WITTGENSTEIN'S *PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS*

I N DISCUSSING this book I shall proceed in the following way: I shall first state a philosophical theory *T*, which is attacked throughout the book. In doing so I shall not use the usual statement of the theory (if there is any) but Wittgenstein's, which may, of course, be an idealization. Secondly, I shall show how the theory is criticized by Wittgenstein—first, using an example (which plays a considerable role in the *Investigations*, but which I have used to present arguments not presented in the book in connection with this example), then discussing in general terms the difficulties revealed by the example. Thirdly, I shall state what seems to be Wittgenstein's own position on the issue. This position will be formulated as a philosophical theory, *T'*, without implying that Wittgenstein intended to develop a philosophical theory (he did not). Finally I shall discuss the relation between the theory stated and Wittgenstein's views on philosophy and I shall end up with a few critical remarks.[1]

For brevity's sake I shall introduce three different types of quotation marks: The usual quotation marks ("...") enclosing Wittgenstein's own words, daggers (†...†) enclosing further developments of his ideas and general remarks, asterisks (*...*), enclosing critical remarks. Text without any of these quotation marks is an abbreviated statement of what Wittgenstein is saying.

I

†The theory criticized is closely related to medieval realism (about universals) and to what has recently been termed "essentialism."[2] The theory, as presented by Wittgenstein, includes the following five main items:

†(1) "Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object, for which the word stands" (1; 90, 120).[3]

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[1] Although many different problems are discussed in the *Investigations*, it seems to me that the criticism of *T* (or the assertion of *T'*) is to be regarded as the core of the book. I shall therefore concentrate on elaborating *T* and *T'*, and I shall omit all other problems (if there are any).

[2] Cf. K. R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (Princeton, 1950), I, 31 ff.

[3] Parenthetical references are to the numbered sections of Part I of the *Philosophical Investigations*, unless otherwise indicated.

Meanings exist independently of whether or not any language is used and which language is used. They are definite, single objects and their order "must be *utterly simple*" (97).

†(2) As compared with this definiteness and purity of meanings (their order "must ... be of the purest crystal" [97]), "the actual use ... seems something muddied" (426). That indicates an imperfection of our language.

†(3) This imperfection gives rise to two different philosophical problems: (a) The philosopher has to find out what a word '*W*' stands for, or, as it is sometimes expressed, he has to discover the *essence* of the object which is designated by '*W*,' when its use in everyday language is taken into account. From the knowledge of the essence of *W* the knowledge of the whole use of '*W*' will follow (264, 362, 449). (b) He has to build an ideal language whose elements are related to the essences in a simple way. The method of finding a solution to problem (a) is analysis. This analysis proceeds from the assumption that "*the essence is hidden from us*" (92) but that it nevertheless " '*must*' be found in reality" (101). However different the methods of analysis may be— analysis of the linguistic usage of '*W*'; phenomenological analysis of *W* ('deepening' of the phenomenon *W*); intellectual intuition of the essence of *W*—the answer to problem (a) "is to be given once for all; and independently of any future experience" (92). The form of this answer is the definition. The definition explains why '*W*' is used in the way it is and why *W* behaves as it does (75; 97, 428, 654). The solution of (b) is presupposed in the solution of (a); for it provides us with the terms in which the definitions that constitute the solution of (a) are to be framed. A definite solution of (b) implies a certain form of problem (a). If it is assumed, e.g., that sentences are word-pictures of facts (291; cf. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 2.1; 4.04) then 'What is a question?' is to be translated into 'What kind of fact is described by a question? The fact that somebody wants to know whether ..., or the fact that somebody is doubtful as to ..., etc.?'

†(4) Asking how the correctness of a certain analysis may be checked, we get the answer that the essence can be *experienced*. This experience consists in the presence of a mental picture, a sensation, a phenomenon, a feeling, or an inner process of a more ethereal kind (305). 'To grasp the meaning' means the same as 'to have a picture before one's inner eye' and "to have understood the explanation means to have in one's mind an idea of the thing explained, and that is a sample or a picture" (73). The essence of the object denoted, the meaning of the denoting expression (these are one and the same thing; cf. 371, 373)

follows from an analysis of this picture, of this sensation; it follows from the exhibition of the process in question (thus the essence of sensation follows from an analysis of my present headache [314]). It is the presence of the picture which gives meaning to our words (511, 592), which forces upon us the right use of the word (73, 140, 305, 322, 426, 449), and which enables us to perform correctly an activity (reading, calculating) the essence of which it constitutes (179, 175, 186, 232). Understanding, calculating, thinking, reading, hoping, desiring are, therefore, mental processes.

†(5) From all this it follows that teaching a language means showing the connection between words and meanings (362) and that "learning a language consists in giving names to objects" (253). So far the description of *T*, as it is implicitly contained in the *Philosophical Investigations*.

III

†In criticizing *T*, Wittgenstein analyzes *T*4 and in this way shows the impossibility of the program *T*3 as well as the insolubility of the problems connected with this program. That implies that, within *T*, we shall never be able to know what a certain word '*W*' means or whether it has any meaning at all, although we are constantly using that word and although the question how it is to be used does not arise when we are not engaged in philosophical investigations. But did not this paradox arise because we assumed that meanings are objects of a certain kind and that a word is meaningful if and only if it stands for one of those objects; i.e., because we assumed *T*1, 2 to be true? If, on the other hand, we want to abandon *T*1, 2, we meet another difficulty: words have, then, no fixed meaning (79). "But what becomes of logic now? Its rigour seems to be giving way here.—But in that case doesn't logic altogether disappear?—For how can it lose its rigour? Of course not by our bargaining any of its rigour out of it.— The *preconceived idea* of crystalline purity can only be removed by turning our whole examination round" (108); i.e., by changing from *T* to *T'*. It will turn out that this change cannot be described simply as the change from one *theory* to another, although we shall first introduce *T'* as a new theory of meaning.

†Before doing so we have to present Wittgenstein's criticism of *T*. This criticism is spread throughout the book. It consists of careful analyses of many special cases, the connection between which is not easily apprehended. I have tried to use *one* example instead of many and to present as many arguments as possible by looking at this example

from as many sides as possible. All the arguments are Wittgenstein's; some of the applications to the example in question are mine.

IV

†The philosopher is a man who wants to discover the meanings of the expressions of a language or the essences of the things designated by those expressions. Let us see how he proceeds. Let us take, e.g., the word 'reading.' "Reading is here the activity of rendering out loud what is written or printed; and also of writing from dictation, writing out something printed, playing from a score and so on" (156).

(A) †According to T_1 we have to assume that the word 'reading' stands for a single object. Now, there is a variety of manifestations of reading: reading the morning paper; reading in order to discover misprints (here one reads slowly, as a beginner would read); reading a paper written in a foreign language that one cannot understand but has learned to pronounce; reading a paper in order to judge the style of the author; reading shorthand, reading *Principia Mathematica*, reading Hebrew sentences (from right to left); reading a score in order to study a part one has to sing; reading a score in order to find out something about the inventiveness of the composer, or to find out how far the composer may have been influenced by other contemporary musicians; reading a score in order to find out whether the understanding of the score is connected with acoustic images or with optical images (which might be a very interesting psychological problem). But this variety, without "any one feature that occurs in all cases of reading" (168), is only a superficial aspect. All these manifestations have something *in common* and it is this common property which makes them manifestations of *reading*. It is also this property that is the essence of reading. The other properties, varying from one manifestation to the other, are accidental. In order to discover the essence we have to strip off the particular coverings which make the various manifestations *different* cases of reading. But in doing so (the reader ought to try for himself!) we find, not that what is essential to reading is hidden beneath the surface of the single case, but that this alleged surface is one case out of a family of cases of reading (164).†

Consider for example the proceedings which we call "games." I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games and so on. What is common to them all?—Don't say : "There *must* be something common or they would not be called 'games' "; but *look and see* whether there is anything common to *all*—for if you look at them you will not see something that is in common to all, but similarities, relationships and a whole series of them at that.... And

the result of this examination is : we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing. ... I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than "family-resemblances"; for the various resemblances between members of a family : build, features, colours of eyes, gait, temperament, etc., etc., overlap and criss-cross in the same way.—And I shall say: "games" form a family [66 f].

And in the same way we also use the word 'reading' for a family of cases. And in different circumstances we apply different criteria for a person's reading [164].

†(B) Looking at the outer manifestations of reading we could not discover the structure suggested by T_1. Instead of an accidental variety centering in a well-defined core we found "a complicated network of similarities" (66). Does that fact refute T_1? Surely not; for a philosopher who wants to defend T_1, there are many possible ways of doing so. He may admit that the *overt behavior* of the person reading does not disclose any well-defined center, but he may add that reading is a *physiological process* of a certain kind. Let us call this process the reading process (RP). Person P is reading if and only if the RP is going on within (the brain or the nervous system of)P. (Cf. 158.) But the difficulties of this assumption are clear. Consider the case of a person who does not look at any printed paper, who is walking up and down, looking out of the window and behaving as if he were expecting somebody to come; but the RP is going on within his brain. Should we take the presence of the reading process as a sufficient criterion for the person's reading, adding perhaps that we had discovered a hitherto unknown case of reading? (Cf. 160.) It is clear that in a case like that we should, rather, alter some physiological hypotheses. If, again, reading is a physiological process, then it certainly makes sense to say that P read 'ali' within 'totalitarianism,' but did not read before he uttered those sounds and did not read afterward either, although anybody who observed the outer behavior of P would be inclined to say that P had been reading the whole time. For it is quite possible that the RP should be present only when P is uttering 'ali' (cf. 157). It seems, however, that it is quite meaningless to hypothesize that in the circumstances described a person was reading only for one second or two, so that his uttering of sounds in the presence of printed paper before or after that period must not be called 'reading.'

