

I Philosophy¹

I am no scholar on Wittgenstein, nor on scholars on Wittgenstein. This needn't be said, as you are bound to discover yourself, but I thought it best to tell you, since, in a sense, I have come not to praise but to bury. The works I shall attend to are basically *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations* (PI).²

Without giving a decisive argument based on texts, let me say that I go with any who would hold that there are deep-running agreements and similarities between the early and the later works of Wittgenstein. One may substantiate such a claim in several ways.

Biographically, Wittgenstein's *philosophical heart* was pretty constant, from the start to the finish his idol was Frege, given his temperament I would find that

1 An earlier version of this essay was read to a conference on Wittgenstein in Skjolden, May 1992 (see <http://wab.aksis.uib.no/wp-no5.pdf>). I am fortunate to have had Cora Diamond read that version; her detailed, and justly hard, criticism made clear the need for revision. Some of her points I have just quietly accepted and changed the original text accordingly. I would like to use this occasion to thank Cora Diamond for her part in making my year at her department in 1992/93 such a valuable one for me. It was a revelation to observe close up her philosophical command, ranging from Frege, Russell and Wittgenstein to topics in moral philosophy and fiction. I am aware that this revision is no proper way of showing my appreciation of her *presence*. She stressed, in a seminar on Wittgenstein, the importance of trusting him, of our realizing that Wittgenstein was to be trusted. I cannot remember that she explained her meaning: I do not think she meant that Wittgenstein is never wrong. I took her then to say that Wittgenstein is a good guide in philosophy, with a genius for what is important, that he is serious and goes deep. Much the same may be said of Cora Diamond.

2 Wittgenstein was a compulsive writer, he seems also to have been searching for the 'perspicuous representation', or 'relieving (liberating) word' by constantly rewriting and re-arranging his text. Given that most of 'his books' come out of a *Nachlass*, my feeling is that one can with justification attribute to him only what he himself prepared for publication. For the rest, we should distinguish between the author, to whom we ascribe the opinions expressed, and the historical person who penned them.

implausible unless he also admired Frege for his problems and philosophical depth (when he, late in life, *Zettel*, 712 writes:

“The style of my sentences is extraordinarily strongly influenced by Frege. And if I wanted to, I could establish this influence where at first sight no one would see it”,

this is no mere stylistic matter).

Thematically, there is a substantial overlap of central topics between *Tractatus* and later works, just spell out the list in the preface to PI (meaning, understanding, proposition, logic, foundations of mathematics, states of consciousness), furthermore, central positions remain in place, e.g. the dominant role played by truth and conditions for truth in assessing (declarative) sentences and their meaning, and the view of logic, where logical relations are seen as revealed through the use of ordinary sentences, tautologies are neither pictures of facts, nor are logical truths the most general laws of nature, as Frege thought.

Finally, the character of Wittgenstein’s remarks about philosophy, his ‘metaphilosophy’, has a constant core. Much of the stuff turning up later is also found in the *Big Typescript*, dating from 1933–4.

The plan I follow is this: first, I detail some features of what I take to be his metaphilosophy, and see them as spelling out the impossibility of giving explanations and theses in philosophy (indeed of philosophy itself), not merely on the articulation thereof; secondly, I sketch the *Tractatus* answer to a particular problem, the one probably overshadowing every other in Wittgenstein’s view, viz. the problem of linguistic meaning; thirdly, I argue that its replacement in PI, required, since he gave up the *Tractatus* answer, is strictly speaking not there (this is the void I found) and I go on to suggest what should take its place, in strict conformity with his metaphilosophy. “Metaphilosophy” is my term, Wittgenstein himself, in PI § 121, denied that there is a second-order philosophy, it is all philosophy, on the same level as it were; I am just picking out those remarks that would be second-level if we were to use that word: remarks about philosophy, philosophers, etc. Wittgenstein wrote much on such matters, he must have felt the need to explain himself, to account for why his writings differed so much from the common academic genre. But, even if his ‘metaphilosophy’ is seen as *dictating*, setting standards for, what philosophy should be, it need not therefore be seen as spelling out what is actually produced, nor as providing a normative standard as to the quality of the philosophical statements. The metaphilosophical remarks can be seen, on the contrary, as running comments by Wittgenstein on what he saw himself as doing, necessary since there were ‘things’ philosophy could not be, or do. However, there is a

