

MORAL THEOLOGY AFTER WITTGENSTEIN

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by

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To Our Lady Seat of Wisdom

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Annotated Bibliography

1. Selected Works by Wittgenstein:

Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. First published in 1921. Wittgenstein attempts to solve philosophical problems by showing how they arise when we misunderstand the structure of our language.

A Lecture on Ethics. Given at the Heretics Society in Cambridge on 17th November, 1929. Wittgenstein argues that ethical statements are essentially nonsensical as they cannot be reduced to relative factual statements, but go beyond the world.

Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough. These consist in two sets of remarks: the first date from 1931, whereas the second set were probably written after 1948. Wittgenstein criticises Frazer for treating primitive beliefs as quasi scientific hypotheses, and for failing to see the role they play within the life of the communities holding them.

Philosophical Remarks. After his return to Cambridge in 1929, Wittgenstein, from February of that year until April 1930, wrote various manuscripts from which he produced a bulky typescript entitled the *Philosophische Bemerkungen* (Philosophical Remarks). Wittgenstein opens the path to his later works by placing emphasis upon how language actually works, in contrast to the *Tractatus* stress on finding the general form underlying all uses of language.

Philosophical Grammar. Remarks taken from various sources, but the most important source is a typescript which was probably completed in 1933, before being revised later that year and in early 1934. This collection contains many passages also to be found in the *Philosophical Remarks*, the *Philosophical Investigations* and *Zettel*. It contains many developments in Wittgenstein's thought, including the analogy between language and games, in which Wittgenstein speaks of language-games.

The Blue Book. Wittgenstein dictated this to his Cambridge class during the academic year 1933-34. He breaks with the idea that language is a calculus and develops the language-game analogy.

The Brown Book. Dictated to Francis Skinner and Alice Ambrose during 1934-35. Wittgenstein breaks with the notion that the purpose of philosophy is to analyse language, and uses language games to throw light on our actual uses of language.

Remarks on the Philosophy of Mathematics. The edited selection of Wittgenstein's writings on the philosophy of mathematics from the period September 1937-April 1944. Wittgenstein against Russell's attempt to reduce Mathematics to logic argues that Mathematics is best seen as a variety of techniques, rather than as a strictly unified whole. He also points to the natural practices and reactions which underlie our use of mathematical concepts.

Philosophical Investigations, Part I. Completed in 1945. Wittgenstein carefully selected and arranged a series of remarks which distilled what he had been working on since 1929. The *Investigations* covers a variety of topics and although Wittgenstein originally attempted to press them into a unified whole he came to realize that they form a series of criss-crossing sketches.

Philosophical Investigations, Part II. Written between 1947 and 1949, these remarks were selected by Wittgenstein from his writings on the philosophy of psychology, but not edited in the deliberate manner of the remarks in Part I. They concern various topics in the philosophy of psychology, such as the phenomenon of seeing aspects.

Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology, Volume I. These remarks from 1946-47 were gathered in Wittgenstein's typescript no. 229. They concern a variety of topics in the philosophy of psychology, such as seeing aspects and the basis of our psychological concepts in our natural reactions.

Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology, Volume II. These remarks from 1947-48 were gathered in Wittgenstein's typescript no. 232. Wittgenstein develops the ideas found volume I.

Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology, Volume II. This is a collection of Wittgenstein's remarks on the relation between 'inner' and 'outer' from 1949-51.

2. Selected Secondary Literature:

Anscombe, G. E. M. *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus.* Anscombe argues against the logical-positivists that the requirements placed by the *Tractatus* on simple objects are logical and not epistemological. She also helps us to see the role played by simple objects in Wittgenstein's account of application in the *Tractatus*

Brock, Stephen L. *Action and Conduct : Thomas Aquinas and the Theory of Action.* Brock brings Aquinas' theory of action into conversation with various philosophers writing in the analytic tradition. He stresses the importance of understanding human action against the background of a wider account of natural causation.

Charlton, William. *Metaphysics and Grammar.* Charlton argues that metaphysics and grammar are intimately connected, such that the work of metaphysicians involves making grammatical distinctions. He criticises twentieth-century accounts of meaning, and accuses Wittgenstein of developing a purely pragmatic account of meaning in his later works.

Gilson, Etienne. *The Unity of Philosophical Experience.* Gilson criticises modern philosophers for mistaking one aspect of experience for the whole of our experience of being. He proposes a conception of metaphysics as essentially dialectical.

Hibbs, Thomas S. *Aquinas, Ethics, and Philosophy of Religion: Metaphysics and Practice*. Hibbs characterizes metaphysics as practice of wisdom, as opposed to the discovery of a static set of metaphysical objects.

Kerr, Fergus. *Theology after Wittgenstein*. Kerr shows how Wittgenstein can help us to overcome various false pictures of the self which are prevalent in modern theology.

Köhler, Wolfgang. *Gestalt Psychology : An Introduction to New Concepts in Modern Psychology*. Wittgenstein read Köhler's work on *Gestalt Psychology* and although he rejected Köhler's physicalism he used many of Köhler's examples in his work on the philosophy of psychology.

MacIntyre, Alasdair. *Dependent Rational Animals : Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*. MacIntyre, in contrast to his earlier works, admits the need for biology in ethical theory. He stresses the animality of human nature, and our dependence on others for human flourishing.

McCabe, Herbert, O.P. *The Good Life : Ethics and the Pursuit of Happiness*. McCabe reads the natural law theory of Aquinas through the lens of Wittgenstein's understanding of human beings as linguistic creatures. He also offers a way of understanding the life of grace as our participation in God's Word.

McDowell, John Henry. *Mind and World : With a New Introduction*. McDowell's influential account of human understanding as involving the development of our second nature. He is influenced by Wittgenstein, but despite his attempt to overcome the modern dualism of subject and object he maintains the underlying modern paradigm of physical nature as the realm of law.

Mulhall, Stephen. *Inheritance and Originality : Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Kierkegaard*. Mulhall is influenced by Stanley Cavell in his reading of Wittgenstein, characterizing the *Investigations* as a work concerned with origins, and in particular the origin of human language in the border between pre and post linguistic behaviour.

O'Callaghan, John. *Thomist Realism and the Linguistic Turn : Toward a More Perfect Form of Existence*. O'Callaghan argues that Aquinas does not develop an internalist account of representation, but rather his account of human cognition should be placed in the wider context of the human search for perfection.

Pinches, Charles Robert. *Theology and Action : After Theory in Christian Ethics*. Pinches combines insights from Aquinas and Wittgenstein to provide a powerful critique of various contemporary theories in moral theology.

Pinckaers, Servais. *The Pinckaers Reader : Renewing Thomistic Moral Theology*. A collection of Pinckaers' papers which cover a wide range of topics in moral theology. Pinckaers uses the writings of Aquinas to cast a critical light on modern moral theology.

Pope, Stephen J. *The Evolution of Altruism and the Ordering of Love*. Moral Traditions & Moral Arguments. Pope, writing in 1994, argues that the dominant twentieth-century

trends in Catholic moral theology are not equipped to enter into dialogue with contemporary work in evolutionary biology. He finds in the Aristotelian influenced natural law writings of Aquinas a more promising conversation partner.

Porter, Jean. *Nature as Reason : A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law*. Porter examines the relationship between nature and reason in the works of Aquinas, with the purpose of overcoming the modern dualism between the realm of nature and the realm of reason.

Rhees, Rush. *Wittgenstein and the Possibility of Discourse*. 2nd ed. ed. Rhees challenges the dominance of the analogy Wittgenstein draws between language and games, arguing that the human search for understanding comes prior to entering into any game.

Note on Referencing

When a reference is to a numbered remark in the works of Wittgenstein this is indicated by a ‘§’; otherwise references are to page numbers

1 WHY STUDY WITTGENSTEIN FOR MORAL THEOLOGY?

1.1 Introductory Remarks: Wittgenstein, Metaphysics and Moral Theology

The philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein has greatly influenced theology in the English speaking world. Wittgenstein's influence is not confined to one particular confession or to a particular subject matter, but can be observed in theologians from a variety of traditions writing on dogmatic, moral and spiritual topics. Although mention will be made in this thesis of this rich variety of uses of Wittgenstein we will be concerned primarily with the work of those theologians and philosophers who have read Wittgenstein as sharing something in common with that tradition beginning with Plato which connects grammar, metaphysics and dialectic. Former students of Wittgenstein such as Peter Geach and G.E.M. Anscombe drew upon Wittgenstein's writings to show how the insights of philosophers like Aristotle are relevant to contemporary philosophical questions.¹ Likewise, theologians inspired by Wittgenstein developed readings of Aquinas which sought to recover aspects of his thought lost by modernity. Victor Preller is of particular note as a theologian who used Wittgenstein to gain insights into Aquinas,² and two influential theologians belonging to the English Province of the Order of Preachers, Cornelius Ernst and Herbert McCabe, were influenced in their presentation of Aquinas by Wittgenstein. Ernst gives a summary statement of the Wittgenstein influenced approach to Aquinas in the following passage from his 1964 paper 'Words, Facts and God': "St Thomas's metaphysics may be regarded as an examination of the presuppositions of our language, at least of our subject-predicate language. The logic of

¹ For example see, G. E. M. Anscombe, *Intention* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957).

² See Victor Preller, *Divine Science and the Science of God : A Reformulation of Thomas Aquinas* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967).

our language is a revelation of the logic, the intelligibility of Being.”³ Such approaches to Aquinas have in recent year suffered a decline in influence. Stephen Mulhall observes the following in his book *The Great Riddle*: “It is my understanding that this project is now generally regarded as being part of the history of theology rather than of its vital present—as very much a project of the 1960s and 1970s, when Wittgenstein’s later writings were at their most influential.”⁴ By contrast, Mulhall’s objective is to show how such approaches: “can be seen not only as an authentically Wittgensteinian enterprise, but also as a genuinely fruitful approach to theology.”⁵ This thesis also seeks to show how the writings of Wittgenstein can be used fruitfully in moral theology. To this end a special debt is owed to Fergus Kerr (as the title of this thesis indicates), who has shown perhaps more than any other theologian the relevance of Wittgenstein for theology, and been a guide for his Dominican brethren and many others in understanding how the study of Wittgenstein can help to renew theology.

There are at least two major challenges in showing how Wittgenstein’s writings are relevant for contemporary questions in moral theology. Firstly, there is the question of how to interpret Wittgenstein. In section 1.3 we will ask why Wittgenstein attracts such a wide variety of interpretation, and offer reasons for holding the reading of Wittgenstein developed in this thesis as both an interpretation of Wittgenstein and as a dialogue partner for moral theology. Secondly, there is a wider question concerning the use of philosophy in theology. In the Catholic tradition the philosophy of nature and metaphysics have played a central role in the development of moral theology. Wittgenstein’s seeming lack of interest in the former and antipathy to the latter seems to indicate that there is little space for a constructive dialogue

³ Cornelius Ernst, O.P., “Words, Facts and God,” in *Multiple Echo : Explorations in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1979), 18. The echo of Heidegger is also present in this remark.

⁴ Stephen Mulhall, *The Great Riddle : Wittgenstein and Nonsense, Theology and Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 22. Mulhall borrows the term ‘Grammatical Thomism’ from Francesca Murphy to characterize the works of theologians such as McCabe who drew on grammatical insights from Wittgenstein in their reading of Aquinas. In a recent editorial of *New Blackfriars* Fergus Kerr questions the description of these theologians as ‘Grammatical Thomists’, and claims that they were more indebted to earlier Catholic theologians than to Wittgenstein in their treatment of religious language. See: Fergus Kerr, “Comment: *Grammatical Thomism?*,” *New Blackfriars* 97, no. 1071 (2016).

between Wittgenstein and Catholic moral theology. Some theologians, particularly those in the Reformed Traditions, welcome Wittgenstein's critique of metaphysics and see him as offering a philosophy which avoids the importation of Greek philosophical ideas into Christian theology.⁶ By contrast, we will argue in this thesis that Wittgenstein can be read in continuity with the metaphysical tradition which originates with Plato.⁷

In section 1.2 we will begin a dialogue between Wittgenstein and the metaphysical tradition by following Anscombe in making Wittgenstein a conversation partner with Plato, Aristotle and Aquinas. This will involve asking what metaphysics is, and tracing the connections between metaphysics, grammar and practice. We will argue that despite his antipathy to metaphysics Wittgenstein shares much in common with the tradition which begins with Plato. The first four chapters of this thesis will develop this dialogue; using the metaphysical tradition to cast a critical light on Wittgenstein's philosophy, while showing how he in his turn helps us to see aspects of that tradition which have been neglected or which require revision and development. In addition to providing a context of philosophical practice for the evaluation of Wittgenstein's philosophy this dialogue will provide an opening for a conversation with moral theology. This dialogue will therefore have three principle conversation partners and a fourth voice, the philosophy of nature (physics) will emerge in the course of our discussions. The question of nature will be a guiding theme throughout this thesis, for although Wittgenstein lacks a philosophy of nature his concern for origins can be read as continuous with the question of nature as origin in the metaphysical tradition. The dialogue between Wittgenstein, metaphysics, physics and moral theology will be developed in chapters five, six and seven. These chapters will draw upon the discussion from the first four chapters, and draw parallels between the work of various contemporary moral

⁶ See for example Tim Labron, *Wittgenstein and Theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2009).

⁷ A theologian who reads Wittgenstein within the metaphysical tradition and applies this reading to questions in theology is Stephen D. Long. See D. Stephen Long, *Speaking of God : Theology, Language, and Truth*, The Eerdmans Ekklesia Series (Grand Rapids, Mich. ; Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2009). We will draw upon Long's work in chapter five.

theologians and Wittgenstein. In particular we will show how Wittgenstein in his later philosophy shares many of the concerns found among those moral theologians who have revived natural law and virtue traditions.

1.2 Wittgenstein and Metaphysics: A Return or a Rejection?

1.2.1 Does Wittgenstein Trivialize Philosophy?

Mulhall recounts how when seeking to understand why Wittgensteinian influenced approaches to Aquinas are seen as passé he was: “pointed to Francesca Aran Murphy’s book, *God is Not a Story*,”⁸ in which Murphy argues that ‘Grammatical Thomists’ have reduced metaphysical concerns to linguistic ones. Murphy blames this reduction on the influence of Wittgenstein, which is seen:

Not only to misrepresent genuinely metaphysical reflection; it is to eviscerate or etiolate it, by reducing a concern for the ultimate ground of being to an anthropocentric, reflective, and emptily formal reflection on our means of representing reality rather than on the reality we aspire to represent.⁹

This contrast between grammatical remarks and metaphysical enquiry characterizes Wittgenstein as replacing an interest in substantive philosophical questions with empty linguistic play. Mulhall, a leading scholar of Wittgenstein, takes issue with Murphy’s interpretation: “For Wittgenstein . . . elucidating grammar and articulating the essence of things are not distinct tasks at all.”¹⁰ How we understand the relationship between grammar and metaphysics will be a central concern of this thesis. At first sight Wittgenstein’s dialogical style of writing and the lack of a more technical philosophical language in his later works may create the impression that he lacked an interest in the deeper questions of philosophy. We will argue, however, that despite various deficiencies and limitations

⁸ Mulhall, *The Great Riddle : Wittgenstein and Nonsense, Theology and Philosophy*, 2. See Francesca Aran Murphy, *God Is Not a Story : Realism Revisited* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). In chapter five we will examine a criticism made by Murphy of Kerr’s use of Wittgenstein.

⁹ Mulhall, *The Great Riddle : Wittgenstein and Nonsense, Theology and Philosophy*, 2.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Wittgenstein can be read as belonging to that tradition of enquiry which places dialogue, questioning and grammar at the service of deep philosophical concerns. This is illustrated in the following vignette recounted by Anscombe.

In the introduction to the second volume of her collected philosophical papers Anscombe recounts how during one of Wittgenstein's classes in 1944 she finally saw how phenomenalism could be overcome. Prior to this she had "felt trapped by it"¹¹ and the standard kinds of objections to phenomenalism raised by Bertrand Russell far from releasing her from this trap had left live and active its "central nerve."¹² Anscombe does not here define what she understands by phenomenalism, but it is reasonable to assume that she is referring to the empiricist doctrine according to which: "propositions asserting the existence of physical objects are equivalent in meaning to propositions asserting that subjects would have certain sequences of sensations were they to have certain others."¹³ Anscombe felt trapped by phenomenalism and describes how: "For years I would spend time, in cafés, for example, staring at objects saying to myself: "I see a packet. But what do I really see? How can I say that I see here anything more than a yellow expanse?"¹⁴

Anscombe's example concerns a human made object, an artefact, but the source of her perplexity arose when she changed her considerations from artefacts to natural things:

the first more natural examples that struck me were 'wood' and the sky. The latter hit me amidsthips because I was saying dogmatically that one must know the category of object one was speaking of – whether it was a colour or a kind of stuff, for example, *that* belonged to the logic of the term one was using. It couldn't be a matter of empirical discovery that something belonged to a different category. The sky stopped me.¹⁵

¹¹ G. E. M. Anscombe, *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind*, The Collected Philosophical Papers of G E M Anscombe (Oxford Oxfordshire: B. Blackwell, 1981), viii.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Robert Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 663.

¹⁴ Anscombe, *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind*, viii.

¹⁵ Ibid.

This confusion resulted from the influence exerted by an empiricist picture of concept acquisition on Anscombe's account of how we classify objects.¹⁶ According to this empiricist account the human mind receives impressions from an external source, which it internally classifies using different categories. The picture sets up a gulf between the inner and the outer, the constructed and the given, which is reflected in a separation of the empirical and the conceptual into given content and the classification of this content. Anscombe's consideration of natural things challenged this separation, but the power exerted by the picture prevented her from questioning the picture itself. Instead she continued to operate within the picture, seeking a means to bridge the gulf between content and concept, but seeing no alternative to collapsing the latter into the former: "How can I say that I see here anything more than a yellow expanse?"

Anscombe thus found herself trapped within the modern empiricist account of concept formation according to which concepts are formed from mental images, such that the concept 'blue' is the result of a mental operation whereby we extract blue from the multiplicity of colours we experience.¹⁷ Wittgenstein's arguments against such empiricist theories are well known, pointing out the circularity of such accounts; they assume we already possess the very concept we are trying to define. At the start of *The Blue Book* Wittgenstein notes that: "for many words in our language there do not seem to be ostensive definitions,"¹⁸ and such words cannot be defined by pointing to a sample. The ability to point

¹⁶ Anscombe's account of classification draws upon the modern empiricist tradition which is developed by empiricists such as Locke and Hume. Although this tradition is presented as resting upon a common sense account of naming it makes various metaphysical and epistemological assumptions. Wittgenstein helped Anscombe to see through these assumptions. Not all empiricist theories of knowledge, however, rest upon these modern assumptions. For an account of how an Aristotelian/Thomist empiricism differs and overcomes many of the challenges made of the modern tradition see John O'Callaghan, *Thomist Realism and the Linguistic Turn : Toward a More Perfect Form of Existence* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003).

¹⁷ For an account of how an Aristotelian/Thomist account of abstraction differs from an empiricist one see *ibid.*, 218-24.

¹⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, Blackwell, 1969), 1. N.B *The Blue and Brown Books* were dictated in English.

to a colour requires the prior mastery of colour concepts.¹⁹ Anscombe relates how during a class she:

came out with “But I still want to say: Blue is there.” Older hands smiled or laughed but Wittgenstein checked them by taking it seriously, saying “Let me think what medicine you need . . . Suppose that we had the word ‘painy’ as a word for the property of surfaces.” The ‘medicine’ was effective, and the story illustrates Wittgenstein’s ability to understand the thought that was offered to him in objection.²⁰

I suspect that most of us like Anscombe would protest: but surely there is something there that is ‘blue’, something we can point to, something we refer to when we say an object is blue. Wittgenstein’s response is to help us see that this ‘something’ is an illusion.²¹ He asks us to think what it would be like if we used the word ‘painy’ to describe surfaces which cause us pain when we touch them. In such cases the temptation to say ‘but surely pain is there’ does not overcome us.

Yes, you may concede, pain is not a something ‘there’ in the world, but it surely is a something; when I am in pain that is no illusion. Wittgenstein is not denying that there are objects which are blue, nor that when I trap my hand in a door that the pain is real. His response to Anscombe is not to draw doubt on our colour ascriptions, nor on our cries of pain; rather he wishes us to see through the belief that our concepts are things in the world. Pain grows and it diminishes, it lasts for seconds or for years, but the concept of pain is not something which grows or diminishes, nor does it last for seconds or years. We cannot point to the concept of pain and say ‘there’ in the same way that we can when a doctor asks: ‘where is does it hurt?’ The mistake that Anscombe made was in the attention she paid to objects

¹⁹ This is not to say that particular colours cannot be defined by ostensive definition, but such definitions assume a prior mastery of colour concepts.

²⁰ Anscombe, *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind*, viii-ix.

²¹ Wittgenstein notes that: “In reality (*Wirklichkeit*), however, we quite readily say that a particular colour exists; and that is as much as to say that something exists that has that colour.” Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), §58. “In Wirklichkeit aber sagen wir sehr wohl, eine bestimmte Farbe existiere; und das heißt soviel wie; es existiere etwas, was diese Farbe hat.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1, ed. Joachim Schulte (Sinzheim, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1984), §58. Here Wittgenstein acknowledges the tendency which Anscombe witnesses to, but argues that it is not the existence of a ‘something’ which is the colour, but that the colour exists when something has the colour.

with the expectation that focusing on an object and analysing it will yield its essence: “How can I say that I see here anything more than a yellow expanse?” Wittgenstein’s medicine was to show her that there is no object of attention in this sense; he freed her from the trap of expecting to see the essence of an object if you look long enough and hard enough.²²

It may seem that Wittgenstein’s fascination with such questions as those raised by Anscombe trivializes philosophy and ignores the deep and central questions which philosophers have traditionally sought to answer. If such is the case then the value of Wittgenstein’s writings for a renewal of moral theology would be limited: perhaps useful in helping us to avoid various linguistic and conceptual confusions, but incapable in throwing light on the central questions facing moral theologians today. In order to evaluate Wittgenstein’s writings it is essential to see how his grammatical remarks connect with the deeper issues philosophers have reflected on throughout the ages. Many of those who follow Wittgenstein would agree that philosophy is a matter of grammatical remarks, but would argue that far from making his thought trivial such grammatical reminders go to the root of problems which have troubled philosophers over the centuries.

Nor does this emphasis on grammar imply anti-realism. The much discussed remark in the *Philosophical Investigations*: “Grammar tells what kind of object anything is. (Theology as grammar)”²³ does not entail that Wittgenstein intends to deny the reality of God any more than he denies the reality of colours or of pain.²⁴ His purpose is to draw our attention to the ways in which we talk about God and how language can mislead us into

²² It is an interesting historical and psychological question to ask how this picture of the mind arose. Standardly Descartes is attributed with introducing the picture, but for an argument that introspection of mental contents as a model for the mental is introduced by the British empiricists, notably Hobbes see Gordon P. Baker and Katherine J. Morris, *Descartes' Dualism* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2002).

²³ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §373. “Welche Art von Gegenstand etwas ist, sagt die Grammatik. (Theologie als Grammatik.)” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §373.

²⁴ For a realist reading of Wittgenstein and religious language see Felicity McCutcheon, *Religion within the Limits of Language Alone : Wittgenstein on Philosophy and Religion* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001).

misrepresenting what God is.²⁵ The temptation to misrepresent how grammar works is one which Wittgenstein came to see as a general human weakness, expressed in the following famous remark in the *Investigations*: “Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language.”²⁶ Wittgenstein sees this general human temptation as particularly prevalent in the work of metaphysicians. His antipathy to metaphysics is clearly stated in the following passage from *Zettel*: “Philosophical investigations: conceptual investigations. The essential things about metaphysics: it obliterates the distinction between factual and conceptual investigations.”²⁷ Another example is the well-known saying in the *Investigations*, where Wittgenstein states: “What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use.”²⁸ Yet, despite this hostility to metaphysics Anscombe interprets Wittgenstein in a manner which places him in the midst of philosophers normally considered as metaphysical.

In the introduction to *From Plato to Wittgenstein*, a collection of Anscombe’s essays, Mary Geach tells us that Anscombe: “recorded that before she knew him [Wittgenstein], the great philosophers of the past had appeared to her like beautiful statues: knowing him had brought them alive for her.”²⁹ Anscombe, in a paper contained in this same collection, ‘Frege, Wittgenstein and Platonism’,³⁰ traces the continuity she sees between these three philosophers. In Wittgenstein’s notion that essence is given through grammar Anscombe

²⁵ For realist anti-metaphysical reading of Wittgenstein see Cora Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit : Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: MIT Press, 1991).

²⁶ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §109. “Die Philosophie ist ein Kampf gegen die Verhexung unsres Verstandes durch die Mittel unserer Sprache.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §109.

²⁷ *Zettel*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 2nd ed. ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), §458. “Philosophische Untersuchungen: begriffliche Untersuchungen. Das Wesentliche der Metaphysik: daß sie den Unterschied zwischen sachlichen und begrifflichen Untersuchungen verwischt.” *Zettel. In Wissenschaft Bemerkungen Über Die Farben ; Über Gewissheit ; Zettel ; Vermischte Bemerkungen, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 8* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), § 458.

²⁸ *Philosophical Investigations*, §116. “Wir führen die Wörter von ihrer metaphysischen, wieder auf ihre alltägliche Verwendung zurück.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §116.

²⁹ G. E. M. Anscombe, *From Plato to Wittgenstein : Essays by G.E.M. Anscombe* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2011), viii.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 127-35.

finds a continuation of the tradition Plato inaugurates with his theory of forms: “Now: was Wittgenstein an ‘essentialist’? To the extent that I have described, yes.”³¹

These arguments for a continuity between Wittgenstein and the metaphysical tradition stand at odds with interpretations of Wittgenstein as anti-Platonic. Robert Fogelin gives a succinct summary of such interpretations in the following passage, in which he argues that Wittgenstein in the *Investigations* came to refute an ontological theory of meaning in favour of one which draws attention to the uses of language:

The Platonist is parsimonious in the number of uses of language he acknowledges, and then makes up for this by being profligate in his ontology. Wittgenstein is profligate in the number of uses of language he admits, but this, in itself, relieves the pressure to explain differences in meaning by reference to differences in *things* signified.³²

Fogelin argues that it is not in failing to observe grammatical distinctions that Platonists creates confusion, but rather in their manner of explaining such distinctions. Thus red is posited to exist as an object, whereas attention to the actual use we make of the word ‘red’ shows us how we use it in referring to things that are red. The story Fogelin tells in this interpretation of Wittgenstein reads the development of Wittgenstein’s thought, from his earlier emphasis in the *Tractatus* on the general logical form of language to the later stress on the multiplicity of linguistic forms, as mirroring more generally the history of philosophy. Whereas in the past philosophers (including the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*) were misled by the grammar of language into thinking that our words correspond to an independent reality which their meanings mirror, Wittgenstein in his later writings came to see that the task of the philosopher is not to discover the ontological foundations of the world, but to show how our familiar world is given through the various uses we make of language; thus relieving the pressure on an overblown ontology.

³¹ Ibid., 135.

³² Robert J. Fogelin, *Wittgenstein*, 2nd ed. ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 115.

Such readings of Wittgenstein are challenged by the ‘New Wittgensteinians’ who argue that the *Tractatus* does not offer a realist metaphysics as the basis for its theory of meaning, but like the later works should be understood as a work of conceptual clarification.³³ Rather than reading the change from the early to the later Wittgenstein as the replacement of an ontological model by a theory of linguistic use, the New Wittgensteinians argue that there is a basic continuity between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*. Both a metaphysical realist account of the *Tractatus* and a corresponding linguistic anti-realist account of the *Investigations* are ruled out. Cora Diamond, one of the earliest and most influential proponents of such a reading of Wittgenstein, sums up this reading of Wittgenstein in the following passage:

The idea that Wittgenstein was an anti-realist about facts underlying the logical features of our forms of expression goes very naturally with a particular way of taking the *Tractatus*, and of seeing its relation to the later writings. We may think of Wittgenstein as having gone from taking a realist view of such metaphysical facts in his earlier writings to an anti-realist view afterwards.³⁴

Diamond argues that Wittgenstein no more affirms than he denies the existence of ‘metaphysical facts’; rather he returns us to the familiar reality we inhabit through the linguistic practices we possess: “There are no metaphysical facts to make our way of speaking right or wrong; there is nothing *out there* to make the necessities we have built into our languages correct.”³⁵ The mistake philosophers make when they attempt to do metaphysics is to assume that we can have access to a reality which is independently of our linguistic practices: “The demands we make for philosophical explanations come, seem to come, from a position in which we are as it were looking down onto the relation between ourselves and some reality, some kind of fact or real possibility. We think that we mean

³³ For an account of this new reading of Wittgenstein see the introduction to Alice Marguerite Cray and Rupert J. Read, *The New Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 2000).

³⁴ Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit : Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind*, 17.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

something by our questions about it.”³⁶ This reading of Wittgenstein is one which takes its cue from Wittgenstein’s remark: “*Not empiricism and yet realism in philosophy, that is the hardest thing*”³⁷ and argues that throughout his writings he preserves a realistic spirit. For Diamond, Wittgenstein’s rejection of metaphysics far from entailing anti-realism is made in the spirit of realism. Wittgenstein wishes to help us return to the basis of our concepts in our linguistic practices and to preserve us from the illusion that those concepts are obtained by stepping outside those practices.

Diamond’s reading of Wittgenstein entails that his rejection of metaphysics, far from making his work irrelevant for theology, holds the promise of helping us see through metaphysical illusions and of returning us to the reality of our lives as moral creatures. It is attractive for those contemporary theologians who wish to maintain realism in theology, while for various reasons rejecting metaphysics. So are we to reject Anscombe’s reading of Wittgenstein as part of a tradition beginning with Plato? We could argue in the first instance that insofar as the intention of the Platonic tradition is a realistic one there is some common ground with the realistic spirit of Wittgenstein. The wholesale rejection of metaphysics, however, weakens the case for continuity, as Platonic realism rests upon metaphysics. Was Anscombe therefore overoptimistic in her ascription of common ground? Did her admiration for her teacher and her adherence to the metaphysical tradition tempt her to overstate the connections between the two?

There are three factors which militate in favour of Anscombe’s readings. Firstly, there is the historical connection between metaphysics and grammar. The central role which Wittgenstein assigns to grammar provides a common ground with metaphysics, which has

³⁶ Ibid., 69.

³⁷ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 3d ed. (Oxford Eng.: B. Blackwell, 1978), VI, §23. “Nicht Empirie und doch Realismus in der Philosophie, das ist das schwerste.” *Bemerkung Über Die Grundlagen Der Mathematik, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 6* (Sinzheim, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1984), VI, §23.

from its inception been concerned with grammar. Secondly, there is the question of metaphysics itself. Diamond, no less than Fogelin, offers a crude caricature of metaphysics: it is the positing of certain ‘metaphysical’ facts or objects. Wittgenstein in his writings, as we have seen, can be no less guilty of such a caricature. The metaphysical tradition, however, is primarily a practice of philosophy, and although this practice entails ontological commitments it does not reduce metaphysics to positing a static model of reality. Thirdly, once we have reappraised the nature of metaphysics we can question whether Wittgenstein’s writings are in fact as anti-metaphysical as many of his followers would have us believe. We will argue that Wittgenstein develops a practice of philosophy in his later works which has several points in common with the metaphysical tradition. In the remainder on this section we will examine these three factors.

1.2.2 Metaphysics and Grammar

In *Metaphysics and Grammar* William Charlton argues that the task of the metaphysician is to show how grammar works: “It is not the business of grammarians to say how metaphysical concepts work, but it is the business of metaphysicians to say how grammar works.”³⁸ Charlton notes that both metaphysics and grammar initially developed with Plato: “Plato’s grammatical analyses not only provided him with an account of truth; they opened up the whole field of metaphysics.”³⁹ In the following passage, which asserts that solving philosophical problems requires seeing how language works, Charlton acknowledges his debt to Wittgenstein: “I follow one twentieth-century thinker, Wittgenstein, in arguing that a principle source of bad metaphysics is misunderstanding how language works.”⁴⁰ Anscombe also draws attention to this connection: “Plato was about the first

³⁸ William Charlton, *Metaphysics and Grammar* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 9.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

grammarians,”⁴¹ but we will see in chapter three that Charlton is far more critical of Wittgenstein’s account of grammar than Anscombe. For present purposes it is sufficient to note the connection he draws between metaphysics and grammar.

But what is metaphysics and how is it connected to grammar? Charlton notes that the term ‘metaphysics’, which means ‘after physics’ in Greek, came initially to be applied to those parts of Aristotle’s writings which were arranged after his physics. As such Charlton asserts that: “the word metaphysics means very little,”⁴² but rather became associated with the examination of certain topics which continue to be the province of metaphysicians, such as existence and causation. Charlton argues that by determining forms of speech grammar is the principle tool used by metaphysicians. For example, the question: ‘what is time?’ cannot be answered by discovering an object which gives the word ‘time’ its meaning. Rather, metaphysicians throw light on the question of time by attending to how our concept of time is expressed in the grammatical construction of our language. By examining how we express concepts such as existence and causation philosophers were able to distinguish between grammatical enquiries and those empirical investigations which are carried out in particular sciences such as zoology or botany: “Before any progress can be made, either in the sciences or in any other academic discipline, people must distinguish questions which can be answered by empirical investigation from questions which must be tackled in other ways.”⁴³ Here Charlton has in mind questions like: ‘what is an animal?’ Such questions are not answered by the empirical sciences, but are presupposed by them. In contrast, question such as: ‘which is the fastest land animal?’ can be answered using agreed methods of observation and measurement.⁴⁴ Wittgenstein’s characterization of philosophy as conceptual investigations thus continues a long tradition of grammatical enquiry.

⁴¹ Anscombe, *From Plato to Wittgenstein : Essays by G.E.M. Anscombe*, 133.

⁴² Charlton, *Metaphysics and Grammar*, 2.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁴ These examples are my own.

Through drawing attention to the connection between metaphysics and grammar Charlton helps to overcome the misconception that metaphysics involves positing a realm of objects which the metaphysician uses to explain reality. There is, of course, bad metaphysics, but the notion that those philosophers who have practiced metaphysical ways of thinking are all guilty of blindly making unwarranted ontological commitments is itself an unwarranted assumption.

1.2.3 Metaphysics and Practice

The misconception that metaphysics involves the discovery or construction of ‘metaphysical objects’ brings with it the further mistake of characterizing metaphysics as primarily a technical discipline which provides models of reality. Academia has become increasingly the province of specialists, with each subject area requiring knowledge of sophisticated methods, and it is thus tempting to portray philosophy as a technical discipline which will yield results from the application of its methods. It is certainly true that philosophers throughout the ages have used various methods and instruments, many of which require considerable training to master. If we follow Charlton it is clear that the development of metaphysics went together with the development of grammar. It would be wrong, however, to conclude that philosophy is primarily about the application and development of various methods and instruments. So, if philosophy (and more specifically metaphysics) is not primarily about putting forward models, which use various methods and instruments to solve philosophical problems, what is it about?

One answer to this question is to say that philosophy is not about anything, rather it is a way of living: a practice of wisdom. For many modern thinkers this kind of answer is attractive because it divests philosophy of the responsibility to demonstrate its claims. If philosophy cannot demonstrate its claims in the same way that the specialist empirical

sciences can, then why hold that philosophy is theoretical? Rather than making theoretical claims philosophy becomes primarily a way of living. The problem with such views is that they assume an opposition between theory and practice. If the reduction of metaphysics to the status of a particular science fails to acknowledge metaphysics as a practice, characterizing metaphysics as practice free from theory is no less guilty of assuming a dichotomy between contemplation and practice.

In his work *Aquinas, Ethics and Philosophy of Religion: Metaphysics and Practice* Thomas Hibbs attempts to overcome the modern dichotomy between theory and practice.⁴⁵ Hibbs notes that although there is a tension in the works of Aristotle between theory and practice, “the relationship between these two might be said to constitute the central and unifying theme in Aristotle’s philosophy.”⁴⁶ Aquinas follows Aristotle in defining, “contemplation as an activity— indeed, as the highest type of activity.”⁴⁷ In contrast to the modern opposition between theory and practice Hibbs argues that in the thought of Aquinas: “If theoretical contemplation is to be considered the highest activity, it will be so only in light of a conception of excellence internal to the notion of practice.”⁴⁸ The reference here to excellence internal to practice recalls Alasdair MacIntyre’s revival of virtue ethics, which Hibbs applies to metaphysics in order to characterize it as a practice of wisdom.⁴⁹ Hibbs sees MacIntyre in his revival of virtue theory as avoiding the modern dichotomy between theory and practice:

MacIntyre suggests a third way between the advocates of philosophy as a theoretical enterprise of establishing epistemological foundations and a flight from theory in its entirety. That, in some form, is the position we intend to develop on the basis of

⁴⁵ Thomas S. Hibbs, *Aquinas, Ethics, and Philosophy of Religion : Metaphysics and Practice*, Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ See Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue : A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

Aquinas's texts, a position most accessible through a consideration of Aquinas's reading of Aristotle.⁵⁰

This third way is the practice of prudence, which incorporates the use of theory while avoiding the danger of reducing philosophy to a merely 'theoretical enterprise.' Furthermore, as a practice of prudence metaphysics is not conformed to a particular goal, but is open to the truth of everything.⁵¹ Metaphysics uses various tools and techniques, but it is ultimately a practice which is concerned with all things; not the technical exploration of a given subject matter.

These reflections upon the relationship between metaphysics and practice do not in themselves tell us what metaphysics is, but they do move us in the right direction. Here Hibbs, following Stanley Rosen, argues that the only way to understand metaphysics is to engage in metaphysics ourselves.⁵² It is only from within the practice of metaphysics that we can answer the question: what is metaphysics? Hibbs is not proposing that we each invent our own metaphysics, but rather that we join those who are the great practitioners of metaphysics, notably Aquinas. For his part Aquinas follows Aristotle's various descriptions of metaphysics: firstly, as the study of being, secondly as first philosophy and thirdly as divine science or theology.⁵³ Hibbs underlines the importance of understanding these descriptions within the context of the relationship between metaphysics and practice. In particular, describing metaphysics as theology has brought the charge that Aquinas substitutes the real living experience of our encounter with the divine for a set of static categories and propositions. By drawing attention to the connection between metaphysics and practice in

⁵⁰ Hibbs, *Aquinas, Ethics, and Philosophy of Religion : Metaphysics and Practice*, 74.

⁵¹ For an account of the practice of philosophy as open to the truth of all things see: Josef Pieper, *In Defense of Philosophy : Classical Wisdom Stands up to Modern Challenges* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992).

⁵² Hibbs, *Aquinas, Ethics, and Philosophy of Religion : Metaphysics and Practice*, 9. In this thesis we will talk a great deal about dialectical reasoning, but like the question of metaphysics there is no single answer to the question: what is dialectical reasoning? Rather it is through engaging in dialectical reasoning that we learn what it is. The historical links between metaphysics and the development of dialectic indicate that any answer to the question of metaphysics will also throw light on the question of dialectic.

⁵³ It is important to distinguish between what is here understood as theology and theology as the study of Scripture. In chapter five we will examine the relationship between metaphysics and theology understood in this latter sense.

Aquinas Hibbs can assert that: “At least as practiced by the believer, metaphysics is among a number of activities, including preaching and disputation, that arise from a surplus of contemplation, a surplus that always exceeds our ability to articulate it in speech.”⁵⁴

In seeking to characterize metaphysics we have used the reflections of two contemporary practitioners of metaphysics. Charlton and Hibbs in their turn draw upon some of the great figures in the tradition of metaphysical practice. At first sight it may appear that despite using the same sources Charlton, with his emphasis on grammar, and Hibbs, with his preoccupation with the relationship between theory and practice, have drawn very different and not necessarily compatible lessons from this tradition. This first impression is reinforced if we again contrast Charlton’s understanding of the relationship between grammar and metaphysics with the three characterizations of metaphysics which Hibbs finds in Aquinas. Despite these differences, however, there is more in common between Charlton and Hibbs than first meets the eye. Common ground is found in Charlton’s argument that language acquisition requires participation in pre-linguistic practices. He adapts H. P. Grice’s theory of conversational implication to develop his own theory of initial language acquisition, which he applies to both the acquisition of language by children and the development of language from the pre-linguistic past inherited by human beings:

The beginnings of language are probably to be sought outside the human species. It is hard to see any continuity between the dance of bees, by which the location of pollen is communicated to a hive, and human speech; but it is clear that some hunting mammals teach their skills to their young, and that bats have friendships and make requests of one another is well documented.⁵⁵

The grammatical reflections that Charlton carries out are not disconnected from our goal oriented (teleological) practices as human beings, but arise out of these practices. For Charlton, understanding grammar in relation to our teleological practices does not, however,

⁵⁴ Hibbs, *Aquinas, Ethics, and Philosophy of Religion : Metaphysics and Practice*, 11.

⁵⁵ Charlton, *Metaphysics and Grammar*, 194. Charlton runs the risk here of anthropomorphizing animals. In chapters four, five and six we will argue that it is necessary to use analogy when speaking of animals in such terms. For Grice’s theory of conversational implications see: H. P. Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words* (Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 1989).

reduce grammar to a given pre-linguistic set of desires: “Making statements and giving orders or advice are social practices in which we engage for practical purposes; but they are *linguistic* practices, practices of *saying*.”⁵⁶ This opens the path towards understanding metaphysics as a practice which is rooted in our animal, social and conversational nature. As such metaphysics is a distinctively human activity, but is not reducible to the expression of a pre-given concept of human nature.⁵⁷

Common ground can also be found on Hibbs’ side, for although Hibbs places emphasis on metaphysics as a practice this is a practice of contemplation. In particular it involves dialectical reasoning, which is essential in the establishment of first principles and also in the operation of the various sciences: “Dialectical reasoning and a variety of intellectual virtues are operative not just on the way to the principles of a variety of inquiries but even in the midst of the sciences.”⁵⁸ In medieval universities dialectic was taught alongside rhetoric and grammar, and a connection between dialectic and grammar is present in Charlton’s understanding of grammar as rising out of exchanges between individuals involved in teleological practices: “We construct sentences in order to say that certain things are or are not the case, or that doing certain things would be good or bad. ... Once this is admitted, how languages are learnt, and how grammatical rules come to be grasped, is readily understandable.”⁵⁹ Hibbs also points to the connection between linguistic practice and dialectic: “It is called dialectic because it is the art of conducting a real dialogue.”⁶⁰

Furthermore, although Hibbs has little to say about grammar like Charlton he argues that our

⁵⁶ Charlton, *Metaphysics and Grammar*, 60. This point is made in an argument against what Charlton sees as Wittgenstein’s reduction of meaning to pragmatics. Whether Charlton is correct in his interpretation of Wittgenstein as developing a pragmatic theory of meaning is a question we shall return to in chapters two and three.

⁵⁷ It is important to note that in talking of the pre-linguistic inheritance of human beings we are referring to something which is related to but distinct from the pre-linguistic behaviour of human beings. It is not clear that Charlton marks this distinction. The pre-linguistic behaviour of human infants is related to but distinct from the pre-linguistic behaviour of other animals.

⁵⁸ Hibbs, *Aquinas, Ethics, and Philosophy of Religion : Metaphysics and Practice*, 44.

⁵⁹ Charlton, *Metaphysics and Grammar*, 202.

⁶⁰ Hibbs, *Aquinas, Ethics, and Philosophy of Religion : Metaphysics and Practice*, 42.

use of language develops from a pre-linguistic basis: “The underlying assumption here is that human beings, like other animals, have pre-conceptual experiences and that the task of human inquiry is to craft concepts to articulate those experiences.”⁶¹

In this section we have offered a reappraisal of metaphysics in order to determine how to understand Wittgenstein in relation to the metaphysical tradition. To accomplish this we have been guided by two contemporary exponents of metaphysics and noted that despite obvious differences they share more in common than first meets the eye. In particular, both Charlton and Hibbs see metaphysics as a practice which has its origin in our pre-conceptual practices (and hence metaphysics requires physics). This does not reduce metaphysics to a pragmatic science, and the central importance of theory is stressed by both philosophers. This reappraisal of metaphysics is itself a dialectical exercise through which we are putting in place the starting points for our investigation of Wittgenstein’s relevance to moral theology; providing an orientation for our enquiries through which we will ask how Wittgenstein can help us to reflect upon the kind of creatures we are. If Anscombe is right, and Wittgenstein can be read in continuity with the Platonic tradition, then we should expect to find points of connection between his thought and the conception of metaphysics we have been developing. It is this task we turn to in the next section.

1.2.4 Wittgenstein and Metaphysics

We have seen how Anscombe reads Wittgenstein in continuity with the Platonic tradition. Her argument for this continuity rests on two related grounds. Firstly, she argues that Wittgenstein’s understanding of philosophy as grammatical remarks shares a kinship with Plato’s development and use of grammar as an instrument for understanding the essence

⁶¹ Ibid., 62.

of things. In her paper ‘A Theory of Language’⁶² Anscombe states: “Strange to say, Wittgenstein’s conception of the grammatical is far closer to the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition than that of the linguistics which seems to hold the field at the present day.”⁶³ Secondly, she sees in Wittgenstein a practice of philosophy which resonates with that of Plato. In her *Introduction to Wittgenstein’s Tractatus* Anscombe notes how the preoccupations of the *Tractatus* are not those of the empiricists or idealists who have for so long dominated philosophy, and therefore it should not be read through such a philosophical lens. Rather, Wittgenstein’s concerns turn on our ability to be:

naively struck by such questions as the following ones: If I say that Russell is a clever philosopher, I mention Russell, and say something about him: now, is what I say about him something that I *mention*, just as I *mention* him? If so, what is the connection between these two mentioned things? If not, what account are we to give of the words expressing what I say about him? Have they any reference to reality? The investigations prompted by these questions are more akin to ancient, than to more modern, philosophy.⁶⁴

The parallel drawn here between Wittgenstein and Plato concerns dialectic as least as much as grammar.⁶⁵ This is not surprising once we consider the connection we earlier traced between dialectic and grammar. It is also interesting to note that although Anscombe’s remarks concern the *Tractatus* they are true also, perhaps more so, of Wittgenstein’s later works, in which the structure of question and response has clear parallels with dialectic as it is practiced by ancient and medieval philosophers. One way of reading the development of Wittgenstein’s thought is to see it as a shift of emphasis, whereby the earlier preoccupation with general logical forms is replaced by the later emphasis on the actual practices within which grammatical tools are used.

⁶² Printed in Anscombe, *From Plato to Wittgenstein : Essays by G.E.M. Anscombe*, 193-203.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁶⁴ *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus* (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 2000), 13.

⁶⁵ To illustrate the parallel Anscombe in a footnote gives the following argument from Plato’s *Theaetetus* 189A: “In Judging, one judges something; in judging something, one judges something real; so in judging something unreal one judges nothing; but judging nothing, one is not judging at all.” To which she adds the comment: “Wittgenstein returned to the problem presented by this argument again and again throughout his life.” *Ibid.*

If we read the transition in Wittgenstein as a change of emphasis from theory to practice then it is important not to read this change according to the modern opposition between theory and practice. The *Tractatus* is a practice in philosophy, and the use of grammatical tools is central to the later works. There is, however, a significant change insofar as the practice of philosophy in the *Tractatus* is determined by the requirements of the logical system employed, whereas in the later works logical tools arise within practice.⁶⁶ This reading of the transition in Wittgenstein's thought is given support from a passage in the *Investigations* in which Wittgenstein criticizes logicians for placing logical requirements on language: "It is interesting to compare the multiplicity of the tools in language and of the ways they are used, the multiplicity of kinds of word and sentence, with what logicians have said about the structure of language. (Including the author of the *Tratatus-Logico-Philosophicus*.)"⁶⁷

In the *Investigations* Wittgenstein's purpose is to return us to the practices out of which "the multiplicity of tools in language" arise and from which they gain their point. In a section of the *Investigations* exploring the question of human intention Wittgenstein argues: "Grammar does not tell us how language must be constructed in order to fulfil its purpose, in order to have such-and-such an effect on human beings. It only describes and in no way explains the use of signs."⁶⁸ The grammar of intentional language does not lay requirements on our intentional practices, rather it describes those practices. Furthermore, Wittgenstein adds: "The rules of grammar may be called "arbitrary", if that is to mean that the *aim* of the

⁶⁶ In this respect we are in agreement with Norman Malcolm's influential reading of the *Tractatus*, see Norman Malcolm, *Nothing Is Hidden: Wittgenstein's Criticism of His Early Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

⁶⁷ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §23. "Es ist interessant, die Mannigfaltigkeit der Werkzeuge der Sprache und ihrer Verwendungsweisen, die Mannigfaltigkeit der Wort- und Satzarten, mit dem zu vergleichen, was Logiker über den Bau der Sprache gesagt haben. (Und auch der Verfasser der *Logisch-Philosophischen Abhandlung*.) *Philosophische Untersuchungen*. In *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Ludwig Wittgenstein *Werkausgabe Band 1*, §23.

⁶⁸ *Philosophical Investigations*, §496. "Grammatik sagt nicht, wie die Sprache gebaut sein muß, um ihren Zweck zu erfüllen, um so und so auf Menschen zu wirken. Sie beschreibet nur, aber erlärt in keiner Weise, den Gebrauch der Zeichen." *Philosophische Untersuchungen*. In *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Ludwig Wittgenstein *Werkausgabe Band 1*, §496.

grammar is nothing but that of the language.”⁶⁹ The mistake made by philosophers is to lay down requirements for language, whereas we throw light upon our practices when we use grammar to describe rather than explain them.

In turning to practice Wittgenstein has been accused of giving human understanding a purely pragmatic role as bringing about certain pre-defined results. In chapter three we will examine how Charlton makes this charge against Wittgenstein. We will argue that although Charlton’s criticisms have some substance, the dialectical nature of Wittgenstein’s later works entail that he cannot be read as a pragmatist in this sense. In the remainder of this present section we will attempt to show that despite his seeming opposition to the metaphysical tradition Wittgenstein is concerned with questions which lie at the heart of that tradition; in particular the question of our human nature and its origins. Despite his criticisms of metaphysics the practice of philosophy which Wittgenstein develops in his later writings has much in common with the dialectical practices of the metaphysical tradition.

1.2.5 Wittgenstein, Human Nature and Moral Theology

Wittgenstein can be read as sharing a kinship with metaphysics in his dialectical practice of philosophy, but does this entail that his practice of philosophy is also an exercise of practical wisdom? The answer to this question will turn upon the degree to which Wittgenstein’s writings cast light on what it is to be human, and whether his practice of philosophy is one which helps us to become more fully human. We will examine these questions in chapters two, three and four of this thesis. The question of the relationship between the pre-conceptual and the conceptual will be central to this examination.⁷⁰ If the

⁶⁹ *Philosophical Investigations*, §497. “Man kann die Regeln der Grammatik “willkürlich” nennen, wenn damit gesagt sein soll, der Zweck der Grammatik sei nur der Sprache.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §497.

⁷⁰ In the following discussions we will identify the distinction between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual with the distinction between the linguistic and the pre-linguistic. This opposes the understanding of philosophers such as Charlton, who argue that animals possess concepts in their behaviour. Against the claim that animals

relationship between the pre-conceptual and the conceptual is to be understood as an opposition between two separate realms, then either the pre-conceptual dominates and the conceptual is seen as merely expressive of pre-given desires, or the conceptual dominates and the pre-conceptual is seen as having no relevance for our human practices. It is by maintaining the dialectical tension between the pre-conceptual and the conceptual aspects of our human nature that philosophers cast light upon our human nature and upon the wider questions concerning our existence and place in the world. In that tradition which follows from Aristotle, which is developed by Aquinas, human beings are defined as rational animals. This definition provides the starting point for a discourse on our human nature which uses dialectical reasoning to throw light on the manner in which human beings are animals that use reason.⁷¹

Wittgenstein follows in this tradition by characterizing humans as linguistic animals. By reading Wittgenstein in the light of this tradition we will investigate how he can help us to renew and develop it, but also how the tradition can throw a critical light upon his own philosophical practices. Our objective is to construct a dialogue between Wittgenstein and the metaphysical tradition which illuminates both conversation partners. This dialogue will aim to help us understand some of those deep questions concerning our human nature which philosophers have asked throughout the ages, and thus to contribute something towards a

possess concepts I would argue that it is only when we have an awareness of possessing a concept that we can be said to properly possess that concept. A cat staking a mouse can be said to be hunting the mouse, but the cat is not aware of what it is doing in the manner of a human being, who can answer the question: “what are you doing following that mouse?” Animals exhibit intentionality in their actions, but this is not the intentionality of a human agent, although there are analogies between them. Perhaps it is best to say that by analogy animals possess concepts, but only human beings properly possess concepts. Similarly, I would argue that by analogy with the fuller linguistic abilities of human beings other animals possess language. This is not to say, however, that all animals communicate in the same manner, nor that all are capable of interacting with the human world to the same degree. For a reflection on what it entails to say that other animals have language see Vicki Hearne, *Adam's Task : Calling Animals by Name* (New York: Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 1986). In this thesis, when we talk of the boundary between the linguistic and the pre-linguistic it is important to keep in mind the complexity of this border. When do we say a child has learnt to speak? We may pinpoint certain key stages, such as the utterance of the child's first word, yet it is difficult to say when the child has sufficiently mastered speech (do any of us manage this?). This does, not entail, however, that speaking of a boundary between the linguistic and the pre-linguistic is meaningless. Not all borders are clearly definable or undisputed.

⁷¹ In this tradition it is because we are rational animals that the form of understanding which is proper to human beings is discourse, and dialectic is central to discourse.

renewal in our understanding of human nature for moral theology. In particular we will draw attention to the way in which Wittgenstein helps us to overcome the modern dichotomy between the pre-conceptual and the conceptual by returning us to the question of our origins. In doing his Wittgenstein seeks to develop that realism which Diamond highlights. Unlike Diamond, however, we will argue that this realism far from overcoming metaphysics connects Wittgenstein with the metaphysical tradition.

In chapters five, six and seven we will take the results of this dialogue between Wittgenstein and metaphysics and attempt to show how they are relevant to contemporary questions in moral theology. This raises a more general question concerning the role of philosophy, and particularly metaphysics, in moral theology; here lies the danger of treating philosophy as a self-enclosed system to which theology is merely added as an external cladding. We will see in chapter five that Wittgenstein is criticised for emphasising the basis of our concepts in our ordinary human practices in a manner which seemingly cuts off any possibility for human transcendence. Hibbs notes that one of the prime sources of the contemporary rejection of metaphysics is the use by philosophers of Wittgenstein's notion of the ordinary:

the recovery of the ordinary has been at the heart of an influential movement in philosophy at least since Wittgenstein. The problem with aligning Aquinas with this movement is its antipathy toward metaphysics. Stanley Cavell, a noted proponent of the return to the ordinary, contrasts metaphysics, understood as a “demand for the absolute,” with the “ordinary or the everyday.”⁷²

How Wittgenstein understands the divine and its relation to the human is by no means simple to answer. On the one hand it is clear that Wittgenstein does not reject the God, but has great respect for those human practices which seek to connect with the divine.⁷³ On the other hand we will not find in Wittgenstein the same kind of theological commitments we find in

⁷² Hibbs, *Aquinas, Ethics, and Philosophy of Religion : Metaphysics and Practice*, 2.

⁷³ For an example of an approach to Wittgenstein which argue that he sees religion as natural to human beings see Gordon Graham, *Wittgenstein and Natural Religion*, First edition. ed. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Aquinas. The dialectical reading we develop of Wittgenstein will enable us, however, to show how Wittgenstein's philosophy remains open to theology. Here the question of origins is the key to understanding how Wittgenstein helps us to overcome the modern dichotomies which place philosophy and theology in two opposing realms. We will draw parallels between how Wittgenstein prompts us to ask about our origins and Aquinas' understanding of nature as it is used in the works of the moral theologian Servais Pinckaers. The purpose of this comparison will be to throw light on deep questions which concern human nature, and to ask how human nature is transformed in the encounter with divine wisdom revealed in Jesus Christ.

1.3 Interpreting Wittgenstein and Using His Work

1.3.1 The Context and Practice of Interpretation

Although we have attempted to justify the claim that Wittgenstein can be located in a tradition from Plato, this claim is bound to seem for many commentators on Wittgenstein so contrary to what Wittgenstein says about metaphysics that further justification is required. The interpretation of any philosopher can split commentators into opposing ranks, with Wittgenstein divisions can be particularly stark, and interpretations widely vary. New-Wittgensteinians criticise anti-realist reading of Wittgenstein, but this is just one example of the many disputes in interpretation which have marked readings of Wittgenstein and which continue to multiply. In the interpretation of any author we can allow our own presuppositions and concerns to dominate, but in the case of Wittgenstein this danger is particularly pronounced; especially in regard to his later works. Why is this? Why do Wittgenstein's writings lend themselves to such a wide variety of interpretations? I believe

that the answer to these questions lies in seeing how the critical and the constructive aspects of Wittgenstein's work interact.⁷⁴

Wittgenstein offers a powerful and persuasive diagnosis of the ills of philosophy and in particular of modern philosophy. Anscombe relates how once in conversation with Wittgenstein she asked him to describe the difference he had made to philosophy, in response to which he replied: "that if you looked at the titles of most of the famous works of philosophy in recent centuries, you found that they tended either to contain the word 'principles' or some reference to the human mind."⁷⁵ Wittgenstein's powerful diagnosis of the ills of modern philosophy has been used by a wide variety of philosophers to overcome philosophical ills; providing a practice of philosophy which on the one hand avoids lapsing into an idealism that mistakes principles for reality, while on the other hand avoiding the reduction of reality to the empirically verifiable.⁷⁶ Differences occur in interpretation when those using Wittgenstein's writings begin to develop accounts of the more constructive elements of this philosophy. Here there is the danger that the modern principles which Wittgenstein strove to overcome are reimported, such that Wittgenstein is characterized as sharing the very preoccupations he so strenuously resists. Diamond's arguments against anti-realist readings of Wittgenstein demonstrate how such readings are founded upon the very presuppositions he so vigorously strove to unmask. Similarly, criticisms of Saul Kripke's account of rule following in Wittgenstein, such as those developed by Colin McGinn, turn on

⁷⁴ I do not mean to imply that Wittgenstein is a constructivist, but rather to point to those aspects of his work which offer us a way of seeing things.

⁷⁵ Anscombe, *From Plato to Wittgenstein: Essays by G.E.M. Anscombe*, 165-66. Anscombe notes that although her question to Wittgenstein implied a reference to his later works, his answer was equally true for the *Tractatus*.

⁷⁶ For an account of how Wittgenstein can be read as a realist who seeks to avoid idealism and empiricism see Fergus Kerr, O.P., *Theology after Wittgenstein*, [New ed.] ed. (London: SPCK, 1997). This reading of Wittgenstein has influenced my approach.

the accusation that Kripke reintroduces the modern epistemological concerns which Wittgenstein strove to combat.⁷⁷

So how are we to interpret Wittgenstein's philosophy or more generally the writings of any philosopher? This is not easy to answer as it requires setting the text which is to be interpreted within a context of interpretation. In *Remarks on The Foundations of Mathematics* Wittgenstein draws our attention to the unstated context within which the proof of a proposition makes sense: "The proof of a proposition certainly does not mention, certainly does not describe, the whole system of calculation that stands behind the proposition and gives it its sense."⁷⁸ Likewise, any interpretation of a philosopher involves a background which is not necessarily stated. But how are we to know whether the background we operate with is one which truly enables us to understand what that philosopher is doing? We may reject one misleading background, but how do we know that our preferred interpretation is not just as wide of the mark? We would seem to be forced back upon the need for principles of interpretation which again brings us back to the primacy of epistemological concerns.

A way out of this circle is suggested by Wittgenstein in his observation that mathematical proofs, such as that for the infinite number of prime numbers, involve the mastering of techniques; and it is this mastery which enables us to locate a proposition within the wider context of interpretation:

I believe this: Only in a large context can it be said at all that there are infinitely many prime numbers. That is to say: For this to be possible there must already exist an extended technique of calculating with cardinal numbers. That proposition only makes sense within this technique. A proof of the proposition locates it in the whole system of calculation. And its position therein can now be described in more than one way, as of course the whole complicated system in its background is presupposed.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ See Saul A. Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language : An Elementary Exposition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982). Also, Colin McGinn, *Wittgenstein on Meaning : An Interpretation and Evaluation*, Aristotelian Society Series (Oxford ; New York, NY, USA: B. Blackwell, 1984).

