

**THE ANALOGY BETWEEN PSYCHOANALYSIS  
AND  
WITTGENSTEIN'S LATER PHILOSOPHICAL METHODS**

by

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There is no way of showing that the whole result of analysis may not be “delusion”. It is something which people are inclined to accept and which makes it easier for them to go certain ways: it makes certain ways of behaving and thinking natural for them. They have given up one way of thinking and adopted another.

Wittgenstein, “Conversations on Freud”

Getting hold of the difficulty *deep down* is what is hard.

Because if it is grasped near the surface it simply remains the difficulty it was. It has to be pulled out by the roots; and that involves our beginning to think about these things in a new way. The change is as decisive as, for example, that from the alchemical to the chemical way of thinking. The new way of thinking is what is so hard to establish.

Once the new way of thinking has been established, the old problems vanish; indeed they become hard to recapture. For they go with our way of expressing ourselves and, if we clothe ourselves in a new form of expression, the old problems are discarded along with the old garment.

Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*

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## ABSTRACT

Wittgenstein's analogy between psychoanalysis and his later philosophical methods is explored and developed. Historical evidence supports the claim that Wittgenstein characterized an early version of his general remarks on philosophy (§§89-133 in the *Philosophical Investigations*) as a sustained comparison with psychoanalysis. A non-adversarial, therapeutic interpretation is adopted towards Wittgenstein which emphasizes his focus on dissolving the metaphysical puzzlement of particular troubled individuals. A "picture" of Freudian psychoanalysis is sketched which highlights several features of Freud's therapeutic techniques and his conception of a neurosis. This portrait of Freud's methods is used as an "object of comparison" for drawing attention to important aspects of Wittgenstein's later practice of philosophy. Wittgenstein's therapeutic conception of philosophy, though concerned with ordinary linguistic practices, is held to focus primarily on rooting out the prejudices and dogmas which lie at the heart of the puzzled philosopher's inclinations to make metaphysical assertions.

## INTRODUCTION

When Wittgenstein returned to philosophy in the early 1930's he declared that "a method had been found" (MWL 322).<sup>1</sup> Though Wittgenstein scholars are not in agreement about the degree of continuity between Wittgenstein's early work, which culminates in the *Tractatus*, and his later work, which culminates in the *Philosophical Investigations*, it is generally agreed that Wittgenstein's later philosophical methods diverge from his earlier work in important ways. Wittgenstein himself wrote that he had "been forced to recognize grave mistakes" in the *Tractatus*, though he thought that his new conception of philosophy "could be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of [his] old way of thinking" (PI p. x).

Noted for his frequent and ingenious use of similes, Wittgenstein quite often compares his later conception of a philosophical problem or puzzle to a psychopathological illness which deludes and plagues the troubled philosopher. Scattered throughout Wittgenstein's writings are explicit references to Freud and to psychoanalysis. Although many of these remarks are quite critical, Wittgenstein also draws positive comparisons, in some places, between his own later practice of philosophy and Freud's psychotherapeutic techniques. While it is generally recognized that there are some therapeutic themes in Wittgenstein's later conception of philosophy, I do not think that most commentators attach great enough significance to these aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophical practice. In a discussion with O.K. Bouwsma, Wittgenstein suggested that he considered the analogy between psychoanalysis and his conception of philosophy to be an important and fruitful one:

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<sup>1</sup>Any citations which I make in this thesis either to works by Wittgenstein or to notes taken of his lectures consist of the appropriate abbreviation followed either by a remark number (signified by '\$') or by the relevant page number. A complete list of these abbreviations is included in the bibliography.

Wittgenstein [said he] had himself talked about philosophy as in certain ways like psychoanalysis. . . . When he became a professor at Cambridge [in 1939] he submitted a typescript to the committee. . . . Of 140 pages, 72 were devoted to the idea that philosophy is like psychoanalysis.<sup>2</sup>

Though it is unclear whether or not a typescript exists which fits this description, the suggestion that Wittgenstein develops this analogy over 72 pages is an intriguing one, and lends support to the idea that Wittgenstein thinks that there are substantial similarities worth exploring.

There is no record in the von Wright catalog of any typescript which makes explicit comparisons between psychoanalysis and philosophy for such a sustained length.<sup>3</sup> There is, however, good historical evidence that the typescript which Wittgenstein submitted to the Cambridge committee, as a part of his application for the position of Professor of Philosophy, was an early version of the *Philosophical Investigations* (TS 220). According to Wittgenstein's biographer, Ray Monk, "in the summer of 1938 [Wittgenstein] prepared for publication a typescript . . . [which] constitutes the very earliest version of the *Philosophical Investigations*". In the fall of 1938, Rush Rhees began work on an English translation of this typescript. It was hoped by Wittgenstein that the English translation and his original German version could be published together as a single book in a planned bilingual edition. Though Wittgenstein eventually decided not to go ahead with publication, Monk claims that when he "decided to apply for the post of Professor of Philosophy . . . he wanted to submit the translated portion of his book in support of his application".<sup>4</sup>

The historical evidence that Wittgenstein submitted TS 220 to the Cambridge committee, then, in conjunction with Bouwsma's report (assuming its accuracy) constitute good evidence for the claim that, in his discussion with Bouwsma, Wittgenstein was referring to an early version of the *Philosophical Investigations*.<sup>5</sup> The suggestion that the typescript in question might be TS 220, if true, would have profound implications for our understanding of Wittgenstein's later philosophical work. Most notably, if Wittgenstein conceives of TS 220 as including a sustained development of the analogy between psychoanalysis and his later conception of philosophy, then

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<sup>2</sup>O.K. Bouwsma, *Wittgenstein: Conversations, 1949-1951*, ed. J.L. Craft and Ronald E. Hustwit (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1986), 36.

<sup>3</sup>For the most current von Wright catalog, see G.H. von Wright "The Wittgenstein Papers", *Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), 35-62.

<sup>4</sup>Ray Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (New York: Macmillan, 1990), 413-414.

<sup>5</sup>Gordon Baker first suggested to me the possibility of there being a historical connection between the typescript mentioned by Wittgenstein to Bouwsma and the fact that Wittgenstein was working on an early version of the *Philosophical Investigations* (TS 220) when he applied for the Cambridge professorship.

the significance of Bouwsma's report may be primarily a methodological one: Wittgenstein's more general methodological and conceptual remarks on philosophy (PI §§89-133) are nearly all present, albeit differently arranged, over 72 pages of TS 220 (§§86-116).<sup>6</sup> Baker and Hacker note that TS 220 is, therefore, of particular historical importance for understanding Wittgenstein's "sustained, if disorderly, discussion of the nature of philosophy".<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the fact that §§86-116 of TS 220 cover 72 pages (matching in length the number of pages Wittgenstein claimed to have spent developing the psychoanalytic analogy), it is interesting to note that Wittgenstein includes among these remarks an explicit methodological comparison between his practice of philosophy and psychoanalysis (TS 220 §106). Though this remark, along with the rest of TS 220, remains unpublished, it is largely a polished version of the following, earlier remark from the so-called "Big-Typescript":

One of the most important tasks is to express all false trains of thought so characteristically that the reader says, "Yes, that's exactly the way I meant it". To make a tracing of the physiognomy of every error.

Indeed we can only convict someone else of a mistake if he acknowledges that this really is the expression of his feeling //if he (really) acknowledges this expression as the correct expression of his feeling//. For only if he acknowledges it as such, *is* it the correct expression. (Psychoanalysis.)

What the other person acknowledges is the analogy I am proposing to him as the source of his thought (BT 410).

Wittgenstein suggests that just as the success of a psychoanalytic treatment depends on the patient's sincere acknowledgment of the proposed source of her neurosis, so the correctness of Wittgenstein's characterization of the source of someone's philosophical puzzlement is dependent on that person's acceptance of his account. Wittgenstein apparently believes, here, that his later methods of philosophy are in some ways like those utilized in psychoanalysis. It may be for this and related reasons, therefore, that Wittgenstein considers his comparison with psychoanalysis a useful one for shedding light on his practice of philosophy.

Though Wittgenstein ultimately dropped his explicit reference to psychoanalysis in the final version of the *Philosophical Investigations*, there still remains a substantial degree of overlap between PI §§89-133 and the earlier general remarks on philosophy found in TS 220. If only for this reason alone, I believe that the implications which may well emerge for how we are

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<sup>6</sup>Cf. Baker and Hacker's correlation of PI §§89-133 with TS 220 [what they call "PPI"] §§86-116.--See G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *An Analytical Commentary on the Philosophical Investigations*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980-85; Basil Blackwell, 1988), 1a:194.

<sup>7</sup>Baker and Hacker, 189.

to understand the *Philosophical Investigations* and Wittgenstein's later practice of philosophy more generally, warrant a closer examination of the comparison between psychoanalysis and Wittgenstein's later work. If, through a closer examination of Wittgenstein's writings, the importance of this analogy can be illustrated, then independent grounds would emerge for accepting the veracity of Bouwsma's report.

The general aim of this thesis, therefore, is to explore Wittgenstein's later philosophical writings in an attempt to spell out the content of his analogy of philosophy with psychoanalysis. I realize, however, the controversial nature of the suggestion that Wittgenstein's conception and practice of philosophy may be, in important ways, far more similar to psychoanalysis than previous commentators have allowed. Though it is not my intention by any means to suggest that the analogy with psychoanalysis somehow exhausts the richness of Wittgenstein's later work, I do think that it lies at the heart of a particularly rich interpretation of Wittgenstein's whole conception of philosophy.<sup>8</sup> In the first chapter I seek to illustrate a number of the therapeutic themes of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy which I suggest have been overlooked by most commentators. By looking at some of Wittgenstein's own descriptions of what he thought he was engaged in, a number of important similarities with psychoanalysis begin to emerge. Having examined Wittgenstein's work in light of the therapeutic interpretation which I adopt, I then proceed in the second chapter to offer a "picture" of Freudian psychoanalysis. By considering how Freud describes his own therapeutic practices, I hope to further illuminate some of the features mentioned in the first chapter. This "picture", then, is not meant to offer a definitive account of psychoanalysis or even of Freud's own work, but merely to serve as an "object of comparison" (PI §130) for investigating Wittgenstein's way of practicing philosophy. In the third chapter, I make more explicit some of the most striking similarities between Wittgenstein's philosophical methods and Freud's psychotherapeutic techniques, suggesting some similarities which merit further study. I then consider one example in greater detail. In my conclusion, I briefly close with a few thoughts on why Wittgenstein may have dropped his

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<sup>8</sup>Though this non-adversarial, therapeutic interpretation of Wittgenstein is presently not very well received, there are a number of individuals, from whom I have learned a great deal, whose reading of Wittgenstein and whose own practice of philosophy is largely in sympathy with many of the features I sketch below. For example, see the work of Friedrich Waismann, O.K. Bouwsma, Timothy Binkley and, especially, the more recent work of Gordon Baker.

explicit reference to psychoanalysis in the final version of the *Philosophical Investigations*. It is my belief that, though he dropped the explicit comparison to psychoanalysis, once one begins to look in the right places with the proper attitude, a rich and profound web of connections emerges. Though there is much more to be learned from this therapeutic approach to Wittgenstein than I have been able to include in this thesis, it is my hope nevertheless that this thesis may shed some light on what Wittgenstein might have meant, in his discussion with Bouwsma, by his characterization of a progenitor of PI §§89-133 as “devoted to the idea that philosophy is like psychoanalysis”.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Bouwsma, *ibid.*



## CHAPTER 1

### WITTGENSTEIN'S PHILOSOPHY: A THERAPEUTIC INTERPRETATION

Especially in his later work, Wittgenstein characterizes philosophical problems in largely negative terms, comparing them to psychopathological ailments and instances of religious sin which disrupt a person's life. Someone who is philosophically puzzled, according to Wittgenstein, has a "vague mental uneasiness" (LWL 22) or "mental cramp" (BB 1), is in a "muddle felt as a problem" (BB 6), is often "tempted" by (PI §520), "seduced" by (PI §§93, 192) or "obsessed with a symbolism" (BB 108), is under "delusions" (AWL 134) and "grammatical illusions" (PI §110) and so on. These different characterizations of philosophical puzzlement suggest an intellectual malady in the form of an illness which needs to be cured or a moral weakness which needs to be overcome. Further, each concrete instance of puzzlement points to the existence of a *person* who is ill or in a state of sin and, therefore, seems to express a particular individual's need of treatment or salvation: "A philosopher is someone who has to cure many intellectual diseases in himself before he can arrive at the notions of common sense" (CV 44).

If we take this negative characterization of philosophical puzzlement literally, then Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy might be considered to be much more narrowly circumscribed than more traditional conceptions of the subject. The activity would be *strictly* therapeutic:

Philosophy isn't anything except philosophical problems, the particular individual worries that we call "philosophical problems" (PG 193).

There is not *a* philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies (PI §133). A particular philosophical problem is not conceived of as a genuine question to be given a definitive answer, but as the expression of somebody's confusion:

The characteristic feature of [a philosophical problem] is that a confusion is expressed in the form of a question that doesn't acknowledge the confusion, and that what *releases* the questioner from his problem is a particular alteration of his method of expression (PG 193).

If a philosophical problem is viewed in this light, then Wittgenstein's aim becomes more like that of the psychotherapist, as he tries to help a puzzled individual to dissolve her problem by getting her to acknowledge what might be the deeper source of her confusion. What the puzzled philosopher may be "tempted to say" (PI §254) is then characterized by Wittgenstein as symptomatic of her underlying malady. Correspondingly, rather than trying to give an answer to what she expresses in the form of a question (responding at the level of her symptoms), Wittgenstein searches for the more rooted basis of her confusion: "The philosopher's treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness" (PI §255).