'sticky' issue connected to my use of his remarks on what philosophy can do. There is a strong contemporary interpretative tradition, relying heavily on the 'metaphilosophical' remarks, that sees Wittgenstein, from early to late, as denying philosophy any ability to produce insights comparable to those truths and theories brought forth in the sciences: philosophy is not a science, nor does Wittgenstein propound philosophical theses. It seems to me that much, at least, of that tradition handles Wittgenstein's pronouncements on philosophy as having a normative impact on what philosophy does, and on what it should be. Thus it treats the 'metaphilosophy' as providing proper, second-order, standards, judging how the rest is to be understood. The 'stickiness' is that, while the tradition has too much going for it to be ignored, Wittgenstein can also, and quite naturally, be read as engaging with, and criticizing, articulated positions by authors not sharing his view of philosophy, even though this may not have been his *final intention*. If the tradition referred to then claims that his criticism is not of the form: they say p and I say *not- p* ; but one of, say, showing up the emptiness of p , that proposed interpretative claim has to be established by argument, not dogmatically proclaimed. But, even if this second construal of his rebuttals is a correct description of what Wittgenstein *does vis-à-vis* other writers, it does not invalidate a reading that sees his texts as expressing philosophical positions. His 'metaphilosophical' remarks may be read either as statements descriptive of his activity, and more or less true of that, or they may be read as normative sentences, more or less adhered to. On either reading, we decide, on a case by case basis, what weight certain remarks carry when read with other remarks. As I hope will become plain, Wittgenstein may have somewhat changed his mind about philosophical matters, his attitude in the *Tractatus* is not identical to that in the *Investigations*; furthermore, disregarding, or sizing down, certain of his remarks is just that, downplaying the weight of certain remarks. Wittgenstein as a writer has been described as always starting afresh, with nothing already on paper. This makes his remarks curiously *local*.

What then are his metaphilosophical pronouncements? Going by the *Tractatus* we have that the problems of philosophy are posed because the logic of our language is misunderstood. The proper consequence to draw from this, according to Wittgenstein, is that what can be said can be said clearly, and of what we cannot talk we must be silent, that is, we cannot think about it either.

This is from the preface. Later in the book we get such sentiments as that the whole of philosophy is full of fundamental confusions (3.324), that the deepest problems are not problems at all, that most propositions and questions in philosophy are not false but nonsensical, and arise from our failure to understand the logic

of our language (4.003). As descriptions of philosophy, we get things like “All philosophy is a critique of language” (4.0031), and that it aims at the logical clarification of thought. Philosophy is furthermore not a body of doctrines but an activity, consisting essentially of elucidations (4.112). From 3.263 we see that elucidations are propositions that contain the primitive signs, the meanings of these signs can be explained by means of elucidations, even though these can only be understood if the meanings of those signs are already known. The simple signs, we learn from 3.2 and 3.201, are the signs of a completely analysed proposition, one where the elements of the propositional sign correspond to the objects of thought. But, see also 4.026, where Wittgenstein says that the meanings of simple signs (words) must be explained to us if we are to understand them. (However, one reading of that paragraph suggests that what is going on there is the drawing of a contrast between words and sentences, notice the occurrence of “words” above.)

And, from 6.54, we get that for Wittgenstein his propositions elucidate in the sense that those who understand them recognize them as nonsensical. A concomitance of this position on philosophy is, for Wittgenstein, that, even though philosophy is not one of the natural sciences (4.111), the correct method in philosophy is to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science (6.53). In 4.11 we hear that all true propositions belong to natural science, the place of philosophy is above or below natural science, setting limits to its sphere (4.113)

On a more detailed level we have:

“In philosophy the question, ‘What do we actually use this word or this proposition for?’ repeatedly leads to valuable insights.” (6.211)

Finally, we hear that all the propositions of our everyday language, just as they stand, are in perfect logical order. (5.5563)

Much of this is found also in the *Philosophical Investigations*, in a subtly altered form. The depth of philosophy is the depth of a grammatical joke. Problems that arise through a misinterpretation of our forms of language have the character of depth, their roots are as deep as the forms of language. And, startlingly, their significance is as great as the importance of our language (§ 111).

