WITTGENSTEIN'S INFLUENCE

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In the British section of the English-speaking world — in Britain and the British Commonwealth — there have been quite considerable changes in the philosophical climate during the past twenty or thirty years. So great have changes been that quite a few people do not think it absurd to speak of "the recent *revolution*[2] in philosophy". And there would be pretty general agreement that the changes — the "revolution" if that is not too strong a word — are chiefly (though of course not entirely) due to the work of one man, Ludwig Wittgenstein, an Austrian by birth who worked in Cambridge, England, and who died some ten years ago. In America Wittgenstein's influence has been nothing like as great. But here, too, there are many that would rank him as at least among the most important philosophers of the century. There are also many who would deplore Wittgenstein's influence, and think that his followers are obscurantists — slippery in argument through unwillingness to be precise, anti-scientific, and pedantically literary.

A most remarkable — and to those outside the trade a rather confusing — thing is that, philosophically speaking, there were *two* Wittgensteins. He had two distinct philosophical careers, between which he turned to things other than philosophy; and in the course of these two careers he developed two quite distinct philosophies. It is the work of the *later* Wittgenstein that has been so widely influential.

I had better start by outlining the two careers.

He was born in Vienna, towards the end of the last century.[3] The Wittgenstein family was wealthy and cultured. Brahms was a friend of the family, and one of Ludwig's brothers became — despite the fact that he had only one arm — a concert pianist. Ludwig, however, set out to become a mechanical engineer and went to England — to Manchester University — to do post-graduate research on jet propulsion of aircraft. But he soon became interested in Bertrand Russell's philosophy, and abandoned his engineering career to go and study under Russell at Cambridge.

He worked with Russell for several years, and towards the end of this time began developing a philosophical line of his own. His collaboration with Russell was interrupted by the outbreak of World War I, in 1914, when Wittgenstein went home to fight with the Austro-Hungarian army. He managed to continue philosophical work, despite his war-services, and to complete a short, highly-compressed and highly obscure book. This — the only book of his to be published during his lifetime — came out in 1922,[4] with parallel English and German texts on facing pages. It was entitled "*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*". The philosophy of the *early* Wittgenstein is that which is contained in this book — a philosophy which its author was later to repudiate completely.

After the publication of his *Tractatus* Wittgenstein gave up philosophy for six or seven years. Tolstoy's ideas had had a deep effect on him, and he gave up the life of a wealthy and learned man to be a village schoolmaster in Austria for several years. During this interval between his two philosophical careers he also spent one year as an amateur architect, designing a house for his sister, and for a while he worked as an under-gardener at a monastery. And then, partly through the efforts of a brilliant young philosopher — Frank Ramsey — he was

1. This unpublished paper (here transcribed by Stewart Candlish) was presented by Gasking at the University of Illinois in the northern Spring of 1961. All footnotes in this text, including this one, have been supplied by SC.

2. All emphasis in the original ms is indicated by underlining. This has here been replaced throughout by italics; a few small but distracting linguistic or typographical errors elsewhere have been silently corrected; the main text is otherwise entirely Gasking's.

3. That is, the nineteenth century.

4. The original German-only edition, *Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung*, was published in 1921.

persuaded to return to Cambridge, late in 1927, and to take up philosophy again. From then on he worked mainly in Cambridge. He became Professor there in 1939 — but resigned the Chair after a few years, to work again as a free-lance. The thought of himself as a professor was one that tended to fill him with disgust.

During most of his later years at Cambridge he lectured twice a week, usually in his own college sitting room or in that of a pupil, to a small group of some twelve to twenty persons. Apart from a short paper (repudiated by him as soon as it was printed in 1929) he published nothing. From the early 1930's onwards his new philosophy — the ideas which are these days so widely accepted — were communicated by him verbally to the small groups that attended these lectures. But his ideas began to spread nevertheless. Shorthand notes were made of two of his lecture-courses and, despite his disapproval and indeed prohibition, typescript copies of these had a clandestine world-wide circulation. (These, the so called Blue-Book and Brown-Book have, since Wittgenstein's death, been printed.) Other sets of notes made by various students were duplicated and circulated. Wittgenstein, meanwhile, was working on the manuscript of a book. When this, his celebrated *Philosophical Investigations*, was posthumously published in 1953, large sections of the philosophical public had already had a sometimes rather garbled preview of its contents. *Philosophical Investigations* is in a relatively finished form, and is the principal source-book for the later Wittgensteinian philosophy.

