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SELECTIONS FROM BOUWSMA'S COMMONPLACE BOOK FROM *THE BLUE BOOK* ON:
"THE MEANING OF A WORD"

The notes collected here were written for students in Wittgenstein seminars at the University of Texas in the academic year 1970–71. The typed notes from those seminars all focus on the opening sentences of *The Blue Book*: "What is the meaning of a word?" As was Bouwsma's practice, he wrote in his commonplace book preparing for the weekly seminar meeting. Some student in the class would volunteer to transcribe these preparatory notes and the department secretary would mimeograph them for distribution to the graduate students in the seminar. The notes were not read in the seminars, but distributed some time later. Seminars began with Bouwsma asking: "What shall we talk about today?" or something very similar to that. He expected of the students to have something ready that was relevant to the reading of the book. With *The Blue Book*, the class dwelt on the beginning paragraphs for most of the term, with connected paragraphs brought in later. There was no telling ahead of time where the discussions would go, but Bouwsma persistently pulled attention back to this first sentence of *The Blue Book* and the discussion of meaning.

Bouwsma began his work on Wittgenstein with an unpublished typescript copy of the "Blue Book" that Alice Ambrose shared with him in the 1930's. Ambrose was the person to whom Wittgenstein had dictated the typescript and was married to Bouwsma's student Morris Lazerowitz. Both were close friends of Bouwsma. Fascinated and energized by what Wittgenstein offered at this stage in his development, he worked on that typescript and came to teach from it, and later, from the *Philosophical Investigations* at the University of Nebraska for many years before these seminar notes at Texas. Entries on *The Blue Book* show up frequently in Bouwsma's commonplace book in the 1950's and 60's, most of which focus on "the meaning of a word." It was, however, the fascination with the first paragraphs of *The Blue Book* and specifically with the concept of meaning that formed Bouwsma's grasp of the relevance for the skepticism generated by the predominant idealism of the day. Bouwsma began his philosophical journey in Bradley's idealism. A growing dissatisfaction with Bradley led him to G.E. Moore's refutation of idealism. His student Morris Laserowitz at Nebraska, now

married to Alice Ambrose and both originally working with Moore at Cambridge, connected Bouwsma with Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein enabled Bouwsma to understand why Moore's commonsense rejection of skepticism, to which Bouwsma already had an affinity, was inadequate and left him dissatisfied. Moore, too, produced sentences of philosophy that jolted Bouwsma's sensibility to natural expressions of language. Bouwsma, with an ear sensitized by literature, poetry, and years of reading James Joyce, worked through Moore's commonsense heavy-handed refutation of idealism. With the "Blue Book" transcript, Bouwsma came to understand the relevance of his poet's ear for language. Working on the "Blue Book" oriented him to see how the misunderstanding of the concept of meaning set the philosophical search for essences on the wrong track – in particular, how the problem of skepticism was embedded in the general confusion surrounding the meaning of a word as the name of its essence.

These early rambling notes on *The Blue Book* were the basis for the formation of Bouwsma's matured philosophical work. Before *The Blue Book* had this formative effect, one can see in his work attention to nuanced language and his practice of uncovering hidden analogies, but after his engagement with the "Blue Book," one can see his grasp of the concept of meaning for his philosophical work. Somewhere in the midst of this work, he yielded refutations of philosophical claims to what he called "the failure" to grasp their sense. The task now was not to refute skepticism and naturalism, but to test the sentences of skepticism and naturalism against the sensible expressions of ordinary language. The criterion for sense became – actually always was – the ordinary expressions of everyday language. The test for "dreams are illusions" is the ordinary expressions of "dreams" and "illusions." This new practice of philosophizing can be traced to his coming to understand the concept of "meaning" and the confusion of the very question "What is the meaning of a word?" When one understands the wrong headedness of the question "What is the meaning of a word?", one understands how to proceed with "illusion," "deceive," "true," etc. Bouwsma did not publish his notes on *The Blue Book*. His only published piece on *The Blue Book* – his well-known "The Blue Book" – did not address the meaning of a word, but aimed at showing the force of Wittgenstein's insight to meaning on the practice of philosophy.

These collected notes span the academic year 1970–71 and are arranged chronologically in sets that were handed back to the graduate students in two Wittgenstein seminars that year. They are typical of the notes that Bouwsma made on *The Blue Book* in the previous years – in their returning to the same sentences or expressions repeatedly as if he were reading them for the first time. He wrote several hours every evening on yellow legal pads, following out sentences that he had read in the book or some remark that a student had made in the seminar. He also kept track of interesting miscellaneous sentences that he had heard during the day, an interesting exchange he had with a friend, or an interview on the radio or TV. The notes collected here were interspersed between other such miscellaneous notes.

What the reader of the notes will find is not a sequenced development of the theme of “the meaning of a word” in the *The Blue Book*, but many separable notes – aspects of Wittgenstein’s project of understanding how the concept of meaning has been misunderstood. While Bouwsma did not start with Wittgenstein’s problem of finding “the logical form of a proposition” (*Tractatus*), he did start with the fascination of words in their natural use and even in poetic expressions of everyday speakers. The notes start and stop, take up some different aspect, and change direction quickly from paragraph to paragraph. Many starts disassemble the question “What is the meaning of a word?”. There is something wrong with the question. It makes us look for the meaning as if there were a thing that is the meaning. What sort of thing would a meaning be? Where is it? Most philosophers look for meanings in the mind – in sensations, perceptions, general ideas. The question sends us on a goose chase. Then, there are expressions of “meaning” of words that do make sense: “What does the word _____ mean?” Bouwsma puts such expressions in their natural contexts where one quickly sees what is being asked and reminds us of how that is different from the philosophical question that is in search of the wild goose – the meaning as a hidden something to be found. Other paragraphs take up a particular word, perhaps a philosophically interesting word such as “act” or perhaps of a word like “horse,” showing how we explore meaning by means of the uses of the word. “For a large class of cases in which we employ ‘the meaning of a word’ the meaning is its use in the language.” A student in the seminar asks what a proper name means. “What does ‘Ruth’ mean?” Well, “Ruth” does not mean anything. On the other hand, “What does ‘Smith’ mean?”

"Smith" means "one who makes horseshoes." Bouwsma draws out the differences in asking for the meaning of a word. The notes go on in this manner.

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Notes for Students
O.K. Bouwsma
(undated)

What is the meaning of a word?
What is the spelling of a word?
What is the pronunciation of a word?

of a word you can ask: What is the meaning of a word? How do you spell a word?
What is the correct pronunciation of a word? What is the history of a word? What is the etymology of a word? What is the first syllable of a word?

Here are the expressions:

"The meaning of"
"The spelling of"
"The pronunciation of"
"The history of"
"The etymology of"
"The first syllable of" (What is the pen-ultimate?)

I was wondering whether one might have a similar difficulty with these questions, or with some of them, that one has with the first of these. Why should: What is the meaning of a word? strike one dumb? Whereas: What is the spelling of a word? would not? So with the other corresponding questions, I could now try to answer the question: "What is the first syllable of a word? Now how would one answer that? I can show you words and the first syllables in those words. I can pronounce the word too. There it is -- heard by everyone. So too with the spelling. I show you what spelling a word is. Of course, you have got to understand spelling.

All this is crazy. Everyone understands. No one can ask such questions among those who can ask such questions. And isn't that just how it is with everyone of these questions, and also the question: What is the meaning of a word? Oh yes. But all the same people ask it or seem to ask it. And that is what has to be explained. Here then is the explanation: If the meaning of a word is what I think it is, then what is it? The point is that the puzzle about the meaning of a word arises out of the way one thinks of meanings. That is, out of the analogy one is led, misled, by. The puzzle can be expressed in this way: How is it possible that the meaning of a word should be what it is and at the same time be what I cannot help thinking it is. Must it be what it must be? No. That is what it isn't. What it must be is what it cannot be. I am not clear about the "cannot."

Blue Book

"What is the meaning of a word?"

First W. states the question. Then he leads the way. He says: "Let us attack this question." Someone asks: What is a bear? and someone suggests: Let us attack this question by asking: "What is a bear-trap?" What does that look like? The idea is that from a bear-trap or a bear-cage you should learn something about a bear. That is wrong. It isn't like that.

The first thing to realize is that we who ask this question: "What is the meaning of...?" are familiar with the meaning of a word. What gives rise to the question is not that there is something about the meaning of a word we do not know. The question arises out of a misapprehension of something we already know. Consider, for instance, that there have been people who asked this same question and then answered. Some said that the meaning of a word or at least of some word is an original of some sort laid away in heaven. When we think the meaning of a word we reach out towards that original far far away and with their 20-20 vision eyes,

We do not see anything. Others, as you know, have said that the meaning of a word is an image. The first account explains how it is that we can in 1990 understand Socrates who talked and thought a long time ago. That shows that meanings are enduring. It tempts one to say that meanings are indestructable. The other account explains something else, namely, how it is that one can understand what someone else is saying with his eyes closed. Understanding is like running a movie, a private affair, strictly private, movies along with the script, namely, the words. The meaning of the word is the illustration.

I ought, however, before W. is introduced prepare the occasion which makes what W. says pertinent. So I think I am going to read a paragraph or two from the dedication at the head of the meditations. Earlier I said, in trying to prepare a short piece on relevance, that philosophers commonly fuss about the meaning of words. But Descartes does not begin in that way. He is going to demonstrate certain things. Perhaps he does fuss about the meanings of words too. For instance, the ontological proof begins with what may be considered a definition, 'the idea of...', and the question: "What am I then" may be considered a question about the meaning of the word "I". In any case a philosophical discussion always or nearly always, or hardly ever, passes over into a discussion or a dispute about the meaning of words. Hence it is obvious that if one is to philosophize one had better be close about the meaning of words and how to explain them. But above all one had better consider how it is that in philosophy the need for this clarification should arise. For it isn't simply that there is this need. There is something more. For it is not that the matter, whatever the is ue is, is resolved in this way. Hence the idea may suggest itself that there is something seriously the matter with what the philosopher has said or written, so serious that -- well, I won't finish that. The point is that in most of our discourse, speaking and writing, we readily understand one another. When we do not we usually know how to explain, how to come to an understanding. It isn't simply that other people do not understand the philosophers which might not seem unusual, seeing people do not understand chemists either. There are technical languages. But chemists understand one another. They share a common language. Philosophers, however, do not understand one another. They do not agree on the meaning of their words and naturally they do not and, as we may see later, cannot, agree in judgment either.

What then does W. supply?

The question with which W. begins the Blue Book may be considered a first step in the 20 year discussion of intelligibility. For that question may be regarded as a part of another question. Namely: What is the meaning of a sentence? For surely if a word has meaning, then a sentence composed of words must have meaning too? Should we perhaps say that it could have ten times as much meaning? But that is not the end. Sentences no more stand above than do words. So we come upon an ever larger unit of language. And now the question: What is the meaning of this -- a conversation, a discussion, a news report -- seems like not very good English. Of a word we can ask: What does it mean? Of a paragraph we can ask that and of a sentence, of course. But now the context is extended further. A word has connection. A sentence has. And so on. The person speaking has connections. He spoke those words. What was he doing with those words? And so on. The same word may enter into ever so many other sentences. Paragraphs, etc. and there must be some way of helping someone to all those occasions. How is it done?

When one becomes aware of all this the B. B. appears as a ragged performance, the

record of a man thinking without any clear view of where the thinking might lead.

The meaning of a word.
The explanation.
Definition

How is the definition to help him when he is to fetch a red flower? Interpreting.
Understanding.

Here is the passage I quoted a fragment of, this morning, in connection with God's omnipresence.

"Whether shall I go from thy spirit?
Or whether shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend to heaven thou art there:
If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
even there thy hand shall lead me
and thy right hand shall hold me
If I say 'Let only darkness cover me
and the light about me be night,'
even the darkness is not dark to thee
The night is bright as the day
for darkness is as light to thee".

It may seem strange that anyone should ask the question: What is the meaning of a word? He could scarcely ask that question without at least being aware that he understood this question he was asking and so was well-acquainted with the meaning of the words in that question, that is, with at least, some of them. It is as though one were to write the question. What is the spelling of a word? Spelling each word correctly. This would certainly be something strange unless we were to suppose that he was the victim of automatic writing and so of automatic spelling. The other case would be a case of automatic thinking. After one had done this, someone would explain: "You spelled" and he would respond, mystified: What is spelling? And this one would have to explain what the spelling of a word is. And how would one do that. So too in the other case. Someone would explain: "You, in your absence, wrote, automatically, and what you wrote, made sense. These words have meaning". And he, mystified, would respond "meaning"? What is the meaning of a word?" Now you are up against it.

By the way, isn't spelling a wonder? People, like us, not much younger, learn a little. And in a short time they can spell. I know it is usual. Barely all the children learn to do it. In a spelling he's the man in charge says: "scythe" and the girl of ten spells "scythe". He says "occasion" and she spells "occasion". The word is given and the child spells the word. Isn't it marvelous what we can do and do? It is almost as though the little girl doesn't do it, as though there were some genius or geniuses who moved her lips and won the prize. In any case if you were to ask that little girl: What is the spelling of a word?, in spite of the fact that she has this day spelled a thousand words, could not tell you what spelling is. That certainly is a sign of something. It suggests that she does not know what she is doing, in spite of the fact that she does it so well. It is well nigh automatic.

One might say that her tongue spells when she spells a word and her hand and fingers do what she writes. She seems to have so little to do with it. And there is no use asking one's fingers to explain.

But it isn't only spelling that we learn. We learn to talk and to write. First syllable, da-da, then words, "daddy", "bell", and then sentences: "I want my mommy". Soon the child prattles all day. All this is wonderful. But the most wonderful thing of all is that these noises mean something. It makes noises and they mean something. It is as though the child before it made any noises had arranged for the noises to have the meanings they now have. One can imagine the infant anticipating what it is going to be like later, aware even then that it can make noises and that it will be a great convenience to have meanings attached to those noises. Now arrangements are made. The task of assigning meanings is commissioned to a master of meanings and the work is done. When later this child talks behold the noises are words and the words have meanings. And now the child is mystified by what it can do. It exclaims: What has been done to my noises? And the answer: "They have been given meanings" does not help. For it has never been shown a meaning, when earlier as an infant it longed for meanings. It had only followed the crying of the infants in the infantorium. It did not know what it was crying for.

The point is this: A child learns words. It says: "Dada", "bye-bye", "doggie", etc. When da-da comes home, it gets excited and says. "Dada, dada". It is told: Wave your patty and say "Bye-bye" and it says "Bye-bye". It has never been told anything about meanings. No one has even said: Now this morning we are to learn some meanings. No one now says: "here is a meaning and here is another meaning". If at the outset someone had said: "Here is a word and here is a meaning, we will put them together", everything from the outset would have been clear. As it is the child learns words. "Today for the first time our baby said "pine-apple. "Pine-apple" is a word. Nothing is said about a meaning. One can imagine a child with a large vocabulary, nothing but words, no meanings. Hence later when a child is older, it has the surprise of his life. It is told: "Everyone of those words has a meaning." And not only that but the child's elders expect him to know what the meaning is. No wonder the child is upset. First there is the surprise. And then there is all this responsibility. He has never been told about meanings, has never been introduced to even one of them. And now all this. No wonder he is distressed. His distress is now expressed in the cry: What is the meaning of a word? There is more. For there is no one to turn to who did not learn his words in a similar fashion. "Words, words, words" and with no one to say a word about meanings until later, too late. And now what is a poor child to do? All he can do is look about him to discover what might be a meaning and, perhaps just to get the problem over with, to settle on something.

There are two things to guide one:

- The meaning is there whether your eyes are opened or closed.
- The meaning of a word lasts longer than anybody.

