6-5-1967

Toward an Understanding of the Later Philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein

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B. S. University of California, 1963

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in Philosophy

in the Graduate School of

The University of New Mexico

Albuquerque, New Mexico

June, 1967

This thesis, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Graduate Committee of the University of New Mexico in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER
OF
ARTS

Brian E. O'Neil
Dean

Date June 5, 1967

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ABSTRACT

Perhaps the biggest obstacle to understanding the later philosophy (1930-1951) of Ludwig Wittgenstein is that, unlike his earlier work, the later work has no explicit organization. I have attempted to show a way around this obstacle by showing the legitimacy of imposing upon the later work the following order:

First, I have taken his later work to stand opposed to the position of "traditional epistemology." I have attempted to show how from traditional epistemology the "empiricist theory of meaning" stems, and how from that theory of meaning stem certain familiar problems of academic philosophy.

Second, I have attempted to show that the bulk of Wittgenstein's later work may be considered as presenting a "theory of meaning," and have attempted to show the role of five concepts in that theory: 'meaning-as-use,' 'family resemblance,' 'language-games,' ' forms of life,' and 'criteria.'

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

In the text, Wittgenstein's works are abbreviated as follows:

BB - Blue and Brown Books

GB - Lectures on Aesthetics, Psychology, and Religious Belief

PI - Philosophical Investigations

RFM - Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics

Z - Zettel

Full bibliographical entries appear in the Bibliography.

Philosophical Journals: In the footnotes, the conventional abbreviations are used:

APQ - American Philosophical Quarterly

JP - Journal of Philosophy

M - Mind

P - Philosophy

PAS - Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society

PQ - Philosophical Quarterly

PR - Philosophical Review

PS - Philosophical Studies (Ireland)

Single quotation marks about a term not part of a larger quotation indicate that what is being referred to is the concept, not the state of affairs, designated by that term.

I.

INTRODUCTION

> In June of 1929 Wittgenstein was awarded a Ph. D. from Cambridge University, having returned to England, and to philosophy, less than a year earlier. . . . The following month, he refused to read a paper ("Some Remarks on Logical Form") which he had prepared for the joint session of the Mind Association and Aristotelian Society, and which obviously goes with the ideas he had worked out in Tractatus. Years later he said to Moore "something to the effect that, when he wrote [the paper on logical form], he was getting new ideas about which he was still confused, and that he did not think it deserved any attention."[1]

It is this event that I should take as marking the watershed between the early and later philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein. Von Wright suggests "about 1933" for the date when "a radical change took place in Wittgenstein's thinking";[2] it is on the basis of Moore's notes of Wittgenstein's 1930-1933 lectures that I pick the earlier date.

I regret that I have not had an opportunity to consult Philisophische Bemerkungen[3] (written in 1930) or any of Wittgenstein's unpublished work. Of the two 1930 works Von Wright says: "In the manuscripts and typescripts of about 1930 the reader is struck by the formulations with which he is familiar from the writings of Schlick and other

members of the Vienna circle," and describes the unpublished work as "a dissertation of about eight hundred pages . . . divided into titled chapters and sections."[4]

Moore attended all but one term of the 1930-1933 lectures, and remarks: "I took what I think were very full notes, scribbled in notebooks of which I have nearly six volumes full."[5] Unfortunately, these notes have not been published; the only public information about them is a series of two articles that Moore published in Mind, giving summaries and occasional quotations of highlights.

For Wittgenstein's lectures in 1933-1934 and 1934-1935, we have his own lecture notes, dictated (in English) respectively to his class and to two of his pupils, and known respectively as the "Blue Book" and the "Brown Book." Wittgenstein never intended the "Blue Book" for publication;[6] "the 'Brown Book' was rather different; and for a time he thought of it as a draft of something he might publish"[7] and attempted to revise a German text of it toward that end. But in 1936 he abandoned his attempt and began work on Philosophical Investigations.

Philosophical Investigations, published posthumously, is the only manuscript from his later period that Wittgenstein intended for publication. The choice of title is his. He was clearly dissatisfied with the work as an expression of

his thought, but not so dissatisfied that he sought to suppress its publication. In 1945, when he stopped working on what is published as Part I of Philosophical Investigations, he wrote, in a preface: "Ich hatte gern ein gutes Buch hervorgebracht. Es ist nicht so ausgefallen; aber die Zeit ist vorbei, in dem es von mir verbessert werden könnte." (I should truly have liked to have brought forth a solid piece of work. Things have not fallen out that way; but the time has passed in which I could be the one to improve it [translation mine]).[8] And in a letter to Malcolm, he remarked of Part I, ". . . it's pretty lousy (not that I could improve on it essentially if I tried for another 100 years)."[9] At the time, his health was failing, and he feared his mind was no longer up to doing philosophy. A year later, he began working on what is published as Part II of the Investigations, working on it "between 1947 and 1949."[10] After that, his health declining, he found himself unable to work. During the last two months of his life, his mind cleared, and he wrote material that Von Wright regards as equal to the best he produced; this material has not been published.

Between 1937 and 1949 he wrote a large number of notes on topics in mathematics. The editors note[11] that "it

appears to have been Wittgenstein's original intention to incorporate his ideas on logic and mathematics in Philosophical Investigations." This incorporation he had apparently abandoned by 1943 when he ceased working on these notes; it is a selection from these notes that is published under the title (selected by the editors) of Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics. I should regard this work less as a full-fledged investigation into topics in philosophy of mathematics than as an application to philosophy of mathematics of certain ideas developed in PI. And I should not regard it as nearly as finished a piece of thought as PI. Due to limitations of time, I have dealt with RFM only insofar as it casts light on topics developed in PI.

Finally, Zettel[12] is a collection of remarks, apparently carefully worked over, that Wittgenstein apparently intended to interpolate into PI. The remarks that comprise Zettel were literally snipped out of other typescripts of Wittgenstein's, most of which are still extant, and only one of which (Philisophische Bemerkungen) has been published.

All of which points out the major difficulty in discussing the later philosophy of Wittgenstein, namely, that its author was never able to present it in a manner with which he was satisfied. One should neither dismiss his remarks on this point as false modesty nor forget that his standards were exceptionally high--nor suppose that

'exceptionally high' means 'unnecessarily high.'

Development of Wittgenstein's Later Thought, 1930-1949

It is surprising how many of the ideas expressed in PI may be found in the 1930-1933 lectures; and (particularly after the first year) how few of the ideas in those lectures contradict ideas in the later work. I should say that, in general, what one sees between 1931 and 1949 is a deepening, broadening, mellowing, and sophistication of Wittgenstein's thought, but, in general, no changes as radical as that which occurs between the earlier and later work. Warnock notes of the Blue and Brown Books that "in subject matter, as also in style, they foreshadow in a general way the Investigations, but not so exactly that one who has read the latter book can safely pass over these preliminary studies as superseded."[13] Rhees notes that

> In the Brown Book . . . he passes from examples of different sorts of naming to a discussion of various ways of "comparing with reality."
>
> . . . the big difference between the Brown Book and the Investigations [is that] in the Brown Book the account of the different language-games is not directly a discussion of particular philosophical problems. . . . It throws light on various aspects of language . . . and in this way does suggest where it is that the difficulties arise which give birth to these problems.[14]

Turning next to the distinction between Part I and Part II of PI, the editors of PI note, without elaboration, that "if Wittgenstein had published his work himself, he would have suppressed a good deal of what is in the last thirty pages or so of Part I and worked what is in Part II, without further material, into its place." It is not clear how much of the 170 articles in the last thirty pages the editors suppose Wittgenstein would have suppressed and supplanted. My impression is that there is no radical break between sections I and II. There is a duplication; certain themes in the last thirty pages of I are taken up again, more polished, in II. For example, the problem of "special atmosphere," considered in #600-610[15] is taken up in considerably greater detail in II:xi. On the other hand, the discussion of free-will and intention in #611-639, though sketchy, is more complete than the parallel discussion in II:viii; and the discussion of various 'inner' states, #572-595, though parallel to certain remarks in II:i,v,ix, neither contradicts nor, in general, duplicates the latter discussion. Findlay[16] characterizes Part II as "material not yet sufficiently worked up to be incorporated in the book" and adds "some of the sections show the beginnings of entirely new approaches to problems raised in the earlier

parts of the work." I am not sure which sections and problems Findlay is referring to; my own impression is that Part II is no radical break from I, but rather a clarification. In II, Wittgenstein is concerned to give feelings their due, but this is more in the spirit of a defense against his being misunderstood as a behaviorist; nothing he says in II weakens the positions he develops in I--it simply makes them less liable to misrepresentation.

The remarks in Zettel, I should say, come closest in tone to those of PI Part I; there is some mere duplication of thought, e.g., the discussion of mental states Z53-96 duplicates that in PI #572-592, but not so much that anyone seriously interested in Wittgenstein's later thought will want to pass this book by. For the most part, the remarks in Zettel cast further light on the topics developed in PI, e.g., the discussion of 'thought' Z97-123 supplements the discussion in PI #316-394. In a few cases, the discussion in Zettel is more extensive than the discussion in PI, e.g., the discussion of meaning in music, Z155-177.

A major difficulty in understanding and a hazard to presenting Wittgenstein's later thought is that, in as sharp a contrast to Tractatus[17] as could be imagined, there is no explicit organization to it. There are no topic-headings,

no explicit indications of where one theme stops and another begins, and very few remarks that provide introduction or orientation to what Wittgenstein is doing. In his Preface (1945) to PI Wittgenstein offers this explanation for the lack of obvious order:

> I have written down all these thoughts as remarks, short paragraphs, of which there is sometimes a fairly long chain about the same subject, while I sometimes make a sudden change, jumping from one topic to another. It was my intention at first to bring all this together in a book . . . [wherein] the thoughts should proceed from subject to subject in a natural order and without breaks.
>
> After several unsuccessful attempts to weld my results together into such a whole, I realized that I should never succeed. The best that I could write would never be more than philosophical remarks; my thoughts were crippled if I tried to force them on in any single direction against their natural inclination. --And this was, of course, connected with the nature of the investigation. For this compels us to travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction. . . .

A correlative difficulty is that it is generally hard to see the point of much of what he is saying. That is, the difficulty is not understanding what he is saying but in understanding why he is saying it. It is clear that Wittgenstein is concerned with problems that have traditionally worried academic philosophers; it is less clear which problems, much less which formulations of these problems. The difficulty

is not lessened by Wittgenstein's tendency to follow his own train of thought on these problems into sub-problems and sub-sub-problems, and to begin his discussion at one of these derivative problems, without tracing it back to the familiar academic problem to which it is relevant. Thus, there is no difficulty in understanding why Wittgenstein is concerned with how we know that someone is in pain; that is a paradigmatic expression of the problem of other minds, but it is considerably less obvious why he is concerned with the possibility-impossibility of a "necessarily private language." Malcolm puts eloquently this difficulty in understanding Wittgenstein:

> In order to appreciate the depth and power of Wittgenstein's assault upon this idea [of private language] you must partly be its captive. . . . The passionate intensity of Wittgenstein's treatment of it is due to the fact that he lets this idea take possession of him, drawing out of himself the thoughts and imagery by which it is to be expressed and defended--and then subjecting those thoughts and pictures to fiercest scrutiny.[18]

It is, of course, possible that he was interested in these minutiae for their own sake, as Austin sometimes was, but this would be counter, not merely to certain remarks in PI (#127, #133) but to the whole pattern of Wittgenstein's life; he was never a man to spend time on philosophy unless he

thought there was some crucial problem to be solved.