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Wittgenstein's work was influenced to an exceptionally small degree by his reading of other philosophers. It seems to have been very largely the stimulus of oral discussions with one or two people that set his thoughts going. The early Wittgenstein was set going by discussions with Russell. The later philosophy resulted, according to Wittgenstein's own account, from the stimulus of conversations with Frank Ramsey and with an economist colleague at Cambridge by the name of Sraffa. I should like, in giving a rough sketch of some of Wittgenstein's ideas, to try to set these in the context of those trends of thought which, via Russell and others, set him off.

First of all I propose to say something about the *early* Wittgensteinian philosophy — that of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. In order to place this in its historical setting I shall first give a very rough sketch of certain intellectual developments of the later nineteenth century — developments that must have (partly, at least) suggested to Russell those philosophical ideas he had at the time when the young Wittgenstein became his pupil.

The rapid development of chemical and physical theory during the nineteenth century led a number of scientists, late in that century, to raise *philosophical questions* concerning the imperceptible entities these theories seemed to treat of — entities such as *molecules*, *atoms*, *ether waves*, and so on. A sceptic could say: the observable phenomena regularly proceed *as if* they were due to the workings of such theoretical entities — but since no one ever has nor ever could observe these entities themselves, what right have we to assert their existence? Are we really entitled to say anything *more* than that observable things proceed *as if* the theoretical entities existed? There seemed to be a problem of justifying a precarious inference to the *forever invisible* — a problem remarkably analogous to eighteenth century problems of how, given that all we are aware of is our '*ideas*' or '*sensations*', we could justify the inference thence to a material world.

Some of the philosophizing scientists did, indeed, come to think the inference illegitimate — that we have no adequate ground for believing in the *real existence* of the entities — the atoms, ether-waves and so on — which their theories spoke of. But they were unwilling, merely on that account, to abandon the theories: no scientist abandons a scientific theory until he has a better one to put in its place. They therefore had to say such things as: "Statements in the theory are not *really* about what they *seem* to be about — i.e. theoretical entities — for

these do not exist. They are *really* about *that which alone exists — namely the observable*. The theory is *not* to be taken as *literally* true, but as a useful device for economizing thought — a sort of mnemonic picture that helps us to anticipate and control observable phenomena.

It is noteworthy that this late nineteenth century positivist doctrine was a doctrine concerning *the way our language works*: it held that statements couched in terms of scientific theory *play a different role in our language* from that played by *ordinary* statements about observables. Ordinary statements were taken to be literally true or literally false reports of real observable happenings among real observable things: theoretical statements were taken to be neither true nor false in *this* sense, since they were not *meant* to be reports of what was really true, but rather to be symbolic devices to help us *organise* our knowledge about observables. On this view there are two 'levels' of language — the fact-stating level and the 'theoretical' level — and utterances on different levels 'work' in quite different ways.

A theory of this sort, if correct, sidesteps the sceptic's challenge. The sceptic says: How can you possibly *justify* the inference from *one* sort of entity to entities of a quite *different* sort, if no one ever has, ever will or ever could actually *observe* the latter sort of entity? The answer is: "There's no need to justify any inference, for there is *no inference*. In setting up a theory you aren't *inferring* facts about real but unobservable entities: you're doing something different from this." Nevertheless a positivist theory, if it is expounded in *this* sort of way only, is quite vague on the question of *what* sort of logical relations, if any, do hold between the different levels.

Russell, however, who started his career as a mathematician, had a very definite and precise idea of what sort of relation there must be — an idea fairly evidently derived from certain nineteenth century developments in mathematics. Earlier mathematicians had operated freely and profitably with such notions as that of an *irrational number* and of an *infinitesimal*, despite the fact that the notions, as then presented, were logically incoherent. In the nineteenth century these notions were made thoroughly respectable, logically, when it was shown how they could be *defined* in terms of simpler, unproblematic ideas. But the sense in which such a notion as that of '√2' was *defined* was a quite novel one — quite different from the traditional idea of a definition as typified by, for instance, "a triangle is a plane rectilinear three-sided figure". The latter defines the word 'triangle' in isolation, by setting up an equivalence between this *word* as such and *a defining phrase*. The new sort of definition does not do this: "√2", for instance, is not defined *in isolation*. Instead rules are given whereby *any complete statement* in which the symbol "√2" occurs can be translated *as a whole* into some *other complete statement* in which the expression "√2" and others like it do *not* occur. For instance: the statement is to be translated *as a whole* into "There is at least one fraction greater than ½ whose square is less than 2". But no particular translation is provided for the expression "√2" as such. It is defined only "in context" or "in use", as Russell would put it. By such definitions in use — rules for translating sentences as wholes — such a notion as that of "√2" was said to be "reduced to" that of ordinary rational number.

