WITTGENSTEIN'S CONCEPTION

OF PHILOSOPHY

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PREFACE

It is a peculiarity of the philosophical activity that the
investigation of the nature, tasks and methods of philosophy
constitutes a most important part of the whole enterprise. Every
"revolution" in philosophy involves essentially a radical change in
the conception of philosophy itself. If there has been a revolution
in philosophy in recent years it is largely due to Wittgenstein's
perceptions into the nature of philosophy. According to G. E. Moore,
Wittgenstein claimed 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 found, as had
happened when chemistry was developed out of alchemy.[1]

How is this 'new subject' related to traditional philosophy and
why should it be called 'philosophy'? In answering, Wittgenstein
said that though what he was doing was certainly different from what
traditional philosophers had done, yet people might be inclined to
say 'This is what I really wanted' and to identify it with what they
had done, just as a person who had been trying to trisect an angle
by rule and compasses might, when shown the proof that this is
impossible, be inclined to say that this impossible thing was the
very thing he had been trying to do, though what he had been trying

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[1]G. E. Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930-33," in his
Philosophical Papers (London, 1959), p.322.

to do was really different.[2]

This analogy is quite appropriate and illuminating. If traditional philosophy is characterized as different attempts at answering various philosophical questions then Wittgenstein's philosophy may be characterized as a systematic questioning of the questions themselves. He was reported to have said that he didn't solve philosophical problems but dissolved them. This is clearly shown by his statement: "The clarity we are aiming at is indeed complete clarity. But this simply means that the philosophical problems should completely disappear."[3]

Wittgenstein's intellectual life is divided much more definitely than most into two distinct major periods. The first is represented by his Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus and the second, by Philosophical Investigations. It is my aim here to seek a clear understanding of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy by comparing and contrasting his earlier and later views. Wittgenstein himself wished to publish the Tractatus and the Investigations together because, as he puts it, "the latter could be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of my old way of thinking. For since beginning to occupy myself with philosophy again, . . . I have been forced to recognize grave mistakes in what I wrote in that first book."[4]

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[2]Ibid., p.323.

[3]Philosophical Investigations (Oxford, 1953), #133.

[4]Ibid., p.x.

The relation between the _Tractatus_ and the _Investigations_ is a matter of open controversy. On the one hand, the passage just quoted has been interpreted to mean that "Wittgenstein himself viewed . . . [the _Investigations_] as a development of deepening of [the _Tractatus_], and in fact, . . . both the one and the other only make sense when they are seen as complimentary."[5] On the other hand, the majority of commentators seem to agree with Hartnack in maintaining that "No unbroken line leads from the _Tractatus_ to the _Philosophical Investigations_; there is no logical sequence between the two books, but rather a logical gap. The thought of the later work is a negation of the thought of the earlier."[6]

One asserts that the _Investigations_, as a whole is a 'development' of the _Tractatus_ while the other claims that they are 'negations' of each other. Both interpretations are radically mistaken. Wittgenstein himself used to say that the _Tractatus_ was not _all_ wrong: it was not like a bag of junk professing to be a clock, but like a clock that did not tell you the right time.[7] It is important to distinguish clearly the part of the _Tractatus_ which was repudiated from the part which was not. Wittgenstein merely advises us to contrast his later work with his old _way_ of thinking—i.e. his old method of philosophizing. It is quite true that his new and old _ways_

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[5]M.J. Charlesworth, _Philosophy and Linguistic Analysis_ (Pittsburgh, 1961), p.76.

[6]J. Hartnack, _Wittgenstein and Modern Philosophy_ (London, 1965), p.49.

[7]G.E.M. Anscombe, _An Introduction to Tractatus_ (London, 1959), p.78.

of thinking are poles apart. The <u>Tractatus</u> follows the methods of traditional theoretic construction (even though to construct only a "ladder" to be abandoned at the end) while the <u>Investigations</u> employs what can best be described as the method of dialectic (in the Aristotelian sense: "dialectic is merely critical"). However, there is an important continuity in Wittgenstein's conception of the nature and tasks of philosophy. The views arrived at in the <u>Tractatus</u> (that philosophical problems arise from our misunderstanding of the logic of our language, that philosophy is no science but an activity of elucidation and clarification, etc.) continued to serve as the leading thread in Wittgenstein's later works. Thus, Wittgenstein's later <u>conception</u> of the nature and tasks of philosophy can best be seen as a 'development' of his earlier views, while his later <u>method</u> should be regarded as the 'negation' of his earlier method. This, I think, is the key to a clear understanding of Wittgenstein's philosophy as a whole.

The method of my presentation is, therefore, to give an exposition and "interpretation" of the <u>Tractatus</u> first (in Part 1) and then (in Part 2) to bring out the sharp contrast between his earlier and later views before his later conception of philosophy is described in detail. I rely and concentrate mainly on the two texts cited, however, many other published writings and a number of unpublished manuscripts and lecture notes will be consulted. Full bibliographical information is given at the end of this thesis.

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OF PHILOSOPHY

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degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

ABSTRACT

Wittgenstein's master concern in both Tractatus and the

Philosophical Investigations has been the study of the nature, tasks

and methods of philosophy. No doubt, the 'revolution' in modern

philosophy is largely due to Wittgenstein's perceptions into the

nature of the philosophical activity itself. If traditional philoso-

ply is characterized as different attempts at answering certain

philosophical questions then Wittgenstein's philosophy may be

characterized as a systematic questioning of the questions themselves.

It is our aim to seek a clear understanding of Wittgenstein's

conception of the nature of philosophy. For this purpose we compare

and contrast the Tractatus with the Investigations because, as

Wittgenstein advised, "the latter could be seen in the right light

only by contrast with and against the background of my old way of

thinking." The relationship between the early and the later Wittgen-

stein is a matter of open controversy. One school asserts that the

Investigations, as a whole, is a 'development' of the Tractatus while

another contends that there is no unbroken line leading from one

book to another; they are 'negations' of each other. Our position is

that while Wittgenstein's later method is indeed the negation of the
earlier, his later conception of philosophy is best seen as a
development of his earlier conception.

In Part I, a brief exposition of Wittgenstein's earlier theory
of language (as a synthesis of the truth-functional theory of
complex propositions and the picture theory of elementary propositions)
is given. The doctrine of "what cannot be said" and the conception
of philosophy as an activity of elucidation is seen as the logical
consequences of this theory of language. The method employed in the
Tractatus is that of 'logical analysis' which involves theoretic
construction by means of purely formal concepts such as "object,"
"name," "atomic fact," "elementary proposition," etc. However, unlike
traditional philosophers who constructed mansions (or systems),
Wittgenstein built a "ladder" to be abandoned after one has climbed
up beyond it.

Part II brings out sharply Wittgenstein's vigorous opposition
to theory construction and the method of logical analysis. The later
Wittgenstein employs what can best be described as the method of
dialectical distinction. Instead of pronouncing truths about the
essences of proposition, language and the world, he now asks questions,
makes distinctions, invents language-games, pokes fun at philosophers,
and asks more questions,--always with the pragmatic view of changing
the reader's attitude. There is no theory in the Investigations,
although Wittgenstein repeatedly reminds us of the pragmatic and
social nature of language in the process of criticizing his own
earlier theory.

The conception of philosophy arrived at in the _Tractatus_ continued to serve as the leading thread in the _Investigations_. The fundamental continuity is most clear in his negative views: i.e. philosophy is no science, philosophical problems arise from misunderstanding the logic of language. On the positive side, Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy as an activity of elucidation, clarification and questioning the questions, runs through both periods. The standard interpretation of both the _Tractatus_ and the _Investigations_ as anti-metaphysical and self-defeating is shown to be mistaken. Other criticisms of the later Wittgenstein are examined and are shown to be based on a misunderstanding of what Wittgenstein is _doing_ in the _Investigations_. It is suggested that the _Investigations_ is best regarded as a book of confession, case histories, and persuasion or propaganda.

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PART I

THE EARLY WITTGENSTEIN

"Half of what I say is meaningless. I say
it so that the other half may reach you."

Kahlil Gibran

I. PRELIMINARY

Wittgenstein's early philosophy is represented by the Tractatus which he completed before he was thirty years old. It consists of short oracular remarks characterized by a remarkable combination of romantic vagueness and formal precision. Within a span of some 80 pages the whole range of philosophy is touched upon. There are comments on the nature of the world, the essence of language, the nature of logic and mathematics and insights about the nature of philosophy, not to mention interesting remarks about philosophy of science, ethics, religion and mysticism.

Because of the difficulty of the subject matter and the cryptic style of presentation, the Tractatus is without doubt one of the hardest philosophic classics to master.[1] Wittgenstein says in the Preface, "Perhaps this book will be understood only by someone who has himself already had the thoughts that are expressed in it--or at least similar thoughts." He told Frank Ramsey that his idea of the work was "not that anyone by reading it will understand his ideas but that some day someone will think them out again for himself and will

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[1]The Tractatus has been compared to Spinoza's Ethics, the Bible, and many other Western classics, but the one classic it resembles most is the Old Master's Tao Teh Ching. Both are composed of short oracular remarks which cover the whole range of philosophy in a short span. Both philosophers use paradoxes to convey their most important insights. One starts with a metaphysical statement about the nature of the World and ends with a practical advise: Whereof one cannot speak one must be silent; while the other starts with a metaphysical statement about the Way of Nature and concludes with a practical message: Do nothing and nothing will be left undone.

derive great pleasure from finding in his book their exact expression."[2] According to Wittgenstein himself, it was misunderstood by Russell, Moore and Frege--the three formost philosophers of his time.[3]

Although the _Tractatus_ remains difficult and opens to various interpretations, it is no longer as forbidding as it was when it first appeared. Now we are in a better position to appreciate the problems Wittgenstein was dealing with. Our understanding is greatly helped by the publication of 'Notes on Logic' prepared for Russell in 1913, the 'Notes' dictated to Moore in 1914, the letters to Russell written in that period, and especially the _Notebooks_ from which Wittgenstein extracted much of the final text. Also helpful are Wittgenstein's later works in which the _Tractatus_ is criticized. My treatment of the _Tractatus_ is necessarily sketchy as I am mainly

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[2]From Ramsey's letter to his mother written on September 10, 1923 while visiting Wittgenstein. Included in F. A. von Hayek's _Biographical Sketch of Wittgenstein_ (unpublished).

[3]From a prison camp in Italy he wrote in April, 1919 to Russell about the completed manuscript: "I believe that I've solved our problems finally. This may sound arrogant but I can't help believing it," but he adds, "you would not understand it without a previous explanation as it's written in quite short remarks." On August 19th of the same year, he wrote Russell again and mentioned, "I also sent my M.S. to Frege. He wrote me a week ago and I gather that he doesn't understand a word of it all. So my only hope is to see you soon and to explain all to you,....." But after discussing the Tractatus "line by line" (according to Russell) and Russell had written an introduction for him, Wittgenstein told Russell, "I couldn't bring myself to have it [the introduction] printed with my work after all. For the fineness of your English style was--of course--quite lost in the German translation and what was left was superficiality and misunderstanding." All quotations are from von Hayek's unpublished _Biographical Sketch_ except the last which is reprinted in _Wittgenstein's Notebooks 1914-16_, p. 131.

interested in his conception and method of philosophy.

What is the Tractatus all about? The keynote is struck in the Preface where Wittgenstein says, "The book deals with the problems of philosophy and shows, I believe, that the reason why these questions are posed is that the logic of our language is misunderstood." The implication is that the problems should not even be posed if the logic of our language is correctly understood. This sums up both the aim and the method of the book. To put it paradoxically: the whole aim of his philosophizing in the Tractatus is to put an end to philosophizing. Wittgenstein will achieve this by setting a limit to thought, or rather to the expression of thoughts--i.e. language, for "it will--only be in language that the limits can be set, and what lies on the other side of the limit will be simply nonsense" (Preface, p.3). Thus, the principal job of the Tractatus is to investigate the essence of language--its function and its structure (cf. P.I. #92).[4]

Before turning to Wittgenstein's account of the nature of language we should first look at the basic assumptions which lie behind the method of the Tractatus. Wittgenstein assumes that the structure of language is revealed by logic and that the essential function of language is to depict or to describe the world. Thus, there are two major questions to be answered: (1) What is the nature of logic? and (2) How is language related to the world?

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[4]Abbreviations: T. for Tractatus, Nb. for Notebooks 1914-16, P.I. for Philosophical Investigations, B.B. for the Blue and Brown Books, P.B. for Philosophische Bemerkungen, R.F.M. for Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics, Z. for Zettel.

Logic, Language and the World. These are the three master-issues of the Tractatus. In 'Notes on Logic' Wittgenstein wrote, "[Philosophy] consists of logic and metaphysics, the former its basis" (Nb. p.93). Why did he think that logic was the basis of metaphysics? No explanation was offered in his early writings since this was one of his basic assumptions which he took for granted. However, an explanation is contained in the Investigations, where he severely criticized the basic assumptions of the Tractatus. "There seemed to pertain to logic a peculiar depth--a universal significance. Logic lay, it seemed, at the bottom of all sciences.--For logical investigation explores the nature of all things" (P.I. #89). And, "logic, presents an order, in fact a priori order of the world: that is, the order of possibilities; which must be common to both world and thought" (P.I. #97).

It should be kept in mind while studying Wittgenstein's early writings that his study of logic and language always had ontological consequences. "The great problem round which everything I write turns is: Is there an order in the world a priori, and if so what does it consist in?" (Nb. p.53). He was preoccupied with the ancient puzzle of the connection between thought, or language and the world. That there must be 'an order in the world' was a conviction he never questioned while composing the Tractatus. The reasoning behind Wittgenstein's method probably ran as follows: For us to think and talk about the world there must be something common between language and the world. The common element must lie in their structures. We can know the structure of one if we know the structure of the other.

Since logic reveals the structure of language it must also reveal the structure of the world. It is quite clear that Wittgenstein's order of investigation is thus: from the nature of logic to the nature of language and thence to the nature of the world.[5] He said of his own inquiry, "Yes, my work has stretched out from the foundations of logic to the essence of the world" (Nb. p.79).

This order of investigation, however, is roughly the reverse of the order of presentation in the finished text. In the Tractatus Wittgenstein starts with the proposition: "The world is everything that is the case" (1.0).[6] "The world is the totality of facts, not of things" (1.1). Though these statements stand at the beginning, they are, in effect, conclusions from what follows. The account of the nature of the world is given first because it anticipates and is demanded by the theory of language which comes later. The meaning of these metaphysical statements cannot be fully appreciated until his account of the nature of language is understood.

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[5]This was roughly Frege's and Russell's procedure also. Russell set himself the problem of determining "Whether anything, and if so, what, can be inferred from the structure of language as to the structure of the world." Inquiry into Meaning and Truth (London: Allen & Unwin, 1940), p.429.

[6]Quotations beginning with numbers are from Tractatus.

II. LANGUAGE

Briefly stated, Wittgenstein's final account of language in the Tractatus divides into two parts: the 'picture theory' of elementary propositions and the 'truth-function theory' of complex propositions. These two theories are designed to answer the questions: "What is the structure of language?" and "What is the function of language?" Since language is conceived as "the totality of propositions" (4.001), the two questions are transformed into the following: "How are propositions related to the world?" and "How are propositions related to one another?" (This is why Wittgenstein wrote in his Notebook, "My whole task consists in explaining the nature of the proposition.") Wittgenstein never doubted that if we can use language to talk about the world there must be some propositions directly connected with the world, i.e. their truth or falsity are not determined by other propositions: these he called 'elementary propositions'. Non-elementary propositions are understood via elementary ones, i.e. their truth or falsity are determined by (or are functions of) some elementary propositions. Accordingly the two questions above now take the following forms: "How are elementary propositions linked with the world?" and "How are complex propositions related to elementary ones?" His answers are: Elementary propositions are 'logical pictures' of atomic facts--the basic kind of facts which cannot be further analysed; and the truth and falsity of complex propositions are completely determined by the truth and falsity of selected sets of elementary propositions.

For the proper appreciation of Wittgenstein's solutions it is

important to realize that his method of analysis was necessitated a priori; he did not arrive at the solutions by generalization from cases. As he later pointed out, "the crystaline purity of logic was, of course, not a result of investigation: it was a requirement" (P.I. #107). He was convinced that language must have such and such features in order for a connection with the world to be possible. In other words, he was looking for the a priori conditions for language to work.

Paraphrasing Kant's question about the synthetic a priori, Wittgenstein's question is: "How is it possible to make statements about the world?" The fact is that language is possible, it is possible to make statements about the world; what he wants to know is: "How is it possible?" It would be quite wrong to suppose that Wittgenstein is concerned with constructing a 'logically perfect language' as Russell assumes in his Introduction to the Tractatus. Wittgenstein makes it quite clear that, "all the propositions of our everyday language, just as they stand, are in perfect logical order" (5.5563). In fact he states in his Notebook, "I only want to justify the vagueness of ordinary propositions; for it can be justified" (Nb. p.70). This, let it be noted, is also the aim of the Investigations; although the methods of justifying ordinary language in it is quite different from that of the Tractatus. In the Tractatus Wittgenstein employs the purely a priori method to show that vague propositions are really not vague at all once their logical structures are revealed by analysis. He says in the Investigations, "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 experience" (P.I. #92). It is precisely in this a priori
search for the once-for-all solutions to philosophical problems that
the Tractatus contrasts most sharply with the Investigations.

The a priori character of Wittgenstein's method is most clearly
manifested in the way he arrived at the notions of elementary propos-
ition and atomic fact.[1] An elementary proposition is simply one that
cannot be analysed into any further, more basic propositions. All
ordinary propositions are complex, they can be analysed into other,
simpler propositions; and these, in turn, could be further analysed
into a class of absolutely basic propositions of which no such further
analysis is possible--these are the elementary propositions.

It would be interesting to retrace the steps (contained in his
Notebooks) from which Wittgenstein arrived at elementary propositions.
It is clear, Wittgenstein points out in the Notebooks, that the
propositions we use in daily life "have a sense just as they are and
do not wait upon a future analysis in order to acquire a sense"
(Nb. p.62) and that the person who asserts something knows what he
means by the vague proposition. But someone else may not understand
and ask: "What do you mean by this and that term?"; and someone
else again will not understand the explanation and will demand
further explanation (Nb. p.70). For example, if I assert, "Wittgen-
stein was a philosopher," I know what I mean. But someone may ask

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[1]"Sachverhalt" has been variously translated as "state of affairs,"
"situation," or "prime fact." Nevertheless the word "atomic" is most
appropriate as "Sachverhalt" denotes a kind of facts which cannot be
analysed further.

"Who was Wittgenstein and what is a philosopher?" I can try to
describe Wittgenstein and define "philosopher," however, terms in
my description and definition may in turn be open to questions. This
process of _analysis_ may go on indefinitely but if it is true that we
can make statements about the world then the process must sometime
come to an end (Nb. p.46), and the end product must, somehow, be in
direct contact with the world.

What does the end products of analysis--the elementary
propositions--look like? Wittgenstein wrote in his _Notebooks_, "In
all the propositions that occur to me there occur names, which,
however, must disappear on further analysis. I know that such a
further analysis is possible, but am unable to carry it out complete-
ly. In spite of this I certainly seem to know that if the analysis
were completely carried out, its result would have to be a proposi-
tion which once more contained names, relations, etc. In brief, it
looks as if in this way I know a form without being acquainted with
any single example of it. I see that the analysis can be carried
further, and can, so to speak, not imagine its leading to anything
different from the species of propositions that I am familiar with"
(Nb. p.61). Thus, although he was not able to carry out _in practice_
a complete analysis and give examples of elementary propositions, he
was sure, a _priori_ that there must be elementary propositions and
what they must be like. In the _Tractatus_ Wittgenstein writes: "The
application of logic decides what elementary propositions there are.
What belongs to its application, logic cannot anticipate" (5.557).
The actual process of analysis belongs to the application of logic,

it is an empirical matter which is of no concern to Wittgenstein's 'logical' investigation.

The a priori nature of Wittgenstein's method is clearly indicated in his conclusions about 'elementary propositions': "If we know on purely logical grounds that there must be elementary propositions, then everyone who understands propositions in their unanalyzed form must know it" (5.5562). "It is obvious that the analysis of propositions must bring us to elementary propositions which consist of names in immediate combination" (4.221). "An elementary proposition consists of names. It is a nexus, a concatenation, of names" (4.22).

We are now in a strange position: On the one hand, 'elementary propositions' cannot be "anything different from the species of propositions that I am familiar with"--i.e. "a concatenation of names"; on the other hand, the names that occur in ordinary propositions "must disappear on further analysis." What are 'names' which are the constituents of elementary propositions?

It must be pointed out first that ordinary names such as 'Dog,' 'Circle,' 'Plato,' etc. do not qualify as 'names' in the special sense Wittgenstein is using it, since they can be further analysed. "A name cannot be dissected any further by means of a definition: it is a primitive sign" (3.26). It follows from this that a name must denote something simple--something without parts, or something whose parts aren't nameable. If a name denoted something complex, it could be defined in terms of its constituents, and hence would not be a name. And if a term in a proposition denotes a complex then the

proposition, by definition, cannot be 'elementary'.

