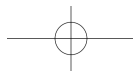
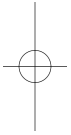
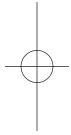


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A Wittgensteinian Way with Paradoxes



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A Wittgensteinian Way with Paradoxes

Rupert Read

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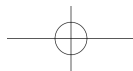
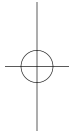
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Contents

Preface and Acknowledgements	vii
A Note on Quotations	xi
Introduction: The Paradoxes of (Philosophical) Delusion	1
I: Away With Philosophers' Paradoxes	
1 Pre-empting Russell's Paradox: Wittgenstein and Frege Against Logicism	19
2 'Time Travel': The Very Idea	45
3 A Paradox for Chomsky: On Our Being Through and Through 'Inside' Language	65
4 Kripke's Rule-Following Paradox—and Kripke's Conjuring Trick	75
5 The Unstability of Kripkean Skepticisms	105
6 Heaps of Trouble: 'Logically Alien Thought' and the Dissolution of 'Sorites' Paradoxes	113
7 The Dissolution of the 'Surprise Exam' Paradox—and its Implications for Rational Choice Theory	139
II: A Way With Lived Paradoxes	
8 Swastikas and Cyborgs: The Significance of <i>PI</i> 420, for Reading Wittgenstein's <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> as a 'War Book'	159
9 From Moore's Paradox to 'Wittgenstein's Paradox?': On Lived Paradox in Cases of (Moral and) Mental Ill-Health	187
10 <i>Lived</i> 'Reductio Ad Absurdum': A Paradoxical and Proper Method of Philosophy, and of Life	203
11 Leaving Things As It Is (sic.): Philosophy and Life 'After' Wittgenstein and Zen	229
12 Conclusion: On Lived Paradoxes	255
Bibliography	261
Index	271
About the Author	285



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Preface and Acknowledgements

In her charming and at times semi-Wittgensteinian novel, *The Philosopher's Pupil*,¹ Iris Murdoch writes that “Of course no philosophy book is ever finished, it is only abandoned.” Some of the present book is very recent material; some of it, I have been working on for almost twenty years (or, as one might even put it: for a generation). I am glad now to have brought it together and offered it to the world. But I wouldn't pretend to have, in any true sense of the word, finished the work and the thinking that it embodies or manifests.

Some might take my ‘tortured’ language oftentimes in this book, my use of endless qualifiers and conditionals and modals and so on, as a potent sign of this book's being in a more ordinary sense ‘unfinished’. But this would be a mistake. As laid out in Katherine Morris's important article, “The ‘Context Principle’ in the Later Wittgenstein,”² Wittgenstein's use of modal terms should be taken much more seriously than it usually is by his interpreters. When Wittgenstein says: “Here is one possibility” or “I am inclined to say”, and so on, then we should take him at his word. So with me. The present work is a series of *exercises* in philosophical *practice*. Try not to read it as stating things; try to read it as a continual set of efforts at moving away from things that I am and that others are inclined to state, things that get us into trouble. My language is complex and ‘hedged’ and tentative not like that of a scientist, but rather like that of a psychotherapist (or like a client/patient).³ Sometimes, a psychotherapist of a patient—myself.

But this Preface is not an Introduction. So I'll say no more as yet about my method(s), which will in any case emerge in and be judged by what follows,⁴ and simply take the opportunity presented now to acknowledge and thank those who have made this book, such as it is, possible.

Firstly, thanks to the two people who have done sterling ‘editorial assistance’ work on the manuscript which has greatly smoothed my wheels here. Namely, Vincent Gaine (in the earliest stages of the project) and Ruth Makoff (in the final stages). I am very grateful to them both.

Thanks to all those who helped improve the various chapters of this book. I have endeavoured to cite them ‘locally’, but special mention goes to those who read significant chunks of or indeed virtually all of the material in manuscript form: these kind persons included Angus Ross, Oskari Kuusela, and Don Levi.

Thanks to those who have influenced me in deeper ways than individual citation makes possible to evidence: Especially Phil Hutchinson; also James Conant and Cora Diamond; and recently also Iain McGilchrist. If it isn't too sappy or weird, I'd like also to take a moment to thank Ludwig Wittgenstein himself, without whom. . . . (Is it even nonsensical, to thank / acknowledge the dead? In good Burkean fashion, I don't believe that it is for a minute; and I think that only an amnesiacal economomistic 'presentism' could make us think that maybe it is.)

Thanks to the kind people at Lexington, especially Jana Hodges-Kluck, for helping greatly to crystallise the final form of this book in terms of its 'angle' and its *topos*; and for putting up with the usual story from academics: delays, excuses on excuses, etc.

Thanks finally to Wes Sharrock for his kind permission to reprint (in a revised form in Chapter 4, for which I alone am responsible) our co-authored piece, "Kripke's Conjuring Trick," on 'Kripkenstein's' rule-following paradox.

And thanks of course to the various editors and publishers who have given permission for the reprinting of material in this book:

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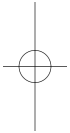


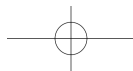
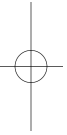
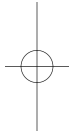
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Rupert Read (r.read@uea.ac.uk), UEA Norwich, late April 2012.

NOTES

1. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983, p.133.
2. *Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 44 no.176 (July 1994), pp.294–310.
3. This is sometimes doubly so in the endnotes, of which there are a great many in some chapters to follow. If my habit of frequently hedging more / rebutting possible misunderstandings / engaging with detractors / making connections / speculating, in the endnotes, irritates you or leaves you cold, then my advice is: skip the endnotes. Somewhat like James Conant, and occasionally like Donald Davidson, my view about my own (often extensive) apparatus of endnotes is that they are at times the best or most interesting or most fun or (possibly) most important parts of the whole thing. But rest assured that the text makes sense (or at least: that I seek to make it legible) by itself, even if one never reads a single one of my endnotes.
4. Philosophical anoraks among you will doubtless be thinking now about ‘the preface paradox.’ . . .



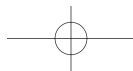
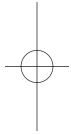


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A Note on Quotations

Within the limits of the constraints of Lexington's house style, I try to follow Wittgenstein's practice (as also explicated by Baker "Quotation-Marks in *Philosophical Investigations Part One*," *Language and Communication* 22: 37, 2002, p.68.). Briefly and roughly: I use double quotes for 'actual' quotes (whether real or imagined) and use single quotation marks for non-actual quotes, including 'scare quotes'. This use of double quotes (note my use of the term "real or imagined," above) also includes references to particular words, names and terms that one might want to utter or use in a sentence, in contrast to concepts, which are in general depicted using single quotes (with the exception of chapter 1, where, following a more 'mainstream' tradition in Analytic Philosophy, particular concepts are italicized where the intention is to identify them as referents of particular words—see chapter 5 for a discussion of this (not unproblematic!) practice).

The reader will note that there are a number of philosophical issues with this, and roughness: borderline cases. This is inevitable. The best way in the end to understand (and if necessary to contest) my diacritical practice (including use of italics, etc.) is to read my book with a sensitive eye. The same is true of Wittgenstein; though to anyone who wishes to essay a full understanding of Wittgenstein's practice in this area, which is my guiding light, invaluable guidance is present in fact in the whole of Baker's book, *Wittgenstein's method*.



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Introduction: The Paradoxes of (Philosophical) Delusion

“The criteria which we accept for ‘fitting’, ‘being able to’, ‘understanding’, are much more complicated than might appear at first sight. That is, the game with these words, their employment in the linguistic intercourse that is carried on by their means, is more involved—the role of these words in our language other—than we are tempted to think. (This role is what we need to understand in order to resolve philosophical paradoxes. And hence definitions usually fail to resolve them; and so, *a fortiori* does the assertion that a word is ‘indefinable’.)” —Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*¹ (henceforth ‘PI’) 182

“We are unable clearly to circumscribe the concepts we use; not because we don’t know their real definition, but because there is no real ‘definition’ to them.” —Wittgenstein, *The Brown Book*, from *The Blue and Brown Books*² (henceforth ‘BB’)

The word “paradox” in daily life tends to mean something like this: something that initially appears hard or even impossible to understand; or something that has even a strange air of self-contradictoriness about it, even though it is not self-contradictory (because it is actual). In the famous case in *The Pirates of Penzance*,³ for instance, the “most ingenious” paradox is that a grown man in the story is only five years old—because he was born on February 29th, and so has only had five birthdays.

But it can immediately be seen that this well-known and charming case (and the many others somewhat like it) does not fit very well with the usage of the term “paradox” that philosophers typically make. For this case from *Pirates of Penzance* is, one might say, a riddle whose solution is immediately present to us (He is not really five years old; the fact that he has only had five actual birthdays doesn’t make a jot of difference to his age in terms of the number of *years* he has lived.). Whereas philosophical paradoxes are not typically at all like that. These are not cases where it is just initially hard to see how things can be thus and so, even though they *are* thus and so. They are not cases where there is just a dynamic tension between the ‘terms’ (as when it is said for example that “Paradoxically, the very effort to reduce the deficit is what has led to the deficit growing still larger”; this use of the term “paradoxically” is actually pretty-closely aligned to the (to a philosopher) less severe term, “ironically”). They are cases more like some of those rightly beloved of Cleanth

Brooks which motivated his over-arching claim that the language of poetry is the language of paradox.⁴ That is, they are cases where there is some qualitatively greater difficulty in resolving the riddle⁵ with which one has been presented. It may well that such riddles, philosophical paradoxes that spawn entire 'literatures' or last for centuries or millennia, are insoluble. And that they need rather to be diagnosed in terms of their (non-obligatory) conditions of arising, than to be answered.

Roughly this, at any rate, is what I shall hold and argue in (Part I, especially, of) this book. It would be a complete failure to engage with philosophers' paradoxes to rest content at showing that the philosopher's worries do not arise in day-to-day living, and so urge that such paradoxes are unreal. Only a crude caricature of an 'ordinary language philosophy' could imagine such a thing. Rather, what I shall seek to do is to show how paradoxes in philosophy can in one way or another be dissolved, *to the satisfaction of the philosopher*. This is setting the bar high. But that is where it needs to be set. It is just no good to mythically language-police paradoxes away, wafting them away with a wave of nods at ordinary discourse. The Wittgensteinian way with philosophers' paradoxes is rather to therapeutically liberate the philosopher⁶ from the suffering from paradoxes that s/he is stuck in, in a way that s/he herself will *will*. That is: Will, acknowledge and willingly accept. Not the policeman but the empathetic psychotherapist should be one's model. And not infrequently the person most needing the therapy turns out of course to be the would-be therapist themselves.⁷

Now; it would be usual at this early point in a book about paradoxes to begin in earnest our investigation of paradoxes in philosophy by *defining* what (such) a paradox is, at least for my present purposes. For the reason implicitly given in my epigraphs above, however, I shan't try to do this. If you are someone with any experience in philosophy (and if you are not, then it is very unlikely that you are reading these words, or, if you are, unlikely that you will read many more before stopping and reading some other philosophy first), then I think that, roughly, you *know*⁸ well enough, reader, roughly what 'philosophers' paradoxes are,⁹ and the various, *family related* things that the term "paradox" means, in the kind of context(s) that will interest and occupy us in the present work; and, in any case (and especially because of that 'family resemblance'), to make such knowledge less rough a definition would be useless or indeed counter-productive. What is needed rather is an *investigation*, or a series of investigations. To understand the role of relatively deep paradoxes in our mental lives, in our linguistic intercourse, and in our confusing ourselves and each other, etc., (The concept 'paradox' isn't 'indefinable': there is rather no need, except for certain very specific purposes,¹⁰ to define it.)

Paradoxes are as paradoxes do. In order to understand *better* what philosophical paradoxes are, and how to resolve them, what is needful is to do

as Wittgenstein says in my epigraph: to look into them and the harm they do (and don't do), and their surroundings; to seek to resolve (dissolve—not, usually, as we will see, solve) them.¹¹ To dissolve them back into our language, from whence they emerged. When we get a clearer picture of the actual uses of words which bamboozle us,¹² this can help us to avoid getting caught up in the kinds of unnecessary nonsenses and travails that *are* philosophers' eager bewitchment by paradoxes.

What is needed, as I say, is an investigation. What is needed is not to put the cart before the horse, by 'defining' paradoxes, and then simply as if were listing them, chapter by chapter. That would repeat (the general style of) the very gesture which so often has led philosophers to permanently mire themselves in paradoxes. Rather than rushing in, we need to tread very gently indeed. What is needed, I shall suggest and endeavour (with you) to 'instantiate,' is gradually to come to understand the nature of paradoxes in philosophy better by engaging with them and seeking to find a way(s) that will actually help one to emerge from one's entanglement in them.

So: by and large in this book I simply investigate particular paradoxes¹³ (though it will often become clear how these paradoxes frequently mirror / relate to each other, and thus how studying 'one' can help us to draw the sting from 'another'). A picture emerges from this, I think, of how this goes; of the various (more or less related) things that go wrong that mire us in our own conflicted desires with regard to our words, and that appear to mire us against our own intentions. Thus we gradually come to be clearer about how it is that paradoxes tend to trap us, in philosophy: often by our imposing on ourselves (before we even notice that we have done so) questions that are prejudicial or that do not correspond to our real needs or that in advance guarantee a failure to be able to answer them.

However, as will become clear, I by no means believe that the kind of paradoxes that interest me in the present work (paradoxes that cut rather deeper than those of the 'five-year-old adult' variety) are limited to professional philosophers, nor that they are only to be understood as 'linguistic' in nature, nor that they are in all cases avoidable, *nor even that they are in all cases undesirable*.¹⁴ This book is divided into two Parts. The first Part (Part I) tends to concentrate on paradoxes found in philosophical work broadly construed (i.e., some of the 'philosophers' whose thinking (or whose paradox-mongering) is put into question here are not professional philosophers, nor even academics. For instance, the paradoxicality of 'time-travel,' and the need to question the very idea thereof, as I do in Chapter 2, is not widely understood; 'time-travel' is a popular concept which is linguistically/culturally/psychologically attractive to a large number of ordinary folk (and some physicists). And in Chapter 7 we shall come to deal with some genuinely/substantively influential economists' paradoxes.). I suggest that such paradoxes can typically,

with some effort and some willingness, be dissolved away.¹⁵ The second Part of the book (Part II) tends to concentrate on where paradoxes occur in real life, including outside even philosophy relatively broadly construed, in a way that is in some cases profoundly harmful: morally or politically or psychically (where in other words the stakes tend to be higher than in Part I), but not at all easily avoidable except through means *not restricted* to that of the philosopher (at least: not unless we *considerably* widen our usual conception of the role and activity of the philosopher). I also consider in Part II ways in which paradox is present in and unavoidably used as part of the methodology of philosophy of which I wholeheartedly approve and partake (including Wittgenstein's own) and in broadly related modes of religious/spiritual embodied *practice* (including in Buddhism).