This notion of a definition-in-use cleared up a number of obstinate puzzles in the philosophy of mathematics. Russell saw in it, early in this century,[5] the key idea that was similarly to solve philosophical problems outside the field of mathematics. Notably it was to clear up those cases where we seemed to be in the position of making a rash inference from the known to the unknown, and of being unable to justify our inference in the face of sceptical criticism. The trick, as Russell put it, was to "replace an inferred entity by a logical construction", that is, to show that the supposed inferred entity is really *definable* in terms of observables — definable, that is, in the way that "√2" is definable in terms of ordinary fractions. Are there doubts about the inference from observables to the the unobservable entities of scientific theory? Resolve them by showing how, in principle, any statement

5. That is, the twentieth century.

purporting to be about an unobservable entity can be translated into statements about observables. Are there doubts, of the traditional sort, about the inference from our sensations to the existence of material objects? Resolve them by showing how statements, ostensibly about material objects, are translatable or 'analysable' into statements about sensations.

Russell, in fact, came to the view that — in the sense in which the statement '$\sqrt{2} > ½$' is not *about* a peculiar entity called '$\sqrt{2}$' — in that sense *most* ordinary statements are not really *about* the objects they purport to be about. And just as (it might be held), you give the *real* meaning of '$\sqrt{2} > ½$' when you give its correct *analysis*, namely 'At least one fraction greater than ½ has a square less than 2' — so also, to give the *real* meaning of most ordinary statements you would have to give their *analyses*. When an everyday statement is translated in this way the resulting statement, in its completely analysed form, *would* be about what it purports to be about.

It was against the background of such ideas, and in a rather similar spirit, that Wittgenstein wrote his *Tractatus*. He says in it, for instance, "Russell's merit is to have shown that the apparent logical form of the proposition need not be its real form". The *Tractatus* accepts the idea that most statements would need translating into "fully analysed form" before they would *really* be about what they purported to be about. And it raises, among other things, the very general question: What features must be possessed by any language whatsoever, if it is to be *capable* of doing what language does? Wittgenstein notes that it is of the essence of language that we can often understand a sentence we have *never* heard before, provided that it is built up out of familiar words. And he asks: *How* is it *possible* that we should understand such a sentence, *without ever having had its sense explained to us*? His answer is his so-called "Picture theory of meaning". A sentence can be understood the very first time it is heard only because the sentences of a language are, in a certain respect, like pictures or models. A sentence admittedly does not *resemble* the fact it states: but it is also *not* essential that a model or picture should actually resemble what it states. You could, for instance, let a certain *pen* and *pencil* represent *Mr Smith* and *Mr Jones* respectively, let *a certain book* represent *a certain house*, and let the relation of *resting upon* represent the relation of *owning*. Once these 'representing conventions' are laid down, you can place the pencil on the book; — and then the fact that *the pencil is resting on the book* will represent the fact that *Mr Jones owns the house in question*. And a person, provided he knows the representing conventions, will understand what is meant by the pencil resting upon the book, as soon as he sees this for the first time, without any further explanation.

The essence of language, according to the picture-theory, is seen in the above example. The pencil's resting on the book is a fact, which consists of these elements — the *pencil*, the *book* and the relation of *resting-upon*. The fact consists in these three elements 'hanging together', as it were. And the fact, in virtue of the representing conventions, asserts another fact: namely Mr Jones' ownership of the house. This latter fact also consists of three elements — *Mr Jones*, *the house*, and the relation of *owning* — all three of them 'hanging together'. The hanging together of the elements of the former fact *asserts* the hanging together of the represented elements which comprise the latter fact.

