The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy
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DISCUSSION

THE AVAILABILITY OF WITTGENSTEIN'S
LATER PHILOSOPHY

Epochs are in accord with themselves only if the crowd comes into these radiant confessionals which are the theatres or the arenas, and as much as possible, ... to listen to its own confessions of cowardice and sacrifice, of hate and passion.... For there is no theatre which is not prophecy. Not this false divination which gives names and dates, but true prophecy, that which reveals to men these surprising truths: that the living must live, that the living must die, that autumn must follow summer, spring follow winter, that there are four elements, that there is happiness, that there are innumerable miseries, that life is a reality, that it is a dream, that man lives in peace, that man lives on blood; in short, those things they will never know.

—JEAN GIRAUDOUX

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

In January of 1930 he began lecturing at Cambridge about those new ideas, and in the academic session of 1933-1934 he dictated a set of notes in conjunction with his lectures; during 1934-1935 he dictated privately another manuscript, longer than the former, more continuously evolving and much closer in style to the *Philosophical Investigations*. These two sets of dictations—which came, because of

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[1] The biographical information in this (and in the final) paragraph comes from the first of Moore's three papers called "Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930-33," *Mind*, LXIII (1954) and LXIV (1955); from R. R(hees)'s introduction to *The Blue and Brown Books;* and from a biographical sketch by G. H. von Wright, published together with Norman Malcolm's moving memoir, *Ludwig Wittgenstein* (Oxford, 1958).

67

the wrappers they were bound in, to be called, respectively, the *Blue Book* and the *Brown Book*—are now publicly available, bearing appropriately the over-title *Preliminary Studies for the "Philosophical Investigations*."[2] But the extent to which the ideas in these pages are available, now seven years after the publication of the *Investigations*, is a matter of some question even after the appearance of the first book on the later philosophy, for none of its thought is to be found in David Pole's *The Later Philosophy of Wittgenstein*.[3]

What I find most remarkable about this book is not the modesty of its understanding nor the pretentiousness and condescension of its criticism, but the pervasive absence of any worry that some remark of Wittgenstein's may not be utterly obvious in its meaning and implications. When, on the opening page, I read, "[Despite the fact that] he ... has been popularly portrayed as a kind of fanatic of subtlety if not, worse, an addict of mystification ... I shall maintain that Wittgenstein's central ideas...are essentially simple," I was, although skeptical, impressed: that would be a large claim to enter and support in discussing any difficult thinker, but it could be very worth trying to do. About Wittgenstein the claim is doubled up. For not only is one faced with the obvious surface difficulties of the writing, one is also met by a new philosophical concept of difficulty itself: the *difficulty* of philosophizing, and especially of the fruitful *criticism* of philosophy, is one of Wittgenstein's great themes (and, therefore, doubtless, simple, once we can grasp it). My disappointment was, accordingly, the sharper when I had to recognize that Pole was conceiving the task of steering toward a deep simplicity to be itself an easy one. Disappointment mounted to despair as I found the famous and exciting and obscure tags of the *Investigations* not only quoted without explanation, but quoted as though they *were* explanations:

At least this much is clear, first that Wittgenstein distinguishes in some sense between the structural apparatus and the content of language; and secondly that he holds that philosophers are prone to the error of seeing the one in terms of the other. We make a picture of an independently existing reality. "We predicate of the thing what lies in the mode of presentation" [p. 37].

It would, for example, have been worth while to try to point to the relation of that idea—which is usually entered as summary of philosophical disorder—to the idea (cited by Pole, p. 54) that "grammar

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[2] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books* (New York, 1958). Cited here as *BB*.

[3] London, 1958.

tells us what kind of object anything is" (§373)[4]—which hints at what philosophy might positively accomplish and at the kind of importance it might have.

Criticism is always an affront, and its only justification lies in usefulness, in making its object available to just response. Pole's work is not useful. Where he is not misdescribing with assurance, his counters may be of the "He says..., but I on the other hand say..." variety ("For Wittgenstein...an expression has as much meaning as we have given it....Now as against this, I shall claim that there is always more meaning in an expression than we have given it" [pp. 83-88]), as though the issues called for the actions of a prophet or a politician, as though it were *obvious* that what Wittgenstein means by "as much meaning" denies the possibility Pole envisages as "more meaning," and that the issue before us is not one of criticism but of commitment. The distortion to which Wittgenstein's thought is subjected is so continuous that no one error or misemphasis seems to call, more than others, for isolated discussion. This paper therefore takes the following form. The next two sections discuss the main concepts Pole attacks in his description and interpretation of Wittgenstein's view of language; the two sections which then follow comment on positions toward "ordinary language philosophy" which Pole shares with other critics of Wittgenstein; the final section suggests a way of understanding Wittgenstein's literary style which may help to make it more accessible.

RULES

The main effort of Pole's work is to expose and discredit Wittgenstein's views about language. There is no problem about what those views are:

Broadly the thesis is that a language ... consists of a complex set of procedures, which may also be appealed to as rules. Normative notions—rightness, validity, and we may perhaps add truth—are significant inasmuch as there exist standards which we can appeal to and principles we can invoke. But where a new move is first made, a new development takes place, clearly no such standard can be applicable; we have moved beyond existing practice. Wittgenstein, it seems, is committed to holding that no such step can be called right or wrong; no evaluative assessment is possible [p. 56].

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[4] All references preceded by "§" are to paragraph numbers in Part I of *Philosophical Investigations;* references to Part II are preceded by "II."

We are to think of two factors in language; on the one hand particular moves or practices which are assessed by appeal to the rules, and on the other hand those rules themselves. Beyond these there is no further appeal; they are things we merely accept or adopt.

.   .   .   .   .

Where there are no rules to appeal to we can only decide; and I suppose that it is primarily on this account that this step is called a decision [p. 61].

This sounds vaguely familiar. Its Manichean conception of "rules" reminds one of Carnap's distinction between "internal" and "external" questions and of the recent writing in moral philosophy which distinguishes between the assessment of individual actions and of social practices; its use of "decision" is reminiscent of, for example, Reichenbach's "volitional decisions" and of Stevenson's "choice" between rational and persuasive methods of supporting moral judgments. Were Pole's description meant to apply to these views, it would merely be crude, failing to suggest their source or to depict their power. As a description of Wittgenstein it is ironically blind; it is not merely wrong, but misses the fact that Wittgenstein's ideas form a sustained and radical criticism of such views—so of course it is "like" them.

Pole's description seems to involve these notions:

1. The correctness or incorrectness of a use of language is determined by the rules of the language, and "determined" in two senses:

    a) The rules form a complete system, in the sense that for every "move" within the language it is obvious that a rule does or does not apply.

    b) Where a rule does apply, it is obvious whether it has been followed or infringed.