Imagine someone who said that all this talk about a word having meaning is a hoax, a part of a communist plot to divert us from the real problems which are economics. Words have no meaning. They may have something else but no meaning. How would one answer such a person? We all know, that these are words on the page. Since, however, there is nothing obvious about meanings, how are we to show that there,

indeed, are meanings? Is it rather like saying that though, of course, men tell their dreams, there are no dreams? People only imagine their dreams. But when do they imagine them, when they tell their dreams or when, as they suppose, they are asleep? How busy can one be when he is asleep? And may it not be that people only imagine that words have meanings? This is not as absurd as it may seem, seeing that people ask: What is the meaning of a word? Which is ostensibly a sign they do not know what it is. And when they get around to answering the question one says it is this and another says it is that. Suppose, that people believed there were duocorns. Someone asks: What is a duocorn? No one knows. Someone says the duocorn is an insect. Another says a duocorn is a species of crocus. There are other suggestions. In the end someone is seen to suggest that there may be no duocorn, just as there is no triocorn. And with that the world is spared another philosophical problem, or is given

What is the meaning of a word?
Who said there was? or is?

another one. What is a triocorn? There is no triocorn. There may be *no duocorn*. What then is there? Well, perhaps a _____.

We should worry. So there is no meaning of a word. We do not need any. We get along very well without. But what is it then we do not need? We do not mean we do need words.

What has to be explained is: What has this question to do with philosophy? It has this to do with philosophy that at some stage in doing philosophy -- is philosophy then something one does? -- one is bound to ask this as everyone knows, philosophers disagree. They talk and dispute. English philosophers philosophize in English-- I mean in the English we all understand. That is wrong. What I mean is that the words you hear are ordinary English words. If they make a jumble, it is of common words that they make a jumble. You hear such words as God, knowledge, I, good, being, object, seeing, dream, and so on. Even when they sometimes use big and uncommon words: these words are explained in terms of the words we are familiar with. It isn't as if the case with a technical and scientific vocabulary that new words are introduced as new discoveries are made. In philosophy there are no discoveries, neither new nor old. What we may get in philosophy -- perhaps, are new confusions and new problems. The point now about these problems is that they are not solved. Philosophers continue to disagree. I say: reality is one and you say: No, it's two. I say: Reality is mind and you say: No, it's dirt. (Of course it could be mind and be dirt.) I say: Ideas are like the angels and you say: No, they are more like hand and mischievous school-boys. When philosophers disagree they disagree, usually, first, as they think, concerning what is said. Then as they continue to discuss, -- they discuss interminably -- each discovers that the other does not understand him. Then they try to explain to one another. The question: What do you mean? recurs often. Remember that the words that now give them so much trouble are the words which ordinarily and among the folks at home give them no trouble. The question now is: Why is it that these beautiful and familiar words which ordinarily give us no trouble, now are the occasion of so much intellectual distress?

I must try to understand this.

There is first of all one common understanding of that word. Here we agree. There are innumerable phrases and sentences in which this word has a place, in

certain contexts and situations. Within these boundaries the word makes sense. The boundaries are not generally as precise as those between Texas and Mexico or should I say that they are just about that precise. The boundary is the water's edge but the water's edge shifts. (a misleading analogy.)

Two things to remember:

- 1). The words that give us trouble are ordinary words we understand. Ask your mother.
- 2). The intelligibility of that word or another one is embodied in the language involving that word, that makes sense. There are also fringe benefits.

Getting to understand the disagreements and the bewilderments among philosophy involves an awareness of that great reservoir of understanding and the forms of intelligible discourse. This is required both in order that one should come to have a feeling for both the form and the deformities of language. The deformities of language which concern us are those which are the expression of an illusion of intelligibility. There is much to explain. How, for instance, does the illusion of intelligibility arise? It arises out of some pictures of intelligible language.

I wish now that it were easy to be simple.

I am going first to explain what I mean by the reservoir of intelligibility and for that purpose I will remind you of the intelligibility of the word "run". You may be surprised at how rich this is. The word "run" is not a word that has any special interest in philosophy. That may help as to keep this simple. I will now point out a few things.

Among other things the following are said to run: Horses, watches, candidates, rivers, cups, ("runneth over"), boys, automobiles, faucets, strawberry-plants, ad-men (run ads), water, road-runners, machinists (run machines), executives, (run offices), enthusiasm, ("ran away with him"), a live, little doggie ("run along, little doggie"), plans (can run aford), what runs amuck? blood, ("runs cold"), eggs-soft-boiled, noses, diseases, (run their courses), scientists ("run tests"), electricians ("run wires"), pipelines ("run through several states"), tears, speakers ("run on and on"), railroads (from Chicago to Denver), fishes (a run of fishes), paint, vines, maple-syrup, ships ("run aground"), projects ("run into trouble"), the (ran his fingers through his hair), telephone wires, secretaries ("run off 100 copies"), young wives (run off to mama), the patient (is run down), the cashier, the wife (ran up a big bill"), lava, time, the equator, (a line that runs), stockings, "the course of true love" (name did run smooth), rain (a run-off), soldiers ("ran into a barrage"), ("run to cover"), anyone: "Run your fingers over this surface", a cornice (runs all around the roof of the building), mice, ("see how they run", "this world ("so runs the world away"), "sweet Thames" ("run softly"), she ("runs him ragged"), the chemist, (runs an experiment), he (ran up the flag), he (ran up a record), my mascara, the sun, she (runs him), sheep (Baa, sheep, run, the fences (He ran him through with the sword).

Now I am going to ask another question. What sorts of things can one run? One can run a race, a mile, an automobile an ad, a machine, an office, a test, a wire, trains, a finger, him, an experiment, a course, etc.

Now I want to try a few remarks.

What a strange thing running must be if horses can do it and cups can do it and blood can do it and soft-boiled eggs can do it, and diseases can do it. What is running

anyhow? Here now is what one might call a philosophical question. And I'll begin with a few remarks. One might begin by saying that nothing can run if it cannot walk. One might define running as an accelerated form of walking. The line between walking fast and running has never been precisely determined, though we are well-acquainted with such distinctions as creeping and crawling and, for instance, hobbling along or going at a snail's pace. Snails crawl. They do not creep. And that is, presumably, because they do not have knees. Knees are essential to creeping though not to crawling. No knees, no creep. Serpents, for instance, crawl but do not creep. The same is true of crabs. It must, accordingly, be because they have no knees. Having noticed what is essential to creeping and how creeping and crawling are distinguished, suggests now a parallel distinction between walking and running. It may suggest it but it won't work. The suggestion is that in order for a crab to run it would have to have legs just as in case it could creep it would have to have knees. I then expected to go on to say that the sort of distinction we have noticed between creeping and crawling, namely that knees are essential to creeping, would help us to distinguish between walking and running. For surely legs and feet are essential to running. But this did not work out. It seems that these are also essential to walking. I think I had better mention that hopping is neither walking nor running though here again a slow hop would certainly be more like walking just as a fast hop would be more like running. And this now reminds me that I am not ever going to consider either dancing or swimming as forms of walking or running. It does not seem that water should make a difference. As for dancing, walking on tip-toe is not rare but is dancing? I have now finished not discussing something and returning to our problem: What is running?

First of all there the model of all running is the running of the horse. This does not mean that the horse and the horse only runs. There are other things that may run provided that what they do is, not modeled after what the horse does, - that would be asking too much -- but is such that were one acquainted with what the horse does, one might readily suppose that it was modeled after what the horse does.

In what precedes I wrote the questions: What is running? I did not ask it. I knew very well what running is. Didn't I write down all those words with the intention of reminding us of what things run. And certainly if I could do that I certainly understand what running is. Still someone who takes notice of the so-many things that run may, as I have already indicated, explain: If all those things run what then is running? It may well seem that in every case of running that I listed there is hidden the running that make each a case of running. And so the question what is running? is a question about that. The question may also be described as a question about what all cases of running have in common. And whatever that is is the meaning of the word "running". How then should we go on? It is clear that if the meaning of the word "running" is hidden in each case, then the task would be to find a case. We must make sure that we have captured the whole case -- is one which we can take apart in such a way that nothing escapes. That is, of course, the danger and the risk any investigation must take. For the meaning of the word may indeed be like-life. For in the process of trying to find it, by vivisection, for instance, the life, as Plato says, like so much smoke or vapor, or under cover of smoke or vapor escapes. In that way life is indeed elusion. And no one has caught it in a bottle, for instance. It is not said that the meaning of a word is like that. But the prospect or rather the fear that it is like that is very great. And it is not hard to see why. For until yesterday at least no one has succeeded, in catching the meaning of the word "running" or of any other word. The field of philosophy is literally littered with abandoned butterfly-nets, salt-shakers, mouse-traps, falcons, decoys, lariats, and so on. The hardness of some people is, however, a tonic, good for the soul, an

exhilaration to the manly. For a man may have seen all those things and yet like a hero; raise his voice and explain: "I'll go on". In every century, how brave is our new world with such men in it. For the plain truth is that some men, a few in every generation, no doubt, ask again: What is the meaning of a word? And whose is there even among the most philistine of philistines the most barbarian of barbarians, who would not part with a bite or of his lunch to make him contradictive to answering that question. Nevertheless, this may come as a surprise. For imagine an ordinary hungry hard-hat man setting aside a part of his lunch in order that mankind should finally come to grasp the secret of his intelligence: that is, mankin's intelligence. For notice, as we all must, that our intelligence is bound up with our language, that is, with our words. And how can we be said to understand anything if we do not know and cannot say what the meaning of a word is? This may help us to realize why the world, including as we have seen, the hard-hat man setting aside a lettuce sandwich, is eager to provide the philosopher their daily bread and a tablet on which to write the truth. So it is that in the highest places man continues to persevere to press on with the question.

But let us not forget that daily bread and a tablet are not nothings, who, indeed, could desire more?

What would it be like to understand intelligence?

It does seem as though we have a sort of bed-rock question; a question, which if only things had been arranged properly, we should not now have to ask. Consider: We are all expected to become intelligent and then to be intelligent. But could any arrangement be more unintelligent than one in which creatures such as we are told: "Be intelligent" and there is no one so much as to tell us what intelligence is. The particular form in which we are in this way victim is this. We are expected to speak and to write in such a way that every word we speak or write has a meaning. Carve every word before you let it fall. That is all very well and is, no doubt, admirable advice. But there is no one to show us how to carve. Turkeys are better served. Carve every Turkey before you let it. . . So we go through life carving. No wonder our words come out misshapen. To carve a word is no doubt to shape it to fit the meanings. Imagine a man told to make a shoe to fit a foot but he is not only not showing the foot he is to make a shoe to fit; he has never even shown a foot, even one foot. It is amazing. Men have gone on for all that carving works and gone on without worrying about the meanings. Some have said: "We carve the words and leave it to God to supply the meanings". That may suggest to us how desperate some men have become. Some, the more earnest, have turned to carving beautiful words. Others more irresponsibly say: "We carve words, that is all". But, as I suggested earlier, these have been men who worried and of whom you might say, that they are uneasy trusting God to supply the meanings. Some have murmured: "There is nothing in the Bible to assure us that when we carve words, God takes care of the rest". And so those conscientious people in the midst of all the carvers quite carryin . They publish a manifesto: "We, carvers of the world, unite. And until our demands are met we carve no more words. We demand to see the meanings of the words we carve before we carve any more words". This looks a lot like rebellion in heaven, to those who piously go on carving words expecting God to supply the whatever. But it must be said that it is by no means comfortable to be a carver of words, and diligent at that, not a careless worker and to be haunted by the fear that all this carving is for nothing, that the words have no meaning. One might then regard the refuge to God as a kind of defuse of one's life. "What? all this, the carving of a life-time, speaking and writing, and not a meaning to show", Well, that's life.

11

Notes for Students
O.K. Bouwsma
Fall, 1970

Where did people ever get the idea that a word has a meaning? The question: what is it? seems to arise spontaneously. There are no authentic reports of travellers having seen them, of having come upon them in a deep forest, as there were reports of travellers having come upon unicorns. The time came, in spite of the authentic reports, when man no longer worried about unicorns, when they gave up the traveller's hope of a silver horn. Some said that the two-faced lions killed all the unicorns. So it may be with meanings.

But why should words have meanings, anyhow; at any rate, The words we have? I say nothing about words other creatures may sound off on. Perhaps their words have meanings and if one of us should ever happen to be there above the earth or under the earth, one of these creatures could show us, might even take us on a tour. As a matter of fact some creatures might have meaning for their words all quite different from the meanings some other creatures have. If you want the names of several tour guides I can furnish them.

There are other possibilities. It is possible, for instance, that once upon a time, long, long ago, the words we are now familiar with did have meanings. Then people came along and for centuries, they knew the meaning of each word and they connected the word with the meaning. It provided amusement in those early days. This was before baseball and chess. Such amusement required leisure. On cold winter mornings one of the company would exclaim, "Let's play meaning" and then they would bring out a collection of words, and each player having a turn, they would match what they called their wits, matching words and their meanings. The champion matcher matched the most. Sometimes a matcher would look up at the ceiling, sometimes into a hole in the floor, and sometimes he would close his eyes, and so on. Everyone seemed or rather did understand what was going on. Then later after a depression set in and men had to work harder and there was less leisure, the game wasn't played anymore. Now and then a few old men of the former generation would get together and play the game just for old times sake. But with their passing the game was no longer played. Soon it was just forgotten except for the word "meaning", much as the word "quoits" has survived, and as one now and then hears someone ask, "what is a quoit" and one has to answer: "There aren't any anymore, though one might find one somewhere in antique stores". So too in the backwoods of Kentucky one might hear the question: "What is a meaning" and the answer: "Oh, that is something very old." In this part of Kentucky the people still speak Elizabethan English. No doubt that has something to do with the survival of the question. Memory lingers from generation to generation in such fragments though the game has disappeared. Now also explain: What is a quoit? This, by the way, is not Brooklynder and has nothing to do with milk.

So now we understand the question: What is the meaning of a word? It cannot be understood without some understanding and knowledge of history. It is a question which presupposes some antiquarian interest, an interest in the old games, for instance.

It is certainly odd that we should be so sure that every word, of which we have so many, should have a meaning, and yet that we should go about asking "what is the meaning of a word?" A cat in a bag -- what is a cat? A pig in a poke -- what is a pig?

Every time you write a word, do you spell it? I am going to say "No, even though you may go through the same motions, etc. when you write it or spell it. You spell it when you are asked to spell it or attend to the spelling. Usually you just write it.

This morning I began the discussion with the question in the Blue Book: What is the meaning of a word: There seemed to be little life in that. Asking what sort of question this is, I suggested the analogies I had hit upon earlier:

What is the meaning of a word?

What is the spelling of a word?

What is the pronunciation of a word?

Later this occurred to me:

What is speaking a word?

What is writing a word?

The question "What is the meaning of a word?" did not elicit much response. But, "what is the spelling of a word?" did. Here we got along. Beebe gave us an answer that went somewhat as follows:

"The spelling of a word is that sequence of letters which represents that word." This may be interpreted as follows: Given a certain word one may ask concerning it: How do you spell it? and then one sounds the letters, attending to the sequence of letters or one writes it, again attending to the sequences. There is a difference between spelling a word and writing the word. The difference is shown in the aim one has, in what one does with what one does. It strikes me that in the case of "what is the spelling of a word?" one is not paralyzed by the question, one does not feel so helpless. The spelled word is before one and all one has to notice is that it is made up of these letters in this order. We did not ask what it is that makes that sequence the spelling of that word? of just that word and not of another word. To every word its own spelling. Is the answer to that question more difficult and above all more difficult to understand? What could one mean by "What makes the sequence the spelling of that word? Is this crazy? I am not going to say "CAT" spelled "cat", no matter how they spell other words. Spelling "cat" in that way involves a system of spelling. Given the system, the letters and the associated sounds, "cat" is not simply spelled in this way. This is how it must be spelled. It is no accident that the word "cat" is spelled as it is. This is in general the case, though one might say that even in the best of regulated languages accidents to happen. How does it happen that "scythe" is spelled "SCYTHE"? The alphabet is designed to provide a letter to correspond to the distinguishable sounds we make in speaking the English words. Hence in spelling we match the letter to the sound. This is, by the way, not how we learn to spell. We learn by drill. This will serve us with the familiar words. Is it right to say that we commonly spell by ear?