⁷⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 3rd ed. ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), VI, §11. "Der Beweis eines Satzes erwähnt ja nicht, beschreibt ja nicht, das ganze Rechnungssystem, das hinter dem Satz steht und ihm seinen Sinn gibt." *Bemerkung Über Die Grundlagen Der Mathematik, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 6*, VI, §11.

⁷⁹ *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, VI, §11. "Ich glaube: Nur in einem Zusammenhang kann man überhaupt sagen, es gäbe unendlich viele Primzahlen. Das heißt: Es muß dazu schon eine ausgedehnte Technik

In asking how to interpret Wittgenstein we can be misled into thinking that our task is to provide a series of criteria, the application of which will bring about a correct interpretation. Whereas what Wittgenstein is offering us is not so much a philosophy to be interpreted, but a practice of doing philosophy. He invites us to follow him as he guides us; not giving us a series of principles, but by teaching us how to think. Thus in the preface to the *Investigations* he remarks: “I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking. But, if possible, to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own.”⁸⁰ There are criteria for interpretation, but these can only be understood and applied within a philosophical practice.

1.3.2 Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Practice

One influential interpretation of Wittgenstein’s philosophical practice sees it as primarily a therapy to combat the restlessness produced by our attempts to solve philosophical problems. Support for this interpretation is given in the following well known analogy from the *Investigations*: “What is your aim in philosophy? – To shrew the fly the way out of the fly-bottle.”⁸¹ The image is a powerful one of liberation, and is consistent with the view that in the *Investigations* Wittgenstein seeks to free us from metaphysical confusions by returning us to our ordinary ways of living. There is, however, another way of interpreting how Wittgenstein uses the fly-bottle analogy. In the *Investigations* Wittgenstein sets out the purpose of his philosophical method. He is not advancing empirical theses, but solving philosophical problems by making the workings of language perspicuous: “The problems are solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have always known.

des Rechnens mit den Kardinalzahlen geben. Nur innerhalb dieser Technik hat dieser Satz Sinn. Ein Beweis des Satzes gibt ihn seiner Platz im ganzen System der Rechnungen. Und dieser Platz kann nun auf mehr als eine Weise beschrieben werden, da ja das ganze komplizierte System im Hintergrund *doch* vorausgesetzt wird.” *Bemerkung Über Die Grundlagen Der Mathematik, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 6, VI, §11.*

⁸⁰ *Philosophical Investigations*, Preface. “Ich möchte nicht mit meiner Schrift Andern das Denken ersparen. Sondern, wenn es möglich wäre, jemand zu eigenen Gedanken anregen.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1, Vortwort.*

⁸¹ *Philosophical Investigations*, §309. “Was ist dein Ziel in der Philosophie? – Der Fliege den Ausweg aus dem Fliegenglas zeigen.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1, §309.*

Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language.”⁸²

The liberation that Wittgenstein is here seeking is not just from one particular use of language (e.g. the metaphysical), but from language itself. The problems which arise when we misuse language are not primarily the creation of philosophers, but rather: “their roots are as deep in us as the forms of our language and their significance is as great as the importance of our language.”⁸³

If the problems we face are the general result of our misuse of language the solution Wittgenstein here offers for our restlessness is not so straight-forward as it first appears. When the bewitchment of language is attributed to metaphysics our escape from the tyranny of philosophy is by means of ordinary language, but once language itself becomes problematic there is no straight-forward means of escaping from the fly-bottle. One way of reading the *Investigations* is to see it as a work of self-questioning.⁸⁴ Rather than viewing the *Investigations* as a book which seeks to offer a single solution for our philosophical ills, it can be read as resisting the temptation to offer a single key to our problems. There is no single means of achieving an overview of language, such that philosophical problems dissolve; rather Wittgenstein sets out to “assemble reminders for a particular purpose.”⁸⁵

Wittgenstein’s purpose is to show what lies in open view before us: “Philosophy simply puts

⁸² *Philosophical Investigations*, §109. “Diese Problem warden gelöst, nicht durch Beibringen neuer Erfahrung, sondern durch Zusammenstellung des längst Bekannten. Die philosophie ist ein Kampf gegen die Verhexung unsres Verstandes durch die Middle unserer Sprache.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosopicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §109.

⁸³ *Philosophical Investigations*, §111. “sie wurzeln so tief in uns wie die Formen unserer Sprache, und ihre Bedeutung ist so groß wie die Wichtigkeit unserer Sprache.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosopicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §111.

⁸⁴ Stephen Mulhall develops such a reading under the influence of Stanley Cavell. I am indebted to Mulhall’s modernist influenced reading, although I will take it in a direction (of encounter with metaphysics) which he does not. I will return to Mulhall’s reading of Wittgenstein in chapter 5. Stephen Mulhall, *Inheritance and Originality : Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Kierkegaard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001).

⁸⁵ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §127. “ein Zusammentragen von Erinnerungen zu einem bestimmten Zweck.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosopicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §127.

everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything.”⁸⁶ What philosophy does is simple, but that does not mean that it is simple to achieve. Thus Wittgenstein adds: “The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something – because it is always before one’s eyes.)”⁸⁷ Wittgenstein’s task is to help us see what lies before our eyes, but this cannot be achieved through a one-step solution; rather, he makes things perspicuous through the various techniques and practices which he develops in his later works. This is not incompatible with a therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy as the following passage makes clear: “There is not a philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies.”⁸⁸ The therapy on offer is not, however, easy to achieve.

Constant questioning lies at the heart of the later Wittgenstein’s philosophical practice. His arguments are no longer set out as the development of a thesis (such as we find in the *Blue Book*), but through opposing voices which prevent us from making the mistake of prematurely thinking that we have reached our final goal. An example of these opposing voices can be seen in the following passage:

The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to. –The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring itself in question. –Instead, we now demonstrate a method, by examples; and the series of examples can be broken off. –Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated), not a single problem.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ *Philosophical Investigations*, §126. “Die Philosophie stellt eben alles bloß hin, und erklärt und folgert nichts.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §126.

⁸⁷ *Philosophical Investigations*, §129. “Die für uns wichtigsten Aspekte der Dinge sind durch ihre Einfachheit and Alltäglichkeit verborgen. (Man kann es nicht bemerken, - weil man es immer vor Augen hat).” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §129.

⁸⁸ *Philosophical Investigations*, §133. “Es gibt nicht *eine* Method der Philosophie, wohl aber gibt es Methoden, gleichsam verschiedene Therapien.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §133.

⁸⁹ *Philosophical Investigations*, §133. “Die eigentliche Entdeckung ist die, die mich fähig macht, das Philosophieren abzubrechen, wann ich will. – Sondern es wird nun an Beispielen eine Methode gezeigt, und die Reihe dieser Beispiele kann man abbrechen. – Es werden Probleme gelöst (Schwierigkeiten beseitigt), nicht *ein* Problem.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §133.

At first this passage seems to lament our inability to find a single solution to our philosophical problems. If we read the passage in the context of its surrounding remarks, however, we can see it in a different light (the proposition is understood against an unsaid background). Previously in remarks §112-114 (following the remark at §111 on philosophical problems lying deep in our language) Wittgenstein criticizes his earlier search for the general form of the proposition in the *Tractatus*. This leads into the more general criticism found in remark §116 concerning how philosophers seek to understand things by grasping their essences. Remark §116 then closes with Wittgenstein stating his purpose: “What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use.”⁹⁰ The temptation is to image that this “bringing back” can be achieved by making some kind of discovery, the kind of discovery through which philosophy will no longer bring itself into question. But this is an illusion; there is no one discovery which allows us to escape from our human practices. There are no one-step general solutions to our philosophical problems, but this is no loss once we see that the search for such solutions is an illusion. All the same, Wittgenstein does not give up the aim of finding rest; of releasing the fly from the bottle. There may be no single solution, but there are solutions. The self-questioning of the later works reveals a restless spirit, but there is also the hope of peace. Moreover, Wittgenstein’s self-questioning has a purpose; it is to prevent the fly from false consolation. The fly sitting on the inside of the glass-bottle has the illusion of freedom as it looks out and surveys the world. In his search for the general form of the proposition Wittgenstein believed he was freeing the self from the world of facts by showing what things are, but he came to realise that: “One thinks that one is

⁹⁰ *Philosophical Investigations*, §116. “Wir führen die Wörter von ihrer metaphysischen, wieder auf ihre alltägliche Verwendung zurück.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §116.

tracing the outline of the thing's nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it.”⁹¹

In his later works Wittgenstein set out to develop a series of practices through which the temptation to false consolation and the illusion of a single step solution are resisted. He does not, however, give up his objective of leading the fly out of the bottle. He asks us to trust him as he guides us through the twisting streets of our linguistic practices: “Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses.”⁹² As I am led through a city my natural reaction is one of trust unless I have reason not to doubt my guide.⁹³ This does not mean I carry on trusting no matter what happens, but it is the basic reaction which enables me to be guided. In order to see whether we should follow Wittgenstein we need to return to the contexts of trust within which we follow the teachings of another person. Here there is no one determining factor, but rather the development of a relationship which occurs over time, and we can initially be guided by the fruits which Wittgenstein's philosophy has born in a variety of areas from the philosophy of mind to theological ethics.

In accepting guidance we should not, however, be uncritical of Wittgenstein's philosophy. Although Wittgenstein can be read as standing in a tradition from Plato it would be wrong to treat him as an unproblematic inheritor of this tradition. Despite arguing that Wittgenstein can be read in the tradition of Plato, Anscombe is cautious about following him

⁹¹ *Philosophical Investigations*, §114. “Man glaubt, wieder und wieder der Natur nachzufahren, und fährt nur der Form entlang, durch die wir sie betrachten.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §114.

⁹² *Philosophical Investigations*, §18. “unsere Sprache kann man ansehen als eine alte Stadt: Ein Gewinkel von Gäßchen und Plätzen, alten und neuen Häusern, und Häusern mit Zubauten aus verschiedenen Zeiten; und dies umgeben von einer Menge neuer Vororte mit geraden und regelmäßigen Straßen und mit einförmigen Häusern.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §18.

⁹³ In *On Certainty* trust is central to Wittgenstein's account of belief (*Glaube*). See Ludwig Wittgenstein *On Certainty*, trans. Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford,; Blackwell, 1969).

in a manner which implies that his philosophy is beyond criticism. She recounts how: "I once heard someone ask Wittgenstein what it all came to, what was, so to speak, the upshot of the philosophy he was teaching in the 1940's. He did not answer. I am disposed to think that there wasn't an answer he could give. ... I therefore depreciate attempts to expound Wittgenstein's thought as a finished thing."⁹⁴ No philosopher can be said to finally have finished her work, but with Wittgenstein the sketchy nature of his work invites further development, which does not necessarily create problems, so long as these developments are seen for what they are and not passed off as "attempts to expound Wittgenstein's thought as a finished article." Nor is it clear that Wittgenstein if given more time would have produced something more than a sketch. Even the greatest of thinkers need guides, and it could be argued that Wittgenstein's general mistrust of the metaphysical tradition deprived him of a valuable source of guidance. Furthermore, it deprived him of a wider context of interpretation, making the task of interpreting his work more difficult and leaving him open to a wide variety of interpretations.

Anscombe's own way of reading Wittgenstein was to see him in relation to her other guides in philosophy. This enabled her to read Wittgenstein critically and to place his writings in the context of broader philosophical concerns. Of particular importance for this thesis is Anscombe's understand of Wittgenstein as attempting to develop a realism which avoids: "the falsehoods of idealism and the stupidities of empiricist realism."⁹⁵ In relation to the question of human nature, and particularly the relationship between the pre-conceptual and the conceptual, we will argue that Wittgenstein offers us a way towards seeing our nature which avoids the danger of either reducing the conceptual to the pre-conceptual (empiricism) or of subsuming the pre-conceptual into the conceptual (idealism). These seemingly opposed dangers both arise from the temptation to find a one-step solution to answer the question of

⁹⁴ Anscombe, *From Plato to Wittgenstein : Essays by G.E.M. Anscombe*, 169.

⁹⁵ "The Question of Linguistic Idealism," in *From Parmenides to Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), 115. Earlier we noted how Diamond reads Wittgenstein as a realist, and in this she is influenced by Anscombe.

our human nature. The practice of philosophy which Wittgenstein develops in his later writings, with its self-questioning and its attempt to find solutions to philosophical problems by approaching them from several directions, throws light on our human nature while itself being an exercise which aims to restore us to that nature. The *Investigations* both in their form and in their content can be read as primarily concerned with the question of what it is to be human: a creature who is bodily and who uses signs to communicate. If there is continuity with the tradition of Plato and Aristotle it is to be found in this. Far from distancing us from our human nature, the metaphysical tradition places the question of what it means to be human at the centre of its concerns, and Wittgenstein, insofar as he shares in this tradition, uses various of its tools (grammar and dialectic) at the service of humanity.

1.3.3 Conclusion: Laying the Groundwork for Dialogue

In this chapter we began by acknowledging our debt to the work those philosophers and theologians who read Wittgenstein as sharing something in common with the philosophical tradition beginning with Plato. This led us to examine the nature of metaphysics and how Wittgenstein relates more broadly to the metaphysical tradition. Our purpose here was to lay the groundwork for a dialogue between Wittgenstein and moral theology, because in the Catholic tradition metaphysics lies at the heart of the dialogue between philosophy and theology. We also touched upon the question of human nature, another of the key dialogue partners in Catholic moral theology. In chapter two we will examine the development of Wittgenstein's thought from the *Tractatus* to the *Remarks on the Foundations of Arithmetic* with the goal of seeing how his understanding of the relationship between nature and grammar develops. We have seen that in his later works Wittgenstein came to question the logical system developed in the *Tractatus*. Chapter two examines in greater depth the changes and developments in Wittgenstein's thought. We will see that

Wittgenstein came increasingly to appreciate the basis of our linguistic behaviour in our natural human practices, and the pre-linguistic reactions which are the initial basis for our linguistic practices. At the centre of these developments we find Wittgenstein developing a dialectical style of writing which seeks to hold together the tensions present in the human being in a manner which opens us to the question of our nature

2 NATURE, LOGIC AND GRAMMAR

2.1 The Development of Wittgenstein's Thought: Application and Practice

In this chapter we shall examine the development of Wittgenstein's thought from the *Tractatus* to the *Remarks on the Foundation of Mathematics*. This covers the period from 1921-1944 and brings us up to a point just prior to the completion of Part I of the *Investigations* in 1945. Our aim will be to cast light upon the *Investigations*. Most of our discussion will relate to Part I of the *Investigations*, however, the discussion on 'seeing as' in chapter two (2.3.6) concerns Part II, which "was written between 1947 and 1949."¹ The guiding theme for this examination will be the question of application, and how Wittgenstein develops his understanding of application by drawing attention to the practices within which we apply concepts.

In chapter one, section 1.3.1, we noted how in the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* Wittgenstein argues that outside its application a mathematical proposition does not have meaning; if we connect this argument with Wittgenstein's observation that understanding a mathematical proposition requires a wider context of practice, then we begin to see how Wittgenstein connects meaning, application and practice. Another central theme in the development of Wittgenstein's notion of application emerges in his argument that underlying our mathematical practices there are non-mathematical uses of signs which make the mathematical uses possible: "It is use outside mathematics, and so the *meaning* of the signs, that makes the sign-game into mathematics."² Here we find Wittgenstein's turn to the ordinary, in which he seeks to help us re-connect with the everyday practices from which our

¹ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Editors' Note. The completed text produced by Wittgenstein of the *Investigations* is standardly designated as 'Part I'. We will use the standard designation of the remarks of the philosophy of psychology which were later attached to this original text of the *Investigations* as 'Part II'.

² *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, V, §2. "Es ist der Gebrauch außerhalb Mathematik, also, die Beseutung der Zeichen, was das Zeichenspiel zur Mathematik macht." *Bemerkung Über Die Grundlagen Der Mathematik*, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 6, V, §2.

mathematical concepts develop. This notion of the ordinary can easily be misunderstood to imply a general theory of meaning in which the ordinary plays a foundational role. Such a reading of Wittgenstein ignores the self-questioning nature of his later works. He aims to provide a perspicuous view of language, but this involves a constant struggle with the temptations our ordinary forms of language put before us: “To this end we shall constantly be giving prominence to distinctions which our ordinary forms of language easily make us overlook.”³ We will see how in his later thought Wittgenstein does see our ordinary practices as providing foundations, but we are misled by the form of language if we begin to use ‘*the* ordinary’ as *the* foundation for all our practices.

This examination of Wittgenstein’s notion of application will develop the reading of his relationship to the metaphysical tradition outlined in chapter one. We argued that despite his remarks condemning metaphysics there are various connections between Wittgenstein and the metaphysical tradition. How to understand the unity of grammar is a central concern of Wittgenstein; avoiding either the assumption of an immediate grasp of a pre-given essence, or the reduction of that unity to empirical generalizations (idealism verses empiricism). Through the notion of application Wittgenstein seeks to show how there is unity in diversity. The notion of application roots our concepts in human practices while avoiding their reduction to the status of empirical generalizations of those practices. If grammar provides a measure for reality it can only do so because concepts require application: “Every sign by itself seems dead. What gives it life?—In use it is alive. Is life breathed into it there?—Or is the use its life?”⁴ It is in using (applying) concepts that they have life.

³ *Philosophical Investigations*, §132. “We werden zu diesem Zweck immer wieder Unterscheidungen hervorheben, die unsere gewöhnlichen Sprachformen leicht übersehen lassen.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §132.

⁴ *Philosophical Investigations*, §432. “Jedes Zeichen scheint allein tot. Was gibt ihm Leben? – Im Gebrauch lebt es. Hat es da den lebenden Atem in sich? – Oder ist der Gebrauch sein Atem?” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §432.

This chapter will trace the development of Wittgenstein's notion of application from the earlier logico-syntactic account of the *Tractatus* to the later emphasis on the uses we give to words in the variety of our human practices. Throughout this development we will see that Wittgenstein holds onto the distinction between the logical (or later grammatical) and the empirical. This is also a key distinction for the metaphysical tradition (where it is essential for understanding unity and diversity). For both Wittgenstein and that tradition there is a constant tension in maintaining this distinction while showing how concepts find application in our lives. If we read Wittgenstein as attempting in his later works a philosophical realism which avoid the dangers of idealism and empiricism, then his account of human nature must overcome two dangers: on the one hand falling into an interpretative circle in which language is autonomous and has no basis in our nature, while on the other hand avoiding the assumption of a pre-given account of human nature (whether an account of the ordinary or a reduction to a pre-conceptual animal nature).

The relevance of these discussions for moral theology will be brought out in chapters five, six and seven. The development of Wittgenstein's thought can be read as the evolution of his understanding of what it is to be human. The theme of application, which we will use to structure our presentation of his philosophy, enables us to understanding the development of Wittgenstein's account of human agency. We will argue in chapter seven that his later account of human agency provides a situated account of human freedom. As Michael Sherwin argues, human freedom is not that of a disembodied angel, but the freedom of a material creature and as such: "Although we are born with the spiritual principles of freedom (intellect and will), freedom is something we must achieve; it is something we must grow into with the aid of a community and God's grace."⁵ The development of Wittgenstein's thought from the *Tractatus* to the later writings involves situating his account of human

⁵ Michael S. Sherwin, O.P., *By Knowledge & by Love : Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 215.

understanding and action in the context of our natural human practices. Whereas the *Tractatus* offers a perspective beyond the realm of facts, his later philosophy seeks to reconnect us with our embodied human nature. In chapter five we will argue that Wittgenstein, far from denying human freedom and transcendence, in his later philosophy opens the way for an understanding of our freedom which shows how freedom (to quote again from Sherwin): “permeates every fibre of our animal nature.”⁶

Although Wittgenstein published little during his life, he left behind a large corpus of work. When assessing the development of Wittgenstein’s thought a commentator must make choices as to the relative weight given to the different documents contained in this large and varied body of writing. These writings range from the painstakingly selected and arranged remarks of the first part of the *Investigations*⁷ to unedited manuscripts. There are also notes taken from Wittgenstein’s lectures and personal remarks recorded by various students and friends. In assessing the weight of these various sources the guiding principle of this thesis will be to give greatest weight to those writings Wittgenstein himself most carefully and deliberately worked upon. We will thus begin with the *Tractatus*, which was published in 1921. In regard to the period from Wittgenstein’s return to Cambridge in 1929 to the completion of Part I of the *Investigations* in 1945, we will read Wittgenstein’s various works in relation to that finished 1945 text. In the period after 1945, when Wittgenstein was concerned with questions of psychology, we will give more weight to the remarks published in Part II of the *Investigations*, but since these were not edited by Wittgenstein in the same manner as Part I we will draw more heavily upon their sources.⁸

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Although the in the *Editors’ Note* it is conjectured that Wittgenstein: “would have suppressed a good deal of what is in the last thirty pages or so of Part I and worked what is in Part II, with further material, into its place.” See Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Editors’ Note.

⁸ Although Wittgenstein published little in his lifetime his writings are copious. The edited selections we will draw upon are taken from sources running to several thousand pages. Schulte’s notes, for example, that between May 1946 and March 1949 Wittgenstein wrote more than 1,900 pages. See Joachim Schulte, *Experience and Expression : Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Psychology* (Oxford England New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1993), 5.

2.2 The *Tractatus* and Application: Sign, Symbol and Object

2.2.1 The Form and Content of a Proposition

Although the principle of application is most readily associated with Wittgenstein's later thought it plays an essential role in the *Tractatus*. In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein sought to develop a perspicuous representation of the logical symbolism he believed underlies language. His aim was to clarify the structure of thought, and thus to prevent us from falling into the confusions produced by everyday language. To this end he distinguished between the perceptible signs we use in language and the symbolism which these signs express: "3.32 A sign is what can be perceived of a symbol."⁹ Whereas the everyday use of signs is messy and confusing, Wittgenstein's aim was to produce a sign-language in which all ambiguity is excluded and thus the symbolism expressed is clearly exhibited:

3.325 In order to avoid such errors we must make use of a sign-language that excludes them by not using the same sign for different symbols and by not using in a superficially similar way signs that have different modes of signification: that is to say, a sign-language that is governed by *logical* grammar—by logical syntax.

(The conceptual notation of Frege and Russell is such a language, though, it is true, it fails to exclude all mistakes.)¹⁰

The requirement that this sign-language is governed by logical grammar entails that the meaning of a sign has no role to play in its determination: "3.33 In logical syntax the meaning of a sign should never play a role. It must be possible to establish logical syntax without

⁹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness, Revised ed. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), 18. "3.32 Das Zeichen ist das sinnlich Wahrnehmbare am Symbol." *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1* (Sinzheim, German: Suhrkamp, 1984), 22.

¹⁰ *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 18-19. "3.325 Um diesen Irrtümern zu entgehen, müssen wir eine Zeichensprache verwenden, welche sie ausschließt, indem sie nicht das gleiche Zeichen in verschiedenen Symbolen, und Zeichen, welche auf verschiedene Art bezeichnen, nicht äußerlich auf die gleiche Art verwendet. Eine Zeichensprache also, die der *logische* Grammatik – der logischen Syntax – gehorcht. (Die Begriffsschrift Freges und Russels ist eine solche Sprache, die allerdings nicht alle Fehler ausschließt.)" *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 22-23.

mentioning the *meaning* of a sign: *only* the description of expressions may be presupposed.”¹¹ Are we thus to conclude that Wittgenstein is offering a purely formal account of this sign-language? As Fogelin notes, remark 3.33: “expresses the formalist’s working rule,”¹² and it is clear that there are formalist aspects to Wittgenstein’s project of producing a perspicuous logical notion. Where Wittgenstein differs from formalism, however, is shown in the preceding remark: “3.328 If a sign is *useless*, it is meaningless. That is the point of Occam’s maxim. (If everything behaves as if a sign had meaning, then it does have meaning).”¹³ This use of a sign is its logical employment: “3.327 A sign does not determine a logical form unless it is taken together with its logico-syntactic employment.”¹⁴ A sign which lacks application is meaningless: it does not hook onto the world.

Central to Wittgenstein’s concerns in the *Tractatus* is the question of how thought hooks onto the world. What he wishes to avoid is the idea that we have a way of accessing the world independent of our manner of representing it, onto which our forms of representation are mapped. The connection between thought and the world must be internal to our forms of representation, and not established by an external relationship: “4.023 a proposition describes reality by its internal properties.”¹⁵ Does this not collapse reality into thought? Here we can see the danger of falling into idealism in an attempt to avoid empiricism. Wittgenstein is aware of this danger and observes that: “3.04 If a thought were

¹¹ *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 19. “3.33 In der logischen Syntax darf nie die Bedeutung eines Zeichens eine Rolle spielen; sie muß sich aufstellen lassen, ohne daß dabei von der *Bedeutung* eines Zeichens die Rede wäre, sie darf *nur* die Beschreibung der Ausdrücke voraussetzen.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 23.

¹² Fogelin, *Wittgenstein*, 59.

¹³ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 19. “3.328 Wird ein Zeichen *nicht gebraucht*, so ist es bedeutungslos. Das ist der Sinn der Devise Occams. (Wenn sich alles so verhält als hätte ein Zeichen Bedeutung, dann hat es auch Bedeutung.)” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 23.

¹⁴ *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 19. “3.327 Das Zeichen bestimmt erst mit seiner logisch-syntaktischen Verwendung zusammen eine logische Form.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 23.

¹⁵ *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 25. “4.023 so beschreibt der Satz die Wirklichkeit nach ihren internen Eigenschaften.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 28.

correct *a priori*, it would be a thought whose possibility ensured its truth.”¹⁶ The internal structure of a proposition does not determine whether the proposition is true or false; this is only achieved by comparing the proposition to reality: “2.223 In order to tell whether a picture is true or false we must compare it with reality.”¹⁷

If the possibility of such a comparison is internal to thought, we need to show how thought is distinguished from reality while at same time able to represent how things are. In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein developed two related tools for this purpose: firstly, his picture theory of meaning, which provides an account of how we project signs,¹⁸ and secondly his theory of simple signs by which he sought to show the basis upon which we are able to picture the world. Through these two tools he sought to show us the logical-syntactic application of signs in a manner which brings out the internal nature of representation, while avoiding the implication that thought is correct *a priori*. Before we go on to examine the picture theory of the *Tractatus* we will first examine the account Wittgenstein gives of projection, as the account of picturing given in the *Tractatus* is essentially an account of projection.

Projection is central to Wittgenstein’s account of how we represent reality through propositions. It is easy to miss in the complex treatment of logical symbolism given by the *Tractatus* the importance which the sensible nature of signs plays in Wittgenstein’s theory. Wittgenstein follows Frege in arguing that propositions are the primary syntactical units through which thought is expressed. For Wittgenstein, however, propositions are not abstract object but rather: “3.1 In a proposition a thought finds an expression that can be perceived by

¹⁶ *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 13. “3.04 Ein a priori richtiger Gedanke wäre ein solcher, dessen Möglichkeit seine Wahrheit bedingte.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 17.

¹⁷ *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 12. “2.223 Um zu erkennen, ob das Bild wahr oder falsch ist, müssen wir es mit der Wirklichkeit vergleichen.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 17.

¹⁸ As Anscombe notes Wittgenstein is here using a “metaphorical extension of the mathematical use.” Anscombe, *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, 69.

the senses.”¹⁹ More exactly the proposition is the expression of a sign as it is projected in relation to the world: “3.12 I call the sign with which we express a thought a propositional sign. –And a proposition is a propositional sign in its projective relation to the world.”²⁰ In this projective relationship: “3.13 A proposition contains the form, but not the content, of its sense.”²¹ The distinction between form and content provides Wittgenstein with the means of showing how the projective relationship between sign and world is internal to the proposition (the form of the proposition), while distinguishing the projected sign from the reality it represents (content). In distinguishing form and content Wittgenstein illuminate the remark that: “3.13 A proposition includes all that the projection includes, but not what is projected”²² and thus to help us see how the internal properties of a proposition must be distinguished from its content: “3.13 A proposition, therefore, does not actually contain its sense, but does contain the possibility of expressing it. (‘The content of a proposition’ means the content of a proposition that has sense.)”²³ But how do we distinguish between those applications of signs which have sense and those which lack sense? When we project signs how can we distinguish between those applications that are empty and those which have content? In other words, what is it about the form of a proposition which enables it to represent reality, and thus to hook onto the world? Wittgenstein answers this question in the *Tractatus* by developing his

¹⁹ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 13. “3.1 In Satz drückt sich der Gedanke sinnlich wahrnehmbar aus.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 17.

²⁰ *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 13. “3.12 Das Zeichen, durch welches wir den Gedanken ausdrücken, nenne ich das Satzzeichen. Und der Satz ist das Satzzeichen in seiner projektiven Beziehung zur Welt.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 18.

²¹ *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 13. “3.13 Im Satz ist die Form seines Sinnes enthalten, aber nicht dessen Inhalt.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 18.

²² *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 13. “3.13 Das Satz gehört alles, was zur Projektion gehört; aber nicht das Projizierte.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 18.

²³ *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 13. “3.13 Im Satz ist also sein Sinn noch nicht enthalten, wohl aber die Mölichkeit, ihn auszudrücken. (‘Der Inhalt des Satzes’ heißt der Inhalt des sinnvollen Satzes.) *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 18.

picture theory of meaning, which seeks to show how the projective relationship is internal to a proposition: “2.2 A picture has logico-pictorial form in common with what it depicts.”²⁴

2.2.2 Logical Picturing and Simple Objects

In his biography of Wittgenstein Raymond Monk recounts how in a conversation with G. H. Von Wright later in his life Wittgenstein described how the idea for the picture theory came to him while he was serving on the front in the Austrian army in 1914.²⁵ The inspiration came from a newspaper article, which gave an account of how a model was used in a Parisian law court to recreate a motor accident. Wittgenstein saw how the correspondence between the elements of the model and the elements of reality enabled it to picture reality. He extended this notion of correspondence to argue that it is the logical correspondence between the elements of a proposition and the elements of reality which enable it to represent reality: “2:18 What any picture of whatever form, must have in common with reality, in order to be able to depict is—correctly or incorrectly—in any way at all, is logical form, i.e. the form of reality.”²⁶ The role that projection plays in the *Tractatus* is to be understood in the context of this picture theory; the projection of the elements of the propositional—sign onto the elements of reality. Anscombe sums this up in the following passage:

It is we who ‘use the sensibly perceptible signs as a projection of a possible state of affairs’; we do this by using the elements of the proposition to stand for the objects whose possible configuration we are reproducing in the arrangement of the elements of the proposition. This is what Wittgenstein means by calling the proposition a picture. It is at any rate clear enough that we could use a picture in this way.²⁷

²⁴ *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 11. “Das Bild hat mit dem Abgebildeten die logischen Form der Abbildung gemein.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 16.

²⁵ Ray Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein : The Duty of Genius*, 1st American ed. (New York: Free Press : Maxwell Macmillan International, 1990), 118.

²⁶ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 11. “2.18 Was jedes Bild, welcher Form immer, mit der Wirklichkeit gemein haben muß, um sie überhaupt – richtig oder falsch – abbilden zu können, ist die logische Form, das ist, die Form der Wirklichkeit.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 16.

²⁷ Anscombe, *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, 69.

In order to achieve this correspondence of elements we need to determine what are the essential elements of the perceptible signs we use, and how those essential elements correspond to the elements of reality.

In regard to the essential elements of propositional-signs Wittgenstein observes:

3.34 A proposition possesses essential and accidental features.

Accidental features are those that result from the particular way in which the propositional sign is produced. Essential features are those without which the proposition could not express its sense²⁸

How are we to distinguish between the essential and the accidental features of a proposition?

Wittgenstein offers an analogy with spatial objects:

3.1431 The essence of a proposition sign is very clearly seen if we imagine one composed of spatial objects (such as tables, chairs, and books) instead of written signs. Then the spatial arrangement of these things will express the sense of the proposition.²⁹

This analogy is followed by a passage in the *Tractatus* which Anscombe notes: “has been found as obscure,”³⁰ but which she considers to be not particularly opaque. Like many sayings in Wittgenstein its very simplicity can be deceptive. If we keep in mind the spatial analogy of the previous remark we can gain a clearer idea of what Wittgenstein is getting at: “3.1432 Instead of, ‘The complex sign “ aRb ” says that a stands to b in the relation R ’, we ought to put, ‘That “ a ” stands to “ b ” in a certain relation says that aRb .’”³¹ The first alternative envisages the situation in which you define a sign for someone who does not know how to use it. It is like explaining the figures used in an instruction manual to someone who does not know what they represent. The problem with this explanation is that it gets

²⁸ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 20. “3.34 Der Satz besitzt wesentliche und zufällige Züge. Zufällig sind die Züge, die von der besonderen Art der Hervorbringung des Satzzeichens herrühren. Wesentlich diejenigen, welche allein den Satz befähigen, seinen Sinn auszudrücken.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 24.

²⁹ *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 14. “Sehr klar wird das Wesen des Satzzeichens, wenn wir es uns, statt aus Schriftzeichen, aus räumlichen Gegenständen (etwas Tischen, Stühlen, Büchern) zusammengesetzt denken. Die gegenseitige räumliche Lage dieser Dinge drückt dann den Sinn des Satzes aus.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 18.

³⁰ Anscombe, *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, 89.

³¹ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 14. “3.1432 Nicht: ‘Das komplex Zeichen “ aRb ” sagt, daß a in der Beziehung R zu b steht’, sonder: Daß “ a ” in einer gewissen Beziehung zu “ b ” steht, sagt, daß aRb .’” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 18.

things the wrong way round.³² Such practices of explanation presuppose that we have already mastered the use of various signs, those which form the language of explanation. If in turn we are required to give an explanation of these signs we end up in a vicious regress. The second alternative assumes that the symbol aRb is one that does not require the kind of explanation given in the first. This is because its essence is already expressed in the application of its sign, as the following remark makes clear: “3.262 What signs fail to express, their application shows. What signs slur over, their application says clearly.”³³ To return to the analogy of explaining an instruction manual, such explanations can only be successful because there is a prior application of signs which expresses what is essential in them. It is important, however, not to be misled by this analogy, for as Anscombe observes in regard to Wittgenstein’s use of application here: “by ‘application’ he did not mean ‘role in life’, ‘use’, ‘practice of the use’ in the sense of *Philosophical Investigations*; he meant ‘logico-syntactic application.’”³⁴

The ‘logico-syntactic application’ of a sign expresses its essential nature; if further signs were required for this we would end in a regress of signs interpreting signs. This explains why Wittgenstein next introduces the notion of a simple sign:

3.2 In a proposition a thought can be expressed in such a way that elements of the propositional sign correspond to the objects of thought.

3.201 I call such elements ‘simple signs’, and such a proposition ‘completely analysed.’³⁵

To avoid a regress Wittgenstein must fix the sense of a proposition by assigning the elements within it to objects, such that it cannot be further interpreted. He does this through identifying

³² That is to say if we are seeking to develop a general theory of symbolism of the type *Wittgenstein* develops in the *Tractatus*. In his later works we will see that Wittgenstein will make a parallel point, but since he abandons the search for a general theory it is expressed by saying that the problem is in applying one model of use as a general model for all.

³³ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 16. “3.262 Was in den Zeichen nicht zum Ausdruck kommt, das zeigt ihre Anwendung. Was die Zeichen verschlucken, das spricht ihre Anwendung aus.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 20.

³⁴ Anscombe, *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, 91.

³⁵ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 14. “3.2 Im Satz kann der Gedanke so ausgedrückt sein, daß den Gegenständen des Gedankens Elemente des Satz zeichens entsprechen. 3.201 Diese Elemente nenne ich ‘einfache Zeichens’ und den Satz ‘vollständig analysiert.’” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 19.

simple signs as names employed in propositions, which have corresponding simple objects. For these simple signs there is no distinction between sense and reference. Thus, at 3.203 he asserts: “A name means an object. The object is its meaning. (‘A’ is the same sign as ‘A’.)”³⁶ This fixes the sense of the propositions which contain such names, allowing Wittgenstein at 3.23 to state: “The requirement that simple signs be possible is the requirement that sense be determinate.”³⁷ Wittgenstein, in seeking to distinguish meaningful from meaningless propositions, sets himself the task of finding the common form of all meaningful propositions. This search for the general form of the proposition lies at the heart of the logico-syntactic system he develops in the *Tractatus*.

The logico-syntactic employment of signs is achieved through the theory of simple signs with their corresponding objects. This achievement has, however, come at a high cost. What are these simple signs and what are their corresponding objects? Wittgenstein argues that simple signs are names, but for what kind of name is sense and reference identical? One answer is to adopt Russell’s epistemological theory of acquaintance, according to which simple signs name those objects we are immediately acquainted with (e.g. sense data). Such an interpretation of the simple objects of the *Tractatus* influenced the development of logical positivism. Anscombe notes that the strongest support for this interpretation occurs in the following passage in the *Tractatus*:

3.263 The meaning of primitive signs can be explained by means of elucidations. Elucidations are propositions that contain the primitive signs. So they can only be understood if the meanings of those signs are already known.³⁸

³⁶ *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 15. “3.203 Der Name bedeutung den Gegenstand. Der Gegenstand ist seine Bedeutung. (‘A’ ist dasselbe Zeichen wie ‘A’.)” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 19.

³⁷ *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 15. “3.23 Die Forderung der Mölichkeit der einfachen Zeichen ist die Forderung der Bestimmtheit des Sinnes.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 19.

³⁸ *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 16. “3.263 Die Bedeutungen von Urzeichen können durch Erläuterungen erklärt weden. Erläuterungen sind Sätze, welche die Urzeichen enthalten. Sie können also nur verstanden werden, wenn die Bedeutungen dieser Zeichen bereits bekannt sint.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 20.

In the different translation which Anscombe uses for this passage the German *bereits bekannt sind* is translated as ‘acquainted’ as opposed to the more literal translation given above, adding weight to the argument that Wittgenstein intends something along the lines of Russell’s theory. Anscombe also conjectures that: “it is quite possible that Wittgenstein had roughly this sort of thing rather vaguely in mind.”³⁹ Yet despite this evidence Anscombe rules out identifying Wittgenstein’s simple names with objects of acquaintance for two reasons. Firstly, there is no evidence that Wittgenstein’s simple names (here Anscombe uses the term elementary names) require elementary propositions (e.g. observational statements) to elucidate them. Secondly, Wittgenstein’s elementary propositions cannot be observational statements as can be seen from the following remark, which comes in a parenthesis at the end of 6.3751 in the *Tractatus*:

It is clear that the logical product of two elementary propositions can neither be a tautology nor a contradiction. The statement that a point in the visual field has two different colours at the same time is a contradiction.⁴⁰

Since for any observational statement it is possible to come up with another which is of the same logical form, but which is contradictory to it, observational statements cannot play the role of elementary propositions in the *Tractatus*. Anscombe observes that in general epistemology concerns are not treated in the *Tractatus*, which is shown in the remark at 4.1121 “Psychology is no more closely related to philosophy than any other natural science. Theory of knowledge is the philosophy of psychology.”⁴¹

We have ruled out an epistemological interpretation of Wittgenstein’s simple signs, but we are no closer to knowing what they are or the nature of their corresponding objects.

³⁹ Anscombe, *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, 26-27.

⁴⁰ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 86. “6.3751 Es ist klar, daß das logische Produkt zweier Elementarsätze weder eine Tautologie noch eine Kontradiktion sein kann. Die Aussage, daß ein Punkt des Gesichtsfeldes zu gleicher Zeit zwei verschiedene Farben hat, ist eine Kontradiktion.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 82.

⁴¹ *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 30. “4.1121 Die Psychologie ist der Philosophie nicht verwandter als irgendeine andere Naturwissenschaft. Erkenntnistheorie ist die Philosophie der Psychologie.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 32.

Anscombe argues that Wittgenstein believed we are able to arrive at simple signs as they are combined in elementary propositions by a process of analysis, and that evidence for this is given at 4.221 in the *Tractatus*: “It is obvious that the analysis of propositions must bring us to elementary propositions which consist in names in immediate combination.”⁴² In speaking here of “bringing us (*kommen müssen*) to elementary propositions” it is easy to think that Wittgenstein has epistemological concerns in mind, but the analysis he carries out in the *Tractatus* is the logical analysis of thought, and therefore what he seeks to bring us to is an understanding of the logical role of elementary propositions and simple names. The theory laid out in the *Tractatus* does not require that Wittgenstein actually supplies examples of simple names nor of their corresponding objects, but rather to show their role in the logic of thought.

2.2.3 The Demand for Clarity and the Requirements of Logic

The *logical* solution to understanding Wittgenstein’s simple names and objects is attractive insofar as it provides an alternative to the foundational epistemology of Russell’s theory of acquaintance. It goes too far, however, in seeking to remove epistemological concerns from philosophy. We will see that in the development of his later work Wittgenstein is concerned with epistemological questions, although he maintains the distinction between philosophy and the empirical sciences. More generally, although Wittgenstein will not abandon the distinction between conceptual and the empirical investigations, this distinction will no longer be determined through laying down general logical requirements.

⁴² *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 36. “4.221 Es ist offenbar, daß wir bei der Analyse der Sätze auf Elementarsätze kommen müssen, die aus Namen in unmittelbarer Verbindung bestehen.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 38.

In the preface to the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein states the aim of the book as drawing: “a limit to thought, or rather—not to thought, but to the expression of thoughts.”⁴³ He adds that this must be done within language, for otherwise we imply that we can think both sides of the limit; which is not possible as beyond the limit of thought there is only nonsense. Thus, from the outset of the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein sets himself against accounts of content which assume direct access to a pre-conceptual given (classical empiricism). Wittgenstein wishes to break the grip of the picture which assumes we can move across a boundary from inside thought to that which is outside it. At the same time he is not denying that there is a world to which thought corresponds; only that it is an illusion to think that we can step outside thought to gain direct access to this world. But how are we to distinguish between thoughts which have content and those which are empty? We have seen how the theory of simple signs and objects provides Wittgenstein with a means of determining whether a thought has content; the problem is that it does so at the cost of forcing language into a logical straight-jacket.

In his later works (as we argued in chapter one) Wittgenstein continues to be guided by the intention of developing a realistic philosophy which avoids empiricism without falling into idealism. He came to see that his mistake in the *Tractatus* was not in its realistic intentions, but in the logical requirements it lays down for language in its pursuit of these intentions. This is not because language has no logical requirements, but that there is no general set of requirements of the kind proposed in the *Tractatus* which hold for all uses of language. The mistake occurs at the beginning when we are misled by language into speaking of *the* boundary of what is thinkable. We are tempted to construct a general theory of the thinkable, rather than examining the various ways in which thoughts are bounded. In the preface to the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein famously states: “The whole sense of the book might be summed up in the following words: what can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we

⁴³ *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 3. “dem Denken eine Grenze ziehen, oder vielmehr – nicht dem Denken, sondern dem Ausdruck der Gedanken.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 9.

cannot talk about we must pass over in silence.”⁴⁴ The logical requirements of the *Tractatus* aim to establish clarity, but this assumes that there is one general notion of clarity which is required in all contexts.⁴⁵ It was precisely this requirement which Wittgenstein came later to reject in the *Investigations*; as the following passage demonstrates, in which he describes the conflict between the requirements we place on language and our actual linguistic practices:

The more narrowly we examine actual language, the sharper becomes the conflict between it and our requirement. (For the crystalline purity of logic was, of course, not a *result of investigation*: it was a requirement.) The conflict becomes intolerable; the requirement is not in danger of becoming empty. –We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need *friction*. Back to the rough ground!⁴⁶

The development of Wittgenstein’s later work can be seen as an attempt to return to the rough ground of our actual linguistic practices. This does not involve a complete rejection of the *Tractatus*: we have noted how he continued to distinguish between conceptual and empirical questions. In the next section we will trace how the principle of application is developed by Wittgenstein; such that the logico-syntactic account of the *Tractatus* turns to an examination and description of the various practices within which the application of concepts occurs.

⁴⁴ *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 3. “Mann könnte den ganze Sinn des Buches etwa in die Worte fassen: Was sich überhaupt sagen läßt, läßt sich klar sagen; und wovon man nicht reden kann, darüber muß man schweigen.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 9.

⁴⁵ Josef Pieper makes this very criticism of the *Tractatus*’ search for clarity: See Pieper, *In Defense of Philosophy: Classical Wisdom Stands up to Modern Challenges*, 96.

⁴⁶ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §107. “Je genauer wir die tatsächliche Sprache betrachten, desto stärker wird der Widerstreit zwischen ihr und unsrer Forderung. (Die Kristallreinheit der Logik hatte sich mir ja nicht *ergeben*; sondern sie war eine Forderung.) Der Widerstreit wird unerträglich; die Forderung droht nun, zu etwas Leeren zu werden. – Wir sind aufs Glatteis geraten, wo die Reibung fehlt, also die Bedingungen in gewissem Sinne ideal sind, aber wir eben deshalb auch nicht gehen können. Wir wollen gehen; dann brauchen wir die *Reibung*. Zurück den rauhen Boden!” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §107.

2.3 Back to the Rough Ground: System, Language and Use

2.3.1 Grammar and the System of Propositions in *Philosophical Remarks*

After his return to Cambridge in 1929, Wittgenstein, from February of that year until April 1930, wrote various manuscripts from which he produced a bulky typescript. He handed this typescript, entitled the *Philosophische Bemerkungen* (Philosophical Remarks), to Russell and it later came into the possession of G. E. Moore, who kept it until after Wittgenstein's death.⁴⁷ This work in many ways signals a transition from the *Tractatus* to the principles and concerns which are expressed in the *Investigations*. It is notable that application is a central theme throughout the text, and Wittgenstein loosens the grip of the logico-syntactic requirements of the *Tractatus* by turning to our actual use of language. To this end, the perspicuous overview of language provided by logic in the *Tractatus* is supplied by grammar in the *Philosophical Remarks*: "A proposition is completely logically analysed if its grammar is made completely clear: no matter what idiom it may be written or expressed in."⁴⁸ Wittgenstein's turn to grammar has the objective of distinguishing the essential from the inessential in "our language."⁴⁹ He stresses that logic is not concerned with the requirements of an ideal language, but with actual language use.⁵⁰ We saw how the logical requirements of the *Tractatus* involved positing simple signs with corresponding simple objects; one consequence of this is that elementary propositions must be logically independent of each other. By contrast, in the *Philosophical Remarks* Wittgenstein argues that it is systems of propositions which we use as rulers to lay against reality, as opposed to

⁴⁷ *Philosophical Remarks*, trans. Raymond Hargreaves and Roger White (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975), 347.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, §1. "Der Satz ist vollkommen logisch analysiert, dessen Grammatik vollkommen klargelegt ist. Er mag in welcher Ausdrucksweise immer hingeschrieben oder ausgesprochen sein." *Philosophische Bemerkungen, Werkausgabe Band 2* (Sinzheim, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1984), §1. As the quotation here makes clear it is not so much that Wittgenstein is rejecting the objective of displaying the logic of language, but rather broadening his conception of the requirements of that logic.

⁴⁹ *Philosophical Remarks*, §1. "unserer Sprache" *Philosophische Bemerkungen, Werkausgabe Band 2*, §1.

⁵⁰ *Philosophical Remarks*, §1.

logically independent elementary propositions: “It isn't a proposition which I put against reality as a yardstick, it's a system of propositions.”⁵¹

Wittgenstein came to see that many kinds of statements, including colour statements, cannot be accounted for according to the theory of simple signs. We noted earlier how for any observational statement it is possible to come up with one of the same logical form which contradicts it. Whereas in the *Tractatus* this leads to the conclusion that colour statements are not elementary propositions, now Wittgenstein questions the requirements he earlier placed on elementary propositions: “This is how it is, what I said in the *Tractatus* doesn't exhaust the grammatical rules for ‘and’, ‘not’, ‘or’ etc.; there are rules for the truth functions which also deal with the elementary part of the proposition.”⁵² In other words, the logical independence of the elementary propositions is not to be determined according to a pre-given theory of simple signs, but is to be described as it functions in actual systems of propositions.

The requirements of an ideal language give way before our actual linguistic practices. For example, we will not find an underlying logical essence beneath our use of observational statements; rather their logical essence is given when we describe the system which uses such statements, which excludes ascribing different colours to the same object. In the following passage we see how Wittgenstein extends logical syntax to include the system wherein colour statements are determined:

Syntax prohibits a construction such as ‘*A* is green and *A* is red’ (one's first feeling is that it's almost as if this proposition had been done an injustice; as though it had been cheated of its rights as a proposition), but for ‘*A* is green’, the proposition ‘*A* is red’ is not, so to speak, *another* proposition—and that strictly is what the syntax fixes—but another form of the same proposition.

In this way syntax draws together the propositions that make *one* determination.⁵³

⁵¹ Ibid., §82. “Ich lege nicht den Satze als Maßstab an die Wirklichkeit an, sondern das *System* von Sätzen.” *Philosophische Bemerkungen, Werkausgabe Band 2*, §82.

⁵² *Philosophical Remarks*, §82. “Es ist so: Die grammatischen Regeln über ‘und’, ‘nicht’, ‘oder’ etc. sind eben nicht damit erschöpft, was ich in der *Abhandlung* gesagt habe. Sondern es gibt Regeln über die Wahrheitsfunktionen, die auch von dem elementaren Teil des Satzes handeln.” *Philosophische Bemerkungen, Werkausgabe Band 2*, §82.

⁵³ *Philosophical Remarks*, §86. “Die Syntax verbietet eine Bildung wie ‘*A* ist grün und *A* ist rot’ (das erste Gefühl ist, als geschähe da mit diesem Satz ein Unrecht; als wäre er dadurch in den rechten des Satzes verkürzt), aber für ‘*A* ist grün’ ist der Satz ‘*A* ist rot’ sozusagen kein *anderer* Satz – und das ist es eigentlich, was die

This extension of logical syntax enabled Wittgenstein to see that: “propositions turn out to be even more like yardsticks than I previously believed.”⁵⁴ In the *Tractatus* he had argued that a picture is: “laid against reality like a measure” (2.1512).⁵⁵ He was misled, however, in thinking that there is a general form of the proposition which constitutes a measure fixed by the requirements of logic. Now he came to see that there is no one underlying general proposition; rather, we establish measures by applying them to reality. It is in doing so that we exclude other measures, and not by any underlying requirement of logic: “The fact that *one* measurement is right automatically excludes all others.”⁵⁶ The systems of propositions we lay against reality provide the measure of reality, not the requirements of logic. In the *Tractatus*, by ensuring that sense is determinate, simple names played an essential role in application. In his later works Wittgenstein changes his direction of enquiry from determining the requirements of logic to examining our actual linguistic practices. From this point onwards he will abandon the task of finding an underlying form of language, and focus upon the actual applications we make with language. Wittgenstein gives up the project of developing a general account of application in favour of seeing how particular types of application throw light on the question of application. One kind of application which will continue to fascinate him is that of colour concepts,⁵⁷ but the two primary fields of application which will shape his later works are psychology and mathematics. These are both represented in the *Philosophical Remarks*, and the application of mathematical concepts is the dominant theme.

Syntax festhält -, sondern eine andere Form desselben Satzes. Die Syntax zieht dadurch die Sätze zusammen, die *eine* Bestimmung sind.” *Philosophische Bemerkungen, Werkausgabe Band 2*, §86.

⁵⁴ *Philosophical Remarks*, §82. “Die Sätze werden in diesem Fall noch ähnlicher Maßstäben, als ich früher geglaubt habe.” *Philosophische Bemerkungen, Werkausgabe Band 2*, §82.

⁵⁵ *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 9. “2.1512 es ist wie ein Maßstab an die Wirklichkeit angelegt.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 15.

⁵⁶ *Philosophical Remarks*, §82. “Das Stimmen *eines* Maßes schließt automatisch alle anderen aus.” *Philosophische Bemerkungen, Werkausgabe Band 2*, §82.

⁵⁷ His post-1945 remarks on colour are collected in: *Remarks on Colour*, trans. Linda L. McAlister and Margarete Schättle, 1 vols. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977).

This focus upon the philosophy of mathematics reveals the influence of Frege and Russell, and at first sight would not appear to be a promising field for gaining insights into our actual use of language. In addition to the technical complexities involved in understanding mathematical concepts, it could be argued that if any field of human discourse approximates to an ideal language surely it is mathematics? But the identification of mathematics with an ideal language is the very thing which Wittgenstein seeks to challenge. Firstly, he wishes to demystify mathematics, to show that it does not consist in insights into a mysterious hidden realm accessible only to the initiated.⁵⁸ If mathematics is technically demanding this is not due to the complexities of a mysterious underlying code which only the mathematician can crack, but due to the twist and turns that we invent. Secondly, he sets out to show that mathematics is not reducible to an underlying general form, but consists in the application of a multiplicity of systems of propositions:

On the one hand it seems to me that you can develop arithmetic completely autonomously and its application takes care of itself, since wherever it's applicable we may also apply it. On the other hand a nebulous introduction of the concept of number by means of the general form of operation—such as I gave—can't be what's needed.⁵⁹

Rather than searching for an underlying general form which guarantees application Wittgenstein came to realize that “application takes care of itself.”⁶⁰ The very fact that we do use language in a determinate manner shows that there is no need to posit the existence of simple names to avoid indeterminacy.

⁵⁸ Wittgenstein argues that it is because we fail to command a clear view of what we are doing that mathematics seems mysterious to us: “I want to say: ‘We don't command a clear view of what we have done, and that is why it strikes us as mysterious.’” *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, II, §8. “Ich will sagen: ‘Wir haben keinen Überblick über das, was wir gemacht haben, und deshalb kommt es uns geheimnisvoll vor.’” *Bemerkung Über Die Grundlagen Der Mathematik, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 6*, II, §8.

⁵⁹ *Philosophical Remarks*, §109. “Einerseits, kommt es mir vor, kann man die Arithmetik ganz selbstständig entwickeln und ihre Anwendung sorgt für sich selbst, denn wo immer sie anwendbar ist, dort darf man sie auch anwenden. Andererseits kann eine nebulöse Einführung des Zahlbegriffes mit Hilfe einer allgemeinen Operationsform – wie ich es machte – nicht nötig sein.” *Philosophische Bemerkungen, Werkausgabe Band 2*, §109.

⁶⁰ *Philosophical Remarks*, §109. “Anwendung sorgt für sich selbst.” *Philosophische Bemerkungen, Werkausgabe Band 2*, §109.

In speaking here of the autonomy of arithmetic Wittgenstein could be mistaken as holding a purely formalist conception of mathematics. We noted earlier that Wittgenstein shares a good deal in common with formalists, but differs in his understanding of the application of mathematical concepts. Although he abandoned the account of application given in the *Tractatus*, application continued to be central to his account of mathematical concepts. More generally application remained central to his account of language, but he began to see that the words we use have many applications with a variety of purposes as wide as human life. In the *Philosophical Remarks* he illustrates this variety by introducing the idea that the words of language are like tools:

Just as the handles in a control room are used to do a wide variety of things, so are the words of language that correspond to the handles. One is the handle of a crank and can be adjusted continuously; one belongs to a switch and is always either on or off; a third to a switch which permits three or more positions; a fourth is the handle of a pump and only works when it is being moved up and down, etc.; but all are handles, are worked by hand.⁶¹

This analogy is one he will return to in his later writings,⁶² and is central to understanding the development of his notion of application: “A word only has meaning in the context of a proposition: that is like saying only in use is a rod a lever. Only the application makes it into a lever.”⁶³ In the *Philosophical Remarks* Wittgenstein came to see that there can be no single account of application, such as that which he sought with the picture theory of meaning. In place of such a unitary account Wittgenstein turns to our actual use of words, and begins to observe how the words of language have a variety of roles: similar to the variety of handles in a control room. The outward similarity between words masks the very different roles they

⁶¹ *Philosophical Remarks*, §13. “Wie in einem Stellwerk mit Handgriffen die verschiedensten Dinge ausgeführt werden, so mit den Wörtern der Sprache, die Handgriffen entsprechen. Ein Handgriff ist der einer Kurbel und diese kann kontinuierlich verstellt werden; einer gehört zu einem Schalter und kann nur entweder umbelegt oder aufgestellt werden; ein dritter gehört zu einem Schalter, der drei oder mehr Stellungen zuläßt; ein vierter ist der Handgriff einer Pumpe und wirkt nur, wenn er auf – und abwegt wird, etc. : aber alle sind Handgriffe, werden mit der Hand angefaßt.” *Philosophische Bemerkungen, Werkausgabe Band 2*, §13.

⁶² See *Philosophical Investigations*, §23.

⁶³ *Philosophical Remarks*, §14. “Ein Wort hat nur im Satzverband Bedeutung: das ist, wie wenn man sagen würde, ein Stab ist erst im Gebrauch ein Hebel. Erst die Anwendung macht ihn zum Hebel.” *Philosophische Bemerkungen, Werkausgabe Band 2*, §14.

play in our language. Our task in philosophy is to gain a perspicuous view of this wide variety of uses, rather than to lay down logical requirements. There is still, however, a long way to go before we arrive at the developed philosophy of the *Investigations*, in which Wittgenstein shows how our use of words originates from our natural human reactions and practices. In the next section we will trace this development in Wittgenstein's reflections upon the connections between application and human life.

2.3.2 From Calculus to Game: Connecting Application with Life

The change in approach signally by the *Philosophical Remarks* was continued and developed in a typescript which was probably completed in 1933, before being revised later that year and in early 1934. This typescript forms the most important source for the collection of Wittgenstein's writings edited under the title *Philosophical Grammar*.⁶⁴ This collection contains many passages also to be found in the *Philosophical Remarks*, the *Philosophical Investigations* and *Zettel*.⁶⁵ Of particular relevance for the development of Wittgenstein's notion of application is the analogy he draws between the application of language and the playing of games. This analogy developed via the idea that language consists in systems of propositions which operate like a calculus. Wittgenstein compares such a calculus to the rules of a game. Just as the rules of a game form the background against which the game is played, Wittgenstein argues that the calculus of language forms the background against which the sentences expressed in language gain meaning:

The understanding of language, as of a game, seems like a background against which a particular sentence acquires meaning.—But this understanding, the knowledge of the language, isn't a conscious state that accompanies the sentences of the language. Not even if one of its consequences is such a state. It's much more like the understanding or mastery of a calculus, something like the ability to multiply.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ See *Philosophical Grammar*, trans. A. J. P. Kenny, 2 vols. (Oxford Eng.: Blackwell, 1974), 487.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 491.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, §11. "Das Verständnis der Sprache, quasi des Spiels, scheint wie ein Hintergrund, auf dem der einzelne Satz erst Bedeutung gewinnt. – Aber dieses Verständnis, die Kenntnis der Sprache, ist nicht ein Bewußtseinszustand, der die Sätze der Sprache begleitet. Selbst wenn es einen solchen Zustand im Gefolge hätte.

The insistence that meaning is not given through states of consciousness is consistent with the anti-psychologism of the *Tractatus*, but also signals the development of Wittgenstein's critique of theories of meaning which mistake a picture of the mental for the actual application of language. Just as it is a mistake to imagine that there is a general form for mathematical concepts, it is equally erroneous to imagine a general form for psychological concepts through which language acquires meaning. In both cases an ideal general form is mistaken for the actual application of concepts. The mistake arises from taking one particular concept, with its particular application, and generalizing it so that its application no longer has any bounds.

This is the substance of Wittgenstein's critique of Augustine's theory of language acquisition, the earlier version of which is to be found in *Philosophical Grammar*. Here Wittgenstein argues that Augustine mistakes acts of naming for a general account of language: "When Augustine talks about the learning of language he talks about how we attach names to things, or understand the names of things. Naming here appears as the foundation, the be all and end all of language."⁶⁷ There is nothing wrong with naming, the problem arises when it replaces all other applications of language: "Augustine does describe a calculus of our language, only not everything that we call language is this calculus."⁶⁸ Wittgenstein continues his criticism of Augustine in the following passage, where the game analogy is prominent: "It is as if someone were to say 'a game consists in moving objects about on a surface according to certain rules...' and we replied: You must be thinking of board games, and your description is indeed applicable to them. But they are not the only

Vielmehr ist es von der gleichen Art wie das Verstehen, Beherrschen eines Kalküls, also wie: multiplizieren können." *Philosophische Grammatik, Werkausgabe Band 4* (Sinzheim, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1984), §11.

⁶⁷ *Philosophical Grammar*, §19. "Augustinus, wenn er vom Lernen der Sprache redet, redet nur davon, wie wir den Dingen Namen beilegen, oder die Namen der Dinge verstehen. Das Benennen scheint hier das Fundament und Um und Auf der Sprache zu sein." *Philosophische Grammatik, Werkausgabe Band 4*, §19.

⁶⁸ *Philosophical Grammar*, § 19. "Augustinus beschreibt einen Kalkül unserer Sprache, nur ist nicht alles, was wir Sprache nenne, dieser Kalkül." *Philosophische Grammatik, Werkausgabe Band 4*, §19.

games.”⁶⁹ Many of the analogies used in the *Investigations* by Wittgenstein to help us see the multiplicity of applications present within language follow this passage.