†(C) To the failure of attempts (A) and (B) to discover the essence of reading certain philosophers will answer in the following way: Certainly—that was to be expected.† For reading is a *mental process*, and "the one real criterion for anybody's *reading* is the conscious act of

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reading, the act of reading the sounds off from the letters. 'A man surely knows whether he is reading or only pretending to read' "(159) †The idea to which they are alluding is this: Just as the sensation *red* is present when we are looking at a red object, so a specific mental process, the reading process (MRP), is present in the mind when we are reading. The MRP is the object of our analysis of reading, its presence makes our overt behavior a manifestation of reading (etc., as already indicated in T_4). In short, it is thought that this mental process will enable us to solve problems which we could not solve when considering material processes only: "When our language suggests a body and there is none; there, we should like to say, is a *spirit*" (36). But it will turn out that mental processes are subject to the same kind of criticism as material processes: that neither a material nor a spiritual mechanism enables us to explain how it is that words are meaningful and that their meanings can be known; that in pointing to mental processes we cling to the same scheme of explanation as in the physiological or the behavioristic theory of meaning (considered in the two last sections) without realizing that we are doing so.[4] That can be shown by very simple means: Consider the case of a person who does not look at any printed paper, who is walking up and down, looking out of the window, and behaving as if he were expecting somebody to come; but the MRP is going on in his mind (in his consciousness). Should we take the presence of this mental process as a sufficient criterion for the person's reading, adding, perhaps, that we had discovered a hitherto unknown case of reading? It is clear that we should alter, rather, some psychological hypotheses (the hypothesis that reading is always correlated with the MRP). But the last argument is a simple transformation of the first argument of section (B) with 'MRP' (the mental process which is supposed to be the essence of reading) substituted for 'RP' (the physiological process, which was supposed to be the essence of reading in section B). By this substitution the second argument can be used for the present purpose as well.

†(a) Let us now turn to a more detailed investigation of the matter. Let us first ask whether really *every act of reading is accompanied by the MRP*. A few minutes ago I was reading the newspaper. Do I remember any particular mental process which was present all the time I was reading? I remember that I was expecting a friend (actually I looked at my watch several times) and that I was angry because he did not

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[4] This point is elaborated in some detail in G. Ryle's *Concept of Mind* (London, 1949), which should not, however, be taken to agree completely with Wittgenstein's ideas.

come, although he had promised to do so. I also remember having
thought of an excellent performance of *Don Giovanni* which I had seen a
few days ago and which had impressed me very much. Then I found
a funny misprint and was amused. I also considered whether the milk
which I had put on the fire was already boiling, etc. Nevertheless, I
was *reading* all the time, and it is quite certain that I was (cf. 171).†
"But now notice this: While I am [reading] everything is quite simple.
I notice nothing *special*; but afterward, when I ask myself what it was
that happened, it seems to have been something indescribable. *After-
ward* no description satisfies me. It is as if I couldn't believe that I
merely looked, made such and such a face and uttered words. But
don't I *remember* anything else? No" (cf. 175; "being guided" instead
of 'reading'). †The same applies to activities such as calculating,
drawing a picture, copying a blueprint, etc. I *know* of course that I was
reading, but that shows only that my knowledge is not based on the
memory of a certain sensation, impression, or the like—because there
was no such impression.† Compare now another example: Look at
the mark ∽ and let a sound occur to you as you do so; utter it—let us
assume it is the sound 'u.' †Now read the sentence 'Diana is a beautiful
girl.' Was it in a different way that the perception of the 'eau' (in
'beautiful') led to the utterance of the sound 'u' in the second case?
Of course there was a difference! For I *read* the second sentence
whereas I did not read when I uttered the 'u' in the presence of the ∽.
But is this difference a difference of mental content, i.e., am I able to
discover a specific sensation, impression, or the like which was present
in the second case, and missing in the first case, whose presence made
the second case a case of *reading*?† Of course, there were many differen-
ces: In the first case "I had told myself beforehand that I was to let
a sound occur to me; there was a certain tension present before the
sound came. And I did not say 'u' automatically as I do when I look
at the letter U. Further that mark [the ∽] was not *familiar* to me in the
way the letters of the alphabet are. I looked at it rather intently and
with a certain interest in its shape" (166). But imagine now a person
who has the feeling described above in the presence of a normal
English text, composed of ordinary letters. Being invited to read, he
thinks that he is supposed to utter sounds just as they occur to him—
one sound for each letter—and he nevertheless utters all the sounds a
normal person would utter when reading the text. "Should we say in
such a case that he was not really reading the passage? Should we here
allow his sensations to count as the criterion for his reading or not
reading?" (160). From the negative answer to this question we have

to conclude that, even if we were able to discover a difference between the way in which the perception of the ∽ leads to the utterance of the sound 'u' and the way in which, e.g., the perception of the 'eau' within 'beautiful' leads to the utterance of the 'u,' this difference—if it is a difference of mental content, of behavior, etc.—cannot be interpreted as justifying the assumption of an essential difference between cases of reading and not reading.[5]

(b) It may be objected to this analysis that the MRP is sometimes present quite distinctly. "Read a page of print and you can see that something special is going on, something highly characteristic" (165). This is true especially where "we make a point of reading slowly—perhaps in order to see what does happen if we read" (170). Thus one could be inclined to say that the MRP is a subconscious process which accompanies *every* case of reading but which can be brought to light only by a special effort.[6]

Answer: (1) Reading with the intention of finding out what happens when we are reading is a special case of reading and as such different from ordinary reading (cf. 170). Nevertheless reading without this intention is also a case of reading, which shows that the reason for calling it a case of *reading* cannot be the presence of a sensation which

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[5] There are cases of mental disease where the patient talks correctly although with the feeling that somebody is making up the words for him. This is rightly regarded as a case of mental disease and not, as the adherents of the mental-picture theory of meaning would be inclined to say, as a case of inspiration : For one judges from the fact that the person in question *talks correctly*, although with queer sensations. Following Locke, a distinction is usually made between impressions of sensation and impressions of reflection. When Wittgenstein talks of sensations, of feelings, of a "picture in the mind" he seems to mean both. So his investigations are directed against a primitive psychologism (concepts are combinations of impressions of sensation) as well as against a more advanced psychologism (concepts are combinations of impressions of reflection). They are also directed against a presentational realism (concepts are objects of a certain kind, but *having* a concept, or *using* a concept is the same as having an idea in one's mind —i.e., although concepts are not psychological events, their representations in people are), against a theory which Wittgenstein elsewhere described as implying that "logic is the physics of the intellectual realm."

[6] A psychologist or an adherent of the phenomenological method in psychology would be inclined to judge the situation in this way. His intention would to be create a kind of "pure situation" in which a special process comes out quite distinctly. It is then supposed that this process is hidden in every ordinary situation (which is not pure, but) which resembles the pure situation to a certain extent. In the case of reading the pure situation would be: reading plus introspecting in order to find out what is going on. The ordinary situation is: simply reading.

—admittedly—is present only in special cases and not in the case discussed. Finally, the description of the MRP cannot be a description of reading in general, for the ordinary case is omitted. We should not be misled by the picture which suggests "that this phenomenon comes in sight 'on close inspection.' If I am supposed to describe how an object looks from far off, I don't make the description more accurate by saying what can be noticed about the object on closer inspection" (171).

†(2) Not every kind of introspection is judged in the same way. It is possible that a person who is supposed to find the MRP by introspection, being tired, should experience and describe quite unusual things while thinking all the time that the task which was set him by the psychologist is being performed by giving these descriptions.[7] No psychologist will welcome such a result. Instead of thinking that new and illuminating facts about reading have been discovered, he will doubt the reliability of the guinea pig. From this we have to conclude once more that the sensations experienced in connection with reading, and even those experienced as the essence of reading by the readers themselves, have nothing whatever to do with the question what reading really is.

†(3) Let us now assume that a reliable observer whom we ask to read attentively and to tell us what happens while he is reading provides us with the following report: 'The utterance is *connected* with seeing the signs, it is as if I were *guided* by the perception of the letters, etc.' (cf. 169, 170, 171). Does he, when answering our question in this way, describe a mental content, as a person who is seeing red and who tells us that he is seeing red describes a mental content? Does he say 'I am being guided by the letters' because the mental content *being guided* is present? Then one would have to conclude that every case of being guided is accompanied by *being guided*, as we assumed at the beginning of section (C) that every case of reading is accompanied by the MRP. But this last assumption has already been refuted, and the other, being completely analogous to it, can be refuted by the same arguments. We have to conclude, therefore, that the possibility of describing the process of reading as a case of being guided does not imply that reading is a mental process, because being guided is not one (cf. 172).[8]

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[7] An illustrative example for experiences of this kind may be found in B. Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (New York, 1945), p. 145.