In Beebe's sentence there is the phrase "represents that words". Now we can understand "represents". Given so simple a word as "cat," a one-syllable word, can it in the spelling of it be heard as compound of two whispers Ke and te and a vowel, a. The spelling represents the sounds, sounds which we should not have heard except for the spelling. I am not clear about the language here, Is "cat" one sound or

three sounds? I think one, though we can lengthen out the sound so as to distinguish component sounds. It seems there are simple sounds to which ideally letters of the alphabet correspond and there are complex sounds represented by combination of letters. All this is elementary. When one contemplates this, the marvelous presence in our lives of an alphabet which is basic in all our writing and printings, in all letters and essays and books, that we can still hear Socrates in the sound of our own voices, enjoining us to take care of our soul, what a marvel indeed, that is. And now it seems preposterous to say that someone invented the alphabet. If a man did not, did a committee? God is not a committee. What is more God does not invent. "Let there be light and there was light." That is not how Thomas Edison went about his business. He was an inventor. "Let there be an alphabet. And there was an alphabet."

There was another sentence in response to: What is the spelling of a word? But the context is slightly different. If I ask: What is the correct spelling of (blank)? the answer will be in terms of the sequence of letters. But if you ask me what she is doing and I answer that she is spelling a hundred words, and the question now is: What is spelling? or what is the spelling of a word?, then we get a different answer. We did. Here it is: "The spelling of a word is the act of reproducing the sequence of letters which" This is interesting since it shows that the expression "the spelling of a word" may be understood either as the doing ("the act") or what it does or is made by that act. I spell and in spelling I produce the sequences.

At about this time I attempted to enlarge the area of discussion, beyond what we may describe as the definition. I began in some such way as this: In order to understand spelling which is different from knowing how to spell, we should understand how spelling came into the world, what purpose it serves. I said: Imagine the world and people in it who had not yet learned to spell. In fact spelling had not yet been invented. Let us say that speaking came before writing. So people had gotten along a long time speaking. People talked, chatted, whispered, shouted, sang, scolded, praised, complained, gossiped, etc. -- always speaking. There was no writing and later, behold, there was writing. In learning to write they had learned to spell. So someone must have supposed it was a good thing. Or did he even then anticipate that the world would be full of books and so people everywhere would be corrupted. He may have said: "If books won't do it, TV will. Later he invented TV to complete the good work. At any rate we can see how some omniscient human people might have considered. At this time people had already played around with chalk, the ink of squids, and had chisled stones. And there were the giant leaves of the Chinese paper trees. What was needed was the art of pasting sounds on the leaves of trees. He worked on that for a long time, how to catch the spoken word and fix it onto a leaf out of this creative attempt, in a flash, came the thought of representing the spoken word by marks on paper, first pictures, later the letters. But what was this for? There is this difficulty with talk. You can talk to people, only people who are near, near enough to hear you. Beyond that they cannot hear you and you cannot talk to them. So you can see that writing has introduced the possibility of talking much louder, a voice that carries as far as the carrier of a letter, man or homing dove, can carry. So you can tell mother now; just use the alphabet. And mother lives in Patagonia. Besides, as someone else suggested writing gives one a longer and infallible memory. So that is how it has come about we now spell. Without spelling, no writing.

Earlier I said: Before there was writing, there was speaking. Lindley had some misgivings about that. For our purpose this will do: Children in the U.S.A. in 1970

learn to speak before they write. Accordingly as we asked in connection with writing, why write?, so we can go on to ask: Why speak? If we can understand speaking we will understand writing, since we do in writing what we did earlier in speaking. If we can answer that question and we speak words, what else? We should get to understand all there is to understand. Perhaps, then, the question: what is the meaning of a word? will be regarded as superfluous. I did not have in mind that one would give an answer in general. That is why I suggested we try to imagine the origin of the first sound that became a word. In this way we may hit upon the idea of what makes that sound a word. It is in this connection we imagined trestboy Bill, who made the noise of the bee, "buzz, buzz, buzz".

(You may be interested in this, In Hamlet you will find: "What do you read, my Lord?"

"Words, words, words."

and also:

"My Lord, I have news to tell you."

"My Lord, I have news to tell you. When Roscius was an actor in Rome, . . ."

"The actors are come, my Lord."

"Buzz, Buzz!"

"Words, words, words" and "Buzz, buzz, buzz.")

The point of imagining a situation in which, let us say, a person, a child, for the first time in the history of the world, spoke and so spoke the first word, was or is that we should so far have no occasion to introduce the word "meaning". That would have to come in later, perhaps there would have to be a great deal of language before there would be occasion for this. Beebe mentioned the case of Helen Keller. Her teacher - it must have been for a long time - tried to get her to catch on to language. That meant trying to get her to understand a word. She succeeded. The first word was "water". With the first word there was a breakthrough. But what now should we say happened when she first understood a word? If we say that for the first time she connected a pattern of touches, her teacher's playing with her fingers on Helen's lips, with water, would that be enough? First I had better ask: What is it to make that connection? It might be that whenever her teacher traces that pattern on her lips she expects her teacher to put her hand in the water, she expects to feel the water run through her hand. Another question: What can water be to Helen who has never heard or seen anything?

See

"The ontogeny recapitulates the phylogony." So we can begin with Billy, our kid. He has as a baby to do just what the first baby did. The first baby, if there was a first baby, spoke the first word. Billy, our kid, and every baby since the first baby, has done the same. There is always the first word as there is always the last word. Everyone has the last word. Be patient and you will have the last word. Now we are on the alert for the first word. A baby cries, coos, grunts tiny grunts, squeals, gurgles, sighs, etc. Notice that I said "sighs". Can a baby sigh? Well, not as an older person sighs. It cannot give a sigh of relief. It cannot do that anymore than it can worry. Now how would I know such a thing? Can I read the baby's mind? Can a baby smile? Of course. Just a pleasant smile? Can it also laugh? At a joke? Why not? Might not a baby make up its own

jokes? Of course not. How do I know that? I seem to know more about babies than does Dr. Spock. I can at any rate assure you that a baby has plenty of leisure and so plenty of leisure to make up jokes. I cannot, however, get rid of the question: How do I know so much? Clairvoyance? Extra-sensory perception? Very well, I do not know. But in that case, what am I saying?

I am going to turn aside now to ask: Why are we concerned about this? Well, to begin with, W. asks, or at any rate, begins the Blue Book with: What is the meaning of a word? You may have noticed that he doesn't answer that question. So I guess he doesn't ask it either. What is obvious is that the sentence contains the phrase "the meaning of". And now I think I can explain how what we are doing is related to that phrase. Let us agree that such a phrase as this one, "the meaning of" is introduced into the language only as there is a need for it. There must be something one wants to do with it. And this need will arise only as there is a situation which is already present to allow for this. Now what is that? Well, there must be words. There will very likely be many of them before there is a need for "the meaning of". This brings us back again to Billy. There is for Billy a first word, and later more and more words. He does things with words. The situation as St. Augustine describes it may not be more useful for our purpose but it is more like the situation as it is for babies we are interested in. That ersatz baby was to invent his own words, to make them himself. That baby is a genius. But Billy learned his words among and from people who are already furnished with words. The purpose was to get into perspective what it is for a child to speak, to have a word, and not merely to make the sound of the word. Accordingly I wanted also to get into perspective, once the child had words, could speak, the occasion when "the meaning of" would come in. There must be a time in the child's life when a new word comes. It utters the word, looks bewildered, utters the word again, looks about as though for help, and then someone says: "He doesn't know what the word means" and going towards the boy, he shows him the thimble. Now the boy picks up the thimble. At some time the boy now catches on. His mother has helped him to the meaning of the word "thimble", not to the thimble", mind you. And in doing this she has prepared him to respond to the order: "Thimble", and when his mother says "thimble" he not only looks at the thimble as if to show that he has made the connection, but he brings her the thimble. He understands "thimble."

But why now all this?

Because. There is an expression of confusion which comes up repeatedly in philosophical discussions which looks like what would have been exhibiting, namely the question: What is the meaning of _____? Our task in philosophy is to get rid of the confusion which gives rise to this expression. For the confusion lies in the background. Try this: We do not understand something that has been said. We think that we do not understand the meaning of a word. But the word is a familiar word we understand. Here we struggle against our better understanding looking for another meaning. The object, however, is to be content with the familiar meaning and in that way discovering that the puzzling sentence, the sentence we do not understand, makes no sense. Here the effort comes to an end. One does not go on trying to understand what cannot be understood. Can one then also show that the sentence cannot be understood? Yes. For the understanding of that word is embodied in the grammar of that word, and that grammar is the touchstone of intelligibility. The grammar expresses the use.

A grammatical remark directs our attention to that part of the grammar of a word which happen to need in order to show up some aberration. (confusion).

What then do we need? To seek out the meaning of the word where it is, to bring it out into the open, and to see by comparing it with what we have got, not only the difference, but the sort of differences.

Can a man think to order? Bring me a steak and salad and four thoughts.

"Think me a thought."

Philosophy, the puzzling questions and the puzzling answers, arise out a wrong perspective of the workings of our language. What we need then is to discover that wrong perspective and to show it wrong by reminding of the right perspective. Grammatical remarks.

Oct 4, '70

The question with which the Blue Book begins is: What is the meaning of a word? W. goes on: "Let us attack the question." That is not normal. We try to answer questions. Sometimes we succeed. That W is about to attack the question suggests that perhaps this is not the question though it may be the expression of a need of some sort. I am going now to try to figure out how this word arises.

We are all familiar with such questions as: What is knowledge? What is truth? What is justice? What is mind - and so on. I am inclined to go on with: "Let us attack. . ." but just now is not the time for it. First I should like to point out that the focal words in these questions, "knowledge", "time", "justice", "mind" are as common in your life as your daily bread. No one asks: "What is daily bread"? Is it then that people who ask such questions are these do not know what we all know? Are we to ask: Where have you been all these years? Can't we say: If you do not know what knowledge is, look it up in the dictionary? We can, of course, say this but it won't help. The person who asks this is perhaps more familiar with the dictionary than you are. He knows that in the dictionary he will find more words and it isn't more words he wants. He is well aware that if he looks up the word "knowledge", he will read at that entry more words, and with every word he reads he can ask again: What is _____? He knows that if it be said of him that he is looking for the meaning of those words, that the dictionary is no place to find what he wants. In the dictionary are only more words. It is as though in a dictionary you found an arrow which pointed to an arrow which pointed to an arrow which pointed out of and to something outside the dictionary. So the question: What is the meaning of a word? holds for any word you like. But when you then get to the edge of the paper you will lose your way. An arrow pointing as this last arrow goes into space - every arrow in this case points away from itself - leaves one helpless. To make sure that this is how it is we need only to remind ourselves that the word-is not the meaning of a word - the arrow is not turned around to point to itself. It may be helpful now to remind you that Billy, the kid, and his mother had no such worries. Why not? Because there were so few words and no dictionaries. The idea of the meaning of a word until the expressions "the meaning of" made the trouble possible. But it came in and so we do have trouble. We are supplied, thank you.

If, as I represented the matter, the arrow points to the arrow to the last arrow which points away, away, then isn't it surprising that the hopelessness of the pursuit did not lead men to drop the matter? If every arrow at the edge of the pages of the book pointed to something, as arrows commonly do, then we might have room to flounder in, but words are not arrows. What then keeps us going? There is promise in this, that the word from day to day, from Socrates to Hartshorn, has the same meaning, and so the word from day to day points to the same thing,

to a thing at least 2500 years old. And since it is at least that old, we may as well say that it is everlasting, and that not by accident, but because. If that is not how it is, how do you explain that Socrates and Hartshorn get on so well. The indestructible makes this possible. This is one fortunate mode of relief. There is another which is less attractive to some people. It begins, not with the idea of the same meaning but with the idea that the meaning of a word must be something, you, are acquainted with. This is the idea that the arrow at the edge of the page points to something you can see, hear, smell, feel, etc., you can see from this, how reasonable the dictionary writers were in not trying to include the meanings of the words themselves in the dictionary. A dictionary in that case would be more like a kaleidoscope and music box and perfumery and sensitivity in the same box. You would look up the word "red" and get a flash, and so on. I said how reasonable they were, but they were no more reasonable than the other people. You can no more get indestructibles into a dictionary than you can the perishables. (I do not mean the vegetables.) (One of the most difficult things in all the world, for an amateur, that is, is to make the Rocky Mountains out of sensations.) This answer is designed to keep the channels of communication open between Protogoras and Hume and the late Positivists.

You may gather from what I have just written that two of the great traditions in philosophy have arisen out of difficulties with "the meaning of a word." In the one case these have arisen in connection with the phrase "the same meaning" and in the other with "the meaning is something with which we are acquainted" together with: "We are acquainted only with our own sensations". These prejudices set the scene of the battle between the perishables and the imperishables. I mention this in order that you may get the relevance of the "question" at the beginning of the Blue Book. For if you suppose, which you may do, at least for a moment, that philosophical distress arises out of our being misled in respect to the grammar of the phrase "the meaning of", then we had better prepare ourselves to resist the temptations involved here by paying attention to that grammar. The grammar of the phrase shows us the meaning of the phrase, not, however, as something we do not know, but as what we do know.

I was about to say that all the problems of philosophy are resolvable into problems of the meanings of words and of how to set those into perspective. But there I suddenly realized that I did not know what all the problems were. I know only 6002. I should have spoken only of those. I just now introduced the word perspective. Here is the point. If in any philosophical discussion you have trouble with a word, you cannot understand it in that context, then to gain perspective, you may set it in a context in which you do understand it. In that way you may discover that is wrong when you did not understand it.

Whelan: "Calories aren't real. They are only a way of talking about food. Calories are an abstraction, noodles are real." "What's the difference between a calorie and a noodle? What's the difference between the unconscious and Austin, Texas?"
 "What's the difference between a porpoise and a shark?"
 The meaning of a word is its use.
 "We can never see an accurate circle. All the circles we see are imperfect copies."
 "No one can see over the horizon." "Two boys - they are always walking towards the horizon". (No one can walk on the equator either or climb the North Pole)

"The floor is 99% space."

"All is flux but at different rates."

"The water froze when heated and that is all there is to it."

"An ordinary woman giving butter to 100 beans which grow in ordinary men".

"I see a star 75 light years away explode."

"I heard the sound after it was made."

"Vico makes much of the notion that the earliest language arose out of man's efforts to formulate the meaning of the primeval thunderclap of God's wrath." Joyce and Aquinas p. 15

"O God! O God! That it were possible.

To undo things done: to call back yesterday!

That time could turn up his swift sandy glass

To until the days, and to redeem those hours."

Thomas Haywood.

"No use crying over spilled milk."

(All the kings horses and all the King's men

Cannot put Humpty-Dumpty together again."

and here is the sentence from Macbeth:

"Things without all remedy should be without regard: what's done is done."

Act III Sec II p 55

The occasion for these quotations is a passage in W. in the Foundations of Math. 13-15. In 14 "what's done cannot be undone" - a purported quotation from Macbeth but not in Macbeth.

