The Movement of Thought

Wittgenstein on Time, Change and History

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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ABBREVIATIONS

All references to Wittgenstein's works appear in the text in parentheses using the English abbreviations provided by A. Pichler, M.A.R. Biggs, and S.A. Uffelmann, in their "Bibliographie der deutsch- und englischsprachigen Wittgenstein-Ausgaben" (https://www.alws.at/alws/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Bibliographie-2019-11-26.pdf; last accessed 15.05.2021). These are followed by a page and/or section number, as well as a manuscript source and date where relevant. To this, I note the following alteration (T = *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*) and the addition of *Philosophical Occasions*:

T   *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus,* trans. D.F Pears & B.F. McGuinness
            (London and New York: Routledge, 1974).

PO   *Philosophical Occasions, 1912-1951*, eds. J. Klagge & A. Nordmann
            (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1993).

INTRODUCTION

> "The movement of thought [*Denkbewegung*] in my philosophizing should be discernible [*müßte wiederfinden lassen*] in the history of my mind, of its moral concepts & in the understanding of my situation."
>
> —*Denkbewegungen [MS 183, p. 125; 1931]*

Wittgenstein often remarked that philosophy is a search for *das erlösende Wort:* the 'saving' or 'redeeming' word. Despite his clear statement to the contrary in the preface to the *Tractatus*—where he claimed, of course, to have found the final solution to the problems of philosophy, once and for all—this would not long remain for him a search for *the* redeeming word (in the singular) but rather for redeeming *words* (in the plural). For, when we look at his philosophical development as a whole, we witness the relentless pursuit of an apparently never-ending task. Thus, in his work, terms of art are coined and diverse problems are dissolved through the various shifts in perspective they are intended to engender, only to be later dropped as quickly as they had once been adopted. Among such typically Wittgensteinian terms of art, even the casual reader will readily recognize those such as 'sense' and 'nonsense' or 'saying' and 'showing' from his earlier thought, as well as 'grammar', 'language-games' and 'forms of life' from the latter. There are, of course, many others—including the rather poetic '*das erlösende Wort*' itself.

Throughout Wittgenstein's work he sought to use contemporary language to craft a novel response to what were in many cases ancient confusions. In this work too, I have tried to identify certain 'redeeming words', tools in my own philosophical toolbox so to speak, with which I might resolve some of the confusions that swirl around my own reception of

Wittgenstein's thought. That problem was for me especially the following, nagging question: Why *did* Wittgenstein write *Philosophical Investigations* anyway? Put differently: What was he trying to achieve with it? Certainly, he was responding to some misconceptions that he had earlier expressed in the *Tractatus*. That much is clear. But this fails to fully address the deeper issue, namely: *Why bother?* The question is important because, unlike the *Tractatus*, the *Investigations* never presupposes the *truth* of the ideas that are expressed there. So, while Wittgenstein's early thought will always be of interest as a poignant account of how things simply are with the world, philosophically speaking, his later work lacks that traditional *raison d'être.* And yet, neither is it a work of fiction or fancy.

In my pursuit of this question, I came to realise—indeed, as others have before—that the work's purpose is *heuristic*. It is meant to help us achieve that kind of shift in perspective that Wittgenstein himself underwent when he realised the faults that were inherent to his earlier mode of thinking. As he himself states in the *Investigations*, these regard principally the various 'pictures' that often hold our thoughts captive and forbid them from moving on in other more profitable directions—such as, for example, that inherently Tractarian vision which suggests that the final solution to the problems of philosophy is within our reach at all, and, consequently, that no further progress in *that* regard would subsequently be warranted. And then, like the great many terms of art we find within its pages, the *Investigations* itself seems somehow intended to be abandoned once its task has been fulfilled.

Here, of course, we are confronted with the ghost of another familiar Tractarian vision: that of the ladder, which is meant to be cast aside once it has been ascended. However, unlike the *Tractatus*, the *Investigations* was not finished, and, I would venture to claim, in fidelity to the open-ended conception of philosophy advanced there, that it could not have been.[1]

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1   N. Venturinha outlines a compelling case for this as well, with an insightful comparison of Wittgenstein's *Investigations* and Pascal's *Pensées*. Venturinha's comparison raises noteworthy parallels regarding the respective contexts of production of the two works; the matter hinges, interestingly, on whether Pascal would have arranged the book to make it more coherent had he lived longer or whether he, like

What would the final word of such a work look like? I, for one, find it difficult to imagine. Nonetheless, though it is clear that Wittgenstein never succeeded in fully realizing the ideal of Tractarian transcendence that he once upheld as the highest achievement philosophy could expect of itself, the sought-after solution that had motivated his work at that time never ceased to motivate his later work either. The true philosophical discovery, Wittgenstein notes in the *Investigations*, is the one that "gives philosophy peace", the one which allows philosophy to stop tormenting itself (PI §133). But then again, we might once more ask: Why not simply let the philosopher labour away under the sway of the 'philosophical superlative', seeking unbendable rules of some superhuman strength about the way things… *must be?* Perhaps such rules are indeed illusionary and our search for them is destined only to bring dissatisfaction, but there were certainly other illusions and dissatisfactions with which Wittgenstein could not have been bothered.[2] So what harm is done by allowing oneself to fall prey to just this kind? In other words: *What need do we, philosophers in particular, have for redemption?* The answer to such questions, I maintain, is not found within the pages of the *Investigations*, nor any other single selection of Wittgenstein's remarks, published or otherwise. To answer it, we must look rather at his work as a whole and at the relentless evolution that his thought underwent over the course of his life.

As I deal with the questions framed above throughout this dissertation, I leave them unanswered here in order to come back to what served for me as something like a few *erlösende Wörter* in my pursuit of a clearer understanding of the problem at hand. Those words were for me *time, change* and *history*. They are not very sexy words, I admit. And they clearly lack the kind of subtle poetic punch for which Wittgenstein is known, as indeed are many of his commentators. But they allowed me nonetheless to access a distinct

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Wittgenstein*,* rather intended his book to represent "a consciously unfinished work." (N. Venturinha, "Introduction: A Composite Work of Art", in ed. N. Venturinha, *The Textual Genesis of Wittgenstein's* Philosophical Investigations (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 1-18.)

2 As Wittgenstein notes humorously in what, by chance, *is* the last word of the *Investigations*: it is indeed possible to speak of the "changing activity of butter when its price rises", but "if no problems are produced by this it is harmless." (PI §693)

element of Wittgenstein's thought which seems to me underappreciated and which casts, moreover, a particular light on what exactly he wished to achieve with his work. In the broadest strokes, this dissertation is an investigation into Wittgenstein's relation to historical and indeed historicist thinking. It is a topic which H.-J. Glock notes (in one of the few articles to treat the subject directly) is "not either obvious or popular."[3] At turns, this investigation is undertaken in relation to the thoughts of others (Spengler or Paul Ernst, for example) and in relation to Wittgenstein's own thoughts (particularly his later response to the earlier, resolute *a-historicism* of the *Tractatus*). What I observed here was that, if we are permitted to compartmentalize his work and divide it up into more or less discrete periods—say, that of the *Tractatus*, that of the early 1930's, that of the *Investigations*, and that which we generally consider to be his post-*Investigations* work—there is almost invariably put forward there, alongside what we generally consider to be the main themes developed at each of these stages, a view of time and temporality that threatens the coherence of those very dominant themes themselves. This, I argue, is no mere coincidence.

Looking at Wittgenstein's development as a whole, we see that he was extremely sensitive to the fact that language—though it may be considered a-historical from a particular point of view—has in itself an ineliminable dynamism, which he variously considered at times in terms of its 'temporal' and/or 'historical' dimension. While stopping short of the claim that Wittgenstein's work evolved *solely* in response to these considerations, the threat this historicism poses to whatever conception he was advancing at a given time finds a consistent refrain throughout his work—and this is the case despite the dramatic revolutions his thought underwent. Not that Wittgenstein always saw historicism as a threat, however. Far from it. Indeed, there were times during the course of this research when I would have happily proclaimed Wittgenstein was indeed a historicist *himself*. There are clearly moments when he flirts with historicist ideas rather heavily, and the legitimacy he grants them is in itself telling for such a philosopher as he was. Wittgenstein ultimately recognized, however, that the flip-side of that historicism is its natural, dialectical sublation:

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3   H.-J. Glock, "Wittgenstein and History", p. 278, in eds. A. Pichler and S. Säätelä, *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*. Frankfurt a.M.: Ontos Verlag, 2006), pp. 277-303.

if people of different places and different times think differently than we do, it is only by virtue of our deeply shared humanity that we are able to identify these differences *as differences*—and not, for example, some incomprehensible form of delusion or madness. This is not to say that aberrations do not and have not existed. Nonetheless, I believe today that it is this deep sense of shared humanity that Wittgenstein aimed at articulating throughout his philosophy, regardless of the matter at hand, while at the same time recognizing the forces that threaten its dissolution—and encouraging us, as philosophers, to acknowledge that philosophy itself is no guarantee against our active participation in any future abdication of that shared humanity.

Expressions of this aspect of Wittgenstein's philosophy are, of course, found particularly in the *Nachlaß* material of the early 1930's—and for good reasons too, although under the sway of popular thinkers of the day (such as Weininger, in particular) they were not always well-expressed at the time. Nonetheless, what they clearly bear witness to is the dawning of a philosophically relevant, historically conditioned form of cultural criticism within Wittgenstein's philosophy, as well as a process of acute reflection concerning the timeliness of the undertaking itself. Despite the fact that the philosophical vocabulary Wittgenstein employed at that time would (like all the others he variously employed) eventually be abandoned, the issues raised there would not. Historically self-reflective, cultural considerations were never a passing interest for Wittgenstein and, indeed, they provide a steady refrain throughout his private remarks—and even find a privileged (if muted) place in the last writings collected just shortly before his death. With such *Nachlaß* comments in mind, moreover, we see that these considerations motivated key strategies in his published and publication-ready works as well, which to this day maintain a privileged place in our evaluations of Wittgenstein's philosophical legacy despite the increasing interest that the *Nachlaß* has rightly earned.

Certainly, the extensive access we have to the *Nachlaß* material today has been a boon to Wittgenstein scholarship. As the older, incomplete picture of his philosophical development has been swept aside, there have arisen new and sometimes radical conceptions of his

philosophical achievement and its lasting significance. Nonetheless, with so much material so readily at hand, there is clearly a risk of 'cherry-picking' quotes (as it were) that attribute to Wittgenstein (possibly) mistaken or (far more likely) simply irrelevant views. Thus, before concluding, I sketch briefly here the methodological touchstones that guided this research into what, by most accounts, remains rather uncharted territory within Wittgenstein scholarship, along with a brief chapter summary. [4]

In the first instance, I have sought at each turn to put Wittgenstein's thoughts about time, change, and history, in relation to what are generally considered to be the dominant trends in his work at a given point in time. This is because I believe we, as scholars, have the most to gain from an appreciation of how the views he develops there, alongside those dominant trends, afford a deeper understanding of the dominant trends themselves and how his thought frequently evolved in response to them. As a work of scholarship, the focus thus remains by and large on what Wittgenstein himself thought of these ideas rather than what we might wish to make of them as contemporary philosophers today. Secondly, I have sought to contextualize the ideas explored here in relation to some of the major biographical moments in Wittgenstein's life. This is for two reasons. On the one hand, I maintain that the connection between Wittgenstein's life and his philosophy is stronger than in most other philosophers (even the greatest among them) and that we cannot get a clear understanding of the latter without an appreciation of the former. On the other hand, it is the general lack of such an appreciation—characteristic of the Anglo-Austrian analytic tradition, within which he initially had the greatest impact—that resulted in the early neglect of the views that I explore here. And this is natural, too. For it is only with our contemporary access to the *Nachlaß* that we are able to appreciate just how outside of that tradition Wittgenstein himself felt he was. Of course, his work can no way be considered as *independent* of it. Nonetheless, as our familiarity with his *Nachlaß* continues to grow, we gain a greater insight into just how distinct many of the issues that motivated his work were from those that

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4 Readers are, in addition, invited to consult the 'Concluding Remarks' section of each chapter, for a more detailed summary of each chapters' content as well as indication of the its general position in the overall argumentation of this dissertation.

motivated the wider academic *milieu* within which he was situated. Historical thinking, to take just one example, was clearly a key element in Wittgenstein's work and his own understanding of that work's significance—and so, if it is true, as noted above, that his thoughts in this regard are a topic neither obvious nor popular in Wittgenstein scholarship, I maintain that this is due to our own tendency to neglect such issues rather than Wittgenstein's.

With this in mind, I have divided the dissertation into two parts. Part I traces the evolution of Wittgenstein's thoughts on time and temporality from the *Tractatus*, through the *Investigations*, and into certain key final remarks from those written shortly before his death (as collected in *On Certainty*). In doing so, I suggest that his later thought in this particular regard—indeed, like so many others within his philosophy—may be viewed as a response to, and subsequent modification of, that conception first outlined in his early thought. For indeed there is a very clear sense in which Wittgenstein had, in the *Tractatus*, proclaimed the end of history. Of course, by that Tractarian light, time itself would move on. But that which happened within it would be 'eternal' in its uniform, empirical character. People would continue to be born, to live and to die, of course, but what we might think of as the 'march of ideas' or the 'movement of thought' would be no more. For the young Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*, there would be only two things left for philosophers of the future to do: either see the world aright or vainly speak where they should rather be silent. Thus, between Wittgenstein's early work and his return to philosophy a decade later, there was not merely a correction of certain mistaken beliefs expressed in that earlier work, but rather a seismic shift in his thought about what it means to be mistaken in philosophy at all. And with that came an acute sense that history does move on and that it cares little for our various claims to have found the ultimate solution to whatever it is that may trouble us philosophically at a given moment in time.

That Wittgenstein's return to philosophy coincided with the rise of fascism in Europe has a significance that cannot be denied, though he rarely referred to it explicitly. History was nonetheless marching on, and though the *Tractatus* had an immeasurable impact in certain

philosophical quarters, it is clear that the work did not achieve the aim Wittgenstein himself had intended for it. Whether or not it could, in principle, have done so is beside the point. For the fact is that the times *were* changing—and Wittgenstein, in typical fashion, changed with them. Thus, in Part II, I take a closer look at the motivations behind Wittgenstein's return to philosophy and in particular at the unique methodology he developed in order to serve his new purposes.

Though Wittgenstein's work in this regard is indeed singular in its application and in its scope, it is not without precedent. Therefore, I look first at how Wittgenstein adapted Goethe's conception of morphology to his own, modified ends. I highlight there particularly how the questions of temporality inherent to the methodology itself were for both initially suppressed and only later came to occupy a key role in their respective applications of it. This helps, on the one hand, to contextualize those remarks Wittgenstein made which appear at times to suggest that history was unimportant for the kind of project he wished to undertake. On the other hand, it highlights the extent to which those familiar and yet apparently off-handed remarks about the historical dimensions of language in the *Investigations* are actually the result of a long thoughtful engagement—rather than a casual interjection in an otherwise basically 'a-historical work', for example. Following this, I look at what has come to be termed the 'conservative charge', regarding Wittgenstein's political orientation and its expression in his philosophy. Through a review of some of the major discussants in this debate, I show that wherever one sits on the matter of Wittgenstein's political convictions (right, left, somewhere in between, or somewhere else besides) will ultimately depend upon how one understands (although has perhaps only vaguely articulated) Wittgenstein's thoughts about tradition, change and the nature of historical continuity.

In the final chapter, I address the question that motivated this investigation at the outset: Why did Wittgenstein write *Philosophical Investigations?* I proceed here, in effect, by historicizing Wittgenstein's work itself and argue that—as the work is inherently tied to the

historical particularities of its production—it is no longer possible for us simply to repeat Wittgenstein's critical agenda in any kind of straightforward way. Given that, the question becomes: What does it mean to philosophise in a *Wittgensteinian spirit*, now that the times have moved on and the problems we are confronting are our own? This, I argue, is the question he wished above all for us to pose. And thus, when Wittgenstein writes in the preface to the work "I should not like my writing to spare others the trouble of thinking" (PI, p. x), we should take him at his word here. Far from an expression of false modesty, it is rather an indication of something essential about the work to follow and the purpose to which it is designed.

ABSTRACT

The Austrio-British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein is famous among the public (philosophical and non-philosophical alike) for having written not only one, but two *magnum opera*—the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921) and *Philosophical Investigations* (1952)—with the second serving more or less as a complete repudiation of the first. Today, however, scholars recognize that far from having two distinct phases of thought, his later work actually represents a continuous process of development, reflection upon and refinement of the ideas he first explored in the trenches of World War I, rather than a straightforward repudiation. This dissertation is an investigation into an under-acknowledged element in Wittgenstein's thought, one which in many cases acted as an impetus for that life-long process of novel philosophical reflection: *History.* What we witness here above all is the development of a philosophically relevant, historically conditioned form of cultural criticism throughout Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, as well as an acute reflection concerning the timeliness of the undertaking itself. This casts a new light on the manner in which the *Investigations* serves as a response to the ideas first put forth in the *Tractatus* and, moreover, the manner in which he himself conceived of its philosophical significance.

As the topic history is (to quote a well-known scholar) 'neither obvious nor popular' within Wittgenstein scholarship, the role that it played in Wittgenstein's thought is explored here from multiple angles, both chronologically and thematically. Part I traces the evolution of Wittgenstein's thoughts on time and temporality from the *Tractatus*, through the *Investigations*, into some key post-*Investigations* remarks. These are Chapters One, Two and Three respectively. Part II examines the motivations behind Wittgenstein's post-Tractarian return to philosophy and, in particular, the unique methodology he developed in order to serve his renewed purpose. Chapter Four explores Wittgenstein's adaptation of Goethe's conception of morphology, highlighting how the questions of temporality that are in fact inherent to the methodology itself were for both initially suppressed and only later came to occupy a key role in their respective uses of it. This helps, principally, to

contextualize those remarks which may appear at times to suggest that history was unimportant for Wittgenstein's philosophical project. Chapter Five addresses what has come to be called the 'conservative charge', regarding Wittgenstein's political orientation. Through a review of some of the major discussants in this debate, I show that wherever one sits on the matter of Wittgenstein's political convictions and its expression in his philosophy will ultimately depend upon how one understands Wittgenstein's thoughts about tradition, change and the nature of historical continuity. Finally, Chapter Six seeks to answer the basic question which, in a certain sense, motivated this research from the outset: What was Wittgenstein trying to achieve with *Philosophical Investigations?* Through a historicization of the work itself, I argue that it is no longer possible today to repeat Wittgenstein's critical agenda in any kind of straightforward way because of the manner in which the work is tied to its own historical particularities. Given that, the question becomes: What does it mean to philosophize in a *Wittgensteinian spirit* today, now that the times have moved on and the problems that we confront are our own? This, I conclude, is the question he wished above all for us, the philosophers of the future, to pose ourselves in order to break free of the dogmatic pictures that hold our thoughts 'captive' and forbid them from moving forward in other, more profitable directions.

PART I

CHAPTER 1. *THE MYTH OF A-TEMPORALITY: TIME AND PROGRESS IN WITTGENSTEIN'S TRACTATUS*

> "What has history to do with me? Mine is the first and only world!"
>
> —*Notebooks, 2.9.1916*

I. Wittgenstein and the 'Science of Logic'

Having begun his studies in philosophy shortly before, in 1912 the young Wittgenstein was asked to write a review of P. Coffey's *The Science of Logic* for the *Cambridge Review*.[5] This review, which stands as the earliest written record of Wittgenstein's philosophical thought, is not widely cited outside of biographical contexts. And this is understandably so, for not much of what makes Wittgenstein's early thought truly distinctive is discernible there.[6] Even if the tone is more vitriolic than is usual for such a review, the work is in most respects exactly what one would expect from a gifted young philosopher beginning his studies and being set on the path of philosophical scholarship by his mentor. For he was already then, as R. Monk remarks, "the wearer of Russell's mantel in logic."[7]

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5 P. Coffey, *The Science of Logic: An Inquiry into the Principles of Accurate Thought and Scientific Method* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1912).

6 Two small but notable exceptions to this include his critical remark that "Mr. Coffey, like many logicians, draws great advantage from an unclear way of expressing himself; for if you cannot tell whether he means to say 'Yes' or 'No', it is difficult to argue against him", which recalls what would later become proposition 4.023 of the *Tractatus*: "A proposition must determine reality one way or the other: yes or no." As well, we might include here what McGuinness calls his stylistic "preference for the epigrammatic and dismissive." (B. McGuinness, *Wittgenstein: A Life (Young Ludwig 1889-1921)* (London: Duckworth, 1988), p. 169.)

7 R. Monk, *The Duty of Genius* (New York: Penguin, 1990), p. 74. In a letter to Ottoline, sent shortly before the review of Coffey was written, Russell notes: "I believe a certain sort of mathematicians have far more philosophical capacity than most people who take up philosophy. Hitherto the people attracted

However, the review opens with a noteworthy remark that serves to illustrate just how radical a departure Wittgenstein would soon make from this 'typical path' and the tradition of mathematical logic into which he was being initiated by Russell:

> "In no branch of learning can an author disregard the results of honest research with so much impunity as he can in Philosophy and Logic. To this circumstance we owe the publication of such a book as Mr. Coffey's 'Science of Logic': and only as a typical example of the work of many logicians to-day does this book deserve consideration. The author's Logic is that of the scholastic philosophers, and he makes all their mistakes—of course with the usual references to Aristotle. (Aristotle, whose name is so much taken in vain by our Logicians, would turn in his grave if he know that so many Logicians know no more about Logic to-day than he did 2,000 years ago). The author has not taken the slightest notice of the great work of the modern mathematical logicians— work which has brought about an advance in Logic comparable only to that which made Astronomy out of Astrology, and Chemistry out of Alchemy." (PO, p. 3-4)

What is so noteworthy about this passage is how Wittgenstein describes the work of modern logicians as "honest research", the advances of which are "comparable only to that which made Astronomy out of Astrology, and Chemistry out of Alchemy." There can be little doubt that by modern mathematical logicians, Wittgenstein has Frege and Russell in mind here: the first "grave mistake" of Coffey's work is the belief that all propositions are of the subject-predicate form, this being the heart of Frege's rejection (and subsequent revision) of Aristotelian logic, first set out in his own *Begriffsschrift* and later developed by Russell in his Theory of Definite Descriptions. Despite Wittgenstein's sharp dismissal of the Aristotelian logic inherent to Coffey's scholasticism, from this we can see that Wittgenstein would have agreed with the object of his criticism in this review on at least one point— namely, that logic is indeed a *science*. In this sense, Russell and Frege would have been to

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to philosophy have been mostly those who loved the big generalizations, which were all wrong, so that few people with exact minds have taken up the subject. It has long been one of my dreams to found a great school of mathematically-minded philosophers, but I don't know whether I shall ever get it accomplished. I had hopes of Norton, but he has not the physique, Broad is all right, but has no fundamental originality. Wittgenstein of course is exactly my dream." (Quoted in R. Monk, *The Duty of Genius, op cit.,* p. 75.)

the 'science of logic' what Galileo was to astronomy or what Lavoisier was to chemistry. Revolutionaries all, in both the methods and the raw materials of their respective *métiers*. Wittgenstein would soon come to see, however, that this is decidedly not the case.[8]

In the preface to the *Tractatus,* Wittgenstein famously declared to have solved all the problems of philosophy. This might seem surprising for a slim volume of less than one hundred pages, but what if one could show that all the various problems of philosophy were but diverse expressions of a single error? As Wittgenstein writes in the preface to the *Tractatus*: "The book deals with the problems of philosophy, and shows, I believe, that the reason why these problems are posed is that the logic of our language is misunderstood." (T, p. 3) Within the main body of the text, Wittgenstein repeats this sentiment: "Most of the propositions and questions of philosophers arise from our failure to understand the logic of our language." (T 4.003)

The problem is by now well-known: failing to abide by the requirements imposed upon us by the logic of our language, we construct illegitimate propositions in our metaphysically-inclined speculations ("whether the good is more or less identical than the beautiful" is the example Wittgenstein proposes at 4.003, in a conscious parody of Platonic reasoning). We thus mistakenly believe ourselves to have fathomed the depths of metaphysical truth, when in fact we have simply said nothing at all. Such speculative answers to questions about the good, the true and the beautiful are not therefore false, Wittgenstein claims, but simply

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8   It is interesting to note in passing that Wittgenstein would later describe his own shift in thought—i.e. from that found in the *Tractatus* to that found in his post-1930 writings and lectures—in *precisely* these terms. In his account of Wittgenstein's early-1930s lectures, Moore notes for example: "I was a good deal surprised by some of the things he said about the difference between 'philosophy' in the sense in which what he was doing might be called 'philosophy' (he called this 'modern philosophy'), and what has traditionally been called 'philosophy'. He said that what he was doing was a 'new subject', and not merely a stage in a 'continuous development'; that 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; that a 'new method' had been discovered, as had happened when 'chemistry was developed out of alchemy'; and that it was now possible for the first time that there should be 'skilful' philosophers, though of course there had in the past been 'great philosophers'." (PO, p. 113)

nonsense. As he summarily notes in the *Tractatus,* regarding the familiar problem of philosophical scepticism:

> "Scepticism is *not* irrefutable, but obviously nonsensical, when it tries to raise doubts where no question can be asked.
>
> For doubt exists only where a question exists, a question exists only where an answer exists, and an answer exists only where something *can be said.*" (T 6.51)

The apparent intractability of ancient and long-standing philosophical problems is not, therefore, due to their enormous difficulty or their unfathomable 'depth'. However, if these problems are not deep, neither are they *shallow*. On Wittgenstein's account, if scepticism is not irrefutable, for example, neither is it simply and straightforwardly refutable. "The *riddle* does not exist," he writes. "If a question can be framed at all, it is also *possible* to answer it." (T 6.5) Like all of the perennial 'philosophical riddles', to attempt a refutation of scepticism would already be to give it too much linguistic currency. For on Wittgenstein's account, there is nothing there to refute: "It is not surprising," he notes, "that the deepest problems are in fact *not* problems at all." (T 4.003)

While Wittgenstein would later come to consider the kind of speculative metaphysics so often found in philosophy as an outright 'bewitchment' by language, at the time he was composing the *Tractatus* the source of this misunderstanding was for him but a simple confusion arising from attending solely to the superficial surface of linguistic form. Thus, he writes there:

> "In everyday language it happens that the same word has different symbols—or that two words that have different modes of signification are employed in propositions in what is superficially the same way.

Thus the word 'is' figures as the copula, as a sign for identity, and as an expression for existence [9]; 'exist' figures as an intransitive verb like 'go', and 'identical' as an adjective; we speak of *something,* but also of *something's* happening.

(In the proposition, 'Green is green'—where the first word is the proper name of a person and the last an adjective—these words do not merely have different meanings: they are *different symbols*.)

In this way the most fundamental confusions are easily produced (and the whole of philosophy is full of them)." (T 3.323-3.324)

These confusions arise, he says, because our "language disguises thought" and so it is not possible to "gather immediately from it what the logic of language is." (T 4.002) Were this not the case, we would not mistake nonsensical talk—as Wittgenstein believed was so frequently to be found particularly in philosophy—for genuine sense. "Most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false," he notes, "but nonsensical. Consequently we cannot give an answer to questions of this kind"—whether, for example, the good is more or less identical than the beautiful—"but can only point out that they are nonsensical." (T 4.003)

The use of language as a medium of philosophical insight is of course a quite traditional one, familiar from the works of Plato to Nietzsche. Taken at face value, such traditional attempts to mine language for a proper understanding of the world are not misguided in spirit. However, having failed to grasp how language functions principally as a means to represent *things* in the world, about which we may genuinely speak and think—such as true sentences, good deeds, and beautiful things, rather than, say, *the* true, *the* good, or *the* beautiful in and of themselves—philosophers are invariable led by the misuse of language down the path of metaphysical speculation. Wallowing in ill-formed expressions, which ultimately succeed in referring to nothing at all, the philosopher thus fails on Wittgenstein's account to fulfil the necessary requirements for achieving genuine expressions of thought in

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9   The third of Coffey's errors, noted in Wittgenstein's review: "He confounds the copula 'is' with the word 'is' expressing identity. (The word 'is' has different meanings in the propositions—'Twice two is four' and 'Socrates is mortal'.)" (PO, p. 3)

language.   Like actors repeating lines on a stage, these obscure metaphysical utterances amount to nothing but a tale—full of sound and fury to be sure, but ultimately signifying nothing.

In the preface to the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein summaries the work in these terms:

> "What can be said at all can be said clearly and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence.   Thus, the aim of the book is to draw a limit to thought, or rather not to thought, but to the expression of thoughts: for in order to be able to draw a limit to thought, we should have to find both sides of the limit thinkable (i.e. we should have to be able to think what cannot be thought.)" (T, p. 3)

To seek clarity of thought within thought alone is problematic, Wittgenstein suggests here, because we require a standard by which to distinguish what is clear from what is obscure. This standard cannot be found in thought alone (as Descartes had suggested in the *Discourse on Method*, for example, under the guise of clear and distinct ideas given by the *lumen naturale* of reason[10])*,* for recognizing genuine thought by thinking alone would mean being familiar with some form of 'non-thought' from which it might be distinguished. And *this* would require one to realise the paradoxical task of thinking what cannot be thought. [11] However, where no 'non-thought' may be identified *non-language*, in other words *nonsense*, may.   Wittgenstein thus wished to turn our attention away from the introspective examination of thought, back to sensical language about things in the world—a new *prima philosophia*—so that we might have a way to identify what is and what is not genuine in the expression of thought, and so expunge from philosophy the nonsense to which it is prone.

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10 For example, concerning Descartes' conception of mathematics as the principle tool for physics and natural philosophy, he writes: "I have noticed certain laws which God has so established in nature, and of which he has implanted such notions in our minds, that after adequate reflection we cannot doubt that they are exactly as observed in everything which exists or occurs in the world." (R. Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, p. 131. In R. Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Vol. I,* ed. and trans. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff and D. Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 111-151.)

11 Regarding Descartes own susceptibility to this failing (from the Tractarian point of view), cf. J. Conant "In Search for Logically Alien Thought", *Philosophical Topics,* 20(1), 1991, pp. 115-180.

We can already begin to see here the extent to which Wittgenstein's work overlaps that of his intellectual fore-bearers, particularly Frege and Russell, and the extent to which it differs radically. Of course, a great deal of work has already been devoted to outlining the similarities between the three, as well as to accounting for the enormous debts that Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* owes to the work of the other two; however, a few uncontroversial examples may nonetheless serve to sharpen the point. In the case of Russell, for example, referring particularly to his Theory of Descriptions, Wittgenstein notes that it was he "who performed the service of showing that the apparent logical form of a proposition need not be its real one." (T 4.0031) It is in this sense that Wittgenstein held that the task of the philosopher is to alleviate problems by remedying the misconceptions that are involved in their formulation. Russell clearly had a similar view. To find an example of Frege's influence on Wittgenstein's thought in the *Tractatus*, we need not look much further than this, although we may need to adjust our focus a little wider. For although Wittgenstein scarcely mentions Frege in a positive light in the work, outside his expression of gratitude in the preface[12], many of the central conceptions within it can be traced back to Fregean roots. A prime example is Wittgenstein's use of Frege's 'Context Principle', which states that one must not ask for the meaning of a sign (or more precisely, the object to which it is supposed to refer) except from within the context of a proposition. We might compare here Wittgenstein's claim, that "Only propositions have sense; only in the nexus of a proposition does a name have meaning" (T 3.3), with Frege's original formulation of the principle: "Only in a proposition have the words really a meaning."[13] Having restating the Context Principle here, Wittgenstein goes on to apply it to his account of what an expression is, and his characterization of an expression as a mark of common form and content (a dual

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12 Perhaps the parenthesis at 4.431 provides an exception, although it is in typical fashion qualified: "Thus Frege was quite right to use [truth-conditions] as a starting point when he explained the signs of his conceptual notation. But the explanation of the concept of truth that Frege gives is mistaken: if 'the true' and 'the false' were really objects, and were the arguments in $\sim p$ etc., then Frege's method of determining the sense of '$\sim p$' would leave it absolutely undetermined."

13 G. Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, trans. J.L. Austin (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1980), §60. [Hereafter FA]

direction of fit between meaningful language and thought) is then woven into the very fabric of the structure and methodology of the *Tractatus* as a whole.

Suffice it to say that amongst all three thinkers there exists a common approach to philosophy regarding its task (the logical clarification of language) and the manner in which that task is to be realized (disambiguation through the use of an adequate logical notation). However, a great gulf opens up between the philosophies of Wittgenstein and the other two when we look at their respective accounts concerning *what it is* about language that allows such a task to be realized at all. Like Russell and Frege, Wittgenstein believed that philosophical obscurities could be resolved by clarifying the foundational structure of language and by remedying the misunderstandings that arise from attending solely to the superficial surface of linguistic form. Also like Frege and Russell, Wittgenstein too believed that the correct understanding would require an adequate logical framework in order avoid these confusions. However, for Frege and Russell, what allows this task to be realized is *the truth* of those logical foundations, which—in virtue of their being true—might subsequently be used to ground more complex logico-linguistic forms (such as those found in mathematics, for example). From this point of view, as the young Wittgenstein so decisively declared in 1912, substantial revolutions—comparable to those in astronomy or chemistry, for example—would indeed be possible in logic, as they are in an other science.

In the *Tractatus,* however, Wittgenstein rejects this possibility: "Philosophy is not one of the natural sciences," he notes. "The word 'philosophy' must mean something whose place is above or below the natural sciences, not beside them." (T 4.112) He stresses that philosophy, unlike science, is not a doctrine or a body of true propositions, such as that which Frege and Russell wished to secure, but rather an activity. The logic of our language must be properly *applied* but it must itself "go without saying." (T 3.334) Logic, he writes at the opening of the preparatory *Notebooks*, "must take care of itself." (NB, p. 2) It is not, therefore, the job of the philosopher to assert logical truths. The logic of our language must be allowed to show itself in its proper use, and it is rather the job of the philosopher to abide by its mandate. Thus, Wittgenstein writes, "all philosophy is a 'critique of language'

(*Sprachkritik*)." (T 4.0031) For it is only by speaking clearly that we may call out others' nonsense, effectively drawing the limits of language from within sensical language itself— i.e., without ourselves overstepping that limit in the very act of critique, without (that is to say) attempting to think what cannot be thought. As he writes towards the end of the *Tractatus*:

> "The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science—i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy—and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give meaning to certain signs in his propositions. Although it would not be satisfying to the other person—he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy—*this* method would be the only strictly speaking correct one." (T 6.53)

The aim of Wittgenstein's critical project at this time is thus to clarify the "a priori order of language"—a task he described early on as "the great problem round which everything I write turns" (NB, p. 53)—and, having clarified that order, to bring language use (above all *philosophical language use*) in line with it, so that we might be assured of genuinely represent things in the world when speaking.

Realising this critique would not mean arriving—in a positive sense—at a certain collection of substantial 'philosophical truths' upon which one might rely in complex, uncertain or ambiguous cases. Rather, truth for Wittgenstein is a matter of what propositions say about *things* and "there is no a priori order of things." (T 5.634) Bringing language into line with its a priori order means therefore—in a negative sense—expunging from it the nonsense that clothes, and so disguises, genuine thought in language: "My difficulty," Wittgenstein notes, "is only an enormous difficulty of expression." (NB, p. 40) In this sense, we would then be left afterwards with nothing but that which could properly be said of things in the world and so be rid of the pseudo-propositions that permeate our ordinary language (as Frege and Russell also wished) *as well as* the superfluous attempt to ground this activity in a body of

substantially true logical propositions (such as that upon which Frege and Russell erroneously relied).

Now, at the heart of this critique lies what has come to be called the Picture Theory of Language, according to which the sense of a given proposition is not determined by the agreement or disagreement of the proposition with the part of the world it describes but rather by the very *possibility* of such agreement or disagreement. As Wittgenstein states: "The sense of a proposition is its agreement and disagreement with possibilities of existence and non-existence of states of affairs." (T 4.2) Wittgenstein was thus led to claim that sensical propositions form a kind of linguistic picture of reality, like a *tableau vivant* (T 4.0311), to which the facts of the world *could* either correspond or not. For a proposition to have sense, it must be 'bipolar'; it must be possible for that proposition to be *either* true *or* false. Thus, for example, the propositions of natural science (as propositions describing the particular arrangement of objects in some bounded part of the world) are sensical even if and when they are false. Crucially, it is from this that the possibility of scientific fallibility follows and, therefore, the possibility of *scientific progress*.

Of principle importance for Wittgenstein here is the consequence of this idea for the positivistic reliance on a priori facts in Frege and Russell's logicism. Specifically, by the Tractarian reading, tautologies are not facts simply by virtue of their unconditional truth. On the contrary, as Wittgenstein gestures metaphorically in the *Tractatus*: "A tautology leaves open to reality the whole—the infinite whole—of logical space: a contradiction fills the whole of logical space leaving no point of it for reality. Thus neither of them can determine reality in any way." (T 4.463) Contrary to the view of Frege and Russell (among other logicians, then and now) the 'unconditionally-true' quality of tautologies does not satisfy the conditions of sense for Wittgenstein. For here we would not know what it means for a tautology to be *false*, nor for a contradiction to be *true*, and therefore cannot compare it with reality (as we can a picture) to see if it 'holds' or not. In a manner of speaking, we would not know where to look for its sense. "For example," Wittgenstein notes in a telling

illustration, "I know nothing about the weather when I know that it is either raining or not raining." (T 4.461)

Wittgenstein was highly critical of appealing to such a body of substantial logical truths, familiar from the history of logic going back to Aristotle (the Law of Excluded Middle, the Principle Non-Contradiction, etc.). Indeed, he considered this critique the *Grundgedanke*, or 'fundamental thought', of the *Tractatus*: "My fundamental idea is that the 'logical constants' are not representatives; that there can be no representatives of the *logic* of facts." (T 4.0312) However, the manner in which Wittgenstein rejected this appeal meant that he had to deal with a number of problems—or, if these problems are mere philosophical pseudo-problems, demonstrate that this is so—to which Frege and Russell were immune. For the question that naturally poses itself here is this: How can we reconcile the necessity that is supposedly inherent to our practice of logic with the revisions—including those of Frege, Russell and Wittgenstein themselves—that have taken place in that very same practice over time? How are we to reconcile the *aprioricity* of logic with the brute fact of its *historical development?*

Where Wittgenstein had once agreed with Frege and Russell, that the advances of logic were comparable to those of the sciences, he would soon after abandon such a view. Nonetheless, that the practice of logic had changed as a result of the inquiries of Frege and Russell cannot and could not have been denied. The status of logico-mathematical progress had, therefore, to figure in the programmes of Frege and (albeit to a lesser extent) Russell, as well as that of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. However, because they had two drastically different notions of a priori truth—as that which on the one hand must be asserted and of which it would be absurd to deny, and that which on the other hand must 'take care of itself'—how they dealt with the question had likewise to take two drastically different paths.

II. Frege: Logician and Historian

The problem of the historicity of logic—in other words, the question concerning how it is that logic can have a history at all—was not unfamiliar to Frege or to Russell, often couched as it is in terms of the nature of self-evidence and logico-mathematical fallibilism. It must be granted that Russell ultimately gave the problem little credence.[14] Frege, however, was very aware of how problematic an appeal to self-evidence can be in light of the similar but erroneous claims made by his philosophical predecessors.[15] He thus provides a rich account of how personal fallibility is possible in practice, despite the universal infallibility of genuine a priori truths; indeed, Burge justly makes the claim that "the integration of these two strands is one of his finest philosophical achievements."[16] Beyond that, however, it is also interesting to note that Frege provides a number of specific examples where one may generalize his account of individual fallibility to the level of community or cultural fallibility. Perhaps most surprisingly here, for a philosopher who is considered by many to be the epitome of the a-historical thinker—"a paradigm example of a foundationalist project

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14 As M. McGinn notes, Russell's justification of aprioricity through self-evidence was in fact quite *uncritical* in this regard: "Russell acknowledges that, in certain circumstances, a proposition that we take to be self-evident may turn out to be false, for example, certain ethical propositions and fallacious memories. He responds to the problem by introducing the idea of 'degrees of self-evidence'. A proposition may, he suggests, 'have some degree of self-evidence without being true' (B. Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 68). This makes it probable, he argues, that there are in fact two different notions of self-evidence, and 'that one of them, which corresponds to the highest degree of self-evidence, is really an infallible guarantee of truth, while the other, which corresponds to all the other degrees, does not give an infallible guarantee, but only a greater or lesser presumption' (ibid.)." (M. McGinn, *Elucidating the Tractatus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 66.)

15 For example, Frege critiques Henkel's claim thus: "Henkel bases the theory of real numbers on three fundamental propositions, to which he ascribes the character of 'common notions' (*notiones communes*): 'Once expounded they are perfectly self-evident; they are valid for magnitudes in every field, as vouched for by our pure intuition of magnitude; and they can without losing their character be transformed into definitions, simply by defining the addition of magnitudes as an operation which satisfies them.' In the last statement there is an obscurity. The definition can perhaps be constructed, but it will not do as a substitute for the original proposition: Are Numbers magnitudes, and is what we ordinarily call addition of Numbers addition in the sense of this definition? And to answer it, we should need to know already his original propositions about Numbers." (FA §12)

16 T. Burge, "Frege on Knowing the Foundations," p. 335. *Mind,* 107 (426), 1998, p. 307-347.

pursued a-historically," notes M. Beaney[17]—Frege devotes a great deal of time to investigating past mathematical practice and the logical principles that "formerly passed as self-evident" for these practitioners (FA §1), all the while situating *himself* amidst such a community of potentially fallible practitioners.

What is so noteworthy about Frege's treatment of history here is not only that he acknowledges the possibility of subjective error while preserving the objective status of a priori truth, as Burge notes, but the fact that he also recognizes that such an account is essential to the success of his program. The possibility of realising genuine logico-mathematical progress required Frege to give an account of its history; for it is the very possibility of such an historical development that allows Frege's own system to serve as the *pinnacle* that he evidently desired it to be.[18]

We see this historically-oriented approach principally in Frege's *Foundations of Arithmetic* of 1884*,* where he proceeds to trace the history of modern mathematics, showing the faults of his predecessors and ultimately laying the groundwork for his own work to come. Thus, in a specific sense—in terms of the previously held philosophical answers to the question *What are numbers?*—he turns to the answers of Leibniz, Locke and Mill, among others, and devotes a great deal of textual exegesis to elucidating their faults. However, in a more general methodological sense—in terms of the nature and necessity of posing the question itself—Frege also looks to the past. He turns here principally to Kant. The quality of Frege's historical exegesis may perhaps be called into question at points, having apparently relied on secondary sources that may themselves have been suspect; however, we still regard Frege's work today (as he himself did in the *Foundations*) as a valiant attempt to

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17 M. Beaney, "Frege and the Role of Historical Elucidation: Methodology and the Foundations of Mathematics," p. 66. In eds Ferreirós & Gray, *The Architecture of Modern Mathematics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 47-66.

18 Similarly, the last chapter of Russell's *The History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1945) is entitled "The Philosophy of Logical Analysis," referring to what he obviously took as the correct form of philosophy, within which the history of philosophical inquiry had then culminated.

respond in particular to the Kantian understanding of arithmetic truths as *synthetic* a priori truths.

For Kant, such synthetic a priori truths were knowable independently of experience (hence, *a priori*) but only through the aid of 'intuition', which would provide them with a space for a genuinely progressive advance of mathematical knowledge (hence, *synthetic*). For Kant, an analytic judgement of the form '*A is B*' is true if and only if the predicate 'B' is contained in the subject 'A'. Thus, the familiar example '*A bachelor is an unmarried man*' is analytically true because the predicate *unmarried man* is already contained in the concept *bachelor*. According to Kant, establishing an analytic a priori truth such as this does not represent a genuine advance in our knowledge, for we would already have to know what an 'unmarried man' is in order to know what a bachelor is, and *vice versa*. On this conception, to learn that a bachelor is an unmarried man is to learn something about the use of the terms 'bachelor' and 'unmarried man', etc., rather than an instance of learning something true about *bachelors*.

However, in the case of mathematics, discovering the solution to '12·12' for example, *this* is an advance in knowledge for Kant. Upon learning what twelve times twelve means, we do not necessarily come to the answer and when we have figured it out, we have not simply learned something about the meaning of the terms 'twelve', 'times' and 'equals'. Like other cases of synthetic knowledge (such as '*Snow is white*') the answer has to be discovered. But, unlike other cases of synthetic knowledge, this knowledge is not dependent on any particular observable experience. Kant thus accounted for the possibility of such knowledge by positing a realm of intuition which allows us to advance our knowledge here, independently of any particular set of experiences to which we might apply the Principle of Induction.

By 'intuition' Kant is referring here to the spatio-temporal framework of representation[19], which by providing *a medium of resistance* allows us to explore and ultimately to advance mathematical knowledge in a genuinely positive way. In a manner of speaking, it is because we can go *wrong* in the application of mathematical principles (unlike the mere ascription of terms at work in analytic knowledge) that we can also go *right*. As Kant notes, ironically: "The light dove cleaving the air in her free flight, and feeling its resistance, might imagine that her flight would be still easier in airless space." (CPR A5/B9) Of course, she *might wish it*, but this would not be the case. In airless space no flight is possible. Analytic knowledge requires no such intuition because the consequent is already contained in the antecedent. In cases such as these there is no distance between the two terms—in other words, there is no friction, no resistance that allows for the proverbial 'flight of knowledge'[20]. Our movement is not 'more free' in such cases, for in them there is no movement at all. In the case of pure analytic a priori logic we are always already where we want to be.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason,* Kant famously illustrates the necessity for synthetic a priori truths and the intuition upon which they rely like this:

> "Give a philosopher the concept of a triangle, and let him try to find out in his way how the sum of its angles might be related to a right angle. He has nothing but the concept of a figure enclosed by three straight lines, and the concept of equally many angles. Now he may reflect on this concept as long as he wants, yet he will never produce anything new. He can analyse and make distinct the concept of a straight line, or of an angle, or of the number three, but he will not come upon any other

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19 E.g: "It is therefore through the medium of sensibility that objects are *given* to us and it alone provides us with *intuition*." (I. Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N.K. Smith (New York, Macmillan, 1929), A19/B33. [Hereafter CPR])

20 Continuing with this metaphor of the flight within airless space, Kant notes "It is thus that Plato left the world of the senses, as setting too narrow limits to the understanding, and ventured out beyond it on the wings of the ideas, in the empty space of the pure understanding. He did not observe that with all his efforts he made no advance—meeting no resistance that might, as it were, serve as a support upon which he could take a stand, to which he could apply his powers, and so set his understanding in motion." (CPR, A5/B9)

properties that do not already lie in these concepts. But now let a geometer take up this question. He begins at once to construct a triangle. Since he knows that two right angles together are exactly equal to all of the adjacent angles that can be drawn at one point on a straight line, he extends one side of his triangle, and obtains two adjacent angles that are together equal to two right ones. Now he divides the external one of these angles by drawing a line parallel to the opposite side of the triangle, and sees that here there arises an external adjacent angle which is equal to the internal one, etc. In such a way, through a chain of inferences that is always guided by intuition, he arrives at a fully illuminating and at the same time general solution of the question." (CPR, A716-7/B744-5)

Here the 'geometer', seizing upon the concepts of straight line and angle, puts them to work in an exploration of their spatially-determined representation.[21] "I construct a triangle," Kant writes, "by exhibiting an object corresponding to this concept, either through mere imagination, in pure intuition, or on paper, in empirical intuition, but in both cases completely a priori, without having had to borrow the pattern for it from any experience." (CPR A713/B741) Though geometers produce a particular representation of a triangle, guided as they are by intuition, they nonetheless arrive at a wholly general solution and, thus, a genuine advance in mathematical knowledge. Here we have deductive knowledge, which is nonetheless synthetic. The 'philosopher', on the other hand, comes up with nothing new and will never succeed in extracting geometric truths from the concepts

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21 In the case of arithmetic, equations are worked out in a temporally-determined representation. The difference, however, in terms of the present survey is marginal. For Kant, at least, and not unlike Russell, the cases are symmetrical. (Cf. M. van Atten, "Kant and Real Numbers", in eds. P. Dybjer, S. Lindström, E. Palmgren, and G. Sundholm, *Epistemology versus Ontology: Essays on the Philosophy and Foundations of Mathematics in Honour of Per Martin-Löf* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012), pp. 3-23.) It is important to note, however, that Frege was more cautious in this regard, noting e.g.:

"We shall do well in general not to overestimate the extent to which arithmetic is akin to geometry. […] One geometrical point, considered in itself, cannot be distinguished in any way from another; the same applies to lines and planes. Only when several points, or lines or planes, are included together in a single intuition, de we distinguish them. In geometry, therefore, it is quite intelligible that general propositions should be derived from intuition; the points or lines or planes which we intuit are not really particular at all, which is what enables them to stand as representatives of the whole of their kind. But with numbers it is different; each number has its own particularities. To what extent a given particular number can represent all the others, and at what point its own special character comes into play, cannot be laid down generally in advance." (FA §13)

themselves without somehow constructing a spatially-determined representation of those concepts (whether with a pen and paper, or in thought alone). We can only claim, as the geometer does here, that '*Two right angles are exactly equal to all of the adjacent angles*' is true *because* of the limits that intuition places upon the possible geometric construction of triangles. In this case, we extend a given figure through chains of inference, mapping its determinate behaviour within the field of representation, and thus we expand our knowledge of mathematics.

Now Frege agreed that the discoveries of mathematics represent genuine advances in knowledge; however, he disagreed that this knowledge requires such a realm of 'intuition'. Against Kant, Frege attempted to show that at least arithmetic, if not geometry, is indeed a system of *analytic* a priori truths, but he had to do so in such a way that it might nonetheless allow genuine progress to be made. As he writes in the *Foundations*:

> "Philosophical motives too have prompted me to enquires of this kind. The answers to the questions raised about the nature of arithmetical truths—are they a priori or a posterior? synthetic or analytic? —must lie in the same direction. For even though the concepts concerned may themselves belong to philosophy, yet as I believe, no decision on these questions can be reached without assistance from mathematics—though this depends of course on the sense in which we understand them." (FA §3)

Like Kant's 'light air', which allows for the flight of knowledge in its very resistance to flight, Frege too had to devise a sense of aprioricity that would provide a medium for logico-mathematical progress. However, for him, in order to be analytic this medium had to be intrinsic to the very truths themselves and not a result of some external synthesis of the truths and a pre-given space of representation according to which they are constrained, à la Kant's geometer.

Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that on Frege's account Kant had not been entirely wrong in his understanding the analytic-synthetic distinction. Indeed, Frege notes in a now infamous footnote that his own use of the Kantian language of 'analytic' and 'synthetic' was not meant "to assign a new sense to these terms, but only to state more accurately what

earlier writers, Kant in particular, have meant by them." (FA §3, fn.1)   Kant had, Frege

claims, simply defined the scope of logic too narrowly.[22]   In other words, had Kant thought

about it more thoroughly, he would have naturally noticed his mistake:

> "Kant obviously—as a result, no doubt, of defining them too narrowly—underestimated the value of
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> analytical judgements, though it seems that he did have some inkling of the wider sense in which I
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> have used the term.   On the basis of his definition, the division of judgements into analytic and
>
> synthetic is not exhaustive.   What he is thinking of is the universal affirmative judgement; there, we
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> can speak of a subjective concept and ask—as his definition requires—whether the predicate concept
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> is contained in it or not [...] He seems to think of concepts as defined by giving a simple list of
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> characteristics in no special order; but of all ways of forming concepts, that is one of the least
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> fruitful.   If we look through the definitions given in the course of this book, we shall scarcely find
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> one that is of this description.   The same is true of the really fruitful definitions in mathematics, such
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> as that of the continuity of a function.   What we find in these is not a simple list of characteristics;
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> every element in the definition is intimately, I might almost say organically, connected with the
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> others." (FA §88)

What Kant missed, Frege claims here, is the power of 'fruitful definitions' to give rise to

genuine advances in knowledge.   Fruitful definitions do not, he argues, only create a list of

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22 MacFarlane addresses this question, pointing out how their conceptions differ in various ways—
specifically, how Frege's conception of logic is more *inclusive*, and thus what appears to be 'outside' for
Kant becomes 'inside' for Frege in terms of the 'resources of logic':

> "[T]he resources Frege recognizes as logical far outstrip those of Kant's logic (Aristotelian term logic
> with simple theory of disjunctive and hypothetical propositions added on).   The most dramatic
> difference is that Frege's logic allows us to define concepts using nested quantifiers, where Kant's is
> limited to representing inclusion relations." (J. MacFarlane, 'Frege, Kant, and the Logic in Logicism',
> *Philosophical Review*, 111(1), 2002, pp. 25–66.)

While this is undoubtedly true, it is difficult not to refer here to the great differences between the two
figures in terms of the phenomena to which logic may be applied.   For example, Frege denies Kant's
dictum (A51/B75) that "Without sensibility, no object would be given to us," claiming that numbers are
genuine objects but "can't be given in sensation." (FA §89)   Frege's view is that our understanding can
grasp such abstract objects if their definitions can be grounded in analytic propositions governing the
extension of concepts, which represents a significant difference in terms of *what it is* that allows logico-
mathematical statements to be true at all.

properties in no particular order (such as Kant's understanding of analytic truth, in which the consequent is already contained in the antecedent 'in no particular order'). Rather, establishing logico-mathematical definitions that extend our knowledge requires one to work out their precise logical consequences and thus—where those definitions are 'fruitful'—gives rise to a series of new ideas over time that was not previously there. In this sense, for Frege, an analytic truth is one that is derivable from other truths through the application of valid rules of inference which are themselves intimately interconnected to our definitions, but are not complete in and of themselves. When we establish a new mathematical definition, we 'graph' it onto previously known logico-mathematical truths, apply the rules of inference to our new series, and so genuinely discover what is now contained in this new series that had not previously been given at all.[23]

Frege thus rejects what he takes to be the narrow Kantian conception of definition: "Kant seems to think of a concept as defined by a conjunction of marks; but this is one of the least fruitful ways of forming concepts." (FA §88) He continues to describe this insight regarding the unity of the proposition as follows:

> "A geometric illustration will make the distinction clear to intuition. If we represent concepts (or their extensions) by figures or areas in a plane, then the concept defined by a simple list of characteristics corresponds to the area common to all the areas representing the definition characteristics; it is enclosed by segments of their boundary lines.[24] With a definition like this,

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23 As G. Currie notes: "A statement like: 'A number is the extension of a concept of the form e*quinumerate with the concept F*, for some F.'—when read from right to left, so to speak, offers an abbreviation of the expression on the right. In this sense Frege's definitions are conservative; we will not be able to prove anything about the extensions of concepts that we could not otherwise have proved. But read from left to right the definition offers an analysis of the term 'number'; a term which already has a meaning (perhaps an imprecise one) but which is now clarified. It is with respect to this left to right reading that the question of fruitfulness arises. The definition enables us to graft the informal concept of number on to a theory (the theory of conceptual extensions) which has, from a philosophical point of view at least, certain advantages over the informal arithmetical theory with which we are familiar." (G. Currie, *Frege: An Introduction to his Philosophy* (Sussex: Harvester, 1982), p. 153.)

24 To refer to our earlier example of a strictly analytic truth, in this case the 'figure' of the concept *bachelor* would precisely overlap at every point that of *unmarried man*.

therefore, what we do—in terms of our illustration—is to use the lines already given in a new way for the purpose of demarcating an area. Nothing essentially new, however, emerges in the process. But the more fruitful type of definition is a matter of drawing boundary lines that were not previously given at all. What we shall be able to infer from it, cannot be inspected in advance; here we are not simply taking out of the box what we have put into it. The conclusions we draw from it extend our knowledge, and are therefore, on Kant's view, to be regarded as synthetic; and yet they can be proved by purely logical means, and are thus analytic. The truth is that they are contained in the definitions, but as plants are contained in their seeds, not as beams are contained in a house." (FA §88)

Frege concludes this lengthy passage with the remark: "Often we need several definitions for the proof of some proposition, which consequently is not contained in any one of them alone, and yet does follow purely logically from all of them together." (ibid**.**)[25]

And this is, of course, exactly what Frege sets out to do in the *Basic Laws of Arithmetic*, published nine years after the *Foundations* had been laid down.[26] In this later work, the Kantian vocabulary of 'analytic' and 'synthetic' would be abandoned; nonetheless, Frege's emphasis on a genuinely productive analytical combination of definitions follows through with the same immanency of natural necessity described earlier. It is important to note, however, that although these definitions "draw boundary lines that were not previously given all"—in other words, though they give rise to *new knowledge*—Frege is extremely cautious to delimit the degree of *creative freedom* exhibited there. As in the reference above, Frege once again claims that the definitions he is proposing in this later work do not "create anything new" in and of themselves. (BA, p. 2) Rather, they mark for him the limit of logical regression, that point at which the propositions of logic and mathematics "are not

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25 As Beaney notes, this passage suggest that there are *two* kinds of definitions: "The first kind are genuinely stipulative definitions, which do serve as abreviatory devices, and which generate straightforwardly analytic judgements in Kant's original sense […] The second kind are Frege's 'fruitful' definitions, which start from a given proposition and yield not the concepts originally 'thought into it' but *new* concepts." (M. Beaney, *Frege: Making Sense* (London: Duckworth, 1996), p. 129.

26 G. Frege, *The Basic Laws of Arithmetic*, ed. and trans. M. Furth (Berkley: University of California Press, 1964) [Hereafter, BA]

derived from other propositions" (ibid.), and thus follow through with the natural order of truth that guides pure logical inference:

> "It is important that we make clear at this point what a definition is and what can be attained by means of it. It seems frequently to be credited with a creative power; but all it accomplishes is that something is marked out in sharp relief and designated by a name. Just as the geographer does not create a sea when he draws a boundary line and says: the part of the ocean's surface bounded by these lines I am going to call the Yellow Sea, so too the mathematician cannot really create anything by his defining. Nor can one by pure definition magically conjure into a thing a property that in fact it does not possess—save that of now being called by the name with which one has named it." (BA, p. 11)

Thus, Frege notes:

> "I myself can estimate to some extent the resistance with which my innovations will be met, because I had first to overcome something similar in myself in order to make them. For I have not arrived at them haphazardly or out of a craving for novelty, but was driven by *the very nature of the case*." (BA, p. 7-8, my emphasis)

But we recall here that the progress Frege presumes that his *Basic Laws of Arithmetic* represent is founded on the possibility of error and of approaching the truth only approximately (such as that embodied in the errors of past philosophers and mathematicians, or Kant's 'narrow understanding' of the nature of analytic truth). In the *Foundations,* therefore, it was essential for Frege to first propose an epistemologically robust account of the history of mathematical error.

In this sense, one might justifiably claim that logico-mathematical fallibility rests at the core of the logicist program—after all, it is this that allows one to separate good mathematics from the bad. Good logic and good mathematics (like good geography) delimit the concepts required for establishing deductive truths that were not previously known; they nonetheless avoid the faults of the 'merely creative' mathematicians—who conduct themselves "like a

god, who can create by his mere word whatever he wants" (FA §109)—by being driven by the very nature of the case. In other words, good mathematics carves up the conceptual world at its joints, so to speak. It is in this sense that logic and mathematics can, for Frege, provide genuinely progressive knowledge of the world that is nonetheless objective in character—*like any other science*. And just as any other science admits approximation and error without compromising its objectivity, so too do logic and mathematics.

In the *Foundations* Frege poses the natural question, which was also the Kantian question: "How do the empty forms of mathematics disgorge such a rich content?" (FA §16) But he proposes a distinctly un-Kantian answer:

> "However much we may disparage deduction, it cannot be denied that the laws established by induction are not enough. New propositions must be derived from them which are not contained in any one of them by itself. No doubt these propositions are in a way contained covertly in the whole set taken together, but this does not absolve us from the labour of actually extracting them and setting them out in their own right." (FA §17)

In Kant's treatment of a mathematical proposition, an arithmetical judgement expands our knowledge if it is supported by *something outside* of the proposition themselves. So too with Frege, but the appeal to intuition drops away when a priori arithmetical judgements are taken together as a set. As Tappenden notes: "The additional content plays the role of the 'something extra' represented by intuition in Kant's schema."[27] For Frege, a logical inference expands our knowledge analytically if that 'something outside' the given logico-mathematical proposition is *another* logico-mathematical proposition.[28] In this way,

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27 J. Tappenden, "Extending Knowledge and 'Fruitful Concepts': Fregean Themes in the Foundations of Mathematics." *Nous,* 29(4), 1995, pp. 427-467.

28 This does not mean, however, that it is 'turtles all the way down' for Frege, for at the foundation of this chain of logico-mathematical propositions are elucidations. As Beaney notes: "Since not everything can be defined, we must rely on something else—elucidation—to explain the meaning of the most basic terms of all. Since there is always the risk of misunderstanding in attempts at elucidation, Frege writes, 'we have to be able to count on a meeting of minds, on others' guessing what we have in mind'. But Frege goes on, 'all this precedes the construction of a system and does not belong within a system'" ("Frege and the Role of Historical Elucidation," *op. cit.*, p. 53.)

inference yields progressive knowledge if a concept attained by carving up conceptual reality is capable of being grafted onto another concept and 'bearing fruit', as it were.

It is tempting to view the idea of progress that Frege outlines here in a psychologistic way, in other words, as a case of simply overcoming the psychological limitations of beings who think like we do—i.e. *imperfectly*. On this account an omnipotent mind would know *without further ado* all of the consequences of the complete and eternally true set of all logico-mathematical propositions. An omnipotent mind would be absolved of the 'labour' of extracting from them their 'covert' truth. However, this is clearly not what Frege meant. Rather, this idea of logico-mathematical progress is one in which "natural order of truths" (FA §23) is allowed to blossom by its own necessity, in thought itself. Attaining the correct concepts, establishing fruitful definitions and extracting from them their consequences via the valid application of logical inference, does not therefore reflect a mere human compulsion. Rather, thought provides a soil in which concepts grow according to an inner necessity all their own, which is discovered only through working out the problem itself. In this sense the objective ground of progressive knowledge in mathematics is found in the logical structure of conceptual continuity, which remains in essence the same, though we proceed to represent conceptual content in fruitfully diverse ways.

Of course, despite these philosophical accoutrements, Frege's project ultimately failed. Naturally, he did not believe it was possible for there to have been an error in his system at the time—having split his basic laws into logically simple steps to make it a matter of 'pure logic'—but it is surely one of the great ironies of the history of philosophy that the introduction to Frege's *Basic Laws* fatefully leaves open the very possibility that was ultimately the downfall of his logicist ambitions. Specifically, Frege admits the possibility that his now infamous Axiom V (wherein his notion of 'value-ranges' or 'course-of-values' are introduced) is defective. He writes there:

> "Because there are no gaps in the chains of inference, every 'axiom', every 'assumption', 'hypothesis', or whatever you wish to call it, upon which a proof is based is brought to light; and in

this way we gain a basis upon which to judge the epistemological nature of the law that is proved. Of course the pronouncement is often made that arithmetic is merely a more highly developed logic; yet that remains disputable so long as transitions occur in the proofs that are not made according to acknowledged laws of logic, but seem rather to be based upon something known by intuition. Only if these transitions are split up into logically simple steps can we be persuaded that the root of the matter is logic alone. I have drawn together everything that can facilitate a judgement as to whether the chains of inference are cohesive and the buttress solid. If anyone should find anything defective, he must be able to state precisely where, according to him, the error lies: in the Basic Laws, in the Definitions, in the Rules [of inference], or in the application of the Rules at a definite point. If we find everything in order, then we have accurate knowledge of the grounds upon which each individual theorem is based. A dispute can arise, so far as I can see, only with regard to my Basic Law concerning course-of-values (V), which logicians have not yet expressly enunciated, and yet this is what people have in mind, for example, where they speak of the extensions of concepts. I hold that it is a law of pure logic. In any event the place is pointed out where the decision must be made." (BA, p. 3-4)[29]

Indeed, Russell's discovery of the paradox at the heart of Axiom V would seem to vindicate this cautious declaration; and Frege's reaction to Russell's announcement makes an honest reference to his initial doubt (although he had not yet denied his conviction that at least something *like* his Axiom V would nonetheless have to play a role in ultimately determining the logical foundations of arithmetic). In the appendix to Volume II of the *Basic Laws*, written hastily after Russell had informed him of his discovery while the book was already in print, Frege notes: "Hardly anything more unfortunate can befall a scientific writer than to have one of the foundations of his edifice shaken after the work is finished." He continues:

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29 In this sense, it is worth noting that Frege had been singularly good to his word, having declared earlier in the text: "The ideal of a strictly scientific method in mathematics, which I have here attempted to realize, and which might indeed be named after Euclid, I should like to describe as follows. It cannot be demanded that everything be proved, because that is impossible; *but we can require that all propositions used without proof be expressly declared as such*, *so that we can see distinctly what the whole structure rests upon.*" (BA, p. 2, my emphasis)

"This was just the position I was placed in by a letter of Mr. Bertrand Russell, just when the printing of this volume was nearing completion. It is a matter of my Axiom (V). I have never disguised from myself its lack of the self-evidence that belongs to the other axioms and that must properly be demanded of a logical law. And so in fact I indicated this weak point in the Preface to Volume I. I should gladly have dispensed with this foundation if I had known of any substitute for it. And even now I do not see how arithmetic can be scientifically established; how numbers can be apprehended as logical objects, and brought under review; unless we are permitted—at least conditionally—to pass from a concept to its extension."[30]

The details concerning the content of Axiom V need not concern us too greatly here. For our present purposes, what is most noteworthy about these two passages is how Frege initially describes his Axiom V as 'pure logic' (a self-evident a priori truth for which no proof can be given and for which no proof is needed) only to admit in the face of his error that it had always lacked the self-evidence "that must properly be demanded of a logical law." How, in light of Frege's claims regarding self-evidence and the infallibility of genuine a priori principles of logic, are we to make sense of the possibility of error here and, moreover, of Frege's initial admission that he too may very well have been mistaken *all along?*

First of all, it is important to note that Frege does not appear to use the term 'self-evident' in a technically precise way. The fact that he seems to have resisted using a single term to perform this function—at different times he employs terms as varied as *selbstverständlich, einleuchtend, evident,* and *unmittelbar klar*—would suggest that he is distancing himself from the same ultra-authoritative claims of 'self-evidence' appealed to by some arch-rationalists in a similar context (even perhaps by Russell).[31] Nonetheless, it is clear that his use of such terms is meant to gesture towards another notion that was for him highly technical and absolutely central to his program. For Frege, there are two senses in which

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30 G. Frege, *Basic Laws of Arithmetic, Vol. II,* in P. Geach and M. Black (eds.), trans. P. Geach, *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966), p. 234.

31 Cf. T. Burge, "Frege on Knowing the Foundations," *op cit.* p. 335, for further discussion.

truth manifests itself: the one that is experienced by a subjective knower and the other that is an objective feature of things (known *or* unknown). We keep these two cases distinct, Frege argues, by maintaining a strict division between the realm of *psychology* (or *the taking-for-true*) on the one hand and the realm of *logic* (*the True*) on the other.

This response to the problem of personal fallibility did not arise solely as a consequence of the contradiction that Russell discovered in his *Basic Laws*; rather, his concern for distinguishing the fallible truths of personal psychology and the infallible truths of logic motivated his endeavour from the very start. Frege clearly recognized that the possibility of realising his program depended on a separation of these two realms. Thus, in both of the introductions to his two major works, the *Foundations* and the *Basic Laws*, he launches a staunch attack against what he considered the absurdity of 'psychological logic'. This attack follows the de-transcendentalisation of Kantian idealism that was widespread in 19th century German philosophy, a strain of psychologism which sought to remove logic from the transcendental sphere of pure reason and return it to the immanent anthropological basis of particular individuals acting in concrete psycho-social contexts. Two striking passages from the German logician B. Erdmann (whom Frege attacks specifically and at length in his introduction to the *Basic Laws* as a prototypical 'psychological logician'), clearly outline the character of this conception of logic:

> "[L]ogical laws only hold within the limits of our thinking, without our being able to guarantee that this thinking might not alter its character. For it is possible that such a transformation should occur, whether affecting all or only some of these laws, since they are not analytically derivable from one of them. It is irrelevant that this possibility is unsupported by the deliverances of our self-consciousness regarding our thinking. Though nothing presages its actualization, it remains a possibility. We can only take our thought as it now is, and are not in a position to fetter its future character to its present one."[32]

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32 B. Erdmann, *Logik*, trans. and quoted in E. Husserl, *Logical Investigations, Vol. I*, trans. J.N. Findlay (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London, 1970), p. 162

Erdmann here views the so-called necessities of logic *sub specie humanitatis*, immanent to a very particular and historically-situated human nature, which because it is not eternally transcendent is subject (like other kinds of thought) to the possibility of radical change. This is the case, Erdmann claims, regardless of our inability to properly conceive of what those changes might be—for *that* inability too is merely the result of historical, and thus accidental, determinations in the character of our thought at a given time:

> "[W]e cannot help admitting that all the propositions whose contradictories we cannot envisage in thought are only necessary if we presuppose the character of our thought, as definitely given in our experience: they are not absolutely necessary in all possible conditions. On this view our logical principles retain their necessity for our thinking, but this necessity *is not seen as absolute*, *but as hypothetical.* We cannot help assenting to them—such is the nature of our presentation and thinking. They are universally valid, provided our thinking remains the same. They are necessary, since to think means for us to presuppose them, as long, that is, as they express the essence of our thinking."[33]

While Frege also sought to remove logic from the transcendental sphere of Kantian idealism, he resisted temporalising—and thus, in his view, relativising—that logic within the sphere of human *praxis,* as Erdmann does here. In Frege's vocabulary, Erdmann would thus seek to reduce the universal *truths* of logic to the particular *takings-for-true* of psychology.

In a moment of poetic lucidity—a stylistic feature that he employs with surprising consistency when he attacks his psychologistic opponents—Frege expresses the idea thus:

> "I understand by 'laws of logic' not psychological laws of takings-to-be-true, but laws of truth. If it is true that I am writing this in my chamber on the 13th of July, 1893, while the wind howls out-of-doors, then it remains true even if all men should subsequently take it to be false. If being true is independent of being acknowledged by somebody or other, then the laws of truth are not psychological laws: they are boundary stones set in an eternal foundation, which our thoughts can

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33 Ibid*.*

> overflow, but never displace. It is because of this that they have authority for our thought if it would attain truth. They do not bear the relation to thought that the laws of grammar bear to language; they do not make explicit the nature of our human thinking and change as it changes." (BA, p.13)

Thus, to claim that the primitive principles of logic are self-evidently true, is not to claim that *we ourselves* are unable be mistaken in supposing them. By extension, to situate a thinker among a community of fallible human beings is not to reduce the truth of any particular thought to the participation of that person among a community of like-minded and similarly fallible people. Regardless of how great or wide-spread that community is, the truth—unlike knowledge—is set in an eternal foundation that the ebb and flow of mortal opinion will never succeed in displacing. It matters not for Frege whether one person is mistaken (at the level of the individual), many people (at the level of the cultural collective) or all of us ('human thinking' as a whole). If the science of logic is to be a science at all, the laws of logic must invariably prescribe the way in which one ought to think about truth, and they can do so precisely *because* they are immune to our sometimes meandering minds. Logic, Frege insists, is concerned with truth, as ethics is concerned with goodness and aesthetics with beauty. Such objective principles exist wholly independently of how human beings think. We *need not* act in accordance with them (just as we need not act in accordance with moral or aesthetic laws) but we *should* if we are seriously concerned with attaining truth rather than the takings-for-true of mere psychology.[34]

From this it is not difficult to see the role of the history of logico-mathematical investigation plays in Frege's work. The *practice of logic* has a history, and it is historical still. But it can only be so because there is an objective truth that exists independently of that practice to which it aspires. The flux of history—like the changing patterns of individuals' personal

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34 E.g., "Just as 'beautiful' points the ways for aesthetics and 'good' for ethics, so do words like 'true' for logic. All sciences have truth as their goal; but logic is also concerned with it in a quite different way: logic has much the same relation to truth as physics has to weight or heat. To discover truths as truths is the task of all sciences; it falls to logic to discern the laws of truth. [...] From the laws of truth their follow prescriptions about asserting, thinking, judging, inferring." (G. Frege, "Logical Investigations, Part I: Thoughts," p. 351, in G. Frege *Collected Papers,* ed. B. McGuinness, trans. P. Geach and R.H. Stootfoff (London: Basil Blackwell, 1984), pp. 351-372.)

psychology—must not be confused with the stable universality of genuinely a priori truths. Individual *takings-for-true* must not be confused with *the True,* no matter how ancient or how deeply ingrained they may appear to be. And that they may be ancient or deeply ingrained holds no authority in the absence of proof.

This does not mean for him that there is nothing interesting to learn from the history of mathematics. There is, as the *Foundations* clearly demonstrates; however, this history— *insofar as it is history*—can only ever be the history of error. What is true a priori is eternally so and therefore, strictly speaking, can have no history. If new proof is demanded for a basic laws that formerly passed as self-evident and its status as truth is thereby thrown into doubt—for example, Frege notes that even Euclid's standard of rigour was not always satisfying to geometers, and out of this critical treatment of the axiom of parallels new developments in modern geometry arose (FA §2)—we can only conclude that it was not an a priori truth to begin with, but rather a taking-for-true of our fallible personal psychology.[35] "Thought is in essentials the same everywhere," he writes, "it is not true that there are different kinds of laws of thought to suit the different kinds of objects thought about." (FA, p. iii) As the laws of thought hold for everyone everywhere, whether or not one abides by

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[35] It is interesting to note in this regard, concerning H. Sluga's criticisms of analytic philosophy for failing to adequately take account of its historical development, that insofar as analytic philosophy may be considered *a Fregean philosophy*, this a-historicism is not a *failing* but rather a *condition* of its realization. As Sluga notes:

"The complimentary tendency, that of underestimating the distance that separates the later tradition [of analytic philosophy] from its beginnings, can equally be illustrated in the case of Frege. Its effect is also that of blocking real historical understanding. Thus, it is taken for granted that Frege was concerned with ontological questions just as the subsequent analytic tradition has been. It is assumed that he was interested in setting up a semantic theory just as logicians have done since Tarski, that, indeed, model-theoretical semantics begins with Frege. His considerations about truth as an object are dismissed as mere scholasticism. His rejection of logicism after the discovery of Russell's paradoxes is considered an overreaction; his objections to Cantorian sets are explained as a result of personal hostility. *Wherever Frege's views can be made to fit the current discussion, they are simply identified with it; where they cannot be made to fit, they are either ignored or explained away in psychological terms.*" (H. Sluga, *Gottlob Frege* (Routledge: London and New York, 1980), p. 6, my emphasis)

Here we see a precise analogue with Frege's own attitude towards history: that the history of philosophy (insofar as it is history) can only be the history of an error, and what is true is eternally so (and thus a-historical).

them, they also hold every-*when.* There are not different laws of thought to suit different times.

It is no coincidence that Frege devotes the entire first half of his *Foundations* (and several significant parts of the *Basic Laws*) to outlining the history of what previously passed for an answer to the question *What are numbers?* Frege turns to history here in order to motivate his project, for it will not suffice for him to merely stipulate the meaning of terms such as 'analytic', 'definition', 'inference', etc., and continue from there. If his analysis is going to be critical—and he needs it to be critical, for indeed his aim is to make a significant contribution to the *traditional debate*—it must also be historical. This historical investigation only serves, however, as an elucidatory preparation for further researches into the genuine a priori foundations and on Frege's account it "should not usurp their place." (FA, p. viii) This would be, Frege argues, to succumb to the 'genetic fallacy' (i.e., to seek the foundation of an idea in its historical origin) and be tantamount to espousing a form of relativism. As he states:

> "It may, of course, serve some purpose to investigate ideas and changes of ideas which occur during the course of mathematical thinking; but psychology should not imagine that it can contribute whatever to the foundation of arithmetic. [...] The historical approach, with its aim of detecting how things begin and of arriving from these origins at a knowledge of their nature, is certainly perfectly legitimate; but it also has its limitations. If everything were in continual flux, and nothing maintained itself fixed for all time, there would no longer be any possibility of getting to know anything about the world and everything would be plunged in confusion. We suppose, it would seem, that concepts sprout in the individual mind like leaves on a tree, and we think we discover their nature by studying their birth: we seek to define them psychologically, in terms of the nature of the human mind. But this account makes everything subjective and if we follow it through to the end, does away with truth. What we know as the history of concepts is really a history of either our knowledge of concepts or the meaning of words." (FA, p. vi-vii)

Subjectively, we may thus indeed mistakenly suppose a logical principle to be self-evidently true and so not accord with the truth. Evidently, there is no contradiction in someone's taking something for a self-evident a priori truth that is in fact neither self-evident nor true a priori. As in the case of all other forms of scientific inquiry, we need only demand further proof to satisfy ourselves of our position, and if we are not thereby satisfied, then we simply need to change it.

However, according to Frege, there *is* a contradiction involved in something itself *formerly being true*. It is, for example, one thing to claim that one's past assertions do not accord with the truth, but it is quite another thing to claim that *the truth does not accord with itself*. "If other persons presume to acknowledge and doubt a law in the same breath," Frege notes, "it seems to me an attempt to jump out of one's own skin, against which I can do no more than urgently warn them." (BA, p. 15) This would be "a hitherto unknown type of madness." (BA, p. 14) And this is in fact what *historicism* (of the psychologistic kind that Frege here identifies it with via the genetic fallacy) would espouse. The psychological logician, such as Erdmann, who would seek the true content of a mathematical thought in the history of individuals' judgements and thus claim that it is possible (no matter how incomprehensible) at one time for two plus three to equal five and at another to equal six, has by this account failed to make the necessary distinction between the content of the proposition and its judgement. As Frege notes:

> "All determinations of the place, the time, and the like, belong to the thought whose truth is in point; its truth itself is independent of place and time. How, then, is the Principle of Identity really to be read? Like this, for instance: "It is impossible for people in the year 1893 to acknowledge an object as being different from itself"? Or like this: "Every object is identical with itself"? The former law concerns human beings and contains a temporal reference; in the latter there is no talk either of human beings or of time. The latter is a law of truth, the former a law of people's taking-to-be-true." (BA, p. 15)[36]

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36 In this sense, though Russell does not explicitly speak about the consequences of historicism for logic-mathematical fallibility, we can see a certain accord between his views and those of Frege. As Beerling

To claim that the proposition '*It is impossible for people in the year 1893 to acknowledge an object as being different from itself* ' is true, is therefore to make a reference to something known about *people in the year 1893* and *not* about the Principle of Identity. To claim that '*Every object is identical with itself* ' is, on the other hand, to make an abstract—and therefore a-historical—claim.[37]

Self-evidence is by this account not a feature of the a priori primitive principles of logic, but of their justification (FA, §3). To *claim* that a truth is self-evident in this sense is only to

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notes:

"Russell places everything in 'knowledge by description' with which I—through external or internal observation—am directly acquainted. [...] Thereto belong the data of memory as the source of all knowledge about the past. I am immediately familiar, though, with the data of my own past only. The past of others or, to put it more generally 'the past as such' is a matter of inference to me. So my knowledge thereof falls under the head of what Russell would call 'knowledge by description.' By the latter he means 'any phrase of the sort,' 'a so-and-so' or 'the so and so'. The final difference from phrases of a strictly logical quality is this, that the latter need not contain any reference to 'actual particulars' and can be composed completely of abstract terms." (R.F. Beerling, "Russell and Historical Truth," p. 386-7. *Kant-studien*, 55(4), 1964, p. 385-393.)

Thus, according to Russell, for sentences referring to history it is required that they contain at least one reference to something with which we are directly acquainted: in this case, the person, time or place in which (or by whom) it is believed that two plus three equals six.

37 The error of the genetic fallacy follows, Frege argues, from failing to distinguish between two propositions that share a similar external form but contain objectively independent content. Here we see the necessity of an adequate logical notation for Frege, and how in his logical notation he draws "together everything that can facilitate a judgement" (BA, p. 4) in order to resolve this difficulty. This feature is embodied in Frege's notation by way of the "content stroke" ("——") and "judgement stroke" ("⊢—— ", Russell's "assertion sign"). In Frege's *Begriffsschrift* this stroke separates the meaning of the proposition (the possible content) from its assertion *as true* (the judgement): "Through this mode of notation I mean to have a very clear distinction between the act of judging and the formation of a mere assertible content." (G. Frege, "Conceptual Notation," p. 94. In G. Frege, *Conceptual Notation and Other Articles,* ed. and trans. T. W. Bynum (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972))

In this sense the proposition '2+3=5' is not to be read as a declaration of *the fact* that two plus two equals five but as the content of the thought to be judged (something we might describe as "two plus three's equalling five", transcribed '——2+3=5' in the *Begriffsschrift*), ultimately as true in this case. Likewise, transcribing the affirmation of this thought in Frege's notion, one would would write: '⊢—— 2+3=5'. In this case, the thought "two plus three's equalling five" denotes "the True." We might also write '2+3=6', to refer to the possible content of a judgement ("two plus three's equally six,"or '——2+3=6')—as Frege notes, "without being guilty of writing a falsehood," for the thought has a sense when taken as a whole— but this could not be truthfully asserted and so would denote "the False"; in Frege's notation: '⊢—◄— 2+3=6', where the sign '—◄—' functions as the "negation stroke."

claim that we recognise its truth—in judging that it is true—independently of other truths (including the truth of one's own acknowledgement of its truth). The primitive principles of logic are not in need of any proof. They are 'unprovable' in the sense that they are not justifiable by derivation. In this sense, not only is there no contradiction between asserting that Frege took his Axiom V to be a matter of pure logic when it was not, the very possibility of such personal fallibility is in fact *inherent to Frege's project*. For to disregard this possibility would be to grant the psychological logician the first step—that the True may be reduced to the taking-for-true—and consequently sound the death-knell of truth, objectivity and the very logical foundation of the science of logic that Frege sought to establish. If Frege begins his *Foundations* with an extensive account of what previous thinkers have mistakenly *taken number for* (i.e. the 'impure' psychological truths of history) before he proceeds to give an account of *what numbers are* (pure, a-historical, logical truth), he does so in order to demonstrate that it is this very capacity for error which preserves the possibility of genuine logico-mathematical progress—such as that Frege believed his work represented—towards an objective truth that is in itself eternal and unmoving.

Attempting, therefore, to bring the psychological logician to a *reductio ad absurdum*, Frege writes:

> "When will a stop be put to this? In the end everything is drawn into the sphere of psychology; the boundary that separates the objective and subjective fades away more and more, and even actual objects themselves are treated psychologically, as ideas. For what else is *actual* but a predicate? and what else are logical predicates but ideas? Thus everything drifts into idealism and from that point with perfect consistency into solipsism. If every man designated something different by the name

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The fact that Frege used this element of the concept script to investigate past mathematical practice —"without being guilty of writing a falsehood", as he states—provides an interesting counterpoint to Wittgenstein's own treatment of the ability of a proposition to relate to a speaker: "Frege's 'judgement stroke' is logically quite meaningless: in the works of Frege (and Russell) it simply indicates that these authors hold the propositions marked with this sign to be true. Thus, [the judgement stroke] is not more a component part of a proposition than is, for instance, the proposition's number. It is quite impossible for a proposition to state that it itself is true." (T 4.442) And further: "The correct explanation of the form of the proposition '*A* makes the judgement *p*', must show that it is impossible for a judgement to be a piece of nonsense. // (Russell's theory foes not satisfy this requirement.)" (T 5.5422)

'moon', namely one of his own ideas, much as he expresses his own pain by the cry 'Ouch', then of course the psychological point of view would be justified; but 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. If we could not grasp anything, but what was within our own selves, then a conflict of opinions [based on] mutual understanding would be impossible, because a common ground would be lacking, and no idea in the psychological sense can afford us such ground. There would be no logic to be appointed arbiter in the conflict of opinions." (BA, p. 17)

There are a number of points at which the die-hard psychologistic logician might find Frege's account of the paradox of relativism to be unsatisfying here. Frege himself admits at the end of his introduction to the *Basic Laws* that: "The distance between my view and the psychological logicians' seems to me so enormous that there is no prospect of my book's having any effect on them at present." (BA, p. 25) But whether Frege's staunch logical realism will successfully persuade the relativists (who Frege here calls the 'idealist'[38]) to give up their erroneous ways is ultimately beside the point.

For as we have seen, Wittgenstein rejects the possibility of proposing a body of substantial self-evident truths of logic such as that which Frege and Russell's system relied upon. Wittgenstein rejects the very objective status of *a priori* truth that allows error, approximation and—finally, by Frege and Russell's account—the serial attainment of logico-mathematical truth. In a word, Wittgenstein rejects logico-mathematical progress.

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38 This characterisation of idealism as psychologism is featured in Sluga's critique of Dummett, as an historical misrepresentation; however, I agree with Dummett's defence of the equation: "In associating psychologism with a species of idealism, and in describing it as dominant, I may have been in error; but, if so, it was an error shared by Frege. In the *Basic Laws,* he speaks of the school of logicians of whom he takes Erdmann as a representative example as 'the dominant logic', and immediately says that it is 'infected through and through with psychology' (BL, p. xiv). Later he says that, on Erdmann's view, 'everything drifts into idealism' (BL, p. xix), and, of Erdmann himself, that 'he is therefore an idealist' (BL, p. xxi), and goes straight on to argue against idealists. Perhaps it can be argued that the historical picture I gave is wrong: but, if so, no one would likely be led into misinterpreting Frege by adopting it, since it was a picture held by Frege himself" (M. Dummett, "Frege as Realist," p. 80. In M. Dummett, *Frege and Other Philosophers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 79-96).

Where Frege claims that the science of logic demands that we regard the necessity of true logical principles as decisive and build up our system from there, Wittgenstein denies that there is such as *science of logic* at all. He nonetheless upholds the claim that a logical framework for language can and must be found in order to trace the limits of the acceptable expression of thought (a condition which philosophy, in his view, typically fails to meet). More to the point then, is the following question: Can Wittgenstein, while refusing to assert the substantial truth of logical principles, avoid falling into the vicious circle of psychologistic—or cultural-historic—relativism that Frege describes here as the natural outcome of such a refusal?

III. "A Necessarily Momentous Event"

Wittgenstein was dissatisfied with the notion of self-evidence that Frege and Russell viewed as the ground for putting forth a priori truths. It is a dissatisfaction that is expressed in the opening remark of the *Notebooks*: "Logic must take care of itself." (NB, p. 2) Logic must take care of itself because self-evidence will not do the trick, so to speak. "If the truth of a proposition does not follow from the fact that it is self-evident to us," Wittgenstein notes in a remark the clearly points towards Frege's position concerning the fallibility of self-evidence, "then its self-evidence in no way justifies our belief in its truth." (T 5.1363) But what then are we to make of Frege's case for logico-mathematical fallibilism?

For Wittgenstein, logic is not a body of true propositions of which it is the job of philosophers to assert, regardless of whether they do so correctly or not. As Wittgenstein notes at the end of the *Tractatus*: "The correct method of philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. the propositions of natural sciences, i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy." (T 6.53) Unlike the natural sciences, there is no room for error in logic because language itself prevents any mistake here. A 'logical error' is by this account not an *errant logic*—as there may be an errant science,

backed by thoughts about the world that are taken for true but fail to hold upon closer examination—but simply no logic at all.

We recall that for Frege and Russell the grounds for attributing a priori status to a proposition rests either on the fact that the proposition stands in no need of further justification (self-evidently true) or in the fact that it may be deduced from a set of more fundamental a priori propositions taken together as a set (as a matter of pure logic). Now, an interesting question we might pose here concerns the number of 'self-evident principles' we need in order for the analysis of non-self-evident theorems (such as those found in mathematics) to proceed. Though their respective account of exactly how many 'logical constants' are necessary, it is nonetheless upon the foundation of this genuinely achievable enumeration that Frege would propose his five fundamental axioms in the *Basic Laws*, and that Russell would claim:

> "Symbolic Logic is essentially concerned with inference in general, and is distinguished from various special branches of mathematics mainly by its generality [...] What symbolic logic does investigate [are] the rules by which inferences are made, and it requires a classification of relations or propositions only insofar as these general rules introduce particular notions. The particular notions which appear in the propositions of symbolic logic, and all others are definable in terms of these notions, are the logic constants. The number of indefinable logical constants is not great: it appears, in fact, to be eight or nine."[39]

For Wittgenstein logic is not distinguished by its generality. Logic for him is not concerned with what is true for all *things* (or even for a highly general class of things, such as numbers) but rather with that which makes it possible for a proposition to be true at all. "In order for a proposition to be true," Wittgenstein writes early on in the *Notebooks,* "it must first and foremost be *capable* of truth, and this is all that concerns logic." (NB, p. 20)

Our question—whether Wittgenstein can avoid succumbing to the relativism with which Frege had indicted the psychological logicians, as a result of denying the existence of

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39 B. Russell, *Principles of Mathematics* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1903), §12.

abstract and a-temporal conceptual entities and thus relativising logic to the sphere of human *praxis*—might therefore be better framed if we take a step back and look at the *Tractatus* as a whole and the view of philosophy that is outlined there. We recall that it was Alfred North Whitehead who famously claimed that philosophy is best summarized as a footnote to Plato. In a comical quip, one of Wittgenstein's student would later add "*until Wittgenstein*."[40] Indeed, it has often been claimed that in Wittgenstein's philosophy we witness a radical departure from the more or less Platonic foundations of his predecessors regarding the status of the logical foundations of mathematics.[41] It is a rupture that involves Wittgenstein's rejection of both sides of the realist coin in logicism: the naturalised *sense* of logical propositions and the direct *reference* of logical constants.[42] In realist fashion, Russell

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40 Quoted in D. Edmonds and J. Eidinow, *Wittgenstein's Poker* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), p. 9.

41 David Pears has argued that one way to characterise the difference between the *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations* is in fact precisely as a dispute between a form of Platonism in the *Tractatus* and anti-Platonism in *Philosophical Investigations* (D. Pears, *The False Prison,* vol. 1 & 2 (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987 & 1988). I agree, however, with Carruthers' claim that Wittgenstein's 'realism' in the *Tractatus* concerning simple objects should not be construed as a form of Platonism:

"[T]he early Wittgenstein was equally opposed to Platonism, whether about propositions or universals, or about numbers. It is true that *TLP* is committed to the existence of a class of necessarily existing objects, but this is not Platonism as it is usually understood [...] because they do not constitute a realm of entities in contrast to the empirical world, but rather form its substance (2.021)." (P. Carruthers, *The Metaphysics of the* Tractatus (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 161.)

42 There has, of course, been quite a lot of debate over the question of whether Frege himself really should be considered a Platonist or not, notably in the exchange between H. Sluga and M. Dummett. Against Dummett's Platonist interpretation of Frege's doctrines, Sluga notes, for example: "In calling Frege a realist, Dummett has laid much stress on the supposed ontological implications of Frege's doctrines" ("Frege as Rationalist," p. 29, in ed. M. Schirn, *Studies on Frege,* (Stuttgart: Problemata, 1976), pp. 27-47) and "Frege's theory of the objectivity of numbers, value-ranges, functions etc., was never intended as an ontological theory." (*ibid.*, p. 29) Sluga goes on to explain that for Frege, "ideal objects are not real, but merely possess validity." (*ibid.*) Hence, they are to be conceived logically and not ontologically. However, I agree with Dummett's justification and take Frege to be a Platonic realist in at least the following minimal sense:

"The word used by Frege, and here translated as 'real' by Sluga, is '*wirklich* ', translated 'actual' by Austin and Fruth; Frege expressly associates *Wirklichkeit* with *Wirkung* (being actual with acting on things). Abstract objects are not, for Frege, *wirklich* (they have no causal effects): for all that, they are just as objective as concrete ones, and exist in just as great independence of our thinking about them." (M. Dummett, "Frege as Realist," *op. cit.,* p. 81.)

and Frege felt their work represented a genuine advance in the history of logico-mathematical development because it aimed towards attaining (and ideally *would* attain) knowledge of independently existing a priori truths. But then to what degree can one claim that the philosophy of Wittgenstein, which rejects the objective status of logic, nonetheless embodies a similar event in the history of thought—a *revolution*, as it were?

There are two ways in which this question might be posed from the perspective of the *Tractatus*, one biographical and one philosophical. However, the answer is negative on both counts. On the one hand, Wittgenstein was sceptical of his own ability to express what he felt was necessary in order to realize his task:

> "If this work has any value, it consists in two things: the first is that thoughts are expressed in it, and on this score the better the thoughts are expressed—the more the nail has been hit on the head—the greater will be its value.—Here I am conscious of having fallen a long way short of what is possible. Simply because my powers are too slight for the accomplishment of the task.—May others come and do it better." (T, p. 4)

On the other hand, setting aside Wittgenstein's own doubts about his *personal adequacy* to meet the task set before him, there is also reason to believe that the work could never be considered progressive in any case. There is reason to believe that it could never achieve anything *in principle,* regardless of how well the thoughts in it are expressed (by Wittgenstein, or by his successors). Thus, Wittgenstein continues:

> "On the other hand, the *truth* of the thoughts that are here contained seems to me unassailable and definitive. I therefore believe myself to have found, on all essential points, the final solution of the problems. And if I am not mistaken in this belief, then the second thing in which the value of this work consists is that it shows how little is achieved when these problems are solved." (ibid.)

This second admission—that little to nothing is achieved by solving the problems of philosophy—is not merely a reflection on Wittgenstein's own ability (or inability) to

philosophise well. Rather, it is a reflection on what it means to philosophise and on what it could mean for their to be *progress* in philosophy.

Though he became increasingly opposed to the idea, Wittgenstein was never a proponent of the scientistic spirit which, as he would later claim, "informs the vast stream of European and American civilisation." (PR, Preface)[43] At the time of writing the *Tractatus* he nonetheless shared the view that has often been used to characterise the scientistic endeavour—embodied eloquently in Frege's attack on the genetic fallacies of psychological logician—that the history of thought and the way in which our investigations into truth have evolved over time have little to do with genuine understanding. Of course, for Wittgenstein philosophy is not a science and he was at this time only interested in the sciences insofar as they might serve as the paradigm for clarity in language use. In other words, he was interested primarily in what could be said without the metaphysical confusion that had infected philosophy. Nonetheless, he shared the spirit of a-historicism that coincides strongly with the anti-psychologism at the heart of the logicist program of Frege and Russell. But, at the same time, he rejected the metaphysical foundations that Frege and Russell had proposed for that a-historicism: i.e. the real existence of abstract, and thus a-temporal, conceptual objects.

From the Tractarian perspective, the key difference between progress in natural science and progress in philosophy might be expressed thus: if Newton could claim to have 'stood on the shoulders of giants', as it were, it was not only their *successes* that allowed him to see so far beyond the horizons of those who had come before him, but also their *failures*. This was evidently the case for Frege as well, exhibited by his extensive historical elucidations found throughout the *Foundations*, in advance of the 'real work' in the science of logic that would follow nine years later in his *Basic Laws.* It is similarly suggested in Russell's vast writings

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43 Similarly, we might recall here the motto for *Philosophical Investigations,* taken from the Austrian playwright Nestroy: *"Überhaupt hat der Fortschritt das an sich, daß er viel größer ausschaut, als er wirklich ist."* However, as we will see later, the motto from Nestroy supports various alternative interpretations as well.

on the history of philosophy, as opposed to what can be found in *Principia Mathematica*, for example.