[8] The idea that reading is a single object (in spite of the variety of manifestations demonstrated in Sec. A) is apparently supported by the fact that

†(c) As already indicated, people usually try to escape from argument (C a) by assuming that the MRP is a subconscious sensation which has to be brought to light by introspection. A different form of the same escape is the following one: The arguments that have been brought forward so far assume that reading and the MRP can be separated from one another. This, however, is not the case : Reading is inseparably connected with the MRP. What occurs separably from reading is not the MRP, but only an erroneous interpretation of something as reading. But how are we to decide whether the MRP itself is present or only something else erroneously interpreted as reading; or, what comes to the same thing, how are we to decide whether we are reading or only believing that we are reading? The given content of consciousness cannot be used for deciding that question, for it is *its* reliability which is to be ascertained. The only possible alternative is to call a sensation a case of the MRP if and only if it is accompanied by reading. But now we assume, contrary to our previous assumption, that we do possess a criterion for reading other than a sensation.

†Another argument against the assumption of a hidden mental content, which may be brought to daylight by introspection or some other mental act, consists in developing the paradoxical consequences of such a view: "How can the process of [reading] have been hidden when I said 'now I am [reading]' *because* I was [reading]?! And if I say it is hidden—then how do I know what I have to look for?" (153; "understanding" replaced by "reading.")[9]

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one can give a definition like the one we gave at the beginning of Sec. IV, or that one can say that reading is a form of being guided. But let us not be misled by words. For the definition of reading in terms of being guided or the like supports the idea that reading is a single object only if being guided can itself be shown to be a single object. But an analysis similar to the one sketched in Sec. A will show that this is not the case.

One of the main reasons for the•wide acceptance of the assumption that it is possible to discover the essence of reading by introspection is the fact that the great number of manifestations of reading is usually not taken into account. Beset by theory T we *think* (173, 66) that acute observation must disclose the essence and that what we find in acute observation is hidden in the ordinary case of reading ($T4$). But our knowledge of the ordinary case is much too sketchy to justify that assumption "A main cause of philosophical disease—a one-sided diet: one nourishes one's thinking with only one kind of example" (593).

[9] The same criticism applies to the method of the phenomenologists. How do they know which phenomenon is the 'right' one? They proceed from the assumption that the essence is not open to general inspection but must be

†(d) So far we have shown (by a kind of empirical investigation into the use of the word "reading") that there is not a mental content which is *always* present when a person is reading, and that therefore giving the criterion for a person's reading cannot consist in pointing out a particular mental content. Now we shall show that even if there were a mental content which is present if and only if a person is reading, we could not take this content to be the essence of reading. Let us assume that a mental content is the essence of reading and that a person is reading if and only if this content, namely the MRP, is present. We shall now show that the process characterized by the presence of the MRP cannot be reading.† First of all: If reading is a particular experience "then it becomes quite unimportant whether or not you read according to some generally recognized alphabetical rule" (165). One is reading if and only if he is experiencing the MRP; nothing else is of any importance. That implies, however, that no distinction can be drawn between reading and believing that one is reading (cf. 202), or, to put it in another way, that anybody who believes that he is reading is entitled to infer that he *is* reading. The important task of a teacher would, therefore, consist in schooling the receptivity of his pupils (232), reading would be something like listening to inner voices in the presence of printed paper and acting in accordance with their advice (233). That different people who are reading the same text agree in the sounds they utter would be miraculous (233). †Our assumption that reading is a mental act leads, therefore, to the substitution of miracles for an everyday affair. It leads also to the substitution for a simple process (uttering sounds in the presence of printed paper) of a more complicated one (listening to inner voices in the presence of printed paper) i.e., it misses the aim of explaining the process of *reading*.†[10]

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discovered by some kind of analysis which proceeds from an everyday appearance. In the course of this analysis several phenomena appear. How are we to know which one of them is the phenomenon that we were looking for? And if we know the answer to this question, why then is it necessary to analyze at all?

[10] In presenting the idea to be criticized we assumed, as in T_4, that the *MRP* is also the reason for our uttering the sounds we utter. The criticism developed in the text applies also to the idea that in calculating we are guided by intuitions (Descartes' theory): It is said that the perception of '$2 + 2$' is followed by a nonperceptual mental event which advises us how to behave in the sequel; it whispers, as it were, into our mind's ear, 'Say 4!' But the idea cannot explain why we calculate as we do. For instead of explaining the process of obeying a rule (the rule of the multiplication table) it describes the process of obeying

(e) But does introducing inner voices really solve our problem—namely, to explain why people read correctly and to justify our own reading of a text in a certain way? Usually we simply read off the sound from the letters. Now we want to be justified, and we think that a mental content might justify our procedure. But if we do not trust the signs on the paper—then why should we trust the more ethereal advice of intuition, or of the mental content which is supposed to be the essence of reading? (232, 233.)

V

†What conclusions are to be drawn from this analysis? First of all: It appears impossible to discover the essence of a thing in the way that is usually supposed, i.e., $T4$ seems to be inapplicable. But if that is the case, the correctness of the analysis can no longer be checked in the usual way. There is no criterion for deciding whether a statement like ' "A" stands for a' or 'the sentence "p" designates the proposition that p' is true or not; and there is no way to decide whether a certain sign is meaningful, either. But usually we are not all troubled by such questions. We talk and solve (mathematical, physical, economic) problems without being troubled by the fact that there is apparently no possibility of deciding whether or not we are acting reasonably, whether or not we are talking sense. But isn't that rather paradoxical? Isn't it rather paradoxical to assume that a sign which we constantly use to convey, as we think, important information is really without meaning, and that we have no possibility of discovering that fact? And since its being meaningless apparently does not at all affect its usefulness in discourse (e.g., for conveying information), doesn't that show that the presuppositions of the paradox, in particular $T1, 2$, need reconsideration?[11]

VI

†A great deal of the *Philosophical Investigations* is devoted to this task.† The phenomena of language are first studied in primitive kinds

a kind of inspiration. In the case of an inspiration I *await* direction. But I do not await inspiration when saying that $2 + 2$ are four (232).

[11] There is another presupposition as well, namely that in Sec. IV *all* possibilities of experiencing the essence have been considered. Clearly, this assumption cannot be proved. But one thing is certain: We considered all possibilities of experiencing the essence which have so far been treated by philosophers who follow theory T. Cf. H. Gomperz, *Weltanschauungslehre*, II, 140 ff., where medieval realism about concepts is criticized by arguments like Wittgenstein's. Cf. also n. 23 below.

of application "in which one can command a clear view of the aim and functioning of words" (5; 130). The primitive, rudimentary languages which are investigated in the course of these studies are called "*language-games*." Let us consider one such language-game: It is meant

to serve for communication between a builder A and an assistant B. A is building with building-stones: there are blocks, pillars, slabs and beams. B has to pass the stones, and that in the order in which A needs them. For this purpose they use a language consisting of the words "block," "pillar," "slab," "beam," A calls them out;—B brings the stone which he has learned to bring at such and such a call.—Conceive this as a complete primitive language [2].

Consider first of all how A prepares B for the purpose he is supposed to fulfill. "An important part of the training will consist in the teacher's pointing to the objects, directing the [assistant's] attention to them and at the same time uttering a word, for instance the word 'slab' as he points to that shape" (6; "child" replaced by 'assistant'). This procedure cannot be called an ostensive definition, because the assistant who at the beginning is supposed to be without any knowledge of any language cannot as yet *ask* what the name is (6); which shows that teaching a language can be looked at as "adjusting a mechanism to respond to a certain kind of influence" (497; cf. 5). Finally the assistant is able to play the game, he is able to carry out the orders given to him by the builder A. Let us now imagine that A teaches B more complicated orders—orders which contain color-names, number-words ('4 red slabs!') and even orders which contain what one would be inclined to call descriptions ('Give me the slab lying just in front of you!'), etc.

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. So we are asking for the expression "This word signifies *this*" to be made a part of the description. In other words the description ought to take the form "the word ... signifies ... ." ... But assimilating the descriptions of the uses of words in this way cannot make the uses themselves any more like one another. For, as we see, they are absolutely unlike [10].

†Compare, e.g., the way in which the word "four" is used with the way in which the word "slab" is used within the language-game in question. The difference in the uses of the two words comes out most clearly when we compare the procedures by means of which their respective uses are taught. A child who is to count correctly has first to learn the series of numerals by heart; he has then to learn how to apply this knowledge to the case of counting, e.g., the number of

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apples in a basket. In doing so, he has to say the series of cardinal numbers, and for each number he has to take one apple out of the basket (cf. 1). He has to be careful not to count one apple twice or to miss an apple. The numeral which according to this procedure is co-ordinated with the last apple is called 'the number of apples in the basket.' This is how the use of numerals is taught and how numerals are used in counting. Compare with this the use of a word like 'slab.' It is taught by simple ostension: The word 'slab' is repeatedly uttered in the presence of a slab. Finally the child is able to identify slabs correctly within the language-game it has been taught. Nothing is involved which has any similarity to the counting procedure which was described above. The application of the word itself to a concrete object is much simpler than the application of a number-word to a collection whose cardinal number cannot be seen at a glance. This application does not involve any complicated technique; a person who understands the meaning of 'slab' is able to apply this word quite immediately.†

Let us now imagine that somebody, following *T*1, should argue in this way: It is quite clear: 'slab' signifies slabs and '3' signifies 3 ... every word in a language signifies something (cf. 3). According to Wittgenstein, he has

so far said *nothing whatever;* unless [he has] explained exactly *what* distinction [he] wish[es] to make. (It might be of course that [he] wanted to distinguish the words of [our] language[-game] from words "without meaning" [13].