13 Here the subject is the (meaning of) use of the word "all." In a certain case someone is inclined to distinguish between the use of the word "add" and something over and above that: "Something attaching to the word itself. This is the idea that the word add has a meaning and a use, that the use flows from the meaning. Same meanings; different use. Here W brings in analogies. I got this wrong. It seems to us that if the use is now different, something else must also be different. I got it now.

Different use; different meaning.

Different behavior; different character.

(Behaviour flows from character)

If is the purported distinction between use and meaning that W is working with here. Someone will think use flows from meaning as behavior flows from character. Here is an analogy.

14 "This shows you" - what shows you? I guess that one should think of use and meaning in the way suggested - I can't figure this out. There is a constantly practiced use, the use, for instance, of the word "add". Certain gestures, picture, reactions, are linked with this practiced use. Lee Gordon waved his hand - a gesture - in connection with "add". That might do for the gesture. "Add the tress, leave none standing. Pictures - what about that? He goes on: If pictures did not force themselves on us how could such a sentence as: "What's done cannot be undone" mean anything to us?" We got to understand this sentence by noticing

what took place before Lady Macbeth spoke these words, not quite these words. Presumably, according to W., you cannot make any sense of these words without a picture. Macbeth had murdered. It makes no sense to say that Macbeth murdered Duncan, a day later regreted it and would brave - what, "trammled up the consequences." Macbeth could have pictured himself - if only he could have - restoring Duncan back to life. Could have in quite (difference) from being forced. There is plenty here I do not understand. Picture, picture? Why should a picture be required in this case and not in this case: "There, you've done it."?

I can see how one may say that the conclusions it contained in the premises and that one draws it out. There one might say is the picture - but what we hear is words.

A picture of the grammar. How does one picture the grammar? Fill it out. Elaborate. Tell the whole story. This, one can choose. Let's have it. But the picture that forces itself upon us, we do not choose. And if the picture is the wrong picture where did we get that, what forced that upon us? I support it must be the grammar - the wrong grammar.

Oct. 8

Mead has a theory of universals (Miller). I take it this means an account of meaning, same meaning, different meaning, and so on. People have in the past answered as though this idea of same meaning were the idea of what the word which has the same meaning was the name of. So the question was: Of what is this word the name? The same word could be the name of some one thing apart from all the things which bear that name. There are many apples but the one apple. Or it could be the name of the invisible skeleton of the apple in each apple. But it could be the name of any apple to which the name applies - applies to apple. I cannot now make out whether Mead formulates the question in this way or not. Is he going to say something like: Same meaning is same response? ("The meaning of the cluck is the response it makes. Something like certainly. The agreed-upon response. By the way, private language is included. But two people might be a society.

What is meaning?

What is same meaning?

Same use

Learning a language.

Particular uses.

New words, new uses.

What is thinking ("Operating with signs")

Language. The agreed upon.

Language and the environment - The hand.

The language is a burden. I mean Mead's language. But apart from that one can see that Mead is helping himself to a new perspective of our speaking and writing and

of our language, what we say and want.

(October 9)

What is a philosophical problem?

A philosophical problem is another philosopher. But sometimes a philosophical problem is the philosopher himself, not another philosopher.

Today we had another occasion to notice the pertinence of the problem: What is the meaning of a word? Miller on Mead says: The meaning of a word is the response of B when A says the word to him. To him? How does B know the word is addressed to him? Never mind that. When the hen goes "cluck", the chicks run to the hen. And when A says "cluck", B runs to A. No doubt as the hen has scratched up a morsel in the sand or seen a hawk overhead. So A has a sandwich for B or sees an automobile coming. The chicks respond to "cluck". So there is a response. B's response to A's saying "cluck" is the meaning of "cluck".

(I have made up a new song. And it is a true song.
As I said we was poor". T.V.)

Oct 11 (P 37)

I have still not worked out a nice explanation of the relevance of: what is the meaning of a word? to philosophy. In the course of doing philosophy is it that this question naturally arises? I think this is it: Philosophy begins with such questions as: what is justice. What is knowledge." etc. One almost immediately runs into difficulties. As in Plato's case -- the dialogues --, one gives up, at least for today. This may, however lead not to trying to answer again but to reflection upon the question: What sort of question is this? Here one may come to see that this question is a question about the meaning of the word. So it looks as though the question is an ordinary one, such a question as one asks when one doesn't know the meaning of a word. Here, this situation is this: One knows the meaning of a word, the word "knowledge," for instance, and goes on as people do, "I know this", "I know that", and so on. So if in that sense one knows the meaning of a word, there seems to be another meaning of the word which one does not know. It is a little like this: If you know what a pear is and buy pears, small pears, eat pears, pick pears, and at the same time think of a pear as a kind of animal, then you may still ask yourself: what is a pear? And you will go to the zoo and look among the animals to find a pear. It isn't there.

I know the meaning of a word. I understand it. I have used it a hundred times.
I know the meaning of a word. I know the grammar of the word. I have been checking.

We may treat what W does with: What is the meaning of a word? as a model for dealing with a whole class of similar difficulties - What do you do? You review the grammar of the expression. In this case you remind yourself of what it is like to explain the meaning of a word. The meaning is what you explain. Consider this now as a model for treating the question "what is knowledge? You review the grammar of the word "knowledge" and what would that be like? You remind yourself of how you get knowledge, what responsibility you assume when you say: "I know." It may be useful to provide yourself with examples. And now to notice the grammar of certain other related expressions such as "I think", "I do not know", "I guess", "I surmise", etc; one may ask what sorts of things one can know.

There is still the question as to the point of this.

Let us suppose that when one knows the meaning of a word, understands it, uses it, etc. that he is vaguely aware of the grammar of that word. It is there in the language. He now misconceives all of this as something, and of the word as a name of that. So when he asks: What is knowledge? he is asking: What is that thing called knowledge? Naturally he cannot find it.. He is asking that question under an illusion. What laying out the grammar for him is supposed to do is to dispell that illusion. For the grammar of the word knowledge excludes the grammar in which he is thinking of knowledge.

Here at any rate, is our way of making something of W's treating that initial question: What is "the meaning of" a word? What you can do with the expression "the meaning of" W. can do with any of these other questions beginning with: What is (space)? But when would one ask? When, in spite of the fact that one understands a word, he still asks: What is _____? He has in that case got the grammar wrong which leads him into the illusion that he does not know the meaning of that word, a review then of the grammar should set him straight and give him relief - but not an answer. Remind yourself of the grammar.

Suppose someone asked W's question: What is the meaning of a word? and he now gave this answer: The meaning of a word is the essence, the enduring what's what, that is either hovering above, or resting in each of the earthly things called in a derivative sense by that name. We could then see one advantage in this. It would keep philosophers humble. The question would be asked and he would reply: I do not rightly know. My eyes were made for short distances and for what lies on the surface. Hence for what hovers high or is under the shelf my eyes fail me. I only know that whatever it is it either hovers or is buried inside. And isn't this what Socrates meant by all his ignorance. Looking up will not help nor will staring hard.

I notice now that W. in the Blue Book introduces his treatment of the initial question as a model for the treatment of such other questions as: What is length: What is the number one? The question which further corresponds to: What is an explanation of the meaning of a word? is: how do we measure a length:

The sorts of questions he is concerned with give us a cramp. a grammatical cramp.

Set 20

Philosophy or at least some sort of it arises out of "The temptation to look about you for something which you might call the meaning".

On p5 of the Blue Book on thinking, W introduces an analogy, an analogy between the way in which we think of the amoeba and the way in which we think of the mind. We observe the amoeba doing such wonderful things. Every amoeba can do it. Among the amoeba then are no misfits, none retarded. Imagine that among human beings all the children were genuises. And yet the amoeba is a pinhead of jelly - to all appearances. What queer jelly to be able to do such things and now what else do we observe? We observe not amoebas but human beings. And what do they do? They go into the garden at an order, a few words, and pluck a red flower and bring it in. They count the boxcars at the railroad crossing. They sing a song of six-pence. They enjoy grammatical cramps. Now, isn't that something? If

human beings are also composed of protoplasm in a box would you expect that to be able to count to ten? What the amoeba can do is as nothing compared to what any of us can do. We might say of the amoeba that it is queer and as gifted as protoplasm can be. Man is, however, super-subtle protoplasm. W. However, points out that what strikes us in the case of the amoeba is that we cannot explain what the amoeba does causally, cannot discover the mechanism. But that is not what astounds us in the case of human beings.

"the mystifying use of our language".

"There are those early memories one cannot get another set; one has only those."
(Willie Cather)

"God gives us memory so that we may have roses in December" (J.M. Barrie)

On last Monday we began reading the BB. W. begins with a "question" and then "attacks" the question. He then tries to explain how this attack is intended to help. It is intended to help in the same way that a similar attack is intended to help in the case of the question: What is length? This explanation, however, to be effective depends upon our being able to appreciate that question. If no one asks the question: What is length? and if one does not oneself ask it, one can scarcely appreciate the helpfulness of the attack. So we passed over this. We asked instead: What is time? and now if we could appreciate the attack on it, we could appreciate W's attack on the question: What is the meaning of a word. All these questions are subject to the same sort of attack but it seems that in some cases it is easier to grasp what is going on, what the point of the attack is, what the attack does to the question.

It has occurred to me just now that something might be made of: What is length? Last Monday it seemed incomprehensible that one could generate a problem, thinking only of the length of a table, for instance. It is only as the "grammar" of the word "length" is varied and complicated that one can be bothered. Perhaps nothing will come of this but we can try. What things then can be either long or short? Is it the length of the table that is short when the table is short? Is a tall man a long man? Will a man have length, width, and breadth? Can a table you are going to make have a length? If so, how do you measure that? Can a long time be longer than the longest table? There is long distance. Triangles have sides and the sides have length but bubbles have no sides and there is no long and short of it. There is the long and short of a certain matter under discussion. The length of a day, 24 hours, Socrates stood out in the cold. "Life is short, art is long". There is long, long ago but no short, short ago. Is a minute longer in time than an inch is in space? Some nights are longer than others. And not all hours are of the same length. He was long of patience. Longitude which is lengthitude is contrasted with latitude, which is widthitude. Strange, isn't it that a day has length but no width. Imagine a table ten feet long without width. Time is more like a piece of string. That is wrong. Time has no length at all since it has neither beginning nor end. One cannot say how long time is. This is like: How high is up? 'He lengthened out the tale'. "It's a long story. Length? 400,000 words. Imagine it -- 400,000 words. Should get you half-way to the moon. How far from Philadelphia to New York? An hour and a half by train. Shorter by plane. So longer and shorter. The distance varies. Movable Philadelphia. From rags to riches. Shorter or longer than from riches to rags?

At arm's length. A rod is the distance between yourself and the ox you shake a stick at - one cannot say how long time is but one can say how long a time it has been since Mother was a girl. In the podiatrist's waiting room is a sign: "A pretty face starts at the feet." From head to toe is a long face. One can pull a long face 'dull' doesn't seem right.) One cannot pull a short one, a fast one yes. How long is a long face? A long ton is 2400 pounds more than a short ton. A long cord is longer than a short cord. There is more wood in a long cord. A long cord is longer than a short cord. There is more wood in a long cord. A long face is not measured in inches. In a long face one counts the disappointments (displeasure) or one measures the intensity of the one disappointment (displeasure). She will go to great lengths to get that horse. The horse won the race by a length (By a head. By a nose). (By a whisker). Minis and midis are distinguished by skirt-length. (What length?) 'and a long, long, loving kiss'.

I remember now that I introduced these variations for a purpose. I wanted to provide a background for the question: What is length? I do not think I have done that. Instead I want now, however, with these variations before us to drop from the blue sky above you with the question: What is length? The question could at least be understood as having something to do with all those variations. Let me now suggest that you understand the question to be a capsule question which is then a capsule full of questions. Each of those questions is a question about the meaning of the word 'length' in each of the episodes. But how now are you to go about answering? Remember that you and I both understand all these expressions. However, you do not need an introduction to the meaning of the word. You do not need a definition. What then? I suggest that what you need is a reminder of the circumstances, what went before and what came after, in which the expression, English being what it is naturally comes in. I am first going to answer my question: What things can be either long or short? Anyone can be short of cash. In a store they can be short-handed. In the stock market one can sell short. Of an account, one may say: "That is the long and the short of it". Tobacco is long-cut. You can get your hair cut short or long. The stenographer may write shorthand or long-hand. Shorty is called Shorty, usually because he is short but sometimes, should I say, because he is long? We are short two chairs. Rainfall may be short. It is never long. A street is short: Our street is the longest in the U.S. Vowels are long and short. So are notes. Tables, in your house, and tables in your imagination, times, distance, sides of triangles, subjects discussed, a day, art, ago, nights (Time can also be high. "A high old time". So a time can be old too), stories, Philadelphia, an army, a face, tone, cords, skirts, lovers' kisses, short arms. In a short run and in the long run. She was short-changed. A crop, short-wave radio, a long journey, a life, a term, a sentence, a horn, etc. Short of breath. In baking we use shortening. What does shortening shorten? There is also short-cakes. 'Mama's little baby loves short'ning bread.' Tempers are short -- short-shrift.

What is the meaning of a word?

What is the price of anything?

How long is a piece of string?

How far is up?

(What is counting with numbers?)

Now you can begin with: What is length? and realize that if you know what can be short you should know what is length. So you may ask: What is it to be short? What we want is a few words that are conclusive, final, succinct, the last word, forever satisfying.

(short order -- long-headed -- short-circuit -- short-coming -- short-sighted)

What is the meaning of a word? That sounds as though I know what the meaning of something else, not a word, his coming to the wedding for instance, is. I was worried, however, about something else, namely about the meaning of a word, not a certain word, about the meaning of any word. This now also sounds like: what is the price of anything (for sale)? That means not the price of a certain thing, an egg-beater, for instance, but the price of anything in the store. Clearly, there is no such thing as the price of anything in the store. If you were to go into a store and ask: What is the price of anything in the store? the clerk would smile at you. She might with a twinkle in her eye explain to you that everything in the store is marked with its price. Now it is your turn to smile. You reply that you do not want to know the price of a toy automobile or of an orange or of anything on the counter. So you repeat your request: What is the price of anything? As you might expect the clerk is flustered, she can tell you the price of anything you point to: What is the price of this? and what is the price of that: but she does not know what to do. Anything she picks up and reads the price of is something, some one certain thing, and not just anything. She might be inclined to say that there is no such price as the price of anything.

Perhaps this can be complicated. He doesn't even accept that the prices of the things in the store are as marked. He asks whether the clerks who mark the prices on these things may not make mistakes so that there is a difference between the price as marked and the real price. And so may not the real price never be known? There seem in this case to be three prices, the price as marked, the price as calculated, and the real price. There may be a difference between the price as marked and the price as calculated since once the price as marked would be a mistake. As for calculations everyone knows that error is possible. It seems, accordingly, that we get on without knowing the real price of anything. So no wonder the clerk could not help us.

What is the meaning of a word?

What is the price of anything?

It seems that just as we may know what the price, as marked, is on all these things in the store so too we may exchange words. We get along in this rough way. We buy and sell without knowing the real price or what price is. In similar fashion we speak and write, words, words, words, but who knows the meaning of any word or what meaning is? What is price? What is meaning? All the same we get on.