2. Where no existing rules apply, you can always adopt a new rule to cover the case, but then that obviously changes the game.

This is rough enough, and what Wittgenstein says about games, rules, decisions, correctness, justification, and so forth, is difficult enough, but not sufficiently so that one must hesitate before saying that Pole has not tried to understand what Wittgenstein has most painfully wished to say about language (and meaning and understanding). For Pole's description seems, roughly, to suggest the way correctness is determined in a *constructed* language or in the simplest games of chance. That everyday language does not, in fact or in essence, depend upon such a structure and conception of rules, and yet that

the absence of such a structure in no way impairs its functioning, is what the picture of language drawn in the later philosophy is about. It represents one of the major criticisms Wittgenstein enters against the *Tractatus;* it sets for him many of the great problems of the later philosophy—for example, the relations between word, sentence, and language—and forces him into new modes of investigating meaning, understanding, reference, and so forth; his new, and central, concept of "grammar" is developed in opposition to it; it is repeated dozens of times. Whether the later Wittgenstein describes language as being roughly like a calculus with fixed rules working in that way is not a question which can seriously be discussed.

Then what are we to make of the fact that Wittgenstein constantly compares moments of speech with moves in a game? Pole makes out this much:

[the] comparison . . . serves his purpose in at least two ways. It serves him first in that a game is usually a form of social activity in which different players fill different roles; secondly in that games observe rules [p. 29].

But what purpose is served by these points of comparison? Let us take the points in reverse order:

A. Where the comparison of language with games turns on their both "observing rules," Wittgenstein invokes and invents games not as contexts in which it is just clear what "observing rules" amounts to, but contexts in which that phenomenon can be *investigated.* In particular, the analogy with games helps us to see the following:

   i) In the various activities which may be said to proceed according to definite rules, the activity is not (and could not be) "everywhere circumscribed by rules" (§68). Does this means that the rules are "incomplete"? It tells us something about what "being governed by rules" is like.

   ii) "Following a rule" is an activity we learn against the background of, and in the course of, learning innumerable other activities—for example, obeying orders, taking and giving directions, repeating what is done or said, and so forth. The concept of a rule does not exhaust the concepts of correctness or justification ("right" and "wrong") and indeed the former concept would have no meaning unless these latter concepts already had. Like any of the activities to which it is related, a rule can always be misinterpreted in the course, or in the name, of "following" it.

STANLEY CAVELL

iii) There is a more radical sense in which rules do not "determine" what a game is. One may explain the difference between, say, contract and auction bridge by "listing the rules"; but one cannot explain what *playing a game* is by "listing rules." Playing a game is "a part of our [that is, we humans'] natural history" (§25), and until one is an initiate of this human form of activity, the human gesture of "citing a rule" can mean nothing. And we can learn a new game without ever learning or formulating its rules (§31); not, however, without having mastered, we might say, the concept of a game.

(iv) There is no one set of characteristics—and this is the most obvious comparison—which everything we call "games" shares, hence no characteristic called "being determined by rules." Language has no essence (§66).

B. For Wittgenstein, "following a rule" is just as much a "practice" as "playing a game" is (§199). Now what are its rules? In the sense in which "playing chess" has rules, "obeying a rule" has none (except, perhaps, in a special code or calculus which sets up some order of precedence in the application of various rules); and yet it can be done correctly or incorrectly—which just means it can be done or not done. And whether or not it is done is not a matter of rules (or of opinion or feeling or wishes or intentions). It is a matter of what Wittgenstein, in the *Blue Book*, refers to as "conventions" (p. 24), and in the *Investigations* describes as "forms of life" (e.g., §23). That is always the ultimate appeal for Wittgenstein—not rules, and not decisions. It is what he is appealing to when he says such things as:

If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: "This is simply what I do" [§217; cf. §211].
What has to be accepted, the given is—so one could say—*forms of life* [II, p. 226].

Pole hears such phrases as meaning:

That [a given language-game] is played is no more than a matter of fact; it is always conceivable that it should not have been played. It might be said that the question raised is as to whether it ought to be played, and this for-mulation—one that Wittgenstein does not discuss—comes nearer, I believe, to the heart of the matter.

If your heart is on your sleeve, that is. Wittgenstein does not discuss whether language games *ought* to be played, for that would amount

72

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to discussing either (1) whether human beings ought to behave like the creatures we think of as human; or (2) whether the world ought to be different from what it is. For the "matters of fact" Wittgenstein is concerned with are what he describes in such ways as these:

What we are supplying are really remarks on the natural history of human beings; we are not contributing curiosities however, but observations which no one has doubted, but which have escaped remark only because they are always before our eyes [§415].

I am not saying: if such-and-such facts of nature were different people would have different concepts (in the sense of a hypothesis). But: if anyone believes that certain concepts are absolutely the correct ones, and that having different ones would mean not realizing something that we realize—then let him imagine certain *very general facts of nature* to be different from what we are used to, and the formation of concepts different from the usual ones will become intelligible to him [II, p. 230, my italics].

"It is always conceivable" that, for example, the game(s) we now play with the question "What did you say?" should not have been played. What are we conceiving if we conceive this? Perhaps that when we ask this of *A*, only *A*'s father is allowed to answer, or that it is answered always by repeating the next to the last remark you made, or that it is answered by saying what you wished you had said, or perhaps that we can never remember what we just said, or perhaps simply that we have no way of asking that question. What sense does it make to suggest that one or the other of these games ought or ought not to be played? The question is: what would our lives look like, what very general facts would be different, if these conceivable alternatives were in fact operative? (There would, for example, be different ways, and purposes, for lying; a different social structure; different ways of attending to what is said; different weight put on our words; and so forth.)

Even with these hints of echoes of shadows of Wittgenstein's "purpose" in investigating the concept of a rule, we can say this much: (1) It allows him to formulate one source of a distorted conception of language—one to which, in philosophizing, we are particularly susceptible, and one which helps secure distortion in philosophical theorizing:

When we talk of language as a symbolism used in an exact calculus, that which is in our mind can be found in the sciences and in mathematics. Our ordinary use of language conforms to this standard of exactness only in rare cases. Why then do we in philosophizing constantly compare our use of words with one following exact rules? The answer is that the puzzles which

73

we try to remove always spring from just this attitude towards language [*BB*, pp. 25-26].

Or again:

The man who is philosophically puzzled sees a law [=rule] in the way a word is used, and, trying to apply this law consistently, comes up against cases where it leads to paradoxical results [*BB*, p. 27].

