery—and it is the role of logical analysis to uncover it.
- By rewriting them in such a notation, *what* propositions our propositions are will become clear.[77]
- By rewriting them in this way, it will also become clear what *all* propositions have in common.
- There is a general form of proposition and *all* propositions have this form.
- In its thus becoming clear what propositions essentially are, it will also become clear how misleading their appearances are—how much the outward form *disguises* the real *hidden* logical structure.
- A logically perspicuous notation is *the* essential tool of philosophical clarification.
- Through our inability to translate them *into the notation,* despite their resemblance in outward form to genuine propositions, certain strings of signs can be unmasked as nonsense (i.e. as strings in which signs to which no determinate meaning has been given occur).
- *All* philosophical confusions can be clarified in this way
- By demonstrating the significance of this tool and its application in the activity of clarification, the problems of philosophy have *in essentials* been finally solved.

This list could be extended to include the following related commitments—to mention only a few of the relevant candidates:

- *All* inference is truth-functional.
- Logical analysis will reveal *every* proposition to be either an elementary proposition or the result of truth-operations on elementary propositions.

- There is only *one* logical space and everything that can be said or thought forms a part of that one space.

And so on.[78]

The italicized expressions in each of the above propositions indicate the occurrence of a moment of (what would count by later Wittgenstein's lights as) *metaphysical insistence*—a moment in which a requirement is laid down. The metaphysical commitments at issue here are, however, not of a sort that early Wittgenstein, at the time of writing the *Tractatus,* would have taken to be metaphysical. Indeed, most of them would not have been taken by him to be *theoretical* commitments at all, let alone ones that were somehow peculiarly *his.* Rather, he would have regarded them as pertaining to matters that become clear through the process of clarifying propositions, and, in particular, through the adoption and application of a perspicuous notation—a notation that enables one to avoid 'the fundamental confusions' ('of which the whole of philosophy is full'; §3.324) by furnishing *an absolutely clear way of expressing thoughts.*[79] His aim, in writing that book, was to bring metaphysics to an end; and the method of clarification he thereby sought to practice, to achieve that end, was to be one that was itself free of all metaphysical commitments. The following remark nicely sums up his later view of his earlier situation with regard to these commitments:

> We now have a theory, a 'dynamic theory' of the proposition; of language, but it does not present itself to us as a theory For it is the characteristic thing about such a theory that it looks at a special clearly intuitive case and says: '*That* shews how things are in every case; this case is the exemplar of *all* cases.'—'Of course! It has to be like that,' we say, and are satisfied. We have arrived at a form of expression that *strikes us as obvious,* But it is as if we had now seen something lying *beneath* the surface.[80]

This passage points to a profound discontinuity in thinking that is folded within a fundamental continuity in Wittgenstein's philosophy that we have sought to bring out in some of our writings, and that has led Williams to assume that we must therefore be generally committed to downplaying any possible discontinuities in his thinking. The fundamental continuity in question lies in Wittgenstein's seeking, early and late, to find a way to do philosophy that does not consist in putting forward philosophical theses, and yet which (through the practice of methods of clarification that he, early and late, sought in his writing to exemplify) would genuinely enable his reader to pass from a state of philosophical perplexity to a state of complete clarity in which the philosophical problems completely disappear. The fundamental discontinuity in question lies in his later thinking that there was an entire metaphysics of language embodied in his earlier method of clarification, thereby illustrating that the most crucial moments in the philosophical conjuring trick are the ones that are apt to strike one as most innocent; so that it turns out to be much more difficult to avoid laying down

requirements in philosophy than his earlier self had ever imagined. Hence it turned out that an entirely different approach to philosophical problems from that practiced in the early work was required and had to be developed in the later work.

The fundamental discontinuity in question here cannot be properly located if one begins by seeking to identify the explicit doctrines that early and later Wittgenstein each self-consciously seek to advance and defend in their respective writings. Arguably, part of the way that standard readings first developed was by commentators attributing to the *Tractatus* a great many of the doctrines that later Wittgenstein was centrally concerned to criticize. Many of these commentators, in turn, were often themselves authors of books on Wittgenstein that had some early chapters on the *Tractatus* in which a reading of that work was developed that allowed it to figure as a target for the most important philosophical criti cisms advanced in *Philosophical Investigations:* criticisms of ostensive definition, privacy, solipsism, etc. (Over the years, a number of scholars have gradually discredited a great many of these attributions. Among some of the earlier casualties—to pick out just three episodes in this long and ongoing saga—were the baptismal theory of naming, the ghost-in-the-machine conception of thought, and metaphysical realism about objects and states of affairs.) No schema of the form 'early Wittgenstein believes *p* and later Wittgenstein believes *not-p*' can ever serve adequately to represent the manner in which Wittgenstein's philosophy develops—not just because adherence to such a schema leads one to focus on a great many incorrect candidates for what early Wittgenstein actually held, but, above all, because such a schema invites us to look for the discontinuities in his philosophy *in the wrong place.*

For the crucial moments in the philosophical conjuring trick performed by the author of the *Tractatus* are ones that are performed by him on himself. They take place at a stage prior to any at which he imagines the activity of propounding substantive philosophical doctrine to begin. Thus, throughout his later work, Wittgenstein is pervasively concerned to practice a method of philosophical investigation that enables us to locate those moments in our thinking in which, unbeknownst to ourselves, we first broach philosophical ground—those moments in which, though nothing beyond the obvious seems yet to have been asserted, a note of metaphysical insistence has already crept in and an unwarranted requirement on how things must be has been laid down. One will not fully appreciate the bearing on his early work that later Wittgenstein takes such a method of investigation to have, if one fails to appreciate the extent to which (what he later regards and criticizes as) the central philosophical doctrines of the *Tractatus* were of such a sort that they were able to appear to its author, at the time of writing, not to be 'philosophical doctrines' at all: they were able to appear utterly innocuous and altogether innocent of metaphysical commitment. If we fail to appreciate this about the *Tractatus*—if we fail to understand the radically anti-doctrinal character of the author's undertaking in that book—and look instead for explicit doctrines of the sort we would look for in other books,

then most of what we will readily identify as its central doctrines are ones that serve as the central targets of the early (as well as the later) work; and they will turn out to be couched in the very propositions that are earmarked as the ones we must overcome if we are to understand the author of the work. Thus we will be led into the dead-end of the standard sort of reading that we discussed above, in section 2. It is interesting in this connection to note how many of the doctrines of the sort that standard readers ascribe to the *Tractatus* and that resolute readers are committed to rejecting—such as 'the doctrine of showing', the commitment to the existence of ineffable truths, and various optional subsidiary doctrines (such as realism, mentalism, solipsism, etc.) and optional subsidiary commitments (such as a distinction between grasping and 'grasping', saying and 'conveying', etc.)—never figure in any of the passages in Wittgenstein's later writing where he is explicitly concerned to criticize something he identifies as a questionable philosophical commitment actually held by the author of the *Tractatus*.[81] What figure in such passages instead are the sort of metaphysical commitments listed in the passage from Diamond quoted above—commitments that later Wittgenstein came to think do indeed presuppose a theory but that early Wittgenstein was able to think merely fell out of the activity of clarification itself.[82] He thought that they could be exhibited through the practice of that activity, and were not commitments to any substantive theory.

One very common sort of criticism of resolute readings (that we have not discussed above) rests upon a failure to distinguish between these two importantly different sorts of theoretical commitments. In the absence of such a distinction, it is bound to seem painfully easy to criticize resolute readings on the basis of putative external 'evidence' drawn from Wittgenstein's later writings: in order to sink a resolute reading, all one needs to do is to find a passage somewhere in Wittgenstein's later writings that criticizes a substantial philosophical commitment that he identifies as essential to the program of philosophical clarification that the *Tractatus* seeks to practice. Such passages cease to appear to be embarrassments to resolute readings, however, as soon as it becomes clear that it is open to resolute readers to regard the *Tractatus* (as Diamond evidently does in the passage quoted above, and as later Wittgenstein evidently did) as a paradigmatic expression of the metaphysical spirit in philosophy Once this becomes clear, the task of criticizing resolute readings ought to begin to seem a somewhat more delicate and difficult (and hopefully also a somewhat more interesting and rewarding) enterprise than it has sometimes seemed to some of our critics. For it will not suffice merely to collect passages in which later Wittgenstein is criticizing early Wittgenstein in order to criticize a resolute reading; one needs to devote enough attention to each passage in which such a criticism figures to be able to make out *what* is being criticized and what *sort* of criticism it is that is there being entered.[83] There is certainly nothing wrong with looking to remarks about the *Tractatus* in Wittgenstein's later writings for a source of possible evidence in weighing the merits of alternative readings of his early book. But reliance on such remarks cannot serve as a surrogate

for having an independently philosophically coherent and textually plausible account of what he was up to in the *Tractatus.* And, whenever one does wish to adduce external evidence of this sort for or against a particular reading, then it must be pondered and weighed (rather than merely adduced as self-evidently devastating).

We cannot enter here into a consideration of the many passages in Wittgenstein's later writing that might offer us additional 'external' clues as to how he might have understood what he wanted to be doing in philosophy at the time of having completed the *Tractatus.* (It would take a paper considerably longer than the present one to sift and assess even a small fraction of the evidence here at all responsibly.) The task is rendered somewhat more arduous than is sometimes appreciated by the fact that in his later writings Wittgenstein is primarily concerned to bring out what is *wrong* in his earlier way of thinking; he is not primarily concerned in such passages, for example, to highlight continu ities in his philosophy. (Though if one is on the lookout for them, when reading other remarks in his later writings, then a great many of them are hard to miss.) His aim, generally, when later reflecting on one or another aspect of his earlier way of thinking, is to try to pinpoint its philosophical Achilles' heel. One therefore needs to handle such retrospective comments in his later writings with some care, if one wishes to tease out of them a portrayal of what his earlier way of thinking might have been, such that it would have had the power to captivate a philosopher with his high standards of rigor and clarity, with his determination to think things through to the bloody end, and with his desire not only to avoid but to put an end to metaphysics. We would, nevertheless, like to conclude with the following suggestion: an appeal of a resolute reading is that it may be able to make good sense of why Wittgenstein is concerned to focus on precisely those commitments that he does single out for criticism, in the passages in his later work where he is actually occupied with the task of criticizing the *Tractatus* (and thus also of why he is not drawn to mention the *Tractatus* when singling out for criticism in his later work just the sorts of views that resolute readings are committed to not ascribing to that work). Thus not only is it not a part of resolute readings, as such, to defend any version of an excessively strong continuity thesis (of the sort, for example, that Williams attributes to us), but, on the contrary, it *can* be a central motivation of such readings (and *is* a central motivation of our reading) to try to improve upon existing accounts of the discontinuities in Wittgenstein's philosophy by furnishing a reading of the early work that affords a more promising background for a textually satisfying and philosophically nuanced account of where the real discontinuities lie.

Notes

1 After some correspondence on the topic, Ogden and Wittgenstein settle on 'to make propositions clear' as a translation of *das Klarwerden von Sätzen;* Pears and

McGuinness render it as 'the clarification of propositions'. Neither of these renderings is ideal; each has something in its favor. We employ both. Wittgenstein's original understanding of this activity of 'making clear' or 'clarification' is a guiding topic of this paper.

2   The characterization of such a reading as 'resolute' is first due to Thomas Ricketts and first used in print by Warren Goldfarb in his 1997, at p.64; cf. also p.73, note 10.

3   Meredith Williams speaks not of 'resolute readings' but of 'the austere reading'.

4   To mention only some of the most notable cases, and leaving to one side anyone who has ever been a student of either of us, the following scholars have all written articles that advance readings of Wittgenstein's work that (seem at least to us) *clearly* to qualify as resolute in the sense adumbrated below: Piergiorgio Donatelli, Juliet Floyd, Warren Goldfarb, Martin Gustafsson, Michael Kremer, Oskari Kuusela, Thomas Ricketts, and Matt Ostrow. Yet we find that we have local—and in some cases quite deep—disagreements with almost all of these scholars. (And each of them would probably be able to say the same thing about the relation of their work on the *Tractatus* to that of almost all of the others.) Then there are many cases that are not so clear, but no less noteworthy: there are scholars—such as, for example, Eli Friedlander, Hidé Ishiguro, Marie McGinn, Brian McGuinness, and the late Peter Winch—whose readings are very different from each other and each of whom would seem to fall into 'the enemy camp', if the battle lines are drawn in ways our critics have often sought to draw them; but about each of these readings it is by no means so clear (at least to us) whether or not it is right to think of the reading in question as belonging in a box together with resolute readings. If there was perhaps fairly recently still a time when it made sense to think of there being something like a standard sort of reading of the *Tractatus* and a handful of dissenters, those days are now certainly over. There is an increasing variety of genuinely interesting ways to dissent on offer. Anyone seriously interested in coming to understand the book stands to gain from this diversity of readings of the *Tractatus.* For each such reading can help shed light on the strengths and limitations of the others and thus on various aspects of the text itself. The sooner the present controversy concerning the interpretation of the *Tractatus* advances past the stage in which the most pressing question appears to be one about which of two 'camps' one ought to belong to, and the sooner it comes to be focused on detailed questions concerning how the text is best read, the more progress can be attained in achieving a genuine understanding of this extraordinarily difficult book.

5   Peter Sullivan makes this basic point forcefully in his 2002. But he does so with some misplaced polemical animus, partly because he sees the schematic character of their claims about how to approach the text as posing a problem for resolute readers, rather than merely indicating how much remains to be done, in the way of understanding the text, once a commitment to undertake to read the work resolutely is in place. To undertake to read the work resolutely means nothing more than to undertake to read it *in a certain way*—and thus to introduce certain constraints on what will count as an acceptable reading (and, in particular, on what will count as having thrown away the ladder). But to commit oneself to reading the text in such a way is not yet to have a reading, if what one means by 'having a reading' is to have a full story about each of the rungs of the ladder and each of the transitions from one rung to the next. Some of Sullivan's polemical animus seems simply to rest

here on a misunderstanding of how much we think is accomplished by merely getting clear about the basic commitments of the text insisted upon by a resolute reading, as such. Our suggestion that the text has these basic commitments has met with fierce opposition (as evidenced, for example, by the essay by Meredith Williams to which we reply below). So the debate has had a tendency to become bogged down over extremely elementary questions. But we agree with Sullivan that if the debate over whether the text has these commitments were settled in favor of the resolute reading, many interesting questions (about how to understand the details of the dialectic that is meant to drive the reader up the ladder) would remain to be worked out. But what does it mean to go on and 'work out' these details? Part of what may fuel Sullivan's dissatisfaction here is a further commitment on his part to a very particular conception of what would count as 'really having a story' about how the *Tractatus* works. We take these issues up briefly in section 4 of this paper.

6   When we speak here of 'propositions', we are translating Wittgenstein's *'Sätz'*. The term *'Satz'* in the *Tractatus* floats between meaning (1) a propositional symbol (as, e.g., in §§3.3ff and §§4ff) and (2) a propositional sign (as, e.g., in §§5.473ff and §6.54). It is important to the method of the *Tractatus* that the recognition that certain apparent cases of (1) are merely cases of (2) be a recognition that the reader achieve on his own. Consequently, at certain junctures, the method of the *Tractatus* requires that the reference of *'Satz'* remain provisionally neutral as between (1) and (2). Many of our uses of the terms 'proposition' and 'sentence' will be correspondingly neutral.

7   The ascription to Wittgenstein of (what Conant has called) 'an austere conception of nonsense' is therefore only a corollary of this second feature of a resolute reading. Commitment to 'austerity' involves the rejection of a particular conception of nonsense (see, e.g., §§5.473–5.4733) that the *Tractatus* is particularly concerned to reject—one that many subsequent readers, starting with Carnap, have particularly concerned to ascribe to that work. But, contrary to what some of our critics have claimed, we do not take a commitment to 'austerity' to constitute any more than that. We shall return to this issue in section 4.

8   Thus, for example, by placing great emphasis on certain remarks from Diamond's essay 'Throwing Away the Ladder' (in Diamond 1991), while misinterpreting those remarks, Meredith Williams manages to convince herself that Diamond seeks to ascribe to the *Tractatus* a theory of sense—a theory which allows one, for example, to determine that a particular propositional sign is meaningless by ascertaining that it has failed to meet a condition of bipolarity set forth by the theory. (One therefore finds Williams attributing to Diamond forms of argument that can be summarized as follows: 'The bipolarity condition for sentencehood is violated because if this sentence is meaningful, it is necessarily true.') But what really leads Williams to this reading of Diamond is her antecedent conviction that any reading of the *Tractatus* must ascribe to its author a commitment to some such theory or other. So the only interesting question in this area for Williams is (not *whether* Diamond and other resolute readers subscribe to some such theory, but rather) *which* theory it is they rely upon. We shall return to this issue in section 3.

9   Peter Sullivan, for example, as we shall see below, is concerned to present a very different sort of criticism of resolute readings. So, too, is Marie McGinn; see, for example, her 1999.

10   In what follows, we are replying to Williams's 'Nonsense and Cosmic Exile: The Austere Reading of the *Tractatus*' and Sullivan's 'What is the *Tractatus* About?' both published in the present volume. This paper is not intended to be a *general* reply to our critics. Nothing of the sort is possible. (Those who imagine that such a thing ought to be easily possible, and that we should get on with it, seem to imagine that there is some straightforwardly surveyable set of points that unites all of our critics in their opposition to our reading. But we have not found this to be the case.) A host of different sometimes relatively straightforward misunderstandings, and sometimes not-so-straightforward points of disagreement, crop up in discussions of this topic. Indeed, often the disagreements cut across the supposed party lines that divide resolute and non-resolute readers. (Thus, for example, though Williams and Sullivan are united in their dissatisfaction with 'the' resolute reading, many of the points that Williams adduces as grounds for opposing a resolute reading place her, as far as we can ascertain, no less at odds with Sullivan's reading than with any put forward by a self-identified resolute reader.) We do hope in our remarks here, however, to make progress in clearing up at least *some* of the most prevalent misunderstandings abroad regarding our way of reading the *Tractatus.* We are very grateful to the editors of the present volume for providing us with this excellent forum in which to do so. We regret that discussion of other remaining significant misunderstandings and interesting points of genuine disagreement will have to await yet another occasion.

11   The passage runs as follows:

> 'Language (or thought) is something unique'—this proves to be a superstition (*not* a mistake!), itself produced by grammatical illusions.
> And now the impressiveness retreats to these illusions, to the problems.
> (*Philosophical Investigations,* §110)

The tendency of thought here at issue, Wittgenstein says, 'proves to be a superstition (*not* a mistake!)'. Tolerance of contradiction would involve a tolerance for (what Wittgenstein here calls) 'mistakes'.

12   See Conant 2003 and Diamond forthcoming B for further discussions of this topic.

13   It is worth taking a moment to say, in case it is not clear, that our remarks here are by no means directed at Williams alone. It is not at all uncommon for proponents of standard readings to attempt to cover up the problems with their readings by ascribing to early Wittgenstein a quite remarkable tolerance for incoherence—a tolerance that simply does not fit with his clear willingness to treat apparent counter-examples with care and seriousness, as comes out in his treatment of 'A believes that p', and of the incompatibility of color ascriptions with each other. The word 'paradox' is misused if it is pasted on to a reading that simply stops at the point at which serious questions arise about how Wittgenstein is supposed to have thought about the deep-going incoherence to which the reading appears to commit him.

14   *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics,* p.18.

15   This way of picturing 'the limits of logic' begins to run into trouble as soon as one begins to try to think it through. One is led to ask what it would be to 'move into'

the realm outside the limit if it wasn't thinking in the realm outside the limit. 'Move' is a metaphor for doing what? Grasping what's out there without actually thinking it? Standard readings of the *Tractatus* often try to buy some wiggle room here by characterizing what is involved in transgressing the limits of logic more circumspectly, hence not as '*thinking* what's outside the limit', but rather as *attempting* to think it (e.g. by attempting to say what's outside the corresponding limit of language). But one runs out of wiggle room quickly here.

16 For further discussion of this (quasi-geometrical) picture of 'the limits of thought' and early Wittgenstein's criticisms of it, see Conant 1992.

17 See Conant 2002: notes 4 (p.425), 22 and 23 (p.429), 27 (p.430).

18 See especially the wording of her description of what she takes Diamond to deny, and what she herself accepts, namely that there is a doctrine of showing in the *Tractatus,* according to which Wittgenstein tries to intimate truths about reality and language that cannot be said. This suggests that there is an elaboration of (something called) 'a say/show distinction' in the book to which she is especially attuned but which Diamond is forced to overlook or deny. But there simply is not, in anything that Wittgenstein says in the book about saying and showing, anything that has a clear connection with 'intimating truths about reality and language' through the production of nonsensical sentences. Williams repeatedly suggests the opposite, but with no textual basis. To insist (as, for example, Conant has in 'The Method of the *Tractatus*') that one needs to distinguish between *showing* and *elucidating* is not to deny that there is a distinction between *showing* and *saying* in the book. (We return to this issue in section 3.) It is only to deny that what commentators have mostly taken the distinction between saying and showing to be —and, in particular, what they have taken 'showing' to be—is in the book. One might want to say, in expounding what the *Tractatus* calls 'showing', that 'Jamie the Zebra has died at the Zoo' *shows* that it is about Jamie (§4.1211: 'Thus a proposition *"Fa"* shows that in its sense the object *a* occurs'), or that it *shows* what it says to be so (§4.022: 'The proposition *shows* how things stand, *if* it is true'); but, if that sort of case exemplifies 'showing', we are exactly nowhere, so far, in understanding how 'The world is everything that is the case' illuminates anything. That the sentence about the zebra might be said to *show* this or that depends on the senseful use of the signs in it; a sentence the signs in which are not used sensefully, and in which the use is not a 'canceling out' sort of use exemplified by tautologies and contradictions, is one which does not show anything in the sense which is exemplified by the zebra example.

19 There are passages which suggest that Williams means by 'the doctrine of showing' something roughly like this: a sentence like 'The world is everything that is the case' cannot, according to the theory of meaning in the *Tractatus,* be held to say what it appears to say, but it can nevertheless be held to illuminate or to show what one had taken it to be attempting to say. But that view certainly cannot be found in the passages in the *Tractatus* which concern 'showing'.

20 This is not the only problem. Any such story (even a rough story) of how the meaningless propositions convey insights would have to depend either on considering the signs in the proposition or on considering the symbols, and there does not appear to be any way of constructing such an account which would not provide a disproof (by counterexample) of views about signs and symbols to which Wittgenstein would have to be taken to be committed, so it would seem, on

standard readings. This point would apply also to the interpretation of the 'doctrine of showing' that we discuss in the previous note.

21   A further part of the problem here is that it is difficult to see how there could be even a rough story, of which Wittgenstein might have availed himself, about how specific meaningless sentences are tied to specific insights which is not a story about what the sentences in question *mean*—and, if so, that would provide another big dose of 'paradox', otherwise known as incoherence.

22   How are we to square these consequences with, for example, §4 ('The thought is the significant proposition') and the many related sections? If it were to be suggested that Wittgenstein accepted two quite different senses of 'thinkable', so that the insights of his book were, in one sense, not thinkable, but were thinkable in some other sense, how is this supposed to be got out of the text? Is it supposed to come out of the 'doctrine of showing'? How, then, does that 'doctrine' do such work? There is in such a suggestion a measure of desperation.

23   How are we to square these consequences with, for example, §4.024 ('To understand a proposition is to know what is the case, if it is true') and the many related sections? Shall we now multiply senses of 'understanding'? This multiplication game, once begun, will have to go on to encompass multiple senses of the expressions 'inferring', 'judging', and so on, across the entire spectrum of expressions for the exercises of logical capacities.

24   For an interesting discussion of a further problem that the standard sort of reading runs into here, as soon as it attempts to take the conception of logic put forward in the *Tractatus* at all seriously, see Warren Goldfarb's article '*Das Überwinden:* AntiMetaphysical Readings of the *Tractatus*' (in preparation). Goldfarb argues that, if showing is a kind of communication, then there is a kind of content that is showable, and logical truths (if they are able to show) must partake of such content. He then goes on to argue that this would undo what Wittgenstein thought he had accomplished by making clear that logic has no content—that a proposition of logic is *sinnlos* and that 'theories that make a proposition of logic appear contentful *[gehaltvoll]* must be false' (§6.111).

25   These four objections are by no means entirely independent of one another, as will become clear in our discussion of them below. Each depends to some extent on the other three, and the first two are really two facets of one single extended misunderstanding.

26   The other main source of this misconception stems from her assumption that resolute readers *must* be operating with a covert theory of nonsense. A proper response to the 'you, too' argument must therefore come in two parts, addressing both her misreading of what an austere conception of nonsense involves and her misunderstanding of what sorts of theoretical commitments it depends upon.

27   Diamond 1991, pp. 195–7. 195–7.

28   Conant 2002, p. 423.

29   It is worth mentioning that the view that Williams here attributes to us is one that some commentators on the *Tractatus* have held. See the references to Proops and Anscombe below.

30   The preceding paragraph has been lifted from Diamond's article 'Criss-cross Philosophy' (forthcoming D) where this topic is discussed at greater length.

31   We are drawing here on remarks in 'Notes Dictated to Moore' (published in *Notebooks 1914–1916,* pp. 107–18); see p. 115.

32 Williams suggests that resolute readers take the context principle to provide
    grounds for a view of nonsense powerful enough to support diagnoses of
    philosophical sentences as violating conditions of meaningfulness. But the context
    principle is not taken by resolute readers to be the basis of any such account.

33 There is a passage in Williams's essay in which she seems to suggest that Diamond's
    point would be that 'A is an object' is nonsense, if 'A' has the meaning it has in
    other contexts in which it has meaning, and if 'object' has the use it usually has.
    Williams gives something like that as Diamond's account of why' "Caesar is a
    prime number" is nonsense': supposedly, if the personal name and number
    predicate mean what they do elsewhere, then the sentence is nonsense. But that is
    not Diamond's view, either of 'Caesar is a prime number' or of 'A is an object'.
    There is, according to resolute readings, no 'if thus-and-such is what the words
    mean, then the sentence is nonsense' or 'then the sentence is a syntactic mess'.

34 To claim, as we do here, that the activity of truth-functional analysis was *taken* by
    early Wittgenstein 'not to depend on any theory of language put forward in the
    book' does not in any way preclude us, *qua* resolute readers, from also being able
    to claim that early Wittgenstein was mistaken about this and that later Wittgenstein
    came to appreciate this. We return to this topic in section 5.

35 We borrow this term 'interrogation' from Goldfarb 1997.

36 Some scholars who have some sympathy with our reading of the *Tractatus* have
    misunderstood us on this point and have taken this alone to mark a sufficient reason
    for thinking there must be 'a third way'; and some who have sought to defend us in
    print have also misrepresented our view on this matter. Conant, for example, in a
    number of his recent writings, in order to avoid misunderstanding on this point, has
    carefully distinguished between 'showing' (in scarequotes) and showing
    (simpliciter)—always using only the former to refer to the sort of 'gesturing'
    standard readers take Tractarian nonsense to be able to do and always using only
    the latter to refer to that which the *Tractatus* itself takes senseful, tautologous and
    contradictory propositional symbols to do. But it is striking how many of Conant's
    readers, on both sides of the debate, take his criticisms of the former to constitute a
    rejection of the latter—as if the mere idea of showing itself already presupposed an
    implicit commitment to the idea of there being something ineffable which is thus
    shown. But this still cannot entirely explain why people who are not inclined to
    acquiesce in a standard reading have taken resolute readers either to reject or at
    least to be suspicious of the very idea of 'showing' (see e.g. Sullivan 2002, pp. 49–
    52). Part of the explanation, no doubt, is that so much energy has been directed by
    resolute readers towards absolving Wittgenstein of any commitment to (what
    Williams calls) 'showing' (as something that nonsense can do) that it has directed
    attention away from the topic of (what Wittgenstein calls) showing (and other
    topics that are not directly tied to the topic of nonsense).

37 Diamond 1991, p. 198.

38 Conant 2002, p. 424.

39 As we have seen, Williams's version of a standard reading (like many others) fails
    on both of these counts; textually more sensitive versions of a standard reading fail
    only on the second count.

40 A proper treatment of this topic would obviously require considerably more space
    than we can afford to devote to it here. All our brief remarks in the next paragraph
    are meant to do is to underscore the main point of the present paragraph (namely,

that resolute readings, as such, are not committed to throwing away the distinction between saying and showing) by indicating how the distinction can be developed in a manner that is consistent with the core commitments of resolute readings.

41 We are, of course, not here denying that speaking about some subject matter requires knowledge of content pertaining to that particular subject.

42 Goldfarb 1997, p.66.

43 The remark in question occurs in Diamond 2000 at p. 165.

44 Conant 2002, p. 378.

45 To mention only one example, he points out (in Sullivan 2002, pp. 46–9) that certain resolute readers have evinced a special hostility to explanations of features of language via an appeal to features of reality, but have seemed to evince a greater tolerance towards the reverse order of explanation, thus making it seem as if resolution had something 'particularly to do with repudiating a certain sort of realism' (p. 47). This is an astute observation about a tendency that is in the literature. (It has, no doubt, something to do with the etiology of certain resolute readings in a prior rejection of certain realist readings.) A resolute reading should be equally committed to rejecting explanation in either direction here and therefore should not accord realism any privileged status as the target of criticism.

46 Sullivan characterizes 'the core commitments' of 'the' resolute reading as follows:

> Resolution's first commitment is a view of what nonsense is and what it cannot be: nonsense is a failure to make sense; it cannot be a matter of making *the wrong kind* of sense…Wittgenstein presents this view of nonsense at *TLP* 5.4733ff… Adapting terminology of Conant's, I'll call commitment to this view of nonsense 'austerity'. The second element of resolution is a 'full-hearted recognition' that when Wittgenstein describes his own propositions as 'nonsense' his meaning is that they are nonsense in the only way the austere view of *TLP* 5.473ff allows, that they fail to make sense.
>
> (Sullivan 2002, p. 45)

Sullivan then goes on to say: 'The two components of resolution so far introduced are, I believe, clear…and clearly correct' (p. 46). It is perhaps worth noting, however, that his characterization here of the view of nonsense that resolution rejects is merely the corollary identified above of (what we call in section 1) the second feature of a resolute reading. It is difficult to square some of the things Sullivan says in criticism of resolute readings with a whole-hearted endorsement on his part of the second feature in its full generality (and not merely the particular corollary of it that is at issue in §§5.4733ff and that Sullivan dubs 'austerity').

47 Thus, as Sullivan rather charmingly sums up his attitude: 'Some writers in the field have reacted to the resolute reading with an outraged, "No! But surely…!" My own reaction, at least to its core ideas, is better captured, "Well, yes, so far. And now…?"' (Sullivan 2002, p. 44).

48 Sullivan does think that, along the way, in their zeal to make it seem that what they have offered can amount to a reading, resolute readers also do make some positive mistakes, engaging in specific interpretative moves that he thinks involve specific misinterpretations of the text.

49 Sullivan, for example, complains: '[A]s a guide to interpretation, the austere view of nonsense is too undiscriminating' (2002, p. 62). We agree. We think the austere view of nonsense is an important thing to be clear about (if you want to understand what Wittgenstein is up to in the book); but we don't think that once you've gotten clear on this one matter, you're home free (so that, merely by coming to see that Wittgenstein rejects the sort of conception of nonsense that is usually attributed to him, one has thereby furnished oneself with anything that deserves to be termed 'a guide for interpretation' on any very weighty understanding of the sort of guidance such a 'guide' ought to supply).

50 We do think that Sullivan 2002 contains a number of such misunderstandings of Conant and Diamond.

51 In Sullivan's example, P and Q are propositions described in such a way that P does indeed entail Q.

52 Goldfarb's discussion of these passages in 'Metaphysics and Nonsense' builds on Thomas Ricketts 1996; see especially pp. 88–94. 88–94.

53 That the author of the *Tractatus* thinks there is a kind of double-think inherent in philosophical discourse we do not dispute. What we dispute is that he thinks that it is (something describable as) 'the system' which enables us, in a fairly direct way, to see that there is a kind of double-think inherent in philosophical discourse.

54 Many philosophers do read the *Tractatus* in exactly this sort of way; for example, both Anscombe and Proops take it that we are meant by the book to come to identify certain propositions as problematic by recognizing that they are not 'bipolar'. See Proops 2002, p. 300; and Anscombe 1963, p. 85.

55 Sullivan 2002, pp. 50–1. 50–1.

56 Michael Kremer (2002) discusses in detail issues that we cannot touch on here, including the application of the term *'Bedeutung'* in connection with expressions joined by an equals sign. We are greatly indebted to Kremer for comments on our treatment of 'P entails Q' in an earlier draft, as well as for conversations and correspondence on numerous other topics discussed in this paper.

57 For a discussion of why these various topics are all grouped together in the 6s (along with the topics of ethical and philosophical uses of language), see Diamond forthcoming A and Conant 2004.

58 The number of Ts and the number of terms in the final parenthesis are determined by the number of propositions that we need to reach in an analysis of P and Q in order for the entailment to be set out as a truth-table tautology. That any entailment can be so written is built into the method of clarification; this is a feature of the *Tractatus* which Wittgenstein did not take, at the time of writing the book, to reflect a substantial doctrine, but about which he changed his view.

59 Many commentators have taken the expressions *'Unsinn'* and *'Scheinsatz'* to be synonyms in the *Tractatus*—as they often are in the writings of Carnap and other members of the Vienna Circle who were influenced by the *Tractatus.* But this assumption leads to trouble when one tries to interpret many of Wittgenstein's remarks in the 6s. For the *Tractatus,* any propositional sign that is *Unsinn* is a

Scheinsatz; but the converse does not hold, as the treatment of mathematical propositions makes especially clear.

60   For a particularly nice example of a case in which a very good philosopher allows herself to take someone to be producing nonsense, when he is simply using words in a way that is different from what she expects, see Anscombe 1963, p. 85. She imagines her way into what she takes to be the nonsensical ambition of Flew, and does not pause to ask whether there is not some way of taking his words which she might recognize to be intended by him, which makes his claim senseful and indeed correct, though poorly expressed. Diamond discusses this example in her forthcoming C.

61   Sullivan 2002, p. 75, note 28; cf. also p. 62.

62   It is worth noting that, however appropriately such a charge may be leveled at its lowest exemplars, it is not clear that 'pernicketiness' need characterize the practice of (anything properly termed) 'ordinary-language philosophy' as such. For a characterization of that practice that is not open to such a charge, see either the opening pages of Cavell 1976 or the title essay in the same volume.

63   Sullivan justifies this reading of the passage, in part, through a particular understanding of how to construe the 'always, whenever' when Wittgenstein says:

> The right method of philosophy would be this: To say nothing except what can be said,…and then always, whenever someone wished to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had given no meaning to certain signs in his propositions.
>
> (§6.53)

Sullivan says: '[T]he method is to be triggered "always, whenever"—that is, *as soon as*—"the other" indulges his inclination towards philosophy' (2002, p. 62).

64   It seems to be part of Sullivan's picture of what resolute readers hold that they will be disinclined 'to allow', as he puts it at one point, 'the train of nonsense to develop under its own momentum' (2002, p. 62)—that they, like the practitioner of §6.53 (on his reading of the remark), will not be able to keep themselves from pouncing. But, on our reading of the *Tractatus,* it is essential to its method of clarification that one not pounce and that the train be allowed to roll. Indeed, not only do we not have any interest in cutting off the philosophical dialectic prematurely, as Sullivan suggests, but we are worried that, contrary to his own intention, Sullivan's proposals (for how to bring 'the system' to bear on particular putative examples of philosophical nonsense) may have just this effect. As we indicated above (in our discussion of the topic of the philosopher as would-be 'spotter' of philosophical illusions), one of our worries about Sullivan's account is that it threatens to make it seem easier to 'spot' philosophical nonsense than Wittgenstein thought it could be.

65   We do not hereby mean to claim that the *Tractatus* itself adheres to (what §6.53 calls) 'the only strictly correct method' in philosophy. For further discussion, see Conant 2002, note 131.

66   This is not to deny that such ascriptions may serve a genuinely elucidatory purpose in attempting to achieve clarity about what leads one to say certain things in

philosophy, and therefore that such ascriptions can play an important role in characterizing some of the philosophical targets of the *Tractatus.*

67 Warren Goldfarb makes this same point forcefully in *'Das Überwinden'.*

68 We therefore concur with Goldfarb in holding that a 'piecemeal' approach is required to understanding how the book undermines its own propositions.

69 And a further question that sometimes divides them is the following: how important is *that* question to an understanding of later Wittgenstein? How important is it to arrive at an accurate account of Wittgenstein's original self-understanding as author of his early work, in order to achieve an accurate appreciation of what he later thought was confused and self-deluded in his earlier self-understanding of what he had achieved in philosophy?

70 There is also a discussion of the significance of Wittgenstein's changed understanding of clarification, taken to be the aim of philosophy, in her forthcoming D.

71 See especially Kuusela 2003.

72 Diamond 1991, pp. 184–5.

73 We choose this example because it occurs in Diamond 1991, the text by a resolute reader that Williams most frequently cites.

74 Diamond 1991, pp. 18–19. 18–19. In our list below of metaphysical commitments embodied in the *Tractatus,* we shall be using sentences of the sort that occur in this passage, sentences that 'appear to be about' the essential nature of language. We are not claiming that these sentences are anything but plain nonsense, or that Wittgenstein in any way intended to communicate a metaphysics of language. It was not until much later, when he had realized that his early conception of philosophical clarification had built into it a quite particular view of language, that he could recognize the metaphysical commitments for what they were.

75 It was, above all, in connection with this presupposition that Piero Sraffa's Neapolitan gesture of disdain (along with his query 'What is the logical form of *this?*') was able to do its picture-shattering work.

76 This commitment involves a great many subsidiary commitments about the character of the process of analysis, about such a process presupposing a point at which the analysis terminates, about when such a point is reached, about what is thereby disclosed, etc.

77 There are a great many subsidiary commitments that come into play here as well, through the commitment to the idea of an absolutely perspicuous notation. That any entailment can be set out as a truth-table tautology, in the manner discussed in section 4, is one example of such a commitment (which, as we noted above, Wittgenstein did not take, at the time of writing the book, to reflect a substantial doctrine, but about which he changed his view).

78 Upon reading a draft of this paper, Michael Kremer pointed out to us that the precise nature of the metaphysical commitments listed goes a long way towards explaining why the first thing Wittgenstein wrote, upon returning to philosophy, was 'Some Remarks on Logical Form'. For that paper, despite all the defects that Wittgenstein almost immediately came to see in it, begins to unravel just these metaphysical requirements.

79 That is, early Wittgenstein fails to realize that the very idea of 'an absolutely clear way of expressing thoughts' itself represents a substantial metaphysical

commitment. For an illuminating discussion of this idea, see Gustafsson 2003. We are grateful to Gustafsson for comments on a previous draft of this paper.

80 *Zettel,* §444. Oskari Kuusela (forthcoming) quotes the following essentially identical remark from the *Nachlass,* which he suggestively retranslates as follows:

> We have a *theory*…of the proposition; of language, but it does not seem to us a theory. For it is characteristic of such a theory that it looks at a special, clearly intuitive case and says: '*That* shows how things are in every case. This case is the exemplar of *all* cases.' 'Of course! It has to be like that,' we say, and are satisfied. We have arrived at a form of expression that strikes us as obvious. We have arrived at a form of expression that *enlightens us.*
>
> (Ts220 §93/Msl42 §105)

Kuusela prefaces his citation of this passage by saying 'The following characterisation that Wittgenstein provides of his early philosophy… suggests that he did not think he was putting forward a theory.' And, in going on to comment on the quotation, Kuusela remarks: '[A]lthough there is a theory of propositions, it is not recognised as one. Rather, it is as if we had caught a glimpse of something: as if we were directly perceiving the essence of propositions.' This nicely captures what we take to be Wittgenstein's later view of the character of his earlier unwitting entanglement in metaphysics.

81 One important difference between early and later Wittgenstein has, of course, to do with what he would regard as a substantial philosophical commitment—and hence with his later criticisms of his earlier commitments. But even where early and later Wittgenstein have a common target in their sights (and there are a great many such targets: mentalism, psychologism, solipsism, realism, idealism, ineffabilism, etc.), there is all the difference in the world in *how* the criticism is prosecuted. A great many of the most significant discontinuities in Wittgenstein's work therefore have to do not just with *what* comes in for criticism, but in what *sort* of criticism it comes in for. Every metaphysical doctrine criticized in the *Tractatus* must be treated again in the later work, only now in such a manner that the mode of 'interrogation' itself no longer presupposes a covert metaphysics. The aspiration to achieve such a philosophically presuppositionless mode of interrogation is common to the earlier and the later work, but its attainment comes to seem to later Wittgenstein to be an enormously more difficult matter than he had ever earlier imagined and to require an altogether different mode of philosophical composition —one which elicits an entirely different sort of engagement and cooperation on the part of a reader and in which the struggle to avoid philosophical assertion and commitment requires a far more circuitous and tentative manner of proceeding.

82 We are here disagreeing with certain resolute readers and, incidentally, thereby illustrating that a variety of resolute readings is, indeed, possible. Juliet Floyd, for example, has been concerned to advance (what she herself has dubbed) a *Jacobin reading*—a reading that denies that the *Tractatus* is committed to the idea of a 'completely adequate' analysis, and *a fortiori* to the metaphysical commitments

listed above that we take to be internal to its program of analysis. See, for example, Floyd 2002. We therefore feel obliged to reject some of what she offers as 'the best answer that can be given to those critics of Diamond (and other antimetaphysical readers of the *Tractatus*)'—namely, that, unlike Frege and Russell, early Wittgenstein 'does not think any notation can depict *the* grammar of language…*the* logical order' (p. 340). The possibility of our disagreement with *la Jacobine,* Floyd, on this fundamental matter furnishes a particularly vivid illustration of the extent to which the central features of a resolute reading (discussed in section 1) underdetermine a reading of the book as a whole.

A number of other resolute readers have favored such a Jacobin reading, including Rob Deans, Burton Dreben and Rupert Read, who has developed this sort of account in a series of recent articles. (We are indebted to Read for helpful comments and suggestions.)

83   Considerably more delicacy than just this is, in fact, required. It is quite mistaken to think that matters here can be settled simply by wheeling in a collection of passages from Wittgenstein (of, say, the form: 'I earlier thought…but the problem with this is …'; or: 'In the *Tractatus,* I held…, but now…') and dumping them on a reader, as if their sheer quantity alone could settle any interesting question on which resolute readers have taken a stand. The idea that one can mount a defense on behalf of standard readings simply by piling up such 'evidence', in the style of Johnny Cochrane, depends on the assumption that the collection of passages in question form a relevantly homogeneous category, so that no detailed interpretation of any individual exhibit is required—all that is required is some textual indication in each passage that later Wittgenstein is expressing some form of dissatisfaction with his earlier philosophy. In fact, on some of these lists of putative instances of external evidence adduced by our critics, there often figure a very heterogeneous collection of passages —only some of which are criticisms of commitments actually held by the author of the *Tractatus.* Not every such passage (in which the *Tractatus* is mentioned and in which a philosophical view is criticized) is mentioning a relevant commitment. Sometimes what is at issue are philosophical commitments that pertain to the *Tractatus* in that they figure centrally in that work, but already figure in that work only as intended targets of clarification. Sometimes what is at issue in such passages is a discussion of what, by Wittgenstein's later lights, is wrong-headed or inadequate in the Tractarian approach to criticizing the view in question. In other cases, what is at issue is something Wittgenstein earlier thought, but not necessarily at the time of having completed the *Tractatus.* Some of the passages our critics adduce arguably involve doctrines held by the *very* early Wittgenstein, before he turns on his earlier (comparatively Russellian) self in the *Tractatus.* (It is therefore crucial, in handling such passages, to be sensitive to the possibility of differences between the early Early Wittgenstein and the later Early Wittgenstein.) Sometimes what is at issue, in passages in the later work in which Wittgenstein criticizes what he 'earlier' thought, are views that he held when he returned to philosophy in 1929 and shortly thereafter. What is certainly at issue in at least some (and sometimes all) of the passages in such collections of external 'evidence' are discussions of the sorts of commitment that resolute readers can (and, indeed, often do hold) that later Wittgenstein wishes to criticize as commitments undertaken by the author of the *Tractatus.* But, as we have just argued above, the existence of such passages is no embarrassment to a resolute

reading, as such. Any case mounted against resolute readings must therefore rest on actual *readings* of the passages in question: on accounts of why the passages in question should discomfit resolute readers and on assessments of the merits of such readings over the available alternatives that resolute readers can (in many cases quite easily) bring to bear on such passages. Finally, in most cases, it will matter here *which* resolute reading is at issue; for, as our previous note about the possibility of Jacobin readings indicates, resolute readers can and often do differ amongst themselves about when and how Wittgenstein, in his later writings, is concerned to criticize the *Tractatus.*

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4
WITTGENSTEIN'S
METAPHILOSOPHICAL DEVELOPMENT
Paul Horwich

It is often said that Wittgenstein gave us two utterly distinct and contradictory philosophies, issuing from two radically different views of meaning: supposedly, the first of these philosophies, contained in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922), comes out of the theory that the meaning of a word is its *referent,* and the second one, articulated in the *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), comes out of a *use* theory of meaning. The main purpose of the present paper is to oppose this picture and to advocate an alternative. I will argue that the basis of Wittgenstein's thought was always his view of what *philosophy* is rather than his view of what *meaning* is. From that perspective we can see the key defect in the *Tractatus* as a certain relatively small incoherence within its *meta*philosophy, and we will be able to explain the central ideas of the *Investigations* as what emerge when this mistake is rectified. If that is right, then we ought to think of the *Tractatus* as providing a sort of flawed first draft of his mature position rather than a profoundly different and wholly rejected point of view.

Let us begin with a much-discussed *apparent* incoherence in the *Tractatus*. Consider the well-known passage from the end of the book, where Wittgenstein acknowledges that much of what has come before is by its own lights 'senseless', but tries to remove the sting from this concession by suggesting that these problematic earlier remarks can nonetheless help us to see things properly:

> 6.54 My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.)
>   He must surmount these propositions; then he sees the world rightly.

Naturally, the question arises as to whether the metaphor that Wittgenstein offers us here succeeds in rescuing his position. For how can anyone consistently endorse certain propositions and at the same time categorize them as senseless? Is not his resort to the image of 'using a ladder and then throwing it away' merely a vain attempt to mask a fatal difficulty?

In order to address this problem we need to be a little more concrete about it. In the course of the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein makes a series of interconnected

pronouncements on grammar, meaning, metaphysics and metaphilosophy. He claims—or seems to claim—

> Regarding *grammar.* that each 'proposition' (i.e. sentence+meaning) is constructed in the course of the following procedure: (i) combine primitive terms ('names') with one another to form elementary propositions; (ii) operate on these with 'not', 'and', 'every', etc., to form logically complex propositions; and (iii) introduce defined terms for the sake of abbreviation. Consequently, each proposition will have a definite basic content that may be articulated in terms of primitives and logical constants.
>
> Regarding *meaning:* that each name refers to a simple 'object'; that each elementary proposition 'depicts' a possible 'atomic' fact (and is true if and only if that fact exists); and that the meaning ('sense') of every other proposition is a function which yields a truth value for each possible combination of truth values assigned to the elementary propositions.
>
> Regarding *metaphysics:* that each possible atomic fact is a possible configuration of simple objects; and that the world—the collection of all actual facts—is determined by which such possibilities are realized and which are not.
>
> And regarding *metaphilosophy:* that philosophical questions and answers are disguised nonsense; they look meaningful but turn out to have no basic content (for they are not constructible by means of the three-stage procedure mentioned above). Therefore one should not engage in philosophical theorizing, but merely debunk, through conceptual analysis, other people's attempts to do so.

I will call this collection of pronouncements The *Tractatus* Theory'—or 'T³'. Now, returning to the 'ladder' problem, is there not a contradiction between Wittgenstein's claim that T³ is senseless and his claim that it can nonetheless help us to see the world rightly? How can T³ possibly articulate a correct view of things or rationally persuade us of anything—even of its own meaninglessness—if it doesn't make sense?

It seems to me that Wittgenstein has available to him an effective response to these sceptical questions. What he can well say is (a) that the sort of 'senselessness' displayed by T³ is not so extreme as to preclude its having logical consequences; therefore (b) that 'senselessness', in the present context, is not to be equated with utter gibberish, but rather with logical incoherence; (c) that supposing T³ to be correct is indeed 'senseless' (in this weak respect), for it leads to contradiction—it is the basis for a *reductio ad absurdum;* and (d) that the moral of this *reductio* argument is that the semantic and metaphysical concepts (such as *reference* and *object*) deployed in T³ are self-contradictory.[1] This interpretation might be fleshed out in various alternative directions. Perhaps Wittgenstein felt that, even though T³'s ontological doctrines cannot be coherently stated in the way it tries to, there is nonetheless something right about them—something that cannot

properly be *said* but is *shown* (i.e. is implicit in grammatical structure). But in that case he would be taking himself to have somehow managed to articulate what cannot really be articulated! Therefore a more plausible view to attribute to him is that there is *no* way of saving T^3's semantic and metaphysical doctrines and that they (including the show/say distinction) have to be completely rejected —though not as absolute nonsense. It seems to me that a reading of the *Tractatus* along these lines is correct, and that it succeeds in showing that the apparent internal conflict with which we have so far been occupied is not a genuine one.[2]

However, there is a further and deeper threat of incoherence within Wittgenstein's position—one that our proposed interpretation would do nothing to relieve: namely, a conflict between, on the one hand, his anti-theoretical metaphilosophical dictum to the effect that philosophy can do no more than expose pseudo-questions for what they are, and, on the other hand, the idea— embodied in the grammatical and logical doctrines that are developed for the diagnosis and treatment of such pseudo-questions—that one can legitimately produce philosophical theories of considerable intellectual value. Thus Wittgenstein prohibits philosophical theorizing on the basis of a philosophical theory This tension is quite distinct from the one that he acknowledges and addresses in his 'ladder' paragraph. And it is a *genuine* incoherence—no clever metaphor, or other form of fancy footwork, is going to be able to get him out of it.

What he has to do to resolve this difficulty, and what he *does* eventually do in the *Philosophical Investigations,* is to make a small but significant change in his view of what philosophy is—retaining most of it, but abandoning the component that is responsible for the internal conflict. Let us see how this is accomplished.

The *Tractatus* metaphilosophy involves the following sequence of ideas:

1 Philosophical questions are provoked by confusion (rather than by ignorance, which is the source of *scientific* questions).
2 Therefore, they articulate pseudo-problems, which can at best be eliminated, not solved.
3 Consequently, no philosophical explanations, theories, or discoveries are possible.
4 Philosophical confusions originate in misunderstandings about language.
5 To be more specific, such confusions arise because of the considerable distances between the superficial forms of certain propositions and their ultimate analyses in terms of fundamental primitives. For example, 'the F is G' should be analysed, following Russell, as '(x)(Fx & (y)(Fy x=y) x=y) & Gx)'. This distance can be so great that we can easily fail to appreciate a statement's real meaning. And in the case of certain statements, we fail to appreciate their complete lack of meaning.

It seems clear that the incoherence with which we are now concerned stems from the conflict between the *anti*-theoretical import of (1), (2), (3) and (4), and the detailed *theoretical* diagnosis of philosophical confusion that is offered in (5).

For that diagnosis is based on a substantive philosophical theory of language: namely that each proposition has an ultimate conceptual analysis to be provided in certain specified terms.

Consequently, Wittgenstein can hang on to the heart and the bulk of his metaphilosophy, but avoid the tension within it, if he gives up his theory-laden account in (5) of the way in which we are confused by language, and replaces it with an alternative. And this is exactly what he comes to do.[3] The metaphilosophy of the *Investigations* keeps (1), (2), (3) and (4). Thus Wittgenstein continues to hold that philosophical puzzlement derives from illusions engendered by language; and so he continues to hold that philosophy cannot yield knowledge. But he comes to see that the precise source of our linguogenic misunderstanding is not the gap between superficial grammatical form and 'underlying logical form'—a notion which he abandons—but is rather something with no theoretical presuppositions: namely, our tendency to be mesmerized by linguistic analogies. More specifically, he replaces (5) with

> 5* Philosophical confusion resides in the tendency to over-stretch analogies in the uses of words, to be unnecessarily perplexed by the conceptual tensions that result, and to wrongly feel that an *a priori* theory of the phenomenon in question is needed to demystify it.

To elaborate this a little: his idea is that the words in a certain small class (e.g. the numerals) are seen to function in many respects like the words in another more prominent class (e.g. names of physical objects); however, we tend to overlook the differences and, as a consequence, are inclined to raise improper (hence unanswerable) questions about the phenomena characterized by terms in the smaller class. We thereby fall into conceptual bewilderment—into an impression that these phenomena are extraordinarily weird; and the cure appears to be an appropriate *a priori* account of them. But, according to Wittgenstein, the peculiar puzzlement we feel is one from which no *theory* can adequately deliver us. What is needed, rather, is a rooting-out of its irrational sources. Moreover, besides being unmotivated, any *a priori* theory that we might be tempted to propose is bound to be defective in one way or another, depending on what sort of theory it is. For if we insist on the legitimacy of the questions, then the impossibility of answering them will lead to either scepticism or revisionism about the phenomena—and both sorts of theory are vitiated by the overstretched analogies on which they rely. On the other hand, if the questions are abandoned, then our continued demand for a substantive *a priori* theory (designed to rationalize their illegitimacy) will yield either a systematization of intuitions that has no explanatory value or, even worse, a senseless metaphysical inflation of truisms.

For example, the numerals function in many ways like names of physical objects. Therefore, overlooking the important differences, we are tempted to ask the sort of questions about the things that numerals designate (i.e. numbers) that

we ask about the referents of other names. Where are the numbers? What are they made of ? How can we interact with them? And if we can't, how is it possible to know anything about them? The traditional way of responding to such puzzles is to develop versions of the four sorts of *a priori* theory just mentioned—theories such as (a) the sceptical, 'Numbers don't exist, although it's useful to pretend they do' (Fictionalism); (b) the revisionist, 'Mathematical reality can't be the way it is naively conceived to be, as existing independently of human thought' (Constructivism); (c) the systematic, 'Mathematical facts may be derived from logical facts' (Logicism); or (d) the metaphysical, 'Numbers are not in space and time, but are nonetheless REAL objects' (Platonism). But from Wittgenstein's point of view these 'theoretical' responses are unwarranted (each in their own way) and take the questions more seriously than they deserve to be taken, given their confused origin. The right reaction to our puzzlement is to expose and eliminate the mistakes that provoke it—that is, to recognize how the questions derive from the exaggeration of linguistic analogies, how the puzzlement they induce is un-called-for, and how the theories designed to dispel that puzzlement are irrational. Once this has been done we will be left with no new knowledge—with no positive 'philosophy of mathematics'—but merely with a strengthened resistance to philosophical confusion.

Thus, as in the *Tractatus,* there can be no philosophical theories, explanations, or discoveries. But whereas in that book the diagnosis of philosophical confusion adverted to a sophisticated philosophical theory of language—rendering the overall account incoherent, as we have seen—the later metaphilosophy does not presuppose any such theory. It is fully anti-theoretical. The inconsistency has been removed.

But is this really so? Has the original difficulty really been avoided? It might well seem that the *Investigations* faces a conflict of exactly the same kind as we found in the *Tractatus:* namely, a contradiction between an anti-theoretical metaphilosophy and the view—which is surely a highly debatable *theory*—that philosophical problems are provoked by a specified form of linguistic confusion.

However, in the present context, unlike before, I do think that a bit of fancy footwork can help. What we might say on behalf of Wittgenstein is that his view of the nature of philosophical problems is indeed debatable—but nonetheless concerns matters that are not *theoretical*—i.e. not *hidden* from us. The distinction required here is that between, on the one hand, the *obvious, undeniable,* and *uncontroversial* and, on the other hand, what is *open to view*—where phenomena of the latter sort may remain unnoticed by those who are, for whatever reasons, not looking in the right direction. If philosophical problems really do derive, as Wittgenstein asserts, from a familiar species of linguistic confusion, then this is a phenomenon of the second kind. We should be able to *see*, both in particular cases and in general, how linguistic analogies can easily. produce conceptual tensions; how these tensions, when their source is unrecognized, will result in confusion; and how the alternate theoretical responses to such confusion will be unmotivated and irrational. These points may

not in fact be obvious to everyone; but, according to Wittgenstein, they can be made so with the help of well-chosen hints, illustrations, and alterations of perspective.[4] Thus Wittgenstein's later metaphilosophy is not, in his sense, a 'theory'; so there is no contradiction in its condemnation of such things.

The improvement in Wittgenstein's metaphilosophy to which I am drawing attention–the change from (5) to (5*)—lies at the bottom of the other major differences between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations.* Most importantly, it explains the huge emphasis that he comes to place on the fact that the various words in a language are used in extremely different ways. From the very outset of the *Investigations*—and throughout that work—we are advised to give characterizations of language that describe how idiosyncratically the different words are used—and not to be concerned with their referents or psychological concomitants. His point is not that theories of these other kinds would be incoherent or false or that they could serve no purpose at all, but that they are not what are needed for the effective disposal of philosophical problems. For insofar as these problems result from insufficient attention to linguistic variation—from the exaggeration of linguistic analogies—they must be treated by providing pertinent reminders of the divergent ways that terms are actually deployed.

It is crucial to appreciate the difference between this aspect of the *Investigations* —the focus on word-use—and a related but quite distinct point: namely, Wittgenstein's identification of the meaning of a word with its use. It is one thing to say, for the reason mentioned above, that philosophical illumination will be promoted by attending to how words are used, and quite a different thing to say that the meaning of a word consists in its use in the language. The first of these points evidently plays the predominant role in determining Wittgenstein's approach to particular philosophical problems—the problems that surround our notions of experience, mathematics, knowledge, art, and so on; and also that surround our notion of meaning. But it is the second point that is usually emphasized by commentators on Wittgenstein. Indeed, it has been given much more weight in his later thinking than it deserves.

For notice, to start with, that it is far from obvious that Wittgenstein changed his mind much about the nature of meaning *en route* from the *Tractatus* to the *Investigations.* After all, he explicitly acknowledges that the word 'meaning' is ambiguous: *Investigations* paragraph 43 defines meaning as use, but only 'For a large class of cases—though not all—in which we employ the word "meaning"'.

Clearly he is not—as is often wrongly supposed—saying that it is only the meanings of *some* words that may be identified with their uses. Rather, he is allowing that there are various cases in which, in speaking of a word's 'meaning', we have in mind something else—for example its referent, or its pragmatic force, or some concurrent intention. And this observation squares perfectly well with the *Tractatus* emphasis on meaning *qua* referent. Thus Wittgenstein's use conception of meaning does not contradict his *Tractatus* position. His change of view concerns not what meaning is, but which brand of meaning is philosophically important.[5]

Nor can credit be given to Wittgenstein's definition as the source of his new metaphilosophy. For in fact that metaphilosophy cannot (and need not) be derived from the use conception of meaning. It is often claimed, on the contrary, that Wittgenstein's objection to traditional philosophy as 'language on holiday' stems precisely from the idea that meaning consists in (and is therefore confined by) ordinary usage.[6] The reasoning attributed to him goes roughly as follows:

  i Meaning=use.
 ii Therefore any deployment of a word beyond its ordinary usage would be meaningless.
iii But philosophical theorizing does involve departures from ordinary usage.
 iv Therefore philosophical theories are meaningless.
  v Therefore we must confine ourselves to removing the temptation to engage in philosophical theorizing.

But this line of thought is glaringly invalid—specifically the step from (i) to (ii). If that move were allowed then the consequences would be far more radical than could have been intended by Wittgenstein, or than can be accepted by us. In particular, the recognition of past errors in *any* domain would be impossible, and even *scientific* theorizing would be incoherent. Let me elaborate these two implications.

In the first place, a vital constraint on how the term 'use' must be understood in the context of Wittgenstein's account of meaning is that there be the possibility of appreciating that we have until now been saying (and thinking) false things—i.e. applying words incorrectly. It must be possible to discover that certain common uses of words are in fact mistaken. (For example, we have now learned that we were wrong to say, 'The sun revolves around the Earth.') But in that case, the notion of 'use' that Wittgenstein needs cannot imply that a philosophical theory, solely in virtue of its departures from what is ordinarily said, would have to be meaningless. In other words, the use conception of meaning leaves it open that philosophy is amongst those disciplines that enable us to discover errors in accepted usage.

And in the second place, although an everyday word might be deployed in a novel way within the context of a philosophical theory, it will nonetheless have *some* use within that theory Therefore the use conception—far from condemning the word as having become meaningless—will certify that it still *does* have a meaning (albeit a novel one). This sort of commandeering of terms is common in science: familiar words (such as 'energy', 'fish' and 'language') are pressed into unfamiliar, explanatory service and thereby given new and technical meanings. So why shouldn't it happen within philosophy too? And in that case, why should metaphysical theories be any less intelligible that scientific ones?