However, for Wittgenstein, the task of philosophy is neither to build upon the successes of the past nor to correct its errors. As he notes in the preface to the *Tractatus*: "I do not wish to judge how far my efforts coincide with those of other philosophers. Indeed, what I have written here makes no claim to novelty in detail, and the reason why I give no sources is that it is a matter of indifference to me whether the thoughts that I have had have been anticipated by someone else." (T, p. 4) What is required is rather to recognise what is adequate in logic and expunge from it what is confused in its application. Within the realm of this confusion, *which is not even error*, there can be neither progress nor revision. If science can advance in a linear manner, moving towards an ever more accurate understanding of the world, philosophy has only to abide by the formal framework that permeates language and leave the rest aside. This structure—which Wittgenstein calls the "logical scaffolding" of the world (T 6.124)—would seem therefore to admit neither approximation nor improvement. The provenance of the a priori given of logical space leaves no room for serial successes. There is only the clarity of "seeing the world aright" (T 6.54) and the obscurity of speaking where we should rather be silent (T 7).

But what then are we to make of the claim that indeed, despite there being no progress in logic, the widespread significance of the logical innovations of Frege and Russell cannot be denied? How then are we to square this idea with Wittgenstein's own use of the consequent system of logical notation (and not only notation) that had been literally non-existent only a generation before?

Along with his rejection of the justificatory function of self-evidence, Wittgenstein also strongly rejected the objective status of a priori truths, which—like other scientific truths, according to Frege and Russell—would admit error and approximate knowledge. Logic must take care of itself and so self-evidence, along with the notion that logic *is a science*, had to be dispensed with: "Self-evidence, which Russell talked about so much, can become

dispensable in logic, only because language itself prevents every logical mistake.—What makes logic a priori is the *impossibility* of illogical thought." (T 5.4731) It is in this sense that Wittgenstein responds to the Kantian question concerning the necessity of intuition for the solution of mathematical problems as follows: "The question whether intuition is needed for the solution of mathematical problems must be given the answer that in this case language itself provides the necessary intuition." (T 6.233) Because the operations that are necessary for the solution of logico-mathematical problems are internal to the propositions, the solution will always become apparent with a sufficiently perspicuous formulation. And in the absence of such a realm of intuition, in which solutions to mathematical problems are 'worked out' despite their resistance to knowledge, no genuine progress is possible. "My difficulty," Wittgenstein notes in the *Notebooks*, "is only an―enormous―difficulty of expression." (NB, p. 40) Because the propositions of logic and mathematics say nothing, any resistance encountered here has nothing to do with the notions themselves but only with the form in which we express them. Any advance in knowledge here—in other words, any logico-mathematical progress—is in this sense merely an instance of *formal* and not *material knowledge*. The only progress that is possible is that achieved by a more perspicuous notation—and that is not an advance of mathematical knowledge, strictly speaking, neither in the Kantian nor in the Fregean sense.

To return to our earlier example, the mathematical proposition '*Twelve times twelve equals one hundred and forty-four*' gains little perspicuity through the symbolic expression '12·12=144' and, therefore, this symbolic expression hardly facilitates the arrival of the solution. The standard alternate form, however—

$$\begin{array}{r} 12 \\ \underline{12} \\ 24 \\ \underline{12} \\ 144 \end{array}$$

—*does* provide a clearly articulated means for arriving at the solution. That is to say, it provides a means, and *not* the solution itself. It is not a material advance in mathematical knowledge, for the solution was always there to begin with. Rather, it is an advance in the form of our expression (comprising not only an adequate semantics but also an adequate syntax) which allows the solution to show itself, completely analogous to Wittgenstein's truth-table method.[44]

This does not imply, however, that the forms of logical articulation necessary for achieving such perspicuity are static. Rather, what is essential—as Wittgenstein makes clear—is that *whatever notation is employed* it must have the necessary 'logical multiplicity' in order for the symbols used to effectively 'go proxy' for the state of affairs described when it is applied to the world.[45] In other words, the wider logical space of which the description of a particular state of affairs is a part must be completely filled in by the possibility for alternate states of affairs, with no place left undetermined and nothing exceeding the number of places available, no matter what may or may not be in any particular case. "A proposition can only determine one place in logical space," Wittgenstein notes, "nevertheless the whole of logical space must already be given by it." (T 3.42)

Wittgenstein outlines the consequences of this conception of aprioricity for the logicist programme of Frege and Russell at 5.45ff, where he discusses the introduction of new

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44 In this sense the '=' sign represents the paradigm of an immaterial, formal relation. As Wittgenstein writes: "When I use two signs with one and the same meaning, I express this by putting the sign "=". // So '$a = b$' means that the sign 'b' can be substituted for the sign 'a'. // (If I use an equation to introduce a new sign 'b', laying down that it shall serve as a substitute for the sign 'a' that is already known, then, like Russell, I write the equation—definition—in the form '$a = b$ Def.' A definition is a rule dealing with signs.)" (T 4.241) We might recall here, of course, Kant's discussion of bachelors and unmarried men.

45 As Wittgenstein expresses it in the *Notebooks* (a slightly more suggestive version of the 'fundamental thought' expressed in T 4.0312): "The proposition says something, is identical with: It has a particular relation to reality, *whatever this may be*. And if this *reality* is given and also that relation, then the sense of the proposition is known. "pvq" has a different relation to reality from "p.q", etc. // The possibility of the proposition is, of course, founded on the principle of signs GOING PROXY for objects. // Thus in the proposition something has *something else* as its proxy. // But there is also the common cement. // My fundamental thought is that the logical constants are not proxies. That the *logic* of facts cannot have anything as its proxy." (NB, p. 37)

devices into the symbolism of logic. Wittgenstein begins his meditation on the role that primitive ideas might play in logic and how they maintain the perspicuity of a wider logical framework, noting:

> "If there are primitive logical signs, then any logic that fails to show clearly how they are placed relative to one another and to justify their existence will be incorrect. The construction of logic *out of* its primitive signs must be made clear." (T 5.45)

Following this remark, Wittgenstein returns to reaffirm Frege's indictment of 'piecemeal' definitions, although not only for objects, but for the logical constants of our notational systems as well. He notes there:

> "If logic has primitive ideas, they must be independent of one another. If a primitive idea has been introduced, it must have been introduced in all the combinations in which it ever occurs. It cannot, therefore, by introduced first for *one* combination and later re-introduced for another. For example, once negation has been introduced, we must understand it both in propositions like '~(*p* v *q*)', '(∃*x*).~*fx*', etc. We must not introduce it first for the one class of cases and then for the other, since it would then be left in doubt whether its meaning were the same in both cases, and no reason would have been given for combining the signs in the same way in both case.
>
> (In short, Frege's remarks about introducing signs by means of definitions (in *The Fundamental Laws of Arithmetic*) also apply, mutatis mutandis, to the introduction of primitive signs.)" (T 5.451)

Frege, we recall, indicted the piecemeal introduction of concepts by mathematicians throughout his work, claiming for example: "A definition of a concept (of a possible predicate) must be complete; it must unambiguously determine, as regards any object, whether or not it falls under the concept (whether or not the predicate is truly assertible of it). [...] We may express this metaphorically as follows: the concept must have a sharp boundary." (BL §56) Frege continues the next section thus: "Now from this it follows that the mathematicians favourite procedure, piecemeal definition, is inadmissible." (BL §57)

In line with his account of perspicuity, Wittgenstein is not of course claiming that we should therefore *define* our primitive operations, but rather that we must clearly and conscientiously lay out their application in all possible forms throughout the logical space in question—without, he notes, what one might call "a completely innocent air":

> "The introduction of any new device into the symbolism of logic is necessarily a momentous event [*muß immer ein folgenschweres Ereignis sein*]. In logic a new device should not be introduced in brackets or in a footnote with what one might call a completely innocent air.
>
> (Thus in Russell and Whitehead's *Principia Mathematica* there occur definitions and primitive propositions expressed in words. Why this sudden appearance of words? It would require justification, but none can be given, since the procedure is in fact illicit.)
>
> But if the introduction of a new device has proved necessary at a certain point, we must immediately ask ourselves, 'At what point is the employment of this device now *unavoidable*?' and its place in logic must be made clear." (T 5.452)

We see clearly here that for Wittgenstein it is possible to introduce new 'logical signs', 'primitive ideas' and 'devices' into logic; indeed, it must be if the demand for perspicuity is to be met. Without this possibility, Wittgenstein would have to admit—as Kant did—the existence of genuine philosophical problems that would admit no solution (such as incongruence of the right and left hand, and the argument for the ideality of space). However, this is not the 'lawless and arbitrary' creation of un-instantiated concepts that Frege indicts the 'creative mathematician' with in the *Basic Laws*. For the constraint of logical perspicuity insists that for any introduction of a new device in our notation "its place in logic must be made clear."[46] In other words, we must be capable of moving smoothly

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46 C. Diamond makes clear the implications of this for the Tractarian notion of 'understanding', when she notes: "When I speak of logic as joining the sentences of 'the language which I understand', I am picking up the use of 'understand' from *Tractatus* 5.62 […] Here, and elsewhere in the *Tractatus*, reference to understanding can be explicated in terms of Wittgenstein's account of the use of language. Thus, e.g., if we understand 'not' (see *Tractatus* 5.451), this is not because we are acquainted with something, a logical object or anything else, but because a negation sign has been introduced via a rule covering its use in *all* propositional combinations." (C. Diamond, "Does Bismarck have a Beetle in his Box?", p. 273, in eds. R. Read and A. Crary, *The New Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 262-292.)

through each and every point of this space via the construction of additional possible propositions: "In geometry and logic alike," Wittgenstein notes, "a place is a possibility: something can exist in it." (T 3.411)

Crucially, for Wittgenstein—unlike both Kant and Frege—we must be able to traverse the space that is coextensive with these operations *without resistance*. In other words, we must know immediately and once and for all what would have to be the case for each contentful expression of this language to be either true or false, independently of whether any particular proposition is or is not the case. If the a priori structure of this language—and the whole of a given logical space defined by it—cannot be made absolutely clear, it remains undetermined and therefore nonsense, syntactically speaking. We can see, therefore, how Frege's quantification theory follows naturally—as a matter of pure a priori inference, in the Wittgensteinian sense—from his analysis of the proposition in terms of function and argument. Hyder, for example, makes an excellent claim regarding how this development is to be conceived of in terms of Wittgenstein's discussion of 'logical multiplicity':

> "The essential point is that in order to successfully describe a set of elementary facts without naming them directly, I need to render to them by means of shared properties. That is what the function-symbol in a quantified proposition achieves. If *Fa* is to be conceived as one point in a manifold of related points *Fb, Ga, …,* then *Fx* is a slice through that manifold.
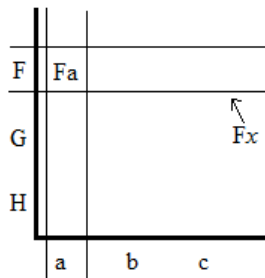
> To claim that such a function-symbol must have the same multiplicity as the propositions that are its values is this equivalent to saying that: (1) it must adequately reflect both the structure of the

manifold in which the referents of these propositions lie; and (2) it must select the relevant subset of that manifold on the basis of shared features of the subset's elements."[47]

Thus we see how the quantification of 'all *x*, such that *Fx*' differs fundamentally from some arbitrary conjunction of *Fa*, *Fb, ...* , etc., and is a feature supported not only by the semantics of Frege's *Begriffsschrift* but also its syntactical structure. In this case, the mode of expression used in the proposition is *perfectly perspicuous* for both the state of affairs described and the logical coordinates that surround it. We can clearly see, for example, that the rest of the space may be filled in completely through various operations that have a clear application to any given proposition at hand (e.g., via the negation of the proposition, the introduction of conditionals or disjunctive propositions, the formation of some logical sum, etc., and especially the transition from the general to the specific). Given the notation employed, what is essential is that we can move seamlessly through the logical space that is completely co-extensive with the syntactical form of the proposition articulated therein.

It is tempting here to fall back upon the 'correctness' of a universal logical syntax, which—by incorporating semantic elements correlated with eternal logical objects—might provide a solid framework for all forms of logical articulation, past, present and future. This is something Russell would seem to suggest, when he notes in his Introduction to the *Tractatus* that Wittgenstein is "concerned with the conditions which would have to be fulfilled by a logically perfect language." (T, pp. ix-x)[48] However, Wittgenstein makes it

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47 D. Hyder, *The Mechanics of Meaning* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002)*,* p. 147.

48 As R. McDonough points out, this claim is clearly mistaken—and is a reflection of Russell's own concern, rather than Wittgenstein's: "It is Russell's view in the Introduction to the *Tractatus* that the ideal sign language serve a particular purpose which we can call 'theoretical', in order to contrast it with the practical purposes which the propositional sign must serve in daily life. Russell writes: 'The whole function of language is to have meaning and it only fulfils this function as it approaches to the ideal language which we postulate.' (B. Russell, "Introduction", T, p. x.) Russell's notion of an ideal language is the notion of a language whose propositional signs are better suited to 'have meaning' than the everyday propositional signs. But Wittgenstein rejects this view, since he holds that it does not fall to the perceptible part of the symbol to determine meaning in the first place. Thus, the existence of an idealized propositional language is irrelevant to the capacity of language to 'have meaning'. The very idea of Russell's ideal language is regarded by Wittgenstein as conceptually confused." (R. McDonough, *The Arguments of the "Tractatus"* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), p. 132.)

clear that what an adequate logical notation requires is not some kind of logical perfection embodied in the correct representation of substantially true a priori facts. Wittgenstein's investigation is not, as Russell supposed, aimed at separating what is correct in language and what is not, and then improving or refining what is. It is aimed at revealing what is already there, in perfect logical order as it is. What is required is perspicuity, embodied in the employment of a notation of an appropriate logical multiplicity. He expresses this idea in the *Tractatus* as follows: "In a proposition there must be exactly as many distinguishable parts as in the situation it represents. // The two must possess the same logical (mathematical) multiplicity. (Compare Hertz's *Mechanics* on dynamic models.)" (T 4.04)[49]

We see here the degree to which Wittgenstein's conception of logico-mathematical propositions diverges radically not only from Frege and Russell, but also from Kant and the notion of 'intuition' upon which the latter's understanding of progressive mathematical knowledge relies. For example, at 4.0411 Wittgenstein explores a few options for alternative logical notations for expressing generality—such as 'Gen.fx', '$f\,(x_g)$', and

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49 Hertz expresses his understanding of 'dynamical model' thus:

"A material system is said to be a dynamical model of a second system when the connections of the first can be expressed by such coordinates as to satisfy the following following conditions: (1) That the number of co-ordinates of the first system is equal to the number of the second. (2) That with a suitable arrangement of the co-ordinates for both systems the same equations of condition exist. (3) That by this arrangement of the co-ordinates the expression for the magnitude of a displacement agrees in both systems." (H. Hertz, *The Principles of Mechanics* (New York: Macmillan, 1956), §418.)

Consider M. Potter's claim:

"Wittgenstein is here drawing on an analogy between the indefinables of a logical system and the unknowns of a physical system. Applied mathematicians talk about the number of degrees of freedom in a system, meaning by this the number of unknowns in the equations which may be determined independently of each other. If we have a set of equations in five unknowns with four degrees of freedom, for instance, we can chose values for any four of the unknowns freely, but the values of the fifth will be fixed by the choices we have made for the other four. When we set up a formal system, Wittgenstein thought it important to ensure that there are no more indefinables than there are degrees of freedom in the system […] Expressed in these terms, Wittgenstein's point was that if, after introducing the names 'Socrates' and 'Plato', we regard 'proper name' as a further indefinable, the system would have more indefinables than degrees of freedom." (M. Potter, *Wittgenstein's Notes on Logic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 84-85.)

'(*G,G*).*F*(*G,G*)'—all of which fail because of semantic indetermination.[50] They rather fail because they do not meet this demand for logical perspicuity. In these cases, he argues, we would be unable to determine what is being generalized, to determine the scope of the generality sign, or to establish the identity of a particular variable, respectively. Thus, Wittgenstein concludes: "All of these modes of signifying are inadequate because they lack the necessary mathematical multiplicity." (T 4.0411) In other words, each of these modes of signifying are syntactically indeterminate, and they therefore produce nothing but nonsense.

Wittgenstein continues: "For the same reason the idealist's appeal to 'spatial spectacles'[51] is inadequate to explain the seeing of spatial relations, because it cannot explain the multiplicity of these relations." (T 4.0412) We might recall here Kant's claim concerning the progressive mapping of geometrical space referred to earlier in our discussion of synthetic a priori truths. Kant noted in this passage how the 'geometer' (as opposed to the 'philosopher'), upon being given the concept of a triangle, begins at once to *construct* one according to the determining constraints of spatial representation provided by intuition. Now the interesting question we might pose to Kant, from the Tractarian perspective, is the

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50 In this respect, it is worthwhile noting that Anscombe—who argued that "the only arbitrariness in the *Tractatus* is in the assignment of names" (*An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus* (London: Hutchenson University Library, 1959)*,* p. 154), a view similarly suggested by M. Black (*A Companion to Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964)*,* p. 272.)—herself notes in regard to these difficulties that they "could of course be got over by supplementary conventions, corresponding to the 'enormously complicated tacit conventions' which Wittgenstein mentions in 4.002 as needed for the understanding of ordinary language." (ibid.*,* p. 140) Appealing to 'supplementary conventions' that may help us 'get over' such syntactic indeterminacy, we see that even Anscombe intuits a level of arbitrariness at the syntactic level, and thus underestimates the role of *perspicuity* in favour of the *correctness* of the Russell-Frege approach to generality. As she notes, "Frege's genius consisted in inventing a notation in which a formula of a different layout is employed for universal propositions; and not just of a different layout, but the right layout." (ibid., p. 139) Such an understanding of correctness, which is here employed independently of application, is foreign to Wittgenstein's thought.

51 Undoubtedly a reference to Russell's claim in "The Philosophical Importance of Mathematical Logic": "The categories of Kant are the coloured spectacles of the mind; truths *a priori* are the false appearances produced by these spectacles." (B. Russell, "The Philosophical Importance of Mathematical Logic," p. 491. *The Monist,* 23, 1913, pp. 481-93.) Black summarizes the contention thus: "Blue spectacles might lead us to see everything blue. But we cannot imagine 'spectacles' that would impose spatial relations where none had been perceived. No ubiquitous distortion of visual experience can explain the logical properties of visual space." (M. Black, *A Companion to Wittgenstein's Tractatus, op cit.,* p. 177.)

following: Given this account of constrained geometrical construction, how are we to understand the development of alternative geometrical spaces wherein a figure possess a different array of possible positions? How are we to account for the 'given' constraints of some form of spatio-temporal representation within which things act in a fixed manner when that very space is *itself* open to revision? In other words, how are we to account for the development of alternate spaces with different degrees of logical multiplicity?

In effect, Wittgenstein poses this very question to Kant in the *Tractatus*. He refers there to Kant's problem of the incongruence of the right and left hands[52], and notes:

> "Kant's problem about the right hand and the left hand, which cannot be made to coincide, exists even in two dimensions. Indeed, it exists in one-dimensional space

– – – O—X – – X—O – – –
  a   *b*
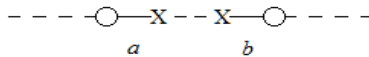
> in which the two congruent figures, *a* and *b*, cannot be made to coincide unless they are moved out of this space. The right hand and the left hand are in fact completely congruent. It is quite irrelevant that they cannot coincide.
>
> A right-hand glove could be put on the left hand, if it could be turned round in four-dimensional space." (T 6.36111)

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52 As N. K. Smith notes: "For as Kant points out, though the right and the left hand are *counterparts,* that is to say, objects which have a common definition so long as the arrangement of the parts of each is determined in respect to its central line of reference, they are none the less inwardly *incongruent,* since the one can never be made to occupy the space of the other. As he adds in the *Prolegomena*, the glove of one hand cannot be used for the other hand. This inner incongruence compels us to distinguish then as different, *and this difference is only determinable by location of each in a single absolute space that constrains everything within it to conform to the conditions which it prescribes.* In three-dimensional space everything must have a right and left side, and must therefore exhibit such inner differences as those just noted." (N. K. Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason'*, 2nd ed.(London: Macmillan, 1923), p. 163), my emphasis.)

What we have here is not merely a clever solution to a familiar philosophical puzzle. It is rather an essential element of Wittgenstein's critique of precisely this aspect of the Kantian transcendental programme. For here we see that the 'solution' to the problem arises not through 'working out' the answer (such as drawing a triangle in a pre-given space or multiplying twelve times twelve), but rather through a redefinition of the space in which the figures performs in a determinate way.[53] By moving the figure out of this space, into one of increased logical multiplicity, the answer becomes evident immediately:
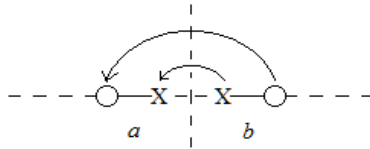
What this example illustrates is that the space of representation is something that we construct, and we do so through the development of an adequate notation. In the construction of such an adequate notation, apparent philosophical 'problems' can indeed be resolved. It is in this sense that Wittgenstein responds to the Kantian requirement of intuition with the claim: "language itself provides the necessary intuition." (T 6.233) We need only map the possible facts within this new space—for example, the 'right' and 'left-hand' figures, in a space of two or more dimensions—and the solution will become apparent. If some problem should remain, we need only adjust the space wherein the question can be posed in order for it to become *answerable*. Where no such space exists, the question may therefore be rejected as nonsensical.[54]

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53 Similarly, as Russell notes in *The Principles of Mathematics*, referring specifically to the puzzle congruence posed for the Kantian position: "No motion will transform *abcd* into the tetrahedron metrically equal in all respects, but with the opposite sense. In this fact, however, there seems, to my mind, to be nothing mysterious, but merely a result of confining ourselves to three dimensions. In one dimension, the same would hold of distances with opposite senses; in two dimensions, of areas." (B. Russell, *The Principles of Mathematics, op cit.*, p. 418.)

54 We might consider as an example of this impossibility Wittgenstein's discussion of colour at 6.3751: "For example, the simultaneous presence of two colours at the same place in the visual field is impossible, in fact logically impossible, since it is ruled out by the logical structure of colour." There is, in this sense, no 'dimension' in which two colours could exist at the same place (at the same time) in the

On Wittgenstein's account, such a novel solution to a familiar problem—as above in the case of long-form multiplication, or even Russell's Theory of Descriptions[55]—is in no way a material advance. It is a formal solution to a formal problem, for mapping this figure in two-dimensional space does not lead us to a new fact. Rather, it adjusts the limits of the facts expressible via the notation in question. This provides a clear counterpoint to Wittgenstein's discussion of the Necker Cube, where seeing the cube 'pointing' first in one direction (upwards and to the right) and then another (downwards, to the left)—i.e., two different figures *within the same space*—does indeed show two different facts. Here it is the complex that is perceived in different ways (giving rise to different facts, by the light of this metaphor) and not the same complex in a different space, which would be analogous to the use of two superficially identical signs (such as "Green is green," where the first is the proper name of a person and the latter an adjective) but that are rather different symbols (cf. 3.323):

> "To perceive a complex means to perceive that its constituents are related to one another in such and such a way.
>
> This no doubt explains why there are two possible ways of seeing the figure

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visual field.

55 It is in this sense that Wittgenstein—immediately after proclaiming the "All philosophy is a 'critique of language'"—credits Russell for "performing the service of showing that the apparent logical form of a proposition need not be its real one." (4.0031) In Russell's Theory of Descriptions, for example, logical features of the proposition are written into its syntactical form rather than a semantics, which permits the assignment of a truth-value that would have been otherwise inaccessible, famously transcribing the proposition '*The present King of France is bald* ' into the form: $\exists(x)[Fx \;\&\; \forall y(Fy \rightarrow x=y) \;\&\; Gx]$, stating there is some x such that x is the King of France (and for every x and every y, if both x and y are both King of France, then y is x), and x is bald. We can easily see how this approach is analogous to Wittgenstein's treatment of identity in the *Tractatus*, when he notes for example: "Identity of object I express by identity of sign, and not by using the sign for identity. Difference of objects I express by difference of signs." (T 5.53) In this sense, according to Wittgenstein's treatment of identity, one need look no further in order to logically articulate '*The present King of France is bald* ' than the following: $\exists(x)Fx \;\&\; Gx.$

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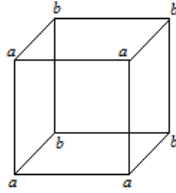
as a cube; and all similar phenomena. For we really see two different facts.

(If I look in the first place at the corners marked *a* and only glance at the *b*'s, then the *a*'s appear in front, and vice versa.). (T 5.5423)[56]

Now, it might be argued that if rival geometric spaces undo the synthetic aprioricity of the Kantian thesis only by redefining its terms, they do not really undo it; they rather make the same sentence express a different proposition (something analogous to employing the same sign for a different symbol, in Wittgenstein's terminology). In such a case, it need come as no surprise that the new figure does not behave in a like manner. However, Wittgenstein's point here is not to undo the Kantian question by solving the problem *per se*, but rather by *dis*-solving it. For Kant, the incongruous counterparts of the right and left hand was a genuine philosophical puzzle. He argued therefore that the a priori given impossibility of arriving at this nonetheless perfectly sensical state of affairs—the congruence of the right and left hands—afforded confirmation of the ideality of space. Against Kant, Wittgenstein suggests that the possibility for the construction of alternative spaces of differing logical multiplicity does not mean that Kant was *wrong* and that the figures can indeed be made congruent, but that given this possibility there is no reason for assuming *one space or another* is primary in the transcendental sense that Kant is after. For example, the argument is not that *because* there are possible spaces (of two or more dimensions) in which *a* and *b* can be made to coincide, *a* and *b* are *as a matter of fact* congruent (though they cannot be made to coincide in the limited space to which Kant has confined them). Rather, the point is that the incongruence of the left and right hand in a space of some particular number of

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56 The implications of the temporal element of experience in this example, how for example it is impossible to see both figures at the same time, would not appear to Wittgenstein until later. This is, of course, dealt with extensively in section xii of Part II of the *Investigations*.

dimensions cannot serve to establish the pre-conditioning character of space itself, as Kant wished it to.

Similarly—just as there is no one single 'logically perfect language', such as that which Frege and Russell wished to secure and after which no further extension or revision of these foundations would be warranted—neither can Kant here rely on the transcendental stability of the spatio-temporal framework of representation as the condition of progressive mathematical knowledge. By Wittgenstein's account it is rather a proto-picture, an *Urbild* that has no primacy beyond the confines of a particular framework of logical articulation, which is applied in particular cases for particular purposes (cf. T 5.5351). As Wittgenstein noted early on in the *Notebooks*:

> "The description of the world by means of propositions is possible because what is signified is not its own sign! Application—.
>
> Light on Kant's question "How is pure mathematics possible?" through the theory of tautologies."
>
> (NB, p. 15)

Language does indeed thus provide all the intuition that is necessary for the solution of mathematical problems; however, it may very well be necessary to construct a more perspicuous language with a greater or lesser degree of logical multiplicity for that solution to appear.

IV. Logic, Ethics, and the Spirit of Scientism

It may at first seem surprising that Wittgenstein—who after all denounced history so strongly in the *Notebooks* with the cry: "What has history to do with me? Mine is the first and only world!" (NB, p. 82)—would by the same token be concerned with accounting for the introduction of novel logical devices. However, it is precisely because Wittgenstein felt compelled to denounce the logical significance of history, while at the same time knowing

full well that he himself was making use of previously unrecognisable logical forms to dissolve philosophical problems according to the methodological standpoint of his *Sprachkritik,* that such an account had to be given. What Wittgenstein required then was a conception of logic that would permit the emergence of new logical forms, while proving them nonetheless to be *a-historical.* This conception of logic was not an end in itself, however.

According to a well-known anecdote, during the time that Wittgenstein was composing his initial *Notes on Logic* in Cambridge, he would often come to visit Russell, pacing up and down his room for hours at a time in agitated silence. Once Russell asked him: "Are you thinking about logic or your sins?" "Both," replied Wittgenstein, as he resumed pacing.[57] Though this story is typically recounted as something of a joke about Wittgenstein's eccentric behaviour, we now know indeed just how seriously—as is more often the case than not—he had replied to Russell's question. For it is without a hint of irony that Wittgenstein wrote to Ficker upon the completion of the manuscript:

> "You won't—I really believe—get too much out of reading it. Because you won't understand it; the content will seem strange to you. In reality, it isn't strange to you, for the point of the book is ethical. I once wanted to give a few words in the foreward which now actually are not in it, which, however, I'll write to you now because they might be a key for you: I wanted to write that my work consists of two parts: of the one which is here, and of everything which I have *not* written. And precisely this second part is the important one. My book draws the limits to the sphere of the ethical from the inside as it were, and I am convinced that this is the ONLY *rigorous* way of drawing those limits. In short, I believe that where *many* others today are just *gassing*, I have managed in my book to put everything firmly into place by being silent about it"[58]

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57 This story has been recounted by Russell in several places, among them: B. Russell, *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, vol. II. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1968), p. 99.

58 Quoted in C.G. Luckhardt, *Wittgenstein: Sources and Perspectives* (Sussex, UK: Harvester Press, Ltd., 1979), p. 94. Cf. P. Engelmann, *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), p. 143. Engelmann makes the following interesting observation with respect to this passage: "It is not clear where the self-quotation ends." (ibid.)

The important part of the work, Wittgenstein informs us here, is the ethical part. Given this central characterisation of the work it is clear that any account of the main themes of the *Tractatus*—such as that outlined here, concerning progress, innovation and the need for an a-historic conception of logic—will remain woefully incomplete if that ethical dimension cannot be brought to bare upon it. It will not be surprising, therefore, to discover that within the pages of the *Tractatus* this a-historicism is indeed intimately tied to the conception of ethics sketched there.

Nonetheless, despite the clear connection between his view of logic as a-historical and his (albeit, obliquely expressed) view of the ethical life as a-temporal, it is difficult to speak about the character of ethics expressed in the *Tractatus* without transgressing the Tractarian dictum that the content of ethical propositions belongs to that sphere about which one cannot meaningfully speak: "It is clear," he notes towards the end of the work, "that ethics cannot be put into words." (T 6.421) By most accounts these final pages remain among the most obscure of the book and Wittgenstein himself admits in the *Notebooks*—just at that point where ethical remarks begin to forcefully crowd out those on logic and the propositional structure of language—that he was in fact acutely aware of "the complete *unclarity* of all these sentences." (NB, p. 79, my emphasis)[59] In itself, this points moreover to an additional, less 'logico-philosophical' difficulty with elucidating Wittgenstein's views on ethics: the *provisional* status of many of the remarks where ethics features most prominently, i.e. those in the preparatory *Notebooks*.[60]

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59 J. Conant, for example, has most notably written a lengthy 'obituary' regarding his attempt to write about Wittgenstein's ethics in his "Must We Show What We Cannot Say", in eds. R. Flemming and M. Payne, *The Senses of Stanley Cavell* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1989), pp. 242-283.

60 As J. Schulte notes about several passages that occur in the *Notebooks*, later to be cut from the *Tractatus*: "Whatever his reasons for cutting all this material may have been, most commentators find it helpful to have recourse to the *Notebooks* in their attempts to shed light on difficult passages in the *Tractatus*. This, I think, may indeed prove a useful strategy. But it is not always an easy one to adopt, if only for the simple reason that the *Notebooks* themselves are often hard to understand, which in part is naturally due to their being a first, at any rate an early, draft of what was to become the only book Wittgenstein published in his lifetime." ("The Happy Man", *Grazer Philosophische Studien,* 42, 1992, pp. 3-21.)

In his biographical account of the period in which Wittgenstein was posted to the Russian Front during the First World War, before completing the final manuscript of the *Tractatus,* Monk is certainly correct to have a quote from Schopenhauer serve as the epithet to the chapter: "Undoubtedly, it is the knowledge of death, and therewith the consideration of the suffering and misery of life, that give the strongest impulse to philosophical reflection and metaphysical explanations of the world"[61] He is also probably correct to note:

> "If Wittgenstein had spent the entire war behind the lines, the *Tractatus* would have remained what it almost certainly was in its first inception of 1915: a treatise on the nature of logic. The remarks in it about ethics, aesthetics, the soul and the meaning of life have their origin in precisely the 'impulse to philosophical reflection' that Schopenhauer describes, and impulse that has as its stimulus a knowledge of death, suffering and misery."[62]

What is not so clear from this remark, however, is whether those reflections on God, the soul, the meaning of life, the good and bad exercise of the will, etc., are meant to be read as an instance of engaging in such philosophical reflection—as Monk seems to be suggesting here, and as Schopenhauer surely intended it—or rather as one more attempt to *dissolve* the impetus to indulge in such reflections. As in the case of a great deal of Wittgenstein's provisional remarks on logic in his pre-publication reflections, if there remains in the posthumously published *Notebooks* traces of an attempt to put into words what by Wittgenstein's own Tractarian light should rather be passed over in silence, just how are we to separate the 'wheat' from the 'chaff' in his ethical reflections, so to speak, if indeed there is any to be found? In other words, to borrow an expression from Wittgenstein's later work, how are we to determine which of those remarks arise from his attempt to enact a philosophical therapy *against* the will to philosophise and which arise from *having fallen prey* to it?

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61 A. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation, Vol. II* (Indiana Hills, CO: Falcon Wings Press, 1958), p. 161.

62 R. Monk, *The Duty of Genius, op cit.,* p. 137

The biographical details are, in any case, clear. Wittgenstein was posted on the Russian Front towards the end of March, 1916. After a long period of silence—at that time he had not written a remark about logic since almost a year earlier—Wittgenstein resumed writing in April, 1916. The fighting was beginning to intensify and Wittgenstein desired to be sent to the front. As he notes in his diaries on 4 May 1916: "Tomorrow perhaps I shall be sent out, at my own request, to the observation post. Then and only then will the war begin for me. And—possibly—life too! Perhaps the nearness to death will bring light into my life." [63] The offensive came on the forth of June, and he soon found himself in the heat of battle. Whether or not Wittgenstein was indeed reborn at this time as he wished, the *Tractatus* undoubtedly was.

Wittgenstein's remarks in the *Notebooks* resume as if nothing had changed in his thinking since being posted to the front. In the well-known string of reflections that introduce Wittgenstein's concern with ethics—answers, apparently, to the question posed at their outset: "What do I know about God and the purpose of life?"—we find statements such as the following: "I know that this world exists. // That I am placed in it like my eye in its visual field. // That something about it is problematic, which we call its meaning. // That this meaning does not lie in it but outside it. That life is the world. [...]" (NB, p. 73) A handful of these passages found their way into the final version of the *Tractatus*, most notably in the final pages of the work (although not solely there, which testifies to the integral role these remarks are intended to play in Wittgenstein's overall strategy in the work). Many more, of course, do not figure in the *Tractatus* at all. However, between these two extremes there is an even more suggestive subset: those that are referred to only obliquely in the final version of the work. Included in this last group are, particularly, Wittgenstein's remarks on the good and the bad exercise of the will, and the respective worlds of the happy and the sad man.

During the war, inspired by his reading of deeply religious and even mystical figures such as Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, Wittgenstein focused himself intensely on showing no sign of fear under fire. He would not allow it, and prayed to God when he felt his courage abandoning

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63 Quoted in the B. McGuinness, *Wittgenstein: A Life, op cit.*, p. 240.

him before he had the opportunity to prove himself. In his diaries, he notes: "How will I behave when it comes to shooting? I am not afraid of being shot but only of not doing my duty properly. God give me strength! Amen. Amen. Amen." (13.09.14)—and just two days later: "Now I have an opportunity to be a decent human being, because I am face to face with death."[64] Shortly thereafter, having been posted to the front and indeed living up to the austere expression of this deeply religious sense of duty—maintaining his spiritual strength and inspiring others with his courage[65]—Wittgenstein resumed writing in the *Notebooks* and formulates this ethical demand thus: "A man who is happy must have no fear. Not even in the face of death. // Only a man who lives not in time but in the present is happy. [...] Fear in the face of death is the best sign of a false, i.e. a bad, life." (NB, pp. 74-75)

In the tradition of Schopenhauer, Wittgenstein sought to renounce any influence of the will as an ethical actor *within* the phenomenal world of appearances[66]—this, in the language of *Tractatus*, being the "whole sphere of what happens and what is the case", accidental, and therefore without higher value (T 6.41). As just one more phenomenon among others, such a conception of the will would only be of interest to psychology (T 6.423). In doing so, he nonetheless affirmed the will—also in the tradition of Schopenhauer—in its transcendental capacity to act *upon the world as whole*. "The will," he notes, "is an attitude of the subject towards the world." (NB, p. 78) In the *Tractatus,* this meditation on the meaning of life and the good and bad exercise of the will is reformulated, but nonetheless bears the distinct mark of these wartime reflections:

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64 B. McGuinness, *Wittgenstein: A Life, op cit.*, p. 221.

65 In a report recommending Wittgenstein for a decoration, which gives a picture of his duties and conduct, it is written: "Ignoring the heavy artillery fire on the casemate and the exploding bombs he observed the discharge of mortars and located them. The Battery in fact succeeded in destroying two of the heavy-calibre mortars by direct hits, as was confirmed by prisoners taken. On the Battey Observation Post, Hill 417, he observed without intermission in the drumfire, although I several times shouted to him to take cover. By this distinctive behaviour he exercised a very calming effect on his comrades." (Quoted in B. McGuinness, *Wittgenstein: A Life, op cit.* p. 242)

66 Schopenhauer: "In my terms, the objective world, the world as representation, is not the only side of the world, but, as it were, the external side of a world that has a completely different different side in its most interior being, its kernel, in the thing in itself […] the will." (A. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, *op cit.,* p. 53)

"If the good or bad exercise of the will does alter the world, it can only alter the limits of the world, not the facts—not what can be expressed by means of language.

In short the effect must be that it becomes an altogether different world. It must, so to speak, wax and wane as a whole.

The world of the happy man is a different one from that of the unhappy man.

So too at death the world does not alter, but comes to an end.

Death is not an event in life: we do not life to experience death.

If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who life in the present.

Our life has no end in just the way in which our visual field has no limit." (T 6.43-6.4311)

Wittgenstein remarked at the time that he was initially composing these meditations on the purpose of life in the *Notebooks*—which, as he notes in reference to Dostoevsky, is *fulfilled* by the man who is happy (NB, p. 73)—in one of the coded remarks that he kept during the war for his more private and personal reflections: "Oddly enough I cannot establish the connexion with my mathematical modes of thought."[67] However, it would not take long for the connection to be drawn and thus, among the final remarks of the *Tractatus*, its full weight is brought to bare on the work:

"Not only is there no guarantee of the temporal immortality of the soul, that is to say its eternal survival after death; but, in any case, this assumption completely fails to accomplish the purpose for which it has always been intended. Or is some riddle solved by my surviving forever? Is not this eternal life itself as much of a riddle as our present life? The solution of the riddle of space and time lies *outside* space and time.

(It is certainly not the solution of any problems of natural science that is required.)

How things are in the world is a matter of complete indifference for what is higher. God does not reveal himself *in* the world.

The facts all contribute only to setting the problem." (T 6.4312-6.4321)

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67 McGuinness, *Wittgenstein: A Life, op cit.,* p. 245.

We see then that without necessarily transgressing the Tractarian dictum that the content of ethical propositions belongs to that sphere about which one cannot meaningfully speak, we can nonetheless point towards his conception of ethics by focusing upon what we can speak about: language, and its limits.

As we have seen, what characterises the logical scaffolding that permeates thought is above all the manner in which the solutions to logico-mathematical problems are co-extensive with the questions. "In logic," Wittgenstein remarks, "process and result are equivalent. (Hence the absence of surprise)." (T 6.1261) This absence of surprise follows, Wittgenstein argues, from the complete *forseeability* inherent to any logical notation: "It is possible—indeed even according to the old conception of logic—to give *in advance* a description of all 'true' logical propositions." (T 6.125, my emphasis)[68] Logico-mathematical proofs only serve, in this sense, to make our inherently obscure language more perspicuous. They are, in Wittgenstein's words, "merely a mechanical expedient for recognising tautologies and contradictions in complicated cases." (T 6.1262). They do not, therefore, represent a material advance in knowledge. Likewise, neither does the successive application of an operation to a given proposition or set of propositions generate anything substantially new: "An operation is the transition from one term to the next in a series of forms. // The operation and the series of forms are equivalent." (NB, p. 81) They are, he notes, rather rules for dealing with signs.

It is in this sense that Wittgenstein outlines the general form of the proposition—expressed in natural language thus: 'This is how things stand' (T 4.5)—via the introduction of his 'N-operator'. The domain of this operation is guaranteed by the existence of propositions with sense, and its completeness is assured by the fact that for any given set of propositions there

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68 As Wittgenstein notes towards the end of the *Notebooks*: "If a sentence were ever going to be constructable it would already be constructable. // We now need a clarification of the concept of the atomic function and the concept "and so on". // The concept "and so on", symbolized by "..." is one of the most important of all and like all the others infinitely fundamental. // For it alone justifies us in constructing logic and mathematics "so on" from the fundamental laws and primitive signs. // The "and so on" makes its appearance right away at the very beginning of the old logic when it is said that after the primitive signs have been given we can develop one sign after another "so on"." (NB, p. 89)

will be one and only one negation for each and every proposition in that set. In this way it would be possible, were we given the complete set of atomic propositions, to construct every proposition that belongs to the sphere of facts out of these more fundamental constituents, positive as well as negative, independently of their truth or falsity. This series of logically articulated propositions would nonetheless represent only a formal, and thus a-historical, development. As Wittgenstein notes towards the end of the *Notebooks*:

> "The fact that it is possible to erect the general form of the proposition means nothing but: every possible form of proposition must be FORESEEABLE.
>
> And *that* means: We can never come upon a form of proposition of which we could say: it could not have been foreseen that there was such a thing as this.
>
> For that would mean that we had had a new experience, and that it took that to make this form of proposition possible.
>
> Thus, it must be possible to erect the general form of the proposition, because the possible forms of proposition must be *a priori*. Because the possible forms of proposition are *a priori*, the general form of the proposition exists.
>
> In this connexion it does not matter at all whether the given fundamental operations, through which all propositions are supposed to arise, change the logical level of the proposition, or whether they remain on the same level.
>
> If a sentence were ever going to be constructable it would already be constructable" (NB, p. 89)[69]

We see here that towards the end of the *Notebooks*, Wittgenstein had already begun to intuit that at the fulcrum between the two axes of the work—what can be said on the one hand and

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[69] In the *Tractatus*, this remark is formulated thus: "It now seems possible to give the most general propositional form: that is, to give a description of the propositions of *any* sign-language *whatsoever* in such a way that every possible sense can be expressed by a symbol satisfying the description, and every symbol satisfying the description can express a sense, provided that the names are suitably chosen. // It is clear that *only* what is essential to the most general propositional form may be included in its description —for otherwise it would not be the most general form. // The existence of a general propositional form is proved by the fact that there cannot be a proposition whose form could not have been foreseen (i.e. constructed). The general form of a proposition is: This is how things stand." (T 4.5)

what must be passed over in silence on the other—there is an implicit reference to time and change, and thus to the *potentially* historical development of logical articulation.

The threat that history poses to Wittgenstein's notion of *Sprachkritik* is captured only a few days earlier in the *Notebooks*, although it was not initially developed at that time. Wittgenstein notes there: "If the most general form of proposition could not be given, then there would have to come a moment where we suddenly had a new experience, so to speak a logical one." (NB, p. 75)[70] Such a 'new experience', Wittgenstein emphatically concludes, is *impossible*. If a sentence were every going to be constructable it would already be constructable, and thus there is no sense in which we might come across a genuinely novel propositional form that could not have been foreseen. As Wittgenstein makes clear: "We can only foresee what we ourselves construct." (NB, p. 71; T 5.556) This is to say that, as spaces of diverse logical multiplicity are something we ourselves construct, the development of logically articulated propositions and *only* the development of logically articulated propositions will follow 'in advance'. Of course, on the other side of language— that to which it is applied—lies the world, to which no such forseeability belongs.

By Wittgenstein's account of aprioricity, novel notational developments such as those of Frege and Russell are necessary for the resolution of philosophical problems. They are not, however, unrestricted for Wittgenstein, in the sense that Frege charges the 'merely creative' mathematician who would invent lawless and arbitrary logical forms at will. Their admissibility into the framework of logic will be determined by the extent to which they can be made absolutely perspicuous. As he notes: "If the introduction of a new device has

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70 Concerning 'logical experience', Russell has this to say: "It should be said, to begin with, that 'acquaintance' has, perhaps, a somewhat different meaning, where logical objects are concerned, from that which it has when particulars are concerned. Whether this is the case or not, it is impossible to decide without more knowledge concerning the nature of logical objects than I possess. It would seem that logical objects cannot be regarded as 'entities', and that, therefore, what we shall call 'acquaintance' with them cannot really be a dual relation. The difficulties which result are very formidable, but their solution is sought in logic. For the present, I am content to point out that there certainly is such a thing as 'logical experience', by which I mean that kind of immediate knowledge, other than judgement, which is what enables us to understand logical terms." (B. Russell, *Theory of Knowledge: The 1913 Manuscript,* ed. E.R. Eames and K. Blackwell (George Allen & Unwin, 1984), p. 97)

proved necessary at a certain point, we must immediately ask ourselves, 'At what point is the employment of this device now *unavoidable*?' and its place in logic must be made clear." (T 5.452) Thus, when Wittgenstein criticises Frege and Russell for failing to exclude all mistakes in their respective *Begriffsschriften*, it is not because some contradiction or other—such as that Russell had identified in Frege's Axiom V—has arisen in their system (neither, it is worth noting, when Wittgenstein charges Coffey for failing to exclude all mistakes in his review of Coffey's *The Science of Logic*[71]). Rather, it is because certain syntactical features of their notations remain *unclear*. Furthermore, Wittgenstein was critical of the way that these developments were introduced, especially regarding their insistence on the self-evidence of logical truths and laws of inference by which they sought to justify their modifications to the Aristotelian framework of subject-predicate logic. "Now it becomes clear," Wittgenstein notes, "why people have often felt as if it were for us to '*postulate*' the 'truths of logic'. The reason is that we can postulate them in so far as we can postulate an adequate notation." (T 6.1223)

In the *Notebooks,* Wittgenstein formulates this sentiment thus: "One cannot say of a tautology that it is true," i.e., in the *substantially true* sense of Russell and Frege, embodied in their use of the judgement stroke or assertion sign, "for it is *made so as to be true.*" (NB, p. 55) It is in this sense that for Wittgenstein, Frege's requirement that the truths of logic resulting from fruitful definitions *cannot be inspected in advance*—and so give rise to substantially progressive logico-mathematical knowledge, which is nonetheless analytic in character[72]—misses the point. Unlike the case of empirical truths, because we can

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71 Besides noting that Coffey "believes reality is changed by becoming an object of our thought", which is the sole philosophical thesis amongst the list of errors, the rest of those errors identified by Wittgenstein are where Coffey "confounds"—in other words, *confuses*—one logical form for another. The remedy, which we have sketched above, is naturally to employ an adequate sign language that makes such errors impossible: "In order to avoid such errors we must make use of a sign-language that excludes them by not using the same sign for different symbols and by not using in a superficially similar way signs that have different modes of signification: that is to say, a sign-language that is governed by *logical* grammar —by logical syntax." (T 3.325)

72 As quoted above: "But the more fruitful type of definition is a matter of drawing boundary lines that were not previously given at all. What we shall be able to infer from it, cannot be inspected in advance; here we are not simply taking out of the box what we have put into it. The conclusions we draw from it

'postulate' the truths of logic only insofar as we can construct an adequate notation, there is no sense in which we might be genuinely left in the dark concerning some region of the logical space that is coextensive with that notation.

Nonetheless, Wittgenstein acknowledges that an adequate notation must *first* be constructed according to which formal obscurities can be brought to light and therefore resolved (as Wittgenstein's employment of quantifiers in his treatment of the equality sign demonstrates, where it is written *out* of the proposition for its lack of perspicuity[73], or in his treatment of alternative notational systems for generality, where the Russellian notation is conscientiously written *in* as syntactically adequate in comparison with the un-perspicuous alternatives he explores[74]). Once again, however, this progress is formal and not material,

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extend our knowledge, and are therefore, on Kant's view, to be regarded as synthetic; and yet they can be proved by purely logical means, and are thus analytic. The truth is that they are contained in the definitions, but as plants are contained in their seeds, not as beams are contained in a house." (FA §88)

73 Specifically, Wittgenstein remarks that the identity sign in particular "is not an essential constituent of conceptual notation." (T 5.533) His point here is that when we try speak about such pseudo-objects—as Frege does, in his definition of zero as the number equal to the extension of all objects that are not identical with themselves—we are inevitably led to reify the elements of our notation that are rather "mere representational devices." (T 4.242) And here we pass from the legitimate but ultimately *sinnlöse* elements of our notation to *unsinnig* claims about 'objects' as if this were some genuine class of entity in the world about which we could truly speak. Specifically in terms of Frege's argument—though Wittgenstein admits that there are certain cases in which we are *tempted* to use expressions of this form, as when one "wants to talk about prototypes (*Urbilder*)" (T 5.5351)—there is not some maximally general class of things called *objects* about which we may sensically claim that they are all necessarily identical with themselves. Thus, Wittgenstein offers a more perspicuous representation of the identity-sign as follows:

"Thus, for example, instead of '$(x){:}fx \supset x = a$ ' we write '$(\exists x).fx.\supset.fa{:}\sim(\exists x,y).fx.fy$'.

And the proposition, '*Only one x* satisfies $f(\ )$', will read '$(\exists x).fx{:}\sim(\exists x,y).fx.fy$'.

[…]

And now we see that in a correct conceptual notation pseudo-propositions like '$a = a$ ', '$a = b.b = c.\supset a = c$', '$(x).x = x$', '$(\exists x).x = a$ ', etc. cannot even be written down." (T 5.532, 5.534)

74 As quoted above: "If, for example, we wanted to express what we now write as '$(x).fx$ ' by putting an affix in from of 'fx'—for instance by writing '$Gen.fx$—it would not be adequate: we should not know what was being generalized. If we wanted to signalize it with an affix '$_g$'—for instance by writing '$f(x_g)$'—that would not be adequate either: we should not know the scope of the generality sign.

If we were to try to do it by introducing a mark into the argument-pieces—for instance by writing

'$(G,G).F(G,G)$'

analogous to the development of long-form multiplication or Wittgenstein's own truth-table method. They are merely mechanical expedients. And in this sense—contra *both* Kant *and* Frege—there is no room for the kinds of genuine resistance that would allow for a substantial advance in logic-mathematical knowledge. Our difficulties, Wittgenstein notes, are only those 'enormous difficulties of expression' (NB, p. 40). Having once determined the syntactically adequate features of our notation, the rest will have to follow, as he says, *without further ado*: "Our fundamental principle is that whenever a question can be decided by logic at all it must be possible to decide it without further ado." (T 5.551)

This naturally raises the question: What cannot be decided by logic? We have already discussed how the truth or falsity of a *non*-logical (i.e., empirical) proposition cannot be determined by logic; however, if this were *all* that logic could not do, the distinction between what is and what is not within the power of logic to decide would remain an empty truism (from the point of view of the *Tractatus*, at least). Thus, the aim of the work, as Wittgenstein makes clear in the preface, is two-fold. It is not only to delimit those things that can be said clearly (the propositions of natural science) but also to definitively place a particular type of proposition-like sentence on the other side of that limit (that is to say, the important ones, those of ethics and aesthetics).

Logical necessity, as we have seen, is not embedded in the substantial truth of some particular set of a priori true propositions but rather in the ability to draw inferences according to the internal relations inherent to an adequate notation. However, this application of logic to the world has its limits, which nonetheless provides a foothold for the exercise of the will despite the infinite foreseeability of any given logical notation. Notably, there is no way to draw inferences from the existence of one situation or state of affairs to the existence of another: "There is," Wittgenstein notes, "no causal nexus to justify such an inference." (T 5.1361) Wittgenstein concludes this chain of reasoning with the following

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—it would not be adequate: we should not be able to establish the identity of the variables. And so on. All these modes of signifying are inadequate because they lack the necessary logical multiplicity." (T 4.0411)

remark: "The freedom of the will consists in the impossibility of knowing actions that still lie in the future." (T 6.1362) In a non-psychological sense, we do not know what the future will bring—even the fact that the sun will rise tomorrow remains a hypothesis from this logical point of view (T 6.36311).

In the sought-after logically-founded causal nexus that Wittgenstein here rejects, logical laws would take on the superficial character of physical laws, which would set us off on the entirely wrong track. For the necessity that makes one thing happen after another, such as that governed by the kinds of causal laws of Newtonian mechanics, is not an inner necessity like that found in logic. Every empirical eventuality that can be described can be imagined otherwise, for it speaks not of the a priori structure of the world: "The laws of physics, with all their logical apparatus, still speak, however indirectly, about the objects in the world." (6.3431)

In this sense, Wittgenstein both exalts and admonishes the sciences. For although the propositions of the natural sciences do indeed serve as the Tractarian model *par excellence* of what can be said clearly—and so without the metaphysical confusions that so often infect philosophy—the scientific *world-view* nonetheless remains fundamentally flawed in this respect:

> "There is no compulsion making one thing happen because another has happened. The only necessity that exists is *logical* necessity.
>
> The whole modern conception of the world is founded on the illusion that the so-called laws of nature are the explanations of natural phenomena.
>
> Thus people today stop at the laws of nature, treating them as something inviolable, just as God and Fate were treated in past ages.
>
> And in fact both are right and both are wrong: though the view of the ancients is clearer in so far as they have a clear and acknowledged terminus, which the modern system tries to make it look as if *everything* were explained." (T 6.37-6.372)

The two world-views contrasted here—that of 'past ages' and the 'modern conception'—are both right and both wrong, Wittgenstein argues. The modern conception is right, on the one hand, insofar as everything that is there to be explained can be explained. However, it fails on the other to acknowledge its own limits. The world—which is all that is the case—can only contribute to setting the ethical stage and cannot contribute to resolving the 'problems of life': "We feel that even when all *possible* scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched." (T 6.52)

Enamoured by its own potential for progress, the scientific world-view thus falls victim to what Wittgenstein calls "the usual way of looking at things," wherein the self "sees objects as it were from the midst of them" (NB, p. 83) In logic and mathematics, this usual way of looking at things leads to the worst kinds of transgression: attempting, for example, as Russell did, to logically bind the subject that judges with the object of its judgement (a piece of nonsense which, when resolved, "shows that there is no such thing as the soul—the subject, etc.—as it is presently conceived in the superficial psychology of today" (T 5.541)). Similarly, regarding Frege's judgement stroke—which would seek to re-inscribe particular a priori judgements into the general framework of logic, a central component we recall of his attack against the genetic fallacy of the psychological logicians—Wittgenstein remarks:

> "Frege's 'judgement stroke' is logically quite meaningless: in the works of Frege (and Russell) it simply indicates that these authors hold the propositions marked with this sign to be true. Thus, [the judgement stroke] is no more a component part of a proposition than is, for instance, the proposition's number. It is quite impossible for a proposition to state that it itself is true." (T 4.442)

There can be no science of logic in this sense, for we cannot look at logic from the outside-in, as it were. There is no sense in which we might provide a description of logic as if some state of affairs existed that would self-regulate its own capacity for truth.[75] Frege's attempt

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75 As C. Diamond remarks: "If you think that the whole of logic is internal to referring expressions, you will see the Russell confusion wherever anyone treats any part of logic as external to what we are talking about. Anyone who, like Frege, treats logical laws as holding of objects and functions will be imagining a kind of reference to objects and functions which (on your view) is an illusion: such a criticism is analogous to that which Frege could have directed against Russell. Given Wittgenstein's account of the

to refute the philosophical absurdity of the psychological logician's cultural-historic relativism is thus, on Wittgenstein's account, misguided. Insofar as the subject is not thought of psychologically, it is not just one more object amongst others, which *assert*, *believes* or s*ays* something or other.[76] There is, therefore, no sense in which the kind of formal knowledge obtained by logico-philosophical investigation may be used to substantially counter an absurd world-view—absurd that is, and *not false*. As Wittgenstein notes in the *Tractatus*: "It used to be said that God could create anything except what would be contrary to the laws of logic.—The truth is that we could not *say* what an 'illogical' world would look like." (T 3.031)

On Wittgenstein's account, such misguided attempts to rectify descriptions of an 'illogical world' will only lead to further philosophical obscurities, for example about the substantial nature of necessity, 'truth itself' and the self-evidence according to which we are supposedly familiar with particular a priori truths and the laws of inference that guide our reasoning with them. Equally nonsensical as the view they oppose, these are rather the sort of metaphysically-inclined speculations that Wittgenstein sought to dissolve, not by pitting theory against theory, but rather by demonstrating that we—in both cases, to be sure—have failed to give a meaning to certain signs in our propositions.

The so-called 'question of the meaning of life'—the philosophical riddle *par excellence*—is not therefore a genuine question. Any question that is a genuine question must inhabit the 'phenomenal world' of *Vorstellungen,* in Schopenhauer's terminology, 'everything that happens and everything that is the case', in Wittgenstein's. We need not therefore be

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character of sentences, it will appear that anyone who thinks of logical truths as genuinely true, anyone who thinks of logical truths as true because their truth conditions are met, will be in a confusion of the same essential character as Russell's: he will be supposing himself to have access to what he is talking about, even though he is abstracting from the logical character of the signs he uses to say anything. The idea of a science of logic is, on Wittgenstein's account, nothing but an illusion." (C. Diamond, "Throwing Away the Ladder", p. 201, in *The Realist Spirit* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), pp. 179-204.)

76 In terms of Russell's theory of judgement, Wittgenstein thus has the following to say: "The correct explanation of the form of the proposition '*A* makes the judgement *p*', must show that it is impossible for a judgement to be a piece of nonsense. // (Russell's theory does not satisfy this requirement.)" (T 5.5422)

troubled by it, at least from the point of view of a logically-informed philosophy of language.[77] Like the various logico-mathematical riddles, the meaning of life is not a problem to be *solved*—but rather dissolved. However, despite the parallels here between the ethics and logic, unlike logical problems, the resolutions of which will follow 'in advance' and 'without further ado', Wittgenstein makes clear: "Man cannot make himself happy without further ado." (NB, p. 76) The will must be exercised correctly for the world to be seen aright—which is to say, from the 'point of view of eternity':

> "The work of art is the object seen *sub specie aeternitatis*; and the good life is the world seen *sub specie aeternitatis*. This is the connection between art and ethics. The usual way of looking at things sees objects as it were from the midst of them, the view *sub specie aeternitatis* from outside." (NB, p. 83)

From this point of view, ethics and aesthetics are one—"the beautiful *is* what makes happy" (NB, p. 86), for it is in the aesthetic encounter that the temporal liberation from willing *in the world* is attained—and no question remains for which one might not be able to find an answer, for "the view *sub specie aeternitatis* sees things with the whole of logical space." (NB, p. 83)

It might justifiably be argued that in the above characterisation of Wittgenstein's 'Tractarian ethics' certain transgressions have been made. For in one sense mediations upon the happiness of man would appear to transgress Wittgenstein's demand that such ethical propositions belong amongst those that must be passed over in silence. However, there is another sense in which one might argue that the imperative—"Live happy!" (NB, p. 75)—is indeed *without* content, and so satisfies the Tractarian condition.[78] Like the propositions of

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77 As Wittgenstein remarked early on in the *Notebooks*: "My method is not to sunder the hard from the soft, but to see the hardness of the soft. // It is one of the chief skills of the philosopher not to occupy himself with questions which do not concern him. // Russell's method in his "Scientific method in philosophy" is simply a retrogression from the method of physics." (NB, p. 44)

78 In this sense, one can see how the characterisation of what Wittgenstein means by the respective worlds of the happy and unhappy man given by Diamond in her preface to *The Realistic Spirit* is somewhat misleading. Diamond notes there, in relation the central character of a novel she discusses, that, "The central character in that story is shown as, in Wittgenstein's sense, unhappy. The world does not meet his

logic, which Wittgenstein reminds us are *sinnlos* and not *unsinnig*, there is a sense in which such a demand may rather have been intended to be placed at the limit of language and not within some mythical beyond. Like the propositions of logic, which rest at the limits of language because they deal not with *how* things are in the world, but *however* they are, it is possible that Wittgenstein believed (or was tempted to believe, at least for a time) that this ethical imperative treats not *how* one wills but *however* one wills. As Wittgenstein once wondered: "Can one say: 'Act in accordance to your conscience whatever that *may* be?'" (ibid.)[79] Put even more forcefully, Wittgenstein remarks shortly thereafter: "Ethics does not treat of the world. Ethics must be a condition of the world, like logic." (NB, p. 77)

In any case, whether it is ultimately to be rejected as nonsensical or not, Wittgenstein's ethical imperative stands as a noteworthy alternative to the traditional—in other words *content-full*—Old-Testament-style commandments gestured briefly towards in the *Tractatus*:

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expectations." (C. Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press:1991), p. 10.) This is a mischaracterisation insofar as it suggests that *if* the world could somehow *meet* the protagonists expectations, it would make him happy. This is to conceive of the will psychologically, and fails to do justice to the transcendental place of the will that Wittgenstein is taking pains to describe here: for there is nothing in the world that makes one happy. Only oneself, and oneself alone, can make one happy. To borrow from the popular expression: the fact *that* the 1L carafe of wine has 500ml of wine in it, has no bearing on the question of whether it is 'half-empty' or 'half-full'. I do not believe Wittgenstein's position on the transcendence of the will, and the worlds of the happy and sad man—who precisely do live in the same world of facts, though the ethical significance of those facts are as different as can be—is meant to encapsulate anything more mystical than this popular euphemism would suggest.

79 The Schopenhauerian root of the interrogative aspect of this reflection—the operative word in what follows being *struggling*—is captured in a comment from B. Magee when he notes, quoting first Wittgenstein's remarks from the *Notebooks* (29.7.16): " 'Is it possible to will good, to will evil, and not to will? // Or is only he happy who does *not* will? // "To love one's Neighbour" would mean to will! // But one can want and yet not be unhappy if the want does not attain fulfilment? (And that possibility always exists.) // Is it, according to common conceptions, good to want *nothing* for one's neighbour, neither good nor evil? // And yet in a certain sense is seems that not wanting is the only good. // Here I am still making crude mistakes! No doubt of that!' Here, plainly, is a man struggling with the incompatibility between, on the one hand, Schopenhauer's doctrine that the most ethically desirable condition is one in which the will is denied, and therefore nothing is wanted; and on the other the Schopenhauerian doctrine that compassion is the basis for morality—or the familiar ethical requirement to love one's neighbour" (B. Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 287)

> "When an ethical law of the form, 'Thou shalt...', is laid down, one's first thought is, 'And what if I do not do it?' It is clear, however, that ethics has nothing to do with punishment and reward in the usual sense of the terms. So our question about the *consequences* of an action must be unimportant. —At least those consequences should not be events. For there must be something right about the question we posed. There must indeed be some kind of ethical reward and ethical punishment, but they must reside in the action itself." (T 6.422)

Consider, in this regard, the following remark from the *Notebooks*:

> "I keep coming back to this! Simply the happy life is good, the unhappy bad. And if I *now* ask myself: But why should I live *happily*, then this of itself seems to me to be a tautological question; the happy life seems to be justified, of itself, it seems that it *is* the only right life." (NB, p. 78)

Whether one believes that such ethical reflections are just at the limit, or are rather over the limit of sensical language, will depend on whether one believes this demand exemplifies— as Monk would seem to suggest—an instance of succumbing to the temptation of philosophical illusion, or whether it is rather one more armament to be used against them. It will depend on whether one believes such reflections have arisen as a symptom, possibly in response to the pathological conditions of trench warfare that Wittgenstein was undergoing at this time, or rather as the cure to a much more general philosophical malaise.

Though Wittgenstein would later write on the flyleaf of Moritz Schlick's copy of the *Tractatus* that "Every one of these propositions is an expression of an illness"[80], there is good reason to believe that at least for a time he felt they belonged not among those philosophical symptoms, brought on by a misguided psychological malaise (à la *PI*) or a superficial attention to the surface level of language (à la *TLP*), but rather among those remarks intended to relieve such tendencies. For certainly, by this account, happiness is not to be conceived of as *sensical*, i.e. as just one more empirical state of affairs in the world to be confirmed or denied along with the existence of trees, rocks and all the rest. And if such

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80 Quoted in A. Maslow, *A Study in Wittgenstein's Tractatus* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961), p. x.

an ethical imperative were to be conceived as *sinnlos,* and *not unsinnig*, then this need not mean anything more for ethics from the Tractarian point of view than it means for the logic: that, despite the fact that there is nothing which is in itself good or bad in the world, any stance one takes towards it will be infused with *value*.[81]

Centrally, from the point of view of the *Tractatus*—and the great importance Wittgenstein evidently accorded to its achievement at the time—this would include, in principle, the value of bothering to engage in *Sprachkritik* at all, rather than continuing to labour under the influence of the various philosophical illusions to which one might be prone or letting others belabour under theirs.[82] Speaking of the will as an 'attitude towards the world' would be no different than speaking of logic in terms of functions and objects: not as just another thing out there in the world, but rather as a way of looking at the world as a whole. Nothing more, and nothing less, than an initial senseless step on the way towards a world that makes sense.

V. The Myth of A-temporality

The question must now be posed: Isn't this treatment of time, change, progress and history, in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* rather beside the point? After all, it is Wittgenstein himself who writes in the penultimate section of the book:

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81 "Things," Wittgenstein notes in the *Notebooks*, "acquire their 'significance' [*Bedeutung*] only through their relation to my will" (NB, p. 84). The translation of *Bedeutung* here by 'significance' is apt, for by this he certainly does not intend anything like the 'meaning' that a name takes on insofar as it is used in the context of a proposition (T 3.3), which Frege would describe in terms of reference, nor anything like 'meaning as use', insofar as the will is an *actor within the world* that makes use of this or that thing in going about its daily business (PI §43).

82 It is tempting to recall here, that alongside the *aim* of the *Tractatus,* what the work *deals with*, and in what its value *consists*, Wittgenstein notes in the preface that: "Its purpose would be achieved *if it gave pleasure* to one who read it and understood it." (T, p. 3, my emphasis) Given his discussion of the respective worlds of the happy and sad man, at 6.43 and throughout the final pages of the *Notebooks*, we might legitimately ask what sense of pleasure Wittgenstein is referring to here.

"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.)

He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright." (T 6.54)

According to the various readings of the *Tractatus* that give this remark a privileged place in any possible explication of the work, despite the appearance of content that any particular passage may have, the work as a whole is *self-refuting*. No exposition of the main themes in it will therefore be warranted, because no exposition of the work's main themes will *make sense*. For in a manner of speaking, there are no themes *in* the work—as Wittgenstein remarks in the preface: "Perhaps the book will be understood only by someone who has himself already had the thoughts that are expressed in it—or at least similar thoughts.—So it is not a textbook." (T, p. 3) Here, 'seeing the world aright' takes on a very different significance than that sketched above, in terms of adopting the view *sub specie aeternitatis*, for example. Seeing the world aright, as Wittgenstein makes clear in this passage, means being prepared to understanding the *author* of the work rather than *his words*.

In this sense, one might justifiably claim that if there is a 'central theme' at work in the *Tractatus*, it is in fact none other than we ourselves, its readers. And evidently, we have our work cut out for us. Indeed, it is C. Diamond who has most vocally charged Wittgenstein's expositors of 'chickening out', for failing precisely to take this self-refuting character of the *Tractatus* at face value, and for attempting to extract themes from it that are not truly there —such as, most notably, the distinction between saying and showing and the metaphysically-inclined positions to which Wittgenstein might appear to be committed as a result of making this distinction.[83] Alighting on such topics, as if Wittgenstein were indeed

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83 As Diamond notes in "Throwing Away the Ladder": "P.M.S. Hacker is an example. He ascribes to Wittgenstein what you might call a realism of possibility. Each thing has, internal to it and independently of language, fixed possibilities of occurrence in kinds of fact, possibilities shared by all members of the category to which the things belong. What we can say, what we can think, is that a thing has (or that it has not) one of the properties that, as a member of its logical category, it can have; or that several things stand (or do not stand) in one of the relations that as members of their logical categories they can stand in." (C. Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit, op cit.*, p. 194)

teaching us something in the *Tractatus,* is rather an instance of the kinds of philosophical theorising that Wittgenstein sought in the work to rid us of. It is a sign that those concerned with expounding such a vision of language from within the architecture of the *Tractatus* have precisely failed to 'throw away the ladder', as Wittgenstein declares we must in order to understand the spirit in which the book was written rather than the letter.

We have seen how the *Tractatus* cannot be considered a 'progressive' work in any sense of the word. Though he claimed to have found "on all essential points, the final solution to the problems" of philosophy, Wittgenstein reminds us that the second thing in which the value of the work lies is that "it shows how little is achieved when these problems are solved." (T, p. 4) This is not, however, to say that insofar as we the readers are its subject, there is not a process to be undertaken. There is. But the end-point of that process is nothing more than the conscientious return to where we, by the light of the Wittgenstein's philosophy, always already are: the ordinary, everyday world.

Even those who have taken only a cursory glance at the *Tractatus* cannot fail to be struck by its unusual style of composition: a numerical series of seven propositions, with similarly structured expositions embedded within them to form various tree-shaped hierarchies, the ordering of which is intended to "indicate the logical importance of the propositions." (T, p. 5 fn.) This peculiar form, which recalls Wittgenstein's final characterisation of the work as a ladder—ultimately to be cast aside *after* it has been climbed—is a stark reminder of the process that we as its readers are intended to undertake. His opening remark concerning how little is achieved when we have done so, likewise foreshadows the return to the ordinary that we should expect, a voyage we would in all likelihood have been unwilling to undertake at the outset if we had genuinely understood what that would entail.

The use of nonsense in the *Tractatus* is thus not intended to point to features of reality, language, thought, etc., which are there, but in some mysterious way such that they will not permit themselves to be spoken of directly or conceived of clearly. These statements are rather, on Diamond's reading, *transitional* remarks that are intended to lead us up the ladder

of our own inclination towards using such nonsense *as if* it made sense, that is to say, *as if* it were representative of a true state of affairs (or at least something like a state of affairs, but one of a special shadowy kind that would resist our attempts to put it clearly into ordinary language). The result of throwing away the ladder would then would be the realisation, in the final instance, that there is no way in which one can can make sense of the very remarks one had only moments before adhered to—and often with a passion rarely seen outside of those contexts reserved for the debate of political convictions or long-standing religious dogmas.

As an example of this, we might take here Wittgenstein's treatment of Frege's analysis of sentences in terms of function and argument. As we have seen, such an analysis is central to Wittgenstein's notion of *Sprachkritik,* employed as it is in order to reveal the emptiness of certain traditional philosophical problems (or what we might have once mistakenly taken for philosophical problems). When Wittgenstein notes, for example, that the sentence 'manner *Socrates is identical*' makes no sense, he is employing the Frege-Russell conception of what it is to be a sensical proposition in order to show that it may *appear* to be syntactically well-formed, but upon closer inspection has no meaningful core that will allow us to extract its significance. We do not know, for instance, if we are faced with the 'is' of the copula here, or the 'is' of identity. We do not know if this 'identical' is that of the equality sign, or some other as yet unidentified concept, etc. Although we might at first imagine that we are able to understand the phrase 'Socrates is identical'—and here the Platonic parody presented at 4.003, concerning the question of whether the true is more or less identical than the beautiful, serves as a particularly poignant example because of its distinctly historical resonance—upon closer inspection we discover that we do not even know *how to begin* making sense of it. And any meaningful sentence we can derive from it, will succeed only to the extent that it represents an entirely different sentence, bearing no resemblance to the original except superficially. The point is that ill-formed sentences, such as those typically found in the works of philosophy, do not express thoughts that transcend the limits of language. As they stand, they are not thoughts at all. And if we try to make some further

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determination here, we will soon find that they will fail to capture what it is we thought we were thinking in the first place.

This does not mean, however, that functions and arguments must on the other hand be real objects *out there* in the world, guaranteeing the sense of any reference to them and the correctness of our analysis of propositions in terms of the truth-functional calculus.[84] When Wittgenstein notes in the *Tractatus,* that "Like Frege and Russell I construe a proposition as a function of the expressions contained in it" (T 3.318), it is undoubtedly natural (according to the traditional conception of the role of such propositions in philosophy) to understand him as claiming that *there are indeed functions and objects*, such that some *x* is one and some *y* is the other. This is in accordance with the traditional spirit of philosophical inquiry that would attempt to speak about the world in a certain way under the influence of a certain type of picture. However, as Diamond makes clear, in Wittgenstein's work such remarks will not 'come home to roost', as it were. They are rather 'transitional' remarks, meant to

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84 As Diamond makes clear, such a conception is suggested, for example, by P.M.S. Hacker, when he notes: "That ontological categories are objectively fixed, once and for all, independently of language, is an assumption of the doctrine [of saying and showing]. Since the picture theory requires syntax to mirror ontology, there are no options in language." (P.M.S. Hacker, *Insight and Illusion, 1ˢᵗ ed.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 23.) As we also saw above, such a conception is also suggested in the following remark from Anscombe: "Frege's genius consisted in inventing a notation in which a formula of a different layout is employed for universal propositions; and not just of a different layout, but the right layout." (*An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus, op cit.*, p. 139) In such passages we find the expression of an insistence to view possibility, necessity, etc., as set in some determinate, extra-logical way: e.g., what is possible, what is necessary, what is sayable, and what is not, is so because of the way ontological categories are themselves (*necessarily*) fixed. I have tried to make it clear, throughout this chapter, that such a notion of 'correctness', as it might be applied to a given language, logical notation, etc., is foreign to Wittgenstein's thought.

lead the reader along a path—that of speculative metaphysics[85]—to the self-refuting character of any such investigation, before ultimately being tossed aside. As she notes:

> " 'There is a distinction between functions and objects, and it comes out in the clear difference between signs for functions and those for objects in a well-designed notation': that is what you could call a 'transitional' remark. There is a transition to be made, after which the word 'function' will have no place in the philosophical vocabulary because it is not needed: there is no work it is needed for. Something else does whatever job there genuinely is for a predicate like 'function' to do, the something else being the general logical features of signs standing for functions. A remark like 'There is a fundamental distinction between functions and objects' is thrown out once we get the predicate 'function' out of the cleaned up philosophical vocabulary."[86]

The use of the terms 'transition' and 'transitional nonsense' clearly indicates the temporal aspect of Wittgenstein's demand for the concrete realisation of an adequate notation, witnessed in his application of *Sprachkritik* to philosophical obscurities. There is a *transition* to be made and it is only then, *after such time*, that a given philosophical vocabulary—applied, at first, only provisionally—will have no more application. "We are left after the transition," Diamond herself continues, gesturing towards this temporal character of *Sprachkritik,* "with a logical notation that in a sense has to speak for itself." (ibid.)[87] She concludes this reflection on the transitional character of Wittgenstein's use of nonsense thus:

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85 Which Diamond aptly defines, in slight distinction to the metaphysical tradition of philosophy, as being within the metaphysical *spirit*: "I understand by metaphysics the laying down of metaphysical requirements, whether in the form about what there is […] or in the rather different form exhibited by the *Tractatus* and also (I believe) in Frege's work, as for example in his views about determinacy of concepts and the possibility of logic." (C. Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit, op cit.*, p. 20) On Diamond's view, the *Tractatus* is therefore nonetheless metaphysical—which ultimately necessitates the change to the later work upon Wittgenstein's return to philosophy in 1930—for it "lays down philosophical requirements on language and does not look at the phenomena of language." (ibid.)

86 C. Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit, op cit.*, p. 183.

87 This is, of course, a rephrasing of Wittgenstein's own gesture towards such temporality in the *Tractatus*: "The rules of logical syntax must go without saying, once we know how each individual sign signifies." (T 3.34)

> "If we try afterwards to say why it is a good notation, we know that we shall find ourselves saying things which may help our listeners, but which we ourselves cannot regard as the expression of any true thought, speakable or unspeakable. When we say why the notation is a good one, when we explain what logical distinctions and similarities it makes perspicuous, we are in a sense going backwards, back to the stage at which we had been when grasping the point of the transition." (ibid.)

For Wittgenstein, Diamond argues, the provisional replacement of terms in our philosophical vocabulary is not merely an incidental achievement. It is rather the principle aim of philosophy, conceived as *Sprachkritik*. Moreover, according to Diamond's Wittgenstein, it is not just some item or other but the *whole* of our philosophical vocabulary that has to be replaced, including that employed in the *Tractatus*. We cannot, to borrow a phrase from Wittgenstein's later reflections, swim up 'the stream of life' to some mythical point in time where the adequacy of our notation might have been genuinely debated around our 'real needs' at the time, for that need has been fulfilled: "In fact," Wittgenstein notes, "all the propositions of our everyday language, just as they stand, are in perfect logical order." (T 5.5562)

If one wished to claim that there is a single thread that runs through Wittgenstein's thought, this would be a good candidate: the application of *Sprachkritik* returns us to our ordinary, everyday, *non-philosophical* selves. This is not to suggest, however, that there is not a significant change in perspective between Wittgenstein's thought as it is expressed in the *Tractatus* and as it is expressed in his later work. Given that Wittgenstein characterised the earlier work in terms of the *absolute truth* of the remarks contained therein—as he notes in the preface: "the *truth* of the thoughts that are here communicated seems to me unassailable and definitive" (T, p. 4)—it is important to note, however, that Wittgenstein's later confrontation with his earlier thoughts was *not* inspired by a realisation that 'thoughts communicated' in that earlier work were in fact *false.* Rather, as he notes in *Philosophical Investigations*:

"(*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 4.5): "The general form of the proposition is: This is how things are."——That is the kind of proposition that one repeats to oneself countless times. One thinks that one is tracing the outline of the things nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it

A *picture* held is captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably." (PI §§114-115)

This is clearly not the kind of 'picture' Wittgenstein had described in the *Tractatus*, but rather an *illusion* (PI §44)—or perhaps better, given his earlier characterisation of logic as 'the great world-reflecting mirror', *a mirage*. No longer content to recognise in philosophy mere confusions, arising from the misguided attention to the superficial surface of linguistic form, Wittgenstein would later diagnose in his earlier thought the kind of speculative metaphysics that arises from the 'bewitchment' with language (PI §109), a *metaphysical spirit* that exhibits itself in laying down extra-logical necessities (about, for example, what kind of sentence a proposition *must be* in order to be a proposition at all).

In her introduction to *The Realistic Spirit*, Diamond considers Wittgenstein's early adherence to this metaphysical spirit in terms of the adherence to a 'mythology': "In the *Tractatus*," she writes, "that myth of what it is for sense to be determinate is at the same time a myth of essential changelessness. There is no possibility of genuinely new thoughts or sorts of thoughts."[88] His later criticisms of the Tractarian adherence to this mythology, she therefore notes, must not be read as if the mythology at work in the *Tractatus* is a false notion of how things are—for it is only according to the mythology that one might claim such a view could be *true* or *false* in the first place (as Wittgenstein himself did in the preface to the *Tractatus*, despite his characterisation of truth in terms of propositional bipolarity within the work itself). Rather, she states, with Wittgenstein's shift in perspective, he attacked the *blind* adherence to the myth. In the later work the mythology is kept, she writes, but it is "recognized for what it is."[89]

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88 C. Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit, op cit.*, p. 7.
89 C. Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit, op cit.*, p. 4.

Readings such as Diamond's give us good reason to suspect that Wittgenstein's characterisation of the kind of a-temporality that belongs not only to logic but also to the ethical life—where eternal life belongs to those who live in the present, who have no fear in the face of death or despair when confronted with the miseries of life—is only provisional. She gives us good reason to suspect that its role in the *Tractatus* is strategic, intended to disabuse us of the will to philosophise rather than being a misplaced instance of succumbing to it. It is, by this reading, one more instance of the kind of transitional nonsense that is meant to be rejected along with the other terms of our philosophical vocabulary. But in doing so, she nonetheless repeats the importance of adhering, from the point of view of the *Tractatus* at least, to something like the view *sub specie aeternitatis* for Wittgenstein's conception of *Sprachkritik* at the time. For in his preface to the work, Wittgenstein claims that his aim is to draw the limits of language, and thereby to trace the limit of thought from the inside-out, as it were. Its value consists, he concludes, in having found 'the final solution' to the problems of philosophy, which would somehow seek to locate themselves on the other side of that limit. As Wittgenstein clearly intuited in the *Notebooks*, *if the limits of language were not fixed*—by, for example, the general form of the proposition—if they were in continual flux, it would not have been possible for Wittgenstein to have definitively drawn them and there would be no final solution to the problems of philosophy. To draw the limits of language means nothing more and nothing less than to limit the possibility of linguistic change.

It is interesting to note that Diamond, in displacing the a-temporal aspect of Wittgenstein's Tractarian methodology, finds precisely a temporal process in the place it once occupied—although indeed one of a seemingly non-metaphysical, *everyday* kind. Consider the following from Diamond, regarding what it would mean to *not* 'chicken out', in the sense outlined above:

> "What counts as not chickening out is then this, roughly: to throw the ladder away is, among other things, to throw away in the end the attempt to take seriously the language of 'features of reality'. To read Wittgenstein himself as not chickening out is to say that it is not, in reality, his view that there are

features of reality that cannot be put into words but show themselves. What *is* his view is that this way of talking may be useful or even for a time essential, but it is in the end to be let go of and honestly taken to be real nonsense, plain nonsense, which we are not in the end to think of as corresponding to an ineffable truth."[90]

In order to make sense of this passage, and indeed the picture it presents of what Wittgenstein would be demanding of his readers, one must inquire into the role that temporality plays within it. It is not enough to ask, as Diamond routinely does, why nonsense might be 'useful or even for a time essential'; that, we know, is in order to disabuse one's interlocutor of the metaphysical illusions they may be belabouring under *at any given moment*. Beyond that, however, one must also ask what is meant here by '*in the end*' and what this would require of a language user, never to fall into the obscurity of metaphysical speculation again. And how, failing that intrinsic sense of Tractarian teleology, are we to distinguish a misplaced instance of succumbing to philosophical speculation, on the one hand, from the kind of strategic employment of transitional nonsense intended to remedy such behaviour on the other?

It is difficult to say how clearly Wittgenstein himself intuited the consequences of this requirement at the time. Any answer one gives here will depend on how strictly one considers the internal coherence of the work. And further, as outlined above, such an attempt will be complicated by the form of Wittgenstein's philosophy and especially by its provisional character, and indeed the provisional character of his entire life's work, both pre- and post-Tractarian. Either way, as we will see in what follows, it is certainly no coincidence that it is precisely *this* element of language—its shifting, changing and evolving nature—that comes to bear so heavily in his later, post-Tractarian conception of *Sprachkritik*. It is curious, nonetheless, that towards the end of the *Notebooks*, precisely there where his remarks on the necessity of adopting the view *sub specie aeternitatis* find their most articulate expression, Wittgenstein would once again seem to intuit exactly this 'fork' in the philosophical road between the a-temporal and the temporal dimensions of

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90 C. Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit, op cit.*, p. 181.

Sprachkritik. "For," as he notes there: "it is equally possible to take the bare present image as the worthless momentary picture in the whole temporal world, and as the true world among shadows." (NB, p. 83)

VI. Concluding Remarks: "*und so weiter*"

As noted above, it may seem surprising that Wittgenstein—who after all denounced history so strongly in the *Notebooks* with the cry: "What has history to do with me? Mine is the first and only world!" (NB, p. 82)—would by the same token be concerned with accounting for the introduction of novel logical devices. However, in this chapter we have seen that it is precisely because Wittgenstein felt compelled to denounce the logical significance of history, while at the same time knowing full well that he himself was making use of previously unrecognisable logical forms in order to dissolve philosophical problems according to the methodological standpoint of *Sprachkritik,* that such an account had to be given.   What Wittgenstein required was a conception of logic that would permit the emergence of new logical forms while proving them nonetheless to be *a-historical*.

From the Tractarian perspective, the key difference between progress in natural science and that in philosophy might be expressed thus: If Newton could claim to have stood 'on the shoulders of giants', it was for him not only their *successes* that allowed him to see beyond the horizons of those who had come before him, but also their *failures*. This attitude towards the successes and failures of the past can been seen in the works of Frege and Russell as well, who themselves sought to contribute precisely to what they considered to be the 'science of logic' in the traditional sense of the word. In Frege's case, this is exhibited by his extensive historical elucidations in the *Foundations* in advance of the 'real work' in the science of logic that would follow nine years later in his *Basic Laws.* It is similarly suggested in Russell's vast writings on the history of philosophy, as opposed to what can be found in *Principia Mathematica*, for example.

It is in this sense that I have claimed that logico-mathematical fallibility rests at the core of the logicist program. For, after all, it is this that allows one to separate good mathematics from the bad: good logic and good mathematics delimit the concepts required for establishing deductive truths that were not previously known. They nonetheless avoid the faults of the "merely creative" mathematicians―who conduct themselves, as Frege notes, "like a god, who can create by his mere word whatever he wants" (FA §109)—by being driven by the very nature of the case. In other words, although fruitful definitions can draw boundary lines that were not previously given, good mathematics carves up the conceptual world 'at its joints', so to speak. Thus, logic and mathematics can, for Frege and for Russell, provide genuinely progressive knowledge of the world that is nonetheless objective in character—*like any other science*—and just as any other science admits approximation and error without compromising its objectivity, so too does logic.

However, for Wittgenstein—who denied the substantial truth of the a priori facts that Frege and Russell aimed at articulating, as well as the self-evidence by which they were supposedly aware of them—no such progress is possible. We have seen how Wittgenstein's understanding of logical multiplicity permits the development of novel logical spaces; however, the adequacy of these novel logical spaces is not determined by an increasingly accurate correspondence between the elements of our notation and a set of substantially true a priori facts, but rather by its complete logical perspicuity.[91] In this sense, insofar as logic progresses at all, this progress represent a mere *formal advance* in knowledge and not a *material advance*—analogous to long-form multiplication in mathematics or Wittgenstein's own use of the truth-table method in logic.[92] I have suggested that it is in this sense that he

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91 Thus have I argued that comments such as the following from Anscombe demonstrate a tendency towards conceiving of logic in Fregean or Russellian terms, rather than those of Wittgenstein: "Frege's genius consisted in inventing a notation in which a formula of a different layout is employed for universal propositions; and not just of a different layout, but the right layout." (G.E.M. Anscombe, *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus, op cit.*, p. 139) In remarks such as these we see an emphasis on the *correctness* of a given logical notation, rather than upon its *perspicuity*, the former being foreign to Wittgenstein's understanding of a priori truth.

92 In this regard it is worthwhile noting that, while Wittgenstein's N-operator is not a standard logical operator employed today, the legacy of his truth-table method—a schema for symbolizing truth-

claims at the opening of the *Tractatus* that a large part of the value of the work consists in showing "how little is achieved" when the problems of philosophy are solved. (T, p. 4)

For Wittgenstein the task of philosophy is neither to build upon the successes of the past nor to correct its errors. What is required is rather to recognise what is adequate in the application of logic here and now and expunge from it what is confused. Within the realm of this confusion, *which is not even error*, there can be neither substantial progress nor revision. If science can progress in a linear manner, moving towards an ever more accurate understanding of the world, philosophy has only to abide by the formal framework that permeates language and leave the rest aside. This structure would seem, therefore, to admit neither approximation nor improvement. The provenance of the a priori given of logical space leaves no room for serial successes. There is only the clarity of "seeing the world aright" (T 6.54) and the obscurity of speaking where we should rather be silent (T 7).

I have shown that the central difference between Wittgenstein's conception of logic and that of Frege or Russell falls upon how one conceives of the logical significance of the development of a series or a logical operation. It was, of course, Kant who traditionally defined mathematical knowledge as synthetic a priori on the basis of the real constraints imposed upon such developments by the spatio-temporal realm of intuition.[93] Frege

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possibilities "*in a way that can be easily understood*" (T 4.31, my emphasis)—is taught to all first-year students of logic. As J. Floyd notes: "Consider a sentence structure of the following form:

$(p \mathrel{\&} {\sim}r) \vee (p \mathrel{\&} q \supset r)$

This looks like a structure that would express a sentence with sense, a picture of reality, assuming that the elementary components of the sentence themselves have sense. But if we rewrite it in the form of a truth-table, as the *Tractatus* says we can, we see it anew. For in this diagram we can see the tautologousness of the original sentence form *in* the final column, which contains only T's; the sentence's apparent sense, its ruling in and ruling out of states of affairs, vanishes." (J. Floyd, "Wittgenstein on Aspect-Perception, Logic, and Mathematics, p. 332. In W. Day and V. Krebs (eds.), *Seeing Wittgenstein Anew: New Essays on Aspect Seeing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 314-337.) Logic, as Wittgenstein reminds us early in the *Notebooks*, is prior to all truth (NB, p. 14).

93 As Kant notes, ironically, in a particularly poetic passage: "The light dove cleaving the air in her free flight, and feeling its resistance, might imagine that her flight would be still easier in airless space." (CPR A5/B9) Of course, she might *wish* it, but this would not be the case. In airless space no flight is possible. Analytic knowledge requires no such intuition because the consequent is already contained in the antecedent. In cases such as these there is no distance between the two terms—in other words, there

critiqued Kant's understanding of the synthetic nature of the a priori for, as he notes, having defined aprioricity too narrowly, i.e. as that wherein the consequent is already 'contained' in the antecedent. Though Frege considered arithmetical judgements to be *analytic* a priori truths, he nonetheless needed—for the same reason that Kant had before him—a medium of resistance that would provide the conditions for genuinely progressive knowledge in mathematics. However, in order for the a priori truths of arithmetic to be analytic, rather than synthetic, this medium had to be intrinsic to the very truths themselves and not a result of some external synthesis of the truths in question and a pre-given space of representation according to which they are constrained. What Kant missed, Frege claims here, is the power of 'fruitful definitions' to give rise to genuine advances in knowledge:

> "But the more fruitful type of definition is a matter of drawing boundary lines that were not previously given at all. What we shall be able to infer from it, *cannot be inspected in advance*; here we are not simply taking out of the box what we have put into it. The conclusions we draw from it extend our knowledge, and are therefore, on Kant's view, to be regarded as synthetic; and yet they can be proved by purely logical means, and are thus analytic. The truth is that they are contained in the definitions, but as plants are contained in their seeds, not as beams are contained in a house." (FA §88, my emphasis)

Frege concludes this passage with the remark: "Often we need several definitions for the proof of some proposition, which consequently is not contained in any one of them alone, and yet does follow purely logically from all of them together." (ibid**.**) Thus, when we establish a new mathematical definition we 'graph' it onto previously known truths, apply the rules of inference to our new set of definitions, and so genuinely discover what is contained in this new series that was not previously given at all.

For Wittgenstein, who conceived of the adequacy of a logical notation in terms of its complete perspicuity, no such resistance is possible. As we have seen, what characterises the logical scaffolding that permeates language is above all the manner in which the answers

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is no friction, no resistance that allows for the 'flight of knowledge'. We are always already where we want to be.

to logico-mathematical problems are co-extensive with the questions. "In logic," Wittgenstein remarks, "process and result are equivalent. (Hence the absence of surprise)." (T 6.1261) This absence of surprise follows, Wittgenstein argues, from the complete *forseeability* inherent to any logical notation: "It is possible—indeed even according to the old conception of logic—to give *in advance* a description of all 'true' logical propositions." (T 6.125, my emphasis) Logico-mathematical proofs only serve, in this sense, to make our inherently obscure language more perspicuous. They are, he notes, mere mechanical expedients (T 6.1262). No small matter of definition, the debate hangs unsurprisingly on the logical significance of *history* and the status of the *temporal* development of a series:

> "The fact that it is possible to erect the general form of the proposition means nothing but: every possible form of proposition must be FORESEEABLE.
>
> And *that* means: We can never come upon a form of proposition of which we could say: it could not have been foreseen that there was such a thing as this.
>
> For that would mean that we had had a new experience, and that it took that to make this form of proposition possible.
>
> Thus, it must be possible to erect the general form of the proposition, because the possible forms of proposition must be *a priori*. Because the possible forms of proposition are *a priori*, the general form of the proposition exists." (NB, p. 89)[94]

We see here that towards the end of the *Notebooks*, Wittgenstein had begun to intuit that at the fulcrum between the two axes of the work—what can be said on the one hand and what must be passed over in silence on the other—there is an implicit reference to time and change, and thus to the *potentially* historical development of logical articulation. It was this

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94 In the *Tractatus*, this remark is formulated thus: "It now seems possible to give the most general propositional form: that is, to give a description of the propositions of *any* sign-language *whatsoever* in such a way that every possible sense can be expressed by a symbol satisfying the description, and every symbol satisfying the description can express a sense, provided that the names are suitably chosen. // It is clear that *only* what is essential to the most general propositional form may be included in its description —for otherwise it would not be the most general form. // The existence of a general propositional form is proved by the fact that there cannot be a proposition whose form could not have been foreseen (i.e. constructed). The general form of a proposition is: This is how things stand." (T 4.5)

potential that Wittgenstein resolutely denied throughout his work at this time. The limits of language had, for Wittgenstein, to be precisely fixed in this sense—by, for example, the general form of the proposition, if not by the primitive elements of our logical notation. For if they were not, and the limits of language were in continual flux, it would not have been possible for Wittgenstein to definitively draw them and there would have been no 'final solution' to the problems of philosophy.

It is in this spirit that we should consider Wittgenstein's last remarks of this period, those composed towards the very end of the *Notebooks,* on the logical status of the expression 'and so on' ('*und so weiter*'). For here, it is no surprise that Wittgenstein—whose *Grundgedank* is concerned principally with restricting the possibility of logical articulation to produce substantially true a priori truths—would claim that the sign '…' (i.e. 'and so on') is fundamental to logic, and further that its significance has been *under*-appreciated. He thus continues, directly after having wedded the necessity of the general form of the proposition to the necessity for complete logical foreseeability:

> "If a sentence were ever going to be constructable it would already be constructable.
>
> We now need a clarification of the concept of the atomic function and the concept "and so on".[95]
>
> The concept "and so on", symbolized by "…" is one of the most important of all and like all the others infinitely fundamental.
>
> For it alone justifies us in constructing logic and mathematics "so on" from the fundamental laws and primitive signs.

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95 Concerning the concept 'atomic function' and the role that it (along with the 'and so on' of a mathematical operation) might play in the foundation of a 'new method' in mathematics, Ramsey makes the following relevant remark: "We must begin the description of the new method with the definition of an atomic function of individuals, as the result of replacing by variables any of the names of individuals in an atomic proposition expressed by using names alone; where if a name occurs more than once in the proposition it may be replaced by the same or different variables, or left alone in different occurrences. The values of an atomic function of individuals are thus atomic propositions." (F. P. Ramsey, "The Foundations of Mathematics", p. 366, *Proceedings of the London Mathematical Society*, 2-25, 1926, pp. 338-384.)

The "and so on" makes its appearance right away at the very beginning of the old logic when it is said that after the primitive signs have been given [*nach der Angabe der Urzeichen*] we can develop one sign after another "so on".

Without this concept we should be stuck at the primitive signs and could not go "on".