The game analogy signals the development of another idea which will run throughout Wittgenstein’s later works: family resemblance. Wittgenstein argues that there is no underlying essence which all games have in common; rather there are overlapping resemblances similar to the resemblances between members of a family. This follows on from his rejection of any attempt to find the general form of language and his stressing the multiplicity of application given in language. Furthermore, it is important to note how the game analogy placed pressure on Wittgenstein’s understanding of language as a calculus. This can be seen in the following passage, which is to be found in *The Blue Book* and in which Wittgenstein repudiates the notion that language is a calculus:

In practice we very rarely use language as such a calculus. For not only do we not think of the rules of usage—of definitions, etc.—while using language, but when we are asked to give such rules, in most cases we aren't able to do so. We are unable clearly to circumscribe the concepts we use; not because we don't know their real definition, but because there is no real 'definition' to them. To suppose that there must be would be like supposing that whenever children play with a ball they play a game according to strict rules.⁷⁰

The game analogy is instrumental in this passage and it enables Wittgenstein to break free of the constricting notion that language is a calculus. It also points the way towards seeing how language is not primarily a set of rules which are subsequently applied to reality, but that the rules of grammar arise out of our natural human reaction to the world.

The Blue Book originates from 1933-34, and thus shows that the move away from seeing language as a calculus in favour of the analogy with games happened during this period. This is not to say, however, that further work was not needed to bring out the implications of this change. In his preface to *The Blue and Brown Books*, Rush Rhees argues

⁶⁹ *Philosophical Grammar*, §19. “Es ist so, als erklärte jemand: ‘spielen besteht darin, daß man Dinge, gewissen Regeln gemäß, auf einer Fläche verschiebt...’ und wir ihm antworten: Du denkst da gewiß an die Brettspiele, und auf sie ist diene Beschreibung auch anwendbar. Aber das sind nicht die einzigen Spiele.” *Philosophische Grammatik, Werkausgabe Band 4*, §19.

⁷⁰ *The Blue and Brown Books*, 25.

that Wittgenstein's thinking in regard to language games was not fully developed until the *Investigations*. Rhees identifies two significant features contributing to this development which can be found in *The Brown Book*, the text Wittgenstein at one time considered publishing, but which he gave up on (after a final revision of the German version in August, 1936) prior to beginning work on the *Investigation*.⁷¹ Firstly, Rhees argues, it was not until *The Brown Book* that Wittgenstein came to see that learning a language game does not necessarily involve mastering concepts in such a manner that the competent language user is able to give an explanation of the meaning of those concepts. Rather, Rhees observes: "he [Wittgenstein] emphasizes that learning a language game is something prior to that. And what is needed is not explanation but *training*—comparable with the training you would give an animal."⁷² Secondly, in *The Brown Book* Wittgenstein finally broke with the idea that the task of philosophy is the analysis of language. *The Blue Book* presents the idea that the purpose of philosophy is to uncover the primitive forms of language which underlie our more sophisticated language games, and from which those more sophisticated uses are built up: "We see we can build up the complicated forms from the primitive ones by gradually adding new forms."⁷³ Whereas in *The Brown Book* Wittgenstein asserts that he is: "not regarding the language games which we describe as incomplete parts of a language, but as languages complete in themselves."⁷⁴ The purpose of language games is not to provide an analysis of language into more primitive underlying forms, but to throw light on our actual linguistic practices. Wittgenstein moves away from the idea that there is some underlying mechanism of explanation, and helps us see that there can be no general account of language and understanding.

⁷¹ See *ibid.*, v-vi.

⁷² *Ibid.*, vi.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, vii.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Although *The Brown Book* signalled the development of language games, and the end of characterizing philosophy as primarily linguistic analysis, Rhees argues that it failed to show *why* we are constantly tempted to look for an underlying essence for language. In chapter one, section 1.3.2 we argued that Wittgenstein's concern in the *Investigations* is to help us overcome the temptations into which language leads us. This concern is present in *The Brown Book*, but what is lacking is any attempt to help us understand why these temptations arise. Rhees argues that in the *Investigations* Wittgenstein faces this question, and in doing so sheds light not just on: "various aspects of language," but uses language games as, "stages in a discussion leading up to the big question of what language is (in par. 65)." ⁷⁵ This discussion will not result in a general theory of language, but in Wittgenstein helping us to see our actual linguistic practices.

2.3.3 The Autonomy of Language and Two Types of Practice

We have seen that Wittgenstein abandoned his search for the general form of the proposition, and thus any attempt to provide a general account of application. In the *Tractatus* the internal nature of the relationship between proposition and reality entailed a distinction between form and content, which was fixed for all applications by Wittgenstein's theory of simple signs. After the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein never abandoned the idea that the relationship between proposition and reality is internal to the proposition; so much is evident from his assertion of the autonomy of grammar. In the game analogy he also points to the internal nature of the relationship between language and the world. The difference is that in abandoning the logico-syntactic requirements of the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein came to argue that language can take care of itself. The distinction between the form and content of a

⁷⁵ Ibid., viii.

proposition is not given through a general theory, but by observing the particular contexts of application in which we use words.

It is important to note, however, that Wittgenstein's assertion of the autonomy of language does not entail that we are free to use whatever tool we desire for a given application; language is not autonomous in this sense. In the following passage from *Philosophical Grammar* Wittgenstein argues that the calculi which we adopt result from our natural reactions to the world:

*What counts as a reason for an assumption can be given a priori and determines a calculus, a system of transitions. But if we are asked now for a reason for the calculus itself, we see that there is none. So is the calculus something we adopt arbitrarily? No more so than the fear of fire, or the fear of a raging man coming at us.*⁷⁶

Here it is essential to see that Wittgenstein in comparing reasons for adopting a calculus with natural reactions is seeking to rule out two misunderstandings of such reasons. The first misunderstanding is to give an empirical casual account of reasons. Wittgenstein rejects such accounts as they reduce all reasons to empirical generalizations:

*What does man think for? What use is it? Why does he calculate the thickness of the walls of a boiler and not leave it to chance or whim to decide? After all it is a mere fact of experience that boilers do not explode so often if made according to calculations. But just as having once been burnt he would do anything rather than put his hand into the fire, so he would do anything rather than not calculate for a boiler.*⁷⁷

My belief that fire will burn me is not based upon an inductive empirical argument, but is a natural reaction in the same way that my fear of fire is natural:

What the thought of the uniformity of nature amounts to can perhaps be seen most clearly when we fear the event we expect. Nothing could induce me to put

⁷⁶ *Philosophical Grammar*, §68. "Was als Grund einer Annahme gilt, kann von vorherein angegeben werden, und bestimmt einer Kalkül; ein System von Übergängen. Wird nun aber nach einem Grund dieses Kalküls gefragt, so sehen wir, daß er nicht vorhanden ist. Ist der Kalkül also willkürlich von uns angenommen? So wenig, wie die Furcht vor dem Feuer, oder einem wütenden Menschen, der sich uns nähert." *Philosophische Grammatik, Werkausgabe Band 4*, §68.

⁷⁷ *Philosophical Grammar*, §67. "Wozu denkt der Mensch? Wozu ist es nütze? Warum *berechnet* er die Wandstärke eines Dampfkessels und läßt nicht den Zufall, oder die Laune, sie bestimmen? Es ist doch bloß Erfahrungstatsache, daß Kessel, die berechnet wurden, nicht so oft explodieren. Aber, wie er alles eher täte, als die Hand in Feuer strecken, das ihn früher gebrannt hat, so wird er alles eher tun, als den Kessel nicht berechnen." *Philosophische Grammatik, Werkausgabe Band 4*, §67.

my hand into a flame—although after all it is *only in the past* that I have burnt myself.
The belief that fire will burn me is of the same nature as the fear that it will burn me.”⁷⁸

The second misunderstanding is to make concepts unbounded by removing them from the contexts in which they have application. An example of this is the one with which we began this thesis in which Anscombe removed colour concepts from their context of application to provide an explanation of colour ascriptions. In the example given above the mistake would be to remove my belief that fire will burn me from the context of my everyday encounters with fire; giving an account of my concept of fire based upon my acquaintance with an abstract concept.

In seeking to avoid these two misunderstandings we can see that Wittgenstein is again walking the tightrope between empiricism (causal accounts) and idealism (removing concepts from their context of application). In speaking of language as autonomous the danger of ignoring application and lapsing into idealism emerges. On the other hand a causal account of language collapses the distinction between the empirical and the conceptual. Wittgenstein’s solution to this impasse is to compare reasons with our fear of fire: both are natural reactions human beings have to the world. It is important to keep this in mind when interpreting remarks such as the following which stress the autonomy of language: “The connection between ‘language and reality’ is made by definitions of words, and these belong to grammar, so that language remains self-contained and autonomous.”⁷⁹ In emphasising the autonomy of grammar here Wittgenstein is seeking to reinforce the distinction between the conceptual and the empirical made in the *Tractatus*. There is a significant development in his thought,

⁷⁸ *Philosophical Grammar*, §67. “Was es mit dem Gedanken an die Gleichförmigkeit des Geschehens auf sich hat, wird vielleicht am larsten, wenn wir Furcht vor dem erwarteten Ereignis empfinden. Nichts könnte mich bewegen, meine Hand in die Flamme zu stecken, obwohl ich mich doch *nur in der Vergangenheit* verbrannt habe. Der Glaube, daß mich das Feuer brennen wird, ist von der natur der Furcht, daß es mich brennen wird.” *Philosophische Grammatik, Werkausgabe Band 4*, §67.

⁷⁹ *Philosophical Grammar*, §56. “Die Verbindung zwischen ‘Sprache und Wirklichkeit’ ist durch die Worterklärungen gemacht, - welche zur Sprachlehre gehören, so daß die Sprache in sich geschlossen, autom, bleibt.” *Philosophische Grammatik, Werkausgabe Band 4*, §56.

however, insofar as he sees that our concepts arise through our natural human reactions to the world: this will be the key to understanding the development of Wittgenstein's notion of application.

In speaking of the connection between natural human reactions and our developed linguistic practices we face two opposing dangers. On the one hand there is the risk of reducing linguistic practices to a pre-given natural measure, and of thus giving a purely pragmatic account of language.⁸⁰ On the other hand, there is the challenge of maintaining the autonomy of language while avoiding the risk of removing concepts from their context of application (subliming grammar). The key to finding a path between these opposing dangers is to be found in the following remark taken from *Philosophical Grammar*, which compares the rules of grammar with the rules of cookery. This comparison has the purpose of helping us to see that language is a practice, but not a practice which is accountable to a reality external to it in the same manner as a particular practice such as cookery:

Why don't I call cookery rules arbitrary, and why am I tempted to call the rules of grammar arbitrary? Because I think of the concept 'cookery' as defined by the end of cookery, and I don't think of the concept 'language' as defined by the end of language. You cook badly if you are guided in your cooking by rules other than the right ones; but if you follow other rules than those of chess you are playing another game; and if you follow grammatical rules other than such and such ones, that does not mean you say something wrong, no, you are speaking of something else.⁸¹

If we add to this passage Wittgenstein's rejection of his earlier understanding that language is a calculus, together with the extension of the game analogy which is found in *The Blue and*

⁸⁰ Here in speaking about the pragmatic I am following Wittgenstein in bringing out the modern connotations according to which practice involves the most efficient means of bringing about a given result. Josef Pieper provides a good overview of how the Thomistic notion of prudent practice differs from this: see Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance*, 1st ed. (New York, : Harcourt, 1965). It is arguable that Wittgenstein's notion of a language game has been influential in helping to recover something of the lost richness of the ancient and mediaeval understandings of practice.

⁸¹ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Grammar*, §133. "Warum nenne ich die Regeln des Kochens nicht willkürlich; und warum bin ich versucht, die Regeln der Grammatik willkürlich zu nennen? Weil ich den Begriff 'Kochen' durch den Zweck des Kochens definiert denke, dagegen den Begriff 'Sprache' nicht durch den Zweck der Sprache. Wer sich bei Kochen nach andern als den richtigen Regeln richtet kocht schlecht; aber wer sich nach andern Regeln als denen des Schach richtet, spielt ein anderes Spiel; und wer sich nach andern grammatischen Regeln richtet, als etwa den üblichen, spricht darum nichts Falsches, sondern von etwas Anderem." *Philosophische Grammatik, Werkausgabe Band 4*, §133.

Brown Books, we can see how in his later writings Wittgenstein came to distinguish between two types of practice. The first type of practice is given its goals by something external to it. The second type of practice is one which is not defined according to an external goal, but the point of which is given within itself. It is important, however, not to read this distinction as one which is hard and fast. To do so is again to assume that there is an external perspective from which we can survey all our practices and distinguish them into externally answerable and internally defined. A distinction is once again being made prior to examining the actual practices. Cookery may be judged by its results, but the practice of cooking transforms our expectations of those results. On the other hand playing chess makes sense within the context of a wider set of human practices and consideration; if these were to change then we may no longer be able to see what the point of playing chess is. Chess makes sense in a world where competition between two individuals in a test of intelligence and skill is part of our way of living. In a world where such contests did not happen, or were even looked upon as abhorrent, then chess would no longer make sense.

We will see that Wittgenstein in his later works (particularly the post *Investigations* writings) will battle the temptation on the one hand to reduce human practice to an external given standard; while on the other hand avoiding the temptation to speak of language games as completely self-contained, lacking connection to the rest of our lives. Again the task of not falling into idealism while avoiding empiricism will be central to Wittgenstein's philosophical research. The remarks in the *Tractatus* concerning the internal nature of representation find their counterpart in that which is internal to a practice; and although Wittgenstein abandoned the *Tractatus* solution to the question of application it remained central to his concerns.

2.3.4 The Application of Mathematical Concepts: Finding Friction

Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics is the edited selection of Wittgenstein's writings on the philosophy of mathematics from "the period September 1937-April 1944."⁸² These writings date from the after *The Brown Book* when Wittgenstein was working on the *Investigations*, and thus provide valuable insights into the development of Wittgenstein's thought leading up to the completion of the text for Part I of the *Investigations*.⁸³ In chapter one, section 1.3.1 we saw how in the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* Wittgenstein draws our attention to the wider context of interpretation within which proof of mathematical propositions takes place. This emphasis on the wider context of interpretation, together with Wittgenstein's assertion that the application of a mathematical concept is rooted in non-mathematical human practice, provides the basis for understanding his remarks concerning meaning as use. There is a temptation to present Wittgenstein's remarks on meaning as use as a general theory of meaning, but it is better understood as the development of the various insights we have been tracing through which Wittgenstein investigates the nature of application.

The question of application remains a central concern in the *Remarks on the Foundation of Mathematics*. In the following passage Wittgenstein argues that we do not understand a mathematical proposition unless we can apply it:

Everything that I say really amounts to this, that one can know a proof thoroughly and follow it step by step, and yet at the same time not understand what it was that was proved.

And this in turn is connected with the fact that one can form a mathematical proposition in a grammatically correct way without understanding its meaning.

Now when does one understand it?—I believe: when one can apply it.

It might perhaps be said: when one has a clear picture of its application. For this, however, it is not enough to connect a clear picture with it. It would rather have been better to say: when one commands a clear view of its application. And even that is bad,

⁸² *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, 29.

⁸³ As mentioned above, Wittgenstein originally intended to include some of this material on the philosophy of mathematics in the *Investigations*. Part I of the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* is formed on the basis of an edited selection of remarks taken from a typescript which originally was intended to be the second half of the *Investigations*.

for the matter is simply one of not imagining that the application is where it is not; of not being deceived by the verbal form of the proposition.⁸⁴

One of Wittgenstein's prime targets here is Russell's attempt to reduce mathematical propositions to logical propositions. We have seen how Wittgenstein rejected the *Tractatus* account of application on the grounds that there can be no such general account; rather, application is given within the various language games we play. The clear view which Wittgenstein seeks does not involve looking beneath or beyond our linguistic practices in order to discover the crystalline logic they are founded upon. The clarity Wittgenstein seeks is one by which we avoid: "being deceived by the verbal form of the proposition."⁸⁵ We aim at clarity, but that is not to say that what we come to see must conform to some pre-given standard of clarity. The temptation to avoid is that of reducing the actual application of concepts to simple underlying forms: "I should like to say: mathematics is a MOTLEY of techniques of proof.—And upon this is based its manifold applicability and its importance."⁸⁶ Mathematics is not an ideal language, but a range of techniques which find application in our lives.

The breakthrough which according to Rhees occurs in the *Investigations*, whereby Wittgenstein not only shows that we have a tendency to be misled by grammar, but also why we are liable to be deceived, is also present in the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*. We are tempted to reduce the motley of our actual human practices to simple

⁸⁴ Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, V, §25. "Alles was ich sage, kommt eigentlich darauf hinaus, daß man einen Beweis genau kennen und ihm Schritt für Schritt folgen kann, und dabei doch, was bewiesen wurde, nicht *versteht*. Und das hängt wieder damit zusammen, daß man einen mathematischen Satz grammatisch richtig bilden kann ohne seinen Sinn zu verstehen. Wenn versteht man ihm nun? – Ich glaube: wenn man ihn anwenden kann. Man könnte vielleicht sagen: wenn man ein Klares Bild von seiner Anwendung hat. Dazu aber genügt es nicht, daß man ein klares Bild mit ihm verbindet. Vielmehr wäre besser gewesen, zu sagen: wenn man eine klare Übersicht von seiner Anwendung hat. Und auch das ist schlecht, denn es handelt sich nur darum, daß man die Anwendung nicht dort vermutet, wo sie nicht ist; daß man sich von der Wortform des Satzes nicht täuschen läßt." *Bemerkung Über Die Grundlagen Der Mathematik, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 6, V 25.*

⁸⁵ *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, V, §25. "daß man sich von der Wortform des Satzes nicht täuschen läßt." *Bemerkung Über Die Grundlagen Der Mathematik, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 6, V, §25.*

⁸⁶ *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, III, §46. "Ich möchte sagen: Die Mathematik ist ein BUNTES Gemisch von Beweistechniken. – Und darauf berauf ihre mannigfache Anwendbarkeit und ihre Wichtigkeit." *Bemerkung Über Die Grundlagen Der Mathematik, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 6, III, §46.*

underlying forms, because we desire to grasp the essence of things. Rather than carrying out the patient and piecemeal work of assembling reminders which enable us to gain a clear view of the applications we make of our concepts, we are seduced by the promise of a one-step solution which brings assurance and control in the midst of the motley of language. In the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* Wittgenstein constantly challenges us to look at the actual practices within which we apply mathematical concepts, and thus to avoid reducing them to a frictionless logic. On the other hand he constantly draws distinctions between mathematical and empirical concepts. Mathematical concepts are not derived from experience; rather in their application they provide a measure for experience: “‘Calculating, if it is to be practical, must be grounded in empirical facts.’—Why should it not rather determine what empirical facts are?’”⁸⁷

By walking the line between idealism and empiricism in the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* Wittgenstein returns us to the natural human practices within which the application of concepts takes place. These natural practices are the basis of the contexts within which interpretation can occur. As we have seen in our examination of *The Brown Book*, application involves training and thus recalls us to our pre-conceptual nature, to the boundary between our linguistic and pre-linguistic nature. Wittgenstein constantly probes the question of our origin as linguistic creatures. Here again lies the danger of either falling into idealism by producing an account of training which presents application as already given (this is the fault Wittgenstein finds in Augustine’s picture of language acquisition), or the error of mistaking empirical generalizations for application. The first mistake is to begin on the linguistic side of the boundary and present the person being trained as already possessing those concepts they are being trained to acquire. The second mistake is to start on the pre-linguistic side of the boundary and to attempt to build our concepts out of empirical

⁸⁷ *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, VII, §8. “‘Das Rechnen um praktisch sein zu können, muß auf empirischen Tatsachen beruhen.’ - Warum soll es nicht lieber bestimmen, was empirische Tatsachen *sind*?’” *Bemerkung Über Die Grundlagen Der Mathematik, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 6*, VII, §8.

propositions. The question of human nature is tied up with this boundary (a sign using animal). In chapter four we will follow Mulhall's reading of the *Investigations* in which he argues that it is a work about origins; and particularly about our origins as linguistic creatures.

For our present purposes it is important to draw attention to two themes which we find in the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* and which become central to Wittgenstein's thought as it develops in the 1940's: following a rule, and 'seeing as'. These two themes provide a bridge to the discussion of language and grammar Wittgenstein carries out in the *Investigations*. More specifically, these themes help us examine the boundary between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual, since both following a rule and 'seeing as' are rooted in our pre-conceptual practices and reactions, and yet essentially involve the application of concepts.

2.3.5 Following a Rule, Training and Our Natural Reactions

We have seen that throughout the development of his later works Wittgenstein is concerned with the application of concepts. Central to this topic is an investigations of the rules according to which applications are governed. These are not rules which merely *describe* the application, but are rules which *determine* application. The distinction between these two kinds of rule is brought out in the following passage from *The Blue Book*, in which Wittgenstein also makes a connection between rules and teaching:

The teaching may have supplied us with a rule which is itself involved in the processes of understanding, obeying, etc.; "involved", however, meaning that the expression of this rule forms part of these processes.

We must distinguish between what one might call "a process being in accordance with a rule", and, "a process involving a rule" (in the above sense).⁸⁸

⁸⁸ *The Blue and Brown Books*, 12-13.

Wittgenstein makes this distinction in the context of distinguishing between two types of teaching: teaching a drill and teaching a rule (as in the above case). Whereas teaching a rule involves the ability to apply concepts according to the rule, teaching a drill sets up causal connections through which words are applied in a regular pattern: “The drill of teaching could in this case be said to have built up a psychical mechanism. This, however, would only be a hypothesis or else a metaphor. We could compare teaching with installing an electric connection between a switch and a bulb.”⁸⁹ Wittgenstein argues that it is conceivable for a person to undergo this mechanical type of training such: “that all the processes of understanding, obeying, etc., should have happened without the person ever having been taught the language. (This, just now, seems extremely paradoxical.)”⁹⁰

The contrast between teaching by drill and teaching by a rule brings out the difference between empiricist accounts of concept acquisition and the kind of account Wittgenstein is seeking to develop through his remarks on following a rule. It remains at the heart of his understanding of following a rule as this develops in his later works, and can be seen as central to his aim of realism without empiricism. Furthermore, the example of rule following given after these remarks in *The Blue Book* involves being taught to square cardinal numbers, and as such is typical of the kind of example Wittgenstein will return to in his later discussions. This use of mathematical examples helps to break the temptation of falling into empiricist accounts of concept formation, because mathematics is an area in which the autonomy of language is more clearly seen. In mathematics, however, the opposing temptation towards idealism is strong, and the development of Wittgenstein’s account of following a rule is also central to his overcoming this temptation.

In *The Brown Book* Wittgenstein develops his account of following a rule, and many of the examples of rule following given in the *Investigations* are also to be found here. There

⁸⁹ Ibid., 12.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

are two developments which are of particular relevance for the relationship between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual, and which thus cast light on the question of how to provide a realist account of concept formation. The first development is Wittgenstein's argument that the acquisition of concepts requires training. The training he has in mind here is not reducible to one particular technique, such as the use of drills, but draws on the natural reaction of the learner, to encourage the learner to develop the application of the concept taught. In the following passage Wittgenstein compares the reaction of a pupil who is encouraged to develop the use of a table of figures (e.g. one in which signs are written opposite pictures of various objects), to the reactions of cats and dogs who are encouraged to retrieve:

The pupil will now be encouraged to make use of the new picture and word without the special training which we gave him when we taught him to use the first table. These acts of encouragement will be of various kinds, and many such acts will only be possible if the pupil responds, and responds in a particular way. Imagine the gestures, sounds, etc., of encouragement you use when you teach a dog to retrieve. Imagine on the other hand, that you tried to teach a cat to retrieve. As the cat will not respond to your encouragement, most of the acts of encouragement which you performed when you trained the dog are here out of the question.⁹¹

It is because human beings have a particular nature that we react naturally to encouragement and can be trained in particular ways, and thus that the acquisition and use of concepts is possible. From the above example it may appear that this kind of training is relevant only for the extension of concepts, not for their initial acquisition. The "special training" that Wittgenstein refers to when the pupil first learnt to use the table is not, however, of a purely mechanical kind. What he wants us to see is that even the most basic of human reactions lose their sense when we image them as causally explained. In order to help us see that at the most primitive level our human reactions are rule governed he develops the primitive language games which we find repeated in the *Investigations*; drawing our attention to primitive human practices in his discussion of rule following, such as the rules for following an arrow:

⁹¹ Ibid., 89.

How does one explain to a man how he should carry out the order, “Go this way!” (pointing with an arrow the way he should go)? Couldn't this mean going the direction which we should call the opposite of that of the arrow? Isn't every explanation of how he should follow the arrow in the position of another arrow? What would you say to this explanation: A man says, “If I point this way (pointing with his right hand) I mean you to go like this” (pointing with his left hand the same way)? This just shows you the extremes between which the uses of signs vary.⁹²

The point Wittgenstein makes is that training someone to follow an arrow relies on the person reacting as we expect them to react; without such reactions even the most basic of human practices can be interpreted in various ways. An account of this training which characterizes it as purely mechanical cannot explain why we react naturally as we do in following arrows. Of course we can create machines which follow arrows, but that assumes there is an inventor who already understands these conventions and has learnt them.⁹³

The discussion of rule following in the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* is found predominantly in books VI and VII, which dates them from 1941-1944. These remarks develop the discussion of rule following and training begun in *The Brown Book* and stress that the natural reactions which allow human beings to be trained take place within a wider context of life: “But this is important, namely that this reaction, which is our guarantee of understanding, presupposes as a surrounding particular circumstances, particular forms of life and speech. (As there is no such thing as a facial expression without a face.)”⁹⁴ Here Wittgenstein uses the phrase ‘forms of life’, a notion which will be influential on interpretation of the later Wittgenstein, but which he used sparingly.⁹⁵ The *Remarks on the*

⁹² Ibid., 97. The corresponding passage in the *Investigations* makes things more explicit: “The arrow points only in the application that a living being makes of it.” *Philosophical Investigations*, §454. “Der Pfeil zeigt nur in der Anwendung, die das Lebewesen von ihm macht.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1, §454.

⁹³ We end up in a regress if we then imagine an inventor of the inventor etc. Somewhere interpretation has to come to an end.

⁹⁴ Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, VII, §47. “Das aber ist wichtig, daß diese Reaction, die uns das Verständnis verbürgt, bestimmte Umstände, bestimmte Lebens- und Sprachformen als Umgebung, voraussetzt. (Wie es keinen Gesichtsausdruck gibt ohne Gesicht).” *Bemerkung Über Die Grundlagen Der Mathematik*, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 6, VII, §47.

⁹⁵ Graham notes that: “In the whole of the *Philosophical Investigations* the expression appears only five times.” Graham, *Wittgenstein and Natural Religion*, 42. Of course, as Graham adds, a lack of frequency does not in itself entail that an expression is not central to a text.

Foundations of Mathematics draw out two important implications for Wittgenstein's account of following a rule. Firstly, when we seek to explain how we learn to use a rule there is the temptation to look for an explanation beyond our training:

To what extent can the function of a rule be described? Someone who is master of none, I can only train. But how can I explain the nature of a rule to myself? The difficult thing here is not, to dig down to the ground; no, it is to recognize the ground that lies before us as the ground. For the ground keeps on giving us the illusory image of a greater depth, and when we seek to reach this, we keep on finding ourselves on the old level.

Our disease is one of wanting to explain.⁹⁶

This develops the argument found in *The Brown Book* that interpretation is grounded in prior primitive human reactions. Now Wittgenstein brings out the implication that the search for explanations beyond our ordinary human practices is the illness characteristic of philosophy, and in so doing he uses the analogy of reaching ground: an analogy which he develops in his later works.⁹⁷

The second and related implication which Wittgenstein brings out concerning following a rule is that such practices require agreement not only in definitions, but also in judgements:

We say that, in order to communicate, people must agree with one another about the meanings of words. But the criterion for this agreement is not just agreement with reference to definitions, e.g., ostensive definitions—but also an agreement in judgements. It is essential for communication that we agree in a large number of judgements.”⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, VI, §31. “Wie kann man die Funktion der Regel beschreiben? Wer noch keine beherrscht, den kann ich nur abrichten. Aber wie noch keine beherrscht, den kann ich nur abrichten. Aber wie kann ich mir selbst das Wesen der Regel erklären? Das Schwere ist hier, nicht bis auf den Grund zu graben, sondern den Grund, der vor uns liegt, als Grund zu erkennen. Denn der Grund spiegelt uns immer wieder eine größere Tiefe vor, und wenn wir diese zu suchen, finden wir uns immer wieder auf dem alten Niveau. Unsere Krankheit ist die, erklären zu wollen.” *Bemerkung Über Die Grundlagen Der Mathematik, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 6*, VI, §31.

⁹⁷ We find this notion as early as *The Blue Book* in a passage which asks why someone's holding their cheek is seen as a sign that the person has toothache: “here we strike rock bottom, that is we have come down to conventions.” *The Blue and Brown Books*, 24.

⁹⁸ *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, VI, §39. “Wir sagen, die Mechtshen, um sich miteinander zu verständigen, müssen über die Bedeutungen der Wörter mit einander übereinstimmen. Aber das Kriterium für diese Übereinstimmung ist nicht nur eine Übereinstimmung in Bezug auf Definitionen, z.B. hinweisende Definitionen, - sondern auch eine Übereinstimmung in Urteilen.” *Bemerkung Über Die Grundlagen Der Mathematik, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 6*, VI, §39.

This agreement in judgements is something basic and given in human life, without which human life would not be possible. The various language games which use examples of tribes differing in key respects to ourselves developed by Wittgenstein in the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* have the purpose of helping us to see how our lives depend upon agreement in judgements. Such agreements do not occur on the level of opinion or conviction, but are prior to these: “The agreement of humans that is a presupposition of logic is not an agreement in opinions, much less in opinions on questions of logic.”⁹⁹ They are the development of our natural reactions, which takes place in the wider context of our lives, and which forms the ground of our understanding. For Wittgenstein this development is the natural history of human beings, and he thus concludes: “that logic belongs to the natural history of man.”¹⁰⁰

Wittgenstein in developing his concept of application moves from the hard demands of logic present in the *Tractatus* to the contingencies of our natural human history. Does this imply that logic is itself contingent, that the hard crystalline purity of the *Tractatus* gives way to the shifting sands of human history? To the challenge that placing logic in the context of natural human history: “is not combinable with the hardness of the logical ‘must,’” Wittgenstein responds by simply pointing out that the propositions of logic are “not propositions of human natural history.”¹⁰¹ Once again Wittgenstein draws the distinction between the grammatical and the empirical. The rules of grammar are part of the natural history of humanity, but this does not entail that they themselves are empirical rules, any

⁹⁹ *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, VI, §49. “Die Übereinstimmung der Menschen, die eine Voraussetzung des Phänomens der Logik ist, ist nicht ein Übereinstimmung der *Meinungen*, geschehe denn Meinungen über die Fragen der Logik.” *Bemerkung Über Die Grundlagen Der Mathematik*, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 6, VI, §49.

¹⁰⁰ *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, VI, §49. By the natural history of human beings Wittgenstein has in mind the story of how we come to develop the complex linguistic practices which characterize human life. “Logik zur Naturgeschichte des Menschen gehört.” *Bemerkung Über Die Grundlagen Der Mathematik*, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 6, VI, §49.

¹⁰¹ *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, VI, §49. “Und daß ist nicht vereinbar mit der Härte des logischen ‘muß’. Aber das logische ‘muß’ ist ein Bestandteil der Sätze der Logik and diese sind *nicht* Sätze der menschlichen Naturgeschichte.” *Bemerkung Über Die Grundlagen Der Mathematik*, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 6, VI, §49.

more than the fact that the rules of chess were historically invented entails that chess is governed by empirical rules. Earlier we saw how Wittgenstein observes that changes in the rules of chess entail that the game we are playing is no longer chess, now he extends this argument to logic in general: “If what a proposition of logic said was: Human beings agree with one another in such and such ways (and that would be the form of the natural-historical proposition), then its contradictory would say that there is here a lack of agreement. Not, that there is an agreement of another kind.”¹⁰² Logic governs our practices, and thus what is to count as agreement is determined by logic. A change in logic brings about a change in what counts as agreement and is as such not a move within the game (to use the analogy with chess), but a change of game.

Wittgenstein’s description of logic as part of the natural history of human beings can be more clearly understood if we return to the analogy we looked at earlier between the use of words in language and the use of tools. Let us take for example the development of hammers. Think of the huge variety and complexity of historical circumstances which came together for the development of hammers: the fact that human beings are able to manipulate tools, the shaping and use of various materials, the development of forms of human life which require the use of tools such as hammers. We can continue with this list, but no matter how extensive we make the list it does not explain what a hammer is. Of course it all throws light on this question, but to understand what a hammer is we need to know how hammers are used in human life. Similarly, a book on the history of the development of chess can throw light on what chess is, but it is only by learning how to play chess that we understand what it is.

¹⁰² *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, VI, §49. “Sagte ein Satz der Logik: die Menschen stimmen in der Weise miteinander überein (und das wäre die Form des naturgeschichtlichen Satzes), dann sagte sein Gegenteil, es bestehe hier ein *Mangel* an Übereinstimmung. Nicht, es bestehe eine Übereinstimmung anderer Art.” *Bemerkung Über Die Grundlagen Der Mathematik, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 6*, VI, §49.

Earlier we saw how Wittgenstein contrasts practices which are defined by an external goal from those which contain their own application. The two examples we have chosen to illustrate how language is shaped within natural human history demonstrate this contrast: whereas a hammer is shaped to fulfil an externally given goal, the rules of chess are not answerable in this sense to an external goal. However, it is important, as we argued earlier, not to overstate this contrast. A hammer may be shaped for a particular purpose or set of purposes, but in being so shaped it makes possible new techniques and ways of shaping the world. This is why the historical account cannot explain what a hammer is. On the other hand, although the rules of chess are autonomous to a degree that the use of a hammer is not, they were shaped by the history of human beings.

Earlier we noted how in the *Philosophical Remarks* Wittgenstein denies that the adoption of calculus is any more arbitrary than our reaction to fire. Now we can add that although logic is part of the natural history of human beings this does not entail that it is any more arbitrary than our other natural human reactions. Our conceptual abilities are grounded in our pre-conceptual human capabilities and develop from them in our natural history. The purpose of the various language games Wittgenstein develops in his later works is not so much to convince us of the arbitrary nature of our concepts, but to help us see what is essential to human life. Once the grip of the logical ideal is loosened, and we turn our attention to the actual application of concepts, we begin to see something of the human nature in response to which concepts are shaped and applied. Which of our human capabilities and reactions are essential, such that without them we would no longer be living a life which is recognizably human?¹⁰³ Wittgenstein, as we would expect, offers no general theory of what is essential to human beings; rather he presents us with a series of examples to help us see what is essential:

¹⁰³ Here it is important to see that this is not a question of whether a particular human being lacking such capacities is human or not, but of what is characteristic of human life.

Can you imagine having absolute pitch, if you don't have it? Can you imagine it, if you do?—Can a blind man imagine the seeing of red? Can I imagine it? Can I imagine spontaneously reacting in such-and-such a way if I don't do so? Can I imagine it better, if I do do so?

But can I play the language-game, if I don't react in this way?¹⁰⁴

If our natural human capacities and reactions are lacking then there are aspects of the world to which we are blind to, like the person without perfect pitch who cannot inhabit the world of sound available to those with perfect pitch. For Wittgenstein our ability to see aspects of the world is not merely added on to our conceptual capacities, but is essential for the acquisition and use of concepts. This brings us to the second theme developed in the later works which helps us to understand the relationship between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual: the phenomenon of 'seeing as'. This is a central theme in his post-1945 writings, and by making us aware of the pre-conceptual human capacities and reactions upon the basis of which following a rule is made possible, it helps us to overcome any lingering temptation to reduce rule following to a mechanical process, or to detach rules from their contexts of application.

2.3.6 'Seeing As': The History of our Human Nature

An early discussion of 'seeing as' is found in *The Brown Book* in a section in which Wittgenstein, in the course of a discussion on the nature of recognizing and familiarity, investigates what it is to see a picture in a particular way or to read a sentence in a particular manner. He uses the example of a line drawing of a face, and urges us: "Let this face produce an impression on you. You may then feel inclined to say: 'Surely I don't see mere dashes. I

¹⁰⁴ Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, VII, §55. "Kannst du dir absolutes Gehör vorstellen, wenn du es nicht hast? Kannst du es vorstellen, wenn du es hast? – Kan ein Blinder sich das Sehen von rot vorstellen? Kann ich mir es vorstellen? Kann ich mir vorstellen, daß ich so und so spontan reagiere, wenn ich's tue? Kann ich mir's besser vorstellen, wenn ich's tue? Kann ich aber das Sprachspiel spielen, wenn ich nicht so reagiere?" *Bemerkung Über Die Grundlagen Der Mathematik, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 6*, VII, §55.

see a face with a *particular* expression’.”¹⁰⁵ When we see the line drawing of a face as having a particular kind of expression (e.g. sad or happy etc.), we do not first see a series of lines which we subsequently interpret as a face with a particular expression; as if we could detach the sad expression from the face and compare it with a paradigm sad expression. The expression is not something which can be removed from the face and replaced with another. Similarly, when we read a sentence as having a particular meaning, we do not first grasp the basic meaning of the sentence and add to it a particular interpretation. Here Wittgenstein draws a comparison between understanding a sentence and grasping a musical theme. There is a temptation to imagine the grasp of a musical theme as involving an interpretation which can be detached from the theme and compared to a paradigm: “the idea suggests itself that there *must* be a paradigm.”¹⁰⁶ Whereas it is in actually playing the theme with that particular expression that we grasp it, not by a subsequent act of interpretation. Wittgenstein next returns to the theme of recognizing and familiarity to argue that the experience of reading is not one in which a subsequent interpretation (our familiar reading of the text) is added to a basic account of understanding. Rather, “an experience of an intimate character”¹⁰⁷ is essential to our reading of the text, just as seeing a line face as happy or sad is essential to how we see that face.

We have seen how in *The Brown Book* Wittgenstein draws our attention to the training which is required in learning the use of words. There is a danger, as noted above, that such training will be misunderstood to involve purely mechanical drills. Against this danger Wittgenstein concludes that following a rule is founded upon our human capacities and reaction. Now we can add that his discussion of ‘seeing as’ helps us to see that these human capacities and reactions are as familiar and subtle as the whole lived experience of our lives. They are what enable us to inhabit our familiar human world. Wittgenstein continues the

¹⁰⁵ *The Blue and Brown Books*, 163.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 166.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 167.

discussion of ‘seeing as’ in *The Brown Book* by returning to a theme familiar from the *Tractatus*: “‘the relation of name and object.’”¹⁰⁸ Here he repeats the point made in the *Tractatus* that this is not a purely external relationship, but adds: “it is clear that there is no one relation of name to object, but as many as there are uses of sounds or scribbles which we call names.”¹⁰⁹ Continuity with the *Tractatus* is seen here, but also Wittgenstein’s criticism of his earlier work. There is no one general account of the relationship between names and objects, the multitude of uses we make of names cannot be reduced to any general theory; rather, we must examine the familiar and subtle uses we make of names, through which we come to see the world in the richness of its various aspects.

This discussion of the name-object relationship comes in the midst of Wittgenstein’s examination of examples in which the same thing (e.g. the famous example of duck-rabbit found in the *Investigations*) is seen under two aspects. The use of such examples enables Wittgenstein to draw attention to the subtlety of the phenomenon of ‘seeing as’: to show us that all seeing involves the drawing of fine distinctions. This finesse extends even to the use of mathematical and logical propositions. In the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* Wittgenstein argues that the application of a mathematical or logical proposition involves seeing the world according to a particular aspect: “It is true enough that I changed the aspect of the logical calculation by introducing the concept of the number of negations [e.g. $\sim^{10} p$]: ‘I never looked at it like that’—one might say. But this alteration only becomes important when it connects with the application of the sign.”¹¹⁰ Here Wittgenstein draws out the other side of the relationship between seeing aspects and application. The application of concepts requires making fine distinctions, but the drawing of aspects makes no sense unless it finds

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 173.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, III, §47. “Es ist schon wahr, daß ich durch das Hineinbringen des Begriffs der *Anzahl* der Negationen den Aspekt der logischen Rechnung geändert habe: ‘So habe ich es noch nicht angeschaut’ – könnte man sagen. Aber wichtig wird diese Änderung erst, wenn sie in die Anwendung des Zeichens eingreift.” *Bemerkung Über Die Grundlagen Der Mathematik, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 6*, III, §47.

application in human life. Not every way of playing a musical theme makes sense to us. There are ways of reacting to the human face which we find incomprehensible.

The extension of the phenomenon of ‘seeing as’ to mathematical and logical propositions reminds us that for Wittgenstein even the most autonomous areas of human discourse are rooted in our natural capacities and reactions. Here it is important to keep in mind his remarks on language as part of the natural history of human beings, together with his insistence that language is autonomous, but that concepts require application in our lives. In regard to the question of the relationship between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual, although mathematics clearly lies on the conceptual side of the boundary it would not be possible without various pre-conceptual capacities and reactions. It is arguable, however, that if we wish to examine the boundary between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual a richer field is provided by the study of psychological concepts. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why Wittgenstein after 1945 wrote little concerning mathematics and logic and dedicated himself to the philosophy of psychology. Here it is less clear what lies on the side of the conceptual and what is pre-conceptual. By turning his attention to psychological concepts Wittgenstein sets himself the task of showing how they are rooted in our pre-conceptual capacities and reactions, while avoiding the temptation of reducing the conceptual to the pre-conceptual. In chapter four we will examine how Wittgenstein relates the conceptual and pre-conceptual in this post-1945 writings, but for now it is important to note that while writing these remarks on psychology he was reading Gestalt psychology.

Schulte observes that Wittgenstein mentions the name of Wolfgang Köhler “relatively frequently”¹¹¹ in manuscripts 130-8, which Wittgenstein completed during the period May 1946 to March 1949 (with the exception of the first fifty or so pages of manuscript 130, which probably date from early 1945). These manuscripts deal with psychological concepts

¹¹¹ Schulte, *Experience and Expression : Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Psychology*, 8.

and show the influence of Köhler's book *Gestalt Psychology*.¹¹² In addition Schulte notes that: "Several of Köhler's theses are discussed in Wittgenstein's last lectures in Cambridge," and that although there is no direct evidence in Wittgenstein's works of wider reading in gestalt theory, "we may be confident that at least from conversations and perhaps through his own reading he knew a good deal more about gestalt psychology than can be found in Köhler's book."¹¹³

The central tenant of Gestalt psychology is that our perception of the world involves taking in the world as a whole, and that the whole cannot be reduced a sum of its parts. It stands against theories which seek to analyse the world into components from which the whole is built.¹¹⁴ The attractions of this theory are clear for the later Wittgenstein, with his move away from the *Tractatus* methodology of analysis, and his desire to show us how the application of concepts takes place in the wider context of our lives. Wittgenstein's discussion of 'seeing as' is clearly influenced by Gestalt psychology, as is evident from the illustrations (such as a line drawing of a cube) he uses in his writings on psychology. In chapter four we will further examine the influence of Gestalt theory on Wittgenstein, and ask in particular how his readings in Gestalt psychology influenced his account of the relationship between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual. On the one hand it is clear that Wittgenstein is critical of Gestalt psychology, which he accuses of reducing the conceptual to the complex. On the other hand the emphasis in the Gestalt account of perception placed upon taking in complexes helped to provide Wittgenstein with a richer sense of the pre-conceptual.

¹¹² Wolfgang Köhler, *Gestalt Psychology: An Introduction to New Concepts in Modern Psychology*, Black and Gold Library (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1947).

¹¹³ Schulte, *Experience and Expression: Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Psychology*, 8.

¹¹⁴ For an overview of Kohler's gestalt theory see *ibid.*, 80-85.

2.3.7 The Application of Ethical and Religious Expressions

Before concluding this chapter an examination is opportune of two works by Wittgenstein which are of relevance for understanding the development of his notion of application, and which directly relate to the topic of this thesis. The first, *A Lecture on Ethics*,¹¹⁵ dates from 1929 and concerns the application of ethical concepts. The second, *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*,¹¹⁶ consists in two sets of remarks: the first date from 1931, whereas the second set were probably written after 1948. Both sets of remarks concern the application of religious concepts.

A Lecture on Ethics pre-dates the developments in Wittgenstein's later thought traced in this chapter, and in many ways recalls the worldview set out in the *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein stresses the distinction between factual propositions and ethical expressions: "Now what I wish to contend is that, although all judgements of relative value can be shown to be mere statements of facts, no statement of fact can ever be, or simply imply, a judgement of absolute value."¹¹⁷ There is, however, an important development of the doctrine found in the *Tractatus* which holds that: "6.421 It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words."¹¹⁸ In *A Lecture on Ethics*, although Wittgenstein upholds the principle that there can be no propositions in ethics, and thus that ethical statements are nonsensical, he nevertheless seeks to find contexts in our lives in which such statements find application. In looking for such contexts Wittgenstein holds that they must respect the absolute nature of what we try to express in ethical statements. Where are we to look for such uses of ethical expressions? Wittgenstein reflects that when asked to consider the use made of an expression: "it is natural

¹¹⁵ Printed in Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Occasions, 1912-1951* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1993), 36-44. *A Lecture on Ethics* was delivered in English by Wittgenstein.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 115-55.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹¹⁸ *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 86. "6.421 Es ist klar, daß sich die Ethik nicht aussprechen läßt." *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 83.

that I should recall cases in which I would certainly use these expressions.”¹¹⁹ He thus sets about recalling those situations in which he has been prompted to use expressions of absolute value, among which: “one particular experience presents itself to me which therefore is, in a sense, my experience *par excellence*.”¹²⁰ The experience he refers to here is that in which: “*I wonder at the existence of the world*. And I am then inclined to use such phrases as “how extraordinary that anything should exist.”¹²¹ He adds to this another experience, that of “feeling *absolutely safe*.”¹²² Wittgenstein is aware that in speaking of experiences he opens the path to those who seek to give a scientific account of experience. He does not deny the possibility of such accounts, but argues that they fail to see the absolute value expressed. In a similar manner he argues that science cannot disprove there are miracles, for: “the scientific way of looking at a fact is not the way to look at it as a miracle.”¹²³

Although the emphasis Wittgenstein places here on first person experience is replaced in his later works with the third person perspective of human practice, and the contrast between the relative and the absolute will no longer form an overarching category,¹²⁴ the importance Wittgenstein sets on the context of use of an expression signals an important breakthrough in his thought. It also opens the question of how to give an account of the use of ethical expressions which is not merely an empirical description.¹²⁵ The account of application given in the *Tractatus* concerns finding the general form of the proposition and as such its purpose is to draw a boundary around the world of facts (of what can be clearly said). At first sight it may appear that Wittgenstein draws this boundary in the name of science in

¹¹⁹ *Philosophical Occasions, 1912-1951*, 40.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹²⁴ Although Cyril Barrett argues that the saying/showing distinction (which involves a distinction between the relative and the absolute) found in *A Lecture on Ethics* and in the *Tractatus* remains throughout Wittgenstein’s later work. See Cyril Barrett, *Wittgenstein on Ethics and Religious Belief* (Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, Mass.: B. Blackwell, 1991).

¹²⁵ Paul Johnston draws attention to this distinction in his account of Wittgenstein and ethics, see Paul Johnston, *Wittgenstein and Moral Philosophy* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1989).

order to deliver us from the obscurity of those areas of discourse which cannot be clearly defined. His real motivation, however, is the very opposite of this. It springs from his desire to preserve all that is most important of life from the incursion of science: “4.113 Philosophy sets limits to the much disputed sphere of natural science.”¹²⁶

In *A Lecture on Ethics* Wittgenstein maintains a strict boundary around the world of facts, with the corresponding distinction between that which is of relative value and that which has absolute value. As his later thought developed he never abandoned the distinction between the empirical and the grammatical; it was no longer held, however, within the overarching distinction between the relative and the absolute. This is a result of the change in his notion of application. The distinction between relative and absolute is no longer to be founded upon a general theory which fixes application once and for ever, but is given within the various practices in which application occurs. What are we to make then of Wittgenstein’s earlier insistence that ethics concerns the absolute? If this implies an overarching metaphysical distinction then it is clear that Wittgenstein abandons this idea, but if it concerns those uses of language in which we talk about the absolute we need to ask what application they have in our lives.

This brings us to the second work we will examine before the conclusion of this chapter, Wittgenstein’s *Remarks on Frazer’s Golden Bough*. Just as in *A Lecture on Ethics* Wittgenstein criticises theories in which ethical expressions are treated as factual statements, in these remarks he criticises Frazer for mischaracterizing the use of religious language as a primitive form of scientific explanation. For Wittgenstein what is characteristic about religious language is not that it seeks scientific explanations, but that it expresses something

¹²⁶ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 30. “4.113 Die Philosophie begrenzt das bestreitbare Gebiet der Naturwissenschaft.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 33. For an examination of how Wittgenstein’s attitude to science differed from that of the logical positivists see Russell Nieli, *Wittgenstein : From Mysticism to Ordinary Language : A Study of Viennese Positivism and the Thought of Ludwig Wittgenstein*, Suny Series in Philosophy (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987).

which lies deep within us: “Here one can only *describe* and say: this is what human life is like.”¹²⁷ The distinction which Wittgenstein drew in his later philosophy between the empirical and the grammatical is given shape in the context of human religious practice, as the distinction between scientific hypothesis and symbolic religious ceremony.¹²⁸ We saw earlier in this chapter how in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein sought to find the logical symbolism which underlies our use of signs. Now he abandons this search for an underlying logical essence, and turns to the actual symbolic practices within which we express what is essential to human life. Furthermore, he characterizes his own: “observations about ‘object’ and ‘complex’”¹²⁹ as being rooted in the mythology which “is stored within our language.”¹³⁰ Whereas in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein offers a mystical perspective, one which seeks to transcend the world of facts, now he locates the mystical within our ceremonial practices: “One could almost say that man is a ceremonial animal. That is, no doubt, partly wrong and partly nonsensical, but there is also something right about it.”¹³¹

In Wittgenstein’s *Remarks on Frazer’s Golden Bough* we see how his thought develops from the logical–syntactic theory of application developed in the *Tractatus* to an understanding of application as rooted in our human practices.¹³² Does Wittgenstein therefore abandon the objectivity of the *Tractatus* in favour of an account of application which relativizes our concepts to the particular practices within which they find a use? An answer to this question turns on what relativity here implies. We have seen throughout this chapter that

¹²⁷ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Occasions, 1912-1951*, 121. “Nur *beschreiben* kann man hier und sagen; so ist das menschliche Leben.” *Bermerkungen Über Frazers Golden Bough*. In *Vortrag Über Ethik Und Andere Kleine Schriften*. (Norderstedt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1989), 31.

¹²⁸ For a reading of Wittgenstein’s *Remarks on Frazer’s Golden Bough* which although largely in agreement questions whether Wittgenstein goes too far in ascribing no causal intent to religious language see John Churchill, “Something Deep and Sinister,” *Modern Theology* 8, no. 1 (1992): 15-37.

¹²⁹ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Occasions, 1912-1951*, 135. “Betrachtungen über ‘Gegentand’ und ‘Komplex’?” *Bermerkungen Über Frazers Golden Bough*. In *Vortrag Über Ethik Und Andere Kleine Schriften*., 38.

¹³⁰ *Philosophical Occasions, 1912-1951*, 133. “In unserer Sprache ist eine ganze Mythologie niedergelegt.” *Bermerkungen Über Frazers Golden Bough*. In *Vortrag Über Ethik Und Andere Kleine Schriften*., 38.

¹³¹ *Philosophical Occasions, 1912-1951*, 129. “Man könnte fast sagen, der Mensch sei ein zeremonielles Tier. Das ist wohl teils falsch, teils unsinnig, aber es ist auch etwas Richtiges daran.” *Bermerkungen Über Frazers Golden Bough*. In *Vortrag Über Ethik Und Andere Kleine Schriften*., 35.

¹³² I am grateful to Fergus Kerr, who in a conversation with me expressed his insight that Wittgenstein’s *Remarks on Frazer’s Golden Bough* is of key important for understanding the development of his later thought.

although Wittgenstein abandoned the quest for the general form of the proposition he continued to hold that there is a distinction between the empirical and the logical (grammatical). The urge to explain the application of concepts through empirical generalizations lies at the heart of the illness we are liable to when doing philosophy: the relativity of our concepts to our practices is not the relativity of a scientific observation or hypothesis. At the same time concepts are empty unless they find application within our lives. The crystalline mythology of the *Tractatus* gives way to the embodied, breathing myth of the ceremonial animal. The search for the form of the proposition is transformed into the question of who we are: what is essential to human life?

Wittgenstein argues that our symbolic religious practices are not replaceable in a more sophisticated scientific age by empirical hypotheses; rather they are basic to us as human beings. Any attempt to explain mythical beliefs and practices goes wrong unless it relates them to what lies deep in our human nature: “Indeed, if Frazer’s explanations did not in the final analysis appeal to a tendency in ourselves, they would not really be explanations.”¹³³ In the remarks which he probably wrote after 1948, Wittgenstein expands this argument when he observes that those religious ceremonies which strike us as deep and sinister do not do so merely because they originated in gruesome practices (e.g. human sacrifice), but rather because there is something within us that they speak to: “the deep and the sinister do not become apparent merely by our coming to know the history of the external action, rather it is *we* who ascribe them from an inner experience.”¹³⁴ If Wittgenstein’s account of ‘seeing as’ provides a means of understanding the autonomy of language which also connects it with life, then his *Remarks on Frazer’s Golden Bough* characterizes religion as essential to how we see

¹³³ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Occasions, 1912-1951*, 127. “Ja, Frazers Erklärungen wären überhaupt keine Erklärungen, wenn sie nicht letzten Endes an eine Neigung in uns selbst appellierten.” *Bermerkungen Über Frazers Golden Bough. In Vortrag Über Ethik Und Andere Kleine Schriften.*, 34.

¹³⁴ *Philosophical Occasions, 1912-1951*. “dies Tiefe und Finstere versteht sich nicht von selbst wenn wir nur die Geschichte der äußeren Handlung erfahren, sondern *wir* tragen es wieder hinein aus einer Erfahrung in unserm Innern.” *Bermerkungen Über Frazers Golden Bough. In Vortrag Über Ethik Und Andere Kleine Schriften.*, 43.

the world. The relativity of religious concepts to our lives is therefore one which is relative to our human nature: if our nature were other than it is we would not be religious, but then we would not be human.

For Wittgenstein the denial of our religious nature makes us less human: “Frazer is much more savage than most of his savages, for they are not as far removed from the understanding of a spiritual matter as a twentieth-century Englishman.”¹³⁵ In chapter one we saw how Wittgenstein in his later philosophy seeks to reconnect us with our humanity. Now we can add that central to this task is returning us to those aspects of our life which find expression in religious practices, but which are explained away in our modern scientific world. There is, however, no one-step way of doing this. In returning to our nature we: “must find the *path* from error to truth.”¹³⁶ There is no simple way of stepping outside our human practices to grasp the nature which forms their basis. Yet at the same time everything lies open before us. In his *Remarks on Frazer’s Golden Bough* Wittgenstein helps us to see what lies before us: we are a ceremonial animal, breathing myth and a mystery to ourselves. In attempting to grasp our own essence we create myths, far more sinister than the myths of “savages.” In his later writings Wittgenstein battles his own tendencies to grasp at the mystery of who we are. In his *Remarks on Frazer’s Golden Bough*, we see his desire to return to the primitive simplicity of our natural human reactions to the world around us.

2.4 Conclusion: From Logical Univocity to the Pluralism of Life

In this chapter we have traced the development of Wittgenstein’s philosophy from the *Tractatus* up to 1945, when the text for Part I of the *Investigations* was completed. In

¹³⁵ *Philosophical Occasions, 1912-1951*, 131. “Frazer ist viel mehr savage, als die meisten seiner savages, denn diese werden nicht so weit vom Verständnis einer geistigen Angelegenheit entfernt sein, wie ein Engländer des 20sten Jahrhunderts.” *Bemerkungen Über Frazers Golden Bough. In Vortrag Über Ethik Und Andere Kleine Schriften.*, 36.

¹³⁶ *Philosophical Occasions, 1912-1951*, 119. “man muß den *Weg* vom Irrtum zur Wahrheit finden. *Bemerkungen Über Frazers Golden Bough. In Vortrag Über Ethik Und Andere Kleine Schriften.*, 29.

particular we have examined how Wittgenstein's conception of application developed during this period, from the logico-syntactic account of the *Tractatus* to the remarks on meaning as use which are found in his later works. This examination has enabled us to establish the continuities and discontinuities between Wittgenstein's early and later writings. On the side of continuity we find no change in Wittgenstein's argument that the relationship between language and the world is internal to language. The internal relationship between the proposition and reality of the *Tractatus* develops into the account of language as autonomous in the later works; in which language consists of various interconnected measures laid out against reality. Wittgenstein never gave up the conviction that the logical (the grammatical) and the empirical must be distinguished; this conviction runs powerfully through his later works, and witnesses to the continuing influence of Frege on Wittgenstein's thought.¹³⁷

What changes in Wittgenstein's philosophy is how he distinguishes the logical and the empirical. In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein searches for the form of the general proposition. As it is the internal properties of a proposition which determine how it represents reality, Wittgenstein sought the common formal properties of all meaningful propositions in order to distinguish them from meaningless propositions. It is this common form which guarantees that propositions can be applied to reality. Within the system of the *Tractatus* the theory of simple signs with their concomitant simple objects ensures that application is possible, as without these simple objects sense would be indeterminate. The logical and the empirical are clearly distinguished, but this clarity comes at a cost.

In the period after his return to Cambridge in 1929 Wittgenstein began to question the logio-syntactic system he had put in place in the *Tractatus*. He abandoned the search for the general form of the proposition, and in place of the logico-syntactic requirements of the *Tractatus* he turned to the actual (grammatical) uses we make of words in our ordinary

¹³⁷ For an introduction to Wittgenstein which traces the influence of Frege see Anthony Kenny, *Wittgenstein*, Rev. ed. (Malden, MA ; Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2006).

language. He came to see that application does not require a general theory; rather, we need to observe how application occurs within various uses of language. The distinction between meaningful and meaningless expressions is not given once and for all by drawing a tight boundary around what can be clearly said. In the *Philosophical Remarks* the general form of the proposition gives way to systems of propositions (calculi), which determine what is meaningful according to the measure they apply to reality in a given context. Later Wittgenstein gave up this emphasis on systems of propositions in favour of his analogy between language and games. This analogy breaks the vestige, still present in the notion of language as a calculus, of the *Tractatus* emphasis on logical rules, and opens the path to Wittgenstein's later concern with the pre-conceptual human practices which form the basis of our conceptual abilities.

We have argued that Wittgenstein sought to develop a realistic philosophy which avoids empiricism without falling into idealism; to this end the notion of application is a key component of Wittgenstein's thought. In the *Tractatus* the account of application has the purpose of showing how representation is internal to propositions, but also that: "3.13 A proposition contains the form, but not the content, of its sense."¹³⁸ In the later works, Wittgenstein's concern is to maintain the autonomy of language while showing how language finds application in human life. Here the analogy between words and tools is instructive, helping us to see how concepts find application in life. This in turn throws light on our human nature. We are sign using animals, and understanding human beings involves seeing how we use signs. Here the dangers of empiricism and idealism again appear: either we begin with a pre-determined empirical account of human nature and subsume our account of sign using into it, or we develop a theory of the use of signs with no reference to the applications signs find within our lives. In section 2.3.3 we examined how Wittgenstein distinguishes between

¹³⁸ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 13. "Im Satz ist die Form seines Sinnes enthalten, aber nicht dessen Inhalt." *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 18.

practices with an external goal and those which internally define their objectives. In comparing language to games Wittgenstein seeks to rule out external accounts of language of the kind which start with a pre-determined notion of human nature. At the same time, he is aware that games can lack application. He seeks to throw light on human nature (a sign using animal) by showing how various language-games find application in life.