The results of philosophy are the uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense and of the bumps that the understanding has got by running its head up against the limits of language (§ 119). We suffer from an urge to misunderstand the workings of our language (§ 109).

Philosophy can only describe language, not interfere with it. It leaves everything as it is (§ 124). If one tried to advance theses in philosophy it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree to them (§ 128). Philoso-

phy only states what everyone admits (§ 599), is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language (§ 109) and aims at complete clarity, which simply means that all problems disappear (§ 133). But, philosophers are like savages, misinterpreting the expressions of civilized men (§ 194).

In addition to § 97, there are two other paragraphs extremely important for understanding *Tractatus* 5.5563 (that our everyday language is perfectly in order), § 81 and § 194. Wittgenstein brings in the concepts of game, calculus and machine to show how we are tempted to think we measure language up against an ideal one, and that logic, as an instrument of assessment, is really descriptively true only of the ideal language. (The “when we do philosophy we are like savages” occurs at the end of § 194.)

This stuff is very similar to the *Tractatus* material, one difference is that *Tractatus* has only marginal remarks about the philosopher, the human being as a philosopher. Another difference, very marked, is that science, in the role it played previously, is virtually absent in PI. A major difference is the presence of grammatical remarks, replacing those of logical syntax and analysis. This replacement indicates his dissatisfaction with their role in the *Tractatus*. A marked similarity is that both works must consider philosophical activity to be a perennial one. This is due to the nature of the causes behind philosophy. That he, in the *Tractatus*, claimed to have found the truth, is beside the point. Even the truth may have to be found, and stated, again and again. It is here well worth remarking that even though Wittgenstein speaks of the philosopher as a savage, it is not the philosopher who by his activity creates the misunderstandings underlying philosophy: both the *Tractatus* and PI make clear that it is us, humans, who misunderstand language. His remarks about *us*, that we are confused about language, misunderstand it, go well with the notion that although language is perfectly all right, radical work needs to be done with us. What it goes less well with is the notion that it is philosophical thinking alone that needs to be stopped. The therapy needed is not to stop us doing philosophy, but to stop us misunderstanding our own language. It is a further claim that all philosophy springs from such misunderstanding.

(“The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to.” (§ 133))

It seems that Wittgenstein is here, in § 133, taking a Kantian-like position: the human mind brings forth, by necessity, ‘ordinary’ philosophy, this needs to be seen as the confusion it is, and is so seen by his own philosophy.³ Let us look at the most striking feature of that.

2 The picture theory

I assume most readers know the *Tractatus*, so I shall not go into great detail. The salient points are these: sentences, as logical pictures of possible worldly circumstances, are themselves facts, these facts are propositional signs in a projective relation to the world. The propositions spell out their meaning by expressing what has to be the case if they are true. The curious, and important, thing about propositions is that because they contain everything but the projected, including their own projective relations, they vouch for their own meaningfulness. The projected is the propositional sense, so the proposition doesn't contain its own sense, but it includes the possibility of expressing its sense.

3.11 “Die Projektionsmethode ist das Denken des Satz-Sinnes.”

Pears & McGuinness give this translation:

3.11 “The method of projection is to think of the sense of the proposition.”

Ogden has this:

“The method of projection is the thinking of the sense of the proposition.”

The difficulty in translating is how to avoid making propositional sense into an object of thinking (thinking of Paris). Both translations may tempt us in that direction with their second “of”, but perhaps by dropping it, one turns the sentence into substandard English. The German, on the other hand, treats the propositional sense as the content of the thinking. An object of thought may be referred to, and presented, in various ways; the content of thinking can only be expressed, presented, through using the sentential sign. We project the sentential sign by thinking