The concept "and so on" and the concept of operation are equivalent." (NB, p. 89-90)

It is undoubtedly significant that during the time he spent on the Russian Front, when Wittgenstein resumed writing on 15 April 1916 after nearly a year of philosophical inactivity, his remarks proceed as if nothing had changed in his thought. Here, of course, is where we find the full force of Wittgenstein's ethical thought—answers, apparently to the question posed at their outset: "What do I know about God and the purpose of life?" (NB, p. 72)—and its connections to the logical investigations that make up the bulk of the *Notebooks* as well as the *Tractatus*. It is similarly significant that, having *completed* his ethical reflections—around 21 November 1916, by which time Wittgenstein had been sent to Olmütz and was impressing upon Engelmann how in his work "logic and mysticism have sprung from the same root"[96]—that once again logic takes centre stage, and once again it does so as if nothing had changed in his thought.

I have tried to show above that despite the possibilities of alternate readings concerning the significance of these ethical reflections, particularly in the preparatory *Notebooks*—as, e.g., an instance of succumbing to the 'will to philosophise', or as one more weapon meant to be used in the struggle against such a tendency—a common concern for the higher value of an a-temporal, timeless eternity shows itself in both his ethical and logical reflections. In the first case, this a-temporality expresses itself in the life of the 'happy man' who lives not in time, but in the eternal present, who lives so that "life stops being problematic." (NB, p. 74, cf. T 6.4311) In the second case, this a-temporality expresses itself in the equivalence of process and result (T 6.1261), where our fundamental principle, or *Grundsatz*, "is that whenever a question can be decided by logic at all it must be possible to decide it *without*

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96 Cf. P. Engelmann, "Observations on the *Tractatus*", in P. Engelmann, *Letters from Wittgenstein* (New York: Horizon Press, 1967), pp. 94-118.

further ado." (T 5.551, my emphasis) Seeing the world aright, either in its ethical or logical sense, is for Wittgenstein intimately connected to the view *sub specie aeternitatis.*

Of course, when Wittgenstein would return to philosophy, ten years after the *Tractatus* had been published, his focus had changed. He recognised "grave errors" in his earlier work (PI, Preface) and, though there is much debate about what precisely those were, he undoubtedly sought in his later work to remedy them. In what follows we will begin to explore some of the aspects of Wittgenstein's later philosophy; particularly, we will look more closely at the solipsism that is supposed to coincide with his earlier, Tractarian account of the 'metaphysical subject', and by this light investigate further how Wittgenstein's later philosophy—wherein the self is conceived as imminent rather than transcendental—returns to affirm the necessity of historical continuity, as a matter of rule-following and of knowing precisely what it means to '*go on*' in the same ways as before.

110

CHAPTER 2. *THE INHERITANCE OF LANGUAGE: KNOWING HOW TO 'GO ON' IN THE INVESTIGATIONS*

> "Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight streets and uniform houses."
>
> —*Philosophical Investigations* §18[97]

I. The World as I Found It

The *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein reminds us in the preface, is not a book that is intended to instruct: "Perhaps this book will only be understood by someone who has himself already had the thoughts that are expressed in it—or at least similar thoughts.—So it is not a textbook." (T, p. 3) One might legitimately ask then: In what sense the thoughts expressed in the book—the truth of which, Wittgenstein notes, is "unassailable and definitive" (ibid.) —do not permit instruction? In what sense do they escape the communicative exchange of ideas between an author and reader, or between a teacher and pupil? Turning the phrase slightly, we might ask in what sense they escape the transmission of knowledge from one generation to another, and what such a limited role of instruction has to do with Wittgenstein's discussion of solipsism—specifically, his infamous cry in the *Notebooks*

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97 In the present context, it is worth recalling here an apropos comment Wittgenstein once made, as quoted by a student of the Moral Sciences Club: "In teaching you philosophy I'm like a guide showing you how to find your way round London… a rather bad guide." (Quoted in D.A.T Gasking and A.C. Jackson, "Wittgenstein as Teacher", p. 52, in ed. K.T Fann, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Man and His Philosophy* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1968), pp. 49-55.)

"What has history to do with me? Mine is the first and only world!" and the remark that immediately follows it: "I want to report the world as *I* found it." (NB, p. 82)

When, in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein describes what he should have to include if were he to write a book entitled *The World as I Found It*, he proceeds by noting a report on his body and the external world insofar as he himself has explored it—i.e., those things which he has discovered are subject to his will and those things that are not. Despite his admission that this would be a method for "isolating the subject, or rather of showing in an important sense there is no subject; for it alone could *not* be mentioned" (T 5.631), it would appear that he would also exclude all history and 'hearsay'. As he notes in the full passage from the *Notebooks* from which the above was abstracted:

> "What has history to do with me? Mine is the first and only world!
>
> I want to report how *I* found the world.
>
> What others have told me about the world is a very small and incidental part of my experience of the world.
>
> *I* have to judge the world, to measure things." (NB, p. 82)

This is undoubtedly an enigmatic remark, from among the most difficult of Wittgenstein's earlier work. For the significance of Wittgenstein's discussion of solipsism in the *Tractatus* is far from transparent, wrought as it is with interpretive difficulties. We might particularly recall here the seemingly self-defeating declaration that: "what the solipsist *means* is quite correct; only it cannot be *said*, but makes itself manifest." (T 5.62) Given Wittgenstein's preceding declaration that we cannot think what we cannot say (T 5.61), this reference—and indeed, the entire discussion of solipsism in the *Tractatus*—appears doubly obscure.

Obviously, Wittgenstein has a particular idea of what it means to 'say' or to 'speak about' something in these passages, and throughout the work as a whole. For there is clearly a sense in which we can indeed very well *speak* things that, by the book's own lights, we cannot think.   These are, most notably, the propositions of logic (tautologies and contradictions) and names. Of course, by the Tractarian account, the propositions of logic do not really say anything at all. Though they are valid propositions—in other words,

though they are derived from elementary propositions according to valid rules of inference —these 'limit case' propositions do not represent states of affairs within the world. They are not *about* anything in particular, and thus they are not *sensical* in this restricted, Tractarian sense. Nor, however, do they fail to touch upon the world completely, and thus neither are they *nonsensical.* They are, he notes, rather *senseless*: "part of the symbolism, much as '0' is part of the symbolism in mathematics." (T 4.4611)

Like logical place-holders, the propositions of logic mark the limits of logical space and, thus, they do not form a substantial point within it: "I know nothing about the weather," Wittgenstein notes in a telling observation, "when I know that it is either raining or not raining." (T 4.461) (Likewise, to take an example from mathematics, we might claim that we know nothing about *apples* when we know that adding two apples to two apples we get four apples.) Such pseudo-propositional signs, we might thus be led to conclude, can be *spoken* but they cannot be *said*—in the sense that, although we might speak them aloud or write them down on a piece of paper, they are not about things in the world. They can be applied to states of affairs in the world, but they do not refer to them.

Names, on the other hand, do refer. They are correlated with objects, and it is the objects themselves which are their meaning. Names do not mean their 'meaning', as a dictionary definition might suggest—definitions in logic, Wittgenstein reminds us in the *Tractatus*, cannot 'dissect' a name (T 3.26), they are only rules for the substitution of signs in a logical proposition or for the translation of the signs of one language into another (T 3.343). Names in this sense are always proper names, and they represent the particular objects to which they refer—and that is all they can do. As Wittgenstein remarks in the *Tractatus*:

> "In a proposition a name is the representative of an object.
>
> Objects can only be *named*. Signs are their representatives. I can only speak *about* them: I cannot *put them into words*.
>
> Propositions can only say *how* things are, not *what* they are." (T 3.22-3.221)

As such, names are arbitrary, neither right nor wrong, neither true nor false. Like the propositions of logic, names do not form a substantial point within logical space. They rather anchor propositions to the world. And like the propositions of logic, which are *always* true (tautologies) or *always* false (contradictions), names cannot determine reality in any way. We can speak them, but they do not say anything. In other words, they are not facts, which put states of affairs of the world into words and which, like a *tableau vivant* (T 4.0311), we are therefore able to affirm or to deny. Propositions—and *only* propositions— can can say how things are, not what they are.

So, assuming that Wittgenstein understands the solipsist as one who is neither spouting logical propositions nor christening the objects around him, what does Wittgenstein mean when he says that what the solipsist *means* is quite correct, only it cannot be said? In order to understand what Wittgenstein is alluding to here, it is first necessary to sketch in greater detail the precise object of this critical remark. It is necessary to sketch in greater detail what Russell thought the solipsist *could* say, and especially what he thought one could do with such things as names and the propositions of logic.

Why Russell? In the earliest incarnations of Wittgenstein's pre-Tractarian thought, the remarks on solipsism that are tied together in the *Tractatus* (T 5.6-5.641) do not occur as single, continuous meditation before their appearance in its more or less publication-ready form. In the *Notebooks* the first appearance is in May 1915, which includes a remark that was later stricken from the final book:

> "*The limits of my language* mean the limits of my world. [≈T 5.6]
>
> There really is only one world soul, which I for preference call *my* soul and as which alone I conceive what I call the souls of others.
>
> The above remark gives the key for deciding the way in which solipsism is a truth. [≈T 5.62]
>
> I have long been conscious that it would be possible for me to write a book: "The world I found" [*Was für eine Welt ich vorfand*]. [≈T 5.631]" (NB, p. 49)

Here, the 'above' in 'the above remark', which provides the key to deciding the truth of solipsism, makes a reference to the 'one world soul', from which alone I can conceive of the souls of others. As it stands this seems to be an enigmatic pronouncement; however, in the *Prototractatus* the intended object of Wittgenstein's remark is made clearer.[98]

In the *Prototractatus*, Wittgenstein's discussion of solipsism stands much as it does in the *Tractatus*, insofar as the chain of remarks is internally structured; however, the chain itself is tied together with several others on the nature of logical analysis. It falls squarely among those of PTLP 5.33ff, which include meditations on the nature of identity and the use of the identity sign, Russell's axiom of infinity, and particularly the misguided attempt to use logical notation for non-logical forms of expression, such as the following:

> "There are certain cases in which one is tempted to use expressions of the form $a = a$ or $p \supset p$ and the like, and in fact this happens when one would like to talk about prototypes [*Urbilder*], *e.g.* about proposition, thing, etc. Thus in Russell's *Principles of Mathematics* 'p is a proposition'—which is nonsense—was given the symbolic rendering ' $p \supset p$', and placed as an hypothesis in from of certain propositions in order to exclude from their argument everything but propositions
>
> It is nonsense to place the hypothesis $p \supset p$ in front of a proposition, in order to ensure that its arguments shall have the right form, if only because with a non-proposition as argument the hypothesis becomes not false but nonsensical, and because arguments of the wrong kind make the proposition itself nonsensical, so that it preserves itself from wrong arguments just as well, or as badly, as the hypothesis without sense that was appended for that purpose." (PTLP 5.3342-5.3343 (=T 5.531))

Following this discussion of logical form, Wittgenstein's discussion of solipsism begins in the *Prototractatus* at 5.335 ("*The limits of my language* mean the limits of my world" (=T 5.6)), and concludes at 5.34 ("We now have to answer *a priori* the question about all the possible forms of elementary propositions" (=T 5.55a)[99]). The context in which

98 For a detailed discussion of the *Prototractatus* and its relation to the *Tractatus*, see G.H von Wright, "The Origin of the Tractatus", in G.H. von Wright, *Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), pp. 63-109.

99 The most interesting difference here, in relation to the final published work, is that at the end of Wittgenstein's discussion of solipsism he does not proceed to announce that we need to answer the question, but indeed answers it, giving the general form of the proposition (T 6). In this way, what is in

Wittgenstein's discussion of solipsism occurs in the earlier *Prototractatus* makes it clear, therefore, that Wittgenstein is directing these remarks, at least in part[100], to Russell and his conception of philosophy.[101]

As M. McGinn notes, during the period with which Wittgenstein was familiar with Russell's views and still committed to commenting upon them from the Tractarian point of view, i.e. 1912-1914[102], Russell's views on knowledge and what he thought philosophy in general, and

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the *Prototractatus* the next step in the argument, following his meditations on solipsism, is in the *Tractatus* rather an earlier *preparatory* step (i.e. T 5.55ff).

100 Traditionally, Wittgenstein's discussion of solipsism has been tied to the 'spiritual' Viennese context in which Wittgenstein was raised, and to which Wittgenstein was to a great extent also responding in his early work, having been inspired by figures such as Schopenhauer and Weininger. This is correct, but it misses the critical element of these remarks that will be sketched in greater detail here. Cf. G.E.M. Anscombe, *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's* Tractatus (London: Hitchenson and Co., 1959), pp. 162-169; B. McGuinness, *Approaches to Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 131-139; A. Janik, *Essays on Wittgenstein and Weininger* (Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1985); P.M.S. Hacker, *Insight and Illusion* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 58-85.

101 In this regard, Diamond puts forth a plausible explanation for its subsequent rearrangement in the published version, where the relevant passages on solipsism are removed from the discussion of the role of logical analysis in philosophy. She notes there:

"My way of taking about what is *in* the book [the *Tractatus*] is meant to reflect Wittgenstein's ideas about his own authorship: there are lines of thought which he wanted a reader of his book to pursue for himself. In the case of the *Tractatus*, one can add that there are lines of thought which he wanted *Russell*—Russell in particular—to pursue. In 1948, he said 'Whatever the reader *can* do, leave to the reader.' While the remark comes from 1948, it reflects a view of writing that was always Wittgenstein's: the reader should not expect to have things done *for* him." (C. Diamond, "Does Bismark have a Beetle in his Box: The Private Language Argument in the *Tractatus*", p. 263, in R. Read and A. Crary (eds), *The New Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 262-292.)

Given Wittgenstein's attitude towards instruction, sketched above, I believe the difference between Wittgenstein's position in the *Tractatus*, and that expressed here by Diamond regarding the 'later Wittgenstein', from 1948, may represent a greater shift than she supposes. Indeed, it may suggest that Wittgenstein was not concerned with what a *reader* can do, but what an *author* can do, i.e. what an author may or may not be capable of communicating to a reader.

102 As McGuinness notes, Wittgenstein had at this time discussed the topic with Russell on a number of occasions, and, in a letter written around Christmas 1914, he thanked Russell for sending him his 'piece about sense data', in which Russell discusses the relation between the subject and the world. McGuinness suggest that this is a reference to "The Relation of Sense-Data to Physics" (in B. Russell, *Mysticism and Logic* (London: Unwinn Paperbacks, 1976), pp. 140-172.) Cf, B.F. McGuinness, *Wittgenstein, A life: Young Ludwig 1889-1921* (London: Duckworth, 1988.), p. 159.

specifically logical analysis, could bring to the theory of knowledge were in a state of development: "However, there is a stable core of ideas that remains the basic starting point for his reflections throughout."[103]   Principally, she notes, Russell was committed to the distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description.   By 'knowledge by acquaintance' Russell meant the particular sensations that one (and one alone) can experience—in other words, a realm of private sense-data[104]—which we are thus in a privileged position to know. Furthermore, he believed that the structure of awareness is such that one is not only necessarily aware of sense-data as they occur, but also of *being aware* of them.   As he notes in "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description":

> "In introspection, we seem to be immediately aware of varying complexes, consisting of objects in various cognitive and conative relations to ourselves. When I see the sun, it often happens that I am aware of my seeing the sun, in addition to being aware of the sun; and when I desire food, it often happens that I am aware of my desire for food. But it is hard to discover any state of mind in which I am aware of myself alone, as opposed to a complex of which I am a constituent."[105]

In this sense, Russell was committed to the view that awareness arises out of one's self-awareness as being aware of sense-data: a two-place relation of sense-data and the self sensing the sense-data.

103M. McGinn, *Elucidating the* Tractatus (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), p. 259. For a detailed survey of Russell's developing views on solipsism, cf. E. Marrou, "'A somewhat curious discussion of solipsism': la réponse de Wittgenstein à Russell et Frege", in Ch. Chauviré (ed.) *Lire le Tractatus logico-philosophicus de Wittgenstein* (Paris: Vrin, 2009), pp. 185-222.

104In "The Relation of Sense-data to Physics", Russell makes this notion of privacy (already assumed in his earlier work) explicit: "so far as can be discovered, no sensibilie is ever a datum to two people at once. The things seen by two different people are often closely similar, so similar, that the same *words* can be used to denote them, without which communication with others concerning sensible objects would be impossible. But, in spite of this similarity, it would seem that some differences always arises from difference in the point of view. Thus each person, so far as his sense-data are concerned, lives in a private world." (B. Russell, *Mysticism and Logic,* op cit., p. 152.)

105B Russell, "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description", p. 202, in B. Russell, *Mysticism and Logic*, op. cit., pp. 200-221.

By accepting that each person lives in a private world of sense-data, he was forced to admit (as he put it) the 'logical possibility of solipsism'. In *The Problems of Philosophy*, first published in 1912, the Cartesian overtones of the position are clearly spelled out:

> "In one sense it must be admitted that we can never *prove* the existence of things other than ourselves and our experiences. No logical absurdity results from the hypothesis that the world consists of myself and my thoughts and feelings and sensations, and that everything else is mere fancy. In dreams a very complicated world may seem to be present, and yet on waking we find it a delusion; that is to say, we find that the sense-data in the dream do not appear to have corresponded with such physical objects as we should naturally infer from sense-data."[106]

As Russell understood it then, the challenge that solipsism poses to the philosophical theory of knowledge is to provide a good reason to accept that, despite the logical possibility of the solipsist's position, there *is* a world beyond one's own private experiences and that particulars (including objects, relations, and to some extent universals) exist with which one is not immediately acquainted: i.e., the things of the world which according to the dictates of common sense give rise to those particulars with which we are directly acquainted. The challenge that solipsism poses to the philosopher is to provide a good reason to accept that there is knowledge of those things with which we are not directly acquainted—that is to say, real, genuine knowledge, and not a mere hypothesis—that can be arrived at through description.

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[106] B. Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 10. In "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description", Russell, like Frege, identifies solipsism with idealism, a position that results, he notes from a 'dislike of relations':

> "The view seems to be that there is some mental existent which may be called the 'idea' of something outside the mind of the person who has the idea, and that, since judgement is a mental event, its constituents must be constituents of the mind of the person judging. But in this view ideas become a veil between us and outside things—we never really, in knowledge, attain to the things we are supposed to be knowing about, but only to the ideas of those things. The relation between mind, idea, and object, on this view, us utterly obscure, and, so far as I can see, nothing discoverable by introspection warrants the intrusion of the idea between the mind and the object. I suspect that the view is fostered by the dislike of relations, and that it is felt the mind could not know objects unless there were something 'in' the mind which could be called the state of knowing the object." (op cit., p. 155)

As is often the case in such discussions of the metaphysics of experience, it is interesting to note that Russell uncritically qualifies the experience of sense-data by employing the notion of one's *present* experiences, i.e. as temporally, as well as spatially and logically present. However, one of the interesting consequences of his extension of this conception of knowledge to include knowledge by description is its ability—not only to account for 'logically distant' objects, such as those Wittgenstein was most obviously concerned with critiquing, i.e. other peoples ascription of 'I' and their identification of essentially private sense-data (red-patches, toothaches, etc.)—but also to account for 'spatially' and what we might call 'temporally distant' objects as well.[107] In fact, in terms of these 'temporally distant' objects, the implicit historical dimension of Russell's theory of knowledge by description is brought out in his principle examples—those of Bismarck and Julius Caesar— the first of which is reprised by Diamond in her article "Does Bismarck Have a Beetle in his Box?"[108]

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[107] As Russell's abundant use of temporally qualified examples—in both the future and past tenses—suggests, there is no reason to assume that he did not see a perfect symmetry between the 'spatially distant' objects of common sense and physics, and the 'temporally distant' objects of history. in "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description" Russell notes that there are "various stages of removal from acquaintance", enumerating a list that treats spatially and temporally qualified objects in an undifferentiated manner, e.g.: "there is Bismarck to the people who knew him, Bismarck to those who only know of him through history, the man with the iron mask, the longest-lived of men." (B. Russell, "Knowledge by Acquaintance and by Description", op. cit., p. 153) If he did differentiate between these different cases in some way, it appears at least to have been philosophically uninteresting (perhaps representing for him an empirical, and not logical asymmetry).

[108] Diamond here draws on one of Russell's principle examples in "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description", the German statesman, Otto von Bismarck. This reference to 'Bismarck's beetle' draws on the discussion from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*:

"Now someone tells me that *he* knows what pain is only from his own case!—Suppose everyone had a box with something in it: we call it a "beetle". No one can look into anyone else's box, and everyone knows what a beetle is only by looking at *his* beetle.—Here it would be quite possible for everyone to have something different in his box. One might even imagine such a thing constantly changing.—But suppose the word the word "beetle" had a use in these people's language?—If so it would not be used as the name of a thing. The thing in the box has no place in the language-game at all; not even as a *something*: for the box might even be empty." (PI §293)

120

Diamond notes in her paper that in order to take Russell's critique of solipsism seriously, as Russell himself inevitably did at the time[109], one has to suppose that each of us is directly acquainted with his or her own self. She invites us, as Russell did, to consider a statement about another individual, such as the German statesman Otto von Bismarck (who, we recall, died in 1898). Since we are supposing that Bismarck has direct acquaintance with himself, he will be able to use the name 'I', ascribable by direct acquaintance. If he makes the statement 'I am an astute diplomatist', it is he himself who is the constituent of the judgement, and as such he is in a unique position to either affirm or deny it. "But you or I or anyone else," Diamond continues in line with Russell's position, "can think about Bismarck only via some description; we are not directly acquainted with the object which he denotes by 'I'." She explains:

> "If we say 'Bismarck was an astute diplomatist,' an analysis of our proposition would show that we are not directly designating Bismarck. We designate him via some description, and we can see from the analysis that Bismarck himself is not a constituent of the proposition. Because the object Bismarck is known to Bismarck by acquaintance, but known to us only by description, our judgement about Bismarck is not the same as Bismarck's judgement about Bismarck. Bismarck has available to him a proposition which he can understand and which we cannot. We can, however, know by description the proposition which Bismarck understands."[110]

Like Russell's argument for the existence of objects of common sense and physics that lie outside of our present experience, because the object 'Bismarck' (or his own private sense-data, like red patches, toothaches and the like) can be referred to by means of terms that do lie within our experience (such as our own sense-data, and our awareness of universals), and yet when we look around we find no object presently answering that description, "the

109It should be noted, however, that Russell soon rejected the idea of knowledge of one's self through acquaintance, in favour of description. This was initially formulated in *Theory of Knowledge: The 1913 Manuscript*, ed. E.R. Eames and K. Blackwell (London: George Allen and Unwinn), a text which he shared with Wittgenstein (cf. R.W. Clark, *The Life of Bertrand Russell* (London: J. Cape, 1975), pp. 204-7). That Russell changed his position in this regard does not, it appears to me, significantly impact the core of Wittgenstein's critique.

110C. Diamond, "Does Bismarck have a Beetle in his Box?", p. 265, in eds. R. Read and A. Crary, *The New Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 262-292.

conclusion follows that there are objects not experienced."[111] Russell's idea is that we can know of these inferred entities on the basis of knowing that there is a unique object (achieved through existential quantification, and therefore without it being necessary to predicate existence to an object with which we are not acquainted) that has some property or other with which we *are* directly acquainted.[112] The conclusion follows that solipsism—despite its 'logical possibility'—is wrong.

Wittgenstein's response to Russell's formulation of solipsism falls principally along two lines. The first concerns Wittgenstein's critique of Russell's *account* of knowledge of the self-as-object, which stands in a composite relation with what is perceived and with which one is therefore necessarily acquainted along with one's experiences. The second concerns Russell's conception of the *task* of philosophy, and the role that such things as logic relations and names may play in the sought-after theory of knowledge more generally. These two are not wholly unrelated. For, regarding the first of these, the relation between the world and the subject as necessarily aware of itself in its experience of the world relies

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111 B. Russell, *The Theory of Knowledge: The 1913 Manuscript* (London: George Allen and Unwinn, 1984), p. 34. See also, pp. 10-11, and B. Russell, *Problems of Philosophy,* op cit., pp. 23-24.

112 Here is Russell's argument from "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description":

"It would seem that, when we make a statement about something only known by description, we often *intend* to make our statement, not in the form of involving a description, but about the actual thing described. That is to say, when we say anything about Bismarck, we should like to, if we could, to make the judgement which Bismarck alone can make, namely the judgement of which he himself is a constituent. In this we are necessarily defeated, since the actual Bismarck is unknown to us. But we know that there is an object *B* called Bismarck, and that *B* was an astute diplomatist. We can thus *describe* the proposition we should like to affirm, namely '*B* was an astute diplomatist', where *B* is the object which was Bismarck." (op cit., p. 153)

This is reprised in terms of Julius Caesar at a latter point in the paper:

"Let our judgement be 'Julius Caesar was assassinated.' Then it becomes 'the man whose name was *Julius Caesar* was assassinated'. Here *Julius Caesar* is a noise or shape with which we are acquainted, and all the other constituents of the judgement (neglecting the tense in 'was') are *concepts* with which we are acquainted, but Julius Caesar himself has ceased to be a constituent of our judgement." (op cit., p. 156)

Besides allowing us access to the past, such knowledge by description also allows access to the future, as Russell notes at the opening of the article: "I know that the candidate who gets the most votes will be elected, though I do not know who is the candidate who will get the most votes. The problem I wish to consider is this: What do we know in these cases, where the subject is merely described." (op cit., p. 148)

upon drawing two *substantial* boundaries: an internal, and an external boundary of experience (the 'I' as self-aware subject at its centre, and the limit of my experience of the world at the outer edge, marking a realm beyond which the non-solipsistic philosopher would seek to gain epistemic access). It is equivalent, Wittgenstein claims, to drawing the visual field around the eye, in which (on the one hand) the eye is taken to be a constituent of the visual field itself and (on the other) there is a clear terminus to the visual field. As he notes:

> "Where *in* the world is a metaphysical subject to be found?
>
> You will say that this is exactly like the case of the eye and the visual field. But really you do *not* see the eye.
>
> And nothing *in the visual field* allows you to infer that it is seen by an eye.
>
> For the form of the visual field is surely not like this
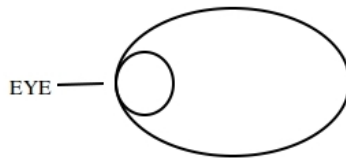
(T 5.633-5.6331)

At issue here is the attempt to cast logical necessities in an empirical light, masquerading metaphysical theories as scientific hypotheses. Indeed, it is P. Sullivan who has most notably and most eloquently argued that the two different limits of this 'two-limit conception of experience' advanced by Russell arise due to one and the same problem.[113] This problem concerns not what one can or cannot *know*, but what one can *understand*. More precisely, it concerns what Russell might be able to expect from logic in the first place. Sullivan thus locates the pivotal point of Wittgenstein's rejection of Russell's view in the remark that immediately follows that referred to above in the *Tractatus*:

> "This is connected with the fact that no part of our experience is at the same time a priori.
>
> Whatever we see could be other than it is.

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113 P. Sullivan, "The 'Truth' in Solipsism, and Wittgenstein's Rejection of the A Priori", *European Journal of Philosophy,* 4(2), 1996, pp. 195-219.

> Whatever we can describe at all could be other than it is.
>
> There is no a priori order of things." (T 5.634)

Drawing the 'field of experience' in terms of such substantial internal and external limits, Russell has precisely sought an a priori description of experience (every person is, necessarily, aware of his or her own self as being aware of experience) and used this structure to derive a logical and a priori foundation for knowledge beyond that realm of our immediate experience (knowledge by description can be reformulated in terms of knowledge by acquaintance, allowing one to surpass the other limit).

Briefly then, Wittgenstein's criticism of this 'two-limit conception of knowledge' is that Russell's account of knowledge by acquaintance is nonsensical, and his account of knowledge by description is unnecessary. In the next remark Wittgenstein explains:

> "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."
>
> (T 5.64)

In a certain sense one might argue that the two limits remain—there is still the self and the world, as 'internal' and 'external' limit of representation, as Wittgenstein abundant references to the self and the world throughout the *Tractatus* (and especially in its final pages) attest—but they are a function of language, purely formal notions without empirical content. In other words, they tell us nothing *about* the world and there is therefore nowhere beyond them—i.e., there is no realm of facts that is a priori inaccessible to us—where knowledge might seek to go via some logical manipulation. As Wittgenstein states at the opening of his meditations on solipsism: "*The limits of my language* mean the limits of my world." (T 5.6)

Admittedly, Wittgenstein's use of the number system in the *Tractatus*—in which the propositions *n*.1, *n*.2, *n*.3, etc. are comments on proposition *n*., and *n*.11, *n*.12 are comments on proposition *n*.1, etc.—are not as consistently applied as he suggests at the opening of the

work; however, it is generally recognised that we should in this case follow Wittgenstein's instructions for reading the work in this way. For it is undoubtedly proposition 5.6 that "provides the key to the problem, how much truth there is in solipsism." (T 5.62) However, as we have seen, throughout the work Wittgenstein has characterised truth as a function of *meaningful* propositions. In other words, he has defined meaning precisely (and on the surface, solely) in terms of what one *can* say: propositions that are about things in the world. So where does Wittgenstein sit, then, on the question of solipsism and the extent to which there may be some truth to what the solipsist intends to communicate?

This question has elicited many answers, which nonetheless typically fall within two camps: those which claim there is some kind of a positive (or 'substantial') truth to Wittgenstein's account of solipsism, which follows from his rejection of Russell's formulation (e.g. Sullivan and McGinn), and those which claim there is solely a negative (or 'therapeutic') truth to solipsism, which is thus directly solely against Russell and similar attempts to provide a logical foundation for knowledge based on an a priori metaphysics of experience (e.g. Diamond).

The first possibility, as McGinn notes, is that once the relations between logic and world, and between the subject and the world, are seen as *internal*—i.e. as inherent to the structure of representation itself—then the 'thinking subject' will cease to function as just another object that is part of the world (privileged or otherwise). It may, however, continue to function as an orientation towards the world: "that is to say, the thinking subject exists insofar as it represents the world to itself."[114] Diamond, on the other hand, who identifies in Wittgenstein's early discussion of solipsism a foreshadowing of his later attack on private

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114 M. McGinn, *Elucidating the* Tractatus, op cit., p. 274. This comment aims therefore at giving a positive account of Wittgenstein discussion of the 'metaphysical subject', e.g.:

> "Thus there really is a sense in which philosophy can talk about the self in a non-psychological way.
> What brings the self into philosophy is the fact that 'the world is my world'.
> The philosophical self is not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather the metaphysical subject, the limit of the world—not a part of it." (T 5.641)

language in *Philosophical Investigations*, sees Wittgenstein's account as solely critical of the kind of epistemic privilege upon which Russell, among others, have relied in the theory of knowledge. In this restricted sense, the Tractarian discussion of solipsism *simply* shows "that *no* role in language is played by the things with which Bismarck is acquainted and which he can name in his language, but to which, according to Russell, we cannot refer by the proper names of our language."[115] Diamond admits, however, that Wittgenstein's attack comes at a price. The Tractarian argument does indeed provide an argument which shows that 'other people's beetles', as she phrases it, drop out of the picture. But this approach "may indeed leave us with our own beetles; the beetle population does not disappear," she notes, "until Wittgenstein develops powerful new coleptericides in the 1930s."[116]

It is not my intention here to argue for the merit of one or the other of these two interpretations of solipsism in the *Tractatus*. For it appears that in both of these interpretations something interesting has been left aside, whichever the case may be. This regards what might be considered the capacity for instruction—we recall that Wittgenstein makes it clear at the opening of the work that perhaps it "will be understood only by someone who has himself already had the thoughts that are expressed in it" (T, p. 3)—and, by extension, the very *heritability* of language itself. For whether the Tractarian 'I' is understood transcendentally or not, 'the world as I found it' is indeed just that—*found*. It is not one that is built or constructed, neither is it communicated piecemeal from one person to another. As Wittgenstein would remark a little further on in the *Notebooks*, and likewise in the *Tractatus* when the subject of ethics is brought to bear on this non-psychological conception of the self that Wittgenstein has here sketched in response to Russell's formulation of solipsism: "The world must, so to speak, wax or wane *as a whole*." (NB, p. 73, my emphasis) In other words, if the subject's capacity for comprehension is tied solely to the possibilities inherent to its potential for *linguistic expression*, it will inevitably find itself in the midst of—or *belonging to*—the world. 'The world as I found it' is one already fully populated with meaning. Diamond is right to locate here an important shift in

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115 C. Diamond, "Does Bismarck have a Beetle in his Box?", op cit., p. 268.
116 Ibid.

Wittgenstein's thoughts about privacy in *Philosophical Investigations*. However, the role and the importance of that shift in perspective—for Wittgenstein's thought generally, and specifically for his thought about the role that instruction might play in language and in philosophy, including his own—remains to be clarified.

II. Majores homines

Wittgenstein seemed to intuit early on the apparent circularity of the relationship between language and world as he had defined it, and the difficulty such a conception would pose to the process of linguistic initiation. Early in the *Notebooks*, for example, he remarks:

> "How can I be *told how* the proposition represents? Or can this not be *said* to me at all? And if that is so can I '*know*' it? If it was supposed to be said to me, then this would have to be done by means of a proposition; but the proposition could only show it.
>
> What can be said can only be said by means of a proposition, and so nothing that is necessary for the understanding of *all* propositions can be said." (NB, p. 25)

The key problem here is one of 'bootstrapping': How does a linguistic novice come to master a language, when all explanation must itself be given in the very language that the novice has not yet mastered? Wittgenstein's solution to this problem at the time, as Sullivan has argued, did not come from of a resolution of this circularity. It came rather when Wittgenstein simply ceased to regard it as *problematic*: "The jangling skeletal worry that reality might outrun language is silenced only by conceiving of language directly as that which embraces reality"[117]—or, indeed, *vice versa*. It would not be until many years later that Wittgenstein would make what could justifiably be characterised as one of the resounding mottos of his life's work: "Explanations come to an end somewhere" (PI §1) However, we can see that in the *Tractatus*, a limit to the capacity of linguistic instruction had already been laid out. All explanations of language terminate in our simply *seeing* how

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[117]Cf. P. Sullivan, "The 'Truth' in Solipsism and Wittgenstein's Rejection of the A Priori", op cit., p. 209.

a proposition picks things out in the world. That it is a matter of our apparently already being able to understand the world in terms of the propositional forms that are used to represent it—which is, of course, to say nothing less than one already *thinks* in language (T 3) before a language has been acquired—would not become a problem for Wittgenstein until the later work was well under way.[118]

Naturally, Wittgenstein was not the first to recognise the apparent circularity of basic linguistic explanation. Already in *Principia Mathematica*, Whitehead and Russell were forced to concede that the definitions of the 'primitive ideas' that would form the foundation of their system presupposed a pre-given familiarity among the members of their readership, noting:

> "Following Peano, we shall call the undefined ideas and the undemonstrated propositions *primitive* ideas and *primitive* propositions respectively. The primitive ideas are *explained* by means of descriptions intended to point out to the reader what is meant; but the explanations do not constitute definitions, because they really involve the ideas they explain."[119]

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118 Even in the 1930's, Wittgenstein continued to hold onto the impossibility of linguistic instruction, claiming: "[A]ny kind of explanation of language presupposes a language already. And in a certain sense, the use of language is something that cannot be taught […] I cannot use language to get outside of language." (PR, 54) As D. McManus notes, drawing an illuminating distinction between acquiring the mastery of a first- and second-language:

"The most obvious candidate for the role of an 'explanation' which would 'get out outside of language' is the giving of an ostensive definition. If we imagine learning a *sign* in that way, we imagine learning that some particular sign is used to refer to what my first language calls 'red', say. But if we imagined that an ostensive definition might teach someone a *symbol*, a first-language expression, as it were, we confront the problem of concept acquisition again: in order to see *what* is being pointed at, the pupil must already have a mastery of the relevant symbol, which is precisely what the 'explanation' was to 'make possible'" (D. McManus, *The Enchantment of Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), p. 107-108.)

119 A.N. Whitehead and B. Russell, *Principia Mathematica, vol. 1* (2nd Ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), *1. It is precisely *this* point that Wittgenstein would attack in the *Tractatus*: "in Russell and Whitehead's *Principia Mathematica* there occur definitions and primitive propositions expressed in words. Why this sudden appearance of words? It would require a justification, but none is given, or could be given, since the procedure is in fact illicit." (T 5.452)

However, it was of course Frege who developed the notion most fully and most famously in his account of 'elucidation'. Elucidation plays a central role in Frege's project, appearing already to some extent in his *Foundation of Arithmetic.*[120] Nonetheless, it is in Frege's response to B. Kerry's critical reception of this work that he spells out most clearly what is at stake in 'elucidating' a linguistic form in order to bring about an adequate understanding, not of *what* a particular language says, but of *how* it says it.

It is worth dwelling on this text for a moment, for it is a delightful example of instruction. Here, in the article entitled "On Concept and Object"[121], we witness Frege (as teacher), who, faced with Kerry (as reticent student), is forced to recede from the very 'logical purity' that his analysis of the foundations of arithmetic aspires towards (embodied in his *Begriffsschrift*, or 'concept script') in order to bring about a correct understanding of the script itself via the 'impure' medium of our ordinary, imprecise—and indeed, even *psychologistic*—natural language.

Frege here responds to Kerry's criticism that he has not adequately distinguished between 'concepts' and 'objects' in his *Begriffsschrift* and that any attempt to do so will run into unresolvable difficulties. For indeed—and Kerry is correct to point this out—Frege has, in explicating the mechanics of his notation, made recourse to a number of linguistic forms that are specifically forbidden by the dictates of that very system. In particular, Kerry attempts to demonstrate that the distinction between concept and object is not absolute, for at times it seems necessary to speak about concepts in manner that would make objects of them. His example: 'The concept 'horse' is a concept easily obtained.' Frege's response to Kerry is Zen-like, incorporating in equal measure simplicity and esoterica:

120E.g.: "When an author feels himself obliged to give a definition, yet cannot, then he tends to give at least a description of the way in which we arrive at the object or concept concerned. These cases can be easily recognized by the fact that such explanations are never referred to again in the course of the subsequent exposition. For teaching purposes, introductory devices are certainly quite legitimate; only they should always be clearly distinguished from definitions." (FA, p. viii)

121G. Frege, "On Concept and Object", in G. Frege, *Collected Papers on Mathematics, Logic, and Philosophy,* ed. B. McGuinness and trans. P. Geach (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), pp. 182-194.

"It must be recognized that here we are confronted by an awkwardness of language, which I admit cannot be avoided, if we say that the concept *horse* is not a concept, whereas, e.g., the city of Berlin is a city, and the volcano Vesuvius is a volcano. Language is here in a predicament that justifies the departure from custom. The peculiarity of the case is indicated by Kerry himself, by means of the quotation-marks around 'horse'; I use italics to the same end. There was no reason to mark out the words 'Berlin' and 'Vesuvius' in a similar way. In logical discussions about a concept one quite often needs to say something about a concept, and to express this in the form usual for such predications—viz. to make what is said about the concept into the content of a grammatical predicate."[122]

Although by now a well-known example, 'the concept *horse* paradox' remains as humorous and as poignant today as it must have appeared at the time.[123] Frege is not, however, deterred and persists unabashedly to employ a similarly problematic grammatical form when he informs his readers a little earlier in the same paper, instructing Kerry, e.g.: "A concept (as I understand the word) is predicative. On the other hand, a name of an object, a proper name, is quite incapable of being used as a grammatical predicate."[124] He continues:

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[122] G. Frege, "On Concept and Object", *op cit.*, p. 186.

[123] Cf. K. D. Jolley, *The Concept 'Horse' Paradox and Wittgenstein's Conceptual Investigations: A Prolegomena to Philosophical Investigations* (Burlington, VA: Ashgate, 2007), for an extensive survey of the paradox and its legacy.

[124] This passage resonates significantly with the terms in which Russell first approached Frege, regarding the paradox he had discovered in Frege's Axiom V. In that exchange Russell first formulates the paradox thus:

"You state that a function, too, can act as the indeterminate element. This I formerly believed, but now this view seems doubtful to me because of the following contradiction. Let w be the predicate : to be a predicate that cannot be predicated of itself. Can w be predicated of itself? From each answer its opposite follows. Therefore we must conclude that w is not a predicate." (B. Russell, "Letter to Frege (1902)", in J. van Heijenoort (ed.) *From Frege to Gödel*: *A Source Book in Mathematical Logic, 1879-1931* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 124-125.)

If Russell had not continued (or better yet, had not *been able* to continue) as he did—i.e., "Likewise there is no class (as a totality) of those classes which, each taken as a totality, do not belong to themselves. From this I conclude that under certain circumstances a definable collection does not form a totality" (ibid.)—Frege's response would have sufficed to end the matter:

"Incidentally, it seem to me that the expression 'a predicate is predicated of itself' is not exact. A predicate is as a rule a first-level function, and this function requires an object as argument and cannot have itself as argument (subject)." (G. Frege, "Letter to Russell (1902)", in in J. van Heijenoort (ed.) *From Frege to Gödel*: *A Source Book in Mathematical Logic, 1879-1931*, *op cit.*, p. 128.)

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"This admittedly needs elucidation, otherwise it might appear false."[125] Indeed it might not just appear *false*, but from a certain perspective—that of Frege's own *Begriffsschrift*, for example—*nonsensical*. Here in the antechamber to the most precise of all sciences, the science of logic, we must resort to metaphor and figurative forms of expression (for example, to talk about objects as being 'saturated' and concepts being 'unsaturated'). It is, as J. Conant notes, "the artful use of nonsense."[126] In other words, as Frege himself notes, one must rely upon a reader who is ready to meet one 'half-way', "who does not begrudge a pinch of salt", as it were.[127] One must rely upon a reader who is content to take a grammatical *hint* in order to grasp exactly what exactly one is gesturing towards. As Frege remarks elsewhere:

> "Theoretically, one may never achieve one's goal this way. In practice, however, we do manage to come to an understanding about the meanings of words. Of course we have to be able to count on a meeting of the minds, on others guessing what we have in mind. But all this precedes the construction of a system and does not belong within a system."[128]

Ironically, the potential for failure inherent to the use of elucidation that Frege highlights here is the very possibility that later came to be realised when Wittgenstein sent him a copy

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125G. Frege, "On Concept and Object", *op cit.,* p. 183.

126J. Conant, "Elucidation and Nonsense in Frege and Early Wittgenstein", in R. Read and A. Crary (eds.) *The New Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 174-217. Here is Diamond's take in a similar question, although as I have tried to show, the explicitly temporal element of Diamond's take introduces a host of distinct (although not unrelated) issues:

"A remark like 'There is a fundamental distinction between functions and objects' is thrown out once we get the predicate 'function' out of the cleaned up philosophical vocabulary. We are left after the transition with a logical notation that in a sense has to speak for itself. If we try afterwards to say why it is a good notation, we know that we shall find ourselves saying things which may help our listeners, but which we ourselves cannot regard as the expression of any true through, speakable or unspeakable. When we say why the notion is a good one, when we explain what logical distinctions and similarities it makes perspicuous, we are in a sense going backwards, back to the stage at which we had been when grasping the point of the transition." (C. Diamond, "Throwing Away the Ladder," in C. Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit, op cit.,* p. 183.)

127G. Frege, "On Concept and Object", *op cit.*, p. 193.

128G. Frege, *Posthumous Writings.*, ed. Hermes, Kambartel, and Kaulbach, trans. Long and White (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), p. 207

of the *Tractatus*—a work which Wittgenstein himself consistently and self-consciously described as being composed *solely* of such elucidations (T 4.112, 6.54)—seeking his aid in securing its publication.[129]

Two decades later, in *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein would include in the work several critical remarks directed explicitly towards the *Tractatus* and the conception of language that permeates that earlier work as a whole. These remarks testify to Wittgenstein's renewed interest in the diversity of linguistic expression, rather than its unity (PI §23), his critique of the relationship between atomic and molecular propositions, apropos the limits of analysis (PI §46), and an attentiveness to what he later considered the 'hardness of the logical must': "this crystal," i.e., the crystalline purity of logic, "does not appear as an abstraction; but as something concrete, indeed, as the most concrete, as it were the *hardest* thing there is." (PI §97)[130] Not content to stop simply at methodological issues, in PI §144 Wittgenstein cuts to the very core of his earlier work—the general form of the proposition:

> " "But this is how it is——" I say to myself over and over again. I feel as though, if only I could fix my gaze
>
> sharply on this fact, get it into focus, I could grasp the essence of the matter.
>
> (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 4.5): "The general form of the proposition: This is how things are."——That
>
> is the kind of proposition that one repeats to oneself countless times. One thinks that one is tracing the outline
>
> of the thing's nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at
>
> it.

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[129] Upon receiving Wittgenstein's manuscript, Frege replied with criticism that were, according to J. Floyd, "explicit, fairly detailed, and harsh." (J. Floyd, "The Frege-Wittgenstein Correspondence: Interpretive Themes", in ed. E. De Pelligrino, *Interactive Wittgenstein: Essays in the Memory of Georg Henrik von Wright* (New York: Springer, 2011), p. 83.) The bulk of these demonstrate an unwillingness to accept the first few propositions of the work (apparently the only ones that Frege read) as something other than the establishment of a definition or the recognition of a judgement, both of which fail to achieve their respective ends in his esteem.

[130] Wittgenstein himself provides the relevant reference to the *Tractatus* here: "In fact, all the propositions of our everyday language, just as they stand, are in perfect logical order.—That utterly simple thing, which we have to formulate here, is not a likeness of truth, but the truth itself in its entirety. // (Our problems are not abstract, but perhaps the most concrete that there are.)" (T 5.5563)

A *picture* held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably." (PI §§113-115)

If we wish to maintain that Wittgenstein's critique of the way he had formulated such issues in the *Tractatus* figures prominently in his subsequent work, as it undoubtedly does, we should not be surprised that each of these points appears in some way at the start of the *Investigations*, indeed right in the opening quote of PI §1, taken from Augustine's *Confessions*. For, as Baker and Hacker note, Wittgenstein had remarked early on that he should like to begin his projected book with the description of a situation from which *all* the material to follow could be obtained.[131] Wittgenstein proceeds to cite a passage from the early part of Augustine's *Confessions*—itself an autobiography, which might very well have

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131Cf. G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 64. The remark comes from MS 108, written between between December 1929 and August 1930. It is interesting to note that the fragment Wittgenstein had originally thought would fulfil this stringent demand was: 'A lamp is standing on my table.' This naturally recalls numerous such propositions from the analyses presented in the *Notebooks,* and especially the following, which provides a wealth of interesting comparisons with Wittgenstein's later approach to language in the *Investigations* (possibly even prefiguring his imminent critique of some of the central notions in the *Tractatus*):

"When I say, "The book is on the table", does this really have a completely clear sense? (An EXTREMELY important question.) // But the sense must be clear, for after all we mean *something* by the proposition, and as much as we *certainly* mean must surely be clear. // If the proposition "The book is on the table" has a clear sense, then, I must, whatever *is the case*, be able to say whether the proposition is true or false. There could, however, very well occur *cases* in which I should not be able to say straight off whether the book is still to be called "lying on the table". Then—? // Then is the case here one of my knowing exactly what I want to say, but then making mistakes in expressing it? // Or can this uncertainty TOO be included in the proposition. // But it may also be that the proposition "The book is lying on the table" represents my sense completely, but that I am using the words, e.g., "lying on", with a *special* reference here, and that elsewhere they have another reference. What I mean by the verb is perhaps a quite special relation which the book now actually has to the table. […] It seems clear to me that what we MEAN must always be "*sharp*". // Our expression of what we mean can only be right or wrong. And further the words can be applied consistently or inconsistently. There does not seem to be any other possibility." (NB, pp. 67-68)

Whether or not it is significant that this is precisely the topic that Wittgenstein was dealing with before he paused writing in his notebooks, upon being sent to the Russian Front, it is an interesting possibility. The last remark here before the break, significantly, is: "The name compresses its whole complex reference into one."(NB, p. 71)

been called *The World as I Found It*—which begins with an account of how he was initiated into the common tongue of his elders:

> "When they (my elders) named some object, and accordingly moved towards something, I saw this and I grasped that the thing was called by the sound they uttered when they meant to point it out. Their intention was shown by their bodily movements, as it were the natural language of all peoples: the expression of the face, the play of the eyes, the movement of other parts of the body, and the tone of voice which expresses our state of mind in seeking, having rejecting, or avoiding something. Thus, as I heard words repeatedly used in their proper places in various sentences, I gradually learnt to understand what objects they signified; and after I had trained my mouth to form these signs, I used them to express my own desires."[132]

Though they are undoubtedly distinct in many respects, one cannot fail to notice the kinship —no doubt alluded to conscientiously by Wittgenstein—between the idea of language presented here and that presented in the *Tractatus*.[133] We will consider in what ways this may or may not be the case below; however, before proceeding, it is important to note that in the full passage from the *Confessions* Augustine proceeds to explicate not only *what* he knows of his infancy but also in the majority of cases *how* he knows it: i.e. whether that be by divine word, by what he has been told of his infancy from those who were there, or by what he himself has observed in other infants. He discusses, for example, the maladroit expressions of his earliest desires and his infantile manipulations of others in order to achieve these selfish aims:

> "Little by little I began to be aware where I was and wanted to manifest my wishes to those who could fulfil them as I could not. For my desires were internal; adults were external to me and had no means of entering my soul. So I threw my limbs about and uttered sounds, signs resembling my wishes, the small number of signs of which I was capable but such signs as lay in my power to use: for there was no real resemblance. When I did not get my way, either because I was not understood or lest it be harmful to me, I used to be indignant with my

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132 Confessions, I, 8. (Anscombe's translation from PI)

133 Backer and Hacker also point out that Wittgenstein notes in MS111 that Augustine's remarks are significant because they represent the conception of a "naturally clear-thinking person"—interestingly qualified as one who is "temporally removed and does not belong to our intellectual milieu." (Cf. G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning, op cit.*, p. 64)

seniors for their disobedience, and with free people who were not slaves to my interest; and I would revenge myself upon them by weeping. That this is the way of infants I have learnt from those I have been able to watch. That is what I was like myself and, although they have not been aware of it, they have taught me more than my nurses with all their knowledge of how I behaved."[134]

When Augustine begins this meditation on language-learning, he notes, immediately preceding the quote used by Wittgenstein in PI §1: "How I learned to talk I discovered only later."

One might legitimately wonder then: How did he come to discover this process of piecemeal initiation into the linguistic order of his elders? Was it divine word, for example? Was he told by those who were there? Had he observed it himself in other infants of that age? Augustine's answer to this question is complicated by doubts (aired, as we shall see, in this very passage from the *Confessions*). However, Wittgenstein's response to this question is nonetheless categorical. And it would appear to be aimed at filling in precisely *this* gap:

"These words, it seems to me, give us a particular picture of the essence of human language. It is this: the individual words in language name objects—sentences are combinations of such names.——In this picture of language we find the roots of the following idea: Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands.

Augustine does not speak of there being any difference between kinds of word. If you describe the learning of language in this way you are, I believe, thinking primarily of nouns like "table", "chair", "bread", and people's names, and only secondarily of the names of certain actions and properties; and the remaining kinds of words as something that will take care of itself." (PI §1)[135]

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134 Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. H. Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), I, 7.

135 This passage is, of course, greatly quoted in the literature on Augustine's philosophy of language. It is worth considering briefly some of the qualifications that scholars give to Wittgenstein's account. C. Kirwan, for example, has argued that Wittgenstein here misunderstands Augustine's adherence to this picture—something like Wittgenstein's own, earlier 'picture theory of language'—but that he is not, however, altogether misrepresenting Augustine's views because of that. As he notes there:

"Wittgenstein is right in stating that Augustine does not guard against this mistake, for 'he does not speak of their being any difference between kinds of words'; and we might add that Augustine's own example of a use of language, to express (state, *enuntiare*) his own desires, is so simple as not to be far

The conclusion that might be drawn here is the following: Indeed, Augustine has not really learned of such a process at all. It is rather a 'picture'—a primitive one at that, as Wittgenstein notes in PI §2—imposed upon his understanding of the nature of language and of its acquisition, from the outside. In other words, it is the kind of thing one might 'repeat to oneself countless times', for it seems to lay within our language and language seems to repeat to us inexorably.

The early stages of language-learning are of interest to Augustine, not for *what* he thinks he has learnt—in terms of, e.g., this or that word—but for *how* he thinks he learnt it. Language is not just picked up all at once. It is taught, by parents and elders, one word at a time. But how does that succeed with infants, when their elders cannot but use language as their medium of instruction? This, as we have seen, was an early issue raised by Wittgenstein already in the *Notebooks*, and resolved shortly after in the *Tractatus* by simply excluding the question from the sphere of his interests in that work. Fifteen-hundred years earlier, Augustine had himself raised this very question and his answer is similarly far from clear. For example, elsewhere—such as *De magistro* (or *On the Teacher*, a work that was

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away from mere naming. Finally, and crucially, there is plenty of reason to think that Wittgenstein is right in his implicit castigations of philosophers, and other theorists, for falling into the same mistake when they start to think about language. Many there have surely been who have been tempted to adopt as their 'picture of the essence of human language' the picture of a system of names. // But Augustine was not one of them. He knew better, because he knew his grammar." ("Augustine's Philosophy of Language", pp. 187-8, in eds. E Stump & N. Kretzmann, *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 186-204.)

However, Kirwan concludes that Augustine did put faith in the Stoic doctrine of 'speech-thought isomorphism', where speech is specifically conceived as a conglomerate of separate signs *each of which* signify an 'object' (though they may not all be nouns). Thus, the names of 'objects' *are* indeed primary for Augustine, but not because he did not consider other types of words, rather because he understood *all words* as transparently designatory in the way that nouns are. The example Kirwan gives, which Augustine himself considered in *De magistro* (apparently unknown to Wittgenstein): the conjunction *si* [if]. This led Augustine, as it did the Stoics before him, to consider certain paradoxes (about, e.g., what the word *nihil* might signify, etc.), which Wittgenstein undoubtedly would have rejected along the same lines as the independent meanings of words like 'if', 'but'—not to mention those given in the *Investigations*: "Think of exclamations alone, with their completely different functions. // Water! Away! Ow! […] // Are you inclined still to call these words "names of objects"? […]" Augustine, evidently, may have answered '*Yes*'.

apparently unknown to Wittgenstein)—he concludes that there is no teacher but God, and it is God alone who can teach men knowledge. Also here, in the very passage from the *Confessions* that is in question, Augustine makes the following admission: "It was not that my elders instructed me by presenting me with words in a certain order by formal teaching, as later I was to learn to alphabet. I myself acquired this power of speech with the intelligence which you gave me, my God."[136]

As H. Chadwick notes in his introduction to Augustine's *Confessions,* reading the work today one cannot help but find so much that is 'modern' in the work, both philosophically and socio-politically.[137] Wittgenstein would, no doubt, have seen it the other way around.[138] Nonetheless, given the context of its production, it would perhaps be too much to expect from the work a fully consistent philosophical treatise on language and its acquisition.[139] For it was *not intended* as such; at the same time, one can hear distinct echoes of this account throughout various works that *were so intended*—those of Russell, for example. Russell's interest in the a priori connections between the constituents of experience can be

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136 Augustine, *Confessions, op cit.*, I, 8. Again, from *De Magistro*: "Therefore, even when I speak what is true and one sees what is true, it is not I who teach you. For one is being taught not by words but by the realities themselves made manifest by the enlightening action of God from within."

137 H. Chadwick, "Introduction", p. ix, in Augustine, *Confessions*, *op cit.*, pp. ix-xxvi.

138 We might recall here Wittgenstein's remark from *Culture and Value*:

"People say again and again that philosophy doesn't really progress, that we are still occupied with the same philosophical problems as were the Greeks. But the people who say this don't understand why it has to be so. It is because our language has remained the same and keeps seducing us into asking the same questions. As long as there continues to be a verb 'to be' that looks as if it functions in the same way as 'to eat' and 'to drink', as long as we continue to talk of a river of time, of an expanse of space, etc. etc. people will keep stumbling over the same puzzling difficulties and find themselves staring at something which no explanation seems capable of clearing up.

And what's more, this satisfies a longing for the transcendent, because in so far as people think they can see the "limits of human understanding", they believe of course that they can see beyond these."
(CV, p. 15 [MS 111; 24.8.31])

139 A fact that Wittgenstein himself surely recognised, as can be seen from the following remark from "Remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough*": "Was Augustine in error, then, when he called upon God on every page of the *Confessions? //* But—one might say—if he was not in error, surely the Buddhist holy man was—or anyone else—whose religion gives expression to completely different views. But *none* of them was in error, except when he set forth a theory." (PO, p. 119 [MS 110; 1931])

connected with the question of how the meaning of simple words are learned. It was his view that the meanings of simple words can be learned only through direct acquaintance with the things that they signify. Those things, according to him, are their meaning. By this reading our publicly shared language would be contingently—possibly even parasitically—related to each individual's private language of sense-data. Russell has told us, for example, that there is a whole set of propositions that in principle only 'I' can understand. If others are to understand that to which I refer in these propositions (such as one's own self, one's toothache, this red present patch, etc.), there will have to be logical relations holding between those two languages (that language which one does understand and that which one does not) allowing one to infer from one to the other.

Though Russell would later remark that he had no interest in connecting his earlier philosophical thought with the socio-political work and educational theorising of his later years[140], one can here discern a clear argument for the manner in which a language is learned. Upon being born, each of us is endowed with a certain private (and indubitable) language, which is grounded in the a priori structure of experience. Properly speaking, this would be our 'first language'. Through our negotiations with the world, we begin quantifying over the propositions of those languages that we do not understand (other people's private languages) on the basis of the language that we do understand (our private language of sense data), and thus are we initiated into a community of speakers who do likewise and come to share a common public language via our shared descriptions of the world.[141]

Despite Russell's resolute atheism, the view of language learning that he advances is distinctly reminiscent of Augustine's conception of learning through innate human

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140 Cf. P.A. Schlipp (ed.), *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

141 For a brief discussion of this feature of Russell's theory of knowledge by acquaintance, cf. D. Pears, "The Logical Independence of Elementary Propositions", pp. 75-76, in I. Block (ed) *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), pp. 74-84; and D. Pears, *Bertrand Russell and the British Tradition of Philosophy* (New York: Collins, 1967), *passim.*

intelligence, which can ultimately attain knowledge only through the grace of God.[142] Reconstructing a direct genealogy between these respective conceptions of knowledge is beyond the scope of this work[143]; however, from this we might justifiably claim that they share at least this much in common: all learning of a publicly shared language is, in essence, the learning of a *second language* (which depends—as it appears to have done in the *Tractatus,* despite Wittgenstein's rejection of Russell's theory of knowledge—on the perfect transparency of signs[144]). Like that of Russell, the Augustinian view of language-learning presumes a coherent, proto-linguistic 'self', which only subsequently learns to speak a publicly shared language. According to such images, the linguistic novice is no *tabula rasa.* We do not *become* competent language users, we simple *are.*[145] Whether we are so by

142 In fact, in *De magistro*, Augustine goes so far as to assert that all knowledge is recollection, though he is explicitly agnostic—here, as in the *Confessions*—about the Platonic doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul. From the *Confessions*, Augustine notes simply: "What, Lord, do I wish to say except that I do not know whence I came to be in this mortal life or, as I may call it, this living death. I do not know where I came from." (Augustine, *Confessions*, *op cit.,* I, 6.)

143 Backer and Hacker, however, make an interesting claim in this regard:

> "To state that Russell's general account of language conforms to the Augustinian picture would be too weak. The whole purpose of his successive theories of meaning is to *prove* that language really does so. This conformity is deep, not apparent, and must be demonstrated. Philosophical analysis of language is what reveals it. The principle of acquaintance sums it up. Finally, the Augustinian picture informs Russell's conception of an ideal language: that would be a language in which conformity to it was *visible* because no sentence would appear except in completely analysed form. The Augustinian picture functions as a norm of representation in Russell's description of language." (Backer and Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning, op cit.*, p. 57.)

144 Though Wittgenstein's discussion of the sign-symbol relation in the *Tractatus* obviously does not treat the notion of second language acquisition in any direct way *per se*, we might easily regard passages such as those on the nature of translation—i.e., the translation of common symbols between various collections of arbitrary linguistic signs—as evidence for the kind of transparency of signs that allows for a seamless initiation from one into another. This notion of translation finds a wealth of examples in the work: e.g., between a proposition and a picture (T 4.011), between an audible symphony and its score (T 4.0141), or between ordinary languages such as English and German (T 4.243). "Like the two youths in the fairy-tale, their two horses, and their lilies," Wittgenstein notes in an illustrative example: "They are all in a certain sense one." (T 4014) The connection with logic, and especially with the translation of our everyday language into logical notation, is clear. Furthermore, its methodological weight would be difficult to underestimate given the nature of his project. This is discussed at length in 3.3ff.

145 It is important to note that this is no mere antiquated theory. We might recall here specifically the language-acquisition theories of cognitivists like Chomsky or Fodor. According to Chomsky's theory of 'universal grammar', a child is bombarded with what he calls 'primary linguistic data':

nature (as Russell might argue) or by divine intervention (as Augustine suggests) is of no consequence, for it is a view that Wittgenstein set out to disabuse us of in the *Investigations* regardless of its form:

> "Someone coming into a strange country will sometimes learn the language of the inhabitants from ostensive definitions that they give him; and he will often have to *guess* the meaning of these definitions; and will guess sometimes right, sometimes wrong.
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> And now, I think, we can say: Augustine describes the learning of human language as if the child came into a strange country and did not understand the language of the country; that is, as if it already had a language, only not this one. Or again: as if the child could already *think*, only not yet speak. And "think" would here mean something like "talk to itself"." (PI §32)

Undoubtedly, a dismissive tone may be perceived in remarks such as these, if one were to look for it. However, to do so would be to fail to appreciate the profound respect that Wittgenstein had for Augustine.[146] In passages such as that quoted at the opening of *Philosophical Investigations* one can see why Wittgenstein held Augustine in such high regard. For example, if in reporting his infancy Augustine had maintained a picture of the 'self' as one surrounded purely by private sense-data—"hermetically sealed" in the words of G. Hagberg[147]—we might expect to find an introspective report, poised between the inner, narrating self, and the present experience (perhaps even that of remembering) that yields

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"On the basis of such data, the child constructs a grammar—that is, a theory of the language of which the well-formed sentences of the primarily linguistic data constitute a small sample. To learn a language, then, the child must have a method for devising an appropriate grammar, given primary linguistic data. As a precondition for language learning, he must possess, first, a linguistic theory that specifies the form of the grammar of a possible human language, and, second, a strategy for selecting a grammar of the appropriate form that is compatible with the primary linguistic data." (N. Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1965), p. 25.) For Fodor's view, see J.A. Fodor, *The Language of Thought* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1975).

146R. Monk reports a humorous and telling example of the kind of influence that Augustine had on Wittgenstein: "He considered *Confessions* to be possibly 'the most serious book ever written'. He was particularly fond of quoting a passage from Book I, which reads: 'Yet woe betide those who are silent about you! For even those who are most gifted with speech cannot find words to describe you', but which Wittgenstein, in discussing it with Drury, preferred to render: 'And woe to those who say nothing concerning thee just because the chatterboxes talk a lot of nonsense.'" (R. Monk, *The Duty of Genius*, op cit., p. 282.)

self-knowledge—and Augustine does, to some extent, provide just that in his account of his infantile will.[148] But this image is at the same time implicitly *unsettled* from the outset. As we saw above, for example, Augustine notes that he has learned more about his own infancy from watching other infants than from what he remembers or has been told of what he does not remember by those who were there. It is in this spirit that we might consider remarks such as the following: "I have personally watched and studied a jealous baby. He could not yet speak and, pale with jealousy and bitterness, glared at his brother sharing his mother's milk. Who us unaware of this fact of experience?"[149] It is thus not only, first, that aspects of the infant's inner or 'private self'—i.e., his will, his desires, his jealousy and joy… his thoughts?—are knowable to others *before* they are knowable to the infant itself through self-reflection, but second, that this is itself a matter of the kind of 'common knowledge' that antedates any purposeful self-expression of the infant. Accordingly, it is only in reflecting on the infancy of others that Augustine has deduced what his own pre-reflective life must have been like.

When Wittgenstein describes Augustine's account of language and language-learning as a 'primitive picture' he evidently does not have in mind anything like those pictures described in the *Tractatus*. There, in the earlier work, he notes that we picture facts to ourselves: "A picture presents a situation in logical space, the existence and non-existence of states of affairs." (T 2.11) A picture is a model, which restricts reality to two possibilities: *true* or *false*. In the *Investigations*, as Baker and Hacker note, a picture is rather something proto-

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147 G. Hagberg, *Describing Ourselves: Wittgenstein and the Autobiographical Consciousness* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008), p. 133.

148 In his commentary to Augustine's *Confessions,* J.J. O'Donnell remarks:

"The weakness of W's meditation is that it does not do justice to the ethical context in which A. is careful to situate his own recollections: the aim of language-learning for the infant A. was not any disinterested attempt to utter true propositions about the world, but a much more self interested attempt to control the world and other people, using whatever rough-and-ready tools were at hand. […] It remains true, none the less, that the Augustinian view of language-learning presumes a coherent 'self' who learns to speak." (J.J. O'Donnell, *Augustine, Confessions, vol. II (Commentary on Books 1-7)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 58.)

149 Augustine, *Confessions, op cit.*, I. 7.

linguistic, a *Weltanschauung*. It establishes the what might be considered to be an intellectual climate, that viewpoint from which an entire style of investigation proceeds. It motivates and directs our inquiries, suggesting to us the problems that require explanation and what will inevitably count as a satisfactory solution to those problems once it has been discovered. It is thus that a picture can exert a fascination on us, and as Wittgenstein notes in PI §115 may even 'hold us captive', for we will be unable to get outside of it if we cannot see (if we cannot *accept*) some possible alternative *as an alternative*.[150] Nonetheless, we would not be giving Augustine his due were we to conclude, as Backer and Hacker do—upon painstakingly developing the logical conclusions to be drawn from the 'Augustinian picture' in an extended *reductio*—:

> "Under Wittgenstein's general supervision, our careful tending of the seed of Augustine's picture of language has produced a striking specimen in the garden of philosophy—a whole *Weltanschauung* encompassing language, the mind, and the world (the Augustinian picture). Wittgenstein did not admire this plant, though he thought it to be of colossal importance. He saw it as a weed, so important a weed that much of the *Investigations* constitutes an elaborate campaign to eradicate it. Such an expenditure of effort would have been ridiculous unless Wittgenstein had thought that the Augustinian picture was a pernicious and widespread weed."[151]

In line with Wittgenstein's later understanding of what it is that a picture might be and how it can exert a pernicious effect on our thought, it is true that the Augustinian picture is, as they note, "like an invisible force, evident only in its visible effects; like a prevailing wind that affects the growth of a tree, it might show itself only in the asymmetric shape that it gives to explicit theorizing."[152] And Augustine does indeed advance a primitive picture of

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150It is in this sense that Backer and Hacker note, quite correctly: "Russell's theory of descriptions is an intellectual triumph precisely because it shows how to reconcile certain notoriously recalcitrant phenomena with the paradigm [towards which theories naturally gravitate, i.e. in Kuhn's sense]. More generally, the ingenuity of investigators and the sophistication of theories are judged by their success in accommodating everything to the adamantine standards set by the paradigm." (G. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning*, *op cit.,* p. 47.)

151G. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning*, *op cit.,* p. 45.

152G. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning*, *op cit.,* p. 46.

how a language is learnt, as Wittgenstein claims. However, even here—in precisely this 'pernicious and widespread weed', fit only for 'eradication' in Baker and Hacker's esteem—another, more important and perhaps even more pernicious weed has already been dispelled from the start: that of the introspective, epistemically independent solipsist.

As Wittgenstein never ceases to remind us, it can be useful to imagine a language more primitive than our own: "It disperses the fog to study the phenomena of language in primitive kinds of application in which one can command a clear view of the aim and functioning of the words." (PI §5) This is an important qualification. For, on the one hand, it helps demonstrate just how how far many contemporary scholars on Augustine have misunderstood the purpose of the quotation at the opening of the *Investigations* (conflating, as it were, Wittgenstein's characterisation of Augustine's allegory as a 'primitive picture' with something like an argument for its *falsity*, which is evidently not the case).[153] On the other hand, it also helps us to imagine just how Wittgenstein might very well have seen something *useful*—a 'grain of truth', as it were, to continue with Backer and Hacker's apt botanical metaphor—in the very picture that Augustine presents: that which Augustine interestingly and insightfully calls 'the natural language of all peoples'.

III. Learning and Unlearning

In §2 of the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein notes that Augustine's concept of meaning rests on a primitive understanding of the way language functions; *however*: "one can also say that it is the idea of a language more primitive than ours." (PI §2) He continues thus:

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153 Here is a typical example: "Wittgenstein argues that Augustine gives a false picture of the essence of human language when he claims that the function of words consists in designating objects and when he interprets sentences merely as the connections of such designations." (J. Brachtendorf, "The Reception of Augustine in Modern Philosophy", p. 487, in ed. M. Vessey, *A Companion to Augustine* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 478-491.)

"Let us imagine a language for which the description given by Augustine is right. The language is meant to serve for communication between a builder A and an assistant B. A is building with building stones: these are blocks, pillars, slabs and beams. B has to pass the stones, and that in the order in which A needs them. For this purpose they use a language consisting of the words "block", "pillar", "slab", "beam". A calls them out;—B brings the stones which he has learnt to bring at such-and-such a call.——Conceive of this as a complete primitive language." (PI §2)

As noted above, when Wittgenstein first began preparing material after his return to Cambridge in 1929 for what he planned to become his second publication, he felt it was essential to begin with a fragment from which the rest of the work would follow naturally. Despite the fact that at the opening of the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein has only just lightly touched on the element of language-*learning* that pervades the quote taken from Augustine's *Confessions*—choosing rather, as he does, to focus initially on its primitive structure, seen here in §2—we can nonetheless witness his attentiveness to the pedagogical aspect of Augustine's picture of language in Wittgenstein's remarks from the *Nachlaß* at this time. From MS 111, where Wittgenstein initially begins to meditate on the relevant passage from Augustine, the very first of these remarks is: "Augustine on the learning of language"[154]— and, significantly, not Augustine *on language*.

But it is not for this reason alone that we should expect to find that the image of the language-learner is one that is woven into the fabric of *Philosophical Investigations*— indeed, from beginning (PI §1) to end (PI §693)[155]—and, as Cavell has so eloquently shown,

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154 Volume IV of the *Wiener Ausgabe,* ed. M. Nedo (Vienna: Pringer-Verlag), p. 9.

155 In this regard it is also noteworthy that, as M. O'C. Drury relates, in 1931 Wittgenstein had expressed to him his wish to use as a motto for the *Investigations* a quotation from Shakespeare's *King Lear*: "I'll teach you differences". How easy it is too focus perhaps too intently on the '*differences*' in this quotation, and miss the pedagogue himself who will do the teaching! As I noted previously, Baker and Hacker are correct to point out that: "It is striking how the Nestroy motto and [four of the six alternate mottoes W. had expressed an interest in using] display a kind of family resemblance. The image of husk and core, appearance and reality, the revealed and the concealed run through them, even though they alternate in evaluation." (G. P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 16.) They fail to note, however, that options such as the one quoted here, from Shakespeare's *King Lear*, relate precisely to Wittgenstein's post-Tractarian

this is often explicitly tied to the image of the child. Before embarking on his analysis of the primitive language in PI §2, to which Wittgenstein would return throughout the first part of the work, he notes, in fact, that: "A child uses such primitive forms of language when it learns to talk." (PI §5) Given the critical characterisation of Wittgenstein's reception of Augustine sketched above—whether or not that characterisation is wholly justified—this would appear indeed to be a strange concession to precisely what Augustine has claimed. So where, we might then ask, has Augustine gone wrong exactly? Wittgenstein does not defer the answer: "Here the teaching of language is not explanation, but training." (ibid.)

It is not uncommon to regard ostensive definitions as establishing a link between language and the extra-linguistic world. Though the term 'ostension definition', or the German *hinweisende Definition,* had not been coined at the time the *Tractatus* was written, something like ostensive definition seems to figure centrally in Wittgenstein's earlier work from that period. If one wished to make a connection between picture of language sketched here at the opening of the *Investigations* and that sketched in the *Tractatus*, the samples of the ostensive definitions given in Augustine's narrative would seem to play a role analogous to that of the *Gegenstände* in the *Tractatus*: the simple objects to which the elements of pictures correspond (T 2.13). In each case they serve as simple, unanalysable points at which language connects with reality—the *this's* and *thats* which pin our propositions to the world—and, as Wittgenstein notes in the *Notebooks*, it is this connection which is supposed to guarantee the sense of the picture as a whole: "The demand for simple things *is* the demand for the determinacy of sense." (NB, p. 63, cf. T 3.23) But how, then, is this connection established in the first place?

As we have seen, from the Tractarian point of view, it is none too clear. In this regard, A. Kenny notes:

> "At *Tractatus* 2.1513-4 Wittgenstein says that the correlations between the elements of a picture and things in
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> the world are 'as it were the feelers of the picture's elements, with which the picture touches reality'. However,

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philosophical methodology, nor do they consider explicitly what these methodological remarks might have in common with the other four.

it is not said that the correlation is made by ostensive definition. 'Ostensive definition' does not appear in the index to the *Tractatus,* but this is unsurprising since the expression was not yet in use as a technical term. (I owe this point to Dr. P. Hacker.[156]) But no other term appears which could be a non-technical equivalent. *Hindeuten* and *hinweisen* appear in 5.461, 2.02331, 5.02, 5.522, but not in the appropriate sense.[157] The nearest to an allusion to ostensive definition is the passage at 3.263"[158]

We saw above that Wittgenstein has described the work of philosophy as consisting solely of elucidations (T 4.112), and that indeed his work in the *Tractatus* is to be properly understood as such (T 6.54). The passage that Kenny refers to here (i.e. T 3.263) is, of course, the *other* place where 'elucidation' figures in the *Tractatus*:

"The meanings of primitive signs can be explained by means of elucidations. Elucidations are propositions that contain the primitive signs. So they can only be understood if the meanings of those signs are already known." (T 3.263)

It is clear that these two uses of the term 'elucidation' are intended to serve different functions in the *Tractatus*, the one being logical and the other methodological. However, if we consider Wittgenstein's remarks in the opening of the *Tractatus*, that the book will only be understood by those who have already had the thoughts that are expressed in, we can see that they nonetheless share a certain resemblance. Furthermore, in terms of the *propaedeutic* function of elucidating the meaning of simple terms, the present passage—which concerns only the logical service that elucidations are supposed to perform as

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156Kenny is here referring to Hacker's paper, "Frege and Wittgenstein on Elucidations", *Mind*, 84(4), 1975, pp. 601-609.

157This 'appropriate sense' being the form of the expression that Wittgenstein (and others) accepted by the time he was composing *Philosophical Investigations*, as found e.g. in the following:

"An important part of the training will consist in the teacher's pointing to the objects, directing the child's attention to them, and at the same time uttering a word; for instance, the word "slab" as he points to that shape. (I do not yet want to call this "ostensive definition" ["*hinweisende Erklärung", oder "Definition"*], because the child cannot yet *ask* what the name is. I will call it "ostensive teaching of words" [*hinweisendes Lehren der Wörter"*].——I say that it will form an important par of the training, because it is so with human beings; not because it could not be imagined otherwise." (PI §6)

158A. Kenny, *The Legacy of Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), p. 14.

opposed to the global methodological role of elucidations in the opening and closing of the work—remains as obscure as the former.[159] Whatever the moral we are ultimately meant to derive from this, one thing that Wittgenstein is definitively *not* saying here is that we first learn the meanings of names by ostensive definition, and then, having successfully hooked those names onto things in the world, we subsequently proceed to put them together in meaningful sentences. And this is, of course, what one would expect. It is none other than Frege's 'context principle', formulated in the *Tractatus* thus: "Only propositions have sense; only in the nexus of a proposition does a name have meaning [*Bedeutung*].*"* (T 3.3) Whatever our understanding of the meaning of simple names, the point here is that it stands or falls with our understanding of the meaningful propositions in which the names figure. How *this* might be so, however, is another matter, one that would seem to be unanswerable from the point of view of the *Tractatus.* And this, of course, shows an essential difference between Frege and Wittgenstein's respective uses of elucidation.   The Fregean use of elucidation belongs to the propaedeutic of *science*, and as such it can rely on our everyday, pre-scientific language for an elucidation of its central features. Although the primitive terms of his *Begriffsschrift* cannot be explained from within the script itself, they can be rendered intelligible in ordinary language—despite the fact that, because of this, no rigorous definition can therefore be provided. Such recourse to everyday language in the service of elucidation was not a means available to Wittgenstein, for unlike Frege his concern was with language in general.

By the time Wittgenstein returned to Cambridge, he came to realise that ostensive definitions could not serve the purpose he seemed to have previously—if obscurely— imagined for them. As he later noted in conversation with Waismann: "When I wrote the

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159M. Black, for example, notes that he finds this passage 'disturbing', stating: "It is impossible to explain a name's meaning explicitly: the only way to convey the meaning is to use the name in a proposition, thus presupposing that the meaning is already understood. On this view, the achievement of common reference by speaker and bearer becomes something mysterious." (M. Black, *A Companion to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, *op cit.*, p. 15.) Ultimately, it is doubtful that Wittgenstein intended this remark about language-learning to be mysterious; more plausible is that he felt it was something that belonged to the realm of psychology, and not logic.

Tractatus I was unclear about logical analysis and ostensive definition. I then thought that there is a 'linking up of language and reality'."[160] As an illustration of the difficulties Wittgenstein came to identify in his early understanding of ostension, we might consider the kinds of objects that are supposed to populate Augustine's world: those things corresponding to nouns, Wittgenstein suggests in PI §1, such as 'table', 'chair', 'bread', etc. Among these objects there might be, for example, a table. It would have been likely, therefore, that Augustine's elders had occasion to point at this thing and utter the word 'table'. But how could Augustine learn by observing such behaviour that this name was to be associated in fact with *the tabl*e, and not rather to its *material*, its *colour*, *shape*, *size*, *number,* and so on? Pointing alone cannot serve to specify the intended definiendum, for the gesture will be the same for each of these different things—for which even the general term 'object' will increasingly and inevitably fail to suffice[161]—and there seems to be no strictly logical way in which they might be distinguished from one another.

As Wittgenstein notes, following his remark on Augustine's idea of the infant as one who has arrived in a 'strange country'—that is, as one who already has a language, only not that of his elders, and therefore has to *guess* what is intended—:

> "Suppose, however, someone were to object: "It is not true that you must already be master of a language in order to understand an ostensive definition: all you need—of course!—is to know or guess what the person giving the explanation is point to. That is, whether for example to the shape of the object, or to its colour, or to

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160 Quoted in: F. Waismann, *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, ed. B. McGuinness, trans. J. Schulte and B. McGuinness (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979), pp. 209-210.

161 In the opening paragraph of *The Blue Book*, Wittgenstein provides a short list which contains a few even more exotic examples, familiar words for which one would struggle to find 'universals' even if one thought, as Russell apparently did, that it would be worthwhile to do so:

"Augustine, in describing his learning of language, says that he was taught to speak by learning the names of things. It is clear that whoever says this has in mind the way in which a child learns such words as "man", "sugar", "table", etc. He does not primarily think of such words as "today", "not", "but", "perhaps"." (BlB, p. 77)

Similarly, in the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein would later note: "Think of exclamations alone, with their completely different functions. // Water! // Away! // Ow! // Help! // Fine! // No! // Are you inclined still to call these words "names of objects?" " (PI §27)

its number, and so on."——And what does 'pointing to its shape', 'pointing to its colour' consist in? Pointing to a piece of paper.—And now to its shape—now to its colour—now to its number (that sounds queer).—How did you do it?—You will say that you 'meant' a different thing each time you pointed. And if I ask how this is done, you will say you concentrated your attention on the colour, the shape, etc. But I ask you: how is *that* done?" (PI §33)

Furthermore, even if we suppose that the child has guessed correctly in the given case and the name is indeed correctly ascribed to the intended object, how is ostension to teach the grammatical role that this name is then supposed to play in a well-formed sentence? We might take, for example, even the case of *ostension itself*. As Wittgenstein notes early on in the *Investigations*, while still in direct dialogue with the picture of language sketched by Augustine in PI §1:

"Are "there" and "this" also taught ostensively?—Imagine how one might perhaps teach their use. One will point to places and things—but in this case the pointing occurs in the *use* of the words too and not merely in learning the use.—" (PI §9)[162]

On the surface, the simple point is this: ostension, along with all of the other diverse activities that make language use successful, cannot be contained solely in the relationship between name and object. As Wittgenstein would put it later on in the *Investigations*: "A great deal of stage-setting in the language is presupposed if the mere act of naming is to make sense." (PI §257)

162This recalls a noteworthy remark in the *Notebooks*, which finally serves to illustrate that there is some role for ostension in the *Tractatus,* and just how far Wittgenstein had come in rejecting this view by the time he was composing *Philosophical Investigations*: "What seems to be given us a priori is the concept: *This*.—Identical with the concept of the *object*." (NB, p. 61) Wittgenstein's use of italics here for the indexical 'this' would suggest indeed, that ostension is what he has in mind here. This stylistic feature is not one that would be abandoned in the *Investigations*: "The definition of the number two, "That is called 'two'"—pointing at two nuts—is perfectly exact.—But how how can two be defined like that? The person one gives the definition to doesn't know what one wants to call "two"; he will suppose that "two" is the name given to *this* group of nuts!" (PI §28)

When teaching a language, we do not tell language-learners *which* things in the world the words of our common language refer to, as if we only needed to attach labels to those objects that are otherwise already present to the young learners mind (PI §26). Rather, we teach them *what things there are*. We initiate them into a world, one where we do things with words—which they might thus be said to *inherit*. As Wittgenstein notes, concerning his own 'primitive language-game', sketched initially in PI §2:

> "In languages (2) and (8) there was no such thing as asking something's name. This, with its correlate, ostensive definition, is, we might say, a language-game on its own. That is really to say: we are brought up, trained, to ask: "What is that called?"—upon which the name is given. And there is also a language-game of inventing a name from something, and hence saying, "This is …." and then using the new name. (Thus, for example, children give names to their dolls and then talk about them and to them. Think in this connection how singular is the use of a person's name to *call* him!)" (PI §27)

Cavell has summarised this point well in *The Claim of Reason*, when he notes: "In 'learning language' you learn not merely what the names of things are, but what a name is; not merely what the form of expression is for expressing a wish, but what expressing a wish is; not merely what the word for 'father' is, but what a father is; not merely what the word for 'love' is, but what love is."[163]

From the point of view of the *Tractatus*, and the necessity of employing well-formed sentences for meaningful speech to even begin, we might also perceive in this pedagogical focus a model for the achievement of syntactic comprehension: i.e, learning 'what a father is'—an 'object', by the Tractarian framework—we learn how to address him, how to speak about him, etc. Learning 'what love is'—a 'relation', according to the *Tractatus*—we learn how to speak of it in a meaningful way and without 'crossing our categories', as it were. While Wittgenstein's later notion of grammar would complicate this strict categorical understanding of objects and relations, etc., in his subsequent appeal to grammar the same attention to well-formed sentences is given. Despite dramatically expanding the sphere of

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163 S. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 177.

meaningful utterances, Wittgenstein's adherence to the 'context principle' never wavered (so long as one applies it to competent speakers, such as philosophers, for example) and thus, in this sense, it remained an essential element of the critique of metaphysics (now understood not simply to mean metaphysics itself, but rather the ill-formed speech of *metaphysicians*) that would run throughout his work, early and late, despite the change in compositional form that occurred between his two major works.

However, in the *Investigations*, there is never solely *one* point being made and our interpretations of it are rarely, if ever, meant to be simple in just this sense. On one level Wittgenstein is indeed offering an alternative to what might be considered a paradigmatic case of the kind of accounts that can often found in philosophical works—a 'primitive picture' at best, a 'pernicious and widespread weed' in the philosopher's garden at worst. Whether or not this is a fair characterisation of Augustine's overall view, it is a picture of language that is nonetheless present in diverse forms throughout the history of philosophy, right up to and including that of Russell, possibly even the *Tractatus* itself, and beyond. Wittgenstein's explicit task is thus, as we have seen, to get his readers to accept his alternative account *as an alternative*. His aim is to enable us to shift our perspective. But then what exactly are we to do with this alternative once it has been accepted as a viable alternative?

For indeed, on another level, a more global methodological point is also being made: a critique directed at philosophy *as a whole*, in all its guises, regardless of what the object of its fascination may be. It is, as Wittgenstein notes in PI §192, the very tendency of philosophers to seek 'super-expresssions' or 'philosophical superlatives' in their attempts to find something that would qualify as an acceptable explanation of the phenomena that perplex them, whatever it may be. It is the 'craving for generality' that leads them to a contempt of particulars, due to their rough and irregular form.

Before concluding this section, let us consider an example. In PI §143, Wittgenstein introduces his discussion of rule-following, around which the great bulk of the

Investigations revolves. The example under consideration here is—once again—that of a young learner, and his reaction to a given order. Wittgenstein supposes that it is an order that we, as competent language users, are familiar with, but which the learner in question does not yet fully understand. The order: "to write down a series of signs according to a certain formation rule", e.g., that of the natural numbers. He thus begins by asking how an instructor might bring the pupil to understand what this notational form requires:

> "First of all series of numbers will be written down for him and he will be required to copy them. (Do not balk at the expression "series of numbers"; it is not being used wrongly here.) And here already there is a normal and an abnormal leaner's reaction.—At first perhaps we guide his hand in writing out the series 0 to 9; but then the *possibility of getting him to understand* will depend on his going on the write it down independently.—And here we can imagine, e.g., that he does copy out the figures independently, but not in the right order: he writes sometimes one sometimes another at random. And then communication stops at *that* point.—Or again, he makes '*mistakes*' in the order.—The difference between this and the first case will of course be one of frequency.—Or he makes a *systematic* mistake; for example, he copies every other number, or he copies the series 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, …. like this: 1, 0, 3, 2, 5, 4, …… Here we shall almost be tempted to say that he has understood *wrong*." (PI §143)

Evidently, the pupil may make infrequent or systematic errors; however, he might also write numbers down at random. He might respond abnormally to the instructor's attempts at explanation—including, in this case: guiding the pupil's hand, repeating his own expressions before the pupil, attempting to get the pupil to '*repeat after me*', as one can often hear it said in any number of diverse pedagogical contexts—in which case the pupil's capacity to learn will come to an end. Now, if such *abnormal* reactions were to become the norm—for this particular pupil, for an entire community, or for humanity at large—then our usual attempts at explanation would lose their point. What would normally count as an explanation in these circumstances would cease to do so. The fact is, however, that in most cases such techniques work just fine and in these cases we simply are not troubled by the apparent lack of logical foundations at all.

Wittgenstein is nowhere denying that the correct apprehension of a rule or an ostensive definition cannot (or does not) function in many cases (or even in the majority of cases). Neither is he denying that particular portions of our publicly shared language might very well be learned in precisely the way that Augustine describes. In fact, he notes in relation to the language-game sketched in PI §2: "An important part of the training will consist in the teacher's pointing to the objects, directing the child's attention to them, and at the same time uttering a word." (PI §6) What he is denying, however, is that what will count as a correct guess or an incorrect guess in any particular case is determined by a set of abstract and external 'super criteria', timeless and immutable, determining in each instance the correct application of the rule. It is a conception that has been termed, if somewhat euphemistically, the 'Platonic conception of rules'. According to this notion, familiar from the case of the philosophy of mathematics especially, it is *the rule itself* —or, in the case of ostension, *the object itself*—that will be the criteria for its own correct application or ascription. Furthermore, its role as arbitrator of our adherence will exist independently of whether the rule is followed once, twice, or always, and independently of any exceptions one may or may not encounter in a given particular instance. Indeed, the rule will exist independently of whether or not it is ever followed, or even whether there is anyone there to follow it, etc. By this conception, when we follow rules we only execute what has already been made present to the mind in the act of grasping the rule. Once again, we have here an image of the language-speaker very much akin to Russell's solipsist, insofar as the correct use of language is necessarily tied to the direct apprehension of the object, rule, etc. which is only *subsequently* referred to or obeyed in our public acts of discourse.

Now, despite Wittgenstein rejection of Russell's image of solipsism—which was already subjected to a devastating critique in the *Tractatus*—he evidently recognised that the apparent privacy of sensations presents a unique case of training in the new sense devised in *Philosophical Investigations.* We can see this if we consider that nearly a hundred remarks in direct succession are devoted precisely to this topic: PI §§243-315, now christened the

'Private Language Argument'. In PI §244, for example, Wittgenstein begins his reflections on sensation language thus:

> "How do words *refer* to sensations?—There doesn't seem to be any problem here; don't we talk about sensations every day, and give them names? But how is the connection between the name and the thing set up? This question is the same as: how does a human being learn the meaning of the names of sensations?—of the word "pain" for example. Here is one possibility: words are connected with the primitive, the natural, expressions of the sensation and used in their place. A child has hurt himself and he cries; and then adults talk to him and teach him exclamations and, later, sentences. They teach the child new pain-behaviour.
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> "So you are saying that the word 'pain' really means crying?"—On the contrary: the verbal expression of pain replaces crying and does not describe it." (PI §244)

Unlike words such as 'table' and 'chair', words without such immediate, primitive expressions—there is, for example, no characteristic 'table-behaviour'—the natural expressions that result from these sensations may be given a linguistic replacement. This is surely a stark reminder of the kind of diversity Wittgenstein asks us to be attentive to throughout the *Investigations*. For unlike the use of words such as 'table' (as in the expression 'This is a table'), what Wittgenstein is suggesting here is that a word like 'pain' (as in the expression 'I am in pain') *need not* be a description. It may, for example, function as a linguistic proxy for the sensation's more primitive expression (like a cry, a shout, grimace or groan).

It may, certainly… but *must* it? In *Insight and Illusion*, Hacker gives the following account of our use of (and our learning the use of) basic sensation words that is founded on a particular interpretation of this paragraph. He notes there:

> "The framework for this language-game consists in the shared human disposition to react to injury by groaning or crying out in pain and assuaging the injured limb. For the beginning of such language-games with psychological expressions lies in natural human behaviour in certain circumstances, in our groans of pain, our

> gasps of surprise, our trying to obtain what we want, our trembling when in danger, and our paroxysms of anger. (But not *all* psychological expressions are like this.)"[164]

Despite this last caveat, Hacker seems to be presenting on Wittgenstein's behalf a comprehensive theory of how at least some language-games develop and how a child becomes initiated into them: the child hurts itself, moans, we teach it to replace its groans with a linguistic expression such as 'I am in pain', 'it hurts', and so on. He goes on to explain that the relation between natural behaviour and linguistic expression will vary from concept to concept, and that some sensation words (such as a tickling feeling, for example) might have no characteristic natural behaviour at all. Nonetheless, he concludes: "It is an *indispensable* guide, but each concept needs careful scrutiny in its own right."[165]

But in fact, just how indispensable it is will depend on whether *any scrutiny at all* regarding the biological roots of this or that aspect of our language—careful or otherwise—is important for the kind of project that Wittgenstein was engaged in. It is, for example, difficult to reconcile Hacker's gloss of PI §244 with methodological remarks such as: "We must do away with all *explanation*, and description alone must take its place" (PI §109), or: "Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains for deduces anything.— Since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain. For what is hidden, for example, is of no interest to us." (PI §126) For indeed, what Hacker appears to be offering in this interpretation of PI §244 is precisely an *explanation* of our capacity to use certain kinds of sensation language correctly, and not a description of its correct use.

We will return to explore the significance of such methodological remarks shortly; however, in this regard it is important to note that if one reads PI §244 carefully one will notice that, when Wittgenstein introduces this example of the linguistic replacement for natural behaviour, he qualifies the case in a significant manner. What Wittgenstein is presenting us with here is, he notes: *one possibility*. This is an important qualification, for it suggests that

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164 P.M.S. Hacker, *Insight and Illusion (Revised Edition)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 293.

165 P.M.S. Hacker, *Insight and Illusion (Revised Edition),* op cit., p. 297.

the account of language-learning described in this passage, and indeed throughout the *Investigations,* may be intended for a different purpose than the one that Hacker has described. The danger that follows from Hacker's interpretation (and others like it[166]) is that it relies precisely on a failure to consider this qualification of the account that follows and thus continues the search for foundations to linguistic phenomena—i.e., *some foundation or other*, to this or that phenomenon—although the Tractarian search for *the* foundation has nonetheless been abandoned.[167] For in fact, if Wittgenstein considered the case of sensation

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[166]The reading I have highlighted here is certainly not unique to Hacker, and I have taken his interpretation only as an example of how many people have understood Wittgenstein's appeal to the 'natural' in the *Investigations*. D. Pears, for example, suggests that Wittgenstein's resolution of the 'rule-following paradox' "is achieved by going outside language and showing how [an intention to do 'the same again'] rests on pre-existing independent structures." (D. Pears, "Wittgenstein's Naturalism", p. 419, *The Monist*, 78(3), (1995), pp. 411-423.) He goes on, incredibly, to conclude that Wittgenstein "might have included in his naturalistic investigations, the material studied by neurologists and psychologists" (ibid, p. 423). N. Malcolm uses PI §244 to reconstruct how we acquire our talk about causal relationships—cf. "Wittgenstein: The Relation of Language to Instinctive Behaviour", in N. Malcolm, *Wittgensteinian Themes* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995) and "Language as Expressive Behaviour, in N. Malcolm, *Nothing is Hidden* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986)—and V. Krebs goes one step *further* when he says of this passage that: "Although he is speaking of a specific language-game, it is *every* word, not just psychological words, that must be appropriated in this way if language is to be meaningful; if, that is, it is to serve as a means of communication for the speaker." (V. Krebs, "The Subtle Body of Language and the Lost Sense of Philosophy", p. 147, *Philosophical Investigations*, 23, 2000, pp. 147-155.) These are all interesting possibilities in their own right, though hardly stand on two legs if they are intended to be a thorough exposition of *Wittgenstein's* philosophy. I am reminded here of Janik's apt remark: "We should bear in mind that our problems often arise from his *solutions*." (A. Janik, "Nyiri on the Conservatism of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy", in A. Janik, *Essays on Wittgenstein and Weininger* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1985), p. 133.)

[167]This point has been made at length in K. Dromm's *Wittgenstein on Rules and Nature*. The weight of Dromm's reading rests in Nozick's conception of 'philosophical explanations' (cf. R. Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981). He remarks, for example:

"We do not use these explanations to expand our knowledge, but to make coherent or plausible the things we already know. They ease a tension, among other things, relieving the anxiety or other distress that tension might cause." (K. Dromm, *Wittgenstein on rules and Nature* (London: Continuum, 2008)*, p. 33.)