(2) He wishes to indicate how inessential the "appeal to rules" is as an explanation of language. For what has to be "explained" is, put flatly and bleakly, this.

We learn and teach words in certain contexts, and then we are expected, and expect others, to be able to project them into further contexts.[5] Nothing insures that this projection will take place (in particular, not the grasping of universals nor the grasping of books of rules), just as nothing insures that we will make, and understand, the same projections. That on the whole we do is a matter of our sharing routes of interest and feeling, modes of response, senses of humor and of significance and of fulfillment, of what is outrageous, of what is similar to what else, what a rebuke, what forgiveness, of when an utterance is an assertion, when an appeal, when an explanation—all the whirl of organism Wittgenstein calls "forms of life." Human speech and activity, sanity and community, rest upon nothing more, but nothing less, than this. It is a vision as simple as it is difficult, and as difficult as it is (and because it is) terrifying. To attempt the work of *showing* its simplicity would be a real step in making available Wittgenstein's later philosophy.

DECISION

Having begun by miscasting the role of rules, and then taking "decision" to be a concept complementary to the concept of a rule, Pole will not be expected to have thrown light either on the real weight (and it is not much) Wittgenstein places on the concept of decision or on Wittgenstein's account of those passages of speech in which, in Pole's words, "a new move is first made."

The only passage Pole actually cites (on page 44, and again on page 61) to support his interpretation of "decision" is this one from

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[5] What "learning" and "teaching" are here is, or ought to be, seriously problematic. We say a word and the child repeats it. What is "repeating" here? All we know is that the child makes a sound which we accept. (How does the child recognize acceptance? Has he learned what that is?)

74

the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics:* "Why should I not say:
in the proof I have won through to a decision?" (II, §27). What I take
Wittgenstein to be concerned with here is the question: "What makes
a proof convincing?" Without discussing either the motives of that
question or the success of his answer to it, it is clear enough that
Wittgenstein takes the conviction afforded by a proof to be a function
of the way it can "be taken in," "be followed," "be used as a model,"
"serve as a pattern or paradigm." But what can be "taken in," and
so forth, in this way is *not something we have a choice about, not something
that can be decided.* Saying that "the problem we are faced with in
mathematics is essentially to decide what new forms to fashion"
(p. 44) is as sensible as saying that the problem we are faced with
in composing a coda is to decide what will sound like a cadence, or
that the problem faced in describing a new object is to decide what
will count as a description.

What is wrong with Pole's interpretation of Wittgenstein as sugges-
ting that the mathematician decides "to use a certain rule" is not
that it takes "too literally what Wittgenstein says of standards or
rules" (p. 60), but that it is not what Wittgenstein says. ("Deciding
to use a certain rule" correctly describes a logician's decision to use,
say, Universal Generalization, which involves certain liabilities
but ones he considers outweighed by other advantages.) What
Wittgenstein says is that "the expression, the result, of our being
convinced is that we *accept a rule.*" We no more *decide* to accept a rule
in this sense than we decide to be convinced. And we no more decide
what will express our conviction here than we decide what will
express our conviction about anything else—for example, that the
road to New Orleans is the left one, that the development section
is too long, and so forth.

Pole snaps at the word "decision" because he fears that it denies
the rationality of choice; he despises this implication of its use in
recent philosophizing (see p. 62). I share this concern about recent
moral philosophy. But what is wrong in such discussions is not the
use of the word "decision"; it is, rather, the implications which arise
from an *unexamined* use of it, a use in which the concept of choice is
disengaged from its (grammatical) connections with the concepts of
commitment and of responsibility. How and why this has happened
is something else.[6]

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[6] If we asked, "In what kind of world would decision be unrelated to
commitment and responsibility?" we might answer, "In a world in which

Wittgenstein does speak of forms of expression which we might think of as representing "a new move" in a shared language, to wit, those whose "grammar has yet to be explained" (*BB*, p. 10). (Adding "because there are no rules for its employment" adds nothing.) But he no more says of such expressions that in explaining them we decide to adopt the rules which confer meaning on them than he says about the concept of decision itself what Pole wishes him to say.

Some examples Wittgenstein gives of such expressions are: "I feel the visual image to be two inches behind the bridge of my nose" (*BB*, p. 9); "I feel in my hand that the water is three feet under the ground" (*ibid.*); "A rose has teeth in the mouth of a beast" (II, p. 222). What he says about them is this:

> We don't say that the man who tells us he feels the visual image two inches behind the bridge of his nose is telling a lie or talking nonsense. But we say that we don't understand the meaning of such a phrase. It combines well-known words but combines them in a way we dont yet understand. The grammar of [such phrases] has yet to be explained to us [*BB*, p. 10].

He does not say, and he does not mean, that there is "no right or wrong" about the use of such expressions. The question "Right or wrong?" has no application (yet) to such phrases, and so the statement that "such phrases are neither right nor wrong" itself says nothing. "Neither right nor wrong" may mean something like "unorthodox" or "not quite right and not quite wrong," but to use such critical expressions implies a clear sense of what would be orthodox or exactly right instances of the thing in question. Are the phrases in question unorthodox ways of saying something? What are they unorthodox ways of saying?

Pole compounds critical confusion by taking the irrelevance of the question "Right or wrong?" to mean that "no evaluative assessment is possible." (If it did mean that, then we should have made no evaluative assessment of a poem when we have found it trite or incoherent or wanting a summary stanza, nor of a decision when we have shown

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morality had become politicalized." It is no secret that this has been happening to our world, and that we are perhaps incapable of what would make it stop happening. That is a personal misfortune of which we all partake. But the pain is made more exquisitely cruel when philosophers describe relations and conversations between persons as they would occur in a totally political world—a world, that is, in which relationships are no longer personal, nor even contractual—and call what goes on between such persons by the good (or bad) name of morality. That concedes our loss to have been not merely morality, but the very concept of morality as well.

it thoughtless or heartless or spineless. Pole's insistence on right and wrong as the touchstones of assessment represents another attempt to meet an academic distrust of morality by an academic moralism. The positions are made for one another.) Is it no assessment of a phrase to say that its grammar has yet to be explained? But that is a very particular assessment, a new category of criticism. And there is no suggestion from Wittgenstein that *any* explanation will be acceptable. He calls one explanation of the diviner's statement a "perfectly good" one (*BB*, p. 10).

Such phrases are not the only ones in which our failure to understand is attributable to our failure to understand grammar; they are only the most dramatic or obvious ones. Once we see that the grammar of an expression sometimes *needs* explaining, and realize that we all know how to provide perfectly good explanations, we may be more accessible to the request to investigate the grammar of an expression whose meaning seems obvious and ask ourselves how it *is* to be explained.