That which a name denotes is called an 'object.' "A name denotes an object" (3.203). "Objects are simple" (2.02). Wittgenstein's line of reasoning is brought out very clearly in the following entry in his Notebooks: "It seems that the idea of the SIMPLE is already to be found contained in that of the complex and in the idea of analysis, and in such a way that we come to this idea quite apart from any examples of simple objects, or of propositions which mention them, and we realize the existence of the simple object--a priori--as a logical necessity" (Nb. p.60).

It is amazing that nowhere in all of Wittgenstein's writings are we offered a single example of 'names' or 'elementary propositions.' Malcolm reports: "I asked Wittgenstein whether, when he wrote the Tractatus, he had ever decided upon anything as an example of a 'simple object.' His reply was that at that time his thought had been that he was a logician; and that it was not his business, as a logician, to try to decide whether this thing or that was a simple thing or a complex thing, that being a purely empirical matter! It was clear that he regarded his former opinion as absurd."[2] In all fairness to Wittgenstein, however, he was not completely blind to the difficulty. Expressions of doubt were contained in his 1915 entries such as: "Our difficulty was that we kept on speaking of simple objects and were unable to mention a single one" (Nb. p.68); and, "Is it, A PRIORI, clear that in analysing we must arrive at simple

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[2]N. Malcolm, Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir (Oxford, 1958), p.86.

components--is this, e.g., involved in the concept of analysis--, or is analysis ad infinitum possible?--Or is there in the end even a third possibility?" (Nb. p.62).

These doubts were either overcome or supressed by the time the Tractatus was composed. At any rate, in the Tractatus Wittgenstein contends that any ordinary propositions (no matter how vague) can be analysed into a set of elementary propositions which consist of nothing but simple terms (or names). He concludes, furthermore, that there must be simple things--i.e., objects--which correspond to the names. He shares the assumption of traditional philosophers that the meaning of a name is the object it denotes. "A name refers to an object. The object is its reference" (3.203).[3] If objects do not exist, the elementary propositions would consist of terms without reference and would thus be senseless. But since the sense of all propositions depends ultimately on that of the elementary ones, no proposition would have any sense, which is patently false. Hence, there must be objects which are simple.

It would be worthwhile to quote at length what Wittgenstein says in the Investigations about his reasoning behind the notion of 'name' and 'object' in the Tractatus: "The word 'Excalibur,' say, is a proper name in the ordinary sense. The sword Excalibur consists of parts combined in a particular way. If they are combined differently

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[3]Wittgenstein adopted the distinction between 'Sinn' (Sense) and 'Bedeutung' (reference) from Frege. However, while Frege made the distinction with regard to sentences, Wittgenstein contends that sentences can only have Sinn and words (or names) have Bedeutung. I shall stick to Wittgenstein's distinction and translate 'Bedeutung' as 'reference.'

Excalibur does not exist. But it is clear that the sentence 'Excalibur has a sharp blade' makes _sense_ whether Excalibur is still whole or is broken up. But if 'Excalibur' is the name of an object, this object no longer exists when Excalibur is broken in pieces; and as no object would then correspond to the name it would have no meaning. But then the sentence 'Excalibur has a sharp blade' would contain a word that had no meaning, and hence the sentence would be nonsense. But it does make sense; so there must always be something corresponding to the words of which it consists. So the word 'Excalibur' must disappear when the sense is analysed and its place be taken by words which name simples" (P.I. #39). Again: "'A _name_ signifies only what is an _element_ of reality. What cannot be destroyed; what remains the same in all changes.' [Good old traditional search for 'substance']. . . . We say that the back is part of the chair, but is in turn itself composed of several bits of wood; while a leg is a single component part. We also see a whole which changes (is destroyed) while its component parts remain unchanged. These are the materials from which we construct that picture of reality" (P.I. #59)--Presumably the picture of reality contained in the _Tractatus_.

Thus, by a purely _a priori_ consideration of language, Wittgenstein has arrived at an ontology: "Objects make up the substance of the world" (2.021), "Empirical reality is limited by the totality of objects" (5.5561). It would not be difficult now to see how the world is structured: it is made up of objects which hang together in a determinate way to form 'atomic facts,' which in turn, make up

'facts' of whatever complexity. It is obvious that each of these, object, atomic fact, and fact, has its linguistic counterpart: name, elementary proposition, and proposition.

"The configuration of objects produces atomic facts" (2.0272). "In an atomic fact objects fit into one another like the links of a chain" (2.03). The linguistic counterpart of the atomic fact--the elementary proposition "asserts the existence of an atomic fact" (4.21). Hence, the general form of propositions is: "This is how things are." "If an elementary proposition is true, the atomic fact exists: if an elementary proposition is false, the atomic fact does not exist" (4.25). But an elementary proposition is a concatenation of names. How can a list of names say anything? There are other puzzling features of language connected with propositions. How can we understand the sense of a proposition even if it is false or if it describes a non-existing entity?--e.g. "Hawaii is the largest state in the Union" or "Present king of France is bald." Furthermore, how can a person understand a proposition which he has never run across before? All these questions boil down to one question, "How are elementary propositions possible?" The answer is: "It is a picture of the atomic fact."

"In the proposition a world is as it were put together experimentally" (Nb. p.7). This idea apparently occured to him in a Paris traffic-court where he saw a traffic accident reconstructed by means of dolls and toys (ibid).[4] The important thing is that the how

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[4]It is characteristic of the method of Tractatus that Wittgenstein exclaimed at this point, "It must be possible to demonstrate every-

of the accident, the way the original participants were related at
the time of the accident is shown by the arrangement of dolls and
toys which stand as proxies for the pedestrians, etc. "A proposition
is a model of reality as we imagine it" (4.01). Similarly a picture
represents or misrepresents a situation by virtue of the arrangement
of dots, lines and color patches on a paper. "In a picture the
elements of the picture are the representatives of the objects"
(2.131).

How is a picture possible? "What constitutes a picture is that
its elements are related to one another in a determinate way" (2.14).
"The fact that the elements of a picture are related to one another
in a determinate way represents that things are related to one
another in the same way" (2.15). A picture of a thing, say X, is a
picture of X and not Y because the way the elements of the picture
are related--the form of the picture, is the same as the way the
elements of X are related--the form of X. As Wittgenstein puts it,
the logical structure of the picture and the thing pictured is
identical.

In the same way, "What constitutes a propositional sign [the
sentence] is that its elements (the words) stand in a determinate
relation to one another" (3.14). But for a proposition to be a
proposition of a certain situation it must have "exactly as many
distinguished parts as in the situation that it represents" (4.04),

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thing essential [about the proposition] by considering this case."
This method he later calls the 'one-sided diet' which cause philo-
sophical disease.

otherwise it would not be a proposition of <u>that</u> specific situation.
This means there must be a one-to-one correspondence between the
elements of a proposition and those of the situation it describes.
This requirement, however, can only be met by elementary propositions
which alone consist entirely of names, each refers directly to an
object. An elementary proposition is not merely a medley of names.--
(Just as a theme in music is not a medley of notes) (3.141). What
makes it a proposition is that names are arranged in a determinate
way--it has a logical structure which is iden'ical to the way the
objects of an atomic fact are arranged. One can literally draw lines
between names of an elementary proposition and objects of the atomic
fact which is pictured by the elementary proposition. <u>That</u> is how
an elementary proposition is in touch with the world; "it reaches
right out to it" (2.1512).

If an elementary proposition <u>matches</u> the atomic fact it
describes then it is true; otherwise, it is false. But a proposition
need not be compared with reality to be understood, because it is a
picture of reality: I know the situation that it represents by
looking at the picture. That is also the reason why we can under-
stand a completely new proposition such as: "There are ten pink
elephants flying over Hawaii." In all likelihood nobody has ever
come across this statement before. Nevertheless, we all know what
it means because it sketches out a picture which can be compared with
the reality. Like a picture, "A proposition <u>shows</u> its sense. [It]
<u>shows</u> how things stand <u>if</u> it is true" (4.022). Hence, "To understand
a proposition means to know what is the case if it is true. (One can

understand it, therefore, without knowing whether it is true)"
(4.024).

There is another important feature of Wittgenstein's theory of
language which should be briefly covered--the truth-function theory.
We have seen that ordinary propositions can be justified by analysis--
their sense can be completely spelled out by means of elementary
propositions. Language consists of propositions and propositions can
be analysed into elementary propositions. Hence, "Suppose that I am
given all elementary propositions: then I can simply ask what
propositions I can construct out of them. And there I have all
propositions, and that fixes their limits" (4.51). What, however, is
the exact relationship between ordinary propositions and elementary
propositions? Wittgenstein's answer is that all non-elementary
propositions are truth-functional compounds of elementary propositions.
"A proposition is a truth-function of elementary propositions" (5).
This is one of the central thesis of the Tractatus. A full apprecia-
tion of this thesis requires an understanding of the truth-functional
logic. It suffices for our purpose to point out merely that a
compound proposition, compounded of the propositions P_1, P_2,...., Pn,
is a truth-functional compound of P_1, P_2,...., Pn if and only if its
truth or falsity is uniquely determined by the truth or falsity (the
truth-values) of P_1,...., Pn. In other words the truth-value of a
compound proposition is completely determined by the truth-values of
its components--once the truth-values of its components are given, the
truth-value of the compound proposition can be calculated. Wittgen-
stein claims that all propositions are related to elementary

propositions truth-functionally.

An elementary proposition can be true or false depending on whether it matches up with the world or not. Given all elementary propositions, if we knew which were true and which false, the world would have been completely described, because the truth-value of any other proposition is entirely determined by the truth-values of its component elementary propositions (4.26).

Wittgenstein does not offer specific reasons for thinking that all propositions are truth-functions of elementary ones. In the Tractatus we merely find different attempts to show that some apparent exceptions (such as 'attitude' propositions; universal propositions; and existential propositions)[5] are in fact truth-functions, some others (such as metaphysical propositions) are ruled out as not being genuine propositions at all (as nonsense), and still others (such as logical propositions), although propositions, are degenerate ones which say nothing. This method is almost a standard procedure with many philosophers. Wittgenstein had a preconceived idea that a genuine proposition must be a truth-function of elementary propositions and then tried to account for all propositions in one way or another according to this preconception.

How did he arrive at the preconceived idea? Anscombe writes, ". . . The picture theory does not permit any functions of propositions other than truth-functions. Indeed, we should not regard Wittgen-

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[5]The detail treatment of these topics is irrelevant to the present thesis and hence will not be included.

stein's theory of the proposition as synthesis of the picture theory
and the theory of truth-function;[6] his picture theory and theory of
truth-functions are one and the same."[7] In fact the truth-function
theory is demanded by the picture theory. As we have seen, in the
analysis of any proposition, we must ultimately reach elementary
propositions. But the sense of a complex proposition cannot be
expressed by merely listing a long list of unconnected elementary
propositions with a period after each one. They must be connected
or conjoined with each other in some way--in fact, truth-functionally;
because elementary propositions are pictures of reality. An
elementary proposition says something in so far as it is a picture
which can be compared with reality. In other words, it must be
capable of being true or false depending on whether it corresponds to
an atomic fact or not, it cannot be true (or false) a priori. As
pointed out before, Wittgenstein thought that the end result of
analysis (elementary propositions) must not be anything different
from the species of propositions which are being analysed (Nb. p.61).
Since elementary propositions have sense in so far as they can be
compared to reality, all propositions must be so accordingly; i.e.
they must be capable of being true or false. If a certain set of
elementary propositions constitutes the complete analysis of a
proposition, the truth-value of that proposition must be completely
determined by the truth-values of those elementary propositions. In

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[6]von Wright's contention. See: Malcolm's Memoir, p.8.

[7]G. E. M. Anscombe, An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus
(London, 1959), p.81.

other words: All propositions are truth-functions of elementary propositions--the whole language is a system of calculus.

For example: if a proposition P_1 is completely analysed by two elementary propositions; P and Q, and they are connected by the truth-functional connective 'and,' then the truth-value of P_1 is completely determined by those of P and Q in the following way:

P	Q	P_1
T	T	T
T	F	F
F	T	F
F	F	F

That is to say, P_1 is true if and only if P and Q are both true. If at least one of P or Q is false than P_1 is false. P_1 is thus capable of being true or false but whether it is true or false (its truth-conditions) depends completely on the truth-values (or truth-possibilities) of its components. Hence P_1 qualifies as a genuine 'proposition'--it has 'sense.' Wittgenstein has shown that for any proposition, given its complete analysis in terms of elementary propositions, there is a mechanical method to test whether the proposition has 'sense' or not.

Two extreme cases appear when the mechanical method (or what is now called 'truth-value analysis') is applied to propositions such as; P_2: "It is raining or it is not," and P_3: "It is raining and it is not." If 'r' represents "It is raining" and '-r' represents "It is not raining" then we have the following situations:

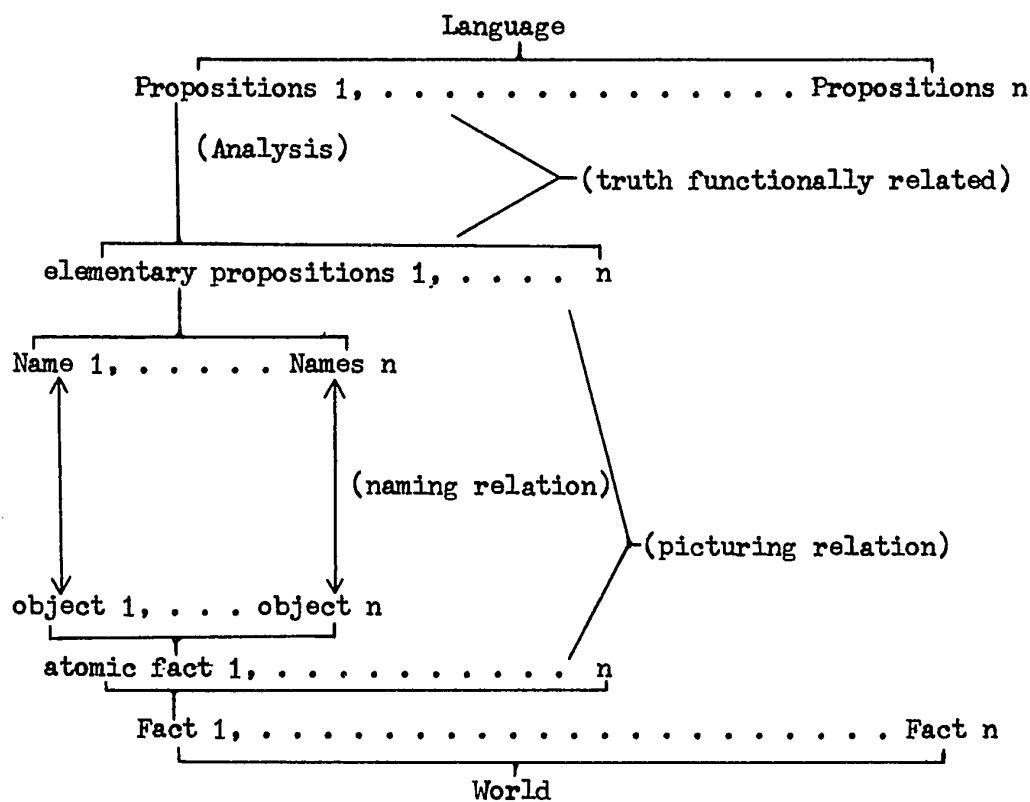| r,	-r	P_2	P_3
T	F	T	F
F	T	T	F

'P_2' is true and 'P_3' is false regardless of the truth-possibilities of 'r.' In other words the truth-values of these propositions are not determined by those of their components--hence, by definition,

they are without 'sense' or senseless. A proposition which is true
for all truth-possibilities is called a <u>tautology</u> and a proposition
which is false for all truth-possibilities is called a <u>contradiction</u>
(4.46). "Genuine propositions show what they say: tautologies and
contradictions show that they say nothing . . . . (for example. I
know nothing about the weather when I know that it is either raining
or not raining.)" (4.461). Any ordinary propositions which turn out
to be tautologies or contradictions are not 'propositions' in the
strict sense; they may be called 'degenerate' propositions. Any other
ordinary propositions which, under scrutiny, turn out to be incapable
of being subjected to truth-value analysis, for one reason or another
(either it is an illegitimate combination of words such as: "Justice
eats blue" or it contains a term without reference such as: "There
is a square-circle"), are considered 'nonsense'; they are not
propositions at all, or pseudo-propositions.

We have now a clear picture of Wittgenstein's view of language
and the world. It is a neat system which can be diagramatically
represented (see the diagram on the following page). If the diagram
is folded horizontally along the middle line, the terms in the upper
half coincide perfectly with the terms in the lower half. Language
is a mirror-image of the world.

Summarily then, language consists of propositions. All
propositions can be analysed into elementary propositions and are
truth-functions of elementary propositions. The elementary proposi-
tions are immediate combinations of names, which directly refer to
objects; and elementary propositions are logical pictures of atomic

facts, which are immediate combinations of objects. Atomic facts combined to form facts of whatever complexity which constitute the world. Thus language is truth-functionally structured and its essential function is to <u>describe</u> the world. Here we have the limit of language and what amounts to the same, the limit of the world.

Language

Propositions 1, ... Propositions n

(Analysis)

>-(truth functionally related)

elementary propositions 1, ... n

Name 1, ... Names n

(naming relation)

>-(picturing relation)

object 1, ... object n

atomic fact 1, ... n

Fact 1, ... Fact n

World

III. WHAT CANNOT BE SAID

According to the above theory, 'language' is identical to 'descriptive' language and to 'say' anything is equivalent to 'describing' something. Thus "the totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science" (4.11) and "what can be said" is identified as "propositions of natural science" (6.53), or "empirical propositions." What about propositions of logic, mathematics, ethics, esthetics, metaphysics, and so on? Wittgenstein devotes the remainder of the Tractatus tracing out the consequences of his theory of language and concludes that propositions of logic, ethics, etc. do not say anything. They are senseless or nonsensical because they are attempts to transcend, in language, the limit of language and, hence, the world. Nevertheless, Wittgenstein contends that there are important things (moral and esthetic values, meaning of life, etc.) which, although cannot be said, can be shown. "They are what is mystical" (6.522). In fact, he considered the delineation of what can be said and what cannot be said, but only shown, the cardinal problem of philosophy.[1] The bulk of the Tractatus deals with language and logic because Wittgenstein wants to "signify what cannot be said, by presenting clearly what can be said" (4.115).

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[1]In replying to Russell's comments after reading the M.S. of the Tractatus Wittgenstein wrote, "Now I am afraid you haven't really got hold of my main contention, to which the whole business of logical propositions is only corollary. The main point is the theory of what can be expressed by proposition--i.e. by language . . . and what cannot be expressed by propositions, but only shown; which I believe, is the cardinal problem of philosophy." Quoted in Anscombe, Introduction to the Tractatus, p.161.

We have seen what 'can be said' according to the Tractatus:
that, and that only, 'can be said' which is capable of being true or
false, so that which of the two possibilities is actual has to be
decided by 'comparing the proposition with reality.' A proposition
has 'sense' in so far as it is a logical picture of the world. But
no picture can be true a priori. "It is impossible to tell from the
picture alone whether it is true or false" (2.225) without comparing
it with reality. Logical propositions are true a priori, they are
tautologies (6.1) and their negations are contradictions. Thus, "the
propositions of logic say nothing" (6.11), they are senseless (4.461).
Nevertheless they are not nonsensical, for they show "the formal-
logical-properties of language and the world" (6.12), or the limits
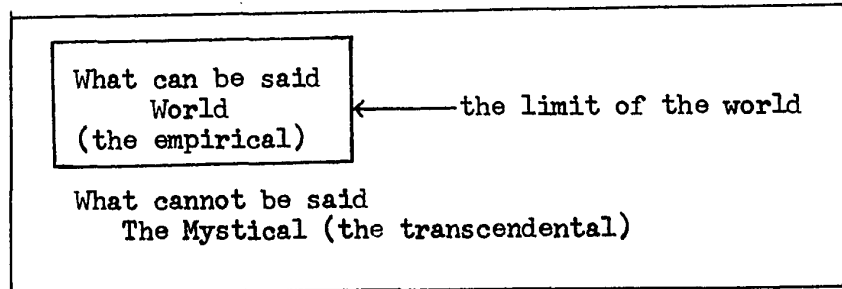of language and the world.

What about the propositions of philosophy? Philosophical
propositions are neither "empirical" nor "logical," they are, accord-
ing to Wittgenstein, attempts to say things which cannot be said.
"Most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical
works are not false but nonsensical. Consequently, we cannot give
any answer to questions of this kind, but can only establish that they
are nonsensical. Most of the propositions and questions arise from
our failure to understand the logic of our language. (They belong to
the same class as the question whether the good is more or less
identical than the beautiful)" (4.003). This judgment of traditional
philosophy follows automatically once we understand "the logic of our
language" as shown by the Tractatus. According to the Tractatus
theory of "the logic of our language," all that can be said is how

reality is (i.e. that certain atomic facts exist and that certain others do not); nothing can be significantly said about <u>what</u> reality is (3.221), which is precisely what metaphysicians attempt to talk about.