The presence of these therapeutic themes in Wittgenstein's later work is not in general dispute. There is a strong inclination, however, either to reject the validity of Wittgenstein's purely negative conception of philosophy or to supplement his negative characterization of individual philosophical puzzles with an underlying positive task for philosophy. Most people simply are not persuaded that philosophy is limited to the dissolution of particular individuals' confusions. They respond to Wittgenstein's more narrow therapeutic conception of philosophy by identifying additional problem-types which they claim go beyond the context-specific, purpose-relative nature of a given individual's philosophical puzzlement (e.g., claiming that philosophy is essentially concerned with the most general questions about reality, whose solution, it is held, have consequences for all of humanity).

Among the followers of Wittgenstein, there is a general inclination to treat his negative characterization of philosophical puzzles as an incitement to go on the offensive against those philosophers who still, for example, insist on trying to vindicate realism over empiricism, or who still labor under the misconceived notion that metaphysics can constitute something more than mere grammatical nonsense. On this adversarial interpretation, Wittgenstein is held to have discovered the true nature of philosophy, finally making it a "legitimate" enterprise: "The real discovery is the one that . . . gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* in question" (PI §133).<sup>10</sup> Armed with Wittgenstein's observation

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<sup>10</sup>See, e.g., Baker and Hacker, 1a:246.

that philosophical problems are *really* confusions about the ordinary use of our words, these adversarial Wittgensteinians consider their proper role as philosophers to involve “pin-pointing [the] conceptual mistakes” which underlie the various traditional positions in philosophy.<sup>11</sup>

In their pursuit of conclusive arguments to vindicate Wittgenstein’s conception of philosophy, there is a tendency to supplement Wittgenstein’s negative conception of a philosophical puzzle with a more positive role for the Wittgensteinian to serve. Since philosophical problems are based on confusions about the grammar of our language and Wittgenstein characterizes his method as “descriptive” (PI §109), a number of commentators suggest that a further aim of the Wittgensteinian is the achievement of an *Übersicht* or “surview” of a particular region of our grammar (Cf. PI §122).<sup>12</sup> While obtaining an *Übersicht* may be quite difficult, involving the “careful *description* of our ordinary uses of language”, on this view, once accomplished, the Wittgensteinian comes into possession of a sort of “topographical” atlas, reminiscent of Ryle’s descriptions of “logical geography”.<sup>13</sup> Though a particular *Übersicht* may be arrived at in the process of dissolving a given individual’s philosophical problem, once cataloged, it takes on a general significance, serving as a permanent “wall” (BT 425) against traditional philosophical positions (e.g., Wittgenstein’s so-called “private-language” argument is characterized as a conclusive refutation of Cartesian-Dualism). Though perhaps conceiving of themselves as engaged in an activity which is essentially unlike science, I think that this adversarial, cartographic approach to Wittgenstein attributes to his “descriptions” of our language a quasi-scientific character: Wittgenstein’s “descriptions” are treated as conclusive appeals to the *facts* of ordinary language, to be used for settling via argument a philosophical problem once and for all.

### 1. THE NON-ADVERSARIAL REALM AND WITTGENSTEIN’S METHOD

The adversarial nature of this common approach to Wittgenstein (while in agreement with much of how philosophy is practiced) tends to de-emphasize the therapeutic themes in his

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<sup>11</sup>Hans-Johann Glock, “*Philosophical Investigations* Section 128: ‘Theses in Philosophy’ and Undogmatic Procedure”, *Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations: Text and Context*, ed. Robert L. Arrington and Hans-Johann Glock (London: Routledge, 1991), 84.

<sup>12</sup>See, e.g., A.J.P. Kenny, “Wittgenstein on the Nature of Philosophy”, *The Legacy of Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 38-60; P.M.S. Hacker, *Insight and Illusion*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

<sup>13</sup>Hacker, 152.

writings and leads to a dogmatism which Wittgenstein himself sought to avoid. Its emphasis on the facts of grammar and the importance of arriving at conclusive argument conceives of Wittgenstein's descriptive method as a means for settling what might be called a conflict in "opinion" between the confused metaphysician and our ordinary language. The adversarial Wittgensteinian serves, as it were, as the legal representative of "ordinary language", drawing on her detailed and perspicuous briefs in order to convict the puzzled philosopher of a sort of linguistic felony.

While the adversarial Wittgensteinian may as a matter of fact offer descriptions of ordinary use which most people are inclined to certify as factually correct, her interpretation of Wittgenstein has difficulty making much sense of his methodological remarks about having no opinion, about being willing to drop some remark if someone objects to it, about theses in philosophy being agreeable to everyone and so on. These sorts of remarks do not seem to allow for an arena in which the Wittgensteinian can have her factual claims about ordinary use vindicated over the metaphysician's mistaken opinions. I think that one of the features that distinguishes Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy from other past practices is his tendency to locate philosophical problems in a realm where argumentative discourse seems inappropriate:

In all questions we discuss I have no opinion; and if I had, and it disagreed with one of your opinions, I would at once give it up for the sake of argument *because it would be of no importance for our discussion. We constantly move in a realm where we all have the same opinions* (AWL 97, italics mine).

If one tried to advance theses in philosophy, *it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree to them* (PI §128, italics mine).

Unless you think that Wittgenstein is claiming that his arguments are so powerful that no one could *possibly* debate them, it might be more appropriate to treat remarks of this sort as suggestions that argument does not occupy the same central position for Wittgenstein which it normally is given in philosophy. We might say that Wittgenstein's use of argument for the therapeutic purposes of dissolving particular philosophical puzzles may play a very different role than the traditional philosophical use of argument for adjudicating between conflicting opinions.

One important feature of Wittgenstein's contrast between his conception of philosophy and science concerns the role played by "facts" or information. Two rival scientific hypotheses are the equivalent of two conflicting opinions about some natural process, and are adjudicated in relation to the empirical facts. We might say that the facts explain why one opinion is correct

and the other is mistaken. Wittgenstein, however, repeatedly distinguishes his descriptive practice of philosophy from this sort of explanatory appeal to the facts:

It was true to say that our considerations could not be scientific ones. . . . And we may not advance any kind of theory. There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. We must do away with all explanation, and description alone must take its place. And this description gets its light, that is to say its purpose, from the philosophical problems. These are, of course, not empirical problems (PI §109).

I want to suggest that when Wittgenstein contrasts philosophical problems with “empirical problems”, he has in mind a distinction between problems arising in a realm where “we all have the same opinions” (suggesting that opinions do not come into conflict) and those problems which involve a difference of opinion. The latter sort are traditionally resolved through argument and appeal to fact. In a case where no difference of opinion exists, there does not seem to be (conceptually) any room for an argument (everyone is in agreement). Such a non-adversarial realm suggests a place where the problems which emerge, whatever their nature, are quite unlike those solved in the sciences and in the traditionally conceived dialectical practice of philosophy. Yet, Wittgenstein suggests that his descriptive method of practicing philosophy can dissolve problems of this very sort (dissolving them, as it were, through the medium of language alone).

The suggestion that Wittgenstein did not think that philosophical problems are based on a mistaken opinion or that they involved a dispute over certain facts, gains support if we consider Wittgenstein’s frequent attempts at distinguishing his practice of philosophy from those activities which teach people new information or which try to change their mistaken opinions about something:

All I can give you is a method; I cannot teach you any new truths (AWL 97).

One of the greatest difficulties I find in explaining what I mean is this: You are inclined to put our difference in one way, as a difference of *opinion*. But I am not trying to persuade you to change your opinion. I am only trying to recommend a certain sort of investigation. If there is an opinion involved, my only opinion is that this sort of investigation is immensely important, and very much *against the grain* of some of you. If in these lectures I express any other opinion, I am making a fool of myself (LFM 103).

Wittgenstein seems to suggest that he is offering a method for removing philosophical puzzlement which does not revolve around a dispute over conflicting opinions (including, we might say, conflicting opinions about the actual facts of ordinary language). Rush Rhees, a former student and colleague of Wittgenstein’s, supports this point with his claim that

“Wittgenstein would have demolished, if he could, the idea of philosophical discussion as a contest to settle who’s right and who’s wrong”.<sup>14</sup>

Even if these points cast some doubt on the adequacy of the dominant adversarial, cartographic interpretation of Wittgenstein, they are difficult points to understand. Many people cannot even accept the suggestion that philosophical problems are really confusions about our grammar. Yet Wittgenstein recommends that we investigate how we use words. For the adversarial Wittgensteinian, so long as Wittgenstein is understood to be making some observations about how people sometimes violate the rules of grammar, and how their puzzlement can be removed by reminding them of the actual rules, then Wittgenstein’s descriptions will seem to be grounded by the facts of ordinary use (and hence will seem to have a substantive foundation). Yet Wittgenstein claims that he is only offering a method for dissolving puzzles which take place in a realm where everyone has the same opinions. He even suggests that his method might be characterized as “the method to treat as irrelevant *every* question of opinions”.<sup>15</sup> When every question of opinions is treated as irrelevant, then every dispute over what the facts are is likewise irrelevant. Yet, Wittgenstein characterizes his practice of philosophy as a descriptive activity. Is there no opinion involved over whether or not a description of our grammar correctly captures certain facts of use? I want to suggest that characterizing Wittgenstein’s descriptions or “grammatical remarks” as having a factual status (and hence corresponding or failing to correspond to how we ordinarily use words) sends us looking in the wrong place for a “realm where we all have the same opinions”.

## 2. THE “REALM OF POSSIBILITIES”

To take seriously Wittgenstein’s idea of a realm where we all agree, or a realm where the argument over different opinions is not relevant to the dissolution of philosophical puzzles, I think we need to pay much more attention to the way that Wittgenstein qualifies his statements with various modal terms like “might”, “can”, etc.<sup>16</sup> Wittgenstein’s use of these qualifications should not be read as undue hesitation on his part. Instead they should be read perfectly literally

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<sup>14</sup>Rush Rhees, “The Philosophy of Wittgenstein”, *Discussions of Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 42.

<sup>15</sup>Rhees, 43, italics mine.

<sup>16</sup>I am indebted to Gordon Baker for learning to appreciate the importance of these qualifications in Wittgenstein’s writings and for learning to *notice* these qualifications.

as signifying *possibilities* rather than actualities. That is, as offering possible senses to a given word or proposition, offering possible contexts in which—or points of view from which—we might agree that a word or phrase *could* be made sense of.

The contrast between possibilities and actualities enables us to distinguish two realms which might correspond to Wittgenstein's contrast between philosophy and science. Science or any activity which makes factual claims takes place in what might be called the "realm of actuality". Here, fact-stating discourse tends to adjudicate between a number of conflicting opinions, reducing these different possibilities to the one actuality which corresponds to a particular fact. Correspondingly, Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy locates philosophical problems in what might be called the "realm of possibility". Here, offering a new possible use for a term or form of expression simply adds to the collection of intelligible contexts: whereas questions of fact are resolved by decreasing possibilities, questions of intelligibility or understanding are resolved by increasing possibilities (we come to understand the particular way in which an individual is using her language).

By refusing to accept a particular possibility, someone is simply refusing to *acknowledge* the intelligibility of a certain context or suggesting that she is unsure what features characterize this context and hence justify calling it a different possibility. Unlike the realm of actuality, where the facts decide, as it were, between conflicting opinions, in the realm of possibility, the only thing which plays an analogous role in determining what is and is not a possibility is *a human decision* to recognize the intelligibility of a particular context. This recognition or acknowledgement may be expressed in a variety of ways, and only seems to be limited by how human beings decide to use language in their lives: "Philosophers very often talk about investigating, analysing, the meaning of words. But let's not forget that a word hasn't got a meaning given to it, as it were, by a power independent of us, so that there could be a kind of scientific investigation into what the word *really* means. A word has the meaning someone has given to it" (BB 27-28).

Whereas an opinion is justified by reference to the facts, a possibility may be justified by any number of different reasons: in short, possibilities are only bound by the purposes for which we decide to use our language. For example, if Wittgenstein says that one *might* call a

mathematical equation a rule of grammar (noting certain functional similarities between the way that mathematical equations and rules of grammar are used), this remark should be treated as a possibility not a claim (perhaps offered to someone who is puzzled about the metaphysical status of numbers). And most people could be brought to see the similarities which might justify extending the ordinary use of the term “rule of grammar” to include mathematical equations. If someone objected to this extension, then Wittgenstein might want to know her reasons for objecting (this might, e.g., defile her conception of the ‘crystalline purity’ of numbers [Cf. CV 79]), but he does not seem committed to insisting that she *has* to call a mathematical equation a rule of grammar: “I have no right to want you to say that mathematical propositions *are* rules of grammar” (LFM 55, italics mine). In the realm of possibilities, while people may be inclined to make use of particular contexts, the fact that others use different contexts does not amount to a difference of opinion, but more like a difference in how they live their lives and the activities they choose to engage in: “[human beings] agree in the language they *use*. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life (PI §241, italics mine).