Thus the identification of meaning with use cannot get us to the conclusion that philosophical theorizing is misconceived. However, no such inference is needed. The real basis for Wittgenstein's metaphilosophy is the observation of so

many problems whose sources turn out to be linguistic overgeneralization. He need not, and should not, go so far as to say that the theories proposed as solutions to these pseudo-problems are invariably meaningless. It suffices to recognize that—even when meaningful—such theoretical claims are not properly motivated and are not justified.

From this metaphilosophical perspective the problems surrounding the phenomenon X must be treated by focussing on the special ways that the term 'X' is used. And applying that methodology to the phenomenon of meaning, we will see that words are said to have 'the same meaning' when their basic use is the same, and that a grasp of the meaning of a word is attributed to someone when he is able to use it appropriately That is, we arrive at the identification of the meaning of a word with its use. Thus the direction of thought is from Wittgenstein's metaphilosophy to his use conception of meaning rather than the other way around.[7]

To summarize: I have been arguing that, early and late, it is Wittgenstein's view of philosophy, rather than his view of meaning, that plays the pivotal role in his thought. His account of meaning has few significant implications and does not undergo substantial revision. His metaphilosophy is what is central and revolutionary. It does change somewhat—an incoherent element is removed from it and replaced—and this modification gives rise to considerable differences in the way that specific philosophical problems are treated. But the correction in his core metaphilosophical position is small in relation to all that is retained: namely, that philosophical questioning is provoked by linguogenic confusion, that it should not be answered, and that it cannot yield philosophical knowledge. Thus the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* represent improving expressions of one and the same hyper-deflationary insight.[8]

Notes

1 Wittgenstein probably had in mind the paradoxes (concerning e.g. the concept HORSE) that seem inevitably to arise within the Fregean view of *reference*—a view which he may have regarded as definitive of the notion. For example, since 'the concept HORSE' is a singular term, it can only refer to an *object,* therefore certainly not to a *concept*, so we can infer that the concept HORSE is not a concept! See Frege (1952) and also Geach (1976).

2 Commentary on the *Tractatus* tends to be divided these days between advocates of the so-called Standard Interpretation, according to which Wittgenstein *endorses* T[3] while recognizing that some of its elements cannot be *said* but merely *shown,* and proponents of the more recent so-called Resolute Interpretation, according to which he rejects T[3]'s metaphysical and semantic pronouncements as plain nonsense. My own view, as indicated in the text, is in the middle. I agree with the Resolutists that those pronouncements are thoroughly rejected by Wittgenstein. But, if they are to be capable of undermining themselves, they cannot be absolute mumbo-jumbo, but must be defective in some less extreme way (specifically, in containing

intrinsically contradictory concepts). For the Standard Interpretation see Ramsey (1923); Black (1964); Anscombe (1959); Hacker (2000); Pears (1987); Geach (1976); and Malcolm (1974). For the Resolute Interpretation see Diamond (1991); Ricketts (1996:57–73); Goldfarb (1997:57–74); and Conant (1989:242–83).

3 Even though Wittgenstein does not himself draw attention to it, the incoherence in the *Tractatus* on which I am focussing is so serious and glaring that he surely must have become aware of it and must have been motivated (in part) by it to modify his metaphilosophical position.

4 See *Investigations* paragraph 92, where Wittgenstein contrasts the sort of non-theoretical account that he wishes *now* to give with the theory that was offered in the *Tractatus:*

> [I]f we too in these investigations are trying to understand the essence of language—its function, its structure—yet *this* is not what those *[Tractatus]* questions have in view. For they see in the essence, not something that lies open to view and that becomes surveyable by rearrangement, but something that lies *beneath* the surface. Something that lies within, which we see when we look *into* the thing, and which an analysis digs out.

5 The main target of the opening remarks of the *Investigations* is not the *Tractatus* view that each primitive term has a referent; but is rather the allegedly Augustinean position which adds to this that these referential meanings are learned by *ostensive definition.*

6 See, for example, Pears (1987a); and Katz (1991).

7 Note that the philosophical problems about meaning that Wittgenstein addresses in the *Investigations* are not intended to be solved by reference to the use conception. On the contrary, these problems arise from the difficulty of seeing how meaning, *given* its determination of, and by, an extensive body of usage, can be 'grasped in a flash'. They are to be solved by attending to our use of the words 'grasp', 'determine', etc.

8 For helpful discussion I would like to thank David Pears, Meredith Williams, Michael Williams, Thomas Ricketts, and James Conant.

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5
WITTGENSTEIN AND THE LIFE OF SIGNS
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1.
The life of signs: two opposed accounts

We can gain a perspicuous view of Wittgenstein's philosophical development and its bearing on contemporary philosophy by concentrating on what he calls the 'life' of signs. He introduces this notion in the *Investigations* by saying[1]

> 432 Every sign *by itself* seems dead. *What* gives it life? In use it is *alive.* Is life breathed into it there?—Or is the *use* its life?

Speaking of the life of signs is a particular way of speaking of meaning. Meaningful words and sentences are *animated* in use: they are not mere marks or sounds, but represent or refer to things, and so can be true or false. Here Wittgenstein opposes two accounts of this. The first is that life is 'breathed into' the sign, as it were from outside, as the sign is used; the second is that the use itself *constitutes* the life.

In *The Blue Book* Wittgenstein puts the same contrast in a way which makes explicit what he means by life 'breathed into' the sign:

> It seems that there are *certain definite* mental processes bound up with the working of language, processes through which alone language can function. I mean the processes of understanding and meaning. The signs of our language seem dead without these mental processes; and it might seem that the only function of the signs is to induce such processes, and that these are the things we ought really to be interested in…But if we had to name anything which is the life of the sign, we should have to say that it was its *use.*
> (3–4)

The idea that signs owe their life to mental processes such as meaning, understanding or intending can seem obvious. Thus take a speaker who uses 'Napoleon died in Elba' to mean that Napoleon died in Elba. We understand this

speaker to mean by 'Napoleon' the particular man Napoleon, to mean by 'died' the act of dying, to mean by 'in' the relation of being in a place, and to mean by 'Elba' the place Elba. Also we understand the speaker to use that particular ordering of words to mean that the man designated by 'Napoleon' performed the act designated by 'died' with the relation designated by 'in' to the place designated by 'Elba'—that is, again, to mean (or say) that Napoleon died in Elba. As the speaker means or intends the words in this way, so the hearer understands them in this way Indeed, in meaning or intending his words in this way, the speaker also means or intends that the hearer understand them in this way as well. If either the speaker meant something different by the words, or the hearer understood something different by them, communication would fail. So to deny that these processes give meaning to signs is to deny something which seems so natural as almost to be truistic; and this indicates part of the significance of Wittgenstein's contrasting emphasis on use.[2]

Clearly this contrast holds between the accounts of meaning in the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations.* According to the *Tractatus,* the user of language imparts significance to signs by a mental process which Wittgenstein describes as 'thinking the sense' or 'thinking the proposition'. As he says, the speaker/hearer 'use[s] the perceptible sign of a proposition (spoken or written, etc.) as a projection of a possible situation', where 'the method of projection is to think the sense of the proposition' (3.11). This mental process is that by which, as above, the user means (designates, etc.) particular things by words, and by the order in which they are used in sentences, and so links language with things and situations in the world. So, as Wittgenstein says, this process yields a sentence which has been 'applied and thought out' (4), and which is therefore 'meaningful' (3.5). By contrast, in the *Investigations* Wittgenstein constantly criticizes the idea that meaning could be conferred in this way. In his remarks on following a rule, for example, he speaks derisively of 'the *mean*-ing you then put into that sentence, whatever that may have consisted in' (186); and throughout he stresses that the use of signs, as opposed to such mental processes, constitutes their meaning, and hence the life of which he speaks in 432.

2.
Fregean sense and the life of signs

Wittgenstein also takes it that thinking in terms of what gives life to signs is useful for understanding other approaches to meaning. In *The Blue Book* he says:

Frege ridiculed the formalist account of mathematics by saying that the formalists confused the unimportant thing, the sign, with the important thing, the meaning. Surely, one wishes to say, mathematics does not treat of dashes on a bit of paper. Frege's idea could be expressed thus: the propositions of mathematics, if they were just complexes of dashes, would be dead and utterly uninteresting, whereas they obviously have a kind of

life. And the same, of course, could be said of any proposition: Without a
sense, without the thought, a proposition would be an utterly dead and
trivial thing. And further it seems clear that no adding of inorganic signs
can make the proposition live.
(4; cf. *Philosophical Grammar* 106)

Thus in Wittgenstein's view Frege's account of sense (or of grasping a sense)
can also be taken as an account of the life of signs. When we grasp the sense of a
word or sound, we do what 'no adding of inorganic signs' could do. The sign is
no longer for us a mere sound or mark on paper, as can be seen in the way we
subsequently use it. Such acts of grasping sense and thought are coordinated as
between speakers and hearers, and apparently determine what people take words
to refer to, and the conditions in which they regard sentences as true.

3.
Mental representation and the life of signs

As is well known, the *Tractatus* is built around a particular conception of
representation. As Wittgenstein says, 'we make to ourselves pictures of facts' (2.
1ff.), and he describes these pictures as what we might call element-
element:combination-combination representations. That is, each picture consists
of certain representing elements in a significant combination. The elements stand
for things in the domain represented (e.g. the constituents of states of affairs),
and the way these elements are combined stands for the way the represented
things are combined in this domain (e.g. the way the constituents of states of affairs
are configured in particular facts). Linguistic representation involves rules of
combination which relate signs to one another, and rules of projection which relate
them to the things and situations they are about.[3]

   Wittgenstein made clear in a letter to Russell that took this account of
representation to apply to tokens of thoughts *(Gedanke)* themselves. These
consisted of real and psychologically investigable elements in the mind (or
brain) of the thinker.[4] He quotes Russell's questions and replies to them as
follows:

'But a *Gedanke* [thought] is a *Tatsache* [fact]: what are its constituents and
components, and what are their relation to the pictured *Tatsache?*' I don't
know *what* the constituents of a thought are but I know *that* it must have
such constituents which correspond to the words of language. Again the
kind of relation to the constituents of the thought and of the pictured fact is
irrelevant. It would be a matter of psychology to find out. 'Does a *Gedanke*
[thought] consist of words?' No! But of psychical constituents that have
the same sort of relation to reality as words. What those constituents are I
don't know.[5]
(Notebooks 1914–16 156–7)

As with other aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy, this can be seen as a naturalistic advance on Frege. In order to contrast the objective character of thought with the subjectivity of mental items themselves, Frege had construed the thought as a kind of non-psychological abstract object, somehow grasped by the mind. This anti-psychologism left it a mystery how thought could actually take place—that is, how the mind could actually grasp or implement thought. By contrast Wittgenstein offered an account which was psychologically real. A person who thinks that P does so by forming an actual mental representation of the fact or state of affairs that P, and the same applies to a person who believes that P, hopes that P, intends that P, etc. As Wittgenstein says generally,

> I only use the terms the expectation, thought, wish, etc., that *p* will be the case, for processes having the multiplicity that finds expression in *p,* and thus only if they are articulated. But in that case they are what I call the interpretation of signs.
>   I call only an articulated process a thought: you could therefore say 'only what has an articulated expression'. (Salivation—no matter how precisely measured—is *not* what I call expecting.)
> (1975a: 70)

Wittgenstein makes this psychological aspect of the picture theory more explicit in later works. Thus in *Philosophical Remarks* he says that 'What is essential to intention is the picture: the picture of what is intended' (1975a: 63), and he treats expectation in the same way 'Our expectation anticipates the event. In this sense, it makes a model of the event' so that 'intention reaches up to the paradigm, and contains a general rule' (1975a: 70). Or again in *Philosophical Grammar,* reflecting on the ideas of the *Tractatus:* 'If I try to describe the process of intention, I feel first and foremost that it can do what it is supposed to only by containing an extremely faithful picture of what it intends' (1974:148). The essential feature of these states of mind—that which gives them the multiplicity which is reflected in their linguistic description, and which distinguishes them from such primitive processes as salivation—is the way they involve mental representation.

   This applies also to the thinking by which we learn and use language. As Augustine describes in *Investigations* 1, the infant learning language can already 'make to itself pictures of facts', and so can think about the sounds the adults make, the intentions they display when they speak, and the things these intentions are related to. This enables the infant to learn which objects the adults mean by which sounds, and which states of affairs by which combination of sounds. Having learned this the infant can use these sounds meaningfully as well. Thus the Tractarian or Augustinian infant can 'already *think,* only not yet speak' (32) and uses this ability to learn language and give life to signs. And then when a person comes to think *in language* she uses sentences to which at the same time she gives sense or life.[6] So overall the mental representations which

realize belief, desire and other propositional attitudes constitute a system of the same general kind as spoken language, not less powerful, and apparently more basic; for evidently the learning and use of language itself depends upon prior representation in thought.

4.
Mental representation and rule-following in the *Tractatus*

Above, Wittgenstein speaks of the mental representation involved in intention as 'containing a general rule'. This is the 'rule of projection' which links the intention to the intended situation. Wittgenstein discusses this in a particularly pregnant series of remarks, indicating both the full account of representation which underpins the *Tractatus,* and also how this is connected with the notion of following a rule.

> 4.14 A gramophone record, the musical thought, the written notes, and the sound—waves, all stand to one another in the same internal relation of depicting that holds between language and the world.
>
>   They are all constructed according to a common logical pattern.
>
>   (Like the two youths in the fairy—tale, their two horses, and their lilies. They are all in a certain sense one.)
>
> 4.0141 There is a general rule by means of which the musician can obtain the symphony from the score, and which makes it possible to derive the symphony from the groove on the gramophone record, and, using the first rule, to derive the score again. That is what constitutes the inner similarity between these things which seem to be constructed in such entirely different ways. And that rule is the law of projection which projects the symphony into the language of musical notation. It is the rule for translating this language into the language of gramophone records.
>
> 4.015 The possibility of all imagery, of all our pictorial modes of expression, is contained in the logic of depiction.

Here Wittgenstein takes a series of representations of the kind he has been discussing as pictures—the musical thought, the written notes, and the groove in a gramophone record—and indicates how he takes them to be related to one another by the concept of a 'general rule'. Since he has just previously compared musical notation with natural language, he clearly means what he says about the one to apply to the other as well. He is concerned with 'rules of projection', or semantic rules, and since he is considering the musical *thought (Gedanke),* he is considering the semantics of mind as well as language.

   We can spell out the example as follows: the composer is able to have a musical thought—to represent music in her mind—in virtue of the way

the elements of her musical thought are connected with the elements of music itself: that is, with the patterns of sound (and hence with patterns of sound-waves in the air) which are the objects of a musical thought. Just as the elements of linguistic thought are not words but are connected with the world in the way words are, so the elements of musical thought are not written notes but are connected with sounds in the way notes are. (Cf. the 'I don't know *what* the constituents of a thought are but I know *that* it must have such constituents which correspond to the words of language' quoted above. For the musical thought the analogue would be psychic constituents 'which correspond to the notes of musical notation.')

So, for example, if the series of sounds is ABCD, the composer will be able to think of this series via a combination of thought-elements, say abcd, where 'a' stands for A, 'b' stands for B, 'c' stands for C, 'd' stands for D and 'abcd' (in that combination) for the series ABCD. The capacity to think, and hence to form 'rules of projection' of this sort, is natural to the mind; so these connections will have been set up as the composer heard music and came to be capable of remembering and thinking of it, say in childhood. Later, when she came to learn musical notation, she will have come to represent the written notes and rules of combination as well. Then she will have used her representations of the sounds and of the written notes to correlate the two, in accord with the conventions of her musical community.

Thus for the written notes 'A', 'B', 'C', etc., the composer will have formed additional thought-elements a*, b*, c*, d*, etc., and used these to learn that 'A' stands for A, 'B' for B, 'AB' in that order for the sequence AB, and so on. These are rules of projection linking language and the world which are agreed among people, and established via prior rules of projection which link these people's thought to both language and the world. They are analogous to the rules in accord with which a person comes to use words in the course of learning a natural language. (In this, like the infant described by Augustine in the quotation in *Investigations* 1, the composer will have also had to make use of thought-elements standing for the relation of one thing standing for another, etc.) Having learned this notation, the composer can use the series of written notes 'ABCD' to give her musical thought abcd 'an expression which can be perceived through the senses', as Wittgenstein says at 3.11. And in this she uses the written notes as 'the projection of a possible situation', namely that in which there occurs the particular sequence of sounds ABCD which she has composed in her mind.

Both the musical thought and the written notes are thus linked by 'rules of projection' to this possible sequence of sounds, and these are also the rules which the musician must *follow out* in order to play the written notes correctly: that is, 'to obtain the symphony from the score'. The musician must first form in his mind a representation of the sounds which constitute the composer's musical thought, and will do this when he reads the notes and follows the same rules of projection as the composer does, and thus assigns the same sounds to written notes. Then he must use this mental representation to guide his action, by

forming an intention to play those notes and fulfilling this intention. In fulfilling the intention he follows out the rule of projection which links his thought-elements —those in the mental representation which is part of his intention—to a sequence of sounds; and he does this by actually producing that sequence of sounds: that is, making it actual. This, again, is parallel to what someone does in following a spoken or written instruction, rule or order, and is an instance of the way our minds and actions are linked by a rule of projection in intentional action.

5.
Rules of projection and the mind as an information-processing mechanism

But now we come to the gramophone. Even to a reader familiar with more recent thinking about the mind it may come as a shock that Wittgenstein should speak here in the same breath of human language and 'the language of gramophone records', and that he should compare the process of derivation in accord with a rule involved in the human activities of writing or playing music to the mechanistic inscription or derivation of sound via the groove in a gramophone. Still part of his conception is clearly that, just as there is a rule of projection by which the musician can derive the symphony from the score, so there is a rule 'which makes it possible to derive the symphony from the groove on the gramophone record'. This rule is evidently embodied in the gramophone itself; and this example is the first of a series—including the player piano, the Jacquard loom, and the human 'reading machines' of the *Investigations*—in which Wittgenstein considers mechanical embodiments of the kind of rules of projection described in the *Tractatus.*[7]

And even in this discussion he writes as if to suggest that we might regard the rules of combination and projection of human thought and language as embodied in physical structures, and human mental representation as achieving its effects, including intentional action, by processes of physical causality. For, as he says:

> 4.002 Man possesses the ability to construct languages capable of expressing every sense, without having any idea how each word has meaning or what its meaning is—just as people speak without knowing how the individual sounds are produced.
>
> Everyday language is a part of the human organism and no less complicated than it.
>
> It is not humanly possible to gather immediately from language what the logic of language is…the tacit conventions on which the understanding of everyday language depends are enormously complicated.

The complex rules of combination (syntax) and projection (semantics) of natural language need not be *known by us* because they are *embodied in us;* like the rules of phonetics, they are 'part of the human organism'. The same presumably holds

for the rules of combination and projection of thought itself. But if such rules are 'part of the human organism', how are they realized there? Insofar as we have no idea of these rules, it is difficult to regard them as operating 'in our minds'. But then the only way they can be 'part of the organism' is to operate within the body. So on this view, as it seems, the body (presumably the brain) *must* contain structures which govern thought and action in accord with these rules, and hence structures which realize the rules themselves. (These things must lie, as he says in *Blue Book* 120, 'if not in their conscious states, then in their brains'. This 'must', as we shall see, is later examined in *Philosophical Grammar* 62, and finally dismissed in *Investigations* 156–8.)

This would mean that according to the *Tractatus* the non-conscious aspects of human thinking are realized by an embodied organic symbol system, which can be construed as a set of mental models, or again as a language of thought. (Since for Wittgenstein a language is just a particularly abstract kind of element—element:combination—combination model, the distinction between mental model and internal language is at best one of degree.) Since the symbols in question bear information about how the world is or is intended to be, such a physical symbol system is also an information-processing device; and Wittgenstein's description seems intended to convey the idea that the working of the mind (or brain), like that of a gramophone, is to be understood in terms of the storage, transformation and transmission of information. How far Wittgenstein actually espoused this view is uncertain, but he gave it interesting consideration.

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6.
Mental mechanism and the unanswered question of the
Tractatus

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Wittgenstein's interest in the mind (or brain) as an information-processing device was also connected with a fundamental philosophical omission in the *Tractatus.* In assuming that we make ourselves pictures of facts, Wittgenstein presupposes that the elements of thought are *referentially correlated with* (i.e. *stand for,* or *refer to)* things in the world. Clearly we can ask how such mental reference is constituted. What makes it the case that a thought, or an element of thought, refers to one object rather than another, and how are we to establish that this is so? This question is not addressed in the *Tractatus;* but it is one upon which in his post-*Tractatus* writing Wittgenstein came increasingly to focus.

More recently this has become the central question of psychosemantics. As Fodor says, 'We must now face what has always been the problem for representational theories to solve: what relates internal representations to the world? … I take it that this problem is now the main content of the philosophy of mind'[8] (1981:61). Although Wittgenstein proposed no answer to this question in the *Tractatus,* he seems then to have thought of it as admitting empirical study. For as we saw above, he held that the relation to the constituents of the thought of the pictured fact—that is, the psychosemantic relations, including mental

reference, with which we are concerned—'would be a matter of psychology to find out'. He thus seems to have supposed that once the abstract structure of his account of representations as element-element:combination-combination pictures was in place, the question of the actual nature of various particular representations could proceed by straightforward empirical investigation. Just as a linguist seeks to discover the actual sounds used as words in a given language, and how they are related to things, so a psychologist might (someday) seek to discover the actual representing elements used in thought, and how they are related to things.

In the cases upon which Wittgenstein concentrates—those in which a person follows a written or spoken rule, a musician plays from a score, etc.—there is a series of derivations from input to output which accord with rules of projection. As described above, these run from written representation (the musician sees the written notes) to mental representation (the musician understands the notes to be played), and from mental representation through action to reality (the notes are played). In such cases the human organism actually produces the concrete internal representation which corresponds to the external representation upon which the agent acts, and the concrete external situation which both the external and internal representation depict. So it seems that studying this process of acting in accord with a rule would enable us to trace the links between representation and reality—to follow out the rules of projection as they are actually realized— and thereby to find both what the elements of thought are, and how they relate to the things for which they stand.

This has been a starting point for many approaches to psychosemantics, either on the input or the output side. Still—and as recent work has come to stress—there is a clear reason to regard it as unsatisfactory. For on accounts of this kind mental representation actually manifests its semantic character only in instances of thought and action which are *correct*. Thus a musician whose inner representation refers to a certain note—and so is correlated by a 'rule of projection' with the note—will in fact play this particular note only if he *fulfils* his intention to play it: that is, if he plays (and so follows out the rule of projection linking his thought-element to that note) *correctly*.[9] So in seeking to understand representation by studying its causal production, we must be able to determine when the causal processes in question are unfolding correctly. If not, then the connections which we observe between inner and outer items may not be those of mental reference which we wish to study; but if so, we are already presupposing a grasp of the notion of correct accord between representation and represented which we wish to investigate.

7.
Wittgenstein's turning point: psychosemantics and the notion of correctness

The idea of mental reference left unexplained in the *Tractatus* thus presupposes that of correctness in rule-governed thought or action, and so cannot be explicated apart from an account of these notions as well. And we can see

Wittgenstein coming to stress this and related points, as he considers how far internal representation can be understood in terms of causal or functional role. Thus take the following from *Philosophical Grammar.*

> But one might say something like this. The sentences that we utter have a particular purpose, they are to produce certain effects. They are parts of a mechanism, perhaps a psychological mechanism, and the words of the sentences are also parts of the mechanism (levers, cogwheels, and so on). The example that seems to illustrate what we're thinking of here is an automatic music player, a pianola. It contains a roll, rollers, etc., on which the piece of music is written in some kind of notation (the position of holes, pegs, and so on). It's as if these written signs gave orders which are carried out by the keys and hammer. And so shouldn't we say that the sense of the sign is in its effect? But suppose the pianola is in bad condition and the signs on the roll produce hisses and bangs instead of the notes.—Perhaps you will say that the sense of the sign is their effect on a mechanism in good condition, and correspondingly that the sense of an order is its effect on an obedient man. But what is regarded as a criterion of obedience here? (1974:69–70)

As stressed above, Wittgenstein has no objection to regarding a human being as a representation-driven mechanism of this kind. The idea that the mind/brain works in such a way is an empirical hypothesis,[10] but one which we are liable to espouse prematurely, as 'a form of account which is very appealing to us' (*Investigations* 159). His point in the above passage—as in others in which he pursues the same line of thought[11]—is not that this kind of account is false, but rather that it does not after all explicate the idea which is woven throughout his *Tractatus* conception of mental processes and language, namely what it is to think or act in accord with a rule. In particular, accounts of this kind do not explain what it is for such action to be *correct* ('the signs on the roll produce hisses and bangs instead of notes…what is…the criterion of obedience here?') and so for an internal sign to be *rightly* correlated with one thing or another in the world. An account in terms of the causal role of internal signs fails to address the central question of correctness.

Wittgenstein continues this theme in more detail in a passage in *Philosophical Grammar* which brings together a number of the ideas we have been discussing,

and illustrates this point of contrast between the approaches of the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* fairly clearly.

62 'That's *him*' (this picture represents him)—that contains the whole problem of representation…

I have the intention of carrying out a particular task and I make a plan. The plan in my mind is supposed to consist in my seeing myself acting thus and so. But how do I know, that it is myself I am seeing? Well, it isn't myself, but a kind of picture. But why do I call it a picture of me?…

'I thought Napoleon was crowned in the year 1805.' What connection is there between your thought and Napoleon? It may be, for example, that the word 'Napoleon' occurs in the expression of my thought, plus the connection that word has with its bearer; e.g. that was the way he signed his name, that was how he was spoken to, and so on.

'But when you utter the word "Napoleon", you designate that man and no other.' How does this act of designating work, in your view? Is it instantaneous, or does it take time? 'But after all if someone asks you 'did you mean the very man who won the battle of Austerlitz' you will say 'yes'. So you meant that man *when you uttered the sentence.* Yes, but only in the kind of way that I then knew also that 6×6=36.

The answer 'I meant the victor of Austerlitz' is a new step in our calculus. The past tense is deceptive, because it looks as if it was giving a description of what went on 'inside me' while I was uttering the sentence.

('But I meant *him.*' A strange process, this meaning! Can you mean in Europe someone who's in America? Even if he no longer exists?)

63 Misled by our grammar we are tempted to ask '*How* does one think a proposition, *how* does one expect such-and-such to happen? (how does one do that?)'

'How does thought work, how does it use its expression?' This question looks like 'How does a Jacquard loom work, how does it use the cards?'

In the proposition 'I believe that p is the case' we feel that the essential thing, the real process of belief, isn't expressed but only hinted at; we feel it must be possible to replace this hint by a description of the mechanism of belief, a description in which the series of words 'p' would occur in the description as the cards occur in the description of the loom. This description, we feel, would at last be the full expression of the thought.

Let's compare belief with the utterance of a sentence; there too very complicated processes take place in the larynx, the speech muscles, the nerves, etc. These are *accompaniments* of the spoken sentence. And the sentence itself remains the only thing that interests us—not as part of a mechanism, but as part of a calculus.

'How does thought manage to represent?' —the answer might be 'Don't you really know? You certainly see it when you think!' For nothing is concealed.

How does a sentence do it? Nothing is hidden…

We ask: 'What is a thought? What kind of thing must something be to perform the function of thought? This question is like: 'What is a sewing machine, how does it work?—And the answer which would be like ours would be 'Look at the stitch it is meant to sew; you can see from that what is essential in the machine, everything else is optional.

So what is the function, that makes thought what it is?— If it is its *effect,* then we are not interested in it. We are not in the realm of causal explanations, and every such explanation sounds trivial for our purposes. (1974:102–5)

These remarks are concerned with both mental representation and the question of mental reference. (Thus in 62 we have 'the whole problem of representation… what connection is there between your thought and Napoleon' and in 63 'How does one think a proposition…How does thought manage to represent'.) It is clear from 62 that there is a basic question, namely how a thought manages to represent someone (or something). This question can be raised even when the thought is a picture constituting an intention in my own mind and represents myself. In this we see one of the main ideas of the *Tractatus,* as explicated above: the idea that an intention is to be understood in terms of a mental representation of the intended action—an action to be performed by oneself. But here the connection between the elements of the representation and what it represents (e.g. between my image of myself and me) is no longer taken for granted, but rather seen as constituting the problem which requires to be addressed. So the problem is now precisely that of understanding the relation which was presupposed but not explicated in the *Tractatus:* that is, the relation of reference which holds between thought and its objects.

To make the problem vivid, Wittgenstein here takes a case in which the relation of thought and its referent can seem mysterious because the referent is remote in time and space, and indeed no longer alive. ('Can you mean in Europe someone who's in America? Even if he no longer exists?') And he now makes clear that, in his view, this problem requires to be approached by consideration of the use of language. The ability mentally to refer to Napoleon does not precede language, but rather is bound up with the capacity to use the word 'Napoleon'.

The relevant use has two aspects: in the ascription and expression of thought ('the word "Napoleon" occurs in the expression of my thought'), and in other contexts, including non-psychological ones ('the connection that word has with its bearer; e.g. that was the way he signed his name, that was how he was spoken to, and so on'). And Wittgenstein also stresses that the connection between the use of language and what it represents is not to be understood as made by an act

or process of meaning something by a word. We do, of course, say that we meant such-and-such a person by a word, and this is true; but this way of speaking misleads us into thinking that there is a process of meaning someone or something by a word which goes on 'inside us', such as the process of 'projection', the mental linking of signs with things, which was at the core of the *Tractatus* account.

This argument is continued by 63 explaining how we are misled when we think that meaning something by a word is a process 'inside us'. We think that this —or the related *Tractatus* process of thinking the sense of a sentence (thinking a proposition)—is something we could explicate by an account of symbolic and causal mechanisms which realize thought. In these mechanisms there would be organic signs: internal surrogates of the words by which we mean things working as part of a mechanism which both represents the situations we think about and can be linked to them causally. Then, among other things, just as we can understand the process by which the punched cards which drive a Jacquard loom both represent the pattern to be woven and also cause the weaving of it, so we could understand the process by which a plan in my mind both represents what I am to do and causes my actions in doing it.[12]

In this we should see realized the links between the sentence which describes my action, my mental representation of the action, and the action itself. So we should see 'the kind of relation [which holds between] the constituents of the thought and of the pictured fact', as Wittgenstein described the psychosemantic relation in his letter to Russell, when he held that these constituents and relations were a matter for psychological investigation. This, however, is an error. The study of causal and functional role cannot yield the understanding which is required, partly because, as remarked earlier, the relation of correctness cannot be explicated in these terms.

8.
Language and the representational power of thought

In these passages Wittgenstein is replacing the *Tractatus* view that thought breathes life into signs by one in which the use of language is required to explain the representational power of thought. In this he is also perforce rejecting the *Tractatus* conception according to which thought has the full semantic content (reference and truth-conditions) ascribed to and by sentences in use, but independently of language and prior to it. This rejection is carried out in more detail in the *Investigations,* where Wittgenstein particularly focuses on two manifestations of this suspect notion of thought. The first is Augustine's account of the role of thought in the learning of language ('as if the child…already had a language, only not this one…as if the child could *think,* only not yet speak'; 32). The second is the Fregean notion of an act (grasping) of thought, which fixes the reference and truth-conditions of sentences in use.

As we can now see, these two suspect conceptions are linked and combined in the mechanistic explication of thought associated with the *Tractatus*. For according to this explication a natural system of organic signs serves both to realize thought prior to and independently of the acquisition of spoken language, and also to implement mental acts of understanding and meaning which assign reference and truth-conditions to sentences as they are used. (These same connections also appear in the work of Fodor, as well as elsewhere in linguistics and cognitive science.[13])This is why Wittgenstein takes these various conceptions of thought to stand or fall together, and why he rejects the priority of thought together with claims about its internal symbolic realization in the successive remarks we have just considered.

9.
Reformulation of the basic question and the role of consciousness

These remarks—which we have only partly discussed—indicate a complex transformation in Wittgenstein's post-*Tractatus* views.[14] In *Philosophical Grammar* he examines the basic question of the referential character of thought, which he failed to address in the *Tractatus.* In doing this, however, he also changes the terms in which he poses the question. He turns his back on the view that thought is realized in an inner system of elements and combinations analogous to language, such as he described in his letter to Russell, and such as he compared to the punched cards which drive a Jacquard loom. Since this is not a mandatory account of thought, but rather a potentially misleading picture which we are inclined to form, the question of understanding the referential character of thought is not well addressed in these terms.[15]

Before considering Wittgenstein's reformulation in the *Investigations* we may note two things about the question of mental reference. First, it is very general: it applies to anything which can be thought about, including abstract entities such as the property of being red as well as concrete particulars such as Napoleon. Second, the question seems particularly related to conscious awareness. We think of such awareness as awareness *of* things, so that consciousness seems a locus of mental reference which is particularly clear and unproblematic. In view of this it is worth noting that we can arrange a variety of items to which this question applies in a rough order by their relation to consciousness. Thus we have:

i Items which are parts or aspects of consciousness itself: e.g. pains and other sensations, and their phenomenological properties.
ii Items which are explicitly represented in consciousness, such as things perceived in the immediate environment, or (to take Wittgenstein's example above) myself and the things I intend to do, as represented in my intentions.
iii Items which are not explicitly represented in consciousness, but which are somehow mentally meant or referred to along with others which are. Thus,

to take an example we shall consider shortly, if I tell someone to add two repeatedly to a given number, I may explicitly think of some instances of what I mean him to do; but my request also encompasses—and in this sense also means, refers to, or is about—further instances which I do not think of.

iv Items such as Napoleon, which may be thought about but which cannot directly impinge upon consciousness because they are remote in space or time, or no longer exist.

While it is clear that the general question of the relation of thought to its objects applies to all these kinds of items, we can see that differences among them are important for Wittgenstein's discussion. Thus in the remark considered above he uses the fact that Napoleon no longer exists to make it seem problematic that we should simply be able to mean or refer to him in thought. More background might be required to enable us to regard it as problematic that we should simply be able to mean, or mentally refer to, a content of consciousness such as a pain. These differences also play a role in Wittgenstein's argument.

10.
The question of representation in the *Investigations:* rule following and the constitution of correctness

In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein took the referential character of thought for granted, and used his account of thought to explain how words and sentences mapped to things and situations in the world. In *Philosophical Grammar,* as we have seen, he pressed his enquiry further, and asked how thought itself manages to represent or refer to things. In the *Investigations,* as we shall now see, he pursues these questions still further, and in a way which is continuous with *Tractatus* 4.0141 discussed above: that is, by considering how both thought and language relate to things via the notion of a rule.

Wittgenstein discusses this notion of a rule in the *Investigations* together with the now familiar opposition between acts of meaning and use as providing the life of signs.[16] In 138 he relates these as follows:

138 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?—Of course, if the meaning is the *use* we make of the word, it makes no sense to speak of such 'fitting'. 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.

Here Wittgenstein's 'but we *understand* the meaning of a word when we hear or say it; we grasp it in a flash' introduces the acts of understanding and meaning which, as we have seen, he takes us to hypostasize as giving life to signs. And

although he is discussing what he regards as a philosophical error, it is important that the sentence he uses to introduce the error is true. Just as we really do mean or understand things by our words, so we really do sometimes grasp the meaning of a word in a flash. What happens in such a case, as Wittgenstein supposes, is just that in a flash of understanding we acquire the capacity to use the word correctly; and since this includes the practical ability to relate the word to the things to which it refers, this is also part of the capacity we acquire. But according to Wittgenstein we are liable to misconstrue this, by assuming (i) that the grasping is of something distinct from the use—such as the concept, meaning or Fregean sense (thought) introduced in the first sentences of this remark—and (ii) that this distinct thing, or our grasping of it, determines the reference of the word, and hence how we use it.

11.
Intermediaries and correctness: the explanatory priority of correct use

The first of these misconstructions is expressed here in the claim that 'what we grasp in this way is surely something different from the "use" which is extended in time'. To accept this is to take the verb 'to grasp' as having an object—e.g. a sense—distinct from the use of the sign in question, and hence, in Wittgenstein's terms, 'to assume a pure intermediary between the propositional *signs* and the facts' (94). This, as Wittgenstein expects, will go with the idea that this intermediary somehow determines reference and truth-conditions, and hence use. So this idea—part of many standard expositions of the notion of sense—is one topic of the remarks which follow.

We have seen that in his work prior to the *Investigations* Wittgenstein focused on explicating the notion of correctness. Accordingly, we find that in these remarks he is concerned with two questions: whether the supposed grasping of distinct intermediaries can explain correctness in the use of signs; and if not, how such correctness is to be explained. Thus in the case of sense, if what is required to explain use is a *correct* grasping of sense (or a grasping of the *correct* sense), we must ask how such correctness is determined. Wittgenstein carries this argument forward, and illustrates its connection with the *Tractatus,* by considering the idea that what is grasped in a flash is a picture. Thus he takes the example of the word 'cube' and a mental picture of a cube (139), or such a picture together with a 'method of projection' (140). (The question as to what relates my mental picture of a cube to actual cubes is comparable to that as to what relates my image of me to myself or my thought of Napoleon to Napoleon.) Wittgenstein treats these examples by observing that the correctness of the grasping of the picture (or sense), or the method of projection which accompanies it, is answerable to that of the use made of the sign, and not vice versa.

We can see that this dialectic would apply to any intermediary, and Wittgenstein at once extends it to the case of someone learning to write series of numerals or numbers. Here, for example, what is grasped in a flash may be an algebraic formula from which the series can be derived. But again what counts as a correct grasping, or a correct application of the formula, is determined by the use made of it: 'The application is still a criterion of understanding' (146). Thus the Fregean idea that the grasp of sense (meaning, etc.) is explanatorily prior to that of correct use (or practice) is shown to be mistaken. A comparable argument extends to the state of understanding more generally (147), and the 'state of a mental apparatus (perhaps of the brain)' which might be supposed to underlie it (149). This last argument continues the argument from *Philosophical Grammar* discussed above, for the 'mental apparatus' here is a symbolic/causal mechanism understood on the model of the pianola (157) and realized by 'what goes on in the brain and nervous system' (158). So according to these arguments nothing in our understanding of meaning is explanatorily prior to that of correct use (or practice); for we determine the correctness of the mental acts, states or mechanisms which we associate with meaning by reference to this.

12.
Determining the correctness of use

This establishes the basic role of correct use, but leaves us with the question as to what constitutes such correctness and how we recognize it. This Wittgenstein starts to address in the next phase of his argument. As before, he considers a pupil being taught the use of a simple arithmetic rule, such as that for adding two. This pupil is supposed, among other things, to learn to continue the series 2, 4, 6, 8…and so on indefinitely The question then is, in what circumstances are we to interpret the pupil as having learned to follow the rule *correctly?* He addresses this question, as it will be important to note, by linking the notion of correctness with that of *interpretation.*

Wittgenstein notes that a learner might continue the series correctly (as we should say) up to 1,000, but then go on to write 1,004, 1,008…We should regard this as incorrect, but it would not necessarily show lack of an understanding (some understanding) on the pupil's part. It might be that going on in this different way was natural to the pupil, and we might find an interpretation which explained this, and according to which it was indeed the correct thing for him to do.

> 185 We say to him: 'Look what you've done!'—He doesn't understand. We say: 'You were meant to add two: look how you began the series!'— He answers 'Yes, isn't it right? I thought that was how I was *meant* to do it.' Or suppose he pointed at the series and said: 'But I went on in the same way' It would now be no use to say: 'But can't you see…?' —and repeat the old examples and explanations.—In such a case we might say, perhaps: It

comes naturally to this person to understand our order and our explanations as we should understand the order 'Add 2 up to 1000, 4 up to 2000, 6 up to 3000 and so on.'

Such a case would present similarities with one in which a person naturally reacted to the gesture of pointing with the hand by looking in the direction of the line from finger-tip to wrist, not from wrist to finger-tip.

This illustrates, as Wittgenstein says later, that 'there are criteria for his "thinking he understands", attaching some meaning to the word, but not the right one' (269). He has so far assumed that the right use is the one we are attempting to impart: that is, our own. ('[H]e continues the series correctly, that is, as we do it' (145).) He now extends his enquiry, to ask how this correctness— *which includes the correctness of our own use*—is itself determined. And since he is raising this question about the notion which is most basic for the explanation of correctness generally, he is in effect asking what determines the correctness of all the other notions he has considered. Hence, as we shall see, he is in effect asking what makes it the case that we are able to think, judge or use words in accord with rules or norms at all.

So we are immediately faced with a deeper question. How do *we* know that *we* are supposed to follow the rule for adding two in the particular way that we do— how do we know that our practice, as opposed to that of the person we treat as deviant, is actually *correct?* This is the topic which Wittgenstein makes explicit in the next remark, by raising what is now the fundamental question of correctness: 'To carry it out correctly! How is it decided what is the right step to take at any particular stage?'

186 What you are saying, then, comes to this: a new insight—intuition —is needed at every step to carry out the order '+ n' correctly. —To carry it out correctly! How is it decided what is the right step to take at any stage?—'The right step is the one that corresponds with the order— as it was *meant*'— So when you gave the order +2 you meant that he was to write 1002 after 1000—and did you also mean that he should write 1868 after 1866, and 100036 after 100034, and so on—an infinite number of such propositions? 'No: what I meant was, that he should write the next but one number after *every* number that he wrote; and from these all those propositions follow in turn.' But that is just what is in question: what, at any stage, does follow from that sentence. Or again, what, at any stage, are we to call 'being in accord' with that sentence (and with the *mean*-ing you then put into the sentence—whatever that may have consisted in). It would almost be more correct to say, not that an intuition was needed at every stage, but that a new decision was needed at every stage.

And this question, as Wittgenstein makes clear, seems exceedingly difficult to answer. Clearly no answer can be based on the acts or states of understanding or

grasping a sense, or the mental or physiological mechanisms assumed to underpin them, which have been considered in the argument so far; for the status of these things as correct depends upon the use to which they are related, and it is the correctness of this which is now in question. Wittgenstein has his interlocutor turn again to the idea that this question is answered by reference to acts of meaning ('The right step is the one that accords with the order—as it was *meant*'), but this fails to extend to the indefinitely large number of cases covered by the rule ('and did you also mean that he should write 1868 after 1866, and 100036 after 100034, and so on—an infinite number of such propositions?') Nor is it to the point to say that this further reach of the rule is determined by what *follows from* the rule, for this is equally in question. The question as to what accords with a rule is that of what accords with a sentence (or sense or meaning) generally, and this includes deductive accord as well. (And the question concerns the constitution of correctness in applying rules generally, and so applies to the rule for *modus ponens* as much as to that for adding 2.)

13.
Correct use and sentential accord generally

We thus seem faced with a deep and general problem, which Wittgenstein again puts in terms of the notion of interpretation as follows:

> 198 'But how can a rule show me what I have to do at *this* point? Whatever I do is, on some interpretation, in accord with the rule.' That is not what we ought to say, but rather: any interpretation still hangs in the air along with what it interprets, and cannot give it any support. Interpretations by themselves do not determine meaning.

As this applies to sentences which express rules, so it applies to the states of mind which we describe by such sentences. For it is clear, for example, that a question as to which action really accords with the mathematical rule expressed by the sentence 'Add 2' is also a question as to which action really accords with the intention or desire described by the use of the same sentence: that is, the intention or desire to add 2. Wittgenstein makes this explicit in 197, when he turns from the case of rules to that of intentions, and hence to sententially articulated mental states in general.

> [W]e say that there isn't any doubt that we understand the word, and on the other hand its meaning is in its use. There is no doubt that I now want to play chess, but chess is the game it is in virtue of its rules (and so on). Don't I know, then, which game I want to play until I *have* played it? or are all the rules contained in my act of intending? Is it experience that tells me that this sort of game is the usual consequence of such an act of intending? so is it impossible for me to be certain what I am intending to

do? And if that is nonsense—what kind of super-strong connexion exists between the act of intending and the thing intended?

We can now see that the question of correctness which has now been raised by consideration of following a rule relates to everything previously encompassed by the rule or 'law of projection' linking thought, language and reality in *Tractatus* 4.0141 above. The question relates to the link between 'the act of intending and the thing intended', and so to all items or states which have *sentential content*—content *that P,* which is assigned by the use of a sentence 'P'— and any of the actions or items in the world which are supposed (or meant) to *accord with* these bearers of content.

Thus consider any sentence 'P' which can be used to specify something a person can do. ('P' might be 'Take the square root', 'Turn left', 'Find something *this* colour', 'Create a diversion' or whatever.) For each such 'P' we have the same questions: what makes it the case that it is correct to act in accord with 'P' in one way rather than another; and how do we know that this is so? And again we have corresponding questions about intention, belief, desire and other states of mind. What makes it the case, and how do we know, that one action rather than another fulfils the desire or intention that P, or renders the belief that someone has done this true? These questions concern both the constitution of the norms we take to govern these phenomena and our knowledge of these norms. So, in Wittgenstein's terms, they are also questions about 'the hardness of the logical must'—questions as to what constitutes this 'super-strong connection', and how we can know about it. So as he puts the question for propositional attitudes more generally,

> 437 A wish seems already to know what will or would satisfy it; a proposition, a thought, what makes it true—even when that thing is not there at all. Whence this determining of what is not yet there? This despotic demand? ('The hardness of the logical must.')

In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein followed the tradition of Descartes and Kant, in taking the first-person perspective—the 'I think'—and with it first-person authority about one's own thoughts, as philosophically basic. To assume that we know what our thoughts are about, however, is to presuppose the connection between thought and world which he now seeks to explicate. So now he considers the topic via questions which encompass first-person authority about both mind and meaning. We take both our sentences ('Add 2') and our thoughts (the intention to add 2) to relate to our actions, and to the world more generally, in ways we describe in terms of *normative accord*—that is, accord which can be regarded in one way or another as correct or incorrect. As illustrated, we describe this accord in many different ways: in terms of the *truth* of sentences or thoughts, the *fulfilment* of intentions, the *satisfaction* of desires or wishes, the *realization* of hopes and fears, the fact that a step *follows from* a premise, or

according to a logical or mathematical rule, and so on. So we can ask: what makes such descriptions true, and how do we come to know them?

This question, in turn, is central to our sense of ourselves as agents who can knowingly think, speak and act. Knowing the contents of our thoughts, intentions or sentences is knowing the actions, objects or states of affairs which are supposed to accord with them in this sort of way Yet although such knowledge seems absolutely fundamental to us, we also seem quite unable to give any account of it, or to describe any justification for it. We acknowledge the normative requirements of thought and language spontaneously and without reflection, and we take them for granted in what we say, think and do. Trying to answer Wittgenstein's explicit questions, however, we can seem quite unable to elucidate either the basis of these requirements or our knowledge of them.

Hence, as Saul Kripke (1982) puts the point in his celebrated exposition, if we take Wittgenstein's remarks as sceptical, 'It seems that the entire idea of meaning vanishes into thin air' (1982:22). In this case scepticism would represent '*all* language, *all* concept formation, to be impossible, even unintelligible' (1982:62), so that 'assertions that anyone ever means anything are meaningless' (1982:77). Such scepticism is thus 'insane and intolerable' (1982:50).

14.
Wittgenstein's solution: an approach via radical interpretation, focusing on 'regular connection' between verbal and non-verbal actions

We saw that Wittgenstein raised this question by reference to interpretation—by citing the possibility of an interpretation which represents an intuitively mistaken way of following a rule as correct in some different or unexpected sense, and by stressing that interpretations alone do not determine meaning. Also I think he solves the problem by reference to interpretation; this emerges in the following remarks, which are, even for him, unusually difficult to understand.

206 Following a rule is analogous to obeying an order. We are trained to do so; we react to an order in a particular way. But what if one person reacts in one way and another in another to the order and the training? Which one is right?

Suppose you came as an explorer into an unknown country with a language quite strange to you. In what circumstances would you say that the people there gave orders, understood them, obeyed them, rebelled against them, and so on?

The common behaviour of mankind is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language.

207 Let us imagine that the people in that country carried on the usual human activities and in the course of them employed, apparently, an articulate

language. If we watch their behaviour we find it intelligible, it seems 'logical'. But when we try to learn their language we find it impossible to do. For there is no regular connection between what they say, the sounds they make, and their actions; but still the sounds are not superfluous, for if we gag one of their people, it has the same consequences as with us; without the sounds their actions fall into confusion— as I feel like putting it.

Are we to say that these people have a language: orders, reports, and the rest?

There is not enough regularity for us to call it 'language'.

In these remarks Wittgenstein at first explicitly states the question of accord which he has been raising, using the examples of rules and orders, and people who respond to these in different ways ('Which one is right?'). He then replies to his own question indirectly, by describing an hypothetical radical interpreter, similar to the figure considered later by Quine and Davidson[17], who seeks to make sense of both the interpretees' utterances and actions, without prior knowledge of either. And here he makes a series of claims about the finding of empirical regularities ('regular connection') between sounds and actions which make interpretation possible.

What are we to make of these claims, and how do they constitute an answer to the general questions about correctness or normative accord which Wittgenstein has raised? Without going further into exegetical detail, I think we can take Wittgenstein here to be making a series of related points which we can partly bring out as follows. We are concerned with the interpretation of speech, and speech is a kind of behaviour which has a marked and complex (syntactic) order, in virtue of which we can understand it with particular clarity and precision. But as 207 suggests, speech is also a kind of behaviour which cannot be understood in isolation from the rest of the behavioural order of which it is a part. (To see this, consider trying to work out the meaning of radio broadcasts in a foreign language on the basis of their syntax alone, in the absence of any clue which might provide information as to what the broadcasts were about.)

Despite the order in people's productions of sounds or marks, if these were not a co-ordinated part of a larger pattern of action we could not interpret such sounds or marks, or regard them as language at all. By contrast, we can understand the order in much non-linguistic behaviour without relying on speech, at least up to a point. We can generally see the purposive patterns in people's behaviour in terms of their performance of commonplace intentional actions, and their being engaged in various everyday projects: 'the usual human activities' which constitute 'the common behaviour of mankind'. But as Wittgenstein has previously stressed, unless we can link such actions with speech, we cannot, in many cases, know what people think; and in the absence of speech it would be doubtful how far we could ascribe precise thoughts or motives to people at all (cf. 25, 32; and also 342).

So we have a general claim about interpretation and understanding. Words without relation to deeds are unintelligible, and deeds without relation to words are inarticulate. It follows that the kind of understanding of people which we actually attain, in which we take deeds to spring from motives with precise and determinate content, requires that we integrate our understanding of verbal and non-verbal action, and hence that we correlate and co-ordinate the two. In this we tie the complex order in utterance to particular points in the framework of action and context, so as to interpret language; and this in turn enables us to interpret the rest of behaviour as informed by thought which, like that expressed in language, has fully articulate content.[18]

15.
Regular connection, intention, and rule

Wittgenstein makes this conception of the relation of interpretation, utterance and action clearer in further remarks. Thus in 243 he writes:

> A human being can encourage himself, give himself orders, obey, blame, and punish himself; he can ask himself a question, and answer it. We could even imagine human beings who spoke only in monologue; who accompanied their activities by talking to themselves.—An explorer who watched them and listened to their talk might succeed in translating their language into ours. (This would enable him to predict these people's actions correctly, for he also hears them making resolutions and decisions.)
>
> But could we also imagine a language…the individual words of [which] are to refer to what can only be known to the person speaking; to his immediate private sensations[?]

This again involves the figure of the explorer/interpreter, in what is clearly a variation on the theme of 206–7. As before, according to Wittgenstein, we find meaning where we find a kind of correlation between utterance and action which a radical interpreter can specify. Here the idea is applied to 'resolutions and decisions': that is, to utterances which express the interpretee's intentions in the actions with which they can be correlated. Just as in 206–7 the radical interpreter is required to find regular connections between utterances of orders and actions which are obeyings of those orders, so in 243 the radical interpreter is required to find regular connections between expressions of intention and actions which are fulfillings of those intentions. In the earlier remarks Wittgenstein claimed that such correlations are necessary for interpretation, and here he adds that they also suffice for it. For given such correlations the explorer—interpreter can both 'predict these people's actions correctly' and 'succeed in translating their language into ours'.

This remark also makes more explicit how Wittgenstein takes the specification of this kind of regularity to bear upon mental states like intention and desire. In

correlating sentences expressing 'resolutions and decisions' with actions in this way, an interpreter is relating specifications of intention to the actions which fulfil them. This is particularly obvious in the case of resolutions and decisions, but it also applies to the rules and orders which Wittgenstein considers in other remarks; for in general the linguistic expression of a rule or order can also be regarded as a specification of the intention with which the person who follows the rule or executes the order thereby acts.

As Wittgenstein stresses, 'when we interpret [another], we make hypotheses, which may prove false' (*Investigations* Pt II, xi); and to frame hypotheses about such utterance/action correlations, the interpreter must make use of his or her own language (32). So we can say that in specifying an interpretive regularity of the kind with which Wittgenstein is concerned, his interpreter/explorer seeks to map a single sentence of his or her own idiolect (i) to the interpretee's verbal behaviour, construed as an utterance of a sentence expressing a rule or order, or again a decision, resolution or the like; and (ii) to the interpretee's non-verbal behaviour, construed as an action in accord with the rule, order, decision, etc.; and so (iii) to the interpretee's intention in acting, which is taken as expressed by the sentence in (i) and therefore fulfilled by the action in (ii). So an interpretive understanding of a single regular connection of this kind represents these three elements—the interpretee's utterance, intention and action—as at once empirically correlated and in normative accord. (So this interpretive mapping is, as it were, the final shadow of 'the general rule' of the *Tractatus,* which links the written notes, the musical thought and playing of music; and hence shows 'the harmony between thought and reality' which that rule embodies.)

This does not mean that in understanding one another we explicitly frame the same kinds of hypothesis as Wittgenstein's interpreter/explorer. The claim of 206–7 is rather that our mutual understanding depends upon the regularities which such hypotheses would specify, if an interpreter were to frame them. In interpreting one another, therefore, we are sensitive to these regularities—e.g. in linking expressions of intention with the actions which fulfil these intentions, and describing both by the same sentences—while our understanding of the regularities themselves remains tacit. As we have seen, Wittgenstein stressed from the *Tractatus* that responses to such regularities are 'part of the human organism' so that it is 'not humanly possible' to gather immediately from language what the logic of language is (4.002). Wittgenstein's consideration of the interpreter/explorer serves as a way of bringing this logic to the fore. For it enables us to locate and give preliminary characterization to some of the complex regularities to which we respond in understanding one another, and which are constitutive of meaning itself.

16.
Interpretation is both empirical and normative, and so provides the kind of account of correctness which is required

Thus in 206–7 and 243 Wittgenstein sketches a conception of interpretation which is at once empirical and normative. Interpretation is based upon a natural order in behaviour, which includes regular connections between utterances and other actions, and so can be considered as a form of empirical enquiry. The empirical order we detect in interpretation, however, is also a normative order. In interpreting even non-verbal actions we find them to be, as Wittgenstein says, intelligible or 'logical': that is, to accord with standards of intelligibility and logic; and in discerning the regular connections between verbal and non-verbal action which are required for language we find the non-verbal actions to occur in normative accord with the verbal ones, for example as followings of rules or orders which are expressed in utterances.

Interpretation thus discerns a kind of regularity which is genuine and which can be objectively characterized; and interpretive characterizations of this order are in terms of the norms and rules about which Wittgenstein has raised his constitutive and epistemic questions. So as 206–7 implies, these questions can be answered by reference to interpretation. Correctness is constituted as a form of natural order, and this kind of order is understood in interpretation. Roughly, what makes it the case that some particular thing I do is correct or incorrect is that my behaviour manifests the kind of order which renders it interpretable, so that there are objectively ascribable but normative regularities in terms of which it can be understood; and this particular thing coincides or fails to coincide with one of these regularities. So reference to interpretation provides an answer to Wittgenstein's general questions: that is, an account as to how these normative connections are both constituted and known.

The instances of 'regular connection' of which Wittgenstein speaks in 207 thus have a triple status: they obtain; we interpret them in normative terms; and they sustain interpretation of this kind. Hence we can see them not only as causal regularities, but as regularities which correctness demands, and which support the kind of interpretation in which correctness or the lack of it is ascribed. This status explains the apparently 'superstrong connection' or the 'despotic demand for what is not yet there' which hold between the act of intending and the thing intended, or other elements of interpretive regularity generally. And it emerges clearly in the examples with which Wittgenstein both illustrates the questions and attempts to dissolve them.

198 'But how can a rule show me what I have to do at *this* point? Whatever I do is, on some interpretation, in accord with the rule'— That is not what we ought to say, but rather: any interpretation still hangs in the air

along with what it interprets, and cannot give it any support. Interpretations by themselves do not determine meaning.

'Then can whatever I do be brought into accord with the rule?'—Let me ask this: what has the expression of a rule—say a sign-post—got to do with my actions? What sort of connection is there here?—Well, perhaps this one: I have been trained to react to this sign in a particular way, and now I do so react to it.

But that is only to give a causal connection; to tell how it has come about that we now go by the sign-post; not what this going-by-the-sign really consists in. On the contrary: I have further indicated that a person goes by a sign-post only in so far as there exists a regular use of sign-posts, a custom.

The notion of 'regular use' or 'practice' here introduces the notion of interpretable regularity which we have been considering above. Wittgenstein's example is the practice of going by a sign-post, in which there is a regular connection, brought about by training, between the sign and actions which accord with it. (The sign-post is of course not an utterance of an interpretee; but still it can be regarded as a concrete instance (token) of one of an interpretee's sentences, and so as involving the kind of sign/action regularity described above.) Thus an interpreter could use observation of behaviour connected with the sign-post to work out that the sign meant, say, 'turn left'; and also a person who used such a sign could point to the sign-post itself as part of specifying a rule or giving an order, or as specifying his or her desire or intention to act accordingly: that is, to turn left.

To interpret the sign this way is perforce to hold that a person trying to act in accord with it by turning right would not be acting in accord with it, and so in that sense would be behaving incorrectly. The sign-action regularity thus covers behaviour which both has a causal explanation and can also be assessed for correctness. The regularity of which the sign is part is also essential to this potential for correctness, since, as 207 makes explicit, a degree of regularity in persons' behaviour in relation to sign-posts (use of the sign) is required for the cogent assignment of an interpretation to the sign, and hence also to the ascription of the desire or intention which agents link with the sign; and such an interpretation also specifies the norm against which correct use of the sign is assessed. So, in Wittgenstein's terms, we begin to understand 'what this going-by-the-sign really consists in' when we see the matter both as one of causal connection and also in terms of the linked notions of practice, interpretation and correctness.[19]

17.
The interpretive discernment of regularity can be compared to the framing of empirical hypotheses and the finding of natural laws

The question of determining the right way to follow a sign-post, or a rule in general, is thus an empirical one: that of charting a 'regular connection' and so finding the right characterization of a certain regularity. In this case, however, the regularity is that of behaviour related to a norm or standard of correctness. This also yields answers to the specific questions Wittgenstein poses. Consider first the analogue of that in 206: what should we say if one person responds in one way and another in another to the sign-post and the training connected with it —which one is right? On the exegesis so far this is straightforward. If the best interpretive explanation we can give of the role of the sign in the lives of those who use it is that it means 'turn left', then someone who responds to the training and the sign by turning right is so far responding incorrectly. This, indeed, is comparable to the case with which the enquiry began, of the learner who responds to our training with '+2' by going on '1,004, 1,008…' As in that case, misinterpreting the sign can be also compared with misinterpreting the gesture of pointing; and indeed if we take the kind of sign-post Wittgenstein actually describes in his argument [85 'A rule stands there like a sign-post…But where is it said which way I am to follow it; whether in the direction of its finger or (e.g.) in the opposite one?'] we see that the comparison is nearly exact.

As before, someone who is acting incorrectly may yet have what deserves to be called his own understanding of the training and the rule. As Wittgenstein holds, this should also show in regular behaviour on his part, which we should be able to interpret. If we succeed in formulating the way this person understands 'turn left', then there will also be the possibility that he will fail to act in accord with the rule as he understands it. Thus someone might regularly turn right at the sign, leading us to suppose that he understood it this way; then on occasion he might encounter the sign (or in another case hear the order 'turn left') and turn left, but then correct himself and turn right. This too we could interpret, for as Wittgenstein emphasizes, self-correction—and other kinds of behaviour which show sensitivity to norms—are also observable aspects of our natural history, and hence material for radical interpretation.

54 Let us recall the kinds of case where we say that a game is played according to a definite rule.

The rule may be an aid in teaching the game. The learner is told it and given practice in applying it. —Or it is an instrument of the game itself. — Or the rule is employed neither in the teaching nor in the game itself; nor is it set down in the list of rules. One learns the game by watching how others play. But we say that it is played according to suchand-such rules because an observer can read these rules off from the practice of the game—like a

natural law governing the play. —But how does the observer distinguish in this case between player's mistakes and correct play?—There are characteristic signs of it in the players' behaviour. Think of the behaviour characteristic of someone correcting a slip of the tongue. It would be possible to recognise that someone was doing so even without knowing his language.[20]

Although this remark is an early one, it has a clear bearing on the themes we have been considering, made fully explicit only later in the book. Since Wittgenstein compares games and language, his focus on a game learnt solely by observing the behaviour of others anticipates his remarks about the explorer/ interpreter, who learns the language of the monologue people through observation in precisely this way. We may suppose, moreover, that such an interpreter would be aided in this work by attending to the 'characteristic signs', stressed here, of people's awareness of the relation of their own behaviour to their own norms, which can be recognized 'even without knowing [their] language'. We can thus see this early remark as ending with a reference to the idea of radical interpretation which Wittgenstein takes up more explicitly via the role of the explorer in 207 and 243.