Religion, ethics, art and the realm of the personal are, like metaphysics, concerned with what cannot be said—that which transcends the world. "The sense of the world must lie outside of the world. In the world everything is as it is, and everything happens as it does happen: <u>in</u> it no value exists . . . . . For all that happens and is the case is accidental. What makes it non-accidental cannot lie <u>within</u> the world, ... It must lie outside the world (6.41). And so it is impossible for there to be propositions of ethics. Propositions can express nothing of what is higher" (6.42). Wittgenstein considered ethics and aesthetics one and the same, they are both transcendental (6.421); and so is religion and "How things are in the world is a matter of complete indifference for what is higher. God does not reveal himself <u>in</u> the world" (6.432). "The solution of the riddle of life in space and time lies <u>outside</u> space and time. (It is certainly not the solution of any problems of natural science that is required)" (6.4312). Thus, concludes Wittgenstein, "There are, indeed, things that are inexpressible. They <u>show</u> themselves. They are what is mystical" (6.522).

The relation between 'what can be said' and 'what cannot be said' can be clearly represented by the following diagrams:

I.

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 _____
|   _____                          |
|  | What can be said |                           |
|  |      World       |<——————the limit of the world|
|  | (the empirical)  |                           |
|  |_____|                           |
|                                                |
|   What cannot be said                          |
|      The Mystical (the transcendental)         |
|_____|
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II.

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|   _____                            |
|  |(Language)       |                            |
|  |        ┌Sense   |<— the limit of language     |
|  | Saying ┤Senseless→         (logic)          |
|  |        └Nonsense--┼-→                        |
|  |_____|                            |
|                                                |
|    Showing                                     |
|_____|
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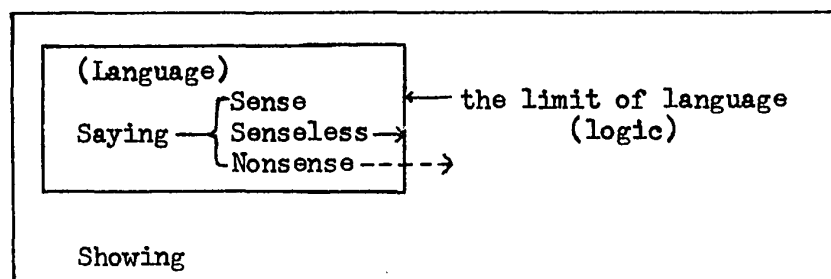
Diagram II is the 'mirror-image' of diagram I. It should be pointed out that 'sense,' 'senseless' and 'nonsense' are terms applicable solely to 'saying'--i.e. propositions. We can say things with sense only within the limits of language. Attempts to say anything about the limit of language result in senseless propositions, and attempts to say anything about what lies on the other side of the limit end in nonsense. 'Sense,' 'senseless' and 'nonsense' are primarily logical categories which Wittgenstein has given strict sense, but they are also used in the ordinary sense with evaluative connotation.[2] The failure to understand Wittgenstein's distinctions

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[2]Frank Ramsey reports that some of Wittgenstein's terms are intentionally ambiguous, having an ordinary and a special meaning. See: Ramsey's letter to his mother written on Sept. 20, 1923 while visiting Wittgenstein. Included in von Hayek: Unfinished Sketch, p.22.

and the tendency to treat them as primarily evaluative or emotive terms is the cause of the fundamental misinterpretation of the Tractatus as an anti-metaphysical treatise. That the earlier commentators and readers of the Tractatus did not appreciate Wittgenstein's important distinction between 'sense' (Sinn), 'senseless' (Sinnlos) and 'nonsense' (Unsin) is evident from the first English edition of the book in which 'Unsinn' (nonsense) is often translated as 'senseless'--the same translation given to 'Sinnlos.'

Logical positivists characteristically regarded the Tractatus as the crystalization of their own anti-metaphysical doctrines. As Carnap reports, years later, ". . . when we were reading Wittgenstein's book in the Circle, I had erroneously believed that his attitude toward metaphysics was similar to ours. I had not paid sufficient attention to the statements in his book about the mystical, because his feelings and thoughts in this area were too divergent from mine. Only personal contact with him helped me to see more clearly his attitude at this point."[3] Positivists considered metaphysics to be simply nonsense and hence to be eliminated. This tendency remains in recent interpretations of the Tractatus. For example Pitcher contends that the statements of the Tractatus implies: 'metaphysics is to be eliminated.'[4] The same misunderstanding prompted Stennius to say, "On the one hand the 'inexpressible,' . . .,

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[3]R. Carnap, "Autobiography" in The Philosophy of Rudolph Carnap (La Salle, Illinois, 1964), p.27.

[4]G. Pitcher, The Philosophy of Wittgenstein (New Jersey, 1964), p.159.

has a positive ring, but on the other hand Wittgenstein seems to share the positivistic tendency to regard it as nonsense which does not deserve our attention. . . . we have a definite feeling that what is inexpressible is just nonsense and nothing else."[5]

Wittgenstein has never said and would never had said, "Metaphysics is nonsense" or "the inexpressible (what cannot be said) is just nonsense." What he did say was: "Most of the *propositions* and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but nonsensical" (4.002, my italics). His point is simply this: Philosophical 'propositions' are not false, they do not mis-state facts which could be correctly stated, for they do not state or mis-state any facts at all--they merely look like propositions but are in reality, not propositions in the strict sense. The attempt to *say* something (in the sense of stating propositions) about what transcends the world (the inexpressible) results in nonsense. In other words, to masquerade a pseudo-proposition as a genuine proposition is nonsense. This does not mean that Wittgenstein was against metaphysics, per se, although he was certainly critical of the traditional metaphysical philosophers who presented their sentences as 'propositions.' It is significant that Wittgenstein made a point of saying that most traditional 'philosophical propositions' are nonsensical but he did not say, for example, that poetry consists of nothing but nonsensical proposition, although sentences in most poems would clearly fall under that category. The reason behind this is

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[5]E. Stennius, Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus' (Oxford, 1960), p.225.

that poems, unlike metaphysical treatises, are not usually masquer-
aded as consisting of 'propositions' which states some truths about
the world. Now, if Wittgenstein had said, "It is nonsense to regard
a piece of poetry as a scientific treatise," it cannot be interpreted
to mean, "poetry is nonsense." He would be drawing our attention to
the important distinction between science and poetry.

For Wittgenstein, metaphysics, ethics, religion and art all
belong to the realm of the transcendental which cannot be said but
only shown. It would indeed be nonsense to contend as Stennius does,
"what is inexpressible is just nonsense and nothing else." The
inexpressible (or the mystical) is everything that is important in
life. Wittgenstein's attitude toward what 'cannot be said' is
strikingly similar to that of another logician-philosopher, Charles
S. Peirce who remarked, "On vitally important topics reasoning is out
of place . . . all sensible talk about vital topics must be common-
place, all reasoning about them unsound, and all study of them
narrow and sordid."[6]

Against the standard interpretation of the Tractatus I contend
that it is not anti-metaphysical. On the contrary, Wittgenstein was
defending metaphysics in a way similar to a theologian's attempt to
defend God by saying, "All attempts to prove the existence of God is
nonsense, for it is not a question of proof at all--it is a matter of
faith."[7] His positive attitude toward metaphysics (and religion) is

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[6]Collected Papers (Cambridge, 1958), vol. I, 1.652, 1.677.

[7]"When I once quoted to him a remark of Kierkegaard's to this
effect: 'How can it be that Christ does not exist, since I know that

clearly shown in Carnap's report: "Once when Wittgenstein talked
about religion, the contrast between his and Schlick's position
became strikingly apparent. Both agreed of course in the view that
the doctrines of religion in their various forms had no theoretical
content. But Wittgenstein rejected Schlick's view that religion
belonged to the childhood phase of humanity and would slowly dis-
appear in the course of cultural development. When Schlick, on
another occasion, made a critical remark about a metaphysical state-
ment by a classical philosopher (I think it was Schopenhauer),
Wittgenstein surprisingly turned against Schlick and defended the
philosopher and his work."[8]

My interpretation of Wittgenstein's views of the mystical is
abundantly substantiated by recent publication of Wittgenstein's
"Lecture on Ethics" and Waismann's "Notes on Talks with Wittgenstein."[9]
He is reported to have said in 1929, "Man has the urge to thrust
against the limits of language. Think for instance about one's
astonishment that anything exists. This astonishment cannot be
expressed in the form of a question and there is no answer to it.
Anything we can say must, a priori, be only nonsense. Nevertheless
we thrust against the limits of language. . . . But the tendency,
the thrust, points to something. . . . I can only say: I don't
belittle this human tendency; I take my hat off to it. . . . For me

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he has saved me?,' Wittgenstein exclaimed: 'You see! It isn't a
question of proving anything!' See: Malcolm's Memoir, p.71.

[8]R. Carnap, "Autobiography," pp.26-27.

[9]Both published in Philosophical Review 74, No. 1 (1965), pp.3-16.

the facts are unimportant. But what men mean when they say that 'The world exist' lies close to my heart."[10] And he concluded his lecture on Ethics with the following: "My whole tendency and I believe the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language. This running against the walls of our cage is perfectly, absolutely hopeless. Ethics so far as it springs from the desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good, the absolute valuable, can be no science. What it says does not add to our knowledge in any sense. But it is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it."[11] There is no doubt that his attitude toward metaphysics is the same.

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[10]Ibid., pp.13-16.

[11]Ibid., pp.11-12. I might point out a similar situation in ordinary life. When one's beloved dies there is an urge to 'communicate' with the dead by speech or writing. The attempt is absolutely hopeless but it is an expression of a tendency in the human mind which one cannot help respecting deeply, it is not something to be ridiculed.

IV. PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy, as we have seen, "is not one of the natural sciences. (The word 'philosophy' must mean something whose place is above or below the natural sciences, not beside them)" (4.111). This follows directly from Wittgenstein's doctrine of 'what can be said.' In fact 4.111 is placed right after 4.11: "The totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science." Nevertheless this conclusion about philosophy was arrived at long before the Tractatus was composed (in 1918). In 1913 he wrote Notes on Logic for Russell in which he said, "the word 'philosophy' ought to designate something over or under, but not beside, the natural sciences. Philosophy gives no pictures of reality, and can neither confirm nor confute scientific investigations. It consists of logic and metaphysics, the former its basis" (Nb. p.93). It is apparent the Wittgenstein had very definite ideas about philosophy quite early but those ideas were not given a rationale until the 'picture theory of proposition' was clearly formulated.

Since philosophy does not give us any truths what is, or ought to be, its task and function? And what is Wittgenstein doing in the Tractatus? His answers are stated as follows:

4.112   Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts.
Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity.
A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations.
Philosophy does not result in 'philosophical propositions,' but rather in the clarification of propositions.
Without philosophy thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and indistinct: its task is to make them

clear and to give them sharp boundaries.

4.113   Philosophy settles controversies about the limits of natural science.

4.114   It must set limits to what can be thought; and, in doing so, to what cannot be thought.
It must set limits to what cannot be thought by working outwards through what can be thought.

4.115   It will signify what cannot be said, by presenting clearly what can be said.

In the preface Wittgenstein said, "The aim of the book is to set a limit to thought . . ." (p.3). That is to say, to set a sharp boundary between 'what can be thought (or said)' and 'what cannot be thought.' Philosophy before the Tractatus contained propositions which are nonsensical because philosophers were mislead by the surface similarity between their 'propositions' and the propositions of natural science—they fail to understand the logic of our language (4.003). Philosophy in the Tractatus is an activity of clarification and elucidations. It shows the logic of our language by presenting clearly what can be said—'empirical propositions.' What about philosophy after the Tractatus?[1]

6.53   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 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.

The only function of philosophy from now on would be a negative

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[1]The distinction of the three 'philosophies' (which other commentators fail to make) is necessary for understanding Wittgenstein's different remarks about philosophy and explains the locations of the three groupings of remarks in the text.

one--to demonstrate to someone whenever he wanted to say something
metaphysical that his 'propositions' are nonsensical. This ad hoc
procedure became the major preoccupation of Philosophical Investiga-
tions although the methods he employed there is quite different from
that of the Tractatus. Presumably the method to be used to demon-
strate to someone that his 'metaphysical propositions' are nonsensical
is the method of analysis: if someone states a metaphysical
proposition, you would analyse his proposition by asking questions
such as: "What do you mean by this and that term?" "How do you
decide whether it is true?" and "What would it be like for it to be
otherwise?" Finally he would be forced to 'spell-out' what he meant
in terms of elementary propositions and then you can show him that he
had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his proposition. It
should be kept in mind that this procedure is applicable only when
someone wanted to say something metaphysical--i.e. to try to masquer-
ade a string of words as a factual statement which is capable of truth
or falsity. If he had uttered the same string of words as a poem
then to show that it does not convey any factual information is quite
irrelevant.

Proper appreciation of Wittgenstein's remarks turns on remem-
bering that 'saying,' 'proposition' and other terms have very special
meaning in the Tractatus. Thus when Wittgenstein concludes the book
with, "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent"[2] (7),
it should not be surprising to anyone who has understood him up to

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[2]Wittgenstein used sagen (say), reden (talk) and sprechen (speak)
interchangeably.

that point. What can be <u>said</u>--i.e. the propositions of natural
science, can be said clearly; What cannot be said--the mystical, can
only be <u>shown</u>. To try to <u>say</u> what cannot be said but only <u>shown</u>
results in nonsense; thus, we must be <u>silent</u>. This is the whole
import of the famous last sentence of the <u>Tractatus</u>, which is clearly
implied by the doctrine of 'what can be said.'

"Silence" here should not be interpreted to mean "complete
silence" in the ordinary sense of not uttering any sound. Wittgen-
stein considered the distinction between what can be said and what
cannot be said but only shown the <u>main</u> point of the <u>Tractatus</u> and
he rightfully regarded his advice, "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof
one must be silent,"[3] the <u>whole sense</u> of the book (see his preface).
"Silence" here means "do not <u>say</u> (in the special sense)," and there-
fore his advice is simply: "Don't try to <u>say</u> what cannot be <u>said</u>"
for "What can be shown <u>cannot</u> be said" (4.1212).

It is clear that Ramsey's famous remark, "But what we can't say
we can't say, and we can't whistle either,"[4] misses Wittgenstein's
point completely. Wittgenstein's whole point is precisely this: the
inexpressible--that which is really important--cannot be said (by

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[3]One of the founders of Logical Positivism, Otto Neurath complained
that this proposition is highly misleading. "It sounds as if there
were a 'something' of which we could not speak. We should rather say,
'If one really wishes to avoid the metaphysical attitude entirely,
then one will 'be silent' but not 'about something.'" Quoted from
'Sociology and Physicalism' in <u>Logical Positivism</u> (ed. A.J. Ayer),
p.284. "Woven man nich sprechen Kann, dauber muss man schweigen" (7).
'Woven' means 'that which'; Wittgenstein clearly wishes to imply
that there <u>is</u> something we cannot speak about. Cf. 6.522.

[4]F. Ramsey, <u>The Foundations of Mathematics</u> (London, 1931), p.238.

natural sciences) but only shown (by music, art, literature, religion
and what not). There are unlimited ways to show the inexpressible.
For example, logic can show the limits of the world by arranging
symbols in a certain way.[5] Music and art can show something important
by arranging sounds and colors in a certain way. Singing, acting,
praying,[6] yes and even whistling are possible ways of showing. The
mystical can be shown. Wittgenstein does not tell us much how it is
shown because his central concern in the Tractatus is merely to show
that it cannot be said. Is not this why he remarked in the preface
that "the second thing in which the value of this book consists is
that it shows how little is achieved?"

The inexcapable question must finally be raised: "How does the
Tractatus show what is shown in it? What is the status of the
'propositions' in the Tractatus?" Wittgenstein answers:

6.54   My propositions serve as elucidations in the
        following way: Anyone who understands me even-
        tually 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.

Nothing in the Tractatus has aroused more interest or caused
more headaches for the commentators than the above remarks. Wittgen-
stein has said in the preface that "the truth of the thoughts that are

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[5]"Logical so-called propositions shew (the) logical properties of
language and therefore of (the) Universe, but say nothing. This means
that by merely looking at them you can see these properties; whereas,
in a proposition proper, you cannot see what is true by looking at
it" (Nb. p.67).

[6]"To pray is to think about the meaning of life" (Nb. p.73).

here set forth seems to me unassailable and definitive," but now he pronounces his 'propositions' nonsensical. Clearly there is a contradiction! Russell set the tone of criticism when he said in the introduction, "What causes hesitation is the fact that Mr. Wittgenstein manages to say a great deal about what cannot be said, thus suggesting to a sceptical reader that possibly there may be some loophole through a hierarchy of language or some other exit" (p.xxi). Since then commentators have either dismissed Wittgenstein's last remarks as self-destructive or attempted to devise ways to explain away the apparent paradox.

On the negative side criticisms are plentiful and their line of attack can be seen by a few samples: Carnap wrote in 1935, "[Wittgenstein] seems to me to be inconsistent in what he does. He tells us that one cannot state philosophical propositions . . .; and then instead of keeping silent, he writes a whole philosophical book."[7] Winston Barnes said in 1950, "the notion of elucidatory nonsense is one that only a very subtle mind in a very stupid moment could have conceived. It were better to be silent than to speak thus."[8] And Pitcher contended in 1964 "Wittgenstein considers his philosophical assertions to be illuminating nonsense . . . . This evaluation cannot be accepted; Wittgenstein has said these things and therefore they can be said. What is nonsensical is to deny that what has been said can be said."[9]

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[7]R. Carnap, Philosophy and Logical Syntax (London, 1955), p.37f.

[8]W. Barnes, The Philosophical Predicament (Boston, 1950), p.105.

[9]Pitcher, The Philosophy of Wittgenstein, p.155.

These remarks display a number of fundamental misunderstanding.
In the first place Wittgenstein himself has never said and, I believe,
would never have said that his propositions are 'elucidatory' or
'illuminating' nonsense. The phrase was wrongly attributed to
Wittgenstein by Frank Ramsey when he said in 1929, "Philosophy must
be of some use and we must take it seriously; it must clear our
thoughts and so our actions. Or else it is a disposition we have to
check, and an inquiry to see that this is so; i.e. the chief proposi-
tions of philosophy is that philosophy is nonsense. And again we must
then take seriously that it is nonsense, and not pretend, as Wittgen-
stein does, that it is important nonsense!"[10] Ramsey, although a
sympathetic interpreter of Wittgenstein, is not very reliable here.
This can be shown by the fact that although he assisted in the
translation of the _Tractatus_ the distinction between 'senseless' and
'nonsense' was not made in the English text, and by his implied
attribution of the statement: "Philosophy is nonsense" to Wittgen-
stein.

Just as Wittgenstein would not have said, "Philosophy is
nonsense" he could not have said, "My propositions are illuminating
(or elucidatory) nonsense." What he did say was quite different: "My
propositions elucidates in the following way: anyone who understands
me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical" (6.54). "Nonsense"
applies to what we say--i.e. propositions; it is not applicable to
'philosophy,' nor can it be qualified as 'elucidatory' or 'important.'

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[10]Ramsey, _The Foundations of Mathematics_, p.263.

Wittgenstein's whole task in the _Tractatus_ is to _show_ or to _elucidate_ the distinction between what can be said and what cannot be said. As indicated before there are many ways of _showing_ but Wittgenstein tries to _show_ the truths contained in the _Tractatus_ by a very special way-- the reader is supposed to read the book as any other metaphysical treatise by treating the pronouncements contained in it _as_ 'propositions'[11] but as it turned out, by its own principle, these 'propositions' are not strictly propositions and cannot strictly be either true or false and thus nonsensical.

If this 'literal' and straight forward interpretation of Wittgenstein is correct then the following attempts to salvage the _Tractatus_ must be irrelevant. Favrholdt suggests, "As far as I can see we do most justice to Wittgenstein by conceiving of the absurd use as something answering to actions. . . . The statements in the _Tractatus_ guide us, and are able to do this although they do not have sense. They function in this way because they are complexes of stimuli which because of our linguistic habits we perceive as communications and therefore react to in a certain way!"[12] Black sees another way out, he claims that Wittgenstein uses many expressions in 'stretched' ways, and that, "Such an exercise in 'revisionary metaphysics' . . . is neither absurd nor self-authenticating. Wittgenstein is trying out a new way of looking at the world, which

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[11]As being capable of truth in the ordinary sense. Is this why Wittgenstein italicized the word _truth_ in his preface when he said that the thoughts in the book are definitely _true_?

[12]David Favrholdt, _An Interpretation and Critique of Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus'_, (Copenhagen, 1964), pp.141-2.

forces him to twist and bend language to the expression of his new thoughts."[13] Both Favrholdt's physiological explanation and Black's treatment of Wittgenstein as a metaphysical innovater are merely suggested ways to explain how the Tractatus is possible, they have no foundation in Wittgenstein's own writings.

As so often happens with detective stories, many readers are shocked to read the last revelation. This is due to their not having paid enough attention to the many clues which the author has placed along the road. It is true that Wittgenstein begins the Tractatus by saying that the truth of the thoughts in what follows are unassailable and definitive, but ends by saying that they are nonsense. There seems to be a clear inconsistency, but if the steps in between are given it should be apparent that nothing can emerge but 6.54 and 7. Here are the steps:

> The aim of this book is to set a limit to thought, or rather--to language, and what lies on the other side of the limit will simply be nonsense (Preface).
> Philosophy must set limits to what cannot be thought by working outwards through what can be thought (4.114).
> It will signify what cannot be said, by presenting clearly what can be said (4.115).
> What can be said--i.e. propositions of natural science (6.53).
> The totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science (4.11).
> Philosophy is not one of the natural sciences (4.111).
> A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations (4.112).
> My propositions serves as elucidations in the following way: Anyone understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical (6.54).