One objective of the book, then, is to point up the difference—the fine but crucial line—between paradoxes that are of merely academic / narrowly intellectual interest, and paradoxes that are actually lived, felt. Whether, for instance, as psychopathology,¹⁶ or as part of what Cora Diamond has called “the difficulty of reality” that affects all of us if we are open to it, *or* as part of the way out of such difficulties. It would be fair to say then, after all,¹⁷ that this book examines paradoxes in a broad sense of that word—i.e., in all the senses just indicated—as opposed to ‘merely logical’ paradoxes.

My submission thus far has been—and I will seek to undergird this, in what follows—that one cannot adequately understand the paradoxes that most focally grip philosophers unless one comes to understand the actual circumstances in which such a grip can be felt outside the academy and outside what philosophers typically recognise as ‘philosophy.’ In part, through coming to understand how the forms of language that can capture philosophers into feeling/being caught by a paradox can in some cases be realised in ordinary life, or in certain at-least-imaginable circumstances, *in such a way that the feeling subsides*.

This book then considers paradoxes of diverse natures, in diverse areas (from the methodology of philosophy itself to religion, from the foundations of logic through the study of language to time-travel, from solipsism and racism to heaps and exams). I seek to do justice to the quiddities of the diversities here, and to indicate deep commonalities linking across these diversities (‘diversities’ which are in fact in *some* cases then merely superficial). Throughout, I seek to liberate, to free up the mind fettered by the pull to paradox, *and* to see where and when and in what respects that pull may need to be left as it is.

In what follows, as may have already become apparent, I tend to presuppose an interpretation of Wittgenstein¹⁸ that was first gelled in the papers collected in my and Crary's *The New Wittgenstein*, and in Gordon Baker's great posthumous work, *Wittgenstein's Method: Neglected Aspects*.¹⁹ My book could then be seen as a set of exercises in thinking (this



Wittgenstein in relation to an important and representative selection of the paradoxes of the philosophical tradition (considering the word “philosophical” here, as already suggested above, in an unusually wide and accommodating sense).

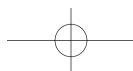
Understood aright,²⁰ this resolute/therapeutic Wittgensteinian project never makes it *easy* to show that someone is lost to his words, and so is speaking nonsense. (Charging “Nonsense!” is always a last resort, and a provisional resort at that.) For, as was already intimated above (in discussion of why it will be no part of my method here to ‘disallow’ philosophical paradox-mongering merely by pointing out its discrepancy with our ordinary non-philosophical talk), one requires *the acknowledgement of the other*, if one is to ‘convict’ them of such confusion. Philosophy requires a deep honesty (a willingness to be ready to acknowledge one’s unclarity), a willingness to listen to the other. I hope to live up to these aims, in what follows. The objective is: to seek to help others (and myself!) not to get caught up, entangled, in paradoxes unnecessarily. (Which, I will suggest, is not at all the same as: not to get entangled in paradoxes *at all*.)

It is fair to say, then, that the sense of “paradox” that I frequently unearth/employ in this book, especially perhaps in Part I, turns out to be close to the sense (sic.) of “nonsense” as that term is understood by ‘new/resolute Wittgensteinians.’ But emphasis must be laid here on the phrase “turns out.” In other words, this is to a very considerable degree a *conclusion*, a *result* of the investigations undertaken here, not a requirement laid down upon them. In other words: it is not as a result of any ‘definition’ that I supposedly begin with that it does (if it does) in fact . . . *turn out* (throughout most of the book) that philosophers’ paradoxes can frequently be equated to nonsense, a hovering between possible senses. *It is rather as a result of coming to understand just what it is that frequently gets philosophers entangled in such paradoxes.*

In the remainder of this Introduction I will simply set out the order of the chapters to follow, an order designed to seek to help unravel unnecessary entanglements (and, to that end, to help to achieve a better understanding of both unnecessary and necessary ones). And I shall in the remainder of this Introduction thereby hazard an initial indication of the relation of the chapters to follow one to another, and thus of the way in which the ‘argument’ of the book as a whole unfolds.

PART I: AWAY WITH PHILOSOPHERS’ PARADOXES

Wittgenstein has a way with paradoxes that are merely philosophers’ paradoxes, that helps their ‘sufferer’ to dissolve them away. . . . Wittgenstein’s way with such paradoxes actually can succeed then in doing away with them.



1. *Pre-empting Russell's Paradox: Wittgenstein and Frege Against Logicism*

This naturally forms the opening chapter of the book because of its explicit reflection on the concept of 'concept', which helps to bed in the remarks made above about the concept of 'paradox,' and on how I hope to elucidate it without stooping to 'defining' it. The chapter offers a Wittgensteinian argument suggesting that if Frege had full-bloodedly taken 'the therapeutic turn,' as he could have done (as he 'started' to do), he would not have been vulnerable to Russell's famous refutation of his logicism. 'Russell's Paradox' is vulnerable to dissolution through precisely the kind of therapeutic thinking that Frege at times brilliantly engaged in, at the outer reaches of his philosophical grasp, concerning the nature of 'concepts' and 'objects.' 'Once' we become truly clear on the distinction between these two, Russell's Paradox cannot get off the ground.

2. *'Time Travel': The Very Idea²¹*

Following some leads in Wittgenstein, I argue here that the very idea of 'time-travel' is itself paradoxical in a self-destructive fashion. I.e., that we have not indicated clearly any intelligible use of words, in nearly all of our invocations of the pseudo-concept of 'time-travel.' 'Time-travel,' in the sense in which people usually imagine that they want to imagine it, is a nonsense. I suggest how the (pseudo-)concept comes from unaware indulgence in (and crossing of) our metaphors of and for time, metaphors based on spatiality, motion, etc., In other words: I suggest that time-travel and its inherent paradoxes can be dissolved if one liberates oneself from compulsion at the hands of the metaphors that seem—merely seem—to make 'time-travel' meaningful, and thus potentially possible.

The chapter includes a setting out of how the scenarios explored in *Dr. Who* and similar works of science fiction are in most cases through-and-through absurd. I conclude by reflecting on *why* we, including paradigmatically philosophers, get hooked on time-travel narratives, and thus sucke(re)d into time-travel paradoxes.

3. *A Paradox for Chomsky: On Our Being Through and Through 'Inside' Language*

'Kripke's Wittgenstein' has been thought by some to provide a powerful challenge to Chomsky's philosophical linguistics, and Chomsky has defended his theory against Kripke's arguments. In Chapters 4 and 5, I will be mounting a fundamental challenge to Kripke's Wittgenstein, largely preventing those arguments from getting off the ground. After briefly sketching the significant common ground that there is between Wittgenstein and Chomsky, I here (in Chapter 3) seek to raise a Wittgensteinian difficulty that I think *does* arise for Chomskian linguistics: Chomsky wants to tell us the form of / the deep structure of language; and yet



this would require us, paradoxically, to be outside language altogether, in order to limn it. A natural human ambition, inevitably productive of nonsense, that Wittgenstein has shown us how to overcome. (I argue for this additionally by means of suggesting that the much-vaunted Chomskian “linguistic universals,” insofar as they are real, may in fact rather be *social* universals; features of language that fall out inevitably from the very having of a culture or a society.)

4. Kripke’s Rule-Following Paradox—and Kripke’s Conjuring Trick²²

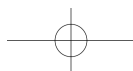
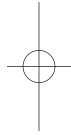
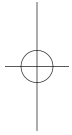
Here, I turn to a paradox allegedly haunting the heart of Wittgenstein’s own writing. In this chapter, I dissolve Kripke’s paradox-mongering back into the ordinary language from whence it came. ‘Kripke’s Wittgenstein’ argues to an extraordinarily paradoxical conclusion: that “There can be no such thing as meaning anything by any word.”²³ But it is very unclear that one can get as far as even *enunciating* the ‘Kripkensteinian’ paradox. This essay sets out then the *reasons* for the failure of Kripke’s reading of Wittgenstein’s rule-following considerations, from a resolutely Wittgensteinian point of view, linking the pathology of that reading to a famous remark from Wittgenstein’s anti-private-language considerations (PI 308).

5. The Unstability of Kripkean Scepticisms²⁴

This short chapter follows on closely from the previous chapter: It considers a generalization or ‘extension’ of the case focused on there. Here I show, by means of examining this alleged extension of Kripkenstein’s argument (to concepts ‘themselves’), how Kripke’s allegedly Wittgensteinian ‘rule-paradox’ cannot be generalized beyond the linguistic case in which it is first put forward, simply because it cannot even be coherently stated/formulated, neither in that case nor in any other. Drawing on Wittgenstein’s thinking about the nature of concepts, then, this short chapter shows that there is no good reason to believe that the would-be ‘metaphysical’ rule-scepticism put forth by ‘Kripkenstein’ can actually be coherently thought at all.

6. Heaps of Trouble: “Logically Alien Thought” and the Dissolution of ‘Sorites’ Paradoxes

Like the previous three chapters, Chapter 6 concerns the actual nature of our language, as opposed to philosophical fantasies thereof. This chapter concerns the ancient philosophical paradox of the “heap” (the ‘sorites’). I argue here that we reason ‘soritically’ (i.e., we (philosophers) tend to suppose that the sorites paradox is real, a genuine problem) because we persist tacitly in thinking both that there are conditions of application for the term in question (such as the conditions of distribution and of



contiguity relevant for ‘heap’ cases) *and* in thinking, simultaneously, that there are not. We persist in being caught by the sorites paradox only so long as we fail to see such conditions clearly. Or to put the same point another way, only so long as we fail to see clearly that, *when such conditions of application are eliminated entirely*, leaving (e.g.) only the bare numbers (of grains) and our particular purposes (e.g., a lot of sugar in my tea may not be a lot of sugar at the warehouse), then the appearance of paradox really does vanish.

At the heart of this chapter is a novel reading of the “woodsellers” from *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*.²⁵ How they might after all be able to reflect a lived reality, and not merely a completely conceptual mystery, or a paradoxical absurdity or madness. The net result: dissolving the sorites via Wittgenstein, via the taking of context truly seriously (which ‘contextualism’ as a theory does not do). It only looks like there is the paradox of the heap so long as we—absurdly—want the term ‘heap’ to be both context-bound and context-independent in its use. I show this, in part through treating Wittgenstein’s woodsellers as caring about whether their piles of wood are properly *heaps* or not. ‘Heap’ just *isn’t* an analytic category (the philosopher’s first mistake typically is to think otherwise, to suppose that there ought always to be a hard and fast answer, theoretically derivable, to the question of whether or not something is a heap): but it might sometimes, under certain circumstances, be a category important in real life.

7. The Dissolution of the ‘Surprise Exam’ Paradox—and Its Implications for Rational Choice Theory

Like the previous chapter, this chapter seeks to overcome a persistent ‘philosopher’s paradox’ through careful attention to the actual conditions in which we have (could have) surprise exams—as, in Chapter 6, we focused on the actual conditions in which we have or do not have heaps, etc. If we stay within the terms of the backward induction model (which is absolutely central to the argument for the surprise exam paradox) then, paradoxically, there can be no pre-announced surprise exams. Actually, the model guarantees that there cannot be. It removes, in fact, the paradox. But there *is* something paradoxical about the claim that there cannot be pre-announced surprise exams. It turns out that the main way to dissolve the air of paradox here, besides noting the common-sense point that the best way to keep a secret is not to announce it, is to allow oneself to note the various ways in which a pre-announced surprise exam is nevertheless (found to be) possible under a wide variety of real-life circumstances, after all, *contra* most philosophers. Crucially: one can surprise one’s interlocutors by simply going ahead and doing something that they thought they had logically ruled out as in principle undoable.



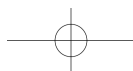
In conclusion, the surprise exam paradox is considered alongside other 'backward induction' paradoxes (including those to be found in economics), and some more general and potentially quite important morals drawn.

PART II: A WAY WITH LIVED PARADOXES

A Wittgensteinian way with paradoxes, as will have become clear already from certain moments in Part I, shows/exemplifies how most philosophers' paradoxes can be dissolved away, *but does not do away with all paradoxes*—far from it. There are paradoxes that are lived; contradictions that matter in psychical or in civil life that are not dissolved by a Wittgensteinian treatment (Unless we expand our understanding of what falls under the heading of such treatment to include cases such as the cure through acknowledgement of the paradoxical desire not to see some humans as human (see Chapter 8) and/or the cure of the pathological desire (roughly) not to see oneself as human (see Chapter 9)). Most crucially: there are paradoxes that are good (perhaps even 'real' or 'true') methodologically and/or practically (see Chapters 10 and 11). It is quite wrong—180 degrees wrong—to think of Wittgenstein as a would-be bringer of an end to all puzzlement. He in fact gives real paradoxes *their real due*, which is only possible once one has done away with philosophers' fake versions of them.

8. *Swastikas and Cyborgs: The Significance of PI 420, for Reading Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations as a 'War Book'*²⁶

Here, I argue that *PI 420* offers a kind of phantasmised cyborg, a paradoxical human-conceived-as-an-automaton, that brilliantly captures a lived paradox at the heart of Nazism's vision of the other—and that the rest of the text of *PI 420*, with its explicit reference to the swastika, supports this reading. That is: by focusing attention onto an important but neglected passage, *PI 420*, I argue that the *Philosophical Investigations* is a work that in the course of its centre-piece (the anti-'private-language' considerations, often called "the private language argument") responds to the great issue of its time: the World War, and the racism and failure of inter-human acknowledgement both underlying and horrifically played out in that war. Seeing a human being as an automaton, or seeing an everyday object as a swastika: these two (similarly paradoxical) possibilities, that Wittgenstein at one point in his book discusses in one and the same sentence, index (respectively) that failure and the needful vigilance of our response to it. Acknowledging the pain of other human beings rather than wrongly modelling that pain in a way that makes others' being inaccessible to us is what at the deepest level is required if we are to





avoid falling back into the mindset that led to World War Two and the Holocaust.

9. *From Moore's Paradox to 'Wittgenstein's Paradox'?: On Lived Paradox in Cases of (Moral and) Mental Ill-Health*²⁷

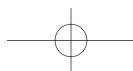
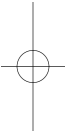
Chapter 8 concerns Wittgenstein's exposition of a paradox that was uncannily and dreadfully present in the large worst recesses of the history of the time when he wrote his great later work: The paradox(es) inherent in *seeing some class of human beings as if they did not suffer or did not matter*. In Chapter 9, we turn to a paradox inherent in *seeing oneself as if one does not matter / is unworthy of consideration / is through and through bad*. Via a paradox associated with the name of Wittgenstein's friend and fellow-founder of Analytic Philosophy, G. E. Moore, I argue here that Wittgenstein developed a sort of real-life moral-psychopathological version of Moore's Paradox²⁸ that can help us to understand how psychopathology functions and thus can perhaps start to give one a hint as to how to overcome it.

In this chapter, then, I investigate Moore's paradox and a related paradox that I attribute to Wittgenstein in order to shed some light on the logic or illogic of certain lived phenomena of psychopathology, and (in reflection) to draw a more general philosophical moral concerning the logic and nature of belief. Much as Kierkegaard taught us that despair cannot know itself and still be despair, I suggest that Wittgenstein has taught us that an unqualified self-judgement of "I'm filth" cannot coherently be made.