In this paper, then, I have imposed upon Wittgenstein's later thought the formal order that he rejected as crippling. I have divided his thought up into topics, arranged these topics into what looks like a logical order, and at all points have attempted to show the relevance of each topic to a familiar problem or problems in academic philosophy. The danger of any such project, of course, is that the clarity one thereby brings to the thinker is specious, and rests on over-simplification. To impose such a project on Wittgenstein imposes one additional drawback to be acknowledged and one additional challenge to be met.

The drawback is that Wittgenstein's thought is, in Whitehead's sense of the term,[19] "coherent"--that is, each of the major concepts that I have imposed upon his work presupposes each of the other concepts for its full development. That entails, not merely that one will be unable to understand any of Wittgenstein until one has begun to understand all of him, but that any ordering of (what I take to be) his key concepts will be no more justified than a number of other orderings. The ordering I have chosen brings out what I think are certain important relations among the topics in his thought, but by its very form suppresses other equally

important relations. For example, Wittgenstein's concept of "meaning as use," whose relation to his doctrine of "language-games" I have stressed, forms the basis for his view of "criteria." His view of criteria might be considered to form the basis for his attack on the "necessarily private language," which attack leads directly into his position on "'inner' processes."

For another example, his doctrine of "family resemblance" is reflected both in his view of "criteria" and his view of "language-games," though I have chosen to stress its reflection in his doctrine of "meaning as use." One might, with equal justification, have started with the doctrine of "criteria" and shown how the other concepts could be considered to develop from it.

The significance of these various interrelations will come clearer in the course of this paper; here I wish only to make clear that in attempting, as I have done, to clarify Wittgenstein's thought by imposing <u>an</u> order on it, one encounters the drawback of suppressing other equally justified orders.

In this paper I have chosen to speak of a "traditional" "theory of meaning" which I suggest generated the familiar problems of academic philosophy. I suggest that the heart

of Wittgenstein's philosophy forms a counterposed "theory of meaning" (which I have chosen to analyze into the five concepts: "meaning-use"; "family-resemblance"; "language-games"; "criteria"; and "forms of life"), and that by application of this theory, solutions are offered to those familiar problems of "traditional" academic philosophy. This sort of arrangement of the material makes Wittgenstein's philosophy look like a paradigm of the hypothesis-deduction "method"; and, of course, it is illuminating to look at his work in this way. But one could, with equal justification, take his "theory" to be something that did not generate but was generated by his solutions of the traditional problems.

This brings me to the challenge I mentioned above: my approach rests on supposing it legitimate to attribute to Wittgenstein a "theory of meaning"; I have indicated that such a theory is not explicit in his work, and implied that it is implicit, but is it legitimate to attribute to Wittgenstein any theories at all? Siegler argues that it is not:

> Has Wittgenstein a logical theory? He disavows having any sort of theory at all. . . . The fact that Wittgenstein disavows any logical theory should lead one carefully to question assertions that he does have one.[20]

And Judith Jarvis Thompson maintains that

> . . . it is astonishing that a man who repeatedly insisted that he put forward

> no theses in philosophy should constantly be credited with having proved this or that thesis, from the private-language thesis to the dreary sorts of things that get called "Wittgenstein's theory of meaning" or "Wittgenstein's theory of meaning as use."[21]

But I have not found in Wittgenstein's published writings the disavowals and repeated instances of which Siegler and Jarvis speak. All I find on this point are two considerably less explicit statements: "we must do away with all explanation, and description take its place (#109)," and "if one tried to advance theses in philosophy. . . ." (#128). Ammerman[22] claims, more cautiously, that in PI Wittgenstein is not "proposing and defending philosophical theses." On the other side of this fence, Quinton[23] argues:

> The Investigations is mercifully a great deal more than the tissue of detailed reminders about the actual use of words which the author believed that it ought to have been. It is full of large, original, and highly discussable philosophical theories and arguments in support of them.

And Feyerabend takes the position that Wittgenstein's position may be formulated as a theory "without implying that Wittgenstein intended to develop a philosophical theory (he did not)."[24]

My own position in this dispute is essentially the same as Feyerabend's, namely, that Wittgenstein does not

explicitly develop a theory, that it was, indeed, as Siegler, Jarvis, and Ammerman suggest, his position that all theories are ipso facto bad philosophy, but that, as Quinton suggests, a large number of the remarks in his writings, in PI in particular, are theoretical as opposed to descriptive. From these sketchy theoretical remarks one can--most tentatively, of course--venture to reconstruct something that might with some accuracy be considered "Wittgenstein's theory." Indeed, I think that unless one engages in this project of reconstruction, one will miss a great deal of what Wittgenstein had in mind, though unless one finally passes beyond holding Wittgenstein's theory to the point of merely exemplifying it in one's thinking, one misses even more of what Wittgenstein had in mind.

Finally, let me offer a suggestion about why Wittgenstein, with all his anti-theoretical orientation (indeed, one could say that the repudiation of theory for practice is the whole message of PI) wound up making so many remarks that are theoretical in the sense that they are not parts of a "grammatical investigation."

PI attempts, one might say, to be precisely what its title implies--a series of investigations, bare of any philosophical hypotheses, or certain philosophical problems.

The difficulty with this project, as noted above, is that it does not carry its relevance to those problems on its face. Now before the pupil can continue such investigations, he must at least sense what is relevant and what is not. In this predicament, Wittgenstein's "theoretical" remarks become useful. The predicament is aggravated in PI by the fact that what we have there are not completed philosophical investigations, but simply sketches, hints at the directions such investigations would take. Wittgenstein's years at Cambridge show how concerned he was that others learn to apply his methods; in such a situation, it is not surprising that he violated his own maxim in #109 and made a number of "explanatory" ("theoretical") remarks. Their function, I think, is to give others guidelines for continuing such an investigation without straying off the path.

Footnotes - Introduction

1. S. Cavell, "The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy," PR, LXXI (1962), 67-93, reprinted in George Pitcher (ed.), Wittgenstein: The Philosophical Investigations (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1966), p. 151.

2. G. von Wright, "Ludwig Wittgenstein, A Biographical Sketch," PR, LXIV (1955), 527-545, reprinted in N. Malcolm, Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir (Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 14.

3. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophische Bemerkungen, R. Rhees (ed.) (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964).

4. Von Wright, loc. cit., p. 13.

5. G. E. Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930-1933," in G. E. Moore, Philosophical Papers (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1959), p. 255.

6. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Preliminary Studies for the "Philosophical Investigations," Generally Known as the Blue and Brown Books, preface by R. Rhees corr. reprint Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1960. Hereafter cited as BB.

7. Ibid.

8. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophische Untersuchungen (Philosophical Investigations), trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe, second edition (rev.) (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958). Hereafter cited as PI.

9. N. Malcolm, Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir (London: Oxford University Press, 1958).

10. PI, Editor's Preface.

11. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Bemerkungen über die Grundlagen der Mathematik (Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics), G. H. von Wright, R. Rhees, and G. E. Anscombe (eds.) (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956). Hereafter cited as RFM and references given to section and paragraph number.

12. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Zettel, G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright (eds. and trans.)(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967). Hereafter cited as Z.

13. G. J. Warnock, "Wittgenstein's Blue and Brown Books," M, LXIX (1960), pp. 283-284.

14. BB, page x.

15. I have followed the conventional procedure in referring to Wittgenstein's work: passages in PI part I are referred to by paragraph number and are preceded by "#"; passages in PI part II are referred to by section number, or, in the case of long sections, by page number and paragraph, counting the first paragraph on the page as 'A'. I have extended this convention to apply to Zettel; passages in Zettel are referred to by paragraph number and preceded by 'Z'.

16. J. N. Findlay, "Wittgenstein's 'Philosophical Investigations'" P, XXX (1955), 173-179.

17. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, German-English, D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuiness (trans.) (New York: Humanities Press, 1961).

18. N. Malcolm, "Wittgenstein's 'Philosophical Investigations,'" PR, LXIII (1954), 530-539, reprinted in Pitcher, loc. cit.

19. Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: Macmillan, 1929), p. 5.

20. F. A. Siegler, "Comments," in C. D. Rollins (ed.) Knowledge and Experience (University of Pittsburgh Press, n. d.), p. 77.

21. Judith Jarvis Thompson, "Private Languages," APQ, I (1964), 20-31, reprinted in S. Hampshire (ed.), Philosophy of Mind (New York: Harper & Row), p. 149.

22. R. R. Ammerman, "Wittgenstein's Later Methods" (abs.), JP, LVIII (1961), 707-708.

23. A. M. Quinton, "Contemporary British Philosophy," in D. J. O'Connor (ed.), A Critical History of Western Philosophy (London: Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1964), reprinted in Pitcher, op. cit., p. 10.

24. P. Feyerabend, "Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations," PR, LXIV (1955), 449-483, reprinted in Pitcher, op. cit., p. 104.

CHAPTER II

THE "TRADITIONAL" POSITION

It is clear throughout Wittgenstein's later philosophy that he is not merely presenting his own position--he is attacking an opposed position. It is less clear what that opposed position is, and considerably less clear whose position it is. Only in a few places in PI does Wittgenstein mention other philosophers by name, and then frequently in such context that one does not feel confident that they are his main target. For instance:

> He told me he decided to begin his Investigations with a quotation from Augustine's Confessions, not because he could not find the conception expressed in that quotation stated as well by other philosophers, but because the conception must be important if so great a mind held it.[1]

And the problem of characterizing whose positions he is attacking is not eased by the fact that

> Wittgenstein was not, strictly speaking, a learned man . . . he had done no systematic reading in the classics of philosophy. He could read only what he could wholeheartedly assimilate. . . . As a young man he read Schopenhauer. From Spinoza, Hume, and Kant he said that he could get only occasional glimpses of understanding. I do not think that he could have enjoyed Aristotle or Leibnitz . . . but . . . he did read and enjoy Plato . . . [and] received deep . . . impressions from St. Augustine, Kierkegaard, Dostoievski, and Tolstoy.[2]

To this inventory one would, of course, add Frege and Russell.

Of course, the first and most accurate thing to say about the position Wittgenstein is attacking is that it is the position that he held in his earlier philosophy. But this point requires a great deal of qualification and specification, which I hope to offer at a later date. Here I can note only that to suppose that the position Wittgenstein is attacking was held only by himself in his earlier period would not explain why his work has been considered such a challenge to and by other academic philosophers.

One is inclined to characterize the "traditional position" that Wittgenstein attacks as "British empiricism"; but the quotations in PI from Augustine and James suggest the limits of that characterization Thomas McElvain, in a conversation, has suggested to me that the "tradition" Wittgenstein attacks in neo-Platonic, and that the position of dualism that Wittgenstein attacks was characteristic of the continental rationalists. In this spirit, Ryle, in Concept of Mind,[3] makes Descartes the villain. I should suggest that many features of the position Wittgenstein attacks may be found in C. I. Lewis' Analysis of Knowledge

and Valuation.[4] Morton White suggests that Wittgenstein tried to show how

> we can disengage ourselves from the traps of traditional philosophies like platonism and cartesianism. . . . By platonism I mean the view that there are abstract entities called meanings which exist above and over the words which express them and the people who utter them; by cartesianism I mean why Gilbert Ryle has called the doctrine of the ghost in the machine, a purely spiritual soul joined mysteriously with a purely material body.[5]

I believe such labels as "traditional epistemology" and "empiricist epistemology" fit no worse than the others we have considered, and will use them in my characterization of the position Wittgenstein is attacking.

The traditional theory of knowledge with which we are concerned starts, I should say, with the position that knowledge consists in the mirroring of reality by the mind.