Imagine someone's saying: "*All* tools serve to modify something. Thus the hammer modifies the position of the nail, the saw the shape of the board and so on."—And what is modified by the rule, the glue-pot, the nails?—"Our knowledge of the thing's length, the temperature of the glue and the solidity of the board."—Would anything be gained by this assimilation of expressions? [14].

VII

†Our example and its interpretation suggest an instrumentalist theory of language.[12] The orders which A gives to B are instruments in

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[12] Or an intuitionist (pragmatist, constructivist) theory of language—the expressions "intuitionist" or "pragmatist" being used in the way in which they serve to describe one of the present tendencies as regards foundations of mathematics. I am inclined to say—and there is strong evidence in favor of this view—that Wittgenstein's theory of language can be understood as a constructivist theory of meaning, i.e., as constructivism applied not only to the meanings of mathematical expressions but to meanings in general. Cf. Poincaré, *Derniers pensées* (German edition), pp. 143 ff., and especially Paul Lorenzen, "Konstruktive Begründung der Mathematik," *Math. Zs.*, Bd. LIII (1950), 162 ff. Cf. also *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 220: "Let the *proof* teach you *what* was being proved."

getting B to act in a certain way. Their meaning depends on how B is supposed to act in the situations in which they are uttered. It seems reasonable to extend this theory—which is a corollary to T', soon to be described—to language games which contain descriptive sentences as well. The meaning of a descriptive sentence would then consist in its role in certain situations; more generally, within a certain culture (cf. 199, 206, 241, 325, p. 226). Wittgenstein has drawn this conse-quence—which is another corollary of T':

What we call *"descriptions"* are instruments for particular uses. Think of a machine-drawing [which directs the production of the machine drawn in a certain way], a cross-section, an elevation with measurements, which an engineer has before him. Thinking of a description as a word-picture of facts has something misleading about it: one tends to think only of such pictures as hang on the walls: which seem simply to portray how a thing looks, what it is like. (These pictures are as it were idle) [291].

And quite generally: "Language is an instrument. Its concepts are instruments" (569). This idea has an important consequence. Instru-ments are described by referring to how they work. There are different kinds of instruments for different purposes. And there is nothing corresponding to the ethereal meanings which, according to $T1$, are supposed to make meaningful the use of *all* instruments alike. "Let the use of words teach you their meaning" (p. 220) is to be substituted for $T4$—and this now seems to be the new theory, T'. But in order to appreciate the full importance of T' we have first of all to consider the following objections, which seem to be inevitable. In talking, ordering, describing, we certainly use words and get other people to act in a certain way (to revise their plans which we show to be unreasonable, to obey our wishes, to follow a certain route which we point out to them on a map). But the description of the meanings of the elements of a language-game is not exhausted by pointing to the way in which we use those elements and the connection of this use with our actions and other people's. For in uttering the words and the sentences we *mean* something by them, we want to express our thoughts, our wishes, etc. (cf. 501). It is "our *meaning* it that gives sense to the sentence.... And 'meaning it' is something in the sphere of the mind" (358; cf. $T4$). What we mean seems to be inde-pendent of the way we use our words and the way other people react to our utterances (cf. 205, and again $T4$). Moreover, the meanings of our utterances, being hidden beneath the surface of the various ways in which we use their elements, can only be discovered by looking at the mental pictures, the presence of which indicates what we mean by

them. A person who wants to understand has, therefore, to grasp this mental picture. "One would like to say: 'Telling brings it about that [somebody else] *knows* that I am in pain [for example]; it produces this mental phenomenon: everything else [in particular whether "he does something further with it as well"—e.g., looks for a physician in order to help me] is inessential to the telling' " (363). "Only in the act of understanding is it meant that we are to do *this*. The *order*—why, that is nothing but sounds, ink-marks" (431). Meaning and understanding are, therefore, mental processes.

†Apparently this idea makes it necessary to give an account of meaning which is independent of the description of the way in which signs are used within a certain language-game. Another great part of the *Philosophical Investigations* is devoted to showing that this is not the case. A careful analysis of the way we use phrases such as 'A intends to ...,' 'A means that ...,' 'A suddenly understands that ...,' shows that in trying to account for this use we are again thrown back on a description of the way we use certain elements of the language-game in which those expressions occur and the connection of this use with our actions and other people's.

VIII

†(A) The meaning we connect with a certain sign is a mental picture. We do not look into the mind of a person in order to find out what he is really saying. We take his utterances *at their face value*, e.g., we assume that, when saying 'I hate you' he is in a state of hating. "If I give anyone an order I feel it to be *quite enough* to give him signs. And I should never say: this is only words. Equally, when I have asked someone something and he gives me an answer (i.e., a sign) I am content—that was what I expected—and I don't raise the objection: but that's a mere answer"(503). On our present view, this attitude is easily shown to be superficial. For it might be that on looking into the speaker's soul (or mind) we discover something quite different, e.g., love in the person who said 'I hate you.'

†Now two questions arise about this procedure. First: Why trust the language of the mind (one wonders what kind of language this may be) when we do not trust the overt language, i.e., the sentence 'I hate you'? (cf., e.g., 74 and all the passages on the interpretation of rules: 197 ff.). For whatever appears to be found in the mind can be interpreted in various ways, once we have decided *not* to proceed as we usually do, i.e., not to take parts of a certain language-game which we are playing at their face-value. Secondly: Let us assume that

somebody who really loves a certain person tells her that he hates her.[13] Does this fact make 'I hate you' mean the same as 'I love you'? Or imagine a person, who abounds in slips of the tongue (or is at the moment rather occupied with a difficult problem and so not listening attentively), giving what we consider to be a wrong or an irrelevant answer. Doesn't that reaction of considering his answer as irrelevant show that what he says is thought to be meaningful independently of what he is thinking? For we don't say: 'He certainly gave the right answer; what he said was accompanied by the right thought-processes,' but rather 'He gave a quite irrelevant answer; maybe he didn't understand our question or expressed himself wrongly.' Or "suppose I said 'abcd' and meant: the weather is fine. For as I uttered the signs I had the experience normally had only by someone who had year-in year-out used 'a' in the sense of 'the,' 'b' in the sense of 'weather' and so on. Does 'abcd' now mean: the weather is fine?" (509; cf. 665). How does somebody else find out what I meant by 'abcd'? Of course I can explain to him that 'abcd' means 'the weather is fine'; and I can also indicate how the parts of the first string of signs are related to the parts (the words) of the second string. But it would be a mistake to assume that such an explanation reveals what 'abcd' really means. For from the few words which I intend to be an explanation one cannot yet judge whether an *explanation* has been given or not.

†Of course I *say* ' "abcd" means "the weather is fine" ' or 'By "abcd" I mean "the weather is fine," ' and I have the intention of giving an explanation. But now imagine someone's saying 'Mr. A and Mrs. B loved—I mean lived—together for a long time.'[14] In this case he does not want to give a definition or an explanation according to which 'love' is supposed to mean the same as 'live'; rather, he committed a slip of the tongue and wanted to correct himself. In certain cases this is clear enough. In other cases it follows, e.g., from the fact that 'love' is never again mentioned in connection with Mr. A and Mrs. B, etc. When, therefore, I say, 'By "abcd" I mean "the weather is fine," ' it is not yet certain what the case is, whether I intended to give an explanation, or was just awaking from a kind of trance, or whatever else might be the case. The way 'I mean' is to be interpreted follows from the context in which the whole sentence is uttered and from

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[13] Psychoanalysis has made rather a misleading use of such cases. It has introduced a picture-language (so-called symbols) and interpreted it in such a way that it is not conceivable how the theory could possibly be refuted.

[14] In Freud's *Vorlesungen über Psychoanalyse* one will find plenty of examples of this kind.

what we find out about the further use of the sign 'abcd' (cf. 686). In order to find out whether 'abcd' really means 'the weather is fine' we have, therefore, to find out how 'abcd' is being used quite independently of any feelings on the part of the person who said 'abcd' and of any explanation given by him. Of course his explanation may be the starting point of a training in the use of a new language in which 'a,' 'b,' 'c,' 'd' really have the meanings indicated. But note now that "abcd" makes sense only within this language-game. I cannot mean 'the weather is fine' by 'abcd' before this language-game has been established. I myself could not possibly connect any sense with 'abcd' before the elements of this sign have become meaningful by being made elements of a certain language-game. And even the fact "that I had the experience normally had only by someone who had year-out year-in used 'a' in the sense of 'the,' 'b' in the sense of 'weather' and so on" (509) could not make them meaningful; I could not even *describe* this experience as I did just now, because such a description does not yet exist.

†We have to conclude that no mere mental effort of a person A can either make a string of signs mean something different from the meaning it has within a certain language-game of which it is part, played by the people who come into contact with A, or justify its being said that *he* means (intends) something different from everybody else who uses it. This seems rather paradoxical. But let us assume for a moment that two people

belonging to a tribe unacquainted with games should sit at a chess-board and go through the moves of a game of chess; and with the appropriate mental accompaniments. And if *we* were to see it we should say they were playing chess. But now imagine a game of chess translated according to certain rules into a series of actions which we do not ordinarily associate with a *game*—say into yells and stamping of feet. And now suppose those two people to yell and stamp instead of playing the form of chess that we are used to; and this in such a way that their procedure is translatable by suitable rules into a game of chess. Should we still be inclined to say they were playing a game? [200].