Thus, Wittgenstein's discussion of 'general facts of nature', 'primitive responses' or 'instinctual reactions' is not meant to be taken as a *thesis* about our common biological origin. Philosophical explanation, as opposed to the ordinary garden-variety or scientific kind, do not need to be true to serve their purposes; they are to be thought of as therapies, justified by their ability to cure us of our misplaced philosophical convictions. According to Dromm:

language to be a special case, as I have suggested above, it is highly doubtful that this is because sensation language needs something like a 'special kind' of foundation in order to be made sense of—one that would be required given the lack of our usual ostensive possibilities, for example. The evidence for this is now widely available; however, we might consider here a very characteristic remark that Wittgenstein once made to a student of his:

> "I used to say at one time that, in order to get clear how a certain sentence is used, it is a good idea to ask oneself the question: 'How would one try to verify such an assertion?' But that's just one way among others of getting clear about the use of a word or a sentence. For example, another question which is often very useful to ask oneself is: 'How is this word learned?' 'How would one set about teaching a child the use of this word?' But some people have turned this suggestion into a dogma—as if I'd been advancing a *theory* about meaning."[168]

It is much more likely, therefore, that if the case of sensation language is a special one it is because in such instances we are *particularly* attracted to a particular picture of how our language functions. It is perhaps because it is the last bastion of the solipsist—who might agree, e.g., that things like tables, chairs, etc., do indeed exist 'out there' in the world, but still: '*Only I know this pain*'—that Wittgenstein is concerned with addressing here and *not* any supposed biological imperative within the mechanisms of language-learning. It is perhaps rather an exemplar—and undoubtedly just one among many, no matter how

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"Philosophical explanations are a kind of fiction, and like any fiction, they might well be true. Also, they are not meant to inform. Rather, they are intended to provoke our imagination. Fictions do this so as to entertain, but sometimes also to instruct, and instruction can take many other forms besides informing." (ibid, p. 34)

168 Quoted in D.A.T. Gasking and A.C. Jackson, "Wittgenstein as Teacher", *op cit.,* p. 54. However, in defence of those still tend to find theses in the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein's later remark in *On Certainty* would seem to indicate a certain degree of plausibility to their account of PI §244: "I myself wrote in my book that children learn to understand a word in such and such a way. Do I know that, or do I believe it? Why in such a case of I write not "I believe etc." but simply the indicative sentence?" (OC §290) Whether Wittgenstein therefore intended the original remark to be, in fact, a *thesis*, or whether he changed his mind about the role such fine distinctions should play in his philosophy is an interesting question, which unfortunately cannot be developed here. The question remains: why indeed did Wittgenstein write 'simply the indicative sentence'?

stubborn—of the kinds of problems that Wittgenstein sought not to solve with his philosophy, but rather dissolve… not to learn, but *to unlearn*.

IV. The *Investigations* as a Pedagogical Work

In a well-known passage of the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein compares language to an 'ancient city': "a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses." (PI §18) I would suggest that this is like Wittgenstein's own writing in the *Investigations* itself and thus serves as a useful guide to reading the work. We might recall here, for example, this particularly noteworthy remark from the preface:

> "I have written down these thoughts as *remarks,* short paragraphs, of which there is sometimes a fairly long chain about the same subject, while I sometimes make a sudden change, jumping from one topic to another.— It was my intention at first to bring all this together in a book whose form I pictured differently at different times. But the essential thing was that the thoughts should proceed from one subject to another in a natural order and without breaks.
>
> After several unsuccessful attempts to weld my results together into such a whole, I realised that I should never succeed. The best that I could write would never be more than philosophical remarks; my thoughts were soon crippled if I tried to force them on in any single direction against their natural inclination.——And this was, of course, connected with the very nature of the investigation. For this compels us to travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction.—The philosophical remarks in this book are, as it were, a number of sketches of landscape which were made in the course of these long and involved journeyings." (PI, Preface)

Mixing our metaphors somewhat, we might consider those remarks from among the 'fairly long chains' that Wittgenstein refers to here—such as his treatment of the 'Augustinian picture of language' and the subsequent private-language argument that develops out of this —to be like the more straight and regular thoroughfares; we might likewise consider those

more singular, but just as well-known passages—such as PI §43: "For a *large* class of cases —though not for all—in which we employ the word "meaning" it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language"—to be like the market-places in the centre of town, where many stop to do their daily business or to gossip; we might consider those remarks from among the last of the book to be like the irregularly lighted edge of town, less visited by the casual tourist; and so on.

By the light of this metaphor, however, we should be reluctant to describe Wittgenstein's frequent methodological breaks as just one more kind of 'jump' among others, just one more kind of 'sudden change' between the more overt subjects dealt with in the book: "the concepts of meaning, of understanding, of a proposition, of logic, the foundations of mathematics, states of consciousness, and other things", by Wittgenstein's own reckoning (PI, Preface). We should rather view them as something akin to *road signs*, marking the essential routes and noting the detours that one must attend to if one is not to loose one's way in this 'maze'—intended, as it were, to keep his readers 'on the straight and narrow', though language (including Wittgenstein's own) is rarely if ever either.

The methodological significance to be drawn from Wittgenstein discussion of language-learning can clearly been seen, if we consider how, when Wittgenstein introduces his account of rule-following in PI §143—before continuing to PI §145, where we are meant to continue by supposing that the pupil now writes the series 0 to 9 "to our satisfaction"—he distinctly pauses in order to re-orient the reader in PI §144. In that first remark, PI §143, we recall that Wittgenstein notes that the pupils 'capacity to learn may come to end', if for example he reacts to our explanation *abnormally*: a case similar to that in which "a person naturally reacted to the gesture of pointing with the hand looking in the direction of the line from finger-tip to wrist, not from wrist to finger-tip." (PI §185) Wittgenstein then pauses, in order to interrogate his own use of language in this particular passage:

> "What do I mean when I say "the pupil's capacity to learn *may* come to an end here"? Do I say this from my own experiences? Of course not. (Even if I had such experience.) Then what am I doing with this

proposition? Well, I should like to say: "Yes, it's true, you can imagine that too, that might happen to!"—But was I trying to draw someone's attention to the fact that he is capable of imagining that?——I wanted to put that picture before him, and his *acceptance* of the picture consists in his now being inclined to regard a given case differently: that is, to compare it with *this* rather than *that* set of pictures. I have changed his *way of looking at things.* (Indian mathematicians: "look at this.")" (PI §144)[169]

The picture of philosophy that is sketched in the *Investigations* is not a flattering one, and in the many personal recollections that we have of Wittgenstein from this period we know that he was not shy about expressing his outright antipathy for it. Within the pages of the work itself, Wittgenstein compares the philosopher to one who has forgotten the purpose of what he is doing (PI §127), to an idling engine (PI §132), to a fly stuck in a fly-bottle (PI §309). Perhaps most famously, he compares the philosopher's treatment of a question to an illness (PI §255).[170]

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[169] This source of this appendix is sketched in greater detail in MS 220, reprinted in *Zettel*: "I once read somewhere that a geometrical figure, with the words "Look at this", serves as a proof for certain Indian mathematicians. This looking too effects an alteration in one's way of seeing.)" (Z §461) According to Baker and Hacker, the text Wittgenstein is referring to here may be von Hartmann's *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, which contains the following remark:

"It is in ethno-psychological respects extremely characteristic that the treatment of geometry among Greeks aims at a rigorous discursive mode of proof, and sedulously ignores the most obvious intuitive demonstrations; whereas that of the Hindoos, in spite of an endowment for arithmetic far surpassing the Greeks, is yet entirely based on direct intuition, and is usually confined to an artificial construction in support of intuition, to which the one word 'see!' is appended."

A useful comparison might be made to a characteristic remark from Wittgenstein's *Nachlaß*, MS 161, 6, where he first draws a geometrical proof and then notes: "How does this proof convince me? It convinces my eyes." (Cf. G. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein, Understanding and Meaning*, *op cit.,* p. 623.)

[170] But then who is the philosopher here, and what is the disease: the *question itself* or the *treatment of the question?* The original remark reads: *Der Philosoph behandelt eine Frage; wie eine Krankheit.* To be sure, Anscombe's translation of Wittgenstein's original remark—"The philosopher's treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness"—fails to do justice to the ambiguity of the original. Anscombe's version suggests that we should understand this remark as stating: the philosopher treats a question as one treats an illness. However, the original also allows for the possibility that it is not *the question* but the *philosopher's treatment* of it that is like a disease. Like the infamous 'Ink-Blot' tests of cognitive science, which Wittgenstein was highly interested in, whether one choose one interpretation or the other will inevitably say more about the interpreter than the originator of the remark. (For an insightful discussion of this passage, cf. S. Mulhall, *Wittgenstein's Private Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), pp. 89-95.)

From out of the treatment of language-learning in the *Investigations*, I believe another metaphor for the philosopher presents itself: that of the *abnormal learner*, one whose capacity to carry on independently has been brought to an abrupt end by a refusal to accept our ordinary, everyday explanations for any number of things. Wittgenstein's discussion of the deviant pupil in PI §143 shows the interdependency of *the normative* and *the normal*. By the light of this comparison, it also shows the deviance of the philosopher, who refuses to participate in the everyday kinds of linguistic performances that keep our language functioning smoothly. As Wittgenstein notes:

> "When we give an order, it can look as if the ultimate thing sought by the order had to remain unexpressed, as there is always a gulf between an order and its execution. Say I want someone to make a particular movement, say to raise his arm. To make this clear, I do the movement. This picture seems unambiguous till we ask: how does he know that *he is to make that* movement?—How does he know at all what use he is to make of the signs I give him, whatever they are?—Perhaps I shall now try to supplement the order by means of further signs, by pointing from myself to him, making encouraging gestures, etc. Here it looks as if the order were beginning to stammer." (PI §433)

A sign-post, an arrow for instance, can be regarded as a simple rule—but even the signpost begins to stammer when we ask, as philosophers: How should I *interpret* that arrow now? The philosopher portrayed in the *Investigations* is, in this sense, like one who insists on the possibility of following the arrow 'from tip to tail', so to speak.

It is important, Wittgenstein notes, that an arrow *can point the other way*; however, to insist upon this fact in every case or upon turning left where the arrow points right merely because it is possible—or, likewise, to throw up one's hands in an expression of helpless, sceptical indecision before every crossroad—would be a strange kind of pathology. It would be to find oneself held captive by a queer picture of meaning and understanding. A man will be *imprisoned* in room with an unlocked door, Wittgenstein once remarked, "as long as it does not occur to him to *pull* rather than push it." (CV, p. 42 [MS 125; 18.5.1942]) Wittgenstein's discussion of language-learning in the *Investigations* highlights how certain

tendencies to go on in certain kinds of ways—that is to say *both* the right way of the satisfactory pupil, *and* the wrong way of the one who has failed to understand, like the deviant pupil or the philosopher—have been learned in particular psycho-social contexts. They can, therefore, be unlearned—with the right approach.[171]

As Wittgenstein reminds us, it is often useful to ask ourselves how a word or technique has been learned. So where, we might then ask, do we find the source of these maladroit *philosophical* inclinations? "A main cause of philosophical disease—a one-sided diet: one nourishes one's thinking with only one kind of example." (PI §593) In the *Investigations*, just as it ever was in the *Tractatus*, the source of our misunderstanding is the failure to command a 'clear view' of language. However, in the later work it is not a matter of seeing what is essential in language, but rather attending to diverse sorts of examples drawn from different contexts. '*What is a proposition?*'—we might ask, as Wittgenstein himself had asked earlier in the *Tractatus*. In that work the answer was: "a proposition is a picture of reality" (T 4.01). It is the expression of a fact, whatever can be true or false. In the *Investigations*, the emphasis shifts dramatically. The answer becomes: 'Well… *this, this*, and *this…* and *maybe this* too in some cases*,* but definitely not *that*', and so on. "Asked what a proposition is," Wittgenstein explains, "we shall give examples and will include what one may call inductively defined series of propositions." (PI §135) It is interesting to note, given the widespread perception that Wittgenstein denies the power of ostensive definition

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171 Indeed, we can see that this 'unlearning' is meant to be understood in precisely the context of 'training' wherein proper, ordinary learning occurs if we consider the following remark from Moore, recounting what Wittgenstein had told his students during his lectures upon his return to Cambridge in 1930. Moore notes that Wittgenstein described himself as having discovered a 'new method' of philosophising, and that "it was now possible for the first time that there should be 'skilful' philosophers, though of course there had in the past been 'great' philosophers." (PO, p 113). Moore continues:

"He went on to say that, though philosophy had now been 'reduced to a matter of skill', yet this skill, like other skills, is very difficult to acquire. One difficulty was that it required a 'sort of thinking' to which we are not accustomed and *to which we have not been trained*—a sort of thinking very different from what is required in the sciences. And he said that the required skill could not be acquired merely by hearing lectures: discussion was essential. As regards his own work, he said it did not matter whether his results were true or not: what mattered was that 'a method had been found'." (ibid., my emphasis)

to communicate sound understanding, that when he asks himself in the *Investigations* what a proposition is, the answer is in fact found by providing precisely an *ostensive definition*. However, it is not a single, sole act of ascription that guarantees the answer has been given correctly, indubitably and once and for all. It is rather a series that develops with familiarity over time, one that is defined as much by what it excludes as by what it includes, and which is therefore subject to alteration and the potential for incertitude in any given case. As Wittgenstein remarks in one of the key methodological remarks that feature in the *Investigations*:

> "But how many kinds of sentences are there? Say assertion, question, and command?—There are *countless* kinds: countless different kinds of use of what we call "symbols", "words", "sentences". And this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once and for all; but new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten. (We can get a *rough picture* of this from the changes in mathematics).
>
> Here the terms "language-*game*" is meant to bring to prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life." (PI §23)

"—It is interesting to compare the multiplicity of the tools in language and the ways they are used," Wittgenstein concludes in a parenthetical remark, "with what logicians have said about the structure of language. (Including the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.)" (ibid.)

Despite its explicit disavowal of all dogmatic metaphysical expressions, Wittgenstein's earlier approach in the *Tractatus* nonetheless remains tied to the tradition that it had attempted to overturn—although perhaps only insofar as it places itself at the very limits of that conception. It belongs to the philosophical tradition that is, as Whitehead so aptly put it, merely "a footnote to Plato."[172] It should not be surprising, therefore, that when

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172 A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology, Corrected Edition*, ed. D.R Griffin and D.W. Sherburne (New York: Free Press, 1979), p. 39. Of course, Wittgenstein's student Wasfi Hijab would later add, in a comical quip: "*until Wittgenstein*." (Quoted in D. Edmonds and J. Eidinow, *Wittgenstein's Poker*, op cit., p. 9.)

Wittgenstein began composing the *Investigations* he defined his approach in terms opposed to those of Plato, in both form and content. In the *Investigations* he points out, for example, that the Socratic question *What is knowledge?* in the Theaetetus is the demand for a definition—i.e., the demand for an essence—where no particular usage of the word 'knowledge' has been provided. For in asking the question, Socrates "does not even regard it as a *preliminary* answer to enumerate cases of knowledge." (BlB, p. 20) Which, of course, is to say that he fails to give us examples.[173]

It is important to note that by introducing such considerations into his later work Wittgenstein was not *rejecting* his earlier account of, e.g., what a proposition is, as he was not rejecting Augustine's account of ostensive definition in PI §1 of the *Investigations*. Rather, he was attempting to circumscribe it by the light of its application. In other words, he was attempting to give such accounts a *reason*, where none had previously been given.

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[173]In fact, in the dialogue, it is Theaetetus *himself* who attempts to respond to Socrates' question precisely by giving diverse examples of the kinds of knowledge we might have, a strategy Socrates denies him the validity of:

"THEAETETUS: Then I think that the things Theodorus teaches are knowledge—I mean geometry and the subjects you enumerated just now. Then again there are the crafts such as cobbling, whether you take them together or separately. They must be knowledge, surely.

SOCRATES: That is certainly a frank and indeed a generous answer, my dear lad. I asked you from one thing and you have given me many; I wanted something simple, and I have got a variety.

THEAETETUS: And what does that mean, Socrates?

SOCRATES: Nothing, I dare say. But I'll tell you what I think. When you talk about cobbling, you mean just knowledge of the making of shoes?

THEAETETUS: Yes, that's all I mean by it.

SOCRATES: And when you talk about carpentering, you means imply the knowledge of of the making of wooden furniture?

THEAETETUS: Yes, that's all I mean, again.

SOCRATES: And in both cases you are putting into your definition what the knowledge is of?

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: But that is not what you were asked, Theaetetus. You were not asked to say what one may have knowledge of, or how many branches of knowledge there are. It was not with any idea of counting these up that the question was asked; we wanted to know what knowledge itself is.—Or am I talking nonsense?"

(Plato, *Theaetetus*, trans M.J. Levett and M. Burnyeat, in *Complete Works,* ed. J.M. Cooper (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), pp. 162-163.)

We might recall here Wittgenstein's qualification that if one sought a definition of those things we wish to call 'games', one *can* delimit the concept for particular purposes (limiting oneself to boardgames, for example, as in PI §3). In the *Investigations* Wittgenstein proceeds to note that earlier, in the *Tractatus*, he had in fact done just that:

> "At bottom, giving "This is how things are" as the general form of the proposition 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
>
> And to say that a proposition is whatever can be true or false amounts to saying: we call something a proposition when *in our language* we apply the calculus of truth functions to it." (PI §136)

So, indeed, we can put a limit around such things, selecting a sample from those among those of our 'inductively defined series'—when, for example, we wish to apply a truth-functional calculus to propositional language, which is entirely legitimate. But whether it will be useful to do so—and if so, in precisely *which* cases—is a different matter entirely.

It is *this* question that occupied Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations*, not simply with regard to the nature of propositional language, ostensive definitions, and so on, but with regard to the overall practice of philosophy *itself*. We might consider here particularly one of the well-frequented remarks from the *Investigations*:

> "It is not our aim to refine or complete a system of rules for the use of our words in unheard-of ways.
>
> For the clarity that we are aiming at is indeed *complete* clarity. But this means that the philosophical problems should *completely* disappear.
>
> The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to.—The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* in question.—Instead, we now demonstrate a method, by examples; and the series of examples can be broken off.—Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated), not a *single* problem.

There is not *a* philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies." (PI §133)

Indeed, as Wittgenstein himself makes clear, the *Tractatus* was not a text that was intended to instruct. "The correct method in philosophy," he notes, "would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said"—a method singularly, and fantastically renounced within the work itself. Wittgenstein continues: "Although it would not be satisfying to the other person—he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy—*this* method would be the only strictly correct one." (T 6.53) But what about *Philosophical Investigations* and the method he proposes there, a method of philosophising that treats *problems*, not a single *problem*, by providing a series of examples—which, as he notes, can be *broken off?*

Wittgenstein is not generally considered a 'philosopher of education', and rightly so. Except for a few remarks he wrote little about the subject.[174] His own technique in the classroom often mystified and frustrated his students. At times he was even abusive.[175] It is clear,

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[174] Little that is, except for the preface to the *Wörterbuch* he produced while teaching gradeschool children in Austria. Interestingly, Bartley claims that Wittgenstein was influenced by Glöckel's school-reform movement—which attacked the old 'drill' schools of the Hapsbergs in favour of a doctrine of 'learning by doing'—though Wittgenstein's preface to the *Wörterbuch* shows precisely the opposite, with its almost authoritarian overtones. We might consider here, especially the following remark:

"In this distressing situation I made up my mind to dictate to my students (the forth grade of a school with five grades) a dictionary. This dictionary contained about 2,500 entries. A dictionary of an even smaller size would not have served its purpose. He who works at the practical level is able to understand the difficulties of this work. Because the result should be that each student receives a clean and, if at all possible, correct copy of the dictionary, and in order to reach that goal the teacher has to control almost ever word each student has written. […] When, after sever months of work [*eine mehrmonatliche Arbeit* = Wittgenstein's own notorious grammatical slip], this little dictionary was finished it appeared that the work had been worthwhile: the improvement of spelling was astonishing. The orthographic conscience had been awakened!" (PO, p. 19)

In this regard, it is interesting to compare Wittgenstein's different position on the propaedeutic of language—guiding the learner's hand, getting him to repeat an expression, etc.—and the *pedagogy* of language—giving examples, posing rhetorical questions, etc.—explored throughout the *Investigations*. (Cf. W.W. Bartley, *Wittgenstein* (London: Quartet Books, 1974), p. 105 *et passim*.)

[175] Finia Pascal relates a now infamous incident, which occurred while Wittgenstein was working as a schoolteacher in rural Austria: "During the short period when he was teaching at a village school in Austria, he had hit a little girl in his class and hurt her (my memory is, without details, of a physically violent act). When she ran to the headmaster to complain, Wittgenstein denied he had done it. The event

however, that he thought very seriously about education. As we have seen, he frequently used pedagogical examples and analogies to make philosophical points. Indeed, one could even argue that Wittgenstein's style of writing and doing philosophy is fundamentally pedagogical: that is, it aims at *teaching* a way of thinking about philosophical problems and —in many instances—at *unlearning* certain bad philosophical habits.

Dialogue is frequently considered the quintessential pedagogical form of philosophy. It is taken to define both a style of philosophising, based upon a give-and-take of question and answer, and a process of inquiry. Wittgenstein's way of 'doing philosophy' in the *Investigations* is pedagogical in this sense, though it differs from traditional attempts to do philosophy in this vein, even those that were consciously practised as a kind of pedagogical technique. It is aporetic*,* but not Socratic*.* It is dialogical, but not in the traditional sense. It is no surprise, then, that Wittgenstein writes: "Reading the Socratic dialogues one has the feeling; what a frightful waste of time! What's the point of these arguments that prove nothing and clarify nothing." (CV, p. 14 [MS 111; 30.7.1931]) Or, moreover, that Wittgenstein expresses his impatience with the game of Socratic rhetoric, and the injustice of his approach:

> "Socrates keeps reducing the sophist to silence—but does he have right on his side when he does this? Well, it is true that the sophist does not know what he thinks he knows; but that is no triumph for Socrates. It can't be a case of "You see! You don't know it!"—nor yet, triumphantly, of "So none of us knows anything!" " (CV, p. 56 [MS 133; 19.1.1946])

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stood out as a crisis in his early manhood." (F. Pascal, "Wittgenstein: A Personal Memoir", pp. 48-49, in C.G. Luckhardt (ed), *Wittgenstein: Sources and Perspectives* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1979), p. 23-61.) Though he certainly never struck any of his students at Cambridge, Wittgenstein's scorn must at times have had as terrible an effect upon its intended receiver, if not more so.

From a certain perspective Wittgenstein's approach can be seen as Socratic.[176] Like Socrates, he is not, for example, saying that his interlocutor's claims is false. He rather aims to bring out how his interlocutor does not know himself what his claim is, what it is he actually wants to say, or means to say. However, where Socrates professed his ignorance and sought to disabuse others of their mistaken beliefs, Wittgenstein, through his dialogical form of reasoning, sought to reveal how in most cases we already know all that we need to know. He sought to *guide* us back to the 'rough ground' where we can walk for ourselves, to unlearn the kinds of artificial ignorance that philosophy imposes upon itself in its attempts to solve problems that were never genuinely posed to begin with.

Wittgenstein admits in the preface to *Philosophical Investigations* that: "It is not impossible that it should fall to the lot of this work, in its poverty and in the darkness of this time, to bring light into one brain or another—but, of course, it is not likely." (PI, Preface) However, given the characterisation presented here, and the analogy of language-learning with learning to philosophise in the new way that Wittgenstein was attempting to bring about, it might indeed be claimed that this is its aim: to teach us to attend to differences among the particulars (rather than gloss over them), to heed examples (rather than ideals), to nourish our thought on the diversity of the everyday:

> "When philosophers use a word—"knowledge", "being", "object", "I", "proposition", "name"—and try to grasp the *essence* of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language which is its original home?—
>
> What *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use." (PI §116)

Wittgenstein's later work deals with many subjects: "the concepts of meaning, of understanding, of a proposition, of logic, the foundations of mathematics, states of

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176 In a remark that bears an uncanny resemblance to Wittgenstein's critique of Socratic dialogues as a 'waste of time', Wittgenstein too would note: "I still find my way of philosophizing new, and it keeps striking me so afresh; that is why I need to repeat myself so often. It will have become second nature to a new generation, to whom the repetitions will be boring. I find them necessary." (CV, p. 1 [MS 105; 1929) Is it only a matter of waiting until we may someday find Wittgenstein's repetitions—which return over and over again to that which we see so clearly, and find nothing problematic therein—a terrible *waste* of time?

consciousness, and", he notes, "other things." (PI, Preface)   Against philosophers who would traditionally seek the essence of these things, what we would do under Wittgenstein's tutelage is to ask if the word is ever actually used that way outside of philosophy. What we would do is bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use. What then, we might ask, is so relevant to the future of philosophy—as Wittgenstein conceived of it— about a word's 'everyday' use? What is characteristic about the original home from which it is derived? It is one in which explanations come to an end somewhere, one in which our usual attempts at explanation *do not* loose their point. It is one in which we know how to go on.

V. Concluding Remarks: Is There A Future for Philosophy?

This chapter began with an exploration of Wittgenstein's discussion of solipsism in the *Tractatus*. We saw there that even though Wittgenstein had already subjected Russell's formulation of the problem to a devastating critique, elements of the solipsistic world-view remain tied to the work—and this despite Wittgenstein's claim that "solipsism, when its implications are strictly thought out, coincides with pure realism." (T 5.64) 'The world as I found it', so to speak, remains the world that I—and I *alone*—found. As Wittgenstein notes in the *Notebooks,* for example:

> "What has history to do with me? Mine is the first and only world!
> I want to report how *I* found the world.
> What others have told me about the world is a very small and incidental part of my experience of the world.
> *I* have to judge the world, to measure things." (NB, p. 82)

Furthermore, shifting the emphasis of this declaration slightly, we have also seen that the 'world as I found it' is indeed also just that: *found*. It is a world fully populated with meaning, without the capacity for the piecemeal instruction inherent in linguistic initiation.

This is surely a strange form of realism, the clarificatory weight of which will inevitably fall on how we are to conceive of Wittgenstein's reference to the 'pure' realism with which solipsism is supposed to coincide. In this chapter we thus surveyed a selection of possible

answers to this question—'resolute' and 'not-so-resolute', as it were.[177] Whichever way one takes this notion, the logical, Tractarian conception of language poses a number of problems from the point of view of language-learning, most notably those concerned with the mechanisms that would appear to be necessary for the elucidation of the simple terms that figure in our propositions and the apparent necessity of our having to acquire, at some point in time, an understanding of them. By extension, this would also pose a problem for our identification of the objects to which the simple terms in our propositions are supposed to correspond. The paradoxical nature of this 'bootstrapping' is expressed in the *Tractatus* as follows:

> "The meaning of primitive signs can be explained by means of elucidations. Elucidations are propositions that contain primitive signs. *So they can only be understood if the meanings of those signs are already known*." (T 3.262, my emphasis)[178]

In Wittgenstein's early work, it appears that this circularity is supposed to be resolved by a notion akin to that of 'ostensive definition'. Despite the fact that the Tractarian notion of ostension is only obscurely expressed in the work—a failing for which Wittgenstein cannot be faulted, as the term had not yet come into existence at the time—several remarks attest to its significant logical role. Principally, we might here consider the following remark from

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177Those provided, for example, by McGinn and Diamond, the first of whom is willing to read in Wittgenstein's remarks on solipsism some remnant of transcendental metaphysics, the latter of whom denies this—although Diamond nonetheless admits that elements of unclarity remain in Wittgenstein Tractarian critique of Russell that would not be resolved until Wittgenstein returned to the question in the 1930's with his new programme in hand.

178This expression is, of course, none other than a rephrasal of Frege's 'context principle'. Ultimately, whether or not one sees this as paradoxical will depend on how far one is willing to accept Wittgenstein's characterisation of the 'metaphysical self'—and thus sensical language-use—as non-psychological. M. Black, as we have seen, describes this passage as 'disturbing', noting: "It is impossible to explain a name's meaning explicitly: the only way to convey the meaning is to use the name in a proposition, thus presupposing that the meaning is already understood. On this view, the achievement of common reference by speaker and bearer becomes something mysterious." (M. Black, *A Companion to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, *op cit.*, p. 15.) It is a claim to which Kenny responds humorously, if ambiguously: "no more disturbing than artificial respiration." (A. Kenny, *The Legacy of Wittgenstein, op cit.*, p. 14.) In any case, as it has been shown above, Wittgenstein's appeal to elucidation in this context is *not* immune to critical interrogation in the same ways that Frege's appeal to the context principle is (hence, Wittgenstein's own evolution post-1930's), since Wittgenstein seeks to elucidate language 'as such' and not some restricted part of it, as Frege does.

the *Notebooks*: "What seems to be given us a priori is the concept: *This*.—Identical with the concept of the *object*." (NB, p. 61)[179]

When Wittgenstein returned to Cambridge nearly ten years after the publication of the *Tractatus*, he recognised that the notion of ostensive definitions could not serve the logical function he had earlier envisioned. As he would remark in a conversation with Waismann from this period, for example: "When I wrote the *Tractatus* I was unclear about logical analysis and ostensive definition. I then thought that there is a 'linking up of language and reality'."[180] Language-learning is not dealt with in the *Tractatus* in any clear way and even the role of ostensive definition is only obscurely formulated there; so, it is interesting to note that when Wittgenstein wrote the *Investigations* he chose a passage from Augustine's *Confessions* that highlighted precisely these difficulties in his earlier conception. Furthermore, this passage from Augustine also helped to pave the way to the novel form of philosophy that Wittgenstein sought to develop in his later work. For, as we have seen, when Wittgenstein describes the Augustinian picture of language—which is undoubtedly akin to that of the Tractarian—as a 'primitive picture' (PI §2), he is not thereby rejecting it as *false*. He is rather circumscribing its application, demanding reasons where none had previously been given—which is to say: where *none had been* given, not where *none could be* given.

Solipsism, ostensive definition and language-learning are three themes that are woven throughout Wittgenstein's work, early and late. In the *Tractatus,* ostension was conceived as an a priori connection between between the elements of a picture and the objects to which they corresponded. As a consequence, Wittgenstein was able to relegate language-learning to the domain of psychology—effectively excluded it from those areas of interest to the

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179As we have seen, the use of italics here—i.e. in the indexical '*this*'—is typically intended by Wittgenstein to indicate the ostensive act. It is a particular stylistic feature found consistently throughout his writings, early and late. E.g.: "The definition of the number two, "That is called 'two'"—pointing at two nuts—is perfectly exact.—But how how can two be defined like that? The person one gives the definition to doesn't know what one wants to call "two"; he will suppose that "two" is the name given to *this* group of nuts!" (PI §28)

180F. Waismann, *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle, op cit.*, pp. 209-210.

logical framework outlined there—and solipsism, as Wittgenstein conceived it in opposition to Russell, served as the inevitable conclusion to the non-psychological conception of the self that figures centrally in the work. As Wittgenstein concludes his remarks on solipsism:

> "Thus there really is a sense in which philosophy can talk about the self in a non-psychological way.
>
> What brings the self into philosophy is the fact that 'the world is my world'.
>
> The philosophical self is not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather the metaphysical subject, the limit of the world—not a part of it." (T 5.641)

In the *Investigations*, on the other hand, the philosophical self is precisely the *human self*—the human being, of body and soul. It is the familiar, all-too-human self that is prone to confusions, to lapses in attention, to failures in judgement—that finds itself sometimes held captive by a picture of itself and its place in the world. It is these very human confusions that Wittgenstein sets out diagnose and treat in his later work. As we have seen, this is only possible insofar as these confusions illustrate a *systematic* error (consistently reading an arrow from 'tip to tail', as it were.)[181] I have further argued that philosophy itself—traditionally conceived, with its 'craving for generality' and 'contempt for the particular'—is just such a systematic error, a bad habit that in Wittgenstein's esteem must be *unlearned* rather than refuted.

No longer the self-sufficient 'I' of the *Tractatus,* which must itself measure the world—whose encounters with others make up a *small and insignificant* part of its experience—the philosopher is portrayed in the *Investigations* as one who has, in fact, already inherited a world through the learned use of our publicly shared language. This language, this world, is 'in order as it is' in the *Investigations* just as much as it ever was in the *Tractatus.* However, far from merely attending to the superficial structure of language—and thus speaking where he should rather be silent—the philosopher portrayed in the *Investigations* is one who has

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181 As Wittgenstein notes in regard to infamous deviant pupil, who adds two up to 1000, and then proceeds to add 4, and insisted he was going on in the same way as before: "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." (PI §185)

wilfully, perhaps even irresponsibly, chosen to abrogate the knowledge that comes with that inheritance in favour of a self-imposed and artificial ignorance. The philosopher is portrayed as something like a child, who has just recently learned how easily it can aggravate its parents by repeatedly asking '*Why?*'—over and over again—and accepting no answer as final.[182] Unlike the child, however, the malcontent philosopher in the *Investigations* has long since ceased to gain any *pleasure* from this incessant inquiring.

Aligning the image of the language-learner with that of the philosopher in the *Investigations* thus plays a duel role. On the one hand, Wittgenstein wishes to draw our attention to the way words are learned as a means for providing one kind of criteria for what counts—and what *should* count—as an acceptable understanding of a word, rule, definition, etc. For example, when we get stuck in philosophical difficulties—such as when we look for precise 'essences' corresponding to the loose and amorphous concepts of our language, a difficulty that will inevitably arise if we cannot accept that these concepts are unproblematically loose and amorphous—Wittgenstein offers the following counsel: "In such a difficulty ask yourself: How did we *learn* the meaning of this word ("good" for instance)? From what sort of examples? In what language-games? Then it will be easier for you to see that the word must have a family of meanings." (PI §77) On the other hand, throughout the work

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182As Moore notes in his account of the lectures of Wittgenstein he attended in the early 1930s, regarding Wittgenstein's 'new method' oh philosophy:

"He said that the 'new subject' consisted in 'something like putting in order our notions as to what can be said about the world' […] He said we were also 'in a muddle' about things, which we had to try to clear up; that we had to follow a certain instinct which leads us to to ask certain questions, though we don't even understand what these questions mean; that our asking them results from 'a vague mental unease', like that which leads children to ask 'Why?'; and that this unease can only be cured 'either by showing that a particular question is not permitted, or by answering it'." (PO, p. 114)

Furthermore, K.E. Tranøy relates the following telling anecdote of Wittgenstein's own attitude towards belligerent children, that is worth recalling briefly here:

"The two children of the von Wrights were quite small at the time, between five and ten years old. Wittgenstein did not always think their parents handled the task of child-raising in the right way. On one occasion he summed up his reactions in the following memorable sentence: 'When you say NO to a child, you should be like a wall and not like a door'." (K.E. Tranøy, "Wittgenstein in Cambridge 1949-51. Some Personal Recollections", p. 15, in *Essays on Wittgenstein in Honour of G.H. von Wright* (*Acta Philosophica Fennica*, 28, 1976), pp. 11-21.)

Wittgenstein appears to embody this allegorical role himself—he, like the teacher, and we his readers like students who will ideally become increasing prepared to accept his examples as legitimate examples… examples that can, Wittgenstein reminds us, be broken off. This is not to say that it was a role he *coveted*.[183] However, there is more than a family resemblance between Wittgenstein's use of pedagogical examples in the *Investigations* and the pedagogical style of the work as a whole. Along with the rest, such examples help to demonstrate a method for knowing how to go on. However, as Wittgenstein shows us, knowing how to 'go on' often means knowing precisely *when to stop*… and sometimes it means knowing when to change direction, to turn around, to retrace our steps, etc.

Before concluding, it is important to note that this conception of philosophy has a strong bearing on how we are to understand the historical significance of philosophical works. For, insofar as philosophical problems arise due to the concrete psycho-social circumstances of particular individuals—those discussed here, and throughout philosophical works in general—one is not automatically justified in claiming that their works are of a universal, transhistoric value, nor that they will inevitably transcend the cultural milieu from whence they came. When we do philosophy: "we are talking about the spatial and temporal phenomena of language," Wittgenstein notes in the *Investigations*, "not about some non-spatial, non-temporal phantasm." (PI §108) However, he also interjects an important note in the margins beside this remark, significant too for being one of the few corrections that Wittgenstein had made to the final typescript of the *Investigations* by the time of his death: "Only it is possible to be interested in a phenomena in a variety of ways." (ibid.) Seen from the point of view of its grammar—if no longer its 'logical structure'[184]—language can be

183Lest we assume that Wittgenstein took any lasting *satisfaction* from his perceived need to fulfil this role in his work, it is good to consider a remark such as the following—characteristic, and in no way unique among the many personal recollections we have of Wittgenstein from those who knew him personally—: "I thought that when I had resigned my professorship at Cambridge I had at least got rid of my vanity. But now I find I am becoming vain about the style in which I am able to write my present book", i.e. *Philosophical Investigations*. (Quoted in M. O'C. Drury, "Some Notes on Conversations with Wittgenstein", p. 23, *Acta Philosophica Fennica,* 28, 1976, p. 22-40.)

184Whether or not the 'logical structure of language' Wittgenstein had sought to identify and isolate in the *Tractatus* is to be understood in a similarly historically-conditioned sense is, as we have seen, a more

conceived as a historically-situated and historically-conditioned phenomena. As such, the philosophy of language is an equally situated and conditioned undertaking. But then once again, we might here ask: *Must that be so?*

Philosophy, for Wittgenstein, is a struggle with language. Language is both the source of our confusions and the means by which we elevate them. This tension, and how Wittgenstein sought to resolve it, is captured wonderfully in the Kantian overtones of his formulation of the task of philosophy in the *Tractatus*: "All philosophy is a critique of language [*Sprachkritik*]." (T 4.0031) Though Wittgenstein would later begin to move away from the transcendental conception of his earlier work, this same concern for this duality of language—as both 'sinner' and 'saint', as it were—is woven throughout the *Investigations* as well: "Philosophy," Wittgenstein notes there, "is the battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language." (PI §109) Strangely, it is perhaps the ambiguity of this remark that makes it such an accurate depiction of the very kinds of difficulties we can get stuck in when we philosophise, and—more importantly—the kinds of things Wittgenstein asks us to attend if we are to get ourself 'unstuck'.

However, it also shows us that what Wittgenstein has to say about philosophy is no exception to the rule. It would be a mistake to think that if Wittgenstein himself philosophises in the precise manner that he does, then this is because it is an exemplar of what philosophy *must* or even *should* be. Rather, if Wittgenstein felt compelled to philosophise in just the way that he did, it is because the problems he was dealing with

complicated question. I have explored this at length elsewhere. However, I believe we might well summarise the difficulties we are presented with here via a strange, and in my opinion paradoxical remark from Diamond's essay entitled "Throwing away the Ladder":

"A remark like 'There is a fundamental distinction between functions and objects' is thrown out once we get the predicate 'function' out of the cleaned up philosophical vocabulary. We are left after the transition with a logical notation that in a sense has to speak for itself. If we try afterwards to say why it is a good notation, we know that we shall find ourselves saying things which may help our listeners, but which we ourselves cannot regard as the expression of any true through, speakable or unspeakable. When we say why the notion is a good one, when we explain what logical distinctions and similarities it makes perspicuous, we are in a sense going backwards, back to the stage at which we had been when grasping the point of the transition." (C. Diamond, "Throwing Away the Ladder," in C. Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit, op cit.,* p. 183.)

figure strongly within the philosophical tradition, the very tradition upon which Wittgenstein wished to have a *direct influence*. As he notes in the *Investigations*: "Your questions refer to words; so I have to talk about words." (PI §120) Indeed, O. Kuusela is correct to note, in his short chapter on the historicity of philosophy:

> "[Wittgenstein's] conception of clarificatory rules as objects of comparison, that is to say, is an adjustment of these philosophical practices, whereby his aim is to solve the problems of dogmatism and injustice to which these practices give rise. But had we not inherited from our philosophical tradition the problematic conception of the unity of concepts that provides the ground for philosophical theories and, subsequently, the motivation for Wittgenstein's methodological adjustment, there might not be any need for the adjustment."[185]

It is of course noteworthy for our understanding of the evolution of Wittgenstein's philosophical methodology that he begins the *Investigations* with a passage from Augustine's *Confessions*, where in the *Tractatus* he had previously claimed: "the reason why I give no sources is that it is a matter of indifference to me whether the thoughts that I have had have been anticipated by someone else." (T, p. 4) Just how significant it is for philosophy in general, however, is another question.[186]

Nonetheless, we can see that Wittgenstein was attentive to the importance of this question regarding the historical continuation of philosophy—regardless of whether this reference to philosophy is to be viewed in a positive or negative light—when he notes in one of his early-1930s lectures:

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185 O. Kuusela, *The Struggle Against Dogmatism: Wittgenstein and the Concept of Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 273.

186 Mulhall, following Cavell, has suggested that beginning the *Investigations* in this way makes Wittgenstein post-Tractarian philosophy *essentially* concerned with entering into a dialogue with the past (cf. S. Mulhall, *Inheritance and Originality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), pp. 29-35). I wonder, in the light of all that we have said here, if that is really the case; for, as Wittgenstein notes in Part II of the *Investigations*: "we can also invent fictitious natural history for our purposes." (PI, p. 230) Furthermore, as I discussed above, this was in fact what Wittgenstein had planned for a long time before finally agreeing to open the work with the passage from Augustine: "A lamp is standing on my table." I believe the analysis found in the *Investigations* that follows could have followed this alternate remark just as they presently do. Would we, however, have been as inclined to follow along with them if they had?

"Why do we wish to call our present activity philosophy, when we also call Plato's activity philosophy? Perhaps because of a certain analogy between them, or perhaps because of the continuous development of the subject. Or the new activity may take the place of the old because it removes mental discomforts the old was supposed to."[187]

In his subsequent account of these lectures, Moore further relates being "a good deal surprised by some of the things he said about the difference between 'philosophy' in the sense in which he was doing might be called 'philosophy'." (PO, p. 113) He notes that Wittgenstein had remarked that what he was doing was a "new subject", not merely a stage in the "continuous development" philosophy, and that:

"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; that a 'new method' had been discovered, as had happened when 'chemistry was developed out of alchemy'[188]; and that it was now possible for the first time that there should be 'skilful philosophers', though of course there had in the past be 'great philosophers'." (Ibid.)

There may appear to be a tension between these remarks, when for example Wittgenstein claims that his is a 'new method' and that it has a 'historical continuity' with what we have

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187A. Ambrose (ed.), *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge 1932-1935; From the Notes of Alice Ambrose and Margaret Macdonald* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books), pp. 27-28. Similarly, in *The Blue Book*, Wittgenstein would make a remark that clearly shows that philosophy itself is no exception to the picture of language that he sketches in the *Investigations* and should be subjected to the same scrutiny as any other concept commonly employed in the practice:

"The use of expressions constructed on analogical patterns stresses analogies between cases often far apart. And by doing this these expressions may be extremely useful. It is, in most cases, impossible to show an exact point where the analogy begins to mislead us. Every particular notation stresses some particular point of view. If, e.g., we call our investigations "philosophy", this title, on the one hand, seems appropriate, on the other hand it certainly has mislead people. (One might say that the subject we are dealing with is one of the heirs of the subject which used to be called "philosophy".)" (BlB, p. 28)

188It is interest to compare this remark with that made by Wittgenstein, in his 1912 review of P. Coffey's *The Science of Logic*. There, Wittgenstein remarks that: "The author has not taken the slightest notice of the great work of the modern mathematical logicians—work which has brought about an advance in Logic comparable only to that which made Astronomy out of Astrology, and Chemistry out of Alchemy." (PO, p. 3)

traditionally called philosophy; or alternately, when he claims that there is *no* continuity, that there is merely an analogical resemblance; or that what he does deserves the name philosophy because it 'replaces' what had previously gone by that name. However, as we have seen, Wittgenstein's method is one of aligning pictures in order to *shift* one's understanding of a problem, not to *fix* it in place. His attempts at giving us a picture of philosophy, including his own, are likewise not intended to tell us what it *must* be, once and for all—for how could it, unless Wittgenstein were prepared to make an exception for this one sole concept alone? As Kuusela points out: "We cannot say that philosophy is always a struggle with language simply because it has to be that for us now."[189]

However, at the same time, Wittgenstein is aware of the tension that surrounds this picture of history and the historical development of linguistic phenomena, such as that of philosophy, but by no means of philosophy alone. For here, as is often the case in our attempts to think historically, the familiar spectre of relativism is evoked once again: Is the very claim which acknowledges that philosophy is historically-conditioned, *itself* historically-conditioned? If so, is it therefore just one more position to be adopted only transitionally, just one more picture in a parade of others like it that will someday be cast aside in favour of one more amicable to the philosophers of the future? And if *that* is so, why do we not begin the hard work of rejecting it now, so that we might get a head-start on the form of philosophy to come?

Here it is difficult not to recall the troubled (and *troubling,* in light of the historical dimension of philosophy sketched here) question Wittgenstein poses to himself at the end of PI §122:

> "A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not *command a clear view* of the use of our words.—Our grammar is lacking in this sort of perspicuity. A perspicuous representation produces just that understanding which consists in 'seeing connections'. Hence the importance of finding and inventing *intermediate cases*

189O. Kuusela, *The Struggle Against Dogmatism, op cit.,* p. 274.

> The concept of a perspicuous representation is of fundamental significance for us. It earmarks the
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> form of the account we give, the way we look at things. (Is this a 'Weltanschauung?')" (PI §122)

In a following chapter, we will return to look more closely at Wittgenstein's understanding of perspicuous representation, the origins of the idea, and at what Wittgenstein hoped achieving such perspicuity would deliver unto philosophy. We have already seen, however, that this danger—of viewing everything as just one more *Weltanschauung*, impermanent and therefore subject to change—was in fact articulated early on in the analytic tradition, by none other than Frege, when he notes in his *Foundations of Arithmetic*:

> "The historical approach, with its aim of detecting how things begin and of arriving from these origins at a
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> knowledge of their nature, is certainly perfectly legitimate; but it also has its limitations. If everything were in
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> continual flux, and nothing maintained itself fixed for all time, there would no longer be any possibility of
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> getting to know anything about the world and everything would be plunged in confusion. We suppose, it
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> would seem, that concepts sprout in the individual mind like leaves on a tree, and we think we discover their
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> nature by studying their birth: we seek to define them psychologically, in terms of the nature of the human
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> mind. But this account makes everything subjective and if we follow it through to the end, does away with
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> truth. What we know as the history of concepts is really a history of either our knowledge of concepts or the
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> meaning of words." (FA, p. vi-vii)

I have shown earlier that Wittgenstein was attentive to this problematic aspect of historicism in the *Tractatus,* when he argued that history had no relevance to the logical structure of language despite the apparent evolution of our logical forms over time. However, when Wittgenstein returned to philosophy in the 1930's, with his novel understanding of *grammar* in hand, this question returned with him—thus demanding a similarly novel response in accordance with that new conception. Kuusela has pointed out, for example, that the problem of the transhistorical claims about what philosophy *must be*—which are hardly relieved by the claim that there is nothing at all that philosophy must be, *if this claim itself must be transhistorically so*—appears in a number of remarks from Wittgenstein. A noteworthy example is found in MS 132, from 1946, when Wittgenstein had begun to move

away from the analyses of the *Investigations*, toward precisely the kind of treatment of relativism that one finds, e.g., among the remarks collected under the title *On Certainty*—a treatment which is, as we will see shortly, often cast in terms of the historical development of knowledge. This remark is as follows:

> "Do we have to deal with mistakes and difficulties that are as old as our language? Are they, so to speak sicknesses that are bound together with the use of a language, or are they special, characteristic of our civilisation? … Or also: is the preoccupation with the means of language that penetrate our whole philosophy an age-old feature of all philosophy, and age-old struggle? Or is it new like science. Or like this as well: does philosophizing always waver between metaphysics and a critique of language?"[190]

Kuusela concludes by noting that it is far from apparent that Wittgenstein intended this rhetorical question to be answered one way or the other. "Rather," he notes correctly, "it seems important that he leaves the question unanswered."[191]

Before returning to those 1930's-era considerations, we will first take a closer look in the following chapter at how Wittgenstein's understanding of the 'logical must' evolved in his latest, and indeed even his *last* remarks. For in *On Certainty* Wittgenstein ceases to impugn its role in our reasoning, but rather seeks to re-inscribe its function in a description of the way in which we do in fact reason, despite what he had earlier considered to be its philosophical dubiousness. In his post-*Investigations* thought Wittgenstein becomes even more interested in language-learning in terms of the creation of a space for judgement, i.e. of judging whether or not one is going on in the same way. Through training, the novice comes to see an activity as one guided by rules, which means the learner does not see it as something that *simply happens*, but rather as something that *must* happen. In doing so he comes to see the obviousness of the outcome.

It is perhaps unsurprising then that in the novel approach of this period Wittgenstein should turn here to the work of G.E. Moore, in particular "A Defence of Common Sense" and

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190MS 132, 7-8; 1946, quoted in O. Kuusela, *The Struggle Against Dogmatism, op cit.*, p. 274.

191O. Kuusela, *The Struggle Against Dogmatism, op cit.,* p. 274.

"Proof of an External World". In his last remarks, collected in *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein devotes a great amount of effort to the task of articulating just what is so powerful in Moore's subtle account of knowledge in terms of the *obviousness* of foundational knowledge claims, as well as what is mistaken in it. What may perhaps be surprising, however, is the manner in which he does so. We will see that in his attempt to 'demystify' scepticism—as opposed to its 'dissolution' found in his earlier work—Wittgenstein returns to affirm the possibility of a genuine sceptical doubt rooted in the historicist insights that he was developing then. We will also see, however, that the point remains principally an anti-philosophical one: our present forms of knowledge are in no way threatened by that insight.

CHAPTER 3. *THE RIVERBED OF THOUGHT MAY SHIFT: THE DEMYSTIFICATION OF HISTORICISM IN ON CERTAINTY*

> "Light gradually dawns over the whole."
>
> —*On Certainty* §141

I. The Idea of a 'Third Wittgenstein'

At one time, the *Tractatus* was seen as a cursory and ultimately faulty step along the way to Wittgenstein's more mature thought in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Such a view is no longer in fashion, and rightly so. Today it is generally accepted that the *Tractatus* is rather a work that stands alone and succeeds or fails on its own terms regardless of Wittgenstein's later criticisms of his earlier work. Wittgenstein's admission in the preface to the *Philosophical Investigations*, that his earlier work contained "grave errors" is certainly important, but its broader significance is complicated by the fact that he does not clearly explicate what he believed those errors were.

Recently, this traditional division between the early and later works—along with the recognition that the *Tractatus* is far from a mere cursory step on the way to the *Investigations*—has led to a growing body of literature on the contours of the limits between them. Out of this discussion has developed an important and enormously influential reading, the 'Resolute Reading'. Granted, one should perhaps rather speak here of 'Resolute *Readings*', for resolute readers are far from making up a unified and singular whole. Nonetheless, adherents to this approach will by and large claim that the greatest difference between 'Wittgenstein I' and 'Wittgenstein II' is the form of the expression; the core message of his philosophy remains essentially the same throughout, despite a shift in

some matters of emphasis and formulation (hence, a 'mono-Wittgensteinianism', but a 'mild' one, as J. Conant has characterised it[192]). For Wittgenstein, of no matter what period, it is argued, philosophy is an activity and not a body of doctrine. Its principle aim is not the solution, but the dissolution of philosophical problems—that is to say, *all* philosophical problems, including those that Wittgenstein's own work might appear at moments to present us with, including, for example, the saying/showing distinction in the earlier work, or the notions rule-following, forms of life, etc., in the latter.

We clearly find echoes of this sentiment in both of Wittgenstein's *magna opera*. As he notes in the *Tractatus,* the correct method of philosophy would be to say nothing but that which can be said; because the questions of philosophy are not false, but nonsensical, "we cannot give answers to questions of this kind, but only point out that they are nonsensical." (T 4.003) Similarly, Wittgenstein would later ask in the *Investigations*: "What is your aim in philosophy? To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle." (PI §309) Though the form of these two remarks is clearly different, one can nonetheless discern here a clear commitment to the kind of project Wittgenstein envisioned for his philosophy from the start. Thus, resolute readers suggest that in many important respects the entirety of Wittgenstein's philosophy succeeds or fails according to the conditions first set out in the *Tractatus*. Specifically, this reading suggests that if there is anything *shown* in Wittgenstein's work— early, as well as late—it is only the very worldly tendency of philosophers (especially those who read Wittgenstein) to get wrapped up in such nonsense.[193]

192J. Conant, "Mild Mono-Wittgensteinianism", in A. Crary (ed.), *Wittgenstein and the Moral Life: Essays in Honor of Cora Diamond* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), pp. 31-142. Cf. especially J. Conant, "Wittgenstein's later Criticisms of the *Tractatus*", in A. Pichler and S. Säätelä (eds.), *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works* (Frankurt: Ontos Verlag, 2006), pp. 172-204, for a concise enumeration of some possible candidates for positions Wittgenstein was committed to throughout his work. (By 'positions' we are to understand here not a philosophical doctrine, but rather a consistent methodological perspective regarding the aim of his philosophy, and the manner this aim is to be realised.)

193For a summary of the main themes surrounding this debate, see A. Crary & R. Read (eds.) *The New Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 2000), the contributors of which challenge what I have here called the 'traditional view', held most notably by P.M.S. Hacker and the (early) G. Baker. Concerning the characterisation of this reading above, Crary notes:

"This volume contains papers on Wittgenstein which (with one exception which I will mention below

Undoubtedly the question of the continuity and/or discontinuity of Wittgenstein's thought is a difficult one, and perhaps no answer upon which all scholars can agree will ever be found. Today, the matter has been even further complicated by an 'additional Wittgenstein' being thrown into the fray, a *third* Wittgenstein, represented by the great body of unpublished remarks written post-1945 after the final composition of *Philosophical Investigations* had been more or less determined. This body of work thus includes, among other as yet unpublished remarks from the *Nachlaß*, those collected in *On Certainty, Remarks on Colour,* the majority of the remarks in *Zettel*, and the various writings on the philosophy of psychology, a body of work which includes Part II of *Philosophical Investigations*.

This reading has been championed in particular by Danièle Moyal-Sharrock, whose collected edition *The* Third *Wittgenstein* explores the possibility of attributing a new and unique philosophical programme to Wittgenstein's 'latest'—and indeed, even his *last*—remarks.[194] As G.H von Wright notes: "As late as two days before his death he wrote down thoughts that are equal to the best he produced."[195] And indeed, who can doubt the directness and power of remarks such as the following, from those composed just a few short days before Wittgenstein's death:

> "Where two principles really do meet which cannot be reconciled with one another, then each man declares the other a fool and a heretic.

[P.M.S. Hacker's "Was He Trying to Whistle It?"]) share certain fundamental and—with respect to received views about Wittgenstein's thought—quite unorthodox assumptions about his conception of the aim of philosophy. This is not to say that the papers form a homogeneous body of work. They are concerned with different periods and regions of his thought, and they diverge from each other to various extents in their emphases and styles, and in the views they attribute to him. Nevertheless, without regard to the period (or periods) of his work with which they are concerned, they agree in suggesting that Wittgenstein's primary aim in philosophy—to use a word he himself employs in characterizing his later philosophical procedures—a *therapeutic* one. […] It would not be wrong to say that what is most striking about the papers in this volume has to do with their suggestion of significant *continuity* in Wittgenstein's thought." (A. Crary, "Introduction", in *The New Wittgenstein*, op cit*.,* p. 1)

194D. Moyal-Sharrock (ed.) *The* Third *Wittgenstein* (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2004).

195G.H. von Wright, *Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), p. 31.

I said I would 'combat' the other man,—but wouldn't I give him *reasons?* Certainly; but how far do they go? At the end of reasons comes *persuasion.* (Think of what happens when missionaries convert natives.)" (OC §§611-612)

Equal to the best he had ever produced? Certainly. But are they the same? Moyal-Sharrock suggests that the answer is 'No':

"To say, as von Wright does, that from 1946 to his death in 1951, Wittgenstein took 'new directions' is not to say that he had never before broached the subjects that were to occupy him in these years— that is, epistemology, the philosophy of psychology, and the philosophy of colour[196]—but that he was now to take them on *fully,* devoting to them the concentrated and sustained attention that generated the formidable originality and depth of the wholly self-sustaining works that are *On Certainty, Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology* and *Remarks on Colour*. Where he had earlier grappled with the subject, Wittgenstein had not achieved a *perspicuous* enough *presentation* of it: one capable of laying the problems to rest."[197]

In the great body of work from this 'third-', post-*Investigations* Wittgenstein, Moyal-Sharrock identifies a number of defining traits, which she argues are not completely *absent* in Wittgenstein's earlier thought, but which nonetheless are not explored there to the same extent. This includes, principally, his attempt to highlight the confusion between *knowledge* and *knowledge claims.* It is a distinction that would, on her reading, drive a categorical wedge between what we might typically consider 'knowledge' from the traditional epistemological standpoint (i.e., things that one can justifiably *claim* to know) and what is

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196Indeed, a noteworthy remark from Anscombe is surprisingly pertinent in this regard, and indicative of the immense difficulties scholars face trying to reconstruct Wittgenstein's intellectual genealogy. In the preface to the *Notebooks 1914-1918*, she notes:

"At the 20th of December 1914 there was a rough line of adjacent crayoned patches, using 7 colours. This was treated as a mere doodle in the first edition, and so it may be. But, having regard to the subject matter of meaning and negation, which is the topic of the surrounding text, it is possible that there is here an anticipation of *Philosophical Investigations* §48. A representation of it is printed on the dust cover of this edition." (NB, Preface to the Second Edition)

197D. Moyal-Sharrock, "Introduction: The Idea of a *Third* Wittgenstein", p. 2. In D. Moyal-Sharrock (ed.) *The* Third *Wittgenstein* (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 1-24.

termed by Moyal-Sharrock as 'foundational-' or 'primitive certainty', which would in turn result in a refusal to admit the latter within the domain of epistemology as it has been traditionally conceived. From this, most notably, follows a redefinition of certainty as an ungrounded *way of acting* in the world. As Wittgenstein notes in *On Certainty*, in response to the question regarding what would count as a test for the apparently contingent propositions that would by this account be 'foundational':

> "What *counts* as its test?—"But is this an adequate test? And, if so, must it not be recognizable as such in logic?"—As if giving grounds did not come to an end sometime. But the end is not an ungrounded proposition: it is an ungrounded way of acting." (OC §110)

"This, of course," Moyal-Sharrock notes, "will have major repercussions for philosophy, for if our basic beliefs are conceptually commensurate with our acts, there is no longer a logical gap between our beliefs and our actions."[198]

The result—at least insofar as Wittgenstein's well-known remarks on the traditional problem of scepticism in *On Certainty* are concerned, which is Moyal-Sharrock's focus—is not only the 'dissolution' of scepticism, as can already be found in the *Investigations* and possibly even in the *Tractatus* before it, but also what Moyal-Sharrock calls its 'demystification'.[199] More generally, however, this demystification of scepticism follows from a wider development in Wittgenstein's thought, regarding the treatment of philosophical problems *in toto*, which can also be seen in his post-*Investigations* remarks on colour, aspect-perception, psychology and (albeit to a lesser extent) the foundations of mathematics. It is a renewed appreciation for the grammatical role of experience and the apparently contingent a posteriori propositions that have traditionally been accepted as the hallmark of empirical knowledge. As she notes:

> "It may be said, then, that the single track of Wittgenstein's philosophy is the discernment and elucidation of grammar—its nature and its limits. But Wittgenstein travelled a long way from the

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198Ibid., p. 3.
199Ibid., p. 3.

Tractatus to *On Certainty*, and the way traversed, though single-tracked, was interrupted by turns. If, from the *Tractatus* to *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein redefined, for himself and for us, the *nature* of 'grammar', from the *Investigations* to *On Certainty* he redefined its *extension*. The *second* Wittgenstein realized not only that grammar is not a *Begriffsschrift* fixed in advance of its use, but also that it replaces *metaphysics*: where what once seemed a metaphysical impossibility (for example, 'A patch cannot be red and green at the same time', 'A machine cannot think') now appears to be only the expression of a rule of grammar. The third Wittgenstein further realized that *contingent* facts such as the world existing or my sitting here can also *belong to grammar*. This *is* a 'new direction'; indeed, it is something even the *third* Wittgenstein finds difficult to recognize."[200]

We should not be surprised that the 'third Wittgenstein', along with the demystification of scepticism and his investigation into the grammatical status of contingent a posteriori knowledge—which, unlike the a priori, is by most everyone's reckoning a temporally-determined form of knowledge—would also terminate several key chains of thought with references to time, change and history as well. For here grammar is thrown back into the 'stream of life', so to speak; for example, a concluding remark to the first of the three sections that make up the complete text (OC §§1-65):

"If we imagine the facts otherwise than as they are, certain language-games lose some of their importance, while others become important. And in this way there is an alteration—a gradual one—in the use of the vocabulary of a language." (OC §63)[201]

As we have seen, Wittgenstein had already touched on the subject of historical change in *Philosophical Investigations,* where he notes for example that the multiplicity of linguistic forms that he was then becoming interested in is "not something fixed, given once and for

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200 Ibid., p. 4.

201 This passage resonates strongly with that of sec. xii, Part II, of the *Investigations*, where Wittgenstein composed one of the strongest formulations of his post-Tractarian method: "I am not saying: if such-and-such facts for nature were different people would have different concepts (in the sense of a hypothesis). But: if anyone believes that certain concepts are absolutely the correct ones, and that having different ones would mean not realizing something that we realize—then let him imagine certain very general facts of nature to be different from what we are used to, and the formation of concepts different from the usual ones will become intelligible to him." (PI, p. 230)

all; but new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten." (PI §23) However, what we witness in these last remarks from *On Certainty* is not only a recognition of the historical dimension of language and its consequent potential for change, but also an acknowledgement of this change as a potentially *legitimate* source of sceptical doubt. Hence, the need not only for a refutation of the significance of history as a sceptical concern—which, as we have seen, already operative in Wittgenstein's *earliest* work[202]—but rather, as Moyal-Sharrock claims, its *demystification*.

The legitimacy of this doubt stems from the possibility that, despite our ways of acting in the large majority of cases as if everything were fixed and stable, the potential exists for a genuine (which is to say, non-philosophical) experience that it all might somehow have been different—that if, for example, certain general facts of our natural history had been otherwise, our contemporary concepts and language-games would differ in corresponding ways[203]—with our contemporary view all the while retaining its status as a grammatical structure that cannot, therefore, *simply* be abrogated by the light of that insight, as an adherent to the traditional practice of philosophical scepticism might wish.

Indeed, as Wittgenstein recognised in *On Certainty*: "In order to make a *mistake*, a man must already judge in conformity with mankind." (OC §156, my emphasis) This remark clearly recalls many of those from *Philosophical Investigations*, especially those that belong to what has come to be called the Private Language Argument. But in *On Certainty*

202For example, we might compare here especially Wittgenstein's solipsistic rejection of history in the preparatory wartime *Notebooks*—"What has history to do with me? Mine is the first and only world!" (NB, p. 82)—with his well-known admission in the *Tractatus* that it is none other than *solipsism* which, when it's implications are 'strictly followed out', coincides with 'pure realism' (T 5.64). As I have shown earlier, this manoeuvre succeeds or fails to the extent that Wittgenstein can circumscribe the significance of historical change at the level of our logical notation. It is none other than the general form of the proposition, which, if it could not be given, "then there would have to come a moment where we suddenly had a new experience, so to speak a logical one. // That is, of course, impossible." (NB, p. 75)

203Cf. J. Medina, "Wittgenstein's Social Naturalism: The Idea of *Second Nature* after the *Philosophical Investigations*", in. D. Moyal-Sharrock, *The* Third *Wittgenstein*, *op cit.*, pp. 79-92.

Wittgenstein goes one step further, for: "mightn't I be *crazy* and not be doubting what I absolutely ought to doubt?" (OC §223, my emphasis) Such a question is evidently not intended to be a mere rhetorical device, destined to be cast aside due to some inherent fault in its grammatical formulation as is patently the case in the *Tractatus* and presumably so in the *Investigations*.[204] For, at first sight, it appears to be a strange concession to precisely the kinds of account that have been given in the traditional philosophical programme, both in terms of its content and its tone. Indeed, it feels as if a remark such as this might have been taken straight out of Descartes' *Meditations* itself.[205] This would also appear to be a very *un*-Wittgensteinian concession. Whether this is the case—and if so, to what extent—will therefore need to be addressed in more detail.

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204 It is undoubtedly significant that this method has been rightly called Wittgenstein's '*therapeutic* approach' to the dissolution of philosophical problems—a reference to remarks such as PI §133 ("There is not *a* philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies") and PI §255 ("The philosopher's treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness"), among others, from the *Investigations.* The therapeutic impetus of Wittgenstein's philosophy can be understood against the background of his own psychological problems. Throughout many years of his life he himself felt threatened by insanity. If one takes his (as well as others') descriptions of himself seriously, this characterisation seem justified.

205 Though the passage from *On Certainty* above has indeed a superficial similarity to Descartes probing self-doubt in the *Mediations*, it is interesting to note, however, that although Descartes briefly raises the possibility of such an objection against his own capacity for judgement in the first meditation, it is just as quickly dismissed:

"And how could I deny that these hands and this body are mine, were it not perhaps that I compare myself to certain persons, devoid of sense, whose cerebella are so troubled and clouded by the violent vapours of black bile, that they constantly assure us that they think they are kings when actually the are quite poor, or that they are clothed in purple when they are without covering, or who imagine that they have an earthenware head or are nothing but pumpkins or are made of glass. But they are mad, and I should not be any less were I to follow examples so extravagant." (R. Descartes, *Mediations on First Philosophy*, in ed. S. Tweyman, *René Descartes: Meditations on Fist Philosophy In Focus* (London: Routledge, 1993.)

Madness obviously presents a very different case than that of perceptual illusions in regards to the establishment of a first philosophy. For, significantly, if he had imagined he were mad, Descartes would not have been able to even start his inquiry. With such a doubt as this, he would have undermined the basis for the whole enterprise. The task he sets for himself in the *Mediations* cannot, in principle, concern how a madman might find a foundation for the sciences: a madman—unlike the otherwise perfectly sane victim of an 'evil genius'—can do nothing of the sort.

Accordingly, a central point of contention between readers of Wittgenstein's latest remarks, such as those collected in *On Certainty*, is the precise role that therapy should occupy in our understanding of Wittgenstein's late philosophical programme. As Moyal-Sharrock notes, in Wittgenstein's ultimate re-engagement with traditional philosophical topics—i.e. with the *content* rather than solely with the *method* of philosophy—we witness a renewed commitment to the subject of philosophy and a loss of interest in the therapeutic enterprise that had earlier guided his investigations. She quotes G. Frongia and B. McGuinness on this point:

> "[T]he publications drawn from Wittgenstein's writings in the years immediately before his death have tended to complicate the picture of his intellectual development. Particular attention has been devoted to *On Certainty* […] and here commentators have seen a pronounced change in Wittgenstein's attitude towards constructive and systematic ways of doing philosophy. Certainty there seems to be a loss of interest in the 'therapeutic' aim of removing 'mental cramps', which alone was allowed to philosophy by Wittgenstein's 'analytic' interpreters."[206]

We might then ask here the question: In what sense Wittgenstein's last remarks—which by Moyal-Sharrock's own admission aim to *demystify* scepticism—are *not* supposed to be therapeutic in the earlier sense of the *Investigations*, if not also the *Tractatus?* Has not this 'demystification' been part of Wittgenstein's therapeutic approach from the start?

In one sense, the answer to this question is 'yes'; for the demystification of traditional philosophical problems was always one of the initial steps taken in the therapeutic programme. We might consider here such ironic caricatures in *Philosophical Investigations* directed against the sublimation of philosophical attempts at explicating some phenomenon or other—such as those that follow in the footsteps of Augustine's picture of infantile

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[206]G. Frongia and B. McGuinness, *Wittgenstein: A Bibliographical Guide* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 35.

language-learning[207]—where, for example, Wittgenstein mocks somewhat this prototypical account of meaning in terms of a humorous encounter at none other than the *greengrocer's*:

> "Now think of the following use of language: I send someone shopping. I give him a slip of paper marked "five red apples". He takes the slip to the shopkeeper, who opens the drawer marked "apples"; then he looks up the word "red" in a table and finds a colour sample opposite it; then he say the series of cardinal numbers—I assume that he knows them by heart—up to the word "five" and for each number he takes an apple of the same colour as the same out of the drawer.——It is in this and similar ways that one operates with words.——"But how does he know where and how he is to look up the word 'red' and what he is to do with the word 'five'?"——Well, I assume that he *acts* as I have described. Explanations come to an end somewhere.—But what is the meaning of the word "five"?—No such think was in question here, only how the words "five" is used." (PI §1)

Wittgenstein's objective here, and in the many passages like it that are spread widely throughout the *Investigations*[208], is to demonstrate that in the kinds of everyday lived interaction he describes, such philosophical demands for explanation will first of all appear ridiculous, and will furthermore ultimately get us no further than we were before our 'philosophical explanation' of such ordinary phenomena had been provided anyway.[209] The

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[207]As I have suggested earlier, however, it is not so much *Augustine's* picture that Wittgenstein criticises here, but rather those like it that are intended to offer a definitive philosophical account of meaning and language-learning, based on the incorrigibility of ostensive definition. This account, as we have seen, has more in common with that of Russell, for example—or more contemporaneously, that of cognitive linguists like N. Chomsky—than with Augustine.

[208]Examples could easily be expanded *ad infinitum*. We might consider just two of the more popular examples, such as the 'builders' of what Wittgenstein had come to call 'language-game (2)' (cf. PI §2ff) or the 'beetle in the box' of the Private Language Argument (PI §293). It is an interesting question, given the wide-spread theoretical weight that the term has taken on in discourses that extend even far beyond Wittgenstein scholarship, whether Wittgenstein's comparison of language to *game* is similarly intended to mock philosophical styles of discourse in such a way.

[209]R. Read makes a similar point in his attempt to read a therapeutic approach in *On Certainty*: "Wittgenstein's remarks are *purpose-relative*, and therapeutic. It is a matter of trying to reorient oneself in relation to what one always already understands in practice, just by virtue of being a language-user, a human being." (R. Read, "'The First Shall be Last and the Last shall be First…'" p. 315, in D. Moyal-Sharrock and W.H. Brenner (eds.) *Readings of Wittgenstein's* On Certainty (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 302-321.)

phenomena in question need not be of such an 'everyday nature', for that matter. As early as 1918, Wittgenstein notes in the *Tractatus*, for example:

> "Not only is there guarantee of the temporal immortality of the human soul, that is to say of its eternal survival after death; but, in any case, this assumption completely fails to accomplish the purpose for which it has always been intended. Or is some riddle solved by my surviving for ever? Is not this eternal life itself as much of a riddle as our present life?" (T 6.4312)

We see then that even in some of his earliest remarks Wittgenstein had already begun to destabilise traditional philosophical accounts by characterising them as being no less mysterious, and in the vast majority of cases probably *a lot more so*, than the very phenomena of which they were designed to make some sort of sense. Nonetheless, it is clear that this feature of his methodology is particularly present in the *Investigations*, where Wittgenstein takes great pains to demonstrate that the kinds of linguistic phenomena put into question by the philosophical cannon never actually demanded an explanation in the first place. Thus, he notes in one of the passages that might serve as a resounding motto for the work as a whole: "the axis of reference of our examination must be rotated, but about the fixed point of our real need." (PI §108)

However, what makes the 'demystification' of scepticism in *On Certainty* unique from the point of view of Wittgenstein's entire oeuvre is that it rather keeps the sceptical doubt *in place*—on the sole condition that it is part of a 'lived' or genuine experience—that sceptical expressions arise from a 'real need', as it were—and not as a philosophical pseudo-problem to be resolved by epistemological speculation. The aim, therefore, is no longer to claim that a certain *form* of expression fails to perform what it is intended to, given the logic or grammar of our language, but rather to probe its source as a potentially legitimate expression within the wider *Lebenswelt* of which it may be a part, if only in principle. From the perspective of *On Certainty*, it is not so much the form of the philosophical expression of sceptical doubt—or, for that matter, of certainty—that fails to meet the conditions for establishing its legitimacy, but rather the lived context in which it is uttered.

What we discover here is indeed a surprising admission on Wittgenstein's part, which is by most accounts exactly what philosophers would traditionally have claimed from the start: philosophical problems have their root in *genuinely* troubling experiences, which philosophers in their theorising *genuinely* attempt to overcome or resolve. Wittgenstein's critique, then, is not geared towards interrogating the sense of a given expression, but rather recognising that it may at particular times arise from a legitimate experience, one which remains legitimate insofar as its expression belongs to unreflective speech, and thus—though he does not bar the expression itself—he effectively bars it from certain forms of philosophical speculation. For, as a genuinely lived experience, it is not material for philosophical thought. One's certainty cannot simply be abrogated at will and neither, on the other hand, can a legitimate sceptical doubt be so easily overcome.

A useful way to frame this point is in terms of what has elsewhere been called the 'pedagogical style' of the *Investigations*. As such, Wittgenstein's understanding of grammar may be characterised as one in which learning can be conceived to some extent as constitutive of the content that is learned. In the words of Cavell: "In 'learning language' you learn not merely what the names of things are, but what a name is; not merely what the form of expression is for expressing a wish, but what expressing a wish is; not merely what the word for 'father' is, but what a father is; not merely what the word for 'love' is, but what love is."[210] Meredith Williams has characterised this well in terms of the epistemic commitments that the very act of learning a technique involves, with regards to knowing how to go on with language and to the ways in which we do things with our words in the world. "The key," she notes, "is the shared sense of the obvious that provides the background necessary for any meaningful use of language or rule-following."[211] This understanding is, she argues, most eloquently illustrated in Wittgenstein's *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, where, for example, he introduces an illustrative account of

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210 S. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 177.

211 M. Williams, *Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning: Towards a Social Conception of Mind* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 208.

'the determination of a concept'. He discusses there a pupil who is learning a new mathematical technique. Upon mastering the technique, the pupil in Wittgenstein's account tells us "I saw that it must be like that…" (RFM VI.7) This 'must', Wittgenstein continues, signifies that the pupil has come to see the outcome as one that is essential to the process:

> "This *must* shows that he has adopted a concept.
>
> This *must* shows that he has gone in a circle.
>
> He has read off from the process, not a proposition of natural science but, instead of the that, the determination of a concept." (RFM VI.8)

As Williams aptly notes, the metaphor of 'travelling in a circle' helps to locate the problem that Wittgenstein is addressing here: Instead of indicating a painful or destructive *regress*—where indeed a quite traditional and characteristic manoeuvre of critical philosophy would be plainly visible—the very fact of travelling in a circle becomes rather the principle indication of the rule's *validity*. As Wittgenstein notes: "He does not say: I realise that this happens. Rather: that it must be like that." (RFM VI.7) The pupil, in other words, comes to see the result as *self-evident*.

We have seen earlier that there is both a positive and a critical side to Wittgenstein's discussion of pedagogy in the *Investigations*. He puts his considerations of the role of the language-learner forth as 'one possibility', from which it does not follow that it is the *only* possibility, even for a restricted subset of language (such as sensation language, for example).[212] To take such a conclusion from Wittgenstein's work in the *Investigations* is to

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212 Previously I advanced this claim against the interpretation of 'nature' and of 'natural expressions' in Hacker's *Insight and Illusion*, a work which represents just one example of the widespread tendency to draw strong theses from Wittgenstein's philosophy, of which he probably would have disapproved. Hacker claims, e.g.:

> "The framework for this language-game consists in the shared human disposition to react to injury by groaning or crying out in pain and assuaging the injured limb. For the beginning of such language-games with psychological expressions lies in natural human behaviour in certain circumstances, in our groans of pain, our gasps of surprise, our trying to obtain what we want, our trembling when in danger, and our paroxysms of anger. (But not *all* psychological expressions are like this.)" (*Insight and Illusion*, *op cit.,* p. 296)

miss the important critique he offers against foundational accounts of any sort. It is to fall victim to the same metaphysically-inclined spirit that Wittgenstein himself identified in the *Tractatus* and that in his later work he sought to overcome through a morphological focus on plurality, diversity and family resemblances (as opposed to a unitary, essentialist picture of phenomena, be that linguistic phenomena or any other). It is, as he claims in the *Investigations,* to find oneself 'held captive by a picture'.

However, far from *impugning* the role of the 'logical must' in his latest remarks, Wittgenstein seeks rather to re-inscribe its function in a description of the way in which we often do indeed reason, despite what he had earlier considered to be its philosophical dubiousness. And how could it be otherwise? For after all, throughout Wittgenstein's oeuvre he has repeatedly called for a recognition of the limits of explanation and a circumscription of the kinds of reasoning that *requires* a solid foundation at all. Within the *Tractatus,* as we have seen, Wittgenstein had already rejected any and all attempts, such as those of Frege and Russell, to posit self-evident logical truths; as Wittgenstein notes in a remark the clearly points towards Frege's account of logico-mathematical fallibility: "If the truth of a proposition does not follow from the fact that it is self-evident to us, then its self-evidence in no way justifies our belief in its truth." (T 5.1363)[213] This critique is carried over into the *Investigations* in terms of his rejection of any and all attempts at explanation that are based on an appeal to a rule that is self-regulating or self-interpreting, and which would therefore carry within itself all of the criteria necessary for its own continual correct application. "Explanations," he notes right at the opening of the *Investigations*, "come to an end somewhere." (PI §1)

Despite Hacker's qualification here, he nonetheless concludes: "It is an *indispensable* guide, but each concept needs careful scrutiny in its own right." (Ibid., p. 297) This is not to say that these are not interesting phenomena for philosophical speculation of the traditional sort; however, such an account clearly poses problems when advanced as an understanding of *Wittgenstein's* philosophy.

213As we saw previously, this is not to claim that there is *nothing* which justifies our belief in the truth of logical and mathematical laws; however, self-evidence is not it.

This line of argumentation is by now becoming quite familiar to us. What remains to be characterised, however, is Wittgenstein's shifting understanding of the circumstances under which training and language-learning is "overlooked as mere history."[214] For as we have also seen, it is in these terms that Wittgenstein had himself once rejected learning as 'mere history', and therefore as something that could not possibly be enlightening for the kind of grammatical investigation that he wished to undertake. For it is in precisely these terms that in the 1930's—though he had already begun to concern himself with the nature of temporality and time-consciousness in terms of the specious present—Wittgenstein nonetheless continued along the lines drawn in the *Tractatus*, maintaining that *history* (if not *time*, exactly) was to remain outside of the domains he sought to elucidate.[215] History remained then primarily a matter of psychology, rather than grammar.

In the *Investigations*, however, Wittgenstein began to characterise learning as something more than 'mere' empirical psychology, and the cumulative processes of transmitting a language from one generation to another as something more than the 'mere' history of our common tongue. Nonetheless, this understanding had not yet achieved its full status as a grammatical one. It remained primarily of a methodological, or therapeutic, importance. In his post-*Investigations* thought Wittgenstein becomes even more interested in language-learning in terms of the creation of a space for judgement, i.e. of judging whether or not one is going on in the same way. Through training, the novice comes to see an activity as one guided by rules, which means the learner does not see it as something that *simply happens*, but rather as something that *must* happen. In doing so he comes to see the obviousness of the outcome. But this obviousness is not expressed in the explicit propositional form. It is rather expressed in a competent speaker's lived reactions and it is here, as Wittgenstein

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214 Wittgenstein: "But couldn't we imagine that someone without any training should see a sum that was set to do, and straight-away find himself in the mental state that in the normal course of things is only produced by training and practice? So that he knew he could calculate although he had never calculated. (One might, then, it seems, say: The training would merely be history, and merely as a matter of empirical fact would it be necessary for the production of knowledge." (RFM VI.33)

215 We clearly see traces of Wittgenstein's early Fregean anti-psychologism in such remarks as those found in the 1930-1932 courses, e.g.: "The history of how we came to know what [a word] means is irrelevant; what remains is our understanding." (L. Wittgenstein, *Cambridge Courses, 1930-1932, op cit.,* p. 26.)

notes in *Zettel*, that his earlier account of rule-following meets an important limit: "For just when one says "But don't you *see…?*" the rule is no use, it is what is explained, not what does the explaining." (Z §302)   Learning thus achieves its full grammatical status in Wittgenstein's reflections.

We saw earlier that it was precisely this sense of the obvious that Wittgenstein sought in his work to question through his use of the morphological method.   The object of this methodology was directed towards philosophical accounts of the kind of phenomena widely accepted by philosophers as those that require a foundational account.   In this way, Wittgenstein sought to make our familiar philosophical accounts appear strange and disconnected from our actual forms of life—our real needs, as it were.   He likewise sought in a certain sense to turn the strange into something familiar, in an attempt to rejuvenate a more appropriate form of philosophical thought and move it in new and more profitable directions.   In Wittgenstein's last remarks he continues this approach; however, he does so not in order to come to terms with how we should think about problems, philosophical or otherwise, but rather with how we do.

It is perhaps unsurprising then that in the novel approach of this period Wittgenstein should turn here to the work of G.E. Moore, in particular "A Defence of Common Sense" and "Proof of an External World". In his last remarks, collected in *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein devotes a great amount of effort to the task of articulating just what is so powerful in Moore's subtle account of knowledge in terms of the *obviousness* of foundational knowledge claims, as well as what is mistaken in it. Before continuing to Wittgenstein's formulation of the issues involved here, let us therefore first take a closer look at Moore's own.

II. Moore and Wittgenstein on the 'Authority' of Ordinary Language

At the opening of Moore's first presentation, "A Defence of Common Sense," he notes that in what follows he will "state, one by one, some of the most important points in which my philosophical position differs from positions which have been taken up by *some* other philosophers."[216] Accordingly, there follows a list—defined by him as belonging to 'class (1)'—of well over twenty or so propositions, all of which Moore claims to know with certainty. This list includes propositions such as: There exists at present a living human body, which is his body; this body was born at a certain time in the past, and has existed continuously ever since, though not without undergoing changes; every since it was born, it has been either in contact with or not far from the surface of the earth; the earth has existed for many years before this body was born; and for many of these years, a large number of human bodies have also lived and died upon it; he is a human being, and has had at different times since his body was born, many different experiences; etc. With the proposition in 'Class (2)', Moore further asserts that not only he himself, but that most of us have also at some time or another known these same propositions to be true of ourselves, with the same certainty as he does.

Propositions such as these may seem, he notes, to be "such obvious truisms as not to be worth stating"[217] Indeed, in every respect they are. However, the philosophical target of this list is soon made apparent. There are, he explains, two points wherein an objection to such a list might be posed by 'some philosophers' (as he continues to qualify consistently). It is a lengthy explication, but one worth repeating in extension nonetheless. For the unique character of Moore's language and the kind of exacting way in which he expresses himself is not merely an accidental feature of the kind of argument he seeks to advance, nor of the kind that he seeks to reject. This qualification is, therefore, as follows:

216G.E. Moore, "A Defence of Common Sense", p. 32, in G.E. Moore, *Philosophical Papers* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1959), pp. 32-59.

217G.E. Moore, "A Defence of Common Sense", *op cit,* p. 32.

"The first point is this. Some philosophers seem to have thought it legitimate to use the word 'true' in such a sense that a proposition which is partially false my nevertheless also be true; and some of these, therefore, would perhaps *say* that propositions like those enumerated in (1) are, in their view, true, when all the time they believe that every such proposition is partially false. I wish, therefore, to make it quite plain that I am not using 'true' in any such sense. I am using it in such a sense (and I think this is the ordinary usage) that if a proposition is partially false, it follows that it is *not* true, though, of course, it may be *partially* true. I am maintaining, in short, that all the propositions in (1), and also many propositions corresponding to each of these, are *wholly* true; I am asserting this in asserting (2). And hence any philosopher, who does in fact believe, with regard to any or all of these classes of propositions, that every proposition of the class in question is partially false, is, in fact, disagreeing with me and holding a view incompatible with (2), even though he may think himself justified in *saying* that he believes some propositions belonging to all of these classes to be 'true'."

Moore continues directly:

And the second point is this. Some philosophers seem to have thought it legitimate to use such expressions as, e.g. 'The earth has existed for may years past', as if they expressed something which they really believed, when in fact they believe that every proposition, which such an expression would *ordinarily* be understood to express, is, at least partially, false; and all they really believe is that there is some *other* set of propositions, related in a certain way to those which such expressions do actually express, which, unlike these, really are true. That is to say, they use the expression 'The earth has existed for many years past' to express, not what it would ordinarily be understood to express, but the proposition that some proposition, related to this in a certain way, is true; when all the time they believe that the proposition, which this expression would ordinarily be understood to express, is, at least partially, false. I wish, therefore, to make it quite plain that I was not using the expressions I listed in (1) in any such subtle sense. I mean by each of them precisely what ever reader, in reading them, will have understood me to mean. And if any philosopher, therefore, who holds that any of these expressions, if understood in its popular manner, expresses a proposition which embodies some popular error, is disagreeing with me and hold a view incompatible with (2),

> even though he may hold that there is some *other*, true, proposition which the expression in question might be legitimately used to express."[218]

Now, despite the fact that Moore has given this exhaustive explication of what it is that he intends to accomplish by proposing such a list of propositions, as opposed to 'some philosophers', it is easy to miss the main thrust of his argument in this passage, as well as in the others like it that make up the paper. When his exacting use of language is examined more closely, what is revealed is a surprisingly subtle argument. It is an argument that patently *does not* concern the truth or falsity of the propositions laid out there (the kind of thing we would traditionally expect from a refutation of scepticism, as Moore "Defence" is evidently intended to be). Rather, it is an argument regarding the *kind of language* in which these propositions are expressed. For what Moore is arguing for here is, first of all, not the truth of the assertions made, but rather the *legitimate use* of the words employed in his assertions. It is this legitimacy that demands the lengthy explication to follow in the presentation. The key here, as he notes, is that it is in the *ordinary sense* of the words used that he has asserted of these propositions that he knows them to be true, with certainty—and it is the words' ordinary meanings that 'some philosophers' would, in Moore's esteem, erroneously call into question.[219]

In Norman Malcolm's celebrated reconstruction of Moore's argument, "Moore and Ordinary Language", the case is made clear; however, it is made so not in relation to some nameless philosopher, but to Russell and specifically to the views expressed by him in his 1927 *Outline of Philosophy*. For Russell makes there a number of the kinds of colourful and shocking claims for which he was well-known[220], one of which Malcolm singles out as an

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218 G.E. Moore, "A Defence of Common Sense", *op cit,* pp. 35-36.

219 As A.R. White has argued: "[Moore's] lack of interest in searching for the truth of those common sense statements which he submitted to philosophical examination stemmed not only from his prior interest in their analysis, but also from his opinion that it is justifiable to take their truth for granted, and queer of philosophers to doubt it." (A. R. White, *G.E. Moore* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1958), p. 9.)

220 In his extended review of the book, H.A. Prichard describes the work as one which positively "bristles with controversial statements." (H.A. Prichard, "Mr. Bertrand Russell's *Outline of Philosophy*", p. 265, *Mind*, 37(147), 1928, pp. 265-282.) In a significant manner, a propos the arguments of Moore that will

example of the kind of claim that Moore attempts in his work to refute. For example, at his most flamboyant, Russell notes that when a physiologist observes a living brain:

> "It is natural to suppose that what the physiologist sees is in the brain he is observing. But if we are speaking of physical space, what the physiologists sees is in his own brain. It is in no sense in the brain that he is observing, though it is in the precept of that brain, which occupies part of the physiologist's perceptual space."[221]

Putting aside any critical evaluation of Russell's Theory of Neutral Monism, Malcolm proceeds to investigate, in the spirit of Moore, the kind of claim that such a statement may be said to represent more generally. First and foremost, it is not, he notes, an *empirical* statement. Russell means to imply here not that when some particular physiologist observes some particular brain he is being *deceived* in supposing that it is in fact a brain that he is observing (through an elaborate construction of mirrors, for example). Neither is he implying that in the past physiologists in general were *mistaken* about what they were observing (according to an outdated empirical model that has been disproved by more recent innovations in brain science, for example). In fact, Malcolm claims that Russell is not disagreeing with the facts of the matter at all, but rather with the way in which we talk about the facts at hand:

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be expounded in what follows, it is I think worth noting that Prichard makes the following relevant remark:

> "I have, in reading it, found myself again and again reminded of a phrase applied by a non-philosophical colleague to certain philosophers, *viz*., 'Those who say they believe what no man really can'. I have found myself constantly wondering whether even Mr. Russell himself *believes* a fraction of the things which he implies that he does, and whether he could not best render his great acuteness of use to the world by scrapping all his present views and, in a Cartesian manner, making a fresh start." (Ibid., p. 265-266)

I would submit that it is Moore's genius in the two presentations under discussion here to have taken this very kind of criticism out of the literary or biographical sphere, and put it rather at the heart of a genuinely *philosophical* critique. Turning such a character critique into a philosophical one is clearly in line with Wittgenstein's general programme as well, hence his great interest in precisely these works of Moore.

221B. Russell, *Outline of Philosophy* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1979), p. 110.

> "In the normal sort of circumstances in which a person would ordinarily say that he sees the postman, Russell would agree with him as to what the particular circumstances of the situation were. Russell would not disagree with him about any question of empirical fact; yet Russell would still say that what he really saw was not the postman, but part of his own brain. It appears then they they disagree, not about any empirical facts, but about what *language* shall be used to describe those facts. Russell was saying that it is really *a more correct way of speaking* to say that you see a part of you brain, than to say that you see the postman."[222]

The difference—which, undoubtedly, hangs on the meaning of how one employs words such as 'really' here, in the kind of familiar philosophical use of the phrase 'What one *really* sees is…'[223]—is not as fine as one might initially suppose. To see this, it is useful to take a case from the history of philosophy.

Many have supposed that Moore had David Hume in mind when he wrote his article, although there is good reason to suppose that Moore was rather directing his attack against a widely adopted *style* of doing philosophy rather than a particular philosopher. Nonetheless, Hume may be said to have provided in many significant respects the 'official theory' of knowledge claims that Moore is broadly calling into question in his work. The crux of this 'official theory' is that it considers all such claims as propositions that fall into one or another of two categories, which are *exhaustive* and *mutually exclusive*. Historically, there

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222 N. Malcolm, "Moore and Ordinary Language", p. 350, in P.A. Schilpp (ed.), *The Philosophy of G.E. Moore* (New York: Tudor, 1952), pp. 345-368.

223 Section xi of Part II of the *Investigations* is, in fact, devoted to calling precisely this use of '*really*', in such expressions as '*What one really sees is…*' that are found commonly in Gestalt-psychology. Wittgenstein certainly does not wish to deny, for example, that in some cases Gestalt figures provide a relevant framework for approaching a unique kind of experience; however, it is patently not the case this framework will provide an absolute or universal means for describing any such experience at all. Eg.:

> "It would have made as little sense for me to say "Now I am seeing it as…" as to say at the sight of a knife and fork "Now I am seeing this as a knife and fork". This expression would bot be understood. —Any more than: "Now it's a knife and fork" or "It can be a fork too."

> One doesn't '*take*' what one knows as the cutlery at a meal *for* cutlery; any more than one ordinarily tries to move one's mouth as one ears, or aims at moving it." (PI, p. 195)

This style of reasoning is clearly related to Moore's own here.

have been different names and different conceptions associated with each of these categories. Hume himself distinguished between propositions expressing a relationship between ideas and propositions relating to matters of fact; Kant, as we have seen, created a third, cross-categorical square, which provided him with the synthetic a priori truths of mathematics. This list could go on. However, broadly conceived, these two categories are generally comprised of a priori (necessary, analytic, deductive, and so forth) propositions, on the one hand, and a posteriori (contingent, synthetic, inductive, etc.) on the other.

Hume, and many subsequent philosophers, saw in this division—however it is expressed—a number of strange and important consequences for a philosophical theory of knowledge. Specifically, they contended that propositions belonging to the category of a posteriori or contingent propositions *are never certain*, and they supported this contention on the basis of an appeal to experience, memory, dreams, or to various kinds of deceptions, all of which had turned out to be false in the past and therefore might turn out to be false in the future, etc. Regardless of the means, the common denominator of these contentions is that the experiential aspect of a posteriori propositions is, in its very essence, *unreliable*. By contrast, a priori propositions will never be contradicted by any possible experience and so *they*, at least, are certain.[224] A priori propositions were thus taken as the paradigm for what might truly be considered reliable in any theory of knowledge. They provided the standard for certainty, according to which all propositions must in turn be measured, a standard to which a posteriori truths will naturally be found to fall short.

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[224]This is, of course, a position that is also found in Descartes. One of the things that Descartes set out to do with his *cogito* was to establish precisely *that* there are a priori truths. For this purpose one needs only one example, upon which his 'first philosophy' can be established and subsequently built up. Wittgenstein would himself gesture towards the role of just such a 'foundational proposition' in the works of Frege, when he notes in *On Certainty*:

" "I cannot doubt this proposition without giving up all judgement."

But what sort of proposition is this? (It is reminiscent of what Frege said about the law of identity.) It is certainty no empirical proposition. It does not belong to psychology. It has rather the character of a rule." (OC §494)

Though Hume may be taken as one of the more extreme and most celebrated proponents of such a view, his epistemology is far from a mere outmoded appendix in the history of modern philosophy. Malcolm points out that among the more contemporary philosophers who have maintained such a view is A.J. Ayer, who in his *The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge* notes, for example:

> "We do indeed verify many such propositions [a posteriori, contingent propositions about matters of fact] to an extent that makes it highly probably that they are true; but since the series of relevant tests, being infinite, can never be exhausted, this probability can never amount to logical certainty […]
>
> It must be admitted then that there is a sense in which it is true to say that we can never be sure, with regard to any proposition implying the existence of a material thing, that we are not somehow being deceived; but at the same time one may object to this statement on the ground that it is misleading. It is misleading because it suggests that the state of 'being sure' is one the attainment of which is conceivable, but unfortunately not within our power. *But*, in fact, *the conception of such a state is self-contradictory*. For in order to be sure, in this sense, that we were not being deceived, we should have to have completed an infinite series of verifications; and it is an analytic proposition that one cannot run through all the members of an infinite series. […] Accordingly, what we should say, if we wish to avoid misunderstanding, is not that we can never be certain that any of the propositions in which we express our perceptual judgements are true, but rather that *the notion of certainty does not apply to propositions of this kind*. It applies to the *a priori* propositions of logical and mathematics, and the fact that it does apply to them is an essential mark of distinction between them and empirical propositions."[225]

From the point of view of the content of Moore's own assertions, he might thus easily be charged with begging the question. In fact, one might even claim that he has invited this charge when he writes, for example, that he will provide a set of assertions that "are, in fact,

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[225] A.J. Ayer, *The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge* (London: Macmillian, 1969), pp. 44-45, Malcolm's italics.

a set of propositions, every one of which (*in my opinion*) I *know* to be true."[226] Nonetheless, Moore highlights here that it is only seen as such from a particular perspective—i.e. the *philosophical one*, such as that which Ayer adopts here—the broader validity of which Moore himself is attempting to circumscribe.

For, unlike Moore, the reason that Ayer is so confident in his claim that it has never been and will never be correct to say of an a posteriori proposition that one knows it for certain, is that he thinks such a claim is *self-contradictory*.[227] On Ayer's account Moore cannot claim that he knows for certain that *p*, when *p* is an a posteriori proposition, for it is in fact a necessary feature of such propositions that they are in no case certain. Like a married bachelor or round square, certainty just does not fit the kind of propositions Moore proposes here. Not only is it incorrect to consider such propositions to be known for certain, but further, it is 'strictly speaking' logically inconceivable. Here, once again, we see that the weight of such a claim rests on how one is to understand the significance of such qualifications as 'really', 'truly', 'strictly speaking', and the like, frequently found in philosophical works.