Also we can see that in this early remark, too, Wittgenstein is considering interpretable regularities, which in this case can be 'read off from the practice of the game—like a natural law governing the play'. Here again Wittgenstein indicates that these are at once natural regularities subject to disciplined empirical study ('like a natural law'), and also regularities which have the further status of activity in accord with rules or norms; and that this is reflected in further observable behaviour relating to them. Wittgenstein thus sketches his views repeatedly.[21] Indeed, in remarks plainly continuous with this, but applied explic itly to language, Wittgenstein constructs nearly the same argument for the case of rules in the home language as he will deploy in the case of radical interpretation considered in 207.

82 What do I call 'the rule by which he proceeds'? 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?—But what if observation does not enable us to see any clear rule, and the question brings none to light?… What meaning is the expression 'the rule by which he proceeds' supposed to have left to it here?

An interpreter trying to discern rules of language can construct hypotheses to account for the linguistic behaviour she observes, and can also make use of the interpretee's own expressive or self-ascriptive account. Interpretive hypotheses will naturally enjoy a maximum of support when these sources of information coincide, as they do in instances of interpretive regularity. If, however, no such

hypothesis is satisfactory, then the notion of rule may be inapplicable to the data of observation; there is, as he says in 207, 'not enough regularity' in the data for us to describe it in terms of the concept of a linguistic rule.

18.
Interpretation ratifies the first-person perspective on mind and meaning

This clearly also applies to the alternative formulation of Wittgenstein's question above: namely, what makes it the case, and how am I to know, that the sentences of my idiolect relate to my own activities and to the rest of the world as I take them to? It is clear that I cannot answer this by *saying* how my sentences relate to these things, for this 'still hangs in the air along with what it interprets, and cannot give it any support' (198). In this context my interpretations of my own rules are no more than 'the substitution of one expression of the rule for another', and do not determine what they mean. Rather, this is determined by the *use* I make of my sentences, which manifests 'a way of grasping a rule which is *not* an *interpretation,* but which is exhibited in what we call "obeying the rule" and "going against it" in actual cases' (201). This is my linguistic practice, which another can interpret as in regular connection with my non-verbal actions, and thereby understand in terms of my fulfilling intentions, following rules and other forms of normative accord. And although I do not (and could not) interpret myself in this way, this also constitutes my first-person expressions of my own meanings and motives as correct and authoritative. Objectivity is thus linked with the possibility of intersubjectivity: each person's first-person or subjective perspective is rendered objective by the possibility of understanding by, and so co-ordination with, that of another.

So Wittgenstein's point is not that we face a problem in justifying our assignments of meaning, or the way we follow rules. It is only that we are bound to *think* that there is such a problem (and indeed an insoluble one) so long as we do not acknowledge the asymmetric role of interpretation, and hence suppose that what can be cited in justification of the ways we think and act must somehow be employed or available to each of us in the Cartesian perspective of our own case.[22] Hence according to Wittgenstein the first-person perspective—that in which we are authoritative about mind and meaning, and in which we find no doubt or indeterminacy—does not contain within itself the materials required for its own justification. Like Descartes, we tend to assume that where clarity and certainty are, there ground and justification must also be, and this is an error. The beliefs which characterize the first-person perspective are constituted as knowledge by a possible relation to others, which consists in our being such as to be interpretable by them.

19.
Expression, interpretable regularity, and further propositional attitudes

The *Investigations* thus replaces the first-person perspective on mind and meaning of the *Tractatus* with an account grounded in the interpretive apprehension of the natural regularities which, in his terms, constitute our 'form of life' (241). These regularities, however, also relate to the first-person perspective, for they encompass utterances which express intentions and other sententially described motives upon which non-verbal actions are based. Thus according to Wittgenstein, in the verbal expression of pain 'words are connected with the primitive, the natural, expressions of the sensation and used in their place' (244); and something similar holds for wishing, expecting and the like. As he says,

> 441 By nature and by a particular training, a particular education, we are disposed to give spontaneous expression to wishes in certain circumstances. (A *wish* is, of course, not such a 'circumstance'.) In this game the question whether I know what I wish before my wish is fulfilled cannot arise at all. And the fact that some event stops my wishing does not mean that it fulfils it. Perhaps I should not have been satisfied if my wish had been satisfied…Supposed it were asked 'Do I know what I long for before I get it?' If I have learned to talk, then I do know.

We can see how this relates to such remarks as 206–7 and 243. The natural capacity for self-expression cited here ('By nature…we are disposed') is one which yields a kind of regular connection between utterance and other action, and so the kind of regularity which makes interpretation possible. (The expression of wishes or expectations, for example, might be part of the behaviour which enabled an interpreter observing someone speaking in monologue to work out what he meant, as in 243.) That I spontaneously express my wishes, and that 'some event stops my wishing does not mean that it fulfils it' are aspects of the same 'regular connection': one according to which a wish is satisfied just by an event described by the same sentence as that in which the wish is expressed, and therefore just by an event in normative accord with the wish itself. Hence the interpretable regularities which fix the semantic character of sentences also serve to fix those of states of mind which we use sentences to articulate and express.

This holds for all the propositional attitudes which have this kind of first-person ascriptive expression; so all can be regarded as bound to their objects in the same linguistically mediated way. Thus Wittgenstein puts the point in a way which admits of generalization:

444 One may have the feeling that in the sentence 'I expect he is coming' one is using the words 'he is coming' in a different sense from the one they have in the assertion 'he is coming'. But if it were so how could I say that my expectation had been fulfilled? If I wanted to explain the words 'he' and 'is coming', say by means of ostensive definitions, the same definitions of these words would go for both sentences.

But it might now be asked: what's it like for him to come. —The door opens, someone walks in, and so on. —What's it like for me to expect him to come?—I walk up and down the room, look at the clock now and then, and so on. —But the one set of events has not the smallest similarity to the other! So how can one use the same words in describing them?—But perhaps I say as I walk up and down: 'I expect he'll come in'—Now there is a similarity somewhere. But of what kind?!

445 It is in language that an expectation and its fulfilment make contact.

20.
Thought, practice, and the fixing of reference

This should, I think, be seen as a claim about the representational or semantic character of states of mind which have a sentential *(that P)* articulation generally, and hence about 'the whole question of representation' as this was raised in *Philosophical Grammar.* The referents of thoughts and other linguistically articulated states of mind, and the conditions in which these are satisfied, fulfilled, etc., are those of the sentences by which we articulate them. Hence these referential and truth-conditional relations are to be seen as determined by the practice of using these sentences, where this includes the kind of interpretive comprehension of 'regular connections' between utterance and action considered from 206–7.

As noted above, this reverses the *Tractatus* conception of thought (understood in this way) as independent of language and explanatorily prior to it. So this remark is continuous with *Philosophical Grammar* 63–4. The claim there was that it was not via an internal symbol system, but rather in linguistic practice, that a thought about Napoleon made contact with Napoleon himself. And like the argument in 441–5, this turned on the way the same words are used both in the expression of a thought and in the practice of describing and referring to its objects. (Cf. 'the word "Napoleon" occurs in the expression of my thought, plus the connection that word has with its bearer; e.g. that was the way he signed his name, that was how he was spoken to, and so on.'[23]) My uses of 'Napoleon' in expressing my thoughts link these thoughts to the referent of that term, as I use it in other contexts; and my uses also enjoy interpretable connections with those of others, which ultimately reach back to Napoleon himself. So what enables me to speak of Napoleon also enables me to think of him. The interpretable order of which my linguistic expressions of thought are a part actually encompasses the

object of my thought, despite its remoteness in time and space from my activity of thinking; and this enables us to see how thought and object are related.

We can see how this line of thought is carried into the fuller argument of the *Investigations.* In 437 Wittgenstein had posed a question: 'A wish seems already to know what will or would satisfy it; a proposition, a thought, what makes it true …Whence this determining of what is not yet there?' This again is a version of 'the whole question of representation', and raised in terms which span language and mind. Through 206–7 and 243, we can see that we fix the conditions in which sentences are true via the regular connections manifest in interpretable practice, and through 243 and 441–4 that these connections include sentential expressions of motives (expectations, wishes, etc.) which specify the conditions in which these motives are fulfilled, satisfied, etc., and hence the things which they are about. So the same regularities as secure the references of sentences also and thereby secure those of thoughts which sentences express. Thus 445 answers the question of 437 and hence fills the lacuna about the reference of thought left in the *Tractatus:* the 'determining of what is not yet there', by which 'an expectation and its fulfilment make contact' is effected by the use of language. Hence it is this use—spontaneous, expressive and interpretable—which we should see as constituting the life of signs.

21.
Practice and consciousness

The idea that the intentionality of thought is to be explained via linguistic practice also contradicts the idea that mental reference is simply given to us in consciousness itself. Thus in 205—just before indicating the role of interpretable regularity in 206–7—Wittgenstein has his interlocutor urge that the existence of a custom or technique (interpretable practice) is not necessary for an intention to play chess. The idea is apparently that one can simply *intend* or *mean* to play chess, as one can simply intend to designate or *mean* Napoleon: the relation of intention or thought to its objects is prior to that of linguistic practice.

Wittgenstein indicates the inadequacy of this by asking how the rules which define chess are 'present in the mind' of someone intending to play. This is a reminder of the point, stressed also in 186, that what someone intends, means, expects, etc., may go beyond anything which could plausibly be said to be a content of that person's conscious mind at the time. (This is clear also in the case of such an intention as that to add 2, or again my expectation that I will do so correctly in any instance if asked; and something similar holds for the variety of instances of some descriptive word, for these too are characteristically not 'present to the mind' in use.) Such consciousness-transcending mental reference, Wittgenstein implies, requires to be explained by reference to linguistic practice. Thus Wittgenstein answers his own question about the reference of intention in 197:

> Where is the connection effected between the sense of the expression 'Let's play a game of chess' and all the rules of the game?—Well, in the list of the rules of the game, in the teaching of it, in the day-to-day practice of playing.

Here Wittgenstein again returns to the idea of the sense of a sentence: that is, the thought expressed by it. So this again is a remark about how such a sense or thought—that expressed by 'Let's play a game of chess'—relates to the things it is about. The answer again is in terms of use or practice. The verbal expression of a desire or intention to play chess is part of an interpretable practice; and other parts of that same practice include the spoken and written expressions of the rules of chess, the many co-ordinate actions which constitute the teaching and learning of chess, the playing of actual games, and so forth. In understanding such a practice we relate speakers to things in their immediate environment, and also to things beyond it [(ii)–(iv) in section 9 above]. For the parts of such a practice admit any degree of spatial and temporal distance from one another, as the case of adding 2 already illustrates. Interpretation links the disparate parts of such a practice as elements of interpretable regularities, and so binds them together in an intelligible (and causally connected) whole. What *cannot* be present to consciousness *can* be a part of such a practice. So intention and other sententially described states—including thoughts—refer beyond consciousness, via the practices in terms of which they are expressed and described.

Finally, as Wittgenstein argues in 243ff., what holds for mental reference which goes beyond consciousness in this way also holds for mental reference within consciousness itself [(i) in section 9 above]. Just as interpretable practice seems unnecessary for us to mean chess by 'chess', so it seems unnecessary for us to mean pain by 'pain'. It seems that we can simply associate words with sensations, and could do so even if there were nothing which could enable another person to judge what sensations we had, and so to interpret these words (256). But it is a corollary of the arguments above that someone could not lay down the meaning of a word in this purely first-person way.

This establishing of meaning is supposed to bring it about that the speaker can use the word correctly: that is, as in accord with a rule. We have seen, however, that what makes it the case that someone follows such a rule correctly— as opposed to merely seeming to himself to do so—is that his performance is such as to admit of assessment as part of an interpretable practice. So if this supposed inner ostensive definition really were beyond the scope of interpretation, it would also be beyond the scope of correctness. In the case of such an imagined, purely first-person conception of sensation, there would be no standard of correctness (258). It is natural to think that even so one would still *believe* that one was associating word and sensation correctly (260). But this is to presume that in the imaginary situation one *thinks* or forms *beliefs* about the sensation correctly, and this is equally unwarranted. For thought and belief are also not purely first-person matters, but subject to interpretive assessment, and rendered objective by

the possibility of intersubjective interpretive agreement. So the intentionality of consciousness—consciousness as permeated by conceptual or sententially articulable thought—requires to be understood in terms of language and practice as well.

22.
Summary and conclusion

As presented here, Wittgenstein's argument has both a conceptual and an empirical aspect. The conceptual claim is that we should regard sentential content — and hence the assignment of both propositional attitudes to persons and propositions to their sentences—as having a particular place in our 'form of life': that is, as constituted via the interaction of human behaviour and our activity of making sense of it. We can cast light on this, in turn, by considering the activity of a radical interpreter, who is set the task of understanding the speech and actions of people unfamiliar to him. This enables us to see that our natural but disciplined practice of ascribing sentential content requires the tacit discerning of regularities which hold between linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour (practice). Given these regularities, we can characterize both utterances and non-verbal activities as the product of motives which have the same kind of sententially ascribed contents as the utterances themselves; and this is the kind of content which we ascribe to our own thoughts. In the absence of such regularities, however, this kind of content could not be ascribed in an empirically disciplined way; and so far as we understand such content as constituted via the explanatory practice in which it is assigned, this is to say that such content would not exist.

This conception, we should note, is consistent both with the claim that thinking and intending are (or are realized by) events in the brain, and that such events are causes of—and in this sense explanatorily prior to—behaviour and practice. Ascribing a causal priority to events in the brain should be no barrier to recognizing that our ability to conceive these events in the particular sentential ways we do depends upon our capacity to relate them to behaviour and the environment, and via the discernment of regularity, in the way Wittgenstein indicates. On Wittgenstein's account the assignment of content is like a kind of measurement, which presupposes that the objects to be measured (the forms of verbal and non-verbal behaviour to be assigned motive- and content-specifying sentences) can be related in certain ways. In particular, the sentential measurement of intentionality can be compared with that of weight (142). Just as the assignment of weights to objects by balancing them against standards would lose its point if these balancings did not correlate with the weight-related behaviour of objects generally, so assigning contents (and hence motives) to behaviour via sentences would lose its point if the utterance of sentences failed to correlate with motivated behaviour generally.[24] Without the order required for the imposition of a metric, assignments of measurement lapse; and this applies to

our natural measuring of intentionality and so psychological causal role by the assignment of sentential content to states or events in the brain.

What Wittgenstein offers as against the *Tractatus* (Augustine/Frege/Fodor) idea of thought is thus a series of proposals about the nature of sentential content itself. The order which sustains the ascription of such content is manifest in linguistic practice, which is why such practice (use) constitutes the life of signs. Since assignments of content to thought presuppose this order, we cannot take the content of thought to be independent of that of language. So the idea that our thoughts have determinate and meaning-constituting content prior to language can be seen as another form of the Cartesian illusion characterized above. Attending to the contents of our thoughts as these seem immediately given to us in consciousness, we fail to apprehend the full range of conditions involved in their attribution. We take as simply given (or given by some sort of invisible underlying mechanism) what is in fact constituted via our intersubjective understanding of a behavioural order in which an essentially salient role is occupied by language and practice.

We have seen that in arriving at this conception Wittgenstein put aside the idea of an inner code. As re-enacted in the *Investigations,* this rejection was prompted not only by the realization that such a code could not be semantically self-sufficient, but also by empirical ignorance. (158 'Now ask yourself: what do you really *know* about these things?') So it is worth observing that an advocate of such a code could accept, in the spirit of the *Investigations,* that the code could be assigned sentential content only via the kind of order shown in linguistic practice, while also holding, in the spirit of Augustine or Fodor, that it nonetheless has such content before language is acquired. The idea would be that the elements of the code might already (innately) be such as to have a determinate explanatory relation to behaviour, including future speech, even before such behaviour actually develops. The structure of the code—to take one of Wittgenstein's own examples—might be compared to that inside a seed, which is already such as to specify the nature of the future plant (linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour) which will develop from it, and so could be preliminarily assigned content on the basis of this innate and order-determining power.[25] Wittgenstein was inclined to reject such a picture, and indicates an alternative in which thought acquires sentential focus only together with the behaviour to which it relates. Such a view, which could not be justified by philosophical argument alone, seems also to be gaining support in cognitive science.[26]

Notes

1 References are to Wittgenstein's works by numbered remark or page, as indicated in the text.

2 As is well known, Grice attempted both to define meaning and to explain use by further specifying the mental processes which gave life to signs. As will appear, this ignores the dependence of individual thought upon social and linguistic practice which Wittgenstein came to stress.

3 For a fuller exegetical account of this and other topics see the longer version of this essay at the Philosophy Department website of King's College London (www.kcl.ac.uk).

4 Wittgenstein's inspiration in this evidently came from Hertz, to whom he refers at *Tractatus* 4.04. The relevant passage is presumably the following:

> The relation of a model to the system of which it is regarded as a model is precisely the same as the relation of the pictures which our mind forms of things to the things themselves…the agreement between mind and nature may therefore be likened to the agreement between the systems which are models of one another, and we can even account for this agreement by assuming that the mind is capable of making actual dynamic models and working with them. See Hertz (1956),p. 428.

5 Wittgenstein's phrase 'the kind of relation to the constituents of the thought and of the pictured fact' is of course ungrammatical in English. I take it that this should be understood by putting the constituent prepositional phrases—'of the pictured fact' and 'to the constituents of the thought'—in the order they should have in English, so that his idea is rendered as 'the kind of relation of the pictured fact to the constituents of the thought'. This makes his reply a straightforward answer to Russell's question.

6 In a helpful criticism of an earlier draft Jane Heal stressed that Wittgenstein's emphasis on sentences as thoughts in 3.5 and 4 seemed to many to be inconsistent with his claim to Russell that thoughts were sentence-like mental or psychic representations. As I indicate, this apparent inconsistency vanishes when we remember that in 3.5 and 4 Wittgenstein is speaking of thoughts as we who have learnt language express them, and that his formulations make explicit reference to the process by which our thinking by means of mental representations (thinking the sense of the sentence, applying the sentence and thinking it out) enables us to use sentences of natural language for this purpose, that is, to express our thoughts to others or to ourselves.

7 See for example the discussion of 'mind models' and the pianola at *Blue Book* 117–8, and the related discussion of thinking as operating with symbols at *Philosophical Grammar* 106.

8 See also the lucid exposition in Fodor (1990).

9 Something similar of course holds on the input side. An object which is perceived will only produce (cause the tokening of) the internal thought-element which refers to it if the object is perceived correctly, that is, perceived as what it actually is.

10 As he says in the *Investigations* 'these mechanisms are only hypotheses, models designed to explain, to sum up, what you observe' (§156).

11 The theme of the relation of mechanism and correctness, and hence mechanism and grammar, is considered again in *Philosophical Grammar* §§135–139 (pp. 187–92), parts of which reappear in *Philosophical Investigations.*

12   The comparison between the Jacquard loom and programmable calculating machines is a familiar one. Ada Lovelace wrote in 1843 that

> The distinctive characteristic of [Babbage's] Analytical Engine is the introduction into it of the principle which Jacquard devised for regulating, by means of punched cards, the most complicated patterns in the weaving of brocaded stuffs …We can say most aptly that Analytical Engine weaves algebraical patterns just as the Jacquard-loom weaves flowers and leaves.
>
> (Quoted in Kim and Toole 1999:80)

13   Thus see Fodor (1979), in which the hypothesized inner symbol-system, like that of the *Tractatus,* serves to implement both pre-linguistic thought and assignments of truth-conditions to sentences of natural language. For comparisons between Fodor and the early Wittgenstein see Summerfield (1992) and McDonagh(l986).

14   I stress the partial nature of the present discussion, as unquoted portions of both remarks contain relevant material which I am not discussing here.

15   This also indicates how the *Tractatus* notion of a picture is partly carried forward in the *Investigations* conception of philosophical problems as resulting from misleading pictures.

16   The opposition appears early in the *Investigations.* In §19 Wittgenstein considers the idea that 'if you shout "Slab!" you really mean: "Bring me a slab"', and asks 'But how do you do this: how do you *mean that* while you say "Slab!"?' This is the 'How does one do that?' question of *Philosophical Grammar* §63, one answer to which is that it is done automatically in an inner code. In §20 Wittgenstein urges that this capacity to mean, and the notion of sense which goes with it, is to be understood in terms of use.

17   It will be clear that the approach to mind and language which I here ascribe to Wittgenstein anticipates that of Quine, and has much in common with Davidson. In particular, the 'regular connections' upon which Wittgenstein concentrates can be seen to underpin Davidson's Unified Theory of radical interpretation, which can be viewed as specifying in more detail the kind of order which behaviour must have to render it interpretable. This is discussed in greater detail in Hopkins (1999).

18   I set out some detailed suggestions as to how we do this in Hopkins (1999).

19   Wittgenstein's emphasis in §198 upon seeing the sign-post with its associated training and practice both in terms of causes and of interpretable practice seems to anticipate Davidson, in the sense that Wittgenstein apparently assumes that the language-game (vocabulary) of cause and effect, and that of rule, intention, and practice, will here apply to the same objects and events, and in harmony. This sensible view is inconsistent with the anti-causalism commonly ascribed to Wittgenstein on the basis, e.g, of his remarks distinguishing reasons and causes. There is indeed uncertainty in this area in Wittgenstein's writings, some of which is discussed in Hopkins (1999).

20   Compare §506: 'The absent-minded man who at the order "Right turn!" turns left, and then, clutching his forehead, says "Oh! Right turn" and does a right turn. — What has struck him? An interpretation?' Clutching the forehead here is comparable to the behavior Wittgenstein mentions as characteristic of correcting a slip. And although according to Wittgenstein the agent himself is not interpreting

the order, but simply acting to correct himself, this is something which we might interpret, in the course of reading the 'rule' for 'Turn Right!' from his behavior, including behavior in which he turned left.

21 Thus see also §31, in which Wittgenstein distinguishes learning to behave in accord with rules from learning the rules themselves: 'One can also imagine someone's having learnt the game without ever learning or formulating rules. He might have learnt quite simple board games by watching, and have progressed to more and more complicated ones.' The first paragraph of this remark is explicitly about learning language, and Wittgenstein regards the learning of natural language as comparable, and interpretation of the kind he describes in §54, §82, §206–7, and §243 as the framing of hypothesis about the rules with which such behavior accords.

22 This also points up a main source of difficulty in Wittgenstein's exposition, namely his play on first person/third person asymmetries about interpretation. He sometimes speaks of interpretation in the clearly hypothetical way considered here:

> One person makes a bidding gesture as if he meant to say 'Go!' The other slinks off with frightened expression. Might I not call this procedure 'order and obedience' even if it happened only once?…the objection could naturally be made that among human beings other than ourselves a quite different gesture corresponds to 'Go away!' and that perhaps our gesture for this order has among them the significance of our extending the hand in token of friendship. And whatever interpretation one has to give to a gesture depends on other actions which precede and follow the gesture.
>
> (*Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics,* pp. 352–3)

But in other cases he mixes first- and third-person uses, so that the reader is forced to distinguish them carefully in order to attain a coherent view. Thus as noted in §198 and §201 he criticizes the role of interpretation in the first person, only to provide a solution via interpretation in the third person in §206–7. In the latter activity, as he later says, 'it is easy to recognise cases in which we are *interpreting.* When we interpret we form hypotheses, which may prove false' (*Philosophical Investigations,* Part II, p. xi). This, he stresses, holds for the explorer/interpreter he introduces in §32, who as he says will have to guess what interpretees mean, and will sometimes guess right, and sometimes wrong.

23 Wittgenstein thus seems to have held that what makes an object the referent of a proper name, as well as of a thought expressed by the use of that name, is a connection which that object has with the spatio-temporally extended practice of using the name. Although he did not spell this out in detail, his idea seems consistent with the kind of 'picture' of continuity of practice provided by Kripke. See Kripke (1980)

24 For a recent account of interpretation as measurement, which includes comments on the relation of this conception to the hypothesis of a language of thought, see Matthews (1994)

25 The example comes from the discussion in *Zettel* §608ff, which also includes vestigial reference to the inner code ('translation with another symbolism' in §612). Wittgenstein's discussion of these matters in terms of human reading machines thus dovetails with the now celebrated connectionist discussions of reading machines. Sejnowski and Rosenberg (1987).

26 See for example the essays in Elman *et al.* (1999).

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6
WITTGENSTEIN AS SOIL
Laurence Goldstein

1.
Seed and soil

In 1929, at around the time when he defended the *Tractatus* at a PhD viva, Wittgenstein composed 'Some Remarks on Logical Form' for presentation at the Joint Session of the Mind Association and the Aristotelian Society in Nottingham. That paper is largely a defence of the Tractarian viewpoint. He abandoned the piece as worthless before the session took place. Subsequently, he told Moore that 'when he wrote it, he was getting new ideas about which he was still confused, and that he did not think it deserved any attention' (*M* 200).[1] Perhaps in the next few months his confusion began to clear as a vision for a new philosophy dawned.[2] He writes: 'I myself still find my way of philosophising new, and it keeps striking me so afresh, and that is why I have to repeat myself so often' (*CV* 3). But this mood of cheerful self-congratulation was not to last. In late 1930, probably inspired by Weininger, he spoke of the *unpoetic* mentality characteristic of the semitic races and of his own philosophy By 1931, his antisemitic self-denigration was in full flow.[3] His writing, he says, is often no more than 'stammering'. He, in common with even the greatest Jewish thinker, is 'no more than talented', never inventing a line of thinking but only reproducing, always either applying his old ideas or drawing upon ideas provided by someone else. 'What I invent,' he said 'are new *comparisons*' (*CV* 16).

However, at some time in 1931, the anti-semitic ranting ceased and philosophical self-confidence returned. In lectures that he delivered at Cambridge, Wittgenstein claimed to have invented a 'new subject' and, as Moore reports, this was 'not merely a stage in a "continuous development",— there was now, in philosophy, a "kink" in the "development of human thought", comparable to that which occurred when Galileo and his contemporaries invented dynamics' (*M* 202). If these remarks are to be taken at face value, then we can infer that, between 1929 and 1931, Wittgenstein conceived of himself as having broken decisively with a tradition in philosophy stretching back over two thousand years.[4] So great was the break that philosophy would henceforth be prosecuted, he thought, in an entirely different way—it would not require genius,

but only cleverness in the application of a method (a method, the *discovery* of which *did* require genius—his).[5] 'All I can give you,' he told Alice Ambrose, 'is a method; I cannot teach you any new truths' (Fann 1969:109, fn. 3).

To spend time pondering the question of one's own originality seems symptomatic of a rather unhealthy self-absorption—Wittgenstein's intensity manifested itself in many ways, some compelling, some repelling—but by 1939–40, he had succeeded in identifying what kind of originality, if any, he possessed. He wrote:

> My originality (if that is the right word) is, I believe, an originality that belongs to the soil, not the seed. (Perhaps I have no seed of my own.) Sow a seed in my soil and it will grow differently than it would in any other soil.
> (*CV* 42)

This doubt, 'perhaps I have no seed of my own', recurs even as late as 1947 (MS 134), where Wittgenstein, though recognizing that he had *taste,* was still questioning whether he had *originality* (*CV* 68).

The *Tractatus* contains some trenchant criticism of Fregean and Russellian doctrines, and does develop certain original lines of thought, but it is essentially, and contrary to surface appearances, a *derivative* work—there are very few conclusions that are not readily traceable to authors whom Wittgenstein, in his early years, had read (Goldstein 2002a). I endorse Wittgenstein's own assessment of his early originality—or, rather, the lack of it. As to his later work, it certainly reads differently from most other philosophical writing. His later way of doing philosophy, the results of his investigations, and his conception of what philosophy is, are sufficiently distinctive as to guarantee his lasting significance. But what makes it so distinctive is rather difficult to pin down, and, so I shall argue, he himself is not a particularly reliable guide in this endeavour.

2.
Early logical brilliance

Wittgenstein is widely regarded as the greatest philosopher of the twentieth century[6] and I have no wish to dispute that assessment. So it may seem heretical, churlish or foolish to claim that his early work was highly derivative. But that was exactly his own view. It seemed to Wittgenstein himself that, with regard to the *Tractatus,* he could not lay claim at all to novelty on individual matters,[7] but he said that he had, during his early work on the book in Norway, 1913–14, 'given birth to new lines of thinking' (*CV* 17). These new lines of thinking were in the field of logic and its foundations. When later, during the First World War, his thinking began to broaden out, the results are often of uneven quality, but this is hardly surprising, as his reading in general philosophy was, up to that point, fairly meagre.

Unfortunately, little remains of what he produced during that early period in Norway. But the notes that he dictated to G.E.Moore in April of 1914 (D 301), when Moore visited him in Skjolden, indicate that the majority of the central theses of the *Tractatus* were worked out during five winter months of almost total seclusion in that remote little settlement at the innermost reach of the Sognefjord. Just prior to the sojourn, Wittgenstein had spent the whole of September 1913 on holiday with David Pinsent in Norway, when he devoted some considerable time to working on logic. On his return to England, he dictated to a stenographer extracts of his notes written in August and during that September vacation. He gave the manuscript to Russell, who, after making some alterations, had it typed up (TS 201).

Pinsent's diary provides a vivid picture of Wittgenstein's early struggles with the foundations of logic. It is worth remembering, when reading this diary, that Pinsent himself was a scholar of extremely high calibre. He gained a Cambridge first in mathematics, and was described by George Thomson, who was to become Master of Corpus Christi College, as 'the most brilliant man of my year, among the most brilliant I have ever met'. (This was before the advent of academic praise-inflation.) When Pinsent writes of Wittgenstein that 'he is really remarkably clever' and 'I have never yet been able to find the smallest fault in his reasoning: and yet he has made me reconstruct entirely my ideas on several subjects' (Pinsent 1999; entry for 18 September 1912), we have impressive evidence of Wittgenstein's precocious talent, as the following diary entries also illustrate:

Saturday, June 1st, 1912 [in Cambridge] [Wittgenstein] was very communicative and told me lots about himself: that for nine years, till last Xmas, he suffered from terrific loneliness: that he continually thought of suicide then…He had been brought up to engineering, for which he had neither taste nor talent. And only recently he had tried philosophy and come up here to study under Russell which had proved his salvation: for Russell had given him encouragement. Russell, I know, has a high opinion of him: and has been corrected by him and convinced that he was wrong in one or two points of philosophy: and Russell is not the only philosophical don up here that Wittgenstein has convinced of error.

Saturday, September 14th, 1912 [in Iceland] I had a most interesting evening with Wittgenstein: he taught me Russell's definition of Number *etc* and the use of his logical symbolism— excessively interesting. Wittgenstein makes a very good teacher.

Monday, August 25th, 1913 [in London] Then we went up to his bedroom, and there he explained to me his latest discoveries in logic. They are truly amazing and have solved all the problems on which he has been working unsatisfactorily for the last year. He always has explained to me what he has been working at and it is exceedingly interesting to see how he has gradually developed his work, each idea suggesting a new suggestion, and finally leading to the system he has just discovered—which is

wonderfully simple and ingenious and seems to clear up everything. Of course he has upset a lot of Russell's work[8]—but Russell would be the last to resent that, and really the greatness of his work suffers little thereby—as it is obvious that Wittgenstein is one of Russell's disciples and owes enormously to him. But Wittgenstein's work is really amazing—and I really believe that the mucky morass of Philosophy is at last crystallizing about a rigid theory of Logic.

Friday August 29th, 1913 [in London]

It seems that both Russell and old Whitehead are most enthusiastic about his recent work in Logic. It is probable that the first volume of the 'Principia' will have to be re-written, and Wittgenstein may write himself the first eleven chapters. That is splendid triumph for him![9]

There is a lot that can be gleaned from this diary Pinsent himself was, as we said, an exceptionally able student, yet he is in awe of Wittgenstein's argumentative brilliance, and is full of admiration for his didactic skills. Wittgenstein was keen to relay his discoveries to Pinsent and no doubt benefited greatly from having to order his ideas in such a way as to make them both teachable and available for critical scrutiny The agenda for his early work on the philosophy of logic had been set for him through his reading of 'Frege's great works' and of some of Russell's writings (*T* p. 3). The seed had been sown. But the rapid growth and flowering of ideas is truly impressive. In TS 201, we find a conception of philosophy as presenting no picture of reality, as neither confirming nor confuting scientific investigation, in fact as being *toto mundo* distinct from the natural sciences. A correct explanation of the logical propositions must, we are told, give them a unique position as against all other propositions (such an explanation is subsequently attempted in two long sections of the *Tractatus* (4. 46–4.4661; 6.1–6.13)). There is criticism of the Fregean view that propositions are names; a distinction is drawn between the sense and meaning *(Bedeutung)* of a proposition, and it is pointed out that neither of these is a thing. Clarification is offered of the distinction between complex and fact. Propositions are themselves construed as facts, for propositions need not contain words, but can contain any representatives (symbols). Thus, where an inkpot stands for me, and this table stands for this chair, my putting the inkpot on the table may serve to express that I am sitting in this chair (*N* 98). Where we do use words to say how things are— for example, in an ordinary sentence—we should not think that all of the words are substantives. 'What symbolizes in "aRb" is that "R" occurs between "a" and "b",' not that 'R' itself stands for some object.[10] A solution to Russell's Paradox, later compressed in the *Tractatus* into 3.332, 3.333, is proposed.

And so on. An array of important results achieved in an astonishingly short period of time. Wittgenstein began his studies under Russell in autumn 1911, and within two years the novice student of a great logician had become his logic teacher. As Brian McGuinness points out, one of Russell's reasons for compiling these notes (TS 201) of Wittgenstein's was that '[Russell] was anxious to

understand, to digest and to pass on to others those logical doctrines that persuaded [him] that what wanted doing in logic was too difficult for [him]'.[11] McGuinness (1972) identifies five ideas contained in Russell's 1913 manuscript on *Theory of Knowledge* that are implicitly criticized in the 'Notes on Logic'. These criticisms were sufficiently powerful as to cause Russell to abandon publication of the manuscript. Sparks from the works of Frege and Russell ignited the fire in Wittgenstein's mind,[12] and that fire, in turn, scorched the fabric of their own doctrines.

3.
The seeds from which the *Tractatus* grew

The regulations for the BA degree at the University of Cambridge, the enforcement of which so incensed Wittgenstein when he wrote to Moore in 1914 (*CL* 85–6), contain the following provision:

> The applicant shall state, generally in a preface to his dissertation and specifically in notes, the sources from which his information is derived, the extent to which he has availed himself of the work of others, and the portions of the dissertation which he claims as original.

Exactly the same wording is used in the ordinances governing PhD submissions in 1929.[13] It has to be said that, in granting Wittgenstein a doctorate for the *Tractatus*—submitted as a dissertation in fulfilment of the degree requirements— the Cambridge authorities were extremely (and, some might say, commendably) lax in their observance of this rule. The *Tractatus* contains no notes, and Wittgenstein is allowed to thumb his nose at the regulations. He simply says that he makes no claim at all to novelty on individual matters and gives as his reason for citing no sources that it is a matter of indifference to him whether the thoughts he has had have been had by someone else. Had he followed the regulations, the *Tractatus* would have looked a lot less tidy than it does, since forty-one footnotes would have been needed just for acknowledging ideas taken from Russell's *Principles of Mathematics*.[14] It is perhaps not widely appreciated that very many more footnotes would have been needed to record all of his intellectual debts relating to the various matters with which his book dealt.

During his childhood and adolescence, Wittgenstein had encountered the work of some philosophers and physicists in the Austro-German tradition and, in particular, had obviously been much impressed by Schopenhauer in whom he got interested through one of his brothers (Bouwsma 1999:103).[15] Schopenhauer was the pre-eminent philosophical influence on Wittgenstein's early philosophy; Wittgenstein is likely to have had no more than a passing acquaintance with other philosophers.[16] In some of his early notebooks, he appears to transcribe from memory passages from Schopenhauer, presumably as an aid to thinking about them.[17] These notebooks were not, of course, intended for publication, and

sometimes they are used as philosophical exercise books. In the *Tractatus,* the section that most obviously corresponds to passages in Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* is the one on solipsism and the 'I'(5.631–5. 641) upon which Christopher Janaway remarks:

> To the extent that there is a coherent position in this section of the *Tractatus,* then, it is one so thoroughly imbued with Schopenhauer's thought that it is almost hard to know how to assess it as a separate contribution to philosophy.
> (Janaway 1989:330)

Other passages with close correspondences in Schopenhauer's text are 6.421, 6. 43, 6.431, 6.4311, 6.4312, 6.45, 6.522 on the topics of ethics and aesthetics being the same, the will, death and the mystical—'feeling the world as a limited whole'.

 The comparison of the relationship between the 'I' and the world to that between the eye and the visual field (*T* 5.6331) and, of course, the image of the ladder (*T* 6.54) are both in Schopenhauer (although the idea of discarding the ladder after successfully ascending it is Wittgenstein's own). Janaway, in the course of his careful discussion, pronounces the suitably scathing verdict that

> the influence of Schopenhauer on Wittgenstein was considerable and systematic, and…reading him against this background gives a degree of overall coherence to parts of his early work which are otherwise all but inexplicable. However, it has also been apparent that Wittgenstein was neither very original, nor very clear-headed, in the way in which he took over terminology, images, and arguments from Schopenhauer, nor very eager to reveal his sources.
> Janaway 1989:336)

Schopenhauer was one of the list of luminaries whose trains of thought Wittgenstein said that he passionately seized for his own purposes. He himself, he said, was 'merely reproductive' in his thinking (*CV* 16). Others on the list were Boltzmann, Hertz, Frege, Russell, Kraus, Loos, Weininger, Spengler and Sraffa.

 Both Hertz and Boltzmann were physicists with a deep philosophical interest in their subject. Wittgenstein read Hertz's *Principles of Mechanics* when he was a student of engineering, and had planned to go on to Vienna to study under Boltzmann, but Boltzmann killed himself first. How those of these thinkers that did so made their mark on the *Tractatus* is reasonably well documented.[18] Hertz is mentioned twice in the book, at 4.04 in connection with the claim that there must be a one-one relation between any (fully analysed) proposition and the distin guishable parts of the situation that it represents, and at 6.361 where Hertz's terminology is invoked to formulate the principle that only connections

that are subject to law are thinkable.[19] But Hertz's influence on Wittgenstein's thought is much more pervasive than the occurrence of just two citations would suggest. Hertz, having detected radio waves, sought a physical model of the propagation of such electromagnetic radiation. Maxwell's equations, he argued, are purely mathematical and may be supplemented with several different physical interpretations—physical models or 'pictures' as he came to call them—to generate competing theories with their different conceptual resources. Each of these theories can be laid upon the experimental data in order to determine the most adequate. Hertz thus presents a Kantian, Copernican-revolutionary account of scientific theories. Wittgenstein's discussion of the relative position of logic and mechanics at 6.342 and the idea of different types of 'nets' corresponding to different systems for describing the world (*T* 6.341) pretty clearly have their origin in Hertz. On the first page of *The Principles of Mechanics,* Hertz writes: 'We form for ourselves images or symbols of external objects; and the form which we give them is such that the necessary consequents of the images in thought are always the necessary consequents in nature of the things pictured' (Hertz 1956:1). It is difficult to read this without thinking 'Wir machen uns Bilder der Tatsachen' (*T* 2.1), bearing in mind that '[w]hat any picture, of whatever form, must have in common with reality, in order to be able to depict it —correctly or incorrectly—in any way at all, is logical form, i.e. the form of reality' (*T* 2.18).

Ludwig Boltzmann is not once mentioned in the *Tractatus,* so it is a matter for conjecture exactly what Boltzmannian lines of thought Wittgenstein had 'passionately seized on'. In his *Populäre Schriften* (published in 1905), that we know Wittgenstein to have read, Boltzmann defends an atomistic hypothesis (to which Hertz too subscribed) and conveys something of the excitement of the discoveries in physics that were being made at around the turn of the century:

> If [particle theory] continues to develop with the same success as in the last few years…then this theory promises to lead us to as yet undreamt-of disclosures about the nature and composition of atoms. For the calculation shows that electrons are much smaller still than ponderable atoms, so that the hypothesis of atoms being built up out of many elements and various interesting views as to the mode of their assembly are now on everybody's lips.
>
> (Boltzmann 1974:168)

Now, Wittgenstein famously said that philosophy consists of logic and metaphysics, the former its basis (N 93). It is a vexed question what manner of metaphysics (if any) Wittgenstein incorporates into his philosophy in the opening sections of the *Tractatus* (1–2.063). What does seem likely, though, is that the doctrine of Objects set out in that section grew from the seed of Boltzmann's atomism. For, as the above quotation shows, Boltzmann is careful to note that the exact nature of the ultimate particles of nature remained to be discovered.

And Wittgenstein, likewise, does not attempt to give examples of Objects (or, correlatively, of the ultimate constituents of thoughts[20]) but only to lay down the conditions that they (whatever they turn out to be) must satisfy—hence *logical* atomism. In fact, as we shall see, a criticism he later made of the *Tractatus* was that it had this quasi-scientific flavour, purporting to address questions the answers to which will be found at a later date.

Like Boltzmann's ultimate particles, the Objects of the *Tractatus* are unalterable (*T* 2.027–2.0271), they combine to make ordinary states of affairs, (*T* 2.01, 2. 0272) and the different possible arrangements of them generate all possible states of affairs (*T* 2.011–2.0123, 2.014). While such evidence does not constitute an overwhelming case in favour of the claim that the remarks close to the beginning of the *Tractatus* are Boltzmann-inspired, it is difficult to think of what *other* aspect of Boltzmann's work could have had the profound influence on his views that Wittgenstein acknowledges them to have had.

Another author not mentioned in the *Tractatus,* but who is almost certainly responsible, either directly or indirectly, for many of its ideas, is Bernard Bolzano. At the beginning of the 'Notes on Logic' (TS 201), Wittgenstein writes: 'Frege said "propositions are names"; Russell said "propositions correspond to complexes". Both are false; and especially false is the statement "propositions are names of complexes"' (*N* 93). This is a good criticism, neatly killing two birds with one stone, and turns on a careful distinction between a form of words that represents a complex and a form of words that expresses a proposition. That distinction is made in Part I, Book One, §19 of Bolzano's *Wissenschaftslehre* (Bolzano 1972). Central elements of Bolzano's philosophy were available to secondary school children in Austria through Robert Zimmermann's *Philosophische Propädeutik,* first published in 1853, but because Bolzano was still vilified in Austria at that time, he was credited as the originator only of some minor points in Zimmermann's text.[21] Other elements of the *Tractatus* that are also present in *Wissenschaftslehre* include the idea that a proposition has a unique analysis (*T* 3.25), the thesis that all necessity is logical (*T* 6.375), the classification tautology/contradiction/contingent proposition (*T* 6. 1–6.1202), the definition of logical consequence (*T* 5.12–5.122), the joint negation operator (*T* 5.502), the theory of probability (*T* 5.15–5.156) and the method of variation (*T* 3.315) (Sebestik 1989).

These last two are particularly interesting. Wittgenstein's logical theory of probability is identical to Bolzano's (see *Wissenschaftslehre* Book Two, §§161–2), yet in a letter to Keynes from the prisoner-of-war camp in Monte Cassino, dated 12.6.1919 (*CL* 114), Wittgenstein writes, 'Have you done any more work on probability? My MS contains a few lines about it which, I believe, —solve the essential question.' As the editors of *CL* note, Keynes had been working on the theory of probability for many years. If Wittgenstein were conscious of having learned from Bolzano, or from some other source, the theory of probability that he expounds in the *Tractatus,* then surely (one hopes) he would not have

written to Keynes this way. So we must assume that he devised it independently or that the trace of an influence was so faint as to have been forgotten.

On the 'method of variation', there seems to be a subtle difference between the account given by Russell in *The Principles of Mathematics* and that given by both Wittgenstein and Bolzano. The latter 'consider certain constituents of a proposition as variable and substitute for them' (*Wissenschaftslehre* Book Two, §147; also 69 and 108) whereas Russell substitutes the variable for a constant. However, in an unpublished paper 'On Substitution' (1904), Russell adopts exactly Bolzano's technique. As Michael Kremer has pointed out to me, this technique is also employed by Frege in *Begriffsschrift* (1967:21–2) and in the *Grundlagen* (Frege 1980:82). Whether Wittgenstein learned the 'method of variation' from Frege or from Russell, or whether any of the three learned it from Bolzano, it is impossible to tell. But, given the various sources from which Wittgenstein might have learned it (given that he certainly had read the Frege, probably the Russell, and very likely, even if in retail, the Bolzano), the chances are that he did not develop it himself, *ab initio.*

If the atomism of the *Tractatus* has its origins in Russell and Boltzmann, and the picture theory is indebted to Hertz, and many of the logical doctrines grew from the work of Bolzano, Frege and Russell, and the material on the self, the mystical, ethics and aesthetics leans heavily on Schopenhauer, just where does the novelty of the *Tractatus* reside? Those who give a so-called 'resolute' reading to *T* 6.54 say that the real novelty lies in its conception of philosophy as *therapeutic.*[22] The idea is that when Wittgenstein there says that his propositions are nonsensical, he really means that they are utter gibberish; if the therapy is successful, it will eventually dawn on the reader that the whole book is, like all philosophy, all nonsense, the avoidance of which can be achieved by the simple expedient of confining oneself strictly to propositions that belong to natural science (*T* 6.53). On this reading, the *Tractatus* is a massive practical joke. Resolutists make much of the fact that Wittgenstein does *not* say 'Anyone who understands *my propositions* finally recognizes them as nonsensical' but *does* say 'Anyone who understands *me* finally recognizes [my propositions] as nonsensical.' Understanding *him* would then amount to understanding that he was the kind of person heavily into irony and practical joking.[23] There is nothing on record to indicate that he was that kind of a person, but a massive volume of evidence to indicate that he was not.

In the light of our little historical excursus above, the resolutist hypothesis about the distinctiveness of the *Tractatus* appears to be extraordinarily unlikely. The main novelties of the book, it seems to me, are the doctrine of *showing,*[24] the notion of proposition as picture (though here, as we have seen, there may be the influence of Hertz's view of scientific theories), the truth-table-based decision theory for first-order logic (which Russell, in his Introduction to the *Tractatus* describes as an amazing simplification of the theory of inference (*T* p. xvi)), the account of number as exponent of operations, which renders 'completely superfluous' the theory of classes (*T* 6–6.031),[25] and, perhaps most important, a

particular conception of logic.[26] On the traditional conception, logic is a body of truths derived from axioms that are themselves self-evidently true. Wittgenstein overturns this conception. Self-evidence is otiose (T 5.4731, 6.1271) and the logical so-called propositions,[27] far from being truths, are not even propositions. This last point needs a little elaboration because Wittgenstein's view is, I think, even more radical than most commentators allow, and informs his later writings on the philosophy of mathematics. It is, I believe, the clearest instance, in his early oeuvre, of where he is both seed and soil. But it is also worth exploring because interpreters are in conflict about this matter. There is weighty textual evidence on each side, and resolving the conflict requires going beyond the texts and getting some sense of the personality of the man, an interpretive ploy not generally needed for scholarly work, but invaluable for the interpretation of Wittgenstein.

Peter Hacker, describing Wittgenstein's early conception of logic, says that the logical propositions are (necessarily) true. But Hacker goes on to say. 'The price paid for such guaranteed truth is vacuity. Propositions of logic are senseless, have zero sense and say nothing at all about the world…all the propositions of logic say the same thing, viz. nothing' (Hacker 1998:18). Hacker here is contradicting himself. If the propositions of logic say nothing (T 6.11), then *a fortiori,* they say nothing true. So Hacker's claim that logical propositions are true seems likely to be false. Further, he may be quite wrong in calling them 'propositions'. Propositions say how things stand (T 4.022, 4.5) so something that says nothing is not a proposition. Propositions are pictures of reality (T 4.01); a proposition determines a place in logical space (T 3.42). Tautologies are not pictures; they do not determine any place in logical space (T 4.462, 4.463), nor, as Hacker himself says, do they describe the most general facts in the universe. So, again, tautologies are not propositions. Hacker says that a logical proposition is a degenerate case of a truth-functional combination of propositions. Now, Wittgenstein does describe tautologies and contradictions as extreme or limiting cases of propositions (T 4.46, 4.466, 5.143), but he was sufficiently mathematically ept to know that the limit of a series is not necessarily part of the series. Tautologies and contradictions vanish inside (or outside) all propositions (T 5.143). Like many other commentators, Hacker seems to have ignored the clarification of the notion of a limiting case that Wittgenstein gives at T 4.466: 'Tautology and contradiction are the limiting cases—indeed the disintegration— of the combinations of signs.' At N 54, 54, which is the source of this remark, he talks of the 'dissolution' *(Auflösung)* of the proposition.[28]

Yet there is evidence that points in exactly the opposite direction. At T 4.464, Wittgenstein talks of the *truth* of a tautology. And Michael Kremer (in correspondence) gives the following three arguments for Wittgenstein's holding that tautologies *are* propositions. First, there are occasions where he explicitly calls them logical *propositions* (e.g. T 4.46, 6.12). Second, the general form of a proposition is: whatever can be reached from elementary propositions by repeated applications of the N operator (T 6, 6.001). Tautologies and

contradictions can be reached from elementary propositions by repeated applications of the N operator. (For example N(p,Np) is a contradiction and N(N (p,Np)) is a tautology.) Therefore tautologies and contradictions are propositions. Third, a proposition is the expression of agreement and disagreement with the truth-possibilities of the elementary propositions (*T* 4.4). With regard to the agreement and disagreement of a proposition with the truth-possibilities of n elementary propositions, there are…Ln possibilities (*T* 4.42). By elementary mathematics, this count can only be correct if tautological and contradictory cases are included. Therefore, again, tautologies and contradictions are propositions.[29]

What are we to make of this? By picking at the *Tractatus* piecemeal, but also by attending to systematic considerations, we come to attribute to Wittgenstein contradictory views on a particularly central issue. Our conclusion might be that secreting contradictions into the text was a bit of playfulness, or that Wittgenstein was, without announcement, using certain words ambiguously, or that he was guilty of carelessness or…Textual excavation alone is unlikely to enable us to decide among the various alternatives, and we are driven to ask: 'Given the kind of man he was, which of these explanations is the most likely?'[30] Was he the sort of person who would conceal from his readers (and from the likes of Russell and Ramsey, with whom he discussed it line by line) the true purport of the book? Was he a rather dishonest man who could preface his book with the remark that what can be said at all can be said clearly (*T* p. 3) yet who then went on to obscure his real intentions?

One important clue, it seems to me, comes from a letter of Russell's, dated 27. 5.1912, in which Wittgenstein is reported as saying that he did not spell out arguments for conclusions because he thought that so doing was likely to destroy the beauty of a work.[31] We know, from innumerable sources, that he attached great importance to literary elegance[32] and also that he did not believe in sparing readers the effort of working things out for themselves. Given that both before and after the *Tractatus* he quite explicitly states that tautologies and contradictions are not propositions,[33] and given also that, in the text, they are described as *'sinnlos'* (*T* 4.461) and that having *Sinn* is a defining characteristic of propositions (*T* 4.022, 4.027), it seems most probable that he holds, in the *Tractatus* that tautologies and contradictions are not propositions—that he avoids the inelegant phrase 'logical so-called propositions' simply for stylistic reasons,[34] and does not, at *T* 4.42, 6.001, issue caveats that would not be required by an alert reader.

This suggestion is by no means decisive, and it is worth making two brief additional points. First, Frank Ramsey, with whom Wittgenstein discussed the text at great length and who was probably more familiar with it than anyone other than its author, concurs with the interpretation offered above. He reports Wittgenstein as holding that tautologies and contradictions are 'degenerate' (Ramsey means this in the mathematical sense in which two lines or two points form a degenerate conic), and says that they are not genuine propositions

(Ramsey 1978:53, 211). Second, there is an interesting connection between the 'unique status' of tautologies and that of the equations of mathematics. 'The logic of the world which is shown in tautologies by the propositions of logic, is shown in equations by mathematics' (T 6.22).[35] If it was indeed Wittgenstein's view that, likewise, equations are not propositions (T 6.2, 6.21) then we can tell a plausible story about the development of the later theory of mathematics as an activity issuing not in truths, but in rules,[36] and of the idea that contradictions, since they are not false propositions, are harmless (*WVC* 131, 139, 194–201; *RFM* Appendix III, §§11, 12). If all this is correct, then Wittgenstein's original seed, a revolutionary conception of the nature of logic, spawned the later philosophy of mathematics—a veritable jungle of exotic ideas that commentators only now are beginning to penetrate.

4.
The *Tractatus* uprooted

It would be very interesting to learn what happened to Wittgenstein's thinking in 1929, between when he confidently defended the *Tractatus* at his PhD viva (18 June) and when he abandoned the paper 'Some Remarks on Logical Form' less than one month later, and began dismantling his earlier views. One intriguing possibility is that he came to see that Russell and Ramsey were right, and that the centrepiece of the *Tractatus*—the doctrine of what can be *shown* but not said — is unsustainable.[37] The doctrine of showing promised an alternative both to Russell's Theory of Types and to the Fregean theory of concepts and objects, an awkward consequence of which latter is that the concept *horse* cannot be called a concept.[38] Yet Wittgenstein's theory has a fatal consequence of its own. This is that *the propositions of the* Tractatus *themselves, INCLUDING THOSE IN WHICH THE DOCTRINE OF WHAT CANNOT BE SAID IS SET OUT, cannot themselves be said.* At *T* 6.54, Wittgenstein is charmingly forthright about this. As we have seen, he declares 'anyone who understands me eventually recognizes [my propositions] as nonsensical' (*T* 6.54). But this is intolerable, for there are plenty of readily intelligible claims made in the text (e.g. *T* 3.1432 and 5.452) and Wittgenstein may have come to see that there must be something seriously amiss with the theory that categorizes the whole text as nonsense, namely the doctrine of *showing* and the associated doctrine of formal (pseudo-) concepts (*T* 4.126–4.1274). It is noteworthy that neither of these doctrines shows up in Wittgenstein's late works.

The doctrine of *showing* is at the centre of a web of theories all of which are manifestations of a certain conception of the nature of philosophy. The doctrine is a response to inexpressibility problems that arise within a mathematical analysis of an ideal language, a language which, according to Frege (and to Peano and to Russell) will allow us to cope more perspicuously with philosophical difficulties. Wittgenstein, in his early period, accepts fundamental tenets of the Frege-Russell framework—for example, he construes propositions

as functions of arguments (*T* 3.318). And, although he does not accept Russell's Theory of Types, he nevertheless has a typology of his own, one which distinguishes, for example, concepts proper from pseudo-concepts. It does not need too many threads to be dislodged before this whole web comes apart.

Recognition of the 'grave mistakes' in the *Tractatus* partly came about, as Wittgenstein says, from 'innumerable conversations' with Ramsey. He writes: 'I was helped to realize these mistakes—to a degree which I myself am hardly able to estimate—by the criticism which my ideas encountered from Frank Ramsey' (*PI* Preface). But *even more than to this criticism,* he adds, 'I am indebted to that which…Mr P.Sraffa, for many years unceasingly practised on my thoughts. I am indebted to *this* stimulus for the most consequential ideas of this book.' There is the well-known story of Sraffa making the Neapolitan gesture of brushing his chin with his fingertips and asking Wittgenstein, 'What is the logical form of *that?*' Something (quite forceful) is said by this gesture, but clearly the gesture does not consist of an articulated arrangement of names (T 3.14) and so would not count, by Tractarian lights, as saying *anything.*

Now, since the *Tractatus* is, centrally, an investigation of the notion of a proposition (before adopting Moore's suggested title, Wittgenstein was calling the work *Der Satz*), this simple point of Sraffa's alone may have been hugely consequential. Like Bolzano, who distinguished the *'Satz an sich'* from the sentence (the physical marks), the early Wittgenstein wanted to explain the difference between an inert (or dead) bunch of marks (the *Satzzeichen)* and a *Satz* (statement) that *says* something. His suggestion was that an elementary statement pictures an atomic fact in virtue of their sharing a structure. But this 'picture' cannot just be an image, for an image too is inert. What we do, then, according to *T* 3.11, is to project a possible situation by 'thinking the sense of the statement'. However, this idea is problematic, for, according to the *Tractatus, thinking,* like *saying, is picturing,* so to think the sense of a statement is to picture it, and how does *that* picture get its sense? Wittgenstein did not realize it when he wrote the book, but here the *Tractatus* theory reaches an *impasse.* The *Philosophical Investigations* effects a great demystification of the notion of a statement. A statement, Wittgenstein there contends, is not a queer thing—the mistake of believing that it is was responsible for the 'subliming' of his earlier account of logic (*PI* §§93, 94). It is not words themselves that have the mysterious power of intentionality, nor is it a mental act that invests them with such power. It is simply a fact about the nature of humans that, amongst the activities in which we engage, some involve words woven into our actions (*PI* §7); the 'life' of signs is this *use* of them by us (*PI* §432). According to the philosophy of logic of the *Philosophical Investigations.,* words and sentences are not mysterious entities with queer properties; rather '[w]e are talking about the spatial and temporal phenomenon of language, not about some non-spatial, non-temporal phantasm' (*PI* §108). Sraffa was, by all accounts, a no-nonsense non-philosopher and his keen nose for metaphysical bullshit kept Wittgenstein honest.[39]

If one reads carefully the words of that tribute to Sraffa and Ramsey, it becomes clear that the *seeds of doubt* that caused Wittgenstein to abandon the *Tractatus,* and the new seeds that bore such remarkable fruit in the *Philosophical Investigations,* were fertilized in Wittgensteinian soil, but were sown by two great thinkers with whom he was fortunate enough to have come into contact. It is to Sraffa, according to Rush Rhees, that Wittgenstein said that he owed the 'anthropological' way of looking at problems, so characteristic of his later (as so foreign to his earlier) work (Monk 1990:261).[40] In Cambridge, Wittgenstein had weekly conversations with Sraffa until 1946, when they were terminated at Sraffa's request. Unfortunately, very little is known of the substance of these conversations, and there is no way of telling which in particular of the most consequential ideas of the *Philosophical Investigations* sprang from Sraffa's seed.[41]

Once Wittgenstein came to recognize that the *Tractatus* was flawed, he was compelled to examine the assumptions on which the work rests. Some of these assumptions are reasonably easy to identify and to dislodge. For example, the idea that thoughts and sentences can be analysed on the model of chemical analysis was questioned and quickly jettisoned.[42] The Tractarian notion that all inference is based on tautological form is explicitly repudiated early on (*WVC* 64, 91). Wittgenstein recognized that the concept of meaning he had adopted 'originates in a primitive philosophy of language' (*PG* §19). When one takes a look at the numerous post-1929 remarks of Wittgenstein that are explicitly critical of mistakes in the *Tractatus,* the 'resolutist' notion that the book was not intended to convey truths becomes truly astonishing. Here is just a small sample:

> In my old conception of an elementary proposition there was no determination of the value of a co-ordinate; although my remark that a coloured body is in colour-space, etc, should have put me straight onto this.
> (*PR* §83, from a 1930 typescript, TS 209)

> One fault you can find with a dogmatic account is, first, that it is, as it were, arrogant. But that is not the worst thing about it. There is another mistake, which is much more dangerous and also pervades my whole book, and that is the conception that there are questions the answers to which will be found at a later date…I did think that the elementary propositions could be specified at a later date. Only in recent years have I broken away from that mistake. At the time I wrote in a manuscript of my book (this is not printed in the *Tractatus*), The answers to philosophical questions must never be surprising. In philosophy you cannot discover anything. I myself, however, had not clearly enough understood this and offended against it.
> (*WVC* 182–3, record of a conversation that took place on 9.12.1931)

My notion in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* was wrong: 1) because I wasn't clear about the sense of the words 'a logical product is *hidden* in a sentence' (and suchlike), 2) because I too thought that logical analysis had to bring to light what was hidden (as chemical and physical analysis does). (*PG* 210)

What gives us the idea that there is a kind of agreement betweenthought and reality?—Instead of 'agreement' here one might say with aclear conscience 'pictorial character'. But is this pictorial character anagreement? In the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* I said something like: it isan agreement of form. But that is an error.
(PG 212)43

Wittgenstein himself said (to Basil Reeve) that he had it in mind to publish a refutation of the *Tractatus* (Monk 1999:457). If the *Tractatus* was deliberate gibberish, then it is hard to see what *refuting* it could amount to. Those who see the book as the beginning of a continuing project to expose philosophical nonsense might, perhaps, regard Wittgenstein's later criticisms of the *Tractatus* as a condemnation of its *strategy.* But, in the absence of any evidence whatsoever in favour of this hypothesis, and a large volume of evidence that, to the contrary, he was criticizing his treatment of individual matters, we should not give it much credence. D.A.T.Gasking and A.C.Jackson give the standard, and correct, and first-hand account of the transition from early to late: '[I]n the last twenty or so years of his life Wittgenstein turned his back on the *Tractatus* and went on to produce and to teach at Cambridge a whole new way of philosophizing' (Gasking and Jackson 1999:141).