The decision of this question again depends on the situation. Imagine, e.g., that their yelling and stamping has an important role within a religious ceremony of the tribe. That any change of procedure is said to offend the gods and is treated accordingly (the offenders are killed). In this case neither the possibility of the translation nor the presence of the chess-feelings in the minds of the participants would turn this procedure into a game of chess (although it is also quite possible to imagine a tribe where people who lose games of chess are thought to

be hated by the gods and are killed. But in this case a difference will be made between games and religious procedures by the fact, e.g., that only priests are admitted to the latter, or that different expressions are used for describing them, which is missing in our case). On the contrary, the strange mental state of those who are troubled by chess-feelings would be an indication either of insanity (cf. n. 5 above) or of lack of religious feeling.

†Now we can turn round our whole argument and look at the people who are sitting at a chess board and moving the pieces. Are they really playing chess? We see now that the inspection of their minds does not help us: they might be queer people, thinking of chess when they are performing a religious ceremony. Their assertion that they are playing chess, even, is not necessarily helpful, for it might be that they heard the words from somebody else and misinterpreted them to mean sitting in front of the board and making arbitrary moves with the pawns. The fact that they are using a chess board does not help us either, for the board is not essential to the game. What, then, is essential? The fact that they are playing according to certain *rules*, that they follow the rules of the chess game. Applying this result to the meaning of sentences in general we arrive at the idea that "if anyone utters a sentence and *means* or *understands* it he is operating a calculus according to definite rules" (81). Thus in analyzing the concepts of meaning, understanding, thinking, etc., we finally arrived at the concept of *following a rule*. But before turning to that concept we have to get more insight into the concepts just mentioned, and especially into the concept of *intention*.†

(B) It is the "queer thing about *intention*, about the mental process, that the existence of a custom, of a technique, is not necessary to it. That, for example, it is imaginable that two people should play chess in a world in which otherwise no games existed; and even that they should begin a game of chess—and then be interrupted" (205). The underlying idea is the same, as in the case of meaning : just as we can attach meaning to a sign by just connecting its use with a certain image which we voluntarily produce, we can also intend to do something by producing a certain mental picture. But how, we have to ask, is it possible to find out whether or not A, who just announced his intention of playing chess, was really intending to do so? Surely chess is defined by its rules (cf. 205). Should we therefore conclude that the rules of chess were present in the mind of A when he uttered his intention? (205).

†Investigation similar to that of IV Ca above will show that not every act of intending to play chess is accompanied by a special mental

picture which is characteristic of the intention of playing chess. Of course, the intention to play chess is sometimes present quite distinctly (I have not played chess for a long time, I am a keen chess player, and *now* I want to play chess and won't stop looking until I have found a chess board and a suitable partner). But this is only a *special kind* of intending to play chess (cf. IV Cb above); therefore its characteristics cannot be the reason for calling other cases cases of intending to play chess—cases, e.g., in which these characteristics are completely absent. But if we assume, on the other hand, that A has a perfect copy of the rules of chess before his inner eye—must he necessarily follow the features of this copy in such a way that the result will be a game of chess? Is it not possible that he either interprets them in an unusual way, that in going over from the reading of his mental picture to the outer world (the chess board, his actions in front of the chess board), he automatically makes a kind of translation, so that finally he is not doing what one would be inclined to call 'playing chess' (cf. 73, 74, 86, 139, 237)? And should we still say that he is intending to play chess just because, somewhere in the chain of events which in the end lead to his actions, a copy of the rules of chess enters in? Of course, we could *interpret* this copy as we are used to do. But is *he* interpreting it in the same way? And even if he could tell us how he is interpreting it do we know how to take his explanation? We see that "interpretations *by themselves* do not determine meaning" (198). We have simply to wait. And if he really acts in such a way that he regards playing chess—as we understand it—as a fulfillment of his intention, then we may say that he intended to play chess. But if it turned out that he did not know how to play chess or that, apparently intending to play chess, he sat down at the chess board and made irregular moves, we should under certain circumstances conclude that he had wrong ideas as to his intentions. Of course the phrase 'under certain circumstances' has to be inserted. For it is perfectly possible that A, intending to play chess, was introduced to a person he did not like and, with the intention of avoiding playing chess with him, acted as if he did not know the rules of chess or as if he had never intended to play chess. But what has to be criticized is the idea that such a difference might be found out by inspecting his mind (or soul) and by reading off his intention from his mental processes. It is his futher actions (talking included), as well as his personal history, which teach us how we are to take his first utterance— that he intended to play chess. But as it now turns out that our criteria for deciding whether a person, A, intends to play chess or not are "extended in time" (cf. 138), we have to conclude that intending to

play chess cannot be a mental event which occurs at a certain time. *Intending is not an experience* (cf. p. 217): it has "no experience-content. For the content (images for instance) which accompany and illustrate [it] are not the ... intending" (p. 217).

†(C) The same applies to understanding.† Let us examine the following kind of language-game (143 ff.): When A gives an order, B has to write down series of signs according to a certain formation-rule. The orders are of the kind "1, 2, 3, ...!" or "2, 4, 6, 8, ...!" or "2, 4, 9, 16, ...!" or "2, 6, 12, 20, 30, 42, ...!" etc. B is supposed to continue the series in a certain way, i.e., he is supposed to write down the series of numerals in the first case, the series of the even numerals in the second case, etc. First of all, A will teach B the rules of the language-game. He will then give orders to B, in order to check B's abilities. He will finally state that B has mastered the system, that he understands it. It should be clear that, when used in this way, 'understanding' cannot signify a mental phenomenon. For we also say that B understands (is master of) the language-game just explained when lying on his bed and sleeping (cf. 148). But the mental-act philosopher is ready with a new expression—he speaks of a *subconscious* mental phenomenon, i.e., he says that B, although dreaming perhaps of beautiful women, is nevertheless subconsciously thinking of the new language game and its rules.

The objections to this idea are obvious. Whether subconscious or not, the alleged thinking-process may or may not determine the actual behavior of B (cf. VIII B, above); i.e., B may not be able to carry out the orders of A although a clever psychologist has found out that the thinking-process which is supposed to accompany his ability to obey the orders is present. We shall not say in this case that B has mastered the game, that we have discovered a special case of mastering the game (cp. IV Cb2, above); we shall simply say that he had not mastered it although he or the psychologist thought he had. This objection being accepted, it might be said that

knowing the game is a state of the mind (perhaps of the brain) by means of which we explain the *manifestations* of that knowledge. Such a state is called a disposition. But there are objections to speaking of a state of the mind here, inasmuch as there ought to be two different criteria for such a state: a knowledge of the construction of the apparatus quite apart from what it does [149].

What the apparatus does is in our case the actual behavior of B when he receives certain orders.

But there is a second way in which the word 'understanding' is used. Understanding in this sense is not meant to be understanding of a game

as a whole (understanding the rules of chess, i.e., knowing how to play chess) but understanding the meaning of a particular move within the game, e.g., understanding the order 2, 4, 6, ...! "Let us imagine the following example: A writes series of numbers down, B watches him and tries to find a law for the sequence of numbers. If he succeeds, he exclaims: 'Now I can go on!'—So this capacity, this understanding is something that makes its appearance in a moment" (151), and this suggests that 'understanding,' used in this way, might mean a mental event. But wait: *Do* we find any mental event which is common to all cases of understanding? Imagine that A gave the order 1, 5, 11, 19, 29, ...! to B and that, upon A's arriving at 19, B said, 'I understand.' What happened to B?

Various things may have happened; for example, while A was slowly putting one number after the other, B was occupied with trying various algebraic formulae on the numbers which had been written down. After A had written the number 19, B tried the formula $a_n = n^2 + n - 1$; and the next number confirmed his hypothesis. Or again—B does not think of formulae. He watches A writing his numbers down with a certain feeling of tension and all sorts of vague thoughts go through his head. Finally he asks himself: "What is the series of differences?" He finds the series, 4, 6, 8, 10 and says: Now I can go on.—Or he watches and says "Yes, I know *that* series"—and continues it, just as he could have done if A had written down the series 1, 3, 5, 7, 9.—Or he says nothing at all and simply continues the series. Perhaps he had what may be called the feeling "that's easy!" [151].

We can also imagine the case where nothing at all occurred in B's mind except that he suddenly said "Now I know how to go on"—perhaps with a feeling of relief [179].

But are the processes which I have described here *understanding?* [152].

Is it not possible that a person who has the feelings just described is not able to write down the series as it was meant by A? Should we not be inclined to say that he did not really understand? "The application is still a criterion of understanding" (146). It would, therefore, be quite misleading "to call the words ['Now I can go on'] a 'description of a mental state.'—One might rather call them a 'signal'; and we judge whether it was rightly employed by what he [i.e., B] goes on to do" (180).