Note that this seemingly truistic position presupposes a perceiver-perceived dualism. That presupposition might seem innocuous to anyone but a dogmatic mystic, but note how easily the perceiver-perceived dualism slides into the mind-body dualism, which will seem innocuous only to a dogmatic dualist.

The essential premise, then, of the position Wittgenstein opposes is that knowledge consists in the mirroring of

reality by the mind. One might trace this premise through Platonic and Thomistic thought; it emerges clearly in Descartes' doctrine of innate ideas, where its neo-Platonic coloration appears in Descartes view that the origin of these innate ideas is in Heaven, and their transmission by the light of reason.

As I have sketched it, the traditional position that Wittgenstein is attacking is, even in its earliest manifestations an epistemology. It becomes an empiricist epistemology in Reformation England. Locke, writing in the emergence of science and Protestantism over theology and Catholicism, keeps the basic premise that knowledge consists in the mirroring of reality by the mind, but (loosely speaking) shifts the locus of reality from heaven to earth, and shifts the means of transmission by Divine Light picked up by the Faculty of Reason, to sunlight picked up by the sensory apparatus. Locke's first steps are:

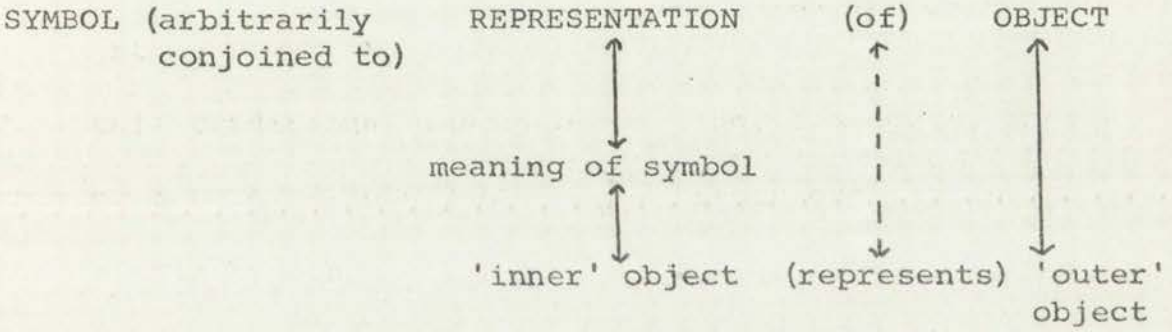
> Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas; how comes it to be furnished . . . to this I answer in one word, from experience . . . our observation employed either about external sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our mind, perceived and reflected on by ourselves is that which supplies our understandings with all the materials of thinking.[6]

Note carefully that Locke has restricted the possible objects of knowledge to "either . . . external sensible objects or . . . the internal operations of our mind." The purpose of this move is to rule out knowledge of theological matters as legitimate knowledge, but its effect is to rule out a great many other types of knowledge as well. One set of consequences, which Hume drew out of Locke's epistemology and Kant moved to counteract at the source, is that epistemological legitimacy is withdrawn from such "categories" of human thought as causality, induction, and, a bit less obviously, certainty. These problems will be discussed below.

The Traditional Theory of Meaning

From the traditional starting-point that knowledge consists in the mirroring of reality by the mind, via its empiricist transmutation, the traditional theory of meaning emerges: the cat on the mat is perceived through the sensory apparatus, and we acquire in the brain some sort of representation of the cat on the mat. One is tempted to think of this representation as a sort of image, in the sense that the pinhole camera, whose lens is often compared to the eye, forms a "real image" of its object. Thus Hume says[7] "all our simple ideas in their first appearances are derived from simple impressions which are correspondent to them and which they exactly represent." But since images are a bulky thing

to keep in mind and communicate, the perceiver, if he is a language-user, conjoins it with a symbol. In language-use, the symbol, then, by a sort of stimulus-response, evokes the mind's representation of the object. This representation is considered the "meaning" of the symbol; it is also a mirror image of its (outer) object: thus we are led to think of meanings as "'inner' objects." To summarize, traditional epistemology leads to a triadic theory of meaning:



To summarize this theory of meaning: words have meanings, and are the units of meaning. The meanings of sentences are built up from the meanings of the words that comprise them. Words, and hence in a derivative sense meanings, have both denotation (the entity designated) and connotation (the "particular atmosphere" associated with the word and the attributes designated). To teach a child how to use a word, one teaches him what its meaning is. If the child is taught only the denotation, we say he is given an ostensive

definition. If the child, or adult, is familiar only with the connotation we say (the terms are Russell's) he has knowledge by description only, and not knowledge by acquaintance. It is implicit, if not explicit, in this position that meanings are in some sense something "inner."

In the first section of PI, Wittgenstein offers the following characterization of the position he is attacking:

> . . . the individual words in language name objects--sentences are combinations of such names. -- In this picture of language we find the roots of the following idea: every word has a meaning. The meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands.

From this traditional theory of meaning, I suggest, emerge many of the best-known problems of traditional epistemology. And on this hypothesis I rest the arrangement of the topics in this paper. I turn now to those problems of traditional epistemology, after which I will present certain theoretical aspects of Wittgenstein's later philosophy structured as "Wittgenstein's theory of meaning."

Universals

From the position of the traditional empiricist theory of meaning, the continuation of the doctrine of universals into empiricist epistemology, while not mandated, is hard to avoid. If meanings represent reality, and are things

one carries about in the mind, surely one does not have a separate meaning for each separate object in the world. One does not have a separate meaning associated with Prancer, Dancer, and Blitzen, much less with Prancer when he is running, Prancer when he is flying, and Prancer when he is eating the candy-canes. It is thus reasonable (though not essential) to suppose that meanings are general things, not specific; "universal" as opposed to particular. This view is strengthened by the fact that we do not have a different symbol for each different object; that would be to live in a world of only proper nouns. Of course, it is possible that symbols be general and meanings specific, but then would not every word be ambiguous?

It is from considerations like these, I think, that the doctrine of universals survives in empiricist epistemology. Wienpahl offers a parallel account of how the empiricist theory of meaning drags in the problem of universals (as well as the problem of mind-body interaction):

> If language be taken to be made up of words and if words are taken to be names, then mind and body must be distinguished. Furthermore, mind must be "something" very odd, for words name general "things" as well as particular. On the other hand, we perceive only particular things. Therefore, the awareness of the general "things" or universals must be the work of some other agency than perception. This agency is the mind. The

> senses perceive the particular, the mind "perceives" the universal. Since the particular and the universal are radically different, the mind and body must be radically different. On the other hand, they evidently interact. How can this be?[8]

For examples of the view of universals in empiricist epistemology, consider Locke:

> All things that exist being particulars . . . it is impossible that every particular thing have a distinct particular name . . . it is plain . . . that general and universal belong not to the real existence of things; but are the inventions and creatures of the understanding, made by it for its own use and concern only signs, whether words or ideas.[9]

Simples

> . . . when we analyze our thoughts or ideas, however compounded or sublime, we always find that they resolve themselves into such simple ideas as were copied from a precedent feeling or sentiment.[10]

Like universals, simples are not mandated by empiricist epistemology, but it is not easy to see how they could have been avoided. That is, one may accept this epistemology and suppose that, in James' phrase, reality enters the brain in a "booming buzzing confusion," but one is perhaps more inclined to join Locke[11] and Hume in building up an orderly theory of knowledge by supposing that reality enters the brain in simple ideas, and that knowledge is built up by forming complex ideas from simples. Wittgenstein

considered that "Both Russell's 'individuals' and my 'objects' (Tractatus) were such primary elements."[12]

Levi remarks that

> The perplexities of philosophy arise . . . when the philosopher treats names as simples, when like Russell he searches for the unanalyzable elements of language . . . hoping eventually to reach elements like 'this' and 'here' beyond which one cannot go.[13]

Sense-data

Sense-data are, I think, mandated by empirical epistemology (though not, of course, by Cartesian epistemology). However, the sense-data position does not emerge from British empiricism until the twentieth century. "Sense-data" are simply the new name for what we have hitherto referred to as the "representations" of the external object that are (by the empirical theory of knowledge) formed by the mind from the neural impulses it receives when it perceives the object. The innovation in the traditional theory that brings in sense-data is simply the making-explicit of the implication that not merely is the "external" object perceived by the eye, but also the "inner object," or "sense-datum" that mirrors it is perceived by the "mind's eye," or, less archaically, by introspection. This view

raises the intriguing possibility that, to use Moore's example, though I think I am seeing the cook's hand, what I am really seeing is simply my sense-datum of the cook's hand. As Quine presents this view,

> Physical objects generally, however remote, become known to us only through the effects which they help to induce at our sensory surfaces . . . impressed with the fact that we know external things only mediately through our senses, philosophers from Berkeley onward have undertaken to strip away the physicalist conjectures and bare the sense-data.[14]

One also finds the sense-data problem in Russell,[15] in Moore,[16] and in Ayer.[17] If one goes only a bit further, and says that what one perceives are only sense-data, i.e., that the external world reaches the mind only by being translated into the "internal world" of sense-data, from which the mind must hypothesize the existence of the external world, then one has taken the position of skeptical solipsism.

Skeptical Solipsism

By this position, I do not mean the position of "dogmatic solipsism" which holds that the "external" world does not exist, but rather the position that we--or rather, I--can never have any information as to whether the

"external" world exists. Ayer dramatically characterizes this position by comparing the perceiver to a (Kafkaesque) man who spends his life in a telegraph office receiving and sending messages; he can never know for sure that there is anybody at the other end sending and receiving his messages; for all he knows, he might be all alone with a spastic telegraph key. Illustrating this position, Hume notes that

> . . . the skeptic . . . must [to avoid seeming insane] assent to the principles concerning the existence of body, though he cannot pretend by any arguments of philosophy to maintain its veracity.[18]

Unless one holds that one perceives <u>only</u> sense-data, the position of skeptical solipsism does not follow from empirical epistemology. However, to avoid it, one must become tangled in the sticky problems of how one can see <u>both</u> the cook's hand and one's sense-datum of the cook's hand, and how one can know which is which.

<u>Dogmatic Solipsism</u>

Curiously, in his earlier work, it was not skeptical solipsism but rather dogmatic solipsism that Wittgenstein seriously considered. His position is suggested in a tantalizing series of aphorisms of which "what the solipsist <u>means</u>, is quite correct, only it cannot be <u>said</u>, but makes

itself manifest"[19] is typical. This suggests that it may be quite inaccurate to consider dogmatic solipsism as the "limiting case" of skeptical solipsism. One is reminded, too, that under the banner of esse est percepi Berkeley, too, juggles dogmatic solipsism, until he dumps it in the lap of God.

I have noted that empirical epistemology is not constrained to adopt a solipsistic position. However, even if it goes the non-solipsistic route, it encounters the problem of fallibilism.

Fallibilism

Skeptical solipsism might be considered a form of fallibilism, but I am concerned here with a different form, a form that presupposes the existence of the "external" world, not the dubitability of its existence.