For Wittgenstein remarked, in *Culture and Value*: "*Nobody can truthfully say of himself that he is filth*. Because if I do say it, though it can be true in a sense, this is not a truth by which I myself can be penetrated: otherwise I should either have to go mad or change myself."²⁹

This has an immediate corollary, previously unnoted: that it may be true that someone is simply filth—a rotten person through and through—and also true that they don't believe that they are filth, but that it is absurd/means nothing to say "I'm filth." Even considering the possibility seriously already prevents it from being true of one that one is (simply) filth. You just can't say "I'm filth" and mean it. In the act of saying it, it is already untrue. Nor can you even say and mean "It may be true that I'm filth," and it still be true that you are filth.

As Chapter 9 proceeds I explicitly consider real cases of delusional belief and of depressive self-loathing in which people may (appear to) find themselves believing things along the lines of "I'm filth." I draw from my identifying therein of a genuinely new ethical or psychopathological version of Moore's Paradox (tentatively dubbed "Wittgenstein's Paradox") a moral concerning the degree to which it makes sense to think of belief as anything like a 'natural kind' term.



The importance of the main conclusion reached in this chapter—that Wittgenstein’s reasoning is sound, and that the remark “I’m filth” is inherently paradoxical—is hard to overestimate. Because the conclusion generalizes back toward the kind of case focal in Chapter 8: parallel considerations apply to “I’m insane” (saying this guarantees a level of insight that partially falsifies the claim seemingly made), and to relevantly similar collective instances: “Our society is completely sick,” “Our society is insane,” etc. This results in a hopeful take-away: The felt desire to say these things already underlines how we are resisting them, how they are not true, how we are working to ensure that they don’t become true. (In passing, it is noted how this undermines an alleged depressing corollary of Kripke’s Wittgenstein’s ‘communitarianism’.)

10. *Lived ‘Reductio Ad Absurdum’: A Paradoxical and Proper Method of Philosophy, and of Life*

I look in this chapter at Nietzsche’s effort to get society/humanity to overcome itself / to change itself radically for the better. I argue that Nietzsche’s route to doing so, in the final, epochal essay of the *Genealogy of Morality*,³⁰ relies on a necessarily paradoxical methodology. A kind of inhabitation of absurdity, to flush out a very widely ramifying ‘disease,’ to which there is (as yet) almost no outside (which to ‘flush out’ to) (Cf. Chapter 9, previewed above). I suggest that this paradoxical methodology can be elucidated by close comparison with Wittgenstein’s methodology, especially (though not only) in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*³¹ (Henceforth ‘TLP’). Heidegger thought Nietzsche was the last metaphysician; I suggest that Nietzsche here already shows awareness of this, and thereby overcomes being caught by this designation. His willing participation in a kind of deliberately *self-implicating reductio ad absurdum*, for the sake of something that is still being given birth to, like Wittgenstein’s, eventuates in a nascent autonomy, not in a heteronomy which can (as Heidegger alleged) only be retrospectively appreciated for its usefulness, from outside and beyond it.

Like Rousseau, then, who self-described thus, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein can illuminatingly be described as men of paradox rather than of thought-constraining prejudices. They, however, work *through* these paradoxes, and might thus come out, along with us, on the other side, saying and doing something clear and new and potentially valuable.

11. *Leaving Things As It Is (sic.): Philosophy and Life ‘After’ Wittgenstein and Zen*³²

Continuing the theme of Chapter 10, this chapter argues that Cora Diamond and James Conant’s reading of the *Tractatus*, as a would-be resolutely therapeutic work, not a work of metaphysics, can be applied to the spirit and practice of Wittgenstein’s work *throughout* his life. The

chapter takes some of the crucial closing portions of Diamond's founding 'New Wittgensteinian' paper, "Throwing away the ladder: How to read the *Tractatus*"³³ and slightly rewrites them. Elements of the *Tractatus* discussions are replaced with roughly symmetrical elements of the *Investigations* discussions. The result is effective and illuminating, and poses some interesting difficulties for a variety of interpretations of Wittgenstein. It suggests moreover an intriguing parallel between Wittgensteinian philosophy and Zen Buddhism, a parallel that takes up the gauntlet of the challenge thrown down by Peter Hacker to the effect that any such parallelism involves a total misunderstanding of Wittgenstein. I suggest, to the contrary, that there is indeed a deep parallel between (Zen) Buddhism and Wittgenstein. That, in the actual practice of meditation, of koans, etc., there is a way of beneficially *living* paradoxes and a way through their harmful effects.

12. Conclusion: On Lived Paradoxes

In closing, I distinguish once more, in the light of the above analyses, between dissolving paradoxes, the usual (and usually correct) Wittgensteinian move to make in the vicinity of a paradox, and recognising *genuine* paradoxes, paradoxes not merely of abstractive philosophy but of lived real life.

I comment in that context on the artificiality of the above separation of the two parts of this book: made clear briefly with reference to examples: such as the surprise exam, and 'Wittgenstein's Paradox'. For example, Chapters 6 or 7 could possibly be placed in Part II, Chapters 8 or 9 could possibly be placed in Part I. What this ties in with is the way in which I aim to take one gradually from mere philosophers' paradoxes to real-life situations in which paradoxicality may be present but isn't a problem in the same way (typically, it isn't a merely intellectual problem, but is a real-life issue).

NOTES

1. New York: MacMillan, 1953, 1958 (transl. Anscombe).
2. Oxford: Blackwell, 1969, 1958, p25.
3. See math.boisestate.edu/gas/pirates/web_op/pirates18.html
4. See his *The Well-Wrought Urn*, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1947.
5. Cf. Cora Diamond's important essay on "Riddles and Anselm's riddle," from her *The Realistic Spirit*, Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1991.
6. And this philosopher, as will become clear, is not (just) a stock figure. It's you (and me).
7. For the background in Wittgenstein to the kind of thinking manifested in this paragraph, the reader is recommended to consult especially my various co-authored articles with Phil Hutchinson, and Gordon Baker's *Wittgenstein's Method* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).

8. You know it; you understand it implicitly. That doesn't mean that you can (yet) say it. This is a key insight that Wittgenstein inherits from Augustine and Socrates, and then greatly develops. To know our way about our language better, such that we can come somewhat closer to saying what we already in effect understand, is the great 'skill' philosophy can teach us. Paradoxically, drawing on a valence now of the word "paradox" that will turn out to be closer to that of Part II than of Part I of the present work: To return us to where we already were (are), and to know the place fully for the first time. This is what we will be seeking to accomplish, *vis-à-vis* paradoxes.

9. In the very unlikely event that you don't, let me direct you to others' words, rather than any of my own (because I find any such formulations rather painfully inadequate), to get you started. R.M. Sainsbury, on p.1 of his *Paradoxes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), writes this: "This is what I understand by a paradox: an apparently unacceptable conclusion derived by apparently acceptable reasoning from apparently acceptable premises." Those words, for all their rather-too-cosy and too 'argumentative' Analytic style, and for all that (as we shall see) they are too limited in scope to reflect the variegation of what we understand by the term "paradox" (see for instance my presentation in Chapter 3, below; also, crucially, Chapters 10 and 11), might be a decent starting-point toward understanding the concept of *paradox*, for someone interested in philosophy who for some reason somehow feels wholly at sea with or in ignorance of the concept.

A useful classic account of the concept of paradox is Quine's, in the title essay to *The Ways of Paradox* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1976; revised edition), though, in common with most Analytic authors, he (like Sainsbury) over-stresses (in my view) the role of truth and falsity and understresses the role of considerations of sensicality and nonsensicality. A key feature of paradoxes is that assuming that a paradoxical claim is false typically does as much harm as assuming that it is true. Often (as we will see in Chapters 4, 5 and 7) the question is rather of whether there is any "it" at all, here. And *sometimes* (i.e., with regard to some paradoxes, as I will show in the latter part of Part II of this book) allowing that the paradox is 'true' doesn't actually do harm, and may indeed be essential to philosophical progress.

10. , E.g., producing a dictionary!

11. I am partly thinking here of Juliet Floyd's tremendous articles on the (type of) understanding gained by grasping why it is that one 'cannot' trisect an angle with a ruler and compass, most notably perhaps her piece in my and Crary's *The New Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 2000); and of Cora Diamond's wonderful work on riddles and how a 'solution' to a riddle in a certain sense alters the riddle 'itself' (See again her *The Realistic Spirit*).

12. Amn't I then after all endorsing here some 'outmoded' Ordinary Language Philosophy (OLP)? No. There is a caricature of OLP, caused in part by some crude un-Wittgensteinian practitioners of OLP, that is outmoded. The sophisticated deployment of OLP by Austin and Strawson at their best, and by Wittgenstein, Ebersole, and Cavell, is not sullied by this, not touched by it. For more on what I mean here, see Avner Baz's *When Words are Called For: In Defense of Ordinary Language Philosophy*, Harvard University Press (forthcoming), and my "Ordinary/everyday Language," in Jolley (ed.), *Wittgenstein: Key Concepts*, Acumen, 2010. For some very useful remarks from Baz about the 'civil status' of alleged paradoxes, the occurrence of what appear to philosophers to be paradoxes in ordinary language and life, see pp.700-701 of his "Aspect perception and philosophical difficulty," in O. Kuusela and M. McGinn (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), and also his "On Learning from Wittgenstein," in W. Day and V. Krebs (eds.) *Seeing Wittgenstein Anew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

13. And so, as one might put it: So much for the cackle. Cf. J.L. Austin's sammel-punkt.philo.at:8080/1309/1/plea.html

14. One obvious place in which paradox can be (to say the least) desirable is in poetry (cf. n.4 above and *supra*). If one thinks, as I do, following Wittgenstein, that there ought to be not a Platonic opposition between philosophy and poetry but rather



a bringing together of them, then it will be unsurprising if one argues, as I will toward the close of the present book, that paradox should play an essential role in the methods of philosophy, properly understood and practiced.

15. And: that their issuances in one kind or another of nonsense is a symptom of this.

16. On which, see for instance Louis Sass's important book, *The paradoxes of delusion: Wittgenstein, Schreber and the Schizophrenic Mind*, Ithaca: Cornell, 1994 (as well as my various published critiques of Sass). Sass's work is one among many existence-proofs for the paradoxes of delusion being more than merely the paradoxes of philosophical delusion—*unless*, again, we expand the 'domain' of philosophy much further than professional philosophers are usually comfortable doing.

17. I mean, 'despite' the fact that I began this Introduction by distinguishing most ordinary employments of the term "paradox" from philosophical employments thereof.

18. The present work does not spend time arguing for the 'therapeutic/resolute' reading of Wittgenstein. It largely takes this interpretation for granted, as already indicated. It could be seen as testing and showing the fruits of the interpretation. Insofar as this book *does* contain explication of and partial justification of this interpretation, this is found in the final substantive chapters, Chapters 10 and 11, below, which turn the topic of the book quasi-self-reflexively onto the *uses* of paradox for philosophy. These are in a sense the culmination of the book, in that (t)here I argue that a genuinely positive role for paradox is to be found in the very methodology of Wittgenstein's philosophy (and that of like-minded great philosophers and meditative practitioners/thinkers), provided that that philosophy is interpreted/understood/practiced aright. (For more on this, see the Conclusion to the present work.)

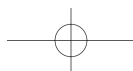
19. The latter was edited by Katherine Morris; it shouldn't be surprising, then, that my Wittgenstein also family-resembles hers. And Phil Hutchinson's—his and my take on Wittgenstein's later work will be visible fully in our forthcoming *Liberatory Philosophy: Thinking through Wittgenstein's 'Philosophical Investigations'*. And to some extent in Denis McManus's *The Enchantment of Words: Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006; Matthew Ostrow's *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: A Dialectical Interpretation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002; and Oskari Kuusela's *The Struggle Against Dogmatism: Wittgenstein and the Concept of Philosophy*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008. To some readers, it will seem as though I am promiscuously combining here elements of / references to Wittgenstein's early and later work. The 'promiscuity' is intentional, and reasoned: see the fundamental conception of *The New Wittgenstein* (*op. cit.*, which Alice Cray and I designed as a book to serve as a 'companion' to the emergence of Wittgenstein's later thinking from out of his early thinking), and the joint work of myself and Rob Deans (including our aspiration to develop a 'resolutely resolute' interpretation of Wittgenstein's early thought (see on this our paper "The possibility of a resolutely resolute reading" in my and Lavery's *Beyond the Tractatus Wars*, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2011) so as to provide the closest possible precedent for Wittgenstein's later thought. To provide, that is, the background against which an adequate interpretation of later Wittgenstein might finally be developed (see on this our "'Nothing is shown,'" in *Philosophical Investigations* 26:3 (2003), pp.239–68, especially its closing pages.).

20. See for instance Part 1 of my *Applying Wittgenstein* (London: Continuum, 2007; edited by Laura Cook).

21. This is an expanded version of a recent paper of mine, "Why There Cannot be Any Such Thing as "Time Travel"," *Philosophical Investigations*, Volume 35, Issue 2, April 2012, pp.138–53.

22. This chapter is based closely on a co-authored paper with Wes Sharrock, "Kripke's Conjuring Trick," that appeared previously in *The Journal of Thought*, Volume 37, Issue 3, 2002.

23. Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1982), p.55.





24. Based closely on a paper of that name that appeared in 1995 in *Philosophical Papers*, Volume XXIV, Issue 1, 1995, pp.67–74.

25. Oxford: Blackwell, 1978 (1956).

26. Based on part of my recent paper in *New Literary History*, “Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations as a War Book” (Vol. 41, Issue 3, 2010), but greatly expanded.

27. Based on my short paper, “A strengthened ethical version of Moore’s Paradox? Lived paradoxes of self-loathing in psychosis and neurosis,” *Philosophical Psychology*, Volume 25, Issue 1, 2012, pp.133–41, substantially revised, edited, and expanded.

28. Some may be initially sceptical of why Moore’s Paradox should be thought relevant *at all* to the domain of psychopathology. I think that one can make an easy start to seeing why it should, and why psychopathology poses a *prima facie* challenge to (or, if you prefer, instance of) Moore’s Paradox, by contemplating even briefly a case such as someone who (as we might well say) knows that she is an alcoholic, and states explicitly that she is an alcoholic, but does not really believe it. . . . Very roughly: “I’m an alcoholic, but I don’t believe it . . .”

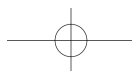
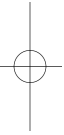
29. Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, amended second edition, edited by G. H. von Wright, Blackwell, 1998 (1980), p.61 (emphasis in original).

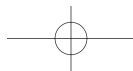
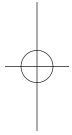
30. New York: Vintage, 1969, ed. Walter Kaufman.