†Now let us use this example to discuss intention and meaning as well. What if B, in carrying out the order 2, 4, 6, 8, ...! wrote 1000, 1004, 1008, 1012, etc. (cf. 185)? Of course A will say: 'Don't you see? You ought to write 2, 4, 6, 8, ...!' And if that does not lead to a change in the behavior of B, he will tell him : "What I meant was that [you] should write the next but one number after every number

[you] wrote; and from this all those propositions follow in turn" (186). Now several conclusions may be drawn from this situation.[†] First of all one may be inclined to say that 2, 4, 6, 8, ...! was an incomplete order and that there was clearly a possibility of misunderstanding (cf. a similar argument in 19). For this order reveals so to speak, only an external character of the series to be written down, namely the character that its first members are '2,' '4,' '6,' etc. And the training of B, too, taught him only an external character of all the series, namely, that they began in a certain way. B has therefore to *guess* how to continue, and of course he may hit upon the wrong guess. But the order "take the next but one!" seems to be of a different character. It contains so to speak the whole of the series in a nutshell. Understanding *this* order implies knowing the law of development for the whole series. But let us now investigate how the understanding of this order may be taught. Of course, A has to write down the series 2, 4, 6, 8, ... and has to explain to B what 'next but one' means. He does so by comparing this series with 1, 2, 3, 4, ... and by showing that '4' is the 'next but one to 2,' etc. The explanation will therefore be similar to the explanation of 2, 4, 6, 8, ...! Why, then, should teaching the pupil how to take 'the next but one' remove any possibility of error? On the contrary! We could imagine that B has been taught how to use 2, 4, 6, 8, ...! but that he does not know, what 'the next but one' means. In this case the teacher would have to explain the 'next but one' by referring to 2, 4, 6, 8, ...! and not the other way round. The same applies to algebraic formulae. Consider a 'difficult' series such as 1, 3, 13, 21, 31, 43, ... It is not easily seen how this series might be continued. If we hear that its algebraic formula is $n^2 - n + 1$ we are able to write down the next members at once. But that only shows that we already knew how to apply the algebraic expression, but did not know how to apply 1, 3, 13, 21, 31, 43, ... if the continuation of this series is ordered. It does not show us an essential quality which, so to speak, contains the whole series in a nutshell. For an onlooker who is unacquainted with the formula as well as with the series will have to learn how to apply the formula in developing series. And the methods of teaching this ability will be similar to the methods of teaching 2, 4, 6, 8, ...! (cf. 146).

Let us return now to intention. The existence of algebraic formulae for the description of series is misleading in one way: A cannot write down the whole series in order to make himself understood to B. But he can use an algebraic formula or a simple expression, such as 'take the next but one.' He can write down the formula within a few seconds

and one is therefore inclined to assume that meaning the series 1, 2, 3, 4, ... *ad infinitum* can be a mental act which occurs within a few seconds.

Here I should first of all like to say: Your idea was that that act of meaning the order had in its own way already traversed all those steps; that when you meant it your mind as it were flew ahead and completed all the steps before you physically arrived at this or that one.—Thus you were inclined to use such expressions as: The steps are *really* already taken, even before I take them in writing or orally or in thought[15] [188].

They "are determined by the algebraic formula" (189). But how? Surely thinking of the formula cannot help us (cf. 146), for one and the same formula may be used for different purposes (think of the different use which is made of the formula $a + b = b + a$ in different parts of mathematics: in class-theory it means the commutativity of class-disjunction; in algebra it is used for expressing the commutativity of algebraic addition; in number theory it is used for expressing a general property of numbers; in lattice-theory it has still another meaning and likewise in group-theory, etc.) The imagining of the formula (if it ever does occur) must be connected with a certain application of the formula in order to provide us with the knowledge of its meaning and with the knowledge of the speaker's intention in using it. And as it is always possible to apply a formula in many different ways we have to observe how it is applied in a particular case, by a particular mathematician, in order to determine his way of using the formula and thus *what he means* when he utters the formula. But the use of a formula is "extended in time" (138). And therefore, since following up this use is one of the criteria we employ to find out what is meant by A when he writes down a certain formula, we cannot say that meaning something is a mental event. "It may now be said: 'The way the formula is meant determines which steps are to be taken.' What is the criterion for the way the formula is meant? It is for example, the kind of way we always use it, the way we are taught to use it" (190).[16]

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[15] Here is the core of Wittgenstein's criticism of the so-called Cantorian (cf. Poincaré *loc. cit.*) interpretation of mathematics. This criticism (it is developed in detail in his mathematical writings, which are still unpublished—in the *Philosophical Investigations* there are only a few passages, cf. 352) is another corollary of *T'*.

[16] Cf. also 693: " 'When I teach someone the formation of the series ... I surely mean him to write ... at the hundredth place.'—Quite right; you mean it. And evidently without necessarily even thinking of it. This shews you how different the grammar of the verb 'to mean' is from that of 'to think.' And nothing is more wrong-headed than calling meaning a mental activity!"

(D) Another criticism of the idea that meaning is a mental activity derives from the fact that sometimes it is calculation that decides the question whether a sentence is meaningful or not. Consider the sentence " 'I have n friends and $n^2 + 2n + 2 = 0$.' Does this sentence make sense?" (513). Assuming that a sentence is made meaningful by connecting its utterance with a certain mental content, we should conclude that there is no difficulty; we have only to look for the mental picture behind it, and that will teach us how to judge. But that is not the case, we are even inclined to say that we do not yet know whether anybody will be able to connect any meaning with the sentence, i.e., according to the theory we are discussing at present, whether anybody is justified in connecting an image with the utterance of this sentence. We have first to find out whether the sentence conforms to certain general rules (the number of friends can neither be negative nor imaginary) and we do so by calculating. We also cannot say at once whether we understand or not; we have first to find out whether there is anything to be understood; i.e., whether we understand or not can again be found out by a process of calculation only. One has, therefore, to realize that "we *calculate*, operate with words and in the course of time turn them sometimes into one picture, sometimes into another" (449).

(E) Result: Meaning, understanding, intending, thinking (and, as we may add—remembering, loving, hoping[17]) are *not mental activities*. The criteria by which we decide whether or not A is thinking of ..., intending to do ..., meaning ..., etc., do not relate only to the moment of the intention, the thought, the understanding. We cannot say "A intended ... because" and point to a process which accompanies his utterances or his (apparently intentional) behavior. "For no *process* could have the consequences of [intending]" (cf. p. 218).

IX

†The last section was devoted to the discussion of a possible objection against an instrumentalist theory of language, as it seems to be sugges-

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[17] "What is a *deep* feeling? Could someone have the feeling of ardent love or hope for the space of one second—*no matter what* preceded or followed this second? What is happening now has significance—in these surroundings. The surroundings [the history of the event included—cf. the words "what preceded"] give it its importance" (583; cf. 572, 584, 591, 614 ff., esp. 638: "If someone says 'For a moment ...' is he really only describing a momentary process?—But not even the whole story was my evidence for saying 'For a moment....' ").

ted by Wittgenstein (cf. Sec. VII). The objection was founded on the idea that words are meaningful because we *mean* something when uttering them, and that quite independently of the way in which those words are used. But it turned out that in deciding whether somebody is really meaning something when uttering a sentence we are thrown back on observation of the way he uses certain elements of speech and that, therefore, an account of meaning can and must be given within the instrumentalist interpretation of language. Meaning is not something that needs consideration *apart* from the description of the way certain expressions are used by the speaker or by other people with whom he is trying to communicate. At the same time a tendency was discovered, namely the tendency "to hypostatize feelings where there are none" (598).[18] No objection to the instrumentalist interpretation seems to be left, but one : When playing a language-game we certainly obey certain *rules*. Thus the idea is suggested "that if anyone utters a sentence and *means* or *understands* it, he is operating a calculus according to definite rules" (81), and the rules seem to be something which *directs* the activities within a language-game, which therefore cannot be described in terms which are useful for describing the working of the language-game itself. It is this idea which we have to treat last. The discussion of this idea in the *Philosophical Investigations* is interwoven with the discussion of the other ideas treated in the book because there are arguments which apply to several ideas at once.†

Assuming that in talking, calculating, etc., we are acting in accordance with certain rules leads at once to the following question: "How am I able to obey a rule?" (217). For, on the one hand, it seems to be the case that "the rule, once stamped with a particular meaning, traces the lines along which it is to be followed through the whole of space ... all the steps are already taken" (219). But "if something of that sort really were the case, how would it help?" (219). For is there not always the possibility of interpreting the rule in a different way? And how are we to know which interpretation is the right one? Once the rule is separated from our activity it seems impossible that it can determine this activity any more. For it may try to make itself known to us by mental events ('grasping' the rule), by a book which contains all rules of the language-game to be played, etc. In any one of those cases we can proceed in many different ways depending on how we interpret, i.e., how we use, the mental picture, the book, etc., in the course of our

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[18] Cf. 295: "When we look into ourselves as we do philosophy, we often get to see just a picture. A full-blown pictorial representation of our grammar. Not facts; but as it were illustrated turns of speech."

(D) Another criticism of the idea that meaning is a mental activity derives from the fact that sometimes it is calculation that decides the question whether a sentence is meaningful or not. Consider the sentence " 'I have n friends and $n^2 + 2n + 2 = 0$.' Does this sentence make sense?" (513). Assuming that a sentence is made meaningful by connecting its utterance with a certain mental content, we should conclude that there is no difficulty; we have only to look for the mental picture behind it, and that will teach us how to judge. But that is not the case, we are even inclined to say that we do not yet know whether anybody will be able to connect any meaning with the sentence, i.e., according to the theory we are discussing at present, whether anybody is justified in connecting an image with the utterance of this sentence. We have first to find out whether the sentence conforms to certain general rules (the number of friends can neither be negative nor imaginary) and we do so by calculating. We also cannot say at once whether we understand or not; we have first to find out whether there is anything to be understood; i.e., whether we understand or not can again be found out by a process of calculation only. One has, therefore, to realize that "we *calculate*, operate with words and in the course of time turn them sometimes into one picture, sometimes into another" (449).