A further *Tractatus* doctrine is that there must be something *common* to two facts if it is to be possible at all for one to be used to *assert* the other. Any *possible* language *must* have certain features in common with the facts it asserts. But it is impossible to *say*, in any language, *what* these features are. To do so you would have to use a language which did *not* have these features; and this is impossible. However, this which cannot be *said* in any language, *shows itself* in language. This difficult doctrine of the unsayable which nevertheless shows itself is another of the main themes of the book.

Wittgenstein's *later* work is very different from this in spirit and in manner. And it is possible, I think, to see in it to some extent the indirect influence of the greatest of all American philosophers, C. S. Peirce. The evidence for this is as follows: The years 1927–1930, when

Wittgenstein had just returned to Cambridge and to philosophy, were evidently the period when the new philosophy was germinating. A paper written about this time (and repudiated by its author as soon as it appeared in print, if not before) shows Wittgenstein still philosophizing in the manner of the *Tractatus*. And documents from the early 1930's show him *already* beginning to do philosophy in the manner of the later *Philosophical Investigations*. Now during these crucial years he had, he tells us "innumerable conversations" with Frank Ramsey, which forced him to recognize "grave mistakes" in his earlier work. What were Ramsey and he talking about in these "innumerable conversations" during the last two years of Ramsey's life? We have evidence of what Ramsey was thinking about and writing about at that time, for the posthumously published collected papers of his include various dated manuscripts from this time. Ramsey had been reading Norman Campbell's "Physics, the Elements" — and working on Campbell's account of the logic of *theories* in physics. And he had also just read and been deeply impressed by the collection of Peirce's papers which was entitled "Chance, Love and Logic". In a number of manuscripts Ramsey adopts and works on 'pragmaticist' notions of Peirce. (Peirce, it will be recalled, re-christened *his* philosophy 'pragmaticism' to distinguish it from James's 'pragmatism'.) Now it seems exceedingly probable that in his conversations at that time with Wittgenstein he would be bringing pragmaticist criticisms to bear on Wittgenstein's earlier philosophy. The hypothesis that this actually took place is further supported by the fact that Wittgenstein's later philosophy is very much closer to 'pragmaticism' than his earlier philosophy had been.

What is common to the two is not so much specific doctrines as a common 'spirit' and certain general 'themes'. Here are some aspects of Peirce's philosophy which, as we shall see, are analogous to certain features in Wittgenstein's later philosophy.

(a) Many previous philosophers had tended to talk as though the essence of such mental activities and states as *believing*, *thinking*, *inquiring*, *coming to know* was the occurrence of some *state* or *process* in the mind of the one who believes, thinks and so on — a state or process open to *his* introspection, but private to him. Peirce, following Bain, gave a *behaviorist* account of belief: to believe, for him, was to have a certain *habit* of action. And a habit of action is, of course, something *public*, open to *anyone* to observe if he will. One of the chief contentions of the later Wittgenstein is that statements about believing, expecting, hoping, feeling pain or anger, intending and so on *are not* to be construed as reports of *private* episodes in the mind of some person — that for such statements there must always be *public* checks.

(b) Peirce insists that our idea of anything *is* our idea of its sensible effects — of the effects that might conceivably have practical bearings. Giving an example of the application of the pragmatist rule to the clarifying of the concept of 'force' he says: "we must begin by asking what is the immediate use of thinking about force". Compare Wittgenstein's dictum: "the meaning of an expression is its *use*".

(c) Unlike many other philosophers, who tended to talk of inquiry and the getting of knowledge as if it were something that an isolated individual could do, Peirce stressed that inquiry is a social and cooperative affair: "In sciences in which which men come to agreement", he says, "when a theory has been broached it is considered to be on probation until the agreement is reached." Wittgenstein too, stresses the fact that knowledge must be *public*; and stresses the fact the certain *agreements in judgment* are essential for certain types of knowledge to be possible e.g. (p. 225) "Mathematicians do not in general quarrel over the result of a calculation. (This is an important fact.) If it were otherwise . . . then our concept of 'mathematical certainty' would not exist."

(d) Peirce says: "Let us not pretend to doubt in philosophy what we do not doubt in our hearts." (C. L. C. p. 2) Compare Wittgenstein: (p. 224) "I can be as *certain* of someone else's sensations as of any fact . . ." (an imagined objector) "But if you are *certain*, isn't it that you are shutting your eyes in the face of doubt?" Wittgenstein replies: "They are shut."

These quotations may have given some impression of the sort of view that Wittgenstein was putting forward in *Philosophical Investigations*. I shall now try to set out, systematically if briefly, *some* of the main points made in that book. (Naturally I shall be a bit selective.)