Let us see now how we might get on with: What is the price of anything? Here goes: If a man owns something and wants to sell it, then if someone is interested in buying it, he will ask the man who wants to sell it, how much in money or wampum or pigs he is asking for it - a horse, let us say. If the answer is: \$100 - that is the asking price. If he sells it finally for \$90, that is the selling price. How he decides to ask \$100 and not more or less commonly depends

on a number of factors, the condition of the horse, its utility, the demand, and the supply, his need of money now, and so on. It is clear in this case that in explaining the concept of price we give an account of the surroundings, buyer and seller, and something to sell, in order to provide. The connections. We attain to clarity by showing connections. As we all know there are stores in which they sell thousands of articles and you can read the prices on the articles. The horse you want to buy may wear a price tag in its tail. In such cases you do not have to ask: How much - or what are you asking?

Have I in this explanation missed anything?

Now consider the following as an answer to: What is the meaning of a word: as you know, people speak and write, just as they buy and sell. In doing so they speak and write to someone and in doing so words, words, flow from their lips or pens. Usually people understand one another, but once a week, perhaps, a strange word will come in. That word may give someone trouble. And now he may interrupt: "Troglodyte, what do you mean?" or "what does that mean?" Then Mr. Agnew explains what he means. He says: "a troglodyte is a cave dweller, a primitive man, usually a large city dweller, in New York, Boston, and so on." Then, whoever has been hearing the speaker or reading the writer, can go on, with understanding.

Now notice the parallel: Just as in case you want to buy a cow and you ask the owner what he is asking for the cow and he says: "A bag of beans: and that is the price he is asking, so too in case you want to understand what someone is saying and there is a word you do not understand, you may ask the owner of that word - it was his word - what he means by that word? or what the meaning of that word is? What he then tells you is the meaning of that word just as when the question was: How much are you asking? the man gave you the price. One can give the meaning as he can give the price.

Is there anything wrong with that? Is anything left out?

"Words are wise men's counters". That is Hobbes, So the analogy I have just presented should be alright.

The question: what is the price of anything? must be regarded as purely theoretical. The answer we have given him is not going to be of any use to a man in his doing better in one supermarket than another. The price is the price. And he knew, before he asked, that the price of the article he might want to buy is marked on that article. At least you can say that the answer has straightened out something in his head. Everything in the supermarket remains the same. Of course he may on occasion look curiously at the article he wants to buy, trying to figure out what the price-mark on the article has to do with the article. But if he needs tooth-paste p 37 he puts down the money and he takes his choice. This is how it is too with the man who asks: what is the meaning of a word? That too is a hypothetical question. The answer we give him is not going to help him to do any better when he tells a joke or when he tries to improve the letters he writes, with a sprinkle of sparkle. The meaning of a word is still the meaning of a word. He had, before he asked his question, heard and read many jokes, perhaps told a few, and received and sent many letters. At best you can say that the answers relieved tensions in his head, a heard-ache, for instance. His telling jokes and writing letters remain the same. Of course, he may now and then still look curiously at a word as though he tried to discover the meaning hidden between or behind the letters of the word. Otherwise things go on as usual. He reads the head-lines in the newspaper, listens to the weather forecast, talks to his dog in pet-language and the dog squeals in reply.

But what then has happened?

Henberg on last Monday asked about: "The meaning of a word is its use". I am not sure as to whether the difficulty arises in trying to understand that we do use words - we do, don't we? - how otherwise explain the expression, "English usage" - or whether it arises in thinking of the meaning of a word as its use. In respect to the former matter it may be well to remind ourselves of how we use words, but it may now be more intelligible if we consider not the use of words but of language. This is because if we speak of the use of a word it may seem as if we use one word at a time, a word singly. This is seldom the case. "Help! Help!" or "Fire! Fire!" might be considered such a case. A man who at the counter says: "A package of Camels, please" is using words. When a student writes a paper on: "The liveliest Mo-nad" he is using words. When Shakespeare wrote Hamlet he was using words. When a man writes a long novel he may use many words. In the English bible there are 20,000 words. Does anyone wish now to say that we do not use words? If he does he does not mean, I think, to say that the man who says: "A package of Camels, please" does not by speaking, get the cigarettes he asked for. Had he said "Luckies", he would have gotten different cigarettes. If the word "use" bothers him, at least, the facts in the matter of this example are plain. He may have stronger misgivings in connection with the students writing the paper or Shakespeare's writing Hamlet or Hamlet's writing Shakespeare. There is certainly nothing so obvious as getting a package of cigarettes. If we ask: What did the student use words for? the answer might be: "To fashion a shining example of clarity", and that might be likened to using gold and precious stones to make a diadem. As for Shakespeare he use words to compose a play to be performed at the Globe theatre. If anyone still shies away from saying that we use language or use words, he will at least understand that someone who said that we do might have such examples in mind.

What I have just now reminded you of, namely, that we use language, together with the idea that we use language in many ways is what W. brings in- to prominence in P.I. 23 where he writes of the multiplicity of language-games. There are many games. There are many uses. There are many things we do with words. My mentioning this may help you to make connection in your reading P.I.

I want now to see whether I can connect the idea of the use of a word with that of the meaning of a word. In our discussion last week I tried to indicate why a man in 1950 or 1970 should have been concerned to say that the meaning of a word is its use. In saying this he too is using words. So what is he using these words for? I want to say something about that first. The problem: What is the meaning of a word? has been with us for a long time. Plato's theory of forms and Aristotle's use of the word "essence" arise out of concern for the meaning of a word. The distinctions between Realism, Nominalism, and Conceptualism are more of the same. And so is the work of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. On the whole the idea shared in all these words was that the meaning of a word is the object which bears that word as a name. So the controversies were about the object or the kinds of objects which were the bearers of those names. The amazing thing is that so much literature could have fed on that problem. Here and there there may have been someone who questioned whether a word was a name - some words, of course, are names but that settles nothing about the question as to the meaning of the word which is the name. But on the whole, one might say, only a man blessedly ignorant of centuries of thinking could escape the benevolent tyranny of the accumulated prejudice. For we who read inherit not only the color of our eyes, but also the intellectual prejudices of the writers and thinkers whom we not only read but whose thoughts form ours. To break with twenty-five hundred years requires strength. In this case someone has to come along and take notice of what men have scarcely noticed because they were as it were born with it. It is one's environment. It is as though it could not have been otherwise. So someone does come along to question what all these centuries of hard thinking were based on and was not questioned. Someone noticed that all these thinkers

assumed that the word is a name and the meaning of a word is the object for which the word stands. That formula prescribed the task. Look for the object. There is a world behind all these words if we could only find it. In this way the philosopher became an explorer of the unknown. Other people floated on the surface of the language but the philosopher dug deep. It could be like digging in the air for hidden treasure - and coming back with something.

Let us say that this is the first step - a difficult step. First take notice of the assumption. Then question it. Someone might notice, bring it out into the open, but not question it. Must one have an inkling that there is something the matter with it? It could arise in this way. A man notices the assumption. He broods over it. He also comes to see that centuries of fruitless, futile enquiry, endless dispute, misunderstanding and confusion, have proceeded from this earnest pursuit of what lies at the end of this impossible rainbow. This may provide the basis of the inkling. With such consequences there must be something the matter with the assumption. Language was certainly not designed for such a debacle. So here is another step: There is something the matter. In consequence something else has to be devised or discovered. At any rate a man is now in a position to ask: What is meaning? What is the meaning of a word? Here is something strange. Nothing could be more familiar to us than words and, of course, words we understand; hence we are familiar with words whose meaning we can explain. And yet confronted with the question: What is the meaning of a word where is one to look? It is difficult to see one's nose and yet, with what is one more familiar? How, accordingly, does one ever come to say that the meaning of a word is its use? What does one look at? I think I can answer that.

"The specious present". It is spacious.

March 26, 1971

How now does one come to be baffled by the meaning of a word? I asked: What does he look at? Consider to begin with that the question does not arise when you are busy about the meaning of a certain word. You come upon the word "fatuous", you do not know the meaning of a word, you look it up, and then you go on reading, understanding the sentence you just read. In this case you do not also ask: What is the meaning of a word? When then do you ask this? Let us say when you are idling? When you are not concerned to know the meaning of a word. Now you have plenty of time and plenty of room. Your question is not tied to anything. You have to tie it to something. So you make your question more definite. Let us suppose that you ask: What is the meaning of the word "horse"? That is a word you know the meaning of and you need now to find a locus for that. Since the meaning of a word requires an environment you can be sure that that environment must have a horse in it. So you get a horse. You will be inclined now to look at the horse to discover the meaning. You would certainly not get a cow. There is something right about this. Were there no horses, the chances are that the word "horse" would have no meaning. Surely then if the meaning of a word is the object for which the word stands it must be the ~~word~~ horse. But which horse? And now we are ready to say: Not any horse, not a horse at all. But we do not give up altogether, as though a cow might do just as well. The meaning of the word "horse" is that which all horses have in common, the skeleton, perhaps. That won't do either. It is rather like the skeleton of skeletons, not made of bones, of no size, no weight, and so on, the design not made on paper, with God's f drawn on air. You do need a horse to get the meaning. "A horse, a horse, my kingdom, my meaning for a horse."

Let us return to the meaning of a word is its use. We have already noticed that we use language. And what is language? Words. So, of course, we use words. When do we use words? When speaking and writing and reading and arithmetic. Isn't it now obvious that when you hear someone speaking or

when you read what someone has written and you then come upon a word spoken or written that you do not understand, isn't it clear that you cannot use that word? Now what do you do? You ask: How do you use that word? That question is equivalent to: "What is the meaning of that word?" For potice that when the question is answered - the meaning of the word "fatuous" is the same as that of "inane" - you can then use the word. This case also shows how we may describe the use of a word. It is not the only way. In order to understand or rather to get into perspective the meaning of a word one must keep in mind the environment in which such questions as: "What is the meaning of the word "fatuous"?" are asked. One must keep in mind what went before and what followed or what might have followed. Doing this should help one to make a radical break with the philosophical vice of looking for something as the meaning.

"Spontaneous demonstration postponed". (I.V.)
 "The young protest but have no solutions". (I.V.)
 Philosophy as high-falutin fidgeting.

Notes for Students

O.K. Bouwsma

September 7, 1971

You can see, not exactly how W. understands the "question," since "the question" is unintelligible, but how he treats the "question" by "the answer" he gives. In giving "the answer," that he gives, W. is helping us who ask "the question" to understand ourselves. Let us suppose that the person who asks is asking for something but he does not know what he is asking for. Then W. gives him something and he is satisfied. He is like a person who is afraid but does not know what it is he is afraid of. Then somebody tells him and sure enough, that is it. The person who asks may say that there is something: the meaning of a word, and it is nothing on land or sea or anything in the heavens, and it is nothing in his mind, an image, for instance. So W. comes along and says: I will show you something, nothing on earth and nothing in your mind, but when you have understood what I will show you and apply it to your need - you obviously need something - you will see that this is it.

So the question: what is the meaning of a word? when understood in terms of the answer, may come to this: How can I present the meaning of a word?

I get sick of this but I should stick to it. One must understand what W. is doing at the beginning only when one has come to the end, and then one can look back. One who is learning may not understand to what place the teacher is leading him until he has arrived there. Then he may see and understand what the teacher was doing to lead him there. The teacher also arrived where he is by a certain route.

Consider then that W., the teacher in this case, understands the person who asks this question in a way that this person cannot. But neither can he tell him directly what he needs to know. It isn't as though he asked: who was born in 1770? A question like that can be answered in a few words, even though one does not give the right answer. But the "question" he asks, let us say, is unanswerable. And what W. in teaching in this case has got them to do is not to tell him that, which he will not understand anyhow, but he has got to begin with a discussion of language in such a way that he will understand. Now he will not have to be told.

In the Blue Book W. does not do this. We might ~~describe~~ describe what W. does in the B.B. as preparation, a voyage of discovery, for doing what he does in P.I. What then does he do? I think what he does may be described in this way: The expression involved in the question is "the meaning of a word." This expression has been lifted out of any context as though behind it or lodged in it one might discover the meaning. With that in mind one can see that what he does is put it back, that is, he provides a context. Naturally if one stares at an expression or looks all around it, hoping the meaning will crawl out of it or from around it, one may be disappointed, though wonders happen. Here it is: you ask what is the meaning of a word? and I will tell you: The meaning of a word is what you ask

for when you do not know the meaning of a word. That provides a context of circumstances. Someone does not know the meaning of the word aphrodisiac, and it seems like an interesting word. So he asks someone: what is an aphrodisiac? and someone tells him in so many words. He says: an aphrodisiac is an ac that will make an aphro (aphra) dizzy. So now he knows what the meaning of this word is. His interest is not in this explanation except as this explanation can be used to remind us of what an explanation is. And so the explanation of one expression can be another expression, in this case, an expression, a phrase eight words long. Notice that in this case as in so many others W. does not tell us anything we do not know. We all know that the dictionary is full of explanations. We all knew this before we asked the question. See then how strange this is. We ask in seeming ignorance. And he reminds us of what we know. Is he making fun of us? Doesn't he know that the meaning of a word cannot be more words? And yet the answer, so many words, in response to: what is an aphrodisiac? seems to be right. Still, there seems to be something like passing the buck. I want to cash in a word and I am given other words. How am I now to cash in those words? "Words are wise men's counters." Where is the gold?

I guess I should not have introduces these complications.

So someone asks: what is the meaning of a word?: he asks for that when he doesn't have it and when he asks for it he gets it. A meaning is usually not hard to get. How then does he get it? Sometimes he figures out what the meaning of a word is, sometimes by repeating the sentence containing the word, getting the hang of it; sometimes by studying the structure of the sentence. You may in some cases get the meaning wrong but sometimes you would surely get it right. You might figure out that Rialto meant a bridge. Rio is river and alto means high. Put them together in a peculiar way and you get "bridge." You can figure out that when Lady Macbeth says: "Out damn spot," she does not mean her little dog. There is no little dog in the play. Is there then another spot? There is a spot which only the terrible lady can see. There is no problem here. But you might want to figure out how ~~that~~ it is there is no problem. "It is better to live in the corner of the house-top than with a contentious woman." That word "contentious" might give you trouble. The word looks like "contented" and one could live with a contented woman comfortably. Who would escape to the roof to get away from a woman who was contented? If the word were "contentious" that would be different. Such a woman you might figure out was one who contended against her husband. She is a fighting woman. It turns out, of course, that a contentious woman is a woman who contends a lot. And what are we doing? Figuring out a meaning. And so? A meaning is something that can be figured out. So too under certain circumstances you might have to figure out that a rock fest is not a geological exposition. Rock isn't rock.

Crooked	Reproach	Prudent	Pledge (Take)	Entice	Crook	Integrity
Crooked	Approach	Frude	Pledge (Give)		Crook	Integral
						Interger

"The apple of my eye"

"Iron sharpens iron and one man shaprens another."

Sept. 8, '71

There was a crooked man and he walked mile,
He found a crooked sixpence against a crooked stile;
He bought a crooked cat, which caught a crooked mouse,
And they all lived together in a crooked house.

I thought of this rhyme when on the previous page I happened on the word "crooked." One might play with the word "crooked" in these several phrases. In which does it make sense? In which can we give it a sense? In which does it make no sense at all?

I was busy with: what is the meaning of a word? It is obviously something words have - should we say in the same way that a bolt or a nut or a bolt and a nut have a use? - not in the way that a bird has wings, perhaps in the way that a bird has a capacity to fly. There are so many things a thing can have, a cousin, a capacity, a use, a wing, a purse, a longing, a pain, a worry, an aim, an effect, a similarity, an attraction, and so on. Perhaps what a word has some things other than words can have. Gestures too can have meaning. If you stick your tongue out at someone, he may not like it. I think that this is a gesture that does not need to be explained. Would this be right: it is a gesture which expresses hostility of a mild sort, depending on the occasion, the facial expression that precedes or immediately follows it. The eyes too may express hostility. How does one scowl? How does one glare the glare that one glares when he glares? What is the glint in one's eye and what the gleam? Here is a question that is familiar: he shakes his fist at you. Shall we say that is a sign of things to come? If he does that at three o'clock and the bell rings at three fifteen, when you get out of school you had better start running. He is threatening you. He will give you a black eye. He might have said: "I'll get you." So we are prepared, I guess, to say that gestures too have meaning. Whether the meaning of a word may be the same as the meaning of a gesture remains to be seen. You may be interested in Saint Augustine's phrase: "the natural language of all nations."