3 Cora Diamond first directed me towards the earlier text, and suggested that I might find it useful to look at the *Big Typescript* for further remarks about philosophy. There is a fragment published in Kluge and Nordmann (eds): *Ludwig Wittgenstein Philosophical Occasions 1912–1951*. This is paragraphs 86–93, given the title ‘philosophy’ by Wittgenstein himself. The bilingual text runs from p. 160 to p. 199. There are two remarks which strike me in this fragment, one is, on p. 188, or 189 for the English translation, “Philosophy is not laid down in sentences but in a language”. The second one is on p. 184 (185), where Wittgenstein claims that the reason why philosophy makes no progress, why the problems occupying the Greeks are still occupying us, is that our language has remained the same and seduces us into asking the same questions again and again. The second strikes me as doctrinaire, with the character of a thesis. All problems, our language has remained the same, are we the same? Haven't we changed since the ancient Greeks, and doesn't that count for something? The whole of the *Big Typescript* has now been published in a scholarly, bilingual edition.

its sense. If we compare what Wittgenstein says here with Frege's talk of grasping a thought, Wittgenstein's idea seems to be that between the mind and its thoughts there is no distance, no gap to be bridged.

When we entertain (think) a proposition, we think its sense. Elementary sentences cannot but help showing off their sense, it seems they cannot be misunderstood. Logic has set up the proposition, both in its relation to us and in its relation to the world, in such a way that its ability to picture the world is self-explanatory. The world as such does not have a different form from that language has. According to 2.18, a picture must share with reality logical form, i.e. the form of reality, if it is to be able to depict it. As I see it, this is the crucial point, there is no problem about meaningful thinking of the world because propositions impose on us their own meaningfulness. Wittgenstein's position here is perhaps best understood as aligning him closely with Frege's view of the internal relation between judgement and truth.

Surprisingly, we may think, Wittgenstein also has a concept of word use, or rather, he uses words such as these: *Gebrauch* and *Verwendung*. (– *benützen* 6.211), but it is a concept very different from what we see in the later work.

When Wittgenstein came to disown the picture theory he did so partly because he rejected the way the theory made propositions contain the projective relation to the world, in other words, he came to reject the picture theory's explanation of its own meaningfulness. Rush Rhees is reported to have stated in conversation that Wittgenstein later said that in the *Tractatus* he confused the method of projection with the lines of projection. This is one way of distinguishing the explanatory part of the picture theory from what I shall later call the theory of meaning part. Wittgenstein must have come to realize that when he, in the *Tractatus*, believed he gave an account of meaning, he merely presented, in schematic form, which meaning a proposition would have. The account given was based on the general form of a proposition, an account criticized in the *Philosophical Investigations*:

“Here we come up against the great question that lies behind all these considerations. – For someone might object against me: ‘You take the easy way out! You talk about all sorts of language-games, but have nowhere said what the essence of a language-game, and hence of language, is: what is common to all these activities, and what makes them into language or parts of language. So you let yourself off the very part of the investigation that once gave you yourself most headache, the part about the *general form of propositions* and of language.’

And this is true. – Instead of producing something common to all that we call language, I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all, – but that they are *related* to one another in many different ways. And it is because of this relationship, or these relationships, that we call them all ‘language’. I will try to explain this.” (§ 65)

The actual rejection caused by Sraffa’s Neapolitan gesture, if folklore is to be trusted, seems to have been brought about by a change in his views on the logic of language. A language is not a monolithic structure, one where all parts have simultaneously been fitted together and by the same authority. What *Tractatus* claimed was that propositions pictured the world, thereby sharing logical form, thereby explaining the possibility of language, since we, when thinking the sense of a proposition, project it onto the world. Such an explanation doesn’t, strictly speaking, account for the existence of any actual language, the sheer existence of the signs is not accounted for, but, that apart, the picture theory explained meaning. (We may say that the *Tractatus* accounted for ‘the language that I understand’: this language is an *a priori* feature of reality.) And the explanation tied meaning to truth, language could express truth. And this linkage he kept. When Wittgenstein later, in *Philosophical Investigations*, tried to explain the role of truth, see e.g. § 136, he introduced two expressions and tried to contrast them: belong to and fit. The bad picture is to imagine that since “a proposition is whatever can be true or false”, the concept of truth fits a proposition in such a way that we could use it “to determine what is and what is not a proposition.” But,

“...what a proposition is is in one sense determined by the rules of sentence formation (in English for example), and in another sense by the use of the sign in the language-game. And the use of the words “true” and “false” may be among the constituent parts of this game; and if so it *belongs* to our concept ‘proposition’ but does not *fit* it.” (§ 136)

Put *use* in a more central place, or make usage of signs a more complicated phenomenon, and we get a perception of what Wittgenstein saw as flawed in the picture theory. Having lost the picture theory, we are short of an account of language can come to be. What in *Philosophical Investigations* does do that? My answer, in short, is, nothing.