5.
Discovery of the method

In the preface to the *Philosophical Investigations,* Wittgenstein wrote:

Four years ago I had occasion to re-read my first book (the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*) and to explain its ideas to someone. It suddenly seemed to me that I should publish those old thoughts and the new ones together: that the latter could be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of my old way of thinking.

Evidently he himself was conscious of thinking in a *new* way His old way involved ascending a ladder, but, in an early sketch of the new method, he says,

[I]f the place I want to reach could only be climbed up to by a ladder, I would give up trying to get there. For the place to which I really have to go

is one that I must actually be at already. Anything that can be reached with
a ladder does not interest me.
(*CV* 10)[44]

A year later, he remarks that language sets everyone the same traps, for it is 'an immense network of…wrong turnings', and his function, as he sees it, is to 'erect signposts at all the junctions where there are wrong turnings, to help people past the danger points' (*CV* 25).

But what exactly (non-metaphorically) is this new way of thinking; how does the new method—or the new methods (*PI* §133)—work? Both in the *Big Typescript (BT)* and in the *Philosophical Investigations* (§§89–133), Wittgenstein devotes a lot of time to reflecting on philosophy and, although some of his remarks are memorable, there often seems to be a discrepancy between the description of his practice and his practice. As Crispin Wright remarks,' a *real* integration of Wittgenstein's official conception of philosophy with his own practice is something which has so far eluded even the best commentary' (Wright 200 1a: 439). The late Wittgenstein, notoriously, said that the philosopher must do away with all explanation and must content himself with *describing (PI* §109). This pronouncement of Wittgenstein's is discomforting. Why are philosophers under an obligation to curb their natural human instinct to explain and to criticize?

It turns out that Wittgenstein is misdescribing his own philosophical practice. For example, in the middle of the metaphilosophy section of *PI* just mentioned, which sets out his anti-explanation methodology, he says, 'Let us ask ourselves: why do we feel a grammatical joke to be *deep?*'[45] Clearly, if we ask ourselves that question and come up with an answer, that answer is going to be an *explanation* of why we feel a grammatical joke to be deep. Wittgenstein's later work is packed with questions (this is a distinctive feature of his later prose) and he sometimes answers questions with questions, and sometimes gives deliberately wrong answers.[46] But where he gives what he takes to be correct answers, it would be a verbal distortion to say that, at least on many occasions, he is not giving explanations. Perhaps many of these explanations could properly be called *descriptions* of the 'grammar' of certain words, phrases or sentences. But, at *PI* §120 he insists that philosophical explanations have to be framed in everyday language—clearly inconsistent with the claim that there are no such explanations. In fact there are very few sections of *PI* containing only pure descriptions of real or imagined language-games—the opening sections on the builders and the lengthy interpolation on the word 'reading' (*PI* §§156–178) are among the examples, and there are few exposes of specious explanations (*PI* §239 is one example). There are also, of course, numerous *arguments* in the *Philosophical Investigations* (though they are rarely so designated; *PI* §140 is an exception) and nobody committed to showing his reader *differences* between language-games would wish to assimilate *arguing* and *describing*.[47] Again, it is supposed to be part of the method to avoid saying anything controversial, only to

state what everyone admits (*PI* §599). Wittgenstein says that he will immediately withdraw any claim to which anyone objects. But, looking at the transcripts of his lecture classes, that is manifestly what he did *not* do. How many times, in *LFM* or *LPP,* do we see Wittgenstein withdrawing *anything* when challenged? He is quite prepared, after carefully weighing the linguistic facts, to commit himself to bold and controversial claims: '[N]othing is more wrong-headed than calling meaning a mental activity!' (*PI* §693); The "inner" is a delusion' (*LW* II, 84) and (!!) 'In philosophy we do not draw conclusions' (*PI* §599).

So, if Wittgenstein's descriptions of it are frequently unreliable, just what was 'the method' that he invented? He dominated every philosophical discussion in which he participated, practically took over every meeting of the Cambridge University Moral Sciences Club, thrilling some, who tended to copy his every gesture, while repelling others. What was he doing on these occasions; what was he saying? Eyewitnesses testify that it was a mixture of brilliance and bombast.[48] Most often, at philosophical meetings, he would simply ignore speakers' papers and would just do his own thing. The reason was not that he thought their *answers* wrong, but because he thought their *problems* illusory. He was convinced that there are no philosophical problems (*PG* §9), except in the sense that one has to puzzle out, in each case, how we are tricked by language into becoming victims of *illusory* problems.[49] Philosophical confusion, he came to believe, is to be alleviated

> by looking into the workings of our language, and that in such a way as to make us recognize those workings: *in despite of* an urge to misunderstand them. The problems are solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have always known. Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language.
> (*PI* §109)

The remedy is to scrutinize carefully the way that words are misused in particular philosophical utterances, and to note the subtle differences[50] between ways in which those words, in normal, everyday use, are used. A point that most commentators overlook is that, since Wittgenstein did not read much 'straight' philosophy, most of his thinking was not about conclusions or arguments defended in the philosophical literature, but was about the writings of contemporary psychologists who lapsed (as he saw it) into metaphysics, or was about the tendency of his own *alter ego* to stray in that same direction.

At the beginning of *BT,* Wittgenstein suggests that the difficulty of philosophy is like the difficulty of a conversion; it demands a renunciation not of understanding, but of feeling. He says, 'Perhaps that is what makes it so hard for many people. It can be as hard to refrain from using an expression as it is to hold back tears or hold in anger.' The difficulty is to confine ourselves to the normal, everyday use of words, and to resist the temptation to misuse words by fashioning them into sentences that are deceptive in that, although syntactically

in perfect order, they disguise metaphysical nonsense. Wittgenstein's philosophical therapy is therefore 'to bring words back from their metaphysical to their normal use in language' (*BT* 265; *PI* §116)[51] by assembling reminders (*BT* 267; PI §§89, 127) of how words are properly used. Examples of such 'metaphysical' sentences are 'I know that I am in pain' (*PI* §246), 'Thinking goes on in my head' (*Z* §605) and 'The past and the future aren't present and the present is only a point' (*PG* §141). Constructing such sentences is not a form of pretentiousness; Wittgenstein's view is that language itself somehow has the power to bewitch us, to lead us into philosophical quagmires. False analogies, he says, are embedded in language. He believed that careful investigation will always reveal how an unwarranted assumption or a false analogy (or a series of these) leads to philosophical error. '[I]n each case what I have to do,' he says, 'is to expose an analogy which has been guiding people's thought without their realizing that it was an analogy. The effect of a false analogy embedded in language: it means a constant struggle and discomfort (almost a constant itch)' (*BT* 264; see also *PI* §90).[52]

Two simple examples will suffice to illustrate how 'the method' is employed. The first concerns *expectation.* Wittgenstein investigates the philosophical claim that *expectation* is a feeling, an inner state. It is, after all 'grammatically, a state' and our problem resolves into trying to understand the grammar of these states (PI §572). He does not want to deny that such states exist. If I report 'I can't keep my mind on my work today; I keep on thinking of his coming,' then this, Wittgenstein allows, is a description of my state of mind (*PI* §585). Now, *expecting him to come* does not seem too different from *persistently thinking of his coming,* and so someone insensitive to subtle differences may claim that *expecting* is a state of mind. And someone who notices that we experience a delightful flutter of excitement when expecting a famous or a beloved person, might further claim that the state in question is a feeling,

The latter claim is easy enough to repudiate. A delightful flutter of excitement may well *accompany* an expectation, but it would clearly be wrong to *identify* expectation with that particular feeling, because when I expect an explosion, then what I feel is nothing delightful, but is raw fear. If you and I are in a situation where we are expecting a bomb to go off, I may feel fear, but you may feel a certain frisson—especially if it was you who planted the bomb. So the feeling is, in a sense, external to the situation; it is contingently related to it. By contrast, the expectation is internal to the situation, or, as Wittgenstein puts it, 'An expectation is embedded in a situation, from which it arises. The expectation of an explosion may, for example, arise from a situation in which an explosion *is to be expected*' (*PI* §581). Wittgenstein is here reminding us of an everyday form of expression ('an explosion is to be expected') by attention to which we may be discouraged from making the philosophical mistake—the false analogy—of assimilating expectation to a feeling. The point can be reinforced: instead of saying, 'I expect the explosion at any moment,' I may agitatedly whisper 'It'll go off now.' The latter is a *manifestation* (not a description) of my feeling (*PI*

§582); it is not a description of a state of mind. I can truly tell someone who has just arrived, 'I've been expecting you for an hour.' Compare that with, 'I have been feeling seasick for an hour.' If the latter is a true report, then I have been feeling seasick for every second of that hour. But can I have been expecting for every second? During that hour, I could have felt anxiety for each second, or excitement. Anxiety gnaws; excitement titillates. These things occur in time and fluctuate in intensity. Not so expectation.

Does this mean that expectation is a phantasm; that I never really expect anything? No—what it means, according to Wittgenstein, is that the criteria for at least some cases of expecting are different from the criteria for feeling or for being in a certain state of mind. The expectation is, in part, constituted by the *surroundings (Umgebung)* (*PI* §§583–4). We can ask the everyday question, 'What is the difference between a cow and a bull?' and point to the answer, for example, to the things that bulls have but cows do not. But that answer should not be regarded as a model of an answer to all 'What is the difference between…?' questions. In some cases the answer alludes not to something intrinsic to the one thing that distinguishes it from the other, but instead to some aspect of the surroundings. What is the difference between my arm rising and my raising my arm? (See *PI* §621.) The answer may be not 'some special brain activity' or 'a volition, a mental act' but may simply be that voluntary movement is marked by the absence of surprise (*PI* §628). If Wittgenstein has correctly identified diseased or confused thinking on such questions, then there are certain paths that psychological and neuroscientific research into expectation and voluntary action should avoid taking.

As a second illustration of 'the method', consider the question, 'What is a number?' This sounds like a profound philosophical problem, and it is indeed one to which the *Tractatus* proposes an answer. But, at the beginning of *The Blue Book,* Wittgenstein says that questions like 'What is the number one?' 'produce in us a mental cramp. We feel that we can't point to anything in reply…and yet ought to point to something.' Here, Wittgenstein says, '[w]e are up against one of the great sources of philosophical bewilderment: a substantive makes us look for a thing that corresponds to it' *(BB* 1*).* Here is where we fall victim to a false analogy. For, if a child asks us, 'What is an apple?' we can point to one, or to several, and with luck the child will, as a result, come to learn what apples are and to use the word 'apple' correctly. Or perhaps in a science class, the teacher might raise the question, 'What is an apple?' and the task would be to give a definition, one that listed the essential properties of apples. But we can't *point to* the number four, and, though we can say something about the essential properties of apples, it by no means follows that, analogously, we can state the essential properties of numbers. As we know from PI §68, Wittgenstein thinks that we can use the word 'number' so that the extension of the concept is not closed by a frontier. In other words, that there is no essence of number.

One of the things to which Wittgenstein became opposed is the idea that we have to *penetrate* phenomena (*PI* §90), to reach a final analysis which brings to

light something hidden in our usual forms of expression (*PI* §91). Wittgenstein deprecates questions such as, '*What is* language?', '*What is* a proposition?' (*PI* §92). His antagonism to such questions can, perhaps, be explained thus: they commit *the fallacy of the complex question.* They are of the form: 'There is something that being an X consists in; what exactly is it?' The unacceptable presupposition is that there *is* something that being language or being a proposition or being a number consists in; that there is some hidden essence to be revealed. We got into this position by taking as our model a question like, 'What is an apple?' How, then, might we deflate the question, 'What is a number?'

Number words typically occur in sentences in noun position or adjective position, and this observation fuels the expectation that numbers are objects or properties (properties not of objects, but of sets of objects). The enquiring mind will then tend to wonder about the nature of these objects or properties, and the project of seeking definitions is underway. But Wittgenstein advises us to think of how words are *learned.* It is worth pausing to reflect that numbers were born not for naming or property-ascribing, but for *numbering off* (counting), and number words occur in a count neither as nouns nor as adjectives; we have merely a series of distinct sounds in a fixed order. Infants learn to recite the first part of this series and, for them, the sounds initially have no more meaning than do the sounds in a tune. At a later stage, when numbering off a collection of objects, a child, like Wittgenstein's ponderous shopkeeper in *PI* §1, takes any one of the objects, makes the first sound in the series—/one/—puts that object aside and proceeds to another object and to the next sound in the series. The useful trick with number words is to take the last-uttered word in a particular count as a measure of the size of the pile set aside. Pleasing results start to flow when we do such things as merging counted piles and re-counting the whole. Of course, when we log such results as equations of arithmetic, we abstract from the particular acts of counting.[53]

What we have just said does not constitute a *theory* of numbers, but encourages us to refrain from thinking that the production of a theory is required. We have described a simple language game in which words are interwoven with the action (*PI* §7) of adding a new object to a pile each time a new word is spoken, and have made no claim as to the nature of mathematical objects. A putative problem about numbers has not been solved but dissolved—shown not to be a genuine problem. And certain consequences follow: if numbers are *not* objects, then mathematicians are not in the business of discovering truths about necessary relations between objects. As Juliet Floyd has pointed out, Gödel, by contrast 'was convinced that philosophy should and must defend theories about the reality of mathematical objects and mathematical concepts, whereas Wittgenstein saw such purportedly metaphysical talk as nonsensical' (Floyd 2001:287–8).

If somebody, reflecting on the sentence, 'Get me five red apples,' were to regard the word 'five' by analogy with the adjective 'red', and make the philosophical move of suggesting that one uses the word 'five' for ascribing a *property,* then

one could make a start at dismantling this suggestion by showing that, at least, there is one important difference in the logical behaviour of the two words. For it makes sense to say that each apple is red but is absurd—a joke—to say that each apple is five. This point introduces us to another apparently highly unusual feature of Wittgenstein's later 'method'—his suggestion that philosophy is a joke or, more accurately,

> The problems arising through our misinterpretation of our forms of language have the character of *depth.* They are deep disquietudes; their roots are as deep in us as the forms of our language and their signifi cance is as great as the importance of our language.—Let us ask ourselves: why do we feel a grammatical joke to be *deep*? (And that is what the depth of philosophy is).
> (*PI* §111) 11)

The 'old philosophical problems' had an apparent 'fundamental significance' but the new method releases us from their gravity, exposing them as nonsense (*BT* 266).

Take, for example the concept of *grief*. We can avoid the philosophical error of thinking that grief is a kind of pain merely by reflecting that it makes sense to say, 'For a second he felt violent pain,' whereas to say, 'For a second he felt deep grief,' sounds like a joke. It sounds queer, as Wittgenstein says, but does it sound queer only because feeling deep grief for one second so seldom happens? (*PI* 174.) Obviously not, and Wittgenstein is being blatantly sardonic in proposing this ridiculous 'explanation'. Deep grief does not come and go in an instant, any more than our moral principles are abandoned on a whim. Hence, Groucho Marx: 'These are my principles. If you don't like them…I have others.' The investigation shows quite clearly that, although superficially 'pain' and 'grief' are nouns both of which apparently stand for inner somethings, their 'logical grammars' are quite different. A whole cloud of philosophy condensed into a drop of humour.

Wittgenstein told Norman Malcolm that 'a serious and good philosophical work could be written that would consist entirely of *jokes* (without being facetious)' (Malcolm 1999:64). It may seem strange that Wittgenstein of all people, should say such a thing (blessed as he was not with a sharp sense of humour) and when one finds examples of what he has in mind, one is not exactly in the territory of belly-laughs. At one point, he says, 'It can't be said of me at all (except perhaps as a joke) that I *know* I am in pain' (*PI* §246). It could only be a joke to say that my right hand can give my left hand money (see *PI* §268), and one assumes that Wittgenstein is jesting when he asks: 'Why can't a dog simulate pain? Is he too honest?' (*PI* §250). Wittgenstein thought that Cantor's Paradise was a joke.[54] Moore-paradoxical utterances also strike us as funny. One of Wittgenstein's examples of a Mooronic assertion features an announcer at a railway station saying, 'Train No.…will arrive at…o'clock. Personally I don't

believe it' (*RPP* I §486). Nonsense is a familiar source of humour, and conceptual confusion of the sort in which Wittgenstein was interested is manifested in utterances, such as those we have been discussing, that are not false but nonsensical. Getting a 'conceptual' joke, seeing the duck where one previously saw the rabbit and experiencing the meaning of a word are all examples of aspect-switching,[55] a subject on which Wittgenstein wrote much in the last six years of his life, his late late period or, as some call it, 'The Third Wittgenstein'.

A verbal gaffe that is an expression of a conceptual distortion is often funny, and alerts us to the possibility that there is a deep philosophical issue in the vicinity. The idea that one could do philosophy entirely in jokes may seem to be a highly novel one, yet it is possible that Wittgenstein derived an appreciation of this point from his reading of Russell and of William James. In a tribute to Russell, delivered at a meeting of the Aristotelian Society in December 1970, Gilbert Ryle made the point that both James and Russell combined seriousness with humour and taught us how 'to laugh off grave conceptual bosh'. Ryle continues:

> Stuffiness in diction and stuffiness in thought were not, of course, annihilated, but they were put on the defensive from the moment when James and Russell discovered that a joke can be the beginning, though only the beginning, of a blessed relief from a strangling theoretical millstone. (Ryle 1972:437)

'The method' employed by the post-1930 Wittgenstein may also have been influenced by Lichtenberg and by Hertz. The idea that language sets everyone the same traps (*CV* 25) is to be found in Lichtenberg, and the idea that the proper task of philosophy is to release us from these traps is to be found in Hertz. Brian McGuinness says that Wittgenstein was fond of quoting Hertz's dictum: 'The whole task of philosophy is to give such a form to our expression that certain disquietudes (or problems) vanish' (McGuinness 1999:105).[56] Kenny's translation tilts more in the direction of another of Wittgenstein's claims—that the *effect* of our coming to realize that the problems really do vanish is a certain calmness or peace (*PI* 133)—when we arrive, in D.Z. Phillips's phrase, in Philosophy's Cool Place: 'The way I do philosophy, its whole job is to frame an expression in such a way that certain worries disappear. (Hertz)' (*BT* 271).[57]

Some of the trademark doctrines of the *Philosophical Investigations* have very clear anticipations, some in writings that Wittgenstein had read, others in writings that he probably had not. The rejection of 'Augustine's conception of language' (*PI* §4), for example, is anticipated by…St Augustine! In a passage from one of the earlier writings of St Augustine, a dialogue between himself and his son Adeodatus, the father raises the question of how many words there are in the verse

Si nihil ex tanta superis placet urbe relinqui

[If it pleases the gods that nothing be left of so great a city]

They consider each word in detail, and Augustine concludes: 'We were wrong, therefore, in laying it down that all words are signs, or that all signs must signify something' (Augustine 1953:71). Presumably Wittgenstein was not familiar with this text, for otherwise he would not have made St Augustine the Aunt Sally of PI §1 who 'does not speak of there being any difference between kinds of words', who regards *naming* as 'the be all and end all of language' (*PG* §19). (In the course of the dialogue, Augustine challenges Adeodatus to show him what *thing* the preposition *ex* is a sign of, and to point with his finger to what is signified by the word *paries*.[58])

Another 'trademark' section of the *Philosophical Investigations* deals with the impossibility of a private language (*PI* §§243–315), and an anticipation of a central strand of that occurs in the well-known passage in *Grundgesetze,* where Frege points out that

[if] every man designated something different by the name 'moon', namely one of his own ideas, much as he expresses his own pain by the cry 'Ouch', then…an argument about the properties of the moon would be pointless: one person could perfectly well assert of his moon the opposite of what the other person, with equal right, said of his.
(Frege 1964:17; cf. *PI* §293)

Of course, Wittgenstein goes further than Frege, for he questions the intelligibility of the notion of an 'idea in the psychological sense', and makes different, indeed opposite, use of the 'pain' example.

One writer with whom Wittgenstein certainly was intimately familiar was William James. Wittgenstein, though critical of some of James' views, admired him both as a man and as a philosopher, frequently discussing sentences from *The Principles of Psychology* in his lectures.[59] The authors of *A Wittgenstein Workbook* have located no fewer than seventy-six passages parallel to Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* and *Zettel* in James' *Principles* (Coope *et al.* 1970:48).[60] We also know that, as a young man (before the age of 23), Wittgenstein had read James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* and that this book had made a big impact on him.[61] As Garth Hallett has noted (Hallett 1977: 40), the major moves in Wittgenstein's discussion of *family resemblance* had already been made by James in his attack on the 'essence' of religion (James 1929:27). The notion of 'family resemblance' *(Familienähnlichkeit)* also occurs in Schopenhauer.[62]

In his late late period, much of Wittgenstein's writing on the philosophy of psychology was provoked by the work of contemporary psychologists such as James and Köhler, and this includes his discussions of kinaesthesia, *seeing-as* and *experiencing meaning* (Goldstein 1999a: 109–18; and forthcoming). The discussion of *avowals of belief* in *PI* Part II, §x and *RPP* springs directly from

his reflections on a paper given by G.E.Moore at the Moral Sciences Club in 1944. The manuscripts from the last year and a half of his life are reactions to views on *certainty* contained in Moore's papers 'Proof of the External World' and 'Defence of Common Sense', and to ideas inspired by reading Goethe's *Farbenlehre.* These are now published as *On Certainty* and *Remarks on Colour* respectively. If, towards the end of his life, Wittgenstein were to have updated that 1931 list of thinkers who had planted seeds in his soil, he would undoubtedly have added, at least, the names of Goethe, James and Moore.[63] Whether he would have changed his mind about his lack of originality in the light of the work he did in the last twelve years of his life, it is impossible to tell. But there is no reason to think that he would have lost any admiration for his ability to invent comparisons (*CV* 16), for his late writings are full of fine examples. He could have said that his contri bution to philosophy was a result of standing on the shoulders of giants. But anyone who is familiar with Wittgenstein's late writings will immediately recognize how much more apt is the metaphor of seed and soil.

Notes

1 I have used the standard Baker/Hacker acronyms when referring to Wittgenstein's works, except that I abbreviate *TLP* as *T* and *WWK* as *WVC. Portraits of Wittgenstein.*(*Flowers* 1999) is a useful source of biographical data that I have used extensively, and refer to the reprinting there of *M*—G.E.Moore's 'Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930–1933' (Flowers 1999, vol. 3:199–204). Also, instead of the *Letters to Russell, Keynes and Moore (LRKM),* I have used the more comprehensive *Cambridge Letters,* that I designate *CL*, and my quotations from the *Big Typescript (BT)* use Sir Anthony Kenny's translation in (Kenny 1994:263–86). In referring to MSS, TSS, and Dictations in Wittgenstein's *Nachlaß,* I use the numbering system devised by G.H.von Wright.

2 The Hintikkas draw upon autobiographical remarks in MS 107 to show that Wittgenstein remained in the dark until late October 1929 (Hintikka and Hintikka 1986:170–1).

3 B.Szabados (1999) attempts to defuse the charge of anti-semitism that the entries in his diary so strongly suggest was one of Wittgenstein's many vices at this time, but we would do well to heed David Stern's warning that 'we should be wary of arguing from what we think our philosophical heroes should have believed to what they actually believed' (Stern 2000:389).

4 This is a view that I share with the Hintikkas. For a detailed exposition of the development of Wittgenstein's thinking between 1931 and 1933, see (Hintikka and Hintikka 1986:137–211).

5 'Philosophy has lost its aura. In future it will be possible to speak of clever philosophers.' This remark of Wittgenstein's is cited and discussed by Desmond Lee, 'Wittgenstein 1929–1931' in (Flowers 1999, vol. 2:195).

6 See Daniel Dennett's evaluation in *Time Magazine's* special issue on the hundred most distinguished persons of the twentieth century, at http://www.time.com/time/ time 100/scientist/profile/wittgenstein.html

7 *T:* 2: 'Ja, was ich hier geschrieben habe, macht im Einzelnen überhaupt nicht den Anspruch auf Neuheit.' The Pears/McGuinness translation does not reflect the force of the admission that the author makes no claim *at all* to novelty.

8 Russell's work on the fundamental concepts of Logic that is: on his purely Mathematical work—for instance most of his 'Principia'—it has no bearing. Wittgenstein's chief interest is in the very fundamental part of the subject. [This footnote was added by Pinsent]

9 These extracts are from (Pinsent 1999). Other entries that tell of Wittgenstein's work on logic are dated 17.9.1912; 18.9.1912; 22.9.1912; 29.9.1912; 4.10.1912; 4.2.1913; 8.9.1913; 17.9.1913; 1.10.1913; 29.4.1914.

10 A formulation almost identical to that of *T:* 3.1432 occurs a few pages later (p. 105). And the inkpot example gets developed as *T:* 3.143, 3.1431.

11 (McGuinness 1972:456). McGuinness is alluding to a letter that Russell wrote in 1916 to Lady Ottoline Morrell, explaining how he had come to realize, at the end of 1913, why the reins of logic's chariot had to be handed over to his ex-pupil. Russell fully acknowledges his debt to Wittgenstein. In the introduction to his 1918 lectures on logical atomism, he says that he is 'very largely concerned with explaining certain ideas which I learnt from my friend and former pupil Ludwig Wittgenstein'; he elsewhere mentions the 'vitally important discoveries by my friend Ludwig Wittgenstein'. It is, I think, a pity that, in the preface to the *Tractatus,* Wittgenstein did not have the good grace to properly acknowledge his reciprocal indebtedness to Russell but, at that time, he was somewhat disdainful of Russell (and did not, until much later, become fully appreciative of Moore's qualities).

12 Basil Reeve, a doctor at Guy's Hospital, where Wittgenstein worked during the Second World War, reports Wittgenstein as having told him of his year in Skjolden, '*Then* my mind was on fire' (Monk 1990:94).

13 For information on the regulations, I am indebted to Jacqueline Cox of the Cambridge University Archives.

14 C.Coope *et al.* (1970:47) list the forty-one passages parallel to the *Tractatus* in Russell's *Principles.* Reading that book was, as Ray Monk says, a decisive event in Wittgenstein's life(Monk 1990:30–1).

15 According to some other accounts, it was his sister Margarete (Gretl) who turned Wittgenstein on to Schopenhauer.

16 See (Magee 1987:311–2). Other texts that have useful accounts of Schopenhauer's influence include Young (1987) and Janaway (1989). It is simply not known how much of the writings of Kant, Brentano, Hegel, Husserl, Kierkegaard, Marty, Mauthner, Meinong and Nietzsche Wittgenstein had read. Commentators have claimed the influence of each of these philosophers on him, but, of these, only Mauthner is mentioned in the *Tractatus* (4.0031).

17 See, for example, entries for the period 11.6.1916–13.8.1916 (N: 72–81).

18 For example, (Visser 1999) on Boltzmann, (Grasshoff 1994) and (Mulligan 1994) on Hertz, (Stern 1996) on Weininger. For a synopsis, see (Glock 2001:1–5).

19 The same idea is present in Boltzmann, who wrote that 'the lawfulness of the processes in nature is the fundamental condition of all knowability' (Boltzmann 1905: 354).

20 See the postscript, point (4) to a letter of 19.8.1919, responding to some queries of Russell's (*CL*: 125).

21 Officially disgraced, Bolzano was not allowed to publish, and his views circulated clandestinely. See (Simons 1992:6). Jan Sebestik also discusses this matter in an appendix (pp. 442–6) to (Goldstein 2002a).

22 See Alice Crary's Introduction to (Crary and Read 2000:1–18).

23 On understanding *me*, see (Diamond 2000). Resolutists who view the *Tractatus* as essentially an exercise in irony include Conant (1993) and Floyd (1998). For detailed criticism of the 'resolute' reading of the *Tractatus* see two essays by Peter Hacker, 'Was He Trying to Whistle It?' and 'When the Whistling Had to Stop' in (Hacker 2001: 98–140; 141–69).

24 That Wittgenstein himself regarded the doctrine of what can be shown but cannot be said as the showpiece of the book is clear from the aforementioned letter that he wrote to Russell on 19.8.1919 (*CL:* 124). There he says that his main contention, his main point, 'is the theory of what can be expressed *(gesagt)* by prop[ositions]s— i.e. by language —…and what can not be expressed by prop[osition]s, but only shown *(gezeigt);* which, I believe, is the cardinal problem of philosophy'.

25 For a totally fascinating account of Wittgenstein's account of numbers as a theory of operations, see (Marion 1998:21–47). An excellent critical discussion is (Potter 2000: 164–94). Both Marion (p. 44) and Potter (p. 178) quote one of the annotations that Wittgenstein made, in 1923, in the margin of Ramsey's copy of the *Tractatus:* 'The fundamental idea of mathematics is the idea of *calculus* represented here by the idea of *operation.* The beginning of logic presupposes calculation and so number.' Since this claim is the inverse of logicism, I fail to understand why both Marion and Potter term Wittgenstein's theory of arithmetic 'logicist'.

26 I shall not discuss here whether these views are correct or ably defended. Some aspersions are cast in (Goldstein 1999b), where it is suggested that Wittgenstein should have been given a more rigorous grilling at his PhD viva.

27 Tautologies are so called by Wittgenstein at *N:* 107 107 and, at the bottom of the same page, he again notes that tautologies are not propositions, a claim he repeats elsewhere. For discussion and documentation, see (Goldstein 1986) and (Diamond 1995: 192–3).

28 I am grateful to Hacker for a stimulating correspondence on this matter, although I ended up unpersuaded by him.

29 Kremer's arguments are neat, but, as Leo Cheung has observed, they are not beyond reproach. For example, Kremer takes Wittgenstein to be claiming that whatever can be reached from elementary propositions by repeated applications of the N operator is a proposition. But what Wittgenstein is actually claiming is that all propositions can be reached by repeated applications of the N operator.

30 In (Goldstein 1999a: 161), I call this the Mandy Rice-Davies approach to interpretation, and defend the view that Wittgenstein is unusual in that, often, to understand what he writes requires that we understand *him*, a point that, as we have seen, Cora Diamond (2000) makes with regard to Wittgenstein's confession of the nonsensicality of his own Tractarian propositions. (I also suggested, above, that those who regard him as a hoaxer, an ironist, a practical joker *don't* really understand him.) A collection of essays that usefully explore the relationship between Wittgenstein's life and his work is (Klagge 2001).

31 Russell wrote: 'I told him he ought not simply to *state* what he thinks true, but to give arguments for it, but he said arguments spoil its beauty, and that he would feel as if he was dirtying a flower with muddy hands' (Blackwell 1981:8). It is possible

to painstakingly reconstruct Wittgenstein's likely arguments for the saying/showing distinction, for the claim about the general form of a proposition, for the *Grundgedanke* that logical constants do not represent etc. (Cheung 1999 and forthcoming). Those who undertake this labour do not think of themselves as embroidering on gibberish.

32 And not just in his writing. D.A.T.Gasking and A.C.Jackson, both of whom attended his lectures, record that Wittgenstein 'was a man of great aesthetic sensibility. His lectures were delivered in spare and vivid prose' (Gasking and Jackson 1999:146).

33 At *RFM,* Appendix III, §20, p. 123, 123, Wittgenstein says that logical 'propositions' could very well be said not to be *propositions* at all. The mere *ring of a sentence* is not sufficient for propositionhood. At *A:* 139–40, he says, 'Because we see the similarity of ~(p.~p) and p v ~p to true propositions we make the mistake of saying they are true.'

34 Similarly, in *RFM* and elsewhere, he frequently refers to 'mathematical propositions' even though, when discussing the status of sentences formulating mathematical results (e.g. '7x8=56'), he notes that there is only a very superficial relation between these and genuine propositions (*RFM* Appendix III, §4, p. 117). 117).

35 For some later remarks on similarities and differences between equation and tautology, see *WVC*: 218–19.

36 For a sophisticated development of this line of thought, see (Kremer 2002). A short critical exposition and overview of Wittgenstein's later views about mathematics is given in (Goldstein 1999a: 123–60). At *RFM* VII, §63, Wittgenstein says that mathematics is normative, and there is a discussion of mathematics as a system of rules at *RFM III,* §§26–8.

37 In his introduction to the *Tractatus,* Russell had written, 'What causes hesitation is the fact that, after all, Mr Wittgenstein manages to say a good deal about what cannot be said, thus suggesting to the sceptical reader that possibly there may be some loophole' (*T*: xxi). Ramsey too expressed scepticism: 'what we can't say, we can't say, and we can't whistle it either' (Ramsey 1931:238). In the first two pages of his essay 'Was He Trying to Whistle It?', Hacker (2001) shows how pervasive is the doctrine of *showing* in the *Tractatus,* and how it manifests itself in a variety of forms.

38 For a useful discussion of this problem, see (Wright 200 1b).

39 Harry Frankfurt argues that the later Wittgenstein was contemptuous of all kinds of bullshit. See his 'On Bullshit' at http://www.jelks.nu/misc/articles/bs.html

40 The influence of Sraffa is perceptively documented in (Monk 1990:260–1). The influence was probably not just in one direction. Marion and Ross argue that Sraffa adopted a constructivist stance about the mathematics that is applied in economics, and they conjecture that 'this constructivism crystallized in his mind in the late 1920s, as a result of coming into contact with the ideas and preoccupations of (Ramsey and) Wittgenstein' (forthcoming: 3, 40).

41 Fann (1969:49–50) says that '[Wittgenstein's] important method of constructing simple and complicated "language-games" seems to be an adaptation of Sraffa's method' employed in his *Production of Commodities by Means of Commodities.* As Marion and Ross (forthcoming: 23–9) point out, both the Sraffian 'Standard System' and the Wittgensteinian 'language-games' are *Hilfkonstruktionen.*

42 Wittgenstein held this doctrine at the beginning of 1930 (*WVC:* 74), tried to work out a theory of *families* of elementary propositions, and then he abandoned completely the atomistic conception of elementary propositions (*PG*, Appendix 4:. 210–14).

43 Appendix 4B of *PG*, the source of which is a manuscript of 1937–8 (MS 116) is, perhaps, the clearest expression of the later rejection of key Tractarian doctrines.

44 This remark occurs in a draft of the foreword to *PR* written in early November, 1930.

45 The point is made, in a different way, at *Z* §328: 'In philosophy it is significant that such-and-such a sentence makes no sense; but also that it sounds funny'

46 By Sir Anthony Kenny's count, the *Philosophical Investigations* contains 784 questions, with only 110 answers, and 70 of the answers are *meant* to be wrong (Fann 1969:109, fn. 1). Wittgenstein said, 'A philosopher is someone with a head full of question marks' (Bouwsma 1999:114).

47 Brendan Wilson (1998) usefully discusses eighteen central arguments of *PI,* devoting a chapter to each.

48 I am grateful to Wolfe Mays for letting me have his personal recollections of Wittgenstein. One of the things that Mays told me was that Wittgenstein did not like to be contradicted and, for this reason, banned A.C.Ewing from attending his classes.

49 This, of course, was what Popper disputed at the famous poker session of the Moral Sciences Club on Friday 25 October 1946 and is the subject of a book-length discussion (Edmonds and Eidinow 2001).

50 According to M.O'C.Drury, Wittgenstein once contemplated using as a motto for *PI* a quotation from *King Lear.* 'I'll teach you differences.' See (Fann 1967:69).

51 Gordon Baker has argued that by 'everyday', Wittgenstein simply means 'non-metaphysical', so that his call to bring words back to their everyday use is not a manifestation of 'ordinary language' philosophy in the style of J.L.Austin (Baker 2002). Another useful attempt to distinguish Wittgenstein's methodology from that of Austin (and of Russell) is (Pears 2002).

52 For a study of Wittgenstein's late methodology, see the essays The Nature of Philosophy' and *'Übersicht'* in (Baker and Hacker 1980:259–309).

53 This paragraph is extracted, with small modifications, from Goldstein (2002b). It might be objected that the numerals form an infinite series, so here we have an abstract entity, and have to confront the question of how we gain epistemological access to such. To give a Wittgensteinian response to such an objection would take us deep into his philosophy of mathematics.

54 See also the joke about similar triangles in the discussion of Gödel's Theorem at *RFM* App. III: § 7. He also implies that transfinite set theory is laughable (*PG* 464).

55 Some of the connections are explored in (Monk 1999:529–33).

56 In the Introduction to *The Principles of Mechanics,* Hertz writes:

> When these painful contradictions are removed, the question as to the nature of force will not have been answered; but our minds, no longer vexed, will cease to ask illegitimate questions…all indistinctness and

uncertainty can be avoided by suitable arrangement of definitions and notations, and by due care in the mode of expression.

(Hertz 1956:8,9)

In his Preface, Hertz acknowledges that he 'owe[s] very much to Mach's splendid book on the *Development of Mechanics*' and there is evidence too that Wittgenstein was directly influenced by Mach (Visser 1982).

57   An account of Hertz' influence on Wittgenstein's mature thought is given by Allan Janik, 'Wittgenstein, Hertz and Hermeneutics' at http://www.nqpaofu.com/2001/nqpaofu48.html (1999). Janik argues that 'Hertz delivered Wittgenstein with a highly original hermeneutic technique, which would influence all his thinking and in fact become the cornerstone of his mature philosophical method' (p. 2).

58   The dialogue was drawn to my attention by Irwin Goldstein, to whom I'm much indebted. Kirwan (2001) gives a detailed analysis of it. Wittgenstein, in attributing to Augustine a picture of language as a system of names, grotesquely misinterprets him. As Kirwan says, '[Augustine] knew better, because he knew his grammar' (Kirwan 2001:188). Augustine records in his *Retractiones* that he wrote a book on grammar, *De grammatica,* and we know of its content through various mediaeval manuscript copies, although the original has not been found.

59   Wittgenstein said of James, 'That is what makes him a good philosopher. He was a real human being' (Drury 1999:150). For very interesting appraisal of James' positive influence on Wittgenstein, see (Goodman 1994) and (Goodman 2002).

60   And these authors may have missed a few. For example, (James 1981:1068) has a parallel in *PI,* Part II:.§iv, which contains the well-known claim, 'The human body is the best picture of the human soul.'

61   In a letter to Russell, dated 22.6.1912, Wittgenstein writes: 'Whenever I have time I now read James's "Varieties of religious exp[erience]". This book does me a *lot* of good.' *(CL:* 14).

62   (Schopenhauer 1966: Second Book, §26:154). I am grateful to Peter Cave for pointing this out to me.

63   I say 'undoubtedly', but von Wright doubts it, although he offers no reasons (von Wright l982:213).

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7
IMMODESTY WITHOUT MIRRORS
Making sense of Wittgenstein's linguistic pluralism

Huw Price

1.
Is assertion a natural kind?

Wittgenstein is often thought to have challenged the view that assertion is an important theoretical category in a philosophical view of language. One of Wittgenstein's main themes in the early sections of the *Investigations* is that philosophy misses important distinctions about the uses of language, distinctions hidden from us by 'the uniform appearances of words' (1958: §11). As Wittgenstein goes on to say:

> It is like looking into the cabin of a locomotive. We see handles all looking more or less alike. (Naturally, since they are all supposed to be handled.) But one is the handle of a crank which can be moved continuously (it regulates the opening of a valve); another is the handle of a switch, which has only two effective positions, it is either off or on; a third is the handle of a brake-lever, the harder one pulls on it, the harder it brakes; a fourth, the handle of a pump: it has an effect only so long as it is moved to and fro.
> (1958: §12)

Few contemporary philosophers share Wittgenstein's evident familiarity with the cabin of a steam locomotive and, in general, most of us are increasingly remote from all but the most superficial understanding of the underlying functions of the tools on which we rely. So we are perhaps even more prone to the mistake that Wittgenstein thinks that philosophy makes with respect to language, that of regarding it as one tool rather than many: 'Think of the tools in a tool-box: there is a hammer, pliers, a saw, a screw-driver, a rule, a glue-pot, glue, nails and screws.— The functions of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects'[1] (1958: §11).

Like the steam locomotive, this aspect of Wittgenstein's philosophy is apt to seem a relic of a quaint but happily bygone age, in which philosophy showed an excessive interest in ordinary language. But whatever one's view of ordinary language philosophy, it would be a mistake to dismiss Wittgenstein's view of

language by association. For Wittgenstein's view is a view about language itself — a contribution to philosophy of language, not a linguistic approach to other philosophical topics. True, if Wittgenstein is right then the view may have applications of the latter kind. But distaste for these applications is not an argument against the view of language on which they rest.

To assess Wittgenstein's view we should try to connect it with mainstream ideas in the philosophy of language—to ask what it amounts to, if couched in such terms. Perhaps it involves rejection of mainstream views, but we ought to be able to say what is being rejected. However, there seems to have been little serious attempt to connect Wittgenstein's view to more conventional philosophy of language in this way The present paper is a contribution to this project.

One of few prominent writers who does discuss Wittgenstein's view is Michael Dummett. In the chapter on 'Assertion' in *Frege: Philosophy of Language,* Dummett raises the question as to 'whether there is…any genuine point in grouping together all those utterances which we class as assertions.' He goes on:

> This question is answered negatively by Wittgenstein in the *Investigations* §23: 'But how many kinds of sentence are there? Say assertion, question and command?—There are countless kinds: *countless* different kinds of use of what we call…"sentences".'
> (Dummett 1973:356)

Dummett is interested in contrasting Wittgenstein's view to Frege's. However, he thinks that it isn't entirely clear what Wittgenstein's view is. He suggests two interpretations of what he calls Wittgenstein's 'repudiation of the notion of assertion', (1973:360) but argues that both are unattractive.

For my part, I have considerable sympathy with what I take to be two important ingredients of Wittgenstein's view, on any adequate interpretation. One of these ingredients plays down the theoretical significance of the idea that a function of (a large part of) language is to 'describe' or 'represent' reality. The other plays up the idea that the language concerned has many different functions, in a way that is not evident 'on the surface'. I'll call these ingredients *non-representationalism* and *functional pluralism,* respectively.

It isn't controversial that these two ingredients are present in Wittgenstein's later thinking in some form, or that they comprise important parts of what is new in the shift from the early to the later Wittgenstein. But it is far from clear how to make these rather vague ideas precise, and connect them with other projects and frameworks in the philosophy of language.

In this respect, Dummett's discussion provides a useful anchor. While I think there is a more promising version of Wittgenstein's view than Dummett allows, it depends on a different conception from Dummett's of the task of a philosophical theory of language. In the relevant respects, moreover, Dummett's is the orthodox view. view. The possibility of making sense of Wittgenstein's

view has thus been hidden by some deep-seated presuppositions of modern philosophy of language, I think, and the interest of the view coincides in large part with the interest of the landscape revealed if those presuppositions are given up.

As I'll explain, the resulting position is a kind of generalised or global expressivism. Its expressivism consists in theorising about language in a non-representational key, its generality in prescribing this key universally (in contrast to a local expressivism, say about ethical discourse). A useful comparison is therefore with Robert Brandom, who is one of the very few contemporary writers to endorse a non-representationalist, expressivist starting point for a theory of meaning. I think that although my version of Wittgenstein's view diverges from Brandom's project in an important way—Brandom is ultimately less non-representationalist than my Wittgenstein—they start at the same point. Because the starting point is unorthodox, a large part of the dialectical task is simply to make it visible—to show that it is possible to begin the relevant enquiry *there*. Brandom is therefore a useful ally, from my point of view.

I don't claim that the view outlined here is exactly Wittgenstein's. But I do think that in making interesting sense of non-representationalism and functional pluralism, it is Wittgensteinian in spirit. It is an under-appreciated position, which provides one interesting way of filling out the intuition that assertion is a less homogeneous linguistic category than tends to be assumed, especially in the tradition stemming from Frege—a tradition to which the early Wittgenstein belonged, and against which his later linguistic pluralism is evidently directed.

2.
Themes from Frege

According to Dummett, the first way of understanding Wittgenstein's view 'would be [as] a denial of the idea, common to most philosophers who have written about meaning, that the theory of meaning has some one key concept' (1973:360). As Dummett notes, the idea thus denied is due in particular to Frege: 'Frege viewed the key concept of the theory of meaning as being the notion of truth: to grasp the sense of a sentence is to grasp its truth-conditions' (p. 360). Moreover, although some philosophers (including Dummett himself) have proposed replacing truth with some other central notion, such as method of verification, the basic Fregean structure has been thought to survive this modification. As Dummett says:

> Other candidates for the role of key concept have been put forward: but it has been common to philosophers to suppose that there is some one feature of a sentence which may be identified as determining its meaning. (1973:360)

Figure 1 The Fregean sense-force distinction

FORCE	SENSE		
	The door is shut	Grass is green	The art of conversation is dead
Assertoric	'The door is shut'	'Grass is green'	'The art of conversation is dead'
Imperative	'Shut the door!'	'Make it the case that grass is green!'	'Make it the case that the art of conversation is dead!'
Interrogative	'Is the door shut?'	'Is grass green?'	'Is the art of conversation dead?'
Optative	'Would that the door were shut!'	'Would it were the case that grass is green!'	'Would that the art of conversation were dead!'

Dummett goes on to explain the standard view of connection between this Fregean 'key concept' conception of meaning and the explanation of linguistic *use*:

> [T]he implicit assumption underlying the idea that there is some one key concept in terms of which we can give a general characterization of the meaning of a sentence is that there must be some uniform pattern of derivation of all the other features of the use of an arbitrary sentence, given its meaning as characterized in terms of the key concept. It is precisely to subserve such a schema of derivation that the [Fregean] distinction between sense and force was introduced: corresponding to each different kind of force will be a different uniform pattern of derivation of the use of a sentence from its sense, considered as determining its truth-conditions. (1973:361)

In using the phrase 'each different kind of force', Dummett reflects the orthodox but not incontestable view that there is more than one kind of force. On this orthodox view, sense and force comprise what we might think of as orthogonal dimensions of variations of meaning. The resulting two-dimensional structure is illustrated by the examples in Figure 1. Within each column of the table, the utterances listed have the same *sense* (or *descriptive content*), but differ in *force*. Within each row, the various utterances have the *same force,* but differ in *sense* (or *descriptive content*).

A virtue of the Fregean approach is that it does capture the powerful intuition that meaning is (at least) two-dimensional in this sense—i.e. that there is something that the meanings of the utterances across each row have in common, inrespect of which they differ from the utterances in the other rows; and also something

that the meanings of the utterances in each column have in common, in respect of which they differ from the utterances in the other columns. But it is worth noting that the apparent two-dimensionality alone does not show that the variation of meaning in one dimension is of a fundamentally different kind from that in the other. After all, we get a similar two-dimensionality from the most basic two-place relational expression *Fxy,* if we consider the two kinds of variations of meaning that result from (i) substituting a fixed name for *x* and then a range of names for *y*, and (ii) substituting a fixed name for y and then a range of names for *x.* In principle, it might be maintained—as it is by David Lewis (1970), for example—that all the utterances in Figure 1 have assertoric force, and that what distinguishes the rows is a particular kind of variation of sense.

However best explained, the particular kind of two-dimensionality provided by the Fregean sense—force distinction seems to deserve prominence in a theoretical account of meaning. One of Dummett's interpretations of Wittgenstein takes him to be challenging the sense—force framework. On the face of it, any such challenge is going to be hard-pressed to explain the intuitions about meaning reflected in the structure of Figure 1. (Dummett himself objects to the proposed view in similar terms.) I take it to be an advantage of my version of the Wittgensteinian view that it does retain the sense—force framework, or something recognisably related to it.

Dummett makes a converse point about the apparent necessity of the sense-force distinction:

> It is difficult to see how, on any theory of meaning which takes meaning as to be characterized in terms of some one key concept, whether that of truth or that of verification or some other, some such distinction between sense and force could be dispensed with.
> (1973:361)

The thought behind this is the one Dummett expresses in the earlier passage: one of the tasks of a theory of meaning is to explain the *use* of an arbitrary utterance, in terms of its meaning. If the 'key concept' invoked by the theory in question is not immediately a specification of use, then the task is to show how use is determined by something not characterised in terms of use. For each variety of Fregean force, this requires a function whose input is specified in terms of the 'one key concept', and whose output is a use prescription. In other words, it requires, as Dummett says, 'some uniform pattern of derivation of all the other features of the use of an arbitrary sentence, given its meaning as characterized in terms of the key concept' (1973:361).

Such functions are therefore use-determining or 'pragmatic' rules, and the sense-force distinction is commonly characterised as a 'semantic-pragmatic' distinction. Across each row in Figure 1, the difference in meaning between the utterances concerned is a *semantic* difference—a difference of truth conditions, for example, if this is the central semantic notion in play, in terms of which

sense is characterised. Down each column, the difference in meaning is a *pragmatic* difference—a difference in the use of the utterances in question, in virtue of their different forces.

We now have sufficient terminology for a rough characterisation of the view for which I'm aiming. We've seen that for Frege and Dummett, the project is to generate the pragmatic from the semantic—to explain *use* in terms of *content*—by appealing to a set of principles, one for each variety of force. Each such principle needs to stipulate how the use of an utterance with the force in question depends on the descriptive content of the utterance concerned. My goal is to identify a second and more fundamental role for pragmatic considerations. Roughly, I want to give a pragmatic account of *how there come to be* descriptive contents, or thoughts, of particular kinds—in effect, we might say, a pragmatic account of the origins of the semantic.[2]

Consider a familiar example. On a Fregean view, specification of the meaning of a typical utterance of 'Snow is white' involves two components. The first component specifies the sense of the utterance, typically by telling us something of this form: 'Snow is white' is true iff *p*. (There are two importantly different conceptions of what is involved in such a 'telling', but let's ignore this for the present.) The second component invokes some general principle governing the assertoric force, to describe the use of an utterance with the specified truth conditions—e.g. the principle that when making assertions, speakers aim to utter true sentences.

On my view, this Fregean specification is not misconceived—at least under one of the two possible conceptions of 'telling' of truth conditions—but it is seriously incomplete. Roughly, what it leaves out is an account of *how there comes to be* a thought to the effect that snow is white. One component of this thought is the concept *white,* for example. My proposal looks for a pragmatic account of the origins and 'possession conditions' of this concept, for creatures like us—natural creatures, in a natural environment. It asks, in effect, how does such a creature have to *be,* and what does it have to *do,* to count as possessing and employing the concept?[3]

It is far from obvious how an answer to this question could amount to what Wittgenstein thought he'd found—a position in tension with much orthodox philosophy of language. After all, doesn't everybody need an account of concept possession? In order to reveal the tension, we'll need to be more explicit about the tasks of a theoretical account of language. For one thing, it turns out that in the orthodox approach there are actually already two distinct roles for pragmatic considerations in such a theoretical enterprise (one of them commonly elided). My proposal is therefore to add a third role, and it will be important not to confuse it with a mere rediscovery of the second. For another thing, the proposal needs to be distinguished from two other possible views, one more radical and one less so. Finally, there are several distinct conceptions of the goals and methodology of a 'theory of meaning', and the proposal is at home in some but not in others. I address these various distinctions in the following four sections.

3.
Three roles for pragmatism in linguistic theory

Science often proceeds by formulating abstract or idealised models, models that are thought to 'fit' reality more or less well. In the case of the science of language, these models may be more or less inclusive in scope. They may be models simply of languages, or of languages-in-a-world, or—perhaps most usefully of all—of languages-and-language-users-in-a-world. As linguistic theorists, then, we are likely to have an abstract or idealised conception of a language, or language-plus-world, or language-plus-world-and-speakers, and face the question as to what counts as fitting reality—what it takes for such a model to 'fit' a given community of (real) speakers.[4] (Notice that this is a different question from one that may arise *within* the model, as to whether a given sentence 'fits' or is 'true of' the world.)

By thus distinguishing the model—the abstract, formal, idealised conception of a language—from the issue of what it takes for that model to fit sociological reality, we give ourselves two locations where pragmatic considerations may play a part. In the latter location, indeed, it seems that nothing but pragmatic considerations can be relevant. In some sense, whether our model correctly represents the linguistic activity of the community in question can depend on nothing but the *use* of linguistic items in the day-to-day practice of that community.

In the former location—that is, *within* the formal model—the obvious example of a pragmatic factor is Fregean force. In a model language conceived in Fregean terms, the basic items are something like possible speech acts—at any rate, sentences considered as possessing force, as well as sense. As we have already noted, it is usual to say that force needs to be explicated in terms of pragmatic or use-determining rules.

It is a nice question to what extent this formal use of pragmatic considerations can be detached from the considerations which bear on the correctness of the ascription of a given model language to a particular community. There seem to be different theoretical strategies possible at this point. As I noted, one attractive option is to model language users, as well as languages themselves. According to this approach, a typical item within the model is a particular speech act, by a particular speaker. The pragmatic or use-related distinctions between speech acts with different Fregean forces will then be represented explicitly within the model. But we'll still need to appeal to *real* use, in order to justify the claim that a particular such model fits the linguistic practice of a given real community. So use will be relevant in two places: theoretically, within the model, and practically, concerning the fit of the model to sociological reality

In this orthodox approach, the models in question ascribe semantic properties to certain linguistic items, such as sentences. The semantic properties themselves are part of the model. In effect, my proposal is to model languages in different

terms, replacing semantic properties with (additional) pragmatic or usage-grounded properties.

The proposal is most easily visualised if users and usage patterns are themselves an explicit component of our linguistic models. In this case, as we noted, the model itself embodies the full two-dimensional structure associated with the Fregean sense-force distinction. On the orthodox view, sense differences correspond to differences in semantic properties (e.g. differences in truth conditions), while force differences correspond to differences in usage rules. In my proposal, both kinds of differences correspond to differences in usage properties—differences of different kinds, of course—and semantic properties are absent from the model altogether. As we'll see, this doesn't imply (absurdly) that the theory says nothing about language-world relations, but only that the theoretically significant such relations are not the familiar semantic relations.

The possibility and character of such a model will become clearer as we go along. For the moment, the point I want to stress is that this approach will provide a crucial role for pragmatic or usage-grounded factors, which is different both from the roles associated with Fregean force distinctions, and with the issue as to whether a given linguistic model fits a given body of sociological data—i.e. as to whether the model fits the linguistic community in question.

4.
Idealism, 'mere presentationalism' and semantic deflationism

In presenting this proposal, one important task is to show that it differs from two other proposals with which it is liable to be confused. Earlier I characterised the view as offering a pragmatic account of how there comes to be a thought to the effect that snow is white—how the possibility of such a thought depends on contingent features of the thinker. On one side, it is important that this is not the ('idealist') view that the *fact* that snow is white is 'mind-dependent', or a product of human linguistic practices. I want to say that the fact that we have the conceptual machinery to judge that snow is white depends on broadly pragmatic (and broadly contingent) factors concerning ourselves.[5] But the whiteness of snow does not depend on these factors.

Why is the proposed view not idealism? Simply because *it doesn't say anything* about snow, or whiteness. It is a view about our use of the terms 'snow' and 'white', or the concepts *snow* and *white,* not about snow itself, or about the colour white. It holds that the use of the terms (or possession of the concepts) depends on contingent features of us, but it would be a category mistake to interpret this as the view that snow, whiteness or the fact that snow is white depend on these features of us.[6]

On the other side, it is important to distinguish the proposed view from the familiar and uncontroversial claim that what depends on contingent pragmatic

factors is merely our 'mode of presentation' of the fact that snow is white—the particular way in which we humans think that thought. This more familiar view admits contingency at the level of concepts, but finds reassurance in the idea that these contingently different concepts will in many cases 'pick out', or refer to, the same worldly objects or facts. (The term 'mode of presentation' conveys this idea.) For example, suppose we thought that colours were physical properties, complex attributes involving the wavelength of electromagnetic radiation. A familiar view is that these physical properties are actually presented to us under a description something like this: that which produces certain visual effects in normal human subjects under normal conditions. On such a view it is a contingent fact about us that we pick out the colours under a description, or mode of presentation, of this kind. Martians might pick out the same properties under a different mode of presentation, involving normally sighted Martians. Nevertheless, according to this view, we and the Martians are talking *about—referring to*—the same things.

In principle, there are two ways in which someone who agrees about the contingency of the concepts might distance himself from this familiar view—'mere presentationalism', as I'll call it. One way would be to extend contingency to the referents, as well as to the concepts. That would lead to idealism—i.e. to the conclusion that the fact that snow is white depends on contingent facts about ourselves. The other way is to leave reference out of the picture altogether, *for theoretical purposes.* This is the approach that I favour, and that I want to propose as a way of making sense of Wittgenstein's remarks about assertion.

The conceptual space for this view thus turns on the possibility that reference—and related 'word-world' semantic notions, such as truth itself—might play no significant explanatory role in a mature scientific theory about language use. As noted earlier, the interesting possibility is not that a mature theory might simply have nothing to say about the relations between language, on one side, and the world, or environment inhabited by language users, on the other. It is rather that the theoretical notions important in describing these relations might not be the semantic notions, such as reference, truth and content itself—a mature scientific view of language might not treat *representation* as a significant theoretical relation between language and the world.[7]

This possibility is almost invisible to many contemporary philosophical audiences, in my experience. It is odd that this should be so. For one thing, non-representationalism is a major theme of twentieth-century pragmatism.[8] For another, to take seriously the idea that linguistic theory is a matter for empirical science is surely to acknowledge, *inter alia,* that it is an empirical possibility that mature linguistic theory will not turn out to require the folk semantic notions, such as reference and truth.[9] But perhaps most importantly, such a view of the theoretical significance of reference, truth and the like is an immediate consequence of views familiar under the labels *deflationism* or *minimalism.* Deflationism has a number of aspects, but one central element is the thesis that

truth or reference are not 'substantial' notions—in particular, not such as to play a significant role in mature scientific theory.

Wittgenstein himself is well known as an early advocate of a deflationist or redundancy theory of truth. Dummett notes Wittgenstein's view of truth, and says that it is incompatible with a Fregean approach to meaning, which characterises sense in terms of truth conditions. I think that Dummett is only half right at this point. Roughly, there are two conceptions of the role of truth conditions in a Fregean theory of meaning, depending on two conceptions of the task of such a theory. On one conception—the one he himself evidently has in mind—Dummett is right, for the use of truth conditions depends on a non-deflationary conception of truth. But on the other conception, a theory of meaning needs only a deflationary truth predicate. This suggests that it may be possible to combine a version of the Fregean project with the non-Fregean view I want to advocate—a view that points to pragmatic contingency in the domain of concepts, without ameliorating that contingency by appeal to further semantic facts.

In order to make this possibility clear, we'll thus need two distinctions: first, a distinction between two versions of the Fregean project, only one of which requires non-deflationary truth; and second, a distinction between the Fregean project in either form, and a different theoretical perspective concerning language. I'll discuss these distinctions in the following two sections.

For the moment, the point to emphasise is that semantic deflationism supports the following response to the suggestion that the proposed version of Wittgenstein's view reduces to mere presentationalism—i.e. to the familiar contingency of 'modes of presentation'. In one sense, the view *is* just the familiar contingency. Where it differs from the orthodoxy is in not ameliorating that familiar contingency by anchoring the contingent concepts via reference to items in a non-contingent world. Because the view *says nothing* of a theoretical nature about the referents of terms, it doesn't provide such anchors. For the same reason, it is in no position to say that two different terms or concepts have the same referents. It doesn't say that they have different referents, either. It simply remains silent on the matter. In so far as it is committed to deflationism about the semantic relations, it denies that there is anything of theoretical interest to be said, *in these semantic terms.*[10]

5.
Two conceptions of the task of a Fregean theory of meaning

The first distinction we need is between two versions of the Fregean meaning-specifying project. Let's approach this distinction by looking at why Dummett thinks that Wittgenstein's deflationary view of truth is incompatible with the Fregean project:

The ideas about meaning which are contained in Wittgenstein's later writings in effect oppose the view that the distinction between the sense of a sentence, as given by a stipulation of its truth-conditions, and the force attached to it is fruitful for an account of the use of sentences. In particular, whereas for Frege the notions of truth and falsity play a crucial role in the characterisation of the sense of a sentence, for the later Wittgenstein they do not. He expressly avowed what I have elsewhere called the 'redundancy theory' of truth, namely that the principle that 'It is true that A' is equivalent to 'A' and 'It is false that A' is equivalent to 'Not A' contains the whole meaning of the words 'true' and 'false'…*If this is* all *that can be said about the meaning of 'true', then learning the sense of a sentence 'A cannot in general be explained as learning under what conditions A is true: since to know what it means to say that 'A' was true under certain conditions would involve already knowing the meaning of 'A'.* For Wittgenstein 'meaning is use', and this involves among other things, that we must describe the use of each particular form of sentence directly, instead of trying to specify the use of an arbitrary sentence of some large class, such as assertoric or imperative sentences, in terms of its truth-conditions, presupposed known.
(1973:359, emphasis added)

At first sight, the highlighted claim is puzzling. Suppose we accept with the redundancy theory that 'N is prime' and '"N is prime" is true' are equivalent in meaning. Does this imply that it cannot be informative about the meaning of 'N is prime' to be told that 'N is prime' is true if and only if the natural number N has no divisors other than one and itself ? Surely the most it implies is that this can be *no more informative* than being told that N is prime if and only if N has no divisors other than one and itself. But isn't that informative? Isn't it precisely the kind of thing we would say to explain the meaning of 'N is prime' to someone who did not know it?