Given Wittgenstein's doctrine of 'saying,' the sentences of the

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[13]Max Black, A Companion to Wittgenstein's Tractatus (Ithaca, 1964), p.386.

Tractatus cannot be said to 'say' anything. They, like propositions
of other metaphysical books, must not be regarded as 'propositions'
in the strict sense; and accordingly, must be regarded as 'nonsensi-
cal.' _This_ much is clear. What is not clear is: _how_ do those
pronouncements elucidate? Careful scrutiny of the text will give
ample evidence of the correctness of my interpretation. He speaks
of 'my _propositions_' and not 'my nonsensical propositions' or 'my
pseudo-propositions.' 'Proposition,' as being pointed out many times,
has a special sense in the _Tractatus_; _propositions_ have sense, they
can be true or false. This is why, I believe, Wittgenstein
emphasized the word 'truth' in the preface. He, as it were, wants
the reader to treat what follows as any other traditional philosophi-
cal treatise, as containing _truths_. (How else could he expect the
reader to treat it?) But if the reader understands him, he will
eventually recognize the _propositions_ in _Tractatus_ as nonsensical.
This is how Wittgenstein planned it. His pronouncements treated _as_
propositions are nonsensical. The reader must "_transcend_ these
propositions, and then he will see the world aright." The implication
is that he did not 'see the world aright' before climbing those steps.
Something important is gained—i.e. 'seeing the world aright,'—the
boundary between what can be said and what cannot be said has become
clear to him.

This way of _showing_ is not as complicated as it seems on the
outset. After all, Wittgenstein has given an analagous example a few
paragraphs before concerning the meaning of life:

6.52   We feel that even when _all possible_ scientific
         questions have been answered, the problems of life

remain completely untouched. Of course, there are
then no questions left, and this is the answer.

This passage has been used to support the positivistic inter-

pretation of the Tractatus as asserting: "Science is everything,

everything else is nothing but nonsense." This hasty conclusion

resulted from the failure to look closely into his next sentence:

> 6.521   The solution of the problem of life is seen in
> the vanishing of the problem. (Is not this the reason
> why those who have found after a long period of doubt
> that the sense of life became clear to them have then
> been unable to say what constituted that sense?")

Here, I think, Wittgenstein is describing a very common phenomena

which no doubt many have experienced. A young man who starts to

reflect on life and world is bound to ask, "What is the purpose of

life? What is the meaning of it all?" He expects a straight forward

answer such as one could give to ordinary questions like "What is the

car for?" "What is the purpose of doing exercise?" After long

reflection he may detect something odd about his original question

as he doesn't seem to be satisfied with any sort of answer, and

finally he may decide that the question itself is not strictly

meaningful. As Wittgenstein says, "a question [exists] only where

an answer exists, and an answer only where something can be said"

(6.51). No amount of scientific information can satisfy the problem

of the meaning of life. But after the vanishing of the problem

"the sense of life became clear" although one is unable to say what

that sense is. Thus, although the 'question' of the meaning of life

is strictly speaking not a question, the process of raising the

question, trying to answer it and finally realizing the nonsensicality

of the question shows the meaning of life to the one who has gone

through this process. He is better off for it, the sense of life became clear to him.

Similarily by raising the questions such as, "What is the essence of language and the world?" "What are the limits of language and the world?" giving answers to those questions (as the Tractatus attempts to do), and finally recognizing that both the questions and answers are strictly speaking nonsensical; the reader is better off for it,--"he will see the world aright." That is why the ladder can only be thrown away after he has climbed up on it.

PART II

THE LATER WITTGENSTEIN

"The destroyer of weeds, thistles and thorns
is a benefactor, whether he soweth or not."

Robert G. Ingersoll

V. TRANSITION

After the publication of the _Tractatus_ Wittgenstein abandoned
philosophy to become an elementary school teacher in an Austrian
village. This course of action was quite consistent with his con-
tention in the _Tractatus_ that all essential philosophical problems
were solved. Ramsey reported, "[Wittgenstein] says that he himself
will do nothing more not because he is bored but because his mind is
no longer flexible. He says no one can do more than 5 or 10 years
good work at philosophy (his work took 7)."[1] It was not until 1929
that he felt he could again do creative work and returned to
Cambridge.

It is clear from the paper "Some Remarks on Logical Form,"[2]
which he wrote for the Aristotelian Society, that he still subscribed
to the basic doctrines of the _Tractatus_. Nevertheless this paper
contains an important criticism of the _Tractatus_ which points to the
direction of his later development. As in the _Tractatus_ Wittgenstein
believes that _analysis_ of ordinary propositions must lead to elemen-
tary propositions. But the form of elementary propositions was given
a priori in the _Tractatus_; and indeed, the whole procedure of
investigation was _a priori_. Now he says, "We can only arrive at a

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[1]From his letter to his mother dated September 20, 1923. Includ-
ed in von Hayek's _Unfinished Sketch_.

[2]This was written immediately following his return to England
in 1929 but was soon repudiated as new ideas which lead to the
Investigations were forming in his mind. See his letter to _Mind_
XLII (1933) and G.E. Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930-33,"
Mind LXIII (1954), p.2.

correct analysis by, what might be called, the logical investigation
of the phenomena themselves, i.e., in a certain sense a posteriori,
and not by conjecturing about a priori possibilities. One is often
tempted to ask from an a priori standpoint: What, after all, can be
the only forms of (elementary) propositions, . . . An (elementary)
form cannot be foreseen. And it would be surprising if the actual
phenomena had nothing more to teach us about their structure."3

The purely a priori method of the Tractatus is under attack and
he now recommends (in a certain sense) the a posteriori method of
investigating the actual phenomena of language. This shift of methods
is what constituted the break between the early and the later Wittgen-
stein. An interesting fact seldom mentioned by the commentators is
that some seeds of Wittgenstein's later philosophy were already
contained in his pre-Tractatus Notebooks. As pointed out before he
had doubts about some of his basic doctrine of the Tractatus. He
was not even sure of his major thesis that the totality of proposi-
tions in language--"Is it a tautology to say: Language consists of
propositions? It seems it is" (Nb. p.52). Nor was he certain about
the picture theory; "On the one hand my theory of logical portrayal
seems to be the only possible one, on the other hand there seems to
be an insoluable contradiction in it" (Nb. p.17). During the compo-
sition of the Tractatus he believed that there must be 'objects' and
to produce examples of them was not a logician's business. However,
he wrote in the Notebooks, "Our difficulty was that we kept speaking

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3Aristotelian Society Proceedings Supp. Vol. 9 (1929), 163-4.

of simple objects but were unable to mention a single one" (Nb. p.62).
On the other hand we find entries such as: "I only want to justify
the vagueness of ordinary propositions, for it can be justified"
(Nb. p.70); and, "The way in which language signifies is mirrored in
its use" (Nb. p.82)--a most typical statement in the Investigations.
Some of these insights are contained in the Tractatus without
elaboration. For example, we find a parenthetical remark in 6.211:
"(In philosophy the question, 'What do we actually use this word or
this sentence for?' repeatedly leads to valuable insights.)" If
these remarks were taken seriously they could have lead to a philoso-
phy quite different from the Tractatus, for they clearly imply that
we should investigate the 'actual use' of language (which is precisely
the main emphasis of the Investigations.)

As it happened Wittgenstein followed the a priori method and
settled with the results of the Tractatus. Black suggests that
Wittgenstein's thoughts were in constant flux and that his position
was intentionally "frozen" for the sake of publication.[4] This
explanation is wrong. From what is known about Wittgenstein's life
and character, there is no doubt that he actually thought he had
solved all important philosophical problems and quit philosophy
accordingly. The doubts expressed in the Notebooks were either
suppressed (unconsciously?) or resolved (he thought) at the time of
the publication of the Tractatus. They, apparently, surfaced again
in 1929 to haunt this tormented mind.

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[4]Max Black, A Companion to the Tractatus, p.23.

The external circumstances of his shift from the Tractatus to
the Investigations was largely due to criticism by Frank Ramsey and
Piero Sraffa, an Italian economist teaching at Cambridge. In the
preface to the Investigations, he acknowledges the effectiveness of
the criticism which forced him "to recognize grave mistakes" in the
Tractatus. He refers to discussions of these in "innumerable
conversations with Ramsey, during the last two years of life . . ."[5]
and to the forcible criticism that Sraffa "for many years unceasingly
practiced" on his thoughts; and acknowledged: "I am indebted to this
stimulus for the most consequential ideas of this book." He said,
according to von Wright, that his discussions with Sraffa made him
feel like a tree from which all branches had been cut.[6] In both
cases the criticism is merely acknowledged by Wittgenstein, with no
mention of its character. Since most of it occurred in conversations,
very little is known from other sources.

The nature of Ramsey's criticism can be gathered from some of
his essays posthumously collected in a single volume.[7] In "facts
and propositions" Ramsey says, "I must emphasize my indebtedness to
Mr. Wittgenstein, from whom my view of logic is derived. Everything
that I have said is due to him, except the parts which have a pragma-
tist tendency, which seem to me to be needed in order to fill up a

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[5] Ramsey died in 1930 at the age of 27. Moore mentions in "Witt-
genstein's Lectures 1930-33," n.1, that Wittgenstein was mistaken
about the number of years. It should be 'one' instead.

[6] In Malcolm's Memoir, p.16.

[7] The Foundations of Mathematics. London: Routledge & Kegan
Paul, 1931.

gap in his system . . . . My pragmatism is . . . very vague and undeveloped. The essence of pragmatism I take to be this, that the meaning of a sentence is to be defined by reference to the actions to which asserting it would lead, or more vaguely still, by its possible causes and effects. Of this I feel certain, but of nothing more definite" (1927).[8]

In his paper "philosophy" (1929), Ramsey's pragmatic tendency is again at issue when he said, "I do not think it is necessary to say with Moore that the definitions explain what we have hitherto meant by our propositions, but rather that they show how we intend to use them in future--the definitions are to give at least our future meanings, and not merely to give any pretty way of obtaining a certain structure."[9] He then recalls that he used to be worried about excessive scholasticism in philosophy and that he could not see how we could understand a word and not be able to recognize whether a proposed definition of it was or was not correct. At that time he did not "realize the vagueness of the whole idea of understanding, the reference it involves to a multitude of performances any of which may fail and require to be restored."[10]

Ramsey regarded philosophy as "a system of definitions (and elucidations of the use of words which cannot be nominally defined.)"[11]

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[8]Ibid., p.155. Ramsey derived his pragmatism from it's founder--C.S. Peirce (See: p.194, n.2). The indirect (through Ramsey) influence of Peirce's pragmatism on Wittgenstein is apparent in all of his later writings and specifically in the Investigations #81, "Ramsey once emphasized in conversations with me that logic was a 'normative science' [Peirce's phase] . . . ."

[9]Ibid., p.263.   [10]Ibid., p.264.   [11]Ibid.

Nominal definition is inappropriate in philosophy and "what is wanted is an explanation of the use of the symbol.[12]

From the remarks quoted above, it is not difficult to see what Ramsey's contribution to the later development of Wittgenstein's consisted in. The decidedly pragmatic tendency in Wittgenstein's later work contrasts most sharply with his earlier theoretic attitude. This pragmatic attitude has another course which is seldom mentioned by commentators—i.e. William James. James's _Principles of Psychology_ was one of the very few books he used as a kind of textbook in his lectures.[13] Drury reports, "Wittgenstein had a great admiration for James, and the _Varieties of Religious Experience_ was one of the few books he insisted I must read."[14] The reason for Wittgenstein's admiration is not difficult to find. At the beginning of his second lecture on _The Varieties of Religious Experience_, James writes that "Most books on the philosophy of religion try to begin with a precise definition of what its essence consists of"; and a little later says: "The theorizing mind always tends to the oversimplification of its materials. This is the root of all that absolutism and one-sided dogmatism by which both philosophy and religion have been infested.

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[12]_Ibid._, p.265.

[13]It is well known that he did not use 'textbooks' in any ordinary sense. Nevertheless, W. Mays reports, "When he was lecturing on belief he read extracts from James's _Principles of Psychology_, and discussed them critically." In K.T. Fann (ed.), _Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Man and His Philosophy_ (New York, 1967), p.83. This is confirmed by numerous references to James in P. Geach's _Notes of Wittgenstein's Lectures on Philosophical Psychology_ (unpublished) Cf. references to James in P. I. #342, #413, #610, p.219.

[14]"Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Symposium," in Fann (ed.), _Wittgenstein, The Man and His Philosophy_, p.68.

Let us not fall immediately into a one-sided view of our subject but let us rather admit freely at the outset that we may very likely find no one essence, but many characters which may alternately be equally important to religion." And in his first lecture he says, "To understand a thing rightly we need to see it both out of its environment and in it," and "it always leads to a better understanding of a thing's significance to consider its exaggerations and perversions, its equivalents and substitutes and nearest relatives elsewhere."[15]

These remarks and suggestions can be inserted into the Investigations without oddness. Wittgenstein's attack on essentialism, his notion of family-resemblance, his use of the extreme examples, and his emphasis on 'circumstances,' are certainly close relatives to James's ideas. The targets of James's attack: the theorizing mind, over-simplification, the one-sided view, dogmatism, and the search for 'one essence' are precisely the characteristics of the early Wittgenstein.

The nature of Sraffa's criticism is not clear as he has not written anything on Wittgenstein or on philosophy.[16] The only thing which suggests something of the character of Sraffa's criticism is an anecdote told to Malcolm by Wittgenstein. According to Malcolm,

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[15]Quoted by J. Wisdom in "A Feature of Wittgenstein's Technique." Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supp. Vol. 35 (1961), p.1.

[16]In a letter to the author dated March 2, 1966, he says, "I am an incredibly slow writer on my own subject of economics and I have never written anything on philosophy or Wittgenstein. If I ever tried this I doubt that I should ever complete it . . . ." I have been told that Wittgenstein's nephew has been trying to persuade him to be the biographer of Wittgenstein but without success.

"One day . . . when Wittgenstein was insisting that a proposition and that which it describes must have the same 'logical form,' and the same 'logical multiplicity,' Sraffa made a gesture familiar to Neopolitans as meaning something like disgust or contempt, of brushing the underneath of his chin with an outward sweep of the fingertips of one hand. Sraffa's example produced in Wittgenstein the feeling that there was an absurdity in the insistence that a proposition and what it describes must have the same 'form.' This broke the hold on him of the conception that a proposition must literally be a 'picture' of the reality it describes."[17] Although this particular criticism in itself does not constitute a decisive 'counter-example' (for according to the _Tractatus_, the gesture does not constitute a 'proposition'), it was probably a series of this _kind_ of concrete counter-examples which broke the hold on Wittgenstein of the conception that language always functions in _one_ way. With hindsight we might say that what is important about the gesture described above is its _use_ in a concrete circumstance. By contrast with the _Tractatus_ where he was mainly concerned with the cognitive use of language, the later Wittgenstein stressed the expressive aspects such as gestures, etc., whose meanings are determined by social contexts and concrete situations. As "use" plays a greater role, so do the users and hence the society.

Sraffa's contribution to the development of the later Wittgenstein must be more than his "forcible" criticism, otherwise Wittgen-

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[17]Malcolm, _Memoir_, p.69.

stein would not have said that he was indebted to Sraffa's stimulus for the most consequential ideas of the Investigations. A glimpse of Sraffa's positive contribution may be detected in his only published work, Production of Commodities by Means of Commodities (Prelude to a Critique of Economic Theory).[18] In this short (100 pages) work on Economics, Sraffa utilizes what Mays called "the method of speculative anthropology"[19] which Wittgenstein uses extensively in his lectures and writings. Sraffa starts his investigation of the process of production with an imaginary society: "Let us consider an extremely simple society which produces just enough to maintain itself . . . . Suppose at first that only two commodities are produced . . .,"[20] and then build up the more complicated forms by gradually adding new features. This method, central to Sraffa's whole investigation, is also quite central to Wittgenstein's later work. The important method of imagining and constructing simple and complicated 'language game' seems to be an adaptation of Sraffa's method. In the Blue Book Wittgenstein writes, "I shall in the future again and again draw your attention to what I shall call language games. These are ways of using signs simpler than those in which we use the signs of our highly complicated every day language . . . . The study of language games

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[18]Cambridge University Press, 1960. Although it was not published until 1960, "the central propositions had taken shape in the late 1920's" (Preface), and a draft of Part I was written before 1928; that is to say, before he met Wittgenstein.

[19]W. Mays, "Recollections of Wittgenstein" in Fann (ed.), Wittgenstein, p.83.

[20]Sraffa, op. cit., p.3.

is the study of primitive forms of language or primitive languages .
. . . When we look at such simple forms of language the mental mist
which seems to enshroud our ordinary use of language disappears. We
see that we can build up the complicated forms from the primitive
ones by gradually adding new form" (B.B. p.17).

In light of the above, von Wright's statement that Wittgen-
stein's later philosophy is "entirely outside any philosophical
tradition"[21] should not be taken without qualification. Nor can we
accept his statement that although the friendship between Moore and
Wittgenstein lasted until the latter's death "there is [not] any
trace of an influence of Moore's philosophy on Wittgenstein."[22] In
the preface to his Principia Ethica (which Wittgenstein read)[23]
Moore writes:

> It appears to me that in Ethics, as in all other philosophical
> studies, the difficulties and disagreements, of which its
> history is full, are mainly due to a very simple cause: namely
> to the attempt to answer questions, without first discovering
> precisely what question it is which you desire to answer. I
> do not know how far this source of error would be done away,
> if philosophers would try to discover what question they were
> asking, before they set about to answer it; for the work of
> analysis and distinction is often very difficult: we may often
> fail to make the necessary discovery, even though we make a
> definite attempt to do so. But . . . if only this attempt were
> made, many of the most glaring difficulties and disagreements
> in philosophy would disappear. At all events, philosophers . . .
> are constantly endeavoring to prove that 'Yes' or 'No' will
> answer questions, to which neither is correct, ...[24]

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[21]In Malcolm's Memoir, p.15.

[22]Ibid.

[23]See von Hayek's Unfinished Sketch.

[24]Cambridge University Press, 1903.

Moore's idea of "questioning the question" through careful analysis and distinction or ordinary usage and his persistent 'defence of common sense' are, to say the least, somewhat "germinal" in relation to Wittgenstein's later work. It is true that Wittgenstein later criticized Moore's 'defence of common sense' as 'child-like' but he admitted that it was an important idea for it destroyed premature solutions of philosophical problems.[25] It is also true that he later criticized analysis,--the common method of Russell, early Wittgenstein and the Logical Positivists; but he appreciated the method of distinction--a method Moore alone, among all British philosophers at that time, practiced. Malcolm reports that Wittgenstein, "observed that if one were trying to find exactly the right words to express a fine distinction of thought, Moore was absolutely the best person to consult."[26] In the Tractatus Wittgenstein's whole method was 'logical analysis' which he inherited from Russell, while the central method of the Investigation may appropriately be called the method of distinction. Instead of looking for similarities by analysis he now concentrates on uncovering differences by distinction. In fact he thought of using as a motto for the Investigations a quotation from King Lear: "I'll teach you differences."[27]

There is another important source of influence which is completely ignored by the commentators. Heinrich Hertz's work was always a

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[25]See: Malcolm, Memoir, pp.66-7.

[26]Ibid., p.67.

[27]Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Symposium," in Fann (ed.) Wittgenstein, p.69.

source of inspiration for Wittgenstein--a debt he acknowledged in

both his early and later writings.[28] In the introduction to his The

Principles of Mechanics, Hertz writes:

> Weighty evidence seems to be furnished by the statements which
> one hears with wearisome frequency, that the nature of force is
> still a mystery, that one of the chief problems of physics is
> the investigation of the nature of force, and so on. In the
> same way electricians are continually attacked as to the nature
> of electricity. Now, why is it that people never in this way
> ask what is the nature of gold, or what is the nature of
> velocity? I fancy the difference must lie in this. With the
> terms "velocity" and "gold" we connect a large number of
> relations to other terms; and between all these relations we
> find no contradictions which offend us. We are therefore
> satisfied and ask no further questions. But we have accumulated
> around the terms "force" and "electricity" more relations than
> can be completely reconciled amongst themselves. We have an
> obscure feeling of this and want to have things cleared up.
> Our confused wish finds expression in the confused question
> as to the nature of force and electricity. But the answer
> which we want is not really an answer to this question. It is
> not by finding out more and fresh relations and connections
> existing between those already known, and thus perhaps by
> reducing their number. 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 question . . . . We are convinced, . . . that
> the existing defects are only defects in form; and that all
> indistinctness and uncertainty can be avoided by suitable
> arrangement of definitions and notations, and by due care in
> the mode of expression . . . ."[29]

This long quotation is given here because Hertz's conception of

the nature of the problems in philosophy of science and his suggested

method of solution (or rather dissolution) seem to be exactly those

of Wittgenstein's with regard to philosophy in general. Wittgenstein

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[28]See: T. 4.04, 6.361, and B.B. p.26.