The path between empiricism and idealism is not easy to walk. In chapter one we noted how Wittgenstein's later thought involves constant self-questioning. Rhees argues that in the *Investigations* Wittgenstein shows not just where we go wrong in misuse of language, but also why we are tempted to make such mistakes. Our propensity to grasp at essences lies deep with us, and is reflected in our linguistic practices. There is no easy one-step answer to the question of our human nature, and we: "must find the *path* from error to truth."¹³⁹ In searching for a path from error to truth, Wittgenstein developed the various techniques, analogies and perspectives of his later works.¹⁴⁰

The development of Wittgenstein's notion of application can be understood as a development in his understanding of the unity of our language. In the *Tractatus* this role is given to the general form of the proposition, which gives way to the calculus of language in the *Philosophical Remarks*. With the shift to the analogy between language and games, the practices which comprise various language-games provide this unity. These practices are not, however, self-contained units. They find application in the wider context of our lives. Thus it is life itself, the whole of human life, which provides the unity of our grammar. This emphasis on human life as a whole presents the danger of imagining we can survey life and subsequently see how grammar fits into it. This danger is present when Wittgenstein speaks of the ordinary as the given basis for distinguishing sense from nonsense. On the other hand,

¹³⁹ *Philosophical Occasions, 1912-1951*, 119. "man muß den *Weg* vom Irrtum zur Wahrheit finden. *Bemerkungen Über Frazers Golden Bough. In Vortrag Über Ethik Und Andere Kleine Schriften.*, 29.

¹⁴⁰ For a comparison of the various techniques Wittgenstein develops in his later works with the Christian mystical tradition as a path to truth see, Peter Tyler, *The Return to the Mystical : Ludwig Wittgenstein, Teresa of Avila and the Christian Mystical Tradition* (London ; New York: Continuum, 2011).

if we hold that there is no such thing as human nature, that human life is nothing more than the play of changing signification, then sense becomes indeterminate. To avoid these dangers Wittgenstein attempted to develop a way of doing philosophy which holds in balance the dialectical tension between the unity and plurality in our practices. As such, Wittgenstein can be seen as sharing something in common with the metaphysical tradition handed down from the Greeks, which mediates between unity and diversity.

In chapter one we followed Anscombe in making Wittgenstein a conversation partner with philosophers who practice metaphysical thinking. Another contemporary defender of the metaphysical tradition who sees parallels in Wittgenstein to the dialectical thinking of Plato is William Desmond. In his article ‘Are We All Scholastics Now? On Analytic, Dialectical and Post-Dialectical Thinking,’ Desmond contrasts the emphasis on univocity which shapes the early Wittgenstein with his later emphasis on the variety of our linguistic practices.¹⁴¹ Desmond argues that this later emphasis on the plurality of our linguistic practices together with Wittgenstein’s intention of teaching us differences heralds something of a return to the metaphysical practices of Plato: “For me Wittgensteinian pluralism recalls an earlier practice of dialectic already mentioned, namely, the Socratic-Platonic approach, an approach with promise of an openness to otherness suggestive of trans-dialectical thinking.”¹⁴² This is the situated account of human freedom which we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The trans-dialectic thinking to which Desmond refers is not the thinking of a disembodied angelic form. It is the living, embodied dialogue of a material creature and as such takes place within the practices of communities. Furthermore, it is not a merely technical dialogue, but that practice of wisdom which Hibbs sees as integral to metaphysics. As such it requires the

¹⁴¹ William Desmond, "Are We All Scholastics Now?," *Yearbook of the Irish Philosophical Society* (2010), ed. Julia Hynes (Dublin: Irish Philosophical Society, 2011).

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 1-24, 22. Desmond’s writings on metaphysics are influential on the presentation of metaphysics given in this thesis. Desmond’s account of metaphysics can be found in *The Intimate Strangeness of Being : Metaphysics after Dialectic*, Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2012).

development of virtues. In chapters five, six and seven we will examine how Wittgenstein's writings throw light on contemporary developments in action theory and its relationship to virtue ethics. In particular, we will argue that an account of human agency must root the exercise of our rational capacities in an account of our embodied human nature. Russell Hittinger, in his *A Critique of the New Natural Law* argues that: "by affording more attention to the role of the virtues" we can avoid the danger of "an ethico-religious positivism in which the principles governing our relationship not only to the person of God, but to all other persons, are drawn from outside the sphere of practical rationality."¹⁴³ In the next two chapters we will continue the discussion of this present chapter by examining how Wittgenstein develops an understanding of practical rationality which connects with the virtue tradition and allows us to avoid the ethico-religious positivism Hittinger here warns against.

In the next chapter we will ask whether the practice of philosophy developed by Wittgenstein in his later works maintains the dialectical tension required to avoid empiricism without falling into idealism. Wittgenstein dropped his project of assimilating language to the crystalline purity of logic, but at the same time he continued to hold onto the distinction between the grammatical and the empirical. We will assess Charlton's criticisms of Wittgenstein and ask whether he maintains a dialectical tension which prevents his account of grammar descending into a confused pragmatism. We will add to this a criticism Rhees' makes of Wittgenstein: that his emphasis on the analogy between games and language leads him to neglect the dialogical nature of our understanding. Both Charlton and Rhees accuse Wittgenstein of failing to account for our language use by ignoring key features of the metaphysical tradition. These criticisms will have the purpose not only of helping us to assess Wittgenstein's philosophy, but also of bring to light the relevance of his writings for an

¹⁴³ Russell Hittinger, *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory* (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 187.

account of human nature. As such they will provide a bridge for the dialogue between the reading of Wittgenstein we have developed in this chapter and contemporary questions in moral theology.

3 GRAMMAR, TELEOLOGY AND ESSENCE

3.1 Two Metaphysical Challenges

In this chapter we will develop the dialogue between Wittgenstein and the metaphysical tradition by examining the arguments of two philosophers who criticise Wittgenstein for his failure to engage with metaphysics. The first criticism is Charlton's, who levels the charge that in the absence of a teleological conception of nature Wittgenstein's account of language collapses into pragmatism. This entails that despite intending to develop an account of our linguistic practices which avoids empiricism Wittgenstein reduces the employment of words to their causal effects. The second criticism comes from Rhee, who accuses Wittgenstein of being misled by the analogy between language and games into neglecting the basis of our linguistic practices in the human search for universal understanding. Although the game analogy can cast light on various aspects of our linguistic practices, Rhee argues that it fails to show how those practices are more than techniques. For Rhee language is first and foremost the growth in dialogue between human beings: "If you understand anything in language, you must understand what dialogue is, and you must see how understanding grows as the dialogue grows. How understanding the *language* grows. For the language is discourse, is speaking. It is telling people things and trying to follow them. And that is what you try to understand."¹ Charlton and Rhee can be seen as accusing Wittgenstein of misunderstanding what it is to be a rational animal. Charlton's criticism points to the need for an account of human agency to show how our practices are shaped by our animality; whereas Rhee's arguments highlight the danger of confusing human understanding with the accomplishment of various techniques. We will ask whether these criticisms of Wittgenstein are fair and what they teach us about human agency and nature.

¹ Rush Rhee, *Wittgenstein and the Possibility of Discourse*, 2nd ed. ed. (Malden, Mass. ; Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 7.

To this end the criticisms of Charlton and Rhees will enable us to examine the basis for Wittgenstein's understanding of human agency in natural principles. The relevance of these investigations for moral theology will become clearer in chapter five. For our present purposes the importance of natural principles is summed up by Sherwin in the following passage in which he explains how natural principles are essential in Aquinas' account of human agency: "To understand how one avoids an infinite regress in the description of practical reasoning, where every cognitive act presupposes a voluntary act and vice versa, St. Thomas appeals to the level of nature and the action of the Author of nature."² Natural principles enable Aquinas to avoid: "two opposite objections. . . On the one hand, some hold that if we regard the will as having a role in shaping reason's practical judgements we inevitably fall into voluntarism and moral relativism. On the other hand, others maintain that if we regard the will's act as always presupposing an act of the intellect we inevitably fall into psychological determinism."³ These two objections are analogous to the dangers of falling into idealism or empiricism, against which we have argued that Wittgenstein developed the realism of his later thought. The criticisms of Charlton and Rhees question Wittgenstein's realism, and whether his account of human agency is sufficiently grounded in a wider account of nature to avoid the disembodied account of agency implied by idealism, or the determinism of empiricism.

3.1.1 Syntax, Lexicography and Practice: Charlton's Reading of Wittgenstein

In spite of Charlton's criticisms Wittgenstein's influence is clear to see on how he understands the rules of syntax, and in the following passage he uses Wittgenstein's analogy between linguistic rules and the rules of a game to explain how syntax works:

² Sherwin, *By Knowledge & by Love : Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 53.

³ *Ibid.*

Rules of syntax, as I understand the term, do not tell us how to form sentences that will be merely structures of written marks or spoken sounds. They tell us how to say things, how to perform definite linguistic acts. There are acts which can be performed only in a game, like trumping and castling. You castle in chess, by complying with the rules of chess and you trump in bridge and whist, by complying with the rules of those games.⁴

Where Charlton differs from Wittgenstein is in drawing a distinction between grammar and lexicography: “Wittgenstein has been credited with an explicit rejection of the traditional distinction between grammar and lexicography.”⁵ For Charlton the task of the metaphysician is to understand how language works, and in particular he draws attention to: “a distinction which was not recognized in the twentieth century between ideas expressed by words for things, and ideas expressed by constructions.”⁶ The former of these has traditionally been the remit of lexicography, whereas the latter is properly speaking the work of grammarians. Lexicography is concerned with how words gain their meaning by representing things, in contrast to which grammar: “proceeds by examining a different way in which words function, namely by determining forms of speech.”⁷ Charlton argues that it is this distinction which enables us to distinguish between syntax and semantics in a manner which respects their complex interrelations. To this end he positions himself between Wittgenstein and Noam Chomsky. Whereas Wittgenstein, according to Charlton, collapses syntax into semantics, Chomsky not only: “distinguishes sharply between syntax and semantics; he says that grammar has nothing to do with meaning whatever.”⁸ Charlton uses the distinction between grammar and lexicography to show how syntax is not reducible to semantics and thus that it has autonomy, while at the same time showing how the rules of syntax are not: “merely structures of written marks or spoken sounds,” but rather, “tells us how to say things, how to perform definite linguistic acts.”⁹ This is the role which is played by Wittgenstein account of

⁴ Charlton, *Metaphysics and Grammar*, 39-40.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, 45-46.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

application, and therefore it is important to understand why Charlton believes his account succeeds whereas Wittgenstein's fails. We must therefore begin by examining Charlton's account of application, and in particular the role which the distinction between grammar and lexicography plays in showing how the rules of syntax tell us how to say things.

Charlton's account of application draws upon another analogy which he shares with Wittgenstein, the analogy between words and tools. In the following passage Charlton argues that metaphysics only became possible once the Greeks had fashioned words to express grammatical concepts: "They [the Greeks] were, of course, literate, but literacy alone would not have been enough; they also needed basic grammatical concepts – which, indeed, they had to make for themselves rather as early craftsmen must make tools for themselves. In the arts, the making of tools and innovation cannot be separated."¹⁰ The analogy here between concepts and tools is given specifically by Charlton to draw parallels with the connection between metaphysics and grammar, and we can extend these parallels by further exploring the analogy between fashioning tools and applying concepts.

In chapter two, section 2.3.3 we saw how Wittgenstein distinguishes between practices with an external goal and those which have their goal within them, and we argued that the analogy between words and tools must be carefully employed if Wittgenstein is to avoid the reduction of language to pre-given external goals. If Charlton's account of syntactic rules is to show how they maintain their autonomy, while at the same accounting for "how to perform definite linguistic acts," he must avoid the danger of reducing them to pragmatic rules for obtaining external goals. He does this by arguing that the distinction between lexicography and grammar entails two distinct types of rule for using words: "There are rules that tell us what words to use for what, and rules that tell us how to perform the various

¹⁰ Ibid., 33-34.

different linguistic acts.”¹¹ The former kinds of rules are those which are used in lexicography, whereas the latter are the rules of syntax (grammar). These two types of rules are distinct, but they do not work independently: “these rules complement each other.”¹² This complementarity entails that the autonomy of language is maintained through the rules of syntax, which tell us how to make various kinds of linguistic acts, while the rules of lexicography provide the application for these linguistic acts by telling us what words are used for (e.g. the semantical properties of words).

If the distinction between syntax and lexicography is ignored, and their complementarity thus lost, accounts of our linguistic practices either emphasise the formal syntactical properties of language at the expense of the semantic, or collapse the syntactical into the semantic. The first mistake overstates the autonomy of language and removes it from any application, whereas the second results in a pragmatic account of language. In the absence of an account of linguistic forms (syntax) an account of the semantic properties of words is reduced to that of their pragmatic employment. Charlton argues that Chomsky is guilty of the first of these mistakes, whereas the second is committed by Wittgenstein. He accuses Wittgenstein in his comments on meaning as use of assimilating grammatical rules to lexicographical rules, entailing that Wittgenstein is not able to draw the: “distinction between what, in speaking, I mean to *say*, and what I mean to *achieve by saying this*.”¹³ In the absence of this distinction Wittgenstein, according to Charlton, offers a pragmatic theory of meaning which bypasses acts of saying and goes directly to the use we make of linguistic constructions. The problem this creates, as we noted above, is that it is only when we understand what kind of linguistic act a person is using that we know what they are trying to achieve with this linguistic act. Unless we can distinguish what kind of speech act is being

¹¹ Ibid., 55.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 57.

made we do not know what is being said, and we cannot determine this by attending to the use of the sentence uttered, because what is said is distinct from what is achieved in saying it.

Charlton goes so far as to argue that outside certain limited contexts talk about using sentences makes no sense: “it seems to me incorrect to speak of using sentences except in the ‘context’ of a libel action or a philosophy seminar.”¹⁴ The account of meaning as use which Charlton accuses Wittgenstein of developing is thus one in which the autonomy of language is subsumed into a pragmatic account of language use, in which the meaning of sentences is determined according to their role in achieving externally given goals. By contrast, Charlton sees himself as returning to the medieval distinction between grammar and rhetoric, in which students first learn the grammatical forms (forms of saying) before studying how these are used for certain purposes:

Now this notion of saying seems to be absent from Wittgenstein’s later work. He goes straight to the practical purpose an utterance has. For him practical meaning does not presuppose linguistic; it supersedes and supplants it. Wittgenstein urges us to replace talk of meaning by talk of use: ‘If we had to name anything which is the life of the sign, we should have to say that it was its use’ (BB, p. 4; PI 432).¹⁵

In order to illustrate this point Charlton examines the primitive language-game given by Wittgenstein in the *Investigations*, in which builders co-ordinate their actions through the use of words. He reads Wittgenstein as here offering an account of how words gain their meaning through their use in a practice; the problem for Charlton with such accounts of meaning acquisition is that the practices of human co-operation which they pre-suppose require linguistic abilities:

Making statements and giving orders or advice are social practices in which we engage for practical purposes; but they are linguistic practices, practices of saying, which do not count as Wittgensteinian language-games. Perhaps they could have grown up only in societies in which there was already cooperative practical activity, but as things are at present, understanding them and, in general, being able to speak the real language of your society, is a prerequisite of taking part in such practices as building projects and religious festivals.¹⁶

¹⁴ Ibid., 60.

¹⁵ Ibid., 58.

¹⁶ Ibid., 60.

Charlton thus accuses Wittgenstein of developing precisely the kind of external account of meaning which he sought to avoid through his emphasis on the autonomy of grammar.

3.1.2 Grammar, Essence and Teleology

In the last section we presented Charlton's charge against Wittgenstein. In this section we will ask whether he offers a fair interpretation of Wittgenstein's account of meaning as use. The first thing to note in assessing Charlton's interpretation of Wittgenstein is that although Wittgenstein offers remarks on meaning as use he does not develop a theory of meaning. His intention is to throw light on the complex and varied ways in which we speak of meaning, rather than to put forward a theory which explains meaning. The primitive language-games used in the *Investigations* do not offer an explanation of language acquisition.¹⁷ These language-games play a variety of roles in Wittgenstein's later writings, involving the use of language-games as objects of comparison to throw light on our actual linguistic practices: "For we can avoid ineptness or emptiness in our assertions only by presenting the model as what it is, as an object of comparison—as, so to speak, a measuring-rod; not as a preconceived idea to which reality must correspond. (The dogmatism into which we fall so easily in doing philosophy.)"¹⁸ The primitive language-games developed by Wittgenstein are not to be taken as theoretical re-creations of how language is acquired. Their

¹⁷ Although, as we argued in chapter two, section 2.3.5, the primitive language-games do throw light on language acquisition by showing us how our use of concepts depends upon pre-linguistic natural human practices and reactions. In his article "Very General Facts of Nature" Lars Hertzberg observes that: "The theme of primitive or unmediated reactions is brought up by Wittgenstein primarily, in two different connections: on the one hand, in connection with learning the use of psychological expressions (particularly pain language); and on the other hand in connection with acquiring an understanding of causality." Lars Hertzberg, "Very General Facts of Nature," in *The Oxford Handbook of Wittgenstein*, ed. Oskari Kuusela and Marie McGinn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 351-72.

¹⁸ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §131. "Nur so nämlich können wir der Ungerechtigkeit, oder Leere unsere Behauptungen entgehen, indem wir das Vorbild als das, was ist, als Vergleichsobjekt – sozusagen also Maßstab – hinstellen; und nicht als Vorurteil, dem die Wirklichkeit entsprechen *müsse*. (Der Dogmatismus, in dem wir beim Philosophieren so leicht verfallen.)" *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1, §131.

purpose is to help us see through those illusions with which language bewitches us and to see something of our actual use of language which otherwise would lie hidden.

When we first read Wittgenstein's account of the builders' language-game we are tempted to interpret it as offering an external account of how words gain their meaning through use. The purpose of the *Investigations* is to help us to overcome this temptation. The various strategies and arguments offered by Wittgenstein, such as his discussion on following a rule, are given to help us see through such false pictures of language. Just as we distinguish between a yardstick and the reality it is used to measure, so we begin to see the builders' language-game as distinct from the actual linguistic practices it throws light upon. In particular, we begin to see that the practices described in the builders' language-game presuppose a whole form of life: the complex life of a community of language users. Far from offering an external account of language acquisition the builders' language-game is offered to help us see through such pragmatic theories of language, and to see that the use of words in language is not determined according to external measures: "Grammar does not tell us how language must be constructed in order to fulfil its purpose, in order to have such-and-such an effect on human beings. It only describes and in no way explains the use of signs."¹⁹

It is clear that Charlton in his criticism of Wittgenstein's account of language as use misreads what Wittgenstein is doing with the primitive language-games. Are we thus to dismiss Charlton's attack on Wittgenstein? To answer this question we must return again to the question of application. In chapter two we argued that in developing this principle Wittgenstein's purpose is to show how concepts find application in our lives in a manner which maintains the distinction between the grammatical and the empirical. This entails that externalist accounts of meaning are avoided, while at the same time the danger of an idealism

¹⁹ *Philosophical Investigations*, §496. "Grammatik sagt nicht, wie die Sprache gebaut sein muß, um ihren Zweck zu erfüllen, um so und so auf Menschen zu wirken. Sie beschreibt nur, aber erklärt in keiner Weise, den Gebrauch der Zeichen." *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §496.

in which concepts lack application is resisted: “The confusions which occupy us arise when language is like an engine idling, not when it is doing work.”²⁰ Charlton’s argument against Wittgenstein turns on the assertion that in the absence of a distinction between grammar and lexicography any account of meaning will fail to show how grammar (the rules of syntax) has application in our lives. In order to assess this argument we first need to examine further the basis upon which Charlton establishes the distinction between grammar and lexicography, and then ask why he asserts that in the absence of this basis grammar cannot find application.

We saw above how Charlton argues that developing grammatical tools was essential in enabling philosophers to distinguish between the use of words as standing for things, and the expression of ideas in linguistic constructions. For Charlton, this linguistic distinction rests upon the metaphysical distinction between those entities which exist in nature and those which are real, but are relative to our human capacities.²¹ This entails that any account of grammar must assume the existence of entities with essences, or it will be incapable of distinguishing between those linguistic construction which have a basis in nature and those which do not. Underlying Charlton’s linguistic argument against Wittgenstein is a metaphysical argument, in which he accuses Wittgenstein of ignoring the distinction between grammar and lexicography due to his rejection of a realist metaphysics. We can add to Charlton’s charge that this rejection concerns both human nature and the nature of the entities human beings interact with; a distinction which is implicit in Charlton, but which requires further investigation. If Wittgenstein’s account does indeed deny that there are natural entities

²⁰ *Philosophical Investigations*, §132. “Der Verwirrungen, die uns beschäftigen, entstehen gleichsam, wenn die Sprache leerläuft, nicht wenn sie arbeitet.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band I*, §132.

²¹ This is the classic scholastic Aristotelian distinction between those properties which are in the nature of things (*ens naturae*), and those properties which arise on the basis of our apprehension of things (*ens rationis*).

which have essences then his well-known dictum that “*Essence* is expressed by grammar”²² is to be interpreted as saying that essence is created by grammar.

In order to understand the grounds upon which Charlton attributes a rejection of natural essences to Wittgenstein it is important to observe the connection between essence and end (telos). In his account of the four causes in the *Physics* Aristotle draws attention to the intrinsic link between essence and telos.²³ It is according to the nature of a thing that we specify its telos. In the absence of an account of natural essences the world also lacks natural ends, and such accounts of nature reduce it to a realm of purpose free facts. This sets up a philosophical problem which David Hume highlights: how to bridge the gap between the realm of human purpose and the realm of purpose free facts.²⁴ One solution (often attributed to Hume) is to argue that all teleological language is reducible to a description of efficient causal interactions, which in turn can be analysed as the regular conjunction of objects. It is precisely such an account of intentional language which Charlton accuses Wittgenstein of developing with his conception of meaning as use: “He could not have used teleological connectives to analyse saying, I suspect, because he did not consider explanations in terms of purpose a genuine alternative to causal explanation.”²⁵

Charlton, however, misreads Wittgenstein when he accuses him of explaining teleological connectives in causal terms. Wittgenstein’s purpose throughout the *Investigations* is to show us that human intentional behaviour cannot be reduced to a purely external account of efficient causation. In the following passage Wittgenstein illustrates the argument that the use of words is not explained according to the external effects they bring about: “When I say

²² Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §371. “Das Wesen ist der Grammatik ausgesprochen.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, § 371.

²³ See Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. Robin Waterfield, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 49, II,7.

²⁴ For an introduction to Hume in which examines how he develops the notion of the two realms see Barry Stroud, *Hume, The Arguments of the Philosophers* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1999).

²⁵ Charlton, *Metaphysics and Grammar*, 195. By causal explanations Charlton here has in mind efficient causation, not the wider notion of cause found in Aristotle.

that the orders ‘Bring me sugar’ and ‘Bring me milk’ make sense, but not the combination ‘Milk me sugar’, that does not mean that the utterance of this combination of words has no effect.”²⁶ When Wittgenstein argues that grammar describes, but does not explain the use of signs,²⁷ he is attacking precisely the kind of causal explanation Charlton accuses him of holding: “if it were shewn how the words, ‘Come to me’ act on the person addressed, so that finally, given certain conditions, the muscles of his legs are innervated, and so on—should we feel that the sentence lost the character of a *sentence*?”²⁸ Wittgenstein places these remarks on human intentional behaviour in the wider context of his discussion of the nature of grammar and meaning. Hence, in his next remark Wittgenstein urges: “I want to say: It is *primarily* the apparatus of our ordinary language, of our word-language, that we call language; and then other things by analogy or comparability with this.”²⁹ We have seen how for Wittgenstein language is autonomous as it is not answerable to an exterior goal, but that the rules of grammar are internal analogously to the way in which the rules of games are internal. The account which Wittgenstein gives of human intentional behaviour is also grammatical; he argues that goal directed human behaviour is not explained causally, but grammatically. This description of human behaviour does not begin by assuming a set of pre-given ends, which act as efficient causes explaining human behaviour; rather, it is only by describing the grammar of human behaviour that we can see the reasons why human beings act as they do.

²⁶ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §498. “Wenn ich sage der Befehl ‘Bring mir Zucker!’ und ‘Bring mir Milch!’ hat Sinn, aber nicht die Kombination ‘Milch mir Zucker’, so heißt das nicht, daß das Aussprechen dieser Wortverbindung keine Wirkung hat.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §498.

²⁷ See *Philosophical Investigations*, §496.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, §493. “Wenn aber gezeigt würde, in welche Weise die Worte ‘Komm zu mir!’ auf den Angesprochenen einwirken, sodaß am Schlußunter gewissen Bedingungen seine Beinmuskeln innerviert werden, etc. – würde jener Satz damit für uns den Charakter des Satzes verlieren.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §493.

²⁹ *Philosophical Investigations*, §494. “Ich will sagen: Der Apparat unserer gewöhnlichen Sprache, unserer Wortsprache, ist *vor allem* das, was wir ‘Sprache’ nennen; und dann anderes nach seiner Analogie oder Vergleichbarkeit mit ihr.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §494.

3.1.3 Teleology and Universal Understanding

So are we to dismiss Charlton's criticism of Wittgenstein or is there something he is getting at despite his misreading of Wittgenstein's account of intentional language? Although Charlton misreads Wittgenstein his charge still has some purchase, because it turns on the argument that lacking a wider context of natural teleologies any attempt to show how grammatical rules have application in our lives will fail. Wittgenstein's emphasis on the autonomy of language, coupled with his lack of commitment to a realist metaphysics, risks setting forth a picture of human behaviour as consisting in self-contained practices which float free of nature. If we return to the contrast Wittgenstein makes between practices with external goals and those whose goals are internal, then it is clear that he regards human intentional behaviour as consisting in the latter kind of practice. We argued in chapter two, however, that this distinction is not hard and fast, insofar as practices with external goals can alter our conception of those goals through shaping tools to obtain those goals. Conversely, practices with internal goals need to be understood in the wider context of human life. At the end of chapter two we argued that the unity of grammar is given through the unity of human life, which is rooted in human nature. The interpretation we have been developing of Wittgenstein supports this argument, but the question arises as to how we understand the unity of human life. If we stress the analogy between language and games then we have a way of understanding the unity of human practices which highlights their autonomy, but which fails to do justice to their connection to a wider context of human life. It could therefore be argued that too strong an emphasis on the analogy between language and games can be misleading.

Rhees, one of the early commentators on Wittgenstein makes this very point in the following passage: "The unity of the language is not the unity of a system. It is not the unity

of a game either. It is the unity of a common intelligibility; that is all. We can understand one another, we can understand what is said. The language hangs together.”³⁰ Rhees argues that by focusing on the application of technical uses of language, such as mathematics, Wittgenstein gives too thin an account of the form of human life: “a form of life or way of living is not a way of working, and it is not an institution.”³¹ For Rhees language is not something which involves a particular application of human understanding, such as a game; rather it is that through which human growth takes place: “a language is something that can have a literature. This is where it is so different from chess. It must be a language of people; and in which people develop; in which people develop their own lives, their own ideas their own literature. (Which is possible to speak ‘with a face of one’s own’.)”³²

We will discuss in the next chapter whether Wittgenstein’s emphasis on the analogy between language and games led him to hold a narrow conception of language. In chapter 2, section 2.3.6, we noted how Wittgenstein’s reflections on ‘seeing as’ challenge reductive visions of human life. At the same time it is clear that the misuse of the language/game analogy, stressing the autonomy of rules while ignoring their application in human life, can blind us to the wider context of understanding within which particular uses of language find their application. If Wittgenstein in the development of his later works sought to root our conceptual abilities in our natural human capacities and reaction, then Rhees’ charge against Wittgenstein turns on the accusation that he reduces our natural human capacities and reactions to “a way of working.” Like Charlton he accuses Wittgenstein of offering a pragmatic conception of language, and illustrates his accusation with a reference to the builders’ language-game: “the builders could not say anything to one another, since they could not ask one another for an explanation of what has been said.”³³ For Rhees,

³⁰ Rhees, *Wittgenstein and the Possibility of Discourse*, 135.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 50.

Wittgenstein's mistake is his failure to place this language game into the context of a wider context of understanding, without which the practice of the builders makes no sense.

In defending Wittgenstein against Charlton's accusations we argued that he uses language-games as objects of comparison, rather than as theoretical re-constructions of our linguistic practices. The purpose of the builders' language-game is not to give an explanation of meaning, but to point to the wider context within which such practices find application. Insofar as he fails to see how Wittgenstein points to the wider context of human understanding Rhees is also guilty of misunderstanding his use of language-games. As with Charlton, however, the wider charge which Rhees brings against Wittgenstein is not dependent upon his particular reading of the language/game analogy. Just as Charlton concludes that Wittgenstein's account of teleological terms requires a wider context of natural teleologies, Rhees argues that Wittgenstein's account of following rules in a game only makes sense in the wider context of the human search for understanding.³⁴ For both Charlton and Rhees, Wittgenstein account of language gets things the wrong way round. Rather than beginning with the wider contexts within which particular uses of language make sense, they argue that Wittgenstein makes the mistake of starting with particular practices (for Charlton this is Wittgenstein's account of use, for Rhees his application of specialized uses of language), and thus misunderstands the nature of language.³⁵ In seeking to avoid the mistake of giving an external account of the use of words Wittgenstein goes too far in the opposite direction of stressing the autonomy of language. He places too strong an emphasis on the internal nature of grammar, leaving the question of the role played by grammar in human life opaque.

³⁴ This is not to say that Rhees would agree with Charlton's account of natural teleologies.

³⁵ Again what is required is a dialectical tension which moves between particular applications of language and the wider context of our human nature. Charlton and Rhees can be seen as accusing Wittgenstein of failing to respect this tension by placing too much emphasis on particular applications.

Charlton and Rhees argue that a much richer conception of our natural human capacities and reactions is required than that provided by Wittgenstein. The aspects of our human nature to which they draw attention can be seen as complementing each other. The natural teleologies without which Charlton argues we cannot make sense of our teleological practices include both the teleology of the entities we encounter in the world and our own natural human inclinations (including those pre-conceptual inclinations we share with other animals). We risk misunderstanding these natural inclinations, however, if we fail to see how they are transformed by human understanding.³⁶ It is this growth in understanding which is the goal of human life. On the other hand, if the role of our natural inclinations is ignored then we fail to see how this growth in understanding is that of the particular kind of creature we are. Any account of human nature must wrestle with the dialectical tension between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual. This is precisely the tension which in chapter two we argued Wittgenstein struggles with in his later works. At the same time the accusation still remains that lacking a metaphysics of natural teleologies, Wittgenstein, despite his intention of avoiding idealism, developed an account of grammar which spins free of any application in our lives. In order to further investigate this accusation we will turn in the next section to the criticism O'Callaghan develops of certain Wittgensteinian accounts of the relationship between the linguistic and the extra-linguistic, notably that developed by John McDowell.³⁷

³⁶ I am not suggesting here that Charlton makes this mistake, but it is important to place his account of natural human teleologies in this wider context. This context is implicit in the complementarity which Charlton sees between syntax and lexicography, but placing this complementarity into a wider dialectical context of understand helps to bring out its implications.

³⁷ There is a distinction between the pre-linguistic and the extra-linguistic, insofar as the former implies reactions and practices which are prior to our linguistic behaviour, whereas the extra-linguistic lies outside the linguistic sphere. In the following discussions it is important to keep this distinction in mind, as our argument will turn on the assertion that the pre-linguistic is not equivalent to the extra-linguistic as McDowell understands (and criticises) it.

3.2 First and Second Nature: Distinguishing the Conceptual from the Natural?

In *Mind and World* John McDowell sets out to show that the conceptual and the empirical are not externally connected as two separate spheres, but rather: “conceptual capacities, capacities that belong to spontaneity, are already at work in experiences themselves.”³⁸ McDowell rejects the idea that empirical content consists in: “bare presences that are supposed to constitute the ultimate grounds of empirical judgement.”³⁹ Conversely, McDowell argues against characterizations of our conceptual abilities which present them as unconstrained by the empirical, resulting in: “a coherentism which threatens to disconnect thought from reality.”⁴⁰ To this end McDowell is influenced, through the work of Peter Strawson, by Kant,⁴¹ and in particular Kant’s dictum that: “Thoughts without content are empty,”⁴² which must be read together with: “the other half of Kant’s remark: ‘intuitions without concepts are blind.’”⁴³ The other philosopher whose influence McDowell singles out is Wilfred Sellars and in particular Sellars’ essay *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*.⁴⁴ It is in this essay that Sellars develops his critique of the myth of the given, which is the myth that empirical content consists of bare presences. McDowell uses Kant and Sellars to argue that without receptivity to empirical content the spontaneity of our conceptual abilities results in empty concepts, while conversely experience conceived as lying outside the conceptual is blind. In response to these opposed dangers McDowell sets his task as developing a third option which avoids the mistake of an empty coherentism, while at the same time enabling us

³⁸ John Henry McDowell, *Mind and World : With a New Introduction*, 1st Harvard University Press paperback ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 24.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., viii. For Strawson’s reading of Kant see, P. F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense : An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, University Paperbacks 572 (London New York: Methuen ; distributed by Harper & Row, Barnes & Noble Import Division, 1975).

⁴² Immanuel Kant, *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929), A51/B75.

⁴³ McDowell, *Mind and World : With a New Introduction*, 4.

⁴⁴ Wilfrid Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).

(without falling into the myth of the given) to: “acknowledge that independent reality exerts a rational control over our thinking.”⁴⁵ As such, he can be seen as attempting to accomplish what Anscombe describes as steering in that narrow channel which avoids: “the falsehoods of idealism, and the stupidities of empiricist realism.”⁴⁶ McDowell identifies a kindred spirit in Wittgenstein, and quotes the following passage from the *Investigations* as evidence that Wittgenstein rejects the myth of the given: “When we say, and *mean*, that such-and-such is the case, we—and our meaning—do not stop anywhere short of the fact; but we mean: *this—is—so*.”⁴⁷ McDowell reads Wittgenstein here as confirming that empirical reality is not located “outside the conceptual sphere,”⁴⁸ and as thus expressing the idea that there is no gap between thought and the world.

McDowell, however, sees himself as working within the tradition of idealism, and is influenced in particular by the absolute idealism of Hegel. Although Kant provides McDowell with the key to reconciling the rational with the empirical, he argues that in drawing a boundary around the conceptual and thus recognizing: “a reality outside the sphere of the conceptual,”⁴⁹ Kant betrayed his own intentions by slighting, “the independence of the reality to which our senses give us access.”⁵⁰ If the reality which lies beyond our senses is the true independent reality, then that which is given through the senses is not truly independent. By contrast, McDowell argues that the picture given by Hegel of the conceptual as unbounded: “is not offensive to common sense, but precisely protective of it.”⁵¹ If the conceptual realm has no outer boundary then there is no contrast between that which is given within this realm and that which lies beyond it, and without this contrast there is no obstacle

⁴⁵ McDowell, *Mind and World : With a New Introduction*, 27.

⁴⁶ Anscombe, "The Question of Linguistic Idealism," 115.

⁴⁷ McDowell, *Mind and World : With a New Introduction*, 27. This quotation is taken from Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §95.

⁴⁸ McDowell, *Mind and World : With a New Introduction*, 26.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

to the common sense notion: “that independent reality exerts a rational control over our thinking.”⁵²

There is, however, a key difference between McDowell and Hegel. Whereas for Hegel there is ultimately a unity between the conceptual realm of human understanding and the empirical realm of science,⁵³ for McDowell modern natural science describes a realm which is distinct from the conceptual: “We must sharply distinguish natural-scientific intelligibility from the kind of intelligibility something acquires when we situate it in the logical space of reasons.”⁵⁴ This distinction is developed by McDowell in the Aristotelian contrast he makes between first nature and second nature. Whereas first nature consists in the law bound realm of science, second nature is the development of human capacities for reasoning: “Human beings acquire a second nature in part by being initiated into conceptual capacities, whose interrelations belong in the logical space of reasons.”⁵⁵ McDowell draws upon Aristotle’s writings on ethics and virtue to argue that the development of our capacities for practical reasoning is part of our human nature, and that nature should not be confined only to the law bound realm of science.⁵⁶ He seeks to combine the Kantian notion that practical rationality is autonomous, with the Aristotelian emphasis on human nature as the basis for our reasoning capacities.

The task which McDowell sets himself is akin to the one which we ascribed to Wittgenstein in chapter two: attempting to preserve the autonomy of grammar, while at the same time showing how the use of words is rooted in our natural human reactions and capacities. McDowell is aware that an emphasis on the autonomy of ethics which fails to

⁵² Ibid., 27.

⁵³ For an account of how for Hegel logic and science are ultimately united see: Stanley Rosen, *The Idea of Hegel's Science of Logic* (Chicago, Illinois : The University of Chicago Press, 2014).

⁵⁴ McDowell, *Mind and World : With a New Introduction*, xix.

⁵⁵ Ibid., xx.

⁵⁶ In a Wittgensteinian spirit, McDowell develops his understanding of how the autonomy of ethics combines with a renewed conception of human nature, see: ‘Non-Cognitivism and Rule Following’ printed in Cray and Read, *The New Wittgenstein*, 38-52.

show how our ethical practices are rooted in human nature is open to the charge of “rampant Platonism.”⁵⁷ He argues that his own Aristotelian account of practical rationality avoids this charge and that his account of second nature: “gives human reason enough of a foothold in the realm of law to satisfy any proper respect for modern natural science.”⁵⁸ He does not, however, develop his understanding of the relationship between first and second nature, and how this distinction is to be drawn remains a problem. In drawing a strict boundary between first nature and second nature McDowell needs to assume an overall perspective from which to view what lies within and outside this boundary. This perspective cannot be provided from within the realm of the conceptual, as this is unbounded and even talk of that which is “within” this realm is liable to mislead. On the other hand the boundary cannot be drawn from the side of the natural sciences, as this would involve the very encroachment of science into the autonomous realm of reason which McDowell seeks to avoid.

In the background of McDowell’s argument in *Mind and World* is the challenge which Richard Rorty issues when he deconstructs: “the reconciling of subject and object, or thought and world.”⁵⁹ In response to Rorty, McDowell characterizes his own project as attempting to: “reconcile reason and nature, and the point of doing that is to attain something Rorty himself aspires to, a frame of mind in which we would no longer seem to be faced with problems that call on philosophy to bring subject and object back together.”⁶⁰ The question is whether the terms by which McDowell understands the relationship between reason and nature are such that their reconciliation is possible. There is a danger of conflating the distinction between the grammatical and the empirical with that between mental content and extra-mental content. In particular, in speaking of *the* conceptual, it is important to avoid intending something analogous to the realm of the mental, with a corresponding contrast

⁵⁷ McDowell, *Mind and World : With a New Introduction*, 84.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 86. For Rorty’s challenge see: Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Thirtieth-anniversary ed. (Princeton, N.J. ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009).

⁶⁰ McDowell, *Mind and World : With a New Introduction*, 86.

between this realm and that which lies beyond it. Does McDowell, despite his attempts to reconcile reason and nature, present first nature in a manner which implies the modern opposition between subject and object?

In order to answer this question we need first to examine briefly how subject and object became opposed in modern philosophy. In his article "Justice after Virtue" Charles Taylor follows MacIntyre in tracing the theological origins of the split between fact and value.⁶¹ Taylor argues that with Occam the conception of the world as a value free realm: "waiting to have purpose given to it by sovereign fiat," took shape.⁶² Although this picture of the world initially developed to guarantee the sovereignty of God, Taylor argues that: "Later something of this conception of freedom is transferred on to man."⁶³ Just as God has been set over and against nature, now it is human beings who are characterized as autonomous subjects. The autonomous subject is not constrained by external nature, which is governed by laws which are objective and discoverable. The contrast between human autonomy and objective, law governed nature is central to the modern dichotomy between reason and nature, which sets up the opposition between subject and object McDowell wishes to overcome.

Taylor's arguments mirror those of other philosophers who criticise the tendencies of modern thought which instrumentalize reason and nature, such as those developed by Etienne Gilson. In *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* Gilson places his critique of modernity in the context of the kind of metaphysical questions we touched upon in chapter one, section 1.2.⁶⁴ Gilson points to the dialectical nature of metaphysical enquiry by noting that the unity of being is given in all concrete sensible perceptions, but that we do not thereby grasp the whole science of being. Rather, we move towards the first principle of knowledge, which is

⁶¹ Charles Taylor, "Justice after Virtue," in *After MacIntyre : Critical Perspectives on the Work of Alasdair MacIntyre*, ed. John Horton and Susan Mendus (Cambridge: Polity, 1994).

⁶² Ibid, 18.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Etienne Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1999).

the end point of our enquiry as opposed to a given content from which we analytically deduce metaphysical principles:

The first principle brings with it, therefore, both the certitude that metaphysics is the science of being as being, and the abstract laws according to which that science has to be constructed. Yet the principle of a certain knowledge is not that knowledge; and the first principle of human knowledge does not bring us a ready-made science of metaphysics, but its principle and its object.⁶⁵

Gilson here sets the abstract nature of metaphysical laws within the context of the unity of being towards which metaphysics is directed. The temptations to which we fall prey when doing metaphysics occur when its dialectical nature is ignored and we seek to grasp the whole science of being through particular concrete manifestations. Our desire for unity tempts us to ignore differences, and thus to mistake the unity present in the concrete particular experience for the whole of being. Gilson argues that this mistake has repeatedly occurred throughout the history of philosophy:

That which is but a particular determination of being, or *a* being, will be invested with the universality of being itself. In other words, a particular essence will be credited with the universality of being, and allowed to exclude all the other aspects of reality. This is precisely what happened to Abailard, to Ockham, to Descartes, to Kant and to Comte.⁶⁶

The account of first nature given by McDowell as the realm of law does not go wrong in presenting an abstraction of reality, but rather in identify reality, or at least that realm which is first nature, with that abstraction.⁶⁷ McDowell's purpose is to safeguard the sovereignty of the realm of reason from the incursions of scientism, while avoiding a dichotomy between reason and nature. What he fails to see is that his account of first nature must be seen as an abstraction, and not as a full description of physical reality, if it is to have any application in relation to his account of second nature. It is only by finding a place within a wider account of our physical interactions with the world that the abstract notion of the physical as the realm of law can find application in our lives. O'Callaghan argues that the gap

⁶⁵ Ibid., 253.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 254.

⁶⁷ Which is not to say that the particular conception of science he presents is beyond question.

which McDowell places between first and second nature secures the autonomy of language at the cost of failing to show how our linguistic abilities are rooted in our nature:

Rather than there being an organic and developmental unity between first and second nature, as in Aristotle's account, in McDowell's account they appear just as disconnected as when one was "in the head." Though he has managed to project the mind *out* there into the world through one's capacities for proper socialization, calling one of the natures "second" does not eliminate the problem; it simply reasserts the dualism of what is *in* second nature, and what is *external* to it — what is *inside* the space of reasons and what is *outside* of it.⁶⁸

In contrast to this dualism between the worlds of first and second nature O'Callaghan argues that: "For Aristotle and St. Thomas our mental lives take place where our lives take place, the world of our first nature, the world of animals, plants, and inanimate beings."⁶⁹ This entails that any account of our human rational capacities must show how we are *rational animals*, and thus that we encounter and interact with the world "not just *qua* animal, and not just *qua* rational, but specifically *qua* rational animal."⁷⁰ In chapter 2, section 2.3 we argued that in his later writings Wittgenstein came increasingly to see that our conceptual abilities are rooted in our pre-conceptual reactions and capacities. In order to avoid the reduction of the conceptual to the pre-conceptual (naïve empiricism) or the opposite danger of subsuming the pre-conceptual into the conceptual (idealism) we argued that Wittgenstein developed a dialectical way of doing philosophy through which he sought to maintain the dialectical tension between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual. This returns us to the criticism Wittgenstein makes of accounts of meaning which fail to show how our concepts have application in our lives. Like Gilson, Wittgenstein challenges us to avoid mistaking the abstraction of the concepts which we use to measure reality with reality itself, and points to the wider context of our lives within which our concepts find their application. The question we shall ask in the next chapter is whether he succeeds in maintaining the dialectical tension required to avoid such

⁶⁸ O'Callaghan, *Thomist Realism and the Linguistic Turn : Toward a More Perfect Form of Existence*, 163.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 280.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 279.

mistakes, or if Wittgenstein, like McDowell with his notion of (first) nature, is guilty of mistaking an abstraction for reality.

3.3 Conclusion: Grammar, Nature and Dialectic

The interpretation of Wittgenstein given in chapter one, which highlights the constant self-questioning nature of his later works, sees Wittgenstein as fighting against one-step solutions to the question of our human nature, and as thus seeking to maintain the dialectical tension necessary for any genuine attempt to understand our nature. In chapter two we continued our reading of Wittgenstein by attempting to show how through the development of his principle of application he sought a realistic understanding of human nature which avoids idealism and empiricism. Our intention in developing this reading of Wittgenstein was to follow Anscombe in drawing out parallels between Wittgenstein's philosophy and the metaphysical tradition. In this present chapter we have examined the challenges of various philosophers who see themselves as sitting in the metaphysical tradition to our reading of Wittgenstein.

The first challenge considered is that issued by Charlton, who argues that Wittgenstein fails to distinguish between lexicography and grammar. This results, according to Charlton, in Wittgenstein developing an idiosyncratic understanding of grammar and adopting a pragmatic theory of meaning. We acquitted Wittgenstein of the charge of holding the pragmatic conception of meaning Charlton accuses him of, but at the same time we noted that Wittgenstein is vulnerable to the wider charge that in the absence of a teleological account of nature any account of meaning will fail. The second challenge we considered was that of Rhee, who accuses Wittgenstein of failing to grasp the basis of our linguistic practices in the search for universal understanding. O'Callaghan argues that the account of human knowledge developed by Aristotle and Aquinas is dialogical in this sense: "Aristotle

and St. Thomas took the linguistic expression of understanding to be the normal case, as when they discuss taking the nominal definition of a term from the ordinary use of the community as the first stage in the process of scientific understanding.”⁷¹ It is this notion of growth in human understanding through dialogue which Rhees accuses Wittgenstein of lacking in his use of the analogy between language and games. In the next chapter we will respond to Rhees’ charge by pointing to the dialogical nature of Wittgenstein’s later work. This response will not only show the dialogical nature of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy, but also indicate whether his dialectical practice is one which brings about a growth in human understanding.

We noted that the challenges which Charlton and Rhees issue to Wittgenstein concern what they perceive as a lack of richness in Wittgenstein’s understanding of human nature. Charlton points to the need to root any understanding of human nature in an account of the concrete experience we have of our physical interactions with the world, while Rhees reminds us that in this concrete experience human understanding is already operative and is that which human practices both presuppose and have as their goal. As such Charlton and Rhees represent the two aspects of metaphysical practice (as understood by Gilson) which explain the dialectical nature of metaphysics: the concrete nature of metaphysics, which begins with particular determinations of being, and the unity which forms the end point towards which all human knowledge tends.⁷² The question is whether Wittgenstein’s dialectical practice can hold together both these aspects; to be rooted in our concrete human practices while at the same time showing how those practices pre-suppose and are directed towards a growth in human understanding.

⁷¹ Ibid., 281.

⁷² For a Thomistic account of the dialectical nature of metaphysics see: Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *First Principles, Final Ends, and Contemporary Philosophical Issues*, The Aquinas Lecture (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1990).

In order to help clarify this question we examined McDowell's account of the relationship between the conceptual and the natural. Here we followed O'Callaghan in arguing that the account McDowell gives of the relationship between Aristotelian first and second nature does not provide the basis for his claim that our conceptual abilities are rooted in our human nature. McDowell's failure is consequent upon the mistake he makes in identifying (first) nature with the abstract measure given by a conception of science as concerned with general laws. This mistake results from his failure to see that any account of the relationship between the conceptual and the natural must be essentially dialectical, if it is to avoid the reduction of conceptual to the natural or subsuming the natural into the conceptual. This is to walk in the narrow channel which Anscombe describes as lying between idealism and empiricism. It is the path of our human nature, the path of a rational animal, by which we seek the whole of being through the concrete reality of the world as we interact with it. It is through dialectic that a rational animal seeks knowledge. As O'Callaghan notes, for Aquinas it involves progressing: "from a general and confused act based upon sense experience to a more general and precise act."⁷³ In chapter one, section 1.2 we followed Hibbs' argument that theory and practice are held together in dialectic practices. We can now add that dialectic itself is both theory and practice, and as such those who practice dialectic must constantly ask how they are holding these together in tension. A failure to do so results in a one-sided emphasis on either practice or theory, which results in a distorted presentation of human nature. Gilson helps us to see how ignoring the dialectical nature of metaphysics results in the kind of physicalist, abstracted understanding of nature which McDowell identifies with first nature. This is the other side of the argument which Charlton advances. For Charlton any account of our linguistic practices which denies their basis in natural teleologies reduces them to the level of efficient causality, and thus fails to account for their

⁷³ O'Callaghan, *Thomist Realism and the Linguistic Turn : Toward a More Perfect Form of Existence*, 221.

dialogical nature. In the next chapter we will ask whether in his later writings Wittgenstein succeeded in maintaining a dialectical tension between the pre-conceptual and the conceptual, by developing a play on the border between them and thus avoiding a reductive, abstract characterization of the pre-conceptual.

4 RECOVERING NATURE, LEARNING TO SEE

4.1 How Dialectical is Wittgenstein? Two Challenges.

The aim of this thesis is to examine the relevance of Wittgenstein's writings for a renewal of moral theology. In order to narrow the scope of this enquiry we have focused upon the question of nature, and argued that in his later philosophy Wittgenstein attempts to return us to our natural ways of being human: his aim is to free the fly from the fly-bottle. In chapter one, section 1.3.2 we noted how Wittgenstein is critical of metaphysics insofar as it involves the adoption of false pictures which mislead us into thinking that there are one-step solutions to our philosophical problems: "There is not a philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies."¹ Metaphysics, however, is not the source of our imprisonment. Wittgenstein came to see that it is our misuse of language which results in bad metaphysics, and that any attempt to return us to our natural human practices must address our more general human tendencies to misuse language.² To this end the various strategies which he developed in his later work can be seen as therapies through which he attempts to help us see our sickness, and to find a cure by returning to our natural ways of acting.

The therapeutic nature of Wittgenstein's later thought sits comfortably with the contemporary move away from metaphysics and grand narrative, enabling those who emphasize this side of his thought to preserve a role for philosophy while avoiding metaphysical commitments. There is certainly textual support for a therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein, and we have seen how in his post-1945 writings he was influenced by Gestalt theory. The self-questioning nature of Wittgenstein's later thought, however, evades any

¹ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §133. "Es gibt nicht *eine* Method der Philosophie, wohl aber gibt es Methoden, gleichsam verschiedene Therapien." *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §133.

² For an argument linking Wittgenstein's understanding of the misuse of language with more general human wrong doing see Philip R. Shields, *Logic and Sin in the Writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

attempt to offer a single interpretation of what he is doing. The comparison with the metaphysical tradition which following Anscombe we have developed in this thesis provides another perspective on what Wittgenstein is trying to achieve in this later works. Here the therapeutic nature of his thought calls to mind Plato's objective of freeing us from that which blinds us to the truth.³ There are those, such as Victor Preller, who have read Wittgenstein in this tradition, particularly drawing parallels with the Platonism of St Augustine.⁴

We have argued that understanding the dialectical nature of Wittgenstein's later work is central to both interpreting what he is doing and in drawing parallels with the metaphysical tradition. In chapters one and two we offered a reading of Wittgenstein's philosophy as attempting a realism which avoids empiricism and idealism. Chapter three examined two challenges to Wittgenstein which placed in question his success in achieving realism in philosophy; in particular, the suspicion remains that despite his attempts to overcome the modern dichotomy between subject and object the manner in which he draws a boundary between grammatical and empirical questions reinforces the modern picture of the mind as a realm of self-contained content.

In this chapter we will conclude our interpretation of Wittgenstein and the parallels between his philosophy and the metaphysical tradition by asking whether in his later writings he succeeds in developing a dialectical form of philosophy which avoids idealism and empiricism. To this end we will examine two related challenges which place in question the dialectical nature of Wittgenstein's later work. The first challenge concerns the relationship between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual. The problem here is how to understand these two realms and the interaction between them without lapsing into idealism or falling into

³ Josef Pieper argues that central to Plato's philosophy was his attempt to overcome sophisticated abuses of language. See Josef Pieper, *Abuse of Language, Abuse of Power* (San Francisco, Calif.: Ignatius Press, 1992). Later in this chapter, however, we will examine how Rhees argues that Wittgenstein's therapies fail to do justice to Plato's insight that philosophy concerns the common human search for understanding.

⁴ For a collection of essays dedicated to Victor Preller which draws connections between Augustinism, Thomism and Wittgenstein see Jeffrey Stout and Robert MacSwain, *Grammar and Grace : Reformulations of Aquinas and Wittgenstein* (London: SCM, 2004).

empiricism. How are we to avoid reducing one to the other, while respecting the dialectical tension in the boundary between them? In answering this question we will turn to Mulhall's reading of Wittgenstein as concerned with the question of origins, and in particular how we acquire language on the boundary between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual. We will follow Mulhall (who is influenced by Cavell) in arguing that the purpose of the various language-games Wittgenstein develops is to encourage us to enter into the play between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual. Such play helps us to overcome the deformation of our desires which takes place when we treat language as an instrument for realizing our will.

The examination of the boundary between the pre-conceptual and the conceptual brings us to Wittgenstein's post-1945 writings on psychology, and the central importance the phenomenon of seeing aspects has in throwing light on that border. Wittgenstein's interest in seeing aspects is part of his engagement with Gestalt psychology and we will examine the similarities and differences between Wittgenstein's remarks on psychology and Köhler's Gestalt psychology, before asking whether Wittgenstein's way of distinguishing between the grammatical and the empirical is consistent with his understanding of the relationship between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual. We will argue that Wittgenstein requires (and shows evidence of developing) a richer sense of the pre-conceptual than his comments concerning the empirical will allow. In dividing human enquiry into the grammatical and empirical, identifying the former with conceptual clarification and the latter with the discovery of efficient causes, Wittgenstein leaves no room for an investigation of physical nature which allows us to characterize nature as anything other than a realm of efficient causation. His own dialectical practices, however, open the path to the use of various grammatical devices such as analogy and negation in characterizing the pre-conceptual in a manner which is not reductive. At the same time we will argue that these practices are still

some distance from an adequate understanding of the pre-conceptual, such as that attempted by Aristotle in his *Physics*. In particular Wittgenstein does not allow for the pre-conceptual physical play through which we first learn about the physical world.

The second challenge to the dialectical nature of Wittgenstein's philosophy follows on from the first and concerns the teleological basis for dialectic. In chapter three we examined Charlton's charge against Wittgenstein. Charlton argues that in the absence of a teleology of nature Wittgenstein's account of language collapses the distinction between grammar and rhetoric to produce a purely pragmatic account of language as use. We noted that there are two related aspects of teleology which are relevant for Charlton's argument, although he does not tend to distinguish between them. Firstly, there is the teleological nature of natural kinds in general, which Charlton argues is essential to making the distinction between grammar and lexicography. Secondly, there is the teleological nature of our linguistic practices themselves. Here the question of the end (or ends) of our linguistic practices is raised, and Charlton argues that in the absence of such a teleological account our linguistic practices are characterized in pragmatic terms. The question here concerns the nature of human desire, and the danger of accounts which give a mechanical understanding of desires as purely efficient causes.

Both these aspects of teleology are required in any account of language which is to avoid the reduction of meaning to pragmatic use. The first aspect concerns the interplay between human beings and the world, and the dialectical character of this interplay. The second opens us to the questions raised by Rhees concerning the dialogical nature of our linguistic practices, which he argues presupposes a search for common understanding prior to particular language-games. These two aspects of teleology combine the two aspects of dialectic which Gilson describes in the practice of metaphysics. The second aspect corresponds to the search for the first principle of all enquiry; whereas the first corresponds to

the concrete nature of metaphysical questioning. In order to prevent dialectic prematurely closing in a false unity it is essential to keep both these aspects in mind. In his attempt to develop realism in philosophy Wittgenstein can be read as trying to keep these two aspects of dialectic in tension: avoiding the false unity which reduces meaning to the level of efficient physical causes (empiricism), while at the same time guarding against subliming logic in an account of our linguistic practices which floats free of any basis in our nature (idealism).⁵

We will examine the light cast upon both aspects of teleology by Wittgenstein's later thought. Concerning the first aspect (natural teleology in general) we will argue (drawing on the discussion of the relationship between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual in section 4.2) that although Wittgenstein shows signs of developing a non-reductive account of the pre-conceptual, this is still some distance from the kind of account developed by Aristotle in the *Physics*. In the absence of such an account of physical nature it is questionable whether Wittgenstein succeeded in developing the kind of realism he sought. Despite this deficiency, however, we will argue that by directing our attention to the boundary between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual Wittgenstein engages with that concrete reality which Gilson characterizes as the starting point for metaphysics. In particular, the dialectical tension Wittgenstein develops in his investigations into this boundary helps us to avoid the danger of reducing what is on one side of the boundary to the other.

A response to the second aspect of teleology (the teleological nature of human practices) will involve an examination of Wittgenstein's remarks on human will and desire.

⁵ Mulhall discusses Wittgenstein's remarks in the *Investigations* §§89-108 on logic as sublime. He notes how Wittgenstein does not directly state what he means by the sublime in these remarks, but offers chains of images and metaphors (see Mulhall, *Inheritance and Originality: Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Kierkegaard*, 87-93). These include the sublime as the basis or foundation of the empirical, the sublime as a refinement of experience, the sublime as the exalted or ideal and the counter-side of this as that which is: "a limitation, as fencing us off from something—even if only a void inimical to human life and its conditions." Ibid., 89. Through the use of these images and metaphors Wittgenstein seeks to rid us of the notion that logic is a structure underlying our experience, which can be refined and presented as the transcendent basis of life. It is in this context that he states his purpose of returning us to the rough ground of our actual linguistic practices, see Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, § 107.

Rhees charges Wittgenstein with over reliance on the language-game analogy, which prevents him from seeing that the search for common understanding is prior to any particular application of language. This common search entails that there is a desire for understanding which precedes the realization of our particular desires in particular uses of language. In chapter three we argued that the criticisms made by Rhees and Charlton turn on the question of whether Wittgenstein, in stressing the autonomy of language, places too much emphasis on the internal nature of the rules of grammar and on the analogy between language and games. The danger lies in overstating the internal nature of grammar language, such that grammar floats free of our natural human capacities. A parallel problem emerges with Wittgenstein's account of human desire. In seeking to avoid an account of human desire which reduces it to a pre-given set of particular desires, there is the danger of cutting desire away from any basis in our nature. This risks an account of desire which emphasises autonomy to such a degree that the language becomes merely an instrument for the realization of our will.

We have followed Mulhall in understanding the various language-games and strategies Wittgenstein develops in his later writings as helping us to overcome the deformation of our desires which occurs when we see language purely in instrumental terms. This reading is in part a response to Rhees and stresses the dialectical and self-questioning nature of Wittgenstein's later works. In particular it opens a reading of Wittgenstein as seeking to avoid the reduction of desire to a pre-given set of particular desires, while at the same time overcoming the temptation of turning language into merely an instrument for our will. It also provides a link between our responses to the first and second challenges. The question of the relationship between the pre-conceptual and the conceptual is also the question of the relationship between our pre-conceptual desires and the desire for common understanding. This brings us back to the question of realism without empiricism or idealism, and whether the dialectical practices developed by Wittgenstein in his later works can be read

in continuity with the dialectical practice which Hibbs argues is central to metaphysics. Does Wittgenstein avoid or succumb to the temptations which Gilson shows philosophers falling into?

In the next section (4.2) we will examine how, from the resources of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, a response may be made to the first challenge: does Wittgenstein maintain a dialectical tension between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual? Section (4.3) will then attempt to respond to the second challenge: in the absence of an explicit teleology of nature does Wittgenstein's account of language collapse into pragmatism? These two sections will cover interrelated themes, and in the course of the discussion we will attempt to bring out how Wittgenstein's account of meaning also entails certain things about the nature of human desire. In both sections there is no intention of implying that Wittgenstein would have responded to these challenges in such a manner, but following Anscombe we hold that a fruitful dialogue between Wittgenstein and the metaphysical tradition is possible. The relevance of these discussions for contemporary questions in moral theology will be developed in chapters five, six and seven. Again, a guiding theme will be how Wittgenstein in his later works develops an account of situated freedom which avoids the empty formalism of idealism, while at the same time not falling into the physical determinism of empiricism. In these chapters we will argue that there are various parallels between Wittgenstein's account of situated freedom and that of moral theologians such as Jean Porter and Servais Pinckaers. These parallels will provide the basis for a dialogue between Wittgenstein and moral theology, which throws light on both conversation partners.