### 3. THE METAPHYSICIAN’S USE OF “MUST”/“CANNOT”

Wittgenstein’s frequent use of modal qualifiers in his philosophical discussions can be given a point by remembering that his descriptive remarks concern philosophical puzzles and ways of removing those puzzles. When Wittgenstein suggests that “what *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use” (PI §115), his emphasis is not on everyday use, but on the philosophically puzzled person’s inclination to make a metaphysical assertion. We might say that for Wittgenstein a philosophical problem is characterized by someone’s metaphysical use of “must” or “cannot”:

Every philosophical problem typically contains one particular word or its equivalent, the word “must” or “cannot” (AWL 97).

One might even say that philosophy is the grammar of the words “must” and “can”, for that is how it shows what is a priori and what a posteriori (CE 411).

This observation alone may strike many people as simply wrong or perhaps strangely idiosyncratic. If we are to gain a deeper understanding of Wittgenstein’s practice of philosophy, however, we have to be prepared to take seriously the distinctions which he wishes to draw. For Wittgenstein, then, calling something a “metaphysical assertion” is not a loosely defined



criticism or merely a term of abuse, but the characterization of an individual's inclination to express herself in the dogmatic form of "must" or "cannot" under particular circumstances.

The characteristic feature of the metaphysician who seeks "treatment" from Wittgenstein is puzzlement or confusion. She is inclined to assert something like "Thinking *must* be a mental process", yet when she reflects on what she perceives as an essential feature of reality, she becomes puzzled and confused (asking herself questions like "Where does thinking take place?" or "How is thinking *possible*?"). This philosophical puzzlement can be extremely traumatic, nearly driving some individuals mad as they try to answer questions which won't seem to come into focus. Waismann offers a particularly telling account of the "deep disquiet" often experienced by the puzzled metaphysician:

The philosopher as he ponders over some such problem has the appearance of a man who is deeply disquieted. He seems to be straining to grasp something which is beyond his powers. The words in which such a question presents itself do not quite bring out into the open the real point—which may, perhaps more aptly, be described as the recoil from the incomprehensible. If, on a straight rail way journey, you suddenly come in sight of the very station you have just left behind, there will be terror, accompanied perhaps by slight giddiness. This is exactly how the philosopher feels when he says to himself, 'Of course time can be measured; but how *can* it?'<sup>17</sup>

What is particularly overwhelming about the philosopher's puzzlement is the combination of asserting with metaphysical force that something "must" be a certain way, while at the same time finding oneself simply unable to comprehend how it "can" be that way: "But *this* isn't how it is!"—we say. 'Yet *this* is how it has to *be*!'" (PI §112).

#### 4. COMPARISON OF POSSIBILITIES TO DISSOLVE THE PHILOSOPHER'S PROBLEM

Wittgenstein's approach to philosophical puzzles of the sort described above offers to the metaphysician a different diagnosis of her puzzlement. Rather than the perception of an essential feature of reality, Wittgenstein traces her use of "must" to an underlying prejudice for a particular form of expression:

Philosophy we might say arises out of certain prejudices. The words "must" and "cannot" are typical words exhibiting these prejudices. They are prejudices in favor of certain grammatical forms (AWL 115).

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<sup>17</sup>F. Waismann, "How I See Philosophy", *How I See Philosophy*, ed. R. Harré (London: Macmillan, 1968), 3-4. Waismann's essay "How I See Philosophy" is written in the therapeutic spirit which I wish to attribute to Wittgenstein. Much of its content, along with that of the book *The Principles of Linguistic Philosophy*, emerged from Waismann's close work with Wittgenstein over the period 1929-35--See G.P. Baker, "Verehrung und Verkehrung: Waismann and Wittgenstein", *Wittgenstein: Sources and Perspectives*, ed. C.G. Luckhardt (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1979), 243-285. I will follow Baker and Hacker's practice of treating Waismann's work as "derivative primary sources" of Wittgenstein--See Baker and Hacker, 1a:xxi.

He suggests that a given prejudice expresses someone's inclination to look at things from a particular point of view or to use an expression in a particular context, while conceiving of this possibility as a necessity. In other words, Wittgenstein suggests that the metaphysician's use of "must" might be characterized as a criterion for those situations where someone sees things in a particular way, without consciously recognizing her use of a particular form of expression as only constituting one of many possible contexts. As a result, when she consequently becomes confused or puzzled, her confusion may seem insurmountable since it seems to follow directly from an essential fact of the matter.

If Wittgenstein can persuade someone to conceive of her philosophical puzzlement as resting on a particular point of view, then he may be able to help her to see that she *need not* continue using a particular form of expression when she encounters difficulties. That is, he may be able to get her to acknowledge that her thinking was being guided or informed by one particular context. If he can do this, then he will have gotten her to see that her puzzlement was the result of her tendency to insist that everything in the world had to conform to a particular context in which she was inclined to think about the world: "If I correct a philosophical mistake I must always point to an analogy according to which one had been thinking, but which one did not recognize as an analogy" (BT 409). Since her puzzlement arises in the realm of possibility, however, there is no fact of the matter independent of her acknowledgment. If she does not acknowledge that she is using words in a particular manner, then there are no independent grounds for suggesting that she is. Instead, Wittgenstein and the puzzled philosopher will have failed to understand each other: her metaphysical assertions will remain unintelligible, though this does not mean that they *cannot* be made intelligible. It may take a creative act of imagination, however, to come up with a description which the metaphysician will acknowledge as adequately characterizing her thoughts (as it were, "putting a finger" on what lay at the source of her puzzlement). Wittgenstein's frequent use of words like "might" or "can" (examples of possibilities) can then be contrasted with the metaphysician's use of words like "must" or "cannot" (examples of necessities). Rather than conceiving of the philosopher's puzzlement as based on a mistaken *opinion* which might be removed by arguing *with* the person and by citing certain facts, Wittgenstein suggests that philosophical puzzles can be removed by helping the

puzzled person to rid herself of the compulsion to say “must”. That is, by helping her to see that what she conceives of as a constraining necessity is merely one context of many. In order to break the “spell” (BB 23) of the metaphysician’s “obsession”, Wittgenstein draws her attention to a whole host of other possibilities. It is by means of his comparison of these different possibilities, rather than by arguing over certain facts (including the facts of ordinary use) that Wittgenstein is able to dissolve someone’s puzzlement: “The puzzlement I am talking about can be cured only by peculiar kinds of comparisons” (LA 20).

For this reason, Wittgenstein’s grammatical investigations should be treated as operating within the realm of possibility rather than that of actuality:

What kind of investigation are we carrying out? Am I investigating the probability of cases that I give as examples, or am I investigating their *actuality*? No, I’m just citing what is *possible* and am therefore giving grammatical examples (BT 425).

Since Wittgenstein’s aim is the removal of a particular individual’s inclination to say “must”, his grammatical remarks (offered in the form of various “language-games” or possible contexts of meaning) help to break the philosopher’s conviction that she has gotten hold of something metaphysically “unique”:

Now you may question whether my constantly giving examples and speaking in similes is profitable. *My reason is that parallel cases change our outlook because they destroy the uniqueness of the case at hand.* For example, the Copernican revolution destroyed the idea that the earth has a unique place in the solar system (AWL 50, italics mine).

By comparing the philosopher’s metaphysical use of a form of expression with a range of similar cases—some actually used by her but “repressed” by her “obsession”, others resulting from Wittgenstein’s imagination of entirely new contexts—the philosopher’s inclination to say, for example, that “thinking *must* be a mental process” is removed. He is quite clear, however, that his purpose in sketching these possibilities is not to make a claim about the nature of thinking, but solely to remove the individual’s philosophical compulsion to say that thinking *must* involve a mental process:

I have been trying in all this to remove the temptation to think that there ‘*must* be’ what is called a mental process of thinking, hoping, wishing, believing, etc., independent of the process of expressing a thought, a hope, a wish, etc. . . . This, of course, doesn’t mean that we have shown that peculiar acts of consciousness do not accompany the expressions of our thoughts! Only we no longer say that they *must* accompany them (BB 41-42).

Now I don’t say that this is not *possible*. Only, putting it in this way immediately shows you that it *need not* happen. This, by the way, illustrates the method of philosophy. (BB 12, italics mine)

Wittgenstein's philosophical discussions, then, are aimed at removing the philosopher's puzzlement by getting her to acknowledge other possibilities. In this sense, Wittgenstein suggests that what he is trying to achieve in order to help her to remove her puzzlement is more like a change in her activity rather than a change in opinion: "I don't try to make you *believe* something you *don't* believe, but to make you *do* something you won't do".<sup>18</sup>

##### 5. CONSEQUENCES OF A NON-ADVERSARIAL, THERAPEUTIC INTERPRETATION

If we read Wittgenstein in light of this non-adversarial interpretation, a number of interesting consequences emerge. Rather than trying to vindicate one philosophical position over another (operating within the context of traditional adversarial philosophy), Wittgenstein conceives of philosophy as an activity which seeks to liberate an individual's thinking from the constraints of various dogmas and prejudices. To this end, the imagination and comparison of different possibilities becomes the most important skill of the Wittgensteinian. Since Wittgenstein's practice of philosophy takes place in the realm of possibility, it will be misleading or confusing to characterize him as an "ordinary language" philosopher, or to suggest that he is primarily concerned with how we *actually* use language. What Wittgenstein calls a "grammatical remark" or a "rule of grammar", therefore, will not necessarily correspond to what we ordinarily mean by "grammar" or call "grammatical rules".

Instead of forcing someone to adopt a position by means of an argument (what is commonly called a "knockdown" argument), Wittgenstein is offering a way out for the philosophically puzzled person in the form of a possibility which liberates that person from the obsessive power of the necessity which lies at the root of her philosophical confusion: "The philosopher strives to find the liberating word . . . the word with which one can express the thing and render it harmless" (BT 409). If someone objects to something Wittgenstein says (denying, for example, that it is possible to make sense of a mathematical equation being construed as a rule of grammar), Wittgenstein suggests that methodologically he is willing to drop it and simply pass on to something else or to offer some other description of the person's problem:

I won't say anything which anyone can dispute. Or if anyone does dispute it, I will let that point drop and pass on to something else. . . . By talking this out, I may attract a man's attention to the nearness of what he does to [the absurd case I constructed]. If it doesn't do, I can say, "Well, if this is no use, then that is all I can do". If he says, "There isn't an analogy", then that is that (LFM 22, 21).

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<sup>18</sup>Rhees, 42.

What is important is the removal of a person's philosophical puzzlement via the discussion of the remarks offered by Wittgenstein. As Waismann puts it:

If we do this in an effective manner, a mind like Frege's will be released from the obsession of seeking strainingly for an answer to fit the mould. . . . However, there is no way of . . . bullying him into mental acceptance of the proposal: when all is said and done the decision is his.<sup>19</sup>

It is Wittgenstein's location of philosophical problems in the realm of possibility (a realm where each individual can decide which possible contexts she will and will not allow to enter the stream of her life) which the adversarial interpretation of Wittgenstein neglects. A realm where differences are expressed by the decision of whether or not to recognize the intelligibility of a particular context best makes sense of the conditional nature of Wittgenstein's remark about philosophical theses: "*If* one tried to advance theses in philosophy, it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree to them" (PI §128, italics mine).<sup>20</sup> In a realm where we all agree or share the same opinions, anything which might count as a "thesis" could be clarified by describing its context; and once the context is recognized, then the "thesis" would trivially follow as a "possibility".

Wittgenstein suggests that his primary task in trying to help the metaphysician to remove her puzzlement is the imagination of new possibilities:

Is scientific progress useful to philosophy? Certainly. The realities that are discovered lighten the philosopher's task, imagining possibilities (LW §807).

This remark places much more emphasis on the importance of the imagination for the philosopher than is generally attributed to Wittgenstein. The adversarial interpretation tends to de-emphasize the philosophical importance of Wittgenstein's rich use of similes, metaphors, imaginary language-games, etc. While Wittgenstein's wonderful similes are rightly applauded for their ingenuity and creativity, there is a sense in which these imagined possibilities are marginalized because they do not seem central to the traditional philosophical focus on argument. Some even suggest, noting Wittgenstein's own frustrations regarding style, that Wittgenstein's style of writing often gets in the way of the argument, requiring less poetically inclined people to come along and set the argument out in plain language.<sup>21</sup> But if we keep in

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<sup>19</sup>Waismann, "How I See Philosophy", 18.

<sup>20</sup>For an attempt to interpret this remark within an adversarial framework see Glock, 69-88.

<sup>21</sup>Hacker, e.g., makes a related point regarding the possibility of systematizing Wittgenstein's work: "It should be borne in mind that Wittgenstein was not satisfied with the 'album of sketches' he produced. Waismann's

mind Wittgenstein's connection between metaphysical necessity and philosophical puzzlement, then the imagination of the philosopher seems intrinsic to her practice: if one's imagination is limited, then one may not be of much help to those in need of liberating possibilities.

Rather than pointing out the facts of grammar to the metaphysician, Wittgenstein seems more inclined to compare different possibilities as a means to helping the puzzled person dissolve her puzzlement. Waismann emphasizes the concern with *comparison* (which takes place in the domain of possibility) rather than the factual focus on actual language use:

Our language can be contrasted with an infinite number of other possible languages which may be adapted to other possible empirical worlds. . . . When we illuminate a philosophical problem by contrasting our language with other similar systems, we are always in danger of being misunderstood. It might be thought from our admission that the system we consider is only similar to actual language that we have not solved our original problem but indicated only how a similar problem might be solved. But we are not dealing here with an explanation of phenomena; it is not that I have wanted to explain one phenomenon and have in fact explained another one similar to it, but *I silence the questionings which seem to resemble a problem by setting a number of similar cases side by side. It is remarkable that the mere bringing together of cases gets rid of perplexity.* What happens in such cases is similar to what happens if we imagine that some phenomenon in the physical world is unique (e.g. if we imagine that the earth is unique among the heavenly bodies) and are then tempted to attribute metaphysical significance to it but are finally satisfied by seeing this phenomenon in a context of similar ones which take from it its appearance of uniqueness.<sup>22</sup>

By means of comparing different possibilities, therefore, Wittgenstein seeks to remove the dogmatic “uniqueness” which underlies the metaphysician's inclination to assert that something “must” be so. The realm where “we all have the same opinions” is not, therefore, coextensive with ordinary language. We might say that in the case of actual use it is perfectly possible to argue over what a word means, or to ask whether or not a mathematical equation is a rule of grammar (under ordinary usage the answer is no<sup>23</sup>) and so on.