Moore's strategic reply to this style of philosophising is to remind us that—on the contrary —there *is* an ordinary use of the phrase 'to know for certain', which we apply to a posteriori propositions all of the time. It is therefore philosophers such as Ayer who are wrong to say that the notion of certainty does not apply to propositions of this kind. For, as Malcolm

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226 G.E. Moore, "A Defence of Common Sense", *op cit.,* p. 32, my emphasis.

227 Here we find a familiar appeal to what might be called the 'a priori nature of experience', one which (as we have seen) Russell also appealed to in his attack on solipsism. By accepting that each person lives in a private world of sense-data, he was forced to admit (as he put it) the 'logical possibility of solipsism'. In *The Problems of Philosophy*, first published in 1912, the Cartesian overtones of the position are clearly spelled out:

"In one sense it must be admitted that we can never *prove* the existence of things other than ourselves and our experiences. No logical absurdity results from the hypothesis that the world consists of myself and my thoughts and feelings and sensations, and that everything else is mere fancy. In dreams a very complicated world may seem to be present, and yet on waking we find it a delusion; that is to say, we find that the sense-data in the dream do not appear to have corresponded with such physical objects as we should naturally infer from sense-data." (B. Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy, op cit.*, p. 10.)

makes clear, Ayer's account rests on the assumption that it makes sense to speak of an ordinary expression as being self-contradictory—and as being *therefore* illegitimate. This assumption, Malcolm notes, is mistaken and he launches a surprisingly subtle argument for why. He responds thus:

> "The reason that no ordinary expression is self-contradictory, is that a self-contradictory expression is an expression which would *never* be used to describe *any* sort of situation. It does not have a descriptive usage. Any ordinary expression is an expression which would be used to describe a certain sort of situation; and since it would be used to describe a certain sort of situation, it *does* describe that sort of situation. A self-contradictory expression, on the contrary, describes nothing. It is possible, of course, to *construct* out of ordinary expressions an expression which is self-contradictory. But the expression so constructed is not itself an ordinary expression—i.e., not an expression which has a descriptive use."[228]

This idea—that no ordinary proposition is self-contradictory—is, he continues in an ironic vein, rather a *tautology*. For ordinary utterances can appear contradictory without thereby falsifying themselves: "That is to say," he concludes, "ordinary language is correct language."[229]

This is undoubtedly a quick summary of Moore's position, which would have to be expanded were Moore's unique and subtle manner of argumentation what is really in question here. However, I would like to highlight a particular feature of this discourse surrounding Moore and the strategy of his "Defence," among other works of his, for which this short survey will nonetheless suffice. It is a feature that concerns what might be called *species* and *genera of knowledge*, a distinction that can be further outlined by returning to a passage referred to earlier. For Malcolm, following his argument for the non-self-contradictoriness of ordinary language, proceeds to give an illuminating example of the normal use of *apparently* self-contradictory expressions, such as when one says '*It is and it*

228N. Malcolm, "Moore on Ordinary Language", *op cit.*, p. 359.
229N. Malcolm, "Moore on Ordinary Language", *op cit.*, p. 362.

isn't…', which he notes may have descriptive uses in certain ordinary, concrete cases (vague ones, for example, such as '*It is and it isn't raining*' in cases of light misting, etc.). This case recalls clearly the example from Mauthner, discussed previously, where he notes that no apparently tautological expression in language—by which, of course, Mauthner always means *ordinary language*—is ever tautological in the stricter, logical sense. Concerning the uselessness of providing a logical analysis of such instances of ordinary language, he notes in his *Beiträge*, for example: "If someone says 'cheese is cheese' or 'schnapps is schnapps' or 'a word is a word', then this utterance is not a special case of the general formula 'A is A'"[230] Likewise, in Malcolm's reconstruction of Moore's argument, if someone says '*It is and it isn't raining*', then this utterance is not a special case of the contradiction 'A and ~A', which must therefore be expunged from our language according to the dictates of the Law of Non-Contradiction (in order to 'avoid misunderstandings', as Ayer puts it).

The question that I wish to highlight here, which was formulated by Mauthner before Moore's "Defence" and was presumably unknown to him, is nonetheless one that they both share: What does it mean to speak of a claim as a 'special case' of another one in this sense? Turning the question somewhat, we might likewise ask: What does it mean to speak of an ordinary expression, such as '*Schnapps is schnapps*', as a species of the generic expression 'A = A', or '*It is and it isn't raining*' as a species of the generic expression 'A and ~A'? It is this question, I believe, that Moore is attempting (albeit in a disguised manner) to call our attention to.

As we have seen, Moore's first task is to demonstrate that, in fact, there *is* an ordinary use of the phrase 'know for certain', which is properly applied to empirical, a posteriori statements. However, this is not the end of the story. For if this were all that Moore were suggesting, there would ultimately be no need to refute 'some philosophers'. We might just

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[230] F. Mauthner, *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache (vol. III: Zur Grammatik und Logic), op cit.*, p. 359, my translation. Likewise, in his *Wörterbuch*, Mauthner notes: "In reality there is no equality; in living nature there is no identity. The proposition A = A is so true, that in the whole world it is true for nothing but itself. It is the principle of absolute identity, but the principle is only applicable to itself." (F. Mauthner, *Wörterbuch der Philosophie, op cit.*, p. 2 [entry 'A = A'], my translation.)

as well let them have their paradoxes, and be done with it. But this is not simply the case, for Moore's common-sense view of the world implies not only that the common-sense view exists *in parallel* to that of 'some philosophers'. He is not only implying, for example, that there are two different uses of the expressions 'true', 'to know for certain', etc., and that both uses are equally legitimate in and of themselves. Rather, he is claiming that our ordinary language is deeper, more primitive and conceptually prior to that other view. For it is this ordinary view which forms the foundation of the refined and regimented descriptions of reality that are found, for example, in the sciences, in logic and mathematics, as well as in philosophy, and *not* the other way around. In the case under consideration here, it is rather the expressions of logic—such as 'A = A' or 'A and ~A'—which are species of their more generic, ordinary equivalents. Moore's claim is not only that our ordinary use of such expressions is a legitimate use, but that if it is to be compared to the extra-ordinary claims of philosophy, it is ordinary language that will turn out to be *authoritative*. Inconsistencies with ordinary use mark a philosophical doctrine as incorrectly expressed, misleading, and possibly even absurd; inconsistencies with the beliefs of the common sense view of the world mark it as false.[231]

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[231] In his early survey of the Moore/Wittgenstein debate, Avrum Stroll provides a good example of just how this might be so, particularly in the case of the natural sciences. Discussing Moore's decline in reputation among analytic philosophers following World War II, he notes the pervasive scientism that was popular at the time (and continues to be so in many important circles today). He discusses, for example, what he calls Moore's 'pre-technical', 'pre-scientific' world view that is, in his view, autonomous and to a great extent immune to revision by such technical sub-domains. The common sense view that Stroll takes as his example is the following:

"A simple example of a proposition that is part of the common sense view is *people die*. This is a proposition virtually every adult knows to be true, but it is not one belonging to any science. One might say that it stands in a presupposition relation to such sciences as biology and medicine. It is not something scientists *merely assume* as a hypothesis; rather they, like everybody else, *know* it to be true. But presupposing it, they may ask such questions as, How and why do people die? Such questions and their answers belong to science; but those answers must be consistent with the knowledge that people do die. No scientific theory that denied such a proposition is acceptable; and that, in effect, is what it means to say that the common sense view is not open to scientific revision." (A. Stroll, *Moore and Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 16.)

It is easy for this statement to be misconstrued. It is certainly the case, for example, that at one time everyone thought that the earth was flat, when it was actually round. Everyone was mistaken. However, the way in which they were mistaken regards what the empirical facts are. It is not a matter of using

This is certainly not to say that it is impossible or illegitimate to create precise and technical variants of the expressions of our ordinary language, and use these in correspondingly precise and technical ways. However, as the common sense view of the world has conceptual priority, our technical language (be it scientific, philosophical, or what have you) will never be able to 'give the lie' to our ordinary uses of the terms in questions (as Russell and Ayer would contend, for example). There is no sense in which 'some philosophers' might thus be able to extract a technical form of a given expression from its prior ordinary use, and subsequently *proceed to measure the adequacy of the original* according to the artificial standards of its progeny. It is a theme that runs throughout Moore's work: our ordinary use of words can never be called into question on the basis of philosophical accounts of their meaning. For to use a technical term is not to refine our ordinary language by *subtracting* from it what is vague, unclear, or imprecise, and so to arrive at what is essential in language. It is, as A.R. White aptly expresses the matter, rather "to depart from it by way of *addition.*"[232] The addition depends, in turn, upon the foundation to which it has been added.

While such a stance towards the authority of ordinary language may easily be overlooked in the first of Moore's presentations under consideration here—as he claims to be advancing in the first instance only a *defence* of common sense, which, as we have seen, may be incompletely interpreted in the more modest terms of its mere legitimacy—the authoritative standpoint that Moore is after can be witnessed especially clearly in the second presentation to be considered here, his "Proof of an External World." In this presentation Moore proceeds to address a familiar and long-standing claim of Kant's, from the preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason,* namely that:

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language 'incorrectly', in the sense that we have been discussing; they were using perfectly correct language to describe what they (mistakenly) thought was the case. In the case of the proposition *people die*, we are rather dealing with the kind of thing Wittgenstein would later describe in *On Certainty* in these terms: as a change in "our whole way of seeing nature" would be necessary in order to 'disprove' the statement (OC §291).

232 A.R. White, *G.E. Moore* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1958), p. 26, my emphasis.

> "However harmless idealism may be considered in respect of the essential aims of metaphysics (though, in fact, it is not this harmless), it still remains a scandal to philosophy and to human reason in general that the existence of things outside us (from which we derive the whole material of knowledge, even for our inner sense) must be accepted merely on *faith*, and that if anyone thinks good to doubt their existence, we are unable to counter his doubts by any satisfactory proof." (CPR, Bxxxix)

As in Moore's earlier work, rather than discussing the validity of the proof that Kant gives in his work, Moore claims that he wishes to discuss, firstly, "the question as to what *sort* of proof this of Kant's is," and secondly, "whether (contrary to Kant's own opinion) there may not perhaps be other proofs, of the same or of a different sort, which are also satisfactory." [233] He thus proceeds to extensively analyse the meaning of Kant's claim concerning 'things outside of us' in terms of things to be met with in space, possible objects to be met with in space, things belonging to the 'external world', etc. and to give what he calls a 'perfectly rigorous proof'—i.e., a proof in which 1. the premises are different from the conclusion, 2. the premises are known to be true, and 3. the conclusion follows from the premises—namely:

> "I can prove now, for instance, that two human hands exist. How? By holding up my two hands, and saying, as I make a certain gesture with the right hand, 'Here is one hand', and adding, as I make a certain gesture with the left, 'and here is another'. And if, by doing this, I have proved *ipso facto* the existence of external things, you will all see that I can also do it now in numbers of other ways: there is no need to multiply examples." [234]

In other words: 1. If two hands exist, the external world exists; 2. here is one hand and here is another; therefore, 3. the external world exists. *Q.E.D.*

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233 G.E. Moore, "Proof of an External World", p. 128, in G.E. Moore, *Philosophical Papers* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1959), pp. 127-150.

234 G.E. Moore, "Proof of an External World", *op cit.,* p. 145-146. One cannot but be reminded here of Johnson's famous 'refutation' of Berkeley's idealism: the eighteenth-century scholar is supposed to have kicked a stone and to have claimed 'I refute it *thus!*'

There are, he admits, a couple of remaining points according to which 'some philosophers'
will still feel that he has not given a *satisfactory* proof of the point in question. The first of
these is, he supposes, that some philosophers will not want a proof of the second premise
that Moore has given—that '*Here is one hand and here is another*'—but rather a more
general statement as to how *any* proposition of this sort may be proved. Moore continues,
significantly: "This, of course, I haven't given; and I do not believe it can be given: if this is
what is meant by proof of the existence of external things, I do not believe that any proof of
the existence of external things is possible."[235] The second point of question is that some
philosophers may claim that if he cannot prove the premisses of his argument, then his proof
is not in fact *conclusive*, as Moore has claimed:

> "This view that, if I cannot prove such things as these, I do not know them, is, I think, the view that
> Kant was expressing in the sentence which I quoted at the beginning of this lecture, when he implies
> that so long as we have no proof of the existence of external things, their existence must be accepted
> merely on *faith*. He means to say, I think that if I cannot prove that there is a hand here, I must
> accept it merely as a matter of faith—I cannot know it. Such a view, though it has been very
> common among philosophers can, I think, be shown to be wrong—though shown only by the use of
> premisses which are not known to be true, unless we do know of the existence of external things. I
> can know things, which I cannot prove; and among things which I certainty did know, even if (as I
> think) I could not prove them, were the premisses of my two proofs."[236]

One can readily witness in this line of argumentation the kind of strategy that Moore
advances throughout his work, which does something like the following: *If* what is meant by
proof of the existence of external things concerns a general statement about how any
propositions of the sort given can be known to be true, for certain, then no proof will be
forthcoming. *However,* Moore's claim is that this patently is *not* what is meant in ordinary
circumstances by the word 'proof'—where in all kinds of cases, proof, and even additional

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235G.E. Moore, "Proof of an External World", *op cit.,* p. 149.
236G.E. Moore, "Proof of an External World", *op cit.,* p. 150.

proof, may be demanded and provided.[237]   The kind of proof required by the philosophers addressed by Moore is not one of those cases. Such a condition is, he notes, an absurdity, and thus not only is it unnecessary but also *unwarranted*. The philosophical demand for an additional, more 'rigorous' form of proof is thus superseded by the ways in which we ordinarily call for and deliver proof, which is perfectly rigorous as it stands in and of itself.

One can see in Moore's appeal to the authority of ordinary language certain resemblances to Wittgenstein's own, which began to feature particularly prominently in his work in the 1930's and continued until the time he was composing the *Investigations*. It is certainly true that Wittgenstein had already written in the *Tractatus* that "all the propositions of our everyday language are, just as they stand, in perfect logical order" (T 5.5563), but it must nonetheless be admitted that the methodological importance of that standpoint remains rather more obscure in Wittgenstein's earlier thought than it does in the later. It is a situation that is further complicated by the criticism he would later make of the earlier work's reformist thrust, which was connected to the idea that meaningful language must have a clear and simple limit, and furthermore, that language must abide by the conditions that limit imposes upon it in order to be meaningful. The commitment that Wittgenstein later made with regard to ordinary language, by contrast, demonstrates a great extension of what might be considered as belonging to the 'linguistic order' of meaningful language, which approaches much more closely what one would typically consider to be precisely the *un*-limited character of the ordinary.[238]

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[237]As Moore notes in an example that recalls the very ordinary sorts of cases in which proof is demanded: "My proof, then, of the existence of things outside of us did satisfy three of the conditions necessary for a rigorous proof. Are there any other conditions necessary for a rigorous proof, such that perhaps it did not satisfy one of them? Perhaps there may be; I do not known; but I do want to emphasize that, so far as I can see, we all of us do constantly take proofs of this sort as absolutely conclusive proofs of certain conclusions—as finally settling certain questions, as to which we were previously in doubt. Suppose, for instance, it were a question whether there were as many as three misprints on a certain page in a certain book. A says there are, B is inclined to doubt it. How could A prove that he is right? Surely he *could* prove it by taking the book, turning to the page, and pointing to three separate places on it, saying 'There's one misprint here, another here, and another here'; surely that is a method by which it *might* be proved!" (G.E. Moore, "Proof of an External World", *op cit.*, p. 147.))

We might consider, for example, Wittgenstein's return to his earlier, Tractarian notion of analysis, where in the *Investigations* he notes:

> "This finds expression in questions as to the *essence* of language, of propositions, of thought.—For we too in these investigations are trying to understand the essence of language—its function, its structure,—yet *this* is not what those questions have in view. For they see in the essence, not something that already lies open to view and that becomes surveyable by a rearrangement, but something that lies *beneath* the surface. Something that lies within, which we see when we look *into* something, and which an analysis gets out.
>
> '*The essence is hidden from is*': this is the form our problem now assumes. We ask: '*What is* language?', "*What is* a proposition?" And the answer to these questions is to be given once and for all; and independently of any future experience." (PI §92)

This is clearly *not* what Wittgenstein intends for his later investigations into the nature of language. Accordingly, he continues a short moment later:

> "We see that what we call "sentence" and "language" has not the formal unity that I imagined, but is the family of structures more or less related to one another.——But what becomes of logic now? Its rigour seems be giving way here.—But in that case doesn't logic altogether disappear?—For how can it lose any of its rigour? Of course not by our bargaining any of its rigour out of it.—the *preconceived idea* of the crystalline purity can only be removed by turning our whole examination around. […]
>
> We are talking about the spatial and temporal phenomena of language, not about some non-spatial, non-temporal phantasm. […]" (PI §108)

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238 Besides the many examples of this that can be found in the *Investigations*—several of which are explicitly drawn in opposition to the view advanced in the *Tractatus,* e.g. PI §23—the most colourful is perhaps that provided by Malcolm in his *Memoir*, in a well-known anecdote that concerns the influence of Pierro Sraffa on Wittgenstein's post-Tractarian thought. Malcolm relates a story about the "feeling of absurdity" that resulted in Wittgenstein regarding the logico-grammatical status of (what Malcolm euphemistically describes as) "a gesture, familiar to Neapolitans as meaning something like disgust or contempt," which Sraffa made to Wittgenstein during one of the frequent occasions they had discussing the central tenants of the *Tractatus*. (N. Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, *op cit.*, p. 69.)

Nonetheless, it must also be admitted that Wittgenstein's post-Tractarian interest in ordinary language was principally of a methodological importance, and he would have been reticent to accept what Moore considered to be authoritative about ordinary language, particularly insofar as that may be taken as a genuine philosophical standpoint. When Wittgenstein notes, for example, that—

> "When philosophers use a word—"knowledge", "being", "object", "I", "propositions", "name"—and try to grasp the *essence* of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language-game which is its original home?—
>
> What *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use." (PI §116)

—he does so in order to illuminate the abuse of language by philosophers, in a negative sense, not in order to posit a positive philosophical theory that would replace them. If such remarks are intended to combat the philosophical impulse, they do not do so on the same playing-field that philosophy supposes.

Recalling our earlier analysis of what can be called the 'pedagogical style' of the *Investigations*, we might also consider here particularly the examples of language-learning and those cases of the explanation of meaning to the linguistic novice that feature prominently in the *Investigations*. As we saw earlier, learning—including the question of how one might *teach* the meaning of a word or expression to a child—provides an example of the kinds of things that Wittgenstein felt one should be prepared to accept as criteria for the correct use of words. However, it would be incorrect to conclude—as we saw Hacker has done—that the biological order of our natural reactions, though they may in principle be used effectively to bootstrap a young learners knowledge in the great many cases, will provide an essential guide to our *philosophical conception* of meaning (even for a certain subset of words, such as those associated with sensations for example). While it is an interesting idea in its own right, particularly from an empirical standpoint, such an account is difficult (if not impossible) to square with Wittgenstein's own admission that he at least is

interested primarily in describing linguistic phenomena and not in providing an explanation of their efficaciousness.

Despite the significant shifts in thought that are characteristic of each of Wittgenstein's major periods, this is true for *On Certainty* as much as it ever was for the *Investigations.* It can be seen clearly from the fact that from Wittgenstein's perspective Moore's two presentations exhibit a *profound difference* in philosophical insight. We know, for example, that Wittgenstein greatly admired the first of these two presentations and that he thought the second was severely misguided.[239] Given what I have described earlier as the consistent application of a style of reasoning throughout Moore's works, to what might we attribute this difference in Wittgenstein's estimation of the two presentations?

In a manner of speaking, one need look no further than the two titles of Moore's presentations. In Moore's "Defence" he had precisely made no effort to *prove* that the common sense view of the world that he was expounding was true. He simply asserted that he knew it was. The power of Moore's approach at that time lay in the vigour of those assertions, which would thus ideally have had the effect of inclining his audience to naturally agree with him, that, indeed, he knew what he asserted to be true with certainty, and that, indeed, they knew it to be true of themselves as well. When and where his assertions failed to do so, this would for Wittgenstein say more about *those who were failed to be convinced* than it would about Moore's attempt to convince them. In a manner of speaking, one might say that Moore had shifted the burden of proof to the sceptic.

Furthermore, in his "Defence", Moore noted at the outset that the propositions to be offered were such 'obvious truism' so as not to be worth stating at all. The implication here is that 'some philosophers' had strayed from the common-sense view and therefore required something of a *reminder* of what they certainly already knew for themselves to be true. But a reminder is not a proof. For Wittgenstein, the danger inherent in Moore's later attempt to return to his earlier claim—let us not forget, that among those various propositions put forth

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239Cf. N. Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir, op cit.,* pp. 33 *et passim*.

in Moore's earlier "Defence" are included those that assert precisely the existence of external objects—is that in doing so, in order to provide a proof of the much grander philosophical claim concerning the 'existence of the external world', Moore risks giving the sceptic's question too much linguistic currency. As in Wittgenstein's *Investigations*-era critique of Russell's attack on solipsism, Moore's attempt to block the sceptic's doubt remains intimately tied to the object of its refutation by acknowledging that there is at least a legitimate doubt there to be countered. Moore, like Russell before him, thus unwittingly committed himself to the very framework that he sought to refute. That is not to say, of course, that he committed himself to it its *truth*, but rather to the idea that the sceptic's doubt might somehow make *sense*.

This manner of critique is not unique to Wittgenstein's later works; it naturally recalls, for example, the famous concluding remarks of the *Tractatus*:

> "The correct method of philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing that can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science—i.e. Something that has nothing to do with philosophy—and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions. Although it would not be satisfying to the other person—he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy—*this* method would be the only strictly correct one." (T 6.53)

In the *Tractatus*, as we have seen, Wittgenstein had already sought to circumscribe truth and falsity within the space of sensical propositions. For a proposition to be sensical it had be 'bipolar', i.e., it had either to be true or false. Propositions that do not meet this condition on Wittgenstein's Tractarian account are not therefore false, but rather nonsensical. Of course, in Wittgenstein's earlier approach it was necessary for him to consider the propositions of logic—tautologies and contradictions—as a unique case of *un*-sensical language (being always true or always false, respectively). As testified by the great attraction that the *Tractatus* continues to exert upon us to this day, there remains something strange and powerful in this account of propositional language. Nonetheless, Wittgenstein

himself was not fully satisfied by the approach he had taken earlier. When he returned to philosophy ten years after the publication of the earlier work, his focus had shifted. He recognised that his earlier 'picture theory of language' provided an incomplete picture, being not but *ein Stilleben* or a *still-life*, what the French edition of the *Investigations* accurately translates in the still more suggestive terms of *une nature morte* (PI §526). He thus sought a more complete description of language in terms of its dynamism—which is to say, as a way of life or as a way of living with words. Wittgenstein's use of the term 'game' found throughout the work, he reminds us, is, of course, "meant to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life." (PI §23)

Naturally, this is not to say that with this change of perspective Wittgenstein discovered a renewed commitment to the practice of philosophy—quite the contrary. But the focus of his criticism of philosophy shifted in a corresponding manner. Philosophical propositions never ceased for Wittgenstein to exemplify the kind of nonsense he sought to expunge from our language. However, the reason given for their senselessness in the *Investigations* is no longer that they fail to meet the transcendental criteria laid out in the earlier work. Rather, the propositions of philosophy had later to be expunged for their impotence. Wittgenstein thus likens the philosopher to one who has forgotten the purpose of what he is doing, to an idling engine, to a fly stick in a fly-bottle. Perhaps most famously he compares the philosopher's use of a question to a disease, which thus requires not a solution, but treatment. The aim of his philosophy, he states, consists in assembling reminders for a *purpose*.

A useful example of just such a reminder can be found in Malcolm's reconstruction of Moore's earlier argument of the "Defence." He highlights there specifically the request that 'some philosophers' (such as Russell and Ayer, among others) make to their readers, when they claim that we should—'properly speaking', 'if we wish to avoid misunderstandings', etc.—*substitute* the expressions of their revised systems for those of our ordinary language. Though they would not disagree with anyone in any particular case about a given matter of fact, they claim it is nonetheless 'more correct' to speak in the manner they proscribe. But

what then, Malcolm asks, might we expect to gain from such a substitution? "It is important to see that by such a move," he correctly notes, "we should have gained nothing whatsoever."[240] For, not only would this be no improvement in any empirically relevant way—our sciences, for example, would not be more efficacious because of it—but furthermore, in our revised system we would need to introduce new words to perform the very function of those that our old words had already performed perfectly well to begin with.[241] The revision of our language would, ultimately, have accomplished nothing. In just what sense, then, their substitutions would be more proper or should help us avoid misunderstandings, is left indeterminate.

A humorous mockery of this kind of 'revisionist reasoning' is provided by Karl Kraus, who once remarked that he and his compatriot Adolf Loos, despite their different pursuits, were essentially engaged in the same endeavour. Both of them—Loos, through his innovative architectural designs, and Kraus, through his critical and satirical essays on contemporary Viennese society—had done nothing more than show that there is a distinction between an urn and a chamber pot, and that it is this distinction above all others that gives culture its footing. He continues: "The others, those who fail to make this distinction, are divided into those who use the urn as a chamber pot and those who use the chamber pot as urn."[242]

Borrowing from the language of Kraus, Moore's critique of philosophical language in his "Defence" might thus be rephrased in a colourful way: philosophers, in their abrogation of ordinary language, have mistaken the urn for the chamber pot. They have, in other words, mistaken the decorative language of the philosophical tradition for something functional, and proceeded to relegate what is truly functional in language to a mere appendage, at worst naïve, at best a folksy and quaint superstition. However, by the light of this analogy,

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240N. Malcolm, "Moore on Ordinary Language", *op cit.*, p. 364.

241If, as Ayer claims, we can 'properly speaking' speak only of a posteriori propositions as 'more' or 'less' probable', for example, this question of degree would have to mapped one-to-one for all of those 'loose expressions' that already do this work in our language (e.g. '*I am certain that's a tree*', '*I think that's a tree*', '*It could be a tree*', etc.)

242Quoted in A. Janik and S. Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna, op cit.,* p. 89.

Wittgenstein's critique of Moore's subsequent attack on scepticism in his "Proof", is that Moore himself has in turn *mistaken the chamber pot for the urn*. In other words, if the kinds of propositions that Moore puts forth as premises for his 'proof'—i.e. '*Here is one hand and here is another*'—function at all, they do not do so in the transparent and straightforward way that Moore's argument presupposes. This certainly does not mean that one cannot use a chamber pot as an urn, or *vice verse*. Indeed, one can. But doing so will ultimately tell us more about *the people who do that* than it will about chamber pots and urns.

III. "It stands fast for me that…"

Of course, if in Wittgenstein's esteem the propositions of Moore's proof do not function in the straightforward, transparent way that Moore intends, this naturally raises the question: *How do they function?* Wittgenstein's answer to this question is repeatedly reformulated within the pages of *On Certainty*; however, not all the answers he provides there are equally clear, nor are they necessarily consistent with one another. This makes a complete reconstruction of his argument problematic. It is a situation further complicated by two intrinsic features of the work: its status as a provisional, unfinished text, and its evolutive character.[243] While these features are by no means unique to *On Certainty,* the work nonetheless presents its readers with particular difficulty here due to its relentless purposiveness and its halting, discontinuous composition.

At first glance, Wittgenstein's remarks in *On Certainty* indeed appear to be composed just as they had previously been in e.g. the *Investigations,* touching now on one topic, now on

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243 Despite these characteristics, which might call its coherence into question from a certain point of view, Anscombe and von Wright clearly have no qualms about calling the remarks collected here precisely a "work", as they notes: "These were not the only things Wittgenstein wrote during this period. He wrote *i.a.* a fair amount on colour-concepts, and this material he did excerpt and polish, reducing it to a small compass. […] It seemed appropriate to publish this work by itself. It is not a selection; Wittgenstein marked it off in his notebooks as a separate topic, which he apparently took up at four separate periods during this eighteen months. It constitutes a single sustained treatment of the topic." (OC, Preface)

another, as they do. However, in his earlier work this feature allowed one equally to contemplate each remark as a single unity of intrinsic significance or as a part of the greater whole, which lent his earlier thought a dialectical force that his last remarks lack. With *On Certainty*, by contrast, one has the feeling that no single remark will ever suffice. Like the text itself, there will never be a final word. Unlike the *Investigations*, which Wittgenstein had described in the preface to that work as 'an album', composed of a series of landscape sketches, one has the impression that *On Certainty* resembles more closely a cubist portrait.[244] Each of the remarks in *On Certainty* is only a small part of a greater picture that is difficult, if not impossible, to reconstruct according to standards of coherence which are essentially foreign to his thought—for such standards as it does have are, "of course, connected with the very nature of the investigation." (PI, Preface)

It will help, therefore, to return once more to Wittgenstein's earlier work and to a response he made to a criticism that Moore presented him with while attending Wittgenstein's lectures between 1929 and 1933. For, though the topics dealt with in these two periods differ greatly, the two cases nonetheless present a number of important methodological parallels that may help us orient Wittgenstein's later response to Moore and to the general

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244Stroll describes Wittgenstein's style in *On Certainty* as that of a 'broken text' (A. Stroll, "Understanding *On Certainty*: Entry 194", in R. Haller and K Puhl (eds), *Wittgenstein and the Future of Philosophy. A reassessment after 50 years / Wittgenstein und die Zukunft der Philosophie. Eine Neubewertung nach 50 Jahren* (Vienna: öbvhpt, 2002), pp. 446-456.) I am much more inclined, however, to feel that insofar as Wittgenstein's writings of any period are 'broken', it is only when seen from the perspective of a straight linearity that was not amenable to his thought, which has rather a *cubist concern* for representing spatial and temporal flux in a single momentary image. As Wittgenstein notes early on in *Culture and Value*:

"Each of the sentences I write is trying to say the whole thing, i.e. the same thing over and over again; it is as though they were all simply views of one object seen from different angles." (CV, p. 7 [MS 109; 6.11.1930])

In this sense, it is fair to claim that Wittgenstein's work is broken only insofar one might claim the same of Braque's *Violin and Candlestick* or Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase*, and that the latter two's work would be improved upon as much Wittgenstein's own by making it 'unbroken' or more coherent according to conventional standards.

subject of sceptical doubt.[245]

In 1954 and 1955 Moore published a synopsis of the notes he had taken during this time, entitled "Wittgenstein's Lectures 1930-33", for the journal *Mind*.[246] Moore, as we have seen, had a keen ear for language-use that struck him as 'out of the ordinary', so to speak. We thus see here once again the very same charge arise in his synopsis of Wittgenstein's lectures, this time in response to Wittgenstein's 1930-era notion of 'grammar' or 'rules of grammar', which he was then developing in order to re-orient his earlier notion of logical form in the *Tractatus*. Moore writes there:

> "With regard to the expressions "rules of grammar" or "grammatical rules" he pointed out near the beginning of (I)[247], where he first introduced the former expression, that when he said "grammar should not allow me to say 'greenish-red'", he was "making things belong to it"; and he immediately went on to say that the arrangement of colours in the colour octahedron "is really a part of grammar, not of psychology"; that "There is such a colour as a greenish blue" is "grammar"; and that Euclidean Geometry is also "a part of grammar". In the interval between (II) and (III) I wrote a short paper for him in which I said that I did not understand how he was using the expression "rule of grammar" and gave reasons for thinking that he was not using it in its ordinary sense; but he, though he expressed approval of my paper, insisted at that time that he was using the expression in its ordinary sense. Later, however, in (III), he said that "any explanation of the use of language" was "grammar", but that if I explained the meaning of "flows" by pointing at a river "we shouldn't

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245 Stroll has in fact suggested that *On Certainty* can be read, in its *entirety*, as a continuation of the very discussions that Wittgenstein and Moore were having over a decade earlier. (Cf. A. Stroll, *Moore and Wittgenstein on Certainty, op cit., passim.*) Whether or not this is the case is an interesting and important question, which, unfortunately, will only be elaborated obliquely here.

246 These have been reprinted in Moore's collection *Philosophical Papers*, as well as Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Occasions*. References to the work will refer to the *Philosophical Occasions* pagination.

247 This number system refers to the three lectures Moore attended at the time, as he notes at the opening of his synopsis: "My lecture-notes may be naturally divided into three groups, to which I will refer as (I), (II) and (III). (I) contains the notes of his lectures in the Lent and May terms of 1930; (II) those of his lectures in the academic year 1930-1931; and (III) those of lectures which he gave in the May term of 1930, after I had resumed attending, as well as those lectures he have in the academic year 1930-33. The distinction between the three groups is of some important, since, as will be seen, he sometimes in later lectures corrected what he had said in earlier ones." (PO, p. 50)

naturally call this a rule of grammar". This seems to suggest that by that time he was doubtful whether he was using "rule of grammar" in quite the ordinary sense; and the same seems to be suggested by his saying, earlier in (III), that we should be using his "jargon" if we said that whether a sentence made sense or not depended on "whether or not it was constructed according to the rules of grammar"." (PO, p. 69)

Moore's charge here, which is in all essential respects comparable to that which can be found in his "Defence of Common Sense" as well as in his "Proof of an External World", is that when Wittgenstein suggests that we should consider the propositions of logic, mathematics, or colour comparability, etc., as 'rules of grammar', this is patently *not what we ordinarily mean* by 'rules of grammar'—as found, for example, in grammar textbooks and foreign language classes. Returning to the original source lecture-notes, the difference is made clear. Moore poses two examples to Wittgenstein:

"(1) Where there is no doubt. "Three men was working." Here it is clear what the rule is and how it has been broken.

(2) "Different colours cannot be in the same place in a visual field at the same time." This differs from example (1).

Are the two examples rules of grammar in the same sense? If we say "Two colours can't be in the same place", we may mean that we can't imagine it, that it is inconceivable or unthinkable, or that it is logically (as distinct for physically) impossible."[248]

Such deviation from the ordinary use, as we have seen, would have suggested to Moore that Wittgenstein's use of the expression 'rule of grammar' is either *misleading*—in such cases as Wittgenstein's use of the expression is merely inconsistent with common usage—or indeed outright *false*—in such cases as Wittgenstein's use marks an inconsistency with the dictates of the common sense view.[249]

[248]L. Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein's Lectures: Cambridge, 1930-1932.* ed. D. Lee (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1980), p. 97.

[249]In Malcolm's reconstruction of Moore's argument, he suggests that Moore felt Wittgenstein's use of the expression 'grammatical rule' belonged to the second case. He lists, for example, twelve propositions by a nameless philosopher and paraphrases the response he supposes Moore would make on each of these

When Moore first made these objections, as he himself notes, Wittgenstein replied that, indeed, he felt the two cases were 'rules of grammar' in an identical sense; however, as is so often the case in Wittgenstein's reflections, the matter is not thereby settled once and for all. For he continues:

> "Grammatical rules are all of the same kind, but it is not the same mistake if a man breaks the one as if he breaks another. If he uses "was" instead of "were" it causes no confusion; but in the other example the analogy with physical space (c.f. two people in the *same* chair) does cause confusion. When we say we can't think of two colours in the same place, we make the mistake of thinking this is a proposition, though it is not; and we would never try to say it if we were not mislead by an analogy. It is misleading to use the word "can't" because it suggests a wrong analogy. We should say, "It has not sense to say - - -"
>
> The rule about red and blue ((2) above) is a rule about the is of the word 'and'; and we would only say that 'was' ((1) above) makes nonsense if someone said it posed a philosophical problem."[250]

Let us consider Wittgenstein's response more carefully. For in it, a number of important features stand out, which will help us to better understand his response to Moore's use of the expression '*I know…*' and the position that ultimately developed out of it in *On Certainty*.

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occasions. The twelfth is, in fact, a reprisal of precisely Wittgenstein's statement:

> "(12) Philosopher: "A priori statements are really rules of grammar.
>
> Moore: "That 6 times 9 equals 54 is an a priori statement, but it is most certainly *wrong* to call it a rule of grammar." (N. Malcolm, "Moore and Ordinary Language", *op cit.,* p. 348, my emphasis.)

I am unable to find another example of where Moore refers to such a statement, and so I assume that Malcolm is referring to Moore's paper, which is no longer in existence as far as I know. Moore, for his part, responds in his reply to Malcolm, that of the twelve propositions Malcolm provides:

> "I think he is quite right that in every case I should approve of a statement of the kind he attributes to me as *a* good argument against the "philosophical statement" in question." (G.E. Moore, *A Reply to My Critics*, p. 668. In P.A. Schilpp (ed.) *The Philosophy of G.E. Moore, op cit.,* pp. 533-688.)

However, it is worth noting that in Moore's earlier synopsis of Wittgenstein's lectures, he states rather a more modest claim, that Wittgenstein's use of the expression 'rule of grammar' belongs rather to the first of the two cases above—that it is misleading, and not false—stating that:

> "I still think that he was not using the expression "rules of grammar" in an ordinary sense, and I am still unable to form any clear idea as to how he was using it." (PO, p. 69)

250 L. Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein's Lectures: Cambridge, 1930-1932, op cit.*, p. 98.

First, Wittgenstein states that although the 'grammatical rules' themselves are of the same kind, the mistakes made when breaking them are *not*. This would clearly seem to go against the so-called 'official theory' of knowledge sketched above; for what difference at the level of mistake would not reflect a corresponding difference at the level of the rules themselves? Some mistakes, Wittgenstein thus clarifies, give rise not only to mere *errors*—such as those that would be promptly corrected in a grammar class—but rather to *confusions*. Specifically, the kind of 'confusions' that Wittgenstein is interested in here are those that have been appropriated over the ages by the philosophical tradition: "It is just that some have been the subject of philosophical discussion and some have not," Wittgenstein notes.[251] Accordingly, what makes the second breakage *nonsense*, whereas the first is only a *mistake*, is that this particular breakage is posed as a philosophical problem to be *solved* rather than simply corrected. Of course, no mere correction will prove sufficient, in Wittgenstein's esteem, for this type of rule-breakage has been firmly embedded in a philosophical tradition from whose grip we find it very difficult to release ourselves.

Secondly, it is essential to note that the dissolution of such conceptual confusions is not, as Moore would claim, to clarify the precise *meaning* of this or that expression (whereby, for example, it will ideally be shown that what we ordinarily mean by a given expression has the capacity to falsify its philosophical variant). Rather, for Wittgenstein, such corrections require 'therapy'. In other words, they require not a solution, but dissolution. How is this therapeutic task to be realised? While this particular aspect of Wittgenstein's morphological methodology would undoubtedly be most clearly expressed within the pages of the *Investigations*, we nonetheless witness a similar approach being taken here, fifteen years before his second *magnum opus* would be published: the task is realised by finding and inventing 'intermediary cases' (*Zwischengliedern*), identifying 'family resemblances' (*Familienähnlichkeiten*), and holding diverse linguistic phenomena up as 'objects of

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251 Ibid.

224

comparison' (*Vergleichsobjekte*)*,* in order to achieve a perspicuous representation (*übersichtliche Darstellung*).[252]

Of principle importance here is that Moore's difficulties arise from *a false analogy*. For example, Moore's insistence on what we might mean by the expression 'cannot'—i.e., that when we say '*Two colours* cannot *be in the same place at the same time*', we must mean either 1. that we cannot imagine it, 2. that it is inconceivable or unthinkable, or 3. that it is logically impossible—this shows to Wittgenstein's mind that it is rather Moore *himself* who is being mislead by an expression:

> "We are inclined to say that we *can't* imagine or think something, and imply that we *could* express it correctly if we had the experience. To say that something is "logically impossible" sounds like a proposition. So if we say we can't think of red and blue together in the same visual space, we have a feeling of trying to do so, as if we were talking about the physical world; we somehow clear ourselves and think it *can* be done."[253]

The use of the word 'cannot', Wittgenstein notes, draws a misleading comparison between the case of colour incompatibility and similar cases in the physical world. His response to such a misleading analogy is, therefore, to put forth a new, better, *more perspicuous* one. In one of Wittgenstein's signature manoeuvres, he suggests that the case is rather like the following: "Compare using the same board and the same pieces we use for chess, but making moves which the rules do not provide for."[254] For here, Wittgenstein emphasises, we would be rather more inclined to say: "*It makes no sense to say that…*" As in the case of a chess-move forbidden by the rules of the game, we do not say here that one *cannot* move in such and such a way—in the sense that it is 'unimaginable' that someone would attempt

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252 Wittgenstein: "A main source of failure to understand is that we do not *command a clear view* of our use of our words.—Our grammar is lacking in this sort of perspicuity. A perspicuous representation produces just that sort of understanding which consists in 'seeing connections'. Hence the importance of finding and inventing *intermediate cases*. // The concept of perspicuous representation is of fundamental importance for us. It earmarks the form of account we give, the way we look at things." (PI §122)

253 L. Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein's Lectures: Cambridge, 1930-1932, op cit.*, p. 98.

254 Ibid.

to move the pieces around the board in such a manner, that it is 'logically impossible' to do so, etc.—but that one is merely playing the game *wrongly* if one does.[255]

In this familiar manoeuvre of Wittgenstein's, we can clearly recognise something similar to the traditional philosophical approach discussed above: i.e. the one in which we substitute one expression for another. As we saw above, what exactly is at stake in such a substitution is put forth clearly by none other than Ayer. In his attempt to outline a solid foundation for our understanding of empirical knowledge, Ayer notes that we are *incorrect* to think of empirical propositions as 'certain', for the notion of certainty simply does not fit propositions of this kind. Rather, for him, certainty is restricted to the domain of non-empirical, a priori knowledge. "Accordingly," he claims, "what we should say, if we wish to avoid misunderstanding, is…"[256] However, though Ayer and Wittgenstein share a similar interest in the substitution of one expression for another, the likeness ends there. For, unlike Ayer, when Wittgenstein says that we should consider a priori statements as 'rules of

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255A *third* feature, no less significant than the two outlined here, is that of Wittgenstein's worry that his philosophy was destined to produce only a sort of 'jargon'. This worry is highlighted, I believe, when Wittgenstein notes right at the opening of his reply to Moore:

"The right expression is "It does not have any sense to say---"; but we usually express it badly by speaking of a rule of grammar." (L. Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein's Lectures: Cambridge, 1930-1932, op cit.*, p. 97.)

Likewise, it further recalls a remark recorded by Malcolm in his *Memoir*:

"In his lectures he would sometimes exclaim in a time of real suffering 'I am a dreadful teacher!' He once concluded a years' lectures with this sentence: 'The only seed that I am likely to sow is a certain jargon.'" (N. Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir, op cit*, p. 63.)

I noted earlier that an important feature of Wittgenstein's post-Tractarian methodology involved the demystification or de-sublimation of philosophical accounts of phenomena via humorous—and even ridiculous—analogies. Besides the greengrocer of PI §1, quoted above, we might consider such examples as the 'builders' of 'Language-game (2)', the 'beetle in the box' of the Private Language Argument, and so forth. It is an important question, given the central role that terms such as 'language-game' or 'rule of grammar' have taken on in discourses well beyond that of Wittgenstein scholarship, whether—and if so, to what extent—these latter expressions were likewise intended to be a humorous mockery of philosophical expressions. In other words, to what extent were they intended to be cast aside after having fulfilled their purpose, rather than to replace their more traditional equivalents, as they currently have in some domains of discourse. In this respect, I believe it is significant that in Wittgenstein's very last remarks these signature terms rarely appear.

256A.J. Ayer, *The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge*, *op cit.* p. 45.

grammar', he is not putting forth a theory regarding what—*as a matter of fact*—these propositions are. Rather, he is claiming that considering them as such will help us to release the grips of a certain kind of philosophical picture, one which will inevitably result in conceptual confusions if we insist too strongly upon its veracity.

As Wittgenstein would later attempt to clarify in the second part of the *Investigations*—where he notes that if we let ourselves "imagine certain very general facts of nature to be different from what we are used to, the formation of concepts different from the usual ones will become intelligible" (PI, p. 239)—he is here attempting to turn the whole axis of our investigation around. It is not the case, for example, that the notion 'rule of grammar' serves as a generic kind, of which statements like '*All bachelors are unmarried men*', '2+2=4' and '*There cannot be two colours in one place at the same time*' would be three different species. Rather, there are certain *similarities* between these three cases and it is these similarities that Wittgenstein wishes to call our attention to, so that some aspects of one case may shed a new light on a confusing-inducing aspects of another. If Moore has sought (contra 'some philosophers') to invert the traditional hierarchy of ordinary expressions and their corresponding philosophical refinements, Wittgenstein seeks rather to 'level the playing field', as it were, thus allowing us to move *horizontally* through the various domains of our discourse with greater ease.

In *On Certainty* this global approach to the dissolution of philosophical problems, which can undoubtedly be found throughout Wittgenstein's post-Tractarian work, is extended to include a number of a posteriori propositions, such as those Moore claims that he knows for certain. As he notes in *On Certainty*:

> "If I were to say "I have never been on the moon—but I may be mistaken", that would be idiotic.[257]

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257 This clearly recalls Ayer's claim, discussed in greater detail above, that we can 'properly speaking' speak only of a posteriori propositions as 'more' or 'less probable'. It is a claim that Moore himself attacked strongly in his work; Wittgenstein, however, takes this critique one step further by claiming that Ayer's position is not just 'wrong', absurd', etc., but indeed *foolish*.

> For even the thought that I might have been transported there, by unknown means, in my sleep, *would not give me any right* to speak of a possible mistake here. I play the game *wrong* if I do." (OC §662)

What Wittgenstein discovers here is a rather surprising similarity between certain aspects of these a posteriori propositions and that more familiar aspect of a priori propositions, alluded to by Ayer himself along with most everyone else of the philosophical tradition, i.e. *it does not make any sense to doubt them*. And, as Wittgenstein had once insisted on the bi-polarity of sensical propositions in the *Tractatus*, he further concludes in an analogous manner that if it does not make sense to doubt them, neither does it make sense *to assert* them. If it is unreasonable to claim that '*I have never been to the moon—but I may be mistaken*', on the one hand, no less unreasonable is it to to claim, on the other, that '*I have never been to the moon—and about* this *I can't be mistaken*'.

It is thus not the case, as Moore claims, that one might simply assert what one knows to be true—about, for example, the fact that he has never been far from the earth's surface, the existence of his hands, that he has two parents, etc., etc.—for in such cases "the expression "I know" gets misused" (OC §6). This misuse is no mere inconsistency with ordinary usage; it is no mere empirical irregularity. It is rather a description of the language game and as such it belongs to logic (OC §628), and—belonging to logic—it must therefore abide by the same limitations that are imposed upon those more familiar elements of the 'logic of our language', a priori propositions. Wittgenstein continues:

> "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 a 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." (OC §58)

Examining our use of such expressions Wittgenstein thus discovers that in order to release the grip of the philosophical paradigm of certainty—i.e., the one in which I *cannot* be making a mistake, which is undoubtedly shared by realists and relativists alike—we should

rather claim that certain propositions *stand fast for us*. As he notes there: "Instead of "I know…", couldn't Moore have said: "It stands fast for me that…"? And further: "It stands fast for me and many others…" (OC §116) Put otherwise: "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." (OC §151) What is revealed here is that, far from exhibiting a kind of certainty that properly belongs to either the realm of a priori propositions (à la Ayer) or also that of a posteriori propositions (à la Moore), what might be euphemistically called '*foundational certainty*' belongs to no category of propositions at all:

> "Giving grounds, however, 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.
>
> If the true is what is grounded, then the ground is not *true*, nor yet false." (OC §§204-205)

As has been argued by Stroll, Moyal-Sharrock, and others, it is above all this feature of such foundational certainty that removes it from the normal traffic of knowledge and doubt— which shunts it "onto the unused siding" of language, so to speak (OC §210)[258]—essentially removing it from the sphere of philosophical scrutiny.

So, despite their different aims, Wittgenstein does indeed share a common methodological starting point with that of traditional philosophy, insofar as the substitution of one expression for another may be assumed to shed a new light on some misleading aspects of another. However, as Malcolm himself reminds us in his reconstruction of Moore's argument contra philosophers such as Russell and Ayer, the question we must then ask ourselves is this: What does one hope to achieve by such a substitution of terms? Put in

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258As Wittgenstein would remark in the *Remarks of Philosophy of Psychology*: "The *facts* of our natural history that throw light on our problem, are difficult for us to find out, for our talk *passes* them by, it is occupied with other things. (In the same way we tell someone: "Go into the shop and buy…"—not: "Put your left foot in front of your right foot, etc. etc. then put coins down on the counter, etc. etc.")" (RPP, I, §78)

more familiar Wittgensteinian terms, we might rephrase this question thus: What kind of problem is this analogy meant to *elucidate*?

To understand this problem better it is useful to consider the kinds of striking metaphors Wittgenstein peppers throughout his remarks, where he speaks, for example, at once about the 'foundations' of such basic judgements, beliefs, etc., but also about their 'foundationlessness'. One of the most striking of such metaphors is to be found towards the beginning of Wittgenstein's notebooks. He writes there, and I quote at length:

> "The propositions presenting what Moore '*knows*' are all of such a kind that it is difficult to imagine *why* anyone should believe the contrary. E.g. the proposition that Moore has spent his whole life in proximity to the earth.—Once more I can speak of myself here instead of Moore. What could induce me to believe the opposite? Either a memory, or having been told.—Everything that I have seen or heard gives me the conviction that no man has ever been far from the earth. Nothing in my picture of the world speaks in favour of the opposite.
>
> But 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.
>
> The propositions describing the 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.
>
> 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.
>
> The mythology my change back into a state of flux [*wieder in Fluß geraten*], 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." (OC §§93-97)

This is an arresting metaphor, clearly among the most powerful in Wittgenstein's oeuvre. But what is the message we are meant to take from it?

As J. Schulte notes, a first step in the right direction is to see that this image casts a new light on the relationship between *change* and *tradition*.[259] The flowing waters of the river stand in a similar relationship to the river-bed itself as our fluctuating surface judgements stand in relation to the imperceptibly shifting traditions within which we have been brought up (our "world-view" or "the inherited background against which I distinguish true from false", as Wittgenstein calls it). Schulte is correct to note, perhaps in homage to Moore, that the 'inherited background' of which Wittgenstein speaks here is not exactly what we would ordinarily call 'tradition'.[260] Even less so can we understand what Wittgenstein means by 'world-picture' here via an appeal to some ordinary use of *that* expression. Nonetheless, certain undeniable similarities present themselves between what we might here call 'tradition', if only for the sake of convenience, and what Wittgenstein calls our 'inherited background' or 'world-picture'.

I take it that these similarities are, at least in part, responsible for the peculiar force of Wittgenstein's having described this world-picture as 'a kind of mythology'. We cannot presume that he does so lightly here. For, as we have seen, Wittgenstein's work had been motivated from the very outset by his interest in what he—following Paul Ernst[261]—has called the "mythology" which is "laid down in our language" (PO, p. 199 [TS 213, p. 434; 1933]). For the sake of clarity, let us repeat here the passage that aroused the young

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259J. Schulte, "Within a System", in D. Moyal-Sharrock and W. Brenner (eds.), *Readings of On Certainty, op cit.*, pp. 59-75.

260As Schulte notes, for example: "That Wittgenstein does not want to speak about tradition, or traditions, in that sense is clear from the examples he does discuss. These examples are in many cases taken from G.E. Moore or modelled on Moore's examples. […] In spite of the frequent use of the first-person pronoun none of these or the other examples discussed by Wittgenstein is as specific or unstable as those forming large parts of what we should normally count as tradition." (J. Schulte, "Within a System", *op cit.*, p. 62.)

261As Wittgenstein once noted, regarding the source of the notion 'misunderstanding the logic of language' mobilized at the heart of his Tractarian project:

"Should my book ever be published its foreword must contain an acknowledgement to the Foreword of Paul Ernst to his edition of the *Grimms' Fairy Tales*, which I should have acknowledged already in the *Log. Phil. Abhandlung* as the source of the expression 'misunderstanding the logic of language'." (Quoted by W. Künne, "Paul Ernst and Ludwig Wittgenstein", *op cit.*, pp. 151-166.)

Wittgenstein's interest so greatly that it would direct the course of his research for many decades to come:

> "The overwhelming majority by far of motifs and material that can still be used today certainly does not originate in reality. It is often the extremely ancient legacy of peoples, occurring in enigmatic and still not adequately explained form among the most distant and different peoples, originating from changes of language, when later ages no longer understood the logic of the language of the past and interpreted it through fabrications; through changes in views about the connection of the world, about death, the soul, the afterlife, God, etc., by rationalistically interpreting uncomprehended remnants of previous beliefs; through the migration of this material to other peoples, through retelling in changed circumstances and through adaptation to the new. The process is essentially always this: a problem that is unsolvable by means of the experience of reality is solved by an invented, rationalised story."[262]

We saw earlier that there are two remarkable respects in which Wittgenstein follows Ernst here. The first is the overwhelming emphasis Ernst lays on the historical aspect of that misunderstanding, this being precisely what Wittgenstein initially picked up on in the *Tractatus*. In other words, Wittgenstein recognised that, given the potential of language about the world to shift, it is necessary to employ a sound logic to gain a clear view of its internal structure and thus help us avoid the contingent historical accidents that have given rise to incomplete signs and muddled meanings over time.[263] However, as we have also seen, in order for Wittgenstein to advance such a framework it was necessary for him to delimit the possibility for the 'limits of language' themselves to shift. Were such a

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262 Quoted by W. Künne, "Paul Ernst and Ludwig Wittgenstein", *op cit.*

263 For example, in this regard, it is interesting to note that Wittgenstein was faced with a strange conundrum in the *Tractatus*: the very capacity of language that he criticises in the work as the source of "the most fundamental confusions" (T 3.324) in philosophy—i.e. the fact that in everyday language "it happens that the same word has different symbols, or that two words that have different modes of signification are employed in propositions in what is superficially the same way" (T 3.323)—*this* belongs to the very essence of the proposition. In other words, if it is an *historical accident* that "the word 'is' figures as the copula, as a sign for identity, and as an expression for existence" (ibid.), a result of piling diverse everyday uses upon one another without making a corresponding alteration in the sign used, then this capacity is written into the nature of the signs themselves.

delimitation of the limits not possible, he would not have been able to definitively draw them and there would have been no 'final solution' to the problems of philosophy.

The second remarkable point is that when Wittgenstein returned to philosophy in the 1930's he also carried with him the converse idea inherent to Ernst's remark here, which he had conscientiously suppressed in his earlier thought: i.e. that along with the various *misunderstandings* of the logic of our language, so too in certain cases is a *correct understanding* historically situated. This can clearly be seen in several of the remarks from the *Big Typescript* and also in those that Wittgenstein dedicated to Frazer's *Golden Bough* from around the same time.[264] It is, furthermore, a sentiment that would be reprised in

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[264]A particularly noteworthy remark, which concerns just what Wittgenstein might mean by 'mythology' here and how this had been adapted from Ernst's remark—falling, as it does, under Wittgenstein's subtitle THE MYTHOLOGY IN THE FORMS OF OUR LANGUAGE ((PAUL ERNST)) in *The Big Typescript*—, is that which concerns his iconic analysis of the 'Cornwolf' ritual:

"In ancient rites we find the use of an extremely well-developed language of gestures.

And when I read Frazer, I would like to say again and again: All these processes, these changes of meaning, we have right in front of us even in our language of words. If what is hidden in the last sheaf is called the 'Cornwolf', as well as the sheaf itself, and also the man who binds it, then we recognize in this a linguistic process we know well." (PO, p. 197 [TS 213, p. 433; 1933])

I thus strongly disagree with Schulte here, when he notes that via Wittgenstein's identification of the natives' magic with a kind of mythology, Wittgenstein intends to evaluate their religious beliefs pejoratively. As Schulte states:

"In practically all other passages of his writings where he uses the word or one of its cognates it bears a clearly negative or pejorative connotation, amounting to something like 'a mere fiction' or 'misleading fantasy'. Even in his 'Remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough*', where he makes his well-known statement that 'An entire mythology is stored within our language', a connection with magic, superstition and potentially misleading features of our language is clearly in view." (J. Schulte, "Within a System", *op cit.,* 63.)

This is surely a gross misunderstanding of what Wittgenstein was attempting to elucidate in these remarks. In fact, nothing could be *further* from the truth. For it is, Wittgenstein argues there, *Frazer* who is being mislead by his pejorative stance towards what he perceives as the naïve 'superstitions' of the natives. This position is repeated time and again in Wittgenstein's remarks on the *Golden Bough* and I will not go into them in further detail here. Let the following passage from *Culture and Value* suffice, which, though it was penned during the post-*Investigations* era that we are concerned with here, also strongly recalls Wittgenstein's earlier critique of Frazer:

"It is true that we can compare a picture that is firmly rooted in us to a superstition; but it is equally true that we *always* eventually have to reach some firm ground, either a picture or something else, so that a picture which is at the root of all our thinking is to be respected and not treated as a

Philosophical Investigations. He speaks there of our language as an 'ancient city' (PI §18) and notes—in a remark that clearly prefigures his considerations in *On Certainty*—that according to the fluctuations of scientific definitions, "what today counts as an observed concomitant of a phenomena will tomorrow be used to define it." (PI §79) He likewise notes there that we extend a concept "as in spinning a thread we twist fibre on fibre" (PI §67) and clarifies that his reference to "changes in mathematics" is meant to "bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or a form of life." (PI §23) Perhaps most significantly, he appeals throughout the work to the 'natural history' of mankind. For example, in the following celebrated remark:

> "What we are supplying are really remarks on the natural history of human beings; we are not contributing curiosities however, but observations which no one has doubted, but which have escaped remark only because they are always before our eyes." (PI §415)

These historical considerations already go a long way towards suggesting that in some significant respects, what Wittgenstein had earlier thought of as the fixed and stable 'limits of language'—particularly the propositions of logic and mathematics—can indeed shift in important and significant ways over time. However, as we have seen, these considerations played a primarily therapeutic role there in the *Investigations* and thus they made no allowance for a possible acknowledgement of the sceptical conclusion that some philosophers would be inclined to draw from them.

Frege, as we have seen, is one such philosopher. We saw earlier how for Frege the history of mathematics—*insofar as it is history*—can only ever be the history of error. What is true a priori is eternally so and, therefore, strictly speaking, can have no history. As he notes in the Introduction to the *Foundations*:

> "If everything were in continual flux, and nothing maintained itself fixed for all time, there would no longer be any possibility of getting to know anything about the world and everything would be plunged in confusion […] [T]his account makes everything subjective and if we follow it through to
>
> superstition." (CV, p. 83 [MS 138; 20.5.1949])

the end, does away with truth. What we know as the history of concepts is really a history of either our knowledge of concepts or the meaning of words." (FA, p. vi-vii)

In his Introduction to the *Basic Laws* he would reprise this challenge to the view *sub specie humanitatus* of the truth of logical laws, as held for example by by B. Erdmann, who suffers from having mistaken the stable truths of logic for the shifting 'takings-for-true' of our meandering personal psychology:

"If being true is independent of being acknowledged by somebody or other, then the laws of truth are not psychological laws: they are boundary stones set in an eternal foundation, which our thoughts can overflow, but never displace. It is because of this that they have authority for our thought if it would attain truth. They do not bear the relation to thought that the laws of grammar bear to language; they do not make explicit the nature of our human thinking and change as it changes." (BA, p.13)

We have looked at these remarks in more detail elsewhere, and so we will not return to the many interesting elements this view presents for an understanding of the foundations of arithmetic specifically. However, it is fair to claim that in these remarks Frege presents a clear image of what such a 'foundation' is at all, more generally, and that this image is, furthermore, one thoroughly shared by diverse members of the philosophical tradition, realist as well as relativist, then as well as now. For, by the light of this analogy, foundations consist of a rock-like material, solid, and equally hard throughout. It is a homogeneous body of more or less certified knowledge, which, by virtue of its homogeneity, does most—*even all*—of the work. It is the very kind of imagery that Wittgenstein's metaphorical comparisons of knowledge with the flowing waters of a river are intended to mitigate against.

What makes Wittgenstein's last remarks so striking in this respect is the *heterogeneity* of the foundations that he evokes there, and, furthermore, that these heterogeneous elements exist in an ecology of mutual dependence. In a remark that clearly recalls Frege's reliance on the Law of Identity in his search for a foundations for arithmetic, Wittgenstein notes:

> "When we first being to *believe* anything, what we believe is not a single proposition, it is a whole system of propositions.
>
> (Light dawns gradually over the whole.)
>
> It is not a single axioms that strike me as obvious, it is a system in which consequences and premises give one another *mutual* support." (OC §141-142)[265]

As Wittgenstein stresses here, a river-bed can fulfil its function only by grace of the fact that it *does not* consist of a material of uniform hardness: some parts consist of rock, others consist of clay or even highly mobile grains of sand. As in the case of knowledge, he suggests that these diverse elements—the foundational support, that which is supported by that foundation, and every variety of strata in between—form an interdependent system. It is for this reason that certain elements of each may change their roles without thereby destabilising the whole. As Wittgenstein notes, continuing his meditations on the river-bed metaphor:

> "But if someone were to say "So logic too is an empirical science" he would be wrong. Yet this is right: the same proposition may get treated at one time as something to test by experience, at another as a rule of testing.
>
> And the bank of the 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." (OC §98-99)

Wittgenstein certainly does not want to ignore the unique status of logical and mathematical propositions in this analogy. But he does emphasise that even their stability is perhaps a relative one, rather than absolute, and that insofar as the foundations are susceptible to

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[265] We see too, from the following remark, that Wittgenstein did not have Frege far from his thoughts in many of these remarks:

> " "I cannot doubt this proposition without giving up all judgement."
> But what sort of proposition is that? (It is reminiscent of what Frege said about the law of identity.) It is certainty no empirical proposition. It does not belong to psychology. It has rather the character of a rule." (OC §494)

change it will in all likelihood be an imperceptible one.[266] It would, therefore, be a mistake to imagine that within this interdependent system there is *no limit whatsoever* to the possibilities of alteration in the course of knowledge. However, as in the case of the ever-so-slowly shifting course of the river-bed, that limit will depend just as much upon the *time* given to change its course as it will upon the *hardness* of the material over which the waters of the river flow.

It is important to note in this respect that we do not therefore *simply* have the freedom to chose whether the status of a given proposition is open to doubt or not, which is to say, we do not simply have the freedom to decide whether a proposition plays a role analogous to something tested by experience or rather to a rule of testing. Far from *eliminating* the normative, Wittgenstein's offers an account of normativity according to which we are constrained, but not altogether determined by past tradition. Language is here thrown back into the stream of life, yes, but it is a life that is always already there, firmly in place and full of meaning, which we are thus not capable of freely abrogating at will. Even if the potential exists for a proposition to be treated at one time as something to test by experience and at another as a rule of testing, as Wittgenstein suggests here, it is not the case that we may simply turn an empirical proposition into a postulate, or vice versa. This, as Wittgenstein never ceases to remind us, is something that tends to be forgotten by philosophers—from Descartes to Russell… and perhaps even to the author of the *Tractatus* himself.[267]

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266 Except, perhaps, in times of great upheaval. We must not also forget here that in certain cases hardness will itself be a disadvantage, and fluidity will rather be called for. As Schulte aptly notes: "What is hard cannot be altered as easily as what is fluid. Hard things tend to preserve their shapes while the shapes of fluid ones are unstable. But hard things have the drawback of breaking under sufficient pressure while fluid things are more adaptable." (J. Schulte, "Within a System", *op cit.*, p. 65.)

267 We might consider Wittgenstein's discussion of Newtonian mechanics in the *Tractatus* as an instance of overestimating our ability to impose just such a desired form upon our description the world. E.g.: "Newtonian mechanics, for example, imposes a unified form on the description of the world. Let us imagine a white surface with irregular black spots on it. We then say that whatever kind of picture these make, I can always approximate as closely as I wish to the description of it by covering the surface with a sufficiently fine square mesh, and then saying of every square whether it is black or white. In this way I shall have imposed a unified form on the description of the surface. The form is optional, since I could have achieved the same results by using a net with a triangular or hexagonal mesh. Possibly the use of a triangular mesh would have made the description simpler: that is to say, it might be that we could

In order to see briefly how this is so, and thus outline a little more clearly just how far Wittgenstein had come from his earliest conceptions of relevance and/or irrelevance of time, change and history to the practice of philosophy, which he never ceased to conceive of in terms of *Sprachkritik*, we might consider here how Wittgenstein wonders at one moment in his final reflections on the matter:

> "Isn't what I am saying: any empirical proposition can be transformed into a postulate—and then become a norm of description. But I am suspicious of this. The sentence is too general. One almost wants to say "any empirical proposition can, theoretically, be transformed…", but what does "theoretically" mean here? It sounds all to reminiscent of the *Tractatus*." (OC §321)

Reminiscent of the *Tractatus?* How could such a remark be reminiscent of a work, which, by all accounts, places a perfectly stable and impermeable limit on the meaningful use of language? Two interesting possibilities present themselves, which unfortunately cannot be developed further here but which may nonetheless be indicated. The first concerns the role of natural science in the *Tractatus*, where Wittgenstein characterises Newtonian mechanics as an 'optional' net or mesh, which imposes a unified description of the world by the very nature of its grid-like structure (T 6.341). To what extent exactly the form of the net is indeed *optional*, as he states, is an important question, which has no place in the architecture of the *Tractatus,* as it is presented there. A second interesting case is given a little further on, in the passage where Wittgenstein discusses Kant's problem of the incongruence of the right and left hands: "A right-hand glove could be put on the left hand, if it could be turned round in four-dimensional space." (T 6.36111) Undoubtedly the weight of this last remark falls upon what exactly is to be understood by the '*if*…' here. Once again, it is a question that has no place within the Tractarian framework as it stands.

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describe the surface more accurately with a coarse triangular mesh than with a fine square mesh (or conversely), and so on. The different nets correspond to different systems for describing the world. Mechanics determines one form of description of the wold by saying that all propositions used in the description of the world must be obtained in a given way from a given set of propositions—the axioms of mechanics. It thus supplies the bricks for building the edifice of science, and it says, 'Any building that you want to erect, whatever it may be, must somehow be constructed with these bricks, and with these alone." (T 6.341)

Though the two cases present two different problems—the one dealing with the form of empirical statements, the other with the aprioricity of geometry—ultimately, both of these examples come down to the same point: the 'metaphysical subject' of the *Tractatus* is one without an inheritance, free to impose some form or other upon the world as it sees fit, so long as the transcendental limits of language are recognised and the conditions of sensical language use are met. As we have seen, however, after Wittgenstein's return to philosophy, that subject returned with him but now, like Wittgenstein himself, it had become historically conditioned, the subject of training and tradition—a 'rule-following subject' who inherits a world along with its language—and who *therefore* cannot simply alter its view of the world all at once, immediately and 'without further ado'.

Later, in Wittgenstein's last remarks, his use of foundational analogies is meant to remind us rather that in the vast majority of cases we simply *do not doubt* the daily realities of the world around us and that the 'propositions' which support that which we do doubt—and conversely, what we might also be said to 'know'—belong to the logic of our language by virtue of the way they function in our language. This is true of some of those propositions that we would typically consider to be a priori, as well as some of those we would typically consider to be a posteriori.[268]   That is to say, it is true of *some* of them, but not all. Undoubtedly, it is an insight that has the potential to blur the distinction between them; however, Wittgenstein recognised as much and he repeatedly resisted drawing this conclusion. And for good reason. Even in the *Investigations*, when Wittgenstein first acknowledged the threat of relativism inherent to the overwhelming emphasis he was beginning to place on community—particularly in regards to the formation and regulation of the rule-following subject—he also acknowledges that the application of logic retains its role despite its reliance upon something that looks all too suspiciously like 'human agreement' here:

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[268]Briefly, this similarity regarding their incontestability is emphasised by Malcolm, when he notes in relation to OC §54 and §56: "Wittgenstein is pointing out an analogy between propositions of arithmetic and empirical propositions. In each of these domains of language the truth of some propositions becomes fixed, unshakable: the idea that one might be mistaken becomes inconceivable." (N. Malcolm, *Nothing is Hidden, op cit.*, p. 210.)

"Disputes do not break out (among mathematicians, say) over the question whether a rule has been obeyed or not. People don't come to blows over it, for example. This is part of the framework on which the working of language is based (for example, in giving descriptions).

"So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is 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.

If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgements. This seems to abolish logic, but does not do so.—It is one thing to describe methods of measurement, and other to obtain and state results of measurement. But what we call "measuring" is partly determined by a certain consistency in results of measurement." (PI §§240-242)

We see from such remarks that far from seeking to annul our usual distinctions between types of propositional language, Wittgenstein wishes rather to *multiply* them. The foundations he speaks of are embedded in human action, which are much more versatile medium than the standard model of foundations would allow for. They are distinguished not so much by their form—be that a priori or a posteriori, or what have you—but rather by the roles that they play in our lives, and those roles are many, uncountable even.

Is Wittgenstein thereby claiming that everything is impermanent, subject to change, and thus, as Frege would have it, that there is no objective truth? Hardly. The point of these considerations is rather to remove that familiar prejudice which tends to give solidity *precedence* over fluidity, stability precedence over mobility, and the eternal precedence over the historical. It is a reminder that our systems of knowledge work perfectly well without the rock-hard foundations that have been sought after by philosophers throughout the ages, that Archimedean point of absolute indubitable truth. It is a reminder that they stand fast for us, for the moment at least, despite what 'some philosophers' would consider their foundationlessness—and, moreover, that this should be enough to satisfy us. Indeed, it is a reminder that in the vast majority of cases, it is.

IV. Concluding Remarks: Between Mistake and Madness

In this chapter, we have surveyed Wittgenstein's response to Moore's use of the expression '*I know…*' in his two presentations, "A Defence of Common Sense" and "Proof of the External World." Where Moore had sought to invert the traditional hierarchy of ordinary expressions and their corresponding philosophical refinements, in *On Certainty* Wittgenstein responds rather by turning the whole axis of the investigation around, 'levelling the playing field', as it were, with the hopes of allowing us to thus move *horizontally* through the various domains of our discourse with greater ease.

Despite Moore's claim that he is using the words '*I know…*' in the 'ordinary sense', Wittgenstein suggests that to list such 'foundational knowledge' straight off like that is rather *to misuse* the expression. This misuse is no mere inconsistency with ordinary usage, in Moore's sense. For in these cases the expression serves as a description of the language game, and as such it belongs not to the sphere of empirical knowledge, as it has traditionally been conceived, but to logic. Though Moore's assertions have the superficial appearance of standard a posteriori empirical propositions, Wittgenstein suggests that because they belong to the logic of our language they must abide by the same limitations that are imposed upon those more familiar elements of that logic, i.e. a priori propositions. In other words, like a priori propositions, *it makes no sense to doubt them*. In order to highlight the similarities between these two sorts of propositions, a posteriori and a priori, Wittgenstein claims that Moore should thus not state that he '*knows*, *with certainty, that…*' but rather: '*It stands fast for him that…*'. It is an analogy meant to release the grip of a certain philosophical picture of certainty, shared by Moore and the sceptic alike, that certainty belongs to those expressions about which one *cannot* make a mistake—and that only *this* kind of certainty will satisfy the conditions of truly reliable knowledge, one way or the other.

As discussed at the opening of this chapter, in Wittgenstein's last remarks he takes pains to emphasise that the kind of certainty Moore is after in his presentations is neither straightforwardly nor transparently propositional, though the assertions he advances appear to have the form of empirical propositions. In doing so, Wittgenstein wishes to make a distinction—very much like that assumed by the 'official theory' of knowledge claims outlined above—between what he describes in the work as 'subjective' and 'objective certainty'. As he notes in OC §194:

> "With the word "certain" we express complete conviction, the total absence of doubt, and thereby we seek to convince other people. That is *subjective* certainty.
>
> But when is something objectively certain? When a mistake is not possible. But what kind of possibility is that? Mustn't a mistake be *logically* excluded?" (OC §194)

In Stroll's "Understanding *On Certainty*: Entry 194", he argues, in fact, that this passage provides an essential pivot for leveraging our understanding of the work as a whole.[269]

Whether or not that is the case is an interesting question that will not be addressed here; nonetheless, the passage does provide a number of fruitful elements that may help to orient more generally the *kind* of approach Wittgenstein is after here. For as stated at the opening of this chapter, what makes Wittgenstein's treatment of scepticism in the remarks collected in *On Certainty* unique is that—as opposed to its 'dissolution', according to the approach employed in his earlier, *Investigations*-era thought—the 'demystification of scepticism' at work here keeps the sceptical doubt, perhaps rather surprisingly, *in place*.

A concluding look at OC §194 helps demonstrate how this might be so. For as Stroll notes, for example, Wittgenstein has here italicised 'logic' in his final question, which suggests that he is speaking of a kind of mistake that is impossible in a different sense from that of the more strict 'logical impossibility' of, e.g., the *Tractatus*. What other sense of 'impossible' might Wittgenstein have in mind here? Wittgenstein does not withhold an answer to this question. Immediately following the remark quoted above he notes:

269A. Stroll, "Understanding *On Certainty*: Entry 194", *op cit, passim.*

> "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?" (OC §195)

The difference, as Wittgenstein characterises it elsewhere in his ruminations in *On Certainty*, is that found between what one would ordinarily *consider* a mistake—i.e. one in which "a man must already judge in conformity with mankind" about a great number of things (OC §156)—and something more akin to what one might consider a form of *madness* or *mental disturbance*. This idea finds a wealth of expression throughout *On Certainty*. For example:

> "For months I have lived at address A, I have read the name of the street and the number of the house countless times, have received countless letters here and given countless people the address. If I am wrong about it, the mistake is hardly less than if I were (wrongly) to believe I was writing Chinese and not German.
>
> If my friend were to imagine one day that he had been living for a long time past in such and such a place, etc. etc., I should not call this a *mistake*, but rather a mental disturbance, perhaps a transient one.
>
> Not every false belief of this sort is a mistake.
>
> But what is the difference between mistake and mental disturbance? Or what is the difference between my treating it as a mistake and my treating it as a mental disturbance?
>
> 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." (OC §§70-74)

Despite some of the significant changes that Wittgenstein's consideration of certainty undergoes throughout the development of the text[270], further on he explicitly likens Moore's expressions to just this kind of case:

> "There are, however, certain types of cases in which I rightly say I cannot be making a mistake, and Moore has given a few examples of such cases.
>
> I can enumerate various typical cases, but not give any common characteristic. (N.N. cannot be mistaken about his having flown from America to England a few days ago. Only if he is mad can he take anything else to be possible.)" (OC §675)

These ruminations of the relative status of a mistake and something more akin to a form of madness are not unique to *On Certainty*. Indeed, examples of such reasoning drawn from the texts throughout Wittgenstein's post-*Investigations work* could be multiplied, and they are by no means all *unsympathetic* towards moments of genuine madness.[271]

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270 As Stroll notes, one of the most significant shifts in the work is a shift in focus from propositional to non-propositional accounts of knowledge, and a consequent move away from literal to metaphorical language: "The work gradually shifts its focus from Moore to the actual roles played in 'the language-game' by such 'practices' as doubting, asserting, and knowing, etc., and from these considerations a new understanding of the nature of certainty slowly emerges. Knowledge and certainty are revealed to be independent concepts that play related but different roles in communication and in other forms of human interaction. Eventually Wittgenstein's focus is turned upon certainty itself, and this notion is explored relentlessly in a series of brilliant metaphors: 'the scaffolding of our thoughts', 'bedrock', 'the substratum of all my inquiring and asserting', 'being anchored', 'standing fast' and so forth." (A. Stroll, "Understanding *On Certainty*: Entry 194", *op cit.,* p. 449. Cf. A. Stroll, "Wittgenstein's Foundational Metaphors", in D. Moyal-Sharrock (ed.) *The* Third *Wittgenstein, op cit.*, pp. 13-24.)

271 We might recall here, for example, Wittgenstein's remark in *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology,* where he notes:

> "The feeling of the unreality of one's surroundings. This feeling I have had once, and many have it before to onset of mental illness. Everything seems somehow not *real*; but not as if one *saw* things unclear or blurred; everything looks quite as usual. And how do I know that others have felt what I have? Because he uses the same words as I find appropriate.
>
> But why do I choose precisely the word "unreality" to express it? … I chose it because of its meaning. But surely I did not learn to use the word to mean: *a feeling*. No; but I learned to use it with a particular meaning and now I use it spontaneously like *this*" (RPP I, 125)

When Wittgenstein indicts the philosophical sceptic's hyperbolic sense of 'unreality' in *On Certainty*, therefore, that is not to say that he would doubt the sense of the equivalent expression, when used spontaneously—which is to say, *genuinely*—by one really undergoing such a sensation. "Just try,"

However, we are here clearly given to understand that the anti-philosophical reminder being made with this comparison is two-fold. For, on the one hand, *were* something like a genuine sceptical doubt to be advanced, it would not appear to the casual observer to be an exploration of knowledge claims based on the foundations of a well-conceived epistemological framework, but rather a *foundation-less* form of insanity. On the other hand, however, equally insane would appear the philosopher's attempt to counter a genuine sceptical doubt by simply asserting, as Moore has done, that in fact '*I do know…*'. As Wittgenstein remarks:

> "I am sitting with a philosopher in the garden; he says again and again "I know that's a tree", pointing to a tree that is near us. Someone else arrives and hears this, and I tell him: "This fellow isn't insane. We are only doing philosophy." (OC §467)

Propositions such as '*Here is one hand and here is another'* certainly do not appear at first sight to be nonsense, and yet, when we imagine a use for such a proposition, nowhere do we find one that will suggest it might function in *either* of the manners that Moore *or* the sceptic wish it to. If the existence of the world is open to doubt or assertion, it is not open to such straightforward doubt and straightforward assertion of the philosophical kind.

We have seen that in characterising our 'foundational knowledge' as something that rather 'stands fast for us', Wittgenstein also opens up several positive characteristics for understanding the interdependent system of knowledge evoked in this analogy. I have developed one of those analogies. Certainly, there are others, perhaps even more profitable metaphors to explore (e.g., the case of *persuasion* and *conversion*, which clearly reconfigures Wittgenstein's earlier understanding of language-learning, where we no longer find a linguistic novice and a master, but two competing 'masters', face to face).[272] I have

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Wittgenstein writes in *Philosophical Investigations*, "—in a real case—to doubt someone else's fear or pain" (PI §303, my emphasis). Or their sense of unreality, as it were.

272 Ruminations such as the following may suggest that Wittgenstein was in his last remarks beginning to develop something that might even be called an *ethics* of discourse: "Is it wrong for me to be guided in my actions by the propositions of physics? Am I to say I have no good ground for doings so? Isn't it precisely this what we call a 'good ground'? // Supposing we met people people who did not regard that

suggested, however, that with the metaphor of the river and the river-bed Wittgenstein wishes at least to destabilise the philosophical prejudice for foundations of absolute solidity, eternal and immutable. Whether or not Wittgenstein would draw the inevitable historicist consequences from this insight can only be a matter of speculation; for, as I have also suggested, a complete reconstruction of the work is hindered by its status as provisional, unfinished text.

Nonetheless, it must be admitted that Wittgenstein's imagery does at least suggest that he may have become increasingly willing to recognise the possibility of significant, even radical historical change. Just how far one will wish to extract a philosophical position from this possibility is another matter. For, despite the potential for historical change that Wittgenstein's imagery suggests, he also provides a clear means for resisting what some would claim are the *sceptical consequences* of that historicism. Once those propositions we would typically consider to be a posteriori are admitted to the logic of our language, we can see that the sceptic's doubts do not make sense. However, for all that, Wittgenstein does not deny the possibility of a genuine, non-sceptical doubt: at times a proposition that is not open to doubt, removed from the traffic of language, as it were, may return once more and find itself called into question. If only in a temporary moment of loss of self, what had once 'stood fast' for one may cease to do so, and so much that is familiar may seem to simply wash away. Furthermore, Wittgenstein's imagery may even suggest that it will perhaps be profitable at some time or another to *attempt* to do so oneself—be one a philosopher, mathematician, religious leader, or anyone else whose thought finds its home at the limits of language—in order perhaps to shift the river-bed of thought in a new and more profitable direction, if only one grain of sand at a time, altering ever so slightly the limits of language in a manner that will, hopefully, be judged favourably by history.

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as a telling reason. Now, how do we imagine this? Instead of the physicist, they consult an oracle. (And for that we consider them primitive.) Is it wrong for them to consult an oracle and be guided by it?—If we call this "wrong" aren't we using our language-game as a base from which to *combat* theirs? //And are we right or wrong to combat it? Of course there are all sorts of slogans which will be used to support our proceedings." (OC §§608-610)

Whether or not Wittgenstein would ultimately agree with this or not, what he certainly does reminds us of here, however, is that one had better not attempt to do so *lightly*. To genuinely call those things into doubt that few, if any of us do, is not to provide oneself with a philosophically well-founded expression of a deep epistemological uncertainty. It is rather, as Wittgenstein makes clear in *On Certainty*, to risk isolation, persecution or incarceration—to risk being called a fool or a heretic—possibly, it may even be to court madness. Is scepticism thereby dissolved? To a certain extent, yes. However, it is not clear that it has been dissolved any more effectively here than it had already been in the *Investigations*, if not in the *Tractatus* before that. Is scepticism thereby *demystified…?*

In the following chapter, I will begin to address the significance of this unanswered question in a more detailed examination of Wittgenstein's general philosophical methodology. Against claims that Wittgenstein was uninterested in accounting for history, I argue that in his use of the morphological method we clearly witness a deep concern for the historical dimensions of thought and language—plotting the course of that river, so to speak. Here, a number of parallels to Goethe's approach towards history are drawn. Both were suspicious of history as an empirical discipline; however, they were also reluctant to take present forms of knowledge as absolute and inescapable. Both likewise addressed this tension through the employment of the morphological method, as a way of questioning the present, through a renewed appreciation of the past, in order to enlarge the horizon of future possibilities in thought, while avoiding expressions of historicist relativism as well as dogmatic claims of what that future will hold.

PART II

CHAPTER 4. *DESCRIPTIVE APPROACHES TO HISTORY: WITTGENSTEIN AND GOETHE ON THE MORPHOLOGICAL METHOD*

> "Who knows the laws according to which society develops? I am
>
> quite sure they are a closed book even to the cleverest of men"
>
> —*Culture and Value*, p. 60 [MS 134; 13.4.1947]

I. Making Sense of History from within the Stream of Life

In his earliest work, Wittgenstein famously claimed "to have found, on all essential points, the final solution to the problems [of philosophy]." (T, p. 4) Looking back, we know that this confidence would not be long-lived. Upon Wittgenstein's return to philosophy in 1929, after a nearly ten-year hiatus following the publication of the *Tractatus*, his approach to philosophy had radically changed. He began to recognize "grave errors" in that earlier work (PI, Preface) and vigorously set out to correct them. These ruminations would ultimately lead Wittgenstein to recognize the need for a higher vantage point from which to view language—what he described as a 'synoptic view' or 'perspicuous representation' (*übersichtliche Darstellung*). As Wittgenstein states in *Philosophical Investigations*:

> "A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not *command a clear view* of our words.— Our grammar is lacking in this sort of perspicuity (*Übersichtlichkeit*). A perspicuous representation (*übersichtliche Darstellung*) produces just that understanding which consists of 'seeing connections'. Hence the importance of finding and inventing *intermediate cases*.
>
> The concept of a perspicuous representation (*übersichtliche Darstellung*) is of fundamental significance for us. It earmarks the form of account we give, the way we look at things." (PI §122)

Where Wittgenstein had once sought abstract unity, he later emphasised everyday forms of concrete diversity, difference and variety. In the place of the general form of the proposition outlined in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein sought to construct a complex collage of observations on the basis of the lived experience of linguistic interaction. With this, he hoped, we might see comparisons between these observations and, in seeing these comparisons, understand what language is by attending to the work it does in our everyday life. Crucially, the emphasis on the fluid immanency of language use that this change in perspective implied, brought with it a new understanding of how language functions as a living practice and thus, as a practice, how it evolves over time:

> "But how many kinds of sentences are there? Say assertion, question, and command?—There are *countless* kinds: countless different kinds of use of what we call "symbols", "words", "sentences". And this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once and for all; but new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten. (We can get a *rough picture* of this from the changes in mathematics.)" (PI §23)

We can see here just how far Wittgenstein had evolved from his earlier Fregean inspirations. But the path that brought Wittgenstein from his earlier Tractarian transcendentalism to here —a place where new types of language, new language-games as it were, arise and flourish for a period of time, while others are ignored and get forgotten, and, moreover, where changes in mathematics provide a singular (if 'rough') illustration of this process—was not a straight one. Indeed, one might even describe this path as *meandering*, were it not for the vigour with which he advanced upon it.

We saw above that in Wittgenstein's very last remarks, i.e. those composed shortly before his death, he came to see the so-called 'hardness of the logical must' and the necessity with which it is associated as gradual rather than discrete; he came to see especially *certainty* as a way of acting, and thus as something that may transition (if only very slowly) between that which we readily call into question, that which we take for granted (although we need perhaps not do so), and that which *were we to doubt it* we would transgress the bounds of

sense (with philosophical nonsense representing only the most benign consequence of such transgression). In these last remarks Wittgenstein thus blurred the traditional epistemic boundaries between a priori and a posteriori knowledge and he also did so via one of the most vivid and arresting metaphors of his entire oeuvre—that of the river and the river-bed:

> "The propositions describing the world-picture might be part of a kind of mythology. And their role is like that of the rules of a game; and the game can be learned purely practically, without learning any explicit rules.
>
> 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.
>
> The mythology my change back into a state of flux [*wieder in Fluß geraten*], 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." (OC §§95-97)

We examined the significance of this passage above. However, what remained unstated there was that this is not Wittgenstein's first mobilization of what we readily recognize as the Heraclitean image of the 'river of time' or the 'flux of the world' within which we flow.[273] For indeed, when Wittgenstein first returned to philosophy, just as he was abandoning his earlier framework and groping around for what would soon become the foundations of his mature work—as the river-bed of Wittgenstein's own thought was shifting, so to speak—not only does the Heraclitean river-image first appear in connection to

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[273] I use 'Heraclitean' as an adjective here, because it is by no means clear that Wittgenstein read Heraclitus directly, or was even familiar with its the original formulation. N. Venturinha has, additionally, given us good reason to believe, contra D. Stern, that Wittgenstein had not even necessarily begun pondering the Heraclitean image via Plato's *Theaetetus*, which does indeed appear here in connection with these ruminations, but, as Venturinha shows, *after* the first appearances of the Heraclitean imagery. For my part, I see no reason to assume that Wittgenstein had more familiarity with the imagery than that provided by its popular understanding, which seems rich enough in itself to engender his subsequent reflections. (Cf. D. Stern, "Heraclitus' and Wittgenstein's River Images: Stepping into the Same River", *The Monist,* 74(4), 1991, pp. 579-604; N. Venturinha, "Wittgenstein on Heraclitus and Phenomenology", in ed. I. Somavilla and J. Thompson, *Wittgenstein und der Antike* (Berlin: Pererga, 2012), pp. 85-110.)

his renewed conception but it provides a surprisingly consistent touchstone among the otherwise dramatic changes that his thoughts were undergoing at the time.

There are already several thorough genealogies of the series of remarks Wittgenstein made with regards to the flux of the world or the flow of time during this period, and we will not survey the whole chain here.[274] However, a few examples will nonetheless help trace its decisive role in the development of what would become Wittgenstein's mature thought. For what is most striking in this regard is how, upon returning to philosophy, Wittgenstein initially retains traces of that key Tractarian conception—that that which belongs to the essence of the world cannot be put into words. However, this now takes on a distinctive *temporal tone*, which was by all means lacking in that earlier work. This new focus on the temporal aspect of the essence of the world was no mere fleeting interest for Wittgenstein. The point is in fact approached repeatedly and from various angles throughout the manuscripts of early 1930's (i.e. MSS 107-115), where we principally find remarks on temporality in relation to verificationism, the specious present and the general phenomenology of time-consciousness.[275] It is interesting to note, moreover, that when Wittgenstein selected the best of these remarks for inclusion in the so-called 'Big Typescript' (TS 213; 1933), we find several references to the Heraclitean river-image spread

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[274]Cf. the footnote above, also especially D. Perrin, *Le flux et l'instant: Wittgenstein aux prises avec le mythe du présent* (Paris: J. Vrin, 2007).

[275]The first appearance of the river imagery is in MS 107, where Wittgenstein notes "The immediate is grasped in constant flow [*in ständigem Fluß begriffen*]. (It actually has the form of a stream [*die Form eines Stroms*])" (11.10.29). A short while later, this is reprised: "The stream of life, or the stream of the world, flows on and our propositions are so speak verified only *by means of instants. //* Only the present verifies our propositions. // So they must be constructed that they can be verified by it." (1.12.29). As is more often than not the case, Wittgenstein's metaphysical speculations here find a clear parallel expression in his biographical context. Indeed, one might legitimately wonder which stands as a sign for the other as primary in his concerns, and whether anything metaphysical was in fact ever meant in the first place. The above remark, for example, is prefaced by the personal reflection: "I feel today such a particular poverty of problems around me; a sure sign that the most important and hardest problems *lie before me*." Compare this with the subsequent remark from Schlick on their collaboration at this time:

"He has indeed the marvellous gift of always seeing everything as if for the first time. But this, I believe, also shows how difficult any collaboration is, since he always follows the inspiration of the moment and demolishes what he has previously devised." (Quoted in *Wiener Ausgabe, op cit.,* vol. 8.1, p. vii.)

throughout the work—e.g., in the chapters 'Thinking. Thought', 'Idealism, etc.', and 'Philosophy'. This attests to the fact that even though Wittgenstein was already in the process of rejecting the phenomenological aspect expressed in the earliest of these remarks, the imagery itself remained central to his conception of philosophy at the time. Thus, it is in the last of these chapters (entitled simply 'Philosophy') that the bulk of Wittgenstein's remarks on the 'river of time' find a place, and where they are most intimately entwined with the nature of the task he had set before himself—a novel conception of philosophy, which he would continuously develop until the appearance of *Philosophical Investigations,* and indeed beyond.

Compare, for example, the following Tractarian-sounding remark:

> "Language cannot express what belongs to the essence of the world. Therefore it cannot say that everything flows. Language can only say what we could imagine differently.
> That everything flows must lie in how language touches reality. Or better: that everything flows must lie in the nature of language. And, let's remember: in everyday life we don't notice that—as little as we notice the blurred edges of our visual field ("because we are so used to it", some will say). How, on what occasion, do we think we start noticing it? Isn't it when we want to form sentences contrary to the grammar of time?" (PO, p. 189 [TS 213, p. 427; 1933])[276]

And this, the first part of which would later find its way into the *Investigations* itself:

> "What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their correct use in language.
> (The man who said that one cannot step into the same river twice said something wrong; one can step into the same river twice.)

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[276] In this context it is interesting to note that Venturinha has altered the translation of the last two sentences here. The original reads: "Wie, bei welcher Gelegenheit, glauben wir den darauf aufmerksam zu werden? Ist es nicht, wenn wir Sätze gegen die Grammatik der Zeit bilden wollen." The above passage is quoted here following the translation provided in *Philosophical Occasions.* Venturinha, however, translates it as "when we want to form sentences contrary to the *present* time" (my emphasis). He does not, however, develop the historicist implications of that possibility. Cf. N. Venturinha, "Wittgenstein on Heraclitus and Phenomenology", *op cit.*, p. 103).

> And this is what the solution of all philosophical difficulties looks like. Their answers, if they are correct, must be homespun and ordinary. But one must look at them in the proper spirit, and then it doesn't matter." (PO, p. 167-169 [TS 213, p. 421; 1933])[277]

Placing these remarks side-by-side, we see the clear indication of a bridge spanning Wittgenstein's early and later work—where, for example, the metaphysical difficulties suggested by the 'river of time' metaphor are, in the first case, indicative of the 'strictly speaking' unspeakable essence of the world and are, in the second, exactly the kind of philosophical nonsense to be rejected outright by 'correct language use', which is to say 'homespun and ordinary'.

We see here once more that what Wittgenstein had initially rejected in the *Tractatus*—"We cannot compare a process with 'the passage of time'—there is no such thing—but only with another process (such as the working of a chronometer)" (T 6.3611)—returns, but in a modified form. In other words, Wittgenstein's first ruminations on the 'river of time' in the early 1930's, though temporalized far beyond the capacity of the Tractarian framework, are nonetheless still abstracted along the lines of that earlier work from any real, embodied language use. That everything flows, he claims, must lie in how 'language' touches reality: not your language, or my language, or any particular use of language in particular, but language *itself*—where propositions are only verified 'at an instant' and must therefore be constructed in such and such a way as to be capable of such and such verification… and so forth. How different are such essentialist formulations from those that would later appear in

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277Cf. in particular PI §116: "When philosophers use a word—"knowledge", "being", "object", "I", "proposition", "name"—and try to grasp the essence of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language-game which is its original home?— // What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use." In this context one might also make an enlightening comparison with PI §435, which is noteworthy for making reference (if only obliquely) to the very Heraclitean issues with which Wittgenstein was so engaged upon his return to philosophy in the 1930's: "If it is asked: "How do sentences manage to represent?"—the answer might be: "Don't you know? You certainly see it, when you use them." For nothing is concealed. // How do sentences do it?— Don't you know? For nothing is hidden. // But given this answer: "But you know how sentences do it, for nothing is concealed" one would like to retort "Yes, but it all goes by so quick, and I should like to see it as it were laid open to view.".”

the *Investigations*, where we—Wittgenstein's *real* readers—are asked in the first person to bring words 'home' from their metaphysical use, where 'the man' who said one cannot step into the same river twice is obviously wrong. For indeed, *one can.* The point here, of course, is that the ordinarily unproblematic expressions provided for by the grammar of our language (when we say, for example, that 'a river flows') only become philosophically interesting if we remove them from the particular, concrete linguistic exchanges that give such expressions significance in the first place (when we later claim, for example, that '*everything* flows'). The meaning of 'to flow' in the first case is clear. In the second it seems to float before us, shimmering but somehow just out of reach. The problem, of course, is not with the word itself but with its strange and unnatural use. It is unclear what we are supposed to do with such a phrase, except perhaps to marvel at it in some way.[278] As Wittgenstein remarks emphatically in *Philosophical Investigations*: "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?" (PI §432) And thus, the remark with which we began this chapter, PI §23, continues: "Here the term 'language-game' is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life."[279]

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[278]Wittgenstein refers directly to the tension inherent to this employment of the Heraclitean metaphor already in the *Big Typescript*, where he notes:

"That "everything flows" seems to hinder us in expressing the truth, for it's as if we can't grasp it, since it slips away from *us.*

But (and this is the point) this doesn't prevent us from expressing something.—we know what it means to want to pin down something in a description that's fleeting. This happens, for instance, when we forget the one thing as we're trying to describe the other. But that isn't what this is all about. And that's the way the expression "fleeting" is to be used.

But one is inclined to respond to the answer "you know how the proposition does it; after all, nothing is concealed" by saying: "Yes, but everything goes by so quickly, and I'd like to see it with all of its parts spread out, as it were".

But here too we're mistaken. For in this process nothing that happens escapes us because of its speed." (TS 213, p 212; 1933)

The above remarks appear in the *Big Typescript* in the chapter "Thought. Thinking.", which makes the handwritten parenthetical remark, placed in the margins beside the first two of those above, even more suggestive: i.e., "doesn't belong here, but rather to the consideration of time or to solipsism."