4.2 Dialectical Tension: The Conceptual and the Pre-Conceptual

4.2.1 The Conceptual and the Empirical.

In chapter three we examined how the distinction Wittgenstein draws between the grammatical and the empirical is understood by commentators such as McDowell to entail a clear division between the conceptual world and the non-conceptual world. McDowell characterises the conceptual world along Aristotelian lines, but draws a sharp distinction between it and the non-conceptual world of nature which is investigated by the modern natural sciences.⁶ This raises the question of how these two worlds are connected, and prompts O’Callaghan’s criticism of McDowell that his impoverished account of first nature cannot act as the basis for the development of second nature. Gordon Baker and Peter Hacker also provide a thin conception of the non-conceptual abilities which are required for the development of our conceptual abilities: “Conceptual abilities rest on brute, preconceptual abilities.”⁷ These brute abilities consist for Baker and Hacker in our ability to be trained, and involve our basic human reactions: “the linguistic training undergone prior to teaching and explaining takes place within the framework of the natural order of things. It assumes a wide variety range of *natural* human discriminatory abilities, recognitional reactions, imitative propensities and behavioural patterns.”⁸ The range of abilities Baker and Hacker here refer to seem to involve more than just “brute” reactions and the question arises as to whether they can be characterized in the reductive terms Baker and Hacker’s division between the conceptual and the non-conceptual realm implies. In particular, it is questionable whether such abilities can be given non-teleological descriptions. For example, our ability to imitate involves copying others as they act to achieve certain goals. The mistake is to identify the

⁶ For Hacker’s Aristotelian account of human nature see P. M. S. Hacker, *Human Nature : The Categorical Framework* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010). Throughout this work Hacker is insistent that he is making grammatical remarks and not indulging in physics or metaphysics.

⁷ Gordon P. Baker and P. M. S. Hacker, Wittgenstein [Electronic Resource] : Understanding and Meaning. Part 2 Exegesis Exegesis 1-184, (Oxford, UK Malden, MA: Oxford, UK Malden, MA : Blackwell Pub., 2005). 305.

⁸ Wittgenstein [Electronic Resource] : Understanding and Meaning. Part I, Essays, (Oxford, UK Malden, MA: Oxford, UK Malden, MA : Blackwell Pub., 2005). 30-31.

pre-conceptual with a given non-conceptual content. Through thus fixing the pre-conceptual the illusion is given that the autonomy of language is preserved, but this comes at the price of positing a realm of nature which has little, if any, connection with the conceptual realm.

MacDowell, Hacker and Baker aim to protect the autonomy of grammar from the misuse of science. This is something, as we have seen, which lies at the heart of Wittgenstein's work.

The cost of this protection, however, is to reintroduce the kind of pre-given characterization of nature as a realm of facts which Wittgenstein abandoned after the *Tractatus*.

The confusions which we find in McDowell, Baker and Hacker are a result of how they distinguish between the form and the content of concepts. We saw in chapter two that the task of showing how the form and content of propositions are held together is at the centre of Wittgenstein's notion of application in the *Tractatus*. This is achieved in the *Tractatus* through the theory of simple objects. After he had rejected this theory the challenge lying before Wittgenstein was how to avoid reducing form to content (empiricism) or content to form (idealism), while at the same time showing how they are related. The realism which Wittgenstein sought in his later works can be seen as turning upon this challenge. In their desire to preserve the autonomy of language McDowell, Baker and Hacker fall into the trap of splitting reality into two realms, the sum of which does not equal the whole. On the one hand there is the realm of grammar, which is autonomous and not determined according to anything beyond itself. On the other hand there is the realm of nature as law given regularities. Form and content are clearly distinguished, but at the cost of creating two limited wholes, the connection between which is minimal. The picture is further complicated by the distinction which McDowell introduces between first nature and second nature, and in a parallel manner by Hacker's distinction between nature as articulated by grammar and nature as discovered by the natural sciences.⁹ Again the motive is to safe-guard the autonomy of

⁹ See Hacker, *Human Nature : The Categorical Framework*, 7.

grammar, but this comes at the cost of swallowing empirical content into the conceptual realm.¹⁰

In contrast to this dichotomy between the empirical and the conceptual Gilson points to the dialectical nature of philosophy, in which the distinction between form and content is maintained, but there is no once and for all way of fixing this division; and thus we avoid the error that a: “particular essence will be credited with the universality of being, and allowed to exclude all the other aspects of reality.”¹¹ Rather, there is a constant dialectical tension within which the boundary between the empirical and the conceptual is maintained, without the need for recourse to a pre-determined characterization of the empirical. This entails that the pre-conceptual is not to be identified with an abstracted realm of law or brute regularities, but is the familiar world of entities which we encounter in our everyday interactions with the world. The distinction between that which exists in itself prior to being cognized and that which results from our cognitive activity is expressed in the Scholastic distinction between *ens naturae* and *ens rationis*. Our ability to make this distinction does not, however, depend upon the adoption of a pre-given ontology.

4.2.2 A Return to Origins and Dialectical Play

In chapter three we argued that in his post-1945 works Wittgenstein began to develop a richer account of the pre-conceptual. It would be wrong to think, however, that this richer account consisted in the replacement of one pre-given ontology with another, such that an account of the pre-conceptual as the realm of brute facts was replaced by one in which facts are seen as more complex. The reading of Wittgenstein we have been developing stresses the dialectical nature of the practice of philosophy he developed, through which he sought to

¹⁰ In his introduction to Adorno Simon Jarvis mentions McDowell along with Sellars as examples of analytical philosophers who follow Hegel in arguing against any sense of the empirical which is not given within the conceptual, and who thus set up the problem which motivated Adorno concerning how to return to the real. See Simon Jarvis, *Adorno : A Critical Introduction*, Key Contemporary Thinkers (Cambridge: Polity, 1998), 149.

¹¹ Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience*, 254.

avoid one-step solutions to our philosophical problems and to achieve a realism which avoids the traps of empiricism and idealism. This entails that the question of the relationship between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual is not one that can be resolved through the drawing of a neat boundary between them. In chapter two we saw how Wittgenstein abandoned the *Tractatus*' search for the general form of the proposition and with it the notion that a general account can be given of the distinction between the grammatical and the empirical. Wittgenstein came to see that any account of the application of concepts must look to the particular subject area and context of application. This moved him in the dialectical direction which is characteristic of the *Investigations*.

The *Investigations* can be seen as dialectical in two related dimensions. Firstly, it seeks to maintain the tension between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual without reducing one to the other. Secondly, the varying voices and perspectives offered open the work to dialogue and discussion through which we may grow together in understanding. Both these dimensions speak against approaches to philosophy which begin with the individual subject grasping either principles or empirical content, from which reality is constructed. They also tell against the mistake of assuming that in seeking to return our ordinary linguistic practices we have a pre-given overview of these practices. Wittgenstein's dialectical practices aim to prevent us from grasping at simple one-step solutions to philosophical problems. As such they open up the question of origins, enabling us to pose this question in a way which helps us to overcome the temptation to snatch at answers which Gilson warns against.

In chapter one we followed Mulhall in highlighting the self-questioning nature of Wittgenstein's later work. Mulhall argues that Wittgenstein's choice to begin the *Investigations* with a passage from Augustine which concerns the acquisition of language raises the question of origins. Augustine's *Confessions* is a work about origins, and in choosing the passage from the *Confessions* which deals with the origins of childhood speech

Wittgenstein can be read as also turning our attention to origins: “Wittgenstein plainly shares Augustine’s sense of beginnings as questionable, as posing problems.”¹² Wittgenstein uses Augustine’s account as an example of how we misunderstand the origins of linguistic practices, but he can also be seen as bringing into question any simple solution to this question. The boundary between infant and child, where the child first learns to talk, is one which evades any direct attempt to grasp it. The mistake made by Augustine is that of an adult language user projecting adult linguistic abilities back onto the boundary between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual. How language originates is understood through the eyes of the adult; fully developed competences, such as giving ostensive definitions, are assumed to exist prior to learning language. The adult comes with readymade solutions to the question of language acquisition, reducing language to a set of adult linguistic competences, and failing to see how language emerges in the dialectical play of childhood between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual.¹³

Mulhall is influenced by Cavell in reading Wittgenstein as concerned in a self-questioning dialectic with the question of the origin of our linguistic behaviour. As adults we seek to grasp this origin, to give an account of what it is to be a language user which stresses our linguistic control over the world, and in doing so we deform the relationship between

¹² Mulhall, *Inheritance and Originality : Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Kierkegaard*, 34.

¹³ In *A Mind So Rare* Merlin Donald examines the question of language acquisition through the account given by Helen Keller, see Merlin Donald, *A Mind So Rare : The Evolution of Human Consciousness*, 1st ed. (New York: Norton, 2001), 232-39. Keller, born in 1880, lost both sight and hearing at the age of eighteen months, and subsequently regressed in her development. It was not until Keller’s family hired Annie Sullivan to be her teacher in 1887 that she began to make progress again. What is interesting in the methods used by Sullivan is that they involved an initial stage of pre-linguistic training, which enabled Keller to develop the discipline and habits required to gain language. Keller’s progress was remarkable and she went on to attend Radcliffe: “one of the most academically demanding women’s colleges in the United States.” *Ibid.*, 234. Donald uses the account given by Keller of how she learnt language to provide evidence for his own theory of the mind, which stresses the importance of consciousness as a category for understanding the mental. There are features of Keller’s case, however, which militate against using it as a general account of language learning. Firstly, Keller had begun to learn to speak before she lost her hearing and sight. It is not clear whether Keller would have been able to develop her linguistic abilities without this earlier heritage. Secondly, although Keller’s description of her world prior to her development under Annie Sullivan is valuable in giving some insight into the pre-linguist human world, her account is given through the eyes of a language user. Furthermore, her development prior to losing her hearing and sight may have had a continuing effect on her manner of experiencing the world. Thirdly, we need to be aware of the unspoken assumptions through which we read Keller’s account. We may not have the theoretical framework Donald is working with, but our adult assumptions can bewitch our understanding.

language and desire. Augustine is right to see a connection between language and desire, but he provides a false account of the relationship between them. Mulhall argues that Wittgenstein followed Augustine in emphasising the connection between desire and language, but sought to divorce this insight from Augustine's understanding of the acquisition of language: "It is as if Wittgenstein wishes to drive a wedge between Augustine's sense of a fundamental connection between language and desire, and his vision of human beings as driven and mastered by the need to submit the world to their will."¹⁴ In contrast to the adult account of the relationship between language and desire given by Augustine, Wittgenstein seeks in the *Investigations* to return us to a sense of the play of language which takes place when we are children. Augustine is not wrong in seeing a connection between language and desire, but his adult reading of language acquisition deforms the relationship by stressing the instrumental role of language as a tool for bringing about what we will.

Mulhall sees Wittgenstein as returning us to the linguistic play of childhood through the various strategies and language-games of the *Investigations*. Here we are offered the possibility of overcoming the deformation of our desire and returning to the innocence of our childhood play, in which desires are not deformed into the will to dominate. Such a 'therapy' is painful, for as Cavell observes it involves change:

Why do we take it that because we then must put away childish things, we must put away the prospect of growth and the memory of childhood? The anxiety in teaching, in serious communication, is that I myself require education. And for grownups this is not natural growth, but change. Conversion is a turning of our natural reactions; so it is symbolized as rebirth.¹⁵

In section 4.3 we will examine more fully Wittgenstein's understanding of the relationship between language and desire. For the present it is important to note that the language-games of the *Investigations* can also be seen as games which have the purpose of returning us to the

¹⁴ Mulhall, *Inheritance and Originality : Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Kierkegaard*, 51.

¹⁵ Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason : Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 125.

play of childhood on the boundary between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual. Our adult seriousness, the refusal to enter into play, is a giving into the temptation to seek ready-made solutions to philosophical problems. The recovery of our humanity involves learning to play.

4.2.3 The End of Play. A Return to Physics?

Mulhall argues that the various language-games developed by Wittgenstein in his later writings have the purpose of helping us to return to the play of childhood, something which, as Cavell points out, requires change in adults. Play, however, although it involves games with language, also involves on a pre-conceptual level physical play as the child interacts with its environment. In his investigation of the relationship between the pre-conceptual and the conceptual does Wittgenstein neglect this type of play? With the emphasis he places upon language-games does he risk losing sight of the importance of physical play in the pre-conceptual, such that his account of the pre-conceptual reduces it to a realm of efficient causation?

We have seen that Wittgenstein continued to draw a distinction between grammatical and empirical enquiry throughout his works. In the *Investigations* he draws a contrast between empirical investigations, which are concerned with particular causal connections, and logical investigation which “explores the nature of all things,” and thus “takes its rise, not from an interest in the facts of nature, nor from a need to grasp causal connexions: but from an urge to understand the basis, or essence, of everything empirical.”¹⁶ Wittgenstein wishes to avoid characterizing logic as something sublime, a mistake he made in the *Tractatus* with his search for the general form of the proposition. At the same time he does not abandon the distinction between the grammatical and the empirical, but continues to see his work as

¹⁶ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §89. “erforscht das Wesen aller Dinge, - Sie entspringt nicht einem Interesse für Tatsachen des Naturgeschehens, noch dem Bedürfnisse, kausale Zusammenhänge zu erfassen, sondern einem Streben, das Fundament, oder Wesen, alles Erfahrungsmäßigen zu verstehen.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §89.

logical: “Our investigation is therefore a grammatical one. Such an investigation sheds light on our problems by clearing misunderstandings away.”¹⁷ On the one side Wittgenstein places the grammatical, which stems from: “an urge to understand the basis, or essence, of everything empirical,” while on the other side he places the empirical, which is concerned with facts of nature and causal connections.

We have argued that the dialectical self-questioning approach to philosophy developed by Wittgenstein in his later work entailed that there is no simple one-step solution to the question of how the boundary between the grammatical and the empirical is to be drawn. This follows from Wittgenstein’s abandonment of the search for the general form of the proposition, because this also entails that there is no general account of relationship between the grammatical and the empirical. The passages quoted from the *Investigations* above imply, however, that the boundary is readily given by the identification of grammar with essence, and the empirical with causal connections. This contrast is reinforced in several remarks from the *Investigations* in which causal accounts of behaviour are contrasted with grammatical investigations. We saw in chapter three how Wittgenstein argues that accounts of human behaviour make no sense if we give a causal account of language use. The intentionality of human behaviour cannot be reduced to an external account of cause and effect: “if it were shewn how the words ‘Come to me’ act on the person addressed, so that finally, given certain conditions, the muscles of his legs are innervated, and so on—should we feel that the sentence lost the character of a *sentence*?”¹⁸ Here Wittgenstein is drawing a boundary between grammar, which concerns the intentional nature of human behaviour, and empirical investigations, which concern the realm of efficient causal interactions. This

¹⁷ *Philosophical Investigations*, §90. “Unsere Betrachtung ist eine grammatische. Und diese Betrachtung bringt Licht in unser Problem, indem sie Misverständnisse wegräumt.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §90.

¹⁸ *Philosophical Investigations*, §493. “Wenn aber gezeigt würde, in welche Weise die Worte ‘Komm zu mir!’ auf den Angesprochenen einwirken, sodaß am Schlußunter gewissen Bedingungen seine Beinmuskeln innerviert werden, etc. – würde jener Satz damit für uns den Charakter des Satzes verlieren.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §493.

distinction is seemingly reinforced in the following passage in which Wittgenstein characterizes empirical investigation as the establishment of causal connections through repeated experiments: “Causation is surely something established by experiments, by observing a regular concomitance of events for example.”¹⁹ If we look, however, at the wider context of this remark it is by no means clear that Wittgenstein holds this conception of causation. The remark is part of a section of the *Investigations* which concerns the nature of reading, which is itself part of a longer discussion concerning the nature of meaning and understanding. Wittgenstein contrasts our experience of reading aloud in a language we know with that of looking at a series of random symbols: “Can’t one feel that in the first case the utterance was *connected* with seeing the signs and in the second went on side by side with the seeing without any connection.”²⁰ It is here that Wittgenstein offers the above description of causation, and asks: “So how could I say that I *felt* something which is established by experiment?”²¹ He immediately adds, in parenthesis, the concession that: “It is indeed true that observation of regular concomitances is not the only way we establish causation.”²² This concession opens the path to understanding causation in less mechanical terms, and of challenging the notion that the distinction between the grammatical and the empirical can be established by a general characterization of the empirical as a realm of efficient causal interaction.

Wittgenstein also challenges the notion that the grammatical can be established as a purely realm of reason which floats free of causation. He acknowledges that rather than

¹⁹ *Philosophical Investigations*, §169. “Verursachung ist doch das, was wir durch Experimente feststellen; indem wir, z.B., das regelmäßige Zusammentreffen von Vorgängen beobachten.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §169.

²⁰ *Philosophical Investigations*, §169. “Ist es nicht fühlbar, daß im ersten Fall das Sprechen mit dem Anblick der Zeichen verbunden war um im zweiten ohne Verbindung neben dem Sehen der Zeichen herläuft?” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §169.

²¹ *Philosophical Investigations*, §169. “Wie könnte ich den sagen, daß ich das, was so durch Versuche festgestellt wird, fühle?” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §169.

²² *Philosophical Investigations*, §169. “Es ist wohl wahr, daß wir Verursachung nicht nur durch die Beobachtung eines regelmäßigen Zusammentreffens feststellen.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §169.

characterizing the experience of being influenced by the letters of a familiar language when we read them as one of causation: “One might rather say, I feel that the letters are the *reason* why I read such-and-such.”²³ While not denying that the language of reasons is used appropriately here Wittgenstein immediately challenges the notion that by talking of reasons we are thus excluding talk of causes: “This justification, however, was something that I said, or thought: what does it mean to say that I *feel* it?”²⁴ Wittgenstein is challenging the neat division between a world of reason, which is the concern of grammatical investigations, and the world of causes (including feelings) which is the province of empirical science. He can also be seen as challenging the equation of the conceptual with the realm of reason and the pre-conceptual with that of efficient causal interactions.

Such an equation is the result of applying a particular kind of picture to our experience of reading. Firstly, the contrast between reading a familiar language and an arbitrary set of symbols prompts us to: “think that we *felt the influence* of the letters on us when reading.”²⁵ He adds that without this comparison the notion of influence: “would never have occurred to us.”²⁶ Secondly we interpret this feeling of being influenced as a mechanical process: “when I speak of the experiences of being influenced, of causal connexion, of being guided, that is really meant to imply that I as it were feel the movement of the lever which connects seeing the letters with speaking.”²⁷ The problem here is that one particular experience of being influenced, of being guided, is used to establish a general account for all

²³ *Philosophical Investigations*, §169. “Eher noch könnte man sagen, ich fühle, daß die Buchstaben der *Grund* sind, warum ich so und so lese.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §169.

²⁴ *Philosophical Investigations*, §169. “Aber was sol les heißen, diese Begründung, die ich ausgesprochen, gedacht habe, zu *fühlen*?” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §169.

²⁵ *Philosophical Investigations*, §170. “auf den Gedanken gekommen, wir *fühlten den Einfluß* der Buchstaben auf uns beim Lesen.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §170.

²⁶ *Philosophical Investigations*, §170. “Wir wären ja nie auf den Gedanken gekommen.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §170.

²⁷ *Philosophical Investigations*, §170. “Denn wenn ich vom Erlebnis des Einflusses, der Verursachung, des Geführtwerdens rede, so soll das ja heißen, daß ich sozusagen die Bewegung der Hebel fühle, die den Anblick der Buchstaben mit dem Sprechen verbinden.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §170.

cases. To break the spell of this dominant picture Wittgenstein asks his readers to consider different experiences of being guided and lists five different experiences ranging from being forcefully led to walking “along a field-track, simply following it.”²⁸ This discussion of being guided challenges any neat division between the grammatical and the empirical as between a realm of reasons and a realm of causes. It also brings us to the boundary between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual, and the relationship between our pre-conceptual practices of being guided and our conceptual practices of acting for reasons. In chapter two, section 2.3.5 we examined Wittgenstein’s discussion of rule following and its basis in our pre-conceptual practices. His reflections on being guided provide the groundwork for these discussions on following a rule, and show that although Wittgenstein continued to distinguish the grammatical from the empirical he saw that there is a dialectical tension and play between them. In particular, the various experiences of being guided he outlines open the path towards an understanding of the pre-conceptual in terms of physical interaction and play.

Wittgenstein, however, also continued to draw a distinction between the grammatical and the empirical according to whether we are dealing with a conceptual or a causal question. We have already noted the danger present in speaking of *the* conceptual, now we can add that a similar danger lies in speaking of *the* grammatical and *the* empirical. Charlton, as we noted in chapter one, argues that a distinction between empirical enquiry and other types of enquiry was present from the beginnings of metaphysics. This does not, however, imply that there are two separate realms, but rather that there are different types of enquiry. In speaking of *the* grammatical and *the* empirical the mistake may be made of imagining that these refer to two realms each with its own content. Philosophers throughout the history of philosophy have been liable to make this mistake, and in the case of Wittgenstein there is a tendency to treat the *empirical* as a realm of efficient causal interaction. It is clear that Wittgenstein makes

²⁸ *Philosophical Investigations*, §172. “du gehst einen Feldweg entlang, last dich von ihm führen.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §172.

such an identification when he distinguishes philosophy as conceptual enquiry from science as empirical discovery. Thus, when reflecting on the phenomenon of seeing aspects he states: “Our problem is not a causal but a conceptual one.”²⁹ Such statements go directly against the interpretation offered above of Wittgenstein’s account of being guided, which would seem to challenge the equation of causation with efficient causality. They also provide the basis for such interpretations of Wittgenstein as those offered by McDowell, Baker and Hacker. How are we to reconcile these two interpretations?

The first and most obvious response is that Wittgenstein is inconsistent. Wittgenstein in his latter works did not set out to develop a systematic philosophy, and came to see that the nature of his enquiry entailed that he could never succeed in wielding his remarks: “into such a whole.”³⁰ In chapter one we argued, following Mulhall, that Wittgenstein’s later works are essentially self-questioning. If we treat them as the finished article, as providing a measure of orthodoxy in philosophy, we fail to see what Wittgenstein was trying to do. Secondly, we can add that the inconsistencies in Wittgenstein’s writings are magnified due to the eclectic nature of the sources he used and his lack of engagement with important elements of the philosophical tradition. Anscombe provides a reading of Wittgenstein as continuous with the Platonic tradition, but at the same time she is no apologist for him. In regard to Wittgenstein’s distinction between the grammatical and the empirical the question is whether he viewed this distinction through the modern lens of conceptual verses empirical content, or as two forms of distinct but interrelated enquiry.

In speaking of *the* conceptual we run the risk of adopting the modern model of subjectivity, such that a realm of conceptual content is contrasted with that which is non-conceptual. When Wittgenstein distinguishes between grammatical and empirical enquiry by

²⁹ *Philosophical Investigations*, 203e. “Unser Problem ist kein kausales, sondern ein begriffliches.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, 534.

³⁰ *Philosophical Investigations*, Preface. “zu einem solchen Ganzen zusammenschweißen.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, Vorwort.

identifying the former as conceptual and the latter with the discovery of causes, he is drawing just such a boundary between the conceptual and the non-conceptual. At the beginning of this chapter we argued that throughout his works Wittgenstein was concerned with the relationship between the form and content of our concepts. The abandonment of the search for the general form of the proposition entailed that there could be no one-step solution to the question of how to understand the relationship between form and content, but that this must be established in each context of application. This follows from the dialectical nature of Wittgenstein's later works; for although the distinction between the grammatical and the empirical is upheld there is no readily given solution to establishing it. To this end it is arguable that the various language-games and strategies which Wittgenstein develops in his later writings are intended to avoid a dichotomy between form and content, while at the same time showing how they are distinguished. In opposition to these dialectical practices the inconsistencies in Wittgenstein's later works are brought about by his continuing to identify the empirical with a realm of efficient causes placed in opposition to the conceptual.³¹

If we keep in mind the inconsistency in Wittgenstein's work we can return to the question whether in his understanding of the relationship between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual he allows for the physical play of the pre-conceptual. On the one hand Wittgenstein seeks to break the hold of the modern picture of the mind as a realm of introspectable content by returning us to the pre-conceptual basis on our concepts in our natural human actions and reactions. On the other hand he continues to operate within the envelope of a conceptual realm juxtaposed with the causal world which is investigated by the

³¹ The distinction Charlton draws between lexicography and grammar is not the same as Wittgenstein's distinction between the empirical and the grammatical. The point we made in chapter three by developing Charlton's argument is that in the absence of a distinction between lexicography and grammar Wittgenstein (and more generally most modern accounts of meaning) sets up a dichotomy between form and content. It is this dichotomy which results in the splitting the grammatical and the empirical into two realms with distinct contents.

natural sciences. The tension created by these clashing demands can be seen in Wittgenstein's investigations into the philosophy of psychology.

4.2.4 Seeing the Whole: A Non-Reductive Account of Nature?

We noted in chapter two how Wittgenstein's later writings on psychology were influenced by Gestalt theory and that during the writing of his remarks on psychology Wittgenstein was reading Köhler. In his presentation of Gestalt theory Köhler contrasts it with two seemingly opposed approaches to psychology: introspection and behaviourism. The former is based upon the idea that psychology begins with the examination of internal sensory experiences, which the subject of experience is able to isolate by attending to how things appear prior to interpretation. Thus, when looking at two objects, one of which is closer to us than the other, it may be the case that the internal images formed by the two objects are the same size, but through interpretation we think of the further object as larger than the closer.³² Köhler argues against such approaches, as they assume that there is a readily isolatable internal content to experience, which we build upon with our interpretations to form our picture of the world around us. Gestalt psychology by contrast begins with the whole of our experience, and does not seek to isolate an internal core prior to interpretation. Köhler is likewise critical of behaviourism, for although it is seemingly opposed to introspectionist accounts of mental content it also assumes that psychology is reducible to a number of simple functional patterns.³³ He supports the behaviourist argument that psychology should not begin with the examination of internal contents of experience, but argues that it is unscientific when it excludes reports of internal experiences.³⁴ Gestalt psychology seeks to show the full complexity of the relationship between human beings and

³² For Köhler's criticism of introspectionism see chapter three of Köhler, *Gestalt Psychology: An Introduction to New Concepts in Modern Psychology*. This is the later revised edition of Köhler's early 1929 work.

³³ For Köhler's criticism of behaviourism see chapter one and four of *ibid.*

³⁴ See *ibid.*, 31.

their environment by developing a more adequate description, which does not reduce these relationships to a simple mechanical core, but looks at the whole content of the psychological.

It is clear that Wittgenstein in his remarks on psychology shares a great deal in common with the Gestalt approach to psychology put forward by Köhler. He also seeks a way of understanding human psychology which avoids positing internal access to a pure mental content given prior to interpretation. On the other hand, like Köhler, he resists the reduction of human behaviour to a set of pre-given functions. He is, however, critical of Köhler's understanding of psychology as an empirical science which differs from the more advanced empirical sciences, such as physics, in the youth of its development. Wittgenstein's remark concerning psychology as a young science: "The confusion and bareness of psychology is not to be explained by calling it a 'Young science'"³⁵ is a direct response to Köhler.³⁶ It is aimed against the idea that psychological concepts can be given a causal, scientific analysis; even one which aims to reflect the whole of our experience. Moreover, Wittgenstein's statement that: "Our problem is not a causal but a conceptual one,"³⁷ comes in the midst of his discussion of seeing aspects and can be understood as disputing Köhler's claim that the seeing of different aspects takes place on a pre-conceptual level of visual organisation into a whole (e.g. a Gestalt). In another remark Wittgenstein attacks Köhler for failing to understand that the different aspects seen when we look at a picture: "one time with *one* group, and then another time with *another* one"³⁸ involve the use of different concepts,

³⁵ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 232e. "junge Wissenschaft" *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, 580.

³⁶ The second chapter of *Gestalt Psychology* is entitled "Psychology as a Young Science." See Köhler, *Gestalt Psychology: An Introduction to New Concepts in Modern Psychology*, 34-66.

³⁷ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 203e. "Unser Problem ist kein kausales, sondern ein begriffliches." *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, 535.

³⁸ *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Chicago Oxford: University of Chicago Press ; Basil Blackwell, 1980), §868. "einmal, zusammen mit *einer* Gruppe von Bildern, ein andermal mit *einer andern*." *Bemerkungen Über Die Philosophie Der Psychologie Band 1. In*

not merely differing organizations of perceptual complexes: “It is – contrary to Köhler – precisely a *meaning* that I see.”³⁹

Wittgenstein is not claiming that the organization of experience takes place only on the level of the conceptual. What he wishes to dispute is Köhler’s reduction of the conceptual content of experience to physiological processes. He thus acknowledges the variety of phenomena that constitute seeing aspects and notes that some lie predominantly on the side of the conceptual, whereas others are purely physiological: “I should like to say: there are aspects which are *mainly* determined by thoughts and associations, and others that are ‘purely optical’, these make their appearance and alter automatically, almost like after-images.”⁴⁰ In this remark we clearly see Wittgenstein’s interest in seeing aspects as a phenomenon lying between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual. At the same time, in speaking of the “purely optical” nature of some experiences of seeing aspects, he seems to identify the pre-conceptual with the world of efficient causation investigated by the modern natural sciences. The dialectical play opened up between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual would seem to be immediately closed down by this one-step method of drawing the boundary between them. On the one hand Wittgenstein wishes to dispute Köhler’s claim that psychology is reducible to physiology, while at the same time he holds onto the modern reduction of the physical to the realm of efficient causality. Yet it is this modern reduction which lies at the heart of Köhler’s project. This inconsistency in Wittgenstein is caused by his continuing adherence to this modern reduction, while he probes the boundary between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual in a manner which challenges it.

Bemerkungen Über Die Philosophie Der Psychologie, Werkausgabe Band 7. (Sinzheim, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1984), §868.

³⁹ *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, 1, §869. “Es ist – im Gegensatz zu Köhler – gerade eine *Bedeutung*, die ich sehe.” *Bemerkungen Über Die Philosophie Der Psychologie Band 1. In Bemerkungen Über Die Philosophie Der Psychologie, Werkausgabe Band 7.*, §869.

⁴⁰ *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, 1, §970. “Ich möchte sagen: Es gibt Aspekte, die hauptsächlich von Gedanken und Assoziationen bestimmt sind, und andere die ‘rein optisch’ sind, und automatisch eintreten und wechseln, beinahe wie Nachbilder.” *Bemerkungen Über Die Philosophie Der Psychologie Band 1. In Bemerkungen Über Die Philosophie Der Psychologie, Werkausgabe Band 7.*, §970.

If the physical is reduced in to efficient causation what are the implications for our understanding of the conceptual? At first sight it may seem that Wittgenstein offers an account of our conceptual abilities which brackets the pre-conceptual, particularly when he speaks of seeing: “aspects which are *mainly* determined by thoughts and associations.”⁴¹ Remarks such as this one may lead us to conclude that Wittgenstein envisages some kind of inner thought process, to which we have access through introspection. Wittgenstein’s arguments against such theories are well known, and in regard to the conceptual content of seeing aspects he argues that it is not through a process of introspection that we determine whether a particular concept is held, but by observing fine shades of behaviour. Thus, in the course of a discussion in which he reflects on various experiences of seeing aspects he urges us: “Do not try to analyse your own inner experience.”⁴² Rather, in determining the relationship between the conceptual and pre-conceptual aspects of our seeing aspects it is important to attend to the difference seeing an aspect makes to our behaviour.

To illustrate this Wittgenstein turns to the limiting case when we are inclined to call seeing an aspect purely an act of knowing and not one of seeing: “For when should I call it a mere case of knowing, not seeing? —Perhaps when someone treats the picture as a working drawing, *reads* it like a blueprint. (Fine shades of behaviour. —Why are they *important*? They have important consequences.)”⁴³ The limiting case helps us to see that in most other cases seeing aspects involves both seeing and knowing, bringing us to the boundary between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual. Our investigation of this boundary is thus not to be carried out through analysis of inner experiences, but by attending to: “fine shades of

⁴¹ *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, 1, §970. “Aspekte, die hauptsächlich von Gedanken und Assoziationen bestimmt sind.” *Bemerkungen Über Die Philosophie Der Psychologie Band 1. In Bemerkungen Über Die Philosophie Der Psychologie, Werkausgabe Band 7.*, §970.

⁴² *Philosophical Investigations*, 204e. “Versuche nicht, in dir selbst das Erlebnis zu analysieren!” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, 537.

⁴³ *Philosophical Investigations*, 204e. “Wann wurde ich’s den bloßes Wissen, kein Sehen, nennen? – Etwa, wenn Einer das Bild wie eine Werkzeichnung behandelt, es *läse*, wie eine Blaupause. (Feine Abshattungen des Benehmens. – Warum sind sie *wichtig*? Sie haben wichtige Folgen.)” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, 537.

behaviour.” Such attention is to be distinguished from the behaviourist reduction of human psychology to a pre-given set of reactions, but at the same time Wittgenstein points to the basis of our concepts in our: “many natural kinds of behaviour towards other human beings.”⁴⁴ We saw how Mulhall argues that in his remarks on seeing aspects Wittgenstein directs our attention to the play between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual. We can now (again following Mulhall) add that our ability to distinguish aspects depends upon whether we are able (and willing) to enter into this play. Only those who are able to play with the fine shades of human behaviour are able to attend to such fine shades in others. It is only within such play, in which we re-connect with our natural behaviour towards others, that we can begin to see the fine shades of meaning our use of language makes possible.

4.2.5 The Play of the Physical: Analogy and Nature

We can now return to ask whether in his account of the play between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual Wittgenstein fails to acknowledge the importance of pre-conceptual physical play. In developing his account of application Wittgenstein came to see that our conceptual abilities are rooted in pre-conceptual abilities and reactions; at the same time, however, he continued to hold onto the empiricist reduction of the pre-conceptual to the realm of efficient causation. His motivation here can be seen as continuous with his intention in writing the *Tractatus* to draw a boundary around the factual, and thus prevent the incursion of science into that which is of value in life: “6.41 The sense of the world must lie outside the world.”⁴⁵ It is this concern to prevent the incursion of science into question of human life which forms part of the background to Wittgenstein’s insistence that his investigations are grammatical, and his continuing to draw a sharp boundary around the factual realm which

⁴⁴ *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, 1, §151. “so viele natürliche Arten des Verhaltens zu den andern Menschen.” *Bemerkungen Über Die Philosophie Der Psychologie Band 1. In Bemerkungen Über Die Philosophie Der Psychologie, Werkausgabe Band 7.*, §151.

⁴⁵ *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 86. “6.41 Der Sinn der Welt muß außerhalb ihrer liegen.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 82.

science investigates. This sharp boundary was increasingly challenged by Wittgenstein's post-1945 investigations into psychological concepts, which provided a rich context for investigating the relationship between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual. In the course of these investigations he came to understand more clearly the rootedness of the conceptual in the pre-conceptual, throwing into question his characterization of the physical as purely a realm of physical causation. This heightened the tension in his work between an approach to psychology which in many respects connects with the pre-modern understanding of human psychology as activity of the soul, and an approach which continues to hold to the modern dichotomy between the conceptual and the non-conceptual.

Wittgenstein stresses the gap between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual in his well-known remark: "If a lion could talk, we could not understand him."⁴⁶ He makes this remark to illustrate the argument that understanding other people does not involve having access to internal thought processes, but requires sharing their way of life. It seems to bracket any reference to pre-conceptual animal behaviour from our understanding of the life of others. This does not rule out a role for the pre-conceptual as the basis for the conceptual, but it places it purely on the side of specific human abilities. It is certainly true that when we talk of the pre-conceptual we are specifically referring to human beings. This does not entail, however, that the pre-conceptual does not involve natural capacities and reactions we share with non-human animals.⁴⁷ It is also true that human beings have an ability to acquire certain

⁴⁶ *Philosophical Investigations*, 223e. "Wenn nein Löwe sprechen könnte, wir könnte ihn nicht verstehen." *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, 568.

⁴⁷ In a reflection on Wittgenstein's remark about lions Vicki Hearne expresses the surprised reaction of a lion trainer: "What does he mean? That if my lion Sudan started talking we would stop being able to understand each other?" Vicki Hearne, *Animal Happiness*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), 168. For Hearne Wittgenstein's mistake is not a simple one, but an "almost miraculously exacting mistake." *Ibid.* In contrast to philosophers such as Daniel Dennett, who simply refuse the possibility of entering into communication with animals, Hearne argues that Wittgenstein's lion remains silent because: "he knows we could not understand him." *Ibid.*, 170. Here Hearne acknowledges she is going beyond Wittgenstein's own thoughts, to read in the lion's silence: "the reticence of all consciousness that is beyond ours, in some accounts of Creation." *Ibid.* Hearne is influenced by Cavell when she sees in Wittgenstein's lion an invitation to enter into a world which opens us to the pre-linguistic aspects of our own being, into a world which exists prior to the

pre-conceptual skills, but this is also true of other animals. In any case, in talking about the acquisition of pre-conceptual skills we are faced with the question of the natural basis upon which this acquisition takes place. Unless some account is given of the natural basis for our pre-conceptual acquisition of abilities they will float free of nature. The problem which O'Callaghan identifies in McDowell's account of the relationship between first and second nature is merely shifted from the border between the conceptual and the non-conceptual, to a dichotomy within the pre-conceptual realm between human acquired abilities and the natural basis for these abilities in our animality.

When Wittgenstein talks about our natural pre-linguistic human behaviour, he does not confine this to that which is acquired. The problem he has is finding a way of speaking about pre-conceptual behaviour which does not reduce it to the level of efficient causal interaction, while at the same not identifying it purely with human acquired abilities. This problem forms the context for an extended remark in which Wittgenstein discusses Köhler's experiments involving monkeys; which comes during a discussion of the concept of thinking, in which Wittgenstein wishes to refute the notion that thinking is an internal conscious process. Firstly, Wittgenstein describes the experiment: "imagine a human being, or one of Köhler's monkeys, who wants to get a banana from the ceiling, but can't reach it, and thinking about ways and means finally puts two sticks together, etc."⁴⁸ The question he is

noise of language. This is not the romanticized world of pure nature, but the world of training which is central to the life of animals: "something happens in lion training that is in part possible because of the trainer's literacy, his capacity for mediated knowledge, but is nonetheless a transcendence of the noise and scepticism that are the inevitable accompaniments of mediated awareness." Ibid., 173. Hearne does not bring out how Wittgenstein's remarks can be read as pointing to the dialectical play on the boundary between the linguistic and the pre-linguistic, and she tends to see these as two separate spheres. Her concluding remarks, however, show that dialectical play is central to her own philosophy, in which she contrasts the silence of Wittgenstein's lion's with the voluble lions presented by the animal trainer Hubert Wells: "Wittgenstein has a lion of towering beauty who is not talking to us. I think that we court more than one kind of tragedy when we dismiss either the volubility of Well's lions or the tremendous silence of the lion of the *Investigations*." Ibid., 174. The reference here to tragedy recalls Cavell's reading the *Investigations*, in which he argues that central to Wittgenstein's concerns is the tragedy of refusing to enter into communication with others.

⁴⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, trans. C. G. Luckhardt and M. A. E. Aue, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Chicago Oxford: University of Chicago Press ; Basil Blackwell, 1980), §224. "Nun denke dir einem Menschen, oder einen von Köhlers Affen, der eine Banane von der Decke holen will, sie nicht erreichen kann, auf Mittel und Wege sinnt, endlich zwei Stöcke aneinander setzt." *Bemerkungen Über Die Philosophie*

interested in is what it means here to say that the monkey is thinking. Wittgenstein concedes that although it would be too much to say that the monkey: “must have some process before its mental eye,” he nevertheless wants, “the monkey to *reflect* on something.”⁴⁹ But how are we to understand this reflection? If on the other hand we assume the use of the sticks is: “a propitious accident, the question is: How can he *learn* from the accident?”⁵⁰

Wittgenstein’s purpose here is not to argue that monkeys can think in the same way that humans think: “But here of course we wouldn’t have the complete employment of ‘think’. The word would have reference to a mode of behaviour. Not until it finds its particular use in the first person does it acquire the meaning of mental activity.”⁵¹ At the same time he is drawing attention to the pre-conceptual basis for thought in a manner which seeks to avoid reducing the pre-conceptual purely to the level of efficient causation. The gulf which Wittgenstein places between humans and lions is not evident in this discussion of monkeys. This difference cannot be explained merely by the fact that monkeys are closer to human beings biologically, nor by observing that the comment on lions is general in nature, whereas those on monkeys regards a particular experiment. The context of both discussions concerns how we understand the concept of thinking, and although monkeys are closer to humans biologically this does not entail that we have nothing relevant to our pre-conceptual nature in common with lions.⁵²

Der Psychologie, Band 2. In Bermerkungen Über Der Psychologie, Werkausgabe, Band 7. (Sinzheim, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1984), §224.

⁴⁹ *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology, 2*, §224. “müsse den Vorgang vor dem geistigen Aug gesehen haben. ... der Affe solle sich etwas *überlegen*.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, §224.

⁵⁰ *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology, 2*, §224. “einen günstigen Zufall an! Die Frage ist dann: wie kann er aus dem Zufall *lernen*?” *Bermerkungen Über Die Philosophie Der Psychologie, Band 2. In Bermerkungen Über Der Psychologie, Werkausgabe, Band 7.*, §224.

⁵¹ *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology, 2*, §230. “Aber hier hätten wir freilich nicht die volle Verwendung von ‘denken’. Das Wort bezöge sich auf ein Benehmen. Die Bedeutung der seelischen Tätigkeit erhält er erst durch die besondere Verwendung in der ersten Person.” *Bermerkungen Über Die Philosophie Der Psychologie, Band 2. In Bermerkungen Über Der Psychologie, Werkausgabe, Band 7.*, §230.

⁵² For a contemporary examination of how Primatology can inform our understanding of human morality see F. B. M. de Waal et al., *Primates and Philosophers : How Morality Evolved*, The University Center for Human Values Series (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006). De Waal is reacting to reductive accounts of

In his discussion of Köhler's experiments with monkeys it is arguable that Wittgenstein opens a path to understanding the pre-conceptual basis of thinking in physical play. The problem he now faces is finding ways to talk about this pre-conceptual behaviour which avoid reducing it to purely efficient causation, while not subliming it in an account of thought as an inner mental process. We have seen that the conceptual work which Wittgenstein carries out in his later works involves making fine distinctions in human behaviour. In making such distinctions Wittgenstein returns us to the boundary between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual; where we first learnt to use language through play. The development of our conceptual abilities presupposes, however, the pre-conceptual play through which we interact with the world around us. Wittgenstein draws our attention to the pre-conceptual, as his discussion of Köhler's monkeys demonstrates, but the insistence that his investigations are grammatical and not empirical would seem to exclude any way of describing pre-conceptual physical play.

The question is whether Wittgenstein is here carrying out a grammatical investigation. Grammatical investigations begin with our linguistic behaviour, and although they can be widened to point to the pre-conceptual abilities which form the basis for our language use, they cannot directly describe these abilities. In his discussion of Köhler's monkeys Wittgenstein's description of the monkeys' behaviour is hedged around with qualifications, negations and the use of analogy. It is true to say that this is a grammatical investigation insofar as Wittgenstein is seeking to help us see the grammar of the verb 'to think'. The behaviour described, however, is not linguistic behaviour. Nor does the fact that we use various grammatical devices to describe this pre-linguistic behaviour entail that it is ultimately grammatical, for we use grammar in the natural sciences without thereby implying that what we are talking about is ultimately grammatical.

primate behaviour, such as those developed by advocates of the selfish gene hypothesis. He seeks to develop a richer conception of the animal world, which can be used to help us better understand the human world.

The question now arises as to what Wittgenstein is doing in his attempts to describe the pre-conceptual if his investigations are neither grammatical nor empirical (at least not empirical in the sense he understands modern sciences to be empirical). If we turn to the Aristotelian tradition for an answer to this question, then it could be argued that what Wittgenstein is trying to do is physics, or more specifically biology, the division of physics which deals with animals. When Charlton accuses Wittgenstein of lacking a teleology of nature it is precisely the absence of this physical level of pre-conceptual behaviour that he argues is missing from Wittgenstein's account of meaning. In identifying science with the discovery of efficient causes and limiting his investigations to the making of conceptual remarks Wittgenstein closes off any possibility of understanding the pre-conceptual. The self-questioning dialectic nature of his thought led him to push beyond these self-imposed limits to a richer understanding of the physical, but he was still some distance from developing an adequate way of understanding the pre-conceptual. It can be argued, nevertheless, that Wittgenstein helps us to see the dialectical nature of any such understanding.

In restricting science to the study of efficient causality Wittgenstein can be read as protecting what is important in life from the encroachment of science; heading off the danger of giving a causal account of our linguistic practices by making a clear distinction between conceptual and empirical investigations. If we lift this restriction can the distinction between the empirical and the grammatical be maintained? Does Aristotelian biology reduce the human being to a set of pre-determined ends such that grammar is merely the linguistic expression of the biologically determined? Here the importance of dialectical play between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual is essential to avoid any such reduction.

When attempting to describe our pre-conceptual behaviour it is essential to keep in mind the use of analogy and negation. This is particularly important at the boundary between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual, where we on the one hand wish to maintain that there

is a real distinction, while on the other hand showing their intimate connection. When we speak of purpose on the level of the pre-conceptual we are trying to get at something which is akin to, while distinct from, our conceptual understanding of purpose. Thus, when Wittgenstein says of one of Köhler's monkeys: "Thinking gives him the possibility of *perfecting* his methods,"⁵³ the kind of thinking and perfecting that he is talking about here is understood through analogy with our conceptual understanding of thinking and perfecting. Wittgenstein is developing a dialectical interplay between the pre-conceptual as understood by analogy and negation with the conceptual, and the light that the pre-conceptual casts upon the conceptual. Once we allow for the development of this dialectical interplay the path is opened for an understanding of the pre-conceptual which is physical, but which does not involve the reduction of the physical purely to the level of efficient causation.

4.3 The End of Desire: Subliming Our Desires

In this section we will examine the second aspect of the teleological basis for our linguistic practices: the question of human desire. This will involve an account of how Wittgenstein understands human desire; keeping in mind the basis for our desires in the pre-conceptual, while guarding against the danger of reducing human desire to a set of pre-given, pre-conceptual desires. Rhees accuses Wittgenstein of failing to appreciate how our linguistic practices originate in our search for common understanding. This search is not limited to particular ends, but involves a desire for universal understanding. When we speak of the basis for human desire we are referring to desire on the pre-conceptual physical (biological) level, but also to the metaphysical question of the origin of desire and the search for unity. Rhees

⁵³ Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, 2, §224. "Das Denken gibt ihm die Möglichkeit zur *Vervollkommung* seiner Methoden." *Bemerkungen Über Die Philosophie Der Psychologie, Band 2. In Bemerkungen Über Der Psychologie, Werkausgabe, Band 7., §224.*

criticises Wittgenstein for failing to see that prior to any particular application of language there is a given unity of understanding:

We cannot say that a discussion has no sense except in connexion with some application.

The unity of understanding is found in dialogue. This is what makes growth possible – in the dialogue of the soul with itself, for instance, though that is not the whole story. It is also the unity that there is when we have different people participating in discussion or in discourse.⁵⁴

Is Rhees here fair in his criticism of Wittgenstein, or does he fail to appreciate the wider dialectical interplay which permeates Wittgenstein's later writings? We argued in chapter two that Wittgenstein situates particular uses of language in the context of the wider abilities and reactions which make such applications possible. It can be argued that in returning us to particular applications of language, and raising the question of the relationship between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual, Wittgenstein wishes to help us see the basis of our mutual understanding in pre-linguistic nature. At the same time, in seeking to avoid the reduction of the conceptual to the pre-conceptual he acknowledges that any account of human understanding must go beyond an account of our pre-linguistic interrelationships.

Does Wittgenstein go far enough, however, in his characterization of how human understanding goes beyond the pre-conceptual? In the previous section we argued that although Wittgenstein opens the path for a more adequate understanding of the pre-conceptual, he continues to hold a reductive understanding of the physical. Similarly, in this section we will argue that the manner in which Wittgenstein separates the grammatical from the empirical removes dialectic from its basis in human desire. The relationship between metaphysics, dialectic and desire is one which is attested by Plato, and Hibbs argues that contemporary approaches to the metaphysics of Aquinas fail to do justice to the erotic nature of dialectic:

⁵⁴ Rhees, *Wittgenstein and the Possibility of Discourse*, 91.

What is lost, say, in the case of Aquinas's metaphysics, amid contemporary abstractions is the erotic appeal of metaphysics and its pervasive deployment of aesthetic language. Metaphysics is rooted in the natural human desire to know, the longing to behold and participate in the beautiful, to find one's place within, and to conceive all one's activities in relation to, the whole. Metaphysics is at once about being, truth, goodness, and beauty.⁵⁵

In seeking to return us to the basis for our linguistic practices in human nature the dialectical nature of Wittgenstein's later philosophy returns us to this older metaphysical tradition. We thus find again in Wittgenstein an inconsistency between his adherence to the modern picture which informs his understanding of the relationship between the grammatical and the empirical, and the development of a dialectical form of philosophy which places this modern picture in question and points towards a pre-modern understanding of the world.

4.3.1 World and Will: The *Tractatus* Account of Desire

Rhees argues that the emphasis placed by Wittgenstein on the analogy between language and games stresses the autonomy of linguistic practices in a manner which cuts them off from any basis in human nature. This criticism gains support if we examine Wittgenstein's understanding of human desire.⁵⁶ In the *Tractatus* there is no direct treatment of desire; rather Wittgenstein's interest is in the relationship between the world and the will.⁵⁷ In chapter two we saw how in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein attempted to draw a boundary around that which can be said, leaving beyond the boundary that which must be passed over in silence. By drawing this boundary Wittgenstein was able to limit science to the factual, and to place beyond the boundary all that is most important in life. But where do we as human beings stand in regard to this boundary? How according to this boundary are we to understand what it is to be human? In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein splits the human being into

⁵⁵ Hibbs, *Aquinas, Ethics, and Philosophy of Religion : Metaphysics and Practice*, xiii.

⁵⁶ In the English translations of Wittgenstein's works the German *Wunsch* is generally translated as wish. In German, however, it also has the more general meaning of desire.

⁵⁷ For an account of how Wittgenstein's understanding of the will developed, and how it relates to earlier and later accounts of the will see: Roger Teichmann, *Wittgenstein on Thought and Will*, Wittgenstein's Thought and Legacy (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015).

the subject, which lies beyond the world, and the body which is part of the world. Since the subject is beyond the world we can say nothing about it, and it is only manifested as that which remains of us once we have subtracted all that can be described physically:

5.631 There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas.

If I wrote a book called *The World as I found it*, I should have to include a report on my body, and should have to say which parts were subordinate to my will, and which were not, etc., this being a method of isolating the subject, or rather of showing that in an important sense there is no subject; for it alone could *not* be mentioned in that book.⁵⁸

The influence of Schopenhauer on Wittgenstein's understanding of the will is clear to see in his passage,⁵⁹ and he continues to operate within the terms of the modern picture which splits human beings into a subject set over and against the physical world which contains the body.⁶⁰ Where does human desire belong in such a picture? If Wittgenstein was to follow the Kantian tradition which informs Schopenhauer then desire would be placed on the side of the world, and thus would be of no interest to ethics, but would be studied by psychology. As such it would be akin to the phenomenal manifestations of the will: "It is impossible to speak about the will in so far as it is the subject of ethical attributes. And the will as a phenomenon is of interest only to psychology."⁶¹ This split in the human being corresponds to the dichotomy between form and content which results from the requirements Wittgenstein

⁵⁸ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 5.631. "5.631 Das denkende vorstellende, Subjekt gibt es nicht. Wenn ich ein Buch schreibe *Die Welt, wie ich sie vorfand* so wäre darin auch über meinen Leib zu berichten and zu sagen, welche Glieder meinem Willen unterstehen and zu sage, welche nicht, etc. Dies ist nämlich eine Methode, das Subjekt zu isolieren, oder vielmehr zu zeigen, daß es in einem wichtigen kein Subjekt gibt: Von ihm allein nämlich könnte in diesem Buche *nicht* die Rede sein. –" *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 67-68.

⁵⁹ For an account of Schopenhauer's influence on Wittgenstein see Brian McGuinness, *Wittgenstein : A Life*, Penguin Philosophy (London: Penguin, 1990), 39-40.

⁶⁰ In his article 'Action and the Will' John Hyman notes that in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein follows Schopenhauer's critique of empiricist account of the will. Hyman also traces the development of Wittgenstein's notion of the will in his later works, observing how he rejected William James' theory of the will and his own earlier Schopenhauer influenced theory. Although Wittgenstein enabled us to overcome various modern mistakes Hyman argues that he remained trapped by the modern failure to distinguish between action and motion, and succumbed to the modern identification of the voluntary/non voluntary distinction with the active/passive distinction. See John Hyman, "Action and the Will," in *The Oxford Handbook of Wittgenstein*, ed. Oskari Kuusela and Marie McGinn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 451-71.

⁶¹ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.423. "6.423 Von Willen als dem Träger des Ethischen kann nicht gesprochen werden. Und der Wille als Phänomen interessiert nur die Psychologie." *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 83.

places upon logic in the *Tractatus*, with the crystal purity of logic finding its counterpart in the subject transcending the world. The attempt to develop a general account of application, and thus to exhibit the unity of the form of all thought through the discovery of the general form of the proposition, is mirrored in the following remark in which Wittgenstein explains the relationship between the world and the will: “6.43 If the good or bad exercise of the will does alter the world, it can alter only the limits of the world, not the facts—not what can be expressed by means of language.”⁶² Just as the general form of the proposition is seen as a framework for all propositions, but has no content itself, so the will frames the limits of the world, but has no effect within the world.

In chapter two we traced how Wittgenstein abandoned the search for the general form of the proposition and sought to return to the rough ground of our actual linguistic practices. This transformation influenced his understanding of the will, and involved a study of the contexts within which we use volitional language. In *The Brown Book* Wittgenstein carries out a discussion concerning how we think about: “volition, deliberation and involuntary action.”⁶³ He argues that philosophers make a mistake when they isolate certain experiences of these phenomena, and use these isolated experiences to create a general account of willing: “Think, say, of these examples: I deliberate whether to lift a certain heavyish weight, decide to do it, I then apply my force to it and lift it. Here you might say, you have a full-fledged case of willing and intentional action.”⁶⁴ Such general accounts of willing fall into the mistake of positing an act of volition which precedes actual voluntary acts: “We speak of an ‘act of volition’ as different from the action which is willed.”⁶⁵ Here, it is clear that Wittgenstein also has in mind the *Tractatus* account of the will, which separates the will

⁶² *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.43. “Wen das gute oder böse Wollen die Welt ändert, so kann es nur die Grenzen der Welt ändern, nicht die Tatsachen; nicht das, was durch die Sprache ausgedrückt werden kann.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 83.

⁶³ *The Blue and Brown Books*, 150.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 151.

which transcends the world from human acts within the world.⁶⁶ To avoid such mistakes Wittgenstein argues that it is essential to keep in mind the wide variety of experiences to which we apply volitional concepts.

4.3.2 Situating Desire: The *Investigation* and the Contexts for Volitional Language

In the *Investigations* Wittgenstein continues this discussion of the contexts within which we use volitional language and in the following passage he criticises the picture of the will as something self-contained which interacts with the world causally: “One imagines the willing subject here as something without any mass (without any inertia); as a motor which has no inertia in itself to move.”⁶⁷ Wittgenstein seeks to return us to practices within which we use volitional language, contrasting the various ways in which we speak about the voluntary and the involuntary. The purpose of this is again to break the spell of the picture which identifies the voluntary with an undetermined act of volition and places all other human acts on the side of the involuntary. Wittgenstein is no longer bracketing off all that is of value from the world, but seeks to give an account of our linguistic practices which involves what is most important in life. In returning to the rough ground of our actual linguistic practices Wittgenstein wishes to provide an understanding of human beings which avoids the reduction of value to a pre-given set of human desires, while at the same time showing how value does not float free of desire. Once again the dialectic nature of Wittgenstein’s later thought is evident in the various strategies and language-games he uses to help us see the nature of volition and desire.

⁶⁶ Although there is continuity in so far as in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein’s purpose is to deny that the will can be understood in terms of causal interaction with the world, whereas in his later works he also denies that the will can be characterized primarily as a faculty which enters into efficient causal interaction with the world.

⁶⁷ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, § 618. “Das wollende Subjekt stellt man sich hier als etwas Masseloses (Trägheitsloses) vor; als einen Motor, der in sich selbst keine Trägheitswiderstand zu überwinden hat.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, § 618.

It is important to keep this dialectical interplay in mind in the following remark from the *Investigations* in which Wittgenstein contrasts his *Tractatus* view of the crystalline purity of logic with his later understanding of language as embodied in human practices: “The *Preconceived idea* of crystalline purity can only be removed by turning our whole examination around. (One might say: the axis of reference of our examination must be rotated, but about the fixed point of our real need.)”⁶⁸ What is the “need” (in German *Bedürfnis*) that Wittgenstein here refers to? An initial reading might suggest that Wittgenstein is here offering a pragmatic account of meaning of the kind Charlton accuses him for holding. Our dialectical reading of Wittgenstein militates against such a reading, and if we follow Mulhall we can read the *Investigations* as calling into question ready-made solution to the question of human need. The strategies and language-games of the *Investigations* have the purpose of helping us to overcome distortions of desire, and to reconnect us with the play of desire on the boundary between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual.

In seeking to return us to our human need, and thus overcoming the distortions of our nature which result in the splitting of the human being into a causally determined body and a transcendently free subject, Wittgenstein can again be placed in continuity with the metaphysical tradition. Pieper argues that it is an account of *eros* such as that given by Plato in the *Symposium*, in opposition to the Sophists, which provides an integrated understanding of human beings:

There is an implication to calling *eros* a mediative power that unites the lowest with the highest in man; that links the natural, sensual, ethical and spiritual elements; that prevents one element from being isolated from the rest and that preserves the quality of true humanness in all forms of love from sexuality to *agape*. The implication is that none of these elements can be excluded as inappropriate to man, that all of them “belong”.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ *Philosophical Investigations*, §108. “Das *Vorurteil* der Kristallreinheit kann nur so beseitigt werden, daß wir unsere ganze Betrachtung drehen. (Man könnte sagen: Die Betrachtung muß gedreht werden, aber um unser eigentliches Bedürfnis als Angelpunkt.)” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band I*, §108.

⁶⁹ Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance*, 260.

The interpretation of Wittgenstein we have developed which involves the play between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual sees in his later works an attempt to achieve something of this unity of “the lowest and the highest” in human beings. There is a crucial difference, however, between Plato and Wittgenstein. Whereas Plato argues that human desire only comes to rest in a union with that which transcends it (the good), Wittgenstein promises rest as the result of the “different therapies”⁷⁰ which bring us philosophical peace.

It is this difference which Rhee highlights in his criticism of Wittgenstein: “The reality of philosophy. That is what Plato was urging against the sophists. One might almost want to say: Philosophy is no more essentially therapeutic than music or poetry or any form of art is.”⁷¹ The search for understanding which lies at the heart of Plato’s philosophy is not brought to rest through the use of therapeutic techniques. There are clear parallels between Plato’s myth of the cave and Wittgenstein’s image of releasing the fly from the fly-bottle, but whereas Plato holds forth the promise of the ascent of human desire it is not clear how Wittgenstein envisages what lies outside the fly-bottle. It may be objected that Wittgenstein’s purpose is to not so much to offer a path of transcendence, but to clear the way for us to engage with the transcendent. This does not, however, answer the core of Rhee’s criticism that philosophy is not the same as therapy.

In the last section we argued that Wittgenstein continued to understand the difference between the grammatical and the empirical in a way which prevented him from developing a more adequate understanding of the pre-conceptual. The picture he adopted in the *Tractatus* continued to exercise a hold over him even when the development of his later philosophy implied the abandonment of that picture. In a similar way the *Tractatus* continued to influence his understanding of philosophy, and although he abandoned the notion that all philosophical questions could be resolved by a perspicuous presentation of a crystalline logic,

⁷⁰ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §133. “verschiedene Therapien.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §133.

⁷¹ Rhee, *Wittgenstein and the Possibility of Discourse*, 19.

he maintained the promise of achieving a perspective which brings philosophical peace. This perspective, however, depends upon the distinction between the subject who transcends the world and our physical nature within the world. With the developments in Wittgenstein's later philosophy this dualism was abandoned, but he continued to hold onto the promise of philosophical peace held in the *Tractatus*. This inconsistency helps to explain the wide variety of interpretations of Wittgenstein's later thought, but also shows the limitation of his philosophy.