While the ordinary language philosopher's focus on the facts of grammar may seek to suppress someone's symptoms by invoking the authority of “ordinary use”, Wittgenstein seeks to root out the disposition in the person which leads her to make metaphysical assertions. We might say that the ordinary language philosopher focuses on language, assembling huge

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attempted systematization of Wittgenstein's work of the early to mid-thirties in *The Principles of Linguistic Philosophy* may ultimately fail . . . . But it certainly shows that the *Bermerkungen* style and snippet-box method of composition, whatever their force and charm, are not inevitable corollaries of Wittgenstein's philosophy”--See Hacker, 177.

<sup>22</sup>F. Waismann, *The Principles of Linguistic Philosophy*, ed. R. Harré (London: Macmillan, 1965), 80. Wittgenstein frequently compares the grammatical dissolution of a philosophical problem to a revolutionary breakthrough in science (e.g., the Copernican revolution). Cf. AWL 50; AWL 98; BT 416.

<sup>23</sup>For a discussion of some of Wittgenstein's motivations for calling mathematical equations “rules of grammar” see G.P. Baker, “Philosophy: Simulacrum and Form”, *Philosophy in Britain Today*, ed. S.G. Shanker (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 43-44; 47-51.

grammatical atlases, as it were, while Wittgenstein focuses on the puzzled individual and her underlying ailment.<sup>24</sup> There is every indication, in fact, that Wittgenstein did not consider language to be the primary subject matter of philosophy. According to Moore,

[Wittgenstein] did discuss at very great length certain very general questions about language; but he said, more than once, that he did not discuss these questions because he thought that language was the subject-matter of philosophy. He did not think that it was. . . . [T]hough the ‘new subject’ must say a great deal about language, *it was only necessary for it to deal with those points about language which have led, or are likely to lead, to definite philosophical puzzles or errors.* I think he certainly thought that some philosophers nowadays have been misled into dealing with linguistic points which have no such bearing, and the discussion of which therefore, in his view, forms no part of the proper business of a philosopher (MWL 257; 323-324, italics mine).

The only reason why Wittgenstein shows any interest in the metaphysician’s linguistic activities is because they are how she expresses her puzzlement and because Wittgenstein notes that if he can get her to acknowledge other grammatical possibilities, then her compulsion may be broken, thereby removing her puzzlement.

If we can get away from the idea that Wittgenstein’s primary concern was ordinary language, then his own use of a range of words becomes more intelligible. Someone who objected to Wittgenstein’s use of the word “grammar”, noting that many of the things he calls “grammatical rules” are not what we ordinarily call “grammatical rules”, would be missing the point.<sup>25</sup> I think that Wittgenstein might reply to this sort of objection by claiming that he is only offering a possible use of the word “grammar” which he justifies in terms of the successful removal of philosophical puzzles:

Of course there isn’t a philosophical grammar and an ordinary English grammar, the former being more complete since it includes ostensive definitions. . . . Russell’s theory of descriptions, etc. These are not to be found in ordinary grammar books; but this is not the important difference. The important difference is in the aims for which the study of grammar are pursued by the linguist and the philosopher. . . . [W]e construct languages of our own so as to solve certain puzzles which the grammarian is not interested in, e.g., puzzles arising from the expression “Time flows”. *We shall have to justify calling our comments on such a sentence grammar.* If we say time flows in a different sense than water does, explaining this by an ostensive definition, we have indicated a way of explaining the word. *And we have left the realm of what is generally called grammar.* Our object is to get rid of certain puzzles. The grammarian has no interest in these; his aims and the philosopher’s are different. We are pulling ordinary grammar to bits (AWL 31, italics mine).

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<sup>24</sup>In a paper contrasting Ryle with Wittgenstein, Bouwsma draws a similar distinction: “There seem to be two approaches. One is to study the language. The other is to alert the thinker”--See O.K. Bouwsma, “A Difference between Ryle and Wittgenstein”, *Toward a New Sensibility: Essays of O. K. Bouwsma*, ed. J.L. Craft and Ronald E. Hustwit (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 27.

<sup>25</sup>For a more detailed discussion of the status of some of Wittgenstein’s “grammatical” remarks see G. P. Baker, “*Philosophical Investigations* Section 122: Neglected Aspects”, *Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations: Text and Context*, ed. Robert L. Arrington and Hans-Johann Glock (London: Routledge, 1991), 61-62.

Wittgenstein's own extended use of the word "grammar", therefore, could be treated as a more general methodological perspective which he is therapeutically recommending to people. We could also say that what Wittgenstein calls a "grammatical remark" is an example of one of the possibilities he offers to the philosophically puzzled person: "I'm just citing what is *possible* and am therefore giving grammatical examples" (BT 426, italics mine).

## 6. WITTGENSTEIN'S THERAPEUTIC CONCEPTION OF PHILOSOPHY

Noting this different concern of Wittgenstein (dissolving puzzles versus arguing for a position) helps to make clear who it is that Wittgenstein is speaking to: any individual who satisfies Wittgenstein's particular criteria for philosophical puzzlement (an inclination to metaphysically assert "must" and to find oneself deeply disturbed). In other words, when Wittgenstein says that we move in a realm where we all agree, I think the "we" in this case refers only to those people who satisfy Wittgenstein's more narrow conception of philosophical puzzlement.<sup>26</sup> And this may be only a small sub-class of those people we are prepared to call engaged in philosophy.

Instead of treating Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy as a discovery of the true nature of philosophy, I think it is more fruitful to follow Bouwsma in his characterization of Wittgenstein's practice of philosophy as an art invented by Wittgenstein: "He is, remember, teaching an art which is new. He is the author, the inventor, the first teacher".<sup>27</sup> On this view, rather than arguing that philosophy *has* to be conceived of in this way, Wittgenstein is offering a conception of philosophy which many *may* be inclined to accept. When asked why what he was doing should be called "philosophy", Wittgenstein did not claim that it was because he had discovered the true nature of philosophy. Instead, according to Moore, Wittgenstein said

that though what he was doing was certainly different from what, e.g., Plato or Berkeley had done, yet people *might* feel that it 'takes the place of' what they had done—*might* be inclined to say 'This is what I really wanted' and to identify it with what they had done, though it is really different, just as a person who

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<sup>26</sup>For this reason, I think Kenny's suggestion that Wittgenstein held that "every one of us, every human being, is trapped in philosophical errors" is misguided (Kenny, 48). At the very least, Wittgenstein would have objected, I think, to the claim that everyone *must* be trapped in philosophical errors at some time in her life, etc. In fact, he seemed perfectly happy contrasting those people who are philosophically puzzled with the rest of us: "A philosopher has temptations which an ordinary person does not have. You *could* say he knows better what a word means than others do. But in fact philosophers generally know *less*. Because ordinary persons have no temptations to misunderstand language" (LSD 140).

<sup>27</sup>O.K. Bouwsma, "The Blue Book", *Philosophical Essays* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 192.



had been trying to trisect an angle by rule and compasses might, when shown the proof that this is impossible, be inclined to say that this impossible thing was the very thing he had been trying to do, though what he had been trying to do was really different (MWL 322-323, italics mine).

Wittgenstein's analogy with the mathematical proof emphasizes the importance that the role of persuasion plays in Wittgenstein's whole practice of philosophy (Cf. PI §334). It is only if Wittgenstein can persuade the metaphysician to acknowledge a point of view or context *as* the underlying source of her confusion that Wittgenstein's practice of philosophy may offer her a source of relief. When Wittgenstein says that "the real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to" (PI §133), he is pointing to the fact that a method has been invented which can be demonstrated and which may eliminate a person's philosophical perplexities: "Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated)".<sup>28</sup>

Unlike some of his followers, Wittgenstein seems to have a precise idea of the role which his practice of philosophy may serve and to whom it is directed. He certainly did not seem to think that he had somehow finally discovered the true nature of philosophy. On one occasion, he responded angrily to Drury's suggestion that he call his book 'Philosophy': "Don't be such an ass—how could I use a word like that which has meant so much in the history of human thought? As if my work was anything more than just a small fragment of philosophy".<sup>29</sup> Rather, Wittgenstein's therapeutic conception of philosophy seems most appropriate for someone of a similar temperament to Wittgenstein: "It is sometimes said that a man's philosophy is a matter of temperament. . . . A preference for certain similes could be called a matter of temperament and it underlies far more disagreements than you might think" (CV 20). Wittgenstein reportedly once said to Bouwsma regarding his own philosophical work: "It's not important but if anyone is

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<sup>28</sup>A number of commentators have been puzzled by this particular claim. Kenny notes that it would be "absurd to say, for instance, that the most important musical discovery is the one which enables you to stop making music when you want. Why should [Wittgenstein] say the important discovery in philosophy is one that enables you to stop philosophizing?" (Kenny, 46). Baker and Hacker call this remark "obscure", suggesting that Wittgenstein later repudiated it (Baker and Hacker, 1a:246). But compare Wittgenstein's so-called "repudiation" as reported by Rhees: "You know I said I can stop doing philosophy when I like. That is a lie! *I can't*"--See Rhees' postscript to *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, rev. ed., ed. Rush Rhees (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 219. If Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy is given a therapeutic interpretation, then this remark becomes understandable. It is a relief to learn of a method which may bring you peace, which may enable you to stop your philosophical perplexity. Like psychoanalysis, however, the success of the method depends on the willingness of the patient and on the strength of the patient's will. You have to want to be cured and your will has to become so strengthened that you can stop philosophizing when you want to. I think Wittgenstein's remark to Rhees, far from repudiating this discovery, is more like an expression of exasperation: "Even with this method, I still can't free myself from these puzzles!"

<sup>29</sup>M. O'C. Drury, "Some Notes on Conversations with Wittgenstein", *Recollections*, 78.

interested I'm good at it and I may help. I don't recommend it. It's for people who *cannot* leave it alone".<sup>30</sup>

## 7. CONCLUSION

It is my hope that by learning to pay attention to how Wittgenstein himself characterizes his practice of philosophy, we can in turn learn to see some of the therapeutic themes which I have suggested (such as, e.g., his aim of dissolving puzzles of particular individuals, the “compulsive” use of “must/cannot” and the crucial role of the metaphysician’s acknowledgment for breaking that compulsion and so on). It is intrinsic to the non-dogmatic aspect of this therapeutic interpretation, however, that even good grounds *need not* mean conclusive grounds. As a result, to suggest that someone *must* go along with this interpretation would, I think, directly go against the spirit of Wittgenstein which I am trying to present.

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<sup>30</sup>Bouwsma, *Conversations*, 68, italics mine.

## CHAPTER 2

### FREUDIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS

There is some historical uncertainty about how well Wittgenstein knew Freud's work or to what extent (if any) Freud's therapeutic techniques inspired Wittgenstein's later philosophical methods. It is interesting to note, however, that as late as the 1940's, in a number of discussions with Rush Rhees on Freud, Wittgenstein described himself as "a disciple of Freud" and "a follower of Freud" (LA 41). Even if we leave aside questions regarding the direct influence of Freud on Wittgenstein, a number of interesting parallels can be drawn between the two men's work. Given that we have now considered some of what Wittgenstein says about his own philosophical methods and practice, in this chapter I want to turn to Freud and examine some of his methodological and conceptual remarks, sketching a "picture" of Freudian psychoanalysis which highlights a number of features of Freud's therapeutic techniques and his conception of a neurosis.<sup>31</sup> I do not intend this portrait of Freud's methods to be in any way exhaustive, but, pointing back to the first chapter, simply to serve as an "object of comparison" (PI §130). I will then consider in more detail in the third chapter some of the substantial similarities which emerge.