Fallibilism is, I believe, constrained by the empiricist theory of meaning, though Locke[20] certainly did not hold it. It perhaps reaches its most vivid expression in Hume, as the following passage suggests:

> In vain do you pretend to have learned the nature of bodies from your past experience. Their secret nature, and consequently all their effects and influence, may change without any change in their sensible qualities. This happens sometimes, and with regard to some objects. Why may it not

> happen always, and with regard to all objects?[21]

Its perhaps most precise exposition is in C. I. Lewis's Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation,[22] in which Lewis distinguishes "theoretical certainty," which he considers necessarily unachievable, from "practical certainty,"-- and perhaps its most popular exposition is with Russell:

> Let us first take the belief in common objects, such as tables and chairs and trees. We all feel quite sure about these in ordinary life, and yet our reasons for confidence are really quite inadequate.[23]

Fallibilism can only be negated, I believe, by giving certain relations between terms (e.g., causality, or the reflexive relation 'substance') as much legitimacy as their terms have; it is because empiricist epistemology will not do this that it entails fallibilism. In empiricist epistemology, the only way a statement can be certain is for the entire conjunction of states-of-affairs that count as evidence for it to be confirmative. But this may intuitively be seen to be an unsatisfiable condition; the conjunction is infinite; however strong the evidence for a given statement, certainty is unjustified since the next bit of evidence might be evidence that all previous evidence was unreliable.

The same arguments that establish fallibilism as a consequence of empiricist epistemology establish the

impossibility of inductive certainty.

Impossibility of Inductive Certainty

This problem is expressed by the concern, to use Hume's example, that no matter how many times I have seen the sun rise, I can never justifiably infer that it will rise tomorrow, because all I have are a series of events, sun-risings, and I can no more be certain that this series of events will continue indefinitely than I can be that a run of red at the roulette wheel will continue indefinitely. And this is because the idea of 'cause,' which is what we are inclined to say makes the difference between the solar system and a roulette wheel, is not an idea that can be justified by the empiricist theory of meaning.[24]

"Inner" States

Note that in traditional epistemology everything is either inner or outer. Nothing (with the possible exception of the neural process itself) is both. The one may refer to the other; thus, meanings refer to their objects (and in his discussion of "rules" and "characteristic expressions," Wittgenstein deals with this gambit). May the outer refer to the inner? Yes, when the outer is the outer behavior of a person. We then say (in traditional epistemology)

that his outer behavior manifests, expresses, or is a sign of his inner state. But note (a) that there is a "logical gap" between behavior and "'inner' state," in the sense that we consider them two disjoint, if parallel phenomena, and (b) that we are inclined to regard the inner, not the outer, as the essence of the matter.

Thus it is not merely meanings that become something inner (as noted above), but all mental phenomena are regarded as "inner processes": imagining, being in pain, understanding, being depressed, expecting, having an opinion, hoping, thinking, intending (all of which Wittgenstein individually discusses in PI), as well as being joyous, indignant, awed, enraptured, pious (which last might be called aesthetic, ethical, and religious emotions; their significance will emerge below).

Now, of course, it is better to regard these--"mental states," to take as neutral a term as I can--as inner rather than taking the only other alternative open on the traditional view, namely, that of regarding them as syndromes of outer behavior (so-called Watsonian behaviorism). However, regarding them as "inner states" opens up another problem, namely the problem of "other minds."

Other Minds

The problem of "other minds" is this: if the essence of all mental states is the "inner state," which is merely manifested by the outer behavior, and given that I cannot perceive anybody else's inner state (an assumption expressed in the necessarily private language position, to which we next turn), but must infer its existence from his outer behavior, how can I ever know that behind the outer behavior there is an inner state? To restate the problem intuitively: Couldn't an ingeniously-designed robot manifest all the behavior we regard as human? Couldn't such robots already have been invented? Couldn't my friends, teachers, and the neighborhood supermarket cashiers be such robots? To take an example that often functions as a paradigm for this problem, since I can perceive only his pain-behavior, not his pain (or, to put it in other paradigmatic words, since I can never feel his pain, or "only I can feel my pain"), I can never know for sure that he really is in pain, nor he I. For all either of us can tell, the other might be feigning.

The usual response to this position is to grant that I can only perceive his "outer behavior," not his "inner state," but to argue that I can perceive both my own outer behavior and my own inner state. Therefore, the argument

continues, when I perceive him producing the same sort of outer behavior that I have perceived myself to produce, I infer, or argue from analogy, that there exists in him the same sort of inner state that I have perceived, or observed, in myself whenever I have that sort of behavior. This is essentially the response Ayer takes,[25] though not without qualifications that space forces me to neglect.

Necessarily Private Language

The solution to the other minds problem we have just considered (the "argument from analogy") supposes (1) that I have observed for myself that my behavior-pattern A is correlated with my inner state E, and (2) that having observed behavior-pattern A in another, I infer (argue from analogy) that inner state E exists in him. Step (2) will be critically considered when we discuss Wittgenstein's solution to the other-minds problem. Here I will only note that step (1) poses a problem which is described as the "necessarily private language" problem.

Step (1) implies that I can observe both my behavior-pattern A and my inner state E. Now observing my own behavior seems like a rather odd, narcissistic thing to do, but poses no obvious philosophical problems. But observing my own inner state E, though at first blush it seems like a

perfectly intelligible, if peculiar thing to do, is shown by Wittgenstein to involve such logical problems that one becomes inclined to say that "observing one's own inner state" is meaningless. This point will be taken up in the later section; here, let us only note what observing one's own inner state, if it is possible, would appear to consist in: one simply "peers inside oneself," observes the inner state, represents it by some convenient symbol such as 'E,' and perhaps records that 'E' occurred at the same time as 'outer' behavior A. Thus 'E,' as well as 'A' becomes a term in a "language" about mental states. However, the difference between 'E' and 'A' is that while 'A' refers to something that anybody can perceive, 'E' refers to something that only one person can perceive--something that is 'necessarily private' to that one person. Thus, we are inclined to describe 'E' as a term in a "necessarily private language," and perhaps say that the meaning of 'E' is given by the "inner state" it refers to.

Having characterized the "necessarily private language" position, let us note its importance for two more familiar problems, or positions of traditional epistemology, considered above: first, if "observing my own inner state" is not possible, then the argument from analogy is not workable,

and if the argument from analogy is not workable, there is no apparent way out of the other minds problem. In sum, if the "necessarily private language" position is not tenable, then there is no way out of the other minds problem.

Similarly, if the concept of a "necessarily private language" is not intelligible, the "inner states" position would not seem to be intelligible. For if I have an inner state, it must be possible for me to give it a name--say 'E.' That is, it must be possible for me to have a "language" about my inner state. And since these inner states are such that I am the only one who has them and the only one who can perceive them, they are "necessarily private" inner states. Thus the intelligibility of speaking of "inner states," in the sense indicated in that section, would seem to be hostage to the intelligibility of the concept of a necessarily private language.

To the best of my knowledge, the "necessarily private language" had not been maintained by any empirical epistemologists until Malcolm, in his review of PI[26] presented and supported Wittgenstein's attack on it.

Mind-body Dualism

Many of the problems we have so far shown to be entailed or induced by empirical epistemology--the traditional theory of meaning and from it the distinction between universals and particulars, sense-data, skeptical solipsism, other minds, inner states, necessarily private language--seem to presuppose for their intelligibility a mind-body dualism. That is not to say that empirical epistemology maintained the view of mental substance on the one hand, and physical substance on the other--it took pains to deny the intelligibility of the concept of 'substance.' But it still seems to think in those terms; to distinguish between "inner" and "outer" is to think of the "inner" as mind and the "outer" as body; to suppose that "inner" and "outer" are disjoint is to reaffirm mind-body dualism. Not that this is an unreasonable view; surely one does not wish to say that mind is body, or body mind. But the position of mind-body dualism poses certain problems, one of which is interactionism.

Interactionism

If mind and body are separate things, how can mind control body? For example, if I intend, or will (mental)

to raise my arm (physical), how does the intention or willing make the arm go up? A more complicated but more familiar manifestation of this problem occurs in

Free-will-determinism

i.e., if I can mentally will to do anything, but if physically every act has a cause, how can one and the same act be both willed and caused? Morgenbesser and Walsh have a selected bibliography of ninety entries, the bulk of them post-Cartesian, on this topic in their anthology Free Will.[27]

The above positions in traditional philosophy all more or less clearly constitute philosophical problems. The three positions that I will next consider, while they similarly flow from the empiricist theory of meaning, will be felt by many to constitute not problems but intelligible positions; I shall suggest in a later section the sense in which they may be regarded as problems susceptible to Wittgensteinian solution.

Aesthetic Non-cognitivism

This position is induced, though not mandated by the empirical theory of meaning. However, it is difficult to see how any other position on aesthetics would be compatible with empirical epistemology. Loosely, aesthetic non-cognitivism

is the view that aesthetic statements are not cognitive, but merely "value-judgments," or statements of personal opinion, preference, or taste. One may find this position in the work of I. A. Richards,[28] Rudolph Carnap,[29] and C. J. Ducasse:

> Art is essentially a form of language--namely the language of feeling, mood, sentiment, and emotional attitude. It is thus to be distinguished from the language of assertion.[30]

Ethical Non-cognitivism

This position is induced, though perhaps not mandated by the empirical theory of meaning. There are a number of positions under this heading: the sophists' position, for example, is not rooted in empirical epistemology. One variety of ethical non-cognitivism is ethical relativism, another is emotivism, which holds that ethical statements are simply descriptions or expressions of one's emotional state. One may find the latter position in Nowell-Smith's Ethics[31] and A. J. Ayer's Language, Truth, and Logic,[32] the former position in Edward Westermark's Ethical Relativity.[33] Other varieties of ethical non-cognitivism include Russell's ethical skepticism in Religion and Science,[34] and C. L. Stevenson's non-cognitive theory in Ethics and Language.[35] Hume saw that empirical epistemology left ethics non-objective, but met the problem of relativism by supposing

ethical sentiments "common to all mankind."[36]

Religious Non-cognitivism

More familiarly, though less accurately, known as religious skepticism, or agnosticism. If religious non-cognitivism is not entailed by the empiricist theory of meaning, then Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding failed of its purpose.[37] Locke meant only to save religion from the dogma of Catholicism on the one hand and what we would call "fundamentalists" on the other;[38] it was left to Hume to face and try to wriggle out of the agnostic implications of this position.[39] The most thorough exposition of the position of religious non-cognitivism with which I am familiar is Schmidt's Religious Knowledge.[40] Lately the position has been popularized, with the customary muddling, in the "God is dead" controversy. The heart of the problem, in its various manifestations, is whether or not "revelatory knowledge" may be shown to be a contradiction in terms.

Wittgenstein's Criticisms of Traditional Philosophy

Cavell notes of Wittgenstein that

> . . . none of the criticisms of the tradition produced by Moore or the Oxford philosophers or the positivists seemed to him to be right, to do justice to the pain, the pervasiveness, even the mystery of that conflict.[41]

Wittgenstein does remark that "In a certain sense one cannot take too much care in handling philosophical mistakes, they contain so much truth" (Z460), but such criticisms as "that is not a significant proposition" (#408) and "makes no sense" (II:iv) do not seem to have departed particularly far from Moore of the positivists. Cavell is certainly not exaggerating, though, when he says that Wittgenstein does justice (if not more) to the "mystery" of the traditional conflicts: such proffered descriptions of the causes of traditional problems as "superstition" (#110), "a dream of our language" (#340), "temptation" (passim; e.g., #345, BB, p. 60), "we are . . . entangled in our own rules" (#125), "a picture held us captive" (#115), "break the spell" (BB, p. 23) and "bewitchment of our intelligence by means of our language" (#119, cf. BB, p. 27) fairly reek of mystery.