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In the earlier *Tractatus* Wittgenstein had asked what must essentially be the case for something like a *sentence*, or a *diagram*, or a *map* to express some actual or possible fact. His account, you will recall, was in terms of elements of one fact being appointed, by certain correlation conventions, to *represent* or *stand for* elements in another fact. And in the whole book there is very little mention of the *people* who use these sentences, and little discussion of what is involved in *using* sentences, *meaning something by them*, *understanding* them, and so on. In *Philosophical Investigations* the whole emphasis is quite different: not on sentences and words, but on *people* who use language in the furtherance of their various activities. The *Tractatus* notion of the meaning of a word being a matter of what element of reality it was conventionally appointed to *stand for* or *name* comes in for explicit criticism. "To understand a language" it is said "is to understand a form of life." — Early in the book Wittgenstein gives the following description of a rather artificially simple case of language using:

(p. 2) "I send someone shopping . . . 'five' is used."

Notice here how Wittgenstein says "Explanations come to an end somewhere." Elsewhere he remarks "The chain of reasons must come to an end." This is a very central point in his thinking, which I shall try to expound in my own way.

If someone disputes a mathematical statement I may give him a proof of it; starting with something he assents to and proceeding thence by a chain of *very* simple steps, each one of which is so obvious that he cannot but admit it, till I lead him, after the last such step, to assent to the statement he had disputed. Let us consider a *very* simple instance of what would be essentially the same sort of thing. Imagine that your young son gets, as a present, a box of tiny building blocks of various shapes and sizes. With it come detailed instructions, copiously illustrated by diagrams, of how to build various things — a bridge, an airplane, a hotel with swimming pool, and so on. You amuse yourself by building the bridge illustrated on the box, following the instructions it gives. Your son, viewing your handiwork, claims that what you've made isn't exactly the thing illustrated on the box — that you've got it wrong somehow. You claim it *is* what the instructions for building do produce. How could this dispute be settled?

Assume that the given instructions are *very* detailed, with illustrative diagrams of some familiar conventional sort, showing you what to do next at *every* stage in the building of the model, and showing you what correct compliance with the instructions for *that* particular step would look like. In that case you could settle the dispute as to what you *should* have built as the bridge, by starting at the beginning again, and going carefully through the building again, step by simple step, at each step checking with the instructions and diagrams for that step to make sure it is right. This procedure, if it can be relied on that you do each very simple step in the sequence correctly, will show conclusively what the completed bridge was meant to look like. (This would be analogous to proving a theorem in mathematics.)

Suppose that at one of the steps in the operation a dispute arises as to whether what you have done is the right thing to do at that point. To *justify* what you have done you could point to the relevant *diagram* of what to do at that stage, and say: "Look — it shows you here that *this* is what you're supposed to do!" (This is analogous to a *step* in your calculation or proof being challenged — and your *justifying* it by saying "I'm simply subtracting the same thing from both sides.") Pointing to the relevant diagram or calculation-rule could be said to be giving a *reason* for taking the next step in the way you do.

Suppose the other person agrees that the rule or conventional diagram you cite as justifying your step in building a proof is the right one, but insists that you are *misinterpreting it*, or

applying it wrongly to this case. He says perhaps — "No *look* at the diagram — *surely this* is what it means you to do here, not what you did!" Or if it is a step in a mathematical proof, he may say something similar, or perhaps say "No, I just don't see it — I can't follow it at all — I don't see what dividing through would come to in this case — I don't see that *you've* divided through at all!" If we assume that the step in question is a very very simple one — so that there's no question of interposing an *intermediate* step — what can you do now? You can't now give him a *reason* any more: all you can do is repeat what you've said and *exhort* him, in persuasive tones, "But just *look* at it — can't you see? *Think* man, use your brains!"

There *is* no reason to be given at this stage. Either he sees it or he doesn't — and if he does see it he will do it without having, or being able to give, a *reason* in justification. (The appeal: "Can't you *see* it? Surely you *must* see!" isn't a reason, it's an exhortation.) But even though he can't (in the very simple cases) be given a *reason* to justify making the right interpretation, and can't be given a reason for not making the wrong interpretation — even so there *is* a right and wrong here. That which he does in either case without reason may be correct *or* it *may be mistaken*. He is *not* entitled to insist that any interpretation that *strikes him as correct* must *be* correct.