For some sentences, but far from all, Wittgenstein held on to the *Tractarian* view of meaning, basically the view that meaning is given by spelling out the truth conditions of propositions, or sentences. To do so is the work of a theory of meaning. A theory of meaning thus purports to give us the actual ties between linguistic expressions and the world. But, the theory of meaning, by itself, does not tell us

how there came to be *these* ties, nor how there came to be ties at all. In other words, a theory of meaning does not, as such, contain an explanation of the existence of a meaningful language. (I prefer here to state this as a problem about how something actually exists “how does language exist”, rather than as a problem about transcendental conditions “How is language possible”.)

As I have said, the picture theory gives both a theory and an explanation of meaning. What Wittgenstein also lost, or gave up, when he dropped the picture theory was the answer it gave to the existence question. But, to drop such a reply doesn't, in itself, entail that other answers are impossible. And, the odd thing is that a fairly straight reading of the *Investigations* gives the impression, through his central use of concepts such as language-game and *Lebensform*,⁴ that Wittgenstein there gives a superior account of how a language could come to be. I shall not here engage with those whose understanding of that work denies that such is his intention, since it is not important what he intended. My claim is simply that if we see the central concepts as providing a successful explanation of the existence of language, we are mistaken, they do not. So, by looking at an example, let us see what he does do in *Philosophical Investigations*.

First, and very shortly, allow me to suggest something about the way to understand the early remarks, those where Wittgenstein plays down talk of meaning, in favour of talk of use of words. My suggestion is that these remarks can be read in two ways: by targeting the picture theory the way they do the replacement gives answers to both the question of what I called ‘the theory of meaning’ and to the question of how language can come to exist. Wittgenstein gives up the ‘glassy essence of logic’, thus the stress on variety, differences in use, lack of one essential feature to all circumstances, etc. His target is therefore not the ‘theory’ of meaning as such, notice the seemingly innocuous §§ 10 and 13, where he admits that talk of signification needs to be accounted for and explained. When Wittgenstein, in § 10, says

“Now what do the words of this language *signify*? – What is supposed to shew what they signify, if not the kind of use they have? And we have already described that”,

he doesn't deny that words signify, that our language is meaningful, the issue is his claim that determining the use of the word shows us its signification, *as if the use bestows meaning*.

4 I use the German word since Anscombe has two translations. For that, see the next essay.

Having just said that, to the example. My focus shall be on the very first language game in PI, the shop example (which is not described as such by Wittgenstein). This is fairly complicated, involving three (or, a bit perversely, two) persons, and two situations. Someone sends someone shopping, that is the first (don't read "else" with the second "someone" and we may have two persons). Then the shopper enters the shop and engages the shopkeeper, that is the second situation. The shopper delivers a slip with three words written on it, and the shopkeeper acts on them. I shall here disregard the fact that the words were written down, and not uttered, by the shopper, we could pretend the words were said, it doesn't matter. The words are "five red apples". A central fact is this: if the utterance was not the utterance of an order the shopkeeper's subsequent actions would be misplaced. (As they would be if, say, his daughter came in to show she could pronounce the words. If she came in 'playing shop', he would go through the motions.) So the words do not direct the shopkeeper to act, the speech act of ordering goods does. The words merely dictate how he acts, how he complies with the order. It is therefore essential to the example that someone goes shopping.

In the early part of PI, where Wittgenstein discusses meaning, in particular the meanings of words, it is a striking feature of the discussion that it is *words-in-use* that is in focus. Wittgenstein talks as if words do not have a specific limited set of meanings, say dictionary meanings, but as if they have many meanings, as many as the ways they are used. I believe this is a mistake (but given what I have suggested goes on in those remarks, I can understand why the text gives that impression). Most, if not all, words certainly have more than one meaning, but occasionally none are operative, as they would be in our example, if the words were uttered by the shopkeeper's daughter. However, when the meanings are not idle, then the words bring with them, into the situation, definite, relevant meanings.