However, when Cavell goes on to say, "nothing is more characteristic of the writing in PI . . . than its shunning of normal modes of argument,"[42] I believe he misrepresents Wittgenstein. In contrast to the rather exotic diagnoses noted above, Wittgenstein offers some very traditional criticisms of the traditional position. One of the main criticisms he raises (though not in precisely these words) is the charge of overgeneralization (#1, #3, #32, #173, #363). In BB, p. 17, he remarks:

> This craving for generality is the resultant of a number of tendencies connected with particular philosophical confusions. There is - (a) the tendency to look for something in common to all the entities which we commonly subsume under a general term. . . . [(b) the tendency "rooted in our language" to suppose that to understand a general term is to have a general picture of its application], (c) the confusion between a mental state, meaning a state of hypothetical mental mechanism, and a mental state meaning a state of consciousness, (d) our preoccupation with the method of science. I mean the method of reducing the explanation of natural phenomena to the smallest number of primitive natural laws; and, in mathematics, of unifying the treatment of different topics by using a generalization.

And Wollheim notes that the craving for generality

> . . . can evince itself either in the general case or in the particular case: either by characterizing all language in a way that is only appropriate to part of it, or by characterizing all the uses of a concept in a way that is only appropriate to some of them.[43]

Other traditional criticisms that Wittgenstein levies against traditional philosophy are conceptual inaccuracy (#40, #316, #339, #587), presenting theories that are found, upon close examination, to have no clear meaning (#192, #372, #339, GB 15, RFM I-123), mistaking for an explanation a hypothesis (#156), generalizing on the basis of an unrepresentative sample (#24, #178, #593), mistaking an hypothesis for an explanation (#156), and "just playing with words" (#67). It should be noted, however, that in

some cases Wittgenstein's basis for these traditional criticisms is not the traditional basis; for example, he defends his charge of conceptual inaccuracy by appeal to ordinary language.

Cavell's remark that Wittgenstein is "shunning . . . normal modes of argument" (quoted above) acquires more force when we consider Wittgenstein's point that we mistake the 'surface grammar' (#664) of our language for a description of reality and "predicate of the thing what lies in the method of representation" (#104). It is this that Wittgenstein has in mind when he attributes the problems of traditional philosophy to the "bewitchment of our intelligence by means of our language" (#109). He expresses the point in BB, p. 27, by saying "the man who is philosophically puzzled sees a law in the way a word is used, and trying to apply this law consistently comes up against cases where it leads to paradoxical results," and, in PI #119, when he describes the problems of traditional philosophy as "the bumps that the understanding has got by running its head up against the limits of language." For example, I use the same "surface grammar" when I say I have a cat in my closet, a pain in my stomach, and a faint hope in my heart, and this tempts us to say, as philosophers, that having hope in one's

heart is the same sort of thing as having cheese in one's pocket. (Wittgenstein gives subtler and accordingly more philosophically relevant examples in #11, #143, #290, p196D, BB, p. 31 and p. 40, and indirectly but importantly in #36). It should be noted that Wittgenstein is by no means the only thinker to suppose that the structure of language leads to a misinterpretation of reality; in contemporary thought, one finds this viewpoint in the contributors to the "general semantics" periodical Etc.[44]

Footnotes - Chapter II

1. Malcolm, Memoir (cited above), p. 71.

2. Von Wright, op. cit., in Malcolm, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

3. Gilbert Ryle, The Concept of Mind (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1949).

4. C. I. Lewis, An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Co., 1946).

5. Morton White, The Age of Analysis (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1955), p. 227.

6. John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, fourth edition, 1700, Book II, Ch. 1, Sec. 2. The edition I have used is published by Gateway Editions, Chicago, p. 18.

7. David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature (London: John Noon, 1739), I:1:1. Henceforth cited as Treatise.

8. P. D. Wienphal, "Wittgenstein and the Naming Relation," Inquiry, VII (1964), 67-72.

9. Locke, op. cit., Book III, Ch. 3.

10. David Hume, An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding (London: 1748), Sec. 2. Henceforth cited as Inquiry.

11. Locke, op. cit., Book II; Hume, Treatise, II:1:1.

12. PI, #46.

13. A. W. Levi, Philosophy and the Modern World (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), p. 468.

14. Willard Van Orman Quine, Word and Object (Cambridge: Technology Press, 1960), p. 1.

15. Bertrand Russell, Our Knowledge of the External World, second edition (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1929).

16. P. A. Schilpp (ed.), The Philosophy of G. E. Moore (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1954), pp. 630-631.

17. A. J. Ayer, Philosophical Essays (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1963), Ch. 4.

18. Hume, Treatise, I:IV:2.

19. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (cited above) 5.62. The remarks in this work are numbered, and it is conventional to use these numbers, rather than page numbers, in citing passages from it.

20. Cf., op. cit., Book IV, Ch. 11.

21. Hume, Inquiry, Sec. 4.

22. Cited above.

23. Bertrand Russell, Philosophy (New York: Norton, 1927), p. 3.

24. Cf. Hume, Inquiry, Sec. 4.

25. Ayer, op. cit., Ch. 8.

26. N. Malcolm, "Wittgenstein's 'Philosophical Investigations,'" PR, LXIII (1954), 530-539.

27. Sidney Morgenbesser, and James Walsh (eds.), Free-Will (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1966).

28. O. K. Ogden, and I. A. Richards, The Meaning of Meaning (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1923).

29. Rudolf Carnap, Philosophy and Logical Syntax (London: Keagan Paul & Co., 1955).

30. C. J. Ducasse, Art, the Critics, and You (New York: Oskar Piest, 1944), pp. 52-53.

31. P. H. Nowell-Smith, Ethics (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1954).

32. A. J. Ayer, Language, Truth, and Logic (London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1946).

33. Edward Westermarck, Ethical Relativity (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1932).

34. Bertrand Russell, Religion and Science (London: Oxford University Press, 1935).

35. C. L. Stevenson, Ethics and Language (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944).

36. David Hume, An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals (London, 1751), IX:1.

37. Cf. Locke, loc. cit., Introduction, especially sections 4, 5, and 7.

38. Cf. ibid., Book IV, Ch. 18-19.

39. Cf. Inquiry, Sec. 11.

40. Paul F. Schmidt, Religious Knowledge (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1961).

41. S. Cavell, "Existentialism and Analytical Philosophy," Daedalus, XCIII (1964), 946-974.

42. Loc. cit., p. 959.

43. R. Wollheim, review of PI in New Statesman and Nation, XLVI, No. 1165 (July 4, 1953), 20-21.

44. Etc.; A Review of General Semantics, published quarterly by the International Society for General Semantics, San Francisco.

CHAPTER III

FIVE CONCEPTS IN WITTGENSTEIN'S THEORY OF MEANING

We have characterized above the "traditional theory of meaning"; here only a few additional remarks are in order.

The theory of meaning Wittgenstein is attacking may be found in Locke: "the use of words is to be sensible marks of ideas; and the ideas they stand for are their proper and immediate signification."[1] And Moore[2] characterizes another aspect of it:

> One chief view about propositions to which he was opposed was a view which he expressed as the view that a proposition is a sort of "shadow" intermediate between the expression which we use in order to assert it and the fact (if any) which verifies it. He attributed this view to W. E. Johnson, and said of it that it was an attempt to make a distinction between a proposition and a sentence.

In BB, p. 35, tracing the origins of this traditional view of meaning to what he would later characterize as a bewitchment by "surface grammar" (see below), Wittgenstein states:

> But what tempts us to think of the meaning of what we say as a process essentially of the kind which we have described is the analogy between the forms of expression:
>
> 'to say something'
> 'to mean something'
>
> which seem to refer to two parallel processes.

Wittgenstein's opposition to this theory comes out clearly when he says, "the meaning of a word is not the experiences one has in hearing or saying it, and the sense of a sentence is not a composite of such experiences" (II:vi). It is not Wittgenstein's point that the traditional theory of meaning is self-contradictory (though one does not want to rule out that possibility), but that it is inadequate to explain meaning. Thus he says: "Meaning is not a process which accompanies a word. For no process could have the consequences of meaning" (II, p. 218). In a later section I will discuss the arguments by which Wittgenstein shows the inadequacy of the traditional theory of meaning. Here I wish to move directly into an exposition of what I take to be the first concept in what I characterize as Wittgenstein's theory of meaning.

Meaning as Use

The most familiar exposition of this theme occurs in PI, #43:

> For a large class of cases - though not for all - in which we employ the word 'meaning' it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language.

A similar, though less familiar articulation is on p212E where Wittgenstein says, "Let the use teach you the meaning."

And again, in #340: "One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to <u>look at</u> its use and learn from that." And, turning to an earlier formulation, "but if we had to name anything which is the life of the sign, we would have to say it was its use" (Z135).

In <u>Zettel</u>, Wittgenstein remarks: "Conversation flows on, the application and interpretation of words, and only in its course do words have meaning."

And, "The concept of pain is characterized by its particular function in our life" (Z532).

Going back to the 1930-1933 lectures:

> About the meaning of single words, the positive points on which he seemed most anxious to insist were, I think, two, namely (a) something which he expressed by saying that the meaning of any single word in a language is 'defined' 'constituted' 'determined' or 'fixed' (he used all four expressions in different places) by the 'grammatical rules' with which it is used in that language and (b) something which he expressed by saying that every significant word or symbol must essentially belong to a 'system' and (metaphorically) by saying that the meaning of a word is its 'place' in a 'grammatical system' . . . . But he said in 1932-1933 that the sense of 'meaning' of which he held these things to be true . . . was only one of those in which we commonly use it.[3]

And Daly points out that this principle is suggested in Tr. 6.211 where Wittgenstein says "in philosophy the question 'why do we really use that word, that proposition' constantly leads to valuable results."

John Wisdom recalls "his saying 'don't ask for the meaning, ask for the use'"[4] recommended at the Moral Sciences Club as a supplement to "the meaning of a statement is its method of versification," and I would offer as another useful reformulation "the significance of a word is in many cases revealed by examining its use."

One implication of this position of Wittgenstein's is that (contrary to the "surface grammar" of the phrase "the use") meaning is not a single sort of thing, but is as varied as the variety in language; to take an easy example, "don't take any wooden nickels" means in a different sort of way than "don't take any $50 bills."

The first sort of criticism that is apt to be lodged against Wittgenstein's meaning-use theme is that the meaning of the term "use," as Wittgenstein uses it, is ambiguous, since Wittgenstein certainly is not using it in its ordinary sense.

Thus Heath remarks:[5]

> . . . 'use' and 'meaning' are both highly ambiguous terms . . . and the difficulties attendant on the merger between them can be felt . . . from the oddly-assorted list of uses at the beginning (#23) to the obstinate questioning and blank misgivings about 'intentional' or physiognomic meaning at the end.

The point is well-taken, though I think that what Heath mistakes for difficulties and misgivings are subtleties and qualifications. The subtleties in Wittgenstein's meaning-use merger lie in the fact, suggested in #23 by his illustration of "the multiplicity of the tools in language and of the ways they are used," that for Wittgenstein there are many kinds of use, with only "family resemblance" in common. The qualifications of this merger are suggested in II:xi, where he points out that meaning does, occasionally, consist of inner feelings--but notes that this is not the most important or usual use of meaning.

It is worth noting Wittgenstein's extension of this meaning-use principle into his philosophy of mathematics. Just as the meaning of a word is given, not by something behind the word, but simply by the uses of the word, so the meaning of a mathematical proof "is not something behind the proof, but the proof."[6]

Wittgenstein shows signs of attempting to extend the meaning-use dictum to proper names when he adds in #43, "And the <u>meaning</u> of a name is sometimes explained by pointing to its <u>bearer</u>," which leads Pitcher to object that

> Wittgenstein's identification of meaning and use leads him to speak of the meaning of proper names and even of their definitions (#40, 79), but in so doing he is simply

misusing the words 'meaning' and 'definition'. . . ."[7]

But this is a bit of a misrepresentation of Wittgenstein's position, as a requotation of #43 may show:

> For a large class of cases - though not for all - in which we employ the word 'meaning' it can be defined thus [dieses Wort so erklären]: the meaning of a word is its use in the language.
>
> And the meaning of a name is sometimes explained [erklärt man manchmal] by pointing to its bearer.