What is the meaning of a word? The meaning of a word is what words have and also what gestures have. If we could get clear about what gestures have, sticking out one's tongue or shaking one's fist, we might then be prepared to say something about the meaning of a word or words. What is not so clear about words might be clear about gestures. I do not have in mind that whereas words are sometimes ambiguous, gestures are not ambiguous. I have in mind rather that when one boy shakes his fist at another boy - notice that a boy doesn't just shake his fist, he shakes

his fist at another boy - how does he do that? - everything seems to be out in the open. We can tell the whole story in terms of what we have seen. It seems simple. There is nothing mysterious about gestures. Language, words, speaking, seem to have invisible connections we cannot make out, the meaning of a word seems lost in the mist. We may want to pursue this. It may be easier to discuss gestures, to describe the workings of gestures, than to discuss language, the workings of words and sentences, etc. So we might begin with the simpler.

It is well to keep in mind that it is the boy who sticks out his tongue and shakes his fist and it is we, the people, who, including the boy, speak and write. Could one stick out his tongue in so many words? Not nearly so eloquently. Could one shake one's fist in angry words. It is sometimes remarked that fingers were made before forks. It might be remarked that there were gestures before there were words. The first remark is used as a defense for messy eating with one's fingers, potato salad or mashed potatoes. The latter is just a remark and it may be true. It is well to remember that to make a gesture is not simply to make a certain movement or to pull a face. In making a gesture one does something with one's face, sticking out one's tongue, or with shaking one's fist. When the baby for the first time waves his patty he may just be waving his patty - it pleases his parents - and not be waving good-bye. That the child ever comes to wave good-bye is one of the wonders of being a human being. Words before gestures - anything before gestures? Just the baby who makes movements and noises. Later it makes gestures and learns to talk.

"Ibsen had no steel in his character."

What is the meaning of a word? This is what W. says: The meaning of a word is something that may be explained. There are other things that may be explained, such as motives and locomotives. The former is an answer to the question: Why did you do it? and the other is an answer to the question: How does it work? Curiously there is a question about motives which has this form: What did you mean by that? Someone who feels insulted might turn on someone with that question. When one asks the above question about the locomotive, one knows well enough that the locomotive moves the eighty box-cars. What one wants to know is what it is that moves what, that moves what, that moves the wheels of the locomotive that moves the wheels of all the box-cars. Is the explanation of the meaning of a word more like the explanation of something someone did, supplying the motive, or is it more like the explanation of the ~~meaning of~~ workings of a locomotive? It may be like neither of these and if we look at some of these explanations of the meaning of a word we may be sure that that is right.

I want to trace the course of W.'s discussion.

What is the meaning of a word?

The meaning of a word is what may be explained.

How explained?

Either by a verbal or an ostensive definition: The verbal definition seems to get us nowhere. There are difficulties with the ostensive definition. For some words there are no ostensive definitions. And such definitions may not be understood. W. goes on to illustrate this with: "This is tove," pointing to a pencil. There are possibilities of misunderstanding. Here W. introduces the word "interpret." "This is tove" can be interpreted in all sorts of ways.

The question is as to what "interpret" means. The idea is that one hears "This is tove," a strange word, and one has to choose among the possibilities. So it is as though he asks himself: Now what does he mean? This use of the word "interpret" is not the usual one. W. does not explain further. He asks rather: How do we decide that he has interpreted correctly? He gives two examples.

W. has apparently passed on to another subject. He began with the question: What is the meaning of a word? (Here is another interesting form of question: "What is the meaning of this, young man?" which may be of some interest, of the sort: What is the meaning of a gesture?) Now he goes on to: "How is he to know what musical instrument to choose?" "How is he to know what sort of flower to bring?"

"That's no way to act."

"Yes, it is. I am an actress."

Sept. 9, '71

After suggesting something concerning how he knows what flower to bring W. returns to: "Do we interpret the words before we obey the order?" He seems to be stuck with the word "interpret." Perhaps it would have been better had he asked: "Do we have to do something with those words before we obey the order?" The natural answer would be: "Yes, we have to understand the words." And this would seem to require that the words must be translated into some form usable in fetching the red flower. Understanding would be thought of as, for instance, converting the words, not into other words, but into pictures commonly (?) associated with the words. That the word has meaning may then be defined in terms of this convertibility. And the meaning will be defined as the picture. The picture you carry in your mind always ready to pay off the word in terms of the commodity of the mind. We must keep in mind what the problem is. I say to one of you: "When you come back, bring me a cup of coffee." You may not have noticed that in saying that, I have made this noise. I won't say just a noise. I made a particular noise. When you come back you bring me a cup of coffee. Had I made a slightly different noise you would not have brought me a cup of coffee. I might have said: "Bring me a bottle of coke." Then, no coffee, but coke. The problem is: How can a noise produce such an effect? Had you made the noise,

someone would have brought you a cup of coffee. It may be important to say that, since if a talking doll made that noise or a phonograph made that noise, you would not have brought either a cup of coffee. I want to elaborate a bit. I make the noise up here in Room 210. You leave, go to the ground floor, get your coffee, and when you are ready you bring coffee for me, up the elevator, down the hall, and back again to Room 210. Here is, we might say, an episode in your life and mine initiated by my making that noise and completed by your returning with the coffee. I spoke. You heard me. Anyone could have heard. There are so many things to hear. It seems now that what I did speaking and what you did going and returning with the coffee, all of this is on the surface of our lives. There must be, underground, what connects the noise I make and what you do. There certainly is a connection. The San Francisco trolley moves on the surface. Everybody can see it move, both up-hill and down. We all know that what makes it move is out of sight. In a similar fashion the noise I make must have connections with intermediate somethings in order to explain your bringing me the cup of coffee. Everybody knows that if you put a dime into the coffee dispenser the dispenser will deliver a cup of coffee. If you want to know how the thing works the man who services the machine can show you what happens when your dime is dropped into the slot. He may even take the machine apart for you. In a similar fashion when I drop a noise, this noise, into your ear, a slot, something happens. That may be just what you would expect. If I had an ear for such things, I might, holding my ear close to where the action is, hear a silent gurgle-gurgle, the sure sign something is going on, just as there is a click-gush, click-gush in the coffee-machine. Of course, if you are used to dimes and coffee-machines and to getting things only with money - whoever heard of a coffee-machine you could talk to? - then it must indeed be startling and seem impossible that with a little noise, less than a dime's worth, dropped in an ear, you could get a cup of coffee. As we all know it is possible. In some cases the phenomenon is spectacularly instant. You say: "Coffee please," and she turns to the urn and there like a miracle is hot steaming coffee, mocha-brown, in a cup for you. You do not believe in miracles? Then neither do you believe that this is coffee in your cup. Some people, however, are not stopped at the word "miracle." They want to know how the miracle is performed, as though there were a way of performing miracles, as there is a way of making a coffee-machine, of which the dime is master.

So we are returned to our problem. What happens when I say: "Bring me a cup of coffee," and you bring me a cup of coffee. Something must have happened in that gap between those two happenings.

"Ad lib."

"Ebullient."

"I will flex your brains."

The preacher distinguished between what is happening and what is going on. He had in mind what one does speaking, singing, bowing, etc. or whatever the happening may be, and worshipping. One can readily appreciate that what those people in the church are doing is a mystery to an outsider. But what are they doing? What's going on? They are worshipping. It is a distinction we are familiar with. One may speak and bow and kiss the queen's hand. But what is going on? He is paying homage to the queen.

September 24, 1971

The Blue Book begins with the question: What is the meaning of a word? W. then goes on to notice what he later describes as the grammar of a word, with the recommendation that this may help. He goes on with greater detail. One might say that the detail brings out that whether and how the explanation is to be understood depends on the background out of which the need for the explanation arises. This W. does not emphasize. What he does is to direct our attention to what it is to understand the definitions or the explanation.

I am going to introduce certain questions which may help to understand the transition to the question at the top of page 3.

He asks: What is "buch"?

I say: "Buch" is (or means) "book."

Does he understand? Yes, if he understands "book." Suppose I now ask: What happened when he heard me say "book" and he understood? You might answer that when he heard the word "book" he looked at a book or he had an image of a book. When I said: "Buch" is "book" it was brought about that what happened when he heard the word "book" now happens when he hears the word "buch." The magic of the one word is transferred to the other word. In Germany the magic of the word "buch" operates in every city.

She asks: "What is a banjo?"

I say: "This is a banjo," pointing to a banjo.

Later I ask her to bring me a banjo and she goes into the room where the musical instruments are kept and here she comes with the banjo. It is no surprise. That sort of thing happens every day. The question is as to how the explanation works. For clearly it is the explanation that makes this possible. It is not a case in which we can see the workings of the hidden machinery as we can in the case of certain machinery which is mounted and enclosed in glass. The workings of an automobile may be shown in this way and an engineer could explain every next movement of the parts of the machine. We are all acquainted with turning the key for the ignition and we can all see the wheels go round. But what happens in between? Between what? Between ears and hands and feet, hers, I mean. I do not want an answer in terms of tympanum and little bones and jelly and all the rest of it to the nerves and muscles in her hands and feet. In W.'s discussion he uses the word "interpretation" and this presumably is a word for whatever happens in between. The word "interpretation" suggests something like this: She hears - ears do not hear - mutters in her mind: "Bring me a banjo. Now what is that?" The words require an interpretation. So she looks up the words in her mind where interpretations are and comes upon an illustrated interpretation with a picture of a banjo. With that selected and placed in a prominent place in her mind she is ready to go to where the banjo is. When W. says in effect, "We need an interpretation," he is saying: There must be something hidden that takes place between the hearing of the order and the execution of the order. When I say hidden do I mean hidden from everyone? It is true that I cannot look into her mind when she hears the order. But cannot she do so either? The idea may be that though she can she does not succeed in doing so. And this may be because what takes place takes place in twinkles and so too fast for an ordinary introspective eye to make out. Flashes may light up

but they also hide. Are they not blinding? So though we may not want to say that she cannot see, we must admit that the conditions are not favorable.

We can now get the connection between W.'s discussion involving the word "interpretation" anent "banjo" and the question on page 3 where the word "interpret" recurs towards the bottom of the page. On page 3 the problem is stated in this way: "How is he to know what flower to bring as I have given him only a word?" The assumption is that a word, just a word, will not be enough. We might add that not just any word will be enough. The word we need must be a trained word. But if we say, foolishly, no doubt, that the word is trained, we must be clear as to what the word is trained to do. And someone is sure to ask concerning the training of the word, How is the word trained? We do know that in some cases at least the word comes into one's vocabulary through its association with something one sees, the word "petunia" and a petunia. "This is a petunia." If this were all there is to it, then we might explain how it is that when someone heard the word "petunia" he looked at that petunia and when he saw that petunia he made the noise "petunia" - and that is all. This interpretation of association is too restricted. There is association by similarity, by contiguity, and by cause and effect. And so the word "petunia" may be associated with ever so many things besides this petunia, any petunia, and any picture of a petunia and also an image of a petunia. One does after all have to explain the workings of the mind in terms of what one knows about the mind. We know that human beings associate. (By the way, though we do associate the name of a thing with that thing, the association does not make the name a name.)

The question was as to how the word, together with something else, whatever that is, is to help the person who is given only a word to know what to bring. It is as though the word opened a drawer and revealed what he was to bring. Imagine a person who is given the order asking himself: Now how am I to know what to bring? and as he says this a picture of a red flower pops up out of the file. He smiles and says: "Now I know what to bring." And he goes out and gets the flower.

What now makes this a plausible account?
That one might carry such a picture in one's hand.

September 25, 1971

So how do we do it? We carry an image.
We carry a picture.
We carry nothing.

That we may carry nothing is shown by the fact that we can carry out the order: Imagine a red flower. In the first case above, it looks as though the order might be elaborated in this way: First imagine a red flower and then bring me a flower to match the flower you are to bring. It is supposed that you would otherwise not know what flower to bring. You must have the means. But now the question arises: How are you to know what flower to imagine? And must you not in that case first have an image of the

flower to carry to wherever you are to imagine the red flower? Then you can compare the first image with the second image to make sure you have the right image. But how are you to know that this first image is the right image? You can never know. Hence there must be some other way of knowing which or what sort of flower to bring. W. suggests that you may bring the red flower without carrying anything and without comparing anything with anything. May there not, however, be something one uses, of which at the time he is unaware, something in the unconscious?

I suggested earlier, last time, an analogy: As when you drop a nickel in the slot of the coffee machine and the machine grumbles and a second later dispenses your cup of coffee, so too when I drop a noise in your ear, the mind grumbles or gurgles, and you go out to get me a cup of coffee. I put in this detail of the machine's grumbling and your mind's grumbling or gurgling, in order to make it plain that something happens between the time I put in the nickel and the dispensing of the coffee and also between the time I put noises in your ear and your bringing me the flower. In the case of the machine we can remove the lid and see the goings on under the lid. The grumbling was the noise of the wheels turning. In the case of the human being there is no such thing as lifting the lid. Every mind in this sense is a closed mind. You may notice that I said "every mind" which should make it plain that I am not here thinking of the brain or the nervous system. The grumbling and gurgling take place in the mind. I guess that is alright. They are the noises that accompany the "interpreting," the meaning and understanding of the noises (words) I dropped in your ears. You cannot expect a mere noise to send a rational creature to bring me either a cup of coffee or a red-flower. W.'s language is: "It seems that there are certain definite mental processes bound up with the working of language. I mean the words I speak and you understand the words you hear. So the question is: What are meanings - What is the meaning of a word? and understanding - What is the understanding of a word?"

I have already suggested that troubles arise out of misconceptions concerning meaning and understanding. One part of the misconception is connected with the idea that one can answer these questions concerning meaning and understanding, as though the meaning of a word were independent of the sentences in which it occurs and the meaning of the sentence independent of the context of other sentences in which it occurs, and the episode of language consisting of sentences and words independent of the situation in which human beings are. In view of this one can see that a right conception requires that one keep in mind in dealing with any such problems as we may meet, that a word, a sentence, an episode of language, has a place in someone's life. It is a detail in someone's speaking or writing. He is up to something. He is a human being, of course, and his speaking, shouting, whispering, cooing, screaming, mumbling, orating, chanting, muttering, murmuring, snapping, etc. are all expressions of interests we all understand. To understand a language is to understand the people who speak that language. It is always a matter of people, people, people. Now we may see that the meaning of a word and the understanding of a word are to be understood in terms of this background. The word is finally to be brought into the context where we can see it play

its part, with the question: What is the man doing? - there must be someone who has been speaking. And in speaking, doing something else.

September 26, 1971

How is it possible to understand a word?

How is it possible to spell a word?

"Open your mouth." He does it. What a wonder! He did it. I made a noise; - how does one do that? almost anyone can do that -; the noise was: "Open your mouth," and he did just that, opened his mouth. What a coincidence! Coincidence? Is it also strange, and a coincidence that when I said "Open your mouth" I expected him to do so? My expecting him to do that and his understanding me when I said that and my hearing that he should do that - these we may say are all mental. The question is: Are they mental processes? How about these: Listening, looking, observing, noticing, remarking, attending to, reading, relishing your food, etc. Is thinking a process? A process has a beginning and, if not a middle, at least an end. This suggests that whatever there is at the beginning is going somewhere, has an end, a goal. Processes may be complete and incomplete. Telling a story, learning how to bake a cake, singing a song, repeating a sentence, making tandelion wine.