In defence of Dummett, however, it might be said that we can't explain the meaning of primitive concepts in this way, and that Dummett's point is therefore valid in such cases. More generally, we can make sense of Dummett's argument by means of a distinction he himself draws between two conceptions of a Fregean theory of meaning.

The distinction turns on the issue as to whether a theory of meaning is allowed to help itself to the full expressive power of the theorist's home language, and to specify the meaning of expressions of the object language by (in effect) offering paraphrases of those expressions in the home language. The alternative theoretical perspective is more austere. To use an image that Dummett employs in making a related point, we might think of it as the perspective of an alien and not necessarily linguistic intelligence, who encounters human language as a phenomenon to be explained and described in the natural world— as Dummett puts it, 'a Martian, say, who communicated by means so different from our own

that he would not for a long time recognise human language as a medium of communication' (1979:133–4).

Dummett calls these two conceptions of the task of a theory of meaning *modest* and *full-blooded,* respectively. As he says, a modest theory aims to 'give the interpretation of the language to someone who already has the concepts required', while a full-blooded theory 'seeks actually to explain the concepts expressed by primitive terms of the language' (1975:102).

It is a familiar idea that a modest theory of meaning needs only a deflationary notion of truth. In particular, Davidson's truth-theoretic approach is widely interpreted both as modest[11] and as requiring only a disquotational notion of truth. In the heyday of Oxford Davidsonianism, for example, John McDowell described what he called 'the best version' of the Davidsonian proposal 'along these lines':

> We may reasonably set ourselves the ideal of constructing, as a component of a complete theory of meaning for a language, a sub-theory which is to serve to specify the contents of (for instance, and surely centrally) assertions which could be made by uttering the language's indicative sentences…[A] direct assault on that task would be to look for a sub-theory which generates, on the basis of structure in the objectlanguage sentences, a theorem, for every appropriate sentence, of this form: 's can be used to assert that p'. Now there is a truistic connection between the content of an assertion and a familiar notion of truth… the connection guarantees, as the merest platitude, that a correct specification of what can be asserted, by the assertoric utterance of a sentence, cannot but be a specification of a condition under which the sentence is true. A radical proposal at this point would be as follows: as long as the ends of the theorems (think of them as having the form 's …p') are so related that, whatever the theorems actually say, we can use them as if they said something of the form 's can be used to assert that p', it does not actually matter if we write, between those ends, something else which yields a truth in the same circumstances; our platitude guarantees that 'is true if and only if' fits that bill, and this gives a more tractable target than that of the direct assault.
> (1981:228–9)

So conceived, the task of a theory of meaning is modest. Given a target sentence *s* of the object language, the task is to produce a sentence *p* of the metalanguage such that by *using p,* we show what it is that *s* itself may be used to say. McDowell points out that for indicative sentences, *'s* can be used to say that p'is true in the same circumstances as *'s* is true iff *p',* so that producing a biconditional sentence of the latter form achieves our goals just as well. The 'truistic connection' on which this depends is just the disquotational schema, so the move calls for nothing more than a deflationary truth predicate.[12]

Indeed, the connection between deflationism and the modest/full-blooded distinction may need to be even closer than this. For the distinction can easily appear tendentious. What can a full-blooded theory employ *except* the conceptual resources of the metalanguage, after all? Yet if it does the content-specifying job using these materials, why does it not count as modest?

The issue of the theoretical role of the semantic notions comes to the rescue here. We've just seen that a modest theory doesn't need substantial semantic notions. In effect, content (as a substantial theoretical notion) simply drops out of such a theory.[13] It is open to us to make the converse a matter of definition—to say that the distinguishing characteristic of a full-blooded theory is precisely that it does employ the semantic notions in a substantial way.

In favour of this proposal is the following argument. A full-blooded theory takes the specification of the truth conditions of a sentence to amount to more than a mere paraphrase. But this requires that the semantic notions bear theoretical weight somewhere other than in the clauses specifying truth conditions. Why? Because we know that in that place—in those clauses—the disquotational aspect of truth is all we need. If truth wasn't doing some theoretical work somewhere else, in other words—in a theory of judgement, for example, or a substantial account of the representational function of the relevant part of language—there would be nothing to stop us reading the proposed theory in modest terms. To prevent this 'slide into modesty', there must be something that the theory does that couldn't be done with a deflationary notion of truth; and this can't be done in the clauses specifying truth conditions, because in that place, disquotation is all we need.

The connection between semantic deflationism and the possibility of a fullblooded theory of meaning thus seems to be a close one: to be precise, the two views appear to be mutually exclusive. This makes immediate sense of Dummett's view of the consequences of Wittgenstein's redundancy theory of truth. Dummett has a full-blooded theory of meaning in mind, and in the full-blooded theory, truth does substantial theoretical work. To accept Wittgenstein's redundancy theory would thus be to abandon the Fregean approach, as Dummett sees it.

However, there is a less drastic alternative, which at the same time makes more interesting sense of Wittgenstein's remarks about the plurality of things we do with language. This alternative view takes the lesson of deflationism to be that the Fregean content-specifying project is necessarily modest, but notes that the resulting theoretical 'thinness' on the side of semantics may be compensated by 'thickness' in a different theoretical vocabulary for linguistic theory. This brings us to the second of the two distinctions foreshadowed at the end of §4, a distinction between the Fregean content-specifying project in either its modest or full-blooded form, and a different, non-content-specifying conception of linguistic theory.

6.
Two conceptions of the task of linguistic theory

We've seen that a modest theory of meaning needs no distinctively linguistic theoretical vocabulary. If a linguistic concept occurs in some target sentence *s* of our object language, then a 'corresponding' concept will be needed in our metalanguage, in order to express a content specification of the form:

s may be used to say that *p*.

But this requirement doesn't distinguish linguistic concepts from any other concepts in the object language. Such a theory has no *new* need for linguistic concepts.

Let's use the term *immodest* for linguistic theories of which this is not true—i.e. for theories with a distinctively linguistic theoretical vocabulary, the need for which is independent of the existence of corresponding linguistic concepts in the object language. A full-blooded theory in Dummett's sense thus counts as immodest. It requires substantial semantic notions—truth, reference, content and the like—regardless of whether the object language in question is sophisticated enough to contain these notions itself. But as we're about to see, the converse is not true. Not all immodest linguistic theories count as full-blooded theories of meaning, in Dummett's sense.

Why not? Because there are possible immodest theories which are simply not in the business of ascribing *contents,* or *meanings,* in the sense that Dummett has in mind. One way to see this is to note an ambiguity in the term 'explain', in Dummett's remark above that a full-blooded theory 'seeks actually to explain the concepts expressed by primitive terms of the language'. According to one possible reading—the one that Dummett has in mind—to explain a concept is to put oneself in a position to use that concept. According to the other possible reading, explanation of a concept need confer no such ability. We might come to understand the role of a concept in the lives of a community to which we ourselves could not belong—come to understand the relation of a concept to a perceptual sense we do not ourselves possess, for example. If use of the concept requires possession of the perceptual sense in question, our new knowledge of the concept does not enable us to use it. Nevertheless, we certainly know something about the concept that we did not know before. It has been *explained* to us, in one reasonable use of that term.

The crucial distinction at work here is that between *content-specifying* and *use-specifying* theories. A content-specifying theory tells us what is said *in,* or *by,* saying an object language sentence *s*—in other words, as we have seen, it tells us something of the form '*s* may be used to say *that*…' (this is what puts us in a position to say the same thing ourselves), whereas a use-specifying theory tells us something about an object language expression by telling us *when* it is typically or properly *used.* The above example shows that knowledge of normal or proper use need not enable us to use the expression in question ourselves. Its use conditions may be conditions that we ourselves cannot satisfy

Figure 2 Three species of linguistic theory

	Modest theories	Immodest theories
Content-specifying theories	1	2
Use-specifying theories		3

In a use-specifying linguistic theory, *use* itself functions as a theoretical concept. (We could easily imagine applying such theoretical approach to an object language that lacks the concept *use*.) Hence a use-specifying theory is automatically immodest, according to the above criterion. In contrast, we have seen that a content-specifying theory may be either modest or immodest—only fullblooded content-specifying theories are immodest.

Thus we have the three possibilities shown in Figure 2. Dummett's preferred full-blooded approach occupies position 2. My Wittgensteinian alternative occupies position 3, and exploits the fact that position 3 and position 1 are not incompatible places to be. A modest Fregean content-specifying theory is compatible with the view that the interesting *theoretical* vocabulary for linguistic theory is pragmatic or use-theoretic, rather than semantic as required in position 2. In the next section I want to illustrate this possibility by thinking about how the modest and immodest views come apart, in a familiar kind of philosophical example.

7.
Expressivism: immodesty without mirrors

Consider a familiar kind of expressivism, say about evaluative judgements—the view that what is distinctive about evaluative judgements is that they express psychological states with a motivational character. This view is often characterised, in part, as the view that evaluative judgements lack truth conditions. However, a modest truth-conditional approach of the kind described by McDowell is blind to what the expressivist takes to be distinctive about evaluative judgements, namely their distinctive psychological 'history'. The sentences

'Le bonheur c'est bien' is true iff happiness is good

or

'Le bonheur c'est bien' can be used to assert that happiness is good

tell us nothing about the expressive origins of such evaluative remarks, but are none the less useful for that, in the context of a modest theory of meaning.[14]

Many writers—McDowell himself is an early example—have been inclined to take this as an objection to expressivism.[15] If truth is minimal, it is easy to be truth-conditional, and implausible to claim that evaluative claims are not truth-conditional. However, this is not an objection to the central expressivist claim

that evaluative judgements are to be understood as expressions of motivational states, but only to the additional claim that such judgements are not truth-conditional—and even then, only if the additional claim is understood in a deflationary way. So it is simply a mistake to think that minimal truth rules out expressivism.

In fact, I think, the boot is on the other foot. If we take it that the expressivist's core claim is that the linguistic role of the judgements in question is non-representational, then deflationism about the key semantic notions is at least close to a *global* motivation for expressivism—a global reason for thinking that whatever the interesting theoretical conclusion about a class of judgements turns out to be, it cannot be that they are 'referential', or 'truth-conditional'. For deflationism amounts to a denial that these notions *have* an interesting theoretical role![16]

Note that in contrast to a McDowellian theory of meaning grounded on deflationary truth, expressivism about evaluative judgements is *essentially* immodest.[17] Whatever else it does, expressivism tells us something of a theoretical nature about evaluative judgements—something that may be both inaccessible to ordinary speakers who make those judgements, and accessible to theorists who don't or can't make such judgements themselves (because they lack the relevant motivational psychology, for example). Moreover, what it tells us is not couched in representationalist terms.

Expressivism about evaluative judgements thus illustrates the possibility of the following combination of views:

(i) an immodest explication of the linguistic role of a particular class of judgements, in non-semantic or non-representational terms.[18]

(ii) a modest specification of meaning of a truth-conditional sort, along the lines suggested by McDowell.

Stage (i) of such an approach would provide a pragmatic account of how there come to be the kind of judgements whose contents may be specified by the modest theory of stage (ii).

As I have noted, such a pragmatic account must itself combine two components. For a start, we need to be told what is distinctive about evaluative judgements, as opposed to other sorts of judgements. This part of the theory might appeal to the distinctive motivational role of associated psychological states, for example, along familiar lines. By itself, however, this part of the theory cannot explain why the expressions of motivational attitudes come to have the character of assertoric judgements. To do that, we need some general theory of what judgement or assertion is 'for'—of what is at stake in treating something as an assertion.

The programme might come unstuck at this point. It might turn out that an adequate account of what is involved in treating something as a judgement needs to invoke a substantial notion of truth. In effect, the notion of assertion would

then be dependent on that of representational content.[19] (The same might apply to the non-assertoric forces.) So there is a general onus on the kind of account I am recommending to show that this is not the case. And one large part of this task is to provide an account of what the assertoric or declarative part of linguistic practice is 'for', without *presupposing* representational content.

This is a very large project, of course, and although I'll provide a slightly more detailed sketch in a moment (see §9), my present aims are necessarily limited. I want to show simply that there is an intelligible theoretical programme in the offing here—an unorthodox but apparently coherent approach to a philosophical theory of language which does embody the key ingredients of Wittgenstein's view of assertion, namely non-representational and functional pluralism. In the hope of enhancing the visibility of this unusual approach, I want now to compare it with Robert Brandom's pragmatist approach to meaning. Although I think that my proposal diverges from Brandom's in significant ways, it starts at a similar point. Since a large part of the battle is to establish that it is possible to start one's theory of language at this unconventional location, Brandom is certainly an ally, from my point of view.

8.
Brandom on platonism v. pragmatism

Earlier I characterised my approach as seeking to explain in pragmatic terms how there come to be contents, concepts or thoughts of particular kinds. I contrasted this to the orthodox Fregean approach, which takes a semantic notion as fundamental, and goes on to explain the pragmatic in terms of the semantic. Here is Brandom's description of what I take to be a closely related contrast between these two orders of explanation:

> Here is another strategic methodological issue. An account of the conceptual might explain the use of concepts in terms of a priori understanding of conceptual *content.* Or it might pursue a complementary explanatory strategy, beginning with a story about the practice or activity of applying concepts, and elaborating on that basis an understanding of conceptual content. The first can be called a *platonist* strategy, and the second a *pragmatist* (in this usage, a species of functionalist) strategy. One variety of semantic or conceptual platonism in this sense would identify the content typically expressed by declarative sentences and possessed by beliefs with sets of possible worlds, or with truth conditions otherwise specified. At some point it must then explain how associating such a content with sentences and beliefs contributes to our understanding of how it is proper to use sentences in making claims, and to deploy beliefs in reasoning and guiding action. The pragmatist direction of explanation, by contrast, seeks to explain how the use of linguistic expressions, or the functional role of intentional states, confers conceptual content on them.

(2000:4)

Brandom goes on to say that his own view is 'a kind of conceptual pragmatism':

> It offers an account of knowing (or believing, or saying) *that* such and such
> is the case in terms of knowing *how* (being able) to do something… The sort
> of pragmatism adopted here seeks to explain what is asserted by by appeal
> to features of assertings, what is claim*ed* in terms of claim*ings,* what is
> judg*ed* by judg*ings,* and what is believed by the role of believ*ings*… —in
> general, the content by the act, rather than the other way around.
> (2000:4)

Later, Brandom distinguishes between views which understand the conceptual
'in representational terms' (2000:7) and his own view, which seeks 'to develop
an expressivist alternative' to this 'representational paradigm' (2000:10).

   In some respects, then, Brandom's project seems close to mine. In endorsing
expressivism and rejecting platonism, Brandom aligns himself, at least initially,
with non-representationalism. But does Brandom want to remain a non-
representationalist, or to build representationalism on pragmatic foundations?
These are very different projects, as we see when we think about the case of
truth. There's a big difference between deflationism about truth, and the kind of
pragmatism which wants to say what truth is—to give a reductive *analysis* of
truth—in terms of practice (for example as what works, or what we converge on
in the long run). Deflationism tells us how the term 'true' is *used,* and may well
explain this use, in the sense of telling us what useful difference it makes to
language users to have a term with this usage pattern. But it doesn't tell us what
truth *is.* Conversely, a reductive analysis of truth—even in terms of pragmatist
raw materials—is not a form of deflationism.[20]

   A similar distinction may be drawn in the case of content. There's an important
difference between an approach which *analyses* content, or meaning, in terms of
use—which says what it is for an expression to have a particular content, in
terms of how it is used—and an account which simply tells us how expressions
are used, without thereby claiming to offer an account of *content.* For an account
of the latter kind, ascriptions of content may figure as part of the explanandum.
Part of the task of such a theory may be to explain the use, and function, of terms
such as 'content' and 'meaning' in ordinary contexts. But just as explaining the
use of the term 'true' is different from saying what truth *is,* explaining the use of
the term 'content' is different from explaining what content *is.* A thoroughgoing
non-representationalist view just tells us about use. It doesn't explain content by
analysing it in terms of use. It is not entirely clear to me whether Brandom
counts as a non-representationalist in this sense—I suspect not.

   A lot rests on this issue. Representation is a word—world relation. An account
that begins with *terms,* and adds a representation relation, thus ends up including
in its ontology what lies at the other end of such a relation—the referents of

those terms, or what they represent. And if these objects are not things already present in the naturalistic framework within which we theorise about language, the result is likely to be an embarrassment. Either we find a place for these objects—values, possibilities, numbers, or meanings themselves, for example— in the natural world, or we endow our representation relations with the ability to reach beyond this world. Neither option seems appealing.

But, as Wittgenstein surely saw, the problem may be self-imposed, a product of our own theoretical preconceptions. If our linguistic theory is non-representational, no such problem arises.[21] Hence the appeal of expressivism in many areas, where ontological commitment seems naturalistically problematic. Of course, these anti-metaphysical advantages require that the expressivist stay non-represen tationalist, and not proceed to construct representational or semantic relations on pragmatic foundations. If Brandom stands on the side of analysis, the side of constructing representational relations rather than explaining representational idioms, then it is doubtful whether he is entitled to these advantages. Nevertheless, his raw materials are avowedly pragmatic. He takes it that our thoughts and expressions have to earn their representational contents in use. Brandom's approach and mine thus start at the same point, even if they diverge later.

Since neither such approach can start with representational states—states already thought of as possessing content—they need to start with something more basic. Their raw materials need to be psychological states construed in non-representational or non-conceptual terms—behavioural (or more broadly, functional) dispositions of various kinds, or what Brandom calls 'knowings how'. Assertion can then be thought of, most primitively, as a kind of expression or product of states of this kind. It is not mere involuntary expression, but a kind of deliberate 'taking a stand'—in Brandom's terms, a 'making explicit'—of one's dispositions in the relevant respect, in a way which invites challenge by fellow speakers who have certain conflicting dispositions.[22]

What point could there be to a linguistic practice for 'taking a stand', in this sense? In my view, a plausible answer is that it serves to encourage useful modification of such commitments, in the light of conflict and subsequent resolution of conflict. I'll say a little more about this proposal in a moment, though again, of course, it requires a great deal more elaboration than I can give it here. For the present, the important task is to show that a model of this kind allows for interesting functional plurality *within* the class of assertions—a functional plurality not explained, as in the orthodox picture, merely by differences of representational content.[23]

9.
Non-representationalism and functional pluralism

To this end, imagine a theoretical enquiry which begins by thinking about the biological functions of the mental states we call beliefs, or commitments, setting

their (apparent) semantic properties explicitly to one side. How has it served our ancestors to develop the capacity to have such mental states? What role did they play in an increasingly complex psychological life? It would not be surprising to discover that there is no single answer, satisfactory for all kinds of commitments. Perhaps the function of some commitments can be understood in terms of the idea that it is advantageous to have mental states designed to covary with certain environmental conditions, but for many commitments, the story might be much more complicated. Consider causal or probabilistic commitments, for example. On anybody's story—even a realist story, if it is minimally adequate—these commitments manifest themselves as dispositions to have certain sorts of expectations in certain sorts of circumstances. Plausibly, there's an interesting story to be told about the biological value of having an internal functional organisation rich enough to contain such dispositions.

Or consider any of the other cases in which it has seemed difficult to give a straightforwardly truth-conditional account of the content of judgements of certain kinds—the kinds of cases in which noncognitivism commonly seems an attractive option, for example, and perhaps others as well: universal generalisations, indicative and subjunctive conditionals, logical claims, and so on. Suppose that in each of these cases we have some sense of what the commitments in question enable us to *do,* which we couldn't do otherwise—some sense of the role of the commitments in question in the psychological architecture of creatures like us.

And suppose that we are able to get to this point, without invoking the idea that states we are talking about have contents, in any substantial sense. (Where we mention the environment, we talk about causal covariance and the like.) So far, then, we'd have a sketch of an understanding of what these various kinds of commitments do for us, but no understanding of why they manifest themselves *as* commitments—no understanding of why we take them to be truth-valued, for example, or expressible in declarative form.

As noted earlier, one option would be to invoke semantic properties to answer this question. We would then incur at least three obligations. First, presumably, we'd need to explain the functions of the various kinds of commitment in terms of their content or semantic properties. (This is the kind of obligation that, at least in some of the cases canvassed, drives noncognitivists to deny that the commitments concerned do have genuine descriptive content.) Second, we'd need to say what these semantic properties are. And third, we'd need to show how invoking them explains the practice of declarative judgement. Perhaps these obligations can be met, but for the moment let's choose a different course. Let's think in the same explanatory spirit about the functions of the various manifestations of the declarative form. With respect to the various non-representationally characterised commitments we have described, let's think about the question: why do we give voice to *those* mental states in *that* form?

Here deflationists are allies, for they offer us some aspects of a possible answer. They offer us an account of the function of the truth predicate, for example—an

account which, as noted earlier, is compatible with the view that commitments serve many different functions. But this is at best only part of the story We need an account of the function of assertoric discourse, which explains how commitments with many different functions of their own usefully get cast as 'public' judgements, presented in language for others to use or to challenge.[24]

It isn't difficult to find a place to start. For social creatures like us, there are often advantages in aligning our commitments across our communities, and especially in copying the commitments of more experienced members of our communities. To some extent we could achieve this kind of alignment by nonlinguistic means—deducing the commitments of our fellows from their behaviour, for example—but it seems much facilitated by a linguistic means of giving voice to and discussing commitments. That's one kind of thing that assertion seems especially well-suited to *do*. Moreover—and for the moment this is the crucial point—it is something it can usefully do in application to commitments with a wide variety of functional roles of their own.

This approach thus turns on the idea that assertions are intentional expressions of psychological states which are initially construed in non-representational terms. These underlying psychological states may themselves have a variety of functional roles, within the internal psychological architecture of the speakers concerned (or better, within the complex network of relations involving both these internal states and the creatures' external environment). Crucially, then, the possibility of plurality comes from the fact that the states in question are not thought of as *primarily* representational in function. Representational states have a single basic function, namely to 'mirror' reality. Plurality, if any, must then flow from plurality of content—from differences in *what is represented.* But a non-representational starting point allows that the commitments in question have a variety of functional roles; a variety obscured in their expression, when they take on the common 'clothing' of the assertoric form.

The view thus leaves space for functional pluralism, and does so precisely in virtue of its non-representationalism. Yet in another sense it still treats assertion as a single tool—in the imagined version, a tool for aligning commitments across a speech community. Assertion thus becomes a multi-purpose tool, in much the same way as the handle turns out to be, in the cabin of Wittgenstein's locomotive. In one sense, as Wittgenstein stresses, the various different handles have very different functions. Yet they are all 'designed to be handled', as Wittgenstein puts it, and *in that sense* members of an important single category (in contrast, as I noted at the beginning, to the assorted tools—'a screw-driver, a rule, a glue-pot, glue…'—mentioned in Wittgenstein's tool-box example). Handles as a class are importantly different from pedals as a class, for example (though many jobs could be performed by either).

So here's the proposal. Thinking of the function of assertions as uniformly representational misses important functional distinctions—distinctions we can't put back in just by appealing to differences in what is represented. To get the direction of explanation right, we need to begin with pragmatic differences,

differences among the kinds of things that the assertions in question *do* (or more accurately, differences among the kinds of things that their underlying psychological states *do,* for complex creatures in a complex environment). And to get the unity right, we need to note that in their different ways, all of these tasks are tasks whose verbal expressions appropriately invoke the kind of multi-purpose tool that assertion in general *is*. To say this, we need to say what kind of tool it is —what general things we do with it that we couldn't do odierwise.[25] If the answer is in part that we expose our commitments to criticism by our fellows, then the point will be that this may be a useful thing to do, for commitments with a range of different functional roles (none of them representation as such).

It is worth noting that this kind of explanatory structure also exists elsewhere in biology. A good example—almost a mirror image of the one from Wittgenstein with which we began—is the human hand. The hand and its precursors must have been useful to our ancestors for many distinct survivalenhancing purposes (many of which could also be performed, though perhaps less well, in other ways). Plausibly, the hand's net contribution to our species' biological success turned on the cumulative advantage of these many distinct functions. In explaining the hand's evolution, then, we need to recognise that it is a multi-purpose tool.[26]

The same would be true, only perhaps more so, if we simply studied the function of hands in contemporary human life, ignoring their biological origins. We would find that our hands serve a huge range of functions, practically all of which can also be served by other means. Although there is no doubt that hands in themselves are theoretically significant objects of study, we miss their true significance if we fail to recognise that the category of manual tasks—of things done by hand— is not a unitary natural kind. If we say that the function of the hand is *manipulation,* and leave it at that, we miss something very important: we miss the underlying functional diversity. On my reading, Wittgenstein makes a closely analogous point about assertion—a point in which representation plays the role of manipulation, as the notion whose homogeneity needs to be challenged.

10.
The survival of the sense-force distinction

I claimed earlier that my version of the Wittgensteinian view preserves something analogous to the Fregean sense-force structure. The first thing it preserves, as I've just stressed, is the idea that there is something that assertions have in common. Despite the fact that it introduces a new kind of pragmatic diversity within the class of assertoric utterances—a diversity not found in the Fregean picture—it nevertheless allows that there is some significant sense in which all assertions are 'doing the same thing'. For they are all applications of the same linguistic tool—a multi-purpose tool, certainly, but a single tool for all that.[27]

Of course, an approach of the proposed kind should not restrict itself to the utterances we think of as assertoric, or declarative. Importantly, therefore, the idea that assertions are the applications of a single multi-purpose tool has the implication that other utterances are *not* applications of this tool. And when it comes to saying something more positive about non-assertoric utterances, there is an appealing strategy available—a strategy that seems to guarantee that the existing pragmatic elements of the Fregean model will survive in this more general theory

The strategy turns on the fact that the proposed account seems able simply to help itself to the work of its Fregean rivals, at least wherever a modest theory of meaning is possible—wherever the conceptual resources of the metalanguage are at least as rich as those of the object language. By her own lights, for example, a Fregean owes us an account of the use of the imperative 'Make grass green!' in terms of the truth conditions of the sentence 'Grass is green.' As speakers of a language with the required conceptual resources, we know— modestly, as it were —what those truth conditions are. That is, we know that 'Grass is green' is true if and only if grass is green. So we know enough to understand what the Fregean tells us about the use of the imperative sentences. This knowledge surely remains available to us, even if we add our pragmatic account of the origins of the thought that grass is green.

It might be objected that in virtue of its modesty, this account will end up treating too much as part of the theoretical ontology. For example, won't it give an account of use conditions for the imperative 'Make grass green!' which actually refers to colours? If so, then we are once more saddled with the problem which non-representationalism promised to avoid, of accommodating within the natural world the objects of colour talk, normative talk, causal talk, meaning talk, and all the rest. But the difficulty is merely apparent, I think. If it is to provide a useful account of what a speaker must know in order to use an utterance correctly, the theory must appeal to speakers' *judgements* about colours, not to colours themselves. It will have to say, not that the command is obeyed if grass is made green, but that one should *judge* it to be obeyed when one *judges* grass to have been made green. Judgements of the latter kind are something we already have in the first-stage theory here proposed. So as long as the project is ultimately grounded on use or judgement conditions in this way, there will be no embarrassing problem of unwelcome ontology.[28]

11.
Conclusion

I've argued that to make sense of Wittgenstein's view, we need to reject a representational conception of the core function of assertoric language. As long as this conception remains in place, the key theoretical notions of a theory of language will be sought in the semantic stable. Reference, truth, content and the like will seem the central notions we need, as linguistic theorists. And the prime

task of a theory of meaning will seem to be that of *specifying* these semantically characterised properties, for arbitrary linguistic items of appropriate kinds.

It might appear that abandoning the representationalist conception means abandoning the project of specifying semantic properties. But we need to be careful. We've seen that there are two versions of this project, distinguished by whether the semantic notions play a deflationary or non-deflationary role in the theory in question. I argued that this distinction lines up with the one that Dummett draws between modest and full-blooded versions of a Fregean theory of meaning. Only a full-blooded theory requires the representationalist presupposition, and a modest theory hence survives its rejection.

However, the very resilience of the modest theory perhaps makes it hard to see that the representationalist presupposition really is optional. After all, it seems a truism that we can say something informative about the meaning of a metalanguage sentence *s* by noting that *s* is true iff *p,* for some appropriate object language sentence *p*. It takes sensitivity to the issue of the theoretical role of the truth predicate to see that this truism isn't a vindication of representationalism at all. On the contrary, it is a truism precisely because the use it makes of truth is so 'thin'.

The resilience of the modest theory may also tend to obscure the fact that it is not the only theory left standing, if we reject representionalism. In addition to the modest theory, there remains a space for a different kind of immodest theory, employing non-representational conceptions of linguistic function. This is where we find the proposed expressivist version of Wittgenstein's linguistic pluralism.

Getting to this view from a Fregean starting point thus takes two steps. We need to distinguish modest and full-blooded versions of the content-specifying approach. And we need to see that the full-blooded approach is not the only immodest option for linguistic theory. Instead of using the semantic notions in a substantial voice, we have the option of finding a different theoretical vocabulary altogether.[29]

This summary makes the path to the proposed view seem somewhat tortuous. But it all depends on where we start. In one sense, the view should seem easy to reach, from somewhere quite familiar. This fast-track route to expressivism turns on the fact that—as I noted in §4—everybody needs an account of concept possession. On everybody's view, then, there is some more-or-less used-based fact about what it takes to employ a given concept. In the orthodox picture, the items thus characterised are thought of in representational terms, as 'modes of presentation' of worldly objects. What is distinctive about the present view is not that it does *more* but that it does *less*—it just asks about use conditions, without supplementing the resulting theory with truth conditions, semantic relations, and the like.

In one sense, the possibility of this 'contraction' of the orthodox picture ought not to seem surprising, to contemporary philosophers. Why? Because the idea that the semantic notions do not have a substantial theoretical role is itself a familiar one in contemporary philosophy, in a way in which it wasn't in

Wittgenstein's time. Unsurprising does not imply uncontroversial, of course. As long as deflationism itself is controversial, so too will be this corollary. At present, in fact, deflationism probably generates less controversy than it deserves, because its consequences are systematically underrated—because people don't see how radical a challenge it poses to the representationalist orthodoxy.

All the same, many philosophical views are both well known and controversial. In calling attention to global expressivism as a framework within which to make sense of Wittgenstein's linguistic pluralism, I don't claim to have shown that the resulting view should not be controversial. I do claim to have shown that it should be better known.[30]

Notes

1 It is worth noting that in these passages Wittgenstein offers us two significantly different metaphors. The handle metaphor compares uses of language to a single kind of tool—a handle—that does different jobs in different applications. The toolbox metaphor compares uses of language to the diverse kinds of tools to be found in a toolbox. I shall be proposing that the former metaphor is the more useful one, in the case of assertions.

2 More precisely, what I'm after is a pragmatic account of the linguistic practices which we'd ordinarily describe as application of particular concepts, or expression of partic ular thoughts. The distinction is important because I am interested in the possibility that the semantic notions—content, truth and the like—are not among the theoretical ontology of the view in question. More on this below.

3 As we'll see, this project has two importantly distinct parts to it. We want a general pragmatic account of the origins of judgement or assertion in general, and specific accounts of the origins of particular concepts.

4 A classic description of the task in these terms is that of David Lewis (1975).

5 Again, this conceptual machinery has two levels to it: roughly, the general machinery that supports assertoric judgements, and the specific machinery associated with the particular concepts in question.

6 Another way to put this: the idealist reading thus involves a use-mention confusion, because the proposed view *mentions* the terms, but doesn't *use* them.

7 Two notes. First, this view should not be confused with the view which does treat representation as a significant theoretical relation, but argues that it is less widespread in language than we tend to assume. That view is (or is close to) orthodox noncognitivism, or nonfactualism, whereas the view envisaged here is more radical. It lacks the theoretical vocabulary in which to say that some part of language is or is not, cognitive, factual or genuinely representational. (More on this contrast in §7 below.) Second, the view that reference, truth and the like are not significant theoretical notions is compatible with acknowledging that there is a legitimate non-theoretical role for these notions—e.g. a 'merely disquotational' use, in the case of truth.

8 Menand (2001:361) quotes Dewey as writing in 1905 that pragmatism will 'give the *coup de grace* to *representationalism*'. More recent pragmatist writing in the same vein includes Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Rorty 1981) and

—with some significant qualifications, as we'll see below—that of Robert Brandom. In contrast, a striking aspect of Dummett's work is that despite pragmatist elements—especially a focus on assertibility in preference to truth—it fails to provide a sympathetic bridge between the non-representationalist strand in pragmatism and the Fregean tradition.

9 I develop this theme in (Price 2003a).

10 This attitude of 'principled theoretical silence' is the key to non-representationalism, in my view, and plays a crucial role in what follows. Again, it needs to be emphasised that such an attitude is quite compatible with acceptance of ordinary, non-theoretical uses of notions such as truth and reference, so long as these can be read in a deflationary spirit.

11 As Dummett himself says, 'a Davidsonian theory of meaning is a modest theory' (1975:103). Later in the same paper Dummett withdraws this interpretation, however.

12 It might be maintained that the resulting theory amounts in the end to a more substantial theory of truth. If so, so much the worse for deflationism. However, it will still be true that the individual theorems of a McDowellian theory do not rely on the 'substance' of a thicker notion of truth, but only on the disquotational property.

13 One manifestation of this is that the modest approach works equally well for parts of language not thought to be descriptive. If we are simply *showing* the meaning of a sentence of the object language by *using* a sentence of the metalanguage, then we are doing something which can be done equally with non-indicative as well as indicative sentences. Indeed, as I noted in (Price 1988, ch. 2), McDowell's schema 's can be used to say that p', interpreted in terms of Davidson's paratactic analysis, yields 's can be used to say this: p'—which allows straightforward substitution of non-indicative sentences for 'p', without violating any grammatical rules.

14 Indeed, we've already noted that McDowell's version of a theory of meaning is blind even to the indicative—non-indicative distinction.

15 The argument may be found for example in Boghossian (1990), Wright (1992) and Humberstone (1991). For McDowell's early version of a similar point, see his (1981: 229).

16 The objectors are right to think that minimalism poses a problem for 'local' varieties of non-factualism—views which are non-factualist about some topics but not about others. Minimalism does indeed make that position unstable, but it does so because it implies global expressivism, in my view, not because it implies global factualism. See also O'Leary-Hawthorne and Price (1996) and (Price 2003a).

17 We noted above that the same is true of any use-specifying theory.

18 Immodesty without mirrors, in other words. As we've noted above, such a theory will not be a theory of meaning at all, in Dummett's sense.

19 And expressivism would be ruled out, unless it could be combined with the view that despite their expressive origins, evaluative judgements achieve a genuinely representational status.

20 I say more about these issues in (Price 2003b).

21 I expand on these ideas in (Price 2003a).

22 Good question: 'What counts as conflict?' I discuss this issue in (Price 1988).

23 Indeed, the direction of explanation is the reverse, in my view. That's what it means to say that this approach explains in pragmatic terms how there come to be particular representational contents.

24 As several writers have noticed, it is puzzling why the deflationist's 'same again' notion of truth is not applicable to non-declarative speech acts.

25 Or could only do with the help of some different tool—some different solution to the problem that assertion solves for us.

26 As Menand (2001:361) notes, Dewey too uses the hand as an analogy for what we do with words and thought. In his case, the point is to counter the representationalism of traditional epistemology, but the present use of the analogy seems nicely complementary.

27 In allowing this much unity to the class of assertions, the account might be thought insufficiently Wittgensteinian. Certainly it conflicts with the radical pluralism of some of his examples, such as that of the tool-box. However, we have seen that taken this literally, his examples are not consistent with one another. And the proposed view is certainly compatible with the pluralism of the less radical examples.

28 The same move enables the proposal to deal with the possibility of imperatives whose significance is inaccessible to us, because we lack the contingent features that the pragmatic account identifies as essential to the use conditions of the thoughts in question.

29 Dummett takes the first step, but apparently not the second. I think that in this respect, despite his advocacy of alternatives to truth as the key concept of a theory of meaning, he stays too close to the Fregean orthodoxy. (This is the source of the tension between Frege and pragmatism in Dummett's work, on which I commented in fn. 8 above.) Clearly, this is a topic on which much needs to be said. But in my view one relevant distinction, insufficiently drawn in Dummett's work, is between two conceptions of the role of an assertibility condition. As I put it in an early paper:

> [I]t is doubtful whether the view that the meaning of a sentence is determined by its assertion conditions—by *when* it may be correctly asserted —need offer this as a revised account of what it is *that* a person who makes an assertion is claiming to be the case. The alternative is to say that although the content, or sense, of an assertion is ultimately determined by its assertibility conditions, it does not *state* that these conditions hold. 'Eric is flying' states that Eric is flying, and not that it is assertible that this is so, even if what it is to state that Eric is flying is ultimately to be understood in terms of *when* this may correctly be stated.
>
> (Price 1983:163)

In other words, an account of when an assertion is typically or properly *used* need not be a specification of what it *says*. With this distinction in place, we are already close to recognising the possibilities (a) that the only kind of content specification is the modest kind, and (b) that use-based accounts are therefore, in the present terminology, immodest but not full-blooded.

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8
WITTGENSTEIN'S REMARKS ON GÖDEL'S THEOREM
Graham Priest

1.
Introduction

Wittgenstein's *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* received perhaps the most lukewarm reception of all of his posthumously published work. For example, Anderson said that it is 'hard to avoid the conclusion that Wittgenstein failed to understand clearly the problems with which workers in the foundations of mathematics have been concerned' (1964:489); Kreisel called it 'a surprisingly insignificant product of a sparkling mind' (1959:158); and even Dummett, who is a good deal more sympathetic, after reminding us wisely that these are remarks culled by editors from notebooks that were never intended for publication, averred

> many of the thoughts are expressed in a manner which the author recognized as inaccurate or obscure; some passages contradict others; some are quite inconclusive; some raise objections to ideas which Wittgenstein held or had held which are not clearly stated in the volume. (1964:491)

The remarks on Gödel's theorem, in particular, drew very negative comments. Kreisel thought that Wittgenstein's 'arguments are wild' (1959:153); Anderson said that they 'indicate that Wittgenstein misunderstood both the content of and the motivation for…Gödel's theorem' (1964:485); and here is Dummett again: 'other passages again, particularly those on consistency and Gödel's theorem, are of poor quality or contain definite errors' (ibid.).[1] The aim of this paper is to revisit the issue, some half a century on, to see whether these harsh words are justified.

Wittgenstein's remarks on Gödel's (first incompleteness) theorem are contained almost entirely within an appendix of some twenty remarks to Part I of the *Remarks.* The editors tell us (1978:30) that Part I is based on a typescript that Wittgenstein had intended at one time as a second part of what was to be the *Philosophical Investigations,* but that the text in the appendix was separated from

the main body of the material. The appendix is not self-contained, since it alludes to other themes of the *Remarks,* and indeed of the *Investigations,* but its isolation means that it can be considered in a relatively self-standing way. Because of Wittgenstein's writing style in this period, one always has to work hard to determine what is going on. The appendix in question poses this problem *in extremis.* Even seasoned Wittgenstein-interpreters have problems decoding the gnomic utterances. The points of some of the individual paragraphs are difficult to discern; the connections between many of them even more so. Sometimes Wittgenstein is arguing with his imagined interlocutor; sometimes he seems to be wrestling with himself. Yet if we are to give Wittgenstein a fair hearing on the matter, it is essential to understand what, exactly, his view is. So I intend to proceed via a close reading of, and textual commentary on, the passage in question—something that, as far as I know, no one has yet attempted. To this I now turn.

2.
The approach to the issue

Wittgenstein's reflections on Gödel's theorem start at some apparent distance from the matter, by observing that not everything written as an indicative sentence has propositional content.[2]

> 1 It is easy to think of a language in which there is not a form for questions, or commands, but question and command are expressed in the form of statements, e.g. in forms corresponding to our: 'I should like to know if…' and 'My wish is that…'
>
> No one would say of a question (e.g. whether it is raining outside) that it was true or false. Of course it is English to say so of such a sentence as 'I want to know whether…' But suppose this form were always used instead of the question?—

He then continues:

> 2 The great majority of sentences that we speak, write and read are statement sentences.
>
> And—you say—these sentences are true or false. Or, as I might also say, the game of truth-functions is played with them. For assertion is not something that gets added to the proposition, but an essential feature of the game we play with it. Comparable, say, to the characteristic of chess by which there is winning and losing in it, the winner being the one who takes the other's king. Of course, there could be a game in a certain sense very near akin to chess, consisting in making the chess moves, but without there being any winning or losing in it; or with different conditions of winning.

3 Imagine it were said: A command consists of a proposal ('assumption') and the commanding of the thing proposed.

4 Might we not do arithmetic without ever having the idea of uttering arithmetical *propositions,* and without ever having been struck by the similarity between a multiplication and a proposition?

   Should we not shake our heads, though, when someone shewed us a multiplication done wrong, as we do when someone tells us it is raining, if it is not raining?—Yes; and here is a point of connexion. But we also make gestures to stop our dog, e.g. when he behaves as we do not wish.

   We are used to saying '2 times 2 is 4', and the verb 'is' makes this into a proposition, and apparently establishes a close kinship with everything we call a 'proposition'. Whereas it is a matter only of a very superficial relationship.

Though these remarks raise a number of different matters, let us pass them over. The important thing for now is that by the time we get to remark 4, it is clear that Wittgenstein is considering the idea that arithmetic equations, though they may be written as indicative sentences, like sentences such as 'I want to know whether it is raining', do not really have propositional content. This is a theme in Wittgenstein that goes all the way back to the *Tractatus.* (See, e.g., *Tractatus* 4. 46ff., 6.2ff.) There, statements of logic and mathematics are argued to be *unsinnig,* to carry no information content at all. Though Wittgenstein has long since given up the views of the *Tractatus* by this point, he is still playing with the thought that statements of mathematics and logic have no content. This is the context which triggers his ruminations on Gödel's theorem. In case there is any doubt at all about this matter, he returns explicitly to the subject in his final remark (20): 'Here one needs to remember that the propositions of logic are so constructed as to have *no* application as *information* in practice. So it could very well be said that they were not *propositions* at all…'[3]

3.
The posing of the problem and an initial solution

Against this background, the next remark introduces the subject of Gödel's theorem.

5 Are there true propositions in Russell's system, which cannot be proved in his system?—What is called a true proposition in Russell's system, then?

It would seem that the theorem—or at least, one way that it is often phrased— is being raised as an objection to the view of mathematics in question. If it is right, mathematical statements, or at least some of them, must have propositional

content, indeed true content. But what, asks Wittgenstein, does truth mean in this context? The next paragraph answers the question.

> 6 For what does a proposition's *'being true'* mean? *'p' is true=p.* (That is the answer.)
>
> So we want to ask something like: under what circumstances do we assert a proposition? Or: how is the assertion of the proposition used in the language-game? And the 'assertion of the proposition' is here contrasted with the utterance of the sentence e.g. as practice in elocution, —or as *part of* another proposition, and so on.
>
> If, then, we ask in this sense: 'Under what circumstances is a proposition asserted in Russell's game?' the answer is: at the end of one of his proofs, or as a 'fundamental law' (Pp). There is no other way in this system of employing asserted propositions in Russell's symbolism.

Wittgenstein invokes a redundancy theory of truth. To say that *p* is true is to say no more and no less than *p* itself. The position is familiar from elsewhere in the later writings (e.g., *Philosophical Investigations,* remark 136). It is clearly a substantial account of truth, but it is not, of course, the model-theoretic account of truth that would normally be invoked by modern logicians in a discussion of Gödel's theorem. Let us not try to adjudicate the point here, but just note it.

Given a redundancy account of truth, the pertinent question then becomes under what conditions we are prepared to assert *p.* Wittgenstein is obviously not supposing that asserting a sentence means that it has a propositional content. He contrasts asserting, instead, with other kinds of utterance, e.g. elocutory Then there emerges another familiar Wittgensteinian theme. Assertion is relative to a language game. That is, when we employ sentences expressed in the language of *Principia,* there are rules that determine when a sentence may or not be asserted. In particular, thinks Wittgenstein, such a sentence may be asserted when it occurs at the last line of a *Principia* proof (maybe a one-line proof). In other words, to be a true *Principia* sentence is just to be provable in the *Principia* axiom system. Whatever one thinks about a redundancy theory of truth, and of the theory of language games, this fact at least gives someone who does not subscribe to these views a way of understanding Wittgenstein in their own terms. When they hear Wittgenstein talk of a truth of *Principia,* they can simply hear him as meaning 'provable in the *Principia* axiom system'. Gödel's theorem of course applies to other languages and other axiom systems. Doubtless, Wittgenstein was aware of this fact. Doubtless, also, he would have taken his remarks to apply equally to any similar system. He treats *Principia* simply as an example. So shall I.

It should be noted that Wittgenstein concedes that the sentences of *Principia* are true/false in an appropriate sense. But the sense is only that of being generated by certain rules. This is quite compatible with their having no propositional or information content, as Wittgenstein is concerned to defend. But

Wittgenstein's identification of truth and provability itself seems to be controverted by Gödel's theorem, as the interlocutor is quick to point out.

> 7 'But may there not be true propositions which are written in this symbolism, but are not provable in Russell's system?'—'True propositions', hence propositions which are true in *another system,* i.e., can rightly be asserted in another game. Certainly; why should there not be such propositions; or rather: why should not propositions—of physics, e.g. —be written in Russell's symbolism? The question is quite analogous to: Can there be true propositions in the language of Euclid, which are not provable in his system, but are also true?—Why, there are even propositions which are provable in Euclid's system, but are *false* in another system. May not triangles be—in another system— similar (*very* similar) which do not have equal angles?—'But that's just a joke! For in that case they are not "similar" to one another in the same sense'—Of course not; and a proposition which cannot be proved in Russell's system is 'true' or 'false' in a different sense from a proposition of *Principia Mathematica.*

Wittgenstein, fortified by his understanding of truth, makes the obvious reply. Of course there can be sentences in the language of *Principia* that are not provable in the *Principia* axiom system, but that are provable in another axiom system. This reply would be comfortable to any modern logician. The Gödel undecidable sentence is not provable in the theory itself, but is provable (or can be proved to be true) in a metalanguage/metatheory.

Wittgenstein points out, correctly, that this is similar, e.g., to certain sentences being provable in Euclidean geometry but not some other geometry. The interlocutor takes this to be a joke: meanings change in the geometric case. Again, Wittgenstein replies correctly: meaning changes in this case too. This time it is 'provable' that is ambiguous; the undecidable sentence is not provable in the *Principia* axiom system, but it is provable in a metatheory.

But maybe this does not get to the heart of the worry. Wittgenstein continues to muse:

> 8 I imagine someone asking my advice; he says: 'I have constructed a proposition (I will use *'P'* to designate it) in Russell's symbolism, and by means of certain definitions and transformations it can be so interpreted that it says: 'P is not provable in Russell's system'. Must I not say that this proposition on the one hand is true, and on the other hand is unprovable? For suppose it were false; then it is true that it is provable. And that surely cannot be! And if it is proved, then it is proved that it is not provable. Thus, it can only be true but unprovable.'

The key thought here is that the undecidable sentence, *P*, can be interpreted so as to *mean* that it is not provable in *Principia.* Thus:

(I) P iff P is not provable in *Principia*.[4]

Note this equivalence. It is between a sentence of the *Principia* language and a sentence of the metalanguage. And since these come from different 'language games', it is not at all obvious—from Wittgenstein's perspective—that the two sentences in question mean the same thing. The tenability of the equivalence—and indeed, exactly what its two sides mean—will be cruces of the subsequent discussion.

Given (I) we may reason as follows:

(A) If P is false, i.e. its negation is true, then by redundancy account of truth, it is provable. By the soundness of *Principia,* this is impossible; so it is true.
(B) If P is proved, then, again by the soundness of *Principia,* it is true, and hence P is not provable; so it is not provable.

We have arguments for both the truth of P and its unprovability. This directly challenges Wittgenstein's identification of truth with provability, and so raises the spectre that the sentence has a content which is true in some more substantive sense—in which case he may have to concede that it has some real content after all; or, and perhaps worse, if he really does want to insist on the identification of truth with provability, we have a flat contradiction. Note that the remark fails to mention the soundness of *Principia.* But note, also, that if one does identify 'true in *Principia*' with 'provable in *Principia*', as Wittgenstein wants to, both soundness and its converse are true by definition.

In reply, Wittgenstein insists that we must be clear on the ambiguity that he has diagnosed in the notion of proof, i.e. truth. He continues:

> Just as we ask : '"provable" in what system?', so we must ask: '"true" in what system?' 'True in Russell's system' means, as was said: proved in Russell's system; and 'false in Russell's system' means the opposite has been proved in Russell's system. —Now what does your 'suppose it is false' mean? *In the Russell sense* it means 'suppose the opposite is proved in Russell's system'; *if that is your assumption,* you will now presumably give up the interpretation that it is unprovable. And by 'this interpretation' I understand the translation into the English sentence. —If you assume that the proposition is provable in Russell's system, that means that it is true *in the Russell sense,* and the interpretation 'P is not provable' again has to be given up. If you assume that the proposition is true in the Russell sense, *the same* thing follows. Further: if the proposition is supposed to be false in some other than Russell's sense, then it does not contradict this for it to be proved in Russell's system. (What is called 'losing' in chess may constitute winning in another game.)

Suppose that 'false' means that its negation is provable in *Principia.* Then, assuming (I), the reasoning (A) shows that P is true, i.e., provable in *Principia.*

But in that case, we ought to give up the interpretation (I). After all, the left-hand side would be true, and the right-hand side false. Similarly, if 'true'/'provable' means 'provable in *Principia*', (B) shows that *P* is not true/provable. Again, this fact gives us ground to reject (I). If, on the other hand, 'false' means something else—then the fact that something is false does not conflict with its being provable in *Principia*.

The next remark continues:

> 9 For what does it mean to say that *P* and '*P* is unprovable' are the same proposition? It means that these two English sentences have a single expression in such-and-such a notation.

The remark would appear to justify glossing the claim about *P* being interpretable as 'P is unprovable' simply as meaning that we can use the latter sentence anywhere we use the former, and vice versa. There is a small slip here. Wittgenstein seems to have forgotten that *P* is not a sentence of English, but of *Principiaese*. But the upshot of the thought seems unobjectionable enough.

At any rate, the thrust of Wittgenstein's thought on the matter is clear: contradiction threatens to arise only if one endorses both a certain notion of truth/provability and the equivalence (I) for this notion. But this equivalence might well be legitimately resistible for such a notion. Note that the contemporary orthodoxy would be to endorse (I), or something like it. Given that the proof predicate, *B(x,y),* really represents provability, *P*—that is, ¬*xB(x,n),* whose code is n, with numeral n—is true *in the standard* model iff *P* is not provable. Wittgenstein, however, is operating with a different notion of truth, and so this argument for (I) is not open to him.

4.
Countenancing inconsistency

But now Wittgenstein continues to muse:

> 10 'But surely *P* cannot be provable, for, supposing it were proved, then the proposition that it is not provable would be proved.' But if this were now proved, or if I believed—perhaps through an error—that I had proved it, why should I not let the proof stand and say I must withdraw my interpretation *'unprovable'?*

He reiterates argument (B) to the effect that *P* is not provable, and then asks the crucial question. Suppose that (B) constitutes a proof, or at any rate, that I believe that it does, *why* should I not let the proof *and* the interpretation (I) stand?[5] In this case, I would have proved *P* in *Principia,* but also proved that it is not provable in *Principia.* We have a contradiction. But so what?[6]

11 Let us suppose I prove the unprovability (in Russell's system) of *P*; then by this proof I have proved *P*. Now if this proof were one in Russell's system—I should in that case have proved at once that it belonged and did not belong to Russell's system. —That is what comes of making up such sentences. —But there is a contradiction here!— Well, then there is a contradiction here. Does it do any harm here?

12 Is there any harm in the contradiction that arises when someone says: 'I am lying. —So I am not lying. —So I am lying. —etc.'? I mean: does it make our language less usable if in this case, according to the ordinary rules, a proposition yields its contradictory, and vice versa?— the proposition *itself is* unusable, and these inferences equally; but why should they not be made?— It is a profitless performance!— It is a language-game with some similarity to the game of thumb-catching.

13 Such a contradiction is of interest only because it has tormented people, and because this shews both how tormenting problems can grow out of language, and what kind of things can torment us.

It is perhaps these remarks which have drawn the ire of commentators more than any others. Wittgenstein countenances the possibility that it has been shown that *P* both is and is not provable in *Principia*—and even that this might be proved in *Principia* itself; and he seems happy with this idea. This is guaranteed to touch a raw nerve in most, the superstitious dread of contradictions, as Wittgenstein himself puts it in remark 17. Wittgenstein's apparent preparedness to accept contradictions is not isolated. At other places in the *Remarks* and elsewhere, Wittgenstein dallies with contradiction.[7] He claims that contradictions of the kind we have here are useless, that drawing them is pointless, but that since they do not have any impact on the rest of our language, they do no harm. If he had enforced the doctrine that meaning is use, he might have gone on to claim that contradictions of this kind are meaningless. And indeed, at certain times, he was sympathetic to this view.[8] But even in the *Investigations,* he never held that meaning was simply to be equated with use. (See, e.g., remark 43.)

Wittgenstein also observes the similarity between the contradiction in question and contradictions of the liar variety. Indeed, the paradox in question can well be seen as a paradox of self-reference of the same kind. Consider the sentence *A*, of the form '<*A*> is not provable'—this sentence is not provable— angle brackets represent some naming device. Here, provability is to be understood in the naive sense of being demonstrated by some argument or other. If *A* is provable, then, since what is provable is true, *A* is true; so <*A*> is not provable. Hence, <*A*> is not provable. But we have just proved this; that is, <*A*> is provable. This is a version of the 'Knower paradox'. Sometimes it is called 'Gödel's paradox'.[9] In fact, if one identifies truth with provability, as does Wittgenstein, Gödel's paradox and the liar collapse into each other.

At any rate, how might one object to Wittgenstein's preparedness to accept contradiction? There are several ways. First, of course, one might object that Wittgenstein's view cannot be correct since such a contradiction flies in the face of the Law of Non-Contradiction: contradictions cannot be true. Wittgenstein would doubtlessly be unimpressed by this logical shibboleth—and given his other views, rightly so. To be true in a language game is simply to be produced by correctly following the rules of that game. And if there is a game that correctly generates sentences of the form A and $\neg A$, so be it. Contradictions are true in that language game. Maybe the language game that we play in English about proof in *Principia* is like that.

Perhaps more pointedly, one might object that even if the contradiction is true, it is hardly harmless as Wittgenstein claims. It ruins the language game altogether. For from it, by well-known rules of the game, we can derive every sentence: contradictions entail everything. It is unlikely that Wittgenstein would have been much impressed by this either. He would doubtless point out that, as a matter of fact, we do not infer everything from a liar-type contradiction. An objector might say that this is beside the point: whether we do or not, the rules of the game allow us to do so, so the game is useless. But here, again, Wittgenstein would probably object. What are the rules of the game that govern inference about proof in *Principia?* The objector is just *assuming* that these are the rules of something like classical logic, in which contradictions entail everything. Doubtless, such a point would not have impressed had it been made at the time of the publication of the *Remarks*. Most people then could see little alternative to the rules of 'classical logic'—or, at least, if there were other logics, such as intuitionist logic, they, too, were explosive.

History has come to Wittgenstein's aid here, though. We now know that there are many paraconsistent logics, logics in which contradictions do not imply everything. Indeed, one of the main motivations for the development of such logics was precisely the thought that the correct logic for reasoning about paradoxes of self-reference is a paraconsistent logic.[10] Wittgenstein, of course, knew nothing of such future developments.[11] But in a remark of great prescience (made in 1930), he foresaw their development: 'Indeed, even at this stage, I predict a time when there will be mathematical investigations of calculi containing contradictions, and people will actually be proud of having emancipated themselves from consistency.'[12]

Thus, he was not at all unsympathetic to the idea of paraconsistent logic; and the objection that the contradiction in question ruins the language, with its rules, since these deliver everything, is adequately met if the underlying logic of the game is paraconsistent. (One might, of course, argue that this particular contradiction is objectionable for some other reason. But that would be a different matter.)

This is not an end of the matter, however; and Wittgenstein is not so quickly off the hook. He is not only considering the possibility that we might prove a contradiction when we reason about what is provable in *Principia*. He is also

considering the possibility that the contradiction might be provable in *Principia* itself. Argument (B) is not, or need not be, an argument in *Principia*. It is simply an argument in 'the metalinguistic language game'. However, in remark 11 Wittgenstein explicitly countenances the possibility that this proof, or one like it, can be run in *Principia* itself ('Now if this proof were one in Russell's system…') —though nothing that has gone before seems to force this suggestion on him. (There is perhaps another small slip here. He takes a proof of P and ¬*P* within *Principia* to show that *P* is both provable in *Principia* and is not. This does not follow—at least, not without (I) and its contrapositive.)

In this case Wittgenstein's preparedness to accept contradiction is surely mistaken. For, quite explicitly, the rules of inference of *Principia are* those of classical logic. So a contradiction in the system does do great damage. It ensures that everything is 'true' in *Principia.* Certainly, this does not render the system and its contradictions entirely useless: we could still use it to practice calligraphy, or to illustrate what a trivial system is like, etc. But it is useless should we wish to apply it to tell us anything interesting about numbers, in the way that it is normally taken to be applicable.

Even here, however, one may salvage something of importance. *Principia* is just an example of the sort of thing that Wittgenstein is talking about. And it is true that similar considerations apply to any formal system of arithmetic based on an explosive logic. But formal systems of arithmetic can be based on a paraconsistent logic. Such systems are, in fact, now well known—even inconsistent systems of number theory. Such systems may contain all of standard number theory, and even be complete, in the sense that every sentence or its negation (or both) is derivable.[13]

For such systems, not only is it clear, as it is not in the case of our informal metatheoretic reasoning in English about provability, that the logic is paraconsistent; it is also demonstrable that the contradictions are quarantined to within certain areas, and do not destroy the general applicability of the system. Finally, there are systems of this kind where the 'Gödel undecidable sentence' ¬xB(x,n), is such that both it and its negation are provable—just as Wittgenstein envisages here. Thus, such arithmetics can formally encode Gödel's paradox (interpreting provability as provability within the system).[14] Even though Wittgenstein is wrong about *Principia,* then, his view may be quite right when applied to certain paraconsistent formal arithmetics.

Maybe, then, we do not have to give up the equivalence (I). We may have to live with the consequence that a contradiction is true, but perhaps we can do that. The upshot is that there are sentences that are true and false, provable and having a provable negation—whether or not we are talking of truth/provability within a formal system game or within our metatheoretic game. Not even this threatens Wittgenstein's original claim that arithmetic sentences do not express propositions.

5.
The question of meaning

Perhaps we can, then, accept a contradiction. But this hardly finishes matters. If we have both proved *P* and proved that *P* is unprovable, what on earth does the proof of unprovability *mean?* Wittgenstein essays an obvious possibility.

> 14 A proof of unprovability is as it were a geometrical proof; a proof concerning the geometry of proofs. Quite analogous e.g. to a proof that such-and-such a construction is impossible with ruler and compass. Now such a proof contains an element of prediction, a physical element. For in consequence of such a proof we may say to a man: 'Don't exert yourself to find a construction (of the trisection of an angle, say)—it can be proved that it can't be done'. That is to say: it is essential that the proof of unprovability should be capable of being applied in this way. It must —we might say—be *a forcible reason* for giving up the search for a proof (i.e. for a construction of such-and-such a kind).
>   A contradiction is unusable as such a prediction.

One might think of an unprovability proof as like a proof that some particular geometric task cannot be performed by ruler and compass. It is, in fact, quite natural to think of it in this way. The geometric proof shows that a certain shape cannot be produced by certain procedures; and an unprovability result might be taken as an indication that a certain syntactic geometric shape cannot be produced by certain procedures. The geometric proof obviously contains an empirical element. We know that no one is, as a matter of fact, going to produce this shape with those procedures, no matter how hard they try. Can one think of the content of the unprovability result in the same way: no one is ever going to produce the shape of *P* if they stick to the rules of the game? No. Assuming (I), the proof of unprovability is itself a proof of *P*. And if we have a proof of *P,* we clearly can't interpret the statement of unprovability in that way! The contradictory nature of what has been proved evacuates it of any empirical content of this kind —or as Wittgenstein has already put it in remark 12, paradoxical sentences are useless.

But if the statement of unprovability is not to be interpreted in this way, what else could it mean? Wittgenstein tries another, and more general, tack.

> 15 Whether something is rightly called the proposition '*X* is unprovable' depends on how we prove this proposition. The proof alone shows what counts as the criterion of unprovability. The proof is part of the system of operations, of the game, in which the proposition is used, and shews us its 'sense'.

Thus the question is whether the 'proof of the unprovability of P' is here a forcible reason for the assumption that a proof of *P* will not be found.

> 16 The proposition 'P is unprovable' has a different sense afterwards— from before it was proved.
>   If it is proved, then it is the terminal pattern in the proof of unprovability.
> —If it is unproved, then *what* is to count as a criterion of its truth is not yet *clear,* and—we can say—its sense is still veiled.