This shows Pitcher's inaccuracy in attributing to Wittgenstein an "identification" in all cases of meaning and use, and indicates that in this passage Wittgenstein spoke, not of the "definition" of a name, but of its explanation (though the translation of the first occurrence of 'erklären' by 'define' is apt to be misleading). The term 'defined' (definiert) does not occur in #40 either; it does occur in #79, but in a context that suggests Wittgenstein may not have been presenting his own view.

Family Resemblance

In BB, pp. 17-18, Wittgenstein speaks of the 'craving for generality' and 'the tendency to look for something in common to all the entities which we commonly subsume under a general term' as a major cause of philosophical confusion. The consequence of succumbing to this craving, Daly suggests,[8]

is "the tendency to think that general terms are generalized images, which leads us to suppose their 'objects' are mental images or states of consciousness; which, in turn, leads us to invent a whole shadow world of mental entities."

It is to this "craving for generality" that Wittgenstein's theme of "family resemblance" is counterposed. One might consider the concept of family resemblance as a propaedeutic to the doctrine of meaning as use.

The concept is first introduced in PI #67. Wittgenstein is there developing his concept of language-games, and is defending his position of having simply exhibited a great diversity of language-games, without having even tried to say what the essence of a "language-game" is. Thus, in #65, he says,

> 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 word for all - but that they are related to one another in many different ways.

And, after offering more illustrations, he observes,

> And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall 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: build, features, color of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way - And I shall say: 'games' form a family (#66-67).

Wittgenstein goes on to argue that, though no defining characteristic can be given of a concept whose instances have only a family resemblance in common, this does not make the concept any vaguer (#70-71). Nor, he argues in #74, does it mean that what a concept predicates is not somthing specific, but only "something in general."

Turning to RFM, we find Wittgenstein using the term "motley" [Bundheit] in a way similar to 'family resemblance' when he says, "I want to give an account of the motley of mathematics" (II-48). And in Zettel he remarks:

> How could human behavior be described? Surely only by sketching the actions of a variety of humans as they are all mixed up together. What determines our judgment, our concepts and reactions, is not what one man is doing now, an individual action, but the whole hurly-burly of human actions, the background against which we see any action (Z567).

> Seeing life as a weave, this pattern (pretense, say) is not always complete and is varied in a multiplicity of ways. But we, in our conceptual world, keep on seeing the same, recurring with variations. That is how our concepts take it. For concepts are not for use on a single occasion (Z568).

There is a foreshadowing of the theme of family resemblance

in the Blue and Brown Books when he remarks that

> . . . the idea that in order to get clear about the meaning of a general term one had to find the common element in all its applications has shackled philosophical investigation (BB, p. 19).

By an application of the concept on p. 110 of the Brown Book, where, by a sequence of "primitive language-games" (see below), he shows the variety of things we may mean by "making a conjecture."

What is the definition of "family resemblance?" How is the "family" metaphor to be taken? Mandelbaum[9] suggests that since real families have more than a family resemblance--namely a common ancestry--Wittgenstein should have explored the possibility that games, too, have a genetic connection.

Although Wittgenstein does not do so, the concept of "family resemblance" might be given a precise definition, e.g., "the members of a set are said to have a 'family resemblance' if and only if there is some ordering of the set such that any two adjacent terms have at least one feature in common and at least one feature not in common." The set of terms 'abc bcd cde def' would be such a set. But I think this rigorous a definition might give the concept of "family resemblance" more precision than Wittgenstein intended, if only because it would mean that the instances

of "family resemblance" were not themselves characterized by family resemblance.

One consequence of the doctrine of "family resemblance" is that, for a given term whose particulars are characterized by family resemblance, no set of defining conditions is sufficient, and no subset necessary. (More precisely, the disjunction of all the characteristics in the set would constitute a sufficient condition, but to elicit that disjunction as the meaning of the term is to do precisely what Wittgenstein seeks with his meaning-use dictum.)

One is inclined to regard Wittgenstein's theme of "family resemblance" as counterposed to the concept of 'universals,' and tempted to suppose that Wittgenstein's theme is a solution to that problem. Thus Bambrough says,

> Wittgenstein denied the assumption that is common to nominalism and realism and that is why I say he solved the problem of universals. . . . The nominalist says that games have nothing in common except that they are called games. The realist says that games have something in common, and he means by this that they must have something in common other than that they are games. Wittgenstein says that games have nothing in common except that they are games.[10]

Aaron[11] takes issue with Bambrough that Wittgenstein's was an original solution of the problem of universals, and suggests that it is a restatement of the resemblance theory, albeit a "fresh and novel one," and that a treatment similar

to Wittgenstein's may be found in Price's Perception. And Daly is inclined to give Acquinas some of the credit:

> When Wittgenstein spoke of 'family likenesses' [sic] between linguistic usages and said that "every statement has its own logic" he was, though not saying the same thing, at least grappling with the same problem, as Acquinas when he wrote 'analogous predication is intermediate between mere equivocation and complete univocity of meaning. Analogous terms are not used with the same meaning, as univocal terms are; but when a term is used analogously the meaning varies in the different uses, but there is a resemblance, different for each case, connecting together the various uses.'[12]

Pitcher, however, notes that:

> We know that he read and admired William James' Varieties of Religious Experience first published in 1902, and in that book James makes the same point about the terms 'religion' and 'government' that Wittgenstein did about 'game.'"[13]

The concept of 'family resemblance' raises, if not as many problems as it answers, at least a good number. Some of these Wittgenstein himself notes, e.g., the oddity of knowing how to predicate one term of many things yet, since one cannot point to any one thing they have in common, being unable to say on what basis one makes the predication (Cf. #75). This oddity Ryle articulates but does not thereby dissolve in his distinction between 'knowing how' and 'knowing that'.[14] As Ryle points out, there are many things that one knows how to do, without being able to say

what one knows. Swimming, for one, and how to use language, for another: one does not learn language from a dictionary.

Another problem, if we attribute to Wittgenstein the precise definition I offered above, is that

> . . . this family-resemblance explanation will not work for those cases where we see a similarity that cannot be analyzed in terms of elements exactly the same. Consider, for example, different shades of red; Garver's different soundings of the same phoneme. . . .[15]

And, if we do apply the term 'family resemblance' to, e.g., shades of red, another problem emerges: namely, the arbitrariness of saying where one family stops and the next starts. E.g., where on the spectrum does the family of reds stop and the family of purples begin? As we shade from one to the other, the family resemblances do not weaken, yet surely there is a distinction between red and purple.

This, I suspect, is precisely what Wittgenstein meant by "intermediate cases" (#122); that is, it is a consequence of the doctrine of family resemblance not merely that we are unable to say of the particulars of which we predicate a common term what it is they have in common, but also that there will always be some particulars, actually existent or imaginable, of which no generic term may be predicated, because they are as much one as the other. Not merely are all cats different, but also there could be a creature that

looks, eats, and purrs just like a cat but barks and chases red motorscooters, and I would not know what to call it. I suppose it is these intermediate cases that Richman has in mind when he argues against Wittgenstein that

> . . . this notion . . . affords us no account of why we refuse to apply the term to those things to which we do not apply it . . . it won't do to describe family resemblances as constituted by a 'network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing'; a more precise formulation of the notion will be needed. In particular it will be necessary to specify what kinds of similarity are relevant . . . and which kinds are not.[16]

Katz suggests the applicability of the concept of 'family resemblance' has limitations which Wittgenstein did not consider:

> He neither provides a reason why a statement of the family resemblance is the best we can do, nor does he try to analyze his cases to show that they amount to more than multiple senses of the same orthographic element, such that some of the simple-minded definitions he considers work for some senses and some work for other senses. . . . Moreover, Wittgenstein totally ignores obvious cases that conflict with his position . . . such as 'brother' 'aunt' and 'highball,' when it's quite clear that, for each, there is a unique defining condition.[17]

This point is well-taken, and raises the question: Just how far did Wittgenstein intend his doctrine of family resemblance to apply? If one redefines the concept as "the members of a set are said to have a family resemblance

if and only if there is some ordering of the set such that any two adjacent terms have at least one feature in common," classes with a unique defining condition would constitute a limiting case of "family resemblance" (and, incidentally, instances of family resemblance would now have in common only a family resemblance). Katz is quite correct that Wittgenstein did not consider cases where "family resemblance" did not apply; though it would have been most unlike Wittgenstein to suppose that he had a principle which would apply to all cases--particularly with the concept of "family resemblance" which is introduced, not as a general theoretical pronouncement, but to illustrate the discussion of a particular concept, namely games. Pitcher, however, takes for Wittgenstein the position that Katz has shown to be a more precarious one: "I think Wittgenstein . . . would claim that not only such 'family' words as 'game' and 'number' but most, and perhaps all, general terms have no unitary meaning."[18]

One sees an interesting application of Wittgenstein's doctrine of family resemblance as early as 1932-1933:

> He said . . . that Freud made the two mistakes (1) of supposing that there is something common to all jokes, and (2) of supposing that this supposed common character is the meaning of 'joke.'[19]

Here we must leave this investigation of 'family resemblance,' pending an extension of Wittgenstein's work.

Language-Games

The concept of 'language-game' is introduced at the very beginning of PI. In #7, referring to #2, Wittgenstein says:

> We can also think of the whole process of using words in #2 as one of these games by means of which children learn their native language. I will call these games 'language-games' and will sometimes speak of a primitive language as a language-game. . . . I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the 'language-game.'

This gives us three different meanings for 'language-game': (1) artificial examples of a simplified situation (e.g., #2, where the language consists of four one-word orders and the language-users consist of A, who gives the four orders, and B, who carries them out); (2) actual examples from primitive cultures, and (3) actual examples from our own culture. Contrary to what Wittgenstein says in #7, there are no examples of language-games in sense (2) in his writings, although (cf. #6) he invites us to consider some of the examples of type (1) in this light. Type (1) is considerably more important in the Brown Book than in PI;

I shall distinguish it from type (3) by calling it the class of 'primitive language-games.' This suggests (correctly, I believe) that (3) is simply a special case of (1). Unless otherwise indicated, then, 'language-games' refers to language-games in sense (1).

The main definition of 'language-game' is ostensive and occurs in #23:

> But how many kinds of sentences are there? Say assertion, question, and command? - There are countless kinds; countless different kinds of use of what we call 'symbols' 'words' 'sentences.' And this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types of language, new language-games as we might say, come into existence and others become obsolete and get forgotten. (We can get a rough picture of this from the changes in mathematics.) Here the term 'language-game' is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life.
>
> Review the multiplicity of language-games in the following examples, and in others: giving orders and obeying them; describing the appearance of an object, or giving its measurements; constructing an object from a description (a drawing); reporting an event; speculating about an event; forming and testing a hypothesis . . . making a joke; telling it; . . .asking, thinking, cursing, greeting, praying.
>
> It is interesting to compare the multiplicity of 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 Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.)

I have quoted this paragraph in full (with the omission of a few examples) because it is the closest Wittgenstein, with his anti-theoretical orientation, comes to saying precisely what he means by 'language-game.' And that is not very close; in the above passage he seems to use the following terms co-extensively: 'kinds of sentence,' 'kinds of use of what we call 'symbols,' 'words' 'sentences,'" "types of language," "language-games," "tools in language and . . . the ways they are used." This suggests, correctly I think, that the concept of 'language-games' grows out of the concept of meaning as use and grows into his concept of 'forms of life.'