[29]H. Hertz, The Principles of Mechanics; translated from the
original edition of 1894 by De. E. Jones and J.T. Walley, (New York:
Dover Publications, 1956), p.7-9.

also considered philosophical problems as "vexations"[30] caused by contradictory relations we have accumulated around certain key terms such as "matter," "mind," "cause," and so on. What is required for solution is not more and fresh facts but "suitable arrangement" of what is already known and "due care in the mode of expression."

I have carefully traced and documented the forces which contributed to the development of the later Wittgenstein with the purpose of bringing out sharply the contrasts between the Tractatus and the Investigations. The extent of the contrast in attitude and method between the two can be seen from the following list summarizing the key issues discussed above.

<p style="text-align:center">The <u>Tractatus</u> versus the <u>Investigations</u></p>

theoretic	pragmatic
dogmatic	dialectic
systematic	un-systematic
monistic	pluralistic
assertative	persuasive
<u>a priori</u>	<u>a posteriori</u>
analysis	distinction
similarity	differences
distinctiveness.	vagueness
" etc.	"

It is well to remember here Wittgenstein's advice that the Investigations "could be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of my old way of thinking." To understand and to appreciate this contrast is already to have grasped the 'spirit' of the Investigations.

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[30]"Philosophical questions are vexations." <u>Lectures in 1946-47</u>, p.47.

VI. REPUDIATION OF ANALYSIS

The period between his return to Cambridge and 1932 was one of continuous development and struggle for Wittgenstein. His thoughts can be seen in the Philosophical Bemerkungen and in Moore's notes of "Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930-33." By 1933 he had rejected the Tractatus conception of language--the picture theory as well as the theory of truth-functions. The Blue Book of 1933-34 testifies to his complete transition from the early work to a radically new philosophy which culminated in the Investigations.

The later Wittgenstein came to regard the method and doctrines of the Tractatus as a paradigm of traditional philosophy. Throughout his later writings the presuppositions and views of the Tractatus served as the main targets of his attack. It is therefore necessary to understand the specific criticisms of the Tractatus contained in his later works.

The Tractatus was concerned with explaining 'How language is possible.' Ordinary propositions are vague but they serve our purposes because, according to the early Wittgenstein, they are really quite clear and distinct. This was shown by analysis. Every proposition can be analyzed into a set of elementary propositions which are composed of names signifying simple objects. It was believed that there must be a 'final analysis' in which all propositions are resolved into elementary propositions. This view came under attack shortly after his return to philosophy. In conversation with Schlick and Waismann in 1931, Wittgenstein said:

Much more dangerous (than dogmatism) is another error which also

pervades my whole book--the notion that there are questions the answers to which will be discovered at some later date. (I recognized that we cannot make a priori assumption about the forms of elementary propositions) but I thought nonetheless that it would at some later time be possible to give a list of the elementary propositions. Only in recent years have I freed myself from this error. At the time, I wrote in the manuscript of my book, though it wasn't printed in the Tractatus. "The solutions of philosophical questions must never come as a surprise. In philosophy nothing can be discovered." However, I myself did not yet understand this sufficiently clearly and made the very mistake that it attacks![1]

According to Moore, Wittgenstein said in one of his first lectures that it was with regard to elementary propositions and their connections with truth-functions that he had to change his opinions most.[2] He began by pointing out that he had produced no examples of elementary propositions and said there was something wrong indicated by this fact, though it was difficult to say what.[3] His view at that time was that it was senseless to talk of a 'final' analysis. But specific criticisms were not given until the composition of the Investigations.

In the Investigations, Wittgenstein not only criticizes the

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[1]Taken from notes made by Waismann, published in B.F. McGuiness' "The Mysticism of the Tractatus," Philosophical Review 75 (1966), p. 313. It is interesting and puzzling to note that Wittgenstein was in a habit of writing down philosophical remarks which he himself did not yet understand fully! This may account for the appearance of some very insightful but unelaborated remarks (such as: "The way in which language signifies is mirrored in its use," "if a sign is useless, it is meaningless" (3.328), and "In philosophy the question 'what do we actually use this sentence for?' repeatedly leads to valuable insights.") in his early writings which seem more appropriately to belong to his later work.

[2]Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures 1930-33," in his Philosophical Papers (London, 1959), p.296.

[3]Cf. p.12 above.

basic assumptions of the _Tractatus_, but also discusses the sort of
considerations that lead to those assumptions. One of the basic
assumptions in the _Tractatus_ is that every proposition has a perfect-
ly determinate or definite sense which can be completely analyzed.
Propositions are said to be completely analyzed when they are
resolved into elementary propositions which consist of names signify-
ing simple objects. Why does it seem necessary that every proposition
must have a definite sense?

> The sense of a proposition--one would like to say--may, of course,
> leave this or that open, but the proposition must nevertheless
> have a definite sense. An indefinite sense--that would really
> not be a sense at all.--This is like: "An indefinite boundary
> is not really a boundary at all." Here one thinks perhaps:
> if I say "I have locked the man up fast in the room--there is
> only one door left open"--then I simply haven't locked him in at
> all; his being locked in is a sham. One would be inclined to
> say here: You haven't done anything at all." An enclosure
> with a hole in it is as good as _none_. But is that true?
> (P.I. #99).[4]

That every proposition must have a definite sense was an
assumption the early Wittgenstein inherited from Frege. Frege
contends that a vague concept is not a concept at all just as an
area with blurred boundaries cannot be called an area at all. This,
observed Wittgenstein, presumably means that we cannot do anything
with it. But--"Is an indistinct photograph a picture of a person at
all? Is it even always an advantage to replace an indistinct picture
by a sharp one? Isn't the indistinct one often exactly what we
need?" (P.I. #71).

Wittgenstein realized that he had not simply looked at proposi-

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[4]Anscombe translates 'Satz' as 'sentence,' but 'proposition' is
preferable here.

tions in actual language and found them to have a definite sense; his conception of language had required that they have it. This was a "preconceived idea" about propositions and language which prevented clear vision "like a pair of glasses on our nose through which we see whatever we look at. It never occurs to us to take them off" (P.I. #103). We must take off the glasses and remove the preconceived idea by "turning our whole examination round. (One might say: the axis of reference of our examination must be rotated, but about the fixed point of our real need)" (P.I. #108).[5]

What do we find when we shed the preconceived idea? We find, says Wittgenstein, that the facts of language do not conform to our a priori requirement. "The more narrowly we examine actual language, the sharper becomes the conflict between it and our requirement" (P.I. #107). We find that in actual language many propositions are vague, inexact and indefinite but serve our purposes in communication perfectly well. "If I tell someone 'Stand roughly here'--may not this explanation work perfectly? And cannot every other one fail too?" (P.I. #88). Someone might criticize this explanation as "inexact" or "inprecise," but what does "inexact" mean here? And what would an "exact" explanation look like? It is conceivable that there are several ways in which such an order might be refined: e.g. draw a chalk line around the area indicated. But the line has breadth so a color edge would be even more exact. But for what purpose, in the circumstances? Striving for increased precision in such manner

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[5]This "turning round" of the axis of reference constituted his turn from "theoretic" to "pragmatic" attitude.

seems to be an idle bustling.

Besides, "inexact" and "exact" are relative terms. "Inexact" is used as a reproach and "exact" is used in praise. Statements of exactness of inexactness are made in relation to a goal or a standard within a given field (or language-game). What is inexact attains its goal less perfectly than what is more exact. There is no single ideal (or absolute standard) of exactness, apart from qualifications appropriate to the circumstances. What is considered exact in cabinet-making might be considered intolerably inexact in cutting diamonds. There is no point in criticizing the cabinet-maker for failing to match the diamond-cutter's standards of precision.

Intimately connected with the assumption that every proposition must have a definite sense was the assumption that the process of analysis makes the sense of the proposition explicit and clear. The method of analysis was absolutely essential to the whole doctrine of the Tractatus. It was quite correct to call the early Wittgenstein an "analytic" philosopher and his philosophy was very appropriately classified as "analytic"--along with Russell's, Moore's and the Positivist's. However, the notion of analysis is now under severe criticism. Suppose I say: "My broom is in the corner,"--is this really a statement about the broomstick and the brush? It is true, that the broom consists of two parts, but does someone who says: (a) "The broom is in the corner," really mean: (b) "The broomstick is in the corner, the brush is in the corner, and the broomstick is attached to the brush"? Wittgenstein characteristically answers:

> If we were to ask anyone if he meant this he would probably say
> that he had not thought specially of the broomstick or specially

of the brush at all. And that would be the <u>right</u> answer, for
he meant to speak neither of the stick nor of the brush in
particular. Suppose that, instead of saying "Bring me the
broom," you said, "Bring me the broomstick and the brush which
is fitted on to it!"--Isn't the answer: "Do you want the broom?
Why do you put it so oddly?" (P.I. #60).

Analytical philosophers want to call (b) a "further analyzed" form

of (a) in the sense that (b) <u>expresses</u> more clearly the meaning of

(a). This, as Wittgenstein points out, readily reduces us into

thinking that the former is the more fundamental form and that if we

have only the unanalyzed form we miss that analysis. But, looking

at the matter from a different point of view, can we not say that an

aspect of the matter is lost in the "analyzed" form as well? (P.I. #63).

It is true, Wittgenstein points out, that sometimes misunder-

standings "can be removed by substituting one form of expression for

another; this may be called an 'analysis' of our forms of expression"

(P.I. #90). Analysis is thus useful in some cases. However, we may

be tempted to think that the 'further analyzed' forms of an expression

can be further and further analyzed until we come to a 'final analysis'

in which the expression is completely clarified and all vagueness

eliminated. "It can be put like this: we eliminate misunderstand-

ings by making our expressions more exact; but now it may look as if

we were moving towards a particular state, a state of complete

exactness; and as if this were the real goal of our investigation"

(P.I. #91). Here Wittgenstein is clearly referring to his earlier

belief that our ordinary expressions were, essentially, unanalyzed;

and that the sense of every expression could be completely spelled

out in terms of "elementary propositions."

The belief in a "final analysis" is closely connected with the

assumption which Wittgenstein made in the Tractatus, that the distinction between the simple and the complex is an absolute one--that a thing is, apart from context and without qualification either simple or complex. The purpose of analysis is supposed to resolve the complex proposition which describes a complex fact, into the simplest (or elementary) propositions which describe the simplest (or atomic) facts. It was assumed that the simplest proposition consists of names denoting absolutely simple things--Wittgenstein's 'objects' and Russell's 'individuals' (P.I. #46)[6]--which are the simple constituent parts of reality. Now Wittgenstein asks: "What are the simple constituent parts of a chair?--The bits of wood of which it is made? Or the molecules, or the atoms?" and answers: "Simple means: not composite. And here the point is: in what sense 'composite'? It makes no sense at all to speak absolutely of the 'simple parts of a chair.'" (P.I. #47).

"Simple" and "complex" like "exact" and "inexact" are relative terms. It makes sense to speak of something as simple or complex only in a context in which it is being considered. In a certain context (e.g. for certain purposes or when viewed from a certain point of view, or when compared with something else in a certain way) a thing may be called simple, but in another context, the same thing may be considered complex. In one sense we may say that a chessboard is composed of thirty-two white and thirty-two black squares and in that sense we may consider the chessboard 'complex' and the squares

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[6]And we might add: Descartes' 'substance,' Leibnitz's 'monads,' Locke's 'ideas,' Hume's 'impressions,' and Logical Positivists' 'sense'datum.'

'simple.' But in a different context we might want to describe the chessboard as being composed of the colors black and white and the scheme of squares. And is the color of a **square** simple, or does it consist of pure white and pure yellow? Furthermore, is pure white simple, or does it consist of the colors of the rainbow?

The point is this: simplicity and complexity are not absolute qualities inhering in the thing itself. We use the words "simple" and "complex" in an enormous number of different ways relative to different contexts. To ask "Is this object complex?" without context, or "outside a particular language-game" is reminiscent, says Wittgenstein, of a boy who had to say whether the verbs in certain sentences were in the active or passive voice, and who racked his brains over the question whether the verb "to sleep" is active or passive (P.I. #47). Wittgenstein regards it as a typical mistake of philosophers to speak of things in absolute terms apart from all contexts. "To the philosophical question: 'Is the visual image of this tree composite, and what are its component parts?' The correct answer is: 'That depends on what you understand by "composite."' (And that's of course not an answer but a rejection of the question)" (P.I. #47).

Wittgenstein has clearly rejected the meaningfulness of talking about the absolutely simple "objects," the existence of 'elementary propositions,' the notion of a 'final analysis,' and 'analysis' as a general philosophical method. Elsewhere he ridicules the analyst as someone who "tried to find the real artichoke by stripping it of its

leaves" (B.B. p.125; also, P.I. #164).[7] It is puzzling to see that

Wittgenstein, inspite of his clear and forceful rejection of analysis,

is universally classified as an "analytic" philosopher.[8] Whatever

he may be, the later Wittgenstein is no longer an analytic philoso-

pher.

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[7]It is noteworthy that Henri Bergson used this same metaphor
to criticize the method of analysis in his An Introduction to Meta-
physics.

[8]E.g. "But few would dispute that among analytic philosophers . . .
Wittgenstein stands out as a great and original philosophical genius."
The Concise Encyclopedia of Western Philosophy and Philosophers.

VII. MEANING

The questioning of the existence of elementary propositions and the abandonment of the possibility of a final analysis meant nothing less than a complete repudiation of his earlier conception of language. The early Wittgenstein assumed that the function of language was to depict or 'picture' facts. According to this theory, words had their references and sentences had their senses. Combination of linguistic elements corresponded to combinations of the elements of reality. Every proposition was built up from 'elementary propositions' which consist of names signifying simple objects. For, it was assumed that ultimately the meaning of a word consists in what it _names_.

In the _Investigations_ Wittgenstein came to realize that the doctrines of the _Tractatus_ rested on a "particular picture of the essence of human language." It is the "correspondence theory of meaning," the essence of which is this: the individual words in language name objects, the object for which a word stands is its meaning.[1] The greater part of the _Investigations_ is directed against this conception of language (or what he calls the Augustinian conception of language).

St. Augustine assumed that the mastery of language consisted in

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[1] It follows from this theory of meaning that one group of words (such as "apple," "chair," and "red") _name_ objects in the 'external' world while another group of words (such as "pain," "pleasure," and "belief") _name_ objects in the 'internal' world. The problem of Universals and the 'private language' problem are directly related to these two aspects of the correspondence theory of meaning. Wittgenstein's attack on essentialism and the private language can only be seen in the right light as the two-fronted attack on this particular conception.

learning the names of objects. This is a well-established idea among traditional philosophers, including the author of the _Tractatus_.[2] Wittgenstein begins to criticize this particular conception of language by first pointing out that Augustine fails to recognize any difference between kinds of words. If you describe the learning of language as essentially a _naming_ activity you are, Wittgenstein points out, thinking primarily of nouns like "table," "chair," "apple," and of peoples names, and only secondarily of the names of certain sensations, actions and properties; but not of words such as "five," "soon," "or," and innumerable other kinds of words.

Suppose, says Wittgenstein, that I send someone shopping and give him a slip marked "five red apples." He takes it to the shopkeeper, who goes to the box marked "apples"; then he looks up the word "red" in a color chart and finds a color sample beside it; then he recites the cardinal numbers up to the word "five" and for each number he takes an apple of the same color as the sample from the box. The test of the shopkeeper's understanding of what is written on the slip is that he _acts_ as described. In this imaginary use of language it makes sense to ask: "What does the word 'apple' refer to?" and "What does the word 'red' refer to?" But what if someone asks, "What does the word 'five' refer to?" This question makes sense only if one assumes that the word "five" has exactly the same kind of function as (or belongs to the same category as) "apples" and "red." That is to say, since we can _point_ to real objects (apples

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[2]A similar account is given in the Bible where God taught Adam to _name_ things presented to his sight.

and color samples) as the references of "apples" and "red," we feel
that there must be something we can point to as the reference of
"five." To the question, "What is the reference of the word 'five'?"
Wittgenstein answers, "No such thing was in question here, only how
the word 'five' is used" (P.I. #1).[3]

In the above imaginary language situation, or what Wittgenstein
calls "language-game," the use of the word "five" is quite clear, the
question as to the meaning of the word "five" has no sense in that
context. The urge to ask for the meaning of a word even when its use
is perfectly clear arises from the "philosophical concept of meaning"
which "has its place in a primitive idea of the way language functions"
(P.I. #2). It is possible to imagine a language-game in which the
primitive idea (or the Augustinian conception) of language would be
right. Let's assume that the language is meant to serve for communi-
cation between a builder A and an assistant B. A is building with
building-stones and B has to pass the stones in the order in which A
needs them. For this purpose they use a language consisting of words
"block," "pillar," "slab," "beam." A calls them out,--B is trained
to bring them when called. Augustine's conception of language as
consisting of names would be an appropriate description of this
particular system of communication;--only not everything that we call
language is this system. It is, Wittgenstein points out, "as if
someone were to say: 'A game consists in moving objects about on a
surface according to certain rules . . .'--and we replied: You seem

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[3]Note: Wittgenstein is not answering the question but rejecting
it.

to be thinking of board games, but there are others" (P.I. #3).

Intimately connected with the Augustinian conception of language is the view that 'ostensive' definition is the fundamental act by which the meaning of a word is given. It is generally assumed that "explanations of the meaning of a word" is roughly divided into verbal and ostensive definitions. The verbal definition, as it takes us from one verbal expression to another, in a sense gets us no further. Hence, all learning of the meaning ultimately depends on the ostensive definition,--it establishes a direct relationship between the meaning and the word.

Against this view, Wittgenstein points out, for one thing, that for many words in our language there do not seem to be ostensive definitions; e.g. for such words as "number," "not," "yet," etc. (B.B. p.1). It is true that in the builder's language-game an important part of the training will consist in the teacher's pointing to the objects, directing the assistant's attention to them, and at the same time uttering a word; e.g. "slab." This ostensive teaching of words can be said to establish an association between the word and the thing. But, the ostensive teaching can help to bring this about "only together with a particular training. With different training the same ostensive teaching of these words would have effected a quite different understanding" (P.I. #6). That is to say, ostensive definition can be understood only in context. In different contexts with different training the explanation of the word; e.g. "tove" by pointing to a pencil and saying "this is tove" may be interpreted to mean variously: "This is a pencil," "This is round," "This is red,"

"This is wood," "This is hard," "This is one," etc. etc. (B.B. p.2).
Ostensive definitions can always be misunderstood, it presupposes
context and training. "So one might say: the ostensive definition
explains the use--the meaning--of the word when the overall role of
the word in language is clear" (P.I. #30).

Let us now look at an expansion of the builder's language.
Besides the four words "block," "pillar," etc. let it contain the
numerals, color-names, and two other words "there" and "this."
The builder is now able to give his assistant more complicated orders
such as: "5 red slabs there!" When the assistant learns this
language, he has to learn the series of numerals 1, 2, 3, . . . by
heart. Will this training include ostensive teaching?--Well, in a
sense; people will, for example, point to slabs and count: "1, 2,
3 slabs." Something more like the ostensive teaching of the words
"block," "pillar," etc. would be the ostensive teaching of numerals
that serve not to count but to refer to groups of objects that can
be taken in at a glance.

How about "there" and "this?" Are they taught ostensively?
If we stretched our imagination, we may say that it involves some
ostensive teaching since one might teach their use by pointing to
places and things. However, "in this case the pointing occurs in the
use of the words too and not merely in learning the use" (P.I. #9),
because the gesture of pointing together with the object pointed at
can be used instead of the word.[4]

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[4]Cf. G.E. Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures," p.260.

Let us add two more words, "now" and "later," to the above
language-game and train the assistant to carry out orders such as:
"Five red bricks there now!" A part of training the assistant may
involve dragging him to perform his work when you want the bricks
now and refraining him when you want them later. Pointing may not
be involved in this training at all. Are we still inclined to insist
that "now" and "later" are taught ostensively? "Now, what do the
words of this language signify?--What is supposed to show what they
signify, if not the kind of use they have? And we have already
described that. So we are asking for the expression 'This word
signifies this' to be made a part of the description. In other words
the description ought to take the form 'the word . . . signifies . . .'
. . . But assimilating the descriptions of the uses of words in this
way cannot make the uses themselves any more like one another. For,
as we see, they are absolutely unlike" (P.I. #10).

Compare, e.g. the way in which the word "five" is used with the
way in which the word "slab" is used and then with the ways "there"
and "now" are used within the language game in question. The
difference in the uses of those comes out clearly when we compare
the different procedures with which their uses are taught and the
various jobs which are performed by means of those words. It is
precisely for this reason that we imagine and describe different
language-games.

There is a certain spell exercized by the phrase "the meaning
of a word," which results in the notion that there must be a single,
perfectly definite property meant by each noun and adjective, that

this object is the meaning of the word, and is named by it anal-
ogously to the way an individual is named by a proper name. (Compare
"the meaning of a word" with "the color of a flower"). To break this
spell Wittgenstein recommended the slogan: "Don't ask for the
meaning, ask for the use."[5] For in most ordinary, non-philosophical
contexts "meaning of a word" can be replaced without loss by "use of
a word"; e.g. in "knowing the meaning of a word," "explaining the
meaning," etc. "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" (P.I. #43). One advantage of
this replacement is that "use" carries with it no suggestion of an
object corresponding to a word. Another is that "use" cannot be
understood merely by looking at the word, it can only be understood
in contexts--both linguistic and social. This is why Wittgenstein
suggests that instead of comparing the relationship between the word
and the meaning with that between the money and the cow that you can
buy with it, we should compare it with the relationship between
money and its use (P.I. #120). The _use_ of money is not an object
separable from the money, and the specific use of money to buy things
(cf. the specific use of words to name things) is only a part of,
and makes sense only in, a larger and much more complicated system
(financial and social).