To put it simply—always a dangerous and potentially misleading thing when dealing with Wittgenstein—the meaning of a mathematical theorem is determined by its proof. The proof gives us, as it were, a criterion for asserting it. If we have not yet found a proof, we have no grounds for asserting it; and in a sense don't know what it means. And if we find a new proof, we have a new criterion for asserting it, and so, in a sense, its meaning has changed. If this is right, to find out what it means to say that *P* is unprovable in this context, we have to look at the proof of this sentence. The proof that *P* is unprovable will give us the sense of this conclusion—and, presumably, this will not be to the effect that a construction of certain kind cannot be found.

Wittgenstein does not attempt to defend his views concerning the connection between meaning and proof here, but isolated remarks on the connection are scattered throughout the *Remarks* (see, e.g., pp. 162, 367). Together, they constitute one of its more difficult and problematic themes. Let me tease apart some of its aspects.

To determine the sense of a proposition, we must look to its proof. But as remark 15 reminds us, the proof is not to be removed from the whole network of operations that constitute the notion of proof. Hence, it might be more accurate to say that the meaning of a sentence is constituted by its proof conditions, which state such systematic connections. In such a form, the view is familiar enough. For example, as is well known, this is exactly the account of meaning given by intuitionists. Of course, a classical logician may object to this. The sense of a sentence is given by its truth conditions, not its proof conditions. But whatever turns on this disagreement, we may bypass it here. For Wittgenstein has identified truth (in a game) with proof (in that game). Given this assumption, we may therefore talk of proof conditions and truth conditions indifferently And both classical and intuitionist logicians may agree that the meaning of a sentence is given by its proof/truth conditions.

This is as far as remark 15 takes us. Unfortunately, Wittgenstein goes further in remark 16. It is not just the *possible* proofs (the proof conditions) that determine the meaning of a sentence, but the proofs that are actually in our hands. This thesis has an air of paradox about it. If we don't have a grasp of what a sentence means till we have a proof of it, how could we possibly recognize one when we see it? And if the existence of a new proof changes the meaning of a sentence, why doesn't this show that the old proofs no longer work? After all,

they proved the sentence with its old meaning. And the order in which we find the proofs is, presumably, of no logico-semantic significance, so if the new proof undercuts the old proofs, presumably the old proofs undercut the new one. There is a tangle of issue here, and this is not the place to discuss them. In the end, I think, Wittgenstein's position is untenable. Fortunately, then, we can largely bypass the issue. The remarks of Wittgenstein that follow make reference to this stronger view only once, and then not in an essential way. Nor is this an accident. In the case at hand, we actually have the proof of the unprovability of P, so we can examine the sense that this delivers to its result. As far as the present discussion goes, we can simply assume that the sense of a sentence is given by its proof (=truth) conditions, and leave Wittgenstein's more extreme view for others to worry about.

Before we move on, one further comment concerning Wittgenstein's extreme verificationism is required. This plausibly entails a certain voluntarism about proof. Suppose that we are about to apply a rule of inference. For the sake of illustration, suppose that we have established A and A $B,$ and are about to apply *modus ponens.* This would allow us to infer $B;$ but doing so, by giving us a new proof of $B,$ would change its meaning; and there is no reason to suppose that A and A $B,$ with their present meanings, entail *that.* Of course, once we have applied *modus ponens,* B will have changed its meaning. And with the new meaning of $B,$ A and A B will entail *that.* But we now have a choice. We can decide to apply *modus ponens,* and accept the consequences; or we can decide not to, and hence take the application of the rule to be invalid. Thus, a putative proof presents us with a *decision* as to whether or not to accept it. Wittgenstein certainly seems to endorse such voluntarism at some places (e.g. *Remarks:* 163, 268). But it is clear that it sits ill with the phenomenology of proof. Indeed, the conclusion seems to be in some tension with the *Investigations* account of rule-following. Applying *modus ponens* (or a similar such rule) is simply something that, in the last instance, one does blindly If I choose not to apply it, then my rule-following peers will simply say that I have not understood. It is, indeed, natural to suppose that Wittgenstein's verificationism, with its attendant voluntarism, is a feature of Wittgenstein's later middle-period thought that was jettisoned by the time of the mature *Investigations.*[15] Again, then, it would be wise not to let too much of substance hang on it.

6.
Remark 17

Having spelled out the connection between meaning and proof, Wittgenstein, as one would expect, next applies the idea to the proofs of P and its unprovability. The next remark poses one of the more difficult exegetical challenges of the whole passage. I shall therefore break the commentary up into parts. The remark starts as follows:

17 Now, how am I to take *P* as having been proved? By a proof of unprovability? Or in some other way? Suppose it is by a proof of unprovability. Now, in order to see *what* has been proved, look at the proof. Perhaps it has here been proved that such-and-such forms of proof do not lead to *P*. —Or, suppose *P* has been proved in a direct way —as I should like to put it—and so in that case there follows the proposition '*P* is unprovable', and it must now come out how this interpretation of the symbols collides with the fact of the proof, and why it has to be given up here.

Wittgenstein draws a distinction between 'proving *P* by a proof of unprovability' and proving it directly. The distinction is not entirely clear, but I take it that this is essentially the distinction between proving that *P* is not provable in the metalanguage and proving *P* in the object language. In the first case, Wittgenstein merely reminds us again to look to the proof to see the sense of its conclusion; he suggests that the sense might be to the effect that such and such forms of proof do not lead to *P*. Presumably, this is like the case of a proof that some construction cannot be effected with ruler and compass. Wittgenstein does not tell us explicitly what conclusions should be drawn from this, but he has already indicated in remark 8 that we should expect to have to give up (I). If (I) holds, then *P* itself would have to mean that there is no proof of it. But if it really is, or were, 'true in Russell's system', *P* *would* be provable in *Principia;* in which case, it couldn't mean that. To see what it does mean, we would have to look to the *Principia* proof of *P*—if any. At any rate, it would seem that the interpretation (I) can be maintained only by equivocation. Without such equivocation, it has to be given up, in which case, as we have seen, no contradiction threatens.[16]

The other possibility is that *P* is proved within *Principia* itself. This demonstrates that such a proof can be effected. Whatever *P* means, then, it is presumably not something to the effect that there is no such proof. Again, we have to look at the *Principia* proof to establish what, exactly, the result means. But again, as Wittgenstein explicitly says this time, it looks as though we will want to reject the interpretation (I), so no contradiction arises.

The passage goes on to consider the possibility that ¬*P*, i.e. on the assumption (I) (or at any rate its contrapositive), that *P* is provable, is proved. In what does such a proof consist?

Suppose however that *not-P* is proved. Proved *how?* Say P's being proved directly—for from that follows that it is provable, and hence not-*P*. What am I to say now, '*P*' or 'not-*P*'? Why not both? If someone asks me 'Which is the case, P, or not-P?' then I reply: *P* stands at the end of a Russellian proof, so you write *P* in the Russellian system; on the other hand, however, it is then provable and this is expressed by not-*P*, but this proposition does not stand at the end of a Russellian proof, and so does not

belong to the Russellian system. —When the interpretation '*P* is unprovable' was given to *P,* this proof of *P* was not known, and so one cannot say that *P* says: *this* proof does not exist. —Once the proof has been constructed, this has created a *new situation*: and now we have to decide whether we will call *this* a proof (a *further* proof), or whether we will still call *this* the statement of unprovability

Suppose that ¬*P*, i.e. that *P* is provable, is demonstrated by producing a *Principia* proof of *P*. In fact, we have just considered that possibility. Its upshot, as we saw, was that *P* and 'P is not provable' have to be taken to have different senses. We can then say both *P* and ¬*P*: *P* is true in the sense that it occurs at the end of a *Principia* proof. But *P* is provable (¬*P*)*,* since this is proved in the metalanguage. If there is to be no equivocation, (I) must be given up, and consistency is maintained.

Actually, this is not quite what Wittgenstein says. This is the one place where his radical views of the nature of proof kick in. He claims that when (I) was endorsed, a *Principia* proof of *P* was not known. (Assuming *Principia* to be consistent, there is none.) Hence, if such a proof were to turn up, *P* cannot mean that *that* proof does not exist. (This seems implausible. If I claim that all swans are white, and an Australian swan turns up, surely it was part of my claim that that swan was white. The claim is just false.) Moreover, presented with a putative such a proof, we have a choice: we can either accept it as *bonafide*, and interpret the metatheoretic statement as not denying its existence, or insist that it does deny its existence, and reject the putative *Principia* proof. This move depends on Wittgenstein's voluntarism, and I doubt that in the end one can make much sense of it. But no matter; the upshot of this way of looking at things is the same as that which I have just described. If *P* were to have a *Principia* proof, then the interpretation (I) can be maintained only by giving the right-hand side a different meaning. Inconsistency, then, does not arise.

What of the other possibility, that ¬*P* is proved directly?

Suppose not-P is directly proved; it is therefore proved that *P* can be directly proved! So this is once more a question of interpretation— unless we now also have a direct proof of *P.* If it were like that, well, that is how it would be.

(The superstitious dread and veneration by mathematicians in face of contradiction.)

The situation is similar to the previous one. Suppose that we were to have a *Principia* proof of ¬P. Assuming (I) (or its contrapositive) we can prove that *P* is provable. So if *P* is not directly provable, then, whatever '*P* is provable' means it cannot be taken to assert the existence of such a proof. (I) can therefore be endorsed only by giving the right-hand side a different meaning. Of course, if one can directly prove *P* as well, then this is no longer the case. But in that case, we would be able to prove both *P* and ¬*P* in *Principia,* and the system would be inconsistent. Both Wittgenstein and I have already discussed the situation that would then arise.

What is the upshot of all this? Wittgenstein does not tell us which of these situations we are in. He simply covers all bases, including the possibility that *Principia* is inconsistent. In most of the situations the upshot of his reasoning is that one has to reject (I), or, at least, reinterpret one of its sides. If one does this, then, as he already pointed out in remark 8, no contradiction arises. If *Principia* is inconsistent, however, the situation is different. We can maintain (I). We just live with the contradiction. As I already observed in the commentary on remarks 11–13, Wittgenstein's optimism is, strictly, unjustified here.[17] But as regards the inconsistent arithmetics, in which both the Gödel sentence and its negation are provable, he may well be right.

In any case, and whether we reject (I) or accept the contradiction, to return to Wittgenstein's original concern with the matter. the gap between truth (in *Principia*) and provability (in *Principia*) fails to open up, and so the results of Gödel's theorem do not pose an objection to Wittgenstein's identification of the two, or to his original thought that sentences of arithmetic do not express propositions.[18]

7.
Final remarks

Most of the philosophical action is now over. The final few remarks mop up. The interlocutor has one last shot.

> 18 'But suppose, now, that the proposition *were false*—and hence provable?'—Why do you call it 'false'? Because you can see a proof? — Or for other reasons? For in that case it doesn't matter. For one can quite well call the Law of Contradiction false, on the grounds that we very often make good sense by answering a question 'Yes and no'. And the same for the proposition '~~p=p' because we employ double negation as a *strengthening* of the negation and not merely as its cancellation.

'Okay,' says the interlocutor, 'I can't say that P is true and not provable; but I can't say it's false either. For if it's false, it must be provable, and so not true.' Wittgenstein merely has to remind that just as 'true' and 'provable' are ambiguous, so is 'false'. To say that it is false could mean that there is a *Principia* proof of its negation. Well, we have already dealt with that in the previous remark. If it means something else, then the claim may have a sense that is quite compatible with its being provable in *Principia.* In that case, though 'P is false and provable' may look like a contradiction it isn't really, since we have a change of sense in the conjuncts. After all, we often make sense of answers like 'yes and no': 'yes' in one sense and 'no' in another. Similarly, if doubling a negation just means strengthening it, then it is clear that ~~p may not mean the same as p.

Wittgenstein then goes on to the attack.

19 You say: '…, so *P* is true and unprovable'. That presumably means: 'Therefore *P*'. This is all right with me—but for what purpose do you write down this 'assertion'? (It is as if someone had extracted from certain principles about natural forms and architectural style the idea that on Mount Everest, where no one can live, there belonged a châlet in the Baroque style. And how could you make the truth of the assertion plausible to me, since you can make no use of it except to do these bits of legerdemain?[19]

Whatever one means when one correctly expresses the result of Gödel's theorem by saying that a sentence is true but unprovable, that's fine, as we have seen. But why bother in the first place? Until you have shown some independent use for the assertion, you haven't succeeded in saying anything much. As remark 12 noted, the claim seems quite useless. And if the claim has no content, it cannot pose a challenge to Wittgenstein's original view about the nature of mathematical sentences.

Finally, Wittgenstein returns to the original issue explicitly, bringing the last thought to bear on it.

20 Here one needs to remember that the propositions of logic are so constructed as to have *no* application as *information* in practice. So it could very well be said that they were not *propositions* at all; and one's writing them down at all stands in need of justification. Now if we append to these 'propositions' a further sentence-like structure of another kind, then we are all the more in the dark about what kind of application this system of sign-combinations is supposed to have; for the mere *ring of a sentence* is not enough to give these connexions of signs any meaning.

Mathematical sentences do not have propositional content: they contain no information. And if the sentence *P* has no content, this would appear to go for '*P* and P is not provable' in spades.

8.
Conclusions

Let me now draw the threads of the discussion together and point out its most significant features. The context for Wittgenstein's discussion of Gödel's theorem is the thought that sentences of mathematics have no propositional content. Wittgenstein is concerned to defend the idea that this might be the case. Gödel's result is introduced as an objection to this view—and especially, as it turns out, to Wittgenstein's identification of truth with provability. By the end of the remarks, the objection has been disposed of, and the view still stands.

Wittgenstein discusses Gödel's result against two background assumptions. The first is a redundancy theory of truth, and the second is the theory of language

games. The second of these is standard Wittgensteinian fare. The first is less so, but views of this kind now have greater popularity than they did when Wittgenstein wrote the *Remarks*. At any rate, neither is a silly view.

These assumptions are not the standard ones that are made in contemporary discussions of Gödel's result. In particular, most such discussions would invoke the model-theoretic account of truth. Did Wittgenstein know about such a possibility? Did he understand it? Who knows? The text is simply silent on the matter. However, the orthodox reaction to Gödel's result is to insist on the distinction between object- and metalanguage. A certain sentence cannot be proved in the object-language, but it can be proved (to be true) in the metalanguage. In effect, Wittgenstein gives this reply soon after raising the matter. Assertions to the effect that Wittgenstein *mis*understood Gödel's theorem therefore seem misplaced.

According to the model-theoretic account of truth, the equivalence (I) is unproblematic. In the context that Wittgenstein is operating in, it is not, and this allows him to question it. In particular, he can ask exactly what the right-hand side means. This allows him to take the discussion into areas beyond those normally countenanced in discussions of Gödel's theorem. In particular, Wittgenstein deploys the idea that the meaning of a sentence is determined by its proof conditions. In virtue of the fact that there are object-level proofs and meta-level proofs (to put it in modern terminology), this still leaves the notions concerned in (I) ambiguous. Except for one circumstance, however, he thinks that once one clarifies the relevant meanings, the equivalence (I) should be rejected. In this case, no contradiction is forthcoming.

The one circumstance in which this is not the case is that in which *Principia* is inconsistent. In this case, he thinks, (I) is fine and contradiction arises. He also thinks that this does not pose any real problems. The thought that the inconsistency of *Principia* is unproblematic is not correct. Because *Principia* is based on an explosive logic, this means that all sentences would be provable, which renders it useless for most interesting purposes. To the extent that there are definite mistakes in the *Remarks,* this is plausibly one.

If we are dealing with an inconsistent metatheory, the matter is different, however. Provided that the metatheory is based on a paraconsistent logic, inconsistency may well be perfectly acceptable. Indeed, provided that we use an object-theory of arithmetic based on a paraconsistent logic, the same is the case. As I noted, such arithmetics, where both the Gödel sentence and its negation are provable—encoding 'Gödel's paradox'—are now well known. None of the formal material on paraconsistent logics and inconsistent arithmetics was, of course, known at the time Wittgenstein was writing. From an orthodox point of view, these possibilities could therefore have seemed wild. (Indeed, given that these techniques are still very unorthodox, the same might still be said.) But once one has taken these possibilities to heart, Wittgenstein's views on the countenancing of inconsistency are not at all wild, and the fact that he made them

when he did shows striking prescience as well as ground-breaking originality. These are not the second-rate thoughts of an otherwise sparkling mind.

What one is to say about various of the positions taken by Wittgenstein, such as that mathematical sentences do not have propositional content, the redundancy account of truth, the acceptability of paraconsistent logic, and so on, is, of course, another matter—and one well outside the brief of this article. But discussions of these matters can only be hindered by a misunderstanding of Wittgenstein's views. I hope that this article has substantially contributed to clearing such away.[20]

Notes

1　Some more recent commentators, notably Floyd, have been kinder about Wittgenstein's remarks. See Floyd (2001) for discussion and references.

2　Quotations are from Wittgenstein (1978: appendix III). All italics are original.

3　Note that Wittgenstein uses 'proposition' sometimes to mean 'indicative sentence', and sometimes to mean 'indicative sentence with propositional content'.

4　Strictly: *'P'* is not provable. But like Wittgenstein, I will suppress the quotation marks when no confusion can arise.

5　It must be admitted that the expression of the last sentence of 10 is a bit odd— though this is not a question of the translation, which is faithful. The only sense that the context would appear to admit is: 'But if this were now proved, or if I believed— perhaps through an error—that I had proved it, why should I not let the proof stand and [why] say I must withdraw my interpretation *"unprovable"*?'

6　It might be noted that the standard modern reaction would be to endorse the equivalence (I): P is not provable (in *Principia*) iff P (is true in the standard model of arithmetic). The arguments (A) and (B) stand (modulo the soundness of *Principia*): P is both true and unprovable. But this is no contradiction, since truth does not imply provability—Arithmetic is incomplete. But Wittgenstein, because he has, in effect, identified truth with provability, cannot draw this distinction.

7　See, e.g., p.256 of the *Remarks,* and also Wittgenstein (1976:209ff.).

8　See, e.g., (1976:209).

9　See, e.g., Priest (1987:59) and Priest (1995:159).

10　For a comprehensive survey of paraconsistent logics, see Priest (2002). For a defence of the view that a paraconsistent logic is the correct logic to reason concerning paradoxes of self-reference, see Priest (1987).

11　There is one isolated remark—Wittgenstein (1976:209)—that suggests that Wittgenstein countenanced the possibility that a contradiction entailed nothing—so endorsing some sort of connexive paraconsistent logic. But he never seems to have pursued this idea in detail.

12　Wittgenstein (1975:322).

13　See, e.g., Priest (1997) and (2000).

14　On all this, see Priest (1994).

15　For a further discussion of Wittgenstein's verificationism/voluntarism, see Wright (1980) esp. pp. 364–86, who, following Dummett, calls the view radical conventionalism.

16 Compare the case that Wittgenstein is considering with an orthodox understanding of the matter. According to this, Gödel gave us a metatheoretic proof of the unprovability of the undecidable sentence—on the assumption that *Principia* is sound. And the result of the proof really does show—on the same assumption— that there is no geometric construction of a certain kind. Since the proof predicate in *P* really does represent provability, (I) holds and so *P* is true in the standard model. Consistency is maintained, not by jettisoning (I), but by the distinction between proof and truth in the standard model.

17 Though one might note that an application of Wittgenstein's voluntarism might well be thought to get him off the hook here. Given a contradiction in *Principia,* one might simply *decide* not to apply the rule of Explosion.

18 A somewhat different interpretation of remark 17 was suggested to me by Brad Armour-Garb. According to this, Wittgenstein is enforcing the thought that different proofs of a sentence literally give it different senses—in the same way that operationalists say that the fact that there are different verifications of an empirical claim show it to be ambiguous. In this case, the fact that there are different proofs of the left and right sides of (I) demonstrates that it can be maintained only by equivocation. Only if one and the same proof is the proof of both sides can (I) be maintained—in which case, a contradiction arises.

I think that the text does bear this interpretation, though I find it less plausible. For a start, though Wittgenstein is clearly tempted by the view that different proofs of the same theorem give it different senses, he does accept the fact that different proofs can have the same force (see, e.g., *Remarks:* 409). But even if he did accept the view in question, it is somewhat implausible to suppose that he is deploying it here. For if he were, he would hardly need to run through all the different cases and consider each in turn, as he does. He could just state the general argument, as I just have. At any rate, for the matter at hand, this is not an issue of great consequence: the upshot of this interpretation is exactly the same as the one I have given. We should give up (I), and so have consistency—unless *Principia* is itself inconsistent.

19 Note that there is a closing right-hand bracket missing in the text. The most plausible place to locate it would seem to be after 'Baroque style'.

20 Many thanks go to Bernhard Weiss for suggesting the topic of this essay, to the members of a discussion session at the University of St Andrews for helpful preliminary thoughts, to Stuart Candlish for advice on translation, and especially to Brad Armour-Garb and Bernhard Weiss for thoughtful comments on drafts of the paper.

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9
SCEPTICISM, CERTAINTY, MOORE AND WITTGENSTEIN[1]

Crispin Wright

G.E.Moore's 'A Defence of Common Sense' was first published in 1925 and his 'Proof of an External World' fourteen years later.[2] Apparently Wittgenstein had a long-standing interest in these papers and in the last eighteen months of his life, stimulated[3] by discussions with Norman Malcolm while his house-guest in Ithaca in 1949, he composed the notes we now have as *On Certainty.* My question here is whether Wittgenstein's last philosophical thoughts point to a principled and stable response to the issue at which Moore's papers had been directed—the issue of scepticism, and particularly scepticism about our knowledge of the material world. My eventual and hesitant answer will be: yes, though the development here will be inevitably sketchy. And it will be focused upon one specific— though as disturbing as any, and very general—form of sceptical argument, which I shall begin by eliciting, ironically, from the consideration of something that was supposed to help—Moore's curious 'Proof' itself.

1.
Moore's 'Proof' and scepticism

Assessments of the accomplishment of Moore's work in this area are, familiarly, various. Anscombe and von Wright report that Wittgenstein himself rated 'Proof of an External World' Moore's best ever paper and told him so. Moore, it seems, modestly agreed. But many wouldn't. The greater part of the essay is devoted to some, frankly, turgid ruminations on what it means to describe objects as 'external', or 'outside our minds' or 'presented in space' or 'to be met with in space'. No particularly startling consequences emerge. And the actual 'Proof'— which everyone on first reading feels blatantly begs the question—is confined to the last few pages.

   Here is the essence of it:

Premise	Here is a hand
Conclusion	There is a material world (since any hand is a material object existing in space)

Where the premise is asserted in a context where Moore, as he supposes, is holding his hands up in front of his face, in good light, in a state of visual and cognitive lucidity, etc.

Why is this so evidently unsatisfactory? It is not that Moore is working with some *outré* concept of proof: his concept of a proof is that of a valid argument from known or warranted premises. That seems pretty standard. And the argument given is (trivially) valid. Nor is it happy to say that the problem is that Moore doesn't first prove his premise. He perfectly fairly points out that it cannot always be reasonable to demand proof of the premises of a proof—sometimes we must claim knowledge without proof, or proof cannot get started. Moreover the premise—so Moore can plausibly contend—is probably more certain, in the relevant context, than the least certain premise in any sceptical argument, even the best.[4] Still, the offered 'Proof' surely isn't a proof at all.

The general issue this raises is under what circumstances a valid argument is indeed at the service of proof, i.e. the generation of a rational conviction of—or the rational overcoming of doubt about—the truth of its conclusion. That's the question, in what is becoming standard terminology, of when a particular epistemic warrant for its premises transmits across an entailment. Here we shall only need part of a more general, theoretical answer. To wit: a particular warrant for its premises transmits across an entailment only when one's path to that warrant does not require picking up knowledge of the conclusion *en route*. Obviously that condition will not be met in explicitly circular arguments, when the very conclusion features among the premises. But there are other cases where it is contravened in a more subtle manner.

One important class of such cases connect with the holism of empirical confirmation emphasised in the last two sections of Quine's 'Two Dogmas'. Consider some simple examples. At work in my office in New York City, I hear a thunderous rumble and sense a vibration in the building. Is that evidence of an incipient electric storm? Yes, if the sky has darkened and the atmosphere is heavy and still. Probably not, if the sky outside is clear blue, given that my office overlooks Amsterdam Avenue with its regular cargo of outsize trucks. I see a massive-seeming brownish bird of prey perching on a fence post. A sighting of a golden eagle, perhaps? Quite possibly, if I am in the wilds of Torridon in the north-western Scottish Highlands; but not if I am knowingly in Welsh farmland, where buzzards have become quite common.

Such examples suggest that what is normal in empirical cases is information-dependence of warrant. A body of evidence, e, is an information-dependent warrant for a particular proposition P if whether e is correctly regarded as warranting P depends on what one has by way of collateral information, I. Consider any case where one's collateral information, I, does indeed sustain e's warranting P but where e could not rationally be regarded as warranting P if certain elements of I were missing and uncompensated for. Such a relationship is always liable to generate examples of transmission-failure: it will do so just when the particular e, P and I have the feature that needed elements of the

relevant I are themselves entailed by P (together perhaps with other warranted premises). In that case, any warrant supplied by e for P will not be transmissible to those elements of I. Warrant is transmissible in such a case only if a rational thinker could cite as her ground for accepting I the fact that she has warrant for P together with the entailment. No rational thinker could do that if the warrant for P supplied by e depends on prior and independent warrant for I.

To fix ideas here are four examples of that shape. First (AIRPORT) suppose you are waiting in an airport lounge and

(e) You hear the agent utter the words, 'This is a final boarding call for Northwest's flight NW644 to Minneapolis.'

So you naturally infer

(P) The agent has just orally forewarned passengers in English of final boarding for NW644.

P entails:

(I) The agent understands (some of) a language (English).

But clearly the warrant bestowed on P by e does not transmit across this entailment from P to I. Rather, it is only in a context of collateral information in which I already participates that e provides a warrant for P in the first place.

Or consider (TWINS). Jessica and Jocelyn are identical twins whom you know well but have difficulty distinguishing. Suppose

(e) You see a girl approaching you who looks just like Jessica.

There is a defeasible inference from that to

(P) That girl is Jessica.

and an entailment from there to

(I) That girl is not Jocelyn.

But given your discriminatory limitations, there is no question of treating e as a warrant for P and then transmitting it across the entailment to conclude I. Rather you—though not perhaps someone who can distinguish the twins purely visually—will need the latter already in place as collateral information before you can reasonably take e as a warrant for P.

Third, consider (SOCCER), involving as evidence

(e) Jones has just headed the ball into the net, he is being congratulated by team-mates and the crowd has gone wild.

That provides a defeasible warrant for

(P) Jones has just scored a goal

which entails (assuming that it is only in the context of a soccer game that a soccer goal can be scored) that

(I) A game of soccer is taking place

But suppose the circumstances are special: you are in the vicinity of a film studio which specialises in making sporting movies and you know that it is just as likely that the witnessed scene is specially staged for the camera as that it is an event in a genuine game. Once you're equipped with this information, you will rightly regard e as providing no warrant for P. What you need, if e is to provide a warrant for P, is precisely some independent corroboration of the context—that is, of I. You ask a bystander: is that a genuine game or a film take? If you learn the game is genuine, you acquire a warrant for the claim that a goal was just scored. But it would be absurd to regard that warrant as transmissible across the entailment from P to I. You don't get any additional reason for thinking that a game is in process by having the warrant for P. It remains that your only ground for I is the bystander's testimony and it is only because you have that ground that witnessing the scene provides a warrant for P.

Finally compare (ELECTION)

(e) Jones has just placed an X on a ballot paper in that booth.
(P) Jones has just voted.
(I) An election is taking place.

Again, we would normally have in e a good but defeasible warrant for P, which in turn entails I. But suppose the context is that of a society which holds electoral drills—practice elections—rather as we now hold fire drills. And suppose that they are held pretty much as frequently as real elections, so that—unless we have some further relevant background information—it is as likely as not that Jones is participating in a drill rather than the real thing. Then in this situation, Jones' writing an X on a ballot paper stops providing a warrant—even a defeasible one —for his voting. If all we know is that a drill is as likely as the real thing, and that Jones has written an X on a ballot paper, we have no better reason to suppose that he has voted than to suppose that he has not. However, given independent corroboration of I, e once again becomes a warrant for P— only, for exactly analogous reasons as before, not one transmissible across the entailment to I.[5]

The form of scepticism that I want to elicit by reflection on Moore's 'Proof' will begin, plausibly enough, by claiming an analogy between the 'Proof' and the foregoing examples. The sceptic will insist that Moore did not formulate his 'Proof' properly—that he begins in the wrong place—since his premise is something which rests on more basic evidence and is thus more properly viewed as a lemma. A more explicit formulation would rather be something like this (MOORE):

(e) My current state of consciousness is in all respects like being aware of a hand held up in front of my face.

(P) Here is a hand.

Therefore

(I) There is a material world (since any hand is a material object existing in space).

What Moore requires is that the defeasible warrant recorded by (MOORE) e for the belief in (MOORE) P is transmissible across the inference from that belief to the conclusion that there is a material world. The sceptical riposte will then be that the proper formulation of the 'Proof' exemplifies exactly the template for transmission failure latterly illustrated: that the status of Moore's experience as a warrant for his original premise, 'Here is a hand', is not unconditional but depends on needed ancillary information and that paramount among the hypotheses that need to be in place in order for the putative warrant for the premise—Moore's state of consciousness—to have the evidential force that Moore assumes is the hypothesis that there is indeed a material world whose characteristics are mostly, at least in the large, disclosed in routine sense experience. So Moore's original 'Proof' begs the question: its premise (P) is warranted only if Moore is independently entitled to its conclusion, just as in the other four illustrations.

The sceptic is here implicitly proposing, of course, that perceptual warrant is inferential: that in acquiring such a warrant, one starts with something more basic —information about the character of one's own state of consciousness— and then moves by a defeasible inference to a claim about the local environment. This idea would go with a broadly Lockean view of experience as drawing a kind of 'veil' between the subject and the external world—a mode of activity within an inner theatre, whose specific happenings would be intrinsically indifferent to whether they occurred in a dream, or in an episode of veridical perception, or in a delusion in waking life. But it's important to realise that the inferential proposal doesn't need this Lockean view. The essence of the former is that our beliefs about the local perceptible environment have their rational basis in elements of our own subjectivity—in how things are with us. It would be

perfectly consistent with this to grant, as against Locke and in sympathy with those philosophers who have urged that we think of perception as a form of direct acquaintance with the world, that perceiving and, say, dreaming are states of consciousness of a quite different logical structure, with literally nothing in common (what has come to be known as the Disjunctivist view[6]). For (MOORE) e can still serve, even so, as a neutral description—neutral, that is to say, with respect to which of the possible 'disjuncts' one's present state of consciousness exemplifies—of one's informational state. And the thought is so far unchallenged that it is on information so conceived that the ultimate justification for our perceptual beliefs must rest. Once one accepts that thought, the comparison of Moore's 'Proof' with the four examples and the resultant diagnosis provided of its intuitively question-begging character—that it overlooks the information-dependence of the most basic kind of evidence for perceptual claims—is, I think, compelling. In any case, one kind of material world scepticism certainly so conceives the justificational architecture of perceptual claims. So Moore is begging the question against that adversary.

Still, recognising that there is a transmission failure involved in, e.g., (ELECTION) and (SOCCER) (in the contexts described) does not itself invite scepticism about the existence of elections and soccer games. Likewise the collapse of Moore's 'Proof' does not, by itself, invite scepticism about the material world. The form of sceptical argument that now arises turns on pressing the question: what, if Moore's warrant for his original premise is information-dependent, could put the needed information (that there is a material world) in place? Not an inference from any specific proposition about it—that would beg the question, just as Moore did. But how else? The emergent sceptical thought denies that there is any other way. Specifically, it involves these five claims:

(i) That there is no way of justifying particular beliefs about the material world save on the basis of the (inconclusive) evidence provided by our states of consciousness.

(ii) Such evidence for any particular proposition about the material world depends for its force on collateral information that the material world so much as exists—it would not be warranted to treat how things seem to us as evidence for claims about our immediate physical environment if we were antecedently agnostic about the existence of a material world.

Ergo

(iii) Our belief that there is a material world cannot without circularity be based on an accumulation of such evidence for the truth of particular propositions about it.

(iv) But there is nothing else on which a belief in the existence of the material world might be rationally based.

(v) And that belief needs justification since it could, after all, be false.

It is, of course, the counterparts of claim (iv) that—by ordinary standards ofconfirmation—fail for the case of (SOCCER) and (ELECTION). But if each of (i)–(v) is accepted, then the upshot is that our entire 'language game' concerningthe material world turns out to be based upon an assumption for which we haveno ground whatever, can in principle get no ground whatever, and which could,for all we know, be false. That seems about as strong a sceptical conclusion asone could wish for (or hope to avoid).

An argument—paradox—of this kind will be available whenever we are persuadable (at least temporarily) that the ultimate justification for one kind of claim—let's say: a type-II proposition—rests upon defeasible inference from information of another sort—type-I propositions. In any such case, the warrantability of the inference will arguably depend upon the presupposition that there is indeed a domain of fact apt to confer truth on type-II propositions in the first place, a domain whose details are broadly reflected in type-I information. So it will depend, *a fortiori,* on the first component of that: that a domain of fact which type-II propositions are distinctively apt to describe so much as exists. Let this supposition be the relevant type-III proposition—a proposition of sufficient generality to be entailed by any type-II proposition. The schematic form of the emergent sceptical argument—I'll call it the I–II–III argument—is then this:

Type-II propositions can only be justified on the evidence of type-I propositions.

The evidence provided by type-I propositions for type-II propositions is information-dependent, requiring *inter alia* collateral warrant for a type-III proposition.

So: type-III propositions cannot be warranted by transmission of evidence provided by type-I propositions for type-II propositions across a type-II-to-type-III entailment.

But: type-III propositions cannot be warranted any other way

And: type-III propositions could be false.

This form of argument is very widely applicable. It may be used, for instance, to provide a simple crystallisation of each of scepticism about other minds, about the past, and about inductive inference. Consider the following reasoning (PAIN) by a subject who is a bystander at a sporting injury:

I Jones' shin bone is visibly shattered and he is thrashing about on the turf.
His face is contorted and he is yelling and screaming.
II Jones is in pain.

Therefore

III There are other minds.

The sceptical argument is exactly as schematised. It will assert that it is only if we have independent warrant for (PAIN) III, (and that Jones is very probably 'minded'), that (PAIN) I may be taken to confirm (PAIN) II. The evidential bearing of (PAIN) I on (PAIN) II is not something which is appreciable from a standpoint which starts out agnostic about the existence of other minds. So, like 'There is a material world', the role of the proposition There are other minds' seems to be, as it were, institutional. And that, sceptically construed, is just a polite way of saying that there is no prospect of any kind of independent justification for it, nor therefore for bona fide justification of the particular beliefs about others' mental states which it mediates.

It will be superfluous to run through the parallel considerations concerning (SEAWEED):

I There is a line of fresh seaweed on the beach some fifty yards above the ocean.
II The seaweed was washed up by the tide some hours ago.

Therefore

III The world did not come into being ten seconds ago replete with apparent traces of a more extended history.

and (BASIC INDUCTION):

I All observed As have been Bs.
II All As are Bs.

Therefore

III Some properties are exceptionlessly co-instantiated with others (Nature is Uniform, at least to some extent).

Notice that in no case is any claim being advanced that the relevant type-III proposition provides information sufficient to justify the relevant I-to-II transition. The suggestion is rather that collateral information encompassing that proposition is at least necessary if the type-I proposition is to support the type-II proposition; and that the opportunities for acquiring that necessary collateral information are limited in the manner indicated by the generalised versions of the first four of the Five Claims.

Although the I–II–III pattern of sceptical argument has this wide potential generality, there is no a priori reason, of course, why the most effective responses to it should be uniform through its various applications. In particular, when it is applied to our beliefs concerning the material world, many philosophers will be tempted by one of two kinds of riposte whose generalisation

to other cases would be stretched, or even definitely mistaken. First, some may simply want to reject the inferential architecture which the argument presupposes. According to the argument, the ultimate warrant for claims about the local perceptible environment is supplied by inference from aspects of our subjectivity—from propositions about how things are with us (no matter whether that in turn is given a Lockean or Disjunctivist cast). Yet these propositions, for their part, are then conceived as known non-inferentially. The question may therefore occur: with what right is the domain of non-inferential warrant— presupposed, of course, if there is to be such a thing as inferential warrant in the first place— restricted in this way and not allowed to extend outward in the first place to propositions concerning the experienced world? Even if that question has a good answer, and we have to be prepared to grant the inferential base for claims about the material world in propositions about subjectivity, there is, second, still scope to question whether the evidential bearing of the latter is properly viewed as information-dependent, whether the evidence of appearances does not rather— in the best circumstances—provide a priori unconditional (though defeasible) support for propositions about local perceptibles. If either of these reservations could be made good, the framework demanded by I–II–III scepticism about the material world would not apply.[7]

The plausibility of these two forms of riposte diminishes, however, when we move to other subject matters. While it might be tempting, for instance, to try to make out that agents' behaviour provides information-independent (though still defeasible) grounds for claims about their mental states, it would seem—to this writer at least—merely Quixotic to attempt to construe claims about others' attitudes and sensations as having a non-inferential epistemology.[8] Moreover, neither tactic seems at all plausible for the case of claims about the remote past (the past beyond living memory). And when it comes to simple empirical induction, the first tactic amounts to a denial of a datum of the problem—that induction is a kind of defeasible inference—while the powerful intuitive tug of Hume's problem is testimony to the sense we have that, strictly, the justifiability of this pattern of inference does indeed call for a piece of information (the 'Uniformity of Nature', that is: the continuing inductive amenability of the world) to which, on the face of it, it is hard to make out any entitlement.

My concern now is nevertheless going to be with one possibility for a uniform response—perhaps better: a uniform attitude—to I–II–III scepticism. This will involve beginning to develop hints and suggestions that feature in *On Certainty* in a way that Wittgenstein himself did not explicitly develop them, albeit in a spirit —perhaps—that is in some respects at odds with his later philosophy of language. The crux will be to make a case that we are within our rights, as it were, in accepting the type-III propositions that we do, their evidential predicament notwithstanding.

2.
Hinges against scepticism?

The preoccupation of *On Certainty* with G.E.Moore's 'Defence of Common Sense' is evident to anyone who reads it with Moore's discussion in mind. One of its most prominent themes is Wittgenstein's insistence on a contrast, missing from Moore, between what belongs to our knowledge properly so regarded—that is, our body of cognitive achievement, based on enquiry—and a much wider class of certainties: propositions which 'stand fast' for us not because they have won through under scrutiny of relevant evidence but because, so he suggests, they are somehow presuppositional and basic in the process of gathering and assessing evidence or within our more general 'world picture'. He writes:

> 151 I should like to say: Moore does not know what he asserts he knows, but it stands fast for him, as also for me; regarding it as absolutely solid is part of our method of doubt and enquiry.
> 152 I do not explicitly learn the propositions that stand fast for me. I can *discover* them subsequently like the axis around which a body rotates. This axis is not fixed in the sense that anything holds it fast, but the movement around it determines its immobility.

Here the image of the axis is crucial. Its point is that nothing external holds these basic certainties in place: they do not provide foundations after the fashion of the classical Cartesian aspiration—foundations of the kind which primitive and especially sure cognitive achievements would provide:

> 94…I did not get my picture of the world by satisfying myself of its correctness; nor do I have it because I am satisfied of its correctness. No: it is the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false.

So far from being products of cognitive achievement, Wittgenstein is proposing that the propositions in question play a pivotal role in our methodology of judgement and thereby contribute to the background necessary to make cognitive achievement possible, a background without which the acquisition of knowledge would be frustrated by a lack of regulation:

> 95 The propositions describing this world-picture might be part of a kind of mythology. And their role is like that of rules of a game; and the game can be learned purely practically, without learning any explicit rules.
> 83 The *truth* [he means: not the fact of the truth but our acceptance as true] of certain empirical propositions belongs to our frame of reference.

A little more explicitly:

400 Here I am inclined to fight windmills, because I cannot yet say the thing I really want to say.

401 I want to say: propositions of the form of empirical propositions, and not only propositions of logic, form the foundation of all operating with thoughts (with language). —This observation is not of the form 'I know …' 'I know…' states what I know, and that is not of logical interest

This casts some light on Wittgenstein's flattering assessment of Moore. What, it would seem, impressed him about the 'Defence of Common Sense' in particular was not its official line—Moore's insistence that he 'knows, with certainty' each of the propositions he there listed (while conceding that he did not know their 'correct analysis')—but the contents of the list and the reminder of the special place of these propositions which Moore, almost without realising it, contrived to provide:

136 When Moore says he knows such and such, he is really enumerating a lot of empirical propositions which we affirm without special testing; propositions, that is, which have a peculiar logical role in the system of our empirical propositions.

137 Even if the most trustworthy of men assures me that he *knows* things are thus and so, this by itself cannot satisfy me that he does know, only that he believes he knows. That is why Moore's assurance that he knows …does not interest us. The propositions, however, which Moore retails as examples of such known truths are indeed interesting. Not because anyone knows their truth, or believes he knows them, but because they all have a *similar* role in the system of our empirical judgements.

138 We don't, for example, arrive at any of them as a result of investigation. There are e.g. historical investigations and investigations into the shape and also the age of the earth, but not into whether the earth has existed during the last hundred years. Of course many of us have information about this period from our parents and grandparents; but mayn't they be wrong?—'Nonsense!' one will say. 'How should all these people be wrong?'—But is that an argument? Is it not simply the rejec-tion of an idea? And perhaps the determination of a concept? For if I speak of a possible mistake here, this changes the role of 'mistake' and 'truth' in our lives.

The immediate and crucial issue, of course, is what exactly the 'peculiar logical role' of the propositions in question is supposed to be.

There is no simple answer covering all cases. Wittgenstein's (and Moore's) examples are various. While a more fine-grained taxonomy would be desirable, a reader of *On Certainty* will speedily notice three salient classifications:

Propositions (those of basic arithmetic and logic, 'I have two hands') which it is our practice, always or normally, to insulate from prima facie disconfirming evidence, and which thereby serve as, in effect, rules for the evaluation—redirection—of the significance of such evidence;

Propositions ('My name is CW', 'This calculation is correct') which are supported by—by normal standards—an overwhelming body of evidence, whose significance would have to be dismissed if they were doubted;

Propositions of type-III (The earth exists', The earth has existed for many years past', 'Material objects do not just disappear when no one observes them') to doubt which would have the effect of undermining our confidence in a whole species of proposition, by calling into question the bearing of our most basic kinds of evidence for propositions of that kind.

However, these various cases are unified—so I read Wittgenstein as suggesting —by their constituting or reflecting our implicit acceptance of various kinds of rules of evidence: rules for assessing the specific bearing of evidence among a range of germane propositions, rules for assessing the priorities among different kinds of evidence, and rules connecting certain kinds of evidence with certain kinds of subject matter. One central idea of *On Certainty* is that some things that Moore misguidedly took himself to know are actually effectively the articulation, in declarative propositional garb, of such rules, our unhesitating acceptance of which allows of no defence in terms of the idea of knowledge. And the reader forms the impression—though I do not know that it could be decisively corroborated by explicit quotation—that it was meant to go with that idea that our acceptance of the propositions in question could likewise not be criticised in terms of the idea of failure of knowledge, of lack of cognitive achievement. The sceptic's attack is to be preempted by the same idea that undercuts Moore's 'Defence'.

But how exactly? The central thrust of knowledge-sceptical argument, of whatever stripe, is after all precisely that what we count as the acquisition of knowledge, or justification, rests on groundless assumptions. And so far from saying anything inconsistent with that, Wittgenstein seems merely to elaborate the theme! How does it help to have a reminder in detail of the various kinds of groundless certainty that we go in for? Once granted that these presuppositions are both essential and ungrounded, isn't the sceptical point effectively taken? Yet rather than contesting the point, Wittgenstein seems repeatedly to emphasise it. Indeed, he is quite explicit that he is, in effect, taking a sceptical point:

253 At the foundation of well founded belief lies belief that is not founded.

Since *On Certainty* is not a sceptical treatise, Wittgenstein's idea can only be that taking the point about groundlessness doesn't have the consequences usually thought to attach it—in particular, that to recognise the role of foundational but

unfounded beliefs does not call all our procedures into question, or expose them as being somehow arbitrary, dogmatic and irrational. But how not?

The answer may seem obvious. The key idea, you might think, is that of rule. In each of the kinds of case distinguished, it is the suggestion of *On Certainty* that a proposition's 'standing fast' for us is to be attributed to its playing a role in or reflecting some aspect of the way we regulate enquiry, rather than being presumed—erroneously—to be an especially solid product of it. Sceptical argument purports to disclose a lack of cognitive pedigree in a targeted range of commitments. Rules, though, don't need a cognitive pedigree. The merit of a rule may be discussible: rules can be inept, in various ways. But, since they define a practice, they cannot be wrong. So any sort of sceptical concern about our warrant to accept a proposition whose role is actually to express or otherwise reflect such a rule is thus a kind of *ignoratio elenchi.*

There are passages where Wittgenstein appears to have something like this thought in mind. Consider for instance:

> 494 'I cannot doubt this proposition without giving up all judgement.'
> But what sort of proposition is that?…It is certainly no empirical proposition. It does not belong to psychology It has rather the character of a rule.
> 495 One might simply say, 'O, rubbish!' to someone who wanted to make objections to the propositions that are beyond doubt. That is, not reply to him but admonish him.
> 496 This is a similar case to that of showing that it has no meaning to say that a game has always been played wrong.

But of course the line is much too swift. Rules governing a practice can be excused from any external constraint—so just 'up to us', as it were—only if the practice itself has no overall point which a badly selected rule might frustrate. But that is hardly how we think of empirical enquiry Empirical enquiry does *par excellence* have an overall point, namely—it may seem the merest platitude to say —the divination of what is true and the avoidance of what is false of the world it concerns. So 'rules of evidence' must presumably answer to this overall point. There therefore has to be, prima facie, a good question whether and with what right we suppose that the rules we actually rely on in empirical enquiry are conducive to that point.

The case of type-III propositions is perhaps the most stark in this connection. To allow that 'there are other minds', say, serves as a rule of evidence—plays a role in determining our conception of the significance of people's behaviour— is not even superficially in tension with thinking of it as a substantial proposition, apt to be true or false. It goes without saying that our conception of the significance of items of evidence we gather will depend on what kind of world we take ourselves to be living in. That in no way banishes the spectre of profound and sweeping error in the latter regard.

I am, of course, perfectly aware that this general kind of objection is out of kilter with a cardinal idea in Wittgenstein's later philosophy: the idea that the 'rules of the language game' precisely do not have to answer to anything external to it. According to the contrasted philosophy of language at work in the *Tractatus,* there is a separation between what constitutes the meaning (truth-conditions) of a statement—which is a matter of an essential (in the *Tractatus,* indeed, pictorial) relation between the statement and a potential worldly truth-conferrer ('fact')—and the rules which we accept as governing its use. So provision is indeed made there for a good metaphysical question about whether the latter are felicitous by the standards set by the former, whether there is the intended general correlation between the obtaining of what we treat as warrant for a statement, which will be a reflection of the rules of the language game, and the satisfaction of its truth-conditions. But by the time of the *Philosophical Investigations,* Wittgenstein has shifted to—indeed, has perhaps invented—the outlook that Hilary Putnam later dubbed internal realism or internalism: it is our linguistic practice itself that is viewed as conferring meaning on the statements it involves—there is no meaning-conferrer standing apart from the rules of practice and no associated external goal.

This is a great metaphysical issue. And it seems perfectly right that sceptical doubt in the Cartesian tradition implicitly takes sides on it. If I am to be seriously troubled by the thought that painstaking and conscientious appraisal by the standards of my actual linguistic practice may consist with massive but undetectable error generated by a quite mistaken conception of some large aspect of the world, then I must be thinking of what determines the content of my beliefs as something extrinsic to that practice—and the classical, molecular, truth-conditional account then seems to be the only candidate. Still, great as it may be, the metaphysical issue is notoriously unclear and difficult to resolve. And while thinking of linguistic practice in a broadly later-Wittgensteinian way may make at least some forms of sceptical doubt hard to hear, the fact that we— many of us —seem to ourselves to hear them pretty clearly will make it intellectually unsatisfying just to point out that the ultimate intelligibility of sceptical doubt is hostage to deep and unresolved issues in the theory of meaning. Rather, what we should ideally like would be a rebuttal of—or at least a 'liveable' accommodation with— sceptical doubt which can avoid joining the debate at that murky level. If we approach the issues in that intuitive spirit, the idea that at least some of the propositions scepticism targets really function innocently as rules for the appraisal of evidence is hobbled as a response to sceptical doubt, in just the way I have emphasised.

3.
Entitlement

So: what is the worst-case scenario, as it were? Can there be an intuitive accommodation with scepticism—one which raises no question whether type-III

propositions are just what they look like, very general contingent descriptions of the world? Is there some relatively benign 'spin' or cast to be given to the situation to which an otherwise unchallenged I–II–III argument would call attention? I shall suggest that there is—a quite different kind of response which can be elicited from one tendency in Wittgenstein's final remarks.

The passages I have in mind are typified by the following,

> 163…We check the story of Napoleon, but not whether all the reports about him are based on sense-deception, forgery and the like. For whenever we test anything, we are already presupposing something that is not tested. Now am I to say that the experiment which perhaps I make in order to test the truth of a proposition presupposes the truth of the proposition that the apparatus I believe I see is really there (and the like)?

Compare

> 337 One cannot make experiments if there are not some things that one does not doubt. But that does not mean that one takes certain presuppositions on trust. When I write a letter and post it, I take it for granted that it will arrive—I expect this.
>
> If I make an experiment I do not doubt the existence of the apparatus before my eyes. I have plenty of doubts, but not that. If I do a calculation I believe, without any doubts, that the figures on the paper aren't switching of their own accord, and I also trust my memory the whole time, and trust it without reservation. The certainty here is the same as that of my never having been on the moon.

Consider any case where one claims a warrant for a particular proposition not by inference from other warranted propositions but directly by the appropriate exercise of certain appropriate cognitive capacities—perception, memory or intellection, for instance. Such a claim is not innocent of presupposition. The presuppositions will include the proper functioning of the relevant capacities, the suitability of the occasion and circumstances for their effective function, and indeed the integrity of the very concepts involved in the formulation of the proposition in question. And the crucial point made in the quoted passages is that one cannot but take such things for granted. By that I don't mean that one could not investigate (at least some of) the presuppositions involved in a particular case. But in proceeding to such an investigation, one would then be forced to make further presuppositions of the same general kinds. The point concerns essential limitations of cognitive achievement: wherever I achieve warrant for a proposition, I do so courtesy of specific presuppositions—about my own powers, and the prevailing circumstances, and my understanding of the issues involved— for which I will have no specific, earned warrant. This is a necessary truth. I may, in any particular case, set about earning such a warrant in turn—and

that investigation may go badly, defeating the presuppositions that I originally made. But whether it does or doesn't go badly, it will have its own so far unfounded— *unbegründete* (253)—presuppositions. Again: whenever cognitive achievement takes place, it does so in a context of specific presuppositions which are not themselves an expression of any cognitive achievement to date.

These propositions are not standing certainties but are particular to the investigative occasion: they are propositions like that my eyes are functioning properly now, that the things that I am currently perceiving have not been extensively disguised so as to conceal their true nature, etc. My confidence in the things which I take myself to have verified in a particular context can rationally be no stronger than my confidence in these context-specific claims. My certainty in them as a *genre* shows in the unhesitant way I set about routine empirical investigation of the world and my ready acceptance of its results. Their context-specificity sets them apart from some of the other kinds of 'hinge' proposition already noted. But two points of analogy with type-III propositions are nevertheless striking: first, each type of proposition articulates something a thinker must inevitably take for granted if she is to credit herself with the achievement of any warrants at all, the type-III propositions conditioning the acquisition of defeasible inferential warrants while the context-specifics engage the non-inferential case; and second, presuppositions of each kind will unavoidably be themselves unwarranted at the point at which they need to be made.

That much analogy is enough to invite a scepticism about non-inferential warrant entirely kindred in spirit to I–II–III scepticism. Suppose I set myself to count the books on one of the shelves in my office and arrive at the answer, twenty-six. The sceptical thought will say that the warrant thereby acquired for that answer can rationally be regarded as no stronger than the grounds I have for confidence that I counted correctly, that my senses and memory were accordingly functioning properly, that the books themselves were stable during the count and were not spontaneously popping into and out of existence unnoticed by me, etc. Yet I will have done nothing—we may suppose—to justify my confidence in these specific presuppositions. So how have I achieved any genuine warrant at all?

Here is one line of reply. Since there is no such thing as a process of warrant acquisition for each of whose specific presuppositions warrant has already been earned, it should not be reckoned to be part of the ordinary concept of an acquired warrant that it somehow aspire to this—incoherent—ideal. Rather, we should view each and every cognitive project as irreducibly involving an element of adventure—I take a risk on the reliability of my senses, the amenability of the circumstances, etc., much as I take a risk on the continuing reliability of the steering, and the stability of the road surface every time I ride my bicycle. Once I grant that I ought ideally to check the presuppositions of a project, even in a context in which there is no particular reason for concern about them, then I should agree that I ought in turn to check the presuppositions of the check—

which is one more project, after all—and so on; so then there will be no principled stopping point to the process of checking and the original project will never get started. The right conclusion—the reply will continue—is not that the acquisition of genuine warrant is impossible, but rather that since warrant is acquired whenever investigation is undertaken in an epistemically responsible manner, epistemic responsibility cannot, *per impossibile,* require an investigation of every presupposition whose falsity would defeat the claim to have acquired a warrant. The right principle is not that any acquired warrant is no stronger than one's independently acquired reasons to accept its presuppositions. It is, rather, that it is as weak as the warrant for any of the presuppositions about which there is some specific reason to entertain a misgiving.

This line of response has several attractions. It involves, first, no large contention in the metaphysics of meaning, nor any unintuitive claim about factuality. Second, it is not open to the complaint one wants to level against so-called 'naturalistic' responses to scepticism, after the style of Hume and Strawson[9], that—in emphasising that it is part of our (human) nature to form beliefs inductively, to see each other as 'minded', and so on—it offers a mere excuse for our inclination to form beliefs in a fashion which, for all that has been said, falls short of the ideals of reason. And third, it concedes that the best sceptical arguments have a point—that the limits of justification they bring out are genuine and essential—but then replies that, just for that reason, cognitive achievement must be reckoned to take place within such limits. To attempt to surpass them would result not in an increase in rigour but cognitive paralysis.

The term 'entitlement' is already in vogue in contemporary epistemology to mark off—perhaps wishfully—a range of propositions which, although lacking specific evidence on their behalf, we can nevertheless somehow warrantably lay claim to as part of the framework of other investigations. A specific version of this idea emerges from the foregoing. First let's be a bit more precise about the notion of a presupposition: say that P is a presupposition of a particular cognitive enquiry if to doubt P would be a commitment to doubting the significance or competence of the enquiry. Then an entitlement is a presupposition meeting the following conditions: (i) there is no extant reason to doubt P; and (ii) to accept that there is nevertheless an onus to justify P would be implicitly to undertake a commitment to an infinite regress of justificatory projects, each concerned to vindicate the presuppositions of its predecessor. That doubtless needs refinement, but the general motif is clear enough. If a project is sufficiently valuable to us—in particular, if its failure would at least be no worse than the costs of not executing it and its success would be better—and if any attempt to vindicate its presuppositions would raise presuppositions of its own of no more secure an antecedent status, then we are entitled to make those presuppositions without evidence.

Unfortunately, type-III propositions are not entitlements as characterised, since they fail to meet condition (ii). The problem with type-III propositions is not that—like 'my visual system is functioning properly on this occasion'—to

accept that there is an onus to justify them in any particular context in which they are presuppositional is to accept an infinite regress of similar justificatory obligations. It is rather that, after the I–II–III argument, one has no idea how to justify them at all. Nevertheless there is one way the spirit of the foregoing ideas might be extended to cover their case. Type III propositions are implicitly in play, as noted, whenever our best justification for the truth of propositions of one kind—propositions of one distinctive type of subject matter—consists in the assembly of information about something else. That's the architecture which the I–II–III scepticism attempts to impose, with varying degrees of plausibility, on the justification of statements about the material world, about the past, about other minds and on inductive justification. And wherever such is indeed the justificational architecture, it will be plausible that a type-III proposition—actually, a strengthened form of those illustrated earlier—will form part of the informational setting we presuppose in order for the relevant transitions to rank as justified. Very abstractly: suppose it granted that the best justification we can have for a certain kind of statement—P-statements—consists in information of another kind—Q-statements—such that no finite set of Q-statements entails any P-statement. The use of P-statements in accordance with this conception will then carry a double commitment: a commitment to there being true P-statements —and hence truth-makers for them—at all, and a commitment to a reliable connection between the obtaining of such truth-makers and the truth of finite batches of appropriate Q-statements. That is the broad shape of the commitment which surfaces in the specific instances:

> There is a material world, broadly in keeping with the way in which sense experience represents it;
>> Other people have minds, broadly in keeping with the way they behave;
>> The world has an ancient history, broadly in keeping with presently available traces and apparent memories;
>> There are laws of nature, broadly manifest in finitely observable regularities.

Here, each first conjunct presents a type-III proposition as originally conceived, which the second conjunct effects the connection necessary for the favoured kind of evidence to have the force which it is our practice to attach to it. As earlier observed, we may of course avoid local versions of the I–II–III argument by arguing for a rejection of the justificational architecture which it presupposes—with perceptual claims, perhaps, a prime case for that attempt. But if this is to be a globally successful tactic, then we will have to do nothing less than so fashion our thinking that it nowhere traffics in statements related as the P-statements and Q-statements in the schema. And that's just to say that none of the thoughts we think must be such that their truth-makers are beyond our direct cognition, so that we are forced to rely on finite and accessible putative indicators of their obtaining.

The prime casualty of such a way of thinking would be the thinker's conception of her own locality: the idea of a range of states of affairs and events existing beyond the bounds of her own direct awareness. Globally to avoid the justificational architecture presupposed by I–II–III scepticism is to abandon all conception of oneself as having cognitive locality in a world extending, perhaps infinitely, beyond one's gaze. In particular, it is to surrender all conception of our own specific situation within a broader objective world extending, spatially and temporally, beyond us.

It is a crucial question whether there could be any coherent system of thought which both practised exclusively within such limits and provided no resources for a grasp of its own limitations. At the least, it would be a huge difference. All our actual thought and activity is organised under the aegis of a distinction between states of affairs existing at our own cognitive station and directly accessible to us and others that lie beyond. There are issues about what is properly allotted to the respective sides of this distinction—whether, for example, the former encompasses anything beyond our own episodic mental states, as Descartes implicitly thought. But whatever is allotted to the domain of the directly accessible, there are two crucially important categories of fact—those of general natural law and of the past—which must surely be consigned to what lies beyond. Since practical reasoning involves bringing information of both kinds to bear on hypothetical situations—of course this point requires detail which I will not here attempt to provide—it seems certain that any system of thought purified of all liability to I–II–III scepticism could not be that of a rational agent. One's life as a practical reasoner depends upon type-III presuppositions. To avoid them is to avoid having a life.

All this needs further elaboration, but let me try to draw things together. I think one principal message of *On Certainty* is that scepticism embodies an insight which Moore missed: the insight that to be a rational agent pursuing any form of cognitive enquiry—whether within or outside one's own epistemic locality— means making presuppositions which are not themselves the fruits of such enquiry. When I go after warranted belief about accessible states of affairs in my own locality, the credibility of my results depends on presuppositions about my own proper functioning, and the suitability of the prevailing conditions, etc. When I go after warranted belief about states of affairs outside, the credibility of my results depends on presupposition of the augmented type-III propositions which condition my conception of how the locally accessible may provide indications of what lies beyond. The official sceptical response to this reflection is to give up on the distinction between warranted and unwarranted belief as a charade. The alternative 'spin' to be taken from *On Certainty* is that the concept of warranted belief only gets substance within a framework in which it is recognised that all rational agency involves ineliminable elements of cognitive adventure. Since rational agency is not an optional aspect of our lives, we are entitled—save when there is specific reason for doubt—to make the

presuppositions that need to be made in living out our conception of the kind of world we inhabit and the kinds of cognitive powers we possess.

This kind of entitlement, of course, has no direct connection with the likelihood of truth. We are entitled to proceed on certain assumptions merely because there is no extant reason to disbelieve them and because, unless we make some such assumptions, we cannot proceed at all. An epistemological standpoint which falls back on this conception of entitlement for the last word against scepticism needs its own version of (what is sometimes called) the Serenity Prayer[10]: in ordinary enquiry, we must hope to be granted the self-discipline to take responsibility for what we can be responsible, the trust to accept what we must merely presuppose, and—the crucial thing—the philosophical wisdom to know the difference.