Such an investigation will doubtless be reminiscent of procedures which have long been part of the familiar texture of analytical philosophizing; in particular, it sounds something like asking for the verification of a statement—and indeed Pole suggests (p. 96) that it is not, at bottom, importantly different in its criticism of metaphysics; and it sounds like Russell's asking for the "real [that is, logical] form of a proposition"—and, of course, the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* had also asked for that. A profitable way, I think, to approach the thought of the later Wittgenstein is to see how his questions about grammar differ from these (and other) more familiar questions. The sorts of differences I have in mind may perhaps be suggested this way: (1) It is true that an explanation of the grammar of an assertion can be asked for by asking "How would you verify that?" But first, where that is what the question asks for, it is not to be assumed that the question itself makes good sense; in particular it is not sensible unless there is some doubt about how that assertion is conceived to be verified, and it therefore leads to no theory of meaning at all (cf. §353). Second, it is not the only way in which an explanation of grammar can be requested; it is equally indicative of our failure to understand the grammar of an assertion if we cannot answer such questions as: "How would you teach someone what that says?"; "How would you hint at its truth?"; "What is it like to wonder whether it is true?" (2) In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein, if I understand, was asking: "Why is the logical form of a proposition its real form?" But in the later phi-

77

losophy he answers, in effect: "It is not." And he goes on to ask: "Why do we (did I) think it was?"; and "What does tell us the real form (= grammar) of a proposition?"

It is part of the accomplishment of Pole's critical study of Wittgenstein that it omits any examination of the twin concepts of "grammar" and of "criteria." For what Wittgenstein means when he says that philosophy really is descriptive is that it is descriptive of "our grammar," of "the criteria we have" in understanding one another, knowing the world, and possessing ourselves. Grammar is what language games are meant to reveal; it is because of this that they provide new ways of investigating concepts, and of criticizing traditional philosophy. All this, it should go without saying, is difficult to be clear about (Wittgenstein's own difficulty is not willful); but it is what any effort to understand Wittgenstein must direct itself toward.

THE RELEVANCE OF THE APPEAL TO
EVERYDAY LANGUAGE

Two of Pole's claims seem to be shared by many philosophers whom Wittgenstein offends, and it would be of use to do something toward making them seem less matters for common cause than for joined investigation. The claims I have in mind concern these two questions: (1) In what sense, or to what extent, does an appeal to "our everyday use" of an expression represent a mode of criticizing the use of that expression in philosophical contexts? (2) What sort of knowledge is the knowledge we have (or claim) of "how we ordinarily use" an expression? The present section is concerned with the first of these questions, the following with the second.

Pole says, or implies, that Wittgenstein regards ordinary language as "sacrosanct," that he speaks in the name of nothing higher than the "status quo" and that he "has forbidden philosophers to tamper with [our ordinary expressions]" (p. 57). Other philosophers, with very different motives from Pole's, have received the same impression, and their impatience has not been stilled by Wittgenstein's having said that

a reform of ordinary language for particular 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 [§132]

78

for they persist in reading Wittgenstein's appeal to our everyday use of expressions as though his effort consisted in scorning the speech of his charwoman out of solicitude toward that of his Nanny.

It takes two to give an impression; if this is a distortion of Wittgenstein's thought, it is a distortion of *something*. Of what? Pole's reference for his claim about what Wittgenstein "forbids" is to a passage which begins this way:

Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it [§124].

There is a frame of mind in which this may appear as something intolerably confining.[7] Then one will hear Wittgenstein's statement as though it meant either that philosophy ought not to change it (in which case Wittgenstein will be accused of an intellectual, even social conservatism) or that the actual use of language may in no way be changed (in which case Wittgenstein will be accused of lacking imagination or a sufficient appreciation of scientific advance). What the statement means is that, though of course there are any number of ways of changing ordinary language, philosophizing does not change it. That charge cannot be evaded by making it sound like a Nanny bleating "ou-ou-ought."

And yet it is a very perplexing indictment which Wittgenstein has entered. Why does Wittgenstein think it is one? Why do philosophers respond to it as though it were? Have they claimed to be, or thought of themselves as, changing or interfering with language?

The force of the indictment can best be seen in considering the ancient recognition that a philosophical thesis may, or may seem to, conflict with a "belief" which we take to be the common possession of common men, together with the equally ancient claim on the part of philosophers that in this conflict philosophy's position is superior

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[7] It is significant that Wittgenstein thought of his methods as liberating. "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" (§133). The reason why methods which make us look at what we say, and bring the forms of language (hence our forms of life) to consciousness, can present themselves to one person as confining and to another as liberating is, I think, understandable in this way: recognizing what we say, in the way that is relevant in philosophizing, is like recognizing our present commitments and their implications; to one person a sense of freedom will demand an escape from them, to another it will require their more total acceptance. Is it obvious that one of those positions must, in a given case, be right?

to that common possession; that, for example, such claims as "We know that there are material objects," "We directly see them," "We know that other persons are sentient," all of which are believed by the vulgar, have been discovered by philosophers to lack rational justification.

But the *nature* of this discovery and the *kind* of conflict involved are problems as constant as epistemology itself. Their most recent guise is perhaps brought out if we can say this much: There would be no sense of such a discovery[8] unless there were a sense of conflict with "what we all formerly believed," and there would, in turn, be no sense of conflict unless the philosopher's words meant (or were used as meaning) what they ordinarily meant. And don't they?

The ordinary language philosopher will say: "They don't; the philosopher is 'misusing words' or 'changing their meanings'; the philosopher has been careless, hasty, even wily[9] in his use of language." The defender of the tradition may reply: "Of course they don't; the philosopher uses technical terms, or terms with special senses, in order to free himself from the vagueness and imprecision of ordinary language and thereby to assess the beliefs it expresses." Neither of these replies is very satisfactory. The former is, if not too unclear altogether to be taken seriously as an explanation of disorder, plainly incredible. I do not see how it can with good conscience be denied that ordinary language philosophers (for example, Austin and Ryle) have found and made trouble for traditional philosophy. But the understanding of the trouble, and so an assessment of its seriousness or permanence, is a project of a different order. And I know of no effort of theirs at this task which carries anything like that immediate conviction which is so large a part of the power of their remarks when they are working within an investigation of ordinary language itself.

On the other hand, someone who imagines that he is defending the tradition by maintaining its right and need to introduce technical

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[8] The importance and role of the sense of discovery in philosophical paradox (one of the constant themes in the philosophizing of John Wisdom), in particular the pervasive significance of the fact that this sense is not accounted for by the familiar criticisms made by ordinary language philosophers against the tradition, was brought in upon me in conversations with Thompson Clarke. He has also read this paper and done what he could to relieve its obscurities.