31. London: Routledge, 1961 (1922); transl. Pears and McGuiness.

32. Based on a short paper of mine previously published in *UEA Papers in Philosophy*, “Just in time: Notes for the meeting of Wittgenstein and Zen” (Volume 16, 2005, pp. 32–45), combined with a reworking of some ideas from my recent piece in an Oxford University Press collection on Buddhism and Analytic Philosophy, “Wittgenstein and Zen Buddhism: One Practice, No Dogma,” in Mario D’Amato, Jay L. Garfield and Tom J. F. Tillemans (eds.), *Pointing at the Moon: Buddhism, Logic, Analytic Philosophy*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

33. Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit*.





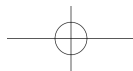
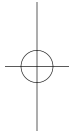
DRAFT

I

Away With Philosophers' Paradoxes

Wittgenstein has a way with paradoxes that are merely philosophers' paradoxes, which helps the 'sufferer' from them to dissolve them away. . . . Wittgenstein's way with such paradoxes actually can succeed, then, in doing away with them.

It is this way, or these ways, that we will now investigate.



DRAFT

ONE
ONE
Pre-empting Russell's Paradox:
Wittgenstein and Frege Against
Logicism

In the Introduction to this book, above, I did a little thinking on the concept of paradox, thinking that will be followed up by the sequence of examinations constituting the body of the book. The present chapter opens that body by taking a step further back—and doing some thinking (thinking influenced above all by Frege and Wittgenstein) about the concept of *concept*. This leads me into what is the central question of the present chapter: the question of the status of alleged contradictions in formal systems (notably: 'Russell's Paradox'). This quintessentially Wittgensteinian question (cf. the close of section 125 of *PI*) is a question that will crop up again and again during the present work: When philosophers point up a paradox or a contradiction or lead us advertently or inadvertently into a nonsense, what *effect* does this have on actual practice (if any)? And: Does it *emerge* from such practice? What *difference* does a paradox make?

Now let us turn to the title I have given this chapter. Someone of a sceptical bent about the title might naturally respond to it in the following way: ""(Later) Wittgenstein against logicism,"" sure. But *Frege??*"" Yet I shall urge that later Wittgenstein was *not* as univocally against logicism as is usually assumed; and (yet) that *early* Wittgenstein was already against logicism quite as much as one needs to be; and further, that the greatest of Frege's philosophizing already explains why. There are great elucidations implicitly available in the great works of Frege, the greatest 'logician,' of why logicism is bankrupt and unnecessary.

Consider the following propositions:

- (0) The concept *horse* is a concept easily attained.
- (1) The concept *horse* is a concept.
- (2) The class of *horses* is a class.
- (3) The class of *horses* is not a horse.
- (4) The class of *horses* is not a member of itself.
- (5) The class of *things which are not horses* is a member of itself.
- (6) The class of *classes which are not members of themselves* is (not?) a member of itself.

Items (1) through (5) on this list can seem perfectly innocuous. Or at least, once one has granted (2), there seems no reason not to move right down the list to (5). But notoriously, if that is allowed, then we reach a paradox: We reach the paradoxical situation wherein the class of classes which are members of themselves is a member of itself if and only if it isn't (This paradox is 'represented' above by (6)). This paradox, due to Russell, appeared to Frege to pose a major problem for him and thus very much required some kind of resolution. Russell's 'Theory of Types' seemed to do the trick. And so the programme of Logicism remained a hope, for a while longer. That is to say, it was possible to continue to hope that mathematics could be founded on logic; 'logic' including set theory and set theory centred on the notion of 'class,'¹ a notion allegedly rather clearer and 'purer'—freer of certain logico-philosophical obscurities or difficulties—than the notion of 'concept.'

Thus, from Frege's hopes of a foundation for arithmetic in logic, we go to Russell's Paradox of alleged self-inclusion of different (later, Tarskian) 'levels' of language (better (because less historically anachronistically): Russell's Paradox of non-self-membered classes); and from Russell's Paradox to Russell's solution, thus saving Logicism, through explicit separation of 'hierarchical levels,' of Types.

Now I hold no brief for Logicism. None whatsoever. But I am unhappy, unhappy at a level of fundamentals, with the above one-sentence paragraph as a sketched philosophical 'history-in-brief' of arguably the key developments in the history of logic in the early twentieth century. And my unhappiness extends to my suspicion that many of even those historians of logic who would quite rightly find the above sketch of course horribly crude and oversimplified will nevertheless not find it unsatisfactory at a level of fundamentals, or at least as a sketched 'rational reconstruction' of what happened. That worries me. And so: before concluding that the twentieth century saw (roughly speaking) the increasingly general and correct recognition of the decisive triumph of Anti-Logicism over Logicism,² let us cast our minds back for a moment to the supposed start of this story: to Frege.

Now you will have noticed that, before we got to propositions (2) through (6), I listed two other propositions:

- (0) The concept *horse* is a concept easily attained.
 (1) The concept *horse* is a concept.

(0) of course was the subject of Frege's difficult and famous philosophic triumph over Benno Kerry.³ Kerry argued that proposition (0) was perfectly fine (as would Frege too; but on as it were a different reading of the proposition than Kerry's, as I shall explain). This appeared, to Kerry, to problematize Frege's 'context principle'; for this principle, Frege's dictum never to look for the meaning of a word in isolation but only in the context of a proposition, has as its concomitant that one ought always strictly to separate the subjective and the objective, the *logical* and the *psychological*, but this, Kerry thinks he has shown us (with (0)), we do not actually need to do. Frege countered that, strange as it might seem, (0) is *only* alright as it stands *if* we understand it differently than Kerry wants us to. We might, for Frege, put this in the following way: A certain concept is "easily attained" only in a person-relative psychological sense, whereas the notion of being 'easily attainable' has no relevance to the logical/interpersonal sense of the concept *horse*. (Similarly, Frege of course distinguished rigorously between the psychological and logical senses of the word "thought.") In (0), that is, the first occurrence of "concept" *isn't as a concept-word*. It doesn't have that logical role, and no amount of psychological associations, etc., are going to change that fact. (In this logically crucial respect, the term "concept" has a role such that it differs from most other general nouns.)

Frege held that in fact the seas of language run very high here, and that it is almost impossible to find a way of expressing oneself that does not mislead oneself and others. He argued (both against Kerry, and elsewhere⁴) that all that philosophical logicians could hope to do hereabouts was to provide *elucidations*, elucidations of what we already know ('know'). For example, that there is a fundamental difference in use between the concept *concept* in the proposition "The concept *horse* is, logically, closely related to the concept *quadruped*" on the one hand, and in propositions such as "The concept *horse* is a concept easily attained" or indeed "The concept *concept* is not a concept easily attained" on the other.⁵ More fundamentally still, he held that the surface appearance of natural language is such that in all three of these propositions, and actually in pretty much the whole list of sentences with which we began this chapter, there is an ever-present and serious risk that we will mistake the use and nature of (for example) the word, "concept." For this word, which Frege thought it best to use in a strictly logical sense, almost inevitably and invariably appears to identify itself as (in Frege's terms) an object-word. What Frege hoped was that he would help his readers find ways of not being bemused by the non-obvious logical category-distinctions which the surface appearance of language could mask. His hope

was that he could provide this help through elucidations, which then help to set up his concept-script.

And so Frege held that, strange as it might sound, the least misleading thing to say, when one starts to get the logical points—the ‘therapeutic’ points if you will—that he (Frege) was making, is that “The concept *horse* is a concept easily attained” is not best heard as an ordinary, sensical, truth-evaluable proposition. For there is an important sense in which the word “concept” is, according to Frege’s proposed and actual usage thereof, being used *inappropriately*,⁶ almost-inevitably misleadingly, in it. Frege, like Wittgenstein, allows that Kerry can use the term “concept,” etc., in any consistent way he pleases: but then the use that he makes of it will not constitute any objection to the use of it that Frege recommends. Once more: *in Frege’s system* (to which Kerry meant to be addressing himself), “concept” is being used inappropriately in (0).

We might usefully phrase the elucidation that Frege was trying to make for us hereabouts, then, as follows: that the form of our language cannot be fully enunciated (N.B. I will make a similar point at somewhat greater length in the final portion of Chapter 3, below). Or, better still, a little more finely grainedly: That there is no such thing as—no coherent understanding available of what it would be to effect—the *defining* of the logical categories and distinctions which effectively constitute the basis of any efficacious *Begriffsschrift* (‘concept-script’). Rather, these categories, these ‘concepts,’ can ‘only’ be *elucidated*; they can in fact only be ‘explicitly’ understood by someone who already implicitly understands them. In short, there is no such thing as taking a ‘meta-perspective’ on logic: logic cannot be taught to someone who doesn’t already ‘know’ it.

“The concept x is a concept,” then, is not something that can be said. This (eminently Fregean) remark of mine is one swift way of saying what Wittgenstein himself says, in *Tractatus* 3.332–3.333, about why the ‘Theory of Types’ is otiose and why ‘Russell’s Paradox’ is nothing. It means nothing for a proposition to ‘contain’ itself. The sign for a function cannot contain itself. When we try to speak of concepts, we try to speak simultaneously of what makes such speaking—indeed, any speaking—possible. We try to contain reference to a concept *within* the concept of “concept” (missing that we are seeking thereby to treat a function as its own argument). We are trying, when we do this, to treat concepts *as concepts and as objects simultaneously*.

There is nothing that it is to succeed in doing this. (It might be thought that, since Gödel, we know that there is; I will address and rebut this thought in future work elucidating Wittgenstein on Gödel. It might be thought too that Wittgenstein recommends an ineffable theory of types, in 3.332: but this is a misunderstanding; this thought is itself part of the ladder that needs therapeutic overcoming, as one works through the temptations that the body of the *Tractatus* self-consciously offers.) We are

thus, when we do this, merely *hovering* between different possible uses of our words . . .

After having endeavoured to become a little clearer about the nonsensicality of the project of stepping outside logic, of giving logic foundations, if we turn back now to our series of 'propositions' (0) through (6), they may start to look rather different. Frege's discussion of (0), which I have tried to recapitulate the gist of, leads naturally into the following, Fregean, thought about (1): That "The concept *horse* is a concept" (or similarly, "Concepts are not objects"; or for sure any other 'proposition' involving the terms which, while not *in his Begriffsschrift*, were or could have been used to frame it) is least-misleadingly construed not as a true statement, say as an analytic truth, nor even as a tautology, but rather as an inevitably misfiring⁷ attempt to say something which can only be shown, which can only be understood *in linguistic practice* (This of course is connected directly with Frege's request that he charitably be read *cum grano salis* (with a pinch of salt . . .). At best, such 'propositions' are *themselves* elucidations. (If one doesn't understand what concepts are, it cannot be *explained* to one.)

So often, in philosophy, the decisive move in the conjuring trick is made before one has even noticed that things have got started. From Frege's point of view, it is with (1) that the trick, or (if you prefer) the rot, starts. Within Frege's system, what look like tautologies may actually not be tautologies (e.g., in the case of (1))—indeed, they may not even be *true*. The Kerryan conjuring trick is to think that (1) can be taken for granted; goes without saying. But once we say it, or *focus* on it, Frege-style, then we see otherwise.

Once we thus get clear on (1), we can then work down the list—and suddenly then the Russell-Frege interaction looks rather different. This working down, I will essay momentarily.

It might first be objected however that "The concept *horse* is a concept" is not nonsense, on the grounds that it could be quite meaningfully employed: e.g., when explaining the meaning of the word "concept." To explicate this analogically—it might be said—we should note that one could intelligibly use the sentence

(1[^]) The animal horse is an animal

when explaining what an animal is. And it is true, we might employ something like the latter sentence in that fashion (though I think that the first occurrence of "animal" in the sentence gives it really quite an (exceedingly; excruciatingly?) odd—and potentially very misleading—sound. A more natural coinage would be simply: "Horses are animals." If one hears a sentence like this, or "The horse is an animal," one naturally reads the definite description in what is sometimes called the 'institutional' sense—as in "The aeroplane has an interesting history." (Taken in that

sense “The aeroplane is an aeroplane” is unproblematically false!). But notice a crucial difference between that sentence ((1[^])) and (1): “The animal horse is an animal” is a sentence that could only be intelligibly used to define “animal” in conjunction with other similar utterances and by contrast with contrasting cases. One might say to a child, “And so is the dog, and the lizard; but *not* the triffid, nor the Venus flytrap.” But it’s different with concepts. One can’t give other examples: just because *everything* that one could so example would, in a way, be a concept. (“In a way” only, of course; there is no intention here to foment some Idealist thesis!)

One might redouble one’s efforts to speak of concepts as concepts by saying something like “The concept *of a* horse is a concept” (Thus now distinguishing it clearly from “The animal horse is an animal,” which doesn’t seem to have helped the Kerryan cause). Isn’t that at least a true statement? But this gets us no further. One can say this of absolutely anything. It is a shuffle; it adds nothing, and still risks seriously misleading. It’s rather like saying “The word “word” (or “horse”) is a word”; or “Words are not things.” Saying these things in isolation without saying more is saying, as yet, nothing.⁸ That one can say these things of any word hardly proves that one can speak of words as words in a way that is literally true and speaks of our world; for these remarks too are, roughly, elucidatory at best. As it were: To get into a position in which one could meaningfully pronounce these things as truths would require one, absurdly, to stand looking at our linguistic practices as from outside.

Object is (in its logical sense) a concept, as is *concept*, and *horse*, and *everything*, and so on . . . (And—and here is Frege’s point again, in a new form—just as we could say that *everything* that one could predicate is a concept, so one could say that *nothing* that one could name is! (This is the inevitable misfiring of attempts to refer to concepts; for in Frege’s scheme concepts are the referents of predicates (functional expressions). “Object” is itself in this sense a name.))

Which of these two things one says—whether one says that in a way “*x* is a concept” is true for any value of *x*, or that in a way “*x* is an object” is true for any value of *x*—will depend on one’s elucidatory purpose;⁹ Frege himself of course emphasized the latter. So: “The concept horse is a concept” is *not* relevantly analogous to “The animal horse is an animal,” even if—or rather, especially if—we allow the latter to stand as ordinary and sensical. As already indicated above, one should not fall into the trap—the *illusion*—of thinking that one can explain the word “concept” to someone who doesn’t already understand what it means. For no ‘contrast-class’ to “concept” can be exemplified. (One might think that “word” might itself be such a contrast-class. I have sought above already to pre-emptively rebut such thinking. When one thinks in the right spirit about words philosophically, about words as more than just objects in the

physical world (e.g., as wall-decorations), then thinking about words is not so different from thinking about concepts.)

Now, if "The concept *horse* is a concept" ((1)), a seemingly innocuous and seemingly true statement, is itself best-construed, if one is to avoid falling into deep error through failing to respect the 'context principle' (and its concomitant strict separations between the logical and the psychological, between concepts and objects), as nonsense, at best as nonsense which can in certain contexts function for us as an elucidation,¹⁰ then it follows that "The concept *horse* is not a concept" is not false, but also nonsensical; that "The concept *horse* is not a horse" is also nonsensical (and at best elucidatory), and so on. And let us note carefully that "The concept *horse* is not a concept" (or similarly, even, "Concepts are not concepts"! too may be elucidatory nonsense—Frege himself used this example, to draw our attention to the 'objecthood' of concepts, when they are predicated of.¹¹ As Cora Diamond puts it, "Nonsense-sentences are as if they were internally all the same; and are *einfach Unsinn*, plain[ly] nonsense. Externally, however, they may differ. . . . For a sentence that is nonsense to be an elucidatory sentence is entirely a matter of features external to it."¹² *Nonsense-sentences do not stand in logical relations to each other*, not even if/when they 'appear' to blatantly contradict one another!¹³

Let us now review (2) through (5), with which we began, and which led—apparently—to Russell's Paradox:

- (2) The class of *horses* is a class.
- (3) The class of *horses* is not a horse.
- (4) The class of *horses* is not a member of itself.
- (5) The class of *things which are not horses* is a member of itself.