Yesterday I asked: Where are all the images or any image before you call it up? It is almost as though you could call it by name. And then it comes. It could not come up unless, like Sazuel, it had been there to come up. But not one of us is a witch.

September 28, 1971

Why is it that what W. says about the workings of language or about our working of language should meet with so much resistance? We use language. Here it is said that our use of an order, for instance, requires these mental processes. We work the language, adjusting it to our needs, what we want to do with it and the situation in which and in relation to which our need arises. So we regard it as an exceedingly elaborate tool. Out of the mouth come words, and what I have referred to as the adjustments have already been made. I do not have to piece the words together to make sentences. I seldom plan a sentence. It comes, like the baby, all made, complete. It is a common miracle. Certainly such things as sentences do not come about by accident. So for every mouth out of which sentences issue there must be a maker of sentences and for every sentence a making. The makings of a sentence, all the words, all the punctuation marks are provided. Now you can make your own. In his discussion, W. asks: How can one make use of the order - a sentence someone else has made? Here too there must be a way of adjusting these words to the situation. It looks as though he must do something. It is also obvious that he does not do something with his fingers. One does not manipulate the words. So what one does one does out of sight, almost out of mind, subconsciously. But this is how it is with

the making of the sentence too. We open our mouths, the sentences fall out, ready made. There must be a maker and the making of sentences. We (or it) have to adjust the sentences to the meaning. Then is the maker of sentences adapted to meaning something, to ordering something. I am supposing that all the words, like materials, are there and that out of these, sentences are made. But we might suppose that all the sentences are there already. Then we should not need a maker of sentences. There need be no maker of what is made already. But there must be a chooser of the sentence for the particular need. And, of course, sentences go together or are brought together to compose conversations and paragraphs. Here is another miracle. That we should be able to carry on a conversation, a maker in me in continual rapid-fire adjustment to another maker in you in reciprocal and rapid-fire adjustment to the maker in me. As quick as lightning the sentences are there in my mouth, in your mouth, at least as quick as tongue and lips permit.

I have an idea that in hitting upon the making of sentences - every child a maker? - I have come close to what Chomsky was trying to understand. How does the maker do it? What does the child have to work with? Universal grammar. The child a maker of sentences. In what sense does the child do this? It, the maker, makes sentences. It also rains. And the sentences are heard at the child's mouth. The child could not say how they got there.

I was diverted above from what I intended to do. The use of language should present no more a problem than the use of any other tool. How do you know which flower to pick? How do you know which button to press? How do you know, just looking at the music on the stand, which keys on the key-board to strike? How do you know what to do with a shovel, a mixer? In these cases one cannot make a problem of any of this: what mental processes intervene between seeing where the hole is to be dug and getting the shovel to dig it? In the case of the order and obeying the order, there seems to be a wide gap. It is like action at a distance, through a vacuum, as it were. Gravitational force. The force of a spoken word in your ear. The mental processes fill the plenum just as the ether once did. How does light travel? How does air travel? As the surf-board does. It rides the waves.

How then does it happen that we have this problem in connection with language and do not have it in connection with our use of other tools? Language a tool? An order a tool? If at the outset we think of language as a tool - used on human beings? - then the same sort of problems one might expect to arise in connection with other tools. To understand a word, an order, an exclamation is either to know how to use it or how to react to it, how to take the part of the bottle to the cork, the bolt to the nut, etc. To know the meaning of a word, etc. is to know what to do with it. Language takes two - a speaker and a hearer, a writer and a reader. But why then does not the use of tools occasion the same problems? Is it the passivity of what the tool operates on? - a piece of wood or metal, for instance? I was going to say because such words as "meaning" and "understanding" so seldom enter into the operation ("operating with words"), after

all, the words are always at hand in speaking and writing.

Is the idea of language as a tool designed to help us to be free of thinking of language in a more misleading way or is this intended to be more than that? Why do I say that language is a tool? It must be in elaborating the idea of meaning as use. "Think of the variety of tools in a tool-box."

What corresponds to the order: "Bring the cows home"? It is a part of an episode, perhaps a daily episode, in the life of people on the farm. It is five-o'clock in the afternoon, time for "I'm going a-milking, sir, she said." So the cows are brought home, into the stables, washed, fed, and milked. After milking, the cows are led or driven out into the barn-yard to spend the night. It is now evening, getting dark. The order given to the boy of twelve by his father begins the episode. Shall we say that the words start the boy running as turning on the ignition key on the starter-button starts the motor? The boy is like a motor to be turned on? If that is so the boy has to be prepared for this - as the motor must be built to respond to the switch.

Do you understand what he said, the order?

Do you know how the can-opener works?

Do you know what happens when you press this button?

I guess "Do you understand?" and "Do you know?" give rise to the same problem. But the questions may not. Let's see: Do you understand what he said does not mean: Did you hear what he said? Now to explain what he said one cannot make use of a can-opener or a button. The order is words. Words may be explained with other words. So the question arises: If you were doing something with the words you explained, and you were doing with those words what you can also do with the words of the explanation, what were you doing with those last words? It is not so easy to show this. What can you do with a can-opener? I will show you. Give me a can. Here is a demonstration, before your very eyes. If you could open a can with words, cutting words ("I will speak daggers to her."), then everything would be cut in the open. So that is what you can do with words. Words work invisibly, without touching. Words are unmoved movers. "A word in your ear." So we must think of words as acting through space, riding an invisible sea, waves of that sea, etc. In the case of tools, other tools, the tool makes some sort of contact. "I am a tool. I push, I pull, I move." Even a magnet pulls. It attracts. Perhaps this is part of it. Human beings are like magnets, attracting words. What nonsense!

September 29, 1971

I am trying to recapture the impasse of Monday morning. It began with: "It seems that there are certain mental processes - meaning and understanding - bound up with the workings of language." I say: "Fetch me a red flower" and he goes. He does so. If we allow that that's it, there isn't anything more, then what needs to be explained is that people think that besides speaking there is something else one does when he speaks, namely, attach meaning to the words he speaks. And the person who understands what I say,

hears what I say and also does something else, namely understands what I say. Now, there is no doubt about his meaning something by what he says nor about his understanding what I say. The question is as to whether his meaning something is something he does and whether his understanding what I say is his doing something with what I say over and above his hearing what I say. I speak meaning what I say - I am not just making these noises - just as I speak, enunciating clearly - I speak emphasizing certain words - in these cases too I do not speak and also enunciate clearly, I speak, enunciating, and I do not speak and also do something else while speaking, namely emphasize, I speak, emphasizing. If I say this I do not mean to deny that I enunciate and emphasize. They are ways of speaking. I could also say: I spoke with meaning or with understanding as distinguished from speaking without meaning or understanding: words in a foreign language, for instance. "I spoke without knowing what the words meant."

Speaking and writing - with or without understanding.

This is what I hit upon: What makes this issue seem so important is that if we do not think of meaning and understanding as "activities," there seems to be no mind left. It looks as though the conception of the dignity of man depended upon a misconception of understanding. Another way of putting it is that if that is what understanding, etc., is then man is a machine. How to lose your mind. Just say that understanding is not an activity. Ah, but you still have thinking and that is an activity. You can, for instance, think your way through a fog. Thinking is sometimes a way of fighting against adversities.

September 30, 1971

Here is a distinction we can use: meaning and understanding and knowing are not activities. If you understand or if you know then you can do certain things. They are forms of being strong. They are like intellectual muscle, stored-up strength, your batteries. Learning, on the other hand, and thinking, figuring out something, proving something, gathering evidence, listening, examing something, observing - these are activities. Being of a certain opinion, believing so-and-so - these are not activities. Stating your opinion, saying what you believe, expressing your attitude on a certain matter, reminiscing, recollecting, reflecting, thinking back to the old days - these are activities. Having a good memory is like owning property. You have resources. You can collect. It is like having money in the bank. Write a check on your memory. Having imagination is like having a memory. You can imagine, you can get images. You can write a check on your imagination. Imagine yourself as a little boy of five in your soldier suit with a plume in your helmet hat. But only you can cash that check. It must be as you imagine it. You must draw on your imagination. You cannot cash it by drawing on my imagination.

Understanding a language is like having money in the bank. The words are all there ready for your use. Your vocabulary is ready

money. Learning the meaning of another word is to make another deposit. Now you can spend. To spend is to use. How spend? By speaking and writing. There are so many things to do with money. So too there are so many things to do with words. "Words are wise man's counters, they do but reckon with them, but they are the money of fools." (Hobbes)

("imagination, therefore, is nothing but decaying sense")

My immediate concern here has been to get clear about what has been troubling us - namely such expressions as "I mean by this word..." and "I understand..." I hit then upon one source of confusion. These are not activities. Thinking is an activity. Was the "mental process" conceived as an activity? (Not clear). But this only postpones the reckoning. For now we must face the similar problem concerning thinking, for it seems that certain definite mental processes are bound up with thinking (speaking). I think, speaking. I speak, thinking. Better consider it this way. I speak and someone asks: "are you thinking?" I say: "Can't you hear me thinking?" He says, "No, no one can hear another man thinking." And so if speaking, I am thinking, I must be doing two things at once. And might I not be doing them? I might be speaking, thinking, and thinking, speaking. I am a triple artist. If I juggle with three balls am I not doing three things, keeping each one of these balls in the air? This is not at all the same. Can you carry on two conversations going at the same time? Is speaking, thinking, speaking and thinking? Is ~~speaking~~ speeding up the egg-beater, beating an egg, speeding the beater and beating an egg?

"What I meant is not what I thought I meant." Flip Wilson.
The words do not mean what I thought they meant.

Notes for Students

O. K. Bouwsma

October 13, 1971

I tried on Monday to make the point that we use language. This came up in connection with W.'s phrase: "the activity of operating with signs." We know what it is to operate with other things. In the advertisements for help-wanted, there are requests for machine-operators of various kinds. There are operators of printing-presses, of lathes, of switchboards. In these contexts the use of the word "operation" gives us no trouble. In nearly all these familiar cases a worker, operator, works with his hands. He pulls a lever or he pushes a handle or he pushes buttons. The machine is commonly made of metal and what is done is visible. You can see the press fall, you can see the blade turn, you may even see the finished product, the newspaper or the dowel. The operation of the switchboard is more mysterious. Strange things happen behind the board, things that make it possible for you to talk to a friend in San Francisco. So if someone were to ask, What is programming? the answer might be: It is the activity of operating with words or numbers on a computer to get information. One operates with something, on something, to produce a certain result. That formulate seems to be alright for the examples we have provided.

Now let me try this: Asking a question is operating with words on someone, (made or fashioned for the purpose) to produce an answer. I say: What time is it? and Tom looks at his watch and responds, also with words: It is 10:30. I ask with words and Tom answers with words. I want now to add that were I to say these words to a chair I would get no answer. What I operate on must be adapted to the purpose of providing the result. This was true also in the other cases. You cannot by pulling a lever in your car, the stick, print a newspaper or turn a dowel. It isn't, of course, simply that I must operate on a human being and not on a chair. Tom must as surely be fashioned to respond to my words as the machine must be designed for its purpose. You cannot press steel with cream puffs. The human being, Tom, must understand my words and must be able to respond with answers which are answers. He must realize that "Peanuts are cheaper" is no answer. If, accordingly, I am to ask a question and Tom is to answer, we must speak the same language, in this case, English. We are mutually adapted to operate with words on one another to produce results innumerable. If Tom can answer questions he can also ask questions. There are workmen, operators, who can work with a great assortment of tools and machines, pushing, pulling, pressing, etc. to accomplish many kinds of results. If a man knows English and lives among people who know English he can, like this multi-variable operator, do a thousand things. For knowing English is to have on the tip of one's tongue an infinitely variable means of adapting words to ends, ends both old and common, and ends new and uncommon. The question may arise as to how a man who knows English and gets to have this amazing resource on the tip of his tongue or the tip of his pen gets to have it there. Babies do not have it. Dogs do not have it. But babies grow up and then do have it. In Germany the resource is a German resource. In France it is a French resource. People in Germany and people in France can ask a German Tom and a French Tom, respectively, the equivalent of: What time is it? and get an answer.

I think that I have now said nothing striking unless what everyone knows may nevertheless be striking for the simple reason that what everyone knows goes unnoticed. But there must be more to it than that. There is something that conceals what in this case everyone knows. Remember then that what everyone knows is that we use language. Could there have been another thing people have said about language? Let us change this: What we know is that we use language in many ways, and now we can suggest that we have commonly assumed that we use language in only one way. And to go with that assumption is a picture of that way. We use language to communicate facts, to give information. This needs to be explained.

Words have meaning. Sentences have meaning. The words and sentences are not the meaning. So we have two things, words and meanings. In speaking we bring the meaning and the words together. In thinking we work with meanings. But since what we say, words and meaning, may be false, there are the facts. So we have this order: Words, propositions, facts; accordingly when I speak there are the words I speak, the meanings I think, namely, the propositions, and the facts with which the proposition corresponds. When I say to you: "Violets are blue" you hear the words. You understand them and that is to say that the meaning dances in your head. But the dance is not the point. You now look beyond to check the meaning (the proposition) with the facts. If there is the correspondence then the proposition is true.

October 14, 1971

I see now that it is a mistake to say that we need: "meaning is use" and "the language-game" to displace some definite idea concerning language and meaning and understanding, etc. It is more likely that "the workings of language" are shrouded in a mist so that we cannot see what with a few words from W. we may come to see. There is a thickening with the expression of the confusion. Here we must see that the troubles arise not when as ordinarily we ask such questions as: Do you understand what I am saying? or What do you mean by "diatribe"? by "trencherman"? What do you think? and so on. This is a truly marvelous thing that as we have learned our language, gone to school, talked, conversed, discussed, etc. we got along very well with such questions, knew how to answer, at home, among friends, etc. wherever we had occasion to speak. Where then do we lose our way?

You may notice that such questions as "Do you understand...?" "What do you mean...?" are questions occasioned by some obstruction in the normal flow of language. If your car falters or stops then you must do something about it. You get out, check things you can check, attach a wire to a spark plug, etc. So too your language may falter, come to a stop, and you must do something about it. "Do you understand...?" is like: "Is something the matter?" In that case you repeat what you said or change your language. Now you can go on. "What do you mean?" calls a halt. The car has stopped. Giving an explanation, a definition is like attaching a wire. A person who uses language is like a person who drives a car. Now and then the language may need a new part

and in that case the speaker must also serve as mechanic to keep the language in running order. As I have already indicated anyone who is twenty years old not only can speak but he is able too to make these minor adjustments, varying the language and making explanations. Even small children can manage to make themselves understood.

The question: "What do you think?" is comparable to giving the car a little push, to coaxing the motor with a little more gas. The question elicits, coaxes, a response.

Notice one thing further. These questions arise in the midst of talk, of conversation, of a discussion. They are specific questions. "Do you understand what I said?" "Well, what did you say?" "I said that the Soviet Union was a union of democratic, peace-loving states." And this: "What did you mean by "scurrilous"?" A car breaks down when it is in motion. So too with language. In the midst of a conversation communication breaks down. It is the one word, the word "scurrilous," that must be replaced. So too if I ask: "What do you think?" I mean: "What do you think about the matter we were discussing?" "What matter?" "The future of the United States. Are we on the way down-hill?" The point is that these questions are specific questions in the course of a normal exchange. Normally we have no need to ask such questions. I speak and you understand. You speak and I understand. We also know how to adjust our language to each other. Sometimes we have to help each other to understand.