[9] Austin, "Other Minds," in Flew (ed.), *Logic and Language* (London, 1953), Second Series, p. 133.

terms (or, as Pole suggests, to invent special philosophical language games—on, for example, pages 96-97) probably has in mind the philosopher's use of such terms as "sense data," "analytic," "transcendental unity of apperception," "idea," "universal," "existential quantifier"—terms which no ordinary language philosopher would criticize on the ground that they are not ordinary. But is the word "seeing" in the statement "We never directly see material objects" *meant* to be technical? Is "private" in "My sensations are private"? Are any of the words in such a statement as "We can never know what another person is experiencing"? Are such statements used in some special language game? The assumption, shared by our ordinary language critic and our defender of the tradition, that such words are not meant in their ordinary senses, destroys the point (not to say the meaning) of such statements. For on that assumption we cannot account for the way they seem to conflict with something we all (seem to, would say that we) believe; it therefore fails to account for what makes them seem to be discoveries or, we might say, fails to suggest what the hitherto unnoticed fact is which philosophy has discovered. Why would Descartes have professed "astonishment" at his "realization" that he might be dreaming if he had not meant to be denying or questioning what anyone who said "I believe, for example, that I am seated before the fire," and the like, would mean? And what cause, otherwise, would there have been for Hume to despair of his skeptical conclusions, regarding them as a "malady which can never radically be cured" (*Treatise*, I, iv, 2), were they not skeptical about (or, as he puts it, "contrary" to) "such opinions as we...embrace by a kind of instinct or natural impulse"?

It may be objected to this that scientific theories, however technical their language, have no trouble conflicting with common beliefs. But it is of crucial importance that neither Hume nor the Descartes of the *Meditations*, nor indeed anyone in that continuous line of classical epistemologists from Descartes and Locke to Moore and Price, seems to be conducting scientific investigations. In particular, they do not set out a collection of more or less abstruse facts and puzzling phenomena which they undertake to explain theoretically. Their method is uniformly what Hume describes as "profound and intense *reflection*" from which, he says, "skeptical doubt arises *naturally*" (*op. cit.;* my italics). They all begin from what seem to be facts of such obviousness that no one could fail to recognize them ("We all believe that there are material objects which continue to exist when they are unperceived"), employ examples of the homeliest extraction ("We should

81

6

all say that I am now holding an envelope in my hand, and that we all see it") and considerations whose import anyone can grasp who can speak ("But no two of us see exactly the same thing"; "But there is much that I can doubt"). (Wittgenstein's originality does not come from his having said that philosophy's problems concern something we all already know.) That such facts and examples and considerations "naturally" lead to skepticism is the phenomenon concerning us here. What the relation may be between this way of coming into conflict with common belief, and science's way, is a fascinating question and one, so far as I know, as yet unexamined.

Perhaps this can now be said: If, in the nonscientific (skeptical) conflict with common belief, words are in some way deprived of their normal functioning, a conceptualization of this distortion will have to account for this pair of facts: that the philosopher's words must (or must seem to) be used in their normal way, otherwise they would not conflict with what should ordinarily be meant in using them; and that the philosopher's words cannot be used in (quite) their normal way, otherwise the ordinary facts, examples, and considerations he adduces would not yield a general skeptical conclusion.

It is such a pair of facts, I suggest, that Wittgenstein is responding to when he says of philosophical (he calls them "metaphysical") expressions that (roughly) they are "used apart from their normal language game," that their "grammar is misunderstood," that they "flout the common criteria used in connection with these expressions." Such assertions do not say that the philosopher has "changed the meaning of his words" (what meaning do they now have?). Nor are they met, if any truth is caught by them, by saying that the words are being used in special senses, for none of Wittgenstein's critical assertions would be true of technical terms. They represent new categories of criticism.

Wittgenstein is, then, denying that in the (apparent) conflict between philosophy and the common "beliefs" (assumptions?) of ordinary men, philosophy's position is superior. This does not mean, however, that he is defending common beliefs against philosophy. That "there are material objects" or that "other persons are sentient" are not propositions which Wittgenstein supposed to be open either to belief or to disbelief. They seem to be ordinary "beliefs" only when the philosopher undertakes to "doubt" them. I am not saying that this is obviously not real doubt, but merely suggesting that it is not obvious that it is, and that it is completely unobvious, if it is not real doubt, what kind of experience it is and why it presents itself as doubt.

Nor is Wittgenstein saying that philosophy's position is inferior to that of common men. Perhaps one could say that he wishes to show that, in its conflict with "what we all believe," the philosopher has no position at all, his conclusions are not false (and not meaningless), but, one could say, not *believable*—that is, they do not create the stability of conviction expressed in propositions which are subject (grammatically) to belief. (That was agonizingly acknowledged, as is familiar to us, by Hume, who wanted, but confessed failure in trying to find, an explanation of it. When he left his study he forgot, as he knew and hoped he would, the skeptical conclusions of his reflections. But what kind of "belief" is it whose convincingness fades as soon as we are not explicitly attending to the considerations which led us to it?) For Wittgenstein, philosophy comes to grief not in denying what we all know to be true, but in its effort to escape those human forms of life which alone provide the coherence of our expression. He wishes an acknowledgment of human limitation which does not leave us chafed by our own skin, by a sense of powerlessness to penetrate beyond the human conditions of knowledge. The limitations of knowledge are no longer barriers to a more perfect apprehension, but conditions of knowledge *überhaupt*, of anything we should call "knowledge." The resemblance to Kant is obvious, and I will say another word about it below.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LANGUAGE

How can we come to such an acknowledgment of limitation? Wittgenstein's answer is: "What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use" (§116). I have, in effect, asked: why does that help? And my suggestion, essentially, was: it shows us that we did not know what we were saying, what we were doing to ourselves. But now I want to ask: how do we accomplish the task of bringing words back home? How do we know when we have done it?

Well, how does the logician know that (a) "Nobody is in the auditorium" must be transcribed differently from (b) "Peabody is in the auditorium"? By intuition? Careful empirical studies? Perhaps he will say: "But obviously we do not want the same sorts of inferences to be drawn from (a) as from (b), in particular not the inference that somebody is in the auditorium." But how does he know *that*? However he knows it—and he does—that is how Wittgenstein knows that the grammar of, say, "pointing to an object" is different from the grammar

83

of "pointing to a color" (*BB*, p. 80; §33). Failing an awareness of
that difference we take the obvious difference between them to be a
function of some special experience which accompanies the act of
pointing. How does Wittgenstein know that? The way Russell (and
we) know that if you do not catch the difference in logical form
between "Pegasus does not exist" and "Whirlaway does not whinny,"
you will take the obvious difference between them to indicate the
presence of some special realm of being which acccompanies the
ordinary world.