How is it settled whether a person is correct or not when he claims that a certain calculation rule applied here results in *this*, or claims that a certain conventional diagram, as applied to the case in hand, means one has to do *this*? He is correct in the former claim if and only if almost anyone else who has been instructed in the relevant branch of mathematics would apply the rule, in this case, as he does. And he is correct in the latter case if and only if almost anyone else who has learnt to interpret this sort of diagram would do, in the given case, what he thinks is what the diagram calls for. In other words the criterion of correct interpretation of a rule or diagram (in the simple cases) is in accordance with the common practice of a group of people who *have* a common practice in applying such rules or interpreting such diagrams. Another very simple illustration. A person who thinks the numeral words should be recited in the order 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 5, 7, 8 etc is *wrong*, —wrong because the community to which he belongs has the practice of reciting them in a different order.

There *is* then, in such cases, a right and a wrong way of applying a rule in a given case, even though, in the simple cases, we can't get him to do the right thing by giving him a *reason* for doing it. [If we tell a person that a certain way of interpreting the rule in a particular case is that which conforms with the standard common practice this isn't giving him a *reason* for making this interpretation — it's giving him a reason for thinking this interpretation is the correct one — something different!]

When there is a right and a wrong thing to do — but a person can't be got to do the right thing by being given a *reason* for doing it — as in the cases we are considering — how *do* we get him to do the right thing, and to do it regularly? The answer is simple and straightforward: — by *training* him in the common practices of his group. The typical technique is the familiar pedagogical one of giving the pupil a few *examples* of what it *is* to do the right thing, then getting him (under supervision) to try his hand at doing it himself on some other examples, and correcting him when he goes wrong and encouraging him when he is right. In favourable cases — for instance with *most* though not all human beings in the learning of (say) simple addition — such *training* or *drill* will lead your pupil thereafter to do, on his own, what anyone else would do who had been through the training. The training makes him a participator in the common practices of the group. He like they will, in all sorts of different cases, do the *right* thing (that is what the *group* does) in various different situations — and like them will do it *without a reason*, because he has been trained.

It is just a large-scale *fact* about the world — which could conceivably have been different in this respect — that the sort of training described *does* produce a common practice. It is, so to speak, an accident that people exposed to training in certain mathematical calculations will thereafter agree on how the rule applies — that the *same* application will strike all of them as

the *right*, the *natural* one. But for this there would be no rules of mathematical calculation and no mathematics.

Now the points just established with regard to mathematics, and the like, apply in a closely parallel way in other fields. If someone, for instance, claims that a certain bird is a *flamingo*, he can give *reasons* in support of the claim — that it has long legs and neck, that its plumage is bright red, and so on. But if you and he are standing, in broad daylight, in front of a flamingo, and he disputes your claim that the thing before you both is *red* — what reason can you give in defence of *that*? What could you do but expostulate — But look at it! Can't you *see* it's red? But here, too, where no *reason* can be given for a correct statement, there nevertheless *is* a difference between right and wrong. As in the case of the calculation-rule the test is (roughly at least) your statement is correct if and only if it accords with what would be said, were he in your place, by anyone else *who has learned to use the colour words*. It is correct if it accords with the uniform practice of your group. And as in the case of basic calculation-rules the correct use of colour words is imparted to people by means of a certain *training* or drill. And it is again a large-scale accident, so to speak, that *training does* produce a common practice in the use of colour-words. The very possibility of there being a right and a wrong in the use of colour words depends on the fact that training *will* produce agreement in colour-judgments among the trainees. Wittgenstein says: "If language is to be means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgments. This seems to abolish logic but does not do so". He imagines an objector saying at this point: "So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?" And he replies "It is what human beings say that is true and false, and they agree in the language they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life."

One of the most characteristic and important of the views advanced in *Philosophical Investigations* — the rejection of the possibility of a *purely private or subjective language* — follows immediately from the points just made.

Consider such statements as "I have a pain"; "I have an itch"; "I am now having a visual image of a red rose". Many people would be inclined to say of these that in making them the speaker is telling us of the occurrence of a particular sort of *experience* of his — that he can, as it were, see into his own mind and there detect certain *mental entities* — pains, itches, visual images — whose presence he *reports* to us, and whose nature he describes. One is inclined to think that just as one can observe, report on and describe a red rose out there, so a person can observe a red visual image within him, report on it and describe it. The difference between the cases, so many would say, is that in the sort of first-person singular remark I have mentioned, the speaker is reporting on and describing something *private*, something only *he* can be *directly* aware of. Let's call this the inner-object theory.