Wittgenstein invites us to compare words in a language with
tools in a tool-box. "Think of words as instruments characterized by

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[5]John Wisdom, "Wittgenstein, 1934-37"; in Fann (ed.): _Wittgen-stein_, p.46.

their use" (B.B. p.67). "Think of the tools in a tool-box: there

is a hammer, pliers, a saw, a screw-driver, a rule, a glue pot, glue,

nails and screws.--The functions of words are as diverse as the

functions of these objects" (P.I. #11). A word is characterized by

its use just as a tool is characterized by its function. This analogy

aptly reminds us that words are used for different purposes. There

is not one function that all words have in common (e.g. to name

things). The demand for a general theory of the meaning of words is

quite pointless.[6] It is as if someone were to claim: "all tools

serve to modify something. Thus the hammer modifies the position

of the nail, the saw the shape of the board, and so on." And what

is modified by the rule?--"Our knowledge of a thing's length." What

about the glue pot? Wittgenstein asks at this point: "Would anything

be gained by this assimilation of expressions?" (P.I. #14).

Sentences as well as words may be understood as tools or

instruments. When we become confused about the sense of a sentence,

Wittgenstein offers us the following advice: "Look at the sentence

as an instrument, and at its sense as its employment" (P.I. #422).

"Ask yourself: On what occasion, for what purpose, do we say this?

What kind of actions accompany these words? (Think of the greeting)

In what scenes will they be used; and what for?" (P.I. #489). It

is in this way that we come to see how words and sentences are

instruments used to accomplish certain purposes. Thus, in one of his

private conversations, Wittgenstein said, "To understand a sentence

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   [6]He stated in one of his lectures that the idea of a general notion
of meaning is in a way "obsolete." See Moore, op. cit., p.258.

is to be prepared for one of its uses. If we can't think of any use

for it at all, then we don't understand it at all."[7] The use of

language ordinarily has a point just as instruments are usually good

for something. But there is no single point of the practice of

language as a whole. Wittgenstein lists a few of these purposes in

the Investigations:

> Giving orders, and obeying them . . . .
> Describing the appearance of an object, or giving its measure-
> ments . . . .
> Constructing an object from a description (a drawing) . . . .
> Reporting an event . . . .
> Speculating about an event . . . .
> Forming and testing a hypothesis . . . .
> Making up a story; and reading it . . . .
> Play-acting . . . .
> Singing catches . . . .
> Guessing riddles . . . .
> Making a joke; telling it . . . .
> Translating from one language into another . . . .
> Asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying (P.I. #23) . . . .

Immediately following this list Wittgenstein adds this signifi-

cant remark: "It is interesting to compare the multiplicity of the

tools in language and of the ways they are used, the multiplicity of

kinds of words and sentences, with what logicians have said about

the structure of language. (Including the author of the Tractatus

Logico-Philosophicus)." In this criticism of logicians and his former

self, he is warning us against oversimplifying our concept of language.

It is not one practice or one instrument, having one essential

function and serving one essential purpose. Language is not one tool

serving one purpose but a collection of tools serving a variety of

purposes. "Language is not defined for us as an arrangement fulfilling

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7See N. Malcolm, Wittgenstein: A Memoir (London, 1958), p.90.

one definite purpose. Rather 'language' is for us a name for a collection" (Z. #322).

What emerges from all these considerations is an instrumentalist (or pragmatic) conception of language. "Language is an instrument. Its concepts are instruments" (P.I. #569). It is like a working machine which gets jobs done--namely everyday activities of life.

VIII. LANGUAGE

In the previous chapter we directed our attention to the pragmatic nature of language. This was brought out by comparing a word with a tool and by describing the use of a word in a language-game. However, Wittgenstein was interested in reminding us of another important feature of language--i.e. it's _social_ nature. The point is made whenever he compares languages with games, or whenever he speaks of, and constructs different "language-games." Wittgenstein now invites us to compare a language with chess game and to look at a word as a piece in chess and an utterance with a move in chess. "We are talking about the spatial and temporal phenomenon of language, not about some non-spatial, non-temporal phantasm . . . . But we talk about it as we do about the piece in chess when we are stating the rules of the game, not describing their physical properties. The question 'What is a word really?' is analogous to 'What is a piece in chess?'" (P.I. #108).[1]

To understand what a piece in chess is one must understand the whole game, the rules defining it, and the role of the piece in the game. Similarly we might say, the meaning of a word in its place is a language-game. To put it in another way, the meaning of any single word in a language is 'defined,' 'constituted,' 'determined,' or 'fixed' (he used all four expressions in different lectures) by the 'grammatical rules' with which it is used in that language.[2] Using

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[1]This analogy appeared also in _Philosophische Bemerkungen_ #18.

[2]See Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures," p.257.

a sentence is, thus, analogous to making a move in chess following the rules. Wittgenstein put it this way: " . . . A move in chess doesn't consist simply in moving a piece in such-and-such a way on the board . . . but in the circumstances that we call 'playing a game of chess,' 'solving a chess problem,' and so on" (P.I. #33). Such a move is comparable to making utterances in a language: "Can I say 'bububu' and mean "If it doesn't rain I shall go for a walk?' . . . . It is only in language that I can mean something by something" (P.I. p.18 note). Thus we cannot call anything a word or a sentence unless it is part of that kind of a rule-governed activity which we call a language. A language, we may say, is a set of activities (or practices) defined by certain rules, namely the rules which govern all the various uses of words in the language.

In order to be clear about the social nature of language Wittgenstein suggests that we ask ourselves: What is it for someone to follow a rule? What does the activity called "following a rule" consists in? To start with Wittgenstein asks, "Is what we call "following a rule" something that it would be possible for only one man to do, and to do only once in his life?" (P.I. #199).[3] The question is a conceptual one calling not for empirical investigation but a logical analysis of the concept of following a rule. Wittgenstein says that it is not possible (it doesn't make sense) that there should have been only one occasion on which someone followed a rule.

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[3]There is an irregularity in Anscombe's translation of "Einer Regel Folgen." It is sometimes translated as "following a rule," and other times as "obeying a rule," The first translation seems to me more appropriate and hence I shall consistently use "following" in my quotations.

Of course, we can imagine situations in which a new rule is followed

by someone only once and then set aside. If such a case should arise,

it would happen only because there already exist rules and the prac-

tice of following them. Wittgenstein is talking about the _practice_

of following rules, not this or that particular rule. It is not

possible that only once in the history of man there was such a thing

as following a rule. It is not possible that there should have been

only one occasion on which an order was given, a promise made, a

question asked, a debt procured, or a game played. Following a rule,

making a promise, giving an order, and so on, are _customs, uses,_

practices, or _institutions_ (P.I. #199). They presuppose a society,

a form of life.[4]

To understand rules it is necessary to understand the whole

institution of "following rules." If the background of custom is

removed, the rules embedded in this custom would also disappear.

Wittgenstein shows this by the following example: "What has the

expression of a rule--say a sign-post--got to do with my action? What

sort of connection is there here? Well, perhaps this one: I have

been trained to react to this sign in a particular way . . . . But

this is only to give a causal connexion; to tell how it has come about

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[4]It should be pointed out here that questioning, ordering, and
promising are relatively well-demarcated activities while following a
rule is not. The word "rule" is versatile in a way that "question"
and "promise" are not. The word "promise" is used in our language
like a piece belonging to only a single game--e.g. a pawn--while the
word "rule" is like a playing card used in many different games. Or
to put the matter in another way, "following the rule" is an activity
which is involved in every important activity we human beings engage
in. Hence the importance of understanding the concept of rule.

that we now go by the sign-post; not what this going-by-the-sign
really consists in . . . . A person goes by a sign-post only in so
far as there exists a regular use of sign-posts, a custom" (P.I. #198).

In another context Wittgenstein asks, "How does it come about
that this arrow ——>> points? Doesn't it seem to carry in it some-
thing besides itself? (P.I. #454). We might answer, "No, not the
deadline on the paper; only the psychical thing, the meaning, can do
that." Wittgenstein says that this answer is both true and false.
It is true that the line in itself is totally dead; however, what
makes it alive is not the 'psychical thing.' "This pointing is not a
hocus-pocus which can be performed only by the soul. The arrow points
only in the application that a living being makes of it" (ibid.)
This point is brought forcibly home by the following imaginary situa-
tion which Wittgenstein used in one of his lectures. Suppose the
members of a savage tribe decorate the walls of their caves by writing
on them rows of Arabic numerals--and suppose that what they write
is exactly what would be written by someone doing arithmetical
calculations. They do it exactly right every time, but they never
use it except for internal decoration--never use it in computing how
much wood they need to build a hut or how much food they need for a
feast, and so on. Would you say they were doing mathematics?[5]

Suppose no applications were made of the arrow. Would it still
point? Suppose there were no regular use of sign-posts and no con-
ventions as to how a sign-post is to be interpreted,--each individual

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[5]D.A.T. Gasking and A.C. Jackson, "Wittgenstein as a Teacher,"
in Fann (ed.), Wittgenstein, p.50.

interpreted it in hiw own way. Would the sign-post still function
as a guide?

An immediate consequence of the above analysis is that there
cannot (logically) be "private rules" or "following a rule privately."
Does this mean that one cannot play a game by himself, or cannot
make up his own rules for a private game? Does not a child set up his
own rule when he resolves not to step on any crack in the sidewalk
on his way home? The answer is that conventions about how a rule is
to be applied are required only in principle. That is, it must be
possible for more than one person to learn to follow the rule.

> Imagine someone using a line as a rule in the following way:
> He hold a pair of compasses, and carries one of its points
> along the line that is the 'rule,' while the other one draws
> the line that follows the rule. And while he moved along the
> ruling line he alters the opening of the compasses, apparently
> with great precision, looking at the rule the whole time as if
> it determined what he did. And watching him we see no kind of
> regularity in this opening and shutting of the compasses. We
> cannot learn his way of following the line from it. Here
> perhaps one really would say: 'The original seems to intimate
> to him which way he is to go. But it is not a rule' (P.I. #237).

Why is it not a rule? Because the notion of following a rule is
logically inseparable from the notion of making a mistake. If it is
possible to say of someone that he is following a rule, then one can
ask whether he is doing it correctly or not. Otherwise there is no
foothold in his behavior for the notion of a rule to take a grip.
There is then no sense in describing his behavior as following a
rule, since everything he does is as good as anything else he might
do, whereas the point of the concept of a rule is that it should
enable us to evaluate what is being done.

The possibility of 'making a mistake' is what distinguishes

someone's merely manifesting a <u>regularity</u> in his behavior and his following a rule. Only in the latter case does it make sense to ask, "Is he doing it correctly?" The question means "Is he following the rule or is he violating it?" To violate a rule is not merely to do something unusual or irregular, something which one does not ordinarily do in a given circumstance. It is to make a mistake, to be at fault, to be subject to criticism.

Let us consider what is involved in making a mistake. Wittgenstein contends that "following a rule" involves what he calls "agreement to go on in the same way." We should like to say: someone is following a rule if he always acts in the same way on the same kind of occasion. But this, though correct, does not advance matters since it is only in terms of a given rule that the word 'same' acquires a definite sense. "The use of the word 'rule' and the use of the word 'same' are interwoven" (P.I. #225). Similarily, one does not learn to follow a rule by first learning the use of the word 'agreement.' "Rather, one learns the meaning of 'agreement' by learning to follow a rule. If you want to understand what it means to 'follow a rule,' you have already to be able to follow a rule" (R.F.M. p.184).

In the same token, we do not learn to follow a rule by first learning the words 'correct' and 'incorrect,' or 'right' and 'wrong.' Rather, to participate in rule-governed activities <u>is</u>, in a certain way, to accept that there is a right and a wrong way of doing things. This is manifested in the process of teaching,--"The words 'right' and 'wrong' are used when giving instruction in proceeding according to a rule. (The word 'right' makes the pupil go on, the word 'wrong'

holds him back)" (R.F.M. p.184). What is right and wrong in a given case can never depend on one's own caprice. As Wittgenstein points out, "One would like to say: whatever is going to seem right to me is right. And that only means that here we can't talk about 'right'" (P.I. #258). I cannot make words mean what I want them to mean; I can use them meaningfully only if other people can come to understand how I am using them. In other words, when it comes to following rules I must accept certain conventions. A mistake is a contravention of what is established as correct; as such, it must be recognizable. That is, if I make a mistake in, say, my use of a word, other people must be able to point it out to me.

Wittgenstein brought out another characteristic of a rule in the following way. He first asks us to imagine an unknown tribe which seems to employ a language. But then suppose that ". . . when we try to learn their language we find it impossible to do so. For there is no regular connection between what they say, the sounds they make, and their actions . . . . There is not enough regularity for us to call it 'language'" (P.I. #207). The point here is that if it is impossible to train a person to use an alleged language we cannot say that it is a language. More generally, if there is to be a practice defined by rules, there must be some way of learning how to engage in the practice or follow the rules. Thus, Wittgenstein contrasts acting according to a rule with acting according to inspiration.

> Let us imagine a rule intimating to me which way I am to follow
> it; that is, as my eye travels along a line, a voice within
> me says: "This way!"--What is the difference between this
> process of obeying a kind of inspiration and that of following
> a rule? For they are surely not the same. In the case of

inspiration I await direction. I shall not be able to teach anyone else my 'technique' of following the line. Unless, indeed, I teach him some way of hearkening, some kind of receptivity. But then, of course, I cannot require him to follow the line in the same way as I do. (P.I. #232).

What makes a rule capable of being learned (or taught) is the fact that following it implies a regularity of behavior. If one acts in accordance with a rule, it must make sense to say "Here he is doing the same thing as he did before," and also to say "Here he is doing the correct thing, there he is not." The rule specifies which acts will count as being the same as other acts, and which acts are to be counted as correct. Unless both factors are stated, it would not be possible to learn or to teach what it is to follow (and also to break) the rule. One would not be able to know whether, in a given set of circumstances, the act which one was doing was an act of the kind required or forbidden by the rule, or whether such an act was the correct thing to do.

To sum it up: Learning how to follow rules is gaining mastery of a technique; it is acquiring a skill. Teaching someone how to follow rules is training him in a technique; it is developing in him a skill. Knowing how to follow rules is having a skill; it is being able to engage in a practice. All of this is true of learning, teaching, or knowing a language, according to Wittgenstein. "To understand a sentence means to understand a language. To understand a language means to be master of a technique" (P.I. #199). When we learn a language, however, we learn not only one technique but a whole complex set of techniques. To speak a language is not just to engage in one practice, but to engage in many different practices. One might say

that a language is a composite practice made up of a number of prac-
tices. The multiplicity and variety of the practices which constitute
our language are emphasized by Wittgenstein in the series of "language-
games" which he constructs in his later writings.

At this point Wittgenstein takes up "the great question that
lies behind all these considerations."--For someone might object
against him: "You talk about all sorts of language-games, but have
nowhere said what the essence of a language-game, and hence of
language, is: What is common to all these activities, and what makes
them into language or parts of language. You let yourself off the
very part of the investigation that once [in the Tractatus] gave you
yourself most headache, the part about the general form of proposi-
tions and of language."

To this challenge Wittgenstein admits readily that he has not
stated the essence of language.--"Instead of producing something
common to all that we call language, I am saying that these phenomena
have no one thing in common which makes us use the same work for
all,--but that they are related to one another in many different ways.
And it is because of this relationship, or these relationships, that
we call them all 'languages'" (P.I. #65). He tries to explain this
by comparing the concept of a language with that of a game.

> Consider for example the proceedings that we call "games." I
> mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic-games, and so
> on. What is common to them all?--Don't say: These must be
> something common, or they would not be called "games."--but
> look and see whether there is anything common to all.--For if
> you look at them you will not see something that is common to
> all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of
> them at that. To repeat: don't think, but look!--Look for
> example at board-games, with their multiforious relationships.
> Now pass to card-games, here you find many correspondences with
> the first group, but many common features dropout, and others

appear. When we pass next to ball-games, much that is common
is retained, but much is lost . . . . And we can go through the
many, many other groups of games in the same way; can see how
similarities crop up and disappear.

And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated
network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing; some-
times over-all similarities, sometimes similarities of detail.

I can think of no better expression to characterize these
similarities than "family resemblances," for the various
resemblances between members of a family . . . overlap and
criss-cross in the same way.--And I shall say: 'games' form
a family (P.I. #66-7).

The concept of language is in this respect like the concept of

game, various language-games have not <u>one</u> thing in common but they

form a family. We can extend our concept of language by adding and

inventing new language-games just as in spinning a thread we twist

fibre on fibre. "And the strength of the thread does not reside in

the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in

the overlapping of many fibres" (P.I. #67, also B.B. p.87).

Someone may object here: "Inspite of Wittgenstein's disclaimer

has he not in reality defined the essence of language when he said

that language is like a set of social practices and a set of instru-

ments?" But this is not the case. Wittgenstein only pointed out

certain very general features ("over-all similarities") in respect of

which all languages resemble one another and which one is likely not

to notice when philosophizing. There are many social practices and

instruments which are not languages. What Wittgenstein deny is that

there is one 'distinguishing' feature which makes these practices and

instruments languages. It is very important to keep in mind that

Wittgenstein did not have a 'philosophy' of language. G.E. Moore,

reporting on Wittgenstein lectures in 1930-33, emphasized that

although Wittgenstein discussed certain very general questions about

language at great length, he said, "More than once, that he did not
discuss these questions because he thought that language was the
subject-matter of philosophy. He did not think so. He discussed it
only because he thought that particular philosophical errors or
'troubles in our thought' were due to false analogies suggested by
our actual use of expressions; and he emphasized that it was only
necessary for him to discuss those points about language which . . .
have led, or are likely to lead, to definite philosophical puzzles
or errors."[6]

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[6]Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures," p.257 and p.324.

IX. PHILOSOPHY

Wittgenstein's later view of language is indeed the antithesis
of his earlier doctrine. In general, his older view of what consti-
tuted a language was much simpler and narrower than the later. The
Tractatus assumed that the structure of language was truth-function-
al. "A proposition is understood by anyone who understands its
constituents." That is to say, if you understand the words in a
sentence, you thereby understand the sentence. The only kind of
context regarded as a crucial determinant of sense or meaning was
notational or syntactical. Most characteristic of the later work
is its opposition to what he considers the preoccupation of philo-
sophers, especially the author of the Tractatus, with linquistic
form and content in separation from function and social context.
Language is no longer looked at through the slots of a logician's
stencil as a highly ordered system of calculus, but accepted in
all its multiplicity and complexity. The eternal striving for
absolute exactness and precision is now regarded as illusion--and
vagueness, in so far as it serves our ordinary purposes, is accepted
as reality. Instead of looking for the unifying principles, which
obscure details and lead to abstracting or positing of essences, he
would draw our attention to case after case of real or imaginary "uses"
of language. The introduction of the "language-game" in the virtually
jargon-free later writings is precisely to bring out the oft forgotten
fact that language has multiple functions and that words and expres-
sions have meaning only in social contexts or in "the stream of

life."[1]

The sharp contrast between the early and the later views of
language, however, should not distract us from seeing the point of
his "critique of language." His great concern in both periods has
been the master problem: What is the nature, tasks, and methods of
philosophy? He is not interested in language for language's sake but
for the sake of philosophy. The specific area of traditional
philosophy which catches and fixes his attention is its battleground,
the sphere of conflicting opinions, the realm of philosophical
problems. In the Investigations, just as in the Tractatus, Wittgen-
stein's task is to question the questions, to mark out the limits of
sense, to indicate what can intelligibly be said and what cannot be
said. The limit, as he realized in the Tractatus (preface), can only
be set in language. To be sure, the boundary is drawn differently
for different reasons in the two books. Still, to draw some boundary
is one of Wittgenstein's major aims in both.

This is made quite clear when Wittgenstein says, in the
Investigations, that in a sense "we too in these investigations are
trying to understand the essence of language—its function, its
structures," except that "essence" here should be understood in an
entirely different sense. For the early Wittgenstein sees 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

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[1]N. Malcolm, Memoir, p.93.

into the thing, and which analysis digs out" (P.I. #92). "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 missunderstood." This statement, from the preface of the _Tractatus_,·

could occur in the _Investigations_ quite appropriately, although it

would have to be construed differently.

The early Wittgenstein believed that he had discovered _the_

essence of language, and revealed _the_ limit of language. The boundary

between sense and nonsense was set once and for all according to a

definite criteria of meaning. The later Wittgenstein, however, no

longer speaks of _the_ language but of different uses of language or

language-games. Consequently, there is no such thing as "_the_ limit

of language" but only "limit_s_ of language" (P.I. #119). And there

are no absolute criteria of 'sense' or 'nonsense,'--"Where we say

'This makes no sense' we always mean 'This makes nonsense _in this_

particular [language-] game.'"[2] In fact, Wittgenstein went as far as

stating that "'make sense' is vague, and will have different senses

in different cases, but . . . the expression 'make sense' is useful

just as 'game' is useful, although, like 'game,' it alters its meaning

as we go from proposition to proposition."[3] Thus, the criticism of

of an assertion as meaningless would always be a specific _ad hoc_

argument, not on the grounds that it did not accord with some general

stipulation.