Sometimes characterized by Freud as "depth-psychology", psychoanalysis has a radical feature which seeks the removal of a patient's neurotic symptoms by making unconscious sexual desires conscious and by rooting out the prejudices which underlie a patient's inclination to repress these sexual desires. Though Freud considers one of the main aims of psychoanalysis to be the removal of these prejudices, he is quite sensitive to the controversy which surrounds

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<sup>31</sup>Though Freud never completed his intended *General Methodology of Psycho-Analysis*, meant to be a systematic work on his psychoanalytic techniques, he did publish a number of papers over his lifetime which address particular aspects of the correct practice of psychoanalysis. For a list of Freud's writings which deal primarily with psychoanalytic technique and practice, see the editors' appendix to Freud's *Papers on Technique*, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols., ed. J. Strachey (London: Hogarth Press 1953-1974), 12:172-173.

psychoanalysis as a result. For this reason, he insists on using the first person when making claims about the appropriateness of the psychoanalytic techniques he has developed:

The technical rules which I am putting forward here have been arrived at from my own experience in the course of many years, after unfortunate results led me to abandon other methods. . . . I must however make it clear that what I am asserting is that this technique is the only one suited to my individuality; I do not venture to deny that a physician quite differently constituted might find himself driven to adopt a different attitude to his patients and to the task before him.<sup>32</sup>

In general, Freud's method of presentation is highly undogmatic. For example, in the opening remarks of a lecture on neuroses, Freud stresses that much of the subject matter of psychoanalysis concerns phenomena with which every human being is directly acquainted (e.g., dreaming and slips of the tongue). In these cases, Freud is methodologically committed to advancing no claim with which his audience will not agree:

I set great store on never taking a step without remaining in agreement with your judgement; I discussed a great deal with you and gave way to your objections—in fact I recognized you and your 'common sense' as a deciding factor. . . . [W]e might say that you had as much experience or could easily obtain as much experience of [dreams and slips of the tongue] as I had.<sup>33</sup>

In the case of more obscure material of which the ordinary individual has no direct experience (e.g. neuroses), Freud denounces dogmatism, claiming that his only aim in his lectures is to stimulate new thought and to upset existing prejudices:

You must not take this . . . to mean that I propose to give you *dogmatic* lectures and to insist on your unqualified belief. Such a misunderstanding would do me a grave injustice. I do not wish to arouse conviction; *I wish to stimulate thought and to upset prejudices.*<sup>34</sup>

Freud's undogmatic approach in psychoanalysis and his desire to stimulate his students' and patients' minds reveals, I think, his deep respect for the integrity of every human being. In the form of psychoanalysis, Freud offers to humanity a therapeutic process which, rather than stifling an individual's human potential, seeks to work with each patient, helping her to develop her various capacities to their fullest.

## 1. NEUROSES, THE UNCONSCIOUS AND REPRESSION

The neurotic phobias and obsessions treated by Freud are conceived of as manifestations of deeper underlying dispositions in the patient. Someone who is afraid of enclosed spaces or someone who compulsively washes her hands, for example, is said by Freud to express in these

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<sup>32</sup>Freud, "Recommendations to Physicians Practicing Psycho-Analysis", 12:111.

<sup>33</sup>Freud, "Psycho-Analysis and Psychiatry", *Introductory Lectures of Psycho-Analysis*, 16:243.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*

behaviors symptoms of a more rooted psychological problem. By characterizing these ailments as symptoms of underlying *psychological* problems Freud broke with the prevailing medical orthodoxy. Most doctors in his age (as in the present) were inclined to treat neuroses either as superficial symptoms which easily could be disposed of (“There’s nothing wrong with you, it’s only a question of nerves; so I can blow away your trouble in two or three minutes with just a few words”<sup>35</sup>) or as medical ailments which could be cured by the administration of drugs and the application of various surgical techniques (roughly, treating these ailments as the psychological equivalent of a broken leg). Freud rejects both of these allopathic approaches to the treatment of neuroses. First, by tracing these ailments to underlying psychological problems, Freud emphasizes the depth of these ailments and how correspondingly difficult they are to remove. As a result, Freud extends the recognized realm of the psychological by drawing attention to what he calls “unconscious” or “repressed” psychological phenomena. Secondly, Freud’s method of treatment also remains in the psychological domain, replacing the intrusive techniques of established medicine with therapeutic discussions which take place between the patient and her analyst.

Freud’s “discovery” of the unconscious is perhaps what he is best known for and lies at the heart of the controversy surrounding psychoanalysis. According to Freud, the symptoms of the patient suffering from a hysterical neurosis are the result of the fact that certain sexual desires and wishes have been repressed from the conscious mind of the patient. Though Freud offered a number of different theoretical accounts of repression throughout his career, he consistently traces repression to a patient’s mental development as a child. Freud claims that every human being passes through a number of stages of mental development, but that in the case of his patients, certain traumatic experiences have interfered with this development. As a result, Freud’s patients are not properly equipped with an integrated self and, therefore, are not able or willing to express all of their sexual desires consciously. Memories of these traumatic experiences, which inevitably involve various sexual desires and wishes, are perceived by the abnormally developed ego as a further threat to its stability; the ego, therefore, is unwilling to

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<sup>35</sup>Freud, “Analytic Therapy”, *Introductory Lectures of Psycho-Analysis*, 16:450.

express these memories or any present versions of the desires themselves, and so represses them, keeping them unconscious.

## **2. THE DEPTH AND DEBILITATING POWER OF NEUROTIC SYMPTOMS**

It is the unconscious nature of these desires and memories, according to Freud, which gives them their power to produce such debilitating conditions in the patient. Freud claims that because these desires are not given their natural expression (due to repression), they seek alternative, symbolic means of expression in the form of dreams, everyday slips of the tongue and, in the case of serious repressions, in the form of debilitating phobias and obsessions. A frequent metaphor in Freud's different theories of the mind depicts the unconscious as a collection of dynamic psychological energies which are forcibly contained by repression. Because the ego "presses down" the psychological energy, diverting it from its natural path, this energy seeks other means of expression. According to Freud, a patient's neurotic symptoms are the end result of this repressed psychological energy seeking alternative ways of expressing itself. The symptoms of a patient's neurosis, in effect, serve as "a substitute for something that is held back by repression".<sup>36</sup> Freud underlines the tenacity and pervasiveness of these symptoms. He compares the emerging neurosis to an organism, stressing how the interconnected nature of its symptoms form a coherent and all encompassing structure: "A neurosis . . . has the character of an organism. Its component manifestations are not independent of one another; they condition one another and give each other mutual support".<sup>37</sup> They form a "substitutive structure".<sup>38</sup>

## **3. INVESTIGATING THE UNCONSCIOUS AND DISSOLVING A PATIENT'S SYMPTOMS**

One of Freud's therapeutic discoveries is that if he can get a patient to understand the "sense" of a symptom, thereby lifting her repression and consequently bringing what is repressed into the patient's consciousness, then he can remove her neurosis. By enabling a person to give her sexual desires their natural, conscious expression, these desires lose their power to create psychopathological symptoms:

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<sup>36</sup>Freud, "Resistance and Repression", *Introductory Lectures of Psycho-Analysis*, 16:298.

<sup>37</sup>Freud, "On Beginning the Treatment", 12:130.

<sup>38</sup>Freud, "Resistance and Repression", 16:298.

The therapeutic prospects lie in the possibility of getting rid of this ‘repression’, so as to allow part of the unconscious psychical material to become conscious and thus to deprive it of its pathogenic power. This view is a dynamic one, in so far as it regards psychical processes as displacements of psychical energy.<sup>39</sup>

Freud is apt to compare a patient’s symptoms to an untranslated language. It is only as long as the meaning of the patient’s symptoms remains unconscious (and hence unexpressed) that the neurosis can exert an influence over the patient:

Every time we come upon a symptom we can infer that there are certain definite unconscious processes in the patient which contain *the sense* of the symptom. But it is also necessary for that sense to be unconscious in order that the symptom can come about. Symptoms are never constructed from conscious processes; as soon as the unconscious processes concerned have become conscious, the symptom must disappear.<sup>40</sup>

The symptoms of a neurosis are treated by Freud, therefore, as symbolic representations of repressed sexual desires. Because the desire is repressed and hence unconscious, the patient, in effect, does not understand the meaning of her symptoms: they are an enigma to her, albeit, a painful, debilitating enigma.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud characterizes one aim of the psychoanalytic method to be the removal of a patient’s symptoms by unravelling their “substitutive structure” via the process of making the patient’s repressed desires conscious:

I have been engaged for many years (with a therapeutic aim in view) in *unravelling* certain psychopathological structures—hysterical phobias, obsessional ideas, and so on. I have been doing so, in fact, ever since I learnt . . . that as regards these structures (which are looked on as pathological symptoms) unravelling them coincides with removing them [In the original German: *The dissolution (Auflösung) coincides with the solution (Lösung)*]. . . . If a pathological idea of this sort can be traced back to the elements in the patient’s mental life from which it originated, it simultaneously crumbles away and the patient is freed from it.<sup>41</sup>

Once the repressed desires are remembered or acknowledged by the patient, bringing them into consciousness, the psychopathological problem, along with its painful symptoms, simply *dissolves*.

While noting that this sort of solution is quite unlike most medical solutions to a problem, Freud compares the ability of psychoanalysis to dissolve a patient’s neurosis to the solving of a riddle or to the power of the spoken word often depicted in fairy tales:

The psychoneuroses are substitutive satisfactions of some instinct the presence of which one is obliged to deny to oneself and others. Their capacity to exist depends on this distortion and lack of recognition. When the riddle they present is solved and the solution is accepted by the patients these diseases cease to be

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<sup>39</sup>Freud, “On Psych-Analysis”, 12:208.

<sup>40</sup>Freud, “Fixation to Traumas--The Unconscious”, *Introductory Lectures of Psycho-Analysis*, 16:279, italics mine.

<sup>41</sup>Freud, “The Method of Interpreting Dreams”, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 4:100, italics mine.

able to exist. There is hardly anything like this in medicine, though in fairy tales you hear of evil spirits whose power is broken as soon as you can tell them their name—the name which they have kept secret.<sup>42</sup>

Because the patient's symptoms exist only as a substitute expression of a repressed sexual desire, her neurosis only has the illusion of being a more straightforward problem. It can only exert an influence over the patient so long as it can draw upon the repressed energy of the sexual desire. Because her neurosis is parasitic on the repressed sexual desire for its ability to plague the patient, once the repression is removed, the neurosis simply vanishes.

#### **4. THERAPEUTIC SKILLS FOR DISCOVERING WHAT IS REPRESSED**

One significant role of the analyst, then, is the facilitation of making what is unconscious in the patient conscious, with the aim of eventually removing the patient's ailments. The analyst relies on two skills to bring what is unconscious into consciousness: interpretation and construction. Since a patient's symptoms are treated by Freud as symbolic representations of repressed sexual desires, an analyst's interpretation of the significance of a patient's symptoms is crucial to removing them. Interpretive work enables the analyst to work backwards from a patient's symptoms and the manifest content of her dreams, for example, to the underlying repressed or latent material. Interpretation is, therefore, the means of discovering what has been repressed and forgotten by the patient.

Determining the sense of a patient's symptoms by interpretation, however, is not enough to remove those symptoms. In addition, the analyst needs to present in a coherent form to the patient what she believes lies in the patient's unconscious. She needs to "lay hold first of this, then of that, fragment of the symptom's meaning, one after another, until they can all be pieced together".<sup>43</sup> To this end, therefore, the skill of constructing a clear depiction of what the patient has repressed, based on the analyst's interpretation of the patient's symptoms, is an important step towards making this psychological material conscious in the patient. The analyst's task is "to make out what has been forgotten from the traces which it has left behind or, more correctly, to construct it".<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Freud, "The Future Prospects of Psycho-Analytic Therapy", 11:148.

<sup>43</sup>Freud, "The Handling of Dream-Interpretation in Psycho-Analysis", 12:93.

<sup>44</sup>Freud, "Constructions in Analysis", 23:258-59.



A number of critics of psychoanalysis have questioned the veridical status of the analyst's interpretations and constructions, suggesting that they are mere conjecture.<sup>45</sup> Aware of these objections, Freud concisely summarized his critics' worries as follows:

He said that in giving interpretations to a patient we treat him upon the famous principle of 'Heads I win, tails you lose'. That is to say, if the patient agrees with us, then the interpretation is right; but if he contradicts us, that is only a sign of his resistance, which again shows that we are right. In this way we are always in the right against the poor helpless wretch whom we are analysing, no matter how he may respond to what we put forward.<sup>46</sup>

Freud's response to these worries is not to dismiss them, but to describe detailed cases where the patient's response is not given complete authority, offering criteria for distinguishing these therapeutic cases from the caricatured analytic setting where the psychotherapist requires her patient to accept indiscriminately whatever she suggests. In effect, Freud responds to these criticisms by reminding his critics of the therapeutic aims of psychoanalysis and consequently of the corresponding therapeutic practices which ground the veridicality of particular interpretations and constructions.

Freud emphasizes that the analytic process is lengthy and drawn out, only arriving at a complete interpretation at the end of the analysis. As a result, Freud notes that some of the constructions offered by the analyst may prove to be mistaken once further unconscious material comes to light. Since the patient's *assent* to the correct construction of what she has been repressing is one criterion of it being correct, Freud suggests that a good rule of thumb for the analyst is to treat a patient's rejection of a construction as a sign that the construction is in some important way incomplete:

As a rule [the patient] will not give his assent until he has learnt the whole truth—which often covers a very great deal of ground. . . . [T]he only safe interpretation of his 'No' is that it points to incompleteness; there can be no doubt that the construction has not told him everything.<sup>47</sup>

The analyst interprets the symptoms of the patient, her reported dreams, etc. as they emerge within the treatment. Her constructions of what lies in the patient's unconscious, therefore, are open to revision and refinement as the treatment proceeds.

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<sup>45</sup>For a discussion of three rival accounts of the epistemological status of the psychoanalyst's interpretations and constructions see M. Rustin, "Psychoanalysis, Philosophical Realism, and the New Sociology of Science", *The Good Society and the Inner World: Psychoanalysis, Politics and Culture* (London: Verso, 1991), 116-144.

<sup>46</sup>Freud, "Constructions in Analysis", 23:257.

<sup>47</sup>Freud, "Constructions in Analysis", 23:263.