Notes

1 This paper corresponds closely to my presentation at the Gregynog conference and is excerpted from my fuller treatment, 'Wittgensteinian Certainties' in D.McManus, Ed. *Wittgenstein and Scepticism.*

2 Both papers are contained in Moore 1959.

3 The editors of *On Certainty* say: 'goaded'.

4 Cf. Moore's 'Some Judgements of Perception', originally published in the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 1918–19 and reprinted in his (1922:220–52). A relevant passage (about Moore's finger) comes at p. 228 228.

5 Notice, by the way, that in all these cases, interestingly, there is no example of failure of closure: in all the scenarios, if one has a warrant for P, then one has a warrant for I.

6 The Disjunctivist idea seems original, at least in modern literature, to J.M.Hinton. See his (1973) and the various earlier articles of his to which he there refers. It is further developed in Paul Snowdon's (1981) and deployed against what he terms the 'highest common factor' conception of experience in McDowell's (1982). See also his (1994) lecture VI, part 3.

7 The rub is in 'made good'. It is not enough just to propose one of these lines of resistance—that is, to rest content with the claim that the opposed sceptical perspective has not been proved and is therefore 'non-compulsory'. Let that be so. Still, merely to oppose one non-compulsory conception with another is to leave open the possibility that, for all we know, the sceptic's view of the justificational architecture is right. And a position where, for all I know, I have no warrant for any claims about the material world is little better than one in which I have apparently been shown that I have no such warrant.

8 Notwithstanding McDowell's sympathetic and resourceful handling of the idea in his (1982).

9 See chapter 1 of Strawson's (1985).

10 I had thought the prayer, or at least its sentiment, original to Augustine, but John Haldane advises me that it is modern, now usually attributed to a Dr Reinhold Niebuhr, of the Union Theological Seminary, **NYC,** who reputedly composed it in 1932. The official version runs:

> God, grant me
> the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change
> the Courage to change the things I can
> and the Wisdom to know the difference.

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10
WITTGENSTEIN, TRUTH AND CERTAINTY[1]

Michael Williams

1.
Wittgenstein a sceptic (or perhaps a relativist)?

In the notes collected as *On Certainty*—composed, of course, long before the Apollo missions—Wittgenstein imagines a tribe whose members believe that they travel to the moon.[2] Perhaps, he says, this is how they interpret their dreams; and he notes how difficult it might be to argue them out of their conviction. These reflections lead to the following passage:

> 108 'But is there then no objective truth? Isn't it true, or false, that someone has been on the moon?' If we are thinking with our system, then it is certain that no one has ever been on the moon. Not merely is nothing of the sort ever seriously reported to us by reasonable people, but our whole system of physics forbids us to believe it. For this demands answers to the questions 'How did he overcome the force of gravity?' 'How could he live without an atmosphere?' and a thousand others which could not be answered. But suppose instead of that we met the reply: 'We don't know how one gets to the moon, but those who get there know at once that they are there; and even you can't explain everything.' We should feel ourselves intellectually very distant from someone who said this.

This passage is striking for the way in which its opening question—'Is there no objective truth?'—is evaded rather than answered. Wittgenstein seems content to register the possibility of a profound divergence of outlook, without further comment.

Wittgenstein's epistemological investigations were prompted by his recollections of Moore's 'Proof of an External World' and 'Defence of Common Sense'.[3] So although Wittgenstein never formulates an explicitly sceptical argument, the question of scepticism is never far away. But is Wittgenstein as resolutely anti-sceptical as Moore? Perhaps not. The passage quoted above is bound to suggest to many readers that Wittgenstein is himself tempted by some kind of scepticism, or perhaps relativism. At the same time, much of his

thinking seems to be strongly anti-sceptical. Wittgenstein's view of Moore is not that Moore is wrong in opposing scepticism, but rather that his way of opposing it reveals an inadequate understanding of its character as a philosophical problem. Whereas Moore tries to meet scepticism head on, with 'proofs' and 'defences', the problem needs to be approached in a more subtle and roundabout way.

Philosophical scepticism is characterized by its extreme generality. The sceptic wants to know how *anything* that we believe amounts to knowledge: anything at all, or anything pertaining to certain very broad domains of fact, such as the external world, other people's mental states, the past, the future, and so on. The sceptic admits that his doubts are *unusually* general. He will even admit that they are *impractically* general. But none of this makes them incoherent. So while we inevitably put aside sceptical doubts in the course of everyday life, such doubts are perfectly intelligible; and when, in our reflective moments, we turn to them, we see that they are unanswerable.

Wittgenstein will not concede any of this. He denies that sceptical doubts are just *impractically* general. Rather, he thinks, they are *impossibly* general. According to Wittgenstein, there are—indeed, must be—basic certainties: propositions or judgements that we *do not* doubt because we *cannot* doubt them. These basic certainties can be thought of as 'framework judgements' in the following sense: by lying 'apart from the route travelled by inquiry', they constitute the framework within which practices of inquiring, justifying beliefs, arguing, asking for and giving reasons, making knowledge-claims, etc. take place. This has nothing to do with practicality and everything to do with the conditions for making any judgements at all.

Baldly stated, Wittgenstein's position may sound like a version of epistemological foundationalism.[4] But we should be in no hurry to think of it in this way. For one thing, there are numerous passages where Wittgenstein sounds like a coherence theorist, the foundationalists' traditional opponent. There is a hint of this in the passage already quoted, where Wittgenstein refers to what is certain 'within our system'. Foundationalism versus the coherence theory: here is one apparent tension in Wittgenstein's thought. It is only apparent: the 'foundationalist' and 'coherentist' elements in Wittgenstein's thought are fairly readily reconciled. However, as I shall be arguing, reconciling them brings to light a further tension that is not so easily relieved.

The tension I have in mind concerns Wittgenstein's attitude to the concept of truth. As we shall see, one of Wittgenstein's deepest anti-sceptical thoughts implies that basic certainties are—indeed must be—straightforwardly true. But another, equally prominent line of thought—hinted at in the passage about the moon-visitors—can easily be taken to imply that basic certainties lack truth-value altogether. This may explain why Wittgenstein seems to want to evade the question 'Is there no objective truth?'

The problem, then, is this: Wittgenstein appears to be in two minds as to whether basic certainties, or at least some basic certainties, are straightforwardly true. In current jargon, there seem to be conflicting 'realist' and

'anti-realist' tendencies in Wittgenstein's thought,[5] and it is tempting to trace the conflict to his being deeply uncertain as to how to think about truth in general. But perhaps appearances are misleading. At any rate, I propose to ask how Wittgenstein's apparent ambivalence about truth arises, with a view to seeing whether it can be resolved. Getting clear about these issues is essential if we are to allay suspicions that Wittgenstein himself, at the end of the day, is some kind of sceptic or relativist.

2.
Meaning, justification and truth

Wittgenstein's problems with truth grow out of his unusual account of basic certainties. We can best approach Wittgenstein's views by reminding ourselves of why philosophers have seen the need for basic beliefs and how the idea of a basic belief has generally been understood.

One of the most ancient sceptical problems turns on a trilemma, Agrippa's trilemma, which can seem both disastrous and inescapable. The Agrippan sceptic's starting point is the banal claim that knowledge differs from mere true belief by being (in some way) grounded. Grounds can take various forms: evidence, credentials, the (presumed) reliability of some basic cognitive faculty, and so on. The sceptic doesn't care. His point is simply that if I make a claim, intending to express knowledge, I imply that I have grounds of some appropriate kind, in which case the sceptic can reasonably ask me to produce them. But in making my grounds explicit, I inevitably enter a further claim, itself purportedly expressing knowledge, which needs grounds of its own. The sceptic can now ask me for these, and so on indefinitely, opening a vicious regress. But how can I get out of it? If, as seems most likely, I run out of things to say, the sceptic will accuse me of making an assumption. If I find myself coming back to something already said, he will accuse me of reasoning in a circle. Perhaps these latter options are not so different: propositions that I cannot defend in a non-circular way might as well be thought of as ultimate commitments: assumptions. But be that as it may, regress, assumption and circularity exhaust our options, yet none produces knowledge.

On the basis of considerations like this, sceptics have questioned whether any of our beliefs are certain. More radically, they have questioned whether any of our beliefs amount to knowledge, even if knowledge does not demand absolute certainty. More radically still, they have questioned whether any of our beliefs are justified even to the slightest extent, whether we have any shred of a reason to suppose that anything we believe is true.

While an infinite regress of justification would be vicious, it is surely not in prospect. Our ability to give grounds runs out, rather quickly in fact. For this reason, the most obvious response to Agrippan scepticism is to adopt some form of epistemological foundationalism. According to foundationalists, if we have knowledge at all, there must be beliefs which, while not based on evidence,

are not arbitrary either, hence not mere assumptions. Traditional foundationalists think that such epistemologically 'basic' beliefs must be 'self-evidencing' or 'intrinsically credible'.

The quest for basic beliefs turns rather naturally into a quest for certainty. Beliefs that are less than certain may be probable. But to be probable is to be probable relative to some evidence, about which we need to have beliefs. If those evidence-providing beliefs are themselves only probable, we will need still further beliefs from which that probability is derived, and so on. This variation on the Agrippan argument has led philosophers to conclude that, unless some beliefs are certain, no others can be so much as probable. However, while the quest for certainty is characteristic of foundationalism in its traditional form, recent forms of foundationalism have tended to be more moderate. For moderate foundationalists, intrinsic credibility need not amount to certainty. Basic beliefs can be defeasible.

Wittgenstein shares the foundationalists' conviction that our ability to give grounds is quite limited: 'To be sure there is justification; but justification comes to an end' (192). More than this, on the question of certainty, Wittgenstein appears at first to take the traditional line. Some judgements are certain because they *cannot* be doubted at all. Alluding to Moore's famous proof of an external world, Wittgenstein writes:

> 25 One may be wrong even about 'there being a hand here'. Only in particular circumstances it is impossible…

Although there is no sharp line between cases where doubt is unreasonable and those where it is impossible (454), the line can be crossed. One may doubt the existence of a planet, which later observations prove to exist. However,

> 54…it is not true that a mistake merely gets more and more improbable as we pass from the planet to my own hand. No: at some point it has already ceased to be conceivable.

Where doubt is impossible, we find certainty.

While Wittgenstein's quest for certainty puts him at odds with philosophers (like myself) who have been tempted to claim (perhaps rather too casually) that anything is revisable, it would be a bad mistake to think of him as attempting to rehabilitate traditional foundationalism.

One difference between Wittgenstein and standard-issue foundationalists stands out immediately. Traditional foundationalists argue for broad, theoretically coherent classes of basic beliefs. So, for example, such foundationalists generally hold that experiential knowledge is by its very nature more certain than, hence 'epistemologically prior' to, knowledge of the external world. By contrast, Wittgensteinian certainties are extremely heterogeneous and cannot be specified by any rule. They include elementary mathematical

propositions (12 x 12=144) and simple recognitional judgements ('Here is one hand'); but they also include quite general claims about the world around us (The earth has existed for many years past', 'Every human being has two parents', 'There are physical objects').

Not only does Wittgenstein repudiate the idea of definable classes of basic certainties, he has no use for another idea of central importance to traditional foundationalists: the idea that basic beliefs are basic because self-evidencing or intrinsically credible. The traditional conception of a basic belief involves the idea of encapsulated knowledge: things that we can believe without our needing to believe anything else, potential first items of knowledge from which a more elaborate structure of justified belief can be built up. By contrast, Wittgenstein holds that while some beliefs do and must 'stand fast', they do so in virtue of their place in a larger, inferentially articulated system of beliefs. Thus:

> 141 When we first begin to *believe* anything, what we believe is not a single proposition, it is a whole system of propositions. (Light dawns gradually over the whole.)
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> 142 It is not single axioms that strike me as obvious, it is a system in which consequences and premises give one another *mutual* support.
>
> 144 The child learns to believe a host of things. I.e. it learns to act according to those beliefs. Bit by bit there forms a system of what is believed, and in that system some things stand unshakably fast and some are more or less liable to shift. What stands fast does so, not because it is intrinsically obvious or convincing; it is rather held fast by what lies around it.

This sounds like a coherence theory of knowledge. However, the picture Wittgenstein is offering differs from traditional coherentism a number of ways.

Traditional coherentism is radically holistic. That is, traditional coherentists see justification as supervening on features of our belief-system as a whole. Nothing Wittgenstein says requires us to suppose that he shares this view. Wittgenstein treats our beliefs, not as elements in a single over-arching and (we hope) suitably coherent system, but rather as belonging to a loosely connected network of distinct (though not hermetically sealed) language-games. Wittgenstein's 'holism' is local and modular rather than global and monistic. This leads to a second difference. Because of their radical holism, traditional coherentists tend to treat all beliefs as epistemically on a par. In the last analysis, all beliefs owe their justification to their place in our belief-system considered as a whole. So if some beliefs are less easily discarded than others, this is only because discarding them would do extensive damage to the system at large, entailing a significant loss of coherence. Thus coherentists argue that any belief may be called in question, just not all beliefs at once. By contrast, while Wittgenstein agrees that beliefs necessarily belong to larger systems, he insists that, within any system of beliefs, there are deep differences in epistemic

status. In particular, there are basic certainties. Wittgenstein is able to take this position because his qualified holism has as much to do with meaning as with knowledge or justification. Meaning resides in the use of words: with the multifarious ways in which statements are linked to other statements and to circumstances. Being able to make lots of judgements is a precondition of making any. One does not hold any beliefs unless one holds lots of beliefs. But this point about meaning does not prejudge questions about the structure of justification. Language-games are necessarily acquired holistically. But a game's internal epistemic structure may well be quasi-foundationalist, with basic certainties functioning as fixed points.

There are, then, basic certainties. But *pace* traditional foundationalists, certainty has nothing to do with intrinsic credibility. So to what do basic certainties owe their special status? As we might expect, the answer—which reconciles the 'foundationalist' and 'coherentist' tendencies in Wittgenstein's thought—is meaning: in particular, meaning's connection to truth. The sceptic's great error is to take thought and judgement for granted. The sceptic proceeds as though he can say: we have all these thoughts, all these beliefs, but are any of them justified? Couldn't any one of them be false? Couldn't they all be false? Wittgenstein's answer is: no. A person who does not get lots of simple, obvious judgements right, or who senses 'doubts' where none can be found, lacks the ability to judge. Often judging correctly—as a precondition of making any judgements at all—is thus prior to any kind of epistemological reassurance. Wittgenstein thinks that this is perhaps clearest in the case of elementary mathematical judgements:

> 43 What sort of a proposition is this: 'We *cannot* have miscalculated in 12 x 12=144'? It must surely be a proposition of logic. —But now, is it not the same, or doesn't it come to the same, as the statement 12x12 = 144?
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> 44 If you demand a rule from which it follows that there can't have been a miscalculation here, the answer is that we did not learn this through a rule, but by learning to calculate.

However, though introduced in connection with elementary mathematical propositions, the thought that one must get lots of things right in order to be able to judge at all does not apply only to what have traditionally been thought of as necessary truths. It applies as well to so-called 'empirical' judgements. This is why a statement about the existence of a certain distant planet may be properly thought of as a hypothesis, while the statement 'Here is one hand', when my hand is in front of my face, may not be. As Wittgenstein says,

> 54…This is already suggested by the following: if it were not so, it would be conceivable that we should be wrong in every statement about physical objects; that any we ever make are mistaken.

But surely, we want to object, isn't this just what the sceptic suggests: that (as familiar thought-experiments show), we could be mistaken in every judgement about physical objects that we make? Indeed: but we should not be too ready to assume that we have a firm grasp on the sceptic's proposal. Wittgenstein writes:

> 55 So is the hypothesis possible, that all things around us don't exist? Would that not be like the hypothesis of our having miscalculated in all our calculations?

If meaning resides in how words are used, a good deal of use must be correct use (on pain of there being no use at all). Accordingly, universal mistake is not a possibility. Anticipating Davidson (2001), Wittgenstein makes this point in full generality:

> 80 The *truth* of my statements is the test of my understanding of these statements.
>   83 The *truth* of certain empirical propositions belongs to our frame of reference. [Emphases in original.]

In sum, in taking judgement (or belief) for granted, the sceptic arrives on the scene too late. Without judgements that are unproblematic, there are no judgements at all. And, because meaning is a matter of use, such unproblematic judgements must be unproblematically *true*.

So while allowing for basic certainties, Wittgenstein is not a foundationalist, in anything like the traditional manner. He makes no attempt to define theoretically coherent classes of basic judgements, and he repudiates the traditional idea that basic judgements derive their special status from their being intrinsically credible. These two points are connected. Basic certainties exist because judgement itself requires judgements that are unproblematically true. This is a point about judgement as such. It does not pick out a special class of judgements —experiential judgements, say—whose relation to truth is especially intimate.

So far, so good. However, connected with his repudiation of intrinsic credibility, and perhaps even more striking, is the fact that, in sharp contrast to traditional foundationalists, Wittgenstein is deeply reluctant to think of basic certainties as examples of basic *knowledge*. Thus:

> 32 It's not a matter of *Moore's* knowing that there's a hand there, but rather we should not understand him if he were to say 'Of course I may be wrong about this'. We should ask 'What is it like to make such a mistake as that?'—e.g. what's it like to discover that it was a mistake?
>   58 If 'I know etc.' is conceived as a grammatical proposition, of course the 'I' cannot be important. And it properly means There is no such thing as doubt in this case' or 'The expression "I do not know" makes no sense in

this case'. And of course it follows from this that 'I *know*' makes no sense either.

With regard to basic certainties, claims to knowledge are nonsensical. The concept of knowledge does not apply.

In allowing for basic certainties, while denying them the status of basic knowledge, Wittgenstein is trying to perform a delicate balancing act, conceding something to the sceptic, but not too much. Just how delicate an act becomes apparent when we see that the class of propositions that 'stand fast' or that 'lie apart from the route travelled by inquiry' (88) does not end with judgements like Moore's 'Here is one hand' but includes all sorts of general commitments: the sorts of commitments that Moore defends under the heading of 'common sense'.

Nightmare sceptical scenarios notwithstanding, I take it for granted that there is an external world, that the experimental apparatus does not disappear when I turn my back, that the earth has existed long before my birth, that not all historical documents are the product of fraud, that the sun will rise tomorrow. But Wittgenstein seems reluctant to think of such commonsense certainties as things that we simply know to be true. His reluctance grows out of a line of thought that, like the Agrippan argument itself, starts from the seemingly innocuous point that 'knowledge' belongs to a family of concepts that includes 'evidence', 'giving grounds', 'excluding the possibility of mistakes', and so on. He writes:

> 18 'I know' often means: I have the proper grounds for my statement. So if the other person is acquainted with the language-game, he would admit that I know. The other, if he is acquainted with the language-game, must be able to imagine *how* one may know something of the kind.

However, with respect to bedrock certainties, this is precisely what one cannot imagine:

> 84 Moore says he *knows* that the earth existed long before his birth… Now it is philosophically uninteresting whether Moore knows this or that, but it is interesting that, and how, it can be known. If Moore had informed us that he knew the distance separating certain stars, we might conclude that he had made some special investigations, and we shall want to know what these were. But Moore chooses precisely a case in which we all seem to know the same as he, and without being able to say how.

I cannot say *how* I know the things Moore says he knows, because such basic certainties are not based on grounds at all.

But the point is not simply that I *do* not have grounds for my basic certainties: I *could* not have grounds. Wittgenstein explains:

105 All testing, all confirmation and disconfirmation of a hypothesis takes place already within a system. And this system is not a more or less arbitrary and doubtful point of departure for all our arguments: no, it belongs to the essence of what we call an argument. The system is not so much the point of departure, as the element in which arguments have their life.

My commonsense and scientific framework determines what counts as evidence for what, thus what it is to give (or possess) grounds. But if practices of justification necessarily take place against a background of unchallenged (and even unchallengeable) commonsense and scientific certainties, it seems to follow that those certainties themselves are beyond justification. But if they cannot be justified, they cannot be known, or not known. The concept of knowledge gets no purchase here, just as Wittgenstein says.

I said that Wittgenstein is trying to perform a delicate balancing act, and it should now be obvious why it is so delicate. The difficulty is to distinguish this response to scepticism from scepticism itself. Wittgenstein is clearly sensitive to this problem. Indeed, there are occasions on which he seems tempted by a sceptical conclusion. For example:

146 We form *the picture* of the earth as a ball floating free in space and not altering essentially in a hundred years. I said 'We form the *picture* etc.' and this picture now helps us in the judgment of various situations. I may indeed calculate the dimensions of a bridge, sometimes calculate that here things are more in favour of a bridge than a ferry etc., etc., —but somewhere I must begin with an assumption or a decision.

This is just what the sceptic wants us to say. Significantly, however, this apparent concession to the sceptic is soon qualified:

149 My judgments themselves characterize the way I judge, characterize the nature of judging.
   150…Must I not begin to trust somewhere? That is to say: somewhere I must begin with not-doubting; and that is not, so to speak, hasty but excusable: it is part of judging.

Although basic certainties are not items of knowledge, they are not arbitrary or doubtful. Nor are they assumptions. Expressing doubt or making an assumption is an epistemic move on a par with giving grounds or claiming knowledge, in that it too necessarily takes place within some framework of bedrock certainties, the element in which *all* epistemic manoeuvres (not just arguments) have their life. The background is necessarily 'inherited' since, without such a background, one could not judge at all, whether knowledgeably or by way of assumption. Anyone who can judge is always already swimming in the element in which judgements

have their life. The sceptic would like to stand outside the framework that makes judgement possible, in order to cast doubt on it as a whole. But there is nowhere to stand.

The radical sceptic suggests that none of our beliefs are justified; and in the light of Wittgenstein's reflections, we may be able to repudiate this suggestion. The sorts of things that we do inquire into are justified (when justifiable) against the background of bedrock certainties. And as for those certainties themselves, we might say that there is a sense in which they too are justified. The sense is this: that in holding them we are not in any way epistemically irresponsible. If there is no judging without a background, there is nothing 'hasty' about relying on one. Even so, if knowledge properly so-called demands more in the way of justification than belief that is, in the sense just indicated, non-arbitrary, the background beliefs that we rely on will not amount to background knowledge.

I am sympathetic to what Wittgenstein is trying to do here. But lacking further development, the argument I have just given is less than fully satisfying. It may be that the judgements that belong to our 'frame of reference' are not what we ordinarily think of as assumptions, and so the sceptic should not call them such. But it is hard to shake the feeling that, on a deeper level, the sceptic is more right than wrong. The source of this feeling is not hard to identify. Many of our commonsense certainties appear to be empirical propositions. That is to say, whether they are true or false depends on what the facts are, not on what we believe. But such certainties cannot be supported by evidence or argument: the element in which arguments have their life cannot itself be argued for. To be sure, in one way our bedrock certainties are justified: we are fully entitled to hold on to them. But in another way, they are not. We do not and, in the nature of the case, cannot have *reasons to suppose that they are true.* This is the sense of 'justified' that seems to be uppermost in Wittgenstein's mind when he expresses reluctance to count basic certainties as items of knowledge. We seem to be left with substantial empirical commitments that cannot be justified. According to Wittgenstein, 'There are countless general empirical propositions that count as certain for us' (273). At the same time, 'At the foundation of well-founded belief lies belief that is not founded' (253). Isn't this what the sceptic is trying to say, except he goes on to wonder how well-founded belief can be, if it rests on belief that is not founded at all? Of course, this is not how we normally think. But as Wittgenstein himself remarks, 'The difficulty is to realize the groundlessness of our believing' (166).

It is not satisfying to be left with the thought that our whole practice of judging depends on 'ultimate commitments' that are both substantive and beyond justification. Since Wittgenstein seems deeply committed to the view that, in the relevant sense, our bedrock certainties are outside the scope of justification, he is under pressure to deny that such ultimate commitments are really substantive. That is to say, he is under pressure to deny that they are straightforwardly true or false. Basic certainties are not items of knowledge, not only because they are beyond justification, but because they lack truth-value.

As I suggested would happen, we have been led from Wittgenstein's account of basic certainties to what seems to be a deep tension in Wittgenstein's thought. Wittgenstein's picture of knowledge tries to combine elements from foundationalist and coherentist. His use-centred approach to meaning leads him to a holistic conception of belief and judgement. One can make a judgement or hold a belief only if one makes lots of judgements and holds lots of beliefs. But within any system of beliefs, some function as fixed points. One line of thought leads to the view that such fixed-point judgements express unproblematic truths. But another line leads to the idea that such judgements are not known to be true: initially because they cannot be justified, but consequently because they are not really true or false.

So far, I have spoken of Wittgenstein's being 'under pressure' to treat bedrock certainties as both straightforwardly true and as neither true nor false. However, it is not hard to find evidence that Wittgenstein himself feels these conflicting pressures and is, as a result, pulled both ways.

As we noted, Wittgenstein argues that 'The *truth* of certain empirical propositions belongs to our frame of reference.' He returns to this idea of a 'frame of reference' on several occasions, offering various phrases and metaphors to further illuminate it. These phrases and metaphors seem to express his ambivalence about the truth of framework-constitutive judgements.

Lots of propositions that are taken for granted are never articulated. They literally go without saying. As Wittgenstein notes:

> 152 I do not explicitly learn the propositions that stand fast for me. I can discover them subsequently like an axis around which a body rotates. The axis is not fixed in the sense that anything holds it fast, but the movement around it determines its immobility.

How are such axial points discovered? Surely, the answer must be that we can come to see that they are presupposed—logically implied by the particular ways in which we do and do not ask questions. By 'logically' I do not necessarily mean 'formally'. Rather, they may be held fast by what Robert Brandom calls 'material-inferential connections'.[6] Still, it is hard to see how such propositions could lack truth-value. They are presupposed in the sense that a commitment to their truth is implicit in our practices of inquiry and justification. This seems to be part of what Wittgenstein is getting at when he introduces the idea of a 'hinge' proposition. Thus:

> 341…[T]he questions we raise and our *doubts* depend on the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt, are as it were like hinges on which those turn.

The natural reading of 'exempt from doubt' is 'taken to be true'. We would not naturally think of ourselves as 'exempting from doubt' propositions that could not possibly be true (or false).

Not hinting at problems about truth, these metaphors—the axis of rotation and the hinge—invite classification as 'realist' or 'objectivist'. But they are balanced by others that have a quite different feel and which might therefore be thought to exhibit an 'anti-realist' tendency. As we have seen, Wittgenstein seems to want to argue that basic certainties are beyond justification, leading to worries about whether his picture of knowledge leaves us with unjustifiable ultimate commitments. Not surprisingly, when he is arguing in this vein, questions about truth are not far below the surface. Thus:

> 94 I did not get my picture of the world by satisfying myself of its correctness; nor do I have it because I am satisfied of its correctness. No: it is the inherited background against which I distinguish between the true and the false.
>
> 95 The propositions describing this world-picture might be part of a kind of mythology. And their role is like that of rules of a game; and the game can be learned purely practically, without learning any explicit rules.

This mythology, Wittgenstein tells us, constitutes 'the river-bed of thoughts' (97). Our practices of inquiring, justifying and arguing run in channels. Less metaphorically; what we leave alone determines the direction and content of the inquiries that we do undertake.

The metaphor of the river-bed has obvious affinities with those of the axial point and the hinge. Even so, to my ear, 'world-picture' and 'mythology' strike a very different note from talk of a 'frame of reference' constituted by the truth of various 'empirical propositions'. Pictures and mythologies are the sorts of things that we do not think of as straightforwardly true or false. Wittgenstein seems to want to detach the idea that certain propositions must 'stand fast' from any suggestion that we are stuck with substantive but unjustifiable commitments. He hints that standfast 'propositions' may lack truth-value because they are more like rules than like statements. The hint is not really followed up, but it points to Wittgenstein's concerns about truth.

I have suggested a contrast between pictures and propositions. Wittgenstein himself seems to do the same. So, he suggests:

> 146 We form *the picture* of the earth as a ball floating free in space and not altering essentially in a hundred years. I said 'We form the *picture* etc.' and this picture now helps us in the judgment of various situations…
>
> 147 The picture of the earth as a ball is a *good* picture, it proves itself everywhere, it is also a simple picture—in short, we work with it without doubting it.

Our 'thought' that the earth is round is not really a straightforwardly true belief but rather a useful picture. Pictures are not true or false, though they can be more (or less) helpful, more or less good to work with.

I think that we recoil from this suggestion. We want to say that our 'picture' of the earth as a ball floating free in space is not just useful but true: at any rate, truer than the picture of it as a disc resting on four elephants standing on a tortoise. Today we haven't just *formed* the picture of the earth as a ball floating free in space, we have *taken* its picture.

I think that Wittgenstein shares this reaction. Wittgenstein's talk of useful pictures sounds like a move towards pragmatism. Wittgenstein recognizes a tendency for his thought to move in this direction and repudiates it:

> 422 So I am trying to say something that sounds like pragmatism. Here I am being defeated by a kind of *Weltanschauung*.

Even the metaphor of the river-bed, which immediately follows from the passage that talks of our 'world-picture' as 'a kind of mythology', leads straight to this:

> 100 The truths which Moore says he knows, are such as, roughly speaking, all of us know, if he knows them.

Here Wittgenstein retains his reluctance to think of basic certainties as items of knowledge, but cannot suppress the commonsense thought that they are straightforward truths.

What are we to make of all this? Are hinge propositions true (or true or false) or aren't they?

3.
Physical objects

The first thing to say is this. There are 'propositions' that have been *thought* to be hinges and which lack truth-value. But they are not genuine hinges. Not every proposition that commentators have thought to be a hinge is one. I say 'propositions', but really I have one proposition in mind. This 'proposition' expresses, or purports to express, one of our most fundamental presuppositions of all: that there is a physical world, or that physical objects really exist.

This proposition has not figured prominently in our discussion to this point. This is because, so far, I have presented Wittgenstein as primarily concerned with Agrippan scepticism, the kind of scepticism that grows out of reflection on what threatens to be an infinite regress of justification. But the first set of notes reproduced in *On Certainty,* comprising paragraphs 1–64, seem mainly to be prompted by Moore's proof of an external world. Here, the problem uppermost in Wittgenstein's mind seems to be Cartesian scepticism, the problem of our knowledge of the external world.[7]

Where Agrippan scepticism is universal, Cartesian scepticism targets certain broad categories of beliefs: beliefs about the external world, or other minds, or the past, or the future. Cartesian argumentation differs from Agrippan in the central role it assigns to sceptical hypotheses: hypotheses that are wildly at variance with our ordinary beliefs but which seem extraordinarily difficult to rule out, given what seem to be our epistemic resources. The paradigm Cartesian problem is Descartes' problem of our knowledge of the external world; and the paradigm sceptical hypothesis is that our experience is controlled by an Evil Deceiver, so that the external world, as we ordinarily conceive it, does not exist, even though our experience remains unchanged. It seems, therefore, that our experience does not give us unproblematic access to the external world. But when it comes to knowing about the world around us, experience is all we have to go on.

Cartesian scepticism is closely associated with Berkeleyan idealism. The idealist agrees that what we immediately know are our experiences or 'ideas' but argues that this is no barrier to ordinary objects. This is because ordinary objects just are clusters of experiential properties. In its sophisticated phenomenalist version, idealism claims that talk about ordinary objects can in principle be translated into talk about experiences: as used to be said, 'material objects' are logical constructions out of sense-data. Wittgenstein is concerned with the connection between scepticism and idealism. In his opening set of notes, Wittgenstein refers from time to time to 'the idealist' as one whose philosophical inclinations need to be understood and overcome.

We might be surprised to find Wittgenstein taking a particular interest in Cartesian scepticism. For as we noted at the outset, the class of propositions that stand fast is extremely heterogeneous. In fact, it includes all sorts of judgements, particular and general, about objects in the external world. It looks, therefore, as though Wittgenstein doesn't need to say anything special to the Cartesian sceptic. His response to the regress problem brings along a response to the external world problem at no extra charge.

This objection takes an overly simple view of what is involved in responding to the threat of scepticism. We do not want simply to 'refute the sceptic' in the sense of showing that he is wrong. We want to understand both how the sceptic goes wrong and why, nevertheless, scepticism can seem so compelling. We want a response to scepticism that is *diagnostic* rather than merely *dialectical*. From the standpoint of this diagnostic project, Cartesian scepticism may turn out to have quite special origins and so requires a separate investigation. Furthermore, as long as Cartesian scepticism remains undiagnosed, Wittgenstein's relaxed conception of basic certainties will itself seem problematic, for it will seem to take our place in the world for granted.

Wittgenstein opens his investigation of Cartesian scepticism by reminding us that the sceptic calls in question beliefs that it does not normally occur to us to doubt. However, he is well aware that this point cuts little ice with the sceptic ('idealist'). Picking up on Moore's proof of an external world, which begins with

Moore's exhibiting his hands as two objects definitely known to exist, Wittgenstein writes:

> 19 The statement 'I know that here is a hand' may then be continued 'for it's *my* hand that I'm looking at'. Then the reasonable man will not doubt that I know.—Nor will the idealist; rather he will say that he was not dealing with the practical doubt which is being dismissed, but there is a further doubt *behind* that one.—That this is an *illusion* has to be shown in a different way

The sceptic or idealist admits that his doubt is special. For example, it is purely theoretical. But this does not mean that it is illegitimate.

A deeper investigation will focus on the way that the sceptic treats the claim that there are physical objects as an unverifiable hypothesis. (From the standpoint of our concerns in this paper, this is already interesting, since this is just how Wittgenstein himself appears to regard some basic certainties.) To make plausible his attitude, the Cartesian sceptic makes essential use of 'sceptical hypotheses': for example, that I am the victim of an Evil Deceiver who produces all my experiences. Thus the sceptic supposes himself to be able to imagine that there is no physical world at all. But is this really so easy to do? Wittgenstein thinks not.

> 35 But can't it be imagined that there are no physical objects? I don't know. And yet 'There are physical objects' is nonsense. Is it supposed to be an empirical proposition?— And is *this* an empirical proposition: 'There seem to be physical objects'?
>
> 36 'A is a physical object' is a piece of instruction which we give only to someone who doesn't understand what 'A' means, or what 'physical object' means. Thus it is instruction about the use of words, and physical object is a logical concept. (Like colour, quantity…) And that is why no such proposition as: There are physical objects' can be formulated. Yet we encounter such unsuccessful shots at every turn.

This is all rather cryptic. But what Wittgenstein has in mind is this. Our understanding of 'objects' is implicit in our ability to refer to particular kinds of object. This ability involves essentially various criteria for identification and re-identification: for when we have the same object again and when we don't. Our ways of identifying and re-identifying sort 'objects' into broad logical categories, and familiarity with such categories, or logical concepts, can short-circuit the teaching of new words. According to Wittgenstein, 'physical object', along with 'colour' and 'quantity', is just such a logical concept. This is why no such proposition as 'There are physical objects' can be formulated. At most it could mean, 'We talk about tables, chairs, dogs, cats, etc.' This is not at all what the realist intends to assert or the idealist to deny.[8]

Interestingly, even this is not the end of the story The idealist or sceptic certainly thinks that 'There are physical objects' is some kind of hypothesis, and we have not yet explained why Wittgenstein registers the incompleteness of his diagnosis:

> 37 But is it an adequate answer to the scepticism of the idealist, or the assurances of the realist, to say that There are physical objects' is nonsense? For them after all it is not nonsense. It would, however, be an answer to say: this assertion, or its opposite, is a misfiring attempt to express what can't be expressed like that. And that it does misfire can be shown; but that isn't the end of the matter. We need to realize that what presents itself to us as the first expression of a difficulty, or of its solution, may as yet not be correctly expressed at all. Just as one who has a just censure of a picture to make will often at first offer the censure where it does not belong, and an *investigation* is needed in order to find the right point of attack for the critic.

So what is the right point of attack?

The source of the problem is the doctrine that only sense-data are immediately known, so that knowledge of the existence of physical objects is always and everywhere dependent on a risky (in fact indefensible) inference from our basic experiential knowledge. If we think that experiential knowledge has a special status—that it is epistemologically basic—then indeed any form of belief in the 'external world' will look like a hypothesis. Indeed, it will be a hypothesis, relative to the basic evidence.

There is no need to fall in with this idea. In fact, there is every reason not to. Wittgenstein's diagnosis is meant to reveal Cartesian scepticism as an artifact of Cartesian epistemology, which in turn depends on taking meaning for granted. Wittgenstein, of course, refuses to take meaning for granted. As we have seen, the use-centred conception of meaning that grows out of this refusal leads him to conclude that the connection between meaning and truth is pervasive. It does not single out some special class of epistemologically basic propositions, defined by their content, to which all other beliefs are then answerable. There is no context-independent order of epistemic priority that puts experiential or sensedatum judgements at the bottom and all other empirical judgements higher up. Wittgenstein draws this conclusion explicitly:

> 53 So one might grant that Moore was right, if he is interpreted like this: a proposition saying that here is a physical object may have the same logical status as one saying that here is a red patch.

The heterogeneity of basic certainties—the natural outcome of a use-theoretic approach to meaning—is the antidote to the idea of an experiential basis for all

our knowledge of the world. And without that idea there is no sceptical problem, no sense of 'There are physical objects' as a hypothesis.[9]

This unmasking of Cartesian scepticism vindicates Wittgenstein's initial diagnosis of sceptical or idealist doubts about whether there are physical objects as nonsense. 'There are physical objects' is indeed neither true nor false. But this is not because it is not a hinge proposition. 'There are physical objects' is not a proposition at all: just a misfiring attempt to express something that needs to be said another way.

4.
Common sense is different

'There are physical objects' is a special case. It is inconceivable that there should be discursive beings who had not mastered 'physical-object' talk. However, more specialized kinds of talk are not like that.[10] Compare 'knowing that there are physical objects' with 'knowing history':

> 85 [W]hat goes into someone's knowing…history, say? He must know what it means to say: the earth has already existed for such and such a length of time. For not *any* intelligent adult must know that…

Or again:

> 92…Men have believed that they could make rain. Why should not a king be brought up in the belief…that the world began with him. And if Moore and this king were to meet and discuss, could Moore really prove his belief to be the right one? I do not say that Moore could not convert the king to his view, but it would be a conversion of a special kind; the king would be brought to look at the world in a different way.

A definite conception of historical time belongs to what we take as common sense. Not all rational beings need share it.

Not only need what we take as common sense not be universally shared, our own commonsense convictions are subject to change. The main thrust of the metaphor of the river-bed is to make vivid just this point. Wittgenstein writes:

> 96 It might be imagined that some propositions, of the form of empirical propositions, were hardened and functioned as channels for such empirical propositions as were not hardened but fluid; and that this relation altered with time, in that fluid propositions hardened and hard ones became fluid.
>
> 97 The mythology may change back into a state of flux, the river-bed of thoughts may shift But I distinguish between the movement of the waters on the river-bed and the shift of the bed itself; though there is not a sharp division of the one from the other.

> 99 And the bank of that river consists partly of hard rock, subject to no alteration or only to an imperceptible one, partly of sand, which now in one place now in another gets washed away, or deposited.

Again we see that not everything that belongs to common sense is a precondition of the very possibility of thought. Wittgenstein's response to idealism, or Cartesian scepticism, the problem addressed in Moore's 'Proof', must therefore be distinguished from his discussion of Moore's 'Defence', which raises very different issues. Moorean common sense is the home of genuine hinge propositions. That they need not be universally subscribed to and that they are subject to change are facts testifying to their genuineness. But their genuineness makes them problematic in ways that demand further explanation. All we know so far is that Wittgenstein's treatment of the 'framework' of physical objects does not offer a template for a treatment of the framework of common sense.

Common sense is our frame of reference, the element in which our practices of inquiring, justifying, assuming, questioning, doubting and all the rest have their life. This seems to put them beyond justification: indeed, beyond being the objects of any straightforward epistemic attitude. Thus if Moore were to bring the king around to our conception of historical time, 'it would be a conversion of a special kind', in which the king would come to 'look at the world in a new way'.

Wittgenstein seems to acknowledge that this line of thought invites questions about truth. Recall the tribe (108) whose members believe that they take trips to the moon. Since they grant that there are no ordinary means of getting there, scientific arguments will not convince them of the error of their ways. Still, whatever *they* think, they *haven't* been to the moon. No one has (or had then). Wittgenstein registers this reaction; but as we saw, his response seems oddly hesitant. If we are thinking 'within our system', it is certain that no one has ever been to the moon. Does 'certain' here mean 'certainly true'? If so, Wittgenstein is heading towards relativism, for his thought will be that truth, and not merely justification, is internal to a 'system'. But even this relativized truth may be applicable only to propositions justifiable within a system. It is not clear that propositions constituting the frame of the system can be thought of as either true or false.

As we noted, it is easy to see how Wittgenstein might be tempted to conclude that they cannot. Propositions belonging to the framework of common sense look to be substantial: they needn't be shared, and they can change. Since they are beyond justification, we seem to be left with substantial factual commitments that we cannot justify, just as the sceptic has always suspected. We may not have lost the physical world in its entirety. But we have lost a great deal of knowledge about it. So we are tempted to suggest that such framework propositions are not really factual. This temptation seems evidently present in the metaphor of the river-bed. The bed—the 'mythology' that is our 'world-picture'—is constituted by propositions that have only the *form* of empirical propositions.

If Wittgenstein really does want to make the move from the impossibility of justifying framework propositions to their lacking a truth value, he will have to do so by way of an 'epistemic' or 'anti-realist' conception of truth: a conception of truth that ties truth to verification. There seems to be plenty of evidence of his willingness to take just such a conception of truth on board. On the negative side, he questions the intelligibility of the claim that truth is not a matter of verification but of correspondence to fact; and he does so in a way that connects with anti-realist doubts about whether any proposition is true or false. He writes:

> 199 The reason why the use of the expression 'true or false' has something misleading about it is that it is like saying 'it tallies with the facts or it doesn't', and the very thing that is in question is what is 'tallying' here.

Is the alternative to a 'correspondence' conception of truth an epistemic conception? Wittgenstein seems tempted to suppose so:

> 200 Really The proposition is either true or false' only means that it must be possible to decide for or against it…
>   205 If the true is what is grounded, then the ground is not *true*, nor yet false.

What could be clearer? Perhaps not much. But just as clearly, Wittgenstein is pulled in a quite different direction, for, as we have seen:

> 83 The *truth* of certain empirical propositions belongs to our frame of reference.

Our frame of reference is not just a 'mythology' constituted by propositions that just look as though they were empirical. They are genuine empirical propositions, and they are straightforwardly true.

Wittgenstein can be difficult to read here because of some terminological uncertainty. Sometimes, he gives 'empirical' an epistemic sense, using it to mean 'apt for being supported by evidence'. This is the sense of 'empirical' that goes with his saying that the hardened propositions constituting the river-bed of thought have only 'the form of empirical propositions'. Since they determine what counts as evidence, they are not themselves straightforwardly verifiable or falsifiable, hence not 'empirical'. But at other times, he gives 'empirical' a more 'metaphysical' spin, using it to mean 'factual' or 'contingent'. According to this second use, framework propositions include numerous empirical judgements. Indeed, 'There are countless general empirical propositions that count as certain for us' (273).

While easy enough to allow for, once we are on the lookout for it, this equivocation does nothing to resolve the theoretical tension. There are any number of passages where Wittgenstein uses 'empirical' to mean 'factual' but

still stresses their peculiar place in our epistemic practices. We just saw one. Here is another:

> 136 When Moore says he *knows* such and such, he is really enumerating a lot of empirical propositions which we affirm without special testing; propositions, that is, which have a peculiar logical role in the system of our empirical propositions.

Having a special role (e.g. as a hinge) is compatible with being an 'empirical' (= factual) proposition. If Wittgenstein is tempted by an epistemic conception of truth, this is exactly what we should expect him to disallow. So what should we say about empirical propositions functioning as hinges: do they have truth-values or not?

5.
Sources of certainty

I have spoken of an 'apparent' tension in Wittgenstein's thought, hinting that it can be resolved. But we cannot dismiss out of hand the possibility that the tension is genuine. I myself used to think that it was genuine and that it reflected a deep uncertainty, on Wittgenstein's part, over how best to approach the concept of truth.

Clearly, Wittgenstein is suspicious of the correspondence theory of truth. But he may be attracted to competing alternatives to it. We have already noted passages from *On Certainty* in which Wittgenstein appears to advance an epistemic conception of truth. However, in *Philosophical Investigations,* he endorses what would today be called a 'deflationary' approach to truth: specifically, a redundancy theory. Thus:

> *PI* 136 At bottom, giving 'This is how things are' as the general form of propositions is the same as giving the definition: a proposition is whatever can be true or false. For instead of 'This is how things are' I could have said 'This is true'. (Or again 'this is false'.) But we have
> 'p' is true=p
> 'p' is false=not-p.

Now ideas about meaning, deriving from *Philosophical Investigations,* are pervasive in *On Certainty*. Accordingly, it would not be surprising if the view of truth that went with them were present also, though perhaps not always on the surface. So we might suppose that, in his 'realist' moments, Wittgenstein is treating truth, understood along deflationist lines, as unproblematic, needing no substantive analysis. By contrast, in his 'anti-realist' moments, he is evincing sympathy for an epistemic conception of truth.

I still think that there is something to this suggestion. But as it stands, it is too simplistic. An obvious question to ask is: how can Wittgenstein show so little awareness of this cleft in his thinking? Why isn't the temptation to think of truth in different ways an explicit topic of reflection? If the tension in his thought is genuine, why doesn't Wittgenstein show signs of *feeling* it?

One possible answer is that *On Certainty* is just a collection of notes, composed at different times, dealing with different (if related) topics and trying out different lines of thought. When exploring one line, we might suppose, Wittgenstein falls with a deflationary view of truth. When exploring another, he is led in the direction of an epistemic conception. Since the notes are exploratory, they are not even intended to advance a stable view. Accordingly, there is no tension to explain, only different suggestions to note.

This answer is inadequate. It is true that Wittgenstein's notes are exploratory and shift focus. However, these shifts of focus show no clear relation to his ways of thinking about truth. Recall the metaphor of the river-bed (96–99). This metaphor is introduced by a passage in which our 'world picture' is likened to 'a kind of mythology' (95). But as we saw, it is followed immediately by a passage that speaks unhesitatingly of 'the truths which Moore says he knows' (100). Even if that passage begins a new set of reflections, it is hard to see how such an abrupt turnaround could go unremarked.

Another suggestion, along the same lines, makes use of an important and (I think) under-appreciated fact about *On Certainty*. This is that the first set of notes (1–65) are concerned mainly with Moore's 'Proof of an External World', whereas the next two sets (66–192 and 193–299) introduce themes from Moore's 'Defence of Common Sense'. I have already argued that Wittgenstein thinks that Cartesian scepticism needs special treatment, treatment that turns out to implicate questions of meaning in a very fundamental way. Common sense raises different issues, precisely because a person could depart from our commonsense views without violating the preconditions for being a thinker at all. We might suppose, then, that the deflationary conception of truth comes to the fore when Wittgenstein's focus is Cartesian scepticism (hence the conditions on being a thinker at all), whereas the epistemic conception is more tempting in discussions of the status of common sense.

This is a better suggestion because it links Wittgenstein's apparently different ways of thinking about truth with different sets of notes and with different focal problems. Also, it is true that the passages in which Wittgenstein seems tempted by an epistemic approach to truth are concentrated in the second and third sets of notes, where the status of common sense, thus of 'hinge' propositions, is the most prominent concern. But again, even in these sets of notes, the tendency to treat truth as unproblematic—and as non-epistemic—is visibly present too. To be sure, Wittgenstein's diagnosis of Cartesian scepticism is where he first exploits the link between meaning and truth. But the context for his 'proto-Davidsonian' argument, in which he makes the link fully explicit, is a discussion of common sense. His claim, at 83, that the truth of certain empirical propositions belongs to

our frame of reference is followed, at 84, by a passage that takes up Moore's claim that the earth has existed long before his birth. Once again, the strategy of resolution by distribution fails to accord with Wittgenstein's actual procedure. We cannot explain Wittgenstein's apparent failure to feel the tension in his thought by distributing his 'realist' and 'anti-realist' tendencies among different occasions of reflection: those conflicting tendencies, if genuine, are on display at the same locations.

The question thus remains on the table: how can Wittgenstein tolerate, or fail to notice, his deep uncertainty about truth? The answer is that, appearances notwithstanding, the uncertainty is not all that deep or all that significant. Wittgenstein is not much interested in the semantics or metaphysics of truth: his focal concern is not truth but certainty. This is not to say that he has *no* interest in these topics. His concern with certainty gives him a definite interest in heading off various mistaken understandings of how certainty arises; and this gives him a certain derivative interest in truth, in so far as appeals to truth enter into such mistaken understandings.

Does this largely negative interest in truth explain how Wittgenstein might not feel that it was urgent for him finally to decide between a deflationary and an epistemic approach? Perhaps: for since both deflationary and epistemic views are unfriendly to explaining certainty in terms of truth, the difference between the two approaches to truth might not be salient for him. But I do not find this suggestion really satisfying either. While it is true that on neither a deflationary nor an epistemic conception can truth explain certainty, the reasons are very different.

Deflationists do not so much repudiate correspondence as trivialize it. The fundamental feature of the truth-predicate is its 'disquotational' property: 'p' is true if and only if p. For deflationists, truth-talk is a device for semantic ascent: a way of replacing first-order talk about things with logically equivalent talk about words (or in some versions propositions). The function of the truth-predicate is therefore expressive: for example, it allows us to endorse (or reject) statements that we cannot or do not choose to reiterate. On a deflationary view, truth isn't the sort of concept that can bear much explanatory weight. So for a deflationist, the problem with explaining certainty by appeal to truth (where this involves more than linking meaning with believing lots of truths) is that the concept of truth is simply not 'substantive'.[11] By contrast, on an epistemic view, the concept has plenty of substance. However, this substance is derived from epistemic considerations. For an epistemic truth-theorist, then, the problem with explaining certainty in terms of truth is not that truth is not a substantive concept but that the arrow of explanation goes the wrong way. If anything, certainty explains truth (or in some cases, lack of truth-value). It is hard to see how this difference is one that Wittgenstein could overlook.

I have said that Wittgenstein's primary interest is in certainty, rather than truth. What I now want to claim is that, while it might be going too far to say that Wittgenstein is not tempted *at all* by an epistemic conception of truth (though I am not entirely sure even about this), he is much less tempted than we might

think. The *dominant* tendency of his thinking about truth is strongly deflationary, a fact that accords well with his comparative lack of interest in truth as an independent topic of inquiry. For a deflationist, truth is simply not that interesting, epistemologically speaking. With these points in mind, we can take a look -in some cases a second look—at the more important passages in which Wittgenstein brings up questions of truth.

I began this essay with a passage in which Wittgenstein appears reluctant to declare that the tribesmen's belief that they visit the moon is simply false. However, this passage is not his last word on the *soi-disant* moon-visitors:

> 286 What we believe depends on what we learn. We all believe that it isn't possible to get to the moon; but there might be people who believe that that is possible and that it sometimes happens. We say: these people do not know a lot that we know. And let them be never so sure of their belief— they are wrong and we know it.
>
> If we compare our system of knowledge with theirs then theirs is evidently the poorer one by far.[12]

Now some readers might detect a hint of studied neutrality even here. *We say* that there is a lot we know that they don't: our ordinary attitude is neither sceptical nor relativist. Doesn't Wittgenstein's way of putting the point suggest that, philosophically speaking, we can still do more than take note of the intellectual gulf between us and them? In the context of philosophical reflection, isn't scepticism the position we find ourselves led to, even if our 'philosophical' and everyday attitudes are diametrically opposed? No, because there is no 'philosophical' standpoint, outside all everyday ways of looking at the world. We can't give our way of looking at things a 'philosophical' justification, a justification that makes whatever considerations convince us of our correctness *more* solid than they already are. But this does not and should not make them any *less* convincing either. Wittgenstein's position is not epistemological scepticism but scepticism about epistemology (in so far as epistemology aims at providing us with 'philosophical' justifications for our current beliefs).

That phrases like 'we say' are not intended to strike a sceptical note comes out very clearly in Wittgenstein's response to the point that our current beliefs don't have to be true. To be sure, even some of our own most deeply held convictions may undergo change: we may come to see them as wrong-headed. But in this there is no route from fallibilism to scepticism. The abstract possibility of changing one's mind is no reason to affect a radically sceptical attitude towards one's current beliefs, if such an attitude is even possible. Wittgenstein is emphatic about this:

> 599…[O]ne can offer counter-examples…which show that human beings have held this and that to be certain which later, according to our opinion, proved false. But this argument is worthless. To say: in the end we can

only adduce such grounds as *we* hold to be grounds, is to say nothing at all.

This is why Wittgenstein, having coolly noted what 'we say' about the moon-visitors, shows no hesitation in passing judgement on their outlook.

For our present concerns, the point to stress is that Wittgenstein does not hesitate to predicate truth of our commonsense convictions. But to insist on their truth is just to re-iterate them, usually emphatically. Truth-talk affects the speech-act we perform, not the proposition we express. The appeal to truth, in connection with bedrock commitments, *displays* their certainty but does nothing to *explain* it. Thus the grounds for Wittgenstein's negative judgement on the moon-visitors' fantasy are broadly speaking epistemic, having to do with how thin their view is compared with ours. Since they know no physics, there is a host of questions that they cannot even ask, much less answer. We can't take them seriously.

The case of the moon-visitors is not isolated. Consider the hypothesis, sceptical or primitive, that the earth is very young. Here too Wittgenstein is ready to make a negative epistemic assessment:

190 What we call historical evidence points to the existence of the earth a long time before my birth; —the opposite hypothesis has *nothing* on its side.

But he immediately insists that this assessment cannot be explained or justified by bringing up the truth of our ordinary views:

191 Well, if everything speaks for an hypothesis and nothing against it— is it then certainly true? One may designate it as such. — But does it certainly agree with reality, with the fact?—With this question you are already going round in a circle.

Again, there is no objection to designating the 'hypothesis' of the antiquity of the earth as true and even certain. But its certainty is not explained by its truth, even when the appeal to truth is tricked out with talk of correspondence to fact. Fact talk is just a stylistic variant of truth talk, which is itself redundant. This is why, in appealing to truth, we are simply going round in a circle. Thus 'justification comes to an end' (192). All this is perfectly consonant with—I would say indicative of—Wittgenstein's having a deflationary approach to truth and a sceptical attitude towards 'philosophical' justification.

After 193, Wittgenstein's editors indicate a break in his notes. But his notes resume with reflections bearing on truth. It is in these passages, pre-eminently, that he may appear to be edging towards analysing truth epistemically.

Whatever his destination, his starting point makes clear (yet again) that the main topic is certainty. 'What does this mean: the truth of a proposition is *certain*?'

(193). With the word 'certain', he tells us, we express complete conviction. But this is only 'subjective' certainty. Objective certainty is found when a mistake is not possible, and we need to know what kind of possibility is involved here. Mustn't the possibility of making a mistake be somehow *logically* excluded? (194).

Again, Wittgenstein insists that appeals to truth get us nowhere:

196 Sure evidence is what we *accept* as sure, it is evidence that we go by in *acting* surely, acting without any doubt…
    197 It would be nonsense to say that we regard something as sure evidence because it is certainly true.
    198 Rather, we must first determine the role of deciding for and against a proposition.

Why must we 'first' determine the role of deciding for and against a proposition? Because explaining certainty in terms of truth is just going around in a circle.

That is one point. But a lot more is going on here. Wittgenstein's repudiation of appealing to truth to explain certainty is immediately followed by passages that seem to link truth with decidability:

199 The reason why the use of the expression 'true or false' has something misleading about it is that it is like saying 'it tallies with the facts or it doesn't', and the very thing that is in question is what 'tallying' is here.
    200 Really 'The proposition is either true or false' only means that it must be possible to decide for or against it. But this does not say what the ground for such a decision is like.

What could be clearer than this? Whatever Wittgenstein may say elsewhere, doesn't this passage identify 'true' with 'provable' or 'verifiable'? Accordingly, isn't Wittgenstein expressing a temptation to take an 'anti-realist' stance towards framework propositions? Unlikely as it may seem, I do not think so.

Let us briefly step away from Wittgenstein, and let us recall the Verification Principle: the Positivists' criterion of meaningfulness. According to this principle, a non-analytic sentence is meaningful only if it is verifiable; and the point of linking meaningfulness with verifiability is to open a way of arguing that certain sentences that we might suppose to be meaningful are in fact devoid of cognitive significance. However, whether the Principle has any critical bite depends entirely on our understanding 'verifiable' in some restrictive way. If 'verifiable' is taken to mean no more than 'arguable somehow or other', it will be difficult to convict *any* sentences of meaninglessness. Ayer scorned Bradley's claim that The Absolute enters into but is itself incapable of evolution and progress' as a paradigm of metaphysical nonsense (Ayer 1946: ch. 1). But not even Ayer would have denied that Bradley argued for his claim. The problem was the way he argued, which gave no hint of what empirical evidence might

bear on the truth of his statement. Furthermore, Ayer understood empirical evidence very narrowly, in terms of claims formulated in a fixed observation language, the predicates of which referred only to 'immediately perceivable' sensible qualities. It is not the Verification Principle itself but the Logical Empiricist conception of verification that does the heavy lifting. Absent its association with empiricism, the Verification Principle could mean anything or nothing.

I suggest that we read Wittgenstein's remarks linking truth with decidability in the same way. Wittgenstein will be advancing a seriously epistemic conception of truth only if he has a restrictive (thus seriously theorized) conception of grounds for decision: the sort of conception that will allow us to argue that bivalence fails, so that some apparently empirical propositions lack truth value. But Wittgenstein has no such conception and makes no such argument. On the contrary, he argues against the need for anything along these lines. The last sentence of 200— 'This does not say what the ground for such a decision is like'—is crucial. It is meant to remind us that 'grounds for decision' take very different forms.

Recall Wittgenstein's droll example of Moore's meeting a king brought up to believe that the world began with him, and assuring the king that he (Moore) *knows* etc., etc. Wittgenstein does not deny that Moore could convince the king. What he does emphasize is that Moore's doing so would be nothing like routine acts of reassuring or informing, but would rather involve getting the king to look at the world in a new way. This point prompts the following comment:

> 92 Remember that one is sometimes convinced of the *correctness* of a view by its *simplicity* or *symmetry*, i.e., these are what induce one to go over to this point of view. One then says something like: '*That's* how it must be.'

Since hinge or river-bed propositions partially determine what, within a particular practice of inquiry, counts as evidence, not all 'grounds for decision' involve straightforward empirical confirmation (or refutation). Rather than connect truth with decidability in a way that would allow for failures of bivalence, Wittgenstein opts for an expansive and notably non-theorized conception of grounds for decision.

This is just what we should expect. The empiricism that gives the Verification Principle its bite is a form of traditional foundationalism: the form that thinks that we can identify, on principled theoretical grounds, broad classes of basic beliefs. Theories of justification along these lines are essentially restrictive. They are just what we need if we want to argue for failures of cognitive significance or for truth-value gaps. Wittgenstein does not just decline to avail himself of such an approach to justification: he explicitly repudiates it. No rule identifies basic certainties. They are not bound together by any distinctive content (as being e.g. judgements about how things appear).

The 'remarks on truth' that we have been considering are carried on against the background of this rejection of traditional foundationalist ideas. Thus

Wittgenstein's discussion in the 190s of truth recalls an earlier line of thought, which relates certainty to the impossibility of being 'mistaken':

> 195 If I believe that I am sitting in my room when I am not, then I shall not be said to have *made a mistake*. But what is the essential difference between this case and a mistake?

As Wittgenstein has already noted (72), not every false belief involves a mistake. In making this point he tentatively suggested an explanation:

> 74 Can we say: a *mistake* doesn't only have a cause, it also has a ground? I.e. roughly: when someone makes a mistake, this can be fitted into what he knows aright.

This suggestion comes almost immediately before what I have been calling Wittgenstein's 'proto-Davidsonian' argument: that the truth of certain empirical propositions belongs to our frame of reference. Mistakes have to fit into what is known aright because—if they don't—there will be doubts about what, if anything, to make of propositions expressing them. Judgements so outrageously false that they raise issues of meaning and understanding are not mistakes. More likely, they would be judged signs of dementia (71, 155).

However, for our present purposes, it is important to note that there are other cases where talk of 'making a mistake' fails to get a grip. Some propositions—those that function as hinges—have the status of methodological necessities. Failure to subscribe to them would not have to be an indication of derangement. Rather, exempting them from doubt determines the character and direction of certain (possibly culturally specific) forms of inquiry. Setting them aside from 'the route travelled by inquiry' (88) determines and is determined by what we look into and (a far from wholly distinct matter) how we look into it. This is the point that the hinge metaphor emphasizes:

> 342…it belongs to the logic of our scientific investigations that certain things are *in deed* not doubted.

The stress on not doubting 'in deed' must not be misunderstood. The certainty attaching to hinge propositions is not and cannot be a matter of their being grounded on evidence, including self-evidence. Instead, it turns on their special role in structuring distinctive practices of inquiry But this does not make it mere 'practical' certainty. The certainty attaching to hinges is a 'practical' matter only in the sense that certain doubts are tied to *practices* of argument and inquiry. In particular, some doubts are necessarily absent if certain such practices are to retain their characteristic form and content. Wittgenstein makes this very clear:

> 343 But it isn't that the situation is like this: We just *can't* investigate everything, and for that reason we are forced to rest content with assumption. If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put.