[279]This remark tellingly concludes, moreover, with one of Wittgenstein's more definitive invitations to compare the novel method presented here with that presented earlier in the *Tractatus*: "It is interesting to

One cannot read the *Investigations* without being struck by the uncanny parallelisms between the topics Wittgenstein deals with there and the manner in which he deals with them—from 'learning' to 'reading', for example, or 'following an order'. What we see here, time and time again, is that Wittgenstein attempts to recreate the kinds of living situations in which these activities function and correlate them with their abstract philosophical counterparts—concepts such as 'meaning', 'understanding', or 'privacy', for example. Thus, time and time again, what we encounter there takes the distinct form of a dialogue—such as that in PI §23 itself, to name just one among innumerable others with even greater and more fragmentary voices still. Now, were we to look for a term of art among Wittgenstein's remarks in the *Investigations* to capture the inspiration behind this dialogic process, we would search in vain.[280] However, *Nachlaß* sources from the time give a clear indication of what this might be. For Wittgenstein is drawing here on none other than the river-image itself. Having abandoned the specious present adduced from the phenomenological epoché, the Heraclitean river-imagery remains embedded in the work nonetheless—both in terms of *what* the work treats and *how* it treats it—as the 'flow of conversation' that guarantees the everyday coherence of our expressions and the very

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compare the multiplicity of the tools in language and the ways the they are used, the multiplicity of kinds of words and sentence, with what logicians have said about the structure of language. (Including the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.*)"

[280]Two notable attempts to characterise just what Wittgenstein was attempting to achieve with the unusual manner of writing he employed in the *Investigations* include those of A. Pichler and his notion of 'criss-cross' or 'album' writing (cf. A. Pichler, "The Philosophical Investigations and Syncretistic Writing", in ed. N. Venturinha, *The Textual Genesis of Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations* (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 65-80), A. Pichler, "Ludwig Wittgenstein and us typical Western Scientists", in eds. S.S. Greve and J. Macha, *Wittgenstein and the Creativity of Language* (London: Palgrave, 2015), pp. 55-75; A. Pichler, "Wittgenstein's albums: *Philosophical Investigations* and *Philosophical Remarks* as alternatives to the 'spirit of progress' in philosophy", in ed. A.R. Moreno, *Wittgenstein – Como ler o album?* (Campinas: CLE, 2009), pp. 57-97.) and N. Venturinha (cf. N. Venturinha, "Introduction: A Composite Work of Art", in ed. N. Venturinha, *The Textual Genesis of Wittgenstein's* Philosophical Investigations (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 1-18.) While these are excellent characterizations of just what is so unique and effective in Wittgenstein's strange form of philosophical composition, they fail to adequately emphasize what I consider the essentially temporal aspect of the work, both in terms of its production and its reception.

ordinary relationship between a speaker and the world. From *Zettel* (TS 233), we might take the following illustrative example:

> "We only speak of 'thinking' in quite particular circumstances.
>
> How then can the sense and the truth (or the truth and the sense) of sentences collapse together? (Stand or fall together?)
>
> And isn't it as if you wanted to say: "If such-and-such is not the case, then it makes no *sense* to say it is the case?"
>
> Like this, e.g.: "If all moves were *always* false, it would make no sense to speak of a 'false move'."
>
> But that is only paradoxical way of putting it. The non-paradoxical way would be: "The general description… makes no sense".
>
> Do no say "one cannot", but say instead: "it doesn't exist in this game". Not: "one can't castle in draughts" but—"there is no castling in draughts"; and instead of "I can't exhibit my sensation"—"in the use of the word 'sensation', there is no such thing as exhibiting what one has got"; instead of "one cannot enumerate all the cardinal numbers"—"there is no such thing here as enumerating all the members".
>
> Conversation flows on, the application and interpretation of words, and only in its course [*im Fluß]* do words have their meaning.
>
> "He has gone away" "Why?"—What did you mean, when you uttered the word "why?" What did you *think* of?" (Z §§130-135)[281]

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[281] Stern makes the following observation on this series of remarks: "In the final paragraph, Wittgenstein first states his thesis that words only have meaning in the flow, the river, of conversation , and then illustrates it with a break in the conversation." (D. Stern, "Heraclitus' and Wittgenstein's River Images", *op cit.*, p. 549.) For my part, when we look at this technique of 'breakage' from the general point of view of Wittgenstein's engagement with the Heraclitean river-image, I find it strongly recalls Wittgenstein's very first mobilization of the imagery. There, I noted above, it is not clear whether Wittgenstein is referring to the philosophical problem of 'temporal flux' or the methodology of his investigation into it. In this context, it is particularly noteworthy that the passage in question is accompanied by a drawing, which appear to be a river (a series of horizontal lines, fading at different lengths to the left) which abruptly halts at a single, vertical line (on the right, at the mid-point). Whether it is the specious present or something else that marks the 'halting' of the river is, from this perspective at least, unclear.

258

Conversation flows on, Wittgenstein notes here, and it is from within the midst of that flow that words take on meaning, i.e., that 'ordinary and homespun' meaning intended to counteract the impetus towards the impersonal and a-temporal philosophical abstraction. Born of Wittgenstein's first attempts to temporalize his thought via the Heraclitean river-image, dialogic form would thus become a pillar of his mature philosophical methodology, one of the key precepts woven into the very fabric of *Philosophical Investigations* as we know it today.

Despite the fact that it is not stated explicitly within the pages of the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein remarked on numerous occasions, in writing as well as in conversation with those close to him, that an expression has meaning only in the stream of life: *Ein Ausdruck hat nur in Strom des Lebens Bedeutung.* Norman Malcolm relates, in fact, that in discussing the metaphor with Wittgenstein, it struck him then as it later did upon recollection "as being especially noteworthy and as summing up a good deal of his philosophy."[282] And he does so with good reason. For here, the river-image reminds us that when we are speaking about language, we are not speaking about some "non-spatial, non-temporal phantasm" (PI §108)[283]; it also reminds us that when we are speaking about language, we are still speaking *a language*. We can no more remove our words from the traffic of that language than we can remove ourselves. This demand, to look for the meaning of a word within the stream of life, expresses the necessity of maintaining a view 'from somewhere' rather than 'nowhere'. It is the reminder of a purpose. But of course, whenever we speak about time—even in this ordinary manner, where it is not something like 'time itself' that flows but rather 'conversation', along with Wittgenstein's seemingly banal observation that language only attains its full potential when it is actually used in a living exchange—the many well-known

[282]N. Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir* (London: Oxford University Press, 1980). p. 93.

[283]In order not to *overstate* the implicit critical aspect of Wittgenstein's later attempts to temporalize his philosophy in regards to the earlier, it is important to note that this remark, which nonetheless begins with critical gesture towards the earlier work, contains a handwritten note in the margin: "Only it is possible to be interested in a phenomena in a variety of ways." This clearly recalls, of course, the following remark from the 1916 notebooks: "it is equally possible to take the bare present image as the worthless momentary picture in the whole temporal world, and as the true world among shadows." (NB, p. 83)

paradoxes associated with temporality are never far behind. And here too, one is all too easily led to a troubling conclusion. Indeed, it is the Heraclitean conclusion that threatens Wittgenstein's insight, as it has threatened so many before. For, were it an accurate description of the world, the strong version of the Heraclitean image would seem to imply that speech can never really find a stable footing, and that we should in truth be unable to say *anything coherent about the world at all*.[284]

Now of course, though Wittgenstein recognizes that communication can (and in fact clearly does) sometimes break down, he grants the general stability of our speech; indeed, given his refusal to accept the coherence of anything like a 'private language', one could even claim that this idea serves as the cornerstone of his mature philosophy. Nonetheless, one must also grant that any stability one does find will only ever be relatively so. For in his attempt to bring linguistic exchange to the forefront and return the philosopher to living language use, Wittgenstein appears to have replaced both the inherent instability of the 'specious present' and the super stability of the view 'sub specie aeternitatis' with the mere relative stability of something like a temporal 'period', wherein a linguistic expression is only

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284This was, of course, already at the heart of Socrates' rejection of Heraclitus' 'doctrine' in the *Theaetetus*. As Theodorus responds to Socrates: "Indeed, how could it be possible to [speak of] any other thing of that kind, if it's always slipping away while one is speaking; as it must be, given that it's all in flux?" It is a reference that, as Stern points out, is not merely of Hellenistic interest. In 1944, as Wittgenstein was putting the first part of the *Investigations* into publishable form, he noted to Drury that "Plato in this dialogue is occupied with the same problems I am writing about." (M. O'C. Drury, "Conversations with Wittgenstein", *op cit.*, p. 163.) He later sent Drury a copy of the *Theaetetus*. Though Wittgenstein's references to the dialogue in the *Investigations* concern the naming of simples (cf. PI §46, 48), the role of Heraclitus in this debate could not have gone unnoticed. In the present context, the following is particularly relevant. For at this point in the dialogue, Socrates suggests a more thorough restatement of the Heraclitean view; Theodorus responds that the Heracliteans themselves are no help here:

"Because, in literal conformity with their texts, they keep moving; as for stopping an argument or a question and, without moving, giving an answer and asking a question in turn, there's less than none of that in them [...] If you ask one of them a question, they draw out enigmatic little expressions from their quiver, so to speak, and shoot one off; and if you try to get hold of an account of what that one meant, you're transfixed by another novel set of metaphors." (Plato, *Theaetetus, op cit.,* 179d-180a.)

Even if Wittgenstein had already rejected the Heraclitean aspects of the specious present in the metaphysical or phenomenological sense, one might wonder nonetheless, given all we have discussed above, how much he conscientiously incorporated into the methodology of the work's composition more generally.

significant for the *time-being*—adopted for the moment, just to be abandoned latter as time flows on and novel needs arise. Now, so long as our gaze remains fixed upon our present exchanges and on our present needs, this would seem to present no problem. As Wittgenstein makes clear in one of the better known dialogic moments of the *Investigations*:

> " "So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is 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 §241)

By drawing on the complex web of social convention, sensical speech is, Wittgenstein suggests here, immanent to the mutual interaction of like-minded participants; being of like-mind, these participants share the dynamic background of meaning that Wittgenstein called a 'form of life'. Truth, thus conceived, is simply neither private nor permanent.

But if Wittgenstein thus helps us escape the metaphysical quagmires of both the specious present (one the one hand) and the eternal 'view from nowhere' (on the other), it would appear that he only does so *temporarily*. For in such a case, a natural question arises: How are we to make sense of statements made outside the present 'flow' of our immanent linguistic interaction—for example, the statements of past epochs (made by those with whom we no longer share a common 'form of life', as it were) or statements concerning epochs to come (made in reference to a form of life of which we do not yet fully partake)—without reducing them out of hand to error or plain nonsense? And in the absence of this understanding, how are we to grasp the ways in which sense *transitions*, how it develops, grows old and decays, how our previous linguistic practices become 'obsolete' and new ones 'come into existence' as PI §23 indicates?

The 'rough picture' of change presented in the *Investigations* soon becomes problematic if we attempt to grasp it more clearly. On the surface, Wittgenstein seems to have remedied his earlier errors, at least in part, by substituting the real, socially-engaged individual for the abstract and aloof metaphysical subject—the communal 'we' for the solipsistic 'I', as it were. And indeed, he has. But a conundrum remains buried within this change of

perspective nonetheless. The problem is that if we are going to ground sensical language use in terms of its spatio-temporal immanency, the difference that make dialogue what it truly is can only be experienced first-hand. This difference would exhibit itself in certain forms of semi- or partial agreement, for example, or in an inability for one person to fully comprehend what another is saying. But in the inevitable absence of an interlocutor, our ability to make sense of past statements can only be determined by the degree to which they accord with those of the present. In other words, there is no possibility to swim *up* 'the stream of life', and so certain forms of history would seem to impossible. Naturally, historical statements of the sort '*Caesar crossed the Rubicon*' make sense, their forms having 'floated downstream' along with us, so to speak. But the intellectual history of the past—its arts, sciences, religions and philosophies, for example, which find their home at the limits of language—would be inaccessible to the present insofar as the form of their expression had changed over the ages. By this account, we would be unable to chart our disagreements, to make sense of deviations from the current standard, and to adjust them in response, and so it would appear necessary by this account to explain deviation away as simple error, mere nonsense—or '*chicanery*', as it were.[285]

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[285]Briefly, an example of such a difficulty can be drawn from Wittgenstein's own attempts to put into words a sentiment to which he could no longer give adequate expression. From among his first attempts to compose a foreward in the early 1930's, we find for example the following:

"I would like to say 'This book is written to the glory of God', *but nowadays that would be chicanery*, that is, *it would not be rightly understood*. It means the book is written in good will, and in so far as it is not so written, but out of vanity, etc., the author would wish to see it condemned. He cannot be free it of these impurities further than he himself is free of them." (PR, Foreword, my emphasis)

Diamond summarizes this difficult well, in remark that evokes her understanding of 'transitional nonsense' and what it means to 'throw away' the Tractarian ladder. As she notes, when we come to see a game in a new way (such that a familiar game "A", e.g., can now be won every time by applying a simple trick, so that it becomes a slightly altered version of its earlier self, game "B"), she notes:

"The player of A who is led to play B, to see in it the game he was playing before, can no longer go on playing A 'naively'; he cannot play as he did before. If, having come to see A in this new way, he conscientiously tries to play A as he did before, this will no longer be doing the same thing; he will be merely going through the motions, he will not mean what he says in giving discordant results as he did before (not because the psychological accompaniments are different). But this is as different from what it was before as was the wearing of togas in revolutionary France from wearing them in ancient Rome. That it is a matter of convention whether we wear togas or not is not to say whether, if we should decide to put them on, this would be a case of 'dressing up like a Roman' and not 'getting

262

While this problem is not normally associated with Wittgenstein, neither is it unfamiliar. It is of course well-known in historicist circles, many of whose key figures drew on none other than Wittgenstein for inspiration. Thomas Kuhn, to take a representative example, refers explicitly to this difficulty in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* precisely at the point in the text where he has fleshed out his notion of progress via the serial succession of more or less ontologically incommensurable 'paradigms'. The historical evidence he offers is rich and his position is compelling, but a worry remains for Kuhn. He writes there:

> "None of these crisis-promoting subjects has yet produced a viable alternative to the traditional epistemological paradigm, but they do begin to suggest what some of that paradigm's characteristics will be. I am, for example, acutely aware of the difficulties created by saying that when Aristotle and Galileo looked at a swinging stone, the first saw constrained fall, the second a pendulum. The same difficulties are presented in an even more fundamental form by the opening sentences of this section: though the world does not change with the change of paradigm, the scientist afterwards works in a different world. Nevertheless, I am convinced that we must learn to make sense of statements that at least resemble these."[286]

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dressed'. I might say, "One can't any longer mean it, if one puts on a toga nowadays"—as I cannot mean what might be said in some language-games" (C. Diamond, "The Face of Necessity", p. 256, in *The Realistic Spirit, op cit.*, pp. 243-266)

She refers here, in conclusion, to a remark from *Zettel*, where Wittgenstein states: "We are here describing a language-game that *we cannot learn*." (Z §339)

[286] T. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 121. For a thoroughly Wittgensteinian analysis of such passages in Kuhn's work, cf. W. Sharrock and R. Read, *Kuhn: Philosopher of Scientific Revolution* (Oxford: polity, 2002). In this context it is interesting to wonder at just how reminiscent Kuhn's own description of history as a series of ontologically incommensurable paradigms is with the manner in which Wittgenstein described his own 'new method' of philosophy upon his return to Cambridge in 1930. As Moore notes, e.g.:

> "I was a good deal surprised by some of the things he said about the difference between 'philosophy' in the sense in which what he was doing might be called 'philosophy' (he called this 'modern philosophy'), and what has traditionally been called 'philosophy'. He said that what he was doing was a 'new subject', and not merely a stage in a 'continuous development'; that 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; that a 'new method' had been discovered, as had happened when 'chemistry was developed out of alchemy'; and that it was now possible for the first time that there should be 'skilful philosophers', though of course there had in the past been 'great philosophers'." (PO, p. 113)

Through Kuhn's use of illuminating historical examples we are tempted to admit that a falling stone was not for Aristotle a pendulum, as it was not for Galileo an instance of constrained fall. But how, in the absence of attributing to the earlier some form of basic error or mere illusion, are we to make sense of the possibility that one thing can be different things to different people at different times and still maintain that there is something there to be different? In other words, how are we to make sense of the possibility of fundamentally different but equally legitimate world-views when we know at the same time that the world in some equally fundamental sense has not itself changed? If we are not to reject deviations out of hand, taking such a historicist view seems to commit us to the very kinds of claims that our intellect immediately rejects as unthinkable nonsense.

The question at the heart of these issues is the following: Is our access to the past limited in some fundamental way? Though the terms of Kuhn's investigation differ greatly from those of Wittgenstein's, the two thinkers share a similar concern when faced with the dilemma at the heart of historicism. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given this formulation of the problem, Cora Diamond herself gestures briefly towards the this difficulty in Wittgenstein's thought in her introduction to *The Realistic Spirit*.[287] As we have seen, concerning what she calls there 'the myth of a-temporality' in Wittgenstein's work, Diamond writes: "In the *Tractatus,* that myth of what it is for sense to be determinate is at the same time a myth of essential changelessness. There is no possibility of new thoughts or sorts of thought."[288] Indeed, this

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[287] I say 'unsurprisingly' here because anyone familiar with her extensive critique of M. Dummett, will see clear parallels between Dummett's view and the historicist predicament presented above. Though the specifically historicist formulation of the problem circumvents that aspect of Diamond's critique that concerns what Dummett himself calls Wittgenstein's 'strict constructivism'—i.e., our supposed freedom to assign the status of necessity to some statements *at will*—it nonetheless keeps in place the idea that necessity can and is conferred upon particular statements and that the sum total set of those statements alters over time. (Cf. M. Dummett, "Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Mathematics" and "The Reality of the Past", in: *Truth and Other Enigmas, op cit.,* pp. 166-185 and pp. 239-258), C. Diamond, "The Face of Necessity" and "Wright's Wittgenstein", in *The Realistic Spirit, op cit.*, pp. 243-266 and pp. 205-224.)

[288] C. Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), p. 7. This naturally recalls one of the better known remarks from the *Tractatus*: "To view the world sub specie aeterni is to view the world as a whole—a limited whole." (T 6.45) There are, however, a great number of less 'mystical' remarks in the *Tractatus* that recall this same a-temporality (especially concerning his idea of logical 'forseeability'), much of which finds its origins in Wittgenstein's acquiescence (later to be repealed) to

is undoubtedly true of the *Tractatus,* where it is only from within the limits of language that the limits of thought may be drawn. As we have seen, if the limits of language were in continual flux it would not have been possible for Wittgenstein to have definitively drawn them and there would have been no 'final solution' to the problems of philosophy. From the Tractarian perspective, drawing the limits of language precisely requires one to exclude the possibility of linguistic change. However, Diamond concludes that although Wittgenstein later acknowledged 'the myth of a-temporality' at work in the *Tractatus,* he was nonetheless unable to give it up when he returned to philosophy ten years later. The myth of a-temporality remains in Wittgenstein's later work as much as it did in the earlier work, she writes, "but the mythology is recognized for what it is."[289] This follows, she claims, from his general methodological standpoint—i.e., his *Sprachkritik.* As she notes there:

> "Wittgenstein's criticism of what I have called mythology or fantasy—in particular, his criticism of the mythology attached to logical necessity—is read as if it were a rejection of the mythology as a *false* notion of how things are. That reading of Wittgenstein is tied to insistence on the question *when* it is fixed that such-and-such is logically necessary, or that such-and-such is in accord with a definition we have given or a rule we have formulated. The question appears to give us no choice but to say either (a) that necessity (or what follows from a definition or is in accord with a rule that we have formulated) is independent of and prior to our habits of inference, or (b) that necessity comes into existence when we explicitly accept the sentence at the end of a proof or when we decide to accept an application of a rule or definition as 'what we meant', and that *until* the acceptance or the decision we were, as far as logic is concerned, quite free. But treating '*When* was it fixed?' as the subject of philosophical dispute is not seeing it as a grammatical issue. Whether the question '*When* does it become true (or necessary) that p?' makes sense is a grammatical question about p."[290]

Frege's attack on 'psychological logic': "It may, of course, serve some purpose to investigate the ideas and changes of ideas which occur during the course of mathematical thinking; but psychology should not imagine that it can contribute anything whatever to the foundation of arithmetic." (FA, p. vi)

289C. Diamond, "Introduction I", in *The Realistic Spirit*, *op cit.,* p. 4

290Ibid, p. 6

According to Diamond, Wittgenstein does not therefore *reject* the historicity of truth (a priori or otherwise), in favour of the so-called 'platonic conception' (as espoused by someone like Frege, for example). He rather encourages us to ask whether we are genuinely able to make sense of such a dichotomy in the first place. By this reading, stating *when* it was the case that such-and-such became true, or became in accordance with a rule previously formulated, is as senseless as stating that it simply has always been and will always be. And *that* fact, according to Diamond, says more about the grammar of words like 'true', 'necessary', 'when' and 'always', than it does about logical formulae and mathematical equations—in which, it must be granted, these words rarely if ever occur.

In many respects, Diamond is not mistaken here. Particularly her critique of the naïve appeal to temporality in regards to the historicity of a priori truths—where, for example, we might reasonably formulate expressions such as '*p* became necessary last Tuesday'—are justified.[291] Ditto for the naïve appeal to freedom in terms of our ability to simply adopt or abrogate such truths, rules and definitions, as we see fit. Nonetheless, we see that despite having turned the access of the investigation around, for Diamond's later-Wittgenstein, just as much as it was for the earlier, there is no way for us to make sense of history from within the stream of life. To ask *when* some possibility or other became true, or necessary, or genuinely in accord with the those definitions we previously set down, is not to see it as a grammatical question. But of course, to ask whether such a question makes sense means to ask whether it makes sense to *us*, here and now. And from this perspective, the difficulties of that other, non-empirical investigation into the past seem insurmountable and therefore, we might be tempted to conclude, indicative of some illusion on our part. By this account, the intellectual history of the world would be—for the Wittgenstein of 1945, as it was indeed for the Wittgenstein of 1918—a tale full of sound and fury, ultimately signifying nothing.

The later Wittgenstein undoubtedly struggled greatly to overcome a-temporality upon which his earlier work was founded, but he was deeply committed to resolving the tension that

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291Cf. C. Diamond, "Wright's Wittgenstein", in *The Realistic Spirit, op cit.,* p. 216.

arose from its abandonment. Though he did not wish to give up the notion of the 'stream of life' and the living linguistic exchange in which purposive language finds its home, he recognized the need to acknowledge the historical dimension of language that was implied with his renewed, non-transcendental conception of it as an embodied human practice. We will thus see that although he did not simply reject historicism, neither did he refuse to admit it into the sphere of his interests. Wittgenstein confronted the difficulties that Kuhn refers to here, not by rejecting them, but by refining them. He thus sought to take up the challenge that, in a manner of speaking, Kuhn would later articulate so well: If thinking historically does not make sense, we must rather *learn* to make sense of it, in order to avoid the philosophical aporia to which it lends itself.

II. "Don't think, but look!"

We have seen that even though Wittgenstein would ultimately abandon the phenomenological analysis of time-consciousness first attempted upon his return to philosophy in the early 1930's, temporal considerations—which would later resurfaces in the form of *history*—remained at the heart of his project nonetheless. Indeed, by the time Wittgenstein was composing *Philosophical Investigations*, we see this concern for the historicity of linguistic form, both a priori and non-, arise repeatedly, regularly, and even strategically at several key moments in the work. From the introduction of the notion of 'language-games' and 'forms of life' (PI §23), to the notion of 'family resemblance' (an idea that inherently incorporates the historical dimension of *genealogy*) (PI §67), and perhaps most tellingly, the idea of rule-following itself, i.e., knowing when and how one is to 'go on' in the same way as before (PI §187)—in all of these, the central notions of time, change, continuity, and thus of history, arise again and again. Indeed, as Wittgenstein himself notes towards the end of the *Investigations*, it is possible to consider the *entire collection* from just such a perspective:

> "What we are supplying are really remarks on the natural history of human beings; we are not contributing curiosities however, but observations which no one has doubted, but which have escaped remark only because they are always before our eyes." (PI §415)

Keeping this in mind, one will notice moreover how the notion of history is deeply embedded in many of the prominent metaphors of the work―"our language can be seen as an ancient city" (PI §18), for example, or "we extend [a concept] as in spinning a thread we twist fibre on fibre" (PI §67), among others―almost as if this were, in fact, the only way for him to openly appreciate the profound implications of linguistic change while sidestepping―and thus helping us sidestep―the conceptual difficulties associated with it.[292]

As we have seen Wittgenstein was always well aware of the difficulties surrounding historicism, even when he was composing the *Tractatus*. Recall how earlier we noted that it may seem surprising that Wittgenstein—who, after all, denounced history so strongly in his early work—would by the same token be concerned there with the introduction of novel

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[292] Indeed, it is interesting to note that Wittgenstein seems almost compelled to refer to the specifically historical dimensions of language *primarily* in metaphorical terms. Perhaps it is for this reason that the role of history in Wittgenstein's thought has been so thoroughly overlooked in the literature. As H.-J. Glock has noted, in one of the very few works that treats of the subject directly:

> "Wittgenstein's own attitude to history is not a topic which is either obvious or popular. To the best of my knowledge, fortified by an examination of existing bibliographies, there is no explicit discussion of it. This is not a coincidence. Obviously, unlike the nature of logic, language and the human mind, history is not a topic that looms large in Wittgenstein's writings, whether that be in the *Tractatus,* the *Philosophical Investigations* or the posthumous publications from the *Nachlaß*." (H.-J. Glock, "Wittgenstein and History", *op cit.,* p. 278.)

Such conclusions are mistaken and in all likelihood due to the overwhelming emphasis placed by most contemporary Anglo-American, analytic philosophers on the 'a-historical' or a-temporal dimensions of truth, rather than any real avoidance on Wittgenstein's part. Thus, in the analytic literature, the widespread references to conceptual change in Wittgenstein's work are usually considered from the perspective of the one undergoing such a change 'in the moment' rather than seeing the intellectual history of the world as the total sum of such changes undergone by *others*. In recent years, however, this too has begun to change. As H. Sluga humorously remarked:

> "Analytic philosophy which began with such resolutely un- and antihistorical sentiments has since gone through an extended period of historical evolution and growth. Somewhat to its own surprise, it has come to recognize along the way that it possesses a history." (H. Sluga "What has History to do with Me? Wittgenstein and Analytic Philosophy", *Inquiry,* 41(1), 1998, pp. 99-121.)

logical devices. However, it was precisely because Wittgenstein felt compelled to denounce the significance of history, while at the same time knowing full well that he himself was making use of previously unrecognisable forms of logical articulation that such an account had to be given. What Wittgenstein required then was a conception of logic that would permit the emergence of new logical forms, while proving them nonetheless to be *a-historical*. It is in this sense that we can see the extent to which there lay in the background of Wittgenstein's Tractarian project, as there had in Frege's and Russell's respective projects before him, an acute awareness of his own position in the intellectual history of the West. We might recall here, for example, how even in Wittgenstein's first surviving work, his 1912 review of Coffey's *The Science of Logic*, he begins with stating as much:

> "In no branch of learning can an author disregard the results of honest research with so much impunity as he can in Philosophy and Logic. To this circumstance we owe the publication of such as book as Mr Coffey's 'Science of Logic': and only as a typical example of the work of many logicians of to-day does this book deserve consideration. The author's Logic is that of the scholastic philosophers, and he makes all their mistakes—of course with the usual references to Aristotle. (Aristotle, whose name is so much taken in vain by our logicians, would turn in his grave if he knew that so many logicians know no more about Logic to-day than he did 2,000 years ago). The author has not taken the slightest notice of the great work of the modern mathematical logicians—work which has brought about an advance in Logic comparable only to that which made Astronomy out of Astrology, and Chemistry out of Alchemy." (PO, p. 3)

Of course, Wittgenstein would soon drastically shift his conception of logic, language and the task of philosophy away from the context of discovery towards one of perspicuity; nonetheless, he never abandoned this sense for the *timeliness* of the task at hand. From all that we have seen above, the following remark from the *Nachlaß* is particularly pertinent in this regard, insofar as it marks both the dramatic change in Wittgenstein's thought regarding the continuity of philosophy itself as well as indicating the kind of break he himself wished to usher in, at least circa 1930, when this remark was composed:

"People say again and again that philosophy doesn't really progress, that we are still occupied with the same philosophical problems as were the Greeks. But the people who say this don't understand why it has to be so. It is because our language has remained the same and keeps seducing us into asking the same questions. As long as there continues to be a verb 'to be' that looks as if it functions in the same way as 'to eat' and 'to drink', as long as we still have the adjectives 'identical', 'true', 'false', 'possible', as long as we continue to talk of a river of time, of an expanse of space, etc. etc., people will keep stumbling over the same puzzling difficulties and find themselves staring at something which no explanation seems capable of clearing up." (CV, p. 15 [MS 111; 24.8.1931])

Of course, Wittgenstein's feelings in this regard would alter once again as he later began to feel more pessimistic about whether he was capable of realising what this task demanded of him or whether his contemporaries were able to appreciate such contributions as he was capable of making towards it. We will look at this in more detail below; for the moment, however, should there remain any doubt, it serves once more as a reminder of the presence of historical (and indeed historicist) concerns at the heart of Wittgenstein's work, concerns which become all the more apparent when we broaden our conception of just what counts as a historicist reference in Wittgenstein's work in the first place. For, in addition to the many remarks concerning linguistic and conceptual change in his published works, there are countless others to thinkers of past epochs spread widely throughout the *Nachlaß*.[293] Though the vast majority of them failed to find a significant place in the *Investigations*, these remarks in no way represent a collection of mere curiosities. They are rather a

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[293] A brief example from *Culture and Value*—a collection which, by all accounts, positively bristles with historical as well as historicist concerns—Wittgenstein remarks: "What a Copernicus or a Darwin really achieved was not the discovery of a true theory but of a fertile point of view [*neuen Aspekt*]." (CV, p. 18 [MS 112; 22.11.1931]) In the present context, this remark is also noteworthy because it is followed shortly after by an early reference to Goethe, and Wittgenstein's own (albeit so far mistaken) attempt to grasp just what kind of a project it was that Goethe was engaged in: "What Goethe was really seeking, I believe, was not a physiological, but a psychological theory of colours." (Ibid. [26.11.1931]) Of course, it is impossible not to recall here the extensive treatment of 'aspect perception'—and especially the 'change of aspects'—to which Wittgenstein devotes section xi of the remarks that have come to be considered Part II of the *Investigations*. Putting these two side by side, we clearly witness the readiness of scholars to interpret Wittgenstein's remarks on aspect perception (solely) within a framework of a philosophy of psychology, rather than (in addition) that of *Weltanschauungensphilosophie.*

constructive engagement with the past, with alternate styles of thought and action, as well as with the successes and failures of past thinkers—including the author of the *Tractatus*—to bring about the kind of dramatic shift in thought that Wittgenstein himself wished to bring about.[294]

Nonetheless, parallel to these concerns, we see again and again the fundamental importance Wittgenstein places on the immanency of language-use and the reassertion of 'the stream of life', from within which we speak, act and judge accordingly, and which threatens the coherence of such historicist considerations. Of such remarks, the *Investigations* is full. And neither do these remarks represent a mere passing interest for him. Even towards the very end of his life—in the remarks collected in *On Certainty*, which, as we have also seen, contains the most powerful expression of Wittgenstein's mature interest in historicism, i.e., the metaphor of the river and the river-bed—Wittgenstein would still maintain that:

> "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."
>
> (OC §286)

Though the dominant perspective here is the familiar *geographical* one of 'us and them' (of insiders and outsiders, as it were), we need only turn the example around its temporal axis to witness its parallel historical dimension. Historically speaking, it is of course we in our time who judge those of the past for committing the most basic of errors, for not knowing what

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294Indeed, when placed side-by-side, the overwhelming prevalence of historical remarks in the *Nachlaß* and their near complete absence within the pages of the *Investigations* is noteworthy in itself, and deserves a much more thorough analysis than we are capable of providing here. However, that Wittgenstein did indeed wish to have an impact on our present manner of thought and action (or present 'form of life', as it were?) cannot be doubted when we consider the expression of his troubled and pessimistic evaluation of the day in the preface to the *Investigations*: "It is not impossible that it should fall to the lot of this work, in its poverty and in the darkness of this time, to bring light into one brain or another—but, of course, it is not likely." (PI, Preface) We will look at this passage more closely below.

we know, and perhaps most prevalently, for falling prey to simple and naïve superstition. [295] However, though it appears confrontational—even proscriptive—by keeping in mind that Wittgenstein is here emphasizing how we *do* react and not how we *should* to react, we begin to see the way in which Wittgenstein sought to resolve this paradox between historicism and the imminency of linguistic sense, and perhaps why his deep sensitivity to historical thought has been overshadowed in most commentaries by the anti-psychologistic and a-historic present tense. For in Wittgenstein's later work he proposes a *descriptive* methodology: "Don't think, but look!" (PI §66) He is not putting forward a theory explaining how

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[295] It is of course this last of these explanatory mechanisms that forms the bulk of Wittgenstein's critical remarks aimed at Frazer and his clumsy attempts at explaining away the continued belief of 'primitive people' in magic. As Wittgenstein notes there, for example:

> "Frazer says that it is very hard to discover the error in magic—and that is why it has lasted so long—because, for example, an incantation that is supposed to bring rain certainty seems efficacious sooner or later. But then it is surely remarkable that people don't realize earlier that sooner or later it's going to rain anyhow."

This remark, and the many others like it found in this collection, are very interesting for a number of reasons. Principle among these is, first, that Wittgenstein would later proclaim his wish to open the *Investigations* with exactly this sort of ruination, but in doing so he wished to place rather philosophers (including the author of the *Tractatus*) in the position of the 'primitives' here, in order to highlight how we readily become enchanted by the philosophical superlative (and will, of course, accept no alternative). For example, he notes at the beginning of the manuscript in which his remarks on Frazer are contained—in a remark which, it must nonetheless be granted, he later marked with an 'S' for '*schlecht*'—:

> "I now believe that it would be right to begin my book with remarks about metaphysics as a kind of magic.
>
> But in doing this I must not make a case for magic nor mat I make fun of it.
>
> The depth of magic should be preserved.—
>
> Indeed, here the *elimination* of magic has itself the character of magic.
>
> For, back then, when I begin talking about the '*world*' (and not about this tree or table), what else did I want but to keep something higher spellbound by my words?
>
> [A motto for this book: 'Can you see the moon there? You can only see half of it, yet it is round and beautiful.']" (PO, p 117 [MS 110; 1931])

Secondly, I maintain that such remarks are noteworthy for capturing, many years in advance of Kuhn's work on scientific revolutions, the mysterious character of 'paradigm shifts' and indeed the impossibility for Kuhn—*were he engaged in an explanatory enterprise, rather than a descriptive one*—of providing a transhistorical explanation of the process by which the anomalies that are at first seen as marginal *exceptions* to the rule of a given paradigm at some later time overwhelm the scientific community and subsequently become the *standard* of its successor.

language ought to be, but rather a description of how language is. Is it not perhaps so with history, that through a descriptive methodology—one which borrows from the tools of natural history, constructing a perspicuous representation of language as it is and has been in all its diverse, and even contradictory forms—that we might approach historical thought despite the paradoxes associated with thinking historically?

Now certainly, there is a strain of natural history that puts forth mechanistic hypotheses about the past and how we arrived at where we are today. That form of natural history seeks to confirm or deny these hypotheses, and thereby arrive at a causal theory of evolutionary development—one which shows how and the extent to which, paraphrasing the remark from *On Certainty* quoted above, those earlier people precisely *did not* know a lot that we know, that they *were* wrong and we know it—everything to which Wittgenstein was opposed in the understanding of culture in general and the understanding of history in particular. However, there is another strain of natural history, one that focuses on the description of the everyday facts that "have escaped remark only because they are always before our eyes." (PI §415) It is a strain of natural history whose focus does not lie in the construction of a static model of phenomena but rather seeks to represent phenomena in respect to their dynamism. This strain of natural history is the descriptive methodology of morphology found in Goethe's scientific works. In particular we might turn here to two works that influenced Wittgenstein greatly, his *The Morphology of Plants*[296] and he *Theory of Colours*[297] especially. In these works Goethe sought specifically to discredit theoretical distortions by placing phenomena back into the real world from whence they came and to which they truly belong.[298] In

296 J.W. Goethe, "The Metamorphosis of Plants", in J.W. Goethe, *Collected Works, vol. 12.*, ed. and trans. D. Miller. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 76-97.

297 J.W. Goethe, *The Theory of Colours*, ed. and trans. C. L. Eastlake (London: F. Cass, 1991). This translation spans only the first part of Goethe's (immense) tripartite work *Zur Farbenlehre* (reprint Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1991). The three parts of the full work include the *Didaktishe Teil* (translated into English here), the *Historische Teil* (in which Goethe turns to the history of colour theory) and the *Polemische Teil* (polemical that is, in that it is a sustained critique of Newton's *Opticks* based on the previous two parts).

298 As Nietzsche observed, "Goethe saw an abuse in this [the promotion of scientific "truth" over "harmony"] and demanded that sciences should have an effect on the external world only through an *enhanced praxis*. (F. Nietzsche, *The Uses and Abuses of History for Life*, §7, in F. Nietzsche, *Untimely*

particular, Goethe wished to draw our attention to the effects that we all experience in everyday life and any reader of his *Theory of Colours* is faced—not unlike readers of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*—with a thousand minutiae relating to our everyday experience. The setting sun turns red; distant mountains look blue; rainbow effects can be observed in spiders' webs; tobacco smoke turns roses green, and so on. Taken all together these observations are meant to remind us just how limited the kind of phenomena investigated in laboratories—or, for that matter, by philosophers in their 'thought experiments'—actually are. They draw our attention to the countless number of phenomena we experience every day but have overlooked because they are always before our very eyes.

It is only in the last decades that the influence of Goethe on Wittgenstein has begun to be fully appreciated. In this time, a number of commentators and biographers have drawn attention to significant affinities between the two men's works.[299] Additionally, the many explicit references to Goethe that have come to light since the publication of Wittgenstein's *Nachlaß* support the fact that we are not only dealing with a question of shared cultural heritage but of deep similarities in aim and method.[300] Though this has been touched on

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Meditations, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).) A comparison to Wittgenstein's claim that "[t]he work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose" (PI §127) is easy to make here.

[299] Cf. R. Monk, *The Duty of Genius* (London: Random House, 1990), pp. 303-304, 509-512; B. McGuinness, *Wittgenstein: A Life, Young Ludwig (1889-1921)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), *passim*; M.W. Rowe, "Goethe and Wittgenstein", *Philosophy* 66 (257), 1991, pp. 283-303; J. Westphal, *Colour: Some Philosophical Problems from Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987); F. Breithaupt, R. Raatsch, and B. Kremberg (eds.) *Goethe and Wittgenstein: Seeing the World's Unity in its Variety* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang GmbH, 2003); among others.

[300] As Baker and Hacker note, Wittgenstein also played with the idea of using a quotation from Goethe as the motto for *Philosophical Investigations*. The line is "Nature has neither core nor husk, you just ask yourself whether you or core or husk", taken from a polemical poem entitled "Allerdings" written in reply to Haller, whom Goethe quotes: "No created spirit penetrates to the innermost heart of nature" and "It is in bliss even if it displays only the outer husk". Goethe, who disdained the idea of a hidden reality behind phenomena that had to be inferred by theory, responds:

"I have heard this reiterated for sixty years—

And cursed at it, on the quite.

I tell myself a thousand times:

elsewhere, it will nonetheless be worthwhile to retrace a few of these affinities here. This is for two reasons. First, though it is no longer possible to doubt the connections between the two thinkers, they are so great and varied that by most accounts they are still not fully understood.[301] Second, certain features of Goethe's own influence on Wittgenstein repeat in a strikingly illustrative manner the very problem at hand, and so this analogy of Goethe's influence on Wittgenstein serves not only to extend our understanding of the biographical contexts wherein Wittgenstein's works were produced, but also to illustrate how one might access the past, think the thoughts of another, find sense in the linguistic expressions of those with whom we do not—or are *unable* to—simply see eye to eye.

It is worthwhile noting that the influence of Goethe on Wittgenstein was not immediately evident to all. The extent of their affinities only came to light after significant selections of the *Nachlaß* had became more widely available. Even then, lacking all the pieces of the puzzle, establishing a solid link was not without its problems. On the hand, it may be worth asking whether we should not be wary of making too strong a connection; for at times, Wittgenstein seems to suggest that at least *he* did not feel that he was strongly influenced by Goethe. Wittgenstein did not place Goethe on the list of his greatest influences, for example —comprising Boltzmann, Hertz, Schopenhauer, Frege, Russell, Kraus, Loos, Weininger, Spengler and the Italian economist Piero Sraffe (CV, p. 19 [MS 154; 1931]), although in the same passage he quotes a poem of Goethe further on—and in another passage from about the same time, he mentions that Goethe dealt with problems which "do not lie in my path"

Nature gives everything amply and gladly,

She has neither core

Nor husk,

She is everything at once.

You just ask yourself,

Whether you are core or husk."

(Quoted in G.P. Backer & P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 16.)

301 As McGuinness notes: "To say what Ludwig admired in Goethe would almost be to say what he found remarkable or worthwhile in life, so many are the themes and attitudes from Goethe that recur in his thoughts." (B. McGuinness, *Wittgenstein: A Life, Young Ludwig (1889-1921), op. cit.*, pp. 34-35.)

and are not "part of my world" (CV, p. 9 [MS 110; 16.1.31]). On the other hand, he does place on this list of influences two thinkers who were, in their turn, *heavily* influenced by Goethe: Spengler and Weininger.

It is not only Goethe's absence that is surprising here, but also that this list of Wittgenstein's greatest influences covers almost exclusively contemporary figures (only Schopenhauer provides a notable exception to this rule). How could Wittgenstein, who grew up in an extraordinarily cultured *fin-de-siècle* Viennese household, not have found some sympathy in the figures of the intellectual history in which he was so obviously well-schooled? (And let us not forget that he purposefully cultivated a deceptive image of himself as a singularly *ill*-read philosopher.) Rather than entering the biographical speculation to which Wittgenstein scholars have been led in the attempt to resolve this apparent conundrum[302], it is worthwhile to suppose that Wittgenstein may indeed have omitted Goethe's name from this list (as he likewise claimed to know little of the history of philosophy, which was not exactly true) for *philosophical* reasons. These reasons may even have only dawned on Wittgenstein many years later, when he had a clearer understanding of what exactly was at stake in the membership of a community of speakers. As J.C. Klagge notes: "Goethe and Wittgenstein lived in different times that pervaded their life-contexts. How does one endorse a view that has a home in another life-context? Wittgenstein acknowledged but did not resolve this problem. He accepted Goethe's views without knowing how to publicly endorse them in his times."[303]

Wittgenstein often expressed his frustration at being unable to accomplish what he thought philosophy most required of him. In a characteristic remark, he notes, for example:

> "I think I summed up my attitude to philosophy when I said: Philosophy ought really to be written only as *poetic composition*. It must, as it seems to me, be possible to gather from this how far my

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[302] As, e.g., Glock does: "His avoidance of past philosophy seems to have been fuelled at least partly by his well-documented contempt for academic philosophy and by an urge to philosophize off his own bat, *without the dead hand of history*." ("Wittgenstein and History," *op. cit.,* p. 186, my emphasis).

[303] J. C. Klagge, "The Puzzle of Goethe's Influence on Wittgenstein," in *Wittgenstein and Goethe. op. cit.* p. 19.

thinking belongs to the present, future or past. For I was thereby revealing myself as someone who cannot do what he would like to be able to do." (CV, p. 24 [MS 146; ca. January 1934])

So it is important to keep in mind that this is not solely a biographical question, as Klagge's reference to 'publicly endorsing Goethe' might be wrongly construed. Wittgenstein certainly would not have been *embarrassed* by endorsing Goethe, for example. Rather, it was for him a question of finding a proper form of expression for his thought, despite what he considered the antithetical spirit of the times in which he was living and thinking.[304] Accordingly, even if its roots trace back to the biographical sphere, we do not need to look far for a philosophical expression of this psychological discontent. Klagge's remark naturally recalls, for example, the formulation found in one of the forewords Wittgenstein composed in the early 1930's, for the work that would ultimately become *Philosophical Investigations* a decade and a half later:

"This book is written for such men as are in sympathy with its spirit. This spirit is different from the one which informs the vast stream of European and American civilization in which all of us stand. *That* spirit expresses itself in an onward movement, in building ever larger and more complicated structures; the other in striving after clarity and perspicuity (*Übersichtlichkeit*) in no matter what structure. The first tries to grasp the world by way of its periphery—in its variety; the second at its centre—in its essence. And so the first adds one construction to another, moving on and up, as it were, from one stage to the next, while the other remains where it is and what it tries to grasp is always the same." (PR, Preface)[305]

In this passage Wittgenstein simultaneously affirms his deep suspicion of history and points out his reluctance to accept what is given in the present as absolute. We see here how

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304 Not that this problem was without biographical expression *altogether*. The remark above is, for example, closely connected to his remarks from the 1930's, lamenting his inability to be creative (what he then considered to be a result of his 'Jewishness', undoubtedly a testament to influence of Weininger on this thought at this time (which we will not investigate here). (Cf. A. Janik, "Wittgenstein and Weininger", in A. Janik, *Essays on Wittgenstein and Weininger, op cit.,* pp. 64-73.) Nonetheless, we should not be surprised that Wittgenstein, a thinker for whom biographical concerns were both the impetus and the aim of philosophy, would find the expression of a philosophical puzzle mirrored in both his life and his work.

305 An earlier draft of the foreward reprinted in PR. (CV, p. 6, my emphasis [MS 109; 6.11.1930]).

profoundly Wittgenstein felt out of step with his time and struggled to find a suitable way to express his *untimely* views. It is a sentiment repeated in the concluding paragraph, where Wittgenstein notes:

> "I would like to say 'This book is written to the glory of God', but nowadays that would be chicanery, that is, it would not be rightly understood. It means the book is written in good will, and in so far as it is not so written, but out of vanity, etc., the author would wish to see it condemned. He cannot be free it of these impurities further than he himself is free of them." (ibid.)

The impetus is clear and we know from many sources, both publish and unpublished, as well as anecdotal, just how dissociated Wittgenstein felt from the dominant trends of the time.   And yet―or perhaps precisely because of that―everything in Wittgenstein's philosophy would seem to point towards the very impossibility of such anachronism, and the deep communal belonging that is for each of us a birthright. Sharing a form of life, wherein words take on meaning through the mutual consent of the community into which we are by necessity born, would seem to forbid it. Forbid it, that is, *unless* we might find a way to understand the contours of that community as extending beyond the immediate spatio-temporal presence of the speakers who supposedly partake in that communication. Thus the preface continues:

> "I realize then that the disappearance of a culture does not signify the disappearance of human value, but simply of *certain means of expressing* this value, yet the fact remains that I have no sympathy for the current of European civilization and do not understand its goals, if it has any. So I am really writing for friends who are scattered throughout the corners of the globe."

Scattered around the globe, in space and… in time? As Wittgenstein once remarked to his friend M. O'Connor Drury: "My thinking is not wanted in this present age, I have to swim so strongly against the tide. Perhaps in a hundred years people will really want what I am writing."[306] To make sense of this we would seem to require some greater understanding of

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306R. Rhees, *Recollections of Wittgenstein.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 160.

the logic by which this 'spirit' develops into a 'vast stream', how this *Zeitgeist* branches out over time into tributaries, eddies and pools, dries up and springs forth once again.

III. Widening the Horizons of History

So if Wittgenstein did not have any sympathy for the contemporary current of European civilization, where did his sympathies lie? Having generally missed the philosophical importance of the historical dimension of language in Wittgenstein's later philosophy, commentators have rarely treated this subject in Wittgenstein's thought, let alone traced this unease to his interest in Goethe's works and the morphological method he employed.[307] This is surprising, for the influence of Goethe on Wittgenstein's thought had been greatly facilitated by the work of Oswald Spengler—who, as it is often remarked, *is* on Wittgenstein's list of influences and whose principle work, *The Decline of the West*, purports in fact to be a study of *world history* according to precisely that methodology. It was a methodology to which Wittgenstein, upon reading Spengler, would adapt his thought wholeheartedly—once he had made a few of his characteristic qualifications, of course.

The guiding principle of Spengler's work is based on Goethe's poem *The Metamorphosis of Plants*, in which Goethe follows the development of the plant-form from the leaf through a series of intermediate forms to the flower and, ultimately, its fruit. "Just as Goethe sought *the Destiny in nature and not the Causality*," Spengler claims, "so here shall we develop the form-language of human history, its periodic structure, its *organic* logic."[308] Applied to

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307 In Goethe's case, treatments of the role of history in his thought also seem to be rare. Besides a handful of short articles, there are two notable exceptions: E. Cassirer, *Goethe und die Geschichtliche Welt* (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1932); and F. Meinecke's panoramic *Historicism: The Rise of a New Historical Outlook,* trans. H. D. Schmidt. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 373-495. For an overview of the role of history in Goethe's appreciation of art (and its relation to the morphological method he applied to his scientific studies), see J Grave, "Idea and History. Johann Wolfgang Goethe's Collection of Prints and Drawings", *Artibus et Historiae,* 27(53), 2006, pp. 175-186.

308 O. Spengler, *Decline of the West*, ed. A. Helps and trans. C.F. Atkinson (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), p.21, original emphasis. Like Goethe, Spengler is here expressing his aversion to evolutionary or

historically-situated cultural phenomena, Spengler takes these cultural phenomena *as* natural phenomena in the Goethean sense. Thus conceived, historical phenomena do not fall prey to the static laws of causality, but rather embody the dynamic laws of 'becoming'. He presents the problem of history as "*the* philosophy of the future": "It expands into the conception of a *morphology of world-history* […] an entirely different ordering, which groups them, not in an ensemble picture inclusive of everything known, but in a picture of *life*, and presents them not as things-become, but things becoming."[309] Wittgenstein's post-Tractarian method, which constructs intermediate cases, family resemblances and replaces theory with a perspicuous representation of seemingly trivial observations, is of the same Goethean tradition. "What I give," Wittgenstein once remarked pointedly, "is the morphology of the use of an expression."[310]

Nonetheless, Wittgenstein was critical of certain elements of Spengler's application of the morphological method. Spengler, in a manner that might indeed be characterised as *proto-Kuhnian*, emphasised for example the insularity of cultures from one another. He held that earlier cultures can never influence later ones (the common belief that they do is delusion of prejudice), and that from within one culture one cannot really grasp the perspective of another.[311] Despite his general high regard for Spengler, Wittgenstein took issue with these and other such details in his analysis of world history. Drury, for example, relates that he

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causal explanations (including what would today be considered socio-biology or evolutionary psychology, a field we would not have to stretch our imagination to imagine Wittgenstein disparaging).

309 Ibid. p. 5

310 N. Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir, op cit*., p. 43.

311 DeAngelis makes the following important note regarding Spengler's (and indeed any historicist's) own ability to access the sense of the past, the realization of which is clearly tied to the possibility of very project itself:

"This view, while stimulating, nevertheless raises difficulties. For example, how can Spengler—who presumably thinks from 'inside' the unique limiting perspective of a modern man—come to understand the perspective of other cultures, *given what he says about cultural insularity?* His answer —which seems both ad hoc and immodest—is, in effect, that an occasional intuitive genius can overcome the obstacles of cultural insularity. (He never explains what such a genius might hope to accomplish by making his thoughts available to a general public of non-geniuses in a book.)" (W. J. DeAngelis, "Wittgenstein and Spengler", p. 49, *Dialogue,* 33, 1994, pp. 41-61.)

was once urged by Wittgenstein to read Spengler, but with the following important qualification:

> "Wittgenstein advised me to read Spengler's *The Decline of the West.* It was a book, he said, that might teach me something about the age we were now living in. It might be an antidote for my 'incurable romanticism'. After I had read the book I said to him,
>
> DRURY: 'Spengler wants to put history into moulds, and that you can't do.'
>
> WITTGENSTEIN: 'In a way, you are right; you can't put history into moulds. But Spengler does point out certain very interesting comparisons. I don't trust Spengler about the details. He is too often inaccurate. I once wrote that if Spengler had had the courage to write a short book, it could have been a great one.'
>
> DRURY: 'I conceived the idea that I might write a book to try and bring out just what was important in Spengler.'
>
> WITTGENSTEIN: 'Well, perhaps some day you might do just that.'"[312]

Clearly, a number of interesting features of this short dialogue stand out. First, Wittgenstein admits that one 'can't put history into moulds', as Drury claims Spengler has done, from

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[312]M. O'C. Drury, "Conversations with Wittgenstein", p. 128, in ed. R. Rhees, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Personal Recollections* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), pp. 112-189. The conversation is said to have occurred in 1930, which would be significant for being around the time that Wittgenstein cited Spengler as one of his principle influences. However, there is a question mark next to the date given, of which Rhees has the following to say:

> "The question mark is Drury's. The first remark in quotes [concerning Russell's views on marriage] was probably in 1930, when Drury was still an undergraduate in Cambridge, anyway. The reference to Russell's exclusion from a professorship at the City College of New York [on 'moral grounds', as it were, this following the opening remark on sex and marriage], must have been after the autumn of 1940." (R. Rhees (ed.), *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Personal Recollections* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), p. 186, f. 10.)

As the discussion of Spengler to be featured here occurs after the 1940 remark on Russell's exclusion from the professorship, we cannot be certain from Drury's date alone that it took place in the 1930's. This makes little difference from the point of view of Wittgenstein eventual position regarding Spengler. It only adds to the long list of sources—comprised mostly from remarks found at various points in the *Nachlaß*—that support the fact that Wittgenstein was interested in certain of Spengler's notions, while nonetheless failing to provide concrete evidence regarding precisely what Wittgenstein found so relevant in this notions.

which it follows that he would not 'trust Spengler about the details'. However, Spengler does nonetheless "point out certain very interesting comparisons'. In what sense, we might then ask, are the comparisons that Spengler makes 'interesting'—and in such a way that the inaccuracy of the details does not matter to the value that might be gained from reading the work? Let us not forget, that Spengler's *Decline of the West* purports to be a work of history, whose value consists precisely in its *rigour* and in its *completeness*.[313]

The answer can be found in an extended remark composed by Wittgenstein in 1931, which deals at length with his impression and reception of Spengler:

> "Spengler could be understood if he said: I am *comparing* different cultural epochs with the lives of families; within a family there is a family resemblance, though you will also find a resemblance between members of different families; family resemblance differs from to other sort of resemblance in such and such ways, etc. What I mean is: we have to be told the object of comparison, the object from which this way of viewing things is derived, otherwise the discussion will constantly be

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[313] Turning the question posed here around somewhat, we could likewise ask in what sense Wittgenstein thought Spengler's analysis of history might cure Drury of his '*incurable romanticism*'. Consider here Spengler's characterisation of the transition between culture and civilisation—which is for him found in the *abandonment of Romanticism*—:

> "At the last, when Civilization sets in, true ornament and, with it, great art as a whole are extinguished. The transition consists—in every Culture—in Classicism and Romanticism of one sort or another, the former being a sentimental regard for Ornamentation (rules, laws, types) that has long been archaic and soulless, and the latter a sentimental Imitation, not of life, but of an older Imitation. In the place of architectural style we find architectural taste. Methods of painting and mannerisms of writing, old forms and new, home and foreign, come and go with the fashion. In the end we have a pictorial and literary stock-in-trade which is destitute of any deeper significance and is employed according to task. This final industrial form of Ornament—no longer historical, no longer in the condition of 'becoming'—" (O. Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, *op cit.*, p. 105)

In this context, Wittgenstein's remark to Drury—from the same conversation, whereupon Wittgenstein proceeds to suggest Drury read Spengler—takes on a new and surprising significance:

> "I know there have been times in history when monks were nothing but a nuisance, but monasticism does correspond to a real need of some human beings […] But you, Drury, couldn't be a monk. It would be all wrong for you to wear a monastic habit." (M. O'C. Drury, "Conversations with Wittgenstein", *op cit.*, p. 128.)

Wittgenstein own monastic leanings are of course *well* known.

affected by distortions. Because willy-nilly we shall ascribe the properties of the prototype [*Urbild*] to the object we are viewing in this light; and we claim 'it *must always* be…'.

This is because we want to give a prototype's characteristics [*den Merkmalen des Urbilds*] a purchase on our way of representing things. But since we confuse prototype and object [*Urbild und Objekt vermischt*] we find ourselves dogmatically conferring on the object properties which only the prototype [*Urbild*] necessarily possess. On the other hand we think our view will not have the generality we want it to have if it is really true only of the one case. But the prototype [*Urbild*] ought to be clearly presented for what it is; so that it characterizes the whole discussion and determines its form. This makes it the focal point, so that its general validity will depend on the fact that it determines the form of discussion rather than on the claim that everything which is true only of it holds too for all things that are being discussed.

Similarly the question always to ask when exaggerated, dogmatic assertions are made is: What is actually true in this? Or again: In what case is that actually true?" (CV, p. 14 [MS 111; 19.8.1931])

The precise way in which Spengler could be said to have influenced Wittgenstein is an interesting story, given Wittgenstein's elusive 1931 allusion to that influence in the list of thinkers whose lines of thought he had taken over and 'seized' them for his own work. The exact details of that influence remain, however, a highly interpretive affair. Despite these and other remarks directed towards Spengler, there is little hard evidence for precisely *which* notions of Spengler impressed themselves upon Wittgenstein and for *what reasons*. [314] Nonetheless, from these two passages—Drury's report, and the proceeding remark from

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[314] von Wright has gone so far as to claim that "the actual influence [of Spengler upon Wittgenstein] pertains, it seems, to an idea in Wittgenstein's later philosophy, indeed to one of its most characteristic thought manoeuvres. This is the idea of 'family resemblance'." (G.H. von Wright, "Wittgenstein in Relation to His Times", *op cit.,* p. 116.) Cavell, on the other hand, has made a more modest claim:

"I am not in a position to claim that Wittgenstein derived his inflection of the idea of forms of life from Spengler's idea of cultures as organic forms (or for that matter from Goethe's living Nature), but Spengler's vision of Culture as a kind of Nature (as opposed, let us say, to a set of conventions) seems to me shared, if modified, in the *Investigations*." (S. Cavell, "Declining Decline", *op cit.*, pp. 53-54.)

As will be evident from what follows, I am sympathetic to von Wright's claim; however, it is important to underscore—which von Wright fails to do—that in Wittgenstein's hands, the idea of 'family resemblances' acts as an anti-essentialist armament against the very pervasiveness of dogmatically applied *Urbilder* that Spengler's analysis relies upon.

Nachlaß—we can see that, despite his reservations regarding 'putting history into moulds', as *objects of comparison* there is something of value to be taken from Spengler's account—so long as one keeps it before one's eyes that the seductive properties of the prototype, or *Urbild*, belong first and foremost to the *Urbild* itself and not the objects it is supposed to encompass.[315]

Wittgenstein's had reservations about Spengler's appeal to the universal validity of the *Urbilder* employed in *The Decline of the West*; he was nonetheless deeply impressed by the morphological aspects of his analysis of history. Thus, it is not surprising that by the time he came to deal with *Goethe's* theory of morphology he was already thoroughly steeped in questions of history and the relationship between historical and natural phenomena—the relationship between things-becoming and things-become, in the words of Spengler—or, in other words, between the historical dimension of language and the immanency of living language use. In *Logik, Sprache, Philosophie*, for example, the work upon which Wittgenstein had been temporarily collaborating with Waismann at the time, the connection is made explicitly:

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[315]In this sense, it is interesting to note, as W. J. DeAngelis does, that:

> "He summarizes his purported findings in elaborate, graphic fold-out sheets in the appendices of the work. These foldouts outline, in the left-hand column, the supposed *prototypical* sequences of cultural development and, in parallel, columns to the right outline the developmental sequences of *actual* cultures. The resulting graphic purports to show how world cultures have actually developed along the lines of the Spenglerian prototype." (W. J. DeAngelis, *Wittgenstein—A Cultural Point of View* (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2007), p. 8)

It is impossible not to compare here the critique of Spengler's use of prototypes, or *Urbilder*, with Wittgenstein later criticisms of his earlier approach in the *Tractatus*, in terms of having been *held captive by a picture*:

> " "But this is how it is——" I say to myself over and over again. I feel as though, if only I could fix my gaze sharply on this fact, get it into focus, I could grasp the essence of the matter. // (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 4.5): "The general form of the proposition: This is how things are."——That is the kind of proposition that one repeats to oneself countless times. One thinks that one is tracing the outline of the thing's nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it. // A *picture* held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably." (PI §§113-115)

"Our thought here marches with certain views of Goethe's which he expressed in the *Metamorphosis of Plants*. We are in the habit, whenever we perceive similarities, of seeking some common origin from them. The urge to follow such phenomena back to their origin in the past expresses itself in a certain style of thinking. This recognizes, so to speak, only a single scheme for such similarities, namely the arrangement as a series of time. (And that this presumably bound up with the uniqueness of the causal schema). But Goethe's view shows that this is not the only possible form of conception. His conception of the original plant [*Urpflanze*] implies no hypothesis about the temporal development of the vegetable kingdom such as that of Darwin. What then is the problem solved by this idea? It is the problem of synoptic presentation [*übersichtliche Darstellung*]."[316]

In his botanical work, Goethe's search for a suitable means to present his investigations led him to formulate this idea of the *Urpflanze*, the 'original-' or 'primal plant'. This primal plant did not for Goethe embody an evolutionary idea of plant development (such as Darwin's did). He believed rather that this idea was to be found in the nature of plant-hood itself, a prototype to be genuinely appreciated by the senses according to the inner laws of its nature. As he notes:

"The primal plant will be the most peculiar creature in the world, and nature herself will envy me. By means of this model and the key to it one will then be able to invent plants *ad infinitum*. These plants would have to be derivable from the model, that is, even if they do not exist, their existence would have to be possible; they should not be picturesque or poetic shadows or figments but possess inner truth and necessity."[317]

It was, of course, against this *Urpflanze* of Goethe that Schiller famously charged (in Goethe's account of the exchange): "This has nothing to do with *experience*, it is an *idea*

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316 F. Waissman, *Principles of Linguistic Philosophy*, ed. and trans. R. Harré (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 80-81.

317 J.W. Goethe, *Zweiter Römischer Aufenthalt,* 17.4.1787, quoted in and trans. J. Schulte, "Goethe and Wittgenstein on Morphology", pp. 57-58, in F. Breithaupt *et al.*, *Goethe and Wittgenstein, op. cit.*.

[…] I [Goethe] relied: Well, so much the better; it means that I have ideas without knowing it; and can even *see them with my eyes*."[318]

The difficulty that lay at the root of this exchange is this: How can one experience dynamic development in the momentary perceptual appreciation of a static object? One can put forth a mechanical model, make predictions based on that model and then seek evidence that will confirm or deny those predictions. However, this is evidently not what Goethe meant. What he sought were not 'mere facts' relating to the contingent events of evolution, but possibilities reflecting the inner truth and necessity of nature itself. Wittgenstein was well aware of this.[319]   The tension between what is directly present and what can only be reconstructed from the past or projected into the future, between things-becoming and things-become as it were, is found throughout Wittgenstein's later works. However, it finds it's clearest expression in the remarks composed at the end of his life. The remarks collected in *On Certainty*, for example, particularly exemplify his refusal to see history as a static, evolutionary trajectory from error to truth or from nonsense to sense—history was not, for him, a mere 'comedy of errors'—and yet, even here he recognized that if we try to 'think historically', if we try to reach back into the past where the 'river-bed of thought' shifted and new channels were plotted, time and again we risk running up against the limits of what is expressible in the language of our own time. This was not without its problems for Wittgenstein and it is thus no surprise that at the time he was composing those remarks collected in *On Certainty* he was also composing those collected in *Remarks on Colour*.[320]

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318 Ibid, quoted in and trans. E. Heller, "Goethe and the Idea of Scientific Truth", in E. Heller, *The Disinherited Mind* (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1975), p. 7.

319 As he remarks in reference to Goethe's theory of colour: "Goethe's theory of the origin of the spectrum *isn't* a theory of its origin that has proved unsatisfactory; it is really not a theory at all. It is, rather, a vague schematic outline, of the sort we find in James' psychology. There is no *experimentum crucis* for Goethe's theory of colour." (RCIII, §125) "*Experimentum crucis*" (Latin = "crucial experiment, the experiment that settles the matter") is a pointed reference to the language of Newton: "The successive failure of those suspicions eventually led me to the *experimentum crucis*, which was this: To the initial set-up of hole/prism/wall he added two boards, each with a hole in it, and a second prism." (I. Newton, "Letter to the Royal Society Presenting A New Theory of Light and Colours" (London: Royal Society, 1671))

In *Remarks on Colour* Wittgenstein examines an initially puzzling series of observations, which he sees as presenting the fundamental grammar of colour: there can be no transparent white; white is the lightest colour; grey is not luminous; there cannot be a pure brown or brown light (brown is essentially a surface colour); there is no blackish yellow; there can be a bluish-green but not a reddish-green.[321] The first and the last of these observations are taken directly from a letter to Goethe from the Romantic Painter, and life-long colleague of his, Philipp Otto Runge (RC I, §21; RC III, §94). It may also be that he is recalling Runge, when he notes that "Phenomenological analysis (as e.g. Goethe would have it) is the analysis of concepts that can neither agree with nor contradict physics." (RC II, §16) Wittgenstein believed that if physics neither confirms nor contradicts 'phenomenological analysis' (taken here to be in Goethe's morphological sense), even less can it hope to solve its problems: "This much I can understand: that a physical theory (such as Newton's) cannot solve the problems motivated by Goethe, even if he himself didn't solve them either." (RC III, §206) This is a feature summarized by Breithaupt *et al.* as follows: "Goethe's world-view characterizes a *morphological access to the manifold of phenomena*. Morphology is, one could say, a *horizontal* approach. In contrast to this, science is essentially *vertical*."[322]

320Cf. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright's preface to *On Certainty*. Wittgenstein had, however, been dealing with colour in terms of Kantian notion of synthetic *a priori* since his early preparations of the *Tractatus* and thus there were for him difficulties in adopting the Goethean framework wholeheartedly. Cf. von Wright and Anscombe's preface to the 2nd edition of *Notebooks 1914-1916*: "At the 20th of December 1914 there was a rough line of adjacent crayoned patches, using 7 colours. This was treated as a mere doodle in the first edition, and so it may be. But, having regard to the subject matter of meaning and negation, which is the topic of the surrounding text, it is possible that there is here an anticipation of *Philosophical Investigations* §48." (NB, p. 1) It is worthwhile to recall, furthermore, that PI §48 opens (on the one hand) with a reference to Plato's *Theaetetus* (i.e., that Platonic dialogue wherein Socrates rejects to he Heraclitean 'doctrine'), and concludes (on the other hand) with a remark gesturing towards what might be euphemistically termed Wittgenstein's 'grammatical presentism': "Does it matter what we say, so long as we avoid misunderstandings in any particular case?"

321J. Westphal, *Colour: Some Philosophical Problems from Wittgenstein* , *op cit*., p. 1.

322F. Breithaupt *et al.*, *Wittgenstein and Goethe*, *op. cit*., p. 8, original emphasis. If there remains any doubt about the methodological affinities between the morphological method of Goethe and Wittgenstein, the manner in which this remark clearly recalls the preface to *Philosophical Investigations* should put these to rest:

"After several unsuccessful attempts to wield my results into such a whole [in which "the thoughts should proceed from one subject to another in a natural order without breaks"], I realized that I should

But what remained unclear to Wittgenstein was the precise contours of this 'horizontal approach' to the natural history of colour:

> "Is there such a thing as a 'natural history of colours' and to what extent is it analogous to a natural history of plants? Isn't the latter temporal, the former non-temporal?
>
> If we say that the proposition "saturated yellow is lighter than saturated blue" doesn't belong to the realm of psychology (for only *so* could it be natural history)—this means that we are not *using* it as a proposition of natural history. And the question then is: what is the other, non-temporal *use* like?
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> For this is the only way we can distinguish between propositions of 'the mathematics of colour' from those of natural history." (RC III, §§8-10)

And again: "A *natural history* of colours would have to report on their occurrence in nature, not their essence. Its propositions would have to be temporal ones." (RC III, §135) Thus we see once again the tension between things-becoming and things-become or between temporal and non-temporal applications.

There are undoubtedly significant differences between Wittgenstein's use of the morphological method and Goethe's. For Wittgenstein, morphology is not strictly speaking a scientific method. In a famous passage of the *Investigations*, for example, Wittgenstein stresses the following distinction between his new morphologically-inclined methods and those of the natural sciences: "our considerations could not be scientific ones. And we may not advance any kind of theory. There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. We must do away with all *explanation*, and description alone must take its place." (PI §109) In other words, science needs explanation, whereas philosophy needs description; scientific inquiries are empirical, philosophical investigations are grammatical; science produces hypotheses, while philosophy "leaves everything as it is." (PI §124) Thus,

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never succeed. The best that I could write would never be more than philosophical remarks; my thoughts were soon crippled if I tried to force them on in any single direction against their natural inclination.——And this was, of course, connected with the very nature of the investigation. For this compels us to travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction.—The philosophical remarks in this book are, as it were, a number of sketches of landscapes which were made in the course of these long and involved journeyings." (PI, Preface)

though they agreed on many of the particulars, what Wittgenstein considered elements of an *a*-scientific world-view were for Goethe the very height of objective scientific investigation.[323] However, there is another element of Goethe's morphological methodology that makes Wittgenstein's appeal to such an approach more problematic. For in Goethe's hands, morphological investigation cannot be separated from another aspect of his investigations—the concern for 'primal phenomena' (*Urphänomene*). Wittgenstein, on the contrary, was highly critical of such abstractions and regularly denounces the damage caused by such pictures (*Urbilder*).[324] In Goethe's work, as in Spengler's adaptation of it, the morphological method is thus directed *towards* the search for primal phenomena. In Wittgenstein's work, this same morphological method appears as weapon directed *against* such a quest.

Nevertheless, regardless of whether the morphological method is applied to the ends of constructing or destructing *Urbilder*, their respective methods are strikingly similar. Perhaps in the end, we must admit that the focus on variable, diverse, lived, temporal—in a

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323In this sense, a very interesting comparison could be done between Goethe's understanding of truth, which is at once static and dynamic, and Frege's understanding of truth. While Frege was especially committed to a Platonic ideal of mathematical truth—timeless and eternal—remarks such as the following reveal cracks in his commitment that may help to explain the tension between this ideal and his understanding of novel mathematical truths:

"But the more fruitful type of definition is a matter of drawing boundary lines that were not previously given at all. What we shall be able to infer from it, cannot be inspected in advance; here we are not simply taking out of the box what we have put into it. The conclusions we draw from it extend our knowledge, and are therefore, on Kant's view, to be regarded as synthetic; and yet they can be proved by purely logical means, and are thus analytic. The truth is that they are contained in the definitions, *but as plants are contained in their seeds, not as beams are contained in a house.*" (FA §88, my emphasis)

324"The 'primal phenomenon' (*Urphänomen*) is, e.g., what Freud thought he recognized in simple wish-fulfilment dreams. The primary phenomenon is a preconceived idea that takes possession of us." (RC III §230) Or again: "Just as their are 'infantile theories of sex', so there are infantile theories in general. This does not mean that everything a child does has arisen *out of* an infantile theory as its basis." (from Wittgenstein's "Remarks on *Frazer's* Golden Bough", PO, p. 153 [TS 221; ca. 1938]) Of course, it was not the *Urphänomene* themselves that Wittgenstein was critical of, but our failure to recognize them as such. As he notes in the *Investigations*:

"Our mistake is to look for an explanation where we ought to look at what happens as a 'proto-phenomenon'. That is, where we ought to have said: *this language-game is played.*" (PI §654)

word, *ordinary*—cases will always involve a motion both towards and away from what is 'primal' in the phenomena themselves. And perhaps this is what troubled Wittgenstein most in his considerations, or at least what he believed called for constant vigilance on his (and on our) part. As he would later note in regards to some of the similarities he perceived between his own work and that of Spengler's:

> "The only way for us to guard our assertions against distortion—or avoid vacuity in our assertions, is to have a clear view in our reflections of what the ideal *is*, namely an object of comparison—a yardstick, as it were—instead of making a prejudice of it to which everything *has* to conform. For this is what produces the dogmatism into which philosophy so easily degenerates.
>
> But how then is a view like Spengler's related to mine? Distortion in Spengler: The ideal doesn't lose any of its dignity if it's presented as the principle determining the form of one's reflections. A sound measure.—" (CV, p. 27 [MS 157b; 27.2.1937])[325]

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325 The original German text is highly suggestive in this passage, for the word translated here as 'distortion' is in the original 'Ungerechtigkeit'. Now there is clearly a sense in which we may think of 'justice' and/or 'injustice' in terms of 'doing justice' to the phenomena in question, in the sense of treating the phenomena adequately, which would fit the translation offered here. This would, furthermore, fit the context surrounding this remark's subsequent incarnation in *Philosophical Investigations*:

> "For we can avoid ineptness or emptiness in our assertions [*Ungerechtigkeit, oder Leere unserer Behauptungen entgegen*] only by presenting the model [*Vorbild*] as what it is, as an object of comparison—as, so to speak, a measuring-rod; not as a preconceived idea to which reality *must* correspond. (The dogmatism in which we fall so easily in doing philosophy)." (PI §131)

There are, however, reasons to believe that Wittgenstein equally intended the parallel, moral aspect of the German original, which is not captured by the English translation. Besides the general moral imperative behind Wittgenstein's own quest for perspicuity—we might recall here, Russell's early inquiry into Wittgenstein's overall aggressivity in dealing with questions of logic and philosophy: "Are you thinking about logic or your sins?" "Both" Wittgenstein replied, of course (B. Russell, *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, vol. II., *op cit.* p. 99.)—there is also the following remark found in the *Big Typescript*: "Our only task is to be just. That is, we must only point out and resolve the injustices of philosophy, and not posit new parties—and creeds." (PO, p. 181 [TS 213, p. 420; 1933]) Again, this may point simply to the aspect of *adequacy* in the application of morphology. We might nonetheless consider here a mysterious and ambiguous remark that Wittgenstein made on one occasion to Norman Malcolm, which has the potential to put this more neutral interpretation of 'justice' into question:

> "One time when we were walking along the river we saw a newsvendor's sign which announced that the German government accused the British government of instigating a recent attempt to assassinate Hitler with a bomb. This was in autumn of 1939. Wittgenstein said of the German claim: 'It would not surprise me at all if it were true.' I retorted that I could not believe that the top people in the

Despite this risk of distortion, the twin motions towards and away from *Urbilder* similarly deny the static and abstract laws of mechanical causality, which are constructed out of ideal sets of phenomena to be held up as a one and only measure of actual phenomena. The risk is in failing to recognizes that they only provide just *that*—*a measure,* nothing more and nothing less—rather than truly capturing the elusive *Ding an sich*. And whether that be Newton's *Opticks* in Goethe's case, Russell's Theory of Judgement in Wittgenstein's, or any other theory at hand, the distinction between form and content inherent to these will not admit the possibility of a dynamic morphology and so must present itself as the very height of objective necessity to which subsequent alteration can only be admitted grudgingly. The *form itself* is what we claim to have discovered and that form must always have been there, as it always will be—present and unchanging. As Spengler aptly notes: "Kant's Time has no relation with the past or the future." [326]

How, then, do these considerations play out in their discussion of history? First of all, it is important to note that like Wittgenstein, Goethe was no historian, and, like Wittgenstein, any historical references in Goethe's work are inherently tied to the problems with which he was dealing. Perhaps it is for this reason that in both thinkers' works we find frequent disparaging remarks on the pertinence of history to their investigations. Both had a 'negative' as well as a 'positive' relation to history. We discussed a few examples of Wittgenstein's negative relation to history above. In the case of Goethe, we might take as an example his remark to the musician C. F. Zelter in 1824, "everything historical has a strange and uncertain character, and it really becomes comical, when one considers how people

British government would do such a thing. I meant that the British were too civilized and decent to attempt anything so underhanded; and I added that such an act was incompatible with the British 'national character'. My remark made Wittgenstein extremely angry. He considered it to be a great stupidity and also an indication that I was not learning anything from the philosophical training that he was trying to give me." (N. Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, *op. cit.*, p. 32.)

Just what exactly Wittgenstein thought Malcolm should have learned from his lectures regarding ideas relating to politically-motivated assassination attempts on a foreign leader is far from clear. Although, in this context of *Urbilder*, objects of comparison and 'ideals', it is highly suggestive. 'National character' was not an issue far from Spengler's thought, for example—and how much more was it part of Weininger's, the ultimate consequences of which are of course well known.

326 O. Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, *op cit*., p. 77.

convince themselves with complete certainty about the past."[327] Cassirer, speaking first of Goethe's faith in the primacy of the experience of unmediated truth before nature, summarizes Goethe's uncertain feeling for history thus:

> "The sense of quiet confidence and faithful devotion leaves Goethe as soon as he enters the terrain of history. Here he feels nothing of that inner security he found in the contemplation of nature, here he meets misgivings from the start, he finds himself constantly in danger of losing the ground out from under his feet. Where Goethe speaks of history and the history of science he breaks into a mood that we scarcely see in him otherwise. He feels himself irritated to the point of criticism and opposition, to pure negation – and this antagonism often grows into the sharpest satire."[328]

Here we find a direct analogue between Wittgenstein's doubts in the face of history and those of Goethe. In Wittgenstein's case, history is presented as that which defies the living exchange where language and life meet. In Goethe's, it is that thing whose 'strange and uncertain character' escapes the living encounter with the truth of nature in our present, sensuous experience.   However, just as we should resist the temptation to take Wittgenstein's remarks in the various forewards comprised in the early 1930's about the *scientism* of his time as an indictment of *science itself,* we should likewise resist the temptation to take these disparaging remarks against history as an indictment of any historical consideration in general.[329]

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327 Quoted in F. Meinecke, *Historicism: The Rise of a New Historical Outlook, op. cit*., p. 427.

328 E. Cassirer, *Goethe und die geschichtliche Welt, op. cit*, p. 5 [my Translation].

329 The difference here is, of course, rather a matter of one's *attitude* towards such empirical disciplines. As von Wright notes: "A philosophy which does not look for answers to questions, does not explain or theorise about the things which attract the philosopher's curiosity, and does not try to provide the foundations for our beliefs, is not a philosophy for which scientific thinking sets the pattern. It, on the contrary, fights the infiltration of this thinking into philosophy and makes it responsible for the confusions from which the philosopher tries to rid himself. It is not, need not be, hostile to science as such. But it may be said to take a critical or even hostile attitude to the influence of science outside its proper domain—and in particular on philosophical thought. In *this* it runs counter to an intellectual mainstream of the century." (G.H. von Wright, "Wittgenstein and the 20th Century", in *The Tree of Knowledge* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1993), p. 97)

Goethe was a man of the sensuous present, though not of this alone. He sought to understand living phenomena according to their form and shape, their sensuous appeal to experience and their inner law as revealed to the mind. And it was this that set up the barriers between him and history, for at times the latter seemed to him but a pale imitation of the former: "History," he notes, "even at its best, always has something corpse-like, some smell of the tomb, about it."[330] However, like Wittgenstein, Goethe would come feel an increasing sense of the importance of historical development for his understanding of nature in the present. All life was for Goethe a mystical union of primal forms of successive metamorphoses. History too, he came to see, was bound to this same law. Although he came closer to the primal phenomena he sought in direct communion with nature rather than in the study of history, the later gradually came to play a greater role in his investigations as a framework by which one might examine more closely the metamorphosis of form.[331]

Neither Goethe nor Wittgenstein were, so to speak, 'doing history'—natural or otherwise— in the sense that they were not putting forth hypotheses concerning historical facts nor seeking empirical evidence to support these hypotheses. In fact, it is just this that Goethe would reject as 'mere matter' and Wittgenstein as the lamentable spirit "which informs the vast stream of European and American civilization in which we stand." (PR, Preface) *Mere* historical facts were not what they sought. Thinking historically was nonetheless central— even inherent, through the consideration of form and perspicuity—to their work and to the morphological methods they employed. As Goethe remarks in his preface to *Theory of Colours,* "Indeed, strictly speaking, it is useless to attempt to express the nature of a thing abstractedly. *Effects we can perceive, and a complete history of those effects would, in fact, sufficiently define the nature of the thing itself.* We should try in vain to describe a man's

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330From the projected preface to the third part of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (quoted in F. Meinecke, *Historicism, op. cit.* p. 441.)

331Regarding Goethe's increasing sensitivity to the centrality of historical thinking for his scientific investigations, Cassirer makes the point clearly: "Goethe rejects history when history is imposed on him as mere *matter*; but in the end he reclaims it as a necessary way finally to understand *form* in itself and in its own creativity." (E. Cassirer, *Goethe und die geschichtliche Welt*, *op. cit.* p. 26.)

character, but let his acts be collected and an idea of his character will be presented to us."[332] This comment, which clearly recalls Wittgenstein's understanding of 'physiognomy', is directed specifically against Newton and the abstract ideal of light and colour employed in his *Opticks* (where he sought an immutable causal substructure to phenomenal appearance, which is of course the sustained object of Goethe's scorn in the second part of the *Farbenlehre*[333]). Goethe continues:

> "The third part is thus devoted to the historical account of early inquirers and investigators. As we
> before expressed the opinion that the history of an individual displays his character, so it may here be
> well affirmed that the history of science is science itself. We cannot clearly be aware of what we
> possess until we have the means of knowing what others possessed before us. We cannot really and
> honestly rejoice in the advantages of our own time if we know not how to appreciate the advantages
> of former periods. But it is impossible to write, or even to prepare the way for a history of theory of
> colours while the Newtonian theory exists; for no aristocratic presumption has ever looked down on
> those who were not of its order, with such intolerable arrogance as that betrayed by the Newtonian
> school deciding on all that had been done in earlier times and all that was done around it."[334]

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332 J.W. Goethe, *Theory of Colours, op cit*. p. xvii, my emphasis.

333 E.g., "Do not the Rays of Light which fall upon Bodies, and are reflected or refracted, begin to bend before they arrive at the Bodies: and are they not reflected, refracted, and inflected, by and on the same Principle, acting variously in various circumstances?" (I. Newton, *Opticks,* fourth edition (London: William Innys, 1730), p. 315.)

334 J.W. Goethe, *Theory of Colours, op cit.* p. xxi. It is interesting to note that Goethe's claim here—that "the history of science is science itself"—pre-dates certain contemporary trends in the philosophy of science by more than a century. As noted by Breithaupt e*t al.*, "in the historical section of his *Theory of Colors,* one finds scientific-theoretical observations that, in our time, have resurfaced only since Fleck and Kuhn." (*Goethe and Wittgenstein, op. cit.* p. 9) Perhaps it is correct to say *since* Fleck and Kuhn; however, I believe we find much more sympathy in the claims made by P. Feyerabend than Kuhn, e.g:

> "Knowledge so conceived is not a series of self-consistent theories that converges towards an ideal view; it is not a gradual approach to the truth. It is rather an ever increasing *ocean of mutually incompatible alternatives*, each single theory, each fairy-tale, each myth that is part of the collection forcing the others into greater articulation and all of them contributing, via this process of completion, to the development of our consciousness. Nothing is ever settled, no view can ever be omitted from a comprehensive account. Plutarch or Diogenes Laertius, and not Durac or von Neumann, are the models for presenting a knowledge of this kind in which the *history* of a science becomes inseparable from science itself […]." (P Feyerabend, *Against Method* (London: Verso, 1984), p. 14).

Wittgenstein read—and was greatly influenced by—Goethe's *Theory of Colours*. Such remarks could not have gone unnoticed by him. However, should there be any doubt, a letter to von Wright in 1950, makes it clear that it was not solely the first part (the '*Didaktischer Teil*') with which he was familiar, though it is this part which Wittgenstein's own *Remarks on Colour* most clearly resemble. As he notes there:

> "The last two weeks I read a great deal in Goethe's 'Farbenlehre'. It is partly boring and repelling, but in some ways also *very* instructive and philosophically interesting. You might take it out of your bookcase and look at what he wrote about Lord Bacon in the *historical* part." (PO, p. 475 [19.1.1950])

This allusive reference to the third part of the *Farbenlehre* (the '*Historischer Teil*') is illustrative for two reasons. On the one hand, it was Bacon who in the early days of the scientific world-view emphasized the idea of unbiased observation of sensory data through an attention to form and creativity.[335] Like Goethe would after him, Bacon sought in this way to approach our understanding of natural law without reducing it to the mechanical order of causality. On the other hand, Goethe's passage on Bacon in the third part of the work is by far the most in-depth of the work and, moreover, lays the foundation for Goethe's

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Goethe's notion of science has more in common with this idea of progress than Kuhn's understanding of the periodic alternation between 'normal' and 'revolutionary science'. There is, for example, in Goethe no notion of epistemic crisis such as that which lies at the heart of Kuhn's theory. Kuhn, however, was working within the dominant paradigm of historico-evolutionary causality that Goethe would not have upheld.

335 F. Bacon, *The New Organon,* ed. and trans. F.H. Anderson (New York: Macmillan, 1960). Indeed, as Desroches aptly notes: "Most critiques of Bacon rest on the temporally gymnastic suggestion that he somehow failed to capture the nature of the scientific revolution that would succeed him, and are based on reading Bacon as an empirical thinker, which is not, to be sure, entirely incorrect. […] Yet such readings have a tendency to dwell on the inadequacy of Bacon's experimental practice of *Novum*'s Book II, even despite Bacon's own claims that his experimental practice is problematic. What is not addressed adequately is the fundamentally reflexive nature of the programme that he puts in place to shape how experiment is to take place in the future, and it is this reflexivity that I equate with a theoretical turn of mind present in Bacon's thought. The Greek *theoria* means, above all, 'to see', and it is Bacon's concerted attempt to see, to look at the science around him, and to develop a method capacious enough to accommodate *being* seen, that defines the crucial articulations of scientific knowledge production undertaken in Book I." (D. Desroches, *Francis Bacon and the Limits of Scientific Knowledge* (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 6.)

own critique of Newton in the second part (the '*Polemischer Teil*'). In this passage on Bacon, Goethe writes:

"Bacon is like a man who is well-aware of the irregularity, insufficiency and dilapidated condition of an old building, and knows how to make this clear to the inhabitants. He advises them to abandon it, to give up the land, the materials and all appurtenances, to look for another plot, and to erect a new building […]. They break it down and some of the inhabitants are forced to move out. He points out new building grounds; people begin to level it off, and yet it is everywhere too narrow. He submits new plans; they are not clear, not inviting. Mainly, he speaks of new unknown materials and now the world seems to be well-served."[336]

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[336] J.W. Goethe, *Zur Farbenlehre, op. cit.,* p. 677 [my translation]. R. Steiner, notable for being one of the few who has taken Goethe's relationship to history seriously, makes the following illuminating remark in relation to this passage: "Contrary to Bacon of Verulam, who pointed towards the bricks of the building, Descartes and Spinoza turned their attention toward its plan." (R. Steiner, *The Riddles of Philosophy* (Spring Valley, NY: Anthroposophical Press, 1914), p. 92.) It is to note in this context that one can clearly witness how the dialectic between works of a more 'rationalistic' tendency (such as those of Descartes, Spinoza, for example, or Newton, under discussion here) and those of, e.g. Goethe. A parallel tension, it would appear, plays itself out in the 20th century between Carnap and Wittgenstein, among others. Where Carnap would write in the preface to his *Aufbau*:

"If we allot to the individual in philosophical work as in the special sciences only a partial task, then we can look with more confidence to the future: in slow careful construction insight after insight will be won. Each collaborator contributes only what he can endorse and justify before the whole body of his co-workers. Thus stone will be carefully added to stone and a safe building will be erected at which each following generation can continue work." (R. Carnap, *The Logical Structure of the World,* trans. R.A. George (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), p. xvii)

To this, Wittgenstein would respond in the second of the draft 1930's prefaces, which I quote at length because it is precisely here that Wittgenstein begins to drift in his assessment of modern culture and how exactly the 'spirit' in which is writing is supposed to differ from that of our mainstream Anglo-European culture—which is to say, just before he breaks for his ruminations on what he himself describes as 'the *danger*' of an overly long foreward:

"Our civilization is characterized by the word 'progress'. Progress is its form rather than making progress being one of its features. Typically it constructs. It is occupied with building an ever more complicated structure. And even clarity is sought only as a means to this end, not as an end in itself. For me on the contrary clarity, perspicuity are valuable in themselves.

I am not interested in constructing a building, so much as having a perspicuous view of the foundation of possible buildings.

So I am not aiming at the same target as the scientists and my way of thinking is different from theirs. Each sentence I write here is trying to say the whole thing, i.e., the same thing over and over again; it is as though they were all simply views of one object seen from different angles.

This he calls Bacon's 'method of dispersion', by which natural science is 'broken up into fragments'. Bacon had, most notably in Goethe's esteem, "led natural philosophy back into the human being."[337] What is so noteworthy about this remark is the manner in which Goethe returns to this very same metaphor of the ancient and dilapidated edifice (which must be abandoned and 'given up to the land') in his own preface, but this time against *Newton* and his Theory of Optics. In the preface to the *Theory of Colours,* he writes:

> "We compare the Newtonian theory of colours to an old castle, which was at first constructed by its architect with youthful precipitation; it was, however, gradually enlarged and equipped by him according to the exigencies of time and circumstance, and moreover was still further fortified and secured in consequence of feuds and hostile demonstrations.
>
> The same system was pursued by his successors and heirs: their increased wants within, the harassing vigilance of their opponents without, and various accidents compelled them in some places to build near, in others in connexion with the fabric, and thus to extend the original plan.
>
> It became necessary to connect all these incongruous parts and additions by the strangest galleries, halls and passages […]. This care and these exertions gave rise to a prejudice in favour of the great importance of the fortress, and although the arts of building and fortification were by this time very much advanced, and people had learnt to construct with much better dwellings and defences in other cases. But the old castle was chiefly held in honour because it had never been taken, because it had always preserved its virgin renown. This renown, this influence lasts even now: it occurs to no one that the old castle has become uninhabitable."[338]

Goethe concludes with the remark that to level this site (to 'raze this Bastille', as he phrases it) would not mean erecting a new structure and encumbering it anew, but rather "to make use of the this area for the purpose of passing in review a pleasing and varied series of illustrative figures."[339]

One movement constructs and takes (in hand) one stone after another, the other keeps reaching for the same." (CV, p. 7 [MS 109; 6.11.1930])

337 J.W. Goethe, *Zur Farbenlehre, op. cit.,* p. 677, my translation.

338 J.W. Goethe, *Theory of Colour, op. cit.,* p. ix-xx.

IV. Held Captive, in the Philosopher's Garden?

We see then that Goethe's approach to history was not aimed at retracing the conceptual development of a given phenomenon within the limited confines of a particular framework. Goethe did not merely seek to better understand that which had been incorporated into the dominant paradigm of scientific investigation, for example, but rather that which had been *discarded* along the way, abandoned to the "rubbish-bin and lumber-room of the history."[340] As Wittgenstein similarly remarks:

> "Nietzsche writes somewhere that even the best poets and thinkers have written stuff that is mediocre and bad, but have separated off the good material. But it's not quite like that. It's true that a gardener, along with his roses, keeps manure and rubbish and straw in his garden, but what distinguishes them is not just their value, but mainly their function in the garden." (CV, p. 59 [MS 134; 8.4.1947])[341]

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339 *Ibid*, p. xxi. Goethe's original German text is even more suggestive from both the point of view of philosophy generally and Wittgenstein's own considerations of aspect-perception in Book II of the *Investigations*, with its reference not to 'illustrative figures' but rather *Gestalten*: *wir wollen uns vielmehr desselben bedienen, um eine schöne Reihe mannigfaltiger Gestalten vorausführen.* On his particular interpretation of the German word *Gestalt,* Goethe has this to say:

"The Germans have a word for the complex of existence presented by a physical organism: *Gestalt*. With this expression they exclude what is changeable and assume that an interrelated whole is identified, defined, and fixed in character.

But if we look at all these *Gestalten*, especially the organic ones, we will discover that nothing in them is permanent, nothing is at rest or defined – everything is in a flux of continual motion. This is why German frequently and fittingly makes use of the word *Bildung* to describe the end product as well as the activity that gives rise to it.

Thus in setting forth a morphology we should not speak of *Gestalt*. When something has acquired a form it metamorphoses immediately to a new one. If we wish to arrive at some living perception of nature we ourselves must remain as quick and flexible as nature and follow the example she gives." (J.W. Goethe, "On Morphology," pp. 63-64, in J.W. Goethe, J.W., *Collected Works*, vol. 12, *op cit.*.)

340 A reference from the original version of Goethe's *Faust* (quoted in F. Meinecke, *Historicism, op. cit.,* p. 425).

341 Wittgenstein is referring here to §155 of *Human All Too Human*: "Belief in inspiration: Artists have an interest in the existence of a belief in the sudden occurrence of ideas, in so-called inspirations; as though

One can separate the good from the bad in the reproduction of an old thought, which is to say that one can translate it into a newer language. And even if this is how Wittgenstein disparagingly characterized his own 'building work' on occasion, it is not what he intended for his philosophy:

> "An old style can be translated, as it were, into a newer language; it can, one might say, be performed afresh at a tempo appropriate to our own times. To do this is really only to reproduce. That is what my building work amounted to.
>
> But what I mean is *not* to give an old style a fresh trim. You don't take old forms and fix them up to suit the latest taste. No, you are really speaking an old language, perhaps without realizing it, but you are speaking it in a way that is appropriate to the modern world, without on that account necessarily being in accordance with its taste." (CV, p. 60 [MS 134; 10.4.1947)[342]

What this work thus requires is a non-reductionist appreciation of what has come before and perhaps been rejected on the road to the present, a way to access the *roses* as well as the *manure* of the past without evaluating it according to the contingent and impermanent standards of our own time.

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the idea of a work of art, a poem, the basic proposition of a philosophy flashed down from heaven like a ray of divine grace. In reality, the imagination of a good artist or thinker is productive continually, of old, mediocre and bad things, but his power of judgment, sharpened and practiced to the highest degree, rejects, selects, knots together; as we can now see from Beethoven's notebooks how the most glorious melodies were put together gradually and as it were culled out of many beginnings. He who selects less rigorously and likes to give himself up to his imitative memory can, under the right circumstances, become a great improviser; but artistic improvisation is something very inferior in relation to the serious and carefully fashioned artistic idea. All the great artists have been great workers, inexhaustible not only in invention but also in rejecting, sifting, transforming, ordering." (F. Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human,* trans. W. Kaufman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

[342] It is notable that the above remark is from 1947. In the present context, it might be profitably compared to those of the early 1930's, where Wittgenstein—under the influence of Weininger—frequently disparaged his work as an example of 'Jewish reproductiveness'. Similarly, the above marks a distinct break from the influence of Spengler, also from the same period. What is so noteworthy here is that the historicist trend that runs through these ideas, as well as their influence on Wittgenstein, remains intact in Wittgenstein's thought and is there appropriated, while the influence of the other two clearly wanes.