4.4 Conclusion: Wittgenstein, Dialectic and Metaphysics

In this chapter we have responded to two challenges to Wittgenstein's later philosophy. The first challenge questions his understanding of the relationship between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual, whereas the second concern the teleological basis for dialectic. This second challenge was seen to have two interrelated aspects, firstly the question of the use of teleological language to describe the world we interact with, and secondly the teleological nature of our desires. Both of these challenges place a question mark over the claim that Wittgenstein succeeded in his later works in developing a dialectical form of philosophy which achieves realism while avoiding idealism and empiricism. In section 4.2 we responded to the first challenge by arguing that Wittgenstein's post-1945 focus on psychological concepts enabled him to investigate more fully the boundary between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual. Wittgenstein's engagement with Gestalt psychology opened the path to a richer understanding of the pre-conceptual. Although he criticised Köhler's reduction of psychology to physiology Wittgenstein was able to use various insights and tools from Gestalt psychology to examine the boundary between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual. Wittgenstein's investigations into psychological concepts seek to maintain the dialectical tension between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual, avoiding the danger of

reducing one side to the other. To this end Wittgenstein opens a path for the use of grammatical tools such as analogy and negation to talk about the pre-conceptual, allowing a more adequate understanding of physical nature. The dominance of the modern picture which informs his understanding of the distinction between grammatical and empirical investigations prevented him, however, from fully taking this path. In particular he lacks a sense of the importance of pre-conceptual physical play in his understanding of the pre-linguistic abilities and reactions which provide the basis for our conceptual abilities.

There is a danger in using this Aristotelian understanding of our relationship with the world that the dialectical tension in the relationship between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual (and also within the pre-conceptual between acquired abilities and the physical basis for them) will be ignored. It is perhaps in regard to this danger that Wittgenstein's later work is of greatest value, and we saw how in his account of the development of our conceptual abilities Wittgenstein shows the interplay between the conceptual and the different levels of the pre-conceptual. More widely the various techniques and language-games developed by Wittgenstein in his later works, and particularly his reflections on seeing aspects, can be understood as exercises in helping us to the play between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual. Through this play we return to our natural desires, overcoming the distortions of those desires which occur when we use language purely as a tool for control; freeing language as the expression of all that is most important in life.

This brought us to the question of how Wittgenstein understands human desire and here we distinguished two aspects of desire. Firstly, there is the relationship between our conceptual and our pre-conceptual desires. Here we saw that Wittgenstein rejected the account of the will which is given in the *Tractatus* by returning us to the actual practices within which we use volitional language. This opens a path for understanding the pre-conceptual basis for our desires which avoids characterizing it purely in terms of efficient

causation, and at the same time the danger of misunderstanding our voluntary behaviour as the causal result of a causally undetermined will is avoided. The second aspect of desire we examined concerns the metaphysical question of the origin and end of human desire. Here we followed Rhees' criticism of Wittgenstein and concluded that although Wittgenstein opens the path towards the kind of account of desire which places the desire for understanding prior to particular applications of concepts, his continuing adherence to the *Tractatus* therapeutic understanding of philosophy, with its implicit notion of the subject, prevented him from developing the kind of account of human transcendence given by Plato. Here we may add, however, that the dialectical nature of Wittgenstein's later thought helps to guard against too ready an account of the end of human desire in a unity of understanding. Although question marks can be placed over Wittgenstein's understanding of *eros*, his dialectical practices can be seen as returning us in the manner Desmond suggests to the metaphysical practice of Plato.

The question of origins lies at the heart of the metaphysical tradition, and Mulhall's reading of the *Investigations* as a work concerned with origins deepens the dialogue between Wittgenstein and that tradition. In particular it raises the question of human nature, and the challenges we have brought against Wittgenstein in this chapter have had the purpose of probing his understanding of human nature. The dialectical practices Wittgenstein develops in his later works can be read in their form and content as throwing light on the question of what it is to be human. In the next chapter we will see how this light can help to illuminate questions in moral theology. The questions we have examine in this chapter such as the relationship between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual, and the nature of desire are of direct relevance for contemporary work in moral theology. Above all we will argue that Wittgenstein's value to moral theology is in challenging modern conceptions of nature, paving the way for a renewal of our understanding of nature and its use in moral theology

5 WITTGENSTEIN, NATURE AND MORAL THEOLOGY

5.1 Wittgenstein and the Renewal of Moral Theology

The first four chapters of this thesis have examined how Wittgenstein's writings can help us to understand human nature for a renewal of moral theology. To this end we have offered a reading of Wittgenstein which places him in dialogue with the metaphysical tradition, and emphasises the dialectical nature of his later philosophy. In particular we have sought to determine how Wittgenstein's philosophy provides an account of human freedom as situated, and as steering a course between the empty formalism of idealism and the physical determinism of empiricism. The influence of Wittgenstein on moral theology in the English speaking world has been considerable, and this thesis could have proceeded by offering an overview of how Wittgenstein has been used by theologians such as Stanley Hauerwas or Charles Pinches. Instead we chose to begin with an in-depth analysis of Wittgenstein's thought on the subject of human nature. The advantage of this approach is that firstly it allows us to carry out a fuller dialogue between the work of moral theologians and Wittgenstein, and in particular provides the starting points for a conversation with those moral theologians who engage with metaphysics and the philosophy of nature in the Catholic tradition. Secondly, it has enabled us to develop a critical perspective on Wittgenstein, which not only draws attention to the limitation of using Wittgenstein's writings in moral theology, but also provides critical perspectives relevant more generally for an account of human nature. Thirdly, and of particular relevance for this chapter and the next, it helps us to see how Wittgenstein's writings can be used in developing an understanding of human nature which is open to theology.

In this chapter we will begin to develop a dialogue between Wittgenstein and moral theology by providing a general overview of the relevance Wittgenstein's philosophy has for

theology. In section 5.2 we will respond to the criticism that Wittgenstein in his later thought developed a form of finite pragmatism which cuts philosophy off from theology. This will lead to a more general discussion of the relationship between philosophy and theology. Here we will touch upon the contemporary re-evaluation of Henri de Lubac's theology of grace and nature to argue that Wittgenstein's philosophy enters most readily into conversation with theology through the mediation of the theology of creation:¹ in raising the question of human nature Wittgenstein provides an opening for an encounter with divine wisdom. In keeping with this emphasis on the theology of creation section 5.3 will outline how over the last twenty-five years the concept of nature has made a return to the mainstream of moral theology. In section 5.4 we will examine parallels between Wittgenstein's search for origins and Aquinas' understanding of nature as origin, as this is presented in the works of Servais Pinckaers.² Like Wittgenstein, Pinckaers sought to overcome the modern dichotomy which opposes the autonomy of reason to the heteronomy of anything which is external to it. Pinckaers' concerns, however, are theological, and the question he faces is how to understand the relationship between grace and nature without opposing the heteronomy of grace to the autonomy of human agency.

5.2 How Open is Wittgenstein's Philosophy to Theology?

Wittgenstein has been criticised for developing a form of pragmatism which cuts off any possibility of human transcendence. In his article "Words, Facts and God"³ Cornelius Ernst asks whether the Wittgenstein of the *Investigations* in unmasking false metaphysical idols and returning us to the: "common world of language-games embodied in the life of the

¹ For a statement of de Lubac's thesis see Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967).

² For a fuller statement of this project of renewal see Servais Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans. Sr. Mary Thomas Nobel, O. P. (Washington DC.: Catholic University of America Press, 1995).

³ Ernst, "Words, Facts and God," 13-27.

community”⁴ makes the question of human transcendence irrelevant: “For the finitude which is presented to us in the *Investigations* is no longer opposed to any sort of transcendence; it is merely one aspect of the Indefinite, the indefinite variety of human life.”⁵ In the Postscript to the second edition of *Theology After Wittgenstein* Kerr also acknowledges the challenge of showing how Wittgenstein remains open to the transcendent. Kerr is responding to Russell Reno’s criticism that his presentation of Wittgenstein forces a choice between: “radical transcendence in pursuit of an extraordinary goal discontinuous with, even hostile to, ordinary life, on the one hand, and, on the other, a pure immanence which forsakes the putatively alienating power of the extraordinary.”⁶ Kerr admits that “There is something to this charge” and regrets that in his presentation of Wittgenstein he emphasised a reading in continuity with Aristotle’s dictum: “that ‘being mortals, we should think mortal’, over against his [Aristotle’s] own insistence that ‘we ought, as far as in us lies, to make ourselves immortal.’”⁷ Similarly, in response to Francesca Murphy’s criticism that his use of Wittgenstein reduces the self to a social construct removed from any sense of wonder through shared participation in being, Kerr responds by regretting that he failed to show how: “Wittgenstein’s philosophical writing is permeated by acknowledgement of what we might properly call ‘the wonder of being’. Indeed, the religious sensibility to which his work lends itself, as we shall see, can be described as a ‘sensibility of wonder’.”⁸

Kerr is generous in his response to his critics, but it is important to note that he is not repudiating the central aim of *Theology After Wittgenstein*, which is to show the relevance of Wittgenstein’s writings in overcoming the dominance of modern misunderstandings of the

⁴ Ibid., 24.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Kerr, *Theology after Wittgenstein*, 199. For Reno’s criticism of Kerr see Russell R. Reno, *The Ordinary Transformed : Karl Rahner and the Christian Vision of Transcendence* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1995).

⁷ Kerr, *Theology after Wittgenstein*, 199.

⁸ Ibid., 197. The phrase ‘sensibility of wonder’ is attributed to John Churchill by Kerr. See Francesca Aran Murphy, *Christ the Form of Beauty : A Study in Theology and Literature* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995).

self within theology. To this end we have followed Kerr in showing how Wittgenstein attempted to develop a form of realism which avoids the dangers of idealism and empiricism. When theologians talk about immanence and transcendence, or of participation in being, what are the temptations they are liable to fall into? How are we to understand interiority and the contrast between the inner and the exterior? The realism which Wittgenstein sought involves a constant questioning of how we use such terms within theology, and the need to overcome the temptation to offer simple solutions to such complex questions. The dialectical nature of Wittgenstein's later thought entails he can be read as offering the dizzying perspective of the Indefinite, but such a perspective is as much a projection as the one which reduces God to a super entity standing over and against the world. Wittgenstein constantly probes our use of terms, teaching us how to avoid the misuses of language which embody false pictures of what it is to be human. In *Theology After Wittgenstein* Kerr emphasizes the aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy which seek to overcome the disembodied rational self of modern thought by reconnecting us with our shared and embodied human practices. This is not to reduce human nature to a given immanence, but rather to bring into question how we understand immanence. Which pictures hold us captive when we think of the immanent and how do we overcome such pictures by returning to our actual human practices? Kerr draws a parallel between Wittgenstein and Aristotle, and opens the path to reading Wittgenstein in conversation with that tradition which characterizes human beings as rational animals: creatures living in the tension of the physical and the spiritual, between the reality of mortality and the desire for immortality.

This is not to say that Wittgenstein is beyond criticism. Indeed, bringing Wittgenstein into dialogue with the metaphysical tradition enables us to show the tensions and limitations of his philosophy. As we begin a conversation between Wittgenstein and moral theology, we should keep these limitations in mind. In assessing the openness of any philosophy to

theology it is important to acknowledge its limitation, for this enables us to see how it can be transformed in the encounter with God's revelation. Is a philosophy essentially closed to divine transcendence or is it open to the transforming grace of divine wisdom? Is its understanding of human nature (or denial of human nature) one which opens or closes the human to the divine? This raises the question of grace and nature, and throughout this chapter and the next we will keep this question in mind when examining the significance Wittgenstein's understanding of human nature has for a renewal of moral theology. Reno's criticisms of Kerr's Wittgenstein turn on the charge that Wittgenstein's understanding of human nature does not allow for that interplay of immanence and transcendence which enables us to understand the interaction between grace and nature. By contrast John Milbank sees Wittgenstein as a kindred spirit with Henri de Lubac and Martin Heidegger in overcoming the modern re-appropriation of a pagan ontology in which: "the primitive pagan ontological assumption that 'capacity' or 'power' rather than 'desire' will disclose reality to us."⁹ This quotation is taken from Milbank's book *The Suspended Middle* in which he aims to defend de Lubac's theology of grace against recent criticisms of de Lubac made by Lawrence Feingold¹⁰ and Steven A Long.¹¹ It would take us beyond the scope of this thesis to enter into this debate,¹² but Milbank suggests that Wittgenstein's later writings can help to overcome an understanding of nature as autonomous and set over and against the transcendent realm of grace.¹³

⁹ John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle : Henri De Lubac and the Renewed Split in Modern Catholic Theology*, Second edition. ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 70.

¹⁰ See Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters*, 2nd ed., Faith and Reason : Studies in Catholic Theology and Philosophy (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2010).

¹¹ See Steven A. Long, *Natura Pura on the Recovery of Nature in the Doctrine of Grace*, (Ashland, Ohio: Fordham University Press, 2010).

¹² For a balanced overview of this debate see Andrew Dean Swafford, *Nature and Grace : A New Approach to Thomistic Ressourcement* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2014).

¹³ For an account of how Wittgenstein can be read as proving resources for overcoming the dualism between a realm of nature and a realm of grace see Terrance W. Klein, *Wittgenstein and the Metaphysics of Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Our reading of Wittgenstein differs from that of Klein insofar as Klein reads Wittgenstein through the lens of Transcendental Thomism with its notion that the philosophy of nature has

The question of grace and nature prompts us to examine the role of philosophy in theology. Theologians who use the work of any philosopher run the danger of presenting it as an autonomous system upon which theological concerns are clamped as an external dressing. On the other hand, there is the opposed peril of losing the integrity of a philosopher's work through using it as an ornamentation which we gild onto pre-given theological categories. Milbank is aware of these opposed dangers and employs the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar to argue that both modern philosophy with its autonomous reason, and the radical theology of revelation developed by Karl Barth depend upon the paradigm of a self-enclosed nature to which grace is externally added: "Barth's theology, for all its apparent innovation, remained confined within a Baroque contrast of nature with grace, and of reason with revelation."¹⁴ In our interpretation of Wittgenstein we emphasised the constant self-questioning and dialectical nature of his later philosophy. It is this which Wittgenstein uses to break the spell of modern philosophy, with its myth of an autonomous reason, enabling us to place Wittgenstein in conversation with the ancient and medieval metaphysical tradition. Far from reducing philosophy to a realm of autonomous human practices Wittgenstein helps us to see the basis of human reason in nature. Again it is important to note the limitations of Wittgenstein's philosophy, but perhaps its greatest merit is in constantly returning us to the question of who we are by showing us what lies in front of our eyes. We do not achieve this by forming an external perspective on our practices, but by reflectively entering into those practices. The fault of modern philosophy lies in seeking a perspective beyond our human practices from which to construct a self-contained model of reality. This is the substance of Gilson's critique of modern philosophy.

The dialectical reading we have developed of Wittgenstein attempts to show how his philosophy remains open for a concrete encounter with theology, enabling us to see how

been superseded by historical consciousness. By contrast we have read Wittgenstein as opening the way to a renewed philosophy of nature as part of our recovery of our human nature.

¹⁴ Milbank, *The Suspended Middle : Henri De Lubac and the Renewed Split in Modern Catholic Theology*, 72.

human beings in all dimensions of their nature enter into the encounter with grace. This encounter will draw upon the reading of Wittgenstein we have developed in the first four chapters, and thus the dialogue between Wittgenstein and moral theology will be conducted in the company of another conversation partner, metaphysics. The relationship between theology and metaphysics is one attested to in the Catholic tradition, and although the use of metaphysics in theology has come under attack from various quarters it remains within the mainstream of theology.¹⁵ An example of this is the theology of truth and language developed by D. Stephen Long in his *Speaking of God*.¹⁶ This study is of particular interest, for in addition to defending the need for metaphysics in theology Long argues that Wittgenstein should be read as a philosopher who engages with and opens a path for metaphysics:

“Wittgenstein does not bring metaphysics to an end; he critiques its improper uses and opens up the possibility for a kind of metaphysics that recognizes the limits of philosophy so that faith and reason no longer police one another.”¹⁷

Long draws upon the work of Desmond in developing an understanding of a metaphysics which is open to theology, and the metaphor of policing a boarder is taken from the following passage from Desmond, which Long quotes at length:

We can plot a border between territories and insist that faith and reason only travel to the other’s country under proper visa. Then they will enter illegally, without certification or passport. There are no univocal borders in mind and spirit which bar trespass or illegal entry; there is a porosity more elemental than all passports and academic policing Where is the pure faith relative to which thought is excluded? Where is there pure reason that entirely excludes all trust?¹⁸

The porosity Desmond speaks of here does not entail collapsing all distinctions between faith and reason, grace and nature, or theology and philosophy; rather it directs us to the need for

¹⁵ For a defence of Aquinas’ metaphysics of creation from the attack made upon metaphysics by Heidegger see Fergus Kerr, O.P., *After Aquinas : Versions of Thomism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 73-96.

¹⁶ Long, *Speaking of God : Theology, Language, and Truth*. It is important to distinguish D. Stephen Long from the earlier mentioned Steven A. Long.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 213-14.

¹⁸ William Desmond, *Is There a Sabbath for Thought? : Between Religion and Philosophy*, 1st ed., *Perspectives in Continental Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 98-99. The quotation is found in Long, *Speaking of God : Theology, Language, and Truth*, 19.

returning to those concrete practices in which grace and nature interact. This is not to rule out the use of general principles in making distinctions, so long as we remember that principles do not apply themselves, but find their application within practices (this is one of the key lessons to draw from Wittgenstein's examination of following a rule, and more generally from his account of application). Porosity does, however, imply a mutual influencing, which raises the question of how the encounter between metaphysics and theology changes both. Thus, Long argues that metaphysics is transformed through the incarnation of Christ: "In Christ, God, assumed human nature, which includes, as the fathers and councils teach, human reason and will, the very 'stuff' that makes philosophy possible."¹⁹

Our approach will differ from Long's, not so much in denying that the incarnation transforms metaphysics, as in following the Catholic tradition which places more emphasis on the theology of creation in the encounter between philosophy and theology.²⁰ It may be objected that emphasising the theology of creation leaves us firmly on the side of reason in the encounter between reason and revelation, raising the risk of developing an autonomous science of nature which cuts us off from revealed truth. But this is only the case if we already view the theology of creation through the lens of modern self-determining reason. In contrast, if we return to those currents of ancient and medieval thought which defer "to an unknown divine wisdom,"²¹ then the theology of creation provides a key context in which to understand the encounter between human reason and divine wisdom.²²

The porosity of the border between revelation and reason in the theology of creation plays at the limits of human reason. At the same time this porosity does not obliterate

¹⁹ *Speaking of God : Theology, Language, and Truth*, 15.

²⁰ For a classic statement of Aquinas' philosophy/theology of creation see: Josef Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas : Three Essays* (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 1999).

²¹ Milbank, *The Suspended Middle : Henri De Lubac and the Renewed Split in Modern Catholic Theology*, 100.

²² For an account of how Aristotelian science is transformed in an encounter with the theology of creation see Marie-Dominique Chenu, O.P., *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century : Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West*, trans. Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little (Toronto ; London: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

distinctions, and the theology of creation enables us to acknowledge the integrity of nature while avoiding the risk of enclosing it in an autonomous realm. In the classic Christological definition of the Council of Chalcedon the relationship between the human and divine natures of Jesus Christ is asserted to be such that the two natures remain united: “without confusion or change, without division or separation.”²³ In the encounter between the human and the divine which is the person of Jesus Christ the human remains fully integral. This is not to imply that the incarnation has no effect on our humanity; rather it is to acknowledge that what is transformed in the incarnation is human nature, and however we are to understand this transformation it cannot involve an essential change in that nature.²⁴

This emphasis on the theology of creation will become evident in chapter seven when we will examine how Catholic moral theologians working in the natural law and virtue traditions argue that an account of human agency must be grounded in natural principles. It also enables us to develop the conversation between Wittgenstein and moral theology. Wittgenstein, in returning us to natural human practices, opens the way for a theology of creation which throws light on the question of the origin and destiny of our human nature. In the next section we will trace the efforts of moral theologians over the last thirty years to develop a renewed concept of nature for use in moral theology. The purpose of this will be to provide the starting point for an engagement between the work of these moral theologians and Wittgenstein, building on the arguments of this present section concerning the relationship between philosophy and theology.

²³ Josef Neuner and Jacques Dupuis, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, 6th rev. and enl. ed. (New York: Alba House, 1996), 203.

²⁴ There is the epistemological question of what knowledge we can have of our created human nature independent of revelation. Here Catholic theologians tend to allow a greater role for human reason, although this is not to say that in particular concrete circumstances a neat division between reason and revelation can always be given.

5.3 The Revival of Nature as a Category in Moral Theology

5.3.1 Protestantism and Evolution: Two Unlikely Sources for a Revival of Nature in Moral Theology

Wittgenstein's concern in distinguishing the grammatical and the empirical is to prevent the intrusion of science into what is most important in life, and the reduction of human behaviour to empirical causal explanations. This is a concern which he holds consistently from the *Tractatus* through to his last writings. It is a concern which was shared by many Catholic theologians in the twentieth century, and prompted them to emphasize the rational and spiritual aspects of human nature at the cost of downplaying or even denying any basis for our rational practices in pre-rational nature. Jean Porter notes how due to the danger of imposing an oppressive morality on the basis of a static and outdated understanding of pre-rational human nature, for many Catholic theologians moral arguments which establish conclusions on the basis of pre-rational human nature had become discredited. By contrast to this placing emphasis on the autonomy of human reason opened the path to a more historically dynamic notion of human nature and natural law, which is responsive to the contingencies of life:

when we examine early twentieth-century Catholic accounts of the natural law, we find that they agree, with few exceptions, on a construal of the natural law tradition which emphasizes the rational character of the natural law and minimizes or even denies the normative significance of nature, except insofar as human nature is simply equated with rationality.²⁵

The shift in Catholic moral theology away from attributing any normative role to pre-rational human nature was so pervasive that up to the 1990's, with the exception of lone voices such as Pinckaers, the predominant models of human agency used by Catholic moral theologians stressed the autonomy of reason and provided little or no normative role for pre-rational

²⁵ Jean Porter, *Nature as Reason : A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law* (Grand Rapids, Mich. ; Cambridge: W.B. Eerdmans, 2005), 35.

nature.²⁶ This was true both of proportionalists and those who opposed them through the development of a new natural law theory.²⁷ Despite this shift, nature as a normative category made a reappearance in moral theology from two unlikely sources: the writings of Protestant moral theologians, such as Oliver O'Donovan, and the work of evolutionary biologists.

In his book *Resurrection and Moral Order*, published in 1986, O'Donovan argues that a conception of the order of creation is required in moral theology. Any account of what it is for a kind of thing to flourish will fail if it does not take account of the wider context of creation: "One cannot speak of the flourishing of any kind without implicitly indicating a wider order which will determine what flourishing and frustration within that kind consists of."²⁸ For O'Donovan this ordering includes both an ordering within creation, but also an ordering of the creation to the creator such that: "The only pure teleological relation, unqualified by any generic equivalence, is that between the creature and its Creator."²⁹ Thus, Donovan directs us to an understanding of human nature within the context of the theology of creation which stresses the need to place it within the wider order of creation. As the title of the book indicates, O'Donovan's theology of creation is understood in the broader light of the theory of the resurrection, but within that theology it is not to be reduced to a mere place holder with an empty content.³⁰

²⁶ Stephen Pope observes that both personalism and liberation theology, the predominant trends in Catholic moral theology from the mid-fifties up until the early nineties, fail to engage with pre-rational human nature. See Stephen J. Pope, *The Evolution of Altruism and the Ordering of Love*, Moral Traditions & Moral Arguments (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1994), 19-49.

²⁷ Bernard Hoose notes how for Joseph Fuchs, one of the key figures in the development of Proportionalism: "We cannot find norms for concrete moral behaviour in mere conformity to physical nature as such. What matters is conformity to the human person in his or her totality." Bernard Hoose, *Proportionalism : The American Debate and Its European Roots* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1987), 19. This does not rule out any role for pre-rational nature, but it minimizes its importance. In regard to New Natural Law Theory Russell Hittinger observes how Germain Grisez rejects classical natural law theory on the grounds that it reduces practical reasoning to: "a mere footnote to the conclusions of the speculative disciplines, which are principally interested in the invariant essences and structures of nature." Hittinger, *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory*, 15.

²⁸ Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order : An Outline for Evangelical Ethics* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1986), 34-35.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

³⁰ For an overview of the use of nature in the works of two other Protestant theologians, James Gustafson and Reinhard Hütter see Porter, *Nature as Reason : A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law*, 41-44.

Another unlikely source which has prompted a return to considering the normative role of nature in Catholic moral theology is the work of evolutionary biologists. Stephen Pope is notable as a Catholic moral theologian who in his 1994 book *The Evolution of Altruism and the Ordering of Love* argues for the need to engage with the work of evolutionary biology.³¹ Pope observes how at that time Catholic moral theologians seemed oblivious to work being done in evolutionary biology and its use in ethics. For Pope this is not merely a case of oversight, but a result of the dominant models of human agency in Catholic moral theology: “Recent Catholic authors thus unnecessarily separate the human person from human nature and the wider natural world.”³² Like O’Donovan, Pope argues that this separation results in an inability to understand the ordering of creation. In contrast to this splitting of the human person, Pope sees the work of evolutionary biologists as helping us to understand the natural ordering of human desires. Furthermore, he argues that Aquinas’ understanding of the ordering of human inclinations can enter into conversation with evolutionary biology, because his concept of human nature is grounded in Aristotelian science such that: “the collective activities of all individual substances harmoniously interlock and coordinate to comprise a hierarchically ordered universe.”³³

Porter also draws upon the work of evolutionary biologists in working towards a concept of human nature, but her use of it is limited and she concludes:

Used with caution, the more careful and limited arguments of the evolutionary psychologists do offer valuable insights into the regularities of human nature, but I am convinced that other avenues of research, especially anthropological studies and comparative studies of the other primates, can be of more value in this respect.³⁴

³¹ Pope, *The Evolution of Altruism and the Ordering of Love*.

³² *Ibid.*, 34.

³³ *Ibid.*, 50.

³⁴ Porter, *Nature as Reason : A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law*, 106. The two avenues of research Porter here mentions were both of interest to Wittgenstein. If our reading of Wittgenstein is correct his interest in these fields of study stems in part from the light they cast on the boundary between the linguistic and the pre-linguistic. Primatologists and anthropologists present observations which despite their limitations point to the concrete reality of an animate nature. Wittgenstein may have rejected the rationalism present in Frazer’s anthropology, but was able to draw conclusions from the materials Frazer compiled.

It is important to guard against the assumption that conclusions from evolutionary science can be given immediate normative status in an understanding of human nature. Here we can heed Wittgenstein's warning against the picture of the "evolution of the higher animals and man" which sees consciousness awakening in the following manner: "Though the ether is filled with vibrations the world is dark. But one day man opens his seeing eye, and there is light."³⁵ It is not clear how we are to use such a picture, and yet it seems to: "spare us this work: it already points to a particular use."³⁶ Our reading of Wittgenstein, by stressing the dialectical nature of the relationship between the rational and the pre-rational, helps to overcome the risk of reducing the rational to the pre-rational or of subsuming the pre-rational into the rational. Pope avoids this risk by using Aristotelian science, as it is developed in the works of Aquinas, as a wider philosophy of nature within which to understand the results of evolutionary science. This allows him to use the findings of evolutionary science while respecting the analogical interplay between the pre-rational and the rational; avoiding the temptation to subsume an account of our rational behaviour into its pre-rational basis.

5.3.2 Physics, Agency and Virtue

In chapter four we argued that Wittgenstein requires something like an Aristotelian understanding of the physical world in order to overcome the modern dichotomy between the conceptual and the natural. Unless our (Aristotelian) second nature is rooted in first nature human action spins free from physical being. Stephen L. Brock in *Action and Conduct*, by calling attention to the need for such an Aristotelian understating of the physical world when developing an account of human agency, contributes to the recovery of nature as a central

³⁵ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 184. "Die Evolution der höheren Tiere und des Menschen . . . Die Welt ist, trotz aller Ätherschwingungen, die sie durchziehen, dunkel. Eines Tages aber macht der Mensch sein sehendes Auge auf, und es wird hell." *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, 505.

³⁶ *Philosophical Investigations*, 184. "dieser Arbeit zu überheben; es deutet schon auf eine bestimmte Verwendung." *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, 505.

category in moral philosophy and theology.³⁷ Brock's aim is to show the relevance of Aquinas' account of human agency for contemporary debates within the philosophy of action, and to apply these results to questions of agency within moral philosophy and theology. At the centre of Brock's thesis is the claim that Aquinas' account of human action turns upon his understanding of the analogical equivocacy of the term 'action', such that an understanding of human agency requires the: "consideration of features common to being a human action and being a physical action."³⁸ Brock adds the warning that: "such a project must be very careful not to blur the distinction between these fundamentally diverse ways of being action."³⁹ He thus acknowledges the essential distinction between the rational and the pre-rational in a manner which avoids creating a dichotomy between them, and allows for their dialectical interplay. In chapter seven we will return to Brock's account of human agency as we consider the light Wittgenstein's writings shed upon the question of agency in moral theology. For our present purposes it is important to see how Wittgenstein can help us to understand the connection between an account of human nature and an account of human agency.

Wittgenstein's influence, either direct or indirect, has been considerable in the revival of action theory undertaken by analytical philosophers and the central role it now plays in moral philosophy and theology. The work of Anscombe is pivotal in this regard. In her influential paper "Modern Moral Philosophy"⁴⁰ she argues that until we have developed an "adequate philosophy of psychology" terms used in moral philosophy such as "*moral* obligation and *moral* duty, that is to say – and of what is *morally* right and wrong, and of the

³⁷ Stephen L. Brock, *Action and Conduct : Thomas Aquinas and the Theory of Action* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Printed in G. E. M. Anscombe, *Human Life, Action and Ethics : Essays*, St Andrews Studies in Philosophy and Public Affairs (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2005), 169-94.

moral sense of ‘ought’, ought to be jettisoned if this is psychologically possible.”⁴¹

Wittgenstein’s influence is clearly to be seen in Anscombe’s argument that use of moral terms must be reconnected to their basis in human practices. The “philosophy of psychology” she has in mind is not one which proceeds by describing the contents of consciousness. Rather, it is an account of human agency of the kind Wittgenstein developed, and which Anscombe connects with the philosophical psychology of Aristotle and Aquinas. Her call for a revival of virtue ethics is to be understood in this light, and Anscombe goes beyond Wittgenstein by drawing connections to the Aristotelian tradition which places an account of the virtues at the heart of its understanding of human nature. This is the tradition which is developed by Aquinas, for whom it is the theological virtues which provide the most comprehensive context for understanding human action, as it is transformed by divine grace.⁴²

Through drawing the connection between the use of moral terms and human practices Anscombe sought to overcome the modern disconnection between moral theory and moral practice. In chapter two we traced Wittgenstein’s rejection of the *Tractatus*’ picture theory of meaning, and his subsequent abandonment of the search for the general form of the proposition. What Wittgenstein came to understand is that propositions cannot be removed from the practices within which they are used without losing their meaning. Anscombe makes the same point for our use of moral terms. It is a mistake to begin with a model of moral agency, whether this is given through the positing of moral principles or the offering of an account of human nature, and to draw moral conclusions from the application of this model to reality. Rather, moral theory develops as reflection upon moral practice.

⁴¹ Ibid., 169.

⁴² For a philosophical account of human action as it is developed by Aquinas in this tradition see Ralph McInerny, *Aquinas on Human Action : A Theory of Practice* (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 1992). A theological account of Aquinas’ understanding of how divine grace transforms human action see Sherwin, *By Knowledge & by Love : Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*.

How we are to understand theory as reflection on practice? Wittgenstein argues for the autonomy of our practices, and that the role of philosophy (and hence of theory) consist in conceptual clarification, through which we overcome confusions in our use of language. Those readings of Wittgenstein which interpret his stress on the autonomy of practice as precluding any but the most minimal basis for those practices in our pre-linguistic behaviour, such as that offered by Hacker and Baker, argue that there is no question of Wittgenstein reflecting upon the basis of those practices in a theory of human nature.⁴³ Such reflections, they argue, are alien to Wittgenstein and arise from the philosophical confusion of imagining that human practices need an external foundation. The dialectical reading of Wittgenstein we developed challenged such interpretations, while acknowledging the inconsistencies in Wittgenstein's later thought which give substance to them. To this end we developed our reading of Wittgenstein in conversation with an understanding of metaphysics in which theory and practice are not opposed.

In chapter one (1.2.3) we followed Hibbs in arguing that metaphysics is primarily a practice. In this metaphysical practice nature is not presented as an external model or foundation, but as the basis for our human practices, which are not reducible to it in any deterministic way. Those interpretation of Wittgenstein which fail to understand the dialectical nature of his thought remain trapped within the modern dichotomy between theory of practice; their conception of practice forms one side of a dichotomy which retains its force despite their rejection of the opposed side (theory). Such is the grip of this modern dichotomy that the most influential response to Anscombe's call for a revival of virtue ethics, MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, makes no use of biology. This is not to say that MacIntyre set out to develop a practical ethics devoid of any theoretical basis, but in his account of virtue he lays emphasis on the cultural mediation of virtue with little acknowledgment of any basis for

⁴³ Such is the interpretation of how to understand Wittgenstein in regard to the use of theory in moral philosophy offered by Johnston in *Wittgenstein and Moral Philosophy*.

virtue in physical human nature. By contrast, in his later work *Dependent Rational Animals* MacIntyre admits his earlier error in failing to appreciate the role of biology in ethics:

“Although there is good reason to repudiate important elements in Aristotle’s biology, I now judge that I was in error in supposing an ethics independent of biology to be possible.”⁴⁴

The question of human agency and its basis in physical nature has brought us to the works of two leading moral philosophers, Anscombe and MacIntyre. This situates us over the border from moral theology in moral philosophy. The porosity of that border is such, however, that these developments in moral philosophy are not without interest for moral theology. At the same time it is important to take note of distinctions, particularly how the operation of the acquired moral virtues differs from that of the infused theological virtues.⁴⁵ We will return to this question in the next chapter, and conclude this present section by mentioning the work of a theologian who combines insights from Wittgenstein and Aquinas in his understanding of human nature and its relationship to divine grace. In his influential work *Law, Love and Language* McCabe, writing back in 1968, characterizes the human being as: “the linguistic animal.”⁴⁶ Human beings are language using *animals* such that: “There is no such thing on earth as a purely linguistic community. Every linguistic community has biological grounds as well.”⁴⁷ McCabe develops his understanding of human behaviour by determining what we share in common with other animals, while bringing out what is uniquely human: a project which is developed in his writings edited under the title *The Good Life*.⁴⁸ We will return to McCabe’s work in the next chapter, when we will examine his understanding of how the linguistic animal is transformed in its encounter with divine grace.

⁴⁴ Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals : Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (London: Duckworth, 1999), x.

⁴⁵ Although it is important to note that for Aquinas there are also infused moral virtues.

⁴⁶ Herbert McCabe, O.P., *Law, Love, and Language* (London: Continuum, 2003), 68.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁴⁸ *The Good Life : Ethics and the Pursuit of Happiness* (London: Continuum, 2005).

In this section we have traced how the concept of nature has made a return to moral theology. This is by no means an exhaustive survey, but it aims to provide the main contours of the revival of nature as a key concept in moral theology, and to relate that revival to the reading of Wittgenstein we developed in earlier chapters.⁴⁹ Central to this comparison is the claim that the revival of nature in moral theology entails the rejection of modern understandings of nature, and the recovery of nature understood by reflection upon human practices; overcoming the modern dichotomy between theory and practice. This opens the path for a return to virtue ethics, and an understanding of the pre-rational basis of human virtue which avoids the danger of subsuming ethics into a pre-given model of nature. It is through the exercise of the virtues that we return to the basis of that exercise in human nature; such that nature is not understood as an abstract model applied to form moral judgements, but as the dynamic source of our humanity. Wittgenstein's concern with the question of origins, and his emphasis on our natural ways of acting, opens the path for a dialogue with virtue ethics. The influence, both direct and indirect, Wittgenstein has had on the revival of virtue ethics indicates that such a dialogue can be fruitful.

5.4 Wittgenstein and Pinckaers: Beginning a Conversation?

5.4.1 Nature as Source: Aquinas' Concept of Nature

In his article 'Aquinas on Nature and the Supernatural',⁵⁰ Pinckaers cautions that we cannot immediately grasp Aquinas' concept of nature: "We cannot study his concept of nature as if we were living in the thirteenth century, because this fundamental notion has

⁴⁹ Another source of the revival in interest in nature in ethical theory which we have not touched upon is the development of environmental ethics. For an examination of how to use the results of environmental science in moral theology see: Celia Deane-Drummond, *The Ethics of Nature* (Malden, Mass. ; Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

⁵⁰ Servais Pinckaers, "Aquinas on Nature and the Supernatural," in *The Pinckaers Reader: Renewing Thomistic Moral Theology*, ed. John Berkman and Craig Steven Titus (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005).

undergone a profound evolution in modern times.”⁵¹ Between ourselves and Aquinas there lies several hundred years in which the concept of nature has evolved under the influence of late medieval nominalism, Renaissance theology and modern science. Moreover, Aquinas’ concept of nature is not a univocal general notion, but rather takes shape in various theological and philosophical contexts, and involves drawing upon Aristotle to distinguishing “four meanings of the word ‘nature’.”⁵² Nevertheless, Pinckaers does identify what he sees as a common feature of Aquinas’ various uses of nature:

they belong together, and together bear on a concrete experience, that of birth, which should be understood not only as a biological act but as a primitive fact, the coming into existence of a being taken in its concrete totality, the human person with its form, that is, a soul or spirit, and its matter, a body. In the case of the birth of Christ, divinity itself will be involved; the problem is to know how. The term “nature” thus seems to designate an all-encompassing and dynamic reality.⁵³

This all-encompassing reality entails that nature, unlike technology, does not operate according to external principles, but involves “the dimension of interiority.”⁵⁴ That which acts according to nature acts in a dynamic fashion from within itself, and in the case of human beings this inner dynamism goes beyond the “biological or psychological.”⁵⁵ In this emphasis on the interiority of human agency, Pinckaers is careful to avoid the trap of assuming immediate access to an inner private self, and follows Aquinas in arguing that our understanding of the interiority of human nature follows from our encounter with external

⁵¹ Ibid., 359. “Nous ne pouvons pas étudier sa conception de la nature comme si nous étions au XIII siècle, parce que cette notion fondamentale a profondément évolué à l’époque moderne.” “Nature-Surnature Chez Saint Thomas D’aquin,” in *Ethique Et Natures*, ed. Eric Fuchs and Mark Hunyadi (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1992), 19.

⁵² “Aquinas on Nature and the Supernatural,” 360. “4 sens du mot ‘nature.’” “Nature-Surnature Chez Saint Thomas D’aquin,” 20.

⁵³ “Aquinas on Nature and the Supernatural,” 360-61. “Ils se tiennent et s’engendrent l’un l’autre à partir d’une expérience concrète, celle de la naissance, qu’il faut comprendre non comme un événement biologique seulement, mais comme un fait primitif, la mise à l’existence d’un être pris dans sa totalité concrète, l’homme avec sa forme, c’est-à-dire son âme ou son esprit, et avec son corps, sa matière. Dans le cas de la naissance du Christ, la divinité même y sera engagée; le problème est de savoir de quelle manière. Le terme de ‘nature’ nous apparaît ainsi comme désignant une réalité englobante et dynamique.” “Nature-Surnature Chez Saint Thomas D’aquin,” 20-21.

⁵⁴ “Aquinas on Nature and the Supernatural,” 361. “la dimension d’intériorité.” “Nature-Surnature Chez Saint Thomas D’aquin,” 21.

⁵⁵ “Aquinas on Nature and the Supernatural,” 361. “biologique ou psychologique.” “Nature-Surnature Chez Saint Thomas D’aquin,” 21.

human acts: “The concept of nature invites our reflection, beginning with our experience of the way we produce acts and works, as though by a kind of generation, and going on to their intimate sources: our free will and our spiritual nature. We are thus led to the causes of human morality.”⁵⁶

Pinckaers’ reflections provide several points of contact with our reading of Wittgenstein. In our interpretation of Wittgenstein we followed Mulhall in reading the *Investigations* as a work which is concerned with origins. Wittgenstein seeks to reconnect us with the origin of our practices, and thus help us to return to our nature as something which is dynamic and whole. For both Wittgenstein and Pinckaers the path to the recovery of nature is a narrow one, and they battle against false philosophies (and theologies) which prevent us from seeing who we are. To this end both direct us to the concrete human practices which lie before our eyes as the means to understanding the inner dynamic principles of human nature. In drawing attention to the centrality of the question of origins in Aquinas’ concept of nature Pinckaers aims to show that there is no opposition in Aquinas between grace and nature. We have argued that the theology of creation provides the key for understanding the relationship between grace and nature; avoiding the danger of setting them in opposition as two opposing spheres. Now we can extend our comparison between Wittgenstein and Pinckaers by seeing both as raising the question of origins in a manner which provides an opening for dialogue with the theology of creation. This is an opening which Pinckaers follows Aquinas in making, bringing a transformation of the Aristotelian concept of nature.

⁵⁶ "Aquinas on Nature and the Supernatural," 361. “La notion de nature invite notre réflexion à partir de l’expérience que nous avons de la production de nos actes, de nos œuvres, comme d’une sorte de génération, et à remonter vers les sources intimes dont elles procèdent: notre volonté libre, notre nature spirituelle. Ainsi sommes-nous amenés à nous poser la question des causes de la moralité en l’homme.” "Nature-Surnature Chez Saint Thomas D'aquin," 21.

5.4.2 Beyond Heteronomy and Autonomy

We have seen in section 4.3 how Wittgenstein attempted to overcome the modern splitting of the human being between a causal empirical account of human action and an empty formal account of the will. The question of our origins, and thus of human nature, oscillates in modern thought between the objectifying perspective of the scientific observer and the inner experience of the acting subject. This is evident in the philosophy of Kant, who contrasts the heteronomy of the empirical world of desire with the autonomy of the transcendent self which is subject to the moral law.⁵⁷ In his article “Aquinas and Agency: Beyond Autonomy and Heteronomy?”⁵⁸ Pinckaers sets out to: “look into the question of autonomy and heteronomy in St. Thomas.”⁵⁹ Pinckaers acknowledges that this is a modern question and notes that in the Kantian tradition it is formulated as entailing a dilemma: “*either autonomy or heteronomy, with a leaning towards autonomy.*”⁶⁰ For Aquinas by contrast this dilemma does not arise. Commentators on Aquinas have found elements implying autonomy and others implying heteronomy. Aquinas places a stress on the autonomy of morality with: “his insistence on the legislative function of the human reason,” while at the same time holding that morality is heteronomous by: “placing outside the human person, in God, the ultimate end considered as the supreme criterion of morality, and his declaration that all legislation derives from the eternal law.”⁶¹ From the Kantian perspective this combination of autonomy and heteronomy is incomprehensible, because within the overall philosophical organization of Kant’s moral philosophy these terms exclude one

⁵⁷ See Immanuel Kant, *The Moral Law : Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* (London: Routledge, 2005).

⁵⁸ Printed in Servais Pinckaers, “Aquinas and Agency : Beyond Autonomy and Heteronomy?,” in *The Pinckaers Reader : Renewing Thomistic Moral Theology* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005).

⁵⁹ Ibid., 167. “de rechercher quelle réponse nous trouvons à la question de l’autonomie et ‘hétéronomie chez St Thomas.” “Autonomie Et Hétéronomie Selon Saint Thomas D’aquin,” in *Autonomie : Dimensions Éthiques De La Liberté*, ed. Carlos Josaphat Pinto de Oliveira (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires 1978), 104.

⁶⁰ “Aquinas and Agency : Beyond Autonomy and Heteronomy?,” 167. “*ou autonomie ou hétéronomie de la morale, avec un connotation en faveur de ‘autonomie.*” “Autonomie Et Hétéronomie Selon Saint Thomas D’aquin,” 104.

⁶¹ “Aquinas and Agency : Beyond Autonomy and Heteronomy?,” 168. “comme de placer en dehors de l’homme, en Dieu, la fin ultime considérée comme le critère supreme de la moralité, et de faire dériver toute législation de la loi éternelle.” “Autonomie Et Hétéronomie Selon Saint Thomas D’aquin,” 104.

another. By contrast, the overall organization of Aquinas' moral theology does not imply such an opposition.⁶²

So how does Pinckaers go about showing that Aquinas offers an understanding of moral agency which takes us beyond the choice between autonomy and heteronomy?

Pinckaers sets out to show how the Kantian understanding of agency which underlies the contrast between autonomy and heteronomy results from the fragmentation of a previously

⁶² Pinckaers does not in this article directly address the methodological issues involved in comparing two philosophies or theologies which differ in their overall organization. The terms 'autonomy' and 'heteronomy' are not found in Aquinas, and through posing the question of their application in his theology we risk imposing alien concerns which deform it. Likewise, importing perspectives from the theology of Aquinas into an interpretation of Kant's moral philosophy runs the risk of changing Kant's use of terms beyond recognition. So are we left with two incommensurable systems of thought which make sense in their own terms, but cannot be compared? This question lies in the background not only of Pinckaers' comparison between Aquinas and Kant, but of the attempt in this chapter to develop a dialogue between Wittgenstein and moral theology. Furthermore, it is present in the earlier chapters of this thesis in our comparison between Wittgenstein and the metaphysical tradition. Have we been somewhat cavalier about such methodological questions? To answer this it is important first to take a step back and examine the basis upon which we formulate methodological questions in philosophy or theology. The notion that methodology can be formulated prior to our practices again falls into the modern mistake of seeking to assess those practices from a perspective beyond them. Philosophies and theologies are then characterized as autonomous systems, which can only be compared by adopting a neutral methodology. Once the possibility of such a neutral perspective is abandoned we are left with self-confined systems of thought with no rational basis for choosing between them. We remain enclosed in this dilemma unless we find a way of overcoming the external perspective which sets it up. To do this we must begin from an immersion in a practice of philosophy or theology and again dialectic is essential in ensuring that our practices do not close in on themselves. Furthermore, the dialectical understanding of rational practice we have been developing in this thesis is not a neutral method, but involves an understanding of the principles which form the basis for our practices. In the previous section we saw how these principles enable us to achieve a unity within the concrete reality of human nature between the pre-rational basis of our practices and the universal horizon of truth towards which they move. As there is no neutral perspective from which to assess the claims of differing philosophies or theologies any comparison must begin with the practice of a chosen one, but this does not entail that the choice is arbitrary. Nor are we caught in a vicious circle of interpretation, so long as we constantly return those practice to their basis in our natural human practices; this we learn from Wittgenstein (albeit that our understanding of the relationship between those practices and the metaphysical tradition departs from him). In moving beyond the choice between autonomy and heteronomy Pinckaers overcomes the methodological problem of how to bring differing conceptions of philosophy or theology into dialogue. This is not to say that the work of comparison is accomplished in one easy step; rather it takes place within the dialectical practice of a philosophy or theology such that we come to see how differing practices show the errors and limitations of their rivals, while learning from those rivals how to overcome their own errors and limitation. This implies an openness on both sides to dialogue, but it does not entail relativism. If a philosopher or theologian can show how a rival practice is limited, and how she is able to overcome those limitations, then she has made a case for adopting her own chosen practice over the rival one. This is not to say that her philosophy or theology is a finished system which will rebuff all challenges. To hold such is again to fall into the modern error of autonomous rationality. It is not merely the internal consistency of our philosophical or theological practices which determines their truth; rather it is whether they make sense in our lives and of our lives. Thus, Pinckaers brings the modern dichotomy between autonomy and heteronomy into question by arguing that it cannot find a home within our moral practices. He turns to Aquinas as providing an account of human agency which takes us beyond this dichotomy and reconnects with our natural human practices. (In this discussion I draw on the conception of rational enquiry developed by MacIntyre in: Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988). MacIntyre applies these principles to competing systems of moral enquiry in: *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry : Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition Being Gifford Lectures Delivered in the University of Edinburgh in 1988* (London: Duckworth, 1990).)

unified tradition: in this case the Patristic tradition. He argues that this tradition was inherited by Aquinas, but later theologians failed to preserve it. Here he identifies: “three historical events in Catholic tradition intervening between Aquinas’ day and ours that had direct consequences for the systematization of morality and for our question.”⁶³ The three events Pinckaers identifies are nominalism, the Protestant Crisis and the universalism of reason. He sets out to show how each of these brought about a fragmentation of the unified conception of the Christian life offered by the Fathers of the Church. At the centre of that unified conception lies an understanding of how human nature is transformed in its encounter with the truth of Jesus Christ revealed in Scripture. Therefore the particular aspect of Aquinas’ theology Pinckaers highlights is his: “treaties on the Evangelical Law, which is one of the high points, too often neglected, of the moral exposition in the *Summa theologiae*.”⁶⁴ This moves us into theology, and raises the question of the relationship between theology and philosophy.

Pinckaers uses Aquinas’ account of human agency and his understanding of the basis of that agency in natural principles, in order to overcome the division between philosophy and theology. He does this in a manner which does not involve collapsing the distinction between philosophy and theology, and they remain distinct discourses: philosophy takes its starting point from our natural reflection upon the world, whereas theology begins with revelation. These distinct discourses are not, however, self-contained autonomous practices. Philosophy, as we have argued throughout this thesis, involves an essential openness to the question of origins. Theology likewise poses the question of origins and thus the question of our human nature. Earlier in this chapter we suggested that philosophy and theology find a

⁶³ Pinckaers, "Aquinas and Agency : Beyond Autonomy and Heteronomy?," 168. “trois événements historiques survenus entre S. Thomas et nous dans la tradition catholique, qui ont eu des conséquences directes sur la systématisation de la morale et sur notre question.” "Autonomie Et Hétéronomie Selon Saint Thomas D'aquin," 105.

⁶⁴ "Aquinas and Agency : Beyond Autonomy and Heteronomy?," 168. “le traité de la Loi évangélique qui forme un des sommets, trop négligé, de la morale exposée dans la Somme théologique.” "Autonomie Et Hétéronomie Selon Saint Thomas D'aquin," 105.

place for dialogue in the theology of creation. Now we can add that in this space, where we ask the question of origins, theology is not an alien, heteronomous discourse, but is that which: “answers to the aspirations hidden in the heart of every person, even beyond what reason can grasp, while at the same time remaining in harmony with reason.”⁶⁵ We also noted earlier that although the theology of creation provides the space for a dialogue between philosophy and theology this does not entail that our understanding of human nature remains unaffected by wider theological perspectives, such as the theology of the incarnation. In seeking to move beyond the choice between autonomy and heteronomy Pinckaers intends to show us how theological concerns are not alien to our natural understanding of who we are, but rather: “The more one surrenders to grace the more one is fulfilled, even on the natural level; the more fully one gives oneself to God, the more fully one becomes oneself.”⁶⁶ For Pinckaers the question of moral autonomy is not that of our independence from anything beyond ourselves, but is the question of interiority; and that question returns us to our origins.

If Mulhall is right, and Wittgenstein’s concerns in the *Investigations* involve an Augustinian questioning of origins, then Wittgenstein can also be seen as developing a sense of interiority which connects us with our origins. In this light the arguments Wittgenstein puts against introspectivist notions of the inner are not intended to imply that we have no inner life, but to help us overcome false notions of interiority which prevent us from returning to our origins. In his writings on the philosophy of psychology Wittgenstein constantly returns to the question of interiority. Wittgenstein maintains that there is a real distinction between the outer and the inner: “There are inner and outer couplets, inner and outer ways of looking at man. Indeed there are outer and inner facts – just as there are for example physical and

⁶⁵ "Aquinas and Agency : Beyond Autonomy and Heteronomy?," 175. “répond aux aspirations cachée au cœur de tout homme de au-delà même de ce que peut saisir la raison, tout en demeurant en conformité avec elle.” "Autonomie Et Hétéronomie Selon Saint Thomas D'aquin," 113.

⁶⁶ "Aquinas and Agency : Beyond Autonomy and Heteronomy?," 170. “Plus l’homme se livre à la grâce, plus il s’accomplit dans sa nature même; plus que il se donne à Dieu, plus que il devient lui-meme.” "Autonomie Et Hétéronomie Selon Saint Thomas D'aquin," 107.

mathematical facts.”⁶⁷ The distinction between the inner and the outer is not, however, that between two parallel realms, with the outer accessible to public observation while the inner is a private realm only accessible to the self. It is this very picture which Pinckaers also wishes to overcome with its dualism between the autonomous inner self, and that which is heteronomous and thus outside the self. In contrast to this dualistic understanding of the human being, Wittgenstein asserts: “The inner is tied up with the outer not only empirically, but also logically.”⁶⁸ For Pinckaers also the inner and the outer are tied together logically, but the key to understanding this logic is to be found in Aquinas’ theology of creation. To this end Pinckaers argues that for Aquinas our natural inclinations: “to truth for the intellect, to beatitude and goodness for the will” far from being heteronomous elements which limit our freedom and autonomy, “have opened the mind and the heart to infinite dimensions and conferred the ability to freely transcend every limited good.”⁶⁹ This opening of the mind and the heart is not a denial of our human nature, but rather its perfection, such that we become more perfectly human through the inner transformation brought about through our encounter with divine grace. Pinckaers thus argues: “The fact that the first origin and ultimate end of morality transcends the human person and lies in God in no way hinders morality from having its source within the person, who having a spiritual nature is capable of sharing directly in the legislative action of God.”⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology, Preliminary Studies for Part Ii of the Philosophical Investigations*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 63e. “Es gibt innere und äußere Begriffe, innere und äußere Betrachtungsweisen des Menschen. Ja es gibt auch innere und äußere Tatsachen – sowie es z.B. physikalische und mathematische Tatsachen gibt.” Ibid., 63.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 63e. “Inneres ist mit Äußerem nicht nur erfahrungsmäßig verbunden, sondern auch logisch.” Ibid., 63. We will develop this comparison between Pinckaers and Wittgenstein on the question of interiority in the next chapter, when we will attempt to show how Wittgenstein’s discussions of rule following and the phenomenon of ‘seeing as’ are central to his attempts to help us regain a true understanding of the interior life.

⁶⁹ Pinckaers, “Aquinas and Agency : Beyond Autonomy and Heteronomy?,” 169. “l’inclination à la vérité pour l’intelligence, au bonheur et au bien pour la volonté . . . qui lui ouvrent l’intelligence et le cœur à la dimension de l’infini et lui confèrent le pouvoir de dépasser librement tout bien limité.” “Autonomie Et Hétéronomie Selon Saint Thomas D’aquin,” 106.

⁷⁰ “Aquinas and Agency : Beyond Autonomy and Heteronomy?,” 169. “que la moralité ait son origine première et sa fin ultime au-dessus de l’homme, en Dieu, n’empêche nullement qu’elle ait aussi sa source à l’intérieur de l’homme, car celui-ci est capable de participer directement, par sa nature spirituelle, à l’action législative de Dieu.” “Autonomie Et Hétéronomie Selon Saint Thomas D’aquin,” 107.

5.4.3 Evangelical Law: The Transformation and Perfection of Inner Nature

In referring to ‘the legislative action of God’ Pinckaers is referring to the Evangelical Law, nevertheless, law in any form would not seem at first sight to be the most promising source for helping us to overcome the dichotomy between autonomy and heteronomy. In what sense is law interior to a human being? Surely law is addressed to us from a source outside the self which demands our conformity to an externally defined standard. Furthermore, is not this sense of exteriority intensified by starting with Evangelical Law? At least with human law we can argue for a basis in human reason, but Evangelical Law is given by God and beyond human reason. Pinckaers raises these concerns, and admits that there is “something of the truth” in them.⁷¹ Nevertheless, he turns to Aquinas’ treaties on the Evangelical Law for his account of autonomy and interiority: “because it is the summit where all the themes of this moral theology converge, and because it shows so clearly the ‘autonomy’ of action enjoyed by the Christian.”⁷² Pinckaers begins his examination of Aquinas’ theology of the Evangelical Law by clarifying how Aquinas used the term ‘law’. In contrast to our: “modern usage, expressing as it does the juridical nature of an external will restricting freedom by force,”⁷³ Aquinas’ understanding of law draws upon: “the more serene ambience of the patristic and ancient philosophical tradition, which saw in law the expression of the dynamic wisdom of the lawmaker, eliciting as far as possible the collaboration of mind and spontaneous, willing assent of those subject to him.”⁷⁴ It is this tradition within which we are to read Aquinas’ theology of the Evangelical Law, although he also stresses its radical

⁷¹ "Aquinas and Agency : Beyond Autonomy and Heteronomy?," 176. "Il y a évidemment du vrais." "Autonomie Et Hétéronomie Selon Saint Thomas D'aquin," 114.

⁷² "Aquinas and Agency : Beyond Autonomy and Heteronomy?," 176. "parce qu’il constitue un sommet et un point de convergence de toutes les lignes de sa morale, et parce qu’il montre avec claret quelle est ‘l’autonomie’ dont jouit le chrétien dans son agir." "Autonomie Et Hétéronomie Selon Saint Thomas D'aquin," 114.

⁷³ "Aquinas and Agency : Beyond Autonomy and Heteronomy?," 176. "du sens moderne, comme l’expression de nature juridique d’une volonté extérieure s’imposant à la liberté par le contrainte." "Autonomie Et Hétéronomie Selon Saint Thomas D'aquin," 115.

⁷⁴ "Aquinas and Agency : Beyond Autonomy and Heteronomy?," 177. "la ligne plus sereine de la tradition patristique et philosophique ancienne qui voit dans la loi l’expression de la sagesse impulsive du législateur, appelant la collaboration, autant que possible, de l’intelligence et de la volonté spontanée de ceux que lui soumis." "Autonomie Et Hétéronomie Selon Saint Thomas D'aquin," 115.

new nature which: “will win for it the title of the New Law, different from all other laws.”⁷⁵

Pinckaers notes how Aquinas drew: “inspiration from St. Paul in the Letter to the Romans and from St. Augustine,” and thus distinguished “two elements in the New Law, a principal element and a secondary one.”⁷⁶ The principal element of the “Law in the New Testament is the grace of the Holy Spirit given through faith in Christ,” whereas the secondary element consists in: “the various things that dispose a person to receive the grace of the Holy Spirit or make use of it fittingly.”⁷⁷

It is the principal element of the New Law, the grace of the Holy Spirit, which entails that it is: “not a law that remains external but becomes interior, being inserted in the heart of believers by the presence and action of the Holy Spirit (*lex indita*).”⁷⁸ The secondary element of the New Law consist of all those means which, although in themselves external elements, are taken up and used by the Holy Spirit dwelling within the person to deepen the interiority of the Spirit’s action. Amongst these means primacy is given to: “the Gospel text itself, and particularly the Sermon on the Mount,” for this is the “work of the Holy Spirit and corresponds precisely to his action.”⁷⁹ In his theology of the Evangelical Law Aquinas radicalizes the ancient and Patristic conception of law as inner conformity to the wisdom of a lawmaker, by emphasising the interior nature of the Evangelical Law as the work of the Holy Spirit dwelling within the believer. This interiority is not set in opposition to external

⁷⁵ "Aquinas and Agency : Beyond Autonomy and Heteronomy?," 177. “qui lui mérite le titre de Loi nouvelle, différente de toute autre loi.” "Autonomie Et Hétéronomie Selon Saint Thomas D'aquin," 115.

⁷⁶ "Aquinas and Agency : Beyond Autonomy and Heteronomy?," 177. “en s’inspirant de S. Paul, dans l’épître aux Romains, et de S. Augustin.” "Autonomie Et Hétéronomie Selon Saint Thomas D'aquin," 115.

⁷⁷ "Aquinas and Agency : Beyond Autonomy and Heteronomy?," 177. “diverses choses qui disposent à recevoir la grâce de ‘Esprit-Saint ou à user convenablement.” "Autonomie Et Hétéronomie Selon Saint Thomas D'aquin," 116.

⁷⁸ "Aquinas and Agency : Beyond Autonomy and Heteronomy?," 177. “elle n’est pas de une loi qui reste extérieure, mais elle deviant l’intérieure, étant insérée dans le cœur des croyants par la présence et l’action de l’Esprit Saint (*lex indita*).” "Autonomie Et Hétéronomie Selon Saint Thomas D'aquin," 116.

⁷⁹ "Aquinas and Agency : Beyond Autonomy and Heteronomy?," 178. “Ce sera notamment le texte même de l’Evangile, en particulier le Sermon sue la montagne.” "Autonomie Et Hétéronomie Selon Saint Thomas D'aquin," 116.

obligation, but is distinguished from the exterior by a logic through which interior and exterior are tied together.