To put the point in roughly the terms that Wittgenstein (in the *Tractatus*) inherited from Frege: The potential problem with (2) through (4) is that it is not clear that they say anything; but we hover between being clear that they don't and thinking that they still do, when we find ourselves asserting them to settle a controversial philosophical or logical problem. These 'propositions' flicker for us between having the status of proper propositions and of tautologies in the true sense of that word (i.e., *saying* nothing). This is one of the greatest fruits of Wittgenstein's philosophy of logic . . .

If (2) through (4) were actually to be saying anything, we would have to be able to say what it would be for them to be false; but we can no more do that than we can say what it would be for "Every stick has a length" to be false.

It might be objected that the paradox of the barber (who shaves all and only those men who do not shave themselves) is of the same form as Russell's Paradox, and yet it doesn't suffer from the fault I allege. It seems clear that it says something, within the 'system' of ordinary language. Well: It is not so clear that it actually *does* say something. By

hypothesis, it certainly doesn't say anything about any actual barber! But, even disregarding this point, there is of course a subtle but perhaps crucial difference between the two cases. The paradox of the barber at least seemingly rules 'something' out, 'something' which perhaps intuitively seemed possible and specific. It says that there cannot be such a barber: a barber who fitted such a description. But the class of classes which are not members of themselves is not, I submit, something which intuitively seemed/seems anything at all. It only gets generated as a thought by following down the track from (1) to (6), or some similar track, within a system such as Frege's. Thus, if I am right in thinking that Frege's own thinking about concepts undermines/defuses that track, then it is far less clear that *any* conclusion is reached that stands as a paradoxical finding in relation to Frege's system.

Returning then to the main thread of the chapter, I hope it is now starting to become clear roughly what my overarching thought is here. If we apply Frege's own rigorous thinking about concepts (and elucidation, and nonsense) rigorously to thinking about classes—and surely to do so is to do nothing more than ensure that we are not falling into philosophical error(s) in our thinking about classes, either—then we quickly reach the following conclusion: *That neither (2), nor (3), nor (4), nor (5), (nor indeed any of their contraries) are sayable at all; except (at best, and in a very 'attenuated' sense) as elucidations. (We could possibly try to imagine (3) being uttered as a possibly illuminating grammatical joke, by a teacher, for example. Perhaps: "A horse of course is a member of the class of horses, but the class of horses is of course a class, rather than a horse!" Even this is very troubling; because the "of course"s surely understate things: It is not clear what it could mean to 'remind' even students of these things. What could it be, to forget what it allegedly is that (1) or (2) seeks to remind one of? Only if we can get clear about this (and I don't think we can do so) can we be clear what it would be to remind someone of these things.)*

But elucidations are not truth-evaluable (and are not in—are not parts of—Frege's symbolism, *unless* we give up the usual view that every statement in one of Frege's symbolisms must be a proper, truth-evaluable statement, on which possibility, see below).¹⁴ Thus they do not provide us with truths that can be stated;¹⁵ but nor can they be counter-exemplified or refuted. They cannot be contradicted and nor can they contradict anything.

They are not, that is, (rendered) vulnerable to paradoxes. "For all x , x is a member of class K if x is a member of class K" is as yet either empty or nonsense because it offers us no recipe for determining, for any object, whether or not it's a member of K (and, crucially: what if anything it would *mean* for it to be so / not to be so). We need a proper recipe for defining a class; so no class K has (yet) been defined. The likes of (2)

through (5), for the reason given just above, cannot help us in the task of such definition.

My conclusion is, then, that *the reasoning which appeared to take us to (6), to Russell's Paradox, to an apparent counter-example to Frege, is flawed*. For we were supposed to get to (5) from (4). What (4) says makes it possible to say (5). But: (4) doesn't say anything. And we were supposed to reach the surprising conclusion in (6) from the asserting of (5). But there is no asserting of (5).

There is no decisive reason for us to see Russell's Paradox as a flaw in Frege's symbolism (because it does not appear in that symbolism as something that genuinely has the nature of a proposition); but no reason either to see either Russell or Frege as actually providing (or failing to provide) foundations for mathematics (though, of course, it's plain, from Russell's autobiography, etc., that setting mathematics on a secure logical footing was one of the driving forces of Russell's early life. And something not dissimilar could be said about Frege. Thus my interpretation is of course thoroughly revisionist.). Rather, what Frege was actually doing, when read (we might say) charitably—in the light less of his intentions than of his actual achievements—was giving us elucidations of how to avoid misunderstanding the logic of our language and the logic of arithmetic. The 'propositions' about classes given here are themselves already nonsense, and at best elucidatory nonsense. They yield no contradictions, no surprising 'results,' no 'statements' with which mathematical logicians have to reckon.

Now it will be objected that my account does not distinguish, as one should, between Frege's elucidatory sentences, which are given in ordinary language, and statements made within Frege's *Begriffsschrift*, which, at least as Frege understood them, are straightforward assertions.¹⁶ "Concepts" and "objects" are excluded from the *Begriffsschrift*, it will be said, but "classes" and so on are not. The statements which give rise to Russell's paradox can all be said to occur within the *Begriffsschrift* itself (or at least, surely, in the slightly 'extended' system of the *Grundgesetze*, where Basic Law V is included too). Thus Russell's Paradox can be constructed within Frege's symbolism, and does not merely occur in sentences which elucidate it. As a result, Frege cannot reject the paradox in the same way that he rejects Kerry's statements about the concept *horse*. Russell's paradox appears as an inconsistency in the system itself, and employs only legitimate concepts, legitimate moves in Frege's game.

It might already be evident what the character of my response to this objection will be. I have (already) suggested that no good reason is given us by Frege not to treat (4) through (6), above, in the same way as (0) and (1). We can understand why Frege himself would have found this response unsatisfying, but I'm suggesting reasons—and resources drawn

from within the purview of his *own* set of ideas—for him to have actually taken the route (away from defeat at the hands of Russell’s ‘Paradox’) that I am suggesting. Some statements which can arguably be developed in the *Begriffsschrift* have just as little right to be seen as sensical as (e.g.) the ‘statement,’ “The concept *horse* is a concept” (or its ‘opposite,’ “The concept *horse* is *not* a concept”). We ought *not* (I suggest) to hold on to the usual view that every ‘statement’ in one of Frege’s symbolisms must be a proper, truth-evaluable statement. To say it again: what Frege was actually doing, when read charitably (Frege, unfortunately, not being very clear at this moment in his texts about what was entailed by Fregean methods), was *giving elucidations* on how to avoid misunderstanding the logic of our language and of arithmetic. Some of these would-be elucidations, and some other nonsenses, frame (e.g.,) the *Begriffsschrift*, some are even to be found within it. So there can be nonsenses within the *Begriffsschrift*!! So what?¹⁷ We might here compare—and this is very important to my own view of the situation—some words of Wittgenstein’s:

Let us suppose that people originally practised the four kinds of [arithmetic] calculation in the usual way. Then they began to calculate with bracketed expressions, including ones of the form (*a* minus *a*). Then they noticed that multiplications, for example, were becoming ambiguous. Would this have to throw them into confusion? Would they have to say [as Frege did on learning from Russell of the Paradox]: “Now the solid ground of arithmetic seems to wobble”?¹⁸

Wittgenstein did *not* think it would be compulsory for them—and of course, ‘they’ are *us*—to do so. We just don’t talk about—we systematically leave out, ignore—division by zero, etc., Likewise, Wittgenstein thought that Frege’s logical excavations and elucidations, even some of those accomplished *via* the *Begriffsschrift*, did not simply collapse in the face of Russell’s Paradox. Frege took himself to be giving arithmetic a foundation in logic,¹⁹ but in fact the very idea of providing such a foundation is an absurdity. Frege misunderstood what he was (necessarily, willy nilly) effecting in the production (and consideration) of the *Begriffsschrift*—we need to re-read what he was about, ‘charitably,’ as I have put it; and, providing we do so, we can hold on to what is useful in Frege, to his real logical achievements of insight.

Wittgenstein put this crucial point as follows: ““But didn’t the contradiction make Frege’s logic useless for giving a foundation to arithmetic?” Yes it did. But then, who said that it had to be useful for *this* purpose?”²⁰ That was Wittgenstein’s way of understanding how Frege’s work on logic could be intelligibly thought of and still used *once* the idea of Logicism were given up as a chimera.²¹ (It is notable that Wittgenstein uses here the expression “Frege’s logic.” If he had written, say, “Frege’s philosophy,” we might think that he was simply making the (trivial) point that Frege’s entire lifework is not rendered philosophically vacuous by the

implosion of Logicism. His actual wording suggests that he thought something stronger, something which I am recommending we think: that a *Begriffsschrift* may turn out to be somewhat useful in one's conceptual thinking (and pedagogically), even after a central aspect of Frege's own motivation for it has disintegrated.)

It might be responded to me that that is all very well, but that it doesn't show that there is no (Russell's) Paradox. In that case, I would cite *PI* 125: "The civil status of a contradiction [paradox], or its status in civil life: there is the philosophical problem." I don't mind, obviously, if people continue to call Russell's Paradox a "paradox." The verbal form alone matters little. The question is what it *amounts* to. What harm it does. What difference it makes to anything. What its status is, in relation to the domain where it is supposed to have effects. That is where I aim to have had an effect. In suggesting that the Paradox doesn't undermine Frege's symbolism, at least relative to a use (one set of uses) of that symbolism (on which I will expand below), I am saying something similar to Wittgenstein, when he said (along somewhat similar lines to those quoted from *PI* 125, above), repeatedly, that a 'hidden contradiction' needn't cause any problems. Frege's symbolism was used just fine before Russell came along. Now that he has come along, now that the Paradox is no longer hidden, it can continue to be used, for some of the same purposes; that is what it means to say that a 'hidden contradiction' needn't be a problem. Only: it (the symbolism) cannot be used for *all* the purposes that Frege had fantasized for it; only for *some* purposes, that survive the dent the Paradox made in certain hyperbolic ambitions. No real, tenable ambitions need have been harmed by it. For it only causes problems—it only really exists at all—on an incoherent understanding of what Frege might have achieved, an understanding whose incoherence is revealed by dwelling as we did above in and among 'propositions' (1) through (5), above.

We can also here usefully remark the following important passage from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*: 6.1262: "Proof in logic is only a mechanical expedient to facilitate the recognition of tautology, where it is complicated." We might then say: The concept-script is a 'mechanical expedient.' But it need not be an absolutely 100% reliable one. It could be rather a technical aid, a rough-and-ready expedient, generally though not always good enough as it is.²²

What of the role of (6), the Paradox, in Frege's symbolism? Doesn't it undermine the symbolism as a whole? We can just ignore it. So this 'statement'—the purported Paradox—can be generated in the *Begriffsschrift*. So what? Once we note that 'statements' (1) through (5), *wherever* they occur, are at best elucidations, then we should realize that nothing can be (as we might put it) *generated* from them. They are not truth-evaluable statements from which other statements can be derived. Again, they have no logical—nor even any self-evident analogical—relations

with other statements. Or better still: they have no logical relations with statements. Full stop. So (6), Russell's dreaded Paradox, cannot be 'generated' from them. If one insists that it occurs, if one chooses nevertheless to state it, it just stands there in the *Begriffsschrift*, alone, uselessly, an irrelevant isolated object. Unless and until it actually causes problems in the application of the *Begriffsschrift*, it can simply be ignored.²³ Safely quarantined.

If (6) is—as I've suggested it is most natural, following a strand of thought from Frege, to think— *not* a proposition, then no proposition can follow from it. Whereas, if it's a contradiction as normally understood, then, by *ex contradictione quodlibet* (which both Frege and Russell endorsed) 'everything' follows from it.

"But what use can a concept-script be, after it is no longer a sufficient condition of something being sensical (*sinnvoll*) that it can be written in the concept-script?" Well, indeed, we may want to give up the name "concept-script," after we see that nonsensical expressions can appear in it. But we may not. Here is one reason why we may not want to give it up: We may still have reason to think that it may be a necessary condition of something's being sensical that it can be written in our concept-script. Admittedly, this will now need some further reasoning beyond the lines of argument exploited by Frege himself—and I have no space to try to give a full argument here (nor am I sure I actually would want to, for more or less later-Wittgensteinian reasons). But the thought that there can be no sensical sentences which are not concept-script-able seems at least a not-unreasonable and somewhat attractive one. (In fact, in spite of *Tractatus* 3.325, it sounds quite like a main thought of Wittgenstein's,²⁴ perhaps especially of later Wittgenstein's, as in the quotes I offered above, and other remarks in the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (henceforth *RFM*.) If we cannot find a way to render for ourselves or others how a sensical thought means in a way which is perspicuous after the fashion of Frege (and early Wittgenstein), is that not at least a good *prima facie* reason for worrying about whether we have succeeded in thinking (something actually worth calling) a thought, at all?

At this point, we might imagine the following further objection: "But look, Frege wants his *Begriffsschrift* for two reasons. Firstly, to provide foundations for logic, foundations excluding all intuition. You have dismissed this first aim. Secondly, to see clearly the structure of our thought. This, you want to say, remains a pretty sound project. But once nonsenses are 'allowed into' the concept-script, then the reason Frege had for thinking that his concept-script 'limned' thought-proper is gone. What are your rationally valid grounds for proposing that being 'concept-script-able' is a necessary condition for being a thought?"

My response to this formulation of the objection to my argument is implicit in the above. For I suspect that the reasonable thing to say, at least for someone at all impressed by Frege, is that the boot is on the other

foot. Once we have admitted nonsenses into the concept-script, then it looks pretty unlikely that the concept-script is insufficiently generous and open-textured. *If one wants to argue that something that cannot even be gotten into concept-script is not nonsense, the onus seems to be on one to say why.*

Now, it's true, a concept-script in my sense won't make all logical inference transparent. So one certainly can't rely exclusively on it in making and analyzing inferences. But that is not the same as saying that it has no use. It could still have precisely the use indicated in the final, italicized sentence of the paragraph above.

So, sure: one might choose to back away from the term "the concept-script," and instead call what Frege produced (say) "a useful and perspicuous logical notation, for particular purposes." A change in appellation does not remove all use from the notation, even uses including claims as to (the) necessary conditions for sense.