Wittgenstein holds that this line of thought, very natural though it be, is completely mistaken. He has an argument to show that — from the very nature of language as such — one *could* not *describe* such an utterly private entity as the inner-object theory supposes one describes.

Let's consider the statement "I am in pain". If this reports the occurrence of a private object, your pain — which only *you* can inspect — how have you come to use the name 'pain' for it? The answer seems obvious: when you were a child you sometimes cut yourself and cried; sometimes fell over and whimpered — and so on. And on *those* occasions your parents and others from whom you picked up your English told you 'You are in pain.' So you were told to say 'I am in pain' on the occurrence of certain *public* happenings — bleeding fingers, whimpering, falling over and the like. But, say you, 'pain' is not the name you give to these *public* events — but to the private *inner* experience that you (and only you) are aware of *when* these public events occur. It names, you think, that *sort* of inner experience that regularly *accompanies* a certain sort of public event.

But if *that's* the story we can ask you: how do you know that the inner experience that accompanies cuts, bruises, tooth-extractions and so on is the *same sort* of inner experience each time? "Well — you may reply — I certainly *take* it to be the same, it *feels* the same to me — it *strikes* me as the same — that's why in each case I describe it by the same word 'pain'. I can *recognise* it, when it comes again, as *another experience of the same sort* as I had before when I cut myself."

The question then arises: How can you be sure you recognize it *correctly*, that you aren't *mixing things up*? (Remember you are claiming to be simply reporting the nature of an inner experience — so you must go by *that alone* — it *wouldn't* do to say: I know that this experience I now have is *pain* again, because I have again cut my *finger*, and pain is the experience you get when you cut your finger, and the like. For if *this* is your answer you are *not* using the word pain *purely* as a description of the inner private experience: in this case 'pain' for you would mean "the inner experience — whatever its quality as experience may be — which regularly accompanies cuts, visits to dentists and the like". Thus *if* you are *really* to use the word pain *simply* to describe a certain sort of character of *inner* private experience, then *you cannot* check on the correctness or otherwise of your statement "this is *pain* that I now feel" by reference to cuts and bruises. It must be done *purely* by reference to the inner experience itself.

So look inside, contemplate the experience you now have. Is it or is it not sufficiently like what you had yesterday when you said you were in pain for it to be correct for you to apply to it that *same* name again? If you say it *is* sufficiently like it, can you *justify* that claim by giving a *reason* for thinking it to be the same? The one *good* reason you might have given for thinking this to be *another* case of *pain* — namely that this is another case of cutting yourself — is not available to you, by hypothesis, if you are claiming your statement to be purely a report of *inner* experience. And it will be no use trying to give as a reason some other fact (or supposed fact) that has to do *purely* with the *inner*. If you do, the same problems will arise about it.

Perhaps, then, your statement that this present experience, quâ experience, has the same quality as one you previously described as 'pain' — perhaps this statement is one of those which can, and indeed must, be made without any reason, but which may nevertheless be correct? Perhaps it's like 'This is red', or like '*This* is what the rule tells you to do in *this* case'? But if so, there must be some way of distinguishing correct from incorrect statements that this inner experience is like that previous one. If your word 'pain' simply describes what *you* alone are aware of — then there can be no training of others in its use (in *that* meaning) — no common practice of a group, therefore, of that sort which in other cases *does* furnish a criterion of correctness. And so there is *no* way of distinguishing between correct and incorrect.

But in that case suppose the experience *strikes you* as the same as before; suppose you have the *impression* that it is the same experience again, namely that which you call 'pain'. There is now no conceivable way left of distinguishing between true impressions of this sort and false impressions, between its striking you that way and really being so, and its striking you that way and its not being so. You may say anything you have a mind to say: *nothing* can go wrong.

But then — if the rules of the language are — "You may say whatever takes your fancy, whatever you say will be all right" then there are *no rules*, and it's *no language* and you aren't *really saying anything*.

The hypothesis that your first-person statements might *really* be sheer descriptions of inner experiences open to you *alone* turns out, by analysis, to be incoherent.