## 5. THE METHODOLOGICAL ROLE OF THE PATIENT'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The therapeutic importance of the patient's ultimate acceptance of a construction was not initially recognized by Freud, though he rectified this early on in his career:

It was my view . . . (though I have since recognized it as a wrong one) that my task was fulfilled when I had informed a patient of the hidden meaning of his symptoms: I considered that I was not responsible for whether he accepted the solution or not—though this was what success depended on.<sup>48</sup>

Throughout his career, however, Freud was equivocal about the ontological relationship between the patient's acknowledgement and what psychoanalysis seeks to reveal to the patient. While Freud typically treats what has been repressed as genuine desires or actual memories of events that in fact took place (suggesting an objective truth comparable to what other sciences seek), in a number of places in his writings Freud notes that what has been repressed may be no more than an "unconscious fantasy"<sup>49</sup> or a "picture" of the patient's past produced by the "wish-fulfilling activity of his imagination".<sup>50</sup> Indeed, Freud observes that in some cases nothing more than a patient's *conviction* that a construction is true is needed in order to remove her ailment: "Quite often we do not succeed in bringing the patient to recollect what has been repressed. Instead of that, if the analysis is carried out correctly, we produce in him an assured conviction of the truth of the construction which achieves the same therapeutic result as a recaptured memory".<sup>51</sup> So, even if the construction is not scientifically confirmable, Freud notes that it still may have a positive therapeutic effect: "The correct reconstruction . . . of such forgotten experiences of childhood always has a great therapeutic effect, whether they permit of objective confirmation or not".<sup>52</sup> Though Freud seems unclear about this at times, this remark reveals the contingent connection between a successful treatment and objective fact.

These remarks isolate a distinct difference between the methods of psychoanalysis and those of natural science. By emphasizing the significant role that interpretations and constructions *may* play in psychoanalysis, even if they are not objectively confirmable, Freud draws attention to the fact that within the psychoanalytic setting, *what is most important is often the sincerity or truthfulness of the patient's acknowledgement, rather than the connection of her*

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<sup>48</sup>Freud, "The Method of Interpreting Dreams", 4:108.

<sup>49</sup>Freud, "Remarks on the Theory and Practice of Dream-Interpretation", 19:115.

<sup>50</sup>Freud, *The Question of Lay Analysis*, 20:227.

<sup>51</sup>Freud, "Constructions in Analysis", 23:265-66.

<sup>52</sup>Freud, *The Question of Lay Analysis*, 20:216.

*reports to what is experimentally confirmable.* What seems most significant in the case of psychoanalysis is not discovering what *really* happened, but reaching a stage in the treatment where the patient can acknowledge that the repression of a particular event or desire which has been suggested by the psychoanalyst *could* be the source of her compulsion. This acknowledgement will take the form of conviction on the part of the patient—“That’s exactly what must have caused it!”—and is only sufficient if it roots out her neurosis and gives her peace.

## 6. RULES OF ANALYSIS

Since much of the therapy session is spent trying to make sense of the patient’s symptoms, Freud establishes certain rules of analysis for both the patient and the analyst in order to foster optimal working conditions. Freud requires of his patients a complete candor regarding what enters their minds during the analytic session: “psycho-analytic treatment is founded on truthfulness. . . . we demand strict truthfulness from our patients”.<sup>53</sup> Acknowledging a similarity with confession, Freud claims, however, that psychoanalysis requires from the patient an expanded conception of truthfulness:

What we want to hear from our patient is not only what he knows and conceals from other people; he is to tell us too what he does *not* know. With this end in view we give him a more detailed definition of what we mean by candor. We pledge him to obey the *fundamental rule* of analysis, which is henceforward to govern his behavior towards us. He is to tell us not only what he can say intentionally and willingly, what will give him relief like a confession, but everything else as well that his self-observation yields him, everything that comes into his head, even if it is *disagreeable* for him to say it, even if it seems to him *unimportant* or actually *nonsensical*.<sup>54</sup>

This fundamental rule of analysis forms the basis for Freud’s famous “free association” method, where his patients are taught to express their ideas in a manner which allows them to evade their own self-censorship.

Freud emphasizes that in the case of analysts, a great deal of skill is required in order to be able to trace a patient’s symptoms to what is repressed—requiring a refined sensitivity to what is unconscious. He further emphasizes how in psychoanalysis, unlike the natural sciences, the psychological dispositions of the analyst are themselves crucial to whether or not a given individual is a good analyst:

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<sup>53</sup>Freud, “Observations on Transference-Love”, 12:164.

<sup>54</sup>Freud, “The Technique of Psycho-Analysis”, *An Outline of Psych-Analysis*, 23:174.

A kind of sharpness of hearing for what is unconscious and repressed, which is not possessed equally by everyone, has a part to play. And here, above all, we are brought to the analyst's obligation to make himself capable, by a deep-going analysis of his own, of the *unprejudiced* reception of the analytic material. . . . An abnormal person can become an accurate physicist; as an analyst he will be hampered by his own abnormality from seeing the pictures of mental life undistorted.<sup>55</sup>

The analyst's corollary to the fundamental rule of analysis, therefore, is that she must listen to the patient's reports without prejudicing what is considered to be significant. As a result, a part of the analyst's training involves undergoing a self-analysis. The self-analysis removes the analyst's own repressions so that she becomes able to perceive what is reported by the patient without bias: "Every unresolved repression in [the analyst] constitutes what has been aptly described by Stekel as a 'blind spot' in his analytic perception".<sup>56</sup> It is the analyst's function to serve the patient as a mirror which represents the patient's symptoms without prejudice: "The doctor should be opaque to his patients and, like a mirror, should show them nothing but what is shown to him".<sup>57</sup>

#### 7. THE PATIENT'S RESISTANCE TO A CURE

Freud's psychoanalytic treatment, however, does not consist solely of interpretive work and the construction of what has been repressed. In fact, though his interpretive work is what Freud is best known for (especially his work on dream interpretation), Freud did not consider this work to be the most significant part of his therapeutic treatment. What is crucial to the method of treatment and to a successful cure in psychoanalysis is that the patient's will and more general attitudes be directly engaged and ultimately changed. This internal engagement of the patient, requiring that she do work on herself, is quite unlike anything found in modern medicine. Modern medicine conceives of a medical problem as externally related to the patient who has the problem. In other words, a part of the patient is fixed or cured by the doctor via the causal efficacy of certain procedures which the doctor performs on the patient (either directly, as in the case of surgery, or indirectly, as in the case of prescribing a drug—in either case, the patient or a part of the patient is treated as an object for the doctor "to work on"). In contrast, Freud argues that neuroses can only be successfully treated if the patient herself brings about an *internal* change in her entire psychological make-up: "habitual modes of reaction" need to be worked

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<sup>55</sup>Freud, *The Question of Lay Analysis*, 20:219-220, italics mine.

<sup>56</sup>Freud, "Recommendations to Physicians Practicing Psycho-Analysis", 12:116.

<sup>57</sup>Freud, "Recommendations to Physicians Practicing Psycho-Analysis", 12:118.

through and overcome.<sup>58</sup> In order for the knowledge made conscious by the analyst to have any effect on the patient, it must “rest on an internal change in the patient such as can only be brought about by a piece of psychological work with a particular aim”.<sup>59</sup>

In addition, therefore, to the patient having repressed certain desires which Freud seeks to bring to her consciousness, Freud identifies strong resistances within the patient herself to remembering these repressed desires. It is the removal of these internal resistances which Freud considers to be the principal aim of psychoanalysis: “The struggle against all these resistances is our main work during an analytic treatment; the task of making interpretations is nothing compared to it”.<sup>60</sup> By locating the cure to hysterical phobias within the framework of the patient’s entire psychological make-up, Freud’s treatment engages the entire patient, requiring that she make far reaching changes upon herself.

#### 8. DISENGAGING THE PATIENT’S WILL

Within the terms of Freud’s developmental theory, Freud traces these resistances to the patient’s abnormally developed ego: because the ego did not develop properly, it is not strong enough or integrated enough to tolerate the natural expression of various sexual desires. It is this inability of the ego that leads to the repression of certain sexual desires in the first place and which later produces the greatest resistance within the patient to a successful psychoanalytic cure. In effect, according to Freud, it is the patient’s will which must be overcome if what has been repressed is to be recalled:

The pathogenic idea which has ostensibly been forgotten is always lying ‘close at hand’ and can be reached by associations that are easily accessible. It is merely a question of getting some obstacle out of the way. This obstacle seems . . . to be the subject’s will.<sup>61</sup>

The fundamental rule of psychoanalysis, which requires patients to let their thoughts “freely associate” and to sincerely report those thoughts, enables Freud to get the patient to disengage the censoring effect of her will during the psychoanalytic session. If the patient “can succeed . . . in putting his self-criticism out of action, he will present us with a mass of material—thoughts,

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<sup>58</sup>Freud, “Analysis Terminable and Interminable”, 23:238.

<sup>59</sup>Freud, “Fixation to Traumas--The Unconscious”, 16:281.

<sup>60</sup>Freud, *The Question of Lay Analysis*, 20:224.

<sup>61</sup>Freud, “Psychotherapy of Hysteria”, *Studies on Hysteria*, 2:271.

ideas, recollections—which are already subject to the influence of the unconscious . . . and which thus put us in a position to conjecture his repressed unconscious material”.<sup>62</sup>

By disengaging the patient’s critical censorship of certain memories the analyst is given unimpeded access to the material which she interprets. The free association method of report requires the patient to adopt an impartial attitude to her own thoughts and memories:

We tell [the patient] that the success of the psycho-analysis depends on his noticing and reporting whatever comes into his head and not being misled, for instance, into suppressing an idea because it strikes him as unimportant or irrelevant or because it seems to him meaningless. He must adopt a completely impartial attitude to what occurs to him, since *it is precisely his critical attitude which is responsible for his being unable, in the ordinary course of things, to achieve the desired unravelling of his dream or obsessional idea or whatever it may be.*<sup>63</sup>

By adopting an impartial attitude, the patient learns to treat her thoughts as “ideas that emerge ‘of their own free will’”.<sup>64</sup> Freud compares the effect of free association on the patient’s will to what is required for poetic creation. Quoting a letter of Friedrich Schiller, Freud suggests that the role played by the critical faculty of the will, which inhibits what the patient would otherwise report, is analogous to Schiller’s diagnosis of the unsuccessful poet who is unable to create because of “the constraint imposed by [her] reason upon [her] imagination”.<sup>65</sup> Schiller claims that by disengaging reason, as it were, the imagination is able to flourish. Similarly, Freud claims that inhibiting the patient’s will helps to release more articulate and clear representations of what is repressed.

## 9. CHANGING THE PATIENT’S ENTIRE PSYCHOLOGICAL OUTLOOK

The main aim of psychotherapy is not, however, this piecemeal disengagement of the patient’s will. In addition to overcoming the patient’s will during individual therapy sessions, Freud claims that a lasting cure can only be brought about by permanently rooting out the prejudices present in the patient which keep her from developing an integrated ego:

It may . . . be said that what is being mobilized for fighting against the alterations we are striving for are character-traits, attitudes of the ego. . . . these character-traits were formed in relation to the determinants of the neurosis and in reaction against its demands.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Freud, “The Technique of Psycho-Analysis”, 23:174.

<sup>63</sup>Freud, “The Method of Interpreting Dreams”, 4:101, italics mine.

<sup>64</sup>Freud, “The Method of Interpreting Dreams”, 4:102.

<sup>65</sup>Friederich Schiller quoted in Freud, 4:103.

<sup>66</sup>Freud, “Resistance and Repression”, 16:291.

By tracing pathological symptoms back to a patient's mental development, Freud locates the roots of the patient's problem in her overall psychological make-up. It is only by radically reconstituting a stronger, integrated ego, where "the subject's mental unity is restored" (or achieved for the first time), that a long term cure is realized.<sup>67</sup> The most important part of psychoanalytic therapy, therefore, involves the patient's work on herself in overcoming the internal resistances of her will. Freud stresses the difficulty of this work for both the patient and the analyst, claiming that the notorious length of time required for a psychoanalytic cure (6 months to three years on average) results from the depth of these resistances and the tremendous effort involved in rooting them out:

The outcome of an analytic treatment depends essentially on the strength and on the depth of root of these resistances that bring about an alteration of the ego.<sup>68</sup>

An analytic treatment demands from both doctor and patient the accomplishment of serious work, which is employed in lifting internal resistances. Through the overcoming of these resistances the patient's mental life is permanently changed, is raised to a higher level of development and remains protected against fresh possibilities of falling ill. This work of overcoming resistances is the essential function of analytic treatment; *the patient has to accomplish it* and the doctor makes this possible for him.<sup>69</sup>

To reach a cure for her neurosis, the patient must, therefore, bring about a fundamental change in herself. This fundamental change is facilitated by her therapeutic work with the analyst, but ultimately rests on her own desire for a cure: "The primary motive force in the therapy is the patient's suffering and the wish to be cured that arises from it".<sup>70</sup>

## 10. TRANSFERENCE

The interpretive and constructive work of the analyst, while significant, then, is only of secondary importance to helping the patient to overcome her internal resistances:

The crux of the matter is that the defensive mechanisms directed against former danger recur in the treatment as *resistances* against recovery. . . . The therapeutic effect depends on making conscious what is repressed, in the widest sense of the word, in the [unconscious]. We prepare the way for this making conscious by interpretations and constructions, but we have interpreted only for ourselves not for the patient so long as the ego holds on to its earlier defences and does not give up its resistances.<sup>71</sup>

Freud's theory of ego development locates the source of a patient's resistances in her past, at a time when she experienced the traumatic events which led to the development of her abnormal

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<sup>67</sup>Freud, "Analytic Therapy", 16:454.