But what kind of knowledge is this? What kind of knowledge is
the knowledge of what we ordinarily mean in using an expression,
or the knowledge of the particular circumstances in which an expression
is actually used? Pole has this to say:

Consider the great purpose of all this—this descriptive setting forth of language-
games. It is to bring us to see that some particular move which we took for
a move in the game has no proper place in it. Such a move is to be shown as
failing to connect with the rest of the pattern. Wittgenstein compares it to
a wheel spinning idly, disengaged from the machine it should belong to.
Here we have a luminous metaphor—and yet no more than a metaphor.
For there can be no way of testing whether this or that linguistic wheel has
failed to engage, except to grasp the pattern in each case; to arrive at some
sort of insight into that unique set of relations which it professes but fails to
form a part of [p. 81].

This is thought to show that if we

once allow that it might be right to reject a proposition or mode of speech
because the pattern has no place for it, . . . it must follow that it must some-
times be right to accept others on the same ground—that the pattern requires
them. There is no inherent difficulty in the notion. . . . Yet here we have a
way of seeing language that the whole bent of Wittgenstein's thought was
opposed to [p. 82].

If I understand what Pole is getting at (he gives no examples, here
or elsewhere), he has been even less impressed by Wittgenstein's
conception of language than we have seen. It is not the "bent" of
Wittgenstein's thought that is opposed to the idea that the "require-
ment of the pattern" justifies the use we make of an expression, but
the straight thrust of his whole teaching: "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" [§107].)
"A *picture* [= pattern?] held us captive. And we could not get outside
it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us

inexorably" (§115). Not only is there "no inherent difficulty in the notion" of "grasping a pattern," the difficulty is to get ourselves not to take our feelings of what is called for or what must be appropriate, at face value.

Other philosophers have taken the knowledge of everyday language, since it is obviously knowledge of "matters of fact," to be straightforwardly empirical, requiring the observations and verifications which we are told that any empirical judgment requires. Such philosophers find the appeal to what we should ordinarily say and mean, when this appeal is not backed by scientific collection of "our" utterances, archaically precious, while philosophers dependent upon that appeal will find the invitation to science at this point cheaply *moderne*. This conflict is not a side issue in the general conflict between Wittgenstein (together with, at this point, "ordinary language philosophy") and traditional philosophy; it is itself an instance, an expression, of that conflict, and one therefore which we will not suppose it will be simple to resolve. Wittgenstein does not speak very explicitly about the knowledge we have of our language, but when we see what kind of claim this knowledge involves, we realize that its investigation lies at the heart of the later philosophy as a whole. I shall try to suggest what I mean by that.

Neither Wittgenstein nor the ordinary language phi osopher, when he asks "What should we say (would we call)...?" is asking just any question about the use of language. He is, in particular, not predicting what will be said in certain circumstances, not, for example, asking how often a word will be used nor what the most effective slogan will be for a particular purpose. (Those questions can, of course, be asked; and their answers will indeed require ordinary empirical methods for collecting sociological data.) He is asking something which can be answered by remembering what is said and meant, or by trying out his own response to an imagined situation. Answers arrived at in such ways will not tell you everything, but why assume that they are meant to tell you what only the collection of new data can tell you? The problems of philosophy are not solved by "[hunting] out new facts; it is, rather, of the essence of our investigation that we do not seek to learn anything *new* by it. We want to *understand* something that is already in plain view. For *this* is what we seem in some sense not to understand" (§89).

What do such answers look like? They will be facts about what we call (how we conceive, what the concept is, what counts as), for example, a piece of wax, the same piece of wax, seeing something, not really seeing something, not seeing all of something, following,

85

finding, losing, returning, choosing, intending, wishing, pointing to something, and so on. And we could say that what such answers are meant to provide us with is not more knowledge of matters of fact, but the knowledge of what would count as various "matters of fact." Is this empirical knowledge? Is it a priori? It is a knowledge of what Wittgenstein means by grammar—the knowledge Kant calls "trans-cendental."

> And here I make a remark which the reader must bear well in mind, as it extends its influence over all that follows. Not every kind of knowledge *a priori* should be called transcendental, but that only by which we know that—and how—certain representations (intuitions or concepts) can be employed or are possible purely *a priori*. The term "transcendental," that is to say, signifies such knowledge as concerns the *a priori* possibility of knowledge, or its *a priori* employment [*Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by N. K. Smith, p. 96].

That is not the clearest remark ever made, but I should think that no one who lacked sympathy with the problem Kant was writing about would undertake to make sense of Wittgenstein's saying:

> Our investigation . . . is directed not towards phenomena, but, as one might say, towards the "possibilities" of phenomena [§90].

As the "transcendental clue to the discovery of all pure concepts of the understanding" (*Critique*, pp. 105 ff.) Kant uses the idea that "there arise precisely the same number of pure concepts of the under-standing in general, as . . . there have been found to be logical func-tions in all possible judgments" (p. 113). Wittgenstein follows the remark quoted above with the words: "We remind ourselves, that is to say, of the *kind of statement* that we make about phenomena.... Our investigation is therefore a grammatical one" (§90). And where Kant speaks of "transcendental illusion"—the illusion that we know what transcends the conditions of possible knowledge—Wittgenstein speaks of the illusions produced by our employing words in the absence of the (any) language game which provides their comprehensible employment (cf. §96). ("The results of philosophy are the uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense and of bumps that the under-standing has got by running its head up against the limits of language" [§119].)

If his similarity to Kant is seen, the differences light up the nature of the problems Wittgenstein sets himself. For Wittgenstein it would be an illusion not only that we do know things-in-themselves, but equally an illusion that we do not (crudely, because the concept of "knowing something as it really is" is being used without a clear

86

sense, apart from its ordinary language game). So problems emerge which can be articulated as: "Why do we feel we cannot know something in a situation in which there is nothing it makes sense to say we do not know?"; "What is the nature of this illusion?"; "What makes us dissatisfied with our knowledge as a whole?"; "What is the nature and power of a 'conceptualization of the world'?"; "Why do we conceptualize the world as we do?"; "What would alternative conceptualizations look like?"; "How might they be arrived at?" It was, I suggest, because he wanted answers to such questions that he said, "It did not matter whether his results were true or not: what mattered was that 'a method had been found' " (Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures," *Mind*, LXIV [1955], 26).