(E) Result: Meaning, understanding, intending, thinking (and, as we may add—remembering, loving, hoping[17]) are *not mental activities*. The criteria by which we decide whether or not A is thinking of ..., intending to do ..., meaning ..., etc., do not relate only to the moment of the intention, the thought, the understanding. We cannot say "A intended ... because" and point to a process which accompanies his utterances or his (apparently intentional) behavior. "For no *process* could have the consequences of [intending]" (cf. p. 218).

IX

†The last section was devoted to the discussion of a possible objection against an instrumentalist theory of language, as it seems to be sugges-

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further activities (cf. 73, 74, 86, 139, 237). Thus it seems that "any course of action [can] be determined by a rule because every course of action [can] be made out to accord with the rule" (201; "could" replaced by 'can').

But "What this shows is that there is a way of grasping a rule which is *not* an *interpretation*, but which is exhibited in what we call 'obeying the rule' and 'going against it' in actual cases" (201). That will become clear from the following example (cf. 454): "A rule stands there like a sign-post. Does the sign-post leave no doubt open about the way I have to go? Does it show which direction I am to take when I have passed it?" (85). How do I know which direction I have to go? "If that means 'have I reasons?' the answer is: My reasons will soon give out. And then I shall act, without reasons" (211). "When someone whom I am afraid of orders me [to follow the sign-post], I act quickly, with perfect certainty, and the lack of reasons does not trouble me" (212, with "to continue the series" replaced by 'to follow the sign-post'). "When I obey a rule, I do not choose. I obey the rule *blindly*" (219). Let us now assume a land where everybody, on seeing a signpost: →, follows it in this direction: ←, where children are advised to follow the sign-post in the way indicated, where foreigners who are in the habit of going → when they see a signpost like this: → are taught that they are acting wrongly, that '→' means 'go ←.' Should we say that the inhabitants of our imaginary country are misinterpreting the signpost? Obviously this would not be the right description of the situation, for without being related to human activities (language-games included) the signpost is a mere piece of matter and the question as to its *meaning* (and therefore the question as to whether a certain interpretation is the right one) does not arise at all.

Now it is using the signpost in a certain way, i.e., behaving in a certain way in the presence of the signpost, that gives a meaning to it and that separates it from the other parts of nature which are meaningless in the sense that they are not parts of human language-games. But *behaving in this way* is also called *obeying the rules*. "And hence also 'obeying a rule' is a practice. And to *think* one is obeying a rule is not to obey a rule. Hence it is not possible to obey a rule 'privately': Otherwise thinking one was obeying a rule would be the same thing as obeying it" (202).

Apply this to language-games in general. It follows, that "to obey a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess, are *customs* (uses, institutions)" (199) and "not a hocus-pocus which can be performed only by the soul" (454). "To understand a sentence

means to understand a language. To understand a language means to master a technique" (199). And so we are back at the instrumental interpretation of language: "Every sign *by itself* seems dead. *What* gives it life?—In *use* it is *alive*. Is life breathed into it then?—Or is the *use* its life?" (432). And questions of meaning, of understanding, of following a rule are to be treated by taking into account the *use* of signs within a certain language-game.

X

†Thus we arrive at the following result. According to T meanings are objects for which words stand. Rules are of a similar ethereal character. Understanding the meanings, grasping the rules, is an activity of the mind, which is the organ for finding our way about in the realm of meaning as the senses are organs for finding our way about in the physical world. We found that either there is no representation of the meanings or the rules in the mind or, assuming that a representation does exist, that it cannot determine the way in which we proceed because there are always many possibilities of interpretation. According to T' the meaning of the elements of a language-game emerges from their *use* and that use belongs to a quite different category from a single mental event or a mental process, or any process whatever (cf. p. 196).

†Now a sign can be part of different language-games just as a button can be used in a game of chess (instead of a pawn, e.g., which has been lost) or a game of draughts. Do we try in this case to abstract from the differences between these two kinds of use in order to discover a common quality which will explain to us how it is possible for the button to function both as a pawn and as a piece in draughts? The question does not arise because it seems obvious that the button *changes* its function according to the game within which it is used. But in the case of a language-game, theory T seduces us into thinking that the sign '2,' e.g., is in any case of its use within language connected with a single element, its meaning, and that the varieties of its use ('Give me *two* apples!'—as said in a grocery; $\int_0^2 x^3 dx = 4$; 'Two hours ago I met him in the street'; 'The number of solutions of the equation $x^2 + 5x + 4 = 0$ is *two*') are only a superficial aspect. Once this idea has been dropped, once it has been realized that the meaning of a sign is constituted by its use within a certain language-game, words can be looked at as the button was above. And instead of trying to grasp the *essence* of a thing which is to explain the varieties of the

use of the sign which stands for the thing we ought simply to describe the language-game of which the sign is part.'"We must do away with all *explanation*, and description alone must take its place" (109). "Our mistake is to look for an explanation where we ought to look at what happened as a 'proto-phenomenon.' That is where we ought to have said: *This language-game is played*" (654). "Look at the language-game as the *primary* thing. And look on the feelings, etc., as you look on a way of regarding the language-game, as interpretation" (656).[19]

†Wittgenstein's position has not yet been described correctly. Wittgenstein was said to hold a theory, T', which emphasizes the instrumental aspect of language and which points to use in a language-game as the essential thing. And describing the language-game, so one is inclined to say, according to the presentation which has been given so far, is the task of philosophy. From that description quite a few philosophical problems will become clear which seemed hopelessly muddled when seen from the point of view of theory T. Philosophy, then, seems to be the theory of language-games (a kind of general syntax or semantics in Carnap's sense) and T' seems to be its most important part. But according to Wittgenstein this assumption would involve a misunderstanding. For the supposed theory of language-games could do no more than enable people to run through the single moves of a game, as a player who is acquainted with the game runs through its moves. But for such a player there is no problem. If he asks, e.g., " 'How do sentences manage to represent?'—the answer must be: 'Don't you know? You certainly see it, when you use them.' For nothing is concealed" (435). Everything "lies open to view" (92; 126). "Philosophy" therefore "may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it ... it leaves everything as it is" (124).

†Let us assume that somebody begins to construct a theory of Language-games. This theory, if formulated in the terms of T', will be thought to serve as an explanation of how meaning is conferred upon single signs by the way in which these signs are incorporated into a language-game. The theory (or description, as it may also be called) will involve a new kind of use of terms such as 'sentence,' 'fact,' 'meaning.' But has a useful explanation or description really been found? We must realize that the supposed theory introduces a *new* use of

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[19] Note that the idea of an ideal language becomes obsolete as soon as it has been recognized that all language-games are on a par. Vague concepts, e.g. (cf. 71), cannot be regarded as inadmissible any longer. They have a definite function, and that is all we can demand from them.

'meaning,' 'fact,' 'sentence,' etc. If this use involves even a slight deviation from the use of these words within the language-games to be described (explained) the supposed description in fact involves a change in the phenomenon to be described. But if on the other hand the change is a considerable one (and that is to be expected if one is trying to develop a fully-fledged instrumentalist philosophy of meaning) a new language-game for the expression 'sentence,' 'meaning,' etc., has been established and the task of describing the given language-game is not fulfilled either. Thus "we must do away with all *explanation*" and with T' as well. The description, however, which Wittgenstein invites us to give instead of the explanation, consists only in "putting the things before us" (126), and as "everything lies open to view, there is nothing to explain" (126). We might therefore say, rather hyperbolically, that the "language disguises thoughts" of the *Tractatus* (4.002) is now replaced by "language is already thought, nothing is concealed."

†But the situation is not quite as simple as that. For there *are* philosophical systems, philosophical theories; and it needs to be explained how it is that they come into existence if "nothing is concealed."

†In describing how philosophical theories come into being, Wittgenstein refers to the fact that "we *do not command a clear view* of the use of our words" (122). Given the answer that nothing is concealed, "one would like to retort: 'Yes, but it all goes by so quick, and I should like to see it as it were laid open to view" (435). On the other hand, "we remain unconscious of the prodigious diversity of all the everyday language-games because the clothing of our language makes everything alike" (p. 224). "What confuses us is the uniform appearance of words when we hear them spoken or meet them in script and print. For their *application* is not presented to us so clearly" (11). Take the following example: The sentences 'Washington is a city' and 'Two is an even number' are of a similar structure. This suggests that just as in the first case 'Washington' is the name of a real thing, 'two' is the name of a more abstract object, notwithstanding the fact that the uses of the two signs are "absolutely unlike" (10).

In the use of words one might distinguish "surface-grammar" from "depth-grammar." What immediately impresses itself upon us about the use of a word is the way it is used in the construction of the sentence, the part of its use—one might say—that can be taken in by the ear. And now compare the depth-grammar, say of the word "to mean," with what the surface-grammar would lead us to suspect. No wonder that we find it difficult to know our way about [661].

This difficulty is the reason why we resort to philosophical theories.

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This difficulty is the reason why we resort to philosophical theories.

Why we invent theories of meaning. And why we try to conceive an ideal form behind the complexities of our language-games.