People might think that I, in my estimate of the shopping example, grossly underplay the stress put by Wittgenstein on the speech act character of that incidence, and of linguistic intercourse in general. But that is not my complaint at all. As a matter of fact, I believe it is natural to give Wittgenstein two reasons for putting the words on a slip of paper: (1) it gives a commonsense look to the situation, as if the shopper is, say, a mother sending a child carrying the slip, (2) handing over a piece of paper seems more of an action than uttering a few words. (Wittgenstein's stress on actions can also be seen in the important place given to bedrock (§ 217), when we turn the spade after reaching the end of justifications. This has taken the place occupied in *Tractatus* by the concept of interpretation not being applicable to elementary sentences.) What I really complain of is that we are given no explana-

tion of how the speech acts themselves came to be. The picture theory explained meaning because of its own structure, the speech act aspect in PI doesn't explain meaning because it doesn't explain itself, it lacks the self-explanatoriness of the picture theory. By that, I mean we will not have accounted for the speech act of ordering goods, or the language game of shopping, or what not, by saying that it is a game we play, or by saying that the utterance of the words is integrated into activities. By saying this we haven't explained why, or rather, how, we came to perform such actions, or be involved in such activities. *This is what we do* is no explanation.⁵

3 The replacement

Is it possible to replace the discarded part of the picture theory? And, doesn't he himself argue against the necessity, and possibility, of a replacement? I shall not enter the debate whether Wittgenstein argued thus. I shall restrict myself to two claims: one, a replacement ought to be possible since languages exist and people do communicate, how this came to be can be a topic of enquiry; two, I believe an explanation exists, at least one on the right lines. The explanation I shall mention is in the works of Ruth Millikan, first and foremost in her book *Language, thought, and other biological categories*. At the outset Millikan has an excellent question:

“If we can understand why singing fancy songs helps song birds, why emitting ultrasonic sounds helps bats, why having a seventeen-year cycle helps seventeen-year locusts, why having ceremonial fights helps mountain sheep, and why dancing figure eights helps bees, surely it is mere cowardice to refuse even to wonder why uttering, in particular, *subject-predicate sentences, subject to negation*, helps man. Surely there is some explanation for this helping that is quite general and not magical.” (pp. 7-8)

5 At this point, Cora Diamond made the following comment: “What L[udwig] W[itgenstein] is attempting to do is lead us to see how philosophical puzzlement is related to the *wish for explanation*.” (Personal communication) I do not in any way deny that such is his intention, but let me refer to what I said above about his ‘metaphilosophy’ and add this: I believe it is natural for some readers to believe that Wittgenstein has shown us how linguistic customs arise, and, secondly, languages do exist, and as with any existent we may ask how they came to be. I cannot believe that Wittgenstein thought such an enquiry misguided. Not philosophy, yes, but misguided, no. So, what would an acceptable explanation look like?

In order to find an explanation Millikan sets up, among other things, a system of theoretical concepts, which, by trading on analogies between biological and sign devices, are meant to cover both. Her strategy, then, is to identify, at least some of, the proper functions such devices serve. The usefulness of these functions then accounts for the proliferation of devices capable of carrying out these functions. All this enables her, among other things, to explain the formation of what is today called 'content' within an historical, evolutionary framework (content as in mental content and propositional content), and to account for intentionality in naturalistic terms. It is, however, my intention *not* to discuss Millikan's work here, only to introduce her as someone who delivers statements conforming to natural science. But, let me throw you one morsel. Millikan's theory is opposed to the figure of the meaning rationalist, she calls meaning rationalism a syndrome, and claims that virtually every thinker on the topic of meaning suffers from the syndrome. A meaning rationalist sees meanings as a Cartesian sees ideas, they are available for introspection, virtually infallible introspection. The exploratory work into them is armchair work. In short a meaning rationalist, though admitting that we may have false beliefs, utter false statements, nails to his mast the claim that we cannot err in thinking that we think. According to Millikan, this is precisely what we may, on occasion, be doing.⁶ Millikan believes that one may, quite literally, engage in what one believes is thinking about the world, and be mistaken in that belief. For her false beliefs, or false thoughts, or propositions, relate to true ones as a defective heart is related to a healthy one. This is a view of the relation between the true and the false very different from the bipolarity view in the *Tractatus*, which comes out like this:

"The sense of a proposition is determined by the two poles *true* and *false*."
(*Notebooks*, p. 97)

For Millikan the figure of Darwin seems the dominant scientific model. Is Wittgenstein at all thinking along such lines? Darwin is mentioned once in *Tractatus*:

"Darwin's theory has no more to do with philosophy than any other hypothesis in natural science." (4.1122)

Another remark, slightly more interesting to some one such as Millikan, is

6 As Cora Diamond pointed out to me, the author of the *Tractatus* cannot with justification be an opponent of Millikan on this score, since it is precisely a central point of that book that we in metaphysics combine signs that produce nonsense.

“Everyday language is a part of the human organism and no less complicated than it.” (4.002).

In later works, the reference to Darwin, in *Culture and Value*, is less than helpful:

“What a Copernicus or a Darwin really achieved was not the discovery of a true theory but of a fertile new point of view.” (p. 18)

And, in the powerful passage PI, Part II, xii, when Wittgenstein says:

“But our interest does not fall back upon these possible causes of the formation of concepts; since we are not doing natural science; nor yet natural history – since we can also invent fictitious natural history for our purposes.”

one feels that he has left the project of Millikan altogether. Which is, of course, fair enough: why should he be interested in, or occupied with, such a project? But, the justification we may muster for philosophy, given a quietist (i.e. no theses in philosophy) reading of Wittgenstein, seems not to produce an argument against such a project as Millikan’s. It cannot be said that trying to answer her problems shows us in a state of confusion, leading us to produce nonsense.”

There are some other remarks I ought to mention, as they support the above estimate, and perhaps help to explain why Wittgenstein took the stance he did. Earlier in the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein introduces the concepts of machine, rails and calculus to help sort out a proper perspective on using language as an exercise in rule following. Well, late in Part I he has some remarks on a kindred topic, the underlying theme in both cases is the notion of language-game.

“To invent a language could mean to invent an instrument for a particular purpose on the basis of laws of nature (or consistently with them; but it also has the other sense, analogous to that in which we speak of the invention of a game.” (§ 492)

The most striking thing here is not the opposition Wittgenstein sets up between the *free* (supposedly) activity of inventing a game and inventing an instrument on the basis of laws of nature, whatever that means. The most striking feature is his line about *inventing* language. I do not believe thinkers interested in what I have called ‘explaining’ language would consider it invented. Nor would they consider it a game, thus placing the phenomenon of language in a totally different relationship to laws of nature from the one Wittgenstein seems to entertain. That Wittgenstein held a narrow view of laws of nature, restricting them to laws of physical science and not including what lawlikeness might be exhibited in historical development, is substantiated by the two following quotes.

“We say: “The cock calls the hens by crowing” – but doesn’t a comparison with our language lie at the bottom of this? – Isn’t the aspect quite altered if we imagine the crowing to set the hens in motion by some kind of physical causation?”

“But if we 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 that sentence lost the character of a *sentence*?” (§ 493)

“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.” (§ 496)

“When I say 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. And if its effect is that the other person stares at me and gapes, I don’t on that account call it the order to stare and gape, even if that was precisely the effect that I wanted to produce.” (§ 498)

Perhaps I ought also to mention a paragraph in the middle of the debate about rules, viz. § 198, the second part of which reads:

“I have been trained to react to this sign in a particular way, and now I do so react to it. But that is only to give a causal connexion; to tell how it has come about that we now go by the sign-post; not what this going-by-the-sign really consists in. On the contrary; I have further indicated that a person goes by a sign-post only in so far as there exists a regular use of sign-posts, a custom.”