And he also said: "There is not *a* philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies" (§133). The sorts of thing he means by "methods" are, I take it, "[imagining or considering] a language-game for which [a given] account is really valid" (for example, §2, §48); "finding and inventing intermediate cases" (§122); "[inventing] fictitious natural history," (II, p. 230); investigating one expression by investigating a grammatically related expression, for example, the grammar of "meaning" by that of "explanation of the meaning" (*BB*, pp. 1, 24); and so on. But in all of these methods part of what is necessary is that we respond to questions like "What would we say if...?" or "But is anyone going to call...?" To suppose that what is then being asked for is a prediction of what will be said, and a prediction for which we have slim evidence, would be as sensible as responding to the request "Suppose you have three apples and I give you three more. How many will you have?" by saying, "How can I answer with confidence? I might drop one and have five, or inherit an orchard and have thousands."

What is being asked for? If it is accepted that "a language" (a natural language) is what the native speakers of a language speak, and that speaking a language is a matter of practical mastery, then such questions as "What should we say if...?" or "In what circumstances would we call...?" asked of someone who has mastered the language (for example, oneself) is a request for the person to say something about himself, describe what he does. So the different methods are methods for acquiring self-knowledge; as—for different (but related) purposes and in response to different (but related) problems—are the methods of "free" association, dream analysis, investigation of verbal and behavioral slips, noting and analyzing "transferred" feeling, and so forth. Perhaps more shocking, and

87

STANLEY CAVELL

certainly more important, than any of Freud's or Wittgenstein's
particular conclusions is their discovery that knowing oneself is
something for which there are methods—something, therefore, that
can be taught (though not in obvious ways) and practiced.

Someone may wish to object: "But such claims as 'We say...,'
'We are not going to call...,' and so forth, are not merely claims about
what *I* say and mean and do, but about what *others* say and mean
and do as well. And how can I speak for others on the basis of knowl-
edge about myself?" The question is: why are some claims about
myself expressed in the form "*We*..."? About what can I speak for
others on the basis of what I have learned about myself? (This is
worth comparing with the question: about what can I speak for
others on the basis of what I decide to do? When you vote, you
speak for yourself; when you are voted in, you speak for others.)
Then suppose it is asked: "But how do I know others speak as I do?"
About some things I know they do not; I have some knowledge of
my idiosyncracy. But if the question means "How do I know at all
that others speak as I do?" then the answer is, I do not. I may find
out that the most common concept is not used by us in the same
way. And one of Wittgenstein's questions is: what would it be like
to find this out?[10] At one place he says:

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 [II, p. 223].

In German the last sentence employs an idiom which literally
says: "We cannot find ourselves in them." We, who can speak for
one another, find that we cannot speak for them. In part, of course,
we find this out in finding out that we cannot speak *to* them. If speaking

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[10] The nature and extent of this fact, and of the different methods required
in meeting it, is suggested by the differences of problems presented to psycho-
analysts in the cases of neurotic and of psychotic communication (verbal
and nonverbal). See, e.g., Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, *Principles of Intensive
Psychotherapy* (Chicago, 1950), esp. ch. 8 and *passim*. Perhaps it is suggestive to
say: the neurotic disguises the expression of particular communications
(e.g., makes something fearful to him look and sound attractive), while the
psychotic distorts his entire grammar. The neurotic has reason, and the
strength, to keep what he means from himself; the psychotic has to keep
what he knows he means from others. Wittgenstein is concerned with both
of these kinds of incongruence.

88

for someone else seems to be a mysterious process, that may be because speaking *to* someone does not seem mysterious enough.

If the little I have said makes plausible the idea that the question "How do we know what we say (intended to say, wish to say)?" is one aspect of the general question "What is the nature of self-knowledge?" then we will realize that Wittgenstein has not first "accepted" or "adopted" a method and then accepted its results, for the nature of self-knowledge—and therewith the nature of the self—is one of the great subjects of the *Investigations* as a whole.

It is also one of the hardest regions of the *Investigations* to settle with any comfort. One reason for that, I think, is that so astonishingly little exploring of the nature of self-knowledge has been attempted in philosophical writing since Bacon and Locke and Descartes prepared the habitation of the new science. Classical epistemology has concentrated on the knowledge of objects (and, of course, of mathematics), not on the knowledge of persons. That is, surely, one of the striking facts of modern philosophy as a whole, and its history will not be understood until some accounting of that fact is rendered.[11] In a smart attack on the new philosophy, Russell suggests that its unconcern with the methods and results of modern science betrays its alienation from the original and continuing source of philosophical inspiration: "Philosophers from Thales onward have tried to understand the world" (*My Philosophical Development* [New York, 1959], p. 230). But philosophers from Socrates onward have (sometimes) also tried to understand themselves, and found in that both the method and goal of philosophizing. It is a little absurd to go on insisting that physics provides us with knowledge of the world which is of the highest excellence. Surely the problems we face now are not the same ones for which Bacon and Galileo caught their chills. Our intellectual problems (to say no more) are set by the very success of those deeds, by the plain fact that the measures which soak up knowledge of the world leave us dryly ignorant of ourselves. Our problem is not that we lack adequate methods for acquiring knowledge of nature, but that we are unable to prevent our best ideas—including our ideas about our

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[11] Bernard Williams, in a review of Stuart Hampshire's *Thought and Action* in *Encounter*, *XV* (Nov., 1960), 38-42, suggests one important fact about what I have, parochially, called "modern philosophy" (by which I meant the English and American academic traditions, beginning with Descartes and Locke and never domesticating Hegel and his successors) which, I think, is related to its unconcern with the knowledge of persons and in particular with self-knowledge; viz., its neglect of history as a form of human knowledge.

89

knowledge of nature—from becoming ideologized. Our incapacity here results not from the supposed fact that ordinary language is vague; to say so is an excuse for not recognizing that (and when) we speak vaguely, imprecisely, thoughtlessly, unjustly, in the absence of feeling, and so forth.

Since Wittgenstein's investigations of self-knowledge and of the knowledge of others depend upon his concept of "criteria," it is worth noting that although Pole ventures a discussion of Wittgenstein's ideas about "inner experience" he prudently withholds any opinion about the role of "criteria" in those ideas. He does suggest that Wittgenstein supposed words to have meaning "in the complete absence of conscious feeling" (p. 88), as though Wittgenstein supposed the users of language to be anaesthetized; and he finds Wittgenstein supposing that "experiential elements play no part" in determining the way language is used (p. 88; cf. p. 86), whereas what Wittgenstein says is, in these terms, that what is experiential in the use of a word is not an element, not one identifiable recurrence whose presence insures the meaning of a word and whose absence deprives it of meaning. If that were the case, how could we ever assess our feelings, recognize them to be inappropriate to what we say? Feelings (like intentions and hopes and wishes, though not in the same way) are expressed in speech and in conduct generally; and the (actual, empirical) problem of the knowledge of oneself and of others is set by the multiple and subtle distortions of their expression. Here, what we do not know comprises not our ignorance but our alienation.