Now, unfortunately perhaps, for us all, perhaps out of his desire for a kind of argumentative and foundational purity (of the kind that Russell and Whitehead also sought to offer, in *Principia Mathematica*²⁵), Frege himself did not see or at any rate presumably would not accept what I have been arguing above, and indeed arguably moved somewhat in the opposite direction in (some of) his later work.²⁶ Frege's periodic or partial realization that there can be no such thing as speaking—enunciating—the form of our language, and that elucidation must 'suffice,' thus did not carry over to a realization that the very idea of grounding our concepts—the very idea of providing a foundation for mathematics, say—is itself, I would argue (though of course I haven't established that securely here), an absurdity, a nonsense. The ambition of a 'reductive' *foundation* of mathematics in logic is overblown.

Frege thus unfortunately responded to Russell's Paradox as a potentially fatal 'counter-example' to his own system; "unfortunately," because Frege thus did not realize, did not see clearly, what was available to see clearly: that the paradox is fatal only on the basis of an incoherent goal for one's symbolism. Frege realized rather more than Russell, for sure; he realized, at his best, that Philosophy is in the grip of a terrible self-deception if it takes itself to be able to enunciate the form of our language, and even that all that we can actually do—and all that is necessary—is to apply or enact or attempt an elucidation or two, on those occasions when someone falls into the grip of illusion concerning the functioning of words.²⁷ Thus Frege again and again stated, in the advices to his readers on how to read his works, that they were not to be taken as issuing in statements. (Advice which Frege's 'Analytic' followers have almost entirely ignored.) This is the meaning of Frege's insistence, over and over (e.g., In *The Basic Laws of Arithmetic*,²⁸ Vol.I p.4, in *On the Foundations of Geometry and Formal Theories of Arithmetic*²⁹ II p.301, and in *Posthumous*

*Writings*³⁰ p.259) that hints, pinches of salt, hopes for meetings of minds, and *elucidations* were unavoidable. But it took Wittgenstein to see entirely clearly what the matter was, and to begin in earnest the difficult process of persuading and enabling others to see so too:

- how Russell's Paradox could tenably be seen as un compelling, as posing a problem only for an incoherent reductive-foundationalist ambition in the philosophy of mathematics;³¹
- how Russell's 'Theory of Types' was philosophically unsatisfactory, an arbitrary saying, and thus quite orthogonal to the supposed paradoxical 'problem' with Frege's logic . . . and that it (the 'Theory of Types') was *a fortiori* unnecessary to a proper (understanding of) logic;³²
- (more widely) how Logicism *itself* is in any case an absurd project, and an *unnecessary* one.

So, I *am* of course, as already allowed, being revisionary especially in respect of Frege's own conception of what he was about. We need to think not only of Frege's great prose introductions and prefaces, and his attempts at producing mutual understanding with other logicians and philosophers, but also of some of the statements *within* the *Begriffsschrift* itself as being at best elucidations—and there is no overwhelming reason for us not to do so. Such an attitude toward the *Begriffsschrift*, while not of course consistent with Frege's wishes to be producing a science of logic (or of arithmetic), does (of course) fit naturally with an idea which is, again, at heart broadly Fregean—namely, as cited above, the idea that, strictly, there cannot be any such thing as a meta-perspective on logic. The *Begriffsschrift* (even in the form expounded in the *Basic Laws*³³) alone, itself, cannot give us such a meta-perspective: neither 'mechanically,' nor by the back door. (Only elucidations can help do that—insofar as the goal is intelligible at all.) We should not, moreover, expect the *Begriffsschrift* to achieve a fantasized 'absolute purity' which ordinary language cannot. (Again, this is what Wittgenstein realized clearly—arguably, in the *Tractatus* itself. Again, it is a complete mistake, though a surprisingly widespread one,³⁴ to see *Tractatus* as itself a Logician work.)

Rather, what Frege's work can help us to understand, as Wittgenstein makes yet clearer, is the absurdity and unnecessariness of such a hoped-for meta-perspective. Such that a concept-script can be a useful and perspicuous logical notation—but only within its limits (and all such notations have (their) limits. They are, I would claim, objects of comparison, in the sense explicated in *PI* 130–2.).

We can, if we wish, treat Frege's symbolism simply as an uninterpreted 'symbolism.' In which case (e.g.,) his *Grundgesetze*, etc., yields simply a perhaps amusing (or perhaps arcanelly mathematically interesting) system of 'symbols.' If, rather, we take what I call a charitable view of (how to preserve a use for) Frege's *Grundgesetze* symbolism, which he

himself did not—if we import into it his own ‘context principle’ and the understanding of elucidation which goes with it—then Frege’s symbolism is again harmless and potentially elucidatory, and again there cannot be any undermining of it. Understood aright, then, Frege’s symbolism is *not refuted nor even problematized by Russell’s Paradox*: because ‘all’ that Frege’s symbolism does is provide a (potentially misleading) schema of ‘elucidations,’ in the sense now of philosophical conclusions drawable from it (as opposed to hints, etc., that helped set it up in the first place). Such elucidations just do not allow any room for the supposed problems of self-inclusion, etc.—‘problems’ which Russell ‘delineated’—to arise. Our language is alright as it is, arithmetic is alright as it is, and logic must take care of itself; all these were held by Wittgenstein, on the basis of a comprehension of and extension of fundamental insights of Frege’s (and in the *Tractatus*).³⁵ So, as Wittgenstein elucidated for us in the *Tractatus*, there is (in turn) no need whatsoever for the Theory of Types, a ‘Theory’ which would eff ‘the ineffable.’³⁶ All that we can do, all that we need to do, as Frege in effect began to do, and Wittgenstein from the *Tractatus* onward into his later work continued to do, is to offer ‘elucidations’ when anyone is confused into thinking anything other than that our everyday language is in order as it is, or when they are tempted to conflate the logical and the psychological, etc.

It might be objected that I have got Wittgenstein’s move beyond Frege, in the *Tractatus*, wrong: “Isn’t what Wittgenstein did in the *Tractatus* essentially to take Frege on board, but to abandon Axiom 5 (aka Basic Law V, which caused all the trouble) and Identity, and add the truth-tables? Isn’t that a radical—and wholly necessary—*revision* of Frege’s logic?” This objection raises some issues concerning the interpretation of Wittgenstein too large to be settled here; but, in outline, my response would be to say, as I have suggested above in my quotations from *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, that, while one *could* say what this objection says, one could equally say, while still following Wittgenstein, what I have tried to say: namely, that one can just keep ‘Frege’s system’ of logic as is, and then apply its results with sensitivity. I.e., when it generates nonsenses, just don’t get too worried by them. Frege’s system, considered as a tool, can arguably still fulfill certain logico-conceptual purposes perfectly well as is. (Even though these purposes are not identical with those that he had in mind when he designed the system, nor for that matter with Wittgenstein’s in *TLP*.)

As I suggested earlier, there is *no* interesting or useful system of logic (or mathematics) which is invulnerable to its rules being willfully applied so as to generate falsities or absurdities. We simply do sidestep ‘the contradictions,’ ‘the paradoxes,’ except when there is a special reason not to. (One ought, if at all possible, to understand every bit of logic—and every bit of concept-script—which one chooses to develop, but that is all.)

So one shouldn't get too fussed by (e.g.,) paradoxes, and try to expurgate them once and for all. To do so is not possible; but moreover, it is unnecessary. For the reasons that later Wittgenstein made explicit: paradoxes and contradictions only cause trouble inasmuch as they actually *do* cause trouble. Their revelation needn't undermine systems that we can still work with (though it may undermine certain (perhaps excessive) ambitions for those systems).

To sum up, and conclude: No calculus could hope to undermine anything, or to provide a foundation for anything, in the sense in which Russell had more or less just these hopes. In Russell's approach, there is no undermining of Frege (if Frege is understood aright, in the sense just described; i.e., if Frege is understood as applying consistently what I take to be his most fundamental logical and elucidatory insights, which unfortunately of course he did not always do). Russell does not undermine Frege's thinking (when that thinking is understood charitably, as per above) via the Paradox; nor does he later effect any *undergirding* of Frege's hope, of Logicism, via the Theory of Types. But there can't be any such thing as the Paradox's refuting Frege's concept-script, or even that Logicism is false or even 'uncompletable.' In fact, my suggestion would be this (though it would of course take further work to establish this): Logicism is not false or 'uncompletable' as a project, but nonsensical, and unnecessary. (No sense can be made of the idea of something's being proven to be uncompletable, if no sense could actually be made in the first place of the idea of its being completable.)

To defeat Logicism mathematico-logically, to show its falsity or incompleteness, you have to imagine it making sense as a project. But that is, I am suggesting, simply absurd, nonsensical! We may also put this point the other way around: If Logicism can be disproved, then it makes sense. But if we could make any sense out of the idea of founding Arithmetic on Logic, then no mere formal mathematical proof could defeat the idea.³⁷ Yet, as I showed earlier—as was plain to Wittgenstein, and could have been plain to Frege had he chosen to heed and develop his own key insights—the ('only') problem is that *no such sense can be made of that 'idea.'* (Any more than sense can be made of the project of trisecting an angle with ruler and compass.³⁸)

Set Theory is of course an extremely impressive intellectual edifice, in its own terms. And Logicism and its opposing systems are, similarly, big and impressive projects in their own ways, real responses to deep intellectual disquietudes and wishes: disquietudes such as are induced by the possible presence of contradiction, wishes such as the quest for certainty.³⁹ But—for those who understand what Wittgenstein, building on Frege, understood—Logicism and Anti-Logicism are nevertheless ultimately equally absurd efforts to 'formalize' or systematize the so-called 'foundations' of mathematics.⁴⁰ Will the twenty-first century understand

and realize in practice the *bankruptcy* of Russell in the philosophy of mathematics, which the second half of the twentieth has been so unwilling to acknowledge? If it does, it might be due in part to the recognition I have attempted to foster in this essay: of the elements of Frege's own thought which point in a different direction to that of Frege's own overwhelming Logicist ambition. The most valuable parts of Frege's own thought, I have suggested, run up against (and overcome) Logicism.

Thus the thinking herein shows how Frege, thought-through-aright, as he was by Wittgenstein, early and late, offers one the resources to defuse Russell's Paradox. And thus to provide a new way of us thinking the founding of what became called 'Analytic' philosophy. A way founded in 'therapeutic' rather than in theoretical, ism-style thinking.

For I have argued, in a 'resolute'/'therapeutic' vein, that Russell's Paradox need not have been regarded as a genuine problem for Frege (so long as Frege were willing to give up the absurd ambition of founding arithmetic, and were content to offer elucidations, as he did elsewhere, instead). I argued this on the basis that the propositions via which Russell's Paradox was arrived at are nonsensical (or at best elucidatory). It follows, I would suggest, that the entire twentieth-century history of mathematical logic may turn out to have been based on a mistake. For *Russell's Paradox*, in the way in which it was intended, is a non-functional intervention in the philosophy of mathematics.

Let us now turn to the widely popular paradox(es) of 'time-travel.' We will find that there, too, a therapeutic approach can have surprisingly drastic and helpful consequences.⁴¹

NOTES

1. We need not, I think, be concerned here with the complications consequent upon taking seriously Russell's 'no-class theory' (which regarded classes as logical fictions)—because this metaphysical/ontological move does not, I believe, make a substantive difference *vis-à-vis* the *logical* points I shall be making concerning concepts, classes, etc.

2. Or indeed, concluding contrariwise with 'neo-Logicists' such as perhaps Crispin Wright and Bob Hale that the *wrong* side won.

3. See Joan Weiner, "On concepts, hints and horses," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 6:1 (Jan. 1989), pp.115–30. (At this point, I should remark that there is of course something somewhat philosophically unsatisfactory about the device of italicizing words and thus magically claiming that these are now clearly and definitively words for concepts. I circle around this point in the present chapter—I address it more directly in chapter 5, below.)

4. See e.g., *Posthumous Writings* (Hermes, Kambartel and Kaulbach (eds.), Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 119–20, pp.177–8, p.207, and *Collected Papers on Mathematics, Logic and Philosophy* (McGuinness (ed.), Oxford, London: Blackwell, 1984), p.182, p.189.

5. In “The unstability of Kripkean skepticisms” (Chapter 5, below), I query the ease with which we (philosophers) take ourselves to be able to refer to concepts ‘themselves’ by means of such devices as italicizing ‘them.’ This point is closely akin to Frege’s and Wittgenstein’s doubts about the speaking of the form of our language, talking about concepts, etc.

6. The word is Frege’s: see e.g., pp.119–20 of his *Posthumous Writings* (*op.cit.*). And so this seems an appropriate point at which to head off parenthetically a general objection perhaps growing in the reader’s mind by now: that my ‘reconstruction’ of Frege and of the history of early Analytic philosophy here may seem to be turning Frege into a ‘philosopher of language.’ No: I aim rather to be ‘elucidating’ what is best seen as a *tension* in Frege’s project. I try in what follows to bring out an oft-underplayed aspect of his early and mature thought (and an aspect of the development of his thought), and suggest that this aspect of his thought (which I explicate in greater detail in “What does ‘signify’ signify?,” in *Philosophical Psychology*, 14:4 (Dec. 2001), pp.499–514) casts a different light both upon Logicism and upon the history of twentieth-century philosophy of mathematics and logic, and indeed upon the whole ‘development’ of Analytic philosophy. If Anglo-American philosophers had ever taken on board Frege’s arguments in “On concept and object,” (*Mind*, New Series, vol. 60, no. 238, April 1951 (1892), pp.168–180) the course of twentieth-century philosophy could have been fundamentally altered (and improved).

7. This use of the word “misfire”—in which the inevitability of the misfiring, and thus the nonsensicality of the result, is crucial—I draw directly from Conant, from his “Elucidation and Nonsense in Frege and early Wittgenstein” (in Read and Crary (eds.), *The New Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 2000)). Conant of course inherits the word from Frege. Frege wavered slightly—as I do, ‘in sympathy,’ in this chapter—as to whether the misfiring was absolutely inevitable or not—see again Conant for detail, and David Cerbone’s “How to do things with wood,” also in Read and Crary. Conant and Cerbone argue that Wittgenstein very largely managed throughout his career to overcome such wavering.

8. Wittgenstein, *PI* 13.

9. In later-Wittgensteinian terms: on one’s therapeutic purpose. See *PI* 16.

10. If further detail be needed concerning how to understand the concepts of “nonsense” and “elucidation” hereabouts, and on the circumstances in which it is tenable to regard nonsense-sentences as elucidatory, it is available in Cora Diamond’s “Ethics, Imagination and the Method of the *Tractatus*” (reprinted in Read and Crary (*op.cit.*)), especially on p.70. (See also *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1983 (1956), revised ed. (*RFM*)), p.402, in which Wittgenstein is guardedly willing to consider allowing that there can be something worth calling a ‘language game’ centred upon elucidations.)

11. For detail, see Cora Diamond’s *The Realistic Spirit* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1991), pp.130–31 and p.143; and *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge, 1961 (1922)) 4.1272. I mean in this chapter to be using the word “nonsense” in a manner roughly consistent both with Frege and Wittgenstein, but there are of course differences (and developments) between (and from) Frege, (to) early Wittgenstein, and (to) later Wittgenstein here—see again Conant’s “Elucidation and Nonsense . . .” for details. The key question when faced with a potentially nonsensical sentence, the key criterion for sense, is, “what could this sentence be used to do?” I suggest that the ‘germ’ of this criterion can already be found not only in the *Tractatus* but also in Frege.