Wittgenstein is quite clear here that meaning is not a one-off happening, that it requires training into customary behaviour. But this is still far from what I believe we need to look for. And, the reason why I am, finally, not too impressed with Wittgenstein here is that the difficult problem has not been touched: how, and why, do customs arise? Defenders of Wittgenstein may truly claim that he didn’t try to ‘solve’ that problem, but it is annoying to be told that the issue is to see the problem disappear as a problem. And when a reader may (mis)read Wittgenstein as using concepts such as *custom* and *language game* to enlighten us, the correct response is: to say that individuals are trained into meaningful behaviour is not to say anything explanatory about how such meaningful behaviour arose. Meaningful behaviour, linguistic or otherwise, doesn’t come into being merely because it is behaviour people are trained to do, much nonsensical behaviour is of such com-

plexity that it takes practice to master it. If linguistic devices are to operate meaningfully in behaviour, it is because they are meaningful devices, most likely operable over a broad spectrum of contexts. For Millikan, it is possible for something to be a meaningful device because the device has stabilizing functions, functions evolved over time. The linguistic devices have proved their usefulness, so over time they have become standardized and stable. There is a tag in biology: ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny, but in linguistic matters the training an individual goes through to become a speaker does not carry that speaker through the stages his words have been through, nor are his word tokens carried through those stages. But his words, the words he uses, are meaningful because they have been through those stages.

Why didn't he come closer than he did? My final suggestion is that something held him captive, and to indicate what I should like to present you with two passages from someone he so misquoted, St. Augustine. The passages come from Book X of the *Confessions*, on memory, which for Augustine meant much more than the faculty for remembering. By the way, God is referred to by the expressions "Power of my soul" and "Truth".

Paragraph 1. "May I know you, who know me. May I 'know as I also am known'. Power of my soul, enter into it and fit it for yourself, so that you may have and hold it 'without spot or blemish'. This is my hope, and that is why I speak."

Paragraph 65. "Truth, when did you ever fail to walk with me, teaching me what to avoid and what to seek after when I reported to you what, in my inferior position, I could see and asked your counsel?..... Without you I could discern none of these things, and I found that none of these things was you. Nor was I you, though I had made these discoveries. I traversed everything, and tried to make distinctions and to evaluate each entity according to its proper rank. ... you are the abiding light by which I investigated all these matters to discover whether they existed, what they were, and what value should be attached to them. I listened to you teaching me and giving instructions.And sometimes you cause me to enter into an extraordinary depth of feeling marked by a strange sweetness. If it were brought to perfection in me, it would be an experience quite beyond anything in this life. But I fall back into my usual ways under my miserable burdens. I am reabsorbed by my habitual practices. I am held in their grip. I weep profusely, but still I am held. Such is the strength of the burden of habit. Here I have the power to be, but do not wish it. There I wish to be, but lack the power. On both grounds I am in misery." (I have used the translation by Henry Chadwick, Oxford 1991.)

4 Afterword

I originally put in this quotation for two reasons. Wittgenstein has always struck me as having a religious temperament, and, Augustine's sentences express this temper very well, I think. No one has commented on my use of this quotation. I believe that is because it was, and is, considered irrelevant to the issue at hand, to bring it in was not quite the done thing. In addition, few of my original listeners struck me as being of a religious temperament, so for that reason also, no one, I believe, saw it as relevant to the body of the paper. Well, recently I have had occasion to read the published diaries from the thirties, *Denkbewegungen, Tagebücher. 1930–1932, 1936–1937*. A striking feature of these diaries, that run to ninety pages in the Norwegian translation, is how reflections over himself and his life, are cast in religious terms. (There are sixty occurrences of "God", plus another ten of "Christ", "Jesus", "Lord". All but seventeen occur in the last forty pages, that contain the diary from 1936–1937.) Many of the remarks express a wish to be spiritually cleansed, there are regrets of not being pure minded, a number have the shape of prayer. For instance, on the last day of January 1937 he asks God to let him be pious but not hysterical; and later, on February nineteenth, he writes of kneeling down praying while having supper. Wittgenstein writes about reading in the New Testament, e.g. letters of St. Paul. It is all personal, and he does not express an academic interest in those texts, void of private concerns. All this in a period of intense philosophical work! It is also striking how direct the writing is, he simply speaks his mind. The style is in stark contrast to that seen in his philosophical writings. He himself comes across as a person struggling to be humble. There is an interesting tie in here between humility and perspicuity: understanding requires loss of arrogance, the wrong sort of pride.

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