If we return now to Wittgenstein's remarks on how our understanding of the inner and the outer are logically tied together, we can observe that the various games and strategies he develops in his later writings have the purpose of overcoming false conceptions of interiority and exteriority, and returning us to the practices in which we come to use these terms. Pinckaers also wishes us to return to the practices in which we learn how the inner and the outer are logically connected, but he tends to use historical arguments to help us see through modern false conceptions of interiority. Unless, however, they are shown to have a basis in our actual practice, these historical arguments run the risk of re-introducing the external observer perspective. To this end Pinckaers locates Aquinas' treaties on the New Law as the summit of his wider account of Christian belief and practice: "The treaties on the New Law thus connects directly with the entire treaties on law and the organism of the virtues and gifts, and relates equally to the study of the Trinity, through the Holy Spirit, and of Christ and the sacraments that give us grace."⁸⁰ It is in the concrete totality of the Christian life that we come to understand key theological notions such as grace and the virtues, and any account of that life which abstracts theological ideas and uses them as self-sufficient principles distorts our understanding of it.

In the practice of the Christian life, therefore, the secondary elements should not be seen as consisting in things which form merely an external cladding to the inner action of the Holy Spirit. There is a unity to the Christian life in which the interior and exterior elements do not correspond to two separate realms, but are essentially (logically) interconnected. We return here to the central theme of this thesis, only now our concern is specifically

⁸⁰ "Aquinas and Agency : Beyond Autonomy and Heteronomy?," 178. "Le traité de la Loi nouvelle entretient ainsi des connexions immédiates avec tout le traité des lois, avec tout l'organisme/des vertues et des dons, mais également avec l'étude de la Trinité par l'intermédiaire du Saint-Esprit, et avec celle du Christ et les sacrements qui nous procurent la grâce." "Autonomie Et Hétéronomie Selon Saint Thomas D'aquin," 117.

theological. Our reading of Wittgenstein characterized him as seeking to overcome the choice between idealism and empiricism by developing a form of realism which re-connects us with our natural human practices. Now, in an analogous way, we can see how Pinckaers in his return to Aquinas' treaties on the Evangelical Law seeks to overcome the modern dichotomy between autonomy and heteronomy by reconnecting us with the basis of the Christian life in the action of the Holy Spirit. Just as the path of realism in Wittgenstein's philosophy is a narrow path, which requires constant self-questioning, so the path to developing a theology which connects us with the life of the Spirit is beset with temptations. On the one hand there is the danger of emphasising the exterior elements of the life of faith at the cost of reducing it to an external measure (analogous to imposing a purely causal account of human action in psychology); while on the other hand there is the temptation to stress the autonomy of the inner working of the Holy Spirit which risks losing the expression of faith in the outward actions of Christ, such as in the written text of Scripture, the sacraments and liturgy of the Church and the charitable activities of Christians (analogous to the denial of any basis for human practices in physical nature). In the next chapter we will develop this comparison, when we discuss how Wittgenstein's writings on following rules and seeing aspects can throw light on the life of faith.

It is important to emphasise that this comparison between Wittgenstein's philosophy and Pinckaers' retrieval of Aquinas' theology of the Evangelical Law uses analogy. The analogy takes its starting point from the understanding of nature as origin which we examined earlier in this chapter; which entails that grace is not an alien imposition upon nature, but a perfecting and deepening of nature which involves an increase in interiority and freedom. At the same time there are crucial differences in the philosophical account we have developed from Wittgenstein and in the theology of the New Law set forth by Pinckaers. These differences all turn on the fact that God's initiative through the work of the Holy Spirit is the

starting point for Aquinas' account of the New Law, whereas Wittgenstein offers us philosophical tools to help us reconnect with our nature. The basis of the analogy in our nature, however, counsels against turning this difference into an opposition between two separate spheres: the realm of grace verses the realm of reason. The secondary element of the New Law includes all those external elements which can be used as tools for the growth of the inner life of the Spirit. This as we have seen, refers in the first instant to the Gospel text, but it encompasses all that can throw light on the mystery of the work of the Holy Spirit, including philosophy as it is transformed and purified through grace.

5.4.4 Objective Virtue: Is Wittgenstein's Philosophy Open to Theology?

Christian theologians have used ideas borrowed from philosophy from the earliest times, and as such these ideas have been transformed and taken up into the life of faith. There is always the question whether a particular use of a given philosophy is compatible with Christian practice and belief, such as the controversy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries concerning the use of Aristotle's metaphysics and science.⁸¹ When assessing whether a particular philosophy is open to theology it is therefore important to ask how we can use that philosophy, or at least elements of it, to help us gain a deeper understanding of Christian belief and practice. This question cannot be answered by standing outside our theological practices, but only by doing theology, and within our practice of theology showing how a philosophy helps us to gain that deeper understanding. We again return to the dialectical nature of human understanding. It is essential, however, to keep constantly in mind the differences between the practice of philosophy and the practice of theology. In the dialogue between theology and philosophy, we are not dealing with two equal partners, although an openness to dialogue can be fruitful for both sides. Theology consists in reflection on the

⁸¹ See Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century : Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West*.

elevation and perfection of our nature through the action of the Holy Spirit, and as such is the perfection and crowning of human wisdom as it is transformed in an encounter with divine wisdom. This encounter is not merely an external conversation, but involves the inner transformation of human nature, so that we come to participate in divine wisdom.

Before we turn to the question of Wittgenstein's philosophy and its relationship to theology it is instructive to examine an historical example of how a practice of theology has used and transformed philosophical ideas. In his article "Historical Perspectives on Intrinsically Evil Acts"⁸² Pinckaers draws on the work of Etienne Gilson and Knut Ragnar Holte to argue that the Church Fathers used ancient philosophers by transforming their key ideas. In particular they took two key ideas which lie at the heart of ancient ethical theories, happiness and virtue, and subjected them to: "a basic critique that makes it possible to integrate them in a new concept of the moral life, centred henceforth on faith in Christ and charity given by the Holy Spirit."⁸³ To this end the Fathers identified happiness with beatitude, which is chiefly obtained through: "the interior ways of the virtues underlying good actions, as proposed particularly in the New Testament."⁸⁴

The Fathers differed from ancient philosophers in their understanding of these central ideas in two key respects. Firstly, whereas for the ancient philosophers: "the end of the human person is wholly within the person, it is immanent,"⁸⁵ for the Fathers beatitude is

⁸² Servais Pinckaers, "A Historical Perspective on Intrinsically Evil Acts," in *The Pinckaers Reader: Renewing Thomistic Moral Theology*, ed. John Berkman and Craig Steven Titus (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press of America, 2005).

⁸³ Ibid., 188. "une critique du fond qui permet de les intégrer dans une conception nouvelle de la vie morale, centrée désormais sur la foi au Christ et sur la charité donnée par l'Esprit Saint." *Ce Qu'on Ne Peut Jamais Faire: La Question Des Actes Intrinsèquement Mauvais, Histoire Et Discussion* (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1986), 23.

⁸⁴ "A Historical Perspective on Intrinsically Evil Acts," 188-89. "les voies intérieures que sont les vertus à la source des actions bonnes, tels qu'elles sont proposées spécialement dans le Nouveau Testament." *Ce Qu'on Ne Peut Jamais Faire: La Question Des Actes Intrinsèquement Mauvais, Histoire Et Discussion*, 23.

⁸⁵ "A Historical Perspective on Intrinsically Evil Acts," 190. "la fin de l'homme est toute dans l'homme, l'immanente à l'homme." *Ce Qu'on Ne Peut Jamais Faire: La Question Des Actes Intrinsèquement Mauvais, Histoire Et Discussion*, 24.

exterior to us and: “resides rather in the effective attainment of the divine object.”⁸⁶ Secondly, and following on from the first, in the Fathers due to the Christian conception of wisdom there is a realism which is lacking in ancient philosophy. This conception of wisdom is found in the writings of St Paul and Pinckaers concludes: “according to St. Paul, the source of wisdom will be in God and will be communicated through the events of salvation history thanks to faith in Christ.”⁸⁷ The limitations of ancient philosophers did not, however, lead the Fathers to wholly reject them, and Pinckaers notes that: “the Fathers will not hesitate to treat of the classic virtues of prudence, justice, courage, and temperance,” although in doing so, “they make substantial changes in these in order to put them at the service of the properly Christian virtues of faith, hope, and charity, which are of another nature with their respective dimension in regard to divine action.”⁸⁸ In the light of this transformation of ancient conceptions of virtue Pinckaers describes the theological virtues as opening: “the human mind and heart to the God of Jesus Christ.”⁸⁹

The degree to which a particular philosophy is open to theology thus turns upon the degree to which it can be used by theologians, even if this involves substantial changes in its key concepts. As such even philosophies which are in many aspects contrary to Christianity, such as Marxism, may provide important insights for theology. There is a difference, however, between taking a number of insights from a philosopher and using her philosophy more widely. Thus, Aquinas’ use of Aristotle is not just the appropriation of a few key ideas,

⁸⁶ "A Historical Perspective on Intrinsically Evil Acts," 190. “réside bien plutôt dans l’obtention effective de l’objet divin.” *Ce Qu’on Ne Peut Jamais Faire : La Question Des Actes Intrinsèquement Mauvais, Histoire Et Discussion*, 24.

⁸⁷ "A Historical Perspective on Intrinsically Evil Acts," 191. “la source de la Sagesse sera en Dieu, communiquée par les événements du salut grâce à la foi au Christ.” *Ce Qu’on Ne Peut Jamais Faire : La Question Des Actes Intrinsèquement Mauvais, Histoire Et Discussion*, 25.

⁸⁸ "A Historical Perspective on Intrinsically Evil Acts," 189. “les Pères n’hésiteront pas à reprendre les vertus classique de prudence, justice, force et tempérance . . . ils leur feront subir des transformations substantielles pour les mettre au service des vertus proprement chrétiennes de foi, espérance et de charité, qui sont d’une autre nature, où l’emporte le côté réceptif à l’égard de l’action divine.” *Ce Qu’on Ne Peut Jamais Faire : La Question Des Actes Intrinsèquement Mauvais, Histoire Et Discussion*, 23.

⁸⁹ "A Historical Perspective on Intrinsically Evil Acts," 191. “l’intelligence et le cœur de l’homme au Dieu de Jésus-Christ.” *Ce Qu’on Ne Peut Jamais Faire : La Question Des Actes Intrinsèquement Mauvais, Histoire Et Discussion*, 26.

but the transformation of whole areas of his philosophy, such as his physics, metaphysics and ethics. The key to this wider appropriation is, as we argued earlier, to be found in the theology of creation. Theologians will continue to question the degree to which Aquinas' use of Aristotle is successful, but we can only determine this by engaging with Aquinas' theological practice and whether within that practice his use of Aristotle involves importing elements contrary to the Gospel or elements which help to illuminate the life of faith.⁹⁰

As we noted at the beginning of this chapter there is a considerable literature which involves the use of ideas derived from Wittgenstein in theology. We also observed that some theologians have challenged the use of Wittgenstein in theology, arguing that he presents an immanentist understanding of human nature, which is cut off from any sense of transcendence. We challenged this reading of Wittgenstein by drawing points of comparison between his concern with the question of origins and Pincakers' reflections on the concept of nature as origin. This comparison entails that there is an opening for dialogue between Wittgenstein's philosophy and Christian theology such that the use of Wittgenstein in theology is more than just the appropriation of a number of insights. Furthermore, the purpose of the examination of Wittgenstein's philosophy which was carried out in the first four chapters was to determine the degree to which Wittgenstein's thought is open to dialogue with theology. To this end we developed a dialectical reading of Wittgenstein, which emphasised the self-questioning nature of his later writings. This self-questioning dialectic runs the risk of turning in on itself, and collapsing into the horizon of finitude Ernst detects in the later Wittgenstein. The reading of Wittgenstein we developed, however, sees him as seeking to return us to the basis of our practices in human nature, overcoming the temptation to reduce them to a pre-given measure, while at the same time avoiding the danger of subliming them in an account of their grammar which has no basis in human nature.

⁹⁰ As we argued earlier in this chapter this does not entail we are locked within particular practices, but rather draws attention to the danger of imagining that we have a vantage point outside of practice. This is not to deny the possibility of transcendence, but to overcome false notions of transcendence and immanence.

Is this enough to entail that the philosophical practice and concepts Wittgenstein develops are themselves open to divine wisdom? If we recall Pinckaers' argument that the pagan conceptions of virtue lack the objectivity of the Christian account of the life of virtue, then it is clear that in order to be open for use within theology philosophical practices and concepts need not in themselves be the kind of open practices which Pinckaers sees in the Christian virtues. What is required is that they are not self-enclosed practices of philosophy, cutting off the possibility of entering into dialogue with theology. To this end our reading of Wittgenstein has the more modest aim of showing that it is open to dialogue with theology, rather than showing that in itself it is an open practice in the sense Pinckaers describes for the Christian virtues. Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that these virtues are theological virtues and as such they go beyond philosophical practices, while using and perfecting such practices. Nevertheless, the reading of Wittgenstein put forward in the first four chapters, and the dialogue we have begun in this current chapter between moral theology and Wittgenstein, indicate that the use of Wittgenstein for theology can be more than just the appropriation of a number of insights. At the same time it is important to keep in mind that in this encounter with theology Wittgenstein's philosophy has undergone a substantial transformation.

5.5 Conclusion: Nature, Law and Agency

In beginning a conversation between Wittgenstein's later philosophy and moral theology a more general question was raised concerning the relationship between philosophy and theology. This highlights the issue of the relationship between grace and nature, and the contemporary renewal of interest in de Lubac's work on grace and nature was briefly examined. We did not take sides in the debate between those who follow de Lubac and those who oppose him, but noted that for both sides it is essential to develop a conception of nature which overcomes modern dichotomies. We then outlines the revival of the concept of nature

as a central category in moral theology was then outlined. This revival involves a critique of modern notions of nature, and a return to the pre-modern concept of nature in which theology and practice are not opposed. Many twentieth-century moral theologians rejected the use of nature as they viewed it through modern eyes as a static category, which is known prior to our moral practices and can be misused to legitimate oppression in the name of conservatism. By contrast those revivals of moral theology which have drawn upon the pre-modern tradition open the way to overcoming the modern opposition between theory and practice, such that nature is not a category grasped outside our practices, but is discovered within those practices. The parallels with our reading of Wittgenstein as clearly to be seen and it is no coincidence that many of those philosophers and theologians (at least in the English speaking world) who have returned to virtue theory and natural law theory have been influenced by Wittgenstein.

We next turned to the more specific question of the use of the concept of nature in moral theology, and found a connection between Pinckaers' revival of Aquinas' understanding of nature as origin and Mulhall's Augustinian reading of Wittgenstein as concerned with the question of origins. The conversation with moral theology was deepened by developing a dialogue between Wittgenstein and Pinckaers' use of Aquinas' theory of agency to overcome the choice between autonomy and heteronomy. This opened again the question of the relationship between philosophy and theology, and we examined how Pinckaers finds in Aquinas' theology of the Evangelical Law an account of human agency in relation to divine grace which overcomes the choice between autonomy and heteronomy. The conversation between Wittgenstein and Pinckaers was developed by comparing their notions of interiority and how both return us to the wider contexts within which human agency is to be understood. A key distinction between their accounts of human agency was noted insofar as Pinckaers' concerns are primarily theological, and as such he argues that Christian

theology as it was developed by the Fathers contains an objectivity and realism lacking in ancient philosophies. This does not entail, however, that Wittgenstein's philosophy is closed to theology, and we argued that the dialogue we have begun to carry out between Wittgenstein and moral theology shows that despite its limitations it is essentially open to theology. In the next chapter we will continue this dialogue between Wittgenstein and moral theology through using McCabe's Wittgenstein inspired understanding of human beings as linguistic animals

6 TRANSFORMING VIRTUE: SHARING IN GOD'S STORY

6.1 Law, Truth and Story

In this chapter we will develop the dialogue between Wittgenstein and moral theology by examining Herbert McCabe's understanding of human beings as autobiographical creatures, and how through grace we are caught up in God's autobiography. McCabe argues that we are invited to participate in the life of God through Jesus Christ, who is the enacted history of God. This involves a transformation of our natural human practices of story-telling, such that we are caught up in the story of God. With this theological account of the graced transformation of our nature in mind we will turn to MacIntyre's understanding of the relationship between virtue and our animal dependencies in order to show how Wittgenstein's conception of human beings as linguistic animals can help throw light on how we become friends of God through Jesus Christ. This will lead to a reflection on the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus Christ preaches the Kingdom of God by giving us the shape of the perfect Christian life as the perfection of our human vulnerabilities. This reflection will draw on insights gained from Wittgenstein's examinations of 'following rules' and 'seeing as' in order to help us understanding that life of virtue which is being caught up in the story of God.

6.1.1 The Truth of Life: Language Using Animals

The unity of human nature and human action is preserved and perfected through the exercise of the virtues. An account of human agency which places too much stress on the analysis of individual acts risks opposing the interior dimensions of human agency to its exterior effects, whereas an account which begins with the exercise of the virtues enables us to see the logical interconnection between the inner and outer dimensions of our acts. This does not entail, however, that we cannot analyse individual acts, rather, as Pinckaers argues,

virtue enables us to see how the inner dimensions of our acts are specified in definite external acts: “Virtue is altogether ordered to actions and to their excellence, as well as to the object that specifies them. One of the tasks of virtue is precisely to effect coordination between the interior and the exterior act, between our disposition to act and its realization in actions done and done well.”¹ Another way of expressing this is to say that the exercise of the virtues enables us to see the reality of our actions, such that we find a resonance between our external acts and our inner intentions.

Wittgenstein in his later philosophy can be understood as attempting to develop a form of realism which enables us to: “effect coordination between the interior and the exterior act.” This realism can only be achieved if we overcome the illusions which prevent us from seeing the basis of what we do in our natural human reactions. This is not merely the operation of various techniques, but a practice which is transformative of our human nature as a whole. Aquinas also points to the transformative nature of the human search for truth with his understanding of living the ‘truth of life’ as a virtue which underlies the exercise of the other virtues. Romanus Cessario sums up in the following passage: “the full development of true freedom and human flourishing requires a principle of rectitude. He [Aquinas] called this rectitude *veritas vitae*, the truth of life, a sort of general virtue which undergirds all the other virtues and, in fact, the whole of human existence.”² This “truth of life”³ is placed by Aquinas in a theological setting when he argues that the measure of this truth is provided by

¹ Servais Pinckaers, "The Role of Virtue in Moral Theology," in *The Pinckaers' Reader : Renewing Thomistic Moral Theology*, ed. John Berkman and Craig Steven Titus (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 292-93. “La vertu est toute ordonnée aux actes, à leur qualité, ainsi qu’à l’objet qui les spécifie. Une des tâches de la vertu est précisément de faire la coordination entre l’acte intérieur et l’acte extérieur, entre nos dispositions à agir et leur réalisation dans des actes faits et bien faits.” "Redécouvrir La Vertu " *Sapientia* 51 (1996): 154.

² Romanus Cessario, O.P., *The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics* (Notre Dame, Ind ; London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 21.

³ Cessario quotes from the *Summa Theologica* II-IIae q. 109, a. 2, ad 3 where Aquinas talks of the truth of life as the: “the kind of truth by which something exists as true, not by which someone speaks what is true.” Ibid. “*veritas vitae est veritas secundum quam aliquid est verum, non veritas secundum quam aliquis dicit verum.*” Thomas Aquinas, *S. Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia*, (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1980), <http://www.corpusthomicum.org/sth2074.html>. II-IIae q. 109, a. 2, ad 3.

the divine law: “Life like anything else is said to be true, from the fact that it attains its rule and measure, namely, the divine law; since rectitude of life depends on conformity to that law. This truth or rectitude is common to every virtue.”⁴ We do not find such an explicit theological context in Wittgenstein’s attempt to develop realism in philosophy, but this is not to say that his philosophical exercises cannot help us to see the truth of life.

Light on how Wittgenstein’s philosophical practices can help us to understand the truth of life is cast by Herbert McCabe’s Wittgenstein influenced conception of human beings as language using animals. McCabe observes that like other animals human beings use their senses to interact with their environment; unlike other animals, however, human beings: “deploy symbols, to live in the structure we can broadly call language.”⁵ Although other animals on the basis of their genetic inheritance: “interpret signals produced by other members of the species,” it is misleading to call these signals ““animal language.””⁶ Only human beings have the capacity to: *make our own symbols*” and as such “the characteristic activity of the human animal is the creative development of language.”⁷ This ability to creatively develop language entails that unlike other animals human beings can: “formulate aims and intentions for ourselves,”⁸ for we can ask and answer the question: ““Why did you do that?””⁹ It is our ability to ask and answer this question which is the basis of our human histories, for in answering this question we show how our actions are part of a story other human beings also can make sense of: “For an adequate account of human action it is necessary to refer to the intentions with which some activity is done – without that we do not

⁴ *The 'Summa Theologica' of St. Thomas Aquinas, Tr. By Fathers of the English Dominican Province. [22 Vols. In 20] (Lond. &c.1911), II-IIae q. 109, a. 2, ad 3.*” Dicitur autem vita vera, sicut etiam quaelibet alia res, ex hoc quod attingit suam regulam et mensuram, scilicet divinam legem, per cuius conformitatem rectitudinem habet. Et talis veritas, sive rectitudo, communis est ad quamlibet virtutem.” *S.Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia.* II-IIae q. 109, a. 2, ad 3.

⁵ McCabe, *The Good Life : Ethics and the Pursuit of Happiness*, 67.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 69.

⁹ Ibid., 70.

know *what* action has been done. Unless we know what story this action is part of, we do not know what it is – it may of course be part of many stories.”¹⁰

The influence of Wittgenstein on McCabe is clear to see in this characterization of human beings as creatures who: “make our own symbols.” McCabe argues that this linguistic ability enables human beings to live a social existence in a manner which is not available to other animals: “So long as, like other animals, I am restricted to sensual experience my life is private.”¹¹ It is language which gives us the ability to transcend our individual existences, thus freeing us from: “imprisonment in the isolated self.”¹² The ability to craft symbols is also essential to the growth of our inner life, as the stories which we tell to explain our actions connects us to other human beings in a manner which also deepens our inner life. This logical connexion between the inner and the outer is one which McCabe takes from Wittgenstein, but it enables him to express the traditional notion of the human soul as immaterial in a manner which does not fall prey to metaphysical illusions. As such McCabe through his reading of Wittgenstein re-presents Aquinas’ conception of the human soul. Human beings are essentially creatures who are able to articulate their life-stories; to express the truth of life.

6.1.2 God’s Autobiography

McCabe moves beyond Wittgenstein and from philosophy into theology by arguing that human self-transcendence: “is seen to be complete in grace, in sharing divine life.”¹³ This sharing comes about through the articulation of a life-story, only this time we are not the author of this story; the author is God, and McCabe argues that we come to know God not by

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 72. In describing animal life as private here McCabe must be understood as using analogy. He is not suggesting that animals do not share a common existence, but that the manner of that common existence does not reach the level of self-transcendence the use of language makes possible. Nor is he implying that the pre-linguistic levels of common life humans share with animals are not in some sense the basis for our common existence. Angels are rational creatures, but they do not share the same kind of common human beings share. The common life of human beings is that of a material rational creature, and as such is that of a language user.

¹² Ibid., 73.

¹³ Ibid.

being able to see God in such a manner that we can conceptualize God; rather: “we know God as we know the author of an autobiography – and this I will suggest is a very odd business.”¹⁴ The influence of Wittgenstein is again clear to see, and McCabe seeks to return us to the practices within which we come to learn of God. These are the practices through which we read Scripture, and are the human participation in the life of the Spirit which we described in chapter five. As such they are practices of the Christian community, and outside these practise Scripture becomes as dead letter: “To regard it as Bible is to read it in and with the community which sustains its existence.”¹⁵

McCabe regards this reading of God’s autobiography as “a very odd business”. In order to help us understand the nature of this oddness McCabe reflects upon the paradoxes created by autobiographical literature. These paradoxes turn upon the fact that once ‘I’ am part of my story as a character in the story this character is no longer the ‘I’ who is the narrator: “‘I’ cannot function as a proper name. ‘I tell you’ is not part of a story in which ‘I’ is a character; it *is* the telling of a story. It is a sign of authority, of authorship as such (it is, as Aquinas would say, formal not material to the story).”¹⁶ Before we consider how a philosophical account of autobiography is transformed by theology it is important to see that the general paradoxes of autobiographical literature become all the more acute when we consider the Bible as God’s autobiography. This is because in himself God does not have a history: “There can be no life-story of the eternal God as such - to say ‘eternal life’ is to say non-narrative life, an incomprehensible concept.”¹⁷ McCabe draws upon the Prologue of John to explain how the eternal God enters into narrative life through the incarnation of the Word of God, who will henceforth be called Son: “In the Prologue John first speaks of the Word, but then when the Word has been made flesh, he speaks only of the Son, and in this Son, God

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 77.

¹⁶ Ibid., 75.

¹⁷ Ibid., 77. McCabe argues that this gap is the one Aquinas establishes as between the formal and material objects of faith.

has become enacted narrative.”¹⁸ The fact that God through his son Jesus Christ has entered into history must not, however, led us to make the mistake of abolishing the: “unbridgeable gap between author-as-author and author-as-character.”¹⁹

McCabe does not attempt to resolve the general paradoxes of autobiography, nor the special problems which we encounter when we try to understand the Bible as God’s autobiography. His account of God as enacted narrative does nevertheless, through the use of analogy, enable us to throw some light on the interplay between God as author and God as character. We can use our reading of Wittgenstein to fill out McCabe’s account by noting that this analogy works on two levels.²⁰ Firstly, there is the analogy of origins. In chapter five, following Pinckaers, we noted how in Aquinas the relationship between grace and nature is to be understood through the question of origins. Human beings are autobiographical animals, and in telling our stories we return to the question of origins, which brings us to ask the ultimate question of the origin of all that is. This question is articulated by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*: “6.44 It is not *how* things are in the world that is mystical, but *that* it exists.”²¹ In raising the question of our own authorship we are led to the question of the author of all that is. Although Wittgenstein abandoned the search for the general form of the proposition in his later works, he did not thereby collapse his account of meaning into a description of self-contained autonomous practices. Rather, in returning us to the human practices within which our concepts find a home, he can be understood (albeit, as we have argued, with limitations) as helping us to develop an understanding of the inner life which opens us to the question of our origin.

¹⁸ Ibid., 73-74.

¹⁹ Ibid., 76.

²⁰ These two levels correspond to what in the tradition of commentary on Aquinas are known as analogy of cause and analogy of proportion.

²¹ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 88. “6.44 Nicht *wie* die Welt ist, ist das Mystische, sondern *daß* sie ist.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 84.

The second level on which the analogy works is through drawing an analogy between God as author and a general account of autobiography. This second level works due to the basis given by the first level, and as such it is important to keep in mind the respects in which these two accounts of authorship differ. We noted above that God in himself, unlike human authors, does not have a history. The converse of this is that human authors are themselves authored, for in order to have a history we have to be made part of a narrative. The analogy McCabe draws between the divine author and human authors turns on the fact that human authorship is a paradigmatic example of human creative activity. Humans are not, however, creative in the way that God is creative. Everything a human being does can be traced to an origin, which is not to say that humans are not capable of great creativity, but that human creativity is of a different order to divine creativity. This is why McCabe concludes that human self-transcendence: “is seen to be complete in grace, in sharing divine life.”²² Grace is required for this completion because without grace human beings cannot share in the divine life. Without grace our story would remain just ‘our’ story, but through grace our story becomes a participation in the life of God: “just as our human life consists in enacted narrative so our divine life is just our participation in the enacted narrative of God. The revelation of God to us is nothing except our being taken up into that narrative, the human story that is the sacrament or image of the unseen and unseeable, incomprehensible God.”²³

When we are taken up through grace into the “enacted narrative of God” our human search for origins is transformed and perfected. This transformation and perfection bring about a healing of our broken nature and an elevation of that healed nature, so that we can participate in the life of God. We have been considering Wittgenstein’s philosophical exercises on the level of the natural operation of our human faculties, and as such they can be considered to have the aim of helping us to overcome the restlessness which results from our

²² McCabe, *The Good Life : Ethics and the Pursuit of Happiness*, 73.

²³ *Ibid.*, 78.

human tendency to grasp at what is true and good. This is to return us to the childlike play of innocence where we first learn to speak our stories. It would be a mistake, however, to view this account as a naturalized surrogate for the theological account of healing and perfection of human nature brought about through grace. Equally the presentation of Wittgenstein we have offered should not be considered merely as offering a means of pre-disposing us to receive grace. Although it is essential to maintain the real distinction between grace and nature in the concrete practice of the Christian life there is no *a priori* way to separate grace and nature.²⁴

In the remainder of this chapter we will begin by examining the parallels between the situated account of human agency offered by Wittgenstein and the accounts offered by Pieper and MacIntyre. We will then use these comparisons as a starting point to show how Wittgenstein's writings on following a rule and 'seeing as' can be used to throw light on the graced healing, transformation and perfection of our natural faculties as we come to participate in the life of God through: "our being taken up into that narrative, the human story that is the sacrament or image of the unseen and unseeable, incomprehensible God."²⁵ This discussion will involve a reflection on how our understanding of human nature with its account of situated freedom is transformed through our encounter with divine wisdom, such that we begin to see more clearly our dependence on others. In learning to see ourselves as dependent and vulnerable we learn to live the truth of life.

6.2 Dependent Virtues: Learning to See Through the Humanity of Christ

6.2.1 Pagan Virtue Transformed: Animal Dependence

McCabe, when he brings out the continuities and discontinuities between human beings and other animals, situates human freedom in a manner which overcomes the modern

²⁴ Which is not to say that we cannot use general principles in distinguishing between grace and nature. Such principles do not, however, apply themselves and it is within our concrete practices that their application is found.

²⁵ McCabe, *The Good Life : Ethics and the Pursuit of Happiness*, 73.

temptation to remove the human agent from the world. To this end, McCabe's understanding of human agency, like that of the metaphysical tradition in general, draws upon the virtue tradition of ancient philosophy in this account of our situated freedom. In this McCabe is following in the footsteps of the long tradition of Christian theology going back to the fathers of the Church who drew upon ancient accounts of virtue in order to cast light on the Christian life.²⁶ The fact that Christian theologians from the Fathers onwards have been able to draw upon the virtue tradition of ancient philosophy indicates that it presents a conception of human agency which despite its deficiencies provides more than just a number of principles which Christian theology can use. Ancient conceptions of virtue can open us to other human beings on the level of our natural tendency to find fulfilment in sharing our lives with others.²⁷ Furthermore, although Pinckaers refers only to the theological virtues as 'open' virtues, our conception of those virtues which are natural is not left unchanged by our encounter with divine wisdom.

This is not to say, however, that the pagan conception of virtue is without serious limitation. In telling our stories we have the tendency to forget the dialectical interplay between author and character, and in this forgetfulness the temptation emerges to subsume our self into the story or to place the self beyond any involvement in the story. Both of these tendencies involve a flight from our creatureliness. A return to our human nature involves learning to live in the interplay between author and character, in which we learn to see ourselves as both author and authored. This interplay enables us to see that our openness to that which transcends us is not compromised by our physical animal nature; the more we

²⁶ For an account of the influence of virtue ethics on the development of Christian moral theology see: Cessario, *The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics*, 12-33.

²⁷ For example, Aristotle's account of friendship in chapter eight of the *Nicomachean Ethics* stresses that perfect friendship is between equals who are good and desire their friends good for the friends' own sake, thus sharing in their lives: "Only the friendship of those who are good, and similar in their goodness, is perfect. For these people each alike wish good for the other *qua* good, and they are good in themselves. And it is those who desire the good of their friends for the friends' sake that are most truly friends, because each loves the other for what he is, and not for any incidental quality" Aristotle, *The Ethics of Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. J. A. K. Thomson, H. Tredennick, Revised translation ed. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1953; repr., 1976), 1156b2-23.

learn to live with the truth of our animal nature the greater becomes our openness to that which transcends us. The truth of life which Aquinas speaks of is the truth of the life of a rational animal, not a disembodied rational agent. The Christian conception of virtue with its underlying theology of creation enables us to see that the exercise of virtue is that of a rational *animal*, bringing out the openness of our whole nature to its divine author in a manner which transforms pagan notions of virtue.

Although in our reading of Wittgenstein we argued that he lacks a philosophy of nature, the way in which his later writings return us to the pre-linguistic reactions which form the basis for our linguistic practices challenges accounts of human intentional agency which disconnect it from our animality. In this respect Wittgenstein offers an understanding of the truth of life which opens us to the reality of our dependence on that which is given prior to, and as a condition for, intentional agency. This dependence opens us ultimately to the author of life, but most immediately our dependency is that of an animal belonging to a particular species. There are two related dimensions to this biological dependency. Firstly, there is the physical inheritance we possess as human beings. Secondly, there is the interdependence human beings have upon each other as a particular kind of higher primate.

We saw in chapter five how Pope brings attention to the significance of our biological nature for moral theology, and does so by drawing parallels between work by contemporary biologist and Aquinas' understanding of the role of natural inclinations in moral reasoning. Aquinas is influenced by Aristotle in his account of human beings as rational animals and in his *Dependent Rational Animals* MacIntyre argues that we should return to Aristotle's texts in order to learn about our animal nature: "if only because no philosopher has taken human animality more seriously."²⁸ Aristotle, however, according to MacIntyre, exemplifies: "two

²⁸ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals : Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*, 5.

attitudes which are barriers to” acknowledging our human animality.²⁹ Firstly, Aristotle failed to draw upon the experience of those in his society who are most dependent due to their vulnerability: “in neither ethics nor politics did he give any weight to the experience of those for whom the facts of affliction and dependence are most likely to be undeniable: women, slaves, and servants, those engaged in productive labour of farmers, fishing crews, and manufacture.”³⁰ Secondly, MacIntyre argues that there are: “two characteristics of Aristotle’s conception of masculine virtue,” which prevented him from understanding our human animality.³¹ These characteristics are Aristotle’s assertion that men unlike women are “unwilling to have others saddened by their grief,” and the disdain the magnanimous man has for being reminded of benefits he has received in contrast to his pleasure in remembering “what he has given.”³² Both these attitudes close human beings to understanding our origins in relationships of dependence. By contrast to this denial of our animality MacIntyre sets out to develop an account of virtue, and of why human beings need the virtues, by beginning with reflection upon our animal dependencies. In particular, MacIntyre argues it is in the experience of those who are most vulnerable that we learn what it means to be a rational animal: “the virtues that we need, if we are to confront and respond to vulnerability and disability both in ourselves and in others, belong to one and the same set of virtues, the distinctive virtues of dependent rational animals, whose dependence, rationality and animality have to be understood in relationship to each other.”³³

The ‘therapeutic’ exercises Wittgenstein develops in his later philosophy can be read in this light as an attempt to help us overcome our tendencies to forget or ignore our own dependencies. The play which he invites us to participate in recalls us to the innocence of childhood play before we are forced to join the serious world of the grown-ups from which

²⁹ Ibid., 6.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 7.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 5.

the vulnerable are excluded. The truth of life does not exclude this play, but rather brings it to maturity in a manner which makes us at the same time more independent and more open to our vulnerabilities. Our discussion of Wittgenstein's accounts of following and rule and 'seeing as' will attempt to show how Wittgenstein in his later works helps us to grow in maturity and independence through making us aware of our animal dependencies. These concerns are theological, and as such will go beyond MacIntyre's philosophical account of human dependence. MacIntyre provides an understanding of virtue, however, which is open to that which is our origin in a way which ancient conceptions of virtue lack. Thus, his understanding of how virtue develops through our animal dependencies and vulnerabilities is more open to transformation and perfection by grace than the ancient philosophical notion that: "the end of the human person is wholly within the person."³⁴ At the same time it will be important to keep in mind that when we talk of grace we are using analogy, and relevant distinctions between nature and grace need to be taken into account.

6.2.2 Situated Freedom

We have read Wittgenstein in relation to the metaphysical tradition as this is developed in the works of philosophers such as Hibbs, Desmond and Gilson. Each of these philosophers sees metaphysics as a practice in which the human desire for universal truth is rooted in our concrete experience of reality. As such they all develop accounts of human freedom which situates it in the context of human nature. Another philosopher whose influence lies in the background of our understanding of metaphysics, and of human freedom as situated in human practices, is Josef Pieper. In the following passage, in which he places human beings in the "middle" between animals and God, Pieper sums up many of the themes which have informed our reading of Wittgenstein:

³⁴ Pinckaers, "Aquinas and Agency : Beyond Autonomy and Heteronomy?," 190. "la fin de l'homme est toute dans l'homme." *Ce Qu'on Ne Peut Jamais Faire : La Question Des Actes Intrinsèquement Mauvais, Histoire Et Discussion*, 24.

The “middle” is the truly human sphere. The truly human thing is neither to conceive or comprehend (like God), nor to harden and dry up; neither to shut oneself up in the supposedly clear and enlightened everyday world, nor to resign oneself to remaining ignorant; nor to lose the childlike suppleness of hope, the freedom of movement that belongs to those who hope.³⁵

This notion of the “middle” is taken by Pieper from Diotima’s reply to Socrates in the *Symposium*. It is interesting to note that Pieper, like Wittgenstein, takes us back to our childlike reactions, and the play which the hardened seriousness of adulthood takes from us. Pieper connects this childlike play to the virtue of hope, which is a theological virtue taking us beyond the philosophy of Plato to the transformation of our nature in the encounter with divine grace. Hope is central to Pieper’s philosophy, for although he respects the distinction between philosophy and theology his philosophy is transformed by the encounter with divine wisdom in revelation.³⁶ Thus, for Pieper, it is through hope that we gain a freedom of movement which is the freedom characteristic of human beings. This is the freedom of creatures who are: “essentially *viatores*, on the way, being who are ‘not yet,’” and as such “it is because the structure of wonder is that of hope that it is so essentially human and so essential to a human existence.”³⁷

In a passage from the second part of the *Investigations* Wittgenstein distinguishes between human beings and other animals due to the human ability to hope: “One can imagine an animal angry, frightened, unhappy, happy, startled. But hopeful? And why not? . . . Can only those hope who can talk? Only those who have mastered the use of a language.”³⁸ There is no suggestion here that Wittgenstein has the theological virtue of hope in mind, but it is significant that he identifies hope as something which is distinct to the life of a creature who

³⁵ Josef Pieper, *The Philosophical Act*, published in Josef Pieper, *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*, trans. Alexander Dru, Rev. ed. (New York,: Pantheon Books, 1964), 105.

³⁶ For an account of Pieper’s philosophy of hope see Bernard N. Schumacher, *A Philosophy of Hope : Josef Pieper and the Contemporary Debate on Hope*, trans. D. C. Schindler, Moral Philosophy and Moral Theology Series, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003).

³⁷ Pieper, *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*, 104.

³⁸ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 174e. “Mann kann sich ein Tier zornig, furchtsam, trauig, freudig, erschrocken vorstellen. Aber hoffend? Und warum nicht? . . . Kann nur hoffen, wer sprechen kann? Nur der, der die Verwendung einer Sprache beherrscht.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, 489.

has mastered the use of language. At the same time Wittgenstein is not cutting human beings off from any connection with other animals, the other emotions he lists are ones humans and other animals share. His interest is in helping us to see both the continuities and the differences between human and animal behaviour. It is questionable whether Wittgenstein is correct in saying that animals cannot hope, but if we ascribe the emotion of hope to animals it differs significantly from the human emotion: a dog may hope to receive a biscuit, but only a human being can hope that the ingredients are ethically sourced.

The second part of the *Investigations* contains selections from Wittgenstein remarks on seeing aspects. In chapter four we noted how the phenomenon of ‘seeing as’ helps to throw light on the nature of human perception in general, and as such can be seen as enabling us to develop an account of perception which avoids reducing it to a purely physiological process, while at the same time preventing us assuming a Godlike view disconnected from any basis in our nature. The childlike suppleness of the play which is required to ‘see as’ entails that when we ask the question of origins we do so with a sense of wonder which opens into hope. We have seen how Kerr argues that Wittgenstein’s work lends itself to a ‘sensitivity of wonder’ and we can now add that the strategies he develops in his later works, including his discussions of ‘seeing as’, bring us to ask in wonder the question of origins. Pieper notes how for Aquinas the desire for knowledge is essential for the: “‘structure of wonder’ (corresponding to hope).”³⁹ Human beings are unique as animals who desire to know, and the philosophical investigations Wittgenstein carries out can be seen as attempting to open up a sense of wonder.

³⁹ Pieper, *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*, 104.

6.2.3 Following a Rule and Learning to Trust

In the discussion of following a rule which was carried out in chapter two we read Wittgenstein's remarks on rule following within the larger context of his developing understanding of the principle of application. In drawing attention to what happens when we follow a rule Wittgenstein seeks to throw light on the question of how we apply concepts. His use of examples from mathematics aims to rid us of the temptation to sublime our concepts in an account of application which lacks any friction in our actual practices, while his criticism of causal accounts of rule following helps us to overcome the temptation to reduce our practices to mechanical responses. The realism which Wittgenstein seeks is one which returns us to the natural human reactions which our ability to be trained in following rules requires. Wittgenstein contrasts the kind of training which human beings can undergo with that which is possible for other animals in a manner which draws out both the similarities and essential differences between human beings and other animals. These comparisons help us to see that although our ability to be trained cannot be reduced to our pre-linguistic animal reactions it has a basis in those reactions.

We also observed how Wittgenstein's account of rule following developed in his later works away from an understanding of rule following as the application of a calculus, to an account which sets rule following in the wider context of human life. This broadening of perspective enabled Wittgenstein to see that it is an illusion to search for a basis for our practices outside the contexts of training in which those practices develop. At first sight this would seem to rule out the claim that training has a basis in our pre-linguistic animal reactions, but it must be remembered that these reactions are not found outside our practices. In chapter five the question of how nature operates as a category in moral theology was examined, and we concluded that it is a mistake to see the use of nature in moral theology as

the application of a pre-given concept of nature to practice. Rather, it is through the exercise of the virtues that we come to understand what human nature is.

Another result of Wittgenstein's criticism of our tendency to look for foundations for our practices beyond those practices is his assertion that following rules relies not only on agreement in definitions, but that: "It is essential for communication that we agree in a large number of judgements."⁴⁰ Here we recall the analogy between logic and the rules of a game such as chess which Wittgenstein makes in order to argue that, just as changing the essential rules of chess entails that we are no longer playing chess, certain changes in the logic of our language would entail that what we are no longer talking about human life. Wittgenstein does not fall into the kind of relativism these remarks may at first sight imply. The logic which governs human life is not something we can just decide to change at will, for it finds its application through agreement: "in a large number of judgements" and if certain of these judgements change what is left is not recognizable as human life. Thus many of the language-games which Wittgenstein develops in his later works have the purpose of showing us how changes in judgements bring us to question whether we would recognize ourselves as human.

Throughout his later works Wittgenstein confronts the temptation to flee from what makes us human. In his discussion of rule following in the *Investigations* Wittgenstein reflects on the difficulty we have in accepting that our practices are not founded upon the certainty of a crystalline logic which removes all contingency from them, nor on the mechanical calculation of outcomes which determines each step in advance. Our practices seem insubstantial, liable to fall apart, when we view them against the demands of logic: "We want to say that there can't be any vagueness in logic. The idea now absorbs us, that the ideal

⁴⁰ Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, VI, §39. "Es ist für die Verständigung wesentlich, daß wir in einer großen Anzahl von Urteilen übereinstimmen." *Bemerkung Über Die Grundlagen Der Mathematik*, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 6, VI, §39.

‘*must*’ be found in reality.”⁴¹ Wittgenstein continually urges us to give up this ideal and in doing so to see that what seems to be the fragility of our practices is essential to them. In particular, he continually returns us to the contexts within which we learn to use language, and our dependencies upon others in these contexts. A clear example of this is given in the account of being guided Wittgenstein offers in the *Investigations*. We followed this account in chapter four and now we will built upon our earlier observations.

In his discussion of being guided in the *Investigations* §170-177 Wittgenstein draws our attention to various contexts within which have an experience of being guided. In Chapter four, section 4.2.4, we argued that these remarks provide a path towards understanding the pre-conceptual in terms of physical interaction and play. This enables us to understand the relationship between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual as one of dialectical interplay, and thus to overcome the modern dichotomy between the empirical realm of determinate causation and the conceptual realm of autonomous reason. Wittgenstein’s remarks on being guided have a particular relevance in helping us to understand the pre-conceptual basis of our concepts, because they bring to light the animal dependencies which are essential to our ability to learn. The pre-conceptual animal basis for our behaviour is not a causally determined realm which we must transcend in order to act rationally. The transcendence which we possess due to our ability to use language does not occur despite our animal nature, but is made possible through our animal dependencies. It is only by trusting in others, allowing ourselves to be guided, that we are able to grow to maturity as human beings. This trusting begins on the pre-linguistic level and the physical play which precedes the linguistic play at the boundary between the linguistic and the pre-linguistic. Our human animal vulnerabilities far from being an obstacle to the development of our rational independence are essential to it. In becoming independent rational agents we do not thereby leave our

⁴¹ *Philosophical Investigations*, §101. “Eine Vagheit in der Logik – wollen wir sagen – kann es nicht geben. Wir leben nun in der Idee: das Ideal ‘*müsse*’ sich in der Realität finden.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen*. In *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Ludwig Wittgenstein *Werkausgabe Band 1*, §101.

vulnerabilities and dependence on others behind, but come to acknowledge and live our vulnerability ever more fully.

The contexts of dependency which Wittgenstein draws attention to in his later works help us to loosen the grip of the temptation to assert our rational autonomy against the face of human vulnerability. Of the five experiences of being guided which Wittgenstein describes in §170 of the *Investigations* four of them involve being guided by someone. In chapter four we argued that these experiences of being guided are used by Wittgenstein to play with the boundary between the pre-conceptual and the conceptual. There is, nevertheless, something lacking in Wittgenstein's overall account of our human dependencies. We have suggested that Wittgenstein requires a physics of the kind developed by Aristotle in order to describe more adequately the dialectical tension between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual, and thus to situate an account of human agency within a wider account of natural causation. In the absence of such a wider context there is a danger that Wittgenstein's account of being guided by someone will either be reduced to the level of mechanical interaction, or be sublimed to the level of contractual agreement between autonomous agents. The wider context of physical causation enables us to see how these experiences of being guided are encounters of the whole human being, and are thus personal in a way which roots personhood in our animal dependencies (we will return to this topic in section 7.2).

This wider physical context also opens us to the question of the ultimate cause, of the one upon whom we are ultimately dependent. Just as human growth depends upon trusting other human beings, so it also requires us to trust in the author of creation. This trusting is our sharing in God's providence, which is our created participation in the eternal law through which he governs creation. It is brought to perfection through the Evangelical law and in chapter five we followed Pinckaers' account of how Aquinas' conception of the Evangelical law overcomes the modern choice between autonomy and heteronomy. We can now,

following McCabe, add that this perfecting of our natural human practices of trusting is made possible by our being taken up into the enacted history of God that is the revelation of Jesus Christ. Our natural human practices of trust enable us to see our story as part of the wider story of creation, as participants in the authorship of God.⁴² Through the Evangelical law God takes us up into his life, making us part of his story, we are not merely participants in this story but friends who come to share in the life of the author.

Earlier in this chapter we noted that grace works through healing and perfecting our nature. The healing work of grace takes place where those contexts of trust which are essential for our human growth have broken down. This is the breakdown of our trust in other people, but also our trust in God. It is through the humanity of Jesus Christ that God restores this broken trust, for in Jesus Christ the vulnerability and dependence of human beings is most powerfully revealed. In Christ crucified we see vulnerable humanity betrayed and tortured, yet at this moment where trust seems to be at its end the Son places himself into the hands of his Father in an act of ultimate trust which will restore our broken relationships. In

⁴² In speaking here of our natural practices of trust we are touching on the question of faith; when we trust in someone we have faith in them. In English the use of the word 'faith' tends, however, to be distinguished from the use of the word 'belief' as implying a theological context for belief. This implies that talk of natural practices of faith can seem somewhat confused. In German the word for belief, *glaube*, is also the word for faith. This entails that speaking of *glaube* as natural to human beings does not necessarily imply a theological context for belief. In this work on faith Joseph Pieper draws connections between (while also distinguishing) natural human practices of faith and trust and the theological virtue of faith: see Josef Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997). In *On Certainty* Wittgenstein also draws upon the wider connotations of the German word *glaube* to show how our beliefs depend upon human practices of trust: "I am told, for example, that someone climbed this mountain many years ago. Do I always enquire into the reliability of the teller of the story, and whether the mountain did exist years ago? A child learns there are reliable and unreliable informants much later than it learns facts which are told it." Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, § 143. ("Es wird mir z. B. erzählt, jemand sei vor Jahren auf diesen Berg gesiegen. Untersuche ich nun immer die Glaubwürdigkeit des Erzählers und ob dieser Berg vor Jahren existiert habe? Ein kind lernt viel später, daß es glaubwürdige und unglaubwürdige Erzähler gibt, als es Fakten lernt, die ihm erzählt warden." *Zettel. In Wissenschaft Bemerkungen Über Die Farben ; Über Gewissheit ; Zettel ; Vermischte Bemerkungen, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 8*, § 143.) When we talk about the perfection of our human practices of trust we are following Aquinas' dictum that the order of grace follows the order of nature: "Nature is not done away, but perfected, by glory. Now the order of charity given above (Articles 2, 3 and 4) is derived from nature: since all things naturally love themselves more than others." Aquinas, *The 'Summa Theologica' of St. Thomas Aquinas, Tr. By Fathers of the English Dominican Province. [22 Vols. In 20]*, II-IIae q. 26, a. 13. (*natura non tollitur per gloriam, sed perficitur. Ordo autem caritatis supra positus ex ipsa natura procedit. Omnia autem naturaliter plus se quam alia amant. S.Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia. II-IIae q. 26, a. 13.*) This is not to say that it is merely a case of bringing human nature to its natural end, but that the order of nature is transformed by being taken up into the higher order of grace in a manner which perfects, rather than destroys it. It is important to add that although faith essential involves relationships of trust it also has a propositional content: we believe that certain things are true because those we trust in hold them to be true.

the resurrection the Risen Lord carries the wounds of his crucifixion, showing us that it is through the vulnerability of his humanity that we have been saved and raised to new life. The healing and perfection which take place through grace is not brought about in spite of our human animal dependency and vulnerability, but through it.

6.2.4 'Seeing As': The Perfection of Our Human Nature

At the end of the section on following a rule in chapter two we saw how Wittgenstein's emphasis on our natural reactions as the basis for following rules opens into a discussion of 'seeing as'. Those who are incapable of reacting in certain ways are blind to aspects of human life rendering them incapable of grasping fully what it is to be human. In his account of 'seeing as' Wittgenstein argues that our ability to make fine grained distinctions is not something which is a mere addition to our perceptual abilities, but is essential to human life. Wittgenstein uses the phenomenon of seeing aspects to cast light on the nature of perception in general, showing that perception is neither reducible to a mechanical process nor is it an interpretation added to a basic set of visual data. As such Wittgenstein's reflections on seeing aspects are central to his attempt to develop realism in philosophy. Like the account of situated freedom which we have developed in this present chapter Wittgenstein's reflection on 'seeing as' can be seen as presenting an understanding of human capabilities which roots them in our animal nature, while avoiding reducing them to the pre-rational.

In chapter two we noted how after 1945 Wittgenstein's reflections turned to the application of psychological concepts. His earlier focus on mathematical concepts no longer took centre stage. This is not surprising once we consider that Wittgenstein came to see that there can be no general account of application, and therefore the investigation of application in more than one area helps to overcome the danger of drawing generalities from a one-sided

diet: “A main cause of philosophical disease—a one-sided diet: one nourishes one’s thinking with only one kind of example.”⁴³ In concentrating upon the application of mathematical concepts Wittgenstein risked reducing the application of concepts to the mastery of mechanical techniques. It was this very danger that Wittgenstein sought to avoid in the development of the analogy between language and games by showing that mathematics is not a logical calculus, but rather involves playing various games which have differing degrees of resemblance. He also argued that the application of mathematical concepts rests upon the possession of various non-mathematical abilities and reactions. Wittgenstein sought to break the mythology of crystalline purity which he succumbed to in the *Tractatus*, through helping us to see that even the most rigid seeming areas of language are not determined through the application of a calculus.

In seeking to break the hold of the mechanical model of application Wittgenstein wishes to return us to the natural human practices and reactions which our ability of follow rules pre-supposes. Mulhall argues that the in final passages in part one of the *Investigations* Wittgenstein helps us to see that inhabiting a language is more than just the mechanical application of rules, but involves making fine grained distinctions. Such distinctions are possible because human beings are by nature symbol using creatures, and learning to use symbols involves taking responsibility for our use of words.⁴⁴ Here we also recall McCabe’s characterization of the human being as a symbol using animal. It is in using these abilities that we take responsibility for who we are, and return to our natural ways of living. In chapter two we saw how from as early as the remarks found in *Philosophical Grammar* Wittgenstein argues that psychological states such as belief are akin to our natural pre-conceptual

⁴³ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §593. “Eine Hauptursache philosophischer Krankheiten – ein seigige Diät: man nährt sein Denken mit nur einer Art von Beispielen.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §593.

⁴⁴ Mulhall holds that in holding a mechanical conception: “to be exemplary of language as such, we satisfy a desire to deny our own responsibility for words—to think of the steps we take with them as really already taken by the words themselves.” Mulhall, *Inheritance and Originality : Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Kierkegaard*, 142.

reactions. In the post-1945 remarks on psychology he develops this insight to argue that beliefs arise from our natural human reactions to the world and others we encounter:

Believing that someone else is in pain, doubting whether he is, are so many natural kinds of behaviour towards other human beings; and our language is but an auxiliary to and extension of this behaviour. I mean: our language is an extension of the more primitive behaviour. (For our *language-game* is a piece of behaviour.)⁴⁵

The natural behaviour which Wittgenstein identifies here involves our pre-linguistic primitive behaviour. This conclusion is confirmed in another set of remarks in which Wittgenstein argues that our concern for the pain of others does not arise as a result of first attending to our own pain and then by analogy inferring that another person: “too had the experience of pain.”⁴⁶ Rather, it is “a primitive reaction to attend to the pain-behaviour of another, as, also, *not* to attend to one’s own pain-behaviour.”⁴⁷ Wittgenstein adds that the use of the word “primitive” here presumably means that “the mode of behaviour is *pre-linguistic*: that a language-game is based *on it*: that it is the prototype of a mode of thought and not the result of thought.”⁴⁸ At the same time it is important to note that Wittgenstein is not saying that the “mode of thought” here under investigation can be reduced to the pre-linguistic. The “language-game is based *on it*,” but that is not to say that it is reducible to it.

We have followed Mulhall in arguing that Wittgenstein’s discussion of seeing aspects is intended to break through our mechanical conceptions of language by “intimating

⁴⁵ Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, 1, §151. “Glauben, daß der Andere Schmerzen hat, zweifeln, ob er sie hat, sind so viele natürliche Arten des Verhaltens zu den andern Menschen; und unsere Sprache ist nur ein Hilfsmittel und ein weiterer Ausbau dieses Verhaltens. Ich meine: unser Sprachspiel ist ein Ausbau des primitiveren Benehmens. (Denn unser *Sprachspiel* ist Benehmen.)” *Bemerkungen Über Die Philosophie Der Psychologie Band 1. In Bemerkungen Über Die Philosophie Der Psychologie, Werkausgabe Band 7.*, §151.

⁴⁶ *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, 1, §917. “auch er habe ein Schmerzerlebnis.” *Bemerkungen Über Die Philosophie Der Psychologie Band 1. In Bemerkungen Über Die Philosophie Der Psychologie, Werkausgabe Band 7.*, §917.

⁴⁷ *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, 1, §915. “daß es seine primitive Reaktion ist, die schmerzende Stelle des Andern zu pflegen, zu behandeln, und nicht nur die eigene – also auf des Andern Schmerzbenehmen zu achten, wie auch, auf eigene Schmerzbenehmen *nicht* zu achten.” *Bemerkungen Über Die Philosophie Der Psychologie Band 1. In Bemerkungen Über Die Philosophie Der Psychologie, Werkausgabe Band 7.*, §915.

⁴⁸ *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, 1, §916. “daß die Verhaltensweise *vorsprachlich* ist: daß ein Sprachspiel *auf ihr* beruht, daß sie das Prototyp einer Denkweise ist und nicht das Ergebnis des Denkens.” *Bemerkungen Über Die Philosophie Der Psychologie Band 1. In Bemerkungen Über Die Philosophie Der Psychologie, Werkausgabe Band 7.*, §916.

something so fine as to be beyond explanation.”⁴⁹ This finesse emerges in the dialectical tension between the pre-conceptual and the conceptual. It is at this boundary that Wittgenstein seeks to return us to the childhood play, enabling us to overcome the deformation of our language which is caused by our adult tendency to determine meaning through the imposition of our will. This is the opening to our human animal vulnerabilities which makes us more fully human. The refusal to allow those who are most vulnerable and dependent to enter into our play blinds us to essential aspects of our humanity. The child who excludes the vulnerable from her play loses something of her own ability to play, until she is left with no friends but sees others merely as objects to be controlled.

Once we have become desensitised to the vulnerability of others, and thus also to our own humanity, how can we learn to see again? In his proclamation of the Kingdom of God, which is summed up in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Christ opens the path to the renewal of our humanity through learning to see ourselves and others as called to friendship with God.⁵⁰ Pinckaers argues the Sermon on the Mount: “has been one of the chief sources of spiritual renewal known to the Church through the ages,”⁵¹ and follows Augustine in seeing the sermon as: “the perfect rule of life for Christians. It could be called the charter of Christian life.”⁵² Pinckaers notes that for Augustine the Sermon on the Mount, which is summed up in the Beatitudes, was not to be seen in isolation from the rest of Scripture, but was: “a summit upon which all revealed moral teaching converged. The Sermon was said to

⁴⁹ Mulhall, *Inheritance and Originality : Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Kierkegaard*, 154.

⁵⁰ For an account of our call to friendship with God which builds upon Aquinas’ theology of charity see: Romanus Cessario, O.P., *The Virtues, or, the Examined Life*, Amateca Handbooks of Catholic Theology (London: Continuum, 2002), 61-95. It is important to keep in mind that although God’s charity envelopes the whole of creation friendship is properly possible only for rational creatures (see *ibid.*, 77). In highlighting the significance of human animal vulnerabilities for human friendship we do not mean to imply that friendship is possible for other animals in anything but an analogous sense. Rather, those vulnerabilities are the open us to a communion which is only possible for rational creatures.

⁵¹ Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, 135. “fut une des principales sources des renouveaux spirituels qu’a connus l’Eglise au cours des âges.” *Les Sources De La Morale Chrétienne : Sa Méthode, Son Contenu, Son Histoire*, 5e éd., ed. (Fribourg, Suisse: Academic Press Fribourg, 1985), 149.

⁵² *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, 144. “la règle parfait des mœurs chrétiennes. On peut l’appeler la charte de la vie chrétienne.” *Les Sources De La Morale Chrétienne : Sa Méthode, Son Contenu, Son Histoire*, 157.

be the perfection of this teaching, in the sense that it contained and fulfilled all its precepts.”⁵³ Aquinas more than any other theologian took over this insight from Augustine and: “referred to it explicitly when he declared that the Sermon on the Mount was definitively the representative text of the New Law (IaIIae, 108 a 3).”⁵⁴ The Evangelical law is summed up in the Sermon on the Mount, which is more than just a number of precepts for Christian living, but sets out the whole shape and pattern of the Christian life.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus Christ invites us to find healing for our broken humanity in a way which will bring it to perfection.⁵⁵ This involves entering into the play of his transforming words, and to allow him through those words to heal and perfect our human nature. It is an invitation to see the world anew, to recover aspects of our ability to see which have been lost through the hardening of our hearts. Each of the beatitudes reveals an aspect of human vulnerability and teaches us to embrace that vulnerability. The path of healing and perfection is one which far from removing us from our human dependencies is one which takes us through those dependencies to find perfection in learning to fully depend upon God. It is through learning to accept and embrace poverty, sorrow, meekness, hunger, mercy and purity of heart that we will become children of God through our discipleship of Jesus Christ, and be made ready to receive the perfection which comes to those who are persecuted for what is right. Christian discipleship involves becoming like a child and entering into the play of God’s Kingdom as it is revealed in Jesus Christ. This is God’s enacted history in which we are given divine riches through the poverty of him who for our sake accepted death on a cross.

⁵³ *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, 144. “le sommet vers où monte et converge tout l’enseignement moral révélé. Le Sermon en est la perfection en ce sens qu’il l’assume et l’accomplit.” *Les Sources De La Morale Chrétienne : Sa Méthode, Son Contenu, Son Histoire*, 157.