†But it is clear "that every sentence in our language 'is in order, as it is.' That is to say, we are not *striving after* an ideal, as if our ordinary vague sentences had not yet got a quite unexceptionable sense ... there must be perfect order even in the vaguest sentence" (98). It should also be clear that the "philosophy of logic speaks of sentences and words in exactly the same sense in which we speak of them in ordinary life, when we say, e.g., 'Here is a Chinese sentence' or 'No, that only looks like writing; it is actually just an ornament' and so on" (108). Thus the proper task of philosophy will be to unmask philosophical theories, to "bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use" (116), to destroy the "houses of cards" and to clear up "the ground of language on which they stand." (113). And philosophy becomes a "battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language" (109). This battle is carried through by "assembling reminders for a particular purpose" (127)—for the purpose of "seeing connexions" (122); and "different therapies" (133), not "*a* philosophical method" (133), are used in order to finish it victoriously.

†But in these therapies the statement of T' (or rather of the several corollaries of T' which have been mentioned so far) plays the most important part. So far we have interpreted the statement of T' as the exposition of a new (instrumentalist, nominalist, or whatever you like to call it) *theory of meaning*. This interpretation is not unreasonable in itself and taken as such it is a very interesting contribution to traditional philosophy (actually I think that everything that is interesting in the book attaches to the treatment of T' in this way). But this interpretation would go against the way in which his book is meant to be used by Wittgenstein. That may be seen from the following considerations: In Section IV the idea was criticized that reading is a mental process. If we stick to T' and interpret it as a theory we cannot understand why the discussion in Section IV should be a *criticism*. For we could argue in the following way: Wittgenstein says that the meaning of a word becomes clear from the way in which it is used within a specific language-game. Let us, therefore, look at the language-game which contains both of the expressions 'reading' and 'mental process,' and in which the sentence occurs 'Reading is a mental process.' Wittgenstein's presentation—so one would be inclined to say—is a description of certain features of this language-game and includes, of course, the remark that 'mental process' as used *in this language-game* has nothing whatever to do with toothaches.

†But that is not the right account of what Wittgenstein does. Wittgenstein does criticize—but his criticism is of a particular kind. It is not the kind of criticism which is directed, e.g., against a wrong mathematical calculation. In the latter case the result of the criticism is that a certain sentence is replaced by its negation or by a different sentence. But Wittgenstein does not want his reader to discover that reading is *not* a mental process. For if 'mental process' is used in a metaphysical way in 'reading is a mental process,' it is used just as metaphysically in "reading is not a mental process" (cf. 116). For him "the results of philosophy are the uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense and of bumps that the understanding has got by running its head against the limits of language" (119), and his aim is "to teach you to pass from a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent nonsense" (464) and in this way to clear up "the ground of language" (119). But that can only mean that "the philosophical problems should *completely* disappear" (133); for if the aim has been reached, "everything lies open to view and there is nothing to explain" (126). This implies that the formulation of T' as used within the critical procedure cannot be interpreted as a new theory of meaning, for it is applied with the intention of making the language-games (e.g., that with 'reading') "lie open to view," i.e., lead to a situation where language-games are simply played, without any question arising as to how it is that words become meaningful as part of a certain language-game, etc. That being so, the formulation of T' loses its function as soon as "*complete clarity*" has been arrived at. But without a function the signs which are part of the formulation of T' are without meaning. Thus one could say of the sentences which are part of T': These sentences "are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless ... (He must so to speak, throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.) He must surmount these [sentences] ...; then he sees the world rightly" (*Tractatus* 6.54). And seeing the world rightly means playing the language games without being troubled by philosophical *questions* or by philosophical *problems*.†

XI

*Note, now, that in the preceding section the idea of the essence has been reintroduced. In traditional philosophy the essence was hidden beneath the various ways of describing it. Now it is the "everyday use" (116) that "has to be accepted," "is given" (p. 226); but this

everyday use is likewise hidden, beneath the "houses of cards" of philosophical theories (118)[20], and it too has to be brought to light. Just so, traditional philosophers (i.e., the adherents of theory T) tried to bring to light the clear and sharp meanings which were hidden beneath the "muddied" use of the words which stand for them (426). If we assume, now, that in removing those philosophical coverings we finally arrive at "*complete* clarity" (133), we assume that there is a *sharp line* between the "houses of cards" on the one hand and the language-games on which they are built on the other. Now while Wittgenstein usually criticizes the idea that, e.g., "there *must* be something common [to games], or they would not be called 'games' " (66; cf. IV A above) and points to the fact that if we "look and see" (66) we find a "complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing" (66), he seems to assume, nonetheless, that at least philosophical difficulties have something in common, that there is a definite boundary between the card-houses of philosophy and the solid ground of everyday language, such that it becomes possible to "bring words back from their metaphysical use to their everyday use" (116).

*To Wittgenstein we can apply the comment (which he used to characterize the adherents of T) that "A *picture* held [him] captive" (115). For if it is the use, the practice, which constitutes meaning, if "what has to be accepted, the given, is ... *forms of life*" (p. 226), then one may ask why Wittgenstein tries to eliminate theory T, which certainly must be regarded as a form of life if we look at the way in which it is used by its adherents. Nevertheless Wittgenstein tries to eliminate this theory as well as other philosophical theories. But this attempt can only be justified by assuming that there is a difference between using a sign (playing a language-game) and proceeding according to theory T. The procedures which are connected with theory T are supposed not to be taken as parts of a language-game, they constitute a sham-game which is to be destroyed. How is this attitude to be understood?

*I think we can understand it by looking at the ideas which Wittgenstein has about philosophy (at his "*picture*" of philosophy as one might call it, using his own word). This picture is the picture of the *Tractatus:* "The word 'philosophy' must mean something which stands above or below, not beside the natural sciences" (*Tractatus* 4.111). In the *Investigations* we may replace "natural sciences" by "language-

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[20] "Language disguises the thought" is the position of the *Tractatus* (4.002). One could say that according to the *Investigations*, the (philosophical) thought disguises language.

games," and we arrive at: "Philosophy must be something which stands above or below, not beside the language-games"; philosophy *cannot* be a language-game itself; e.g., it cannot be theory *T'*. I submit that this idea is still present in the *Investigations* and that it makes it clear why Wittgenstein, having found that a sign can only be meaningful if it is incorporated into a language-game, cannot admit that there are philosophical theories.[21] This observation (as well as others which have not been mentioned[22]) suggests that the *Investigations* (apart from their substitution of language-games for the one language of the *Tractatus*) are after all not as different from the *Tractatus* as they seem to be at first sight. I am even inclined to say (without being able to substantiate this contention at the moment) that the *Investigations* basically contain an application of the main ideas of the *Tractatus* to several concrete problems, the only difference being the use of language-games instead of the language of the natural sciences which formed the theoretical background of the *Tractatus*.

*Trying to evaluate the book, we might say that the criticisms of *T* and the statement of *T'* which it contains, as well as the application of this theory to the discussion of concrete problems (remembering, obeying an order, the problem of sensation, etc.), are a great achievement, which, however, has its predecessors.[23] *Here we are within traditional philosophy.* But Wittgenstein wants us to see his criticisms in a different light. In the end we should forget them as well as *T*, we should forget philosophy entirely. Although the formulation of what can be regarded as a *theory* (theory *T'*) led us to the proper understanding of our difficulties, it must not be taken as the formulation of a *theory* but only as a proper means of getting rid of our philosophical troubles. *T'* has, therefore, to disappear together with those troubles. This new idea, which is Wittgenstein's own and which can be found in the *Tractatus* as well, is due, first, to the *picture* that philosophy must be

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[21] There are some passages which seem to contradict this interpretation of Wittgenstein's views, e.g., "If one tried to advance *theses* in philosophy it would never be possible to question them, because everyone would agree to them" (128), according to which philosophical theses are not meaningless, but *trivial*.

[22] Cf. the similarity of "shows itself" in the *Tractatus* and "lies open to view" in the *Investigations*.

[23] Cf., e.g., H. Gomperz, *Weltanschauungslehre*, vol. II, where further references are given; E. Mach, *Erkenntnis u. Irrtum*, 3d ed., pp. 126 ff.; D'Alembert, *Traité de dynamique* (1743); the tenets of the various nominalistic schools, old and new, etc. Cf. also K. Popper's criticism of essentialism, developed as early as 1935.

something quite extraordinary and, second, to certain difficulties, already mentioned, which could be solved by taking into account the difference between object-language and meta-language (used by Tarski to get rid of similar difficulties, but never recognized by Wittgenstein [cf. 121]). Using this device we find that the philosophical language games do not necessarily disturb the language-games they are supposed to describe. We also find that philosophy is not necessarily on a level with the language-games it is about. On the contrary, the assumption that the philosophical language-games are on a level with the language-games they deal with leads to contradictions. This solution would not agree with Wittgenstein's, but it would retain several elements of his philosophy: (1) his criticisms of T; (2) his statement of T'; (3) his observation, that language-games may be disturbed by other language-games which are supposed to explain or to describe them. It would, however, interpret the statement of T' as a special theory of meaning and formulate it by taking account of the difference between object-language and meta-language. It would be possible still to have philosophical theories and philosophical problems without being open to Wittgenstein's criticisms, except perhaps the one criticism, that the distinction introduced is purely artificial.*

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