12. “Ethics, Imagination . . .” (*op.cit.*), p.70. (Translation emended.) What I have done here, applying a Diamondian spin to Fregean insights, is to cast serious doubt on the interpretation of Russell’s Paradox of which Russell himself unfortunately managed to convince Frege, in his famous letter of 1903. To see the parallelism in more detail, consult p.89 of Julian Roberts’s *The Logic of Reflection* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 1993).

Now, it might be replied that Russell’s Paradox applies to Frege’s concept-script, not to his elucidations. This is of course technically correct. But the case I am making is

that the propositions to which it consequentially applies either do not appear in that concept-script or appear harmlessly there or appear there as elucidations, such that it does not apply to them.

13. The same applies to elucidatory nonsense, wherever we may find it—even in Wittgenstein's later work. Elucidatory nonsense—exemplifications of nonsense at particular moments—does not show us any fact or thing. This is why “grammatical remarks” or “reminders”—the terms that later Wittgenstein prefers to “elucidations”—do not contradict; and why the apparent ease of catching the later Wittgenstein himself in a contradiction is usually of little philosophical interest. One can make ‘opposite’ grammatical remarks in different circumstances, remarks which would if ‘eternalized’ probably be in *both* cases simply nonsense. One isn't reminded of any thing by Wittgenstein's reminders; this suggests a strong sense in which they are at best senseless, and (‘better’!) themselves (akin to) latent nonsense. (In a fuller presentation, we should go into how this point relates to Wittgenstein's marvelously exact, hesitant and tortured style in his later work. For this, see my and Hutchinson's *Liberatory Philosophy*, forthcoming.)

14. Are elucidations not themselves nonsense? Yes. So how am I, and how are Wittgenstein and my Frege—the part of Frege I like, especially, a key strand in the early and mature (not so much the late) Frege—any better off than (on my account) Russell (or Gödel, or indeed the Positivists)? A question too large for the present chapter, beyond saying that self-consciousness about one's nonsenses is far preferable to lack of same; but a fuller ‘answer’ is available, in (e.g.) Diamond's “Throwing away the ladder” (in her *The Realistic Spirit* (*op.cit.*); cf. also “What does a concept-script do?,” in the same volume, which finds some real philosophical utility in both the frame and the substance of Frege's *Begriffsschrift*); and also in the papers by Cerbone, Conant, and Diamond in Read and Cray (*op.cit.*). After Cerbone and Conant, I am drawing attention to there being two different strands in Frege, one of which leads in a direction very different from what is usually supposed to be Frege's inheritance.

15. If elucidations are kept radically apart from truth-evaluable propositions, is one not committing some version of the analytic *vs.* synthetic distinction? Well, it is true that my writing is largely out of sympathy with Quine's, and more in sympathy with those (e.g., Dilman) who question the hegemony of Quine in English-speaking philosophy of language; but technically I do not need in the present chapter to set out a stall radically opposed to that of Quine, for such Quinean issues are largely orthogonal to mine. Why? Because ‘elucidations’ in Frege and Wittgenstein are not, properly, candidates for truth or falsity *at all*; whereas the analytic *vs.* synthetic distinction is a distinction between truths supposedly arrived at by meaning alone and truths supposedly arrived at with the aid of the world. (But for a far richer treatment than I have space for of ‘the analytic *vs.* synthetic distinction,’ and of how, strictly, the radically different understandings of it found in Russell and Frege undermine the very idea of there ever really having been such a unified programme as ‘Logicism’ in the first place, see Michael Kremer's <http://philosophy.uchicago.edu/faculty/files/kremer/Kremerabsolutelyfinal.pdf>.)

16. Though ultimately—though this is strictly beyond the arguments given in the body of this chapter—I would wish to raise some questions concerning the very idea, presupposed (though in different ways) by Frege, Russell, Gödel, etc., of ‘mathematical propositions.’ (See also F. Waismann in *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle* (henceforth ‘WWK’; Oxford: Blackwell, 1979), p.240f.)

17. See Diamond's emphasis on Wittgenstein's emphasis on the “clarificatory purposes” of a *Begriffsschrift*, at p.80 of her “Logical syntax in Wittgenstein's Tractatus,” *Philosophical Quarterly*, 55:218 (Jan. 2005), 78–89. As Diamond shows in her “Frege and Nonsense” (in *The Realistic Spirit*), Frege's symbolism is meant to exclude only (some?) misleading appearances, and thus to get us to see some nonsenses plainly. But there is no nonsense ‘expressible’ in ordinary language which is excluded by a concept-script. For there is no nonsense literally formed by ‘category-mistakes’; all there is (see above) when there is nonsense is (plain) nonsense, words in combination to which we do not

succeed in giving any sense. What a concept-script sometimes enables us to do (see again Diamond's "What Does a Concept-Script Do?," especially p.143 and p.132) is to see that certain alleged 'philosophically interesting claims' cannot be translated into a concept-script-based language *at all*. The attempt at such translation helps us to see such 'statements' in their full nonsensicality. As explained further below, I am suggesting that this point holds also for certain 'statements' that *can* apparently be made in a concept-script. Arguably, a concept-script helps us see more plainly for instance that 'statements' (2) through (6) (and (6) most obviously of all) are nonsense. It helps us to see them in their plain nonsensicality—that's precisely what it's good for, and not a refutation of it! Not something to make it fail (and arithmetic totter)! Some things may appear in a good *Begriffsschrift* itself which are plain nonsense (but this doesn't mean that any genuine statement which is not nonsense can fail to appear in our concept-script: see my suggestion in the main text, below). *Some* of the same kinds of nonsenses which are to be found in misleading or systematically ambiguous sentences of ordinary language get reproduced there—they are to be noted, and set aside if they cause trouble, just like 'hidden contradictions'; or, if you like, (they can be) thrown away.

If this all seems simply too scandalous, perhaps the following rendition of what I am up to might be preferable: We could choose to distinguish between two senses of being 'in' the *Begriffsschrift*:

In one ('narrow') sense, something can only be in the *Begriffsschrift* if it is not nonsense. In another ('wide') sense, some of the nonsenses to be found in ordinary language, or logico-mathematical 'versions' of them, would be constructible (N.B., not 'expressible') in the *Begriffsschrift*. If we adopted this proposal, we would then speak of some things in the 'wide' concept-script coming to be seen as needing to be excluded from the 'narrow' ('true?') concept-script. However, we would then exclude from the *Begriffsschrift* narrowly construed much of Set Theory. (Though that might not be such a bad idea.) Again, a concept-script yields no special quasi-metaphysical vantage-point whatsoever; it simply helps to make perspicuous certain features of our talk. There is in fact no reason why, viewed aright, our ordinary language itself cannot be seen as a concept-script. Whereas Logicians wanted to found mathematics on logic, and 'Ideal Language' theorists wanted to found language on logic, Wittgenstein drew out the strand in Frege according to which a concept-script is merely, roughly, a useful means for institutionalizing grammatical reminders. Compare the following words he wrote to Ogden, concerning how to translate, how to understand, the *Tractatus*: "[T]he propositions of our ordinary language are not in any way logically *less correct* or less exact or *more confused* than propositions written down, say, in Russell's symbolism or any other "Begriffsschrift"." (P.50 of *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein to C.K. Ogden* (London: Blackwell, 1973; edited by G. von Wright))

(Of course, it might be said with some justice that perhaps all this is to read Frege much too charitably for, were all this to have been his position, he would surely have said so in his reply to Russell instead of contriving a convoluted way out of the problem. As I said in the text above: I am reading Frege less in the light of his intentions and his behavior, more in the light of what resources he had available to him given what he already achieved. I am reading Frege in the light of the strands in him that Wittgenstein inherited.)

18. P.204 of *RFM* (and see also p.205, p.212, pp.395–96). It is not, it should be noted, quite clear that Frege ever did say quite this. Wittgenstein *may* (though I myself think he was not, given the letter of Frege's texts) have been interpreting Frege a little uncharitably. I leave the reader to judge—the quote which is, to my knowledge, probably closest to the phrasing Wittgenstein gives here is to be found in the famous letter to Russell, reprinted on p.254 of *The Frege Reader* (ed. M. Beaney; Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

19. Though see n.3 of Weiner's (*op.cit.*): Frege did *not*, at least not latterly, think 'unreformed' arithmetic to be undefective. In this, he clearly differed from Wittgenstein.

20. P.378 of *RFM* (emphasis mine). This remark, and the 'affirmative' reading of Frege I suggest is implicit in it, leads into one of my main themes here: that an attentive reader of Wittgenstein's later work (e.g., see pp.267f. of his *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics*) cannot fail to be struck by the serious *value* accorded by Wittgenstein to the philosophical advances made by Frege and Russell, including very specifically those things made clearer by their 'Logicistic' moves. A fuller task for another occasion would be: to bring out in detail Logicism's rejection—and great value—as seen *throughout* Wittgenstein's career. Throughout his career, Wittgenstein holds that reduction of mathematics to logic is the mistake (see *TLP* 6.2f.). Thus he absolutely does not uphold Logicism in the *Tractatus*—but nor does he in his later work condemn the impulses that led to Logicism and some of the elucidatory impulses which it involved in Frege especially, and which were expressed in concept-scripts that could be useful for certain genuine purposes.

Now, an objection might be raised that, even if it be conceded to me that Wittgenstein has already overcome Logicism in *TLP*, nevertheless the crucial element in Wittgenstein's progressing beyond Frege in the *Tractatus* was his giving up of Frege's Basic Law 5, whereas I am focusing rather on controversial applications of Frege's thought involving 'elucidations' and nonsense, and thus not strictly following either Frege or Wittgenstein. To anticipate briefly my response (below) to this objection: in Wittgenstein's later work on the philosophy of mathematics, we see pretty explicitly that it is not compulsory to give up Basic Law 5. Rather, one can keep it, except where it *actually* causes problems: whereupon one just suspends it, or ignores the results. Those made unhappy with this, as a seemingly 'unrigorous' procedure, have yet to come to terms with Wittgenstein's (later) philosophy of mathematics, a philosophy of practice which, I am suggesting, renders Logicism and its negation absurd, while building on and preserving Frege's insights concerning language and concepts.

21. It might have been the leading 'intuitionist' thinker, Brouwer, who helped Wittgenstein to this insight. In any case: The concrete suggestion that I will shortly make is that the concept-script can henceforth function as an 'object of comparison' over a limited but still vast domain: it would no longer be thought of as sufficient for sense, but it would remain necessary.

22. And additionally offering us perhaps, as I will explain momentarily, a necessary (though not a sufficient condition) for a proposition's not being nonsense: its appearing / its constructibility in the concept-script. (Cf. also n.21, above.)

23. Much as we ignore too the (useless) supposed self-referential sense of the statement "I am lying"; see p.120 and p.255 of *RFM*. (It is worth noting that a serious emphasis on *use* in one's philosophy of language avoids the impression, possibly given by some of my formulations early in this chapter, that sentences can be inspected, in isolation, for their sensicality. No; sentences only have meaning in a context, in use. 'Indexicality' is, if you like, a vital feature of all (meaningful) sentences. And, roughly: context is king. (This thought is developed at some length in Chapters 6 and 7, below.)

24. See on this Kelley Dean Jolley's brilliant writings on the *Tractatus* and Frege, in the course of which he argues compellingly that early Wittgenstein was no logicist. Cf. also Laurence Goldstein's work, that has some similarities to mine in this connection. Goldstein argues (*op.cit.*) roughly as follows: Russell's paradox begins with a stipulation: Let 'Rus' be the class of all non-self-membered classes. But a stipulation is not a proposition; it does not have a truth-value, and some stipulations are unsuccessful, e.g., 'Let N be the largest number.' So: What can be shown, Goldstein stresses, is that Russell's is equally an unsuccessful stipulation.

25. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927.

26. See for instance p.23 of P. Carruthers's *Tractarian Semantics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989). (Frege eventually moved away from 'classical' Logicism altogether; but that late part of his work need not concern us here.)

27. For more on this version of Frege as proto-Wittgensteinian, see J. Conant's work; and Kelly D. Jolley's "Frege at Therapy" (paper presented to the 'Mind and

Society Seminar,' Manchester Metropolitan University, June 6–7, 2000). As hinted above, a reasonable suggestion as to why Frege did not make the further move here which Wittgenstein did make is that Frege regrettably came to place less weight on the Context Principle, etc., in his later work. His *Begriffsschrift*, etc., work is that which, when 'applied' and extrapolated in the manner which I am undertaking in this chapter, best yields the complete deflation of the Logicism *vs.* Anti-Logicism debate.

28. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964.

29. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971.

30. *Op.cit.*

31. There is of course not necessarily any objection here to the more modest ambition of knowing better what mathematical terms mean/are/amount to. A genuinely clarificatory ambition in the philosophy of mathematics is harmless. Insofar as Frege's ambition was restricted to trying to define mathematical concepts clearly, then I am not objecting to it here.

32. Unless, of course—again, a charitable thought—we try to see the Paradox as an elucidatory *reductio ad absurdum* of the very idea of something's being a member of itself, and thus of the whole tendency of classical set theory (see *RFM* p.330); and try then to see the 'Theory of Types,' as Russell quite plainly did not see it, as in turn a (rather crude) attempt at elucidation, at reminding us of what we must do with signs if we are not to come up with something useless. For Wittgenstein's severe critique of the very idea of a Theory of Types, see *TLP* 3.326–3.333 (and Kelly Dean Jolley's powerful paper on the same topic, "Logic's Caretaker—Wittgenstein, Logic, and the Vanishment of Russell's Paradox," *The Philosophical Forum*, Vol. 35, Issue 3, pp.281–309, September 2004). As Kneale and Kneale make clear (at p.668–72 of their *The Development of Logic* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962)), stating the Theory of Types clearly involves nonsense. So it is itself an elucidation, at best. In sections 3.326–3.333 of *TLP*, Wittgenstein's fundamental aim, again following a basically Fregean line of thought, is to make plain that a Theory of Types is unnecessary for any language (i.e., for any language which, as any language does, consists of "legitimately constructed" propositions (cf. *TLP* 5.4733, & 5.5563, remarks which not incidentally make obvious how strongly the *Tractatus* anticipates Wittgenstein's later work), and which, as any language does—and this comes to the same thing—stands in 'logical relations' to, roughly, a concept-script or scripts). Thus "Russell's Paradox vanishes" (*TLP* 3.333).

For Wittgenstein's dismissal of the alleged foundational role of 'classes,' see e.g., *TLP* 4.1272 and 6.031, and also *RFM*, pp.401–3. For Wittgenstein's suggestions as to how to react to the contradiction in a manner other than that of constructing a 'Theory of Types,' see *RFM*, pp.217–18, p.376, & p.410. A full investigation of the grammar(s) of 'contradiction' is a task for another paper; but it is worth noting the fairly extensive investigation undertaken by Laurence Goldstein, in his *Clear Thinking and Queer Thinking* (*op.cit.*), on pp.147–60. Goldstein emphasizes that Wittgenstein in his work on mathematics emphasized that contradictions are not best construed as statements of any kind, and that they can in some circumstances be quite harmless.