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[2]Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures," p.273.

[3]_Ibid._, p.274.

It is for this reason that Wittgenstein constructs various language-games in the process of criticizing specific metaphysical utterances. To make sure that his investigations are not construed as constituting a 'philosophy' of language, he explains: "Our clear and simple language-games are not preparatory studies for a future regularization of language . . . . [They] are rather set up as objects of comparison which are meant to throw light on the facts of our language by way not only of similarities, but also of disimilarities" (P.I. #130). It is true that, with respect to treating specific philosophical problems, Wittgenstein's main concern is to draw our attention to the dissimilarities between different language-games in which the relevent words occur. Nevertheless, he wishes to remind us of certain over-all similarities among the language-games. "We want to establish an order in our knowledge of the use of language: an order with a particular end in view; one out of many possible orders; not the order" (P.I. #132).[4] In the Investigations, Wittgenstein established an order in our knowledge of the use of language,-- i.e. the pragmatic or instrumentalist conception or language, with a particular end in view--that of solving, or rather, dissolving

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[4]Compare: P.I. #17, "How we group words into kinds will depend on the aim of the classification,--and on our inclination. Think of the different points of view from which one can classify tools or chess-men."--For example, from the point of view of function, shape, material, color, weight, etc. Wittgenstein is interested in grouping words according to their functions just as we usually group tools according to the jobs they perform and chess-men according to the roles they play in a game--hence, the invitation to look at words as tools or chess-men.

philosophical problems.[5] Although Wittgenstein now realizes that "sense" and "nonsense" are vague terms in ordinary language, nevertheless it is possible to draw a boundary according to the established order for a particular purpose. This is done in the Investigations when Wittgenstein advises us to look at the ordinary uses of language as a machine doing work. We may say that the general criteria by which the later Wittgenstein judges philosophical utterances to be nonsensical is the pragmatic criterion of meaning. This is shown by his submitting philosophical statements to questions such as: "What use can we make of that statement?" "What practical consequences is it supposed to have?" "Under what circumstances, to achieve what, would you say that?" and so on. In the Tractatus the boundary was discovered, but in the Investigations the boundary was drawn.

> To say "This combination of words makes no sense" excludes it from the sphere of language and thereby bounds the domain of language. But when one draws a boundary it may be for various kinds of reasons. If I surround an area with a fence or a line or otherwise, the purpose may be to prevent someone from getting in or out; but it may also be part of a game and the players be supposed, say, to jump over the boundary [metaphysical language-game?]; or it may show where the property of one man ends and that of another begins boundaries between science, metaphysics and religion, for example ; and so on. So if I draw a boundary line that is not yet to say what I am drawing it for (P.I. #499).

This important and often misunderstood[6] passage throws much

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[5]This is made clear by the statement in the paragraph following the one just quoted: "The clarity that we are aiming at is indeed complete clarity. But this simply means that the philosophical problems should completely disappear" (P.I. #133).

[6]E.G. Philip P. Hallie, "Wittgenstein's Exclusion of Metaphysical Nonsense," Philosophical Quarterly 16 (1966).

light on Wittgenstein's later philosophy. Just as the Tractatus
was misinterpreted as basically anti-metaphysical, the Investigations
is now generally regarded as anti-metaphysical. This is largely due
to his branding metaphysical statements as nonsensical in both books.
However, the purpose of his drawing a boundary between sense and
nonsense is not correctly understood. He is not attempting to
eliminate metaphysics or to end all philosophy; his task is to
understand their nature. I hope this point will become clearer
further on. It may be noted here that Wittgenstein had a certain
sympathy for metaphysical philosophers and that he told one of his
students: "Don't think I despise metaphysics or ridicule it. On
the contrary, I regard the great metaphysical writings of the past
as among the noblest productions of the human mind."[7]

In Part I Wittgenstein's views on philosophy were seen to be
the logical consequences of his theory of language. Similarily,
his later conception of philosophy follows from his new way of
looking at language.[8] It should not be difficult now to understand
his 'diagnosis' and 'treatment' of the philosophical problems.
Philosophical problems arise mainly through a misinterpretation of
our forms of language,--they are 'linguistic' or rather 'conceptual'
problems. That is not to say, however, that they are silly or unim-
portant problems.--They "have the character of depth. They are deep

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[7]M. Drury, "A Symposium on Wittgenstein," in Fann (ed.),
Wittgenstein, p.68 and p.126.

[8]His most important remarks about philosophy (P.I. #109-#133)
come right after his criticisms of his old theory of language.

disquietudes; their roots are as deep in us as the forms of our language and their significance is as great as the importance of our language" (P.I. #111).

For Wittgenstein, then, philosophy begins with puzzlement. Philosophical questions are tormenting questions arising from our forms of language; they are 'vexations' or 'intellectual discomfort' comparable to some kind of mental disease. In a lecture, Wittgenstein said that philosophers were 'in a muddle about things'; that they follow a certain instinct which leads them to ask certain questions without understanding what those questions mean; that the asking of those questions results from 'a vague mental uneasiness,' like that which leads children to ask 'Why?'[9] Hence, "A philosophical problem has the form: 'I don't know my way about'" (P.I. #123). Elsewhere, a philosophical problem is compared to a 'mental cramp' to be relieved or a 'knot in our thinking' to be untied (Z. #452). And a person caught in a philosophical perplexity is compared to a man in a room who wants to get out but doesn't know how,[10] or a fly caught in a fly-bottle. Philosophy, as Wittgenstein conceives it, is thus "a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language" (P.I. #109). His aim is—"To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle" (P.I. #309).

The metaphorical description of philosophical problems in psychological terms—such as 'mental cramp,' 'mental torment,' etc.—

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[9]Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures," p.323.

[10]Malcolm, Memoir, p.51.

is not accidental. For one thing, it is an expression of Wittgen-
stein's personal involvement with them. For another, it is an
appropriate characterization of Wittgenstein's own methods and aim of
philosophy. "The philosopher's treatment of a question is like the
treatment of an illness" (P.I. #255). Just as there is not one
conclusive thereapy for all mental illness; "There is not a philosoph-
ical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies"
(P.I. #133). Which therapy should be used would depend on the
illness and the person who is afflicted by it. Nevertheless, like
psycho-therapy, the first step is to look round for the source of the
philosophical puzzlement (B.B. p.59). For example, if a patient is
suffering from delusions, it would not be of any help to tell him that
he is merely having delusions. To cure him an analyst must seek out
the cause of his illness. Similarly, Wittgenstein points out, "When
the solipsist says that only his experiences are real, it is no use
answering him: 'Why do you tell us this if you don't believe that
we really hear it?' Or anyhow, if we give him this answer, we
mustn't believe that we have answered his difficulty. There is no
common sense answer to a philosophical problem. One can defend common
sense against the attacks of philosophers only by solving their
puzzles, i.e., by curing them of the temptation to attack common
sense; not by restating the views of common sense" (B.B. pp.58-9).[11]

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[11]Wittgenstein is, no doubt, attacking G.E. Moore here. In his
unpublished Last Notes, Wittgenstein criticizes Moore's "A Defence of
Common Sense" along this line. Moore's contribution to philosophy lies
in detecting the oddness of metaphysical claims but his mistake (and
childishness) lies in trying to counter metaphysical statements (e.g.

We must try to understand why the metaphysicians want to make such paradoxical statements. Wittgenstein's philosophical therapy is analogous to psycho-therapy in another respect. The goal in both cases is to get rid of the illness. "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" (P.I. #133). In a sense, he is exactly where he started; for philosophy "leaves every-thing as it is" (P.I. #124). However, philosophy is never trivial or unimportant. Should treatment by psycho-analysis be regarded as trivial on the ground that it leaves a man nothing more exciting than sane?

In describing Wittgenstein's criticisms of his own earlier theories of meaning and language we have already pointed out what he considered to be traditional philosophers' mistakes and have demonstrated his methods of dealing with those problems. Nevertheless, we shall attempt to summarize some of his more general criticisms of traditional philosophy and also to illustrate his new methods by specific examples. The main mistake made by philosophers (inclu-ding the author of the Tractatus), according to Wittgenstein, is that "When language is looked at, what is looked at is a form of words and not the use made of the form of words."[12] When we are doing philosophy we are confused by the uniform appearance of words

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"We cannot prove the existence of an external world") by statements of common sense (e.g. "Here is one hand, . . . and here is another.")

[12]Lectures and Conversations (Oxford, 1966), p.2.

when we hear them spoken or meet them in script and print. But
their application is not presented to us clearly. It is like looking
into the cabin of a locomotive. We see handles all looking more or
less alike. Traditional philosophy, we may say, is concerned with
handles. It treats of terms, words as handles; it ignores to a
large extent the different ways the handles work. "We remain
unconscious of the prodigious diversity of all the everyday language-
games because the clothing of our language makes everything alike"
(P.I. p.224). This is a very important point which Wittgenstein
wants to remind us of over and over again in the Investigations. He
distinguishes 'surface-grammar' from 'depth-grammar' in the use of
words. The 'surface-grammar' is "What immediately impresses itself
upon us about the use of a word . . ., the part of its use—one might
say—that can be taken in by the ear" (P.I. #664). The 'depth-grammar,'
then, is the application of words.

A few examples here would help to clarify the distinction.
Compare the propositions: "I have a beautiful hat" and "I have a
terrible toothache." The similarity in their surface-grammar is
obvious but their uses are quite different (cf. B.B. p.53). The
difference in their depth-grammar may be brought out by comparing,
e.g. "Is this my hat?" and "Is this my toothache?"—(nonsense).
Compare again: "All roses have thorns" and "All rods have length."
On the surface, both propositions seem to be empirical generalizations,
but while we can imagine roses without thorns, can we also imagine
rods without length? How do we decide whether all rods have length?
Do we examine rods as we would examine roses? The second proposition

is not experiential but logical or, as Wittgenstein calls it,
'grammatical'; it does not give us information about rods but states
a rule governing the use of the word 'rod.'

We all know what "It is 5 o'clock here" means; do we also know
what "It is 5 o'clock on the sun" means? What is the criteria for
application here? Don't we understand this statement: "although
the deaf-mutes have learned only a gesture-language, each of them
really talks to himself inwardly in a vocal language"? Wittgenstein
remarks: "What can I do with this information (if it is such)?
The whole idea of understanding smells fishy here. I do not know
whether I understand it or don't understand it. I might answer:
'It's an English sentence; apparently [surface grammar] quite in order
--that is until one wants to do something with it; . . .'" (P.I. #348).
Let us look at another example. "The Earth has existed for millions
of years" makes clearer sense than "The Earth has existed in the last
five minutes," or "The Earth has just sprung into being now."[13] We
know the ideas and observations associated with the former proposition
but what observations do the latter propositions refer to, and what
observations would count against it? (P.I. p.221). Compare the
following sentences: "A newborn child has no teeth."--"A goose has
no teeth."--"A rose has no teeth." "This last at any rate--one would
like to say--is obviously true! It is even surer than that a goose
has none.--And yet it is none so clear. For where should a rose's

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[13]This is a criticism of Russell's statement in The Problems of
Philosophy that it is logically possible that the world might have
sprung into being 5 minutes ago. See: Moore, "Wittgenstein's
Lectures," p.320.

teeth have been?" (P.I. p.221).

In every case "There is a picture in the foreground (the surface-grammar) but the sense lies far in the background; that is, the application of the picture (the depth-grammar) is not easy to survey" (P.I. #422). The picture is there; and Wittgenstein does not dispute its correctness. But what is its application? The 'pragmatism' in Wittgenstein's later philosophy is becoming more and more pronounced.[14] "The axis of reference of our examination must be rotated, but about the fixed point of our real need" (P.I. #108). Instead of concentrating on the theoretic study of linguistic forms (as he did in the Tractatus), he is now concerned with the pragmatic examination of linguistic functions. A boundary of sense is drawn around the criteria of 'use,' 'purpose,' 'employment,' 'practical consequence,' etc. The purpose of drawing this boundary is to remind ourselves that "It is not every sentence-like formation that we know how to do something with, not every technique has an application in our life; and when we are tempted in philosophy to count some quite useless thing as a proposition, that is often because we have not considered its application sufficiently" (P.I. #520). "The confusions which occupy us arise when language is like an engine idling, not when it is doing work: (P.I. #132). "Philosophical problems arise when language goes on holiday" (P.I. #38).

A metaphysical pronouncement is like "A wheel that can be

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[14]He refers to pragmatism a number of times in his lectures. In his Last Notes we find entries such as: "In other words I want to say something that is (or sounds) like pragmatism. A kind of Weltanschauung cuts across my path."

turned though nothing else moves with it, [it] is not part of the

mechanism" (P.I. #271). Its main cause is precisely due to the

difficulty in understanding the 'depth-grammar' of some sentences.

The form of a metaphysical utterance makes it look like an empirical

proposition but it is really a 'grammatical' or conceptual one.[15]

As Wittgenstein puts it, "The essential thing about metaphysics:

it obliterates the distinction between factual and conceptual

investigation" (Z. #458). Compare:

(1) Only one person can play patience.
(2) Only one person can sit on a bench 6 inches wide.
(3) Only one person can feel his own pain.

The 'surface-grammar' is quite alike, but their 'depth-grammar' is

utterly different. (2) states a physical impossibility and (1) states

a 'grammatical' impossibility--it makes no sense to speak of playing

patience with another person. (3) has an experiential form;--a

philosopher who says this may well think that he is expressing a

kind of scientific truth. However, can we imagine its opposite?

What would it be like for someone else to feel my pain? When we

say "One man cannot feel another's pain," the idea of an insurmount-

able physical barrier suggests itself to us, while the impossibility

is really logical.--It states a grammatical rule governing the use of

the word "pain," much in the same way that (1) states a grammatical

rule (cf. P.I. #248).

What Wittgenstein always does when he meets the word "can" in

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[15]Wittgenstein used 'grammatical,' 'conceptual,' and sometimes
'logical' or 'tautological' interchangeably. Also: 'empirical,'
'experiential,' and 'factual' are used interchangeably.

a metaphysical proposition is to show "that this proposition hides
a grammatical rule. That is to say, we destroy the outward similar-
ity between a metaphysical proposition and an experiential one"
(B.B. p.55). Propositions such as "Every rod has length," "Sensations
are private," "Time has only one direction," etc. are "A full-blown
pictorial representation of our grammar" (P.I. #295). To free us
from the misleading forms of metaphysical expressions, Wittgenstein
suggests that instead of saying "one cannot . . .," we say "there is
no such thing as . . . 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 as enumerating all the members'" (Z. #134).

"Grammar tells what kind of object anything is" (P.I. #373)--
It expresses the essence of a thing (P.I. #371). If someone says,
"This body has extension," we might reply: "Nonsense!"--but are
inclined to say "Of course!"--Why is this? (P.I. #252). We are
inclined to reply the latter because, in a sense, it contains so much
truth--so much that we cannot imagine its negation (cf. Z. #460).
Nevertheless, we might want to say "Nonsense! Who are you informing?
You speak as if it is an experiential statement!" When Wittgenstein
says, as he often does in his later writings, that metaphysical
propositions are 'nonsense,' 'senseless,' or 'without sense,'[16] we

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[16]He does not distinguish these terms in the Investigations as he
did in the Tractatus.

should keep in mind the distinction he wishes to make:--"Nonsense is produced by trying to express by the use of language what ought to be embodied in the grammar.[17] Wittgenstein explained in his lectures that it was in this particular sense that he thought both the Realist and the Idealist were "talking nonsense."[18] Compare this with the formulation in the Tractatus: Nonsense is caused by attempting to say what cannot be said. The parallel between his earlier and later views of metaphysics is obvious. As in the Tractatus, Wittgenstein opposes the typical metaphysical way of expressing certain "fundamental things" (Z. #459) in the empirical form. If we think, therefore, Wittgenstein is anti-metaphysical per se, we should remember his remarks about poetry: "Do not forget that a poem even though it is composed in the language of information, is not used in the language-game of giving information" (Z. #160).

Since this aspect of Wittgenstein's later philosophy is completely misunderstood by most commentators, I shall attempt to clarify it in another way. Wittgenstein often draws the analogy between language and the chess-game, and different uses of language are compared to different moves in a game. Learning the initial positions of each chessman and the rules defining each piece, etc., is not yet 'playing' the game, but preparing to play. Similarily, grammatical propositions are "preparations for the use of language,

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[17]Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures," p.312.

[18]Ibid. Cf. "The Solipsists' statement 'Only my experience is real' is absurd 'as a statement of fact,' . . . . Solipsism is right if it merely says that 'I have toothache' and 'he has toothache' are on quite a different level."

almost like definitions are . . . . [They] are part of the apparatus
of language, not of the application of language."[19] If the applica-
tions of language are compared to different houses serving different
purposes (cf. P.I. #18), than the apparatus of language is comparable
to the ground on which the houses stand. "Where does our investigation
get its importance from, since it seems only to destroy everything
interesting, that is, all that is great and important? . . . But
we are only destroying castles-in-the-air, and we are laying open the
ground of language on which they stand" (P.I. #118).[20] Different
language-games are like houses which are built for some purposes. A
metaphysical proposition is, as it were, a pretence use of language.
Metaphysics pretends to be a kind of science. In this respect,
Wittgenstein continues to adhere to his earlier insight: "Philosophy
is not one of the natural sciences" (T. 4.111). This is reaffirmed
in the Investigations: "It was true to say that our considerations
could not be scientific ones" (P.I. #109). He criticizes metaphysics
because it has been presented in an empirical form, not because it
deals with unimportant matters. When he criticizes Freud, for
example: "Freud is constantly claiming to be scientific. But what
he gives is speculation--something prior even to the formation of an
hypothesis."[21] It is not because he thinks that Freud was doing some-

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[19]Wittgenstein's Lectures in the Spring of 1939, lecture notes
taken by Norman Malcolm (unpublished), p.89.

[20]My translation, Anscombe's is misleading.

[21]Lectures and Conversations, p.44.

thing unimportant. He is merely warning us not to take Freud's words on their face value, but to look at them in a different light. Metaphysics deals with very fundamental matters—it is concerned with the ground of language, and consequently, of 'Being.'[22]

Wittgenstein conceives his philosophical task to be helping those who are philosophically puzzled to see the nature of their puzzlement. It is true that he tends to emphasize the negative aspects of philosophy—e.g. "philosophical propositions are senseless, do no jobs, are like idling machines, etc." But we might remember the following parable Wittgenstein used to explain the verification principle: Imagine that there is a town where the policemen are required to obtain information about the kind of work each inhabitant does. Occasionally, a policeman comes across someone who does not do any work. The policeman enters this fact on the record, because this too is a useful piece of information about the man![23] The moral of this parable is that if we discover a proposition to be unverifiable, then that is an important piece of information about it. Thus, he says: "Asking whether and how a proposition can be verified is only a particular way of asking 'How d'you mean?' The answer is a contribution to the grammar of the proposition" (P.I. #353).

Wittgenstein suggested some positive ways of looking at meta-

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[22]Cf. "[Logic] takes its rise, not from an interest in the facts of nature . . . but from an urge to understand the basis, or essence, of everything empirical . . . . Our investigation . . . is directed not towards phenomena, but, as one might say, towards the 'possibilities' of phenomena" (P.I. #89-90).

[23]Malcolm, A Memoir, p.66.

physics. He emphasized that although metaphysical statements, taken

at their face value, are absurd; the "idea expressed by them is

of enormous importance."--They exhibit clearly the grammar of certain

important words in our language. Our ordinary language "holds our

mind rigidly in one position, as it were, and in this position

sometimes it feels cramped, having a desire for other positions as

well" (B.B. p.59). A metaphysician invents a notation which stresses

a difference more strongly, makes it more obvious than ordinary

language does. In a sense he has discovered "a new way of looking at

things. As if [he] had invented a new way of painting; or, again,

a new metre, or a new king of song" (P.I. #401).--All of these

requires great talent and insight. No wonder he regarded "the great

metaphysical writings of the past as among the noblest productions

of the human mind."

Wittgenstein's later work, as we have seen, is not anti-

metaphysical; although it is non-metaphysical. His main task is to

understand the nature of metaphysics and his contribution, above all,

lies in suggesting a new way of looking at philosophy. Nevertheless,

we may benefit from pondering over a remark by one of his close

friends: "The whole driving force of [Wittgenstein's] investigation

is missed if it is not seen continually to point beyond itself."[24]

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[24]Drury, "A Symposium," p.70.

X. UNDERSTANDING WITTGENSTEIN

Due to the novel nature of his philosophy and the typically
aphoristic and cryptic style of his writings, Wittgenstein's work
lends itself readily to all sorts of interpretations and misinterpre-
tations. In this chapter I shall examine some of the major criticisms
leveled against Wittgenstein and suggest a way of looking at his work
which would avoid certain misinterpretations.