<sup>68</sup>Freud, "Analysis Terminable and Interminable", 23:240.

<sup>69</sup>Freud, "Analytic Therapy", 16:451, italics mine.

<sup>70</sup>Freud, "On Beginning the Treatment", 12:143.

<sup>71</sup>Freud, "Analysis Terminable and Interminable", 23:238.

ego. According to Freud, the principal means for overcoming these internal resistances and for strengthening the patient's ego lies in a re-enactment of these repressed desires and events. The patient's relationship with the analyst, termed the "transference", serves as a symbolic substitute for the actual relationships in a patient's past (e.g., with her mother or father) which led to the debilitating repression: "The decisive part of the work is achieved by creating in the patient's relation to the doctor—in the 'transference'—new editions of old conflicts. . . . the transference becomes the battlefield".<sup>72</sup> By re-enacting these conflicts, the patient strengthens her ego, and with the help of the analyst, is brought to realize how her own attitudes stand in the way of remembering what is repressed. The analyst's central skill, therefore, is her direction of the transference, leading the patient to give up certain prejudices and resistances. Only by getting the patient to identify her resistances *as* resistances can the analyst get the patient to give them up.

As a result, while it is true that psychoanalysis seeks to remind the patient of things she has forgotten, things she knows but refuses to allow to enter into her consciousness, it is not true that this knowledge is the central ingredient to a cure. Freud notes that repressed information made conscious is only beneficial for removing the patient's phobia, *if* this recollection rests on the realization of an internal change in the patient herself:

If the doctor transfers his knowledge to the patient as a piece of information. . . . it does not have the effect of removing the symptoms. . . . [For it to have an effect] the knowledge must rest on an internal change in the patient such as can only be brought about by a piece of psychological work with a particular aim.<sup>73</sup>

Freud insists, in fact, that what is of primary significance to a successful psychoanalytic cure is not the knowledge which the analyst makes conscious in the patient, but the change in attitude of the patient which makes her capable of acknowledging what has been repressed:

It is a long superseded idea, and one derived from superficial appearances, that the patient suffers from a sort of ignorance, and that if one removes this ignorance by giving him information (about the causal connection of his illness with his life, about his experiences in childhood, and so on) he is bound to recover. *The pathological factor is not his ignorance in itself, but the root of this ignorance in his inner resistances; it was they that first called this ignorance into being, and they still maintain it now.* The task of the treatment lies in combating these resistances. Informing the patient of what he does not know because he has repressed it is only one of the necessary preliminaries to the treatment. If knowledge about the unconscious were as important for the patient as people inexperienced in psycho-analysis imagine, listening to lectures or reading books would be enough to cure him.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>Freud, "Analytic Therapy", 16:454.

<sup>73</sup>Freud, "Fixation to Traumas--The Unconscious", 16:281.

<sup>74</sup>Freud, "'Wild' Psycho-Analysis", 11:225, italics mine.



In addition to the patient's acknowledgement serving as the criterion of correctness for Freud's interpretations and constructions, therefore, Freud stresses that a therapeutic cure can only be brought about if the patient can be brought to acknowledge her own underlying prejudices *as* prejudices and hence as the rooted source of her inclination to repress various sexual desires. It is only by rooting out these prejudices, so that the patient is no longer inclined to repress a given sexual desire, that she becomes able to make use of the knowledge offered to her by the analyst. Psychoanalysis is best understood, therefore, as a therapy which engages the entire person, requiring her to do difficult and far reaching work on herself.

## 11. CONCLUSION

Freud's psychoanalytic approach to curing neuroses treats a patient's neurosis as a symptom of deeper problems concerning the entire patient. In this sense, we might say that Freud is a precursor to modern forms of holistic or homeopathic approaches to medicine. For the purposes of this thesis, the important features of psychoanalysis to keep in mind are: (1) Freud's characterization of psychopathological problems as symptoms of deeper problems—interpretation of the symbolic meaning of these symptoms leads the analyst to their unconscious origin. (2) The power of a neurosis is parasitic on the psychical energy of a repressed sexual desire—once the repression is lifted and the desire made conscious, the symptoms simply dissolve. Constructions of these repressed desires and forgotten events enable the analyst to present to the patient a coherent picture of the source of her neurosis—the patient's acceptance of a construction *as* correct is a criterion for it being correct. (3) The principal obstacle to a cure is the patient's own internal resistances. Transference of the forgotten and repressed events into the context of the therapeutic relationship enables the analyst to get the patient to acknowledge her own resistances *as* her own underlying prejudices which incline *her* to repress certain sexual desires—this requires a change in the patient's entire psychological outlook.

In a sense, psychoanalysis might be characterized as wholly therapeutic and largely negative, as it seeks to remove debilitating symptoms from a patient by remaking the entire psychological landscape of the person:

The patient only gets free from the hysterical symptom by reproducing the pathogenic impressions that caused it and by giving utterance to them with an expression of affect, and thus the therapeutic task *consists solely in inducing him to do so*; when once this task has been accomplished there is nothing left for the patient to correct or to remove. Whatever may be required for this purpose in the way of counter-

suggestions has already been expended during the struggle against the resistance. The situation may be compared with the unlocking of a locked door, after which opening it by turning the handle offers no further difficulty.<sup>75</sup>

Once the patient's neurosis has been dissolved there is nothing which remains to be done. The patient can simply "open the door", returning to her ordinary life: "The aim of treatment will never be anything else but the *practical* recovery of the patient, the restoration of his ability to lead an active life and of his capacity for enjoyment".<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>Freud, "Psychotherapy of Hysteria", 2:283.

<sup>76</sup>Freud, "Freud's Psycho-Analytic Procedure", 7:253.

## CHAPTER 3

### WITTGENSTEIN AND PSYCHOANALYSIS: THE ANALOGY MADE EXPLICIT

In this chapter I want to briefly draw more explicit attention to some of the particularly striking similarities between Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy and Freudian psychoanalysis, and then consider one case in greater detail. Though many have previously noted the analogy, it is generally treated as superficial and not worth much attention. I believe, however, that our discussion over the last two chapters of Wittgenstein and Freud's respective therapeutic methods reveals that there is a great deal of substance to the comparison, both in terms of the person-centered conception of a problem and the corresponding methods of treatment. A number of similarities stand out which especially merit further investigation.

Freud's characterization of psychoanalysis as "depth-psychology" might be said to correspond to Wittgenstein's occasional reference to "depth-grammar" (PI §664). In both cases, a patient's symptoms are treated as the result of deeply rooted prejudices which lie in the patient's habits of thought.<sup>77</sup> Correspondingly, the sort of treatment offered is equally engaging of the person. While Freud requires his patients to reconstitute their entire psychological make-up, Wittgenstein points to the need for a change in one's entire way of thinking: "Getting hold of the difficulty *deep down* is what is hard. . . . It has to be pulled out by the roots; and that involves our beginning to think about these things in a new way" (CV 48).

As Freud seeks to discover what lies in the depths of the patient's unconscious through the interpretation of her symptoms, so Wittgenstein starts with what the metaphysician is "tempted to say" (PI §254) and works back to an analogy which may be guiding her thinking. Waismann further emphasizes the importance of making this "misleading" analogy conscious so as to dissolve its domination over the philosopher's thinking:

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<sup>77</sup>von Wright emphasizes the central role of "habits of thought" in Wittgenstein's later conception of philosophy--See G.H. von Wright, "Wittgenstein in relation to his Times", *Wittgenstein and his Times*, ed. Brian McGuinness (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), 111.

An important part of our task is to scent the analogies which lead to philosophical problems. Our method is in some respects similar to that of psycho-analysis. Using this terminology, we might say that an unconsciously active analogy becomes harmless as soon as it is brought into consciousness. (And this comparison with psycho-analysis could be carried further.)<sup>78</sup>

Wittgenstein stresses, however, the indeterminate nature of what are called “misleading” analogies: “When we say that by our method we try to counteract the misleading effect of certain analogies . . . in most cases it is impossible to show an exact point where an analogy begins to mislead us” (BB 28). We might say that an analogy is only “misleading” when someone finds herself led to a place she would rather not be.

This indeterminacy points to a further important similarity between Wittgenstein’s conception of a philosophical puzzle and Freud’s conception of a neurosis. In both cases, unlike the natural sciences, the patient’s acknowledgment of a diagnosis is essential to a successful cure, and further, it is her sincere acknowledgment which ontologically grounds the accuracy of the therapist’s description. When Wittgenstein offers to the metaphysician a possible context in which she might be thinking, pointing to a given analogy, he notes the essential role of her acknowledgment:

One of the most important tasks is to express all false thought processes so characteristically that the reader says, “Yes, that’s exactly the way I meant it”. . . . Indeed we can only convict someone else of a mistake if he acknowledges that this really is the expression of his feeling. . . . For only if he acknowledges it as such, *is* it the correct expression. (Psychoanalysis.) What the other person acknowledges is the analogy I am proposing to him as the source of his thought. (BT 410).

Bouwsma draws out the comparison here, noting the connection between acknowledgment and breaking the “compulsion” of the puzzled philosopher’s inclination to make metaphysical assertions:

People say things under a compulsion. The compulsion is explained by what is hidden. And what now is hidden? A grammatical analogy. But which one? Perhaps there are some likely ones. But here as in [psychoanalysis] the object is not to hit upon the analogy that really explains it, explains the compulsion. The object is to hit upon the analogy that one may assent to as what has compelled one to say this. The idea is that with this assent the force of the compulsion is broken. It is not, by the way, that one feels any compulsion. The compulsion may be expressed in the words: “It must be so. . . .”<sup>79</sup>

It is only if the philosopher acknowledges a particular analogy as the source of her puzzlement, that Wittgenstein can be assured of his diagnosis. Hence, the therapeutic “unravelling” of her puzzlement is identical with the discovery of what was bothering her.

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<sup>78</sup>Waismann, PLP, 179.

<sup>79</sup>Bouwsma, “Ryle & Wittgenstein”, 31.

The central significance for Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy of acknowledgment, "unconscious" sources of puzzlement and the rooted conception of a philosophical puzzle, suggests that his analogy of philosophy with psychoanalysis is quite substantial. The analogy can be extended even further to issues involving a change in the metaphysician's will, to reveal an even more fundamental similarity which is generally ignored by commentators.<sup>80</sup> Freud considers his most important work to involve the overcoming of the patient's internal resistances to a cure. Similarly, I want to suggest that Wittgenstein considers most of his grammatical investigations and remarks to be aimed at either disengaging the metaphysician's will during a particular discussion or at achieving a more permanent change in her whole way of thinking and her different ways of seeing things.

### 1. THE METAPHYSICIAN'S *RESISTANCE* TO THERAPEUTIC CURE

Wittgenstein spends a great deal of time in his practice of philosophy offering possible descriptions to the metaphysician of her confused manner of thinking: "I ought to be no more than a mirror, in which my reader can see his own thinking with all its deformities so that, helped in this way, he can put it right" (CV 18). Even though these descriptions require the patient's ultimate acknowledgment to be considered correct, they also function somewhat like "information", serving a role in Wittgenstein's treatment of the metaphysician similar to the one played by Freud's interpretations and constructions.

Wittgenstein's practice of philosophy is not, however, solely concerned with the interpretation and description of the metaphysician's pattern of thinking. Though Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy traces the puzzled philosopher's metaphysical use of "must" to misleading analogies and "pictures" which effectively repress her ability to recall how she ordinarily uses language (BT 419), he does not consider his attempts at discovery and communication of "what may lie at the back of the philosopher's mind" to be the most important part of his philosophical therapy. Instead, he emphasizes that the puzzled individual will have to do serious work on "general, deeply rooted, tendencies of [her] thinking" (BB 30). It is these underlying inclinations to look at the world from within a particular context or to only *see* one possibility which Wittgenstein suggests may be at the root of the metaphysician's confusion. If

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<sup>80</sup>For an exception, see Kenny, 59.

Wittgenstein can persuade her to look on her puzzlement as possibly resulting from the *unconscious* use of particular analogical patterns of thought, then he may be able to get her to trace her puzzlement to certain prejudices in her manner of thinking.

While Wittgenstein may be able to discover through interpretation and description an analogy which he thinks might unconsciously guide the metaphysician's thinking, this "information" will have no therapeutic effect unless Wittgenstein can also get the metaphysician to overcome her *resistance* to seeing it *as* an analogy and hence as resulting from a way of seeing the world. In other words, in addition to the metaphysician's acknowledgment serving as a criterion for determining the correctness of Wittgenstein's characterization of her puzzlement, a successful cure also requires that the puzzled individual be brought to *see* that it is her *prejudice* for a particular "way of thinking" which produces her puzzlement.

Just as Freud initially underestimated the essential role of the patient's acceptance of his diagnosis for a successful therapeutic treatment, so Wittgensteinians are in danger of prematurely supposing that their work is done when they believe that they have correctly identified the grammatical source of someone's philosophical "error". Freud came to realize that, in the case of psychoanalysis, he could only be certain of the correctness of his diagnosis if he were able to successfully remove his patient's neurosis. If the Wittgensteinian ceases her discussions with the metaphysician before she succeeds in removing her puzzlement, then she is in grave danger of misunderstanding the metaphysician, and, worse, attributing that misunderstanding to the "stubbornness" or "stupidity" of her patient (rather than, say, her inappropriate emphasis on the facts of ordinary language).