And what, we might then ask, characterizes those contingent and impermanent standards by which we judge the successes and/or failures of the past? In a word, it is *progress*.[343] Wittgenstein's scepticism towards progress for progress sake―expressed time and time again―frequently took the form of a kind of speculative anthropology in which he described the bizarre and often unsettling behaviour of imaginary 'strange tribes'. The task of this exercise was to help us imagine that we need not take certain of our concepts as the "absolute correct ones" and that it is not necessarily the case that having different concepts from the ours would mean "not realising something we realise." (PI, IIxii) These 'strange tribes', along with the passage this quote is taken from, are often taken as evidence of Wittgenstein's indifference to history, as it begins with a caution: "we are not doing natural science; nor yet natural history―since we can also invent fictitious natural history for our purposes." (ibid.) If, however, the imaginary tribes and histories Wittgenstein evokes here function as well as the real ones, this need not relegate historical investigations to the sidelines of Wittgenstein's work, but rather places it at its centre along with―*and along side*―the imaginary cases that are widely regarded as an essential element in Wittgenstein's unique philosophical methodology.[344] Thus, Wittgenstein writes, specifically speaking of

343 We will look at this in more detail at a later point; however, in the present context all-pervasive (and indeed pathological) application of *Urbilder*, a brief quote from Kraus will serve to sharpen the point. In 1909, Karl Kraus published an article in *Die Fackel* entitled "Der Fortschritt", arguing that progress is a mere form, or worst—at best, a slogan: "A newspaper phrase conveying a lively image has suggested itself to me. This is how it is worded: we are under the sign of progress. Only now do I recognize progress for what it is—a mobile decoration. We stay ahead and keep walking in place. Progress is a standpoint and looks like movement." (Quoted in J. Bouveresse, "Wittgenstein, von Wright and the Myth of Progress", p. 303, *Paragraph,* 34(3), 2011, pp. 301-321.)

344 Cf. H.-J. Glock, "Wittgenstein and History," *op. cit.,* p. 298. The problematic qualification Glock gives in regard to this passage—that "unlike history and cultural anthropology, fictional anthropology cannot help to establish whether our current practices are *humanly* necessary, dictated by our biological needs and capacities"—is precisely the kind explanation that Wittgenstein wishes to avoid in his morphological notion of philosophical and scientific investigation, and hence the raising up of fictional cases along side real ones. The introduction of fictional cases does not mean that Wittgenstein is not interested in 'actual history', as Glock suggests, but that Wittgenstein's interest in history would not satisfy certain ideals of what history is or should be (such as Glock's). Goethe too makes the point when he claims in a letter to the German mathematician and cartographer, Carsten Niebuhr, that, "The separation of fiction and history is invaluable: it destroys neither of them, but rather enables the value and merit of each to be more clearly defined." (Quoted in F. Meinecke, *Historicism, op. cit.* p. 430.)

the case of science: "Science: enrichment and impoverishment. *One* particular method elbows all the others aside. They seem paltry by comparison, preliminary stages at best. // You must go down to the original sources so as to see them all side by side, both the neglected and the preferred." (CV, p. 60-61 [MS 134; 13.4.1947])[345] This, of course, is exactly the core issue at the heart of Goethe's critique of Newton: What should in Goethe's esteem have been considered a marginal colour phenomena, i.e. the decomposition of the light spectrum under highly controlled experimental conditions, was rather turned by Newton into the measure by which all other colour phenomena was to be appreciated. Thus any colour phenomenon that we might seek to describe had from then on to conform to the set of general axioms outlined by Newton, and these alone, lest it be rejected as the result of an all-too-human adulteration or admixture of the nature of what passes for true, *pristine* colour.

Like Goethe, Wittgenstein too sought to question the dominant paradigms of the age via an appreciation of that which had been discarded along the way and abandoned to the 'rubbish-bin and lumber-room of the history'. And perhaps it is for this reason that his historical thought is largely missed in the literature or placed on the wrong side of that line which separates genuine philosophical concerns from non-philosophical ones. For the point of going to 'original sources' is not to reproduce a unified image of the evolution of empirical

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345 There is an enlightening comparison one may make here to the treatment of science in the *Tractatus*, regarding how what is here criticized by the later Wittgenstein for its reductionist world-view is rather upheld in that earlier work for the potential completeness of its expression. Interestingly, the difference between these two perspectives is already outlined in the *Tractatus*, where the completeness exemplified by mechanics, for example, exists alongside other equally complete forms of expression (or 'nets') for describing the world. Compare the above remark from the *Nachlaß* with the following from the *Tractatus*:

"Newtonian Mechanics, for example, imposes a unified form on the description of the world. [...] The form is optional, since I could have achieved the same result by using a net of a triangular or hexagonal mesh [rather than a square one]. [...] The different nets correspond to different systems for describing the world. Mechanics determines one form of description of the world by saying that all propositions used in the description of the world must be obtained in a given from a given set of propositions—the propositions of mechanics. It thus supplies the bricks for building the edifice of science, and it says, 'Any building that you want to erect, whatever it may be, must somehow be constructed with these bricks, and with these alone.'" (T 6.341)

investigation. Rather, what is required is to see what came before in its uniqueness, its concrete difference and diversity. Here we might be reminded of numerous remarks from Wittgenstein on the nature of language and the practice of philosophy itself. Chief among them is his remark in *Philosophical Investigations*: "Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets." (PI §18) This is not merely a description of what language looks like, but of how one must approach language methodologically. The point—as Wittgenstein makes clear in PI §122, quoted at the opening of this chapter—is "finding and inventing *intermediary cases*."[346] What we require are remarks on our natural history, which are not curiosities, but rather "observations that no one has doubted because they are always before our very eyes." (PI §415) For Wittgenstein, as for Goethe, we do not approach history by giving it a fresh trim, putting it to work, and thereby transporting it into the present. Rather than remaking the past over in the image of the present, we should walk the ancient paths and little squares of the old town and describe what we see without holding it up to the standards of the straight and regular thoroughfares of our newly designed suburban boroughs. Renewing and reinvigorating thoughts of the past requires seeking out formal connections, rather than proposing evolutionary models of progress which make the past

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346 To repeat: "Our grammar is lacking in this sort of perspicuity (*Übersichtlichkeit*). A perspicuous representation (*übersichtliche Darstellung*) produces just that understanding which consists of 'seeing connections'. Hence the importance of finding and inventing *intermediate cases*." (PI§122, cf. above.) The original source of this remark is, moreover, noteworthy for appearing first in Wittgenstein's "Remarks of Frazer's *Golden Bough*", where he refers there, no less, to Spengler:

"The concept of perspicuous representation is of fundamental importance for us. It denotes the form of representation, the way we see things (A kind of 'World-view' [*‚Weltanschauung'*] as it is apparently typical of our time. Spengler. // This perspicuous representation brings about the understanding which consists precisely in the fact that we "see the connections". Here the importance of finding *connecting links* [*Zwischengliedern*]" (PO, p. 133 [MS 110; 1931])

Placed beside the actual (empirical?) anthropology of Frazer, Wittgenstein's own speculative anthropology takes on distinct historicist overtones. Among the many examples one could draw from the text, we find the following for example:

"What a narrow spiritual life on Frazer's part! As a result: how impossible it was for him to conceive of a life different from the England of his time. // Frazer cannot imagine a priest who is not basically a present-day English parson with the same stupidity and dullness." (PO, p 125 [MS 110; 1931])

seem at best to be series of preliminary stages on the way to a predestined and infinitely preferable present.

If we no longer conducted our research in the fashion of Newton—in other words, if we could abandon our need for the all-encompassing *experimentum crucis*—we would not judge the past for 'not realizing something that we realise' (in the words of Wittgenstein) nor would we look down on those who were not of our time 'with such intolerable arrogance' (in the words of Goethe). We would no longer insist on holding phenomena up to a single standard of adequacy—namely, *ours*. Thinking historically requires that we give up this need to dismiss the past as, at best, an error and at worst mere nonsense. As Goethe writes,

> "Someday someone will write a pathology of experimental physics and bring to light all those swindles which subvert our reason, beguile our judgement and, what is worse, stand in the way of practical progress. The phenomena must be freed once and for all from their grim torture chamber of empiricism, mechanism, and dogmatism, they must be brought before the jury of men's common sense."[347]

In line with Goethe's condemnation of that which subverts our reason and beguiles our judgement, that 'pathology' from which we find it so difficult to escape, Wittgenstein too would described his philosophical endeavours as a form of therapy: "The philosopher's treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness." (PI §255) And thus: "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) Wittgenstein makes the point clearly in *Philosophical Investigations* in reference to his own earlier work:

> "(*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* 4.5):"The general form of the proposition is: This is how things are."—— That is the kind of proposition that one repeats to oneself countless times. One thinks that

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347 J.W. Goethe, "Maxims and Reflections", p. 309, in Goethe, J.W., *Collected Works*, vol. 4, *op cit*.

> one is tracing the outline of the thing's nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing the frame through which we look at it.
>
> A *picture* held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably." (PI §114-115)

Similarly, Wittgenstein would later evoke this sense of overwhelming inexorability—an experience of the 'logical must' that we so often encounter when we engage in philosophical speculation—in *On Certainty*:

> "I am sitting with a philosopher in the garden; he says again and again "I know that that's a tree", pointing to a tree that is near us. Someone else arrives and hears this, and I tell him: "This fellow isn't insane. We are only doing philosophy." (OC §467)

The release from such captivating pictures does not require 'razing the Bastille' of logical or causal coherence in order to erect a new monument of another form—as if it *were not* a tree the philosopher is here contemplating in the garden!—but lies rather in perspicuity and a clear view of language. What is required is "to make use of the this area for the purpose of passing in review a pleasing and varied series of illustrative figures."[348] As Wittgenstein notes: "Our mistake is to look for an explanation where we ought to look at what happens as 'proto-phenomena' (*Urphänomene*). That is, where we ought to have said: *This language-game is played*." (PI §654) Is played… or *was played*, as it were. For along the horizontal axes of language-games, forms of life and family resemblance, it makes little difference. Historians have always known that the past is a foreign country, a place where people do things differently. But from the morphological point of view the past is no less accessible than those cultures scattered around the globe and the 'strange tribes' of our imagination. What is required of us is to describe the phenomena, not 'make sense' of it.

Like Goethe, Wittgenstein was ready to engage in historical analysis when it was itself the subject of morphological description. He investigates historical phenomena when it is a question of finding and inventing formal connections, of describing 'language-games' that

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348 J.W. Goethe, *Theory of Colours, op cit.* p. xxi.

have been played and not a neutral material to be affirmed or denied on the basis of empirical evidence. As a collection of phenomena among others, one to be surveyed and arranged in the kind of perspicuous representation afforded by nature itself, history too provides access to primal forms through an appreciation of successive metamorphoses. The aim of this investigation is that, through a renewed appreciation of yesterday, an enhanced *praxis* might unfold tomorrow. Goethe hoped to incorporate an historical dimension into modern science in a manner that would help preserve an appreciation for the true accomplishments of the past as well as keep a sense for future possibilities that are progressively more open rather than closed. Wittgenstein too sought to pave the way for future interventions by putting into question that which passes for absolute in the present, the *Urbilder* which dictate the form of our investigation inexorably has to take and from which we find it so difficult to escape. For this restrictive ideal of progress requires an ever-tightening grip on natural phenomena. It thus excludes more and more from the field of acceptable investigation until ultimately it has missed what it most desperately sought. As Wittgenstein remarks in the *Investigations*:

> "The more narrowly we examine actual language, the sharper becomes the conflict between it and our requirement. (For the crystalline purity of logic was, of course, not a *result of investigation*: it was a requirement.) The conflict becomes intolerable; the requirement is now in danger of becoming empty.—We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need *friction*. Back to the rough ground!" (PI §107)

The morphological method of Goethe and Wittgenstein is thus designed to help release the grip of the pictures that hold us captive, and along with that to free phenomena from the 'grim torture chamber of empiricism'. The hope is that in the course of this labour, which progressively arrays the phenomena into more varied and dynamic groupings, new possibilities might unfold in the future.

V. Concluding Remarks: Understanding Wittgenstein's Debt to Goethe

In this chapter, we have compared the morphological methods of Wittgenstein and Goethe. Against interpretations that Wittgenstein failed to account for history, or was uninterested in doing so, I have argued that in his use of the morphological method we witness a deep, life-long concern for the historical dimensions of thought and of language. In this exploration, a number of parallels to Goethe's approach were drawn. Both of these thinkers were suspicious of history as an empirical discipline; however, they were also reluctant to take present forms of knowledge as absolute and inescapable. Wittgenstein and Goethe likewise both addressed this tension through the employment of morphology—a descriptive enterprise, and not an explanatory one—, which afforded them a way of questioning the present, through a renewed appreciation of the past, in order to enlarge the horizon of future possibilities in science and philosophy. I concluded with the claim that if we have missed the centrality of history in Wittgenstein's thought it is because a picture of what it means to 'do history' held us captive. These are, I argue, the very kinds of distorted pictures that the use of the morphological method is meant to help us rid ourselves of.

Here we begin to see the dissolution of the historicist paradox outlined at the opening of this chapter. From the morphological perspective, historical consideration conflicts neither with Goethe's understanding of nature (whereby truth is communicated in the moment of wholistic perception) nor Wittgenstein's understanding of living language use within the 'steam of life' (wherein meaning takes hold among a community of like-minded speakers, particularly through purposive action). In other words, the morphological understanding of history is not simply a return to the past. Nor is it a transportation of the past into the present. Rather, engaging morphologically with history implies an enhanced sense of our own historicity through an appreciation of the past as it was and not as a mere preliminary to the present. From this perspective, our own time too is reclaimed from the 'specious present'—what Wittgenstein described in the *Big Typescript* in terms of relentless film strip, the feeling that "the present vanishes into the past without our being able to stop it" (PO, p 191 [TS 213, p. 428; 1933])—via an appreciation of the fact that the present is only one

time among many, neither absolute nor predestined, and perhaps not even *preferable* to others. The present thus serves as a bridge between the past and the future, while at the same time maintaining its own inalienable autonomy.

We have seen that Wittgenstein's historical thought serves as a counterpoint to the kind of speculative anthropology found throughout his work, in which he often describes the bizarre and unsettling behaviour of imaginary 'strange tribes'. For many of these examples, when viewed from a temporal perspective, offer a clear historical parallel to the more familiar 'geographical' metaphor of 'us' and 'them', of 'insiders' and 'outsiders' as it were. What he would later describe in *On Certainty*, for example, in terms of our readiness to disregard the beliefs and the belief-systems of others, is readily rotated around its temporal axis in terms of our readiness to disregard even those of our predecessors who have made us who we are:

> "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.
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> If we compare our system of knowledge with theirs then theirs is evidently the poorer one by far."
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> (OC §286)[349]

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[349] Though taken from among Wittgenstein's last remarks, and seemingly far removed from questions about the foundations of logic and mathematics, Wittgenstein's remark here prefigures one of the key conclusions of C. Wright's work on Wittgenstein and the philosophy of mathematics. He notes there, for example:

> "Measurement with soft rules will be useless in the results are applied for the kinds of purposes for which we measure; but if they are not, it is seriously unclear what good grounds there could be for saying that these people who, talking apparent English, solemnly lay floppy rulers alongside things and seem to record readings are doing anything that may informatively be described as 'measuring'." (C. Wright, *Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics* (London: Duckworth, 1980), p. 71.)

Diamond summarizes what is at issue in this account, when she notes:

> "Wright argues that Wittgenstein's examples, if looked into and developed, will 'destabilize': it will appear *either* that the activity described has an application so unlike that of measuring (inferring, calculating) as to make it unreasonable to describe it as such; *or* the application, the purposes, of the activity will be like enough to ours to make it clear that these people are using procedures inferior to ours." (C. Diamond, "Wright's Wittgenstein", *op cit.*, p. 220.)

As Wittgenstein had already made clear in the *Investigations*, the point of such remarks is to emphasis how we do act and not necessarily how we must, or even should. The exercise is to help us appreciate the fact that we need not take certain of our own concepts as the "absolute correct ones" and that it is not necessarily the case that having different concepts from the ours would mean "not realising something we realise" (PI, IIxii). Contra early readings of Wittgenstein as a 'strict constructivist' (those of Dummett and Wright, for example), we need not identify a thesis akin to relativism in this undertaking. By the same token, we need not assume that Wittgenstein was simply unable to give up what Diamond has called the 'myth of a-temporality' in his thought. As we have seen, even within the pages of the *Investigations* itself, Wittgenstein was perfectly willing to acknowledge the historical dimension thought and language, and even that of a priori mathematical truths—*when it suited him*. For, from the morphological perspective, these remarks are intended as methodological signposts for approaching language, for understanding how we are to describe it and the role it plays in our lives. They are not intended as theses about what language 'is' for example.[350] Like Goethe before him in terms of colour, Wittgenstein

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The point, as Diamond makes clear, is that whether or not it makes sense to describe some activity or other as measuring (in a comparable sense to what we would general call measuring in our own case), will depend as much upon whether that activity helps its practitioners to achieve *their own purposes* as it does our own. Diamond, interestingly, concludes her evaluation of Wright's analysis with a concrete *historical example*: medieval time reckoning, which was of course significantly different to our own. She concludes by noting: "I do not know how far attention to such cases can help resolve the issue Wright raises; but he has done a service raising it." (Ibid., p. 221)

What appears significant to me in this exchange, which gets somehow lost in the difficulties presented by the examples—e.g., those surrounding the adequate description of an activity that we cannot, by the Wright own account, properly conceive of—is clearly alluded to in the quote from *On Certainty* above. This point is the following: whether or not another culture's activity is similar enough to ours or not, in order to be *considered analogous* to our own, is not something that can be determined via the application of abstract, disinterested criteria. It is, rather, a thoroughly *political* issue.

350 Examples explored here include that of PI §23, where Wittgenstein uses changes in mathematics to illustrate his newly-introduced terms 'language-games' and 'forms of life', or the temporal metaphors embedded directly in the work, e.g. "our language can be seen as an ancient city" (PI §18) or "we extend [our concept of number] as in spinning a thread we twist fibre on fibre" (PI §67). Additionally, I have suggested that many of the work's key ideas—that of 'following a rule' (as in PI §187), for example—are easily rotated along a temporal axis, and are thus readily brought into relation with the historical dimension of language as a whole. (Examples of those themes that I have not, unfortunately, been able to explore in detail would include, e.g., that of 'aspect perception' from Part II of the *Investigations*. If we

does not want to tell us what language is or must be. Rather, through their employment of the morphological method, which progressively arrays phenomena into more varied and dynamic groupings, they hoped to avoid the restrictive imposition of such *Urbilder* upon nature and, thus, that new possibilities for conscientious appreciation might unfold.

The kind of imaginative anthropology Wittgenstein employed widely throughout his work—particularly as formulated in Part IIxii of the *Investigations*, as he makes the following caution: "we are not doing natural science; nor yet natural history – since we can also invent fictitious natural history for our purposes"—is often taken as evidence of Wittgenstein's indifference to history. I have argued, however, that these two concerns should rather been seen as complementary approaches. In this regard, Wittgenstein gives an illuminating example in his "Remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough*":

> "But a hypothetical connecting link should in this case do nothing but direct the attention to the similarity, the relatedness, of the *facts*. As one might illustrate an internal relation of a circle to an ellipse by gradually converting an ellipse into a circle; *but not in order to assert that a certain ellipse actually, historically, had originated from a circle* (evolutionary hypothesis), but only in order to sharpen our eye for a formal connection." (PO, p. 133 [MS 110; 1931])

Lest we make too much of Wittgenstein reference to 'facts' here, it is important to keep in mind that this motion—towards finding and inventing intermediate cases—goes the other way as well. For, we might similarly imagine a case in which there *are no intermediary steps* where we are tempted to think that they *must* rather exist. A number of interesting examples of just such a case are explored at length in Wittgenstein's remarks from his 1937-38 manuscripts, particularly those remarks he ultimately reworked for inclusion in *Philosophical Investigations,* collected under the "Cause and Effect: Intuitive Awareness" (MS 119). There are of course many interesting passages in this collection of remarks,

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have missed the historical aspect of such remarks, I have suggested that this may be because, in the analytic tradition, conceptual change is usually considered from the perspective of the one undergoing such a change 'in the moment', as it were—thus relatively *a-temporally* and *a-historically*—rather than seeing the intellectual history of the world as the total sum of such changes undergone by *others*.

given Wittgenstein's chosen theme. But a particularly good example of how we might, through Wittgenstein's application of the morphological method, begin alternatively to *efface* those intermediary, causal connections that we (of our time, and our place) feel rather compelled to posit―perhaps unnecessarily or even *pathologically* so―is the following:

> "Today, in case we actually discovered two seeds which we could not distinguish, but one produced a poppy and the other a rose, we should look frantically for a difference.—But in other circumstances we might give this up—give up looking for a difference. This would be a tremendous thing to do—as great as recognizing indeterminacy. We would no longer *look* for a difference, and so we would no longer say there *must* be a difference. *Now* (today) we have every reason to say that there must be a difference. But we could imagine circumstances where would break with this tradition […] There is an ideal—a direction in which investigations are constantly pushed. 'There *must* be' corresponds to this idea." (PO, p. 411 [MS 119; 1937])

Clearly in this discussion we have relied heavily on such provisional, unpublished sources. I have highlighted, however, how the ideas expressed in these remarks nonetheless find expression in *Philosophical Investigations*, which remains for many the definitive expression of Wittgenstein's mature philosophy. The above remark, for example, though it is taken from the *Nachlaß,* proves intimately connected to some of the broader themes in the *Investigations*―the temporal or historical aspects of which (as I have suggested) have been obscured by our own inattention rather than Wittgenstein's. This is more readily appreciated when we consider how the manuscript in question, MS 119, begins in fact with that passage that would become §415 of the *Investigations*. And it is, of course, §415 that suggests it is possible to consider the *entire collection of remarks* from just such a historical perspective:

> "What we are supplying are really remarks on the natural history of human beings; we are not contributing curiosities however, but observations which no one has doubted, but which have escaped remark only because they are always before our eyes." (PI §415)

That *Philosophical Investigations* can in its entirety be considered from a historicist perspective is not to suggest, however, that one must necessarily do so. For we recall here,

that Wittgenstein's use of the morphological is intended to go both ways—both *towards* and *away from* positing such 'objects of comparison'.

It is in the tension between these two movements that we see the answer to the question with which our investigation began, both in terms of history generally and Wittgenstein's own debt to Goethe. If the influence of Goethe on Wittgenstein's thought was not immediately apparent and has for example only come to light since the complete publication of the *Nachlaß*, this doesn't mean that we have understood Wittgenstein *incorrectly* until now (as Newton would claim we had not understood the true nature of colour before his *Opticks,* or Russell the true nature of judgement, or Frege that of numbers). Rather, between them they share certain formal connections. But that means that each also maintains its own autonomy and stands on his own. We may find and invent intermediary cases, by all means. But we need not necessarily do so. As noted by Breithaupt *et al.*, in regards to their own attempt to recreate the genealogy of the morphological method from Goethe to Wittgenstein:

> "The historical references lend themselves to translation into systematic ones. That is, *links* ("Zwischenglieder") can be found or reconstructed between Goethe and Wittgenstein, many in fact: Goethe—Emerson—James—Wittgenstein; but also Goethe—Schopenhauer—Weininger/Spengler—Wittgenstein. Not only internally, but also with reference to the *whole* apparatus, the idea of morphology lends itself beneficially to translation. Then it can be seen how one gets from morphology to transcendental philosophy here, from pragmatism here to scientism there."[351]

We need not thus necessarily trace Wittgenstein's descriptive morphology back to Goethe (or to Bacon before him, as I have suggested above), but if an enhanced *philosophical praxis* results from this labour then we should.

In terms of accessing the past and of thinking historically, we see now that it is mistaken to suppose that Wittgenstein was simply unable in his later work to give up what Diamond calls 'the myth of a-temporality'. Neither was he indifferent to questions of historical import. References to time, change and history are spread widely throughout his work and

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351F. Breithaupt *et al.*, "Introduction," in *Goethe and Wittgenstein, op. cit.,* p. 10.

indeed represent a *key feature* of his philosophy. Wittgenstein was not, however, 'doing history'. In these remarks Wittgenstein was exploring the descriptive potential of the morphological method (in the tradition of Bacon, Goethe and Spengler, among others) to re-evaluate the present in light of the past in the hopes of broadening the horizon of future possibilities. If we have missed the importance of history in Wittgenstein's thought and his capacity to engage meaningfully with the past, it is only because we have been forbidden by a picture to see his historical thought as meaningful outside of its narrow scope of what we consider to be the acceptable features—in other words, what *must* be the features—of such an historical investigation. Indeed, the very point of employing the morphological method is not simply to 'raze the Bastille' of logical coherence and causal thinking, but rather to release us from the pathological tendency to use measures such as these as the sole standard of whether a given investigation is or is not acceptable. What the morphological method does is to find relations where we previously saw none at all. Likewise, it seeks to release the grip of overly dogmatic *Urbilder* and remove those relations we thought were necessarily given and could not possibly have imagined otherwise. It is not, for example, the case that our thoughts have simply come from nowhere and that new thoughts may never arrive. Nor is it the case that they *must* have come from some place in particular, the inevitable result of an unalterable causal chain of historical events. To claim the opposite is to risk succumbing to the philosophical superlative, that "dogmatism into which we fall so easily when doing philosophy" (PI §192). It is to risk insisting that thought be held up to a standard that, as Wittgenstein and Goethe remind us, was not the result of our investigation but the requirement.

As mentioned above, we have relied heavily on unpublished remarks drawn from various manuscripts in Wittgenstein's *Nachlaß*. I have tried to show that this neither invalidates nor supplants other readings of Wittgenstein's published (in the case of the *Tractatus*) or ready-to-publish works (in the case of the *Investigations*). Through such an approach, it is hoped, a new light may be cast on elements of both. In what follows we will see how remarks one might otherwise consider among Wittgenstein's *marginalia* can nonetheless illuminate key

elements of the *Investigations*. I am referring here to the motto of the work (the quote Nestroy's play *Der Schützling: Überhaupt hat der Fortschritt das an sich, daß er viel größer ausschaut, als er wirklich ist.*) and Wittgenstein's troubled an enigmatic pronouncement in the preface to the work: that he makes the *Investigations* public with "doubtful feelings" and that "it is not impossible that it should fall to the lot of this work, in its poverty and in the darkness of this time, to bring light into one brain or another—but, of course, it is not likely."

CHAPTER 5. *THE SPECTRE OF CONSERVATISM*

> "Only every now and again does one of the sentences that I write here make a step forward [*macht einen Fortschritt*]; the rest are like the snipping of the barber's scissors, which he has to keep moving so as to make a cut with them at the right moment."
>
> —from an unpublished plan for the preface to
> *Philosophical Investigations*
> (CV, p. 66 [MS 136; 8.1.1948])

I. Wittgenstein as '*geistige Erscheinung*'

In his keynote address to the 2nd International Wittgenstein Symposium in Kirchberg am Wechsel in 1977, von Wright announced the publication of Wittgenstein's *pensées* on art, culture and society, entitled *Vermischte Bemerkungen* (*Culture and Value* in English), and argued that it presented an unprecedented resource for determining the relationship between Wittgenstein's personal beliefs and his philosophical achievements:

> "It is a collection of remarks on philosophy, on architecture, literature and music, on history and contemporary society, and on religion. The remarks were written at different times of Wittgenstein's life but for the most part towards the end of it. It is, I think, a very beautiful collection and I wish that everyone interested in Wittgenstein and in the kind of spiritual endeavour that philosophy is would read it again and again. Although by no means an autobiography, it tells us more than any other written source about Wittgenstein's intellectual character and view of life, and also about how

he regarded his relationship with his time. It will be an indispensable source for any future attempt at assessing Wittgenstein and his achievement as '*geistige Erscheinung*'."[352]

In his address von Wright proceeds to ask what was then—as it is today—one of the most pressing questions concerning Wittgenstein's place in the Western intellectual tradition, one which became all the more pressing with the arrival of the publication in 1978: How are we to understand the relationship between Wittgenstein's open and public philosophy (as found, for example, in the *Tractatus* and the more or less publication-ready *Philosophical Investigations*) and the deeply entrenched 'cultural pessimism' that we witness in many of the private remarks from his *Nachlaß?*

The question is important claims von Wright because, *pace* Wittgenstein, philosophy is the result of certain pathological thought patterns, which in turn reflect for him a deeper malaise on the cultural level: "If philosophical problems are symptomatic of language producing malignant outgrowths which obscure our thinking," von Wright notes, "then there must be a cancer in the *Lebensweise*, in the way of life itself."[353] If this is correct it has the potential to greatly problematise the reception of Wittgenstein's philosophy. For insofar as we engage in philosophy at all, this would seem to suggest not only that there is something wrong with our *use* of language—as expressions used to characterise philosophy in *Philosophical Investigations*, such as "a piece of plain nonsense" or "bumps on the head of our understanding" (§119), might seem to suggest—in other words something that one not need

352 G.H. von Wright, "Wittgenstein in Relation to His Times", p. 73, *Proceedings of the 2ⁿᵈ International Wittgenstein Symposium (Wittgenstein and His Impact on Contemporary Thought)* (Vienna: Höldre-Pichler-Tempsky, 1980), p. 73-78. Hereafter references to von Wright's address will refer to the reprinted edition: G.H. von Wright, "Wittgenstein in relation to his Times", in eds. B. McGuinness and A. Kenny, *Wittgenstein and his Times* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), pp. 108-120.

353 G.H. von Wright, "Wittgenstein in Relation to His Times", *op. cit.*, p. 119

to take very *seriously* at all[354]—but also there is something wrong with *us* and the way that we live our lives in these times of ours.

The fact is that Wittgenstein was intensely suspicious of the 'spirit' that, as he notes in a foreword prepared in 1930 for a text that was never quite published during his lifetime, "informs the vast stream of European and American civilization in which all of us stand." (PR, Foreword) The hallmark of this spirit, which Wittgenstein found 'alien and uncongenial'*,* is the belief in progress—above all, the kind of progress that results from the technological application of scientific thought to the problems of society. "*That* spirit," he notes, "expresses itself in an onward movement, in building ever larger and more complicated structures"; it "tries to grasp the world by way of its periphery" and "adds one construction to another, moving on and up, as it were, from one stage to the next." (ibid.)[355] Progress is here painted as a kind of quasi-mechanical process, self-sustaining and self-maintaining, creating in each instance the conditions of its own perpetuation—which is to say, its own *perpetuation,* and not its *realisation*, as one may be forgiven for mistaking. It is

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354 The original German of PI §119 reads: *Die Ergebnisse der Philosophie sind die Entdeckung irgend eines schlichten Unsinns und Beulen, die sich der Verstand beim Anrennen an die Grenze der Sprache geholt hat.* Regarding Wittgenstein's use of the term '*schlicht'*, and its potential for sarcasm that is not captured in the English translation, Engelmann makes the following remark: "The besetting sin of false artistic endeavour is the striving to avoid banality and its odium, thus setting oneself apart from one's fellows. Invariably the frantic attempts to find striking and precious phrases lead up to falsification of the second degree, when something banal not born of personal experience is picked up second hand, because it looked so exquisite in its original setting. (Such artificial banality is aptly described by the sarcastic use of the word 'plain', in the German '*schlicht*'.) It is falsification by means of the genuine." (P. Engelmann, "Observations on the *Tractatus*", p. 113, in P. Engelmann, *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein* (New York: Horizon Press, 1967), pp. 94-118.)

355 As we saw in an earlier chapter, it is very likely that these lines were penned with the 'spirit' of the Vienna Circle in mind, what Wittgenstein describes here as that of the 'typical Western scientist." Recall that Carnap in his preface to the *Aufbau,* written just a few years earlier than Wittgenstein's here, would note:

"If we allot to the individual in philosophical work as in the special sciences only a partial task, then we can look with more confidence to the future: in slow careful construction insight after insight will be won. Each collaborator contributes only what he can endorse and justify before the whole body of his co-workers. Thus stone will be carefully added to stone and a safe building will be erected at which each following generation can continue work." (R. Carnap, *The Logical Structure of the World, op cit.,* p. xvii.)

in this light that we should consider J. Bouveresse's Krausian characterisation of progress (which, he notes, following Kraus, is not a *movement* but rather a *state*[356]) as that which is always holding off on a future promise:

> "It would seem that additional growth is necessary to solve the problems posed by growth […] Adversaries of the dogma of unlimited growth are thereby compelled to a certain degree of caution; but this circle also considerably weakens the position of the advocates of the dogma, because their foremost advantage is that the real and considerable improvements that might follow on a thoughtful and judicious use of what is gained through growth can always be held over to the next day and even deferred indefinitely."[357]

Viewed from a particular angle, such progress may indeed seem impressive, like a great machine that produces a great deal of noise and heat though it is not clear to what other end it has been created. However, as Wittgenstein reminds us in the motto of *Philosophical Investigations,* the thing about progress is that it generally looks much greater than it really is: *Überhaupt hat der Fortschritt das an sich, daß er viel größer ausschaut, als er wirklich ist.*[358] Given that this line is the only occurrence of the word *Fortschritt* ('progress' in

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[356]In 1909, Karl Kraus published an article in *Die Fackel* entitled "Der Fortschritt", arguing that progress is a mere form, or worst—at best, a slogan: "A newspaper phrase conveying a lively image has suggested itself to me. This is how it is worded: we are under the sign of progress. Only now do I recognize progress for what it is—a mobile decoration. We stay ahead and keep walking in place. Progress is a standpoint and looks like movement." (Quoted in J. Bouveresse, "Wittgenstein, von Wright and the Myth of Progress", p. 303, *Paragraph,* 34(3), 2011, pp. 301-321.)

[357]J. Bouveresse, "Wittgenstein, von Wright and the Myth of Progress", *op cit.,* p. 303.

[358]In English: "In general it is characteristic of progress that it looks much bigger than it really is." The motto is taken from the play of Austrian playwright J. N. Nestroy's, *Der Schützling* (Act IV), where the story's hero, Gottlieb Herb (the son of a poor bookbinder), proclaims it at the end of a monologue deploring the limited success of fighting to eradicate physical and social evil in the world. (Cf. H. Spiegelberg, "The Significance of Mottoes in Wittgenstein's Major Works," *Proceedings of the 2nd International Wittgenstein Symposium (Wittgenstein and His Impact on Contemporary Thought)* (Vienna: Höldre-Pichler-Tempsky, 1980), pp. 54-57.) The full passage reads thus:

> "There are so many means of extirpating and eradicating, and nevertheless so little evil has yet been extirpated, so little wickedness eradicated from this world, that one clearly sees that people invent a lot of things, but not the right on. And yet we live in the era of progress, don't we? I s'pose progress is like a newly discovered land; a flourishing colonial system on the coast, the interior still wilderness, steppe, prairie. It is in the nature of all progress that it looks much greater than it really is." (Quoted in

English, literally translated as 'forward step') in the work—Wittgenstein's second *magnum opus*, of which he was acutely aware that it would stand as the sole published testimony to the developments that his philosophy had undergone since returning to Cambridge in 1929 —how are we to understand this enigmatic pronouncement?

There is one sense in which the motto might be read entirely in isolation from what we would traditionally consider to be the philosophical content of the book: i.e. as a reflection upon Wittgenstein's own work and upon its value as a philosophical corpus. We cannot forget here the particularly radical change that occurred in Wittgenstein's style of thought between his earlier work in the *Tractatus* and in his later work, such as it is found in *Philosophical Investigations*, nor his characterisation of the second book as a response to "grave errors" identified in the first (PI, Preface). Although Wittgenstein had already written disparagingly of the possibilities of his philosophy to deliver any form of substantive redemption in the *Tractatus*—the second thing in which the value of that work consists, as he notes in the preface to that work, is that "it shows how little is achieved when these problems are solved" (T, p. 4)—there is little reason to assume that Wittgenstein felt his later work in *Philosophical Investigations* had any more emancipatory potential. On the contrary, Wittgenstein often remarked disparagingly about the legacy of his later work, noting on several occasions that he felt his thought was only 'reproductive' and unlikely to inspire anything but a kind of pseudo-philosophical jargon.[359] In the preface to the later

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G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 16.)

[359]As Malcolm relates of Wittgenstein: "In his lectures he would sometimes exclaim in a time of real suffering 'I am a dreadful teacher!' He once concluded a years' worth of lectures with this sentence: 'The only seed that I am likely to sow is a certain jargon'." (N. Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, *op cit.,* p. 63.) This recalls also Wittgenstein's response to Moore in his 1930's lecture—in response to Moore's question regarding whether Wittgenstein was using the expression 'rule of grammar' in the ordinary sense when he said that colour incompatibility reflected a grammatical impossibility rather than a psychological incompatibility: "The right expression is "It does not have sense to say—"; but we usually express it badly by speaking of a rule of grammar." (L. Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein's Lectures: Cambridge, 1930-1932.* ed. D. Lee (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1980), p. 97) Wittgenstein's remarks here may also recall the series of remarks, circa 1930, where under the influence of Weininger he described he work disparagingly in anti-Semitic terms; however, as we saw earlier, he continued to describe is work as 'reproductive' even into the mid-1940's, long after Weininger's influence in this regard had waned (cf.

book, for example, he notes that much of the material from which it was drawn was "marked by all the defects of a weak draughtsman", and that after they were rejected only a number of "tolerable ones" remained—that he should have liked to produce a good book; however: "This has not come about, but the time is past in which I could improve it." (PI, p. ix)

Is this motto a reflection, then, on the limited value of Wittgenstein's return to philosophy post-1929, and consequently of that which we are often inclined to consider one of his most enduring qualities as a philosopher—i.e., his inability to rest content with what he had just written, and his consequent capacity to continually advance into unknown territory… in a word, *to progress?*[360] Or is it rather, as the 1930 foreword suggests, a signal announcing that only those readers who are in sympathy with the *spirit of the work* will understand it? Von Wright suggests that the motto is best read according to this second sense.[361] As he remarks:

CV, p. 60 [MS 134; 10.4.1947]).

360 This is in fact how Malcolm describes the significance of the motto in his memoirs: "His concept of the value of his own work would not be easy to describe. In the preface to the *Investigations* he says that it is not 'a good book', and this remark was not an affectation of modesty. […] He expounded and defended his views ideas in argument with confidence and power. He did not think of the central conceptions of his philosophy were *possibly* in error. He certainly believed, most of the time, that he had produced an important advance in philosophy. Yet I think that he was inclined to feel that the importance of this advance might be exaggerated by those who were too close to it. This feeling is probably reflected in his choice of Nestroy's remark for the motto of the *Investigations.*" (N. Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir, op. cit.,* pp. 59-60.)

361 So too do Baker and Hacker, in their 'analytical commentary' on the *Philosophical Investigations.* They note, in their defence, that between 1930 and 1947 Wittgenstein played with several options for the motto. Not one of these points towards the personal and self-depreciating reading of the motto that Malcolm advocates (a reading that has been taken up in other places besides, with Malcolm's remark the only source of evidence for it; cf. e.g. H. Spielberg, "The Significance of Mottoes in Wittgenstein's Major Works", *op. cit.*). They discuss there options that Wittgenstein explored at various points in the *Nachlaß*, sources as diverse as:

1. A quote from Matthias Claudius' poem "Abendlied" (noted in 1931): "Do you see the moon there? // Only half of it is visible // Yet it is round and beautiful!"

2. A quote from Hertz, referred to as early as the *Blue and Brown Books* (1933): "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."

3. Longfellow's poem "The Builders" (noted in 1938): "In the elder days of Art // Builders wrought with greatest care, // Each minute and unseen part, // For the gods are everywhere." (Wittgenstein

"If one reads it in its context in Nestroy's play, *Der Schüztling* [*The Protégé*], one will perhaps understand it better. Progress, we are told, is only the greening fringe of a colonial territory with a vast hinterland of the impenetrable wilderness."[362] He notes in this regard that Wittgenstein's personal and political views are rarely, if ever, *prophetic*. Of Nietzsche —who did precisely describe his work as prophetic, and himself as 'a shaft of longing for the opposite shore'—Wittgenstein once wrote that he had touched on problems of the intellectual world of the West which no other philosopher had even approached, let alone solved, problems which could "only be written in the obscure language of prophecy, comprehensible to very few indeed." (CV, p. 9 [MS 110; 16.1.31]) Wittgenstein, on the contrary, did not pursue obscurity, but rather clarity. He sought directness of speech, what one might even call the *emancipation* of ordinary language. Far from 'longing for the opposite shore', he longed for a return to the ordinary, everyday world of the here and now, which he felt was rather obscured by philosophical thinking. In this sense it might indeed be claimed that if Wittgenstein had no faith in the potential of the future to resolve the

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follows this transcription with a parenthetical remark: "*könnte mir als ein Motto dienen*", of which Backer and Hacker aptly note: "It is unclear whether the sense of the parenthesis is that these verses could serve as a motto for the book, or as a motto for W. *himself*." Also interesting to note here, is the title to the poem and the famous 'Builders' of Wittgenstein's own 'language game #2' of the *Investigations*.)

4. A remark of unknown origin (circa 1939): "A rascal who gives more than he has." (Again, I would note that it is not clear whether Wittgenstein intends to refer here to the book or to its author!)

5. Goethe's poem "Allerdings" (noted in 1946): "Nature has neither core nor husk, ask yourself whether you are core or husk."

6. Finally, M. O'C. Drury relates that (in 1931) Wittgenstein once thought of using as a motto a quotation from Shakespeare's *King Lear*: "I'll teach you differences".

About versions 1 and 3-5, Backer and Hacker note: "It is striking how the Nestroy motto and [these four alternatives] display a kind of family resemblance. The image of husk and core, appearance and reality, the revealed and the concealed run through them, even though they alternate in evaluation." (G. P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning, op. cit.,* p. 16.) They fail to note, however, that the other options, 2 and 6, relate precisely to Wittgenstein's post-Tractarian philosophical methodology, nor do they consider what these methodological remarks might have in common with the other four.

362 G.H. von Wright, "Wittgenstein in Relation to his Times", *op. cit.*, p. 114.

problems of the present he may nonetheless have had no clear *philosophical* vision of that failure.

However, to do so would be to misunderstand the deep affinities that he felt his thought had with that of Spengler, both in terms of what Wittgenstein took from his reading of *The Decline of the West*, as well as what he rejected in the work. Though von Wright notes that Wittgenstein did not, like Spengler, develop a clearly defined 'philosophy of history' *per se*, he nonetheless lived the decline of the West, so to speak:

> "He lived it, not only in his disgust for contemporary Western civilization, but also in his deep awe and understanding of this civilization's great past. How else could he have written these words which I find deeply moving: 'The earlier culture will become a heap of rubble and finally a heap of ashes, but spirits will hover over the ashes'."[363]

This is certainly a fair characterisation. In private, Wittgenstein often expressed his frustration at being unable to accomplish what he thought philosophy most required of him, a fact that was tied for him to what he felt was the inability of the present age to grasp that which he sought to achieve in his work. As he noted in an alternate version to the preface of *Philosophical Investigations:*

> "It is not without reluctance that I deliver this book to the public. It will fall into hands which are not for the most part those in which I like to imagine it. May it soon—this is what I wish for it—be completely forgotten by the philosophical journalists, and so be preserved perhaps for a better sort of reader." (CV, p. 66 [MS 136; 8.1.1948])

But besides the many personal recollections of Wittgenstein's students and colleagues, we need not restrict ourselves to anecdotal evidence for confirmation, nor for that matter to its wealth of expression in the unpublished remarks from the *Nachlaß*. Particularly, we might consider here the preface to *Philosophical Investigations*, where he notes that it is with "doubtful feelings" that he makes the work public, and that: "It is not impossible that it

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363 G.H. von Wright, "Wittgenstein in Relation to his Times", *op. cit.*, p. 116.

should fall to the lot of this work, in its poverty and in the darkness of this time, to bring light into one brain or another—but, of course, it is not likely." (PI, p. x)

It is a curious remark, whose dark and fatalistic tone stands out in stark contrast to the content of the work to follow. For within the pages of the *Investigations* there is no indication that it is intended to be anything more than than the *Tractatus* had been: a 'treatise', albeit of a very different form, on the nature of language, and one which deals moreover almost exclusively with a set of standard problems taken precisely from the contemporary philosophical *milieu* of its times. Certainly, there is no expression of anything even remotely reminiscent of the kind of troubled and pessimistic historical consciousness that such a remark suggests.

It is in this sense that von Wright is right to isolate three interrelated threads in Wittgenstein's thought: 1. his view that the individual's beliefs, judgements, and thoughts are entrenched in shared linguistic forms that are by nature resistant to questioning; 2. his view that philosophical problems arise as disquietudes of the mind, having resulted from some malfunction in our linguistic forms and hence our communal way of life; and 3. his apparent rejection of the scientific-technological world-view of modern industrialised societies, which he considered a form of cultural decay. Regarding these three points von Wright notes:

> "It can hardly be denied that these three aspects are closely interconnected and deeply integrated in Wittgenstein's intellectual personality. An effort to understand it which does not pay attention to this fact is doomed to failure. What is problematic, however, is whether or to what extent the three aspects are separable from one another in thought or whether there is also some kind of conceptual connectedness between them. Particularly pertinent is the question whether the third aspect, the Spenglerian one, is only contingently, that is for historical and psychological reasons, connected with the other two in Wittgenstein's thought. If the connection is only accidental or contingent, then one

could say that Wittgenstein's attitude to his times is irrelevant to the understanding of his philosophy, even though it may be quite important to an understanding of his personality."[364]

The difficulty arises here because Wittgenstein, unlike many other philosophers, did not claim an a-historical, timeless validity to the view of philosophy he was advancing, or indeed to any philosophy at all. In fact, quite the opposite; for insofar as philosophical problems arise form malfunctions in *particular* manners of speaking and living, philosophy itself is not a 'historical constant'—at least no more than our ways of speaking are. As those malfunctions are expressed only within the psycho-social horizons of particular linguistic forms, so too will be the various forms of philosophy that are to be addressed and ultimately dissolved. As he notes in *Culture and Value*:

> "People say again and again that philosophy doesn't really progress, that we are still occupied with the same philosophical problems as were the Greeks. But the people who say this don't understand why it has to be so. It is because our language has remained the same and keeps seducing us into asking the same questions. As long as there continues to be a verb 'to be' that looks as if it functions in the same way as 'to eat' and 'to drink', as long as we continue to talk of a river of time, of an expanse of space, etc. etc. people will keep stumbling over the same puzzling difficulties and find themselves staring at something which no explanation seems capable of clearing up.
> And what's more, this satisfies a longing for the transcendent, because in so far as people think they can see the "limits of human understanding", they believe of course that they can see beyond these." (CV, p. 15 [MS 111; 24.8.1931])

If Wittgenstein's own radically different form of philosophising is a legitimate response to the unhealthy patterns of thought he identified in our ways of speaking—a longing for the transcendent?—this will determine the extent to which, once those problematic patterns are dissipated, the philosophical conundrums that torment us will simply no longer arise. At that time, there will no longer be any need for the kinds of insight that his philosophy

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[364] G.H. von Wright, "Wittgenstein in Relation to his Times", *op. cit.*, p. 118.

affords. As he notes in *Philosophical Investigations*, in a meditation on his novel, post-1929 conception of the task of philosophy:

> "It is not our aim to refine or complete the system of rules for the use of our words in unheard-of ways.
>
> For the clarity that we are aiming at is indeed *complete* clarity. But this simply means that the philosophical problems should *completely* disappear.
>
> The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to.— The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* in question.—Instead, we now demonstrate a method, by examples; and the series of examples can be broken off.—Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated), not a *single* problem.
>
> There is not *a* philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies." (PI §133)

Wittgenstein's way of approaching philosophy was not an attempt to draw a picture of what philosophy in its essence is, or even *should be*, but rather what he believed it demanded of him given the nature of the times in which he was living. By the light of his own philosophy it would seem that if Wittgenstein felt the need to philosophise in the precise manner that he did, this would be attributable to his feelings toward the broader historical trends of the times. For it is the concrete historical expression of those linguistic malfunctions that demanded being addressed as he sought to address them. It is in this sense that we are confronted with von Wright's question: To what extent can we separate the third aspect of Wittgenstein's 'intellectual personality', i.e. the *pessimistic one*, from the other two?

II. The 'Conservative Paradox'

In his reply to von Wright's call to probe what were then the relatively uncharted boundaries between these three interconnected aspects of Wittgenstein's thought—his philosophy, his

view *of* philosophy, and his deeply entrenched cultural pessimism—J.C. Nyíri proposes in fact that no such distinction is possible. Spurred on by his intense cultural pessimism, the core elements of Wittgenstein's philosophy are, Nyíri argues, as thoroughly conservative ('neo-conservative', in Nyíri's terms) as his politics. Though he recognises that drawing a universally valid characterisation of conservatism presents some difficulties—and thus, for example, one is only able to draw 'family resemblances' between Wittgenstein's thoughts and those of the leading conservative theorists of his day—, he points nonetheless towards the conservatives' thoroughgoing suspicion of theory, which manifests itself in a scepticism regarding all promises of a future utopia, a nostalgia for traditional, authentic modes of existence and the un-intellectual closeness to life that these are supposed to embody. "The most radical expression of the conservative hostility against theory," he states, "is the distaste for all abstract concepts: the conservative preference for silence."[365]

Though Nyíri is concerned principally with exploring elements of Wittgenstein's later philosophical work in relation to conservatism, one would also not fail to recognise certain of these traits in the author of the *Tractatus* as well, if one wished to search for them: e.g., his distrust in the capacity of instruction ("Perhaps this book will be understood only by someone who has himself had the thoughts that are expressed in it.—So it is not a textbook"), his dismissal of the value of novelty ("Indeed, what I have written here makes no claim to novelty in any detail, and the reason why I give no sources is that it is a matter of indifference to me"), his call for an almost folksy brand of simplicity ("The whole sense of the book might be summed up in the following words: what can be said at all can be said clearly"), and, of course, the work's final invocation of silence regarding all things of a higher, spiritual order ("and what we cannot talk about must pass over in silence"). (T, p. 3-4) Despite the great change that took place in Wittgenstein's thinking upon his return to philosophy nearly ten years after the publication of the *Tractatus*, his later remarks are rife with similar thoughts. While this is particularly true of those personal remarks collected in *Vermischte Bemerkungen*, it is by no means true of them alone.

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365 J.C. Nyíri, "Wittgenstein's Later Work in Relation to Conservatism", p. 47, in ed. B. McGuinness, *Wittgenstein and his Times* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), pp. 44-68.

However, insofar as this characterisation of conservatism has a bearing on the content of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, Nyíri goes one step further. Most controversially, Nyíri claims that with the later concepts of 'rule-following', 'language games' and 'forms of life', Wittgenstein paints a conservative picture of human nature as one that needs, and *ought to be*, constrained by its form of life, which in turn places it beyond the reach of criticism: "A criticism presupposes a form of life, a language, that is, a tradition of agreements; every judgement is necessarily embedded in traditions. That is why traditions cannot be judged. 'One can only *describe* here' Wittgenstein wrote in 1931, 'and say: this is what human life is like'."[366] Nyíri quotes a familiar-sounding passage from Wittgenstein here, regarding the stability of practices and the inexorability that enforces conformity among its participants, as in for example the practice of counting:

> "We should presumably not call it 'counting' if everyone said the numbers one after the other *anyhow*; but of course it is not simply a question of a name. For what we call 'counting' is an important part of our life's activities. […] Counting (and that means: counting like *this*) is a technique employed daily in the most various operations of our lives. And that is why we learn to count as we do: with endless practice, with merciless exactitude; that is why it is inexorably insisted that we shall all say 'two' after 'one', 'three' after 'two' and so on." (RMF, I, 4)

Someone counting thus hastens as it were to a 'common meeting point' with everyone else; where no such meeting point can be found each man declares the other a fool and a heretic, according to the popular citation from among Wittgenstein's last remarks (OC §611). This

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[366] J.C. Nyíri, "Wittgenstein's Later Work in Relation to Conservatism", *op. cit.*, p. 39. Feyerabend too would note—although unlike Nyíri—in order to *criticise* what he considered the conservative leanings of this formulation of the task of philosophy as that which 'leaves everything as it is': "'Wittgensteinian' analyses are characterized by the fact that they are restricted to a single 'language-game'; they are *monistic*. Alternatives are brought in, not in order to arrive at a better theory through a criticism of the existing one, but rather *in order to get a better insight into existing theory*. And getting better insight into the existing theory (the existing 'language-game') means revealing its hidden strengths, i.e., its capability to deal with problems that have arisen and to remove the impression that a revision might be needed. A Wittgensteinian uses alternatives with a *dogmatic*, or *conservative*, purpose. Knowing where the argument is going to lead, he does not really take them seriously, although he may admit that they possess an important therapeutic function." (P. Feyerabend, "Problems of Empiricism", p. 227, fn. 20, in ed. R. Colodny, *Beyond the Edge of Certainty* (Pittsburgh: CPS Publications, 1965), pp. 145-260.)

in no way implies in Nyíri's view that forms of life, language-games, etc., are *static*. Quite the opposite; however, Wittgenstein's conservative attitude is, he argues, most clearly expressed in his disdain for any language which—insofar as it is a *new language*—has not 'grown organically' from its proper, which is to say traditional, 'soil'.[367]

According to Nyíri, the notion of rule-following arises in Wittgenstein's later work in response to what he calls the 'neo-conservative paradox', a sentiment that undoubtedly prevailed among Europe's German-speaking population, and Austrians especially, following the collapse of the old world-order after the First World War. Noting first the conservative's 'preference for silence', Nyíri continues:

> "This silence seems to become ever more compelling as the distance grows between contemporary reality and the order of the past—the order that is to be re-established. But, at the same time, the need to possess a guiding theory becomes ever more compelling. The so-called old conservatism of the nineteenth-century spoke simply of an historically developed or indeed divine order which was to be preserved or re-erected. But the German and Austrian neo-conservatives of the twenties and early thirties were no longer acquainted with any traditions that would have been worth preserving; they wanted change, without however knowing—or being able to know—in what direction this change should occur. As K. von Klemperer[368] puts it, 'the new conservatism was clearly heading

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367 An illustrative, and humorous, example is provided by Carnap, in his intellectual biography:

> "I sometimes had the impression that the deliberately rational and unemotional attitude of the scientist and likewise any ideas which had the flavor of 'enlightenment' were repugnant to Wittgenstein. At our first meeting with Wittgenstein, Schlick unfortunately mentioned that I was interested in the problem of an international language like Esperanto. As I had expected, Wittgenstein was definitely opposed to this idea. But I was surprised by the vehemence of his emotions. A language which had not 'grown organically' seemed to him not only useless but despicable." (R. Carnap, "Intellectual Autobiography", p. 26, in ed. P.A. Schilpp, *The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1963), pp. 3-43.)

That meeting was in 1927. As late as 1946, Wittgenstein still speaks of a "feeling of disgust" that he experiences when thinking of Esperanto, which merely "plays at being a 'language'." (CV, p. 52 [MS 132; 26.9.1946])

368 von Klemperer was a prominent member of a generation of European historians who fled Nazi Germany and established themselves as scholars in the United States. (The quote that follows is from his *Germany's New Conservatism: Its History and Dilemma in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 7.)

> into a dilemma between conserving and destroying, between a positive attitude towards our civilization and nihilism.' The old conservatism had, philosophically speaking, an ontology as its basis; neo-conservatism, however, is a conservatism from which history had taken away the possibility of an ontology."[369]

Using the language of Wittgenstein, the core of the neo-conservatives' insight might be described as having given rise to a 'mental cramp' in their world-view. The conservatives longed for a return to the past, but in fact they found nothing there worth re-establishing; they felt intuitively that one must put one's faith in the traditions that hold society together, but found none in which they are confident enough to do so. Their conundrum then was that: "on the one hand man, by his very nature, cannot do without absolute standards, that he needs and ought to observe fixed truths, but that on the other hand all absolute standards have perished historically, are a thing of the past, and fixed truths do not exist at all."[370]

Perhaps surprisingly, the 'neo-conservative paradox' that Nyíri formulates here does indeed find an analogous expression in the later work of Wittgenstein, at least as it has been interpreted by some. And here, Nyíri is by no means alone. This is most notably the case in the what has come to be called 'the rule-following paradox', which lays at the heart of the so-called Private Language Argument of the *Investigations*. The problem, as it has come to be commonly characterised, is that the very phenomenon of rule-following seems to point directly towards its own 'autonomy', an underlying region of arbitrariness in truth (which Nyíri describes as 'anarchistic'). "This," Wittgenstein writes in *Philosophical Investigations*, "was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule." The solution, also as it is commonly formulated, lies in the fact that 'obeying a rule' is a practice, and one that we engage in *blindly*: "If everything can be made out to accord with the rule, then it can also be made out to conflict with it. And so there would be neither accord nor conflict here." (PI §201) According to Nyíri, Wittgenstein's solution to the neo-conservative paradox is found,

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369 J.C. Nyíri, "Wittgenstein's Later Work in Relation to Conservatism", *op. cit.*, p. 48.

370 J.C. Nyíri, "Wittgenstein's Later Work in Relation to Conservatism", *op. cit.*, p. 56.

as is his solution to the rule-following paradox, in his insight that the possibility of alternative orders in no way weakens the inexorable force that our own exercises upon us.[371] The arbitrary of truth—which, it might be noted, arises in the conservative's mind by a certain unsettling *historical* consciousness[372]—is brought back into line by re-inscribing it into the givenness of the present social order and the unwavering force that our traditions exert upon us: "The basic concepts of the new framework," Nyíri notes in regards to Wittgenstein's later philosophy, are thus: "training and behaviour, use, custom, institution, practice, technique, agreement."[373] Put differently, one might claim that the possibility of encountering some strange tribe or other, as Wittgenstein was fond of imagining in his later remarks—including, not incidentally, the possibility that it is *we ourselves* who may have

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371 An interesting parallel that merits much more consideration than I am able to provide here is presented in *Culture and Value*, where Wittgenstein discusses what he calls the "Catholic dogma" in terms not unlike those of the rule-following paradox: "The effect of making men think in accordance with dogmas, perhaps in the form of certain graphic propositions, will be very particular: I am not thinking of these dogmas as determining men's opinions but rather as completely controlling the *expression* of all opinions. People will live under an absolute, palpable tyranny, though without being able to say they are not free. For dogma is expressed in the form of an assertion, and is unshakeable, but at the same time any practical opinion *can* be made to harmonize with it; admittedly more easily in some cases than in others." (CV, p. 28 [MS 118; 15.9.1937])

372 It is interesting to note, briefly, that the temporal dimension to the rule-following paradox is explored at length in Kripke's *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, where it is unfortunately removed from any historical sensitivity that Wittgenstein may have intended to address with these considerations. E.g.:

"Now suppose I encounter a bizarre sceptic. This sceptic questions my certainty about my answer, in what I just called the 'metalinguistic' sense. Perhaps, he suggests, as I used the term 'plus' in the past, the answer I intended for '68+57' should have been '5'! Of course the sceptic's suggestion is obviously insane. My initial response to such a suggestion might be that the challenger should go back to school and learn to add. Let the challenger, however, continue. After all, he says, if I am now so confident that, as I used the symbol '+', my intention was that '68+57' should turn out to denote 125, this cannot be because I explicitly gave myself instructions that 125 is the result of performing the addition in this particular instance. By hypothesis, I did no such thing. But of course the idea is to say what function this was? In the past I gave myself only a finite number of examples instantiating this function. […] The sceptic claims (or feigns to claim) that I am now misinterpreting my own previous usage. By 'plus', he says, I *always meant* quus; now, under the influence of some insane frenzy, or a bout of LSD, I have misinterpreted my own previous usage." (S. Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 8-9.)

373 J.C. Nyíri, "Wittgenstein's Later Work in Relation to Conservatism", *op. cit.*, p. 85.

been that strange tribe in the past, or become so estranged in the future—does not in the least loosen the grip that our own immanent form of life has upon us.

Or does it? There is certainly some justification to Nyíri's position here, for Wittgenstein would indeed appear to hold that those aspects of human life that are closest to us are—if not immune to *all* critique, as Wittgenstein's condemnation of the 'spirit' of his own times clearly illustrates—at least immune to *a certain kind of critique*, for example what we might traditionally consider to be philosophically enlightened critique 'from first principles'. In particular, the kind of critique embodied in naturalised moral philosophies, which would paint a picture of our social and spiritual lives as governed by moral *facts*, was undoubtedly repugnant to Wittgenstein.[374] But at the same time Wittgenstein clearly articulated a methodology, most eloquently expressed in his understanding of imagination, for releasing the grip of certain fantasies that can take hold of one—fantasies such as the conservatives', which would dictate the need for tradition and constraint on the basis of certain general facts of human nature.[375] Most notably, in section xii of Part II of *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein notes:

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[374] Perhaps the best, or at least the most flamboyant demonstration of this relates to the meeting of Wittgenstein and Popper at the Cambridge Moral Sciences Club in October 1946. According to the story —which has now ascended to near legendary status—Popper was there to deliver a paper called "Are There Philosophical Problems?", a title that no doubt would have annoyed Wittgenstein from the outset. According to Popper's version of the story, no doubt exaggerated, but telling nonetheless, Popper had put forth a series of problems that he insisted were real philosophical problems, rather than what Wittgenstein would have called mere 'puzzles'. Wittgenstein naturally dismissed them all with increasing agitation. When the subject of ethics came up, his agitation reached its height. Wittgenstein challenged him to give an example of a genuine moral rule, waving a poker from a nearby fireplace in the air as he did so. Popper—so the story goes—replied: 'Not to threaten visiting lecturers with pokers', whereupon Wittgenstein threw down the poker and stormed out of the room. (Cf. D. Edmonds and J Eidinow, *Wittgenstein's Poker, op. cit*.)

[375] We might consider here, the following from Nyíri:

"Wittgenstein is of course perfectly aware of the fact that there are different forms of life, different ultimate givennesses. And that these different forms of life all have the same value, that human nature can manifest itself equally in various forms of life. But there is a human nature, since it is an unalterable anthropological fact—a fact that is, indeed, a precondition for the existence of logic—that any human being must, in order to be a human being, be constrained by some form of life, by some network of tradition." (J.C. Nyíri, "Wittgenstein's Later Work in Relation to Conservatism", *op. cit.*, p. 59.)

"If the formation of concepts can be explained by facts of nature, should we not be interested, not in grammar, but rather in that in nature which is the basis of grammar?—Our interest certainly includes the correspondence between concepts and very general facts of nature. (Such facts as mostly do not strike us because of their generality.) But our interest does not fall back upon these possible causes of the formation of concept; we are not doing natural science; nor yet natural history—since we can also invent fictitious natural history for our purposes.

I am not saying: if such-and-such facts of nature were different people would have different concepts (in the sense of a hypothesis). But: if anyone believes that certain concepts are absolutely the correct, and that having different ones would mean not realising something that we realize—then let him imagine certain very general facts of nature to be different from what we are used to, and the formation of concepts different from the usual ones will become intelligible to him" (PI, p. 230)

According to A. Janik, remarks such as this suggest that although Wittgenstein may have had a conservative temperament in his dealings with life and the political situation of post-war Europe, the significance that his philosophy has for those of us practising it today need not be essentially tied to this. We need not commit ourselves to Wittgenstein's general social and political conservatism, nor to the cultural pessimism that is (justifiably) characterised as its source. Regarding Wittgenstein's own view about the extra-philosophical lessons that might be taken from his life in order to understanding the significance of his work, Janik notes:

"Indeed, it appears to be characteristic of his work as a whole that he wished to separate his philosophizing from his personal beliefs. We have in recent years discovered more and more evidence that Wittgenstein was profoundly profoundly [sic] conservative and that this conservatism certainly casts a new light on his work but I think it also makes it all the more amazing that the only work [sic] in which he deliberately and explicitly emphasizes his conservatism, *Vermischte*

We will return briefly to look at what it mean to speak of 'tradition' here in relation to Wittgenstein's well known remarks on 'forms of life'. Schulte has argued, for example, that although 'tradition' is a useful way to emphasise what Wittgenstein means by the expression 'form of life', one would not be referring to such things as we normally consider as part of our 'cultural traditions' (celebrations, holidays, etc.) with this phrase (as Nyíri is perhaps doing here).

Bemerkungen, is much more a personal statement which intends to reveal the man's thoughts rather than the philosopher's positions. Nyíri emphasizes that the evidence we have to go on is scant but I think that what we do have to go on indicated that Wittgenstein took great pains to separate his cultural pessimism from, say, his view of meaning or thinking."[376]

Besides pointing to the numerous difficulties that one is presented with in trying to characterise 'conservatism' at all—Nyíri's appeal to the notion of 'family resemblances', for example, does not in Janik's view absolve him from giving an argument regarding precisely what does and what does not fall under the concept in a given instance[377]—it is particularly problematic in his view to classify methodological concepts such as 'language-games' and 'forms of life' under such a rubric. Wittgenstein actually tells us *very little* about what he means by terms such as 'form of life', Janik notes—and for good reason. According to Janik, there is: 1. no evidence that by the term Wittgenstein meant anything other than an arbitrary set of contingent social practices (rather than a reified conception of a real, existing 'society' or 'culture', as Nyíri suggests), and 2. there is no evidence for this because it was not *a part of the problem* he was addressing. "We should bear in mind," Janik notes, "that our problems often arise from his *solutions*."[378]

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[376] A. Janik, "Nyíri on the Conservatism of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy", p. 130, in A. Janik, *Essays on Wittgenstein and Weininger* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1985), pp. 116-135. A similar but more modest claim is made by Bouveresse, when he notes: "Though, in different places in his manuscripts, he expressed his antipathy for modern civilization and his feeling of belonging to a world which was condemned to disappear, and had practically disappeared, one would look in vain for some trace of that in the philosophical texts that he intended for publication." J. Bouveresse, "'The Darkness of this Time': Wittgenstein and the Modern World", p. 12, in ed. A.P. Griffiths, *Wittgenstein Centenary Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 11-39)

[377] This criticism is directed specifically at Nyíri's claim that: "Conservative theory can take the form of anthropology, or the theory of history; in its content it can embody very different tendencies, depending on what remains—if anything at all—that is regarded as worth conserving, or even re-establishing. […] A conservative political creed as such does not exist, and conservative politics change with the times; many of today's conservative aims correspond to liberal ideas of yesterday." (J.C. Nyíri, "Wittgenstein's Later Work in Relation to Conservatism", *op. cit.*, p. 46)

[378] A. Janik, "Nyíri on the Conservatism of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy", *op. cit.,* p. 133. There is certainly some truth to this. During the period in which Wittgenstein was writing the *Tractatus*, for example, he certainly believed he could prove the existence of elementary propositions, starting from the general premises about the nature of factual language, and that it was neither necessary nor possible for

Nonetheless, even if we were to apply the notions of Wittgenstein's philosophy to particular social arrangements drawn from real-life situations, Janik argues that there is no sense in which our 'form of life' is not amenable to critique, nor even to radically progressive social change. Just as our daily social practices change in terms of the various forms of expressions we use and the significance these take on at some time or another for a community of speakers, the constraint of a given practice is no more and no less restrictive than our capacity to encounter or imagine alternative forms of life and make readjustments in our own in light of these encounters. However, for Janik, that this is a highly *individualistic* affair—a characteristic that runs completely counter to Nyíri's sketch of the social conservative's view of human nature, and one that Wittgenstein himself undeniably possessed in spades.

A final voice to be considered here, which has weighed in on this debate, is that of Cora Diamond. Where Janik states that the problems in Nyíri's argument are for the most part "subtle rather than gross errors"[379]—requiring not one refutation but a "constellations of reasons" for believing that even if Wittgenstein had a conservative temperament in life this need not commit us to viewing his philosophy by that light—Diamond suggests that Nyíri is indeed guilty of *gross errors*, errors that are in fact just plain "nutty":

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him to specify them in more detail. Later, looking back on this combination of dogmatism and agnosticism, he found it unacceptable. This has not, however, stopped commentators from attempting to address precisely this difficulty in his earlier work. (Cf. D. Pears "Logical Independence of Elementary Propositions", in ed. I. Block, *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1981), pp. 74-81) Ironically, Janik here draws the opposite moral from Nyíri on this same point. Having referred to a series of Wittgensteinian remarks from the Cambridge conservative political theorist, and possible one-time student of Wittgenstein's, M. Oakshott, Nyíri notes:

"It is hardly necessary to refer here to parallel passages in the writings of Wittgenstein—the reader must certainly have noticed likenesses both in content and in formulation. It is not only similarities which meet the eye, however, but also an important difference. The passages quoted from Oakshott are the logical *starting points* of his arguments, they serve as premises to large-scale conclusions about society and history. In the writings of Wittgenstein, however, the corresponding passages are themselves the conclusions, the *results* of penetrating, rigorous analyses. It is, I believe, in the implication of this difference that Wittgenstein's significance for conservatism consists." (J.C. Nyíri, "Wittgenstein's Later Work in Relation to Conservatism", *op. cit.*, p. 64)

379 A. Janik, "Nyíri on the Conservatism of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy", *op. cit.,* p. 117.

"There is nothing in Wittgenstein's writings, in particular nothing in the kinds of criticism he brings to philosophizing, which implies that moving with words beyond what we have done with those words in the language-games in which we learned to use them has anything the matter with it, or is not something we can judge as appropriate or inappropriate, worth doing or not. The idea of Wittgenstein's philosophy as inherently *conservative* is nutty. […] The interpretation of his philosophy as conservative results in part from a lack of attention to what he says about mathematics; but it is supported also by what I earlier described as the imposition on philosophy itself of the philosophical requirement that it lay down requirements. And this is the refusal of the kind of liberation that he hoped philosophy might bring."[380]

The "imposition on philosophy itself of the philosophical requirement that it lay down requirements" to which Diamond refers here is of course explored at length throughout her work. It is, she claims, nothing less than the 'metaphysical spirit' that would lay requirements upon the world, language, or what have you, which *it* must in turn meet in order to be considered philosophically significant at all. The metaphysical spirit thus focuses on the requirements, rather than the phenomena that they are intended to capture. It thinks, but does not look.[381]

We recall Nyíri's characterisation of the origin of the 'conservative paradox'—much like that of the 'rule-following paradox' of *Philosophical Investigations*—as laying in the tension between two opposing insights: that, on the one hand, man by his very nature cannot do without absolute standards and a fixed set of truths, and that, on the other hand, all absolute standards have perished historically and fixed truths thus do not exist at all. Wittgenstein's solution, he proposed, was to re-inscribe our arbitrary practices within a network of traditions that is necessary *for us* as a community despite its overall world

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380 C. Diamond, "Introduction II", p. 34, in *The Realist Spirit* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), pp. 13-38.

381 Though she does not speak of this directly, we might easily imagine that the target of Diamond's criticism here is Nyíri's idealised characterisation of, for example, "the essence of the conservative mentality", "the source of everything conservative", and other such claims. (J.C. Nyíri, "Wittgenstein's Later Work in Relation to Conservatism", *op. cit.*, p. 46ff.)

geographic-historical contingency, and thus is in no way threatened by the existence of alternate orders. The arbitrarity of grammar, he suggests—far from committing us to a form of relativistic nihilism with regards to truth and to its standards—only reasserts the importance of tradition and the inexorable role that shared practices have (and ought to have) in the regulation of our everyday lives. Diamond's alternative demand is to rethink the nature of Wittgenstein's philosophy according to the light of what it was that he was trying to achieve, rather than what he may have appeared to be saying about such 'metaphysically spirited' positions. Wittgenstein did not set out, on Diamond's view, to institute a philosophical theory about rules, practices, forms of life, etc., but rather to engage in a global critique of laying down such theoretical frameworks *at all.*

What Diamond has particularly in mind here is the clash between certain realist/anti-realist trends in the interpretation of Wittgenstein's philosophy (especially, as we saw earlier, those found in the 'anti-realist' camp such as Michael Dummett's or Crispin Wright's).[382] Granted, she does not identify precisely this tension in Nyíri's paper on Wittgenstein's supposed conservatism, but her characterisation of the core of the debate as one that revolves around a misunderstanding of what it is that Wittgenstein sought to do in his work fits nonetheless. For on Diamond's view it makes no difference whether one argues that Wittgenstein was a realist, an anti-realist, or some hybrid of the two (as Nyíri does, reading into Wittgenstein's political views something very much like Kripke's 'sceptical solution' to the 'sceptical paradox' of rule-following).[383] To argue that there is such a philosophical theory in Wittgenstein's thought is to misunderstand deeply the function of his philosophy.

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382 Cf. the collection of essays presented in M. Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas, op cit.* and C. Wright, *Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics, op cit.*

383 Kripke is, of course, much more prudent in this regarding, noting as he does: "I suspect—for reasons that will become clearer later—that to attempt to present Wittgenstein's argument precisely is to some extent to falsify it. Probably many of my formulations and recastings of the argument are done in a way Wittgenstein would not himself. So the present paper, should be thought of as expounding neither 'Wittgenstein's' argument nor 'Kripke's': rather Wittgenstein's argument as it struck Kripke, as it presented a problem for him." (S. Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language, op. cit.,* p. 5) Of course, the extent to which Kripke is able to maintain this prudence in his work has been called into question, particularly by Stanley Cavell. (Cf. S. Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 64-100.)

According to Diamond, readings such as Nyíri's are tied to a faulty historical consciousness and an insistence on the kinds of questions that arise, for example, when we ask '*when it was fixed*' that such-and-such is true, or '*when it was recognised*' as faulty (and of course where do we stand in the present given that that was then and this is now, or not yet as it were), etc. Treating questions of fixed, necessary truths as the material for philosophical dispute in this manner is not, according to Diamond, to engage in a 'grammatical investigation' in Wittgenstein's sense. Rather, to investigate whether the form of that question *even makes any sense—this* is a grammatical investigation:

> "Wittgenstein wanted us to see that the grammar of a-temporality has application in a life that looks *looks* like *this and this and this*; that is, he shows us what life with definitions that fix meaning, life with formulations of rules that do (in an unmysterious sense) contain all of their applications."[384]

This remark is evidently intended to be made from one point of view, with its focus on logical necessity and a-historical logical frameworks. But the same might be said regarding the other side of that coin—for example, Nyíri's—where the role of *possibility* in historical developments is central, which in an analogous and completely unmysterious sense *does not constrain* our applications of a fixed rule in future cases.[385] The point, according to Diamond, is that there are no problems here that Wittgenstein sought in his philosophy 'to solve'. If we do not see Wittgenstein as drawing our attention to the various roles of words such as 'necessary', 'possible', 'true', 'false', 'rule', etc., have in our lives: "We shall miss altogether the kind of philosophical criticism he was engaged in."[386] That kind of philosophical criticism—which orients Wittgenstein's thought in the later works as much as it ever did in the *Tractatus*, despite the change in perspective between the two periods—is,

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384C. Diamond, "Introduction I", *The Realistic Spirit, op. cit.*, p. 6.

385Hence Diamond's comment, discussed above, that: "There is nothing in Wittgenstein's writings, in particular nothing in the kinds of criticism he brings to philosophizing, which implies that moving with words beyond what we have done with those words in the language-games in which we learned to use them has anything the matter with it, or is not something we can judge as appropriate or inappropriate, worth doing or not." (C. Diamond, "Introduction II", *The Realist Spirit, op. cit.,* p. 43.)

386C. Diamond, "Introduction I", *The Realistic Spirit, op. cit.,* p. 7.

of course, none other than his *Sprachkritik*, the critique of language, which is not a philosophical theory but a global critique of such theorizing.

Janik argues that it is characteristic of Wittgenstein's thought that he wished to separate his philosophy from his personal beliefs, and thus the significance that his philosophy might have for us today is independent of the biographical and historical circumstances that gave rise to it, such as his deeply committed cultural pessimism. The life of the man, he suggests, is interesting but not essential to our understanding of the significance of his work; our problems often arise, Janik notes, from his solutions. Diamond, on the other hand, argues that we cannot understand the significance of the work *unless* we understand the man; our problems persist because we have misunderstood that his solution was rather to dissolve such 'problems' in general. As the penultimate proposition of the *Tractatus*, one upon which Diamond has lain great emphasis throughout her work, states:

> "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.)
>
> He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright." (T 6.54)

Diamond draws our attention to that fact that Wittgenstein here asks us to understand *him*, the author of the *Tractatus*, and not the propositions contained therein. Because philosophy traffics in nonsense, in which there is properly speaking nothing to understand, we must rather understand what it is the author of the work is trying to achieve in order to understand the work as a whole. For what the author is trying to achieve *is* the work. Though they take home different messages about the significance that Wittgenstein's view of language has for our understanding of its historical dimension and the cultural decay that he felt characterised the spirit of his time, both suggest that in his work—perhaps unlike in his private life—the question about what von Wright calls the 'third aspect' of Wittgenstein's post-Tractarian thought, the Spenglerian one, has little bearing.

III. *Sprachkritik* and History

The fact that these three responses to von Wright's challenge each re-orient in different ways the role of the historical development of language in Wittgenstein's philosophy—whether that be in terms of its content, or its aim—suggests that there is something important going on here. As noted above, Wittgenstein did not in any immediately apparent sense have 'a philosophy of history', as it might be claimed that he had a philosophy of mathematics or a philosophy of psychology. And yet, again and again in this discussion we bump our heads against the historical dimensions of notions like rule-following, forms of life, or indeed language itself. What is disputed is thus not the presence of some historical reflection in Wittgenstein's thought, but rather its significance. However, in that case, what still has to be characterised is how these considerations manifest themselves. For it is not at all clear whether Wittgenstein's (perhaps vaguely expressed) understanding of the historical dimension of language and the place that it may or may not have had in his philosophy or in his critique of culture did not change as much as some of the other, more obviously central aspects of his thought. As such, invoking Wittgenstein's attitude towards history (as each of the above commentators do) would necessitate (as is rarely done, here or elsewhere) a more precise articulation of just 'which Wittgenstein' we are talking about here, as well as a more thorough exploration of the more overt themes being developed in parallel to that at the time.

From the outset, historical considerations were an integral part of the sources that are, by everyone's reckoning, central Wittgensteinian notions: those such as 'misunderstanding the logic of language' and 'the critique of language', the later of which he felt was required in order to command a clear view of the former. Perhaps there is no greater testament to this than that which can be found in Paul Ernst (one of the more suggestive comparisons that Nyíri draws between Wittgenstein and 'conservative thinkers' of his time). As Wittgenstein once noted, regarding the source of the notion 'misunderstanding the logic of language':

"Should my book ever be published its foreword must contain an acknowledgement to the Foreword of Paul Ernst to his edition of *Grimms' Fairy Tales*, which I should have have acknowledged already in the *Log. Phil. Abhandlung* as the source of the expression 'misunderstanding the logic of language'."[387]

The comparison with Ernst that Nyíri draws here is not only suggestive because of the conservative views Ernst expressed at length elsewhere—views with which Wittgenstein may or may not have been familiar[388]—but also because of the clear link that Ernst draws to the *historical dimension* of that misunderstanding. What fascinated the author of the *Tractatus* in Ernst's writings on the Grimm Fairy Tales was not (as was typically his fashion) its central thesis, but rather a more or less incidental passage. Here is the passage that aroused the young Wittgenstein's interest so greatly that it would direct the course of his research for many decades to come:

"The overwhelming majority by far of motifs and material that can still be used today certainly does not originate in reality. It is often the extremely ancient legacy of peoples, occurring in enigmatic and still not adequately explained form among the most distant and different peoples, originating from changes of language, when later ages no longer understood the logic of the language of the past

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[387] Quoted by W. Künne, "Paul Ernst and Ludwig Wittgenstein", *Scientia Poetica,* 2, 1998, pp. 151-166. It should be noted that this work by Ernst is not, however, the Foreword to the collection but the Afterword.

[388] Many of these are indeed reminiscent of Wittgenstein nonetheless. We might consider, for example, a remark such as the following:

"[Men have now been] freed of every form-creating constraint, and have been left completely on their own. And it is clear that nothing can come of this except senseless barbarism.—Thus because man needs form and constraint he has come to feel profoundly unhappy, and the yearning which had already arisen amongst the old bourgeois as a result of the schism between culture and reality has acquired a vastly greater power" (Quoted in J.C. Nyíri, "Wittgenstein's Later Work in Relation to Conservatism", *op. cit.*, p. 53)

Here, it is easy to draw a comparison with Wittgenstein's remarks in an alternate version of the 1930 Foreword to *Philosophical Remarks*:

"A culture is like a big organism which assigns to its members a place where he can work in the spirit of the whole; and it is perfectly fair for his power to be measured by the contribution he succeeds in making to the whole enterprise. In an age without culture on the other hand forces become fragmented and the power of an individual man is used up in overcoming opposing forces and frictional resistances." (CV, p. 6 [MS 109; 6.11.1930])

and interpreted it through fabrications; through changes in views about the connection of the world, about death, the soul, the afterlife, God, etc., by rationalistically interpreting uncomprehended remnants of previous beliefs; through the migration of this material to other peoples, through retelling in changed circumstances and through adaptation to the new. The process is essentially always this: a problem that is unsolvable by means of the experience of reality is solved by an invented, rationalised story."[389]

Though Wittgenstein gestures in some sense towards this historical dimension of the logic of language in the *Tractatus*—as, for example, when he discusses the development of the modern alphabetic script from ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics (T 4.016), or when he compares the world-views of the ancient and modern times (T 6.371-6.372)[390]—it's significance is nonetheless conscientiously obscured in the work as a whole, most famously and most directly with the cry recorded in the wartime *Notebooks*: "What has history to do with me? Mine is the first and only world!" (NB, p. 82) However, there are additional signs that Wittgenstein actively sought to circumscribe the role of history in his earliest published work. No one familiar with the work of Fritz Mauthner, for example, can fail to note the similarities between the views expressed above by Ernst and those of Mauthner, regarding the latter's own conception of *Sprachkritik*—and it was of course Wittgenstein who famously rephrased Mauthner's original methodological demand within the pages *Tractatus* with the following qualification: "All philosophy is a 'critique of language' (though not in Mauthner's sense)." (T 4.0031)

389Quoted by W. Künne, "Paul Ernst and Ludwig Wittgenstein", *op. cit.*

390It might also be noted that traces of this 'mythological' aspect of the logic of language can be witnessed, in a non-historical sense, in at least one of the propositions of the *Tractatus*, where Wittgenstein elucidates his understanding of logical isomorphism—between the musical idea, the musical notation, the sound waves produced when it is performed and the gramophone record on which it is recorded—as follows: "To all of them the logical structure is common. (Like the two youths their two horses and their lilies in the fairy tale. They are all in a certain sense one.)" (T 4.014) This reference is taken directly from one of the Grimms' fairy tales, "Gold Children", in which the lilies in the garden blossom or wither depending on how the youths fare.

Mauthner, initially a journalist, came to philosophy particularly in response to what he perceived as linguistic 'wizardry', embodied in the politically motivated usage of words such as *Volk* and *Geist*, which were gaining dubious currency in the popular conservative discourses of the time. As a staunch nominalist, who sought to merge a liberal politics with philosophical empiricism, Mauthner argued that such concepts were generated solely by language—through the persuasive use of metaphor and analogy—rather than genuine entities to be referred to directly. Beginning from this traditional starting point, not unlike that of the British Empiricists, Mauthner drew radical conclusions about what kind of activity philosophy should be and the political implications to be drawn from it. As he wrote in the introduction to his *Wörterbuch der Philosophie*:

> "Philosophy is theory of knowledge. Theory of knowledge is critique of language. Critique of language, however, is a labour on behalf of the liberating thought, that men can never succeed in getting beyond a metaphorical description of the world utilising either everyday language or philosophical language"[391]

Philosophical language is indeed a 'refinement' of ordinary language in Mauthner's sense, as logicians such as Russell and Frege might well have claimed themselves; however, as such, it is for Mauthner no less metaphorical and no more veritable for that. On the contrary, in this 'refinement' the foundations of language are rather obscured and forgotten. What Mauthner found problematic in this, and thus what necessitated his critical enterprise, was what he perceived to be a tendency to attribute a stable reality to the high-flown abstractions that we make out of our words' otherwise ordinary and flexible everyday use. Unlike the explicit statements of the author of the *Tractatus*—the still uncertain status of the relationship between his philosophical thoughts and his politics notwithstanding—for Mauthner, this tendency to reify conceptual abstractions is not simply the result of a mere 'linguistic confusion'. Where Wittgenstein diagnosed only a misguided manner of attending

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[391]F. Mauthner, *Wörterbuch der Philosophie: Neue Beitrage zu einer Kritik der Sprache, vol 1* (Leipzig: Georg Müller, 1910), p. xi, my translation.

solely to the superficial surface structure of language, Mauthner saw the source of real, practical *injustice* in the world. As Janik and Toulmin note:

> "Reification—to use a Machian phrase—begets all sots of 'conceptual monsters'. In science, these include such misleading notions as force, laws of nature, matter, atoms and energy; in philosophy, substance, objects and the absolute; among religious ideas, God, the devil and natural law; in political and social affairs, obsession with notions like the Race, the Culture, and the Language, and with their purity or profanation. In all such cases, reification involves assuming the existence of entities which are 'metaphysical'. So Mauthner considered metaphysics and dogmatism to be two faces of the same coin, which was also the fountainhead of intolerance and injustice."[392]

The substantial core of Mauthner's analysis of such terms finds a clear methodological analogy in *Der Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, the aim of which is to analyse one hundred and one crucial words from our common philosophical vocabulary (beginning, incidentally, with '*A=A*'[393]). The methodology of the book—which is no doubt a treatise on the nature of language and *not* a reference source of philosophical terms, as it remains somewhat mysteriously classified today—reflects Mauthner's theory of knowledge and his attack on the role of grammatical metaphors in philosophy.

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[392] A. Janik and S. Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), p. 123.

[393] Given Wittgenstein's life-long interest in logic, this entry is worth dwelling on briefly. In this passage Mauthner notes significantly that "the proposition is true, but so empty, that outside logic it must arouse the suspicion of insanity." Also: "There is no identity in reality; there is no identity in nature. The proposition A = A is so true, that in the whole world it fits nothing better than it does itself." (p. 2) Such remarks clearly recall those of the later Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations*, as elsewhere: " 'A thing is identical with itself.'—There is no finer example of a useless proposition, which yet is connected with a certain play of the imagination. It is as if in imagination we put a thing into its own shape and saw that it fitted." (PI §216) Mauthner also address the notion of tautology in his *Beiträge*, concerning the uselessness of logic in ordinary language, where he notes, "If someone says 'cheese is cheese' or 'schnapps is schnapps' or 'a word is a word', then this utterance is not a special case of the general formula 'A is A'." (F. Mauthner, *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache (vol. III: Zur Grammatik und Logic)* (Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 1999), p. 359, my translation.) Similarly, Wittgenstein would remark: "One says "I know" where one can also say "I believe" or "I suspect"; where one can find out. (If you bring up against me the case of people's saying "But I must know if I am in pain!", "Only you can know what you feel", and similar things, you should consider the occasion and purpose of these phrases. "War is war" is not an example of the law of identity either." (PI, p. 221)

Mauthner begins by exploring the psychological or empirical origin of his chosen terms and proceeds to explain how the ordinary functional elements of these once primarily descriptive words have been transformed into nouns, ultimately to be theorised about by philosophers and other intellectuals. He then demonstrates how the use of these words has shifted in relation to the history of philosophy through the process of nominalisation. Because language is essentially metaphorical and thus unstable by nature—in a constant state of flux or *statu nascendi*—the knowledge gained through using language "is neither going to grasp nor alter the real world."[394]

In the *Tractatus*, immediately prior to Wittgenstein's admission that all philosophy is a critique of language, he notes: "Everyday language is a part of the human organism and is no less complicated than it." (T 4.002) To this Mauthner might very well have added: *Neither more nor less!* For Mauthner our world is the world of the senses, and our senses are accidental. If they were by chance different in nature or number, our language would be different too, and consequently so would the picture of the world that we have made for ourselves. The contingency of the senses (what Mauthner calls *Zufallssinne*) demonstrates that necessary truth—that is to say knowledge that is universally true, eternally valid once and for all—is an absurdity, one more piece of reified conceptual nonsense. Every word is historical and in every word it is solely its history that is preserved.

Despite their different attitudes towards language, its logic, and the philosophical significance of its historical development, like the author of the *Tractatus,* Mauthner was nonetheless aware of the unstable grounds upon which he was standing, methodologically speaking. He attacked metaphysics by pointing out the meaninglessness of the words used in it. Consequently, he was forced to recognise the extent to which his own use of terms, such as 'language', represented an instance of what he considered illegitimate reification. " 'Language'," he notes, "does not exist; it is an abstractum. That we cannot enter twice the same river, applies also to language."[395] The very idea of *Sprachkritik* thus confronts its own limit. It is undertaken in and through words, and Mauthner recognised that his own

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394 F. Mauthner, *Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, *vol 1, op. cit.*, p. 25 (entry: '*an sich*')

critique must itself be subjected in turn to the critique of language. Born of contradiction and ending in silence, it is the 'suicide of language': "If I want to ascend into the critique of language," he notes, "which is the most important business of mankind, then I must destroy language behind me and in me, step by step: I must destroy every rung of the ladder while climbing up it."[396] It is, of course, Wittgenstein who has most famously rephrases the ladder metaphor that Mauthner employs here, although he paints a very different picture of the critique of language—that is to say, not one of *despair* but one of *transcendence*. However, as we have seen, in order for Wittgenstein to do so he had to safeguard language from its historical dimension.

Naturally, Wittgenstein's interest in employing *Sprachkritik* in order to dissolve conceptual confusions did not end with the publication of the *Tractatus*, and neither did his interest in Ernst's particular formulation of the issue. However, upon Wittgenstein's return to philosophy in the 1929 it was not only Ernst's expression 'misunderstanding the logic of language' that returned with him, but also his understanding of what Ernst characterised as the 'mythological' element inherent to the logical structure of language. For example, in the so-called *Big Typescript*—TS 213, composed in the early 1930's and considered by many to be the source of the most substantial passages of what would eventually become *Philosophical Investigations*, especially those regarding the *practice of philosophy itself*—Wittgenstein refers directly to Ernst in a subtitle to one of the most significant of the nineteen 'chapters' that make up the book; indeed, entitled simply "Philosophie", it is very possibly one of the most significant selection of unpublished remarks in Wittgenstein's entire post-Tractarian oeuvre. In the last of the passages that fall directly under his mediations on the nature of philosophy and upon the novel conception of its task that had

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395Quoted in G. Weiler, "On Fritz Mauthner's Critique of Language", p. 83, *Mind*, 67, 1958, pp. 80-87. We see here in fact, that Mauthner had already approached many of the issues Wittgenstein himself later would, upon his immediate return to philosophy in 1930. A great deal could be said, I believe, about Wittgenstein's return to philosophy as a reversal of the a-historicism he once upheld in the *Tractatus* as, indeed, the antithesis of Mauthner: "All philosophy is a 'critique of language' (though not in Mauthner's sense)." (T 4.0031)

396Quoted in G. Weiler, "On Fritz Mauthner's Critique of Language", *op. cit.* p. 80.

arisen in his mind since his return to Cambridge, Wittgenstein has the following serve as the subtitle: THE MYTHOLOGY IN THE FORMS OF OUR LANGUAGE ((PAUL ERNST)).

Unfortunately, Ernst is not mentioned directly in the subsequent material. However, remarks such as the following suggest interesting possibilities for the significance that Wittgenstein felt Ernst's characterisation had for his newly-conceived philosophical methodology and the historical dimensions of language that he was beginning to address: "An entire mythology," he notes, "is laid down in our language." (PO, p. 199 [TS 213, p. 434; 1933])[397] For the most part, Wittgenstein dwells here rather on the anthropological work of Victorian ethnologist J.G. Frazer, and his book *The Golden Bough.*[398] We might consider here briefly a reflection such as that which Wittgenstein puts forth in this section, which is also reminiscent of Mauthner's original understanding of *Sprachkritik* as directed against the illegitimate reification of grammatical metaphors:

> "Driving out death or killing death; but on the other hand it is portrayed as a skeleton, and therefore as dead itself, in a certain sense. "As dead as death." 'Nothing is as dead as death; nothing as beautiful as beauty itself!' The picture according to which reality is thought of here is that beauty, death, etc., is the pure (concentrated) substance, whereas in a beautiful object it is contained as an admixture.—And don't I recognize here my observations about 'object' and 'complex'? (Plato)

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[397] Though the mythological dimension of language sketched here only became central to Wittgenstein's thought after is return to Cambridge in the 1930's, it is interesting to note a handful of remarks in the *Notebooks* which suggest that Wittgenstein had perhaps already been prepared for this shift. We might consider here a pair of parenthetical remarks from early 1915: "Words are probes; some reach very deep; some only to a little depth." (NB, p. 39) and "The older a word, the deeper it reaches." (NB, p. 40)

[398] A particularly noteworthy remark, however, concerning just what Wittgenstein might mean by "mythology" here and how this meaning has been adapted from Ernst's remark, is found right at the opening of Wittgenstein's reflections. It is that which concerns his iconic analysis of the 'Cornwolf' ritual:

> "In ancient rites we find the use of an extremely well-developed language of gestures.

> And when I read Frazer, I would like to say again and again: All these processes, these changes of meaning, we have right in front of us even in our language of words. If what is hidden in the last sheaf is called the 'Cornwolf', as well as the sheaf itself, and also the man who binds it, then we recognize in this a linguistic process we know well." (PO, p. 197 [TS 213, p. 433; 1933])

The primitive forms of our language: noun, adjective and verb, show the simple picture *into* whose form *language* tries to force everything." (PO, p. 199 [TS 213, p. 434; 1933])

This tacit critique of the *Tractatus* that is contained in this remark is a familiar one. It finds a wealth of expression in Wittgenstein's various unpublished sources, and occasionally in *Philosophical Investigations* as well.[399] The Mauthnerian character of this critique need not surprise us either, given the re-emerging significance of the historically situated and indeed evolving 'mythology' of Wittgenstein's own conception of language.[400] But what may seem rather surprising is how in the following passage (the last of the chapter) Wittgenstein refers to the 'dangers' inherent to such abstractions—a point that is also reminiscent of Mauthner's perception of the dangers inherent to the reification of grammatical metaphors in philosophy, which he identified with dogmatism and thus a source of real political injustice in the world. Wittgenstein notes here the following:

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[399] E.g.: "Thought is surrounded by a halo.—Its essence, logic, presents an order, in fact the a priori order of the world: that is, the order of *possibilities*, which must be common to both world and thought. But this order, it seems, must be *utterly simple*. It is *prior* to all experience, must run through all experience; no empirical cloudiness or uncertainty can be allowed to affect it——It must rather be of the purest crystal. But this crystal does not appear as an abstraction; but as something concrete, indeed, as the most concrete, as it were the *hardest* thing there is (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* No. 5.5563)." (PI §97)

[400] Here I think it should be clear just to what extent I agree and disagree with the following insightful (but incomplete) analysis of Wittgenstein's post-1930 shift in thought, specifically in terms of his budding appreciation for the historical dimension of language, provided by Janik and Toulmin:

"Did Wittgenstein acquire this anti-historicism from Gottlob Frege? Was he converted to this view in part by Frege's denunciation of the "psychologistic" and "genetic" fallacies, and his insistence that conceptual analysis must be pursued in formal, logical and timeless terms? This could be so. But, given the tenacity of Wittgenstein's moral attitudes, it is more plausible to assume that this particular view antedated his acquaintance with Frege, and that previous moral and intellectual inclinations predisposed him to find Frege's logicism congenial. Here again, Wittgenstein's views stand in clear contrast with Mauthner's views, which he rejected. Mauthner's feeling for historical and cultural diversity may have driven him to the extreme of relativism, but at any rate it kept his sense of historical relevance alive. Even when Wittgenstein had abandoned his earlier Russellian belief in a universal structure of real logical forms, in his own later phase, in favor of a more Mauthnerian or Loosian analysis of language as a function of forms of life, he never followed up the historical implications of his new approach." (A. Janik and S. Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna, op. cit.,* p. 244.)