Most of Wittgenstein's statements are vague and, as he pointed
out, are meant to be vague (B.B. p.84). His most important insights
are expressed in analogies, metaphors and parables;--due to the
extreme difficulty of his subject matter. (He is, in a sense, still
trying to say what cannot be said.) Nevertheless, this does not
mean he can be interpreted in whatever fashion one wishes. It is not
uncommon for some of Wittgenstein's remarks to be understood in
exactly the opposite of what was intended. For example, it is
apparently possible for a philosopher to interpret Wittgenstein thus:
"Old-style philosophy for him teaches nothing, changes nothing,
'it leaves everything as it is.'"[1] And, Wittgenstein's later view
of language is understood by another philosopher to be thus: "The
language-game is also a logic game. Here Wittgenstein is advancing
a thesis not too far removed from the viewpoint of Hilbert: 'if
anyone utters a sentence and means or understands it he is operating

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[1]Leslie Paul, Persons and Perception (London, 1961), p.42.

a calculus according to definite rules'" (P.I. #81).[2]

These kinds of misinterpretations are not serious, as they are so obvious. However, there are many serious criticisms which require our analysis. We have seen that Wittgenstein is not anti-metaphysical (IX), not an 'analytic' philosopher (VI), and not a 'common-sense' philosopher (IX). Is he an 'ordinary-language' philosopher? Has he "explicitly laid it down that our ordinary expressions are 'in order as they are,' and has forbidden philosophers to tamper with them?" Is it true that "His own system makes no provision for the adoption of any new way of speaking in conflict with existing practice," as David Pole has claimed?[3] And what about Cornforth's accusation: "When Wittgenstein set up the actual use of language as a standard, that was equivalent to accepting a certain set-up of culture and belief as a standard. . . . It is lucky no such philosophy was thought of until recently or we should still be under the sway of witch doctors, . . ."[4] A long quotation from the Blue Book here will help to dispel the kind of misunderstanding revealed by these criticisms.

> A philosopher is not a man out of his sense, a man who doesn't see what everybody sees; nor on the other hand is his disagreement

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[2]James Feibleman, Inside the Great Mirror (The Hague, 1958), p. 206. He failed to quote the first half of the sentence which makes Wittgenstein's sense clear: "For it will then also become clear what can lead us (and did lead me [obviously refering to the Tractatus]) to think that if anyone utters a sentence and . . . ."

[3]David Pole, The Later Philosophy of Wittgenstein (London, 1958), p.79.

[4]Maurice Cornforth, Marxism and the Linguistic Philosophy (New York, 1965), p.163.

with common sense that of the scientist disagreeing with the coarse views of the man in the street. That is, his disagreement is not founded on a more subtle knowledge of fact. We therefore have to look round for the source of his puzzlement. . . .

Now the man whom we call a solipsist and who says that only his own experiences are real, does not thereby disagree with us about any practical questions of fact, he does not say that we are simulating when we complain of pains, he pities us as much as anyone else, and at the same time he wishes to restrict the use of the epithet 'real' to what we should call his experiences; . . . And why shouldn't we grant him this notation? I needn't say that in order to avoid confusion he had in this case better not use the word "real" as opposed to "simulated" at all; . . . (B.B. p.59).

Philosophy is not science. The philosopher is neither a

theoretical scientist who gives us explanatory theories, nor an

empirical scientist who discovers new facts: he is not a scientist at

all. "Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither

explains nor 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" (P.I. #126). Don't forget that Wittgenstein is

dealing with "philosophical" problems--"The concepts of meaning, of

understanding, of a proposition, of logic, the foundations of mathe-

matics, states of consciousness, and other things" (P.I. Preface).

A philosophical problem is like a jig-saw puzzle,--all the pieces

(facts) are there, only all mixed up (B.B. p.46). There is nothing

hidden in philosophical problems. What is hidden is of no interest

to us as philosophers, although it may well be of great interest to

scientists. Philosophers' disagreement with common sense is not about

electrons, neurons, magnetic fields, etc., but, so to speak, about

tables, chairs, and things everybody knows. It is in this context

that Wittgenstein says: "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[5] which is its original
home?--What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to
their everyday use"(P.I. #116).

It is only when philosophers use words in the metaphysical way
that we bring them back to their everyday use.[6] (Compare: "Whenever
someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, [we] demonstrate to
him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain words in his
sentences."--T. 6.53). This characterizes Wittgenstein's method--to
remind the philosopher who says "only my experiences are real" that
he is not using the word "real" in any ordinary sense as when we use
it in contrast with "simulated," etc. For this reason Wittgenstein
used to ask: "What would my bed-maker say of this kind of abstract
talk?" when he was faced with metaphysical statements such as: "We
don't really know that the external world exists," "The bed is really
a bundle of sense-data," "The existence of other minds is only a
hypothesis," and so on. It was in this sort of situation that Witt-
genstein said "What the bed-maker says is all right, but what (the
metaphysicians) say is all wrong."[7] Does this mean that he now

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[5] In the original, Wittgenstein speaks of "der Sprache" and not
"der Sprachspiel." Anscombe mistakenly translates it as "language-
game" in the English text.

[6] This includes everyday use of language by scientists, artists,
mathematicians, neuro-surgeons, etc.

[7] See W. Mays, "Recollections of Wittgenstein," in Fann (ed.),
Wittgenstein, p.82 and p.338. "Bed-maker" is the English equivalent
of "chambermaid."

advocates the "bed-maker's" world view and her language as a standard?!

Pole says, or implies, that Wittgenstein regards ordinary language as "sacrosanct," and that he speaks in the name of nothing higher than the "status quo." Thus he complains: "Wittgenstein's whole treatment of language takes no account of the necessity or possibility of its growth, . . . it comes near to prohibiting it."[8] And Cornforth contends that "When he said that philosophy 'may not interfere,' that came to saying that it may not interfere with currently accepted culture and belief."[9] These accusations arise from Wittgenstein's statement: "Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it" (P.I. #124). For Pole and Cornforth this statement meant either that philosophy ought not to change it (in which case Wittgenstein is accused of being an intellectual or even a social conservative, as Cornforth in fact, does), or that the actual use of language may in no way be changed (in which case he will be accused of lacking imagination or a sufficient appreciation of scientific advance). What the statement means is that philosophy (as Wittgenstein conceives it) does not change it, although of course there are many ways of changing ordinary language--and it in fact changes constantly. Wittgenstein makes this quite clear in the following passages:

> [The multiplicity of language] is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types of language, new language-games,

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[8]Pole, op. cit., p.92.

[9]Cornforth, loc. cit.

as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten (P.I. #23).

A reform [of ordinary language] for particular practical purposes, an improvement in our terminology designed to prevent misunderstandings in practice, is perfectly possible. But these are not the cases we have to do with (P.I. #132).

To Pole's accusation: "His own system makes no provision for the adoption of any new way of speaking in conflict with existing practice," we might answer: "It is quite true that Wittgenstein makes no provision for any new way of speaking, but he does not make any provision against it either, for he has no system." It should be quite obvious that Wittgenstein avoided "system" in his later years.[10] Related to this is another kind of misunderstanding--i.e. Wittgenstein advances theories (of meaning, language, and what not) in the Investigations.

Pitcher asserts that in spite of Wittgenstein's explicit denial, "He himself most certainly puts forward theses with which not everyone would agree." One such 'thesis' is that "the meaning of an expression is its use in the language."[11] He claims that Wittgenstein "identifies the meaning of a word--and the sense of a sentence--with its use in the language;" and sets about to "argue that this identification is mistaken;" and then tries to assure us that Wittgenstein's mistake does not really affect his valuable practice. Pitcher's curious argument is worth quoting at length here:

Wittgenstein seems to have been laboring under the traditional

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[10]O.K. Bouwsma told me that once Wittgenstein flew at Smythies for suggesting that he was a "systematic philosopher."

[11]George Pitcher, The Philosophy of Wittgenstein, p.323.

assumption--perhaps a hold-over from the _Tractatus_--that it is
the job of the philosopher to give us the real meaning of
certain important words; and he is telling us that this meaning
is neither the objects, if any, denoted by the word nor any kind
of spiritual atmosphere surrounding the word, but that it is
rather the uses of the word in the language. What he might
better have said, I think, is that it is not the job of the
philosopher to give us the meaning of philosophically difficult
words, but rather to give us their uses. As Wisdom put it,
"Don't ask for meaning, ask for the use."[12] And this is
actually what Wittgenstein himself does in practice: he
investigates the uses of words, and is not much concerned with
their meanings. That is why I think his error in identifying
meaning and use is not of much consequence: it does not
seriously affect his valuable practice. It is interesting to
note, in fact, that Wittgenstein himself occasionally divorces,
at least by implication, the notions of meaning and use. After
describing a simple language-game involving the word 'five,'
he says: "But what is the meaning of the word 'five'?--No
such thing was in question here, only how the word 'five' is
used" (P.I. #1).[13] In another passage, he virtually says
what I have just suggested that he should have said--namely,
that the philosopher ought to abandon his preoccupation with
meanings and concentrate on the uses of the terms that puzzle
him: [here he quotes P.I. #5].[14]

"He might better have said, . . .;" but "this is _actually_ what

he does in practice;" and "in fact, that's what he occasionally says;"

while "in another place, he _virtually_ says;" etc. It is difficult to

understand why a sympathetic interpreter of Wittgenstein would want

to go through all these torturous mental somersaults instead of

admitting the obvious--i.e. Wittgenstein does not identify meaning

with use. Apparently it is not Wittgenstein but _Pitcher_ who is labor-

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[12]This was _not_ Wisdom's slogan but Wittgenstein's. Wisdom merely
reported that Wittgenstein recommended this slogan at the Moral
Sciences Club. See: John Wisdom, "Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1934-37,"
Mind, LXI (1952), p.258.

[13]This, of course, is a rejection of the question which is one
of Wittgenstein's favorite _methods_ (_Last Notes_, Mar. 12, 1951). See:
Chapter VII above.

[14]Pitcher, _op. cit._, p.253.

ing under a traditional illusion.

There is another interesting criticism of Wittgenstein that needs to be answered. Pole suggests that since the goal of Wittgenstein's philosophizing is to make philosophical problems disappear, why don't we discover a drug which when administered to philosophers, would cause them to lose any interest in philosophical problems?[15] It is true that Wittgenstein compared his philosophy with psychoanalysis but he explicitly attacked the suggestion that it was a form of psycho-analysis. "They are different techniques," he said.[16] He also said, "In philosophizing we may not terminate a disease of thought. It must run its natural course, and slow cure is all important" (Z. #382). Philosophical problems are, of course, not psychological problems. If we speak of 'treatment' it is 'philosophical treatment.' As pointed out before, philosophical problems arise from our form of language—human form of life. They are 'deep' problems. That is why, in his lectures, Wittgenstein would not be satisfied until his students were thoroughly perplexed by a philosophical problem; he tried to show that "you had confusions you never thought you could have had.[17] He tried to work his way into and through a philosophical problem. This is reminiscent of Zen master's procedure: "Before you have studied Zen, mountains are mountains and rivers are rivers: while you are studying it mountains

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[15]Pole, p.84.

[16]Malcolm, A Memoir (ibid.), p.57.

[17]D.A.T. Gasking & A.C. Jackson, "Wittgenstein as a Teacher," in Fann, p.53.

are no longer mountains and rivers are no longer rivers; but once you

have enlightenment mountains are once again mountains and rivers are

rivers."[18] Something is gained by this process, i.e. enlightenment.

It is true that Wittgenstein says: "The results of philosophy

are the uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense and of

bumps that the understanding has got by running its head up against

the limits of language" (P.I. #119). Why, then, encourage people to

bump their heads against the hard walls? Because "These bumps make

us see the value of the discovery" (ibid.). One, so to speak, learns

to see the limits of language (and of the world) by running his head

against them. We might remember what Wittgenstein conceived himself

to be doing in his "Lecture on Ethics": "My whole tendency and I

believe the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics

or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language" (See p.32

above.) Thus, although the successful pursuit of philosophy "leaves

everything as it is" as regards to the actual use of language and

our talks about mountains and rivers, it by no means leaves a

philosopher as he was. He will achieve "complete clarity" and will

"see the world aright" (cf. p.42 above).

The criticisms above and many others not treated here arise

from a fundamental misunderstanding of the later Wittgenstein. They

are caused by reading the Investigations in a wrong way. The

Investigations is completely unsystematic in both its form and its

content. Unlike most earlier or later philosophical writings in the

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[18]D.T. Suzuki, Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings of Suzuki, ed. by
William Barrett (N.Y., 1956), p.xvi.

Western tradition, it consists of loosely connected remarks, unanswered questions, unamplified hints, imaginary dialogues, vague images, metaphors, and epigrams. This, as Wittgenstein points out in the preface, is "connected with the very nature of the investigation." If we ask, "What is Wittgenstein saying? What kind of theory is he advancing?" as we usually do upon reading a philosophical book, we would be on the wrong track. I wish to suggest a way of looking at the Investigations which may reveal something of the "nature" of his investigation. To this end I recommend asking instead "What is Wittgenstein doing?" The answer is: confession and persuasion. The failure to understand what Wittgenstein was doing and the tendency to look for the essence of his work in a strictly rational or matter-of-fact way are the main causes of the existence of numerous wildly irrelevant interpretations and refutations of Wittgenstein.

Wittgenstein was a passionate thinker for whom philosophical problems were tormenting "personal" problems.[19] To read his philosophical diaries is to see Laocon struggling with the serpent. As Cranston remarks, "Philosophy was not just work, it was an obsession for Wittgenstein ; being a philosopher meant worrying about problems in such a concentrated way that one might at any moment go mad.[20] Like the existentialist philosopher Wittgenstein is always in agony

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[19]In a letter to Russell, Wittgenstein exclaimed, "I wish God I had more understanding and everything would finally become clear to me: otherwise I can not live any longer!" (in Van Hayek, Unfinished Sketch, p.13).

[20]In an unpublished paper on Wittgenstein.

while doing philosophy.[21] His immediate personal aim is to rid himself of the obsession philosophical problems have become. "The real discovery is the one that makes **me** capable of stopping doing philosophy when **I** want to" (P.I. #133, my underline). The use of first-person pronouns here is significant, it is characteristic of a confession.

The deliberately unsystematic structure of the Investigations is essentially related to the completely ad hoc character of the later work. The greater part of it, as we have seen, is devoted to criticizing the method and doctrine of the Tractatus while the remainder is engaged in a polemic against the prevailing tendencies of philosophizing in his time. If his criticisms sound unbearably harsh, it is because they are mainly directed against his former self. The harshness of his self-criticism calls to mind Augustine's writings. It is no wonder that he found in Augustine's Confessions his natural form of expression.[22]

Any serious confessions must contain, as the Investigations does, the full acknowledgement of temptation ("I am tempted to say here . . .," "I feel like saying . . .," "We are inclined to think . . . .") and a willingness to correct them and give them up ("Our whole examination must be turned around . . .," "I imposed a requirement which does not meet any real need," "One is easily

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[21]It is no accident that Wittgenstein's favorite philosophers were St. Augustin, Kierkegarrd, and Dostoievsky.

[22]Stanley Cavell has called attention to this aspect of Wittgenstein's later writings in "The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy." Philosophical Review, 71 (1962), p.92.

mislead . . . ."). The voice of temptation and the voice of
correction are the antagonists in Wittgenstein's dialogues. Unlike
dogmas and theories, confessions are not to be believed, criticized,
or refuted. They are either helpful or not helpful.

In confessing, you do not explain or justify, but describe your
own experience. That is why there is nothing in the Investigations
which we should ordinarily call reasoning, argument or proof. When
he does assert something it is either very 'trivial' or 'obvious'--
something we fail to notice because it is always before our eyes
(P.I. #129). He remarked in one lecture, "The kind of investigation
we are about is to draw your attention to facts which you know, but
have forgotten. I won't say anything which anyone will dispute, and
if he does dispute, I will drop it."[23] He can drop it because the
force of his procedure does not depend on those 'facts.' This is
connected to his remark in another lecture to the effect that it did
not matter whether his results were true or not: What mattered was
that "a method had been found."[24]

Instead of calling the Investigations a kind of 'confession' we
may just as well call it a book of case histories of philosophic
cures (taking a hint from his comparison of philosophy with psycho-
therapy). He himself described it as an album of "sketches of land-
scapes" made in the course of some sixteen years of involved

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[23]Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1939, p.4.

[24]G.E. Moore, p.322.

philosophical "journeyings" (Preface, p.ix). It is not so much case

histories of various individuals as it is one long case history, that

of Wittgenstein himself. He puts himself on the couch, as it were,

talks to his students, later analyzing the significance of their

jottings.[25] Wittgenstein says in the Investigations "we now demon-

strate a method, by examples" (#133). He could have said: "We now

demonstrate a method of cure, by case histories."

The purpose of writing a confession or recording case histories

is no doubt to help others.[26] Another way to characterize what he

is doing is: persuasion, conversion, or even propaganda. He made

this quite clear in one of his lectures: "I am in a sense making

propaganda for one style of thinking as opposed to another. I am

honestly disgusted with the other . . . . Much of what I am doing is

persuading the people to change their style of thinking."[27] To this

end different methods are to be employed "like different therapies"

(P.I. #133). The sort of thing he means by "methods" are, for

example: imagining or inventing language-games as objects of

comparison; calling attention to some well-known homely facts which

are forgotten; finding and making up intermediate cases; reminding

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[25]The Investigations is, in fact, a selection and rearrangement
of remarks from Wittgenstein's philosophical diaries and lecture
notes taken by his students.

[26]Not long before he died, Wittgenstein quoted to a friend the
inscription that Bach wrote on his Little Organ Book: "To the glory
of the most high God, and that my neighbor may be benefited thereby."
Pointing to his own pile of manuscript he said: "That is what I
would have liked to have been able to say about my own work." M.
Drury, "Wittgenstein: A Symposium," p.71.

[27]Lectures and Conversations, p.28.

someone that the question does not arise; poking fun at a metaphysical

statement to make its oddness ring; giving rules of thumb such as,

"Don't ask for meaning but ask for use"; and so on. It is worth

noting here that Wittgenstein once said that a serious and good

philosophical work could be written that would consist entirely of

jokes.[28] Another time he said that a philosophical treatise might

contain nothing but questions (without answers).[29] In his own writings

he made extensive use of both. To give a few examples: "Why can't

a dog simulate pain? Is he too honest?" (P.I. #250). "Why can't

my right hand give my left hand money?" (P.I. #268). "Why does it

sound queer to say: 'For a second he felt deep grief?' Only because

it so seldom happens?" (P.I. p.174). Wittgenstein used many other

devices. Which device is to be employed on a given occasion would

depend on the problem and the person who is perplexed by it. The

"methods" do not constitute a conclusive technique, it is rather an

art. Wittgenstein, above all, was an artist. We may learn and

benefit from him but cannot copy him.

With good reasons, Wittgenstein was of the opinion that his

ideas were usually misunderstood and distorted even by those who

professed to be his disciples. He once told von Wright that he felt

as though he were writing for people who would think in a quite

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[28]This reminds me of the following conversation between two boys
in a comic strip. A: "Every day I ask myself those age-old
philosophical questions . . . Who am I? Why am I here? That, my
friend, is philosophy." B: "Sounds more like amnesia."

[29]Malcolm, A Memoir, p.29. The Investigations contains 784
questions, only 110 of these are answered; and 70 of the answers are
meant to be wrong.

different way, breathe a different air of life, from that of present-
day man. For people of a different culture, as it were.[30] In the
forward to the Philosophische Bemerkungen Wittgenstein writes, "The
spirit of this book is a different one from that of the mainstream
of European and American civilization, in which we all stand." It is
not surprising that we should find striking resemblences between
Wittgenstein's methods and that of Zen Buddhism—a philosophy from a
different culture. Both Buddha and later the Zen masters were very
much concerned with giving peace to those who were tormented by
abstract philosophical questions. Zen masters have been particularly
well-known for their ability to show the nonsensicality of metaphysi-
cal questions by replying the questioner with nonsense, a joke, an
irrelevancy, a gesture, or what not. The state of 'enlightenment' in
which the mind is free from philosophical questions is not unlike
the state of 'complete clarity' which Wittgenstein was striving for.

Wittgenstein certainly believed that he had produced an
important advance in philosophy. Yet he feared that this advance
might be exaggerated. This is reflected in his choice of Nestroy's
remark for the motto of the Investigations: "Überhaupt hat der
Fortschritt das an sich, dass er viel grosser ausschaut, als er
wirklich ist." (It is the nature of every advance, that it appears
much greater than it actually is). He was characteristically
pessimistic about the future of his philosophy. In the Preface to
the Investigations we read: "It is not impossible that it should fall

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[30]G.E. von Wright, "Biographical Sketch of Wittgenstein," in
Fann, p.13.

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." I think this pessimism is connected to his profound appreciation of the 'depth' of philosophical problems.--They are deeply rooted in the human mode of life. "The sickness of a time is cured by an alteration in the mode of life of human beings, and the sickness of philosophical problems could be cured only through a changed mode of thought and of life, not through a medicine invented by an individual" (R.F.M. p.57).

Whether Wittgenstein's medicine is effective or not only history will tell. However, judging from existing commentaries and interpretations of Wittgenstein's philosophy, his fear was not totally unfounded: "The seed I am most likely to sow is a certain jargon."[31]

Finis

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[31]Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1939, the concluding remark of this series of lectures.

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