In the discussion of 'family resemblance' we noted that Wittgenstein introduced this concept to characterize what it is that games have in common (#66, cf. also #100); the force of this argument was to illustrate that what "language-games' have in common is only family resemblance. There is an interaction of this point in p244F where he says, "We remain unconscious of the prodigious diversity of all the everyday language-games because the clothing of our language makes everything alike."

Wittgenstein makes explicit in #83 that he intends no more than an analogy between language and games ("doesn't the analogy between language and games throw light here?" (#83)); that he intends no less than an analogy is indicated

by an incident which Malcolm reports:

> Freeman Dyson recalled one anecdote of Wittgenstein's which is of considerable interest: one day when Wittgenstein was passing a field where a football game was in progress the thought first struck him that in language we play games with words. A central idea of his philosophy, the notion of a 'language-game,' apparently had its genesis in this incident.[20]

One is next inclined to ask whether Wittgenstein meant that every linguistic utterance falls into at least one language-game. That he at least tends that way is suggested in p224H where he says "something new (spontaneous, specific) is always a language-game"; however, in p188F he asks, "is it then so surprising that I use the same expression in different games? And sometimes, as it were, between the games?" which, strictly read, does not say that there are some expressions that inhere in no language-games, but that expressions which inhere in one language-game may also be used 'as it were, between the games.' Wittgenstein's meaning here hinges on what he means by 'as it were'; unfortunately, he does not spell this out, beyond a note that "one language-game analogous to a fragment of another" (Z648).

That Wittgenstein considered mathematics to be, at least to some extent, language-games, is suggested in RFM IV-1, where he says, "It is of course clear that the mathematician in so far as he really is 'playing a game' does not infer." This point is further suggested by the

previously-quoted remark in PI #23, and from remarks in RFM V-23 and V-41, where he says, "the introduction of a new rule of inference can be conceived as a transition to a new language-game."

A few more remarks are in order on "primitive language-games." As Rhees notes in his introduction to the Blue and Brown Books, there is a tendency in the Blue Book to treat the primitive language-games as paradigmatic of actual language-games. Rhees considers Wittgenstein to have dropped this position in the Brown Book, but one must note that the entire first section of that work is devoted to primitive language-games. In PI much less space is given over to primitive language-games; Wittgenstein uses them only to suggest one of the difficulties of the traditional theory of meaning, and in #130 he makes clear that he does not consider them as paradigmatic of language:

> Our clear and simple language-games are not preparatory studies for a future regularization of language - as it were first approximations ignoring friction and air-resistance. The [primitive] language-games 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 dissimilarities.

To conclude this section, I should like to offer my own informal characterization of Wittgenstein's concept of language-games.

Wittgenstein's view of man is inseparable from his view of language, mankind being, in his view, language-using social animals. In Wittgenstein's view, it is not the case that language depicts knowledge and knowledge depicts reality; the three are bound together because man, the language-using animal, is inseparable from his world. That is, man's entire life is an interaction with the world and his fellow-men. Interaction, as we all know it, is unity in a sense, and it is this sense that seems to underly Wittgenstein's later work. A game, for example softball (as it seems when you are playing it, not when you are trying to analyze it!) is a paradigm of unity in a non-mystical sense with nature (i.e., your glove, or the ballfield on which you run) and your fellow-men (i.e., the catcher, if you are the pitcher). I am not, I repeat, describing a mystical experience known only to acid-eating athletes, but rather the experience of anyone who enjoys playing a game. I mean nothing more profound than that while we are playing a game, the skepticism of traditional philosophy can get no hold on us--just try, as you wind up and pitch an inside fast ball to doubt that the catcher is there (cf. PI #303, 420). Now (and this is what is crucial) that the skepticism of traditional philosophy can get no hold on us while we are

actually up and active in the world does not show that while we are active our faculties of rationality are dulled, lulled, or beguiled by the animal excitement of that activity (which is what Descartes and Hume believed). Playing baseball is not, usually, like fighting for survival, where we can use our reason only to think of practical expedients, not to comprehend what is about us. On the contrary, activity is as deeply human (which is to say it calls as much on man's soul and reason) as analytic contemplation. The convictions we have in ordinary life are to be given no less weight (at the least) than the convictions we have in the philosophy library. That Hume's game of backgammon is the starting point for Wittgenstein's philosophy (cf. #654) implies, not that Wittgenstein has begged all of Hume's questions, but that Hume never bothered to remember, for philosophical purposes, what a game of backgammon is really like (cf. #127).

It may help to think of Wittgenstein as an existentially-oriented epistemologist; (cf. 466 ff., also #307); a language-game, we might say, is the existential manifestation of "grammar."

As noted above, Wittgenstein both constructs what he calls 'language-games' (these are the primitive language-games),

and describes human linguistic interactions as language-games. It is the latter use of the concept that is essential to his view. The compound word language-game is being used to urge the view that language bears analogic resemblance to a game.

One must bear in mind that it is language, not life, that is being characterized metaphorically as a game. To suggest a view of life as an aggregation of language-games is very different from suggesting a view of life as an aggregation of games.

The aspects of a game that must be carried over to the concept of language are (1) that it is, usually, an interaction between two or more people, and not, as the traditional position implies, usually a reaction of a single person to an object, (2) that a game is primarily an activity, and only secondarily the saying and comprehending of words (although cf. Z329). Thus, Wittgenstein remarks:

> A language-game does not have its origin in consideration. Consideration is part of a language-game. And that is why a concept is in its element within the language-game (Z391).

There is a danger that Wittgenstein's philosophy may seem like stimulus-response behaviorist psychology, though Wittgenstein explicitly denies that it is (#307). The radical though subtle difference between Wittgenstein's

philosophy and behaviorist psychology may be brought out by noting that in a game, "Batter Up!" brings the on-deck batter to the plate, but that does not mean he had been conditioned to come to the plate at the words 'batter up.' He comes because he is playing the game. And in (the language-game of) asking someone to repeat something, "what did you say?" is not a stimulus that calls forth the conditioned response of repeating; one repeats because this is a part of our form of life. This is a matter, not of conditioning, but of upbringing. There is a world of difference between the two, the difference between the world of captive rats and the world of men.

Aspects of a game that Wittgenstein's term 'language-game' is not intended to predicate of language are (1) that the rules are usually explicit, and so can be codified, and (2) that they are arbitrary, and thus there is little reason for a person to play a given game, and little significance in his deciding he does not want to play.

An instance of a language-game is not drawing-room repartee, but saying "Excuse me" when you bump into the wife of a bellicose individual on the subway. The significance of not playing this particular game is that you will be taken to have jostled the lady on purpose. Or take the

language-game of asking and giving directions. If your uncle asks you for directions, and you say nothing, it will not do to say, in explanation of your conduct, "Oh, I simply don't feel like playing this language-game today," though a similar explanation would be in order for declining to play a game of tennis.

Language-games are more than arbitrary; they indicate a form of life (cf. #610). "Form of life" and "language-game" are two aspects of the same thing, since the forms of human life are linguistic; and (a) language is not usually divorced from action, be it physical or interpersonal and (b) the type of action that is the essence of the language(-games) to effect, is not action that is merely individual, but the type of societal actions for which the language was evolved--the forms of life, e.g., asking someone to repeat something, telling someone to expect you at five, telling someone you intended to bring the corrected papers but left in such a rush you forgot.

In contrast to a language-game, a game, e.g., baseball, is not a form of life. There is no great significance to a person's never playing the game of baseball, but a person who never played the language-game of 'Excuse me' (or some equivalent linguistic or non-linguistic "game") would be an egomaniac or a monarch; a person who never played the

language-game 'I will have it completed by _____' could not work in a corporation (and if he played only when he felt like it, he would be regarded as not caring about his work; if he regarded the language-game as merely a matter of saying words, and ignored its tie-in with a way of life, then we would say of him, "his word is worthless").

Language-games, then, are not a matter of arbitrary convention but of forms of life. And forms of life are not arbitrary, they are products of our natural history, expressions of our natural state.

To summarize with an example: giving orders, and obeying them, is a language-game. It expresses a form of life--a form of life highly characteristic of America, less characteristic of Tahiti. In case of extreme stress, when it is "every man for himself," this form of life breaks down. If the language-game of giving orders and obeying them is played to excess, we have, not monotony (as we have when the game of whist is played to excess), but tyranny.

This language-game likewise reflects our natural history, in that it could not exist if "certain very general facts of nature [were] different from what we are used to" (II:xii). For example, if the world were plastic and gooey (or if our hands were plastic and gooey), it would not be (logically)

possible to give or obey orders, because no one could carry them out. In such a world, "Pick up that slab!" would not be an order, but, perhaps, an exclamation of despair.

Language-games are the articulations of the forms of life that have evolved in response to our natural history as language-using animals.

If Wittgenstein's analysis went no deeper than language-games, it would be correct to say he regarded life as a meaningless game.

If his analysis went no deeper than forms of life, it would be correct to say he took society as his given, his starting point.

But because his analysis starts at the depth of natural history, his starting point is not society, but man (cf. #384, 527).

Criteria

I will conclude this section with a few remarks about the place of the concept 'criteria' in Wittgenstein's theory of meaning.

In ordinary language one speaks of criteria in the sense of standards, e.g., "criteria for the format of the written work." In traditional epistemology one speaks of

criteria in the sense of evidence, e.g., our criteria for saying that the moon is covered with dust, or the mat is covered with cats.

Wittgenstein nowhere defines what he means by criteria; he does not even offer the sort of informal description that he offers, for example, of "language-game" and "family resemblance." So far as I can piece together his meaning of the term, Wittgenstein's criteria have the following features:

(1) They are criteria <u>for</u> something: for example, for a body's having changed weight at a certain time (#182), "for a person's reading" (#164), for mastery of a technique (#185), for someone's saying something to himself (#344), for someone's being of such and such an opinion (#573), for someone's having the capacity to play chess (II:vi), for truthfulness (II p222F).

(2) They occur within language-games (#182). There is a suggestion, but no more than a suggestion, that Wittgenstein does not believe they occur in all language-games (#290).

(3) That 'C' is the criterion for 'A' in context S_1 offers no assurance that in any and all contexts S_n 'C' will be the criterion for 'A' (BB, p. 25, <u>PI</u> #79, Z439).

(4) If 'C' is the criterion for 'A' in context S_1, and I see 'C' in context S_1, then I may not reasonably doubt that 'A' is the case, even though it is not impossible that 'A' is not the case (#303, II:v).

This last feature of criteria, which at first blush sounds paradoxical, marks Wittgenstein's biggest break with the traditional view of criteria. Wittgenstein's position here stems from the following features in his theory of meaning, all noted above: criteria are imbedded in language-games, language-games are imbedded in forms of life, and forms of life, for Wittgenstein, are the ultimate grounds of justification for making statements, doubting conclusions, and all other human activities.

If one is to attempt to develop from Wittgenstein's theoretical remarks <u>about</u> criteria a theory <u>of</u> criteria, one would have to develop several distinctions which he does not develop:

(1) From Wittgenstein's account, it would seem that criteria are not constituent in all language-games, but only in that group of language-games that, loosely speaking, involve making statements. This makes it seem as if utterances in such language-games as giving orders, making jokes, asking questions, and praying are without "criteria"

for proper and improper utterance. One would want to extend the concept to cover these sorts of language-games.