Since Wittgenstein does fuller justice to the role of feeling in speech and conduct than any other philosopher within the Anglo-American academic tradition, it is disheartening to find his thought so out of reach. Pole extends the line of those who, shocked at the way academic reasoning is embarrassed by the presence of feeling—its wish to remove feeling to the "emotive" accompaniments of discourse, out of the reach of intellectual assessment—counter by taking feelings too much at face value and so suffer the traditional penalty of the sentimentalist, that one stops taking his feelings seriously. Other philosophers, I believe, are under the impression that Wittgenstein denies that we can know what we think and feel, and even that we can know ourselves. This extraordinary idea comes, no doubt, from such remarks of Wittgenstein's as: "I can know what someone else is thinking, not what I am thinking" (II, p. 222); "It cannot be said of me at all (except perhaps as a joke) that I *know* I am in pain" (§246). But the "can" and "cannot" in these remarks are grammatical; they

mean "it makes no sense to say these things" (in the way we think it does); it would, therefore, equally make no sense to say of me that I do not know what I am thinking, or that I do not know I am in pain. The implication is not that I cannot know myself, but that knowing onseself—though radically different from the way we know others—is not a matter of cognizing (classically, "intuiting") mental acts and particular sensations.

THE STYLE OF THE *INVESTIGATIONS*

I mentioned, at the beginning of this paper, the surface difficulties one has in approaching the writings of Wittgenstein. His literary style has achieved both high praise and widespread alarm. Why does he write that way? Why doesn't he just say what he means, and draw instead of insinuate conclusions? The motives and methods of his philosophizing, as I have been sketching at them, suggest answers to these questions which I want, in conclusion, to indicate.[12]

The first thing to be said in accounting for his style is that he *writes:* he does not report, he does not write up results. Nobody would forge a style so personal who had not wanted and needed to find the right expression for his thought.The German dissertation and the British essay —our most common modern options for writing philosophy—would not work; his is not a system and he is not a spectator. My suggestion is that the problem of style is set for him by the two aspects of his work which I have primarily emphasized : the lack of existing terms of criticism, and the method of self-knowledge.[13]

In its defense of truth against sophistry, philosophy has employed the same literary genres as theology in its defense of the faith: against intellectual competition, Dogmatics; against Dogmatics, the Confes-sion; in both, the Dialogue.[14] Inaccessible to the dogmatics of philo-

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[12] Wittgenstein speaks of this as a problem in his preface to the *Investigations.*

[13] Perhaps another word will make clearer what I mean by "terms of criticism." Wittgenstein opens the *Investigations* (and the *Brown Book*) by quoting a passage from Augustine's *Confessions* in which he describes the way he learned to speak. Wittgenstein finds this important but unsatisfactory. Is there any short way of answering the question: What does Wittgenstein find wrong with it? (Does it commit a well-known fallacy? Is it a case of hasty generalization? Empirical falsehood? Unverifiable?)

[14] The significance of the fact that writing of all kinds (not just "literature") is dependent, in structure and tone and effect, on a quite definite (though extensive) set of literary forms or genres is nowhere to my knowledge so fully

sophical criticism, Wittgenstein chose confession and recast his dialogue. It contains what serious confessions must: the full acknowledgment of temptation ("I want to say..."; "I feel like saying..."; "Here the urge is strong...") and a willingness to correct them and give them up ("In the everyday use..."; "I impose a requirement which does not meet my real need"). (The voice of temptation and the voice of correctness are the antagonists in Wittgenstein's dialogues.) In confessing you do not explain or justify, but describe how it is with you. And confession, unlike dogma, is not to be believed but tested, and accepted or rejected. Nor is it the occasion for accusation, except of yourself, and by implication those who find themselves in you. There is exhortation ("Do not say: 'There *must* be something common... but *look* and *see*...' " [§66]) not to belief, but to self-scrutiny. And that is why there is virtually nothing in the *Investigations* which we should ordinarily call reasoning; Wittgenstein asserts nothing which could be proved, for what he asserts is either obvious (§126) —whether true or false—or else concerned with what conviction, whether by proof or evidence or authority, would consist in. Otherwise there are questions, jokes, parables, and propositions so striking (the way lines are in poetry) that they stun mere belief. (Are we asked to believe that "if a lion could talk we could not understand him"? [II, p. 223]) Belief is not enough. Either the suggestion penetrates past assessment and becomes part of the sensibility from which assessment proceeds, or it is philosophically useless.

Such writing has its risks: not merely the familiar ones of inconsistency, unclarity, empirical falsehood, unwarranted generalization, but also of personal confusion, with its attendant dishonesties, and of the tyranny which subjects the world to one's personal problems. The assessment of such failures will exact criticism at which we are unpracticed.

In asking for more than belief it invites discipleship, which runs its own risks of dishonesty and hostility. But I do not see that the faults of explicit discipleship are more dangerous than the faults which come from subjection to modes of thought and sensibility whose origins are unseen or unremembered and which therefore create a different

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made out as in Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, 1957); the small use I have made of it here hardly suggests the work it should inspire. More immediately I am indebted to Philip Rieff's introduction to the Beacon Press edition of Adolf Harnack's *Outlines of the History of Dogma* (Boston, 1959) and to the reference to Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* cited by Rieff.

blindness inaccessible in other ways to cure. Between control by the living and control by the dead there is nothing to choose.

Because the breaking of such control is a constant purpose of the later Wittgenstein, his writing is deeply practical and negative, the way Freud's is. And like Freud's therapy, it wishes to prevent under-standing which is unaccompanied by inner change. Both of them are intent upon unmasking the defeat of our real need in the face of self-impositions which we have not assessed (§108), or fantasies ("pictures") which we cannot escape (§115). In both, such misfor-tune is betrayed in the incongruence between what is said and what is meant or expressed; for both, the self is concealed in assertion and action and revealed in temptation and wish. Both thought of their negative soundings as revolutionary extensions of our knowledge, and both were obsessed by the idea, or fact, that they would be mis-understood—partly, doubtless, because they knew the taste of self-knowledge, that it is bitter. It will be time to blame them for taking misunderstanding by their disciples as personal betrayal when we know that the ignorance of oneself is a refusal to know.[15]

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