So, for example, entertaining radical doubts about the antiquity of the earth does not produce an especially rigorous form of historical investigation but rather abolishes historical inquiry altogether. This 'practical' demand for hinges applies to the most arcane theoretical investigations. The stress on 'practices' of inquiry —of not doubting *in deed*—is meant to remind us that there is no rule that determines exactly what must be left alone. The bottom line is how we actually proceed, without a rule. This kind of practicality has nothing to do with such 'practical' limitations as a lack of time or resources.

Practices can change. Hinges can come unscrewed; we can rehang the door; we can stop using that door altogether. But having had those particular hinges in place—though we may come to think of it as a bad idea—is not a matter of having 'made a mistake'. All this fits perfectly with Wittgenstein's relaxed and expansive approach to 'grounds for decision'.

Wittgenstein's treatment of hinge propositions anticipates (and generalizes) Thomas Kuhn's distinction between routine or 'normal-scientific' investigation within a disciplinary matrix and 'revolutionary' changes to the matrix itself (Kuhn 1962). Wittgenstein differs from Kuhn in having a serious interest in general scepticism. Accordingly, he is concerned with the immovable certainties of thought as such, as well as with the potentially replaceable hinges of particular forms of inquiry Still, for Wittgenstein as for Kuhn, 'Not all corrections of our views are on the same level' (300). We must distinguish between routine changes of belief with a given practice of inquiry and changes in (or replacement of) the practice itself. The grounds for deciding in favour of a new practice are multifarious, holistic, often highly theoretical, and in any case impossible to reduce to rule. The language game just is like that, and none the worse for being so.

It should be clear where I am heading. I want to say that Wittgenstein's talk about 'pictures' and 'new ways of looking at the world' should not be given *any* seriously truth-theoretic gloss. Wittgenstein is looking for ways to dramatize the different ways of being certain. The passages in which Wittgenstein talks in what we might be tempted to think of as an 'anti-realist' idiom are just Kuhnian moments, in which he is trying to make vivid the contrast between routine inquiry and changes at the level of methodological necessities. In his curious defence of common sense, Moore helps us to see this vitally important contrast, while remaining seemingly oblivious of it himself. Its character and basis need to be explored. For this task, talk of truth as tallying with the facts is no help at all.

6.
Acting, seeing, knowing

I will bring my argument to a close by dealing with some objections.

One obvious objection is this: if Wittgenstein is saying what I claim he is saying, why is he even tempted to equate 'true or false' with 'decidable'? Even granted that he has an expansive conception of grounds for decision, which takes a lot of philosophical bite out of the equation, why does he make *any* connection between truth and decidability?

This question is not that hard to answer: the connection is simply a reflection of Wittgenstein's broadly inferentialist conception of meaning. Beliefs derive their content from their relations to circumstances, actions and other beliefs. This is why, with respect to hinge propositions, while talk of 'doubt' and 'mistake' may be idle, talk of belief is not. Suppose that a schoolboy questioned the truth of history Wittgenstein writes:

> 312 Here it strikes me as if this doubt were hollow. But in that case— isn't *belief* in history hollow too? No; there is so much that this connects up with.

Only connect. But where there are connections there will be grounds for decision (or perhaps revision). A 'belief' that was disconnected from all 'grounds for decision'—even grounds of the most holistic or theoretical kind— would be an inferential outlier, hence not a belief at all. This point has nothing to do with what is ordinarily thought of as an epistemic conception of truth.

A second problem is that I have overstated my case. Even if we should not try to gloss the distinction between routine inquiries and hinge-level changes in truth-theoretic terms, I must surely be wrong in claiming that Wittgenstein finds no explanatory work for truth to do. For by my own account, some certainties — those that cannot be doubted at all—are to be understood in terms of the link between truth and meaning.

I have spoken to this point in passing: the link between truth and meaning is just the link between understanding and believing lots of truths, a link that can be perfectly well characterized using no more than a deflationary conception of truth. If we insist on going deeper, what we are led to is not truth-as-correspondence (or as anything else) but *agreement*. Wittgenstein sometimes makes the point in just these terms:

> 156 In order to make a mistake, a man must already judge in conformity with mankind.

One cannot make a mistake unless one understands what one is saying, and understanding depends on getting lots of things right, on judging 'in conformity with mankind'.

We should not imagine that this point constitutes a back-handed concession to an epistemic conception of truth (as a consensus theory). Wittgenstein makes this clear in *Philosophical Investigations:*

> *PI* 241 'So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and false'—It is what human beings *say* that is true and false, and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life.
>   *PI* 242 If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but (queer as this may sound) in judgments. This seems to abolish logic, but does not do so. —It is one thing to describe methods of measurement, and another to obtain and state results of measurement. But what we call measurement is partly determined by a certain constancy in the results of measurement.

Like Heidegger, Wittgenstein holds that meaning is prior to truth; that meaning is a matter of use; and that at bedrock, use is mastered practically, as a matter of 'know-how' that does not involve the self-conscious following of rules.[13] The connection between Wittgenstein's claim that 'The truth of certain empirical propositions belongs to our frame of reference' (83) and his insistence on the need to judge in conformity with mankind can be understood only in the light of all his use-centred approach to meaning. But understanding the connection this way undercuts the temptation to suppose that Wittgenstein intends truth to be understood epistemically (or any other non-deflationary way).

Highlighting Wittgenstein's emphasis on agreement in practice helps us to deal with a passage that might seem to pose an insuperable objection to my claim that Wittgenstein is not even seriously tempted by an epistemic approach to truth. We have already met the passage in question:

> 205 If the true is what is grounded, then the ground is not *true,* nor yet false.

This is a conditional: Wittgenstein does not say that the truth *is* what is grounded. But surely he is feeling the temptation. Temptation to do what? Analyse truth in epistemic terms? Not necessarily. Even if he does hold that (in some sense) the truth is what is 'grounded', it does not follow that to be grounded is to be based on evidence. It does not follow that the 'ground' of truth is even propositional.

It is necessary to read 205 in context. Putting this passage in context reveals right away that Wittgenstein's concern is not truth generally but certain truth. He is still nosing around the relation between and truth and certainty, and the futility of explaining or justifying certainties by appeal to their truth. Thus:

206 If someone asked us 'but is that *true?*' we might say 'yes' to him; and if he demanded grounds we might say 'I can't give you any grounds, but if you learn more you too will think the same.'

But there is a further point to take on board. As we have seen, Wittgenstein's views about certainty parallel (as well as being importantly related to) his views about meaning. Meaning and understanding depend on the practical grasp of how expressions are used, not on the following of self-interpreting rules. Similarly, the epistemic status of a judgement depends on the practical grasp on that judgement's (possibly context-sensitive) role in argument and inquiry and not on the judgement's being somehow intrinsically evident. This very point is the immediate context for our problem passage:

204 Giving grounds…justifying the evidence, comes to an end; —but the end is not certain propositions' striking us immediately as true, i.e. it is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is our *acting,* which lies at the bottom of the language-game.

Explaining certainty in terms of truth is dangerous as well as futile: it fosters the illusion that some truths must be grasped in a peculiarly 'immediate' way, by a kind of seeing.

These passages are easily misread, on account of some ultimately harmless terminological slippage. Wittgenstein sometimes uses 'grounds' to mean 'evidence'. If grounds are understood this way, hinge propositions—perhaps certainties generally—are ultimately groundless. They are propositions that are reasonably believed-true, without being straightforwardly based on evidence. This is what Wittgenstein has in mind when he refers 'the groundlessness of our believing' (166) and this use is on display at 206. But 204 and 205 use 'ground' (*Grund* in all three passages) in a more general way to apply to whatever lies 'at the bottom' *(am Grunde)* of our certainties. For if we press our inquiries, insisting that *something* lies there, we are led to something not propositional at all. It is a way of acting, including, but not restricted to, the role we assign to judgements in various contexts of inquiry This non-propositional ground is of course neither true nor false. But in neither use of 'ground' is Wittgenstein claiming that the basis of belief consists of propositions that are without truth-value.

Finally, what should we say about the connection between knowledge and justification? In particular, how should we read the passages where Wittgenstein seems to want to put common sense beyond justification (and so for that reason not properly thought of as 'known')? Some commentators make a lot of Wittgenstein's seeming to want to limit the use of 'know', excluding basic certainties from the scope of knowledge.[14] But in my view, it is not a deep matter at all.

In approaching Wittgenstein's thoughts about the proper use of 'know', we need to recognize that his remarks about knowledge, like those about 'grounds', are subject to terminological uncertainty. Indeed, the uncertainties are connected. When discussing knowledge, Wittgenstein has a tendency to think of 'justification' as 'justifying', i,e. giving grounds, i.e. citing evidence. This way of understanding 'justification' goes with thinking of propositions that stand fast for us as not 'justified', hence not known. On the other hand, holding some particular propositions fast need not be a matter of credulity: to hold them fast is reasonable. Indeed, in some cases it is unavoidable. So while *they* are (in one sense) ungrounded, *we* are justified in cleaving to them. In this way, they can be the objects of beliefs that are true (in a deflationary sense of 'true') and justified (though not derived from evidence). Thinking of 'justified true belief' in this second way, even basic certainties can amount to knowledge.

At different points, Wittgenstein is tempted to think of 'justification' in both of the ways just mentioned. As a result, he is superficially inconsistent over whether basic certainties are things we know to be true. Here he is introducing the idea of axial propositions:

> 151 I should like to say: Moore does not *know* what he asserts he knows, but it stands fast for him, as also for me; regarding it as absolutely solid is part of our *method* of doubt and enquiry.

Now compare this with the passage leading to the hinge metaphor:

> 340 We know, with the same certainty with which we believe *any* mathematical proposition, how the letters A and B are pronounced, what the colour of human blood is called, that other human beings have blood and call it 'blood'.

But the apparent inconsistency is superficial: pure terminological slippage. Theoretically, nothing of consequence is at stake.

Why is Wittgenstein drawn to advocating a restrictive use of 'know'? A large part of the reason, no doubt, is that it offers a way underlining the distinction between judgements that derive their certainty from compelling evidence and those that are certain in virtue of standing apart from the route travelled by inquiry. Rhetorically, there is something to be said for this. Philosophical discussions of knowledge are (or were) so penetrated by evidentialist presuppositions that to characterize propositions that stand fast as simply known to be true is to risk being led up the garden path (to foundationalism, intrinsic credibility, and knowing as resting on a kind of seeing). This is just where we don't want to go.

A second reason—connected with the first—is to block the temptation to suppose, with Moore, that headway against the philosophical sceptic or denier of common sense can be made by *claiming* to know. No doubt, this isn't a very

good reason: there is nothing wrong with the view that there are lots of things we do know that we can't defend by insisting that we know them. Nor is there anything wrong with the view that there are lots of things we know that we can't defend by showing, in an everyday citing-evidence, displaying-credentials sort of way, *how* we know them.

Still, Wittgenstein has a point to make that is stable independently of whether we are inclined to go along with his occasional strictures concerning the use of 'know'. His doubts about Moore's insisting that he 'knows' this and that are meant, at least in part, to teach us something about the limits of proof, where proof is taken to be compelling argument from premises that any rational being would have to agree to, and so would agree that he knows. For a final time, think of the moon-visitors, or the king who is brought up to believe that the earth came into being only recently. We could not give such people compelling reasons against their opinions without teaching them some science (physics, geology, etc.) Without knowing some physics, they lack any conception of the questions that they can't answer. Of course, they don't have to listen to us. If they refuse to listen, or if they argue at every turn, they won't learn physics. They will be like the recalcitrant pupil, who insists on raising the problem of induction in his science class. It is notable that paragraph 206, which stresses the impossibility of giving 'grounds' (= evidence) to the utterly uninitiated, builds up to this very point. To get to the stage at which one can make intelligent criticisms, or appreciate evidence, a pupil has to take things on trust: 'If this didn't come about, that would mean that he couldn't for example learn history' But if the moon-visitors do learn physics, they will no longer suppose that they go to the moon. Some questions get answered in the course of getting to the point at which they can be asked.

In pointing to the limits to proof, Wittgenstein does invite us to acknowledge the possibility of an epistemic asymmetry—we know things that they don't— that may not be remediable. Or rather, may be remediable only given some willingness to listen and learn on the part of an interlocutor. However, to recognize that such situations can arise is to concede nothing to either scepticism or relativism. Scepticism and relativism point to in-principle impossibilities. Philosophical sceptics do more than remind us of contingent ignorance: they argue for the impossibility of knowledge. And philosophical relativists do more than remind us that there can be situations in which our argumentative resources are inadequate to persuade the unpersuaded: they argue for 'incommensurable' world views. Neither philosophical option describes our situation with respect to the moon-visitors. Perhaps we can teach them physics; and then again, perhaps we can't. If we can't, we can only shrug our shoulders, noting the intellectual distance between us. But the loss is all theirs.

Notes

1 Subsequent to the Gregynog conference, I have presented versions of this paper at a conference on Robert Fogelin and Pyrrhonism, sponsored by Dartmouth University (2001), the Mind and Society Conference held at Manchester Metropolitan University, the University of Houston, Texas A and M and the New School University (all 2002) and the University of Chicago Wittgenstein Workshop (2003). I am grateful to all those (too many to list) who came to my talks and, by their questions, forced me to try to clarify and defend what I want to say.

2 (Wittgenstein 1969), references to this work are given in the text by numbered, displayed paragraphs or by parenthetical paragraph numbers.

3 G.E.Moore, 'Proof of an External World' and 'A Defence of Common Sense', both in his (1959).

4 According to Avrum Stroll, Wittgenstein is (an original kind of) foundationalist. See his (1994). I criticize Stroll's account of Wittgenstein's relation to foundationalism in my (2001).

5 Crispin Wright finds in *On Certainty* the seeds of an anti-realist response to scepticism. See his (1985).

6 See (Brandom 1994). Brandom thinks that inference, rather than representation, is the concept in terms of which meaning is ultimately to be understood. Brandom takes his view, while inspired by Sellars, to be broadly in sympathy with central ideas of Wittgenstein.

7 I give a more detailed presentation of the argument of this section in my (forthcoming).

8 My take on this aspect of Wittgenstein's argument owes a lot to Brandom's discussion of referring to objects in (Brandom 1994). See p. 360f.

9 In his (1985) Wright does think of 'There are physical objects' as a hinge proposition. But it is significant that Wright sets up the problem of external world scepticism in terms of a problematic inference from experiential data. Unless the problem is couched in these terms, Wright's 'anti-realist' approach to the status of our presupposition that there is an external world (working more or less as we normally suppose it to work) has no obvious work to do. Given Wittgenstein's diagnosis, this is just what we should expect.

10 In my view, commentators on *On Certainty* are too quick to assume that Wittgenstein has an all-purpose response to scepticism. For example, Marie McGinn's (generally excellent) (1989) fails to see that the problem of the external world is special. (Special in Wittgenstein's eyes and special anyway.) For some thoughts on how failure to take account of this vitiates diagnostic approaches to scepticism, see my (1992: ch. 5).

11 For more on what deflationists can say about the link between truth and meaning see my (1999).

12 It may be worth noting that Wittgenstein offers two varieties of moon-visitor. Here is the example as first introduced:

> 106 Suppose some adult had told a child that he had been on the moon. The child tells me the story, and I say it was only a joke, the man hadn't been on the moon; no one has ever been on the moon; the moon is a long

way off and it is impossible to climb up there or fly there. —If the child now insists, saying perhaps there is a way of getting there which I don't know, etc., what reply could I make to him? What reply could I make to the adults of a tribe who believe that people sometimes go to the moon (perhaps that is how they interpret their dreams), and who indeed grant that there are no ordinary means of climbing up to it or flying there? —But a child will not ordinarily stick to such a belief and will soon be convinced by what we tell him seriously.

There is a difference between the travellers of 108, who don't care how they get to the moon, and those of 106 who think that they don't go there physically. The don't-cares' ultimate defence of moon-travelling is general scepticism: 'even you can't explain everything'. By contrast, the dream-travellers have an alternative explanation, though not a very good one. In both cases, we have views that are poorer by far than ours, though they are poorer in somewhat different ways.

13 Cf.Heidegger's claim that knowing is 'a founded mode of Being': (Heidegger 1962: ch. II, §section 13). See also ch. V, §44f. where Heidegger argues for the priority of 'disclosedness', the opening up of a conceptual space, over propositional truth. Division 1 of *Being and Time* is a defence of the fundamental role of know-how in the constitution of meaning, hence of truth and knowledge. It contains diagnoses of scepticism, particularly Cartesian scepticism, which are interesting to compare with those offered by Wittgenstein in *On Certainty*. It is unfortunate that Heidegger is not much read by philosophers in the Analytic tradition, though perhaps this is beginning to change.

14 (McGinn 1989) is a good example.

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11
A SECOND WAVE OF ENLIGHTENMENT
Kant, Wittgenstein and the continental tradition

Pirmin Stekeler

> Some scepticism merely is unripe idealism.
>   A realist is an idealist oblivious about himself.
>   Idealism is nothing but true empiricism.
>
> <div align="right">(Novalis 2000)[1]</div>

1.
Wittgenstein—a late romanticist?

Some time ago, Friedrich Kambartel (1989) published an article entitled 'Wittgenstein's Late Philosophy: The Completion of Kant's Criticism of Scientific Enlightenment'. In asking about Wittgenstein's lasting significance, it may be worthwhile to look at what Kambartel says about the relation between Kant, Wittgenstein and what I would like to call a second wave of enlightenment. In Kambartel's picture, the first wave is *scientific enlightenment*. The second wave seems to consist, then, in a *criticism of the scientific world view* or of *naturalism.*

It is not wrong to identify the tradition of continental philosophy with such a criticism. From the point of view of the defenders of classical enlightenment this tradition is, therefore, often seen as an 'idealistic', 'romantic', 'anti-naturalistic', 'anti-scientistic' and 'metaphysical' throwback. But these judgements already presuppose that enlightenment, scientism and naturalism are identical and that there is no need for further criticism. Kambartel's title suggests that Wittgenstein's (later) philosophy continues the project of such a criticism along the lines proposed by Kant.

For that matter we should, perhaps, avoid using such grand labels as 'continental tradition' or 'scientism' and 'naturalism'. They are useful, however, to map whole contexts of philosophical thinking. Under the term 'naturalism' we can subsume traditional materialism as well as physical reductionism or biological evolutionism with respect to the development of mental capacities. The main trend in current philosophy of mind and cognitive science is, in this vague sense, naturalistic. The continental tradition of philosophy, on the other hand, begins with Descartes or, perhaps better, with Kant; it leads to German Idealism and then to Philosophical Phenomenology in the tradition of Husserl,

Heidegger and their French counterparts. So far, so good. But what are the shared projects, the common ways of doing philosophy, the peculiar topics, methods or even insights in this tradition? A first answer is that it is critical of 'empiricism', because empiricism in all its versions is apologetic of naturalism. The argument against empiricism is that it is at least half-blind with respect to *our* conceptual preconditions for objective experience and empirical judgements proper. Understanding any possible empirical claim not only presupposes acknowledgement of a set of *formally analytical sentences,* but mastery of quite some number of *generic forms of conceptually valid judgement and inference*. These forms are made explicit by so called *synthetic a priori statements*. The continental tradition of philosophy uses 'transcendental' arguments in a defence of this finer distinction between different classes of conceptual judgements.

Analytical sentences get a formal value 'true' when they articulate accepted or acceptable *formal schemes of purely terminological inference*. They are true not because they represent anything in the empirical world but because we (have to) accept them when we (attempt to) understand the formal part of the meaning of corresponding words and sentences. This formal part of the meaning of an expression E can be roughly identified with the formal inferential capacity of the use of sentences $\Phi(E)$ in statements. Such sentences can have formal consequences that depend on E. If this is so, we say that the formal inference is (partly) due to the formal meaning of E. It is crucial to see that the schemes of analytical inferences are defined at the level of *expressions*, of words and sentences.

Traditional empiricism (Hume) and logical empiricism (developed by Ernst Mach, Rudolf Carnap and Hans Reichenbach in Vienna, Prague and Berlin, Bertrand Russell and the early Wittgenstein in Cambridge) agree with the Kantian tradition in their understanding and acceptance of *analytical sentences*. We are here neglecting Quine's anxiety with respect to the question of how *to identify* the difference between merely formal and already material, empirically contentful, rules of inference and how we *learn* the difference. To avoid the problem we just assume that we have implicitly or even explicitly agreed on a *list* of purely formal and terminological rules, that can be 'learned by heart', so to speak. Think of the rules for the use of the logical words, or of the row of the decimal numbers taken as a sequence of words, or of any explicit system of terminological rules. In any case, I think that Quine's anxieties are not really relevant for the main dispute between empiricism and the Kantian tradition.

Things get highly controversial when it comes to *material* but still *conceptual* presuppositions of (particular) empirical claims. As I have said, *synthetic a priori* propositions make such presuppositions explicit. Such statements are true not because they express facts in a world behind the scene of empirical phenomena or beyond our practice of using language in judgements about the world. They are true because they articulate conceptual inferences, just as the analytical sentences do. But these inferences are not analytical in the narrow sense above. Rather, they belong to the very form of how *our sentences and*

statements relate to the empirical world. Therefore, the (formal, conceptual) truth of synthetic a priori statements cannot be investigated and controlled either by a mere analysis of *logical syntax* of sentences and *formal semantics* including all kinds of *terminological deduction schemes,* or by particular observation and experiment.

In fact, Kant had realised that there are conceptual rules and principles *that cannot be expressed as merely terminological rules at the level of sentences.* They 'work' at the level of utterances and propositions which we employ in order to talk about an objective empirical world. An example of this is the principle that if something is an object of my *Anschauung* it must be possible for it to be an object of your *Anschauung,* too. But then we have to respect a certain change of perspective from my point of view to yours. (I do not translate the German word *'Anschauung'* by 'intuition', even though both words correspond to Latin *intuitio.* The fact that the English word connotes some *inner perception* is all too misleading.) When Kant talks about 'outer form of *Anschauung*' we should take it in this sense: the form of the practice of how we control changes of perspectives in spatial orientation. Think of cases when I refer *to the same object* from here as you refer to from there —and when all this happens in the horizon of our joint perception. The 'inner form of *Anschauung*' is the way we control the identity of an object 'as time goes by'. Or rather, it is the way we jointly control an 'objective' time ordering. Details aside, the identity of (bodily) objects in time is, according to Kant, more or less determined by the rule of continuous movement, at least with respect to things that stay in the horizon of *Anschauung.* Therefore, the statement that bodies move continuously in space is no *empirical* statement; and it is no *analytical* statement in the relevant sense either. It is a statement that is *a priori true,* because we presuppose it in any case in which we refer to one and the same body at different times. If empirical objects leave the horizon of our *Anschauung,* we either have to rely on reports or, and this is the usual case, on some causal knowledge when we want to identify them over time. Therefore, causal laws become constitutive for any 'real' use of the concept of identity for bodily objects. This is the reason why a certain form of causality turns into a *condition for the possibility of objective, i.e. object-related, experience and its articulation.*

Lack of understanding of this difference between analytical sentences and synthetic a priori statements is the reason why an obviously non-metaphysical reading of Kant like the one proposed here is still not appreciated by the empiricist tradition.[2]

In order to see that the Kantian tradition can be understood as a second wave of enlightenment, I still have to explain more about why the first wave, scientific enlightenment and empiricism, is in need of a critical turn, or at least of some fine tuning. Only then can we get clear about Wittgenstein's relation to the continental tradition of philosophy, perhaps even to such 'post-modern' thinkers as Derrida. But because of the tendency to see Wittgenstein's late philosophy just as a piecemeal critique of philosophical ways of abusing language, a short

remark is needed to show why we should expect the claimed connection. In his critique of this deflationary understanding of Wittgenstein's enterprise as mere therapy from philosophical diseases by recollecting the 'normal' use of language, Kambartel says that there must be a deeper reason for Wittgenstein's sometimes deeply felt resignation with respect to his philosophical achievements.

It is well known that Wittgenstein complains to Drury, for example, that the present times do not appreciate his ways of thinking. Even if we grant that Wittgenstein's way of dealing with philosophical problems is unusual, non-theoretic and aphoristic in style, this would be a weak reason for such a grand complaint. In fact, Wittgenstein himself names a greater target of criticism, the main 'stream of American and European civilisation we live in' (1975a: Foreword). It is the 'spirit of our own times' he fights against. Kambartel identifies this spirit with the scientific worldview. If this is indeed right it should lead to a 'deeper' understanding of why Wittgenstein feels simultaneously out-dated and premature, and to a more engaging reading of Wittgenstein's 'untimely' considerations. But what exactly is wrong with the scientific world view, the heritage of the first wave of enlightenment? Is the criticism of the later Wittgenstein hopelessly romantic and, precisely as such, already post-modern? Why does the first wave of enlightenment need a second one? I shall try to give a short sketch of why the question is indeed urgent.

2.
Scientific enlightenment

The first wave of enlightenment, scientific enlightenment, is directed against superstitious beliefs in gods and angels, spirits and ghosts, witchcraft and miracles. It questions the idea of personal immortality and opposes the supposition of a free (but sinful) will. It attacks Platonist beliefs in a world beyond possible experience, beyond all phenomena.[3] If its only goal had been the overcoming of superstition, nothing would have been wrong with scientific enlightenment. The problem is rather to determine what Platonism is that it must be criticised and if there is a movement of empirical philosophy and naturalism that goes too far in its anti-Platonism. The upshot of this might be a neglect of the presupposed forms of objective experience and knowledge; they indeed go beyond mere subjective sensation and reflection. Hence a possible result is a misunderstanding of the very concept of possible experience and empirical knowledge.

In order to say briefly what scientific enlightenment is, I propose to distinguish, roughly, three different traditions: Cartesian Rationalism, British Empiricism and Bacon's Project of experimental science. Leibniz, for one, belongs to the first movement or tradition, Hume to the second and Galilei, in a sense, to the third.

Descartes' rationalism starts with the sceptical question: what are we entitled to believe as certain? The idea is not to question everything, but to show that and how any particular knowledge claim about the 'outer' empirical world can be put into question. For this Descartes makes use of a method that the Greeks called *epoché*. His critical reflection begins by bracketing 'all' traditional beliefs. A first result is that we cannot bracket ourselves as the subjects of our critical thinking. However this is understood or misunderstood in detail, it is a 'transcendental' argument that will have its own career. In fact, it is not the least of the honours of Descartes that he has shown us this: when we doubt, we already presuppose at least some logical forms of making claims and doubting, proving and disproving. Moreover, we presuppose the forms and norms of *rational* thinking, of what we call *'reason'* and *'reasonable'*. The word 'reason' just is the name, the title, of this form. Later, the evaluative titles 'reason', 'rationality', 'understanding' and the quest for 'proofs' are turned by the Cartesians into a kind of weapon against mere traditional beliefs.

I am obviously not here overly concerned with philosophical and historical details. I just want to give an outline of what I see as the main thought of the Cartesian rationalism. But it is important to understand Descartes' method as a first step in a more complex project. The project aims at a conscious analysis of a methodological order of presupposed certainties, reasonable contentions and jointly controlled beliefs. The goal is neither scepticism nor absolute certainty but autonomy of thinking. The goal is rationally controlled conviction and sufficiently reliable knowledge. Indeed, we had better not take unchecked beliefs for granted.

As far as this reading goes, there is nothing wrong with rationalism. It just says that we should dare to think for ourselves. The only problem is that it is unclear what this means.

British Empiricism continues on Cartesian lines. It is not really an independent movement. It starts with the question of what there is. And it gives the well-known answer that we should replace the unclear question what there 'really' is by the more feasible question what we *can know* that there is. We can know about what there is only via our senses. Possible experience decides what we can reasonably claim about what there 'really' is. In other words, empiricism proposes to read the term 'real existence' in an immanent way, opposing any metaphysical reading of the word 'real' by which one wants to refer to a world beyond all phenomena.

We do not have to go deeper into the difficulties concerning the right understanding of our talk about *possible* perception or *possible* experience. It suffices to focus on the critical impact of this epistemological turn in the ontological question: it does not make sense to claim that there might be things behind the scene of possible experience, if there is no connection to possible experience at all. If you claim that there is something, you should be able to tell us how it might have been or can be or could be experienced, or how the claim can be tested by possible consequences in experience. Instead of absolute truth,

you should care about *common sense* and *bon sense,* about jointly controlled belief and good judgement, *Gemeinsinn* and *Urteilskraft,* as Kant translates this pair of competences into German.

On this reading, nothing is wrong with such empiricism. It just says that subjective experience and inter-subjective control are the basis of any reasonable knowledge claim.

Bacon's fairly theoretical project of experimental science is older than rationalism and empiricism. But in reality it does not become influential before Galileo's and Kepler's results. However, despite obvious problems, I use the label 'Bacon's project' for the project of empirical and exact natural science: for example, in Newton's mechanics, the technical approach to knowledge and a mathematical, theoretical articulation of general laws of nature are eventually brought together. But Bacon already had made it clear that we know best what we know *how to do*, what we can *construct* and *reconstruct* The foundation of knowledge consists in the mastery of techniques. In a sense, this was already an insight of Plato. A paradigmatic case for a good theoretical explanation is a blueprint used in architecture. A blueprint says how something can be done—if we can 'read' it as an instruction, that is, if we can put it into practice or if we can use it for orientation in the way we use maps. One can say that mathematical geometry develops forms of writing clear and distinct blueprints.

If it comes to movements of bodies in space, we need another kind of blueprint; we need a geometrical representation of *dynamics*. As Leibniz had already seen, a basic advance of Newton's mechanics over the Cartesian project of pure *kinematics* was the insight into the role of *mass (numbers)* of physical objects, approximated by their weight, for their behaviour in movement. On this ground, explanations of accelerations can be given with respect to *inertial* defaultmovements. These default-movements form a fixed system of space, represented in mathematical pictures and models by straight lines. The system of these inertial movements replaces the older idea of a fixed point in space that does not move at all.

The general form of the explanation of acceleration refers to the law of gravity for bodies: mass determines the force that is needed for an acceleration of a body and it also 'explains' the 'gravitational force of attraction'. We do not need more details about this 'mechanical' form of explaining relative movements of bodies here. I am content with the following most general but almost trivial statement. The postulate that the book of physical nature is written in mathematical symbols, or rather that it should be written in mathematical symbols, is an enormously fruitful idea.

As far as the corresponding *project* is presented, there is, thus far, nothing wrong with it. It just asks us to explain the objective world of moving bodies as well as possible by timeless laws. Quantitative, mathematical, laws are preferred, of course. The laws tell us, then, what will happen or can be done if certain situations or states of affairs obtain or rather when a certain event occurs in the sense of a constellation of bodies together with some pre-history (which

is needed to determine the current form of movement). If we control such an explanation in experimental and observational experience, we do not need much traditional belief and do not rely on intuition in the sense of mere subjective inspiration. We just have to test what we can do and to look at what we can experience. This is the reason why science can proceed on a safe path to progress.

3.
Kant's critique of naturalism

But if nothing was wrong with these three aspects of scientific enlightenment, why do we need a second wave of enlightenment at all? What is it that needs to be criticised?

There is a problem in my picture of rationalism, empiricism and Bacon's project. My picture is, in a sense, already Kantian. In fact, Kant is a rationalist and a follower of Descartes and Leibniz; he is also an empiricist and a follower of Locke and Hume, Bacon and Newton. But he has realised that the empiricist separation of *rationality* as the competence of using concepts (ideas or words) from *perception* is a mistake. Therefore we need a new unity of the rationalist and the empiricist tradition of thought. The example of the outer and inner form of *Anschauung* of bodily objects in the empirical world shows how this new unity is to be understood.

But what is so important about this unity and the corresponding criticism of empiricism and scientific enlightenment—such that I can speak of a new beginning of a second wave of enlightenment?

Kambartel (1989:149) attributes to Kant three main insights. The first is this: *There is a complex constitution of man's competence to act and speak, to know things and believe things.*

I understand this insight as a criticism of Locke's 'physiological' theory of knowledge and of Hume's behaviourist analysis of human cognition. Both assimilate human knowledge far too much to the cognitive behaviour of animals. The same holds for most contemporary philosophy of mind and for the whole 'medical' approach to cognition in the behavioural and brain sciences today. In these approaches, we underestimate the peculiar social and co-operative form of human experience. We overlook the complex forms of giving and asking for reasons. We do not see that *Anschauung,* in distinction to mere subjective sensation and perception, already presupposes what Davidson calls 'triangulation', the competence of changing our subjective perspective in space (and time!), and the competence of a conceptual identification of *what* is perceived and *where* it (allegedly) is. In distinction to mere sensation and perception, *Anschauung* for Kant is not merely subjective at all. It is the competence of identifying the occurrence of some objective feature (of a certain 'gestalt', for example, or already of an 'object') here and not there, now and not then. Therefore, *Anschauung* in Kant's sense presupposes the competence of

dealing with interpersonal and situation-invariant spatial and chronological judgements about objects.

Moreover, our concept of an object of experience cannot be understood if we do not grasp the form of how to identify such an object despite changes of its form or gestalt in time. This is the reason why objects have a constitution. It is just wrong to assume that Kant thinks that objects were 'constructed' by us, on the basis of sense data, sensations. This reading of Kant overlooks the fact that Kant criticises Locke and Hume on this very point and does not follow them. Hume's philosophy does not give a sufficient analysis of *Anschauung,* nor of the concept of an object and of objective knowledge.

So, if I talk about Kant's second wave of enlightenment, it is mainly because he shows that the naturalism in Hume's empiricism becomes untrue to the fact of objective experience. It misses the point of understanding the *shared project of experience,* as I would say more emphatically than Kant said. When he talks about the form of experience he refers to an implicit system of norms for reasonable empirical judgements and inferences in general, and for the empirical sciences in particular.

Empiricism does not grasp the concept of *objective* cognition. Such cognition is concerned with trans-subjectively available *objects*. Bluntly speaking, Hume's analysis of cognition remains bound to merely *subjective cognition* and his understanding of rationality is limited to the 'idea' that individuals are just *disposed* to let one 'idea' follow another. This is the deep reason why his conception of cognition and rationality does not pass beyond the boundary of the kind of cognition and rationality available to animals. Or rather, the Humean tradition talks and thinks in a way that makes it impossible to articulate the difference between human and animal cognition, human intentions and animal desires. But to talk that way does not make things that way. To refuse to see differences is not to understand similarities. If we verbally put different things on the same level, they still might not be on the same level. So, there is a need to be critical with respect to all the claims of the empiricist tradition that use the following only seemingly 'sceptical' form: 'I do not see the difference between animal and man'; 'My intuition or introspection does not tell me enough about this or that allegedly conceptual truth'; 'I do not understand Kant's concept of the synthetic a priori. It is unclear to me.' Any of these subjective expressions is first to be evaluated. It might hide a good argument. But at first it is just a means of prevarication, a hand-waving gesture which the speaker uses to bring a pause in order to listen to arguments proposed in a language he first has to learn to understand. The real problem is that the sceptical critic wrongly believes that he can demand clear and distinct and convincing arguments that *force* him to understand and acknowledge a proposal for a possible differentiation. In the Introduction of his *Phenomenology of Spirit,* Hegel articulates this problem of subjectivist defection on the ground of a sceptical attitude. There he uses an argument whose general form ironically goes back to Descartes. Its intended application to 'science', i.e. to shared tradition of real knowledge, is directed

against Cartesian doubts as well as against an empiricist's possible lack of 'introspective intuition':

> if the worry about falling into error sets up a suspicion of science…it is hard to see why we should not turn around and suspect this very suspicion. Should we not worry whether this fear of erring is not error itself ? Indeed, this fear presupposes something—a great deal in fact—as truth, basing its reservations and inferences on what is in itself in need of prior examination to see if it is true.
> (Hegel 1980:54)

In fact, the refusal to make a distinction is already a claim that needs argument. This is so even if the distinction in question may not have clear and distinct boundaries.

The second insight of Kant, according to Kambartel, is this: *There is a special constitution of formalised natural science*.

Science presupposes a *canon,* a system of trans-subjective projection rules, for the interpretation and experimental control of numerical measures and mathematical models. This insight contradicts the rationalistic idea that mathematical science could describe a world of things 'as it really is' behind the scene of mere phenomena. If we explain the phenomena of experience by such a 'real world', we fall back into Platonism, even if we pay lip service to empiricism. It is the rationalist (as, perhaps, Leibniz was) and the rationalistic empiricist (perhaps Locke might be the paradigm), not Kant, who believe in a world of things in themselves. They believe in causes behind the scene of experience and beyond our project and technique of articulating 'laws' of nature in language and mathematics. It is true enough, however, that some of Kant's formulations about things in themselves as 'causes' of our perception are misleading. The overall picture is clear nevertheless.

But already Berkeley and Hume had seen that 'scientism' can become a new version of Platonism. In fact, the need of a new wave of enlightenment can be seen best in the context of an analysis of the 'law of causality' and the criticism of the superstitious belief in the causal nexus.[4] For Hume, the 'principle of causality' is as for Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* (cf. e.g. *TLP* 6.36 ff.) only a fairly successful form in which *we turn past experience into future expectations*. The status of causal connection is at best one of probability, of stochastically evaluated expectation. This is so because the events as the objects of possible perception are seen as logically and conceptually independent from each other.

Kant, however, already had given another reading to the causal connection of 'objective' events defined by the 'behaviour' of bodily objects. For Kant, a lawful connection of the appearances of an object in the order of time is presupposed in any talk about an empirical object. This means that there is a practice of identifying objects. It presupposes a concept of lawful movement. Therefore, causal connectedness is, at the same time, a constitutive feature of

talking about an object and a regulative norm for scientific investigation. It is a regulative norm in the sense of an instruction: try to explain as much as possible in the world of objective experiences by causal connections.

There is, one has to admit, a deep tension in Kant's reading of the principle of causality. Sometimes it is said to be constitutive, sometimes it is only a regulative rule and ideal. But at least the tension is made explicit. I do not want to pursue this much further here. In any case, it cannot be an *empirical* claim or truth that there is a law of causality—if we do not talk about our practice, but about what we can experience and explain in nature. It cannot be a terminological truth, either. Therefore, Kant uses the new label 'synthetic' (i.e. 'non-analytic') and 'a priori' (i.e. non-empirical) in order to characterise the peculiar meaning and truth conditions of statements by which we express forms and norms of our practice of (scientific) articulation of beliefs about things and events, changes and movements. Any explanation of a singular process presupposes some reference to generic laws.

The third insight of Kant is this. *In any knowledge claim a whole form of leading a life as a person who has the competences of being rational and of taking part in a culture of reason is already presupposed.*

The form of how we rationally deal with a knowledge claim is presupposed as already known. It belongs to the competence of a person. Therefore, there is *no need to give and no possibility of giving* a *scientific explanation* of our general form of life as human beings. The same point can be expressed in the following way. The method of transcendental, i.e. presuppositional, reflection by which we make forms of human life explicit is not to be confused either with empirical investigation or with scientific explanation. *Doing* science is more basic than what is expressed in science and how we reflect on science. But doing science presupposes mastery of the form of doing it properly. A whole *world* of (joint and individual) human actions is presupposed in any observational and experimental investigation, in any theoretical articulation and causal explanation. A whole form of a complex (co-operative) practice is presupposed in any scientific theory.[5]

In the first words of his *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant himself refers to Bacon. He does so because Bacon's project already acknowledges a kind of primacy of action, of experiment, of constructions. This leads to an insight into possible limits of science and of scientific constructions. Any knowledge-claim about nature, understood as the realm of processes we cannot change, is limited by what we can do, by our actions. Any claim about what we allegedly can do is limited by what we know about nature, about what we cannot change. Kant agrees, however, that we can only *show* what we *can* do by following (possible) instructions *at will*. We cannot determine the truth of statements about competence of intentional action by mere observation. In experiments we control the possibilities and the limits of such a competence. We test the consequences and success-conditions of positive action schemes or plans in view of their goals. And we control necessary conditions *sine qua non*. What we can explain

causally, as a necessary consequence of a certain set of events without any interference of intentional actions, cannot be the result of an action.[6] It is just not true that causal laws which take the form of predicting (in prefixed margins of probability) what will happen, given certain empirical conditions, really can explain 'everything'. Or rather, there is no sufficient reason to believe this. We can see this if we look at the difference between the following two claims. The first is harmless. It says that every event is a continuous 'consequence' in a chronological order of events. The second is a dogmatic claim. It says that for any event there are events that have caused it with necessity in a way such that this causation could be 'in principle' expressed by a general, situation invariant law (on the level of types). Such a claim is neither empirically true nor can it be defended on a priori grounds. What can be defended is only this: we are always entitled to look for possible causal laws, even in cases where, at first sight, a behaviour may appear to us as an intentional action and therefore the chances of finding a causal law might be small. The continental tradition of philosophy shows what it means to comprehend the limits of natural sciences with respect to alleged 'explanations' of human actions and practices.

It may be true that the attribution of these three insights to Kant is already influenced by a tradition of reading Kant that begins with Fichte and his students, such as Novalis or Hegel, and ends with Heidegger. But there is no question that this is the 'continental' reading of Kant—if there is one at all, i.e. if we are allowed to abstract from less relevant disputes and stick to the main lines. In this reading, Kant criticises two misleading moves of the scientific enlightenment. The first is the new Platonism as we find it in the materialism or physicalism of many followers of Newton as well as in Locke's version of empiricism as a kind of rationalistic realism. The second is the subjectivism in Hume's empiricist behaviourism and naturalism.

4.
Wittgenstein's main achievements

The second wave of enlightenment is at the same time directed against the 'old' tradition of transcendent Platonism and against the 'new' tradition of dogmatic metaphysics in scientific naturalism. In the following short account of Wittgenstein's achievements that go beyond Kant and his followers, I focus on three problems.

The first problem I call *belief-ontology*. Belief-ontology in mathematics consists in starting with the assumption of some class of abstract entities like the sets or with a system of axioms. Belief-ontology in the exact sciences consists in a 'realist' or Platonist reading of the relation of numerical quantities and mathematical models to nature or, again, with an unquestioned assumption of 'axioms' and 'principles.' Everyday belief-ontology consists in all kinds of 'ontic' assumptions with respect to a correspondence between language and the world and in all kinds of 'private contentions' that are claimed to be fundamental

principles of reason without further reflection on their status in shared life and experience.

The second problem is *empiricist subjectivism* and its support of behaviourism and naturalism.

The third problem is a meta-philosophical one and concerns the method and language of philosophy. Wittgenstein opposes the belief that we need theories in philosophy or in the humanities altogether and criticises the belief that theories of meaning and of knowledge are possible. Rather, we should make use of a peculiar 'deictical' form of language and a Socratic method when we reflect on our own practices. Philosophy gives birth to insight in a dialogical and dialectical way.

I shall try to give a short sketch of Wittgenstein's contributions to these points.

Against belief-ontology

With the help of Frege's logic, Wittgenstein makes the relation between syntactical and logical form of sentences and expressions clearer than was possible before. In mathematics, for example, formal truth conditions for logically complex statements are schematically defined on the ground of simpler statements. Or better, Frege's predicate logic is best looked at as a powerful schema that allows us to define many logically complex predicates on the basis of few (relational) predicates. Moreover, Frege and the early Wittgenstein tried to show that being a well-defined name of an (arithmetical) object just means to occur at the right place in a well-defined (arithmetical) statement. Being an object just means to have (in principle) a well-defined name in the realm of discourse at stake. Hence, we can get rid of any transcendent belief in pre-given objects, properties or facts. This shows that Platonism in mathematics is superficial and superfluous.[7] At the same time, Frege and Wittgenstein attack psychologism and ridicule the idea that numbers or any other abstract objects or concepts or meanings are in the heads or brains of individual persons. Wittgenstein is adamant about the fact that any abstract 'object' and any (mathematical or non-mathematical) truth condition is defined in a public form of using language, on the basis of a normative practice of speaking (and thinking). More precisely, a normative form of using names and name-like expressions in sentences or situation-bound assertions constitutes (abstract) objects and (true) statements about them. Meaning, reference and truth exist in this form of practice and nowhere else. The formal evaluations of arithmetical sentences (or assertions), for example, just mean that certain forms of inference are valid. They only make conceptual rules of acceptable inferences involving number terms and terms for sets explicit. On the basis of this insight, Wittgenstein sees already in the *Tractatus* that all logical and arithmetical truths are without 'empirical content' and can be read as formal inference rules, expressed in the form of sentences.

Frege's attempt to provide a foundation of arithmetic in his *Grundgesetze der Arithmetik (Basic Laws of Arithmetic)* had failed because the realm for the variables in a sentence and especially in a term for a course of values was not well defined or well founded,[8] as Bertrand Russell had shown. Wittgenstein's philosophy of mathematics can be seen as an attempt to save the spirit of Frege's approach as far as possible. This spirit is directed against mentalism and formalism. Mentalism is the subjectivist illusion of a direct, immediate, private, access to abstract objects like numbers or sets, meanings or contents, rules or forms. Formalism is the naive identification of numbers with signs and concepts with symbols, perhaps together with rules of deduction as merely schematic forms of behaviour. A branch of this formalism in mathematics thrives today, namely Hilbert's sophisticated idea that there could be 'implicit definitions' of possible realms of abstract objects by formal axiomatic systems. But mathematical formalism mistakes mathematics for a system of schematic deductions and calculations that can be handled in the end by a computer. We do not understand Wittgenstein's philosophy of mathematics if we do not see it in the context of his criticism of formalism and axiomaticism.

The hard problem is to show that the formalist proposal to avoid all 'ontological' problems by the axiomatic-deductive method of implicit definitions is itself a form of hidden *belief-ontology*. In fact, it does not even face the problem of how an abstract realm of discourse can or must be constituted in order to serve as a possible interpretation of an axiomatic system. It does not acknowledge that there is a pragmatic foundation of mathematics that cannot be expressed in axiomatic 'foundations' at all. No wonder that the logicians and mathematicians who worked in Hilbert's project of developing a formalist foundation of mathematics did not understand, much less appreciate, Wittgenstein's remarks on the foundations of mathematics. Even though Wittgenstein did not want to change the practice of mathematics at all, he indeed wanted to change our understanding of this practice.

The problems of informal (pre-axiomatic) and formal (axiomatic) *belief-ontology* are almost unavoidable in any merely formal approach to a logic of definition and inferential deduction. Aristotle already had seen that in formal logic the very constitution of the realm of 'objects of discourse' in which the predicates and relations are defined cannot be expressed at all. The *genus proximum* for a definition must always be presupposed. As a result, we presuppose 'larger and larger' realms of objects in which we try to define subsets or relations by explicit predicates or forms of sentences. In the end we presuppose a whole universe of discourse about entities or *beings as such*. It was this very presupposition with respect to all extensions or sets that led to the breakdown of Frege's approach.

Aristotle had therefore distinguished formal logic with its definitions and deductions from *ontology*. Formal logic presupposes ontology. It presupposes an understanding of the realm of things in which we define properties and relations. Martin Heidegger was the best student of Aristotle in this respect. Heidegger saw

that a mere *assumption* of a universal realm of what there is just means *forgetting* to reflect on the very concept of an entity and the realm of discourse in which it can be addressed as an entity. Thus, the concept of being an entity in the universal realm of discourse, of being a possible object of meaningful talk, is presupposed, not explicated. This forgetfulness just is the belief-ontology I am talking about.

W.V.Quine rightly says that to be is to be the value of a variable. But he does not tell us what it is to be a value of a variable or what usually is presupposed when we use variables. Is, for example, god or your soul a candidate for a value of a variable? Under what conditions? In what kind of sentences? And if not at all, why not? Is the 'real' realm of the variables in empirical sentences the realm of sense perceptions, glimpses, sense data, whole bodies or whole events? If yes, what is a sense datum? Or what is an event? And what do we quantify over if we quantify over *possible* states of affairs or *possible* events? What is a *possible* glimpse or a *possible* event?

Belief-ontology begins with a mere subjective appeal to accept as clear what a real number, pure set, a datum, a thing, an event (or what not) is. Or it just uses categorised (free and bound) variables 'for' real numbers, pure sets, things, events (or what not) in a list of axioms that allegedly say something 'about' these things. Whoever proceeds in this way at least shows some lack of understanding of what we do when we play the game of producing axiomatic theories and make deductive calculations in such theories. Or, perhaps, he only forgets to tell us. But a lack of understanding of what we do when we proceed this way can have quite far-reaching consequences. On the ground of ontological contentions about what there really is, we decide in the end about how to organise and interpret whole fields of research, for example in mathematics, psychology or cognitive science.

I claim that Heidegger's main insight is that belief-ontology is a basic logical mistake or rather a fundamental naivety which ironically is *shared by axiomatic-deductive scientism and theology*. And I claim that it is essentially the same insight Wittgenstein arrives at in his late philosophy.

Wittgenstein had developed his version of this insight in the context of *philosophy of mathematics.* In mathematics, people think that any mathematical sentence is to be understood in the end as a sentence of pure set theory Frege and Cantor share this idea, but Frege at least tries to analyse the 'linguistic constitution' of the concept of a set. Unfortunately, the logical theory of definition implicitly leads to the assumption of a *universal ontology* and this tendency of formal logic spoiled Frege's idea thoroughly Despite the collapse of Frege's (and Russell's) logicism, the (problematic) idea of *one* realm of abstract sets as *the* realm of mathematical objects was 'saved' in Hilbertian formal mathematics. Zermelo had developed the corresponding first system of axioms for 'whole set theory'. Axiomatic set theory thus became 'the' foundation of mathematics.[9] But this just means that mathematics starts with the 'belief' in the formal consistency of axiomatic set theory and with the contention that every proper mathematical definition and every 'real' proof has to take place in this

framework. *This is the belief-ontology of mathematics in its modern, typically axiomatic, form.*[10] It is this picture which Wittgenstein so fiercely attacks—without much success in his preferred audience, the community of mathematicians. But Wittgenstein is right nevertheless. The whole approach of belief-ontology is flawed.

What goes wrong here becomes especially clear if we look at an example like the belief in the ontological reality of possible worlds and possible things as proposed by David Lewis. The implicitly accepted task is to define all distinctions and relations by the usual logical means of definitions. This forces us to assume a realm of possible worlds and things. We then start to speculate about which axioms are to be declared as basic descriptions of the structure of possible worlds. Unfortunately, the whole procedure, exact as it is, is utterly arbitrary. It appears to be much more rational than it is. The reason is that the concept of an entity or object, an event or a whole possible world is misconstrued if we think that it can be defined by a set of formal axioms. It is misapprehended if we think that we just have to 'assume' a corresponding universe of discourse. If we proceed that way we do not realise how our talk about possibilities is constituted in the *real reality of discourse*.

Wittgenstein goes far beyond Frege in his later philosophy of mathematics just because he had seen the traps of belief-ontology. He had seen the reasons for the tendency to look for a universe of discourse in the attempts to get rid of Russell's types in the hierarchy of sets. And he had seen the problems of this tendency. Therefore he can claim that—and show why—the most interesting, non-trivial, proofs in mathematics are not formal deductions but *arguments*. They argue in favour of new rules of deduction or of new 'axioms' or in favour of a new 'model' or a whole new 'formal language game' that can be used for some purpose inside or outside of mathematics. Such argumentative proofs 'show' why we can accept the proposed rules of inferences or that a formal language game fulfils some important conditions. But there is no higher or general fact of the matter that is 'shown' by such proofs. This is an anti-Platonist insight into the constitution of mathematics.

Platonism and formalism in mathematics are twins. They both are dogmatic in the sense that they are just decisions in favour of a belief-ontology. They both forget to analyse what it means to reflect on the constitution of a domain for a variable.

Outside mathematics, belief-ontology is any poorly reflected-upon supposition of an allegedly situation-invariant concept of pre-fixed reference and truth. It means that the fact is forgotten or overlooked that *we* define the criteria for existence and identity of objects, events and states of affairs or for the truth of propositions—even if we do this most often in a way that the defining criteria surpass our means of control. This is already so when we define the identity of a body moving outside the reach of direct *Anschauung*.

Against subjectivism

Humean empiricism and subjectivism poses another problem. Kant himself still uses a language that seems to presuppose the perspective of the first person. Therefore, Kant's generic form of expression is not really sufficient to articulate the preconditions of being a person who can reflect on the presuppositions of personal competence—as, once again, Heidegger has pointed out (and Hegel before him). The problem is how to avoid the following dilemma of the subjectivist point of view: either I reflect on my competence by a kind of 'introspection' that already *presupposes* the competence of thinking and of having intentional and cognitive states. Or I see myself as a possible object of one of the sciences of human behaviour, of physiology, for example, or psychology, sociology or education.

The problem is connected with a quest for a deeper understanding of individual and joint intentionality, of human communication and co-operation as the place in which any understanding of content is situated. Wittgenstein opposed any 'subjectivist' and any 'realist' reading of mental and intentional, semantical and conceptual expressions like 'belief' and 'mind' and 'consciousness' and 'will', 'meaning', 'predicate' and 'content'. We use such expressions when we reflect on our *condition humaine,* on our competence to take part in a common practice. It is wrong to identify intentionality with mere subjective states or even with spiritual events of some kind or other. It is also wrong to identify intentionality with bodily states or events. Talking about mental and intentional states or processes is talking about personal states or events. But personal states or events are social states or events. This, in a nutshell, is what I see as Wittgenstein's main contribution to the second wave of enlightenment with respect to the problem of subjectivity.

All in all, Wittgenstein's philosophy provides us with a reflection on institutions and practices as the presupposed ground for mental competence. We do not find such a reflection in Kant's philosophy at all. Kant does not focus on the importance of normal and formal languages.[11] In his reflection on forms of actions and knowledge, he neither realises the importance of joint experience and joint control of knowledge claims, nor does he reflect on the difficult title-words like 'thinking' or 'concept' or 'understanding' or 'reason' or '(self) consciousness'. He uses words like these without further analysis, just appealing to our pre-conceptions.

Wittgenstein nevertheless continues on Kantian lines. He reflects on the linguistic and practical 'constitution' of (reasonable) thinking. He does so in an analysis of the 'grammatical' forms of language use. He just replaces Kant's words 'constitution' and 'constitutional' by 'grammar' and 'grammatical', as Kambartel observes, too. The picture of grammarians who make the implicit forms of correct language use explicit replaces Kant's metaphor of a constitution of a state, perhaps together with a constitutional assembly representing the 'society' of mind's competence. But, of course, Wittgenstein's use of the words

'grammar' and 'grammatical' is metaphorical also, or rather, here he uses the rhetorical figure of synecdoche. His conception of grammar includes the forms and norms of joint and individual actions in which language is used. A grammatically correct statement fulfils basic norms of correct language use far beyond mere syntax. A grammatical statement talks about such norms.

Statements about the real world of possible experience are 'true' only as far as we can presuppose the 'true' (correct) way of using them in an inferential language game. The rules of true or correct inferences are, however, not all defined by formal rules of deduction. The competence of drawing the 'right' inferences rests on a complicated practice. It is open to control and review. If we make a judgement about the truth of a claim we also make a judgement about the correct way to use the claim in an inferential game. This use defines or characterises the 'meaning' of the claim. In other words: meaning, correct use, successful usage and truth cannot be separated neatly. It is the 'success' of a communicative and co-operative practice that, in the end, decides about the 'right' or 'sufficient' understanding of a (generic or concrete) sentence or of a (generic or concrete) speech act, and about its 'correctness' or 'truth' as well. This 'success' rests, of course, on some presupposed competence and knowledge that form a kind of rock bottom for taking part in the co-operative practice of linguistic communication, in joint developments of knowledge or in any other form of developing forms of shared practice. Wittgenstein certainly does not use such *epitomising labels* as I am forced to do here—such that I run some high risk of being misunderstood. Rather, he shows these things paradigmatically.

Philosophical exercises and reminders

Wittgenstein does indeed want to *show* us the right way of seeing things and dealing with language. He is not interested in meta-level statements *about* the right way of seeing things. He takes the insight seriously that understanding, at its base, is *practical competence*. His motto is: 'And write with confidence "In the beginning was the deed".'[12]

Therefore, Wittgenstein presents paradigmatic ways of doing philosophy or thinking in an autonomous and critical way. Philosophy is exercise, not theory. It cannot be theory, because (axiomatic) theories *usually are founded on the shaky ground of belief-ontology*. Philosophical reflection must be immanent, aphoristic, dialogical, dialectical, sometimes ironical, didactical, deictical. This, in fact, already was the insight of the romantic students of Fichte: Novalis, Friedrich and August Schlegel (the highly gifted translator of Shakespeare). Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche stand in their tradition. This tradition is continued, in a sense, by Paul Feyerabend, Richard Rorty and Jacques Derrida, to name just a few. They all agree that philosophy is an exercise of *bon sense* or *good judgement,* but as such it can be an art of thought-provoking polemics, too.

Nevertheless we can develop 'theories' in philosophy, if we only know that they are usually mere local metaphorical models for making an implicit form of a

practice explicit. Such models can be formal constructions of language games as objects of comparison. They function, then, as linguistic techniques of verbal articulation. But such a model gets its meaning only via an autonomous projective judgement about what it can *show* us. It may improve our understanding. Perhaps it helps with respect to a certain limited set of expressions, sentences or forms of judgement in a scientific discipline or in everyday discourse. Or it improves our understanding of the place of science or another whole institution in and for our life. But any such attempt can fail, just as any metaphor or analogy can be misleading, too, if it is not designed or used properly.

The project of science has already developed in an institutional framework. In it, we jointly develop and control knowledge on the ground of our pre-knowl edge. A huge part of this background knowledge is pre-scientific know-how. Another part of background knowledge comes in the form of traditions of articulated certainties.

The humanities, too, should be understood now as joint enterprises. They are a project of critical reflection on all forms of practice in life including the sciences. And they are already an institution with a division of labour and perspective. There is an historical and philological, (micro) sociological, psychological, political and philosophical access to the phenomena of human culture. But this project of reflection on the human condition is possible only if we do not lose an understanding of the differences in method, language and goal between reflection in the humanities and the procedures in the empirical sciences. The deep danger of naturalism and scientism is that they are about to destroy this tradition of cultural reflection, especially once they have won the leading position in public opinion.

It is therefore wrong to assume that Wittgenstein's criticism of philosophical theory means the end of philosophy. On the contrary. He redefines, renews philosophy in a more thoroughgoing way than Dewey had proposed. Philosophy does not answer to quests for absolute certainty. Nor does it argue in favour of some relativism or scepticism. The second wave of enlightenment does not aim at a renunciation of scientific orientations and explanations at all. Rather, it urges us to become more conscious of the peculiar social and cultural form of reason and rationality, but especially of science as a mere province of our life. Reason, rationality and science rest, like everything in the human world, on co-operation and trust, *bon sense* and a good comprehension of our own common enterprise. The need of autonomous comprehension of implicit forms of human practice is the basic reason why it is so wrong to replace reflections on everyday understanding and cultural institutions by empirical investigation and scientific theory.

Notes

1 'Novalis' is Friedrich von Hardenberg. Compare *Novalis, Werke II*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000, pp. 394 and 551 394 and 551.

2 John McDowell's (1994) undertakes a new recovery of Kant's insight for the analytic tradition. Compare also the chapters on Kant in my (1995) and notice that Kant's word 'transcendental' means something like 'presuppositional'.

3 The phrase 'beyond all phenomena' is the first line of a famous prayer in which Gregorios Nazianzenos *addresses* and, at the same time, even *defines* god. This side remark may show how a critique of Platonism and a critique of theology go hand in hand.

4 The English translation, 'Superstition is nothing but belief in the causal nexus' (*TLP* 5.1361) seems to me fairly problematic. The German text rather reads: 'the main source of superstition results from belief in the causal nexus'.

5 The problem, of course, is how to distinguish presuppositional analysis of a practice and its forms from empirical social science and mere history of a practice. We must, however, leave this question open here.

6 The last sentence sounds tautological and it would take some time to make its nontrivial content clear. But it may be enough if we see that the world of action is more basic than the world described by natural science.

7 Despite all dispute about it, Frege's criticism of Dedekind's and Cantor's belief in a pre-established system of sets as abstract objects shows that it is wrong to label Frege as a Platonist.

8 Frege's 'logicism' had been an attempt to define exactly one system of names for all mathematical objects, the *pure sets*. Such a set is a *course of values* or *extension* of a function.

9 Axiomatic set theory is an *ersatz* to a full description of the 'ontology' of mathematics. The axioms allegedly characterise the essential structure of the 'universe of discourse of mathematical objects'. This universe is identified with 'the' class of abstract sets or structures.

10 It is crucial to see that it does not make much difference if we start with ontological convictions as in Naive Set Theory or if we start with a belief in (the formal consistency of) the basic axioms of set theory.

11 Kant's paradigm of a real scientific theory was classical mechanics. His reflections on psychology and the historical and social sciences were rather vague and undeveloped partly due to his times.

12 The passage from Goethe's Faust I (*'und schreib getrost, "im Anfang war die Tat"'*) is Faust's 'non-standard' translation of the famous beginning of St John's Gospel (*'in principio erat verbum'*). It appears, as is well known, in Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*, 402.

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