(2) We must distinguish between criteria for the making of a statement and criteria for the verifying of that statement. In some cases these will coincide, but not in all cases, and in particular not in all cases where the statement is true. For example, my criteria for <u>making</u> the statement "a wildcat is on the doormat" may be my observation that it was there when I attempted to go to the privy an hour ago; but my criteria for <u>verifying</u> the statement, if I am called upon to do so, will be to open the door and look again.

(3) The criteria for a given statement in a given context will be different for different people. For example, we may both say at the same time "the cat has come to join us," but your criteria may be that you noticed a familiar shape hurtling down from the chandelier; mine, that I feel a familiar sensation at the base of my neck.

<u>Rules: An Attack on the Traditional Theory of Meaning</u>

A major attack that Wittgenstein levies against the traditional theory of meaning is that that theory depends upon the concept of rules as extra-systemic, which demands an infinite regress of rules and hence is unworkable.

It may be seen, I think, that the concept of rules or some concept that does the same job is essential to the traditional theory of meaning. For one thing, if one doesn't hold Wittgenstein's doctrine of family resemblance, one must hold the view that the meaning of a term is a single sort of thing applied to particular instances, and one must then suppose a rule in virtue of which the meaning is correctly applied to the objects it designates. That is, the traditional theory of meaning asserts that meanings refer to, mean, their object, but provides no theoretical explanation of how they do so. This leaves a vacuum in the traditional theory. Wittgenstein obligingly tries to fill in this vacuum, and winds up demonstrating that it can't be filled by showing that an infinite regress of rules would be required to fill it. Thus he shows that the traditional theory of meaning is inadequate beyond repair.

In #85-86 he develops what I think is a crucial argument against the possibility of using the concept of 'rules' to prop up the traditional theory of meaning. Wittgenstein's argument is that a rule, in and of itself, cannot determine how one is to proceed:

> A rule stands there like a sign-post. - Does the sign-post leave no doubt about which way I have to bo? . . . where is it said which

> way I am to follow it; whether in the direction of its finger or [e.g.] in the opposite one? "Can't we imagine a rule determining the application of a rule, and a doubt which it removes - and so on?"

In #199 Wittgenstein offers a further attack on the traditional concept of 'obeying a rule':

> Is what we call 'obeying' a rule something it would be possible for only one man to do, and to do only <u>once</u> in his life? - This is of course a note on the grammar of the expression 'to obey a rule.'

The point of this note, I take it, is that (in Wittgenstein's opinion) it is a contradiction in terms to say that X is a rule and that X was obeyed only once and then by only one person. Note that on the view of 'rule' Wittgenstein is attacking, the view of 'rule' implicit in the traditional theory of meaning, "obeying a rule" can be something done only once and by only one person. One might suggest that it is because of the primacy of forms of life in Wittgenstein's thought that he takes the position that obeying a rule must be something public, an instance of a general practice, not something only one person could do only once.

How Wittgenstein proposes to get out of the problem of the infinite regress (the problem that, in the traditional theory of meaning, a rule is needed to interpret a rule, and so on <u>ad infinitum</u>) is indicated by the following

remarks:

> But this initial segment of a series obviously admitted of various interpretations . . . so you must have chosen <u>one</u> such interpretation. - Not at all. A doubt was possible in certain circumstances. But that is not to say that I did doubt, or even could doubt. . . . (#213).
>
> 'How am I able to obey a rule?' - If this is not a question about causes, then it is about the justification for my following the rule the way I do. If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say 'This is simply what I do' (#217).
>
> We have no reasons to follow the rule as we do. The chain of reasons has an end (BB, p. 143).
>
> There is an insight in saying that language is a set of rules; but it is misleading to say that to use language is to <u>obey</u> or <u>follow</u> rules.[21]

In short, Wittgenstein meets the problem of the infinite regress by grounding the justification of language-use in forms of life, not (as the traditional theory does) in reasons or rules. One might say that in Wittgenstein's theory of meaning the concept of 'criteria' occupies the place the concept of 'rules' attempted to occupy in the traditional theory of meaning. That is, on the traditional theory of meaning, one uses and understands a term on the basis of rules; on Wittgenstein's theory of meaning, one uses a term and justifies its use as correct on the basis of criteria. A principal difference between the traditional

conception of "rules" and Wittgenstein's conception of "criteria" is that a given rule, in the traditional theory, is the same for all contexts to which it applies (indeed, that is what makes it a rule), whereas a criterion for a given statement, in Wittgenstein's theory of meaning, varies in different contexts, within the limits of family resemblance.[22]

Footnotes - Chapter III

1. Locke, op. cit., Book III, Ch. 2, Sec. 1.

2. G. E. Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930-1933," reprinted in G. E. Moore, Philosophical Papers (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., p. 265. Henceforth cited as Moore.

3. Moore, p. 257.

4. John Wisdom, "Ludwig Wittgenstein 1934-1937," Mind, LXI (1952), 258.

5. P. L. Heath, "Wittgenstein Investigated," PQ, VI (1956), 66-71.

6. RFM, p. 83.

7. G. Pitcher, The Philosophy of Wittgenstein (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), p. 252.

8. C. B. Daly, "New Light on Wittgenstein," PS, X (1960), 5-49.

9. M. Mandelbaum, "Family Resemblances and Generalization Concerning the Arts," APQ, II (1965), 219-228.

10. J. R. Bambrough, "Universals and Family Resemblances," PAS, LXI (1960-1961), 207-222.

11. R. I. Aaron, "Wittgenstein's Theory of Universals," M LXXIV (1965), 249-251.

12. C. B. Daly, "Metaphysics and the Limits of Language," in Ian Ramsey (ed.), Prospect for Metaphysics, (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1961), pp. 178-206.

13. Pitcher, op. cit., p. 218.

14. Ryle, op. cit.

15. C. Ginet, "Comments," in Rollins, loc cit., pp. 72-76.

16. R. J. Richman, "'Something Common,'" JP, LIX (1962), 821-830.

17. Jerrold Katz, The Philosophy of Language (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 72.

18. Pitcher, op. cit., p. 220.

19. Moore, p. 316.

20. Malcolm, Memoir, p. 65.

21. Hector Neri-Castañada, "The Private Language Argument," in Rollins, op. cit., pp. 85-105.

22. I am indebted to Professor Hubert Alexander of this University for suggesting this point to me.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

I have attempted to show how the five concepts 'meaning as use,' ' family resemblance,' ' language-game,' 'forms of life,' and 'criteria' interrelate to form Wittgenstein's theory of meaning. Briefly, this theory might be expressed by the following propositions:

(1) The meaning of a term is, in most cases, given by its use in language-games.

(2) It is on the basis of criteria that a term is used and its correct use verified.

(3) A given term does not have a single use, but a range of uses with only "family resemblance" in common.

(4) Language-games are the linguistic manifestations of forms of life.

(5) Criteria are imbedded in forms of life; thus they enable us to make statements, and make them with exactly that degree of certainty that characterizes our form of life.

To say that this theory of meaning is not explicit in Wittgenstein's later work is rather an understatement. Though Wittgenstein did not deny that his work contained a theory of theories, he did make clear his opposition to

philosophical theories. Nevertheless, many remarks in his later work, including those quoted to show his opposition to philosophical theory, can only be characterized as theoretical. This is not to say that Wittgenstein has, much less professes, anything approaching a complete philosophical theory. But it is to say that from his remarks a certain philosophical theory, incomplete and imprecise, may be reconstructed. This I have attempted to do, and have attempted to justify so doing by supporting my alleged reconstruction at all points with quotations from or references to passages in Wittgenstein's later work.

This task has not been simplified by the fact that Wittgenstein's anti-theoretical orientation expresses itself in his unwillingness to give precise definitions of his "theoretical" concepts. A summary of my discussion of his concept of 'family resemblance' may bring this point out. I attempted to offer a precise definition of that concept (viz. "the members of a set are said to have a family resemblance, if and only if there is some ordering of the set such that any two adjacent terms have at least one element in common"). This definition, I indicated, saves

Wittgenstein's concept of 'family resemblance' from Katz' criticism that some classes, such as the class of aunts, do have a feature in common; these cases may, under my definition, be considered as the limiting case of family resemblance. My definition of family resemblance is not, however, immune to Ginet's criticism that it is inadequate for such cases as the colors in a spectrum "where we see a similarity that cannot be analyzed in terms of elements exactly the same." That my definition falls to this criticism does not, however, show that Wittgenstein's concept of 'family resemblance' fails. For Wittgenstein neither offers a definition of his concept, nor specifies that he intends it to apply beyond the specific applications he makes of it. Those applications I have noted: members of a human family, games, language-games, jokes, and possibly mathematics. That Wittgenstein's concept of "family resemblance" escapes criticism only because it is undefined and its range of applicability unspecified, restricts the sense in which one may attribute to him a "theory."

Within these restrictions, however, one may say of him that he does have a theory of meaning which stands opposed to that pattern in the history of philosophy that I have characterized as "the traditional theory of meaning."

I shall, in conclusion, attempt to summarize the nature of that opposition.

As indicated above, one of the principal charges he raises against the traditional theory of meaning is the charge of overgeneralization. In particular, that the traditional view took the meaning of a term to be a single thing, knowable by introspection. In Wittgenstein's theory of meaning, in contrast, any term has a wide range of meanings, related only by "family resemblance," and these meanings are known, not by introspection, but by examining the actual use of the term. Thus, loosely speaking, the meaning of a term is its use in the language. This use, which reveals the meaning is given not (as it would be in the traditional theory of meaning) by examining the syntactical role of the term in the sentence, but rather by examining the relation of the term to its criteria and to its "language-game." Thus, one major objection to the traditional theory of meaning upon which Wittgenstein's theory of meaning may be said to be based is that the traditional theory of meaning mis-described meanings as unitary, knowable by introspection, and linked together by syntactical relations, whereas the case is (according to Wittgenstein) that they have only family resemblance in common, are knowable by

examining their use, and are linked together by "grammar," particularly criteria-relations, within language-games.

The second locus of opposition of Wittgenstein's theory of meaning to the traditional theory of meaning, is that the traditional theory of meaning took meaning to consist essentially in the language-user's relation to his terms, whereas Wittgenstein takes it to consist essentially in the language-user's relation to other language-users. That is, what is primary in Wittgenstein's view is not (as is the case in traditional epistemology) how we come to know language, but rather, how we use it. How we use it is expressed by our language-games, and the significance of language-games is given by the linguistic forms of life of which they are the manifestation. In the traditional view, the justification of criteria had to be extra-systemic; Wittgenstein shows this involves an infinite regress, and offers in his theory of meaning the only alternative: the justification of criteria is within their own system. More precisely, the justification of criteria is imbedded within their language-game in forms of life. This Wittgensteinian position comes out most importantly in his attack on the traditional theory's concept of "rules," but most clearly in his otherwise incomprehensible position on Gödel's

proof.[1] Gödel's proof showed for axiomatized mathematics what Wittgenstein argues against the traditional theory of meaning--namely, that justification must be extra-systemic, and that an infinite regress of extra-systemic justifications is required to justify the making of any statement in the original system. This proof is generally regarded as showing the impossibility of an axiomatized system of justified propositions; that Wittgenstein does not take it to do so becomes comprehensible only when one realizes, as I have attempted to demonstrate above, that for him justification is not extra-systemic but systemic; that the justification both of ordinary language-games and of mathematical "language-games" is inherent in the form of life of which they are the manifestation. In short, if I had to summarize the originality of Wittgenstein's later philosophy in a single phrase, I should say: Wittgenstein showed that life is its own justification.

Footnotes - Chapter IV

1. RFM, Appendix I.

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