Now I want to call your attention to the sorts of "questions" that give us trouble. Here they are: What is understanding? What is meaning? What is thinking? First, notice that these questions are quite different from the questions we described above as specific questions. Also they do not arise in the normal flow of conversation. You do not have to answer any of these questions in order to get along at home or where you work. How then do they arise? I said on Monday that they arise when language is standing still. Perhaps you stare at a word, perhaps with a torpedo eye, and you kill it. Then you look for the life in it. Let me suggest then that a word has meaning only as it enters into the stream of human life with other words in sentences and as it is interwoven with our interests in the world about us. For notice that when you ask these questions you are not asking them in the way that you may ask: What is scurrilous? (I have purposely asked: What is scurrilous? and not: What is the meaning of the word "scurrilous"? in order to suggest that a misconception of the meaning of a word is shown in the form of the question. The "what" suggests some thing as it does in all of Plato's questions. Ask instead: What is the meaning of the word "thinking"? and at least one has a chance.) It isn't as though when someone asks: Do you understand? or What do you think? you do not understand. There are not strange words, not like "trencherman" or "philtre." If it were like that you could consult the dictionary and that would settle it. What has happened in these cases is that one has taken up a word, lifted it out of its environment where it has meaning,

and now asked: What is the meaning? as though it had meaning apart from that environment. In that case the best advice might be: "Put the fish back in the water. That is where it swims."

I have tried in this note to provide an account of the questions we have been snagged in by relating them first to questions which may be regarded as expansions of the snagging questions, and second to the going language which occasions these latter questions.

I read: "That hath made him mad.
I am sorry that with better heed and judgment
I had not quoted him. I feared he did but trifle
And meant to wrack thee; but beshrew my jealousy."
She: What does "quoted" mean? and "wrack"? and "beshrew"?
Schotz: What does "mean" mean? ("the meaning of meaning")

Shakespeare's language provokes her questions. The answers are at the bottom of the page. "Quoted" means "observed," a surprise. "Beschrew" means "curse." She asks reasonable questions. No one except an expert could be expected to understand those words. Schotz's question is something else, has nothing to do with understanding those few lines. It looks as though he did not understand her question, nor the answer. So what is he up to? Does he understand "observed" and "curse" but not "mean"? Here is a puzzle.

Bouwsma note, Feb 5, 73, cont.

What does "Ruth" mean? Ruth doesn't mean anything, unless you have in mind does she mean well--as she follows the harvesters with the other gleaners, keeping an eye on Boaz.

What does "Ichabod" mean? Ichabod means: The glory of Israel has departed? But "Ichabod" fled the headless horseman and how could departed glory do that? What does Smith mean? A smith is a maker of horseshoes. and what does Mr. Smith mean? Mr. Smith means nothing to me. I have never met him. Does Mr. Smith have no meaning or is it "Mr Smith" that has no meaning?

This word has a meaning--don't all words? No--and its meaning is its use in the language. Ayo understands that alright. But this word has a meaning and--what a surprise!--its meaning is not its use. How so? It has no use.

I propose to investigate the idea of use first. What is use? We are familiar with the idea of use in connection with tools. A thing's use is what you can do with it. Perhaps we should distinguish its customary use, generally what it was made for, and other uses to which it has been put. What is a spade good for? Well, if you want to plant a tree, you have to have a hole in the ground in which to place the roots of the tree. If you are to have such a hole you have to dig it. And you will need something to dig it with. A spade is good to dig with. This is not to say you cannot dig with your hands but dish-pan hands are bad enough and hard-pan hands are terrible. Unfortunately we do not ask: What is the meaning of a spade? as we do ask about a word. We might ask: What is the significance of the spade? or What is the significance of the horse-collar? These, however, are not, I guess, the equivalent of: What is the meaning of the word "malicious"? The equivalent is rather: What is a spade good for? or What can you do with a spade? Curiously, no one would have difficulty in answering such a question. No one asks: Is the meaning of a spade the same as the use of a spade? In any case it seems that we need someone to tell us that just as there is the use of a spade so too there is the use of a word. But that is not all he tells us. He tells us that at least in a large class of cases the use is the meaning. But why should he tell us that? Do we need to be told?

Everyone seems to agree that words have a use. And in some cases this is clear. How does the highway department use the word STOP on a red or yellow background? Here is one word and it works. People in their cars drive up to the sign and stop. They all do. It seems like magic. Of course, those who drive cars have learned to read and they understand the complex of regulations, including stop-signs, which are required in order to keep the traffic flowing. The background for this is schools, government, books, an alphabet, the English language, etc. It is elaborate. What I want to emphasize is, however, something simple. The word STOP is used to bring cars to a stop at this intersection. STOP is an order, like SLAB. When accordingly it is said that words are used and we are given such examples as these, the idea of use is clear. We use the word "STOP" to order people to stop, just as we use a spade to dig a hole. What makes this possible is by no means simple. But is it also clear that words are used when you read a report in the newspaper or a passage in a novel? In a case like that who uses the words and to what end? What corresponds to the cars coming to a stop or to planting a tree? In the case of the cars or the slabs you connect the word with something that happens, you see the cars and you see B carry a slab. But you read the newspaper at the breakfast table or the novel in your easy chair. Now nothing

happens. Nothing stops; no one carries anything. It looks, at any rate, as though we have come upon a quite different idea of use and of success in use. Maybe the language is not working. In the case of "STOP" and "SLAB" the words have an immediate connection with the environment. The cars stop and you can see them. B brings the slab and you can see him. The words seem to work like buttons you press. They are like automatic controls. No one thinks. A sees "STOP" and he stops. B hears "SLAB" and he brings a slab. In the case of your reading the newspaper or the novel someone might see you reading but whatever happens corresponding to stopping or bringing is out of sight, out of sight in the mind.

I want to introduce a word intimately connected with what we have been saying. It is the word "understand". Did the man who came up to the stop-sign and stopped understand the sign? Of course, why otherwise would he have stopped? And what about the man who did not stop? He may not have seen the sign but he may very well have seen the sign and said: "I won't stop". So understanding the sign does not consist in stopping; though I am not going to say that stopping takes longer. One might think of understanding as stopping held in abeyance. That won't help. I want to introduce a stumbling block. The sign is there to get people to stop. It won't work if people can't read. They have to understand. So there is always a step, namely, understanding, between seeing the sign and stopping. The use of the sign is apparent in the stopping. But the understanding is hidden. Should I now say that understanding is getting the meaning of the sign? First I see the sign. Then I understand the sign. Then I decide whether to stop or not to stop. It seems that we now have distinctions we were looking for. There is the sign or word we see or hear, the meaning we grasp, and the use we execute. The police use the word to get people to stop. They use the word. This is effective only if the sign induces understanding. And now to comply and be safe or not to comply and be in danger--that follows.

And what about your reading Tom Jones, the novel, I mean? They are Fielding's words and so, I guess, he uses them. Obviously he does not expect you to stop anywhere nor to carry a slab. So it looks as though Fielding is not using these words if by using is meant getting someone to do something. You read and do nothing. Perhaps, you get a drink but Fielding did not tell you to do that. So you read and understand; you get the meaning, but that is all. Of course you understand, you go on reading eagerly, to see what Tom and Sophia are going to do next. All the while you sit comfortably in your big chair. You are not driving a car and you are not building a house. So what are we to do with the idea of use? Suppose we say that Fielding wrote a story to ~~amaze~~ amaze you, will that save the idea of use? It does not seem much like stopping or carrying. Heschel, in that piece I read to you is quoted: "The Greeks learned to comprehend. The Hebrews learned to revere. The modern man learns to use." Is W. perhaps one of those modern men? He would not have consented to that. But he has sometimes been misunderstood. "You are a Pragmatist. You are a Behaviorist."

W. in 43 wrote: "For a large class of cases in which we employ the word "meaning", the meaning of a word is its use." So W. is saying
~~XXXXX~~

something about words and only about words. Of words some have a meaning and some do not. Are we agreed about that? I remarked above that "Ayo" and "Miss Bartoletti" have no meaning. They may have something else, but no meaning. Let us say that they have referents. They do, however, have a use or uses, no meaning but certainly use. If I have this straight then W. is not saying anything about "Ayo" and "Miss Bartoletti"--unless he thinks that these words do have a meaning and also a use, but in these cases the meaning is not the use. Perhaps we now have this straight. The meaning of "Ayo" is identified with a certain or certain definite descriptions: "Ayo is the young lawyer with a small left ear." Here the meaning is what you say in answer to the question: "What does 'Ayo' mean?" But its use is not determined by this. I am afraid this won't do. There is too much of use bound up with this definite description. How about this: I point to something wrapped in a blanket and I say: "This is Ayo." In 40 W. writes: "It is important to note that the word "meaning" is being used illicitly if it is used to signify the thing that "corresponds" to the word. That is to confound the meaning of a name with the bearer of a name." Does the name "Ayo" have a meaning? It is interesting that in the sections before 43, W has been discussing names and ostensive definitions.

I am going to pass over these complications for now. "For a large class of cases"--cases of what? Is the answer "cases of words" or "cases in which we employ the word "meaning"? The latter class would be larger than the former. This would involve that there are cases (contexts) in which we employ the word "meaning"--souvenirs, letters, "the old ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ oaken bucket", a lock of hair, memories, an old watch, a gift, an acquaintance, etc. and in those cases the meaning is ~~XX~~ not the use. Such things are not used. They are kept in silver boxes with other treasures, to be displayed with one's baby pictures. Is this the distinction that W. has in mind? If it were W. would be saying something like: "The meaning of the old letter to me ("How dear to my heart") is quite different from the meaning of the word "chrysalis" as defined in the dictionary. There is very likely nothing dear to my heart about that. And so the word "meaning" is used in one way in: "The meaning of that letter in my life has been very great" and "The meaning of the word 'cantankerous' is refractory (?)". Would W. be interested in making that distinction? Not very likely.

And so we are returned to: "For a large class of cases in which we employ 'the meaning of a word', the meaning of a word is its use in the language." Ayo asked, well enough acquainted with the large class, What is that other class? Craft answered: "The meaning of words in poetry." The idea, apparently, is that words in a poem, though certainly related to words as used in the language, have meaning, but are not used. I am not sure about the explanation. We can try: Of a word in a ~~XXXX~~ poem you may ask: What is the meaning of this word? and you will get the answer. The answer ~~XX~~ will be the ordinary one. And it should help some. In the ordinary use what makes sense and what does not make sense is determined by the structure of the language episodes. I am referring here to what W. describes as the grammar of the word. The past uses, the past forms, determine present forms. There are rules. Now should I say: But in

poetry there are no rules? That might be misleading. If there are rules they are poetry rules. To make this plainer we must remind ourselves of uses. The use of a word is to be understood in terms of the use of the language of which it is a part. What are you doing with this language? I am asking the way to the police station. But poetry is language on a holiday. A poet isn't asking questions. He isn't on the way to a police-station. He isn't doing all sorts of things. He isn't telling a joke. He isn't scolding the cat. He isn't ordering a new lawn-mower. He isn't giving orders to the carpenter. If we say that in these cases words are tools, we should say that the poet's words are toys, baubles. As a young girl strings beads or pearls so the poet strings together words. He does not do this to hang the wash on that string.

You can use all the tools in the tool-box. You can plow the field with the plough; You can use the hammer in building your house. You can use the saw, the plane, the rasp, etc. But one might also assemble them to perfect an interesting design. The design might incorporate too some suggestion of the uses of those tools. In the latter case it would be more like poetry. For the words are interesting then only as they have absorbed the fragrance of their use. Here too the sounds of the words and their looks are considered for the design. In considering the idea of the meaning of a word Miss Walsh said that everything about a word is included in the meaning, also the sound and the looks of the word. This may surprise you. She may have been thinking of words in poetry.

We now have a distinction between words in use whose meaning is their use and words, usually the same words, not in use, whose meaning whatever it is, is not their use. Here is a better explanation. If you come upon a word in use which you do not understand you can explain the meaning in terms of its use in other contexts. You explain ~~the~~ one use in terms of similar uses. There is a pattern in the language. But words in poetry cannot be understood in that way and that is because the poet is an innovator, who upsets the normal routines of our language. But it isn't that he wants to leave a note for the milkman in an original style. He doesn't need a bottle of milk. He needs to make a triple rhyme or he needs to make words sing, to make them dance. To make poetry he has to spoil prose. He takes the slaves out for a frolic. You might recognize them. But now they wear unusual clothes, sometimes gay but sometimes somber.

The poet is a predator. He ~~preys~~ preys upon prose. Prose is routine language. We repeat the same forms day after day. Prose is language, the work-horse. It gets the work done. Poetry does no work. It is language in finery, in gay feathers, on parade.

I am going to turn now to what you may regard as a ~~perverse~~ perverse explanation of P.I. 43. I referred to this on Monday but I did not state it. I'll do that now. "For a large class of cases in which ~~we~~ we employ the word "meaning", the meaning of a word can be defined thus, The meaning of a word is its use." Why is W. concerned here about a definition? Is someone asking: What is the meaning of a word? Who could that be? When do children in school learn to use the dictionary? So generally we may be sure that by the time a child is in the fifth grade he can, when he comes upon a word he does not understand,

consult the dictionary. And he finds there the meaning of the word he did not understand. If anyone were to ask the eleven-year old: What is the meaning of a word? his reply might well be: What word did you have in mind, ew'll look it up. I am trying to find out for whom W's definition is intended. It is not intended for someone who for the first time in his life has come upon the expression "the meaning of a word" and does not understand it just as he might not know the meaning of the word "scenery". It must be for someone who has been familiar with that expression and has been responding to it and been using it ever since he was eleven years old. Grown men ask this question, ponder over it, knit their brows. One can imagine them going about muttering: What is the meaning of a word? The child of eleven can tell him but what she tells him will seem to him beside the point. By the time one has come to ask: What is the meaning of a word?, some time after one has been familiar with strange words of which there are 380,000, and with a dictionary ("a present help in time of trouble") one is in trouble. The interesting question is as to how ~~EX~~ he comes to ask this question. There are gradations of trouble. He may ask the question and be so overwhelmed by the question that he is silenced and discomforted by it. He does not know what to say. It is a stunning question. There may be developments. Someone may say or he may have read in a book: "The meaning of a word may be defined as the object for which the word # stands." This may give him some relief. He may stop pacing the floor. If he stops thinking he will not need W. But the chances are that he will go on thinking. He will go on to ask: But what is the object for which the word stands? and he may not find rest in any answer. He may look around about him, he may look within, and he may invent a world of objects especially designed to be the objects words can stand for.

For whom then is W's definition intended? For those who ask: "What is the meaning of a word?" To them W. may come as a friend in need: And what about the large class of cases in which the word "meaning" is employed? this is the class, a large enough class if you consider how often people like us have asked: What is the meaning of a word? and how often, under the same illusion, they have asked such particular questions as: What is knowledge? What is time? What is mind? etc., ~~WHX~~ which translated come ~~EXX~~ to: What is the meaning of the word "knowledge", the word "time", the word "mind", etc. Each of these questions in the form: What is knowledge? expresses the illusion that the meaning of a word is an object. And this, according to W, is the source of so much of our intellectual distress.

I am going to repeat: What is that larger class? Cases in which one employs the expression "the meaning of a word" in relation to which W. K now says: "No, no, the meaning of a word is not the object or any object for which a word stands. It is the use of the word." And now what about that other class that Ayo was interested in? That is the class of cases in which we employ the expression "the meaning of a word" as ~~KXX~~: What is the meaning of the word "charaband"? and whoever asks this is satisfied with what the dictionary says. We must, accordingly, distinguish between: What is the meaning of a word? which is the expression of philosophical bewilderment and: What is the meaning of the words: "chili-con-carne," which is the normal reaction to strange words. The first requires an exorcism; the second a piece of information.