⁵⁴ *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, 144. “la reprendra de façon explicite quand il fera du Sermon sur la Montagne le texte propre de la Loi nouvelle (Ia IIae, q. 108, a. 3).” *Les Sources De La Morale Chrétienne : Sa Méthode, Son Contenu, Son Histoire*, 158.

⁵⁵ Pinckaers describes how Augustine characterizes the beatitudes as stages of conversion (healing) and perfection.

In his reflections on seeing aspects Wittgenstein can be seen as developing a realism in philosophy which roots our perceptual abilities in our human practices. As such he can be understood as standing against all attempts to deform human nature through a refusal to enter into the play of our human vulnerabilities. The realism which Jesus Christ proclaims in the Sermon on the Mount invites us to enter into the play of the Kingdom of God in which the very aspects of our human nature which make us most vulnerable are the path to our perfection. It is in learning to see poverty as the source of divine riches, sorrow as the advent of joy, meekness as growth in strength, hunger as fulfilment, mercy as healing for our own souls, purity of heart as the key to seeing the truth, and peace-making as the path to our inheritance as God's children, that we discover what it is to be human. The perfection of our nature is not brought about by overcoming our human dependencies, but by becoming vulnerable through the grace of God given to us in the beatitudes. Through his cross and resurrection Jesus Christ teaches us to see once again with the innocence of childhood, and raises up our fallen nature so that we may live as children of God; enfolding us in the story of God. This is to live in the eternal play of love which is the life of the Holy Trinity, the play through which the world was made and through which we are redeemed.

6.3 Conclusion: Learning to Live as Children of God

In this chapter we have developed the dialogue between Wittgenstein and moral theology by engaging with a theological account of virtue. In order to do this we followed McCabe's theology of revelation as the enacted history of God, which uses analogy to help us understand our graced participation in the life of God as being caught up in the autobiography of God. McCabe draws upon Wittgenstein to argue that human beings are essentially autobiographical animals: the truth of life is the truth told by a creature that is able to narrate its own story. In filling out McCabe's account we turned to the dialectical nature of

Wittgenstein's conception of human understanding. This dialectic enables us to remain in that middle which is between the self as character and the self as author and in doing so raises the question of origins. We are author of our story, but also authored. MacIntyre's account of human beings as dependent animals helps us to see how it is through our human vulnerabilities that we come to understand ourselves as authored. Our dependency as a creature opens us to see and live the truth of life, situating our freedom in a manner which enables us to see that we are not the ultimate author of our own lives. We are not the origin of our stories, but rather called to live it in dependence on others, and ultimately in dependence on the God who is revealed through the vulnerable humanity of Jesus Christ. Through Jesus Christ we are caught up in the story of God in a relationship which transforms and perfects the story of our creation, such that our stories become part of God's story

7 ACTION AND VIRTUE: TRANSFORMING ENGAGEMENT

7.1 Action and Language: Making Sense of What We Do

In this chapter we will examine how our reading of Wittgenstein can be used to understand human agency. In chapter five we noted how Anscombe in ‘Modern Moral Philosophy’ observes that our uses of moral terms such as ‘duty’ have become detached from the practices within which they originally found application. There is a disconnection between human actions and the language moral philosophers use to understand them. For Anscombe we need a renewal in our understanding of human psychology for such terms to make sense: “In present-day philosophy an explanation is required how an unjust man is a bad man, or an unjust action a bad one; to give such an explanation belongs to ethics; but it cannot even be begun until we are equipped with a sound philosophy of psychology.”¹ To return such terms to their home in our human practices more is required than just a technical mastery of human psychology. For Wittgenstein, understanding requires more than just mastery of a language, as the following passage from Part II of the *Investigations* argues in regard to understanding a people with traditions which are strange to us:

We also say of some people that they are transparent to us. It is, however, important as regards this observation that one human being can be a complete enigma to another. We learn this when we come into a strange country with entirely strange traditions; and, what is more, even given a mastery of the country’s language. We do not *understand* the people. (And not because of not knowing what they are saying to themselves.) We cannot find our feet with them.²

Wittgenstein’s remarks here concern difficulties in understanding others, but they also help us to reflect on the difficulty of understanding ourselves. In order to understand ourselves we

¹ Anscombe, *Human Life, Action and Ethics : Essays*, 174.

² Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 223e. “Wir sagen auch von einem Menschen, er sei uns durchsichtig. Aber es ist für diese Betrachtung wichtig, daß ein Mensch für einen andern ein völliges Rätsel sein kann. Das erfährt man, wenn man in ein fremdes Land mit gänzlich fremden Traditionen kommt; und zwar auch dann, wenn man die Sprache des Landes beherrscht. Man *versteht* die Menschen nicht. (Und nicht darum, weil man nicht weiß, was sie zu sich selber sprechen.) Wir können uns nicht in sie finden.” *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, 568.

need more than just the mastery of a language. Overcoming the ways in which we misuse language involves learn how to be human. Wittgenstein's philosophical exercises provide tools which can help us to see through the false pictures which hold us captive; enabling us to see what lies in front of our eyes. The recovery of our human nature involves developing those practices through which we begin to see and live the truth of life. In this chapter we will indicate ways in which a dialogue can develop between Wittgenstein and contemporary understandings of the relationship between nature, reason and human agency.

In section 7.1 we will compare Wittgenstein's desire for realism in philosophy with the recovery of the concept of nature in the works of Jean Porter. We will also relate our reading of Wittgenstein to Porter's project of reviving the tradition in which natural law and virtue ethics go hand in hand. The encounter between Porter and Wittgenstein will not be all one-way traffic, and we will examine and respond to a Wittgensteinian criticism Pinches makes of Porter's use of dialectic. Section 7.2 will draw on Brock's Thomist understanding of human agency and compare Aquinas' understanding of use with Wittgenstein's account of the use of terms in our language. Finally, in section 7.3 we will examine how Wittgenstein's understanding of situated freedom enables us to develop a critique of the account of human agency presented by those modern theories, such as proportionalism, which distinguish between moral and non-moral goods and evils.

7.1.1 Agency and Natural Principles

Jean Porter is a leading figure in the return within Catholic moral theology to an understanding of human nature which seeks to represent it in its concrete totality, and thus to show the essential significance of pre-rational human nature for the natural law. In this revival of natural law she reads Aquinas as developing a dialectical understanding of human nature, such that human beings are neither reduced to their pre-rational nature, nor identified

purely with a disembodied rationality, but live within the dialectical tension of being a rational animal. This dialectical tension is central to Porter's understanding of natural law, and to her critiques of the dominant modern theories of ethics. In chapter four of *Nature as Reason* Porter compares Aquinas' account of practical reasoning with contemporary approaches. To this end she contrasts "broadly Kantian" approaches to practical reason, which have a "fundamental commitment" to the "autonomy of morality,"³ with those approaches which characterize the use of reason in moral reasoning as: "instrumental to aims generated outside itself."⁴ This basic division is complicated by the fact that instrumentalist approaches split into cognitive versus non-cognitive theories of moral norms. Both hold that moral norms have a basis in human desires, but differ in how they regard: "the foundation of the logical status of moral norms."⁵ On one side there are consequentialists, who for the most part are cognitivists, while on the other side Humean sentimentalists argue that moral norms have no cognitive basis, but are expressive of our desires. The former tend to be more radical in their ethical theories, emphasising where the requirements of reason entail we should abandon our ordinary moral sentiments, whereas the latter tend to more conservative conclusions preferring to find an equilibrium in the play of our moral sentiments. This entails that although consequentialists are opposed to Kantians on the question of the autonomy of morality both differ from sentimentalists in placing emphasis on the role of rational procedure in moral reasoning. For this reason Porter argues that Kantianism and consequentialism tend to collapse into each other: "Kantianism and consequentialism, are unstable – each tends to collapse into its contrary, absent some stipulation about the proper objects and scope of practical reason itself."⁶

³ Porter, *Nature as Reason : A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law*, 235.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 239.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 241.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 244.

Porter argues that Aquinas' account of practical reasoning does not fit into this division between sentimental and Kantian moral theories. Contrary to sentimental theories Aquinas: "does not believe that human action (much less human identity tout court) can be explained in terms of the contingent equilibrium of heterogeneous desires."⁷ Against Kantian theories Aquinas does not accept that human agency is the operation of the will governed by the dictates of practical reason "detached from all desire."⁸ In order to understand how Aquinas overcomes the dichotomy between given desire and autonomous reason it is necessary to see that although: "Aquinas gives a certain priority to desire in the processes of action,"⁹ his account of desire is cognitive. This applies both to the will, which Aquinas understands to be rational appetite, "and also with the more general forms of appetite found in all creatures."¹⁰ The modern accounts of practical reason Porter examines, despite all their differences and oppositions, operate with the modern dichotomy between reason and desire. By contrast, in the psychology developed by Aquinas intellect and will condition one another, and although will and passions are distinguished they are: "both forms of appetite, and as such, each is oriented towards some perceived good."¹¹

We have noted how Wittgenstein attempted to develop a form of realism which avoids both empiricism and idealism. As we consider the relevance of his philosophy for moral theology we can see various parallels between Wittgenstein's realism and the account of practical reasoning Porter develops from Aquinas. Sentimentalist accounts of practical reasoning are normally built upon the basis of Humean empiricism, which views the operations of reason as subsequent to a causal account of human action. On the other hand, Kantian theories of autonomous reason, although in their contemporary forms shy of admitting idealist underpinnings, face the difficulty of showing how the autonomous use of

⁷ Ibid., 253.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 254.

reason can find application within the actual world of human desire.¹² The realism Wittgenstein seeks can thus be seen as opening the path to the development of an account of human agency which avoids reducing human practices to an empiricist understanding of human desire, while at the same time overcoming the temptation to sublime the will by turning it into a universal faculty for autonomous self-determination.

There is, however, a key difference between Porter and Wittgenstein. Porter is aware that in order to prevent this dialectic coming apart (and thus falling into the dichotomies characteristic of modern moral theories) an account of human will and passion must be given a basis in natural principles. In any creature appetite is: “an inclination towards some end which is exigent, or at least appropriate to the existence and flourishing of a specific kind of creature,”¹³ and thus in understanding a creature’s appetites we are also giving an account of the nature of that creature. This applies both to sentient and non-sentient creatures, and is the application of the general metaphysical principle that: “all creatures sustain their existence in and through operations which are given order and direction by the creature’s specific form.”¹⁴ These operations are oriented to the good of the creature, and in the case of human beings our specific form is such that: “both the passions and the will are necessarily oriented towards the good, each in accordance with its characteristic way of apprehending its proper object.”¹⁵

In our critique of Wittgenstein we examined Charlton’s argument that Wittgenstein’s theory of meaning collapses into pragmatism since its account of our linguistic practices lacks any basis in a wider account of final causation. As we now continue the conversation between Wittgenstein and moral theology, we can see that without a wider account of human nature he risks being trapped within the dichotomy between sentimentalism and Kantianism.

¹² Jürgen Habermas is aware of this problems and the need to recover sources of moral motivation from the lifeworld of pre-universalized desires. See Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), 109.

¹³ Porter, *Nature as Reason : A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law*, 256.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Human agency is either reduced to a causal account which fails to explain the application of intentional concepts, or it is removed from any basis in physical nature leaving the connection between the world and the will mysterious (as we saw in chapter four). What is required to overcome this dilemma is an account of will which shows its basis in human nature; because it is within the unity of the human being, a creature who is a rational animal, that the will is a uniting faculty. Porter argues that this unity is provided in Aquinas' understanding of the will as: "naturally and spontaneously oriented towards . . . components of well-being, including life itself, health, reproduction, and the like."¹⁶ Furthermore, she notes that: "This claim, that the will is naturally and (under some conditions) necessarily oriented towards certain objects, provides a critical link between 'nature as nature' and 'nature as reason' understood in a Thomistic sense."¹⁷ By "nature as nature" Porter is referring to that nature we share with non-rational creatures. Thus, the natural principles which form the basis for the operation of the will also provide the basis for the relationship between the rational and the pre-rational aspects of our nature, such that they are not set in opposition, but united in an account of the concrete unity of the human being.

Before we finish this section a brief word on emotion is timely. This is an important topic for moral theology and we have neglected it so far in our discussion of Wittgenstein and moral theology. There is an obvious point of dialogue here between Wittgenstein's concern to show how our linguistic practices are rooted in our natural human reaction and the prominence role of the emotions play Aquinas' account of the Christian life. Pinckaers argues that the role Aquinas gives to the emotions in the *Summa*: "rests on a unified conception of the human being and human action."¹⁸ This unity is expressed in Aquinas' understanding of

¹⁶ Ibid., 257.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Servais Pinckaers, "Reappropriating Aquinas' Account of the Passions," in *The Pinckaers' Reader : Renewing Thomistic Moral Theology* ed. John Berkman and Craig Steven Titus (Washington., D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 278. "repose sur une conception unitaire de l'homme et de son agir" "Les Passions Et La Morale," *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* (1990): 383.

the: “natural harmony between the body and the soul, between sensation and spirit, in spite of the frictions we can experience.”¹⁹ Pinckaers characterizes this natural harmony as an interplay of our human faculties when he concludes that: “We can find the same harmony in the interplay of the human faculties; reason, will, sensation, and sense perception.”²⁰ This interplay entails that for Aquinas the human agent is not split into a rational subject set over and against a natural self (the contrast Porter draws between Kantian and sentimentalist accounts of ethics), rather: “Thanks to the natural union between body and soul, and to the fundamental harmony that it creates between our faculties, humans can spontaneously move from the emotions to the spiritual, and, on the contrary, the spiritual can rebound through sensation, for good and bad.”²¹

In seeking to return us to the play between the linguistic and the pre-linguistic Wittgenstein can be understood as helping us to overcome the instrumentalization which occurs when the emotions are seen as objects to be ignored or manipulated, and to re-connect with the dynamic basis of the unity of the human being in the play between the emotions and the spiritual. This is not merely a technical balancing of the various human faculties, but provides tools which can help us in a recovery of our human nature. The perspective in which we should see Wittgenstein’s later philosophy is not that of the technician standing externally to that which her acts will pass into, but as the engaged human agent. It is the situated freedom of the human agent which forms the perspective from which the dialectical self-questioning of the later Wittgenstein arises.

¹⁹ "Reappropriating Aquinas' Account of the Passions," 278. “une harmonie naturelle entre le corps et l’âme, entre la sensibilité et l’esprit, quels que soient les tiraillements qui peuvent survenir.” "Les Passions Et La Morale," 383.

²⁰ "Reappropriating Aquinas' Account of the Passions," 278. “Elles se répercutent dans le jeu des facultés : raison, volonté, sensibilité, perception des sens.” "Les Passions Et La Morale," 383.

²¹ "Reappropriating Aquinas' Account of the Passions," 278. “C’est donc grâce à l’union naturelle entre le corps et l’âme et à l’harmonie de fond qu’elle crée entre nos facultés, que peut s’opérer un passage spontané des passions au spirituel et que le spirituel peut, à son tour, rejaillir sur le sensible, pour le bien comme pour le mal.” "Les Passions Et La Morale," 383.

7.1.2 Self-Questioning Dialectic

Despite the absence of a wider account of nature Wittgenstein's use of dialectic helps him to hold in unity the internal and external aspects of the human being. Moreover, in chapter four we argued that the self-questioning nature of Wittgenstein's later works helps him to avoid falling into the very philosophical mistakes he seeks to overcome. Despite his limitations and inconsistencies, Wittgenstein directs us to the concrete reality of our human practices: that which lies before our eyes. One of the most valuable lessons Wittgenstein provides for moral theology is the need for constant re-examination and questioning. A danger contemporary moral theologians run is that of offering a narrative tracing the development of our moral concepts in which the perspective of the modern impartial observer pre-dominates as opposed to that of the Christian involved in the joys and the sorrows of the Christian life. The dialectical understanding of human practices which Wittgenstein develops is rooted in those practices, and thus seeks to avoid the perspective of the philosopher or theologian standing outside them.

In *Theology and Action* Pinches draws upon Wittgenstein's engaged perspective to develop a critique of contemporary theories in moral theology. Pinches argues that theories such as proportionalism are founded on the modern dichotomy between the causal physical world, and the intentional human world: "Proportionalism's picture of the world is clearly physicalist, about action, and so also about human beings. To reiterate, it supposes there is a physical world (including, of course, physical human bodies) to which human minds come with their intentions and actions to effect some change."²² Like Porter, Pinches also draws upon Aquinas' understanding of human action in order to overcome this modern dualism between mind and body, emphasising that moral action is essentially human action, such that

²² Charles Robert Pinches, *Theology and Action : After Theory in Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, Mich. ; Cambridge: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002), 76.

any explanation of moral actions which removes them from their human context entails:

“they are no longer recognizable as human actions at all.”²³

Although Pinches shares a great deal in common with Porter in returning to Aquinas for an account of human action which avoids modern dichotomies, he accuses Porter of carrying “modern presumptions about ‘morality’ that are incompatible with it.”²⁴ The work to which Pinches refers in his criticisms is Porter’s 1995 book *Moral Action and Christian Ethics*.²⁵ Here she attempts to overcome the dominance of: “an idea of rationality which takes mathematical reasoning as its paradigm,”²⁶ by developing an account of moral concepts as open-textured empirical concepts. Porter’s objective is to avoid rationalism in ethics, while at the same time giving objective content to moral concepts. To this end she wishes to refute relativism by showing how certain moral judgements are universal: “It is true to say that no one can seriously deny that dishonesty, selfishness, cruelty, and the like, are bad qualities, or, correlatively, that truthfulness, thoughtfulness, and kindness are good.”²⁷ Pinches accuses Porter of falling into the very modern dichotomy she is seeking to overcome. He argues that Porter presents a typically modern account of how we form moral concepts, which rests on the picture of the isolated objective observer, who stands outside our human practices isolating a sub-set of actions which we designate as moral. As such Porter’s account implies that our grasp of moral concepts is subsequent to practices. By contrast he argues that: “Aquinas does not begin a discussion of morality and then turn in the midst of it to a discussion of human action. Instead, he begins discussing morality with a discussion of human action.”²⁸ The application of concepts occurs within human practices and cannot be understood in abstraction from those practices. In situating Aquinas’ account of moral

²³ Ibid., 28.

²⁴ Ibid., 141.

²⁵ Jean Porter, *Moral Action and Christian Ethics*, First paperback edition. ed., New Studies in Christian Ethics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

²⁶ Ibid., 8.

²⁷ Ibid., 131.

²⁸ Pinches, *Theology and Action : After Theory in Christian Ethics*, 146.

concepts within the context of human practice Wittgenstein's influence on Pinches is clear to see.

How fair is this criticism of Porter? The answer to this question turns on the degree to which Porter's method can be considered an expression of the dialectical reasoning which takes place within our human practices, or as the adoption of an observer perspective which stands beyond those practice. In her subsequent writings, such as the highly influential *Natural and Divine Law*,²⁹ and the work we examined above, *Nature as Reason*, Porter stresses the dialectical nature of moral reasoning. In *Nature as Reason* she draws upon a work we examined in the first chapter in connection with its account of dialectical reading: MacIntyre's *First Principles, Final Ends, and Contemporary Philosophical Issues*. Here MacIntyre attempts to overcome the modern division between analytical and empirical concepts by returning to an Aristotelian understanding of dialectical reasoning towards first principles.³⁰ Porter uses MacIntyre to argue that empirical content is not determined by a process of generalizing abstraction, as in classic modern empiricism, but is grasped in the course of investigation. An empirical investigation proceeds from an initial definition, which is not fully developed and may be significantly revised, to understand by the use of dialectic more fully what is being examined. This entails that those definitions which represent: "the essential properties of specific kinds" are not those we begin with, but are "included in the outcome of a successful inquiry."³¹ Through drawing attention to the essentially dialectic nature of empirical investigations, Porter provides an account of how the content of moral concepts is determined which avoids falling into the dichotomies typical of modern theories. This is not to say, however, that the dialectic Porter develops is beyond criticism, and the danger that the external observer perspective will remerge in the practice of dialectic remains.

²⁹ Jean Porter, *Natural and Divine Law : Reclaiming the Tradition for Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999).

³⁰ See *Nature as Reason : A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law*, 103-25.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 111.

This danger is particularly acute in the historical reconstructions of our moral concepts which Porter carries out. The lesson we repeatedly learn from Wittgenstein is that it is essential to reconnect our use of concepts with the practices in which they have a home. For moral theologians these are the living practice of the Christian community.

If Pinches fails to take into account the use of dialectic in Porter, his reading of Wittgenstein also betrays a lack of appreciation of his use of dialectic. We have argued that those followers of Wittgenstein who place emphasis on the autonomy of human practices at the cost of ignoring their dialectical nature fall into the modern dichotomy between theory and practice by failing to see the essential role of theory within human practice. Thus, we can turn Pinches' criticism of Porter back on him by asking whether he falls into this trap. The title of his book *Theology and Action: After Theory in Christian Ethics* indicates that he places himself among those who are against the use of theory in ethics. The theories he rejects, however, are all modern theories, and in his use of Aquinas he acknowledges something of Aquinas use of analogue and dialectic by referring to his understanding of the natural species of actions.³² There is a danger, nonetheless, that by failing to acknowledge the dialectical nature of moral reasoning Pinches does not pay sufficient attention to the natural principles which are the basis of our moral practices. This leaves his account of human action vulnerable to the criticisms we have brought against Wittgenstein from Charlton and Rhees.

If we ignore the basis of our human practices in pre-rational human nature then our account of those practices lacks friction, and spins off, collapsing in on itself (here we recall Porter's criticism of Kantian ethics). On the other hand, failure to understand the universal horizon of our practices results in their fragmentation into self-enclosed language-games (this brings to mind Porter's criticism of Humean moral theories). Porter can be seen as attempting to keep both these moments of dialectic in tension, such that moral reasoning proceeds from

³² Pinches, *Theology and Action : After Theory in Christian Ethics*, 95-96.

the immanent perspective of the moral agent,³³ while transcending particular practices in seeking to determine the natural principles of all human action.³⁴ Whether Porter fully succeeds in holding this dialectical tension in a fruitful unity is a question beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is instructive to return to the constant self-questioning nature of Wittgenstein's later thought, and conclude that perhaps no philosopher or theologian will ever fully succeed in striking a balance in this tension. In addition to the inherent difficulty of combining the particular and the universal, immanence and transcendence, there is also the human tendency to grasp at solutions and the need to return to the child-like interplay which lies on the boundary between the linguistic and the pre-linguistic.

The Augustinian reading of Wittgenstein offered by Mulhall counsels against grasping at ready-made solutions to philosophical and theological questions. The blindness which prevents us from seeing what lies in front of our eyes is particularly acute when it comes to the question of human nature, for the deformation of our desires prevents us from returning to the basis of those very desires in our nature. This accentuates the instrumentalization of human nature and moral reasoning risks becoming the application of a technique for achieving a given result from objectified nature. In his criticisms of proportionalism Christopher Kaczor picks up on Pinckaers' argument that the proportionalist understanding of moral reasoning replaces the emphasis on virtue in Aristotle and Aquinas with the application of a technique.³⁵ In section 7.3 we will develop this criticism of proportionalism in more detail. In the next section (7.2) we will examine how Wittgenstein's philosophy is more than just a series of techniques by comparing his understanding of the uses of language with Brock's Thomistic account of human agency.

³³ This does not imply introspection, but rather the fact that there is no neutral perspective outside our moral practices from which to assess them.

³⁴ Porter stresses that these principles do not entail there is no variation between cultures in moral practices; rather they place limits on what we can make sense of as human, see Porter, *Nature as Reason: A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law*, 136.

³⁵ See Christopher Robert Kaczor, *Proportionalism and the Natural Law Tradition* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 134.

7.2 Agency, Autonomy and Nature

7.2.1 Intentional and Physical Agency

In chapter two we traced the development of Wittgenstein's philosophy by following the changes in his account of application from the search for the general form of the proposition in the *Tractatus* through to the emphasis in his later writings on the basis of application in natural human reactions. This development moves from the transcendent perspective of the *Tractatus* in which Wittgenstein offers a mystical perspective: "6.45 To view the world sub specie aeterni is to view it as a whole—a limited whole. Feeling the world as a limited whole—it is this that is mystical,"³⁶ to the engaged perspective of the *Investigations* in which he urges us to return to the "rough ground."³⁷ In chapter five we defended Wittgenstein against the charge that this change in perspective entails that his later thought reduces human practices to the purely immanent, against which the transcendent appears as alien and external. Such would be the case if Wittgenstein had merely reversed the perspective of the *Tractatus*, so that his thought pivots from the transcendent perspective of silence to the engaged perspective of the finite horizon Ernst warns against.³⁸ The reading of Wittgenstein we have put forward seeks to show how in his later philosophy he developed a set of dialectical practices which offer a perspective of situated freedom. This perspective combines transcendence and immanence in a manner which does not place them in opposition, but shows how in the middle of our human practices we raise the question of origins.

³⁶ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 88. "6.45 Die Anschauung der Welt sub specie aeterni ist ihre Anschauung als – begrenztes – Ganzes. Das Gefühl der Welt als begrenztes Ganzes ist das mystische." *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 84.

³⁷ *Philosophical Investigations*, §107. "den rauhen Boden!" *Philosophische Untersuchungen. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Ludwig Wittgenstein Werkausgabe Band 1*, §107.

³⁸ Nieli makes this accusation against Wittgenstein. See Nieli, *Wittgenstein : From Mysticism to Ordinary Language : A Study of Viennese Positivism and the Thought of Ludwig Wittgenstein*.

The significance of this perspective for an account of human agency in moral theology can be seen if we compare it with the disengaged perspective of the *Tractatus*. In *Aquinas, God and Action*³⁹ David Burrell turns in his account of human action to the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*. Burrell argues that it is a mistake to identify actions with their causal role in bringing about results, a mistake which Aquinas did not make: “I shall show how Aquinas’ paradigm for *actus* – intentional activity – in no way countenances any inherent connection between action and accomplishment.”⁴⁰ He sees Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* as helping us to overcome our identification of actions with their casual results. The key passages Burrell quotes from the *Tractatus* concern the relationship between the will and the world, including the following passage in which Wittgenstein challenges the assumption that there is a causal connection between the will and the world:

6.374 Even if all that we wish for were to happen, still this would only be a favour granted by fate, so to speak: for there is no *logical* connexion between the will and the world, which would guarantee it, and the supposed physical connexion itself is surely not something that we could will.⁴¹

The contrast which Wittgenstein draws here between the logical and the physical is one which continues throughout his works. If we read the later Wittgenstein as drawing a strict separation between the world of human intentional activity and the world of contingent, physical causal interactions, then Burrell would seem to be justified in his conclusion that the therapeutic nature of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy consist in helping us to: “renounce the fruits”⁴² of our actions, and so release us from the illusion that actions are to be identified with their results.

³⁹ David B. Burrell, *Aquinas : God and Action* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁴¹ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 84. “6.374 Auch wenn alles, was wir wünschen, geschähe, so ware dies doch nur, sozusagen, eine Gnade des Schicksals, denn es ist kein *logischer* Zusammenhang zwischen Willen und Welt, der dies verbürgte, und den angenommenen physikalischen Zusammenhang könnten wir doch nicht selbst wieder wollen.” *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung. In Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Werkausgabe Band 1*, 82.

⁴² Burrell, *Aquinas : God and Action*, 171.

We argued in section 7.1.2 that Wittgenstein's self-questioning dialectic enables him to avoid the pitfalls set up by the modern dichotomy between human intention and physical causation. Burrell in his reading of Wittgenstein fails to appreciate this development of dialectic in his later works. As a consequence, not only does Burrell misread Wittgenstein, he also continues under the influence of this misreading to contrast the world of exterior physical nature with the world of interior intentions. Hence, although he is aware that Aquinas understands 'cause' to be an analogous term⁴³ he fails to see how Aquinas' use of analogy connects, as well as distinguishes, how human actions are causes with a wider account of physical causation. Like Wittgenstein, Burrell's conception of physical causation is reductive, but without the self-questioning dialectic which characterizes Wittgenstein's later thought his account of human agency splits the intentional agent away from any basis in bodily interaction with the world.

In chapter five we briefly examined Brock's account of human agency, which like Burrell's is based upon Aquinas, but unlike Burrell's takes note of Aquinas' use of analogies with the physical world in his account of human action. In chapter four of *Action and Conduct* Brock sets out an account of the agency of the will. Brock draws attention to: "Aquinas's assertion that the completion of the act of the will exists in relation to something to be done by the one willing,"⁴⁴ in order to set forth an account of intentional action which uses analogy in relation to a wider account of natural agency as bringing something about. Since the realm of intentional action is that of voluntary action⁴⁵ Brock states that this account of human agency: "will be carried out chiefly through an analysis of the very notions of 'wanting' and 'the wanted', to show that wanting is chiefly a disposition to cause

⁴³ See *ibid.*, 170.

⁴⁴ Brock, *Action and Conduct : Thomas Aquinas and the Theory of Action*, 138.

⁴⁵ For Aquinas the voluntary covers all sentient creatures insofar as their actions originate in interior principles, and likewise intentionality is not restricted to the human action. Brock's account of human agency takes this common inheritance into account in his understanding of human intentional action, while drawing the distinctions which intellect and will make to human agency.

something.”⁴⁶ The contrast with Burrell could not be starker, and Brock goes on to distinguish his causal account of human agency from a Kantian conception of agency.⁴⁷ To this end Brock argues that an account of the will must start with an understanding of agent causality: “it is not at all trivial to maintain that voluntariness pertains chiefly to objects of a certain kind of agent-causality, and that this presupposes, as a matter of principle, powers of bringing things about, ‘physical’ powers if you like.”⁴⁸ Like Pinckaers, Brock locates the origins of human action in natural principles:

by its very nature voluntary action, and therefore also the will, presupposes and depends upon other things besides the will itself. It is to say that voluntary activity is inserted with a larger order of things, not only as a matter of fact but also as a matter of principle. In particular, it is to say that the will’s existing under the conditions of a determinate nature, human nature in the case of man’s will, is quite ‘natural’ to it.”⁴⁹

Brock argues that this insertion of voluntary activity into “a larger order of things,” is achieved by Aquinas through his notion of ‘use’. This notion is: “a rather neglected one in the studies on his [Aquinas’] psychology of action,”⁵⁰ but, “brings together most of the salient features of his conception of the will’s causality.”⁵¹ In particular, it provides the connexion between the interior act of the will and its exterior effects,⁵² and is: “an act that is at once an immediately voluntary action and a physical passion.”⁵³ For Brock, this account of use is essential in any account of human agency, and is the application to voluntary action of the more general physical principle which Aquinas takes from Aristotle that the action of an

⁴⁶ Brock, *Action and Conduct : Thomas Aquinas and the Theory of Action*, 138.

⁴⁷ Porter draws upon Brock’s account of human agency. See, Porter, *Nature as Reason : A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law*, 296.

⁴⁸ Brock, *Action and Conduct : Thomas Aquinas and the Theory of Action*, 146.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 171.

⁵¹ Ibid., 172.

⁵² As Brock explains, we should not confuse interior and exterior here with what remains within the agent and what is external to the agent. Some interior acts of the will have effects which are external to the agent, and conversely some exterior acts of the will remain within the agent. The distinction between interior and exterior acts of will is a logical distinction, not a spatial distinction. This does not entail that Wittgenstein would approve of the manner in which Aquinas understands and presents this logic, but it does help us to see why a fruitful dialogue is possible between Aquinas and those analytical philosophies of action which draw upon Wittgenstein.

⁵³ Brock, *Action and Conduct : Thomas Aquinas and the Theory of Action*, 175.

agent terminates in the patient: “the same act is at once immediately ‘of’ the agent, as its action, and ‘of’ the patient, as what it undergoes.”⁵⁴

7.2.2 Nature and Use

Brock is aware that this emphasis on use: “may start to give the impression that what is being proposed is some kind of ‘utilitarianism’, treating human action as essentially a kind of means toward something outside itself, something merely instrumental.”⁵⁵ He thus argues that Aquinas’ understanding of use differs from utilitarianism in two essential respects. Firstly, ‘use’ is to be understood according to the nature of the thing that is used. Secondly, there is a distinction between using something which is exterior to us and the use of our own nature. The former involves productive (technical) practices, whereas the latter concerns human practices.⁵⁶ Thus, in order to see how an account of human nature provides a basis for an understanding of human agency which avoids collapsing into Kantianism or consequentialism we need to attend to the different senses of ‘use’ in Aquinas.

In distinguishing the various senses of ‘use’ in Aquinas, Brock draws attention to the difference between those uses where: “the goal is indeed extrinsic to what is used,” and those in which the goal is “*immanent*”⁵⁷ to the action. The former are technical or productive uses, whereas the latter are fully human actions. When Aquinas distinguishes between these two senses of use it is important to note that he is making a logical as oppose to a spatial distinction. In the article from the *Summa theologiae* which Brock quotes in regard to this

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 192.

⁵⁶ In speaking here of human practices we mean those practices which are not merely an expression of a particular role or function we have (e.g. being a carpenter), but are expressive of what it is to be a human (e.g. just, courageous). For an analysis of Aquinas’ account of human action see: McNerny, *Aquinas on Human Action : A Theory of Practice*. Such practices are often described as moral practices, but there are various confusions with the use of the term ‘moral’ which are best avoided in giving an account of human action. There is a danger, however, that in speaking of ‘human acts’ and ‘human agency’ that we imply acts which are technical acts of production are not carried out freely by a human being. In order to avoid this confusion it is important to return to the contexts of application in which we distinguish between human acts and technical acts.

⁵⁷ Brock, *Action and Conduct : Thomas Aquinas and the Theory of Action*, 192.

distinction Aquinas contrasts acts which: “pass into external matter, e.g. *to cut* and *to burn*,” with “acts which do not pass into external matter, but remain in the agent, e.g. *to desire* and *to know*: and such are all moral acts, whether virtuous or sinful.”⁵⁸

At first sight Aquinas’ way of making this distinction would seem to confirm Burrell’s interpretation, but once we remember that this is a logical distinction it becomes clear that we are dealing with two different (but related) logics of action, rather than two types of action which are distinguished as happening in different spaces. Those acts which pass into external matter remain, nevertheless, acts of the agent which brings them about. So how do we distinguish between acts which pass into something external and those which remain immanent to the agent? Here we do well to follow Wittgenstein’s instructions and return to the contexts of application for our terms. When an architect designs a building this remains an action of the architect, yet our interest is not in the inner transformation of the architect, but the building she has created. We do not call the architect ‘design’, but rather call her a designer. Conversely, when a shopkeeper deals honestly with a customer this may involve the use of things external to the honest action, such as the use of standard weights and measures, and the dispensing of goods, but the action itself does not pass into the external things, but remains in the shopkeeper. Thus we call the shopkeeper and not the goods she has dispensed honest. The difference between these two designations reflects the fact that whereas the actions which architects perform (*qua* architect) are not essential to a person’s character, human acts, such as acts of honesty, are essential to our character. A person who changes profession from architecture to shop keeping has not thereby essentially become a

⁵⁸ Aquinas, *The 'Summa Theologica' of St. Thomas Aquinas, Tr. By Fathers of the English Dominican Province. [22 Vols. In 20], I-II, q. 74, a. I.* This is not the translation Brock uses, but the differences in translation are not material to the argument being made here: “transeunt in exteriorem materiam, ut urere et secare . . . non transeuntes in exteriorem materiam, sed manentes in agente, sicut appetere et cognoscere, et tales actus sunt omnes actus morales, sive sint actus virtutum, sive peccatorum.” *S. Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia*. I-II, q. 74, a. I. It is interesting to note here that Aquinas speaks of “actus morales”, which would seem to be most naturally translated as moral acts, which is the translation here chosen by Brock. The problems with the modern use of the term “moral” have led us in general, however, to avoid speaking of moral acts, preferring instead to speak of “human acts.”

changed person. Important things about her and her life have changed, but her essential character has remained the same. In contrast, a shopkeeper who becomes dishonest has changed something essential about her character.

It is important to note that all actions in their concrete reality can be considered either from a human or a technical point of view. The difference in logic between characterizing acts as technical and as human does not divide concrete acts into two different classes. Rather, all acts can be considered from a technical perspective and from a human perspective. The difference between these perspectives is that whereas the human perspective when specifying its goals takes into account the whole of reality, the technical perspective abstracts from reality in specifying its goals. Pinckaers, in the context of a critique of proportionalism, sums this up in the following passage in which he distinguishes technical finality from Aquinas' understanding of moral finality:

The difference between finality of the technical type and moral finality consists principally in this: the first abstracts from the nature of realities taken as means and ends, considering only their useful qualities, in such a way that everything can become a means to an end and can also be seen as an end for a series of means. In contrast, moral finality is determined by the very nature of realities; some things are ends by nature and can never, as such, be legitimately considered as means, while others are by nature means and can never be seen as ends properly understood.⁵⁹

How does this account of Aquinas' understanding of use compare with the emphasis Wittgenstein places on the use of language? In chapter one during our discussion of Wittgenstein and metaphysics we saw how he compares the various uses of language with the uses of the different tools in a tool box. The analogy is one which connects Wittgenstein to the metaphysical tradition going back to Plato, and the development of metaphysics together

⁵⁹ Pinckaers, "Revisionist Understandings of Actions in the Wake of Vatican II," 255. "La différence entre la finalité de type technique et la finalité morale consiste principalement en ceci : la première fait abstraction de la nature des réalités prises comme moyen et fin, ne considérant que leurs qualités utiles, de sorte que toute chose peut devenir un moyen par une fin, comme aussi être prise comme fin pour une série de moyens. Au contraire, la finalité morale est déterminée par la nature même des réalités, de sorte que certaines seront des fins par leur nature et ne pourront jamais être prises légitimement comme moyens, tandis que d'autres seront, par nature, des moyens et ne pourront jamais être prises proprement comme des fins." *Ce Qu'on Ne Peut Jamais Faire : La Question Des Actes Intrinsèquement Mauvais, Histoire Et Discussion*, 86.

with grammar. Charlton's criticism of Wittgenstein turns on the accusation that he views the use of words as purely instrumental. Our defence of Wittgenstein in chapter three against this accusation drew attention to his understanding of the differing uses words; entailing that they are instruments which are shaped according to those various uses. We argued, however, that an adequate account of those various uses depends upon wider physical and metaphysical principles which are lacking in Wittgenstein. These wider principles are particularly relevant in the case of human nature. If we recall Aquinas' distinction between actions which: "pass into external matter" and those which "remain in the agent," in both cases these actions are shaped according to the nature of that which they are in. As such, Aquinas is not marking a distinction between a natural realm of efficient causation and an intentional realm of human action; rather it is a distinction between actions considered as productive and actions considered as human. Both types of action rest upon natural principles, and both as we noted earlier, are types of causal action.

In the first four chapters of this thesis we argued that there are good grounds for understanding what Wittgenstein is doing in his later philosophy as developing philosophical practices which help us to recover our human nature. If this is the case, Wittgenstein's philosophical practice aims primarily at producing an inner transformation of the person who engages with it. This inner transformation is not merely that which occurs when we gain technical knowledge about the world, but involves an essential transformation of our character. If I learn a new technique in mathematics I am said to be improving as a mathematician, whereas learning how to overcome my fears makes me a more courageous human being. Since Wittgenstein characterizes his later philosophy as providing tools which help us to overcome the various entanglements our misuse of language brings about, it is clear that he does not regard his task as being purely that of a technician. The tool analogy Wittgenstein develops to help us see the variety of ways we use words may at first sight

imply that he understands our use of language as purely technical, and his work as that of a technician in helping to find technical solutions to our problems. By contrast, the reading of Wittgenstein we have developed argues that he sees his work as primarily that of helping us to reconnect with our human nature, and as such he can be seen as following in that metaphysical tradition which takes its lead from Plato in using the techniques of grammar at the service of virtue. This is not to say that the strategies and games Wittgenstein offers in his later philosophy are in themselves exercises in moral philosophy or theology; rather they are tools which are apt or not apt to be used as we develop an account of human life.

7.3 The Application of Terms in Moral Theology

In order to understand how Wittgenstein offers more than just a set of techniques, but helps us to overcome the splitting of the human being found in modern moral thought, we will build upon the criticisms of proportionalism given in section 7.1.2. Both Pinches and Pinckaers argue that proportionalists misunderstand human agency, which is to say that proportionalists fail to understand the grammar of human action. Pinches draws upon Wittgenstein to argue that proportionalists split the human agent between a physical being to be acted upon and an intentional self that acts. For Pinckaers proportionalism reduces human actions to purely technical operations. Our reading of Wittgenstein can help us to understand how proportionalists misuse language, tearing evaluative terms such as ‘good’ and ‘right’ away from their contexts of application.

Proportionalism is governed by the application of various distinctions central to which is the distinction between a non-moral level⁶⁰ of good and evil and the moral level of good

⁶⁰ Some proportionalists use the term pre-moral, others prefer non-moral.

and evil.⁶¹ This distinction is summed up in the following entry in the *Encyclopaedia of Catholicism* by James Walter:

The proponents [of proportionalism] make a distinction between moral and premoral values/disvalues. Moral values and disvalues describe the qualities of persons as they confront situation, e.g., just or unjust. Premoral evils or disvalues refer to the harms, lacks, deprivations, etc. that occur in, or as a result of, human agency, e.g. death. Premoral values refer to those conditioned goods that we pursue for human and non-human well-being.⁶²

The distinction between non-moral and moral goods and evils is derived from the observation that the language of good and evil can be used to describe the state of the world prior to human intentional activity. A forest fire which causes widespread destruction of plants and animals can be described as an evil for those living beings. There is no suggestion, however, that the fire can be held guilty for its crimes, and thus the evil ascribed to the fire is not the same as the evil imputed to the human being who deliberately started the fire. This difference in the use of language leads proportionalists to argue that we have two separate levels of good and evil such that in the analysis of any human act we must distinguish between the non-moral goods and evils involved and the moral good and evil brought about. What begins as a distinction made in the context of how we ascribe good and evil to non-human agents has now become a distinction between two levels of good and evil. Hoose notes how two of the leading figures in the development of proportionalism, Peter Knauer

⁶¹ Louise Janssens notes how this distinction is based upon the old distinction between physical evils and moral evils: "Of old, a distinction between *malum physicum* and *malum morale* was made. Nowadays, we prefer the term "ontic evil" to the term "physical evil," because the contemporary meaning of "physical" corresponds more to the meaning of "material." Louis Janssens, "Ontic Evil and Moral Evil," in *Readings in Moral Theology No. 1: Moral Norms and Catholic Tradition* ed. Charles E. Curran, and Richard A. McCormick (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 60. In making this distinction Janssens intends to follow Aquinas. Paul M. Quay S.J. responds to Janssens' appropriation of Aquinas by making two important observations which help to confirm our analysis of the distinction between nonmoral and moral goods and evils. Firstly: "Thomas carefully distinguishes an evil that has no moral aspects, whether at the human or the subhuman level, from any mere absence of good. Apparently avoiding the formation of a fixed technical vocabulary, he generally speaks descriptively of these two notions in accord with the immediate context." Paul M. Quay S. J., "Disvalue of Ontic Evil," *Theological Studies* 46 no 2 Jun (1985): 263. Secondly: "It would be hard to find a clearer statement that 'ontic evil' is not at all equivalent to 'physical evil' in its traditional sense." Ibid., 264. Quay's observations here show how Aquinas' use of evaluative terms such as "good" and "evil" is carefully tied to given contexts, and that modern appropriations of Aquinas often generalize distinctions he makes in a manner which removes them from their contexts of application.

⁶² James. J. Walter, "Proportionalism," in *The Harpercollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, ed. Richard P. McBrien (s.l.: HarperCollins, 1995), 1058.

and Louis Janssens, make this distinction: “Knauer distinguishes between physical evil and moral evil. Janssens does the same thing, but prefers the term “ontic evil” to “physical evil” because the contemporary meaning of “physical” corresponds more to material.””⁶³

Proportionalists differ in how they use this distinction, but they take it as self-evident and given. For example, Gareth Hallett in the course of criticising those proportionalist who fail to take moral values⁶⁴ into account in their determination of proportionate good continues to take the non-moral/moral distinction as something which runs through all human acts as we aim to maximize value: “VM [value maximization], too, looks to the proportion of value and disvalue. However, as a species of unrestricted proportionalism, it envisages maximizing all values, moral as well as nonmoral.”⁶⁵

But what sense does it make to speak of moral and non-moral goods or values? If we return to the original contexts within which we ascribe responsibility to agents it is essential to note that such ascription are made of the agent *qua* agent. It is because fire is an agent that we can ascribe responsibility to it. As an agent fire can be described as good or evil: a good fire warms us on a cold day, an evil fire destroys our possessions. Such ascription use (as Brock points out) analogy, and involve situating human agency in a wider context of physical agency. The primary practices within which we learn to ascribe responsibility are the human practices attributing praise and blame to other human beings, but, these practices take shape in a dialectical interplay with the wider physical world of agency.

Up to this point we have shown how the ascription of good and evil to non-human agents takes shape from the original contexts in which we make such ascriptions. But how do

⁶³ Hoose, *Proportionalism : The American Debate and Its European Roots*, 33. Hoose adds here (quoting Janssens) that “Ontic evil is what we call “any lack of a perfection at which we aim, any lack of fulfilment which frustrates our natural urges and makes us suffer.”Ibid. The quotation from Janssens is from Janssens, "Ontic Evil and Moral Evil," 60.

⁶⁴ Hallett prefers to talk of values rather than goods because he sees value as a broader term which covers both moral and non-moral goods and evils: “My chief reason for preferring the word-pair *value* and *disvalue* over *good* and *evil* is that *evil* too readily suggests just moral evil, whereas VM is broader.” Garth L. Hallett, *Greater Good : The Case for Proportionalism* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1995), 13.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 109.

we move from talk about non-human agents as good or evil to talk of non-moral goods and evils? Does it make any sense to speak of fire as a non-moral good or evil? In what respect is fire good or evil when we talk of it as a non-moral good or evil. The fire that destroys my possessions can be described as a good fire insofar as it does well what fire does (e.g. burn things up), because ascriptions of good and evil need to specify the respect in which what they describe is good or evil. Such specifications need not be explicit, but the context of ascription must make clear what we mean by saying that something is good. Now a proportionalist could argue that talk of non-moral goods and evils is merely a short-hand for the contexts in which we ascribe responsibility to non-human agents. So when we talk of fire as a non-moral good or evil it is just a way of saying that we can ascribe responsibility to fire in an analogous manner to our ascriptions of responsibility to human agents, while at the same time marking the essential differences between human responsibility and non-human responsibility. The problem with this defence is that the short-hand misleads us into positing the existence of moral and non-moral goods and evils in a manner which detaches our use of the terms “moral”, “good” and “evil” from their contexts of use.

In the *Investigations* Wittgenstein distinguishes between those reforms of our terminology which are undertaken for particular practical purposes and the misuses of language he is concerned with:

Such a reform for practical purposes, an improvement in our terminology designed to prevent misunderstandings in practice, is perfectly possible. But these are not the cases we have to do with. The confusions which occupy us arise when language is like an engine idling, not when it is doing work.⁶⁶

This remark is found in a section of the *Investigations* in which Wittgenstein argues that he uses language-games not to produce a model of reality, but to provide objects of comparison which enable us to: “throw light on the facts of our language by way not only of similarities,

⁶⁶ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, § 132.

but also of dissimilarities.”⁶⁷ The problem with the division of the world into moral goods and evils and non-moral goods and evils is that it does not provide us with such “objects of comparison,” but rather with a model to which: “reality *must* correspond.”⁶⁸

The confusion involved in the division of the world into moral and non-moral good and evils is evident if we use an example. Proportionalists describe health as a non-moral good which we intend in a moral act, as the following passage from Knauer expresses in the following analysis of the surgical removal of a limb:

In the operation the surgeon does not think of anything except the skilful removal of the limb of the patient. This removal is the concrete thing which is willed by him, and one can say that this act is “the effect willed in itself.” But the morality of the act is not determined on this level. Whether the removal of a limb is a health measure or a mutilation of the patient cannot be recognized in the concrete actuality which might be photographed. The reason why the surgeon removes the limb must be looked at. What value does the act seek to serve? It is done because of the health of the patient.⁶⁹

If describing health as a non-moral good is merely short-hand for ascribing responsibility to a non-human agent then speaking of health as a non-moral good makes no sense, since health is not an agent. In fact, taken on its own the term “health” does not refer to anything; there is no such thing as health. In chapter one we narrated Anscombe’s confusion concerning the use of the word “blue”, and how Wittgenstein helped her to overcome the empiricist assumption that “blue” refers to an object. There are blue objects in the world, but blue is not itself an object we can point to and grasp. Similarly, the concept “health” does not refer to something which exists in itself; rather we grasp the concept health by learning to apply it in various analogical ways. Our ability to grasp these analogies is essential to understanding the concept “health”, as we can speak of healthy organisms, healthy practices, healthy relationships, healthy diets and healthy environments, to give just some of the analogical uses of the term. For some of these uses questions of agency are relevant, but it is

⁶⁷ Ibid., § 130.

⁶⁸ Ibid., § 131.

⁶⁹ Peter S.J. Knauer, "The Hermeneutical Function of the Principle of Double Effect," in *Readings in Moral Theology*, ed. Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 22.

not health which is the agent cause. When we describe a diet as a healthy diet we are saying that the diet brings about health, not that health is itself an agent.

A proportionalist could argue that amongst all these analogical uses the primary significance of the term “health” is given when we speak of healthy organisms. Knauer speaks of the “health of the patient” not of health in an abstract sense. Whether an organism is healthy is a scientific question, not a question for moral evaluation. The problem with this reply is that it again involves the ascription of the term “non-moral” to something which is not an agent. A healthy organism is an agent, but that is because organisms are agents, not because “health” is an agent. A sick panda can act, and although the sickness might affect how the panda acts it is not the acting agent.

In chapter two we traced how Wittgenstein came to question the assumptions of the *Tractatus* and abandoned the search for the general form of the proposition. Wittgenstein came to see how he had allowed the dictates of logic to determine his account of application. The application of concepts cannot be determined once and for all through fixing a general form for the proposition; rather application is determined within the various contexts in which concepts are applied. We can draw a parallel lesson for our critique of proportionalism. Proportionalists, as we have seen, abstract terms such as “good” and “evil” from their contexts of application in order to provide a general theory of moral judgement. In a manner typical of modern moral theories proportionalists place emphasis on the analysis of individual acts of judgement, and rather than examining such acts in their concrete contexts of application seek a general theory which will allow any act to be assessed as morally good or evil. Pinckaers expresses this atomization of human agency in the following passage from *The Sources of Christian Ethics* in which he traces the influence of late medieval nominalism:

Human action then would be made up of a succession of free decisions of independent acts—cases of conscience as they would later be called—having only superficial relation to one another. Each would have to be studied in isolation. Like each individual person, each act became a kind of absolute, like a small island. Hence the note of

insularity that has been attributed to Ockham's thought and that evokes his English background.⁷⁰

The picture which holds us captive here is of the individual agent acting in a single instance, abstracted from the wider contexts in which we make sense of human agency. It is a picture which holds the promise of autonomy; the radical freedom to choose good or evil unconstrained by any factor heteronomous to oneself. Iris Murdoch provides a powerful counter-image to help us escape from the grip of this picture when she describes the modern understanding of the human agent in the following terms: "The moral agent is pictures as an isolated principle of will, or burrowing pinpoint of consciousness, inside, or beside, a lump of being which has been handed over to other disciplines, such as psychology or sociology."⁷¹ The will is imposed on the world, unconstrained by anything beyond its own dictates. This is a disturbing image, but the picture of the isolated individual agent has such a powerful grip on our modern imagination that rather reject it modern thinkers generally seek to determine human agency by providing a general form of moral judgement. This is what leads proportionalists among others to remove evaluative terms such as "good" and "evil" from their contexts of application, just as Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* removes the term "object" from its contexts of application in this theory of simple objects.

In order to overcome this picture of the individual moral agent a radical change is required in how we think of human agency. This is the kind of change Wittgenstein has in mind when he argues that: "The *preconceived idea* of crystalline purity can only be removed by turning our whole examination around. (One might say: the axis of reference of our

⁷⁰ Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, 244. "L'agir humain va donc être constitué par une suite de décisions libres, d'actes indépendants – de cas de conscience, comme on dira plus tard, - n'entretenant plus entre eux que des relations superficielles et qu'il faudra étudier en particulier. Comme chaque individu, chaque acte devant une manière d'absolu, comme une petite île. D'où le caractère d'insularité qu'on a pu attribuer à la pensée d'Ockham et qui évoque son origine anglaise. Ainsi a-t-il posé par sa conception de la liberté et de l'acte humain la base de ce qui deviendra la casuistique." *Les Sources De La Morale Chrétienne : Sa Méthode, Son Contenu, Son Histoire*, 253-54.

⁷¹ Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, Studies in Ethics and the Philosophy of Religion (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 47.

examination must be rotated, but about the fixed point of our real need.)”⁷² To understand how we apply concepts such as good and evil it is necessary to return to the human practices in which they find a home. These practices are the virtues which enable us to grow as human beings. As such, they involve more than the technical mastery of various techniques. To see this let us return to the concept of health.

A healthy human beings is, as we noted above, one who is a healthy organism. Such a person is said to be in good health, and this can be determined in a technical manner by health care professionals. In order to become and remain healthy she needs to exercise, eat well, sleep etc. and hope to avoid various hazards which remain beyond her control. All this does not, however, imply that she is a good human being. A human being can be in perfect physical health and yet be vicious and cruel. In order to be described as a good human being someone needs to consistently act in a manner which fulfils what it is to be human, which is to say that she must develop those practices which enable human beings to fulfil their nature. These practices are the virtues.

It is the exercise of the virtues which enable us to apply evaluative terms such as “good” and “evil” in their fullest attribution to human beings. Those who exercise the virtues are called good to the degree to which the virtues perfect their human nature, whereas those who exercise the opposite to virtue, vice, are said to be evil to the degree their human nature is corrupted. Furthermore, those who are good through the exercise of the virtues are able, to the degree they possess the virtues, to apply evaluative terms such as good and evil to that which is good and evil. Conversely, those who lack virtue, to the degree they do not possess the virtues, also lack this ability. In the *Investigations* Wittgenstein gives the following description of what it is for thought to be in harmony with reality: “The agreement, the harmony, of thought and reality consists in this: if I say falsely that something is *red*, then for

⁷² Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, § 108.

all that, it isn't *red*. And when I want to explain the word "red" to someone, in the sentence "That is not red", I do it by pointing to something red."⁷³ What Wittgenstein is getting at here is that the person who makes the false attributions already understands what it is for thoughts to be in harmony with reality through mastering various practices such as attribution of colour predicates and being able to point out particular colours. We can extend this example to the attribution of evaluative terms by noting the when we say falsely that something is *good* then, for all that, it isn't good. Our ability to consistently attribute good to that which is good and evil to that which is evil depends upon the degree to which we exercise the virtues. This is more than merely the acquisition of various techniques, and is, as we argued earlier in this chapter an inner transformation of the human being.

7.4 Conclusion: Nature, Dialectic and Theology

In this chapter we developed the conversation between Wittgenstein and moral theology by drawing comparisons between his later philosophy and Porter's revival of moral theology through a return to the practice of the virtues with their basis in human nature. We examined Pinches' criticism of Porter, which led us to Wittgenstein's emphasis upon the constant questioning of our practices; reconnecting them with their basis in our natural human reactions. In section 7.2 we compared Burrell's interpretation of Aquinas' conception of human agency with Brock's interpretation, and observed how Brock draws our attention to Aquinas' use of analogy by situating his account of human agency in a wider context of natural causation. Burrell draws inspiration from the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* in arguing that for Aquinas there is no inherent connection between actions and what they accomplish. In doing this he fails to take account of the changes in Wittgenstein's conception of human agency that take place in his later works, which call into question the transcendent

⁷³ Ibid., § 429.

perspective of the *Tractatus* and returns us to the ‘middle’ of our human practices by situating an account of human freedom in our natural human histories. This does not reduce human practices to the mere achievement of certain technical goals, but enables us to develop an understanding of the logical relationship between the inner and exterior aspects of human action. This entails that Wittgenstein’s philosophical practices should be read as practices which can help us to recover our humanity, as oppose to merely technical exercise. Finally, in section 7.3 we saw how Wittgenstein’s understanding of human agency can help us to overcome the confusions involved in the distinction between moral and non-moral goods and evils. Here we conclude our dialogue between Wittgenstein and moral theology as a provisional dialogue which indicates where a fuller dialogue could take its starting points.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The objective of this thesis was to develop a dialogue between Wittgenstein and moral theology with particular reference to the works of recent and contemporary theologians working in the Catholic tradition. The first four chapters offered a reading of Wittgenstein's philosophy with the intention of providing starting points for the conversation with moral theology developed in chapters five, six and seven. In chapter one we noted some particular challenges to this conversation; firstly the difficulty of interpreting Wittgenstein due to the wide and often incompatible interpretations of his works, and secondly his stated hostility to metaphysics. This second challenge is especially significant for the Catholic tradition of moral theology, which has used metaphysics in the service of the Gospel to throw light on the Christian life. Our response in chapter one was to re-evaluate how metaphysics is understood, and to use this re-evaluation to argue that Wittgenstein in the dialectical practices of his later works is not so far from that tradition which finds its origins in Plato. Here we were guided by Anscombe in reading Wittgenstein as a conversation partner with philosophers such as Plato who are associated with metaphysics. We also followed Anscombe by interpreting Wittgenstein as attempting to develop a form of realism in his philosophy which overcomes the opposed dangers of idealism and empiricism.

In chapter two we developed an account of Wittgenstein's philosophical development up to the *Investigations* by following the theme of application as it evolves in his writings from the *Tractatus* onwards. This reading aimed to show how Wittgenstein's later emphasis on the contexts of application for our concepts connects him to the pre-modern understanding of the relationship between theory and practice, and aims to overcome the modern dichotomy between the form and the content of thought.

Chapters three and four provided challenges to our reading of Wittgenstein by following the criticisms Charlton and Rhees make against him. We acquitted Wittgenstein of

these charges to some degree, but acknowledged that although he helps us to recover a lost notion of nature his lack of engagement with the philosophy of nature leaves him vulnerable to the charge that his account of meaning risks collapsing into a form of pragmatism. The purpose of these chapters was to set up the terms for the conversation between Wittgenstein and moral theology; providing not only starting points for dialogue but also helping us to see the role that natural principles play in an account of human thought and action. In particular, the role of the pre-conceptual in the development of our conceptual capacities was stressed, and the lessons we can learn from Wittgenstein in respecting the origins of our linguistic habits on the border between the conceptual and the pre-conceptual.

The engagement between Wittgenstein and moral theology began in chapter five by responding to the challenge that Wittgenstein's later philosophy is a form of immanentism cut off from any notion of divine transcendence. This response engaged with the recent revival in moral theology of nature as a central category, to argue that our reading of Wittgenstein has various parallels with the concerns of those moral theologians who have worked in recent times to revive the natural law and virtue traditions. The aspects of Wittgenstein's later philosophy which enabled him to overcome the dichotomies of modern thought also provide a means for overcoming the modern division between immanent human nature and the 'external' work of God. Here Mulhall's readings of the *Investigations* as a work concerned with origins is key to drawing parallels with Pinckaers' presentation of Aquinas's account of nature. This enabled us to argue that Wittgenstein's thought is open to theology.

In chapter six we deepen the conversation between Wittgenstein and moral theology by using MaCabe's Wittgenstein inspired account of human beings as autobiographical creatures. MaCabe helps us to re-envisage the relationship between grace and nature by developing a theology of God's Incarnate Word, in which we are caught up in God's

autobiography. We developed MaCabe's account by again reflecting on the question of origins, showing how Wittgenstein can help us to see that pondering our own story opens us to that which is our ultimate origin. We then returned to Wittgenstein's remarks on following a rule and seeing aspects to suggest ways in they can help us to understand more deeply the transformation of our nature brought about in grace.

Finally, in chapter seven we examined how Wittgenstein's writings can help to throw light on contemporary accounts of human agency in moral theology. To this end we traced various parallels between Wittgenstein and the works of theologian and philosophers such as Porter and Brock, before using insights from Wittgenstein to show how the contemporary distinction between moral and non-moral goods and evils is based upon various confusions. These reflections, like those of the previous two chapters, are somewhat schematic and indicate where future dialogue between Wittgenstein and moral theology could take place. It is our hope, however, that the work of analysis carried out in this thesis will be of some service to moral theologians as they develop a conversation between Wittgenstein and contemporary questions in moral theology.

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6th March 2017. Signature : David Goodill.

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