"So long as one imagines the soul as a thing, a body, which is in our head, this hypothesis is not dangerous. The danger of our models does not lie in their imperfection and roughness, but in their unclarity (fogginess).

The danger sets in when we notice that the old model is not sufficient but then we don't change it, but only sublimate it, as it were. So long as I say the thought is in my head, everything is all right; things get dangerous when we say that the thought is not in my head, but in my spirit." (PO, p. 199 [TS 213, p. 434; 1933])

This is undoubtedly an obscure passage, whose significance is better left indeterminate for the time being. However, it suggests that at least for a time Wittgenstein did indeed have a sense for the socio-political consequences of his philosophy. Far from a mere linguistic confusion that arises from attending solely to the superficial surface structure of language, as in the *Tractatus*, philosophical models are here portrayed as dangerous sublimations of older belief systems, whose danger—rather than salvation—lies precisely in the attempt to remedy the 'imperfections' of the old system; for that remedy is achieved by imposing upon them 'unclarity' and 'fogginess' rather than something like 'precision', as philosophers such as Frege or Russell or Carnap would have wished.[401] It is a suggestive image, one with which Mauthner would undoubtedly have felt quite at home; however, why this might be dangerous is ultimately left unstated.

It is worth noting, however, that an earlier subtitle from the same chapter suggests one option, in terms of 'justice': THE METHOD OF PHILOSOPHY: THE PERSPICUOUS REPRESENTATION OF GRAMMATICAL FACTS. THE GOAL: THE TRANSPARENCY OF ARGUMENTS. JUSTICE. (PO, p. 171 [TS 213, p. 414; 1933)) Unfortunately, like the case of the reference of

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401 If it is the case, as Christiane Chauviré has suggested, that "philosophy and mythology are of the same nature" ("Wittgenstein et la tradition philosophique", *op cit.,* p, 45), I would suggest that this is so in the sense that both may be considered in terms of the sublimation of older belief systems, which are themselves poorly understood, thus resulting in new practices that are no more veritable than the earlier ones. They are, however, different with regards to whether or not one *thinks* one has thereby resolved some earlier problem, à la philosophy, and thus they differ with regards to the role that they play in our lives. It is not therefore simply the case, as Schulte has suggested, that due to their similar nature Wittgenstein positioned himself towards *both* pejoratively.

Paul Ernst referred to above, the notion of justice alluded to here lacks a substantial exploration in the ensuing text. Its sole development is a parenthetical remark, placed among those that express the necessity for perspicuity and clarity in philosophy. Wittgenstein notes there, parenthetically: "Our only task is to be just. That is, we must only point out and resolve the injustices of philosophy, and not posit new parties—and creeds." (PO, p. 181 [TS 213, p. 420; 1933]) Whether Wittgenstein is referring here to some conception of moral and socio-political justice, or to something like 'doing justice' to the phenomena themselves, is difficult to say. There is good reason to suspect that Wittgenstein may have intended the latter, at least insofar as the phenomena of language are concerned.[402] But then the question arises nonetheless: In what does the value of 'doing justice to the phenomena' consist, if not in the restoration of a more authentic form of life free from maladroit linguistic expressions and the unhealthy thought patterns of which they are a

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[402] Among other remarks by Wittgenstein which I consider in greater elsewhere, we might here briefly refer to Wittgenstein's initial remark from the same period, in the notebook dealing with Frazer's *Golden Bough*: "Nothing is so difficult as doing justice to the facts." (PO, p. 129 [MS 110; 1931]) Earlier, we took a close look at what it might mean here, to speak of doing justice to the facts.

symptom?[403] The question of the spiritual purpose of the book—of *why* Wittgenstein wrote it, and of *what* dangers he sought to address, *if any*—remains unanswered.

IV. Concluding Remarks: Philosophising in the Darkness of this Time

The fact that Wittgenstein did not see fit to include a great many of the remarks from *The Big Typescript* in the final version of *Philosophical Investigations*—including, of course, his use of chapter headings and subheadings, of which we have been making liberal use here— is not without its problems for the reading presented above. As Janik and others have noted, Wittgenstein did indeed seem to take pains to separate his personal views from those remarks that were prepared for publication, as found in the *Tractatus* and the more or less publication-ready *Philosophical Investigations*. It is, for example, easy to draw heavily on

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[403]In favour of this interpretation, which would suggest that Wittgenstein believed his work was directed towards a socio-political form of justice, we might nonetheless consider here a mysterious and ambiguous remark that Wittgenstein made on one occasion to Norman Malcolm:

"One time when we were walking along the river we saw a newsvendor's sign which announced that the German government accused the British government of instigating a recent attempt to assassinate Hitler with a bomb. This was in autumn of 1939. Wittgenstein said of the German claim: 'It would not surprise me at all if it were true.' I retorted that I could not believe that the top people in the British government would do such a thing. I mean that the British were too civilized and decent to attempt anything so underhanded; and I added that such an act was incompatible with the British 'national character'. My remark made Wittgenstein extremely angry. He considered it to be a great stupidity and also an indication that I was not learning anything from the philosophical training that he was trying to give me." (N. Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, *op. cit.*, p. 32.)

Just what exactly Wittgenstein had thought Malcolm should have learned from his lectures regarding ideas relating to politically-motivated assassination attempts on a foreign leader is far from clear. However, an interesting possibility presents itself further on in Malcolm's *Memoir*, where he notes that towards the end of World War II, Malcolm wrote to Wittgenstein, speaking of the war as a terrible 'boredom'. To this Wittgenstein replied:

"I want to say something about the war being a 'boredom'. If a boy said that school was an intense boredom one might answer him that, if he only could get himself to learn what can really be learned there, he would not find it *so* boring. Now forgive me for saying that I can't help believing that an enormous lot can be learnt about human being is this war—*if* you keep your eyes open. And the better you are thinking the more you'll get out of what you see. For thinking is *digestion*." (N. Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, *op. cit.*, p. 41)

Nachlaß sources, such as these and many others besides, as evidence for Wittgenstein's pessimistic image of contemporary culture as one dangerously cut off from its spiritual source. It is likewise easy to conclude that the 'mental cramps' he identifies as the source of philosophical malaise should not be viewed as being intended to express Wittgenstein's alone, or even those of the Cambridge philosophical elite, but rather those shared by the broader culture in which we all continue to live. However, it cannot be denied that the *Philosophical Investigations* contains no such references to the contemporary 'spirit of this civilization', the 'danger' of our current unclarity, nor even the supposed 'justice' of the task to be undertaken, which can be found in the earlier versions of the work. Only his oblique reference to the 'darkness of this time' in the preface to the *Investigations* and its motto from Nestroy—*Überhaupt had der Fortschritt das an sich, daß er viel größer ausschaut, als er wirklich ist*—serve as condensed reminders of the work's earlier expressed purpose.

Certainly, it would have been quite characteristic of Wittgenstein's temperament that he should proclaim to be writing for people who, like himself, found the 'spirit' of modern European and American civilization alien and uncongenial, while at the same time refraining from indicating precisely what it is about that *other spirit*—i.e. the one in which he was presumably writing, and of which we would have to partake in order to understand his work correctly—that would shed a new light upon what he considered to be the darkness of these times. Perhaps it is for this reason that the significance of Wittgenstein's remark in the preface to the *Investigations*, as well as the work's ambiguous motto, remained in obscurity for so long. Were they perhaps written off as just one more expression of his eccentric and often antagonistic personality? If such a superficial reading was once possible, it is clearly no longer the case. For throughout the remarks composed in the 1930's, now widely available to the public, Wittgenstein repeatedly tried to give an adequate expression to this negative evaluation of contemporary society, and these remarks are not bereft of any indication of what he believed the way forward might consist in. Specifically, it is in the two forewords of 1930 and 1931 that he set out to communicate what one might

justifiably call the 'spiritual purpose' of his work and how that purpose was to be embodied the *work's very form* more than in any other aspect of it.

What must have been surprising for those who were not familiar with the *Nachlaß* sources before their appearance in *Culture and Value* in 1978, is that in composing these remarks Wittgenstein consistently employed a vocabulary that bears the unmistakable imprint of Spengler, both in terms of his tone and his vocabulary. In the first, the Spenglerian vocabulary is most prominent. Here, Wittgenstein describes our own age as precisely one of a 'civilisation', which is *therefore* without 'culture'; he describes the present age as one in which the arts have disappeared, as one in which great men are drawn not to the production of great works but to the application of technical skills. "This is," he notes, "not a value judgement":

> "For in times like these, genuine strong characters simply leave the arts asides and turn to other things and somehow the worth of the individual man finds expression. Not, to be sure, in the way it would at a time of high culture. A culture is like a big organization which assigns each of its members a place where he can work in the spirit of the whole; and it is perfectly fair for his power to be measured by the contribution he succeeds in making to the whole enterprise. In an age without culture on the other hand forces become fragmented and the power of an individual man is used up in overcoming opposing forces and frictional resistances; it does not show in the distance he travels but perhaps only in the heat he generates in overcoming friction." (CV, p. 6 [MS 109; 6.11.1930])

These are remarkably Spenglerian characterisations, which should certainly give us pause for thought. However, the picture that these remarks provide of Wittgenstein's aim in philosophy is not yet a complete one.

As we saw above, it was around the time that Wittgenstein was composing these remarks that he also set out to enumerate a list of those thinkers who he felt had exercised the greatest influence on his own thought. It is a list that includes, among others, Spengler. It is highly doubtful that Wittgenstein would have placed Spengler on this list merely because Spengler had provided him with a convenient vocabulary for expressing his own, pre-

existing attitudes towards a society with which he felt out of step. Rather, in composing this list of influences he notes that he had taken over these figures' lines of thought [*Gedankbewegungen*], incorporating elements of their thought into his own: "I have simply straightaway seized on it with enthusiasm for my work of clarification (*Klärungswerk*)" (CV, p. 19 [MS 154; 1931])

It is this direct influence, not only upon Wittgenstein's attitudes towards the times, but also upon what he thought might serve as a legitimate *response* to its ailments—what he calls here, significantly, his '*Klärungswerk*'—that the wider significance of Spengler's *Decline of the West* for Wittgenstein can be seen. Particularly, it in the second version of the same foreword quoted above, posthumously published in the collection *Philosophical Remarks*, that we witness just how this might be so:

> "This book is written for such men as are in sympathy with its spirit. This spirit is different from the one which informs the vast stream of European and American civilization in which all of us stand. *That* spirit expresses itself in an onward movement, in building ever larger and more complicated structures; the other in striving after clarity and perspicuity in no matter what structure. The first tries to grasp the world by way of its periphery—in its variety; the second at its centre—in its essence. And so the first adds one construction to another, moving on and up, as it were, from one stage to the next, while the other remains where it is and what it tries to grasp is always the same."
> (PR, Preface)

Here we see that in fact Wittgenstein had already begun to characterise early on what that 'other spirit' might look like, more than a decade and half before composing the preface that would ultimately be published in *Philosophical Investigations*. It is, unsurprisingly, one that strives after 'clarity' and 'perspicuity'. It is *this* spirit that for him is opposed to that of the present age, the obscure one of a progressive 'onwards movement' that Wittgenstein characterises in accord with Spengler as one of a dark decline. Though the name Spengler hardly appears in Wittgenstein's writings after the early 1930's, what we have here characterised as that 'other spirit' is, indeed, precisely how Wittgenstein would later

characterise his work in the *Investigations* as a whole: as one that finds and invents 'intermediate cases', identifies 'family resemblances' and holds diverse linguistic phenomena up as 'objects of comparison' in order to achieve a *perspicuous representation*. It is in this sense that Wittgenstein could be said to have adopted not only a Spenglerian assessment of his times as one of decline, but also how Spengler helped form his conception of how one might respond to its ills and so begin taking steps towards overcoming them.

Thus, if Wittgenstein did not refer directly to such considerations in the final version of *Philosophical Investigations*, this should not be understood as a mere form of defiance on his part. In fact, following his initial sketch to the unpublished foreword of 1930, Wittgenstein notes that for him: "It is a great temptation to try to make the spirit explicit." (CV, p. 8 [MS 109; 7.11.1930]) However, despite this temptation to make the spirit of the work explicit, Wittgenstein recognised that such an attempt could only end in failure. For: "When you bump up against the limits of your own honesty it is as though your thoughts get into a whirlpool, an infinite regress: You can *say* what you like, it takes you no further." (*ibid.*) As many remarks from the *Nachlaß* demonstrate, Wittgenstein did not reject the 'spiritual side' of his ethical or social-political thought. What Wittgenstein rejected was the temptation to express that directly, and especially to provide a foundation for such thoughts on the basis of theoretical and philosophical considerations.[404] He considered especially the pretension of giving *reasons* for such considerations, where none can in fact be given, as the sign of a half-hearted and dishonest character. It was this dishonesty that he abhorred most of all.

However, this does not mean that Wittgenstein was writing in order to save us from some form of nihilism in matters of ethics and social order—as if the inability to give reasons precluded their non-existence—as Nyíri's claim that Wittgenstein's resolution to what Nyíri calls the 'neo-conservative paradox' was spurred on by a will to save "the neo-conservative

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[404]Besides the Wittgenstein-Popper affair, we might also consider for example that in his conversations with the Vienna Circle, McGuinness records, Wittgenstein employed in a modified form a formula from Schopenhauer: "Preaching morals is difficult, founding it impossible." (B. McGuinness, *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1979), p. 118.)

position from a theoretical catastrophe at a time when, in Germany, it could no longer be saved from a political catastrophe" might suggest.[405] If one were inclined to read a form of conservatism into Wittgenstein's work in this manner—by, for example, citing the 'conservative's preference for silence'—one might likewise consider remarks such as the following from *On Certainty*: "To be sure there is justification; but justification comes to an end." (OC §192) As Nyíri demonstrates, a conservative reading of remarks such as this is possible. However, that is not the final word. For the kind of spiritual silence we encounter in Wittgenstein's published works is a principled silence; it does not arise from a mere 'distaste for abstractions', for example. He specifically seeks not to speak of his spiritual purpose, but rather to show it. Especially in *Philosophical Investigations*, where the pragmatic consideration of meaning-making in lived contexts is designed to return linguistic acts, such as justification, to their original home―giving reasons, Wittgenstein unceasingly seeks to remind us, has a *purpose*. Where that purpose will not, or cannot in principle be fulfilled, reasons will fail despite our deepest conviction of their correctness.

Ethical concerns designed to help restore a non-philosophical equilibrium to what Wittgenstein considered the spiritual malaise of his times were central to his project from the start. We need hardly recall his well-known characterisation of the *Tractatus* as a fundamentally ethical work in just this sense, despite—or perhaps, more precisely, *because of*—its general silence on such matters. As he noted in the letter sent to Ficker upon the completion of the manuscript:

> "You won't—I really believe—get too much out of reading it. Because you won't understand it; the content will seem strange to you. In reality, it isn't strange to you, for the point of the book is ethical. I once wanted to give a few words in the foreword which now actually are not in it, which, however, I'll write to you now because they might be a key for you: I wanted to write that my work consists of two parts: of the one which is here, and of everything which I have *not* written. And precisely this second part is the important one. My book draws the limits to the sphere of the ethical from the inside as it were, and I am convinced that this is the ONLY *rigorous* way of drawing those

405J.C. Nyíri, "Wittgenstein's Later Work in Relation to Conservatism", *op. cit.*, p. 57.

limits. In short, I believe that where *many* others today are just *gassing*, I have managed in my book to put everything firmly into place by being silent about it"[406]

This reflection on the ethical part of the work—which is, he categorically states, the important one—concludes with the following suggestion: "For the time being, I'd recommend that you read the *foreword* and the *conclusion* since these express the point most directly."[407] The conclusion is, of course, the most forceful expression of Wittgenstein's quietism in spiritual matters, here and very probably throughout all his work, published or otherwise: Whereof we cannot speak, thereof we must be silent. Though his ethical and spiritual stance remains unexpressed in the pages of the book, it is not absent for it. Rather, because it remains unexpressed it is capable of permeating the entire work as a whole.

From the point of view of the *Tractatus,* this quietism is connected to what he then considered to be the limits of language, which impose silence upon expressions of a higher spiritual order. Following his remark towards the end of the book that the sense of the world must lie outside of it, Wittgenstein remarks: "So too it is impossible for there to be propositions of ethics. // Propositions can express nothing that is higher." (T 6.43) However, as we have seen, by the time Wittgenstein began writing again upon his return to Cambridge in the early 1930's, this framework had undergone an extensive revision. In the place of the 'general form of the proposition' outlined in the *Tractatus*, according to which the limits of language are drawn and ethics is situated squarely beyond them, he later sought to construct a 'perspicuous representation' or 'synoptic view' via a collage of observations on the basis of our lived experience with language. With this reorientation, the limits of language—previously rigid and a-historical, capable of being drawn solely from the 'inside-out'—became blurred amongst the imaginative play of overlapping language-games and flexible, evolutive forms of life.

406Quoted in C.G. Luckhardt, *Wittgenstein: Sources and Perspectives* (Sussex, UK: Harvester Press, Ltd., 1979), p. 94. Cf. P. Engelmann, *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), p. 143.

407Ibid.

For all that, Wittgenstein's quietism regarding spiritual matters did not disappear. But in line with his new appreciation of the cultural-historic dimensions of language—where, if indeed anywhere, the clearest connection between his cultural pessimism and his philosophical programme is to be situated—the impossibility of clear spiritual expression is not tied to the logical limits of language but to the horizons of the expressive possibilities that belong to a given culture. For example, in the 1930's foreword, Wittgenstein dedicates his work with the following clarification: "I would like to say 'This book is written to the glory of God', but nowadays that would be chicanery, that is, it would not be rightly understood." (PR, Foreword) In the alternate version of the same foreword, reprinted in von Wright's *Vermischte Bemerkungen*, Wittgenstein explains: "I realize then that the disappearance of a culture does not signify the disappearance of human value, but simply of *a certain means of expressing this value*, yet the fact remains that I have no sympathy for the current of European civilization and do not understand its goals, if it has any." (CV, p. 6, my emphasis [MS 109; 6.11.1930])[408]

In what sense, then, might Wittgenstein have given a description of the 'spirit' in which a work such as *Philosophical Investigations* was written, when he clearly felt that the means for expressing that spirit had been all but lost? Whatever it may be, Wittgenstein undoubtedly felt that the higher spiritual purpose that the work was intended to embody remains intimately tied to the work itself—we might recall here the phrase used by Drury, when he reports asking himself whether he can see, as Wittgenstein had suggested to him, that the problems discussed in the *Investigations* are being seen from a "religious point of view"[409]—but the reader who does not yet share in that spirit will fail to understand the work and those who already share in it will understand it anyway. So, it is useless to

[408]This idea of the limits of expression finds an uneasy parallel in Wittgenstein's consideration of how people think in accordance with certain 'dogmas' in 1937: "The effect of making men think in accordance with dogmas, perhaps in the form of certain graphic propositions, will be very particular: I am not thinking of these dogmas as determining men's opinions but rather as completely controlling the *expression* of all opinions. People will live under an absolute, palpable tyranny, though without being able to say that they are not free." (CV, p. 28 [MS 118; 11.9.1937]) It is difficult not to recall in this regard the quote from Karl Kraus with which we opened this chapter, among others from this dark period of European history.

communicate it to *either* of these readers why the book has been written. In fact, it may very well do more harm than good. As Wittgenstein notes, following his initial sketch to the unpublished 1930 foreword: "The danger in a long foreword is that the spirit of the book has to evident in the book itself and cannot be described." (CV, p. 7 [MS 109; 7.11.1930])

Must this danger leave one helpless and mute before an inexpressible monolith, or might it perhaps be indicated in other ways? In this regard it is very significant that, following these reflections in the unpublished 1930's foreword, Wittgenstein proceeds to compare the book to a room into which the author does not want certain people to be admitted:

> "If you have a room which you do not what certain people to get into, put a lock on it for which they do not have a key. But there is no point in talking to them about it, unless of course you want them to admire the room from the outside!
>
> The honourable thing to do is to put a lock on the door which will be noticed only by those who can open it, not by the rest." (CV, p. 7-8 [MS 109; 7.11.1930])[410]

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409 Wittgenstein: "I am not a religious man, but I cannot help but see problems from a religious point of view" (Quoted in: M. O'C. Drury, "Some Notes on Conversations with Wittgenstein", p. 26, *Acta Philosophica Fennica*, 28, 1976, pp. 22-40.) Drury, furthermore, picks up on the historical quality of the *expressibility* of this 'point of view', in regards to the 1930's preface, wherein Wittgenstein notes: "I would like to say, 'this book is written to the honour of God', but nowadays this would be the trick of a cheat, i.e. it would not be correctly understood." (PR, Preface)—Drury responds: "I would dwell on this quotation for a moment. It implies that words which in one age could be correctly used can at a later date be 'the words of a cheat'; because if these words are constantly used in a superficial way they become so muddied that the road can no longer be trod." (ibid., p. 24) Here we find a rich comparison to Mauthner and Mauthner's conception of *Sprachkritik*, outlined earlier in this chapter.

410 This passage finds a familiar refrain in the following from 1942: "A man will be *imprisoned* in a room with a door that's unlocked and opens inwards; as long as it does not occur to him to *pull* rather than to push it" (CV, p. 42 [MS 125; 18.5.1942]) However, I believe a more fruitful—and more *critical*—comparison can be made with Wittgenstein's earlier attempt at just such a prefacing remark in the *Tractatus* begs to be drawn here. We recall that it was there, of course, that Wittgenstein opened the work with the words:

> "Perhaps this book will be understood only by someone who has himself already had the thoughts that are expressed in it—So it is not a textbook." (T, p. 3)

Despite the centrality this remark maintains among important readings of the work today, these fail to appreciate the extent of Wittgenstein's later critique of the book's tone in addition to the ideas contained there. For example, it is lines such as this, I believe, that must be recast in light of Wittgenstein's later remark that the value of the *Tractatus* is cast into doubt by the pervasiveness of "kitsch" in it. As

It is worth dwelling on this metaphor for a moment. For indeed, as Bouveresse has noted, "despite the fact that at various places in his unpublished manuscripts Wittgenstein expressed a strong antipathy for modern civilization, which he felt was condemned to disappear or perhaps already had, one would look in vain for some trace of that in the philosophical texts that he intended for publication."[411] However, if we limit ourselves to the published works because of this, we will miss neglecting an undeniably important element in Wittgenstein's thought. On the other hand, if we focus too fixedly on the unpublished remarks, which Wittgenstein felt for various unknown reasons were not fit for public scrutiny, we risk misrepresenting his views.

Under these conditions, if it is at all valuable to try to determine the relationship between Wittgenstein's philosophy and those aspects of his personality that are habitually described as 'culturally pessimistic', one may perhaps have to look elsewhere—perhaps to the *margins* of *Philosophical Investigations*. Its motto, for example. From one perspective, it may seem surprising that Wittgenstein, who was so against ornamentation in all aspects of his life and work would trim his publication-ready work with such a showy decorative device as a motto. (Even the planned titles of his latter works—such as *Philosophical Grammar, Philosophical Remarks*, *Philosophical Investigations*, etc.—give the uninitiated reader little clue of what is contained within them.) However, from another perspective, the one that keeps in mind what Wittgenstein felt was the only honest and honourable thing to do in an age where the possibility for the expression of higher spiritual purpose had all but disappeared, it becomes perhaps more clear.

The thing about the motto to *Philosophical Investigations* is that it generally appears to be much *smaller* than it really is, much less important. For here, as in the *Tractatus*,

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Wittgenstein noted in shortly after his return to philosophy in 1929:

"Aside from the good & genuine, my book the Tractatus Log.-Phil. also contains kitsch, that is, passages with which I filled in the gaps and so-to-speak in my own style. How much of the book consists of such passages I don't know & it is difficult to fairly evaluate now." (PPO, p. 133[MS 183, p. 30; 16.5.1930])

411 J. Bouveresse, " 'The Darkness of this Time': Wittgenstein and the Modern World", *op cit.*, p. 12.

Wittgenstein may indeed be drawing our attention to the 'second part' of *this* work—the important one?[412]—by drawing the limits of his own capacity for language from in the opposite direction, i.e., from the *outside-in* as it were. In this case, that second part of the work indicated by the motto would seem to point not only towards the presence of some cultural-historic facet in Wittgenstein's thought, but also towards its significance for the meaning of his philosophical work as a whole and what he relentlessly sought to achieve with it. While, in the end, the meaning of the motto is far from transparent, if we seek to understand the relationship between Wittgenstein's published philosophy and the historically-oriented cultural pessimism we find expressed in many of his private remarks— as, indeed, von Wright rightly claims that we should—it is perhaps here at the margins of the *Investigations* that we should begin.

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[412]Here I am reminded of one of the earliest of the mottoes Wittgenstein explored as a possibility for the second work he would someday publish, discussed briefly above, quoted in Backer and Hacker. The quote is from the poem "Abendlied" (also known as "Der Mond ist aufgegangen"), by Matthias Claudius: "*Seht ihr den Mond dort stehen? Er is nur halb zu sehen, und ist doch rund und schön*" ("Do you see the moon there? Only half of it is visible, and yet it is round and beautiful.") Remarked in 1931, it unclear whether the 'other half' that is not there to be seen is reminiscent of Wittgenstein's attitude towards something like the 'second part' of the *Tractatus*, referred to in the letter to von Ficker, or rather to something similar he intended in what would become *Philosophical Investigations.*

However, the full context of the remark from which this motto is taken suggests another interesting possibility, one that is not explored by Backer and Hacker, which speaks more to the importance of mythology and the 'charm'—be that in the *best* or *worst* sense—of language. From MS 110 (ca. 1931), among those remarks dealing with none other than Frazer's *Golden Bough*:

"I now believe that it would be right to begin a/my/ book with remarks about metaphysics as a kind of magic.

In them, however, I ought neither to defend magic nor make fun of it.

The profoundness of magic must be retained.—

Indeed, the *switching off* of any/of/ magic has the nature of magic itself.

For if I begin to speak of the 'world' (and not of this tree or table), what else would I be trying to do but to charm something greater into my words?

|A motto for this book: 'Can you see the moon there? You can only see half of it, yet it is round and beautiful.'|" (PO, p. 117 [MS 110; 1931], translation altered.)

It is difficult not to recall the opening lines of the *Tractatus* here—"The world is all that is the case." (T 1)—and Wittgenstein's proposed opening of the *Investigations*, before he had decided on the passage from Augustine's *Confessions*—"A lamp is standing on my table"—from MS 108, written between between December 1929 and August 1930.

It is undoubtedly significant that the remarks we find in the *Nachlaß*, as well as some in the *Investigations* perhaps, *can* be read by a conservative light. And this feature should not, contra Diamond, be discounted out of hand. What we must ask ourselves, however, is why this is so and what is at stake here. Cavell has put this point well. In his lecture "Declining Decline", where he does not deal with Nyíri's claims precisely, but where he notes of Kripke's interpretation of the so-called 'rule-following paradox'—and especially what Kripke calls Wittgenstein's 'sceptical solution' to the 'sceptical problem' of the arbitrarity of rules, which, as I have argued above, echoes that of Nyíri's analysis almost perfectly—he notes:

> "[M]y general response, for example, to Kripke's influential interpretation of Wittgenstein on rules is that since the solution Kripke proposes for what he calls Wittgenstein's skepticism with respect to rules continues a conventionalist view of agreement, agreement about ordinary usage, the way he interprets Wittgenstein's skepticism must be equally conventionalist, or rather it must have a hook of arbitrariness already in it. That Wittgenstein *can* be taken so is important; no less important is that he need not be so taken. Then the philosophical task is to uncover the force of this alternative, to discover whether for example one side takes undue credit from the denial of the other."[413]

Indeed, it is most notably Cavell who has persistently characterised 'Wittgenstein's philosophy'—a term according to which, he notes, "I will always, and almost always exclusively, mean what is contained in *Philosophical Investigations*"[414]—as precisely a *spiritual struggle*, through and through. According to Cavell, even if a conservative reading of Wittgenstein's philosophy finds evidence for that conservatism in certain aspects of his work, it is only able to persist because the features of the struggle itself have been overlooked there. For in that struggle we witness, not simply a *nostalgia* for some original, more authentic way of living, nor a return to some more familiar past arrangement, but rather a call for a *future* transformation:

413S. Cavell, "Declining Decline", *op cit.,* p. 51.

414S. Cavell, "Declining *Decline",op cit.,* p. 31.

"Wittgenstein's formulation about having to accept the given plays its part, I feel sure, in conveying a political or social sense of the *Investigations* as conservative. This was the earliest of the political or social descriptions, or accusations, I recall entered against the *Investigations*. Writers as different as Bertrand Russell and Ernest Gellner[415] greeted the book's appeal to the ordinary or everyday as the expression of a so to speak *petit bourgeois* fear of change, whether of individual inventiveness or of social revolution. Now I think that Wittgenstein must leave himself open to something like this charge, because a certain distrust, even horror of change—change that comes in a certain form—is part of the sensibility of the *Investigations*. But simply to say so neglects the equally palpable call in the book for transfiguration, which one may think of in terms of revolution or conversion."[416]

According to Cavell, the root of the confusion between the two parallel interpretations of Wittgenstein's philosophy—the one as 'conservative', and the other as something like 'progressive' in a sense that undoubtedly still begs further clarification[417]—lies in what

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415 Russell's criticisms of what he considered to be the 'lazy consequences' of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, the latter having in his esteem 'grown tired of serious thinking', are well known. The criticisms of Gellner—who, not unlike Russell sought to marry a liberal politics with an optimistic, scientifically-oriented philosophy—are of the same vein. Given that a quote from Russell serves as the epigram for Gellner's *Words and Things*, and that Russell wrote the foreword to the work—stating that "for my own part, I find myself in very close agreement with Mr. Gellner's doctrines as set forth in this book" (p. xiv)—we might wonder in what sense Russell and Gellner really are 'so different' as Cavell notes here, though they are certainly among the earliest commentators on what has been perceived as the 'political' consequences of Wittgenstein's philosophy, and so the pool of authors was perhaps then rather limited (as it generally remains to today, somewhat surprisingly). The following is a representative sample of the kind of criticism Gellner offers against Wittgenstein's apparently conservative demand to 'accept the given':

"The 'late-Wittgenstein' theory of language, and of the authority it conferred on all its customs and norms, simply in virtue of being part of a natural language, changed all this with a single stroke—and it was the very same stroke which had also solved the problems of validating the norms of our life. It saved the rich old *Lebenswelt* whose practices and perceptions are built into our language, as well as validating our principles. At long last we could embrace both our principles and our mistress, and yet fear neither pox nor gallows. If ordinary speech, and the entire corpus of custom of which it is a part, are a self-justifying system which neither permits nor requires external validation—well then, we need never fear the erosion of our customary ideas and the identity articulated in terms of them." (E. Gellner, *Words and Things* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959), p. 12)

416 S. Cavell, "Declining Decline", *op. cit.*, p. 43.

417 Christian Chauviré is, to the best of my knowledge, one of the very few to have treated this subject at any length. In her essay, "Humanisme et anthropologie", she notes, for example:

Wittgenstein wishes to emphasise by saying, for example: "What has to be accepted, the given, is—so one could say—forms of life." (PI, p. 226) For there is a sense in which Wittgenstein's reference to *Lebensformen* can be read as a reference to *forms* of life, limiting itself to a kind of 'horizontal movement' whereby conservative readers hear a call to re-integrate the natural into the social, to re-appropriate it into our manners of living as an unalterable given—a given that philosophy must, furthermore, respect. Here, of course, we might think of such remarks from Wittgenstein about the nature of philosophy as that which "leaves everything as it is." (PI §124) We might also think about it in terms of what we explored earlier, that of 'doing justice to the facts' (rather than, say, *discovering* them, as someone like Russell might wish to do). According to this reading, Wittgenstein is emphasising the social nature of language and a conventionalised sense of agreement. We should not, therefore, be surprised that a conventionalised sense of *Lebensformen* will support a conventionalised, contractual sense of agreement among the members of a community with which it is supposed to be co-extensive—i.e. a contractual sense such as the conservatives', à la Nyíri's characterisation of it.

However, Cavell argues there is another sense in which one might read Wittgenstein's reference to *Lebensformen*—as a reference rather to 'forms of *life*', which Cavell calls the

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"The question of the human, of human nature and of how to characterise it, has rarely been rarely been posed as such in relation to Wittgenstein. Numerous texts are however dedicated to his anthropology and to his concept of natural history, probably derived from Goethe. But these fail to offer as evidence one of the essential dimensions of his thought : his humanism, and particularly its almost paradoxical character, since he drew heavily on the global pessimism of Spengler and the sense of decline. It is up to us, then, the show how a humanist can also be a pessimist.", *op. cit.,* p. 139, my translation)

For my part, I have tried to show precisely how this might be so elsewhere. Though he does not address the question of how Wittgenstein might orient himself towards the possible foundations for radical social change in as much detail as Chauviré, John Moran makes an interesting suggestion in this regard towards the end of his biographically-focused summary of Wittgenstein's possible leftism, "Wittgenstein and Russia". He notes there, in relation to that which is typically cited as 'Exhibit A' in all judgements of Wittgenstein's conservatism:

"If he proposes that philosophy should leave everything (conceptually) as it is, this is for the sake of accuracy, aimed among other things at avoiding the acceptance of spurious language reform *in lieu of real change.*" (J. Moran, "Wittgenstein and Russia", p. 96, *New Left Review,* 73, 1972, pp. 85-96, my emphasis.)

'vertical' sense. Its function would not then be to proscribe a re-integration of the natural into the social, but rather to challenge the individual to acknowledge one's own separateness and to feel one's own personal responsibility for the future of the life of which one is a part. It is the philosopher's struggle with philosophy—not to overcome it, but to transform it and to transform himself in the process. It is in this sense that Cavell takes issue with von Wright's formulation of the problems of 'cultural pessimism' in Wittgenstein's thought. Cavell notes in this regard, for example, that:

> "von Wright's appeal to 'cancer in the way of life' makes me uneasy. 'Way of life' again to me sounds too exclusively social, horizontal, to be allied so directly with human language as such, the life form of talkers. And the idea of a cancer in a culture's way of life does not strike me as a Spenglerian thought. 'Cancer' says that a way of life is threatened with an invasive, abnormal death, but Spengler's 'decline' is about the normal, say the internal, death and life of cultures."[418]

Thus, Cavell does indeed see in the *Investigations* a preoccupation with the kinds of culturally pessimistic thoughts of Spengler; however, he sees Wittgenstein's work in the *Investigations* as the embodiment of Wittgenstein's intention to *combat* the conditions that have given rise to that decline.[419]

Nonetheless, a lingering question remains regarding whether or not Wittgenstein sought to treat that cultural-historic malaise that gives rise to 'malignant philosophical thought' via some form of conservatism. Cavell admits the ambiguity inherent to this notion of

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418S. Cavell, "Declining Decline", *op. cit.*, p. 53.

419For my part, I would defend von Wright on this point. For surely what Cavell offers is a mischaracterisation of cancer. Cancer is neither invasive nor abnormal; it is rather the response of *an over-active autoimmune system*, the result of 'crossed-signals' and 'mistaken identities', as it were. While not 'average' or 'everyday', malignant cancer is not 'abnormal' at all, expect insofar as it might be considered as *too much of the normal*. To run with this metaphor just a bit further than it was probably intended by its originator, and to quote Cavell himself on this matter: it is the "strain of language against itself, against the commonality of criteria which are its conditions, turning as it were against its origins." (S. Cavell, "Declining Decline", *op. cit.*, p. 58.) Cavell's point, that this notion of Wittgenstein's is not Spenglerian, may nonetheless stand insofar as cancer is *curable*, while death is not of the same order, not something one 'treats' by a therapeutic method (as PI §133 indicates).

'transfiguration', which may give rise to the impression that a deep-seated conservatism lies within his work:

> "The rhetoric of humanity as a form of life, or a level of life, standing in need of something like transfiguration—some radical change, but as it were from inside, not *by* anything; some say in another birth, symbolizing a different order of natural reactions—is typical of a line of apparently contradictory sensibilities, ones that may appear as radically innovative (in action or in feeling) or radically conservative: Luther was such a sensibility; so were Rousseau and Thoreau. Thoreau calls himself disobedient, but what he means is not that he refuses to listen but that he insists on listening differently while still comprehensibly. He calls what he does revising (mythology). Sensibilities in this line seem better called revisers than reformers or revolutionaries."[420]

Cavell thus sees in Wittgenstein's work a call for revision, but he acknowledges that this call may be distorted by Wittgenstein's apparently transparent demand for a *return* to the 'ordinary' or 'everyday'. In this sense, he argues that Wittgenstein's appeal to the ordinary does not represent a desire to return to an original and more authentic *form* of life; in fact, for Cavell, it is not a return at all, since we are not returning to anywhere we have already been. Why then, if it is not 'strictly speaking' a return, does this demand present itself as directed precisely towards what should be most familiar to us? Because, according to Cavell, along this vertical line, the direction one follows out of the philosophical illusions in which we get caught up is not *up*, towards a higher order of transcendence, but *down*: "along each chain of a day's denial."[421]

Every reader of the *Investigations* will have some way of addressing the pattern of self-defeat that is presented in the work, even if it is only to say no more of philosophers than that they 'misuse language'. For no one can deny the manner in which the philosopher is portrayed in the work, and not see in it at least something of oneself (even if one feels it is perhaps hyperbolically presented). As Cavell notes: "The philosopher portrayed in the

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420S. Cavell, "Declining Decline", *op. cit.*, p. 44.
421S. Cavell, "Declining Decline", *op. cit.*, p. 46.

Investigations, confounded by unsatisfied interlocutors, has show them their dissatisfactions, their loss of progress."[422]   And indeed, we cannot fail to recognise that tendency in ourselves to see anything short of the ideal as arbitrary, artificial, or mediocre. We recognise in ourselves that lust for the excesses of the sublime, or a longing for the transcendent, against which Wittgenstein offers only *poverty*: "Here," Cavell remarks aptly, "I propose that we take the famous description in the preface to the *Investigations*—'this work, in its poverty and in the darkness of this time'—to be naming the time in question as what is conceived and depicted by and in the work as a whole, in its apparently empty-handedness."[423]   It is the refusal to see the work either as exempt from its times, or as having already achieved the task that it sets before itself and before us.

We saw above that Wittgenstein had hoped his work might be preserved for a "better sort of reader" (CV, p. 66 [MS 136; 8.1.1948]), presumably one of a future in which a genuine culture had replaced the degenerate civilisation of the present. Did he, like Nietzsche, feel that this was an inevitability? One can only speculate. In any case, he certainly did not feel that its arrival was *immanent.* We might consider here a remark Wittgenstein made to Drury on a separate occasion from that discussed above, regarding Spengler: "My thinking is not wanted in this present age, I have to swim so strongly against the tide. Perhaps in a hundred years people will really want what I am writing."[424]   It has now been over seventy years since Wittgenstein's death, and scholars continue to wrangle over the finer points of his philosophy.   Though they often concern minute interpretive details, which can prove frustrating to the casual reader, the issues being dealt with are not peripheral ones.   They

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422S. Cavell, "Declining Decline", *op. cit.*, p. 56.

423S. Cavell, "Declining Decline", *op. cit.*, p. 69. Once again, we meet in a rather unexpected place the precise shift in Wittgenstein's *style* of thought, rather than that which we might typically consider its *substance*, between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*.   The above line from the preface to the *Investigations*, for example, stands out in stark contrast to its youthful and boisterous Tractarian equivalent: "On the other hand, the *truth* of the thoughts that are here communicated seems to me unassailable and definitive. I therefore believe myself to have found, on all essential points, the final solution to the problems. And if I am not mistaken in this belief, then the second thing in which the value of the work consists in that it shows how little is achieved when these problems are solved." (T, p. 4)

424R. Rhees, *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, *op cit.*, p. 160.

concern rather the core ideas of his philosophical programme and the very nature of what he sought to achieve with his work. Whether or not these lingering questions will be resolved in the near future, no one can say. Perhaps with the passing of time we will see in Wittgenstein's work the clarity and perspicuity he longed for. For the present, it seems to be neither.

However, from out of this exploration one can at least perceive a tentative answer to the question of von Wright with which we began: How are we to understand the relationship between Wittgenstein's public philosophy and the deeply entrenched 'cultural pessimism' that we witness throughout his private remarks? Firstly, the *Nachlaß* clearly illustrates what many had already intuitively discerned in those remarks that were made available by Wittgenstein himself during his lifetime: i.e., that in his work he was attempting to bring about a *new form* of philosophising. The *Nachlaß* further suggests, however, that he distinctly perceived this body of work as one which was ahead of its time and which might thus one day shed a new light upon the darkness of our own. Whether or not one submits oneself to his same dire diagnosis of the present age as Wittgenstein did, we should not ignore the fact that aspects of his philosophy—very significantly—*can* be read in a conservative light. Neither should we forget, however, that throughout Wittgenstein's work, though he may have done so *gloomily*, he always kept one eye on the possibility of a brighter future and that it was this above all that he wished his philosophical corpus would someday afford us.

Chapter 6. *Ethics and Aesthetics Are One: Wittgenstein and the Avant-garde*

> "When we think of the world's future, we always mean the destination it will reach if it keeps going in the direction we can see it going in now; it does not occur to us that its path is not a straight line but a curve, constantly changing.
>
> —*Culture and Value*, p. 4 [MS 107; 24.10.1929]

I. What is the Avant-garde? Peter Bürger and the Politics of Artistic Practice

The title alludes to a juxtaposition which may at first sight seem unorthodox.[425] Certainly, from the point of view of Wittgenstein's otherwise quite conservative artistic taste, a comparison of his work with the aesthetic strategies of the avant-garde is surprising. Nonetheless, when carried out conscientiously, it provides an illuminating perspective on what Wittgenstein wished to achieve in his work and how that wish motivated, even necessitated, the unorthodox methodology he adopted. For by all accounts, the form of Wittgenstein's writing is considered essential for grasping the content of his thought. Nonetheless, we still lack a clear understanding of the shift between his two major works, especially in terms of the stylistic demands placed upon readers of the later work. In particular, this comparison of Wittgenstein's writing with the European avant-garde seeks to highlight the uniquely political character of his post-1930 philosophy, which was all but absent in his earlier writing. What is revealed here is that, while the 'anti-philosophical' aim of Wittgenstein's thought remains consistent across his work, in the latter part of his life

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[425]This chapter originally appeared in a slightly condensed form as J.M. Fielding, "Wittgenstein and the Avant-garde", in eds. A. Weiberg and S. Majetschak, *Aesthetics Today: Contemporary Approaches to the Aesthetics of Nature and of Arts* (Amsterdam: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 281-296. Reprinted here with permission.

this critique of philosophy is placed alongside a more general critique of culture and of the prevailing ideology that he felt was the source of our maladroit philosophical practices.

Undoubtedly, the term 'avant-garde' is one that is thrown around all too easily today. A theoretical framework is therefore necessary for understanding what is unique to the avant-garde in the historical sense rather than the adjectival, i.e. that period of art beginning shortly after the turn of the century and continuing until the start of the Second World War. According to Peter Bürger, whose *Theory of the Avant-garde* remains a milestone in this area of aesthetics, 'avant-garde art' in this historical sense thus encompasses the well-known artistic schools of Futurism (ca. 1909-1914), Dada (ca. 1916-1921) and Surrealism (ca. 1922-1939).[426]

The crux of Bürger's thesis is his attempt to define the historical avant-garde in terms of a shifting perception regarding the *social function* of art, as opposed to its production and reception alone. For this shift in the avant-gardistes' understanding of the social function of art followed, in particular, the earlier generation's belief that art should be *autonomous* with regards to the practical, socio-political demands of living in contemporary bourgeois society. The analysis of art in terms of bourgeois ideology is central here. In fact, Bürger quotes a well known passage by Marx on this point, regarding the 'untruth' of religion. The young Marx, he recalls, denounces as false consciousness the Christian ideology (in this case), to which he cannot for all that deny some element of truth, for it does illuminate real suffering in this world. Quoting first Marx's well-known passage in his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*[427], Bürger continues:

> "It is in religion that this twofold character of ideology is brought out. 1. Religion is an illusion. Man projects into heaven what he believes he would like to see on earth. To the extent that man believes in God who is no more than an objectification of human qualities, he succumbs to an illusion. 2. But religion also contains an element of truth. It is 'an expression of real wretchedness' (for the

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[426]P. Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

[427]K. Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (Cambridge: CUP, 1971), p. 131.

Vienna. In a time without a progressive sense of its own aesthetic identity, architects borrowed freely from historical styles of the past as they felt befitted the purpose of the buildings themselves.[430] Thus, the Rathaus was designed after the Gothic style, the Burgtheatre after the Renaissance, while the Hellenic Reichsrat, complete with its imposing statue of Athena at the entrance, stood as the very symbol on Vienna's cultural superiority within Europe. This eclecticism was not, of course, restricted to architecture. It was reflected in the interior spaces of Vienna's inhabitants as well, its ubiquity ultimately leading to a conflict within the movement itself. Aestheticism was, in a manner of speaking, undone by its own success. Its social prestige attracted intense popular interest, popular interest brought vulgarisation, and vulgarisation brought satirical attack. Aestheticism, as Clement Greenberg would note in his early 1930's defence of the avant-garde, had by the turn of the century degenerated into an all-pervasive culture of *Kitsch*.[431]

L'art pour l'art's claim to autonomy was hardly a turn-of-the-century phenomena. It has, in fact, been generally attributed (rightly or wrongly) to Kant and Schiller's aesthetic doctrines from over a century before. With aestheticism, however, Bürger argues that the autonomy doctrine met a kind of historical limit where it was forced to confront the paradox buried deep within its foundations. As the autonomy of art grew into a concrete artistic ideology, its lack of social impact became increasingly apparent. What had begun over a century before as a unique position in the social matrix—that is to say, a real, independent realm of value, exclusive to art, and thus a unique responsibility on the part of the artist to instigate social and political rejuvenation—had degenerated into a cloistered alienation.

In Bürger's analysis, the avant-garde thus emerged as a movement opposed to this shift towards hermeticism in the pre-war generation of *fin-de-siècle* artists. Art, he argues, thus entered into an age of 'self-criticism', an activity he defines in terms of 'ideology critique'.

Vienna—was not lessened in the least: Margaret Stonborough-Wittgenstein famously sat for a Klimt portraiture, Hoffmansthal was indeed a distant relation of the family, and even the Secessionsgebäude itself was erected with the help of Karl Wittgenstein's philanthropical contributions.

430 C.E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (Oxford: OUP, 1998), pp. 24-115.

431 C. Greenberg, "Avant Garde and Kitsch", *The Partisan Review*, 1939, pp 34–49.

As Bürger notes: "At the moment it has shed all that is alien to it, art necessarily becomes problematic to itself. As institution and content coincide, social ineffectuality stands revealed as the essence of art in bourgeois society, and thus provokes the self-criticism of art."[432] If we look at the three main movements isolated by Bürger—Futurism, Dada, and Surrealism—such intentions are apparent. A work such as Duchamps' *The Fountain* strikes at the very heart of the notion of the artistic genius and the unity of the signature; Magritte's paintings ceaselessly confront the notion of the frame and its legitimating function; while the Futurists aimed to identify artistic authenticity with technological progress and a readiness for violence, claiming that one must even risk one's own life in the process. Artists of the avant-garde thus sought to attack art's hermeticism, exploding not art itself but *the institution* that surrounds it, in order to deliver artistic practice unto the real needs of the public and so play a part in the transformation of everyday life.

Despite the differences in these schools, in each movement there is a similar adoption of the preceding age's turn to the medium itself, but the limits of that medium are exploded beyond what artists at the turn of the century would have considered appropriate, or even essential, to artistic production. More radical than the impressionists' reduction of representation to its barest possible elements, for example, or Klimt's use of two-dimensionality in otherwise 'high art', the avant-gardistes sought materials outside the traditional realm of aesthetics, which they employed in the diverse but similar techniques of *collage* and *montage*. In line with their critique of the institution of art and their desire to return art to the everyday, avant-garde artists took freely from the materials of the real world and pasted scraps of newspaper or fragments of cloth on canvas, overlapped representational images with words and everyday objects, or, indeed abandoned representation altogether, entitling works that were barely recognisable as such in blatantly absurd or contradictory ways. The artwork thus began to shed its work-like character, in order to became a 'happening', a singular event, in which the participation of the audience was frequently crucial. Abandoning the work-like character of artistic production, the age of the manifesto

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[432] P. Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-garde*, *op cit.*, p. 27.

was ushered in as artists sought to inform the public of the new relation between art and society that their works announced.[433]

Though certain aspects of their work varied greatly, Bürger articulates in particular such common theme as the avant-gardistes' continual attack on what he calls the 'organic character' of traditional works of art. "The insertion of reality fragments into the work of art," Bürger notes in relation to the practice of montage, for example, "fundamentally transforms the work. The artist not only renounces shaping a whole, but gives the painting a different status […] They are no longer signs pointing to reality, they *are* reality."[434] Like Magritte's superimposition of equally 'real' but spatially or logically incongruous pictorial elements or the characteristic representation of frames within frames, the unity of meaning that characterises the part-whole relationship of the traditional, organic work was thus disrupted. As Bürger explains:

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433 Of course, the works themselves do not speak of what Bürger has here termed their 'social function', since they sought to exploit their own institutional appropriation in a confrontational and ironical manner. Hence, the need for manifestos. We might consider here, for example, Marinetti's claim from Futurist Manifesto:

> "It is from Italy that we have flung this to the world, our manifesto of burning and overwhelming violence, with which we today establish 'Futurism', for we intend to free this nation from its fetid cancer of professors, archaeologists, tour guides, and antiquarians" ("The Founding and the Manifesto of Futurism", p. 5, in ed. E. Rainey, *Modernism: An Anthology* (New Zork: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005), pp. 3-6.).

Hermann Broch sums up quite nicely the distinctly political impetus for such aesthetic rejuvenation that had begun a little earlier and then taken hold in the turmoil following the First World War. As he notes:

> "That this feeling for the new, this affirmation of the new, this will to a new world-epoch was first proclaimed by seemingly mediocre painters in a seemingly mediocre document, the Futurist Manifesto of 1904, and the fact the manifestants went on the become not good painters but good fascists, is relatively unimportant. (Even a futuristic manifesto can prescribe no artistic, but a most political attitudes.)" (H. Broch, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal and his Time* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 153-154.)

Of course, the spirit of rejuvenation and return to real life alluded to here were not unique to Futurism, but were central to the writings of the Dada and Surrealist manifesto as well (though the violence of the Futurists was later mitigated).

434 P. Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-garde*, *op cit.*, p. 78.

"The organic work of art is constructed according to the syntagmatic pattern; individual parts and the whole form a dialectical unity. An adequate reading is described by the hermeneutic circle: the parts can be understood only through the whole, the whole only through the parts. This means that an anticipating comprehension of the whole guides, and is simultaneously corrected by, the comprehension of the parts. The fundamental precondition for this type of reception is the assumption of a necessary congruence between the meaning of individual parts and the meaning of the whole. This precondition is rejected by the nonorganic work, and this fact defines its decisive difference from the organic work of art. The parts 'emancipate' themselves from a superordinate whole; they are no longer its essential element."[435]

What this means, Bürger emphasises, is that the parts lack hermeneutic necessity. New elements of the same or similar type could be added, or present elements could be omitted altogether, with no corresponding shift in the significance of the work *as a whole*. Far from a change solely in the production of art, this shift in the technique of artistic production naturally had important consequences for the reception of artworks as well. The work's objective became associated with its shock-value, Bürger argues, drawing the recipients' attention to the principles underlying the work and particularly to their *contingency*—ultimately like those principles structuring our everyday lives outside the gallery as well. Shock was aimed at, as a stimulus to change one's life. It was employed as a means to break through aesthetic immanence and to initiate a change in how the audience viewed not only art, but life itself and the corresponding institutions which govern human interaction more generally. The avant-gardistes were thus not attempting to reinforce the aestheticist's belief in a distinct domain of experience, which would reside in the aesthetic realm alone.[436]

435P. Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-garde*, *op cit.*, p. 79-80.

436Bürger's work has been criticised for drawing from too narrow a pool of examples. R. Murphy, for example, argues that Bürger has missed similar critiques of the organic work of art in other artistic schools of the time, most notably expressionism. In this regard, he notes, the various forms of discontinuity and disruption in expressionist writing, and expressionism more generally, are parallel to those of the avant-garde movements:

"These non-organic textual structures dramatize subjectivity not by channelling it into the traditional format, namely a combination of plot and characterisation based on the notion of the individual as a single, unified and unique Cartesian entity—in other words not into the form which Bürger sees as

Rather, they were adapting the public's readiness to accept such a domain, in order to exploit its weakness and expose the faltering ideology upon which it rested.

Naturally, seen from the point of view that defends a continual development between romanticism, aestheticism and the avant-garde, this development may appear paradoxical. For, when we think of avant-garde works today, we often imagine them as those that are most removed from everyday life, the most esoteric, elitist even. In other words, they are often viewed as the very height of *l'art pour l'art* decadence. Hence the perennial question―'*But is it art?*'―associated with avant-garde works in particular. However, according to Bürger's analysis, this does not negate the avant-gardists' intentions, but merely signals their failure to bring about the kind of total transformation of the relationship between art and life that they sought. Nonetheless, even if the avant-gardistes fell short of their their aim in this regard—their artworks having eventually been appropriated by the very institution they sought to destabilise—the movement was not a total failure for all that. Their critique of the institution of art succeeded in making the general categories that pervade its legitimating function apparent, raising important questions about the validity of institutionally determined artistic norms that continue to define aesthetic discourse to this day.

> providing an aesthetic compensation for the 'lost totality of the human being'. Instead, the avant-garde text stages subjectivity as fragmented and discontinuous, for example as a constellation of personae, a series of mutually conflicting and contradictory roles played out by seemingly separate figures in the text." (R. Murphy, *Theorising the Avant-garde* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 18.)

Bürger's response to this critique is clear: montage and collage are by no means an invention of the avant-garde, nor its sole property. In this respect certain aspects are shared, between it and expressionism, for example. In both types of work, individual elements are deprived of their function and joined together in such a way as to disrupt the coherence of the whole. Nonetheless, Bürger correctly emphases that similar styles of work need not have an identical social basis. Similar modes of production may differ greatly in regards to their social function, which will in turn shift to locus of their reception. As Murphy makes clear, the expressionist work still 'points' beyond itself: representing a discontinuous and fragmented subjectivity, it still serves the self-understanding of the bourgeois, art-going public. Though it thus began to weaken the letter of *l'art pour l'art*'s stringent doctrine of autonomy, it remained within the spirit of aestheticism, quite traditionally conceived in terms of art's general autonomy, i.e. its *unique* ability to represent that which cannot find expression elsewhere in our lives.

II. Some Limitations on the Parallel between Art and Philosophy

This has undoubtedly been a hasty summary of Bürger's conscientiously articulated and thoroughly dialectic argument. However, the extent to which Wittgenstein partook in some of the aesthetic strategies of the avant-garde is, hopefully, already becoming clear. Nonetheless, in order to make it clear that Wittgenstein was motivated by comparable *historical* considerations, and that he was not simply borrowing from the avant-garde because of some inclination towards its bald aesthetic value—which, given the preceding analysis, would be an absurd claim—, it remains to be made clear how aestheticism differed from philosophy around the turn of the century and how Wittgenstein positioned himself towards the latter.

Firstly, it is clear that philosophy never went through the same progressive movement towards autonomy that art had made from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards. Even if post-enlightenment philosophy had isolated itself from dominant social practices in many significant respects, particularly as it freed itself from religious constraints, by the turn of the century the practical import of philosophy was again centre-stage. This was especially the case in analytic philosophy, in Vienna and Cambridge in particular, and the benefits that analytic philosophers felt they could bring to science and mathematics. [437]

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[437]Nonetheless, it must be noted that the ideal of ideological disinterestedness, which Bürger characterises as essentially bourgeois in its apolitical universalism, ran deeply throughout it. Specifically, the socio-political consequences of the progress that analytic philosophy was assumed to represent were to be divorced from the value of truth itself. Indeed, as the following quote from Russell illustrates, a philosopher's 'moral authority'—specifically *as* 'a seeker of truth'—was intimately tied to one's ability to severe oneself from political interests:

"Morally, a philosopher who uses his professional competence for anything except a disinterested search for truth is guilty of a kind of treachery. And when he assumes, in advance of inquiry, that certain beliefs, whether true or false, are such as to promote good behaviour, he is so limiting the scope of philosophical speculation as to make philosophy trivial; the true philosopher is prepared to examine *all* preconceptions. When any limits are placed, consciously or unconsciously, upon the pursuit of truth, philosophy becomes paralysed by fear, and the ground is prepared for a government censorship punishing those who utter 'dangerous thoughts'—in fact, the philosopher has already

Furthermore, Russell, Frege, and the logical empiricists who would soon adopt their programme in Vienna, held a firm belief in the notion of *progress*—not only for science but for philosophy as well. *Der Zeit Ihre Philosophie, Der Philosophie Ihre Freiheit* would be inscribed over no doors here.

Autonomy, simply put, was not part of the wider philosophical program of the day. At the same time, however, the question must be asked: What would such an 'autonomous philosophy' look like? How could philosophy sever itself from the independent and objective truth that it had always sought to express with fidelity? Much like a novel without a narrative, no matter how minimal, a work of philosophy without the aim of understanding the world—or, at least, of articulating a sceptical voice regarding such an understanding—

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placed such a censorship over his ow investigations." (B. Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, *op cit.*, p. 863.)

Naturally, Russell himself was highly politically engaged, as were many of the Vienna Circle heirs of logical empiricism. Nonetheless, attributing a distinct political orientation to logical empiricism itself is problematic. Russell himself insisted that his socio-political thought and his mathematical-epistemological thought were distinct, as would Carnap after him. In terms of the Vienna Circle, in particular, this tension between the 'value-neutrality' of logical empiricism and strong political convictions of some of its practitioners has given rise to lively and as-yet-inconclusive debate. (For a survey of this debate, cf.: T. Uebel, "Political Philosophy of Science in Logical Empiricism: The Left Vienna Circle", *Studies in the History of Science,* 36, 2005, pp. 754-773; S. Richardson, "The Left Vienna Circle, Part 1; Carnap, Neurath, and the Left Vienna Circle Thesis", *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science*, 40, 2009, pp. 14-24; and T. Uebel, "What's right about Carnap, Neurath and the Left Vienna Circle: A Refutation", *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science,* 41, 2010, pp. 214-221.)

would surpass the limit of its integrity and become unrecognisable as such.[438] Significantly, such a work would cease to be a work of philosophy *per se* and become rather a work of art.

What such limitations highlight is the need to distinguish between the aesthetic strategies of the historical avant-garde, in Bürger's sense, as specific to the plastic and performative arts, and those of *modernism* more generally, which thrived in a wide variety of domains at about the same time, with or without the doctrine of autonomy. Admittedly, it is tempting to identify the avant-garde with modernism wholesale. Such wholesale identification is facilitated, moreover, by the lack of a clear definition of what modernism *is* precisely. Unlike parallel endeavours within the avant-garde, it was never organised by a group who shared an agenda or even a set of clearly articulated priorities. In light of this fact, it has been claimed that modernism developed out of a prevailing desire to resist the collective stress of contemporary life and the total rationalisation of the human being within industrial society. It was of course Marx who had, only shortly before, highlighted how the

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438 The comparison with literature is illuminating here. In his survey of turn-of-the-century literature, Broch suggests that of all modernist literature, perhaps Joyce came closest to achieving something like an avant-garde work in Bürger's sense, i.e. in terms of exploiting and critiquing the institutional framework within which a work takes on its specific work-like character. Noting first the sense of anxiety that prevailed among writers in the early years of the twentieth century—here, for example, he considers Proust, Thomas Mann and Henry James—and the failure of their aesthetic impulses to express that anxiety in prose, Broch explains:

> "Of the three men, James had the weakest impulse, Proust probably the strongest, to approach the new with all its threats. But none of the three did so. Joyce at one time began to do so with *Ulysses* (which appeared after the war), and it would be idle to deliberate whether and how the others might have taken a similar route. […] For unlike the new painting, whose new symbolic language had attained group value, Joyce had most likely conceived a unique experiment. Although, having retained the form of the novel, he had created a hybrid structure, it could hardly be further radicalised; and if it could be radicalised, it would have become still more subjective in the formation of language and symbol; it would have to flow into a subjective esoteric which no one would be able to resolve." (H. Broch, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal and his time: The European Imagination 1860-1920*, *op cit.*, p. 160.)

What such limitations in the domains of literature and philosophy reveal is, of course, not an ontological boundary, but rather a normative boundary beyond which readers would not be able to identify such a work of literature or philosophy as such. The discussions of Wittgenstein's highly literary style and the status of his works as works of philosophy, are in this sense not without good reason. (Cf., e.g., M. Perloff, "Writing Philosophy as Poetry," in eds. O. Kuusela and M. McGinn *The Oxford Handbook of Wittgenstein* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), pp. 714-728.)

commodification of time and the reification of the individual would progressively engender alienation within society. Modernist strategies that turn radically towards the material of a work's construction, alternate abruptly between perspectives and voices, and ultimately fracture the coherence of the work as a whole, are thus interpreted as providing a refuge from the all-encompassing rationalisation of the individual within modern society.

Leaving aside the question of whether modernism succeeded or failed in this attempt, it is important to note that, so-conceived, it remains subject to the 'duplicity' of aestheticist art diagnosed by Bürger at the outset of his work. And it is perhaps Georg Lukács, in his 1957 essay "The Ideology of Modernism", who levelled the strongest arguments against this 'taking refuge' from contemporary society, specifically in terms of its bourgeois character. This is not to say that the works themselves were bourgeois *per se*. High modernism's "obsession with morbidity," he notes, "had ceased to have a merely decorative function, bringing colour into the greyness of reality, and become a moral protest against capitalism."[439] However, modernist art, with its abdication of social responsibility in a time of great economic and political upheaval, did not and *could not have* contained any concrete criticisms, which ultimately compromised any character of protest it may have had. As Lukács remarks of Musil, and modernist art more generally:

> "With Musil—and with many other modernist writers—psychopathology became the goal, the *terminus ad quem*, of their artistic intentions. But there is a double difficulty inherent in their intention, which follows from its underlying ideology. There is, first, a lack of definition. The protest expressed by this flight into psychopathology is an abstract gesture; its rejection of reality is wholesale and summary, containing no concrete criticisms. It is a gesture, moreover, that is destined to lead us nowhere; it is an escape into nothingness. Thus the propagators of this ideology are mistaken in thinking that such a protest could ever be fruitful in literature. In any protest against particular social conditions, these conditions themselves must have the central place."[440]

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439 G. Lukács, "The Ideology of Modernism", p. 1224, in ed. D.H. Richter, *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends* (Boston and New York: St. Marten's Press, 1989), p. pp. 1218-1232.

440 G. Lukács, "The Ideology of Modernism", *op cit.*, p. 1224

Modernism could not advance towards a concrete *terminus ad quem*, argues Lukács, because it had denied itself, from the outset, any concrete conception of history that would support the establishment of a *new order* upon the ruined foundations of the present, and thus, despite its protestations, it served in the end merely to reinforce that existing order. Though the human condition was exalted in its abstract particularity, it was robbed of its concrete potential for improvement. Human nature was seen from the point of view of what it has always been and always would be. Our collective condition was thus treated as static, as opposed to dynamic, and "the denial of history, of development, and thus of perspective, becomes the hallmark of true insight into the nature of reality."[441]

Lukács criticism of modernism may itself be called into question, not least of all due to its ideological character, which risks white-washing the details surrounding particular authors and the full nuance of their art.[442] However, the notion of history that he evokes there, as well as the tension between the abstract/timeless/a-historical individual and the concrete human-being, is significant for our understanding of what distinguishes the avant-garde from modernism more generally. In such a case, furthermore, it is of little consequence that Lukács includes schools such as Futurism and Surrealism within modernism, i.e. schools which Bürger considers as distinct from the movement more generally. For, according to Bürger, most criticism has in fact lost sight of the goals that the avant-garde set up for itself. That is, most critics have failed to adequately consider how the avant-garde sought to shift art's social function. Crucially, as opposed to Lukács' characterisation of modernism in general, for Bürger, the avant-gardistes were not merely reacting to feelings of angst, *ennui*, or a sense of *Weltschmertz*, engendered by the alienation inherent to life in contemporary industrial society. What in fact distinguishes the avant-garde from modernism more generally is, for him, precisely the *terminus ad quem* that Lukács diagnoses as lacking in modernism. It is the destruction of the institution of art and the return of art to the everyday praxis of life. This, by its very nature, was specifically supported by the objective

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441G. Lukács, "The Ideology of Modernism", *op cit.*, p. 1226

442S. De Cauwer, "Pathology and the Search for a Modern Ethics in the Writings of Robert Musil", in ed. S. Symons, *The Marriage of Aesthetics and Ethics* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 251-256.

understanding of historical progress lacking in turn-of-the-century aestheticism, and (according to Lukács) the post-war modernism that followed in its wake. As we will see, it is furthermore this shifting sense of historical progress that placed Wittgenstein at the heart of the more general cultural shift taking place in the aesthetic realm, from aestheticism to something more like the avant-garde, with its attack on the institutions which shape our lives and its desire to return aesthetic praxis—or in the case of Wittgenstein, *philosophical praxis*—to the everyday.

III. Turning The Axis of the Investigation Round: From Modernism to Avant-garde

The preceding remarks lead us to the natural question: If autonomy was not part of the philosophical landscape at the time, what is to be gained from a comparison of the aesthetic strategies of the avant-garde, which sought to reject such autonomy and thrust art back into the centre of real life, with Wittgenstein's philosophical corpus? At first sight, it may seem like the answer is 'not a great deal'. However, it is noteworthy that Wittgenstein himself—unlike figures such as Frege, Russell, or the various members of the Vienna Circle—felt that there was no connection between what passed as philosophy within the academy and the everyday praxis of real life. He felt that the vast majority of philosophy was little more than nonsensical pseudo-babble, that there was not and could be no such thing as progress in philosophy—for he denied the realm of distinctly 'philosophical truths' upon which logical positivism in particular relies, its own version of the 'autonomy doctrine', so to speak—and he thus felt that contemporary philosophers were guilty of making the same mistakes that the ancient Greeks had made two thousand years prior. As he noted early on, after his return to Cambridge:

> "People say again and again that philosophy doesn't really progress, that we are still occupied with the same philosophical problems as were the Greeks. But the people who say this don't understand why this is so. It is because our language has remained the same and keeps seducing us into asking

the same questions. As long as there continues to be a verb 'to be' that looks as if it functions in the same way as 'to eat' and 'to drink', as long as we still have the adjectives 'identical', 'true', 'false', 'possible', as long as we continue to talk of a river of time, of an expanse of space, etc., etc., people will keep stumbling over the same puzzling difficulties and find themselves staring at something which no explanation seems capable of clearing up.

And what's more, this satisfies a longing for the transcendent, because in so far as people think they can see the 'limits of human understanding', they believe of course that they can see beyond there." (CV, p. 15 [MS 111; 24.8.1931])

From this, we see that Wittgenstein distinctly recognised the 'duplicitous' character of philosophy, which in his view pretended to satisfy a human demand that it could not in principle succeed in fulfilling. Thus, as philosophy is incapable of satisfying its promise for a higher, transcendent form of knowledge, it cannot but defer that satisfaction, propelling philosophers into the future armed only with the same dissatisfactions and doomed to repeat the same mistakes. Thus, though philosophy was not conceived of in aestheticist terms by the majority of its practitioners at the time, Wittgenstein himself understood philosophy in a strikingly similar manner. It proves perhaps less surprising, then, that he should ultimately employ similar avant-gardist strategies in his attack upon it following his return to philosophy in 1929, a decade after having completed the *Tractatus*.

Now, as noted above, modernism lacks a coherent definition. So any survey of the modernist style will have to content itself with a reliance on a 'family resemblance' of diverse and often incongruent features. Nonetheless, looking at Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, one readily identifies a great deal that might justifiably be characterised as modernist in the aesthetic sense. Like many modernist classics, the text employs an arcane structure and replaces the consistent development of a stable perspective with formal patterning. It alternates dramatically between diverse perspectives, interrupting the coherence of the 'narrative'. Mirroring the Viennese eclecticism of Wittgenstein's youth, statements on the nature of language and logic, mathematics, physics, ethics, death and the meaning of life, as well as colour, music and visual perception, are placed 'side by side' and positioned in such

a way that chains of reasoning may be followed both vertically and/or horizontally. Like many modernist works, it takes the 'primitive state' of humankind as a point of reference and shows ambivalence towards the contemporary worldview. In turn, it displays a sensitivity to the unequal relation between the mind and the self—and, perhaps above all, it includes the heroic idea that philosophy, when done *correctly*, can transcend the misconceptions of the modern world and provide a stable footing against its prevailing confusions.[443]

Of course, when Wittgenstein returned to philosophy in the 1930's, his position had radically changed. He recognised "grave errors" in his earlier work and clearly felt that his new approach to philosophy addressed a lack in its form as well as in its content. He later described some of the work's stylistic features as "kitsch" (PPO, p. 133[MS 183, p. 30; 16.5.1930]), and even a casual glance at the two works side-by-side will reveal the almost complete lack of ornamentation in the second, even when compared to the already rather

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443 As modern scholarship has illuminated, there is a critical element at work in the *Tractatus*. However, the object of that criticism may be much broader than is commonly assumed. If it appears to be about the traps that modern logicians (such as Russell, for example) fall into, one could easily claim that the object of that criticism is modern society's overactive rationality more generally (with Russell standing in proxy). However, it cannot be denied that in Wittgenstein's early work—unlike the latter—that critical element takes the form of an isolated struggle by the individual to overcome the negative impact of that culture, which is to say, without aide from nor consequences for one's fellow community. In the words of Lukács:

"Man, thus conceived, is an ahistorical being. […] This negation of history takes two different forms in modernist literature. First, the hero is strictly confined within the limits of his own experience. There is not for him—and apparently not for his creator—any preexistent reality beyond his own self, acting upon him or being acted upon by him. Secondly, the hero himself is without personal history. He is 'thrown into the world': meaninglessly, unfathomably. He does not develop through contact with the world; he neither forms nor is formed by it. The only 'development' in this literature is the gradual revelation of the human condition. Man is now what he has always been and always will be. The narrator, the examining subject, is in motion; the examined reality is static." (G. Lukács, "The Ideology of Modernism", *op cit.* p. 1220.)

Whether or not one wishes to impugn the *entirely* of modernist literature as such with these remarks, as Lukács evidently does, anyone familiar with the *Tractatus* and especially the pre-Tractarian *Notebooks* will recognise these features there. Perhaps above all, Wittgenstein's remarks on solipsism and his oblique reference to the fictional book *The World as I Found It* encapsulate this spirit of resolute individualism.

austere *Tractatus*. In place of the earlier, punchier, aphoristic style*, what we find in the *Investigations* is a generally playful and imaginative rumination on the common behaviour of humankind, which is almost banal in its everydayness. In a word, what marks the shift from the *Tractatus* to the *Investigations* is the distinctly *social character* that the early work lacked—even if the object of Wittgenstein's criticism, which is to say the empty speculative use of language in philosophy, remained consistent across the two works. Beyond merely reflecting on one's use of language, in the latter work the task is refocused on one's life and the role that language plays within it. What is significant in this change, moreover, is the corresponding shift in the production and intended mode of reception of the work, which correspond to this shift towards a more social character.

In Bürger's view, the modernist aesthetic continues in many significant respects along the path first laid down by *fin-de-siècle* aestheticism. For with respect to the categories of his analysis, modernism partakes in similar modes of production (individual), modes of reception (also individual), as well as a common purpose or social function (the portrayal of bourgeois self-understanding). That this characterisation bares a certain resemblance to the *Tractatus* is born out by the fact that, *if one were to adopt a Tractarian world-view*, nothing in one's outer appearance would change. One would still carry on much as one had done before, only without the temptation to enter into metaphysical speculation when questions present themselves as great world-shaping riddles.[444] The aim here is thus not to transform

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444 Regarding the comparison drawn between the *Tractatus* and certain modes of modernist aesthetics, it is worthwhile noting here that Hofmannsthal would write of a similar indiscernibility in his *Lord Chandos Letter*, published almost two decades before the *Tractatus*. In this unique story, told in the form of a letter to the protagonist's contemporary—none other than Lord Francis Bacon himself—Chandos (a poet) is writing to explain how he has fallen into what might be described as a 'Tractarian crisis', where all the words he once used to transcend our ordinary experience of the world have ceased to have any meaning and thus, though mystical experience pervades his existence, the *expression* of that experience is on the verge of escaping him forever:

"Since then, I have led a life such as you will scarcely understand, I fear, so uninspired, so thoughtless in the course of my days—a life, I might add, that is virtually indistinguishable from the lives of my neighbours, my relatives, and most of the landowning gentry of this realm, and one not wholly without its blissful and quickening moments." (H. von Hofmannsthal, *The Lord Chandos Letter* (Marlboro, VT: Marlboro Press, 1986), p. 22.)

one's practice, but to return it to a more originary one. The ethical aspect of such a transformation is made clear in the preparatory *Notebooks*, where Wittgenstein notes: "It seems one can't say anything more than: Live happily!" (NB, p. 78) As we have seen, however, Bürger continues by defining the avant-garde in terms of its conscientious attack on such an aesthetic locus of bourgeois individualism.

What, then, is it about the latter text that is specifically avant-garde in its approach and which the earlier text lacked? By Bürger's light, there is an important distinction to make between the *criticism of philosophers* (what he calls 'dogmatic criticism'), the *criticism of philosophy by means of philosophy* ('system-immanent criticism'), and the *criticism of philosophy in toto*, which is to say, as an institutionalised practice (what Bürger calls 'self-criticism' or 'ideology critique'). The meaning of 'dogmatic criticism' should be clear here, also that this term is not intended to be dismissive. What is interesting to note, rather, is the shared dialectic nature of the other two categories, which for all that are not identical. In system-immanent critique, the reference to philosophising becomes the principle means of doing philosophy and advancing its endeavours. This most readily recalls Kant and his own self-proclaimed 'critical philosophy'. Kant's critique remained system-immanent in Bürger's sense insofar as he failed to question the wider institution of philosophical practice, proposing rather to trace the limits of thought 'from the inside out', as it were, thus drawing positive philosophical theses from that critique. Although Kant's investigation into the antinomies was historically conditioned, for example, the result of that investigation was posited as an atemporal, timeless norm.[445] With self-critique, on the contrary, philosophising

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For a detailed treatment of the significance of this line, and the indiscernibility between Chandos and his neighbours, cf. B. Bennett, "Chandos and his Neighbours", *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 49, 1975, pp. 315-331.

445 A key example of such a positive thesis is found in the doctrine of the autonomy of art itself. Bürger outlines the bourgeois character of this thesis thus: "With his demand that the aesthetic judgment be universal, Kant also closes his eyes to the particular interests of his class. Towards the products of the class enemy also, the bourgeois theoretician claims impartiality. What is bourgeois in Kant's argument is precisely the demand that the aesthetic judgment have universal validity. The pathos of universality is characteristic of the bourgeoisie, which fights the feudal nobility as an estate that represents particular interests." (Bürger, *The Theory of the Avant-garde*, *op cit.*, p. 43.)

becomes the *sole* subject of philosophy and the work becomes about nothing other than the practice itself, thus conceived as a historically and temporally situated. In Bürger's terms, 'the institution' and the 'content' of particular works completely coincides, thus drawing our attention to the various institutional functions which grant or deny them legitimacy—i.e., from the outside-in. The realization of this aim requires, however, a shift in the respective modes of production and reception of the work in question.

For Wittgenstein*,* it is undoubtedly on the level of its intended reception that the great differences between his earlier and later work were most readily felt. Among early readings of the work, there was a recognition of a new conversational tone that led many to ask: *to whom* precisely is this work addressed? Certainly, the 'metaphysical subject' was rejected along with other key notions from the *Tractatus*—although, as the penultimate section of that earlier work makes clear, this was already to be rejected at *that* time along with the rest of the work's pseudo-philosophical architecture. Nonetheless, in contradistinction to the smattering of references to the reader of the *Tractatus*, it was noticed early on that the reader takes a key position in the latter work. Here, however, the reader appears not in the *third person*, nor instructed how the work is to be read, but rather in the *second person*, being thus invited to participate in a shared problematic, frequently elucidated by the author himself (not surprisingly) in the first person.

The first section of the *Investigations*, which begins with a quotation from Augustine about the learning of language, thus continues: "These words, it seems to *me*, give *us* a particular picture of the essence of human language." (PI §1, my emphasis) Such a tone, as Cavell has suggested, suggests a refusal on Wittgenstein's part to see the work either as exempt from the intellectual *milieu* of its time or—unlike the *Tractatus*—as having already achieved the task that it sets before itself.[446] Despite the difference in intensity between avant-garde 'happenings' and Wittgenstein's inclusion of the reader in the problematics addressed in the work, this dissolution of the distance which separates the producer and the recipient of a

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446S. Cavell, "Declining Decline", *op cit.*.

work resonates with Bürger's evaluation of the role of the 'recipient' of avant-garde artworks.

The dialogical style of reasoning found in the *Investigations*, one could further point out, finds a strong parallel in Wittgenstein's method of classroom instruction. Addressing the attendees directly, while jumping from topic to topic, appears to have been a means for Wittgenstein to bring about a mode of understanding that saw each topic as intricately entwined, and thus arising not from a single misunderstanding but from a network of misconceptions. They had to be resisted from many sides at once, lest one misconception be replaced by another that had been previously knocked down. These were not errors in the traditional sense. As Wittgenstein noted already in 1933, in the first of the section headings for the chapter entitled 'Philosophy' in the *Big Typescript:*

> "DIFFICULT OF PHILOSOPHY NOT THE INTELLECTUAL DIFFICULTY OF THE SCIENCES, BUT THE DIFFICULTY OF A CHANGE OF ATTITUDE. RESISTANCES OF THE WILL MUST BE OVERCOME." (PO, p. 161 [TS 213, p. 406; 1933])

From the recollection of Wittgenstein's students, we know that they frequently experienced a kind of shock in while undergoing this process, as the confusions that arose from jumping from one to another topic gave way to a sudden insight into what Wittgenstein had intended all along.[447] Apparently, however, these 'revelations' were not long-lived—the will to

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447Lest we think that such shocking insights were the result of Wittgenstein's domineering personality alone, consider here the account of P. Hadot, a scholar not of analytic philosophy but ancient philosophy, who credits Wittgenstein with the genesis of the guiding idea of his work, that of *l'exercice spirituel*, or 'spiritual exercise', as one that reveals how philosophy in antiquity was a way of life rather than a doctrine. As Hadot notes:

> "The analysis—which one can call revolutionary—of language that is developed in *Philosophical Investigations* provoked in me, I must say, an overturning (*bouleversement*) of my philosophical reflections. All sorts of new perspectives opened up to me in my work as a historian of philosophy." (P. Hadot, *Wittgenstein et les limites de langage* (Paris: Vrin, 2006), p. 11, my translation.)

It was, furthermore, Wittgenstein's rejection of the mentalist view of language, and his replacement of the analysis in the *Tractatus* with that of language as a *social activity*, or form of life, that revolutionised the study of ancient thought for Hadot.

> "This idea helped me to resolve the problem that was put before me, as well as many of my

philosophise being, perhaps, stronger than Wittgenstein had imagined—and the same procedure would typically begin again at the following séance, with a different, dizzying set of examples.

It is only when this pattern of dialogic reasoning is compared to the style and structure of the *Tractatus* that it receives its full significance. Like the *Tractatus,* the *Investigations* is comprised of a series of numbered paragraphs; however, unlike the *Tractatus*, the later text seems to have no greater organising principle. Paragraphs appear to be arranged willy-nilly, with neither tempo nor crescendo, and the endpoint of the work seems to have no greater necessity than any other. The key to understanding this inherently contingent structure is what Bürger calls the 'non-organic' character of the avant-garde work. We have seen how this implicates a significant shift in the relation between the parts of the work and the whole. The parts of a non-organic work lack hermeneutic necessity. New elements of the same or similar type could be added, present elements could rearranged, or omitted altogether, without a corresponding shift in the overall significance of the work. Given this unusual mode of production, moreover, there seems to be no particular benefit to be gained by reading the remarks in the order they have been arranged. Wittgenstein himself appears to have eschewed all traditional forms of argumentative linearity.

Of course, we know today that Wittgenstein struggled *immensely* over the final arrangement of the remarks in the text. In fact, the difficulties that Wittgenstein underwent finding an acceptable form for this, his second magnum *opus*, are referred to directly in the preface of the work, where Wittgenstein characterises the unique form of work as an 'album'. As he notes there:

> "I have written all these thoughts as *remarks*, short paragraphs, of which there is sometimes a fairly long chain about the same subject, while I sometimes make a sudden jump, jumping from one topic to another.—It was my intention at first to bring all this together in a book whose form I pictured

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colleagues: that of the apparent incoherence of the philosophical writers of Antiquity […] It is with this lens that I began to speak of *l'exercice spirituel*" (Ibid.)

differently at different times. But the essential thing was that the thoughts should proceed from one subject to another in a natural order and without breaks.

After several unsuccessful attempts to weld my thoughts together into such a whole, I realized I should never succeed. The best that I could write would never be more than philosophical remarks; my thoughts were soon crippled if I tried to force them on in any single direction against their natural inclination.——And this was, of course, connected with the very nature of the investigation. For this compels us to travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction.—The philosophical remarks in this book are, as it were, a number of sketches of landscapes which were made in the course of these long and involved journeyings." (PI, Preface)

Despite Wittgenstein's new conversational tone, early readers of the work were prone to underestimate the significance of these remarks. Where some were once inclined to read in this an admission of a *personal incapacity* to write a 'better', more coherent work, we now prioritise his claim that such a work would be contrary to the what he was trying to achieve. Thus, when Wittgenstein remarks a little further on that "this book is really only an album" (ibid.), he is rather indicating something essential about what one should expect from the work and how it is to be read. The *Nachlaß* in particular shows how the final order of these remarks was painstakingly constructed from a 'cut-and-paste' rearrangement of remarks contained in several manuscripts, which had themselves in turn been constructed from previously rearranged manuscripts over the course of the previous fifteen years, with any number of additional commentaries, interlinear insertions and frequently minute, apparently senseless alterations.[448]

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[448] In terms of the comparison articulated here an interesting example presents itself, which unfortunately, can only be indicated here. The comparison concerns Bürger's discussion of 'chance' in surrealist works and their doctrine of 'objective chance' as a means to attend to the particulars in life which others fail to notice. As Bürger notes:

"Valery once correctly observed that chance can be manufactured. One need only close one's eyes as one picks an object from a number of similar ones to make the result a chance result. Although the Surrealists do not manufacture chance, they devote a heightened attention to events whose occurrence is not held to be likely. They can therefore register 'chance events' that, because of their triviality (i.e.. their unrelatedness to the preoccupations of the individual concerned) escape others. Starting from the experience that a society is organized on the basis of a means-ends rationality increasingly restricts the individual's scope, the Surrealists attempt to discover elements of the unpredictable in daily life."

In sum, this technique of building an 'album' is perfectly in-line with the avant-garde approach. In the first place, its mode of production is reminiscent of the techniques of collage and montage, and in the second, the dialogic-therapeutic focus of the work mirrors the avant-garde's intended mode of reception. But what of the work's social function?

Given that little is said by Wittgenstein about what he specifically wished to achieve in his final work—unlike the avant-garde, who clearly proclaimed theirs in the various manifestos of the day—the ideological character of his attack on the institution of philosophy can only be witnessed directly in various *Nachlaß* sources. Specifically, in the early 1930's, when Wittgenstein returned to philosophy with his new culture-critical agenda in hand, it is the series of prefaces to the work he hoped to publish at that time that stand out most clearly today as something like his own private 'manifesto' for the legitimate practice of philosophy. There, what Wittgenstein calls the dominant 'spirit of the times'—and the extent to which the alternative mode of philosophical composition he was developing then was precisely intended *to be* an alternative to that spirit—is expressed by him thus:

> "This book is written for such men as are in sympathy with its spirit. This spirit is different from the one which informs the vast stream of European and American civilization in which all of us stand. *That* spirit expresses itself in an onwards movement, in building ever larger and more complicated structures; the other in striving after clarity and perspicuity no matter what structure. The first tries to grasp the world by way of its periphery—in its variety; the second at its centre—in its essence. And so the first adds one construction to another, moving on and up, as it were, from one stage to the next, while the other remains where it is and what it tries to grasp is always the same." (PR, Foreword)

(Bürger, *The Theory of the Avant-garde*, p. 65).

This understanding of chance is far from the spontaneous splashing of paint on canvas, or the unpredictable drip. It is rather painstakingly calculated. And in this sense, it may also be reminiscent of Wittgenstein's 'cut up' method. In this regard N. Venturinha offers a relevant story:

> "[A] paper by Paul, also posthumously published, sheds light on the matter. He reports an episode in which, showing him 'different copies' of TSS 228 and 230 'housed in two identical box-files', Anscombe said 'Wittgenstein wanted them to show how philosophical ideas could lead on the each other in different orders'." (N. Venturinha, "Introduction: A Composite Work of Art", *op cit.*, p. 7.)

Dogmatic criticism, as we have seen, pits one theory against another and infers its own truth from the untruth of the other. Dialectical criticism, on the other hand, proceeds immanently, deriving its force from the gaps and contradictions within the object of its criticism. In this way, the *Tractatus* proceeded to lead the reader along, from one familiar philosophically-sounding proposition to another, in order to end by exposing the very nonsensical character of those propositions. Like the German literary genre of *Bildungsroman*, the story is told in a series of stages through which the reader progresses towards self-discovery, a form of knowledge which would moreover be empty without having gone through this precise series of mishaps and misplaced enthusiasms. Crucially, like Kant before him, the result of Wittgenstein's investigations at that time were posited as an atemporal norm. And despite his claim in the preface, that the works value consists in recognizing "how little is achieve" when the problems of philosophy are finally resolved (T, p. 4), the results are cast as the highest standard of philosophical achievement, to be upheld indefinitely upon completion of the work.

The dialectical nature of the *Investigations* is of a significantly different sort, which ultimately allowed Wittgenstein's latter work to escape the atemporal—and *apolitical*—character of the earlier work, and finally achieve a more thoroughly ideologically-centred critique. As Wittgenstein concludes the preface to that later work, in stark contrast to a similar remark with which he once *opened* the preface to the *Tractatus*: "I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking. But, if possible, to simulate someone to thoughts of his own." (PI, Preface)

Nonetheless, it is clear that doing so, and to the extent that Wittgenstein was willing to pursue this relentless task, it also posed a real risk to the work's comprehension. As Bürger notes:

> "For dialectical criticism, the contradictions in the criticized theory are not indications of insufficient
> intellectual rigour on the part of the author, but an indication of an unsolved problem or one that has
> remained hidden. Dialectical criticism thus stands in a relation of dependency to the criticized

> theory. That also means, however, that it reaches its limit where such a theory cannot validate its claim to be a theory. All that remains to it is 'rejection', as Hegel called it, whereby it also renounces its own claim to being a theory, for it can oppose the nontheory only as opinion."[449]

With the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein—like the avant-garde before him—reached that limit where he openly confronted the non-workly character of his thought. Much like the perennial question with which the avant-garde has been confronted over the decades—'*But is it art?*'—we may therefore be tempted to ask ourselves whether that which is to be found in the *Investigations* is philosophy at all. Wittgenstein himself certainly did, and for good reason.[450]

However, it must be admitted today that his work has been thoroughly appropriated by the very institutions he once opposed and thus, like the avant-garde before him, it no longer makes sense to ask the question that vexed its author during a significant portion of his life. No-one wonders today whether what is found in the *Investigations* is philosophy, though naturally one may reject it as 'non-theory' and, thus, not as false but rather as an ill-conceived and wrong-headed endeavour. But what of those of us who believe there is something of value to be taken from it? How are contemporary Wittgensteinians to resolve the tension that Wittgenstein himself was never able to resolve to his satisfaction: that between the anti-establishment character of his work and the institutional forums wherein that work continues to receive its legitimacy to this day?

449P. Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-garde*, *op cit.*, p. liv.

450Russell, once famously remarked that, after returning from the War Wittgenstein "seems to have grown tired of serious thinking and to have invented a doctrine which would make such an activity unnecessary." (B. Russell, *My Philosophical Development* (London: Routledge, 1959), p.161). By the same token, A. Badiou—no analytic philosopher himself and an otherwise enthusiastic reader of the *Tractatus*—was prepared to write Wittgenstein entire post-Tractarian oeuvre off as 'sophism' (cf. A. Badiou, *Wittgenstein's Antiphilosophy* (London and New York: Verso, 2011)). Wittgenstein himself asked within the pages of the *Investigations*, just there where he he introduces the key notion of 'perspicuity', or *Übersichtlichkeit*: "The concept of a perspicuous representation is of fundamental significance for us. It earmarks the form of the account we give, the way we look at things. (Is this a '*Weltanschauung*?')" (PI §122)

IV. Wittgenstein's Continued Legacy: Lessons from the Avant-Garde

We need not find it surprising that Wittgenstein failed to communicate the cultural-critical objectives of his work more openly. Like the avant-garde before him, he did not demand that the content of philosophy should become politically-charged in order to be critical of the prevailing ideology. In fact, it was probably just the opposite. For *unlike* the artists of the avant-garde, who very publicly announced the new relationship of art to life that their works heralded, Wittgenstein's pessimism forbade such an open announcement. Ironically, it is perhaps the central feature of the *Investigations*' composition—its non-organic character, which purposefully lacks hermeneutic necessity and thus encourages isolation, abstraction, and reconstitution according to the *reader's priorities*, and *not* those of its author—which facilitated the obscuration of its goals.

Of course, it has now been almost seventy years since the *Investigations*' first appearance, and the latent ideological challenge that his work contains has not gone unnoticed by all. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this insight is most frequently (though not exclusively) associated with those scholars most familiar with the *Nachlaß* sources. Alois Pichler, for example, has developed a thorough re-assessment of the relationship between Wittgenstein's critique of culture and the alternative method of philosophising that he sought to develop, and from a specifically ideological prospective moreover. Pichler draws our attention to the material principles of Wittgenstein's method of philosophical composition and the manner in which this was precisely intended *to be* an alternative to other, more dominant forms of philosophising, then as now. Furthermore, he highlights the manifesto-like character of the various draft prefaces to the body of work that would ultimately become the *Investigations* and, interestingly, how Wittgenstein penned these remarks in clear opposition to the very public manifesto of the Vienna Circle.

Despite the decades that separate us from the Vienna Circle's staunch scientism, Pichler argues that the challenge that is contained, not only in the content of Wittgenstein's philosophy, but also in its form, remains salient to this day. As he concludes a recent paper:

"Wittgenstein was doubtful about the success of his work: whether someone would understand his way of doing philosophy and manage or even want to apply it on their own: *to follow his example*. In this chapter I did not want to criticize the standards or conceptions of philosophy that Wittgenstein opposes. My chapter conforms to those standards rather than Wittgenstein's (however, one might say that my chapter is not *philosophy*). But I wanted to stress a point that was made early on by Wittgenstein, but today often seems to be forgotten or underacknowledged: Wittgenstein challenges our Western academic traditions not only in matters of content and conceptions, but even more so, it seems to me, in matters of the *form* philosophy should take."[451]

By historicising Wittgenstein, and drawing certain parallels between his strategies and those of the avant-garde, I have sought to arrive at precisely such questions: What does it mean to continue philosophising in a Wittgensteinian spirit today? What could it mean 'to follow Wittgenstein's example', as Pichler has put it, given the anti-establishment character of his work? And can we truly do justice to that work while its legitimacy remains tied to the very institutions that Wittgenstein himself deeply opposed? This, I argue, is where the comparisons between Wittgenstein's late work and the European avant-garde end—and where we in philosophy may perhaps learn something from the contemporary reception of the avant-garde within modern aesthetic practice and discourse.

In Bürger's work, he comments on the failure of the avant-garde to bring about the complete alignment of the praxis of art with the praxis of everyday life thus:

"A contemporary aesthetic can no more neglect the incisive changes that the historical avant-garde movements effected in the realm of art than it can ignore that art has long since entered a post avant-gardiste phase. We characterize that phase by saying that it revived the category of work and that the procedures invented by the avant-garde with anti-artistic intent are being used for artistic ends. This must not be judged a 'betrayal' of the aims of the avant-garde movements (sublation of art as a social institution, uniting life and art) but the result of a historical process that can be described in these very general terms: now that the attack of the historical avant-garde movements on art as an

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451 Pichler, A., "Ludwig Wittgenstein and Us Typical Western Scientists", *op cit.*, p. 57.

institution has failed, and art has not been integrated into the praxis of life, art as an institution continues to survive as something separate from the praxis of life. But the attack did make art recognizable as an institution and also revealed its (relative) inefficacy in bourgeois society as its principle."[452]

Such a remark acknowledges that history moves one, and the time has passed wherein one might have been able to legitimately repeat the critical gestures of the avant-garde in any kind of straightforward way. After World War II, we can no longer uphold the advances of technology as the harbinger of utopian redemption, à la Futurism. After Freud, we can no longer consider the subconscious a naïve and trustworthy guide for engaging with the world, as did the Surrealists. Neither can we, in the manner of Dada, continue to simply place familiar *objets trouvés* in the museum as examples of the aesthetic qualities of everyday life. While such gestures continue to motivate artistic works in significant ways, their bald critical character does not bare infinite repetition; the times have changed and with that these gestures have ceased to function in the same way as before. However, the avant-garde has had a lasting impact on our commerce with art. For, following the avant-garde's revelation of its ideologically-determined institutional status, the question of what it means for art to be critically engaged has become central to aesthetic discourse today.

Like the avant-garde, it goes without saying that Wittgenstein failed to bring about the destruction of the institution of philosophy. Unlike the avant-garde, however, it would appear that he also failed to pose lasting questions about philosophy's institutional status. Or did he?

While the various *Nachlaß* sources cited here help highlight what Wittgenstein wished to achieve in his work, it is the material construction of the *Investigations* that most clearly states the case: its unique method of production (the 'album-form'), its intended mode of reception (dialogic-therapeutic), as well as the social function at which it was aimed (the self-critique of philosophy *in toto*, in order to bring about a realignment of the praxis of

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452P. Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-garde*, *op cit.*, p. 57.

philosophy and the praxis of life). Only when we admit the fact that Wittgenstein failed to achieve this goal can we begin to move his programme forward in a manner appropriate to the challenges that we are presented with today―challenges that do not necessitate *repeating* his critical gestures of over a half a century before, but rather finding a means to express those challenges that are unique to our times and to begin addressing them with regard to our own historical particularities. Perhaps above all, it means being conscious of the extent to which the institutional status of our contemporary academic discourse may or may not pose a threat to the social relevance that we would wish our works to have—if that is indeed what we would wish. And I am not suggesting that it need be. What I am suggesting, however, is that it was so for Wittgenstein and we would do well to keep this in mind if we seek to philosophise in a 'Wittgensteinian spirit' today.

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