Wittgenstein suggests that part of overcoming the metaphysician's compulsion to say "must" (if she eventually acknowledges such a metaphysical compulsion) involves persuading her to work directly on, with his help, the dogmas and prejudices which lie at the root of her inclination to metaphysically insist on one manner of thinking. Achieving this acknowledgment requires the metaphysician to do far reaching work on her *internal resistance* to giving up this very way of thinking. In effect, like Freud, Wittgenstein suggests that the principal difficulty which stands in the way of removing the philosopher's puzzlement is her own will.

By noting Wittgenstein's focus on the will of the puzzled philosopher, his frequent contrast between science and his practice of philosophy can be further clarified. Whereas in the sciences, a problem is solved by the discovery of new information, Wittgenstein is always emphasizing that he is not teaching anything new:

It is . . . of the essence of our investigation that we do not seek to learn anything *new* by it. We want to *understand* something that is already in plain view. For *this* is what we seem in some sense not to understand (PI §89).

Equally, a confusion which is not resolved by the discovery of new information, therefore is not one which rests on a mistaken opinion (which might otherwise be corrected by discovering the truth of the matter). Since the philosopher's puzzlement involves language, an ordinary subject about which she is perfectly knowledgeable, Wittgenstein suggests that what makes the removal of her puzzlement so difficult is not the subtleties of the subject-matter (like science) but something more to do with her *unwillingness* to part with the analogy which guides her thinking:

[Heading to §86:] Difficulty of philosophy not the intellectual difficulty of the sciences, but the difficulty of a change of attitude. *Resistances* of the will must be overcome (BT 406, italics mine).

What makes a subject hard to understand—if it's something significant and important—is not that before you can understand it you need to be specially trained in abstruse matters, but the contrast between understanding the subject and what most people *want* to see. Because of this the very things which are most obvious become the hardest of all to understand. What has to be overcome is a difficulty having to do with the will, rather than the intellect (CV 17).

Removing her puzzlement, then, requires a change in the metaphysician's attitude, involving serious work on her will. Like Freud's emphasis on overcoming a patient's internal resistances by changing her entire psychological outlook, Wittgenstein suggests that his most important philosophical work involves trying to get the puzzled individual to acknowledge that what she expresses in the form of a metaphysical necessity can be understood as a "way of seeing" things, thereby removing the puzzling consequences of such a necessity. Wittgenstein readily admits that this involves "persuasion" (LA 27), suggesting that once someone goes through his philosophical exercises she may well change her whole "way of thinking": "I might say to my pupils: When you have been through these exercises you will think differently" (PG 172).

## **2. DISENGAGING THE WILL: THE IMPORTANCE OF IMAGINING POSSIBILITIES**

One difficulty of trying to change how someone looks at her problem is figuring out how to get past the critical censorship which the individual's "way of seeing" imposes on her faculties. In short, part of the difficulty of removing a philosophical puzzle is its internal

connection to the tormented individual who seeks peace: it is she who desires relief but it is also she who resists giving up her way of seeing the matter. Freud developed the “free association” method precisely for this purpose. By getting his patient to adopt an uncensoring, “uncritical” attitude to her thoughts, he is able to disengage her will, allowing what is unconscious to express itself in a more transparent manner. I want to suggest that Wittgenstein’s grammatical investigations serve an analogous purpose. Wittgenstein tries to disengage how a person *thinks* about language, momentarily removing her inclination to metaphysically say “must”, by directing her to examine concrete cases:

The scrutiny of the grammar of a word weakens the position of certain fixed standards of our expression which had prevented us from seeing facts with unbiased eyes. Our investigation tried to remove this bias, which forces us to think that the facts *must* conform to certain pictures embedded in our language (BB 43).

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 (PI §66).

The therapeutic motto “Don’t think, but look!” (PI §66) is a *leitmotif* of his entire practice of philosophy, and could be considered the counterpart to Wittgenstein’s requirement that people sincerely report what they are “tempted to say” no matter how nonsensical it may appear (Cf. CV 56).

By drawing the metaphysician’s attention to certain possibilities, Wittgenstein seeks to disengage her inclination to feel metaphysically bound to look at things in one way. If he can get her to acknowledge other possibilities, temporarily changing her “way of seeing” things, then her compulsion may eventually be broken:

What do I mean when I say “the pupil’s capacity to learn may come to an end here”? Do I say this from my own experience? Of course not. (Even if I have had such an experience.) Then what am I doing with that proposition? Well, I should like you to say: “Yes, it’s true, one *can* imagine that too, that *might* happen too!”—But was I trying to draw someone’s attention to the fact that he is capable of imagining that?—I wanted to put that picture before him, and his acceptance of the picture consists in his now being inclined to regard a given case differently: that is, to compare it with this rather than that set of pictures. I have changed his way of looking at things. . . . (I once read somewhere that a geometrical figure, with the words “Look at this”, serves as a proof for certain Indian mathematicians. This looking too effects an alteration in one’s way of seeing.) (PI §144, Z §461, italics mine)

It may be incredibly difficult, however, to even temporarily disengage the metaphysician’s compulsion. When the puzzled philosopher finds herself inclined to make metaphysical assertions, she is unable to examine her linguistic practices without prejudice:

One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to *look at* its use and learn from that.

But the difficulty is to remove the prejudice which stands in the way of doing this. It is not a *stupid* prejudice (PI §340).



Like Schiller's claim that poetry is inhibited by the critical faculties of a person, the metaphysician's compulsion keeps her from being able to imagine other possibilities, making it difficult for her simply to "look" at her most important possibilities, her actual linguistic practices. I want to suggest that Wittgenstein's concern with disengaging the philosopher's prejudices is the primary reason for his emphasis on possibilities and his frequent use of the imagination.

When the metaphysician says something "must" be the case, Wittgenstein suggests that she is unable to *see* that her disquieting necessity is merely one possibility:

It must be like this, does not mean: it will be like this. On the contrary: 'it will be like this' chooses between one possibility and another. 'It must be like this' sees only *one* possibility (RFM 239).

If the metaphysician is certain that things "must" be like this, then her inability to simply look at her linguistic practices rests on her unwillingness to do so ("If I know that things *must* be this way, why should I bother to gather further evidence?"). For this reason, the most important possibilities often are not instances of the metaphysician's actual linguistic practice but imagined cases, some of which depart from ordinary usage in fantastic ways:

Whenever we make up 'ideal languages' it is . . . to remove some trouble caused in someone's mind by *thinking* that he has got hold of the exact use of a common word. That is also why our method is not merely to enumerate actual usages of words, but rather deliberately to invent new ones, some of them because of their absurd appearance (BB 28, italics mine).

It's only by thinking even more crazily than philosophers do that you can solve their problems (CV 75).

Imagining possibilities, then, is one principal role of the Wittgensteinian therapist (LW §807). Since the metaphysician's compulsion holds her imagination in check, Wittgenstein suggests that by engaging her in a *discussion* and drawing on the resources of his own imagination, he may be able to help her to break free of her compulsion. By transforming philosophy from an adversarial contest between conflicting opinions to a comparative enterprise which takes place in "a realm where we all have the same opinions" (AWL 97), Wittgenstein locates philosophical puzzles in a domain which effectively undermines the critical power of the metaphysician's compulsion.

### 3. CHANGING THE METAPHYSICIAN'S "WAY OF THINKING"

Temporarily disengaging the individual's will, however, is not sufficient for a far reaching cure to her problem. While Wittgenstein's creative examples may be impressive and, as it were, momentarily distract the metaphysician from her compulsion, if it is as deeply rooted and

troubling as Wittgenstein sometimes suggests, then it is bound to return (perhaps once Wittgenstein's class ends for the day). Wittgenstein suggests that what is needed for a long term cure is to persuade the puzzled metaphysician to *see* the particular "way of seeing" which leads to her puzzlement *as* a way of seeing.

Like Freud's suggestion that a successful psychoanalytic cure requires serious work from the patient and a lengthy treatment, Wittgenstein suggests that genuine progress in philosophy as he practices it requires the puzzled philosopher to engage in serious work on herself over a sustained and lengthy period of time. Malcolm reports that Wittgenstein emphasized the importance of regularly attending his classes for several terms:

[Wittgenstein] would admit anyone to his lectures. He required, however, that they attend continuously and for a considerable amount of time. . . . I have known two cases in which he allowed someone to come for one term only, but he was reluctant to give such permission. . . . [I]t was true that one had to attend for quite a long time (at least three terms, I should say) before one could begin to get *any* grasp of what he was doing.<sup>81</sup>

In addition to the metaphysician requiring a number of terms to even begin to understand Wittgenstein's therapeutic approach to philosophy, Wittgenstein also stresses how important it is for the individual not to prematurely cut short Wittgenstein's philosophical therapy before she has reached the deepest expressions of her puzzlement: "In philosophizing we may not *terminate* a disease of thought. It must run its natural course, and *slow* cure is all important. (That is why mathematicians are such bad philosophers.)" (Z §382)

Wittgenstein's therapeutic practice of imagining possibilities and, therefore, disengaging the metaphysician's compulsion in individual instances, enables him to assist the metaphysician in her longer term work of changing her entire attitude and the "way of seeing" things which underlies her puzzlement:

Working in philosophy—like work in architecture in many respects—is really more a working on oneself. On one's own interpretation. On one's way of seeing things. (And what one expects of them.) (CV 16)

I want to suggest, therefore, that the main purpose of Wittgenstein's therapeutic discussions is to provide a setting where the puzzled individual, with Wittgenstein's help, can eventually root out the underlying source of her puzzlement.

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<sup>81</sup>Norman Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984; reprint, Oxford University Press, 1989), 27.

If we keep in mind Wittgenstein's emphasis on the need for the puzzled individual to do far reaching work on herself, then the adversarial interpretation of Wittgenstein will seem likely to have missed the deeper point of Wittgenstein's method of practicing philosophy. Rather than conceiving of philosophical problems as intellectual blunders to be silenced by the external "medicine" of conclusive argument, I think Wittgenstein is more inclined to compare philosophical puzzlement to other serious problems encountered in a person's life. In addition to his frequent comparison of a philosophical puzzle with a psychopathological illness, Wittgenstein also compares the puzzled philosopher to someone in a fallen state of sin. Bouwsma remarks on this similarity, noting how in both cases, it is not individual sins or particular pieces of nonsense which are the focus, but a troubled individual, whether metaphysician or sinner, who is in need of help:

Everyone knows that sin cannot be dealt with sin by sin. It is the disposition that must be changed. Accordingly, just as in the case of sin, it is the sinner who must be saved, and no treatment of this or that sin or a whole batch of sins can keep the sinner in check, so, too, in the case of thinkers and their confusions. It is the human being who falls into confusion who needs help.<sup>82</sup>

When someone is faced with a psychologically tormenting illness or a religious crisis, her whole life may seem to hang in the balance. I believe that Wittgenstein conceived of philosophical problems in a similar manner, and that he thought that an individual's philosophical difficulties might only be removed by a far reaching change in her entire way of thinking and of living:

The way to solve the problem you see in life is to live in a way that will make what is problematic disappear (CV 27).

The sickness of a time is cured by an alteration in the mode of life of human beings, and it was possible for the sickness of philosophical problems to get cured only through a changed mode of thought and of life, not through a medicine invented by an individual (RFM 132).

Since Wittgenstein's focus is on philosophical puzzlement, I want to suggest that his main therapeutic aim is directed at working on the puzzled philosopher's whole "way of thinking" in order to permanently root out the prejudices which underlie her puzzlement and confusion so that she may return to those activities in her life which she finds most rewarding: "Philosophy, studying it, is simply a course in thinking—clearing away confusions. Once these are cleared away one is prepared for other work".<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup>Bouwsma, "Ryle and Wittgenstein", 26.

<sup>83</sup>Quoted in Bouwsma, *Conversations*, 28.

## CONCLUSION

I began this thesis with the suggestion that there is a good deal of evidence that Wittgenstein characterized a significant portion of an early version of the *Philosophical Investigations* as “devoted to the idea that philosophy is like psychoanalysis”. And I think once someone’s attention is drawn to this analogy, a number of striking similarities emerge. If this analogy remained central to Wittgenstein’s conception of philosophy, suggesting the purely therapeutic interpretation which I have developed in this thesis, then one might wonder why Wittgenstein dropped his explicit reference to psychoanalysis. Though I can only offer two possibilities, I think they are worth noting.

In discussions with Rush Rhees, Wittgenstein noted one way in which the analogy of his conception of philosophy with psychoanalysis might be misleading: “When you think of the investigation of philosophical problems as a form of psychoanalysis, you think like a physician—‘We’ll soon put that right!’”<sup>84</sup> Since the point of such an analogy is not to equate the two activities, but to illuminate Wittgenstein’s practice, then it is perfectly possible to imagine contexts where one’s philosophical purposes would not be served by stressing this analogy. The danger of equating the two activities, and thereby confusing both of them, also seems to have been a concern of Wittgenstein’s. In his discussion with Bouwsma where he mentioned the analogy with psychoanalysis, Wittgenstein also noted how Keynes had misunderstood that it was an analogy:

When he became a professor at Cambridge he submitted a typescript to the committee. Keynes was a member of the committee. Of 140 pages, 72 were devoted to the idea that philosophy is like psychoanalysis. A month later Keynes met him and said he was much impressed with idea that philosophy is psychoanalysis. And so it goes.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>Quoted in Brian McGuinness, “Freud and Wittgenstein”, *Wittgenstein and His Times*, ed. Brian McGuinness (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), 39.

<sup>85</sup>Bouwsma, *Conversations*, 36.

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