'Superstitious' fear of contradiction may largely result from thinking of contradictions as a kind of statement, and from thinking of statements' meanings as literally being formed compositionally or additively: Wittgenstein, after Frege, rejects the latter notion, also. (This, of course, is the key fault-line between Frege and Wittgenstein on the one hand and Russell and Moore on the other. Russell and Moore seem to have won the battle over the unity of the proposition in Analytic philosophy—part of the thrust of my work here is to try to ensure that they lose the war. To his credit, Russell was quite often relatively honest about some of the deep difficulties facing both the Theory of Types and anti-'propositional-wholism'—see, e.g., pp.162 and 166–67 of Ray Monk's *Bertrand Russell: The Spirit of Solitude* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1996).)

33. *Op.cit.*

34. See for example the "Introduction" to Benacerraf and Putnam's influential collection, *Philosophy of Mathematics: Selected Readings* (2nd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p.16. (A careful reading of *TLP* 6.2f. indicates that in fact the

similarities between Logicism and Wittgenstein's 'early view' are mostly only superficial: One may think of mathematics as in certain respects analogous to logic, but one can hardly think of it as the same as it nor as reducible to or foundable on it—one can hardly be a Logicist—if, like Wittgenstein in *TLP*, one thinks that there are no logical constants, etc. (See also *WWK*, pp.218–19; and n.24 & n.32, above.)

35. And indeed *before* the *Tractatus*: see e.g., n.15 of M. McGinn's "Between metaphysics and nonsense: Elucidation in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*" (*Philosophical Quarterly* 49:197 (Oct. '99), pp.491–513). (As will be evident, my Wittgenstein is both strictly therapeutic (like Diamond's and Conant's, unlike McGinn's) and focused on elucidation (like both Conant and McGinn; though I fear that McGinn has not understood that elucidations are not in any way assertions nor (even tautologous) truths.)

36. There is a risk here of appearing to court what Jim Conant (in his *op.cit.*) has called the (very popular) "ineffabilist" reading of (the early) Wittgenstein. I show how to avoid this risk in my "Meaningful Consequences" (jt. with J. Guetti, *Philosophical Forum*, Vol. 30 (4) Dec. 1999, pp.289–314). Provided that this risk, a risk which Frege is continually in danger of, of explicitly stating what one has oneself ruled out as unstable . . . provided that this risk is avoided, then it is safe to say that the avoidance of 'effing' the ineffable is invariably to be preferred to the related (e.g., Russellian) theoreticist option of quasi-positivistically trying to state the unstable. (For a similar case, see my "The Unstability of Kripkean Scepticisms" (*Philosophical Papers XXIV*: 1 (1995); and reprinted/reworked as Chapter 5, below.) I am suggesting that Frege is right to emphasize elucidation and 'unstability' over the (fantasized) theorization, e.g., *à la* Kerry, of 'the foundations of logic'; and that he should have extended this compunction full-bloodedly to 'the foundations of arithmetic.'

37. To go beyond what I have argued in the body of this chapter, one might suggest that no mathematico-logical tricks will be felt to be needed hereabouts—either to 'found' mathematics on logic, or to 'disprove' the legitimacy of such founding—once one tries looking at mathematics, for mental-cramp-reducing purposes, very roughly, *as grammar*, 'rather than' as a body of statements/ truths/propositions. One will then see how very different mathematical 'statements' are from (other) statements. (For explication, see e.g., p.90 and pp.162–64 of *RFM*, and p.138ff of Goldstein (*op.cit.*), and Baker & Hacker's *Wittgenstein: Rules, Grammar and Necessity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985, *passim*, especially p.288 and p.6. Note that Baker and Hacker's account—of which I am *not* endorsing other crucial aspects (such as their rather excessive liking for a *thesis* of 'the autonomy of grammar,' and their questionable 'meta-philosophical' presuppositions and practices)—carefully distinguishes Wittgenstein's own view from any conventional form of Conventionalism (see p.338ff.), as well as from Logicism itself. (What Baker and Hacker do not bring out so well is yet a further move in the therapeutic dialectic: Wittgenstein emphasizes, for example on pp.40–43 of *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics* ('*LFM*'; Hassocks, Sussex: Harvester, 1976), the sense in which mathematics is a set of *techniques*, or a set of actions of *calculation*, rather than a set of linguistic items, *no matter of what kind*. But we have no room here to explore this further.) Baker and Hacker point out further that, if one thinks of arithmetic, etc., basically as (akin to) grammar, then one will no longer be inclined to place the question of the 'ontological status' of numbers centrally. And then, unlike Frege, Russell, etc., one will not be nearly so interested in the potential question of logicizing arithmetic—*via* 'logicizing' numbers into sets—in the first place. But to go more fully into this point would require that we take seriously also the huge question mark which the von Neumann *vs.* Zermelo, etc., 'debate' over what sets the numbers supposedly are (see, e.g., Paul Benacerraf's "What numbers could not be," reprinted in Benacerraf and Putnam, *op.cit.*) places—more or less independently of the present discussion—over once more the very intelligibility of Logicism, and that is clearly a task for another occasion.)

To take this thought about 'mathematics as grammar' seriously—this thought whose consequence is that mathematical 'propositions'/'statements' are in fact only quite *misleadingly* described as such—involves a further step away from the 'main-



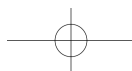
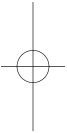
stream' than does Wittgenstein's specific point (in 'defence' of Russell) that one must strictly distinguish statements within a mathematical system from those outside the system.

38. For detail, see J. Floyd's paper on Gödel, the concept of proof, and the trisection of the angle, "Wittgenstein, Mathematics and Philosophy," in Crary and Read, (*op.cit.*).

39. These disquietudes and wishes are arguably all of a piece. Those many who follow Wittgenstein on epistemological questions should ask themselves why they do not join those few who follow him in the philosophy of mathematics: "Now, what is it for us not to know our way about in a calculus? // We went sleepwalking along the road between abysses. But even if we now say: "now we are awake", ___can we be certain that we shall not wake up one day? (And then say: ___so we were asleep again.) // Can we be certain that there are not abysses now that we do not see? . . . // [I]s it wrong to say: "Well, I shall go on. If I see a contradiction, then will be the time to do something about it."? ___Is that: not really doing mathematics? Why should that not be calculating? I travel this road untroubled; if I should come to a precipice I shall try to turn round. Is that not 'travelling'?" (*RFM*, pp.205, 212)

The fear of contradiction, common to Logicians and Anti-Logicians, is very much like the fear of uncertainty which characterizes so much Modern Epistemology.

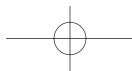
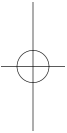
40. To say it again: I am 'of course' in agreement with those who have argued before me that the very idea that mathematics 'needs' and even perhaps 'lacks' foundations is nonsensical. My only quarrel with most of those who have so argued (e.g., Putnam, in "Mathematics without foundations" (*J. Philosophy* 64 (1967), pp.5–22; reprinted in Benacerraf and Putnam, *op.cit.*)) is that their arguments have tended to avoid the 'full-blooded bolshevist' line that I have taken here (as Wittgenstein takes, e.g., on *RFM* p.204, p.217f., pp.376–78, and p.370—though (crucial to note and *contra* some of Wittgenstein's critics), this is of course bolshevism or anarchism in respect of 'the foundations of mathematics,' *not* in mathematics itself. (Cf. pp.116–23, p.146, p.204, and pp.382–89; and see also p.270f. of *LFM*.) And this of course comes back to one of the deep tensions in Frege's own thought, between what Conant (*op.cit.*; see also p.295f. and n.22 of Cerbone, *op.cit.*) calls the 'constitutive' strand of Frege's conceptualisation of logic, and the other, more scientific strand (the strand which has tended to dominate the Frege-'influenced' literature). While Wittgenstein holds unambiguously that the generality of logic is not the generality of general truth, Frege wavers, wanting the laws of logic to be laws of truth, genuinely normatively and substantively applicable, as well as wanting them to be simply constitutive of thought. (The non-constitutive strand in Frege is among other things tied in with his 'assertion sign,' which appears to be a logical sign, but which actually muddies the distinction between logical and psychological, a distinction which is more unambiguously treated of in Wittgenstein. Frege leans toward making Truth look like a genuine property of (some) thoughts, and fears that if nonsenses are allowed to appear in his concept-script, then this leaning is even more necessary (because such nonsense-sentences seem to him then to have sense with *Bedeutung*, or to be thoughts without truth-value). I have tried to allay this fear, above.) If Frege had more full-bloodedly opted for the 'Kantian,' 'constitutive' conception of logic, he would have been much better-placed to have taken the attitude toward the concept-script, elucidation and nonsense which I have recommended in this chapter—in part, because he would then already have been less inclined to have seen logic as a foundation or as a science. Frege did not *want* to admit that there could be no science of getting clearer on what terms like "object" and "concept" mean. He didn't want to have to resort to the postulation of an obviously uncomfortable (though perhaps transitionally stimulating) half-way house, something like "thinking without Thoughts." If he had been clearer about the respects in which logic is no science, and in which elucidation involving nonsenses is in principle unavoidable if one seeks philosophic clarity, then the history of twentieth-century philosophy of logic and mathematics, etc., might have been very different.

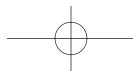
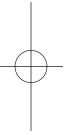
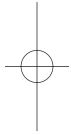




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41. I have substantial intellectual debts, *vis-à-vis* the writing of this chapter, to J. Guetti, W. Coleman, W. Sharrock, and (especially) to O. Kuusela, M. Kremer, C. Diamond, and J. Conant (though it is certain that not all of these people would endorse even most of what I am saying!). My ideas having taken the particular form they do here is due to my reading of L. Goldstein's *Clear Thinking and Queer Thinking* (London: Duckworth, 1999), and to supportive remarks of his in person and in correspondence for which I owe him a large debt of thanks. Thanks also, in perhaps a similar vein, to A. Ross, B. Worthington, S. Ferguson, an anonymous referee, and especially to the audience which heard this chapter in a slightly earlier (and much condensed) form at the annual Wittgenstein Symposium, Kirchberg-am-Wechsel, Austria, 12–18 August 2001, particularly Phil Hutchinson, Dan Hutto, Laurence Goldstein, and Jim Conant.





DRAFT

TWO

‘Time Travel’: The Very Idea

“[S]equencing, in the sense of the ordering of artificially decontextualised, unrelated, momentary events, or momentary interruptions of temporal flow . . . is not in fact a measure of the sense of time at all. It is precisely what takes over when the sense of time breaks down. Time is essentially an undivided flow: the . . . tendency to break it up into units and make machines to measure it may succeed in deceiving us that it is a sequence of static points, but such a sequence never approaches the nature of time, however close it gets.” —Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and his Emissary*¹

“When people assume that they have some concept with which they can state intelligible beliefs, these people may be mistaken. One example are certain beliefs about time travel. Suppose I claim that it might have been true that I had caused myself to exist, because I had travelled back in time and had earlier brought it about that my parents met, married, and had me as their first child. If you replied that my claim was not fully intelligible, you would be right.” —Derek Parfit, *On What Matters*²

PART I: THE FUTURE

1. You want to travel forward in time. You want to see the future. You want to *be* there.
2. Okay; so you employ a time-machine to zip a hundred years into the future.
3. But suppose there is another way (perhaps less hazardous, perhaps more feasible). It may become possible within some of our lifetimes for human beings to be cryogenically preserved for long periods, without

suffering any physical deterioration. If you could be frozen for a hundred years and then wake up, why not call *that* “time-travel”?

4. For it seems to bring about exactly what one wanted out of time-travel, out of the ‘time-machine’ concept. One moves forward into the future *just like that*. (A time-machine would be of little use, in which one aged at exactly the same rate as time sped forward . . . ³) Is there then any good reason not to call a cryogenic preservation unit a “time-machine”?

5. It seems that there is not. But now, consider: what is cryogenesis, except a long dreamless sleep in which the body-self does not deteriorate? But, given that, then why not call simply *going to sleep* traveling through time into the future? (And this of course is hardly an original idea. Think of *Sleeping Beauty*. Or of *Rip van Winkle*. My argument in the present paper poses no objection at all to such stories or to ‘time-travel’ tales structurally similar to them. (Indeed; thus far, my presentation basically just reflects the well-known argument of D.H. Mellor, in *Real Time II*⁴ concerning the real possibility of what he (Mellor) terms “forward” time travel. Only: I shall suggest that “forward” time travel alone is not on balance genuinely deserving of the name.))

6. It will perhaps be objected that while one is asleep one has dreams. It is not altogether clear that this is an objection at all, given that time-travel for people is often conceptualized as ‘continuous,’ i.e., as having a subjective duration. So it need not differ that much from a night’s sleep in which one has some dreams. But in any case, there is the phenomenon of the dreamless sleep (Or at least, there could be: Descartes was surely wrong to deny its very possibility.). So still, why not at least call such sleep “time-travel”?

7. It will be objected that the body ages during sleep. But there is some good biological evidence to doubt that this is straightforwardly or unequivocally true. Much sleep (though not, of course, *too* much sleep!) is actually *renewing* of our organism. (Whereas, if consistently deprived of sleep altogether, one simply dies in a remarkably short time: apparently. According to my casual researches on the internet: somewhere between about 10 days and 10 months. Sleeping less is something that severely risks shortening your life. And: those of us who have experienced the slow torment of hour after hour insomnia would give a lot, instead, to ‘travel’ extremely quickly forward to the next morning, via healthy natural sleep.)

8. Therefore, there seems no good reason to withhold the term “time-travel” from healthy, body-renewing sleep, especially perhaps if it is relatively dreamless. You really can travel to the future. You can see the future. You can be there. Just by living long enough. (One could perhaps even go one step further. One could say that we are all time-traveling all the time, just by virtue of living. Each second that I live, I travel further into the future. Such a way of talking seems broadly to follow from our



frequently metaphorically treating the passage (sic.) of time as if it were spatial travel.)

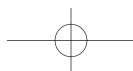
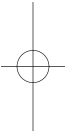
9. But this seems an absurd or at least an unsatisfying conclusion. When we initially spoke of "time-travel," we didn't want to license the conclusion that simply (say) going to sleep was worth calling "traveling through time." What element is missing? What do we want out of the concept of 'time-travel' that going to sleep does not yield us?

10. The key ingredient that in sleep is missing from time-travel is the essential element of any travel whatsoever that is worthy of the name, of tourism and holidaying for instance, or even of going to prison: *there and back again*. The reason, I believe, why the conclusion that going to sleep is as much traveling through time as is going to the future in a time-machine is repugnant is that we are on balance only prepared to call going to the future "traveling through time" if we can at least potentially *return* from the trip. If this makes at least *conceptual* sense.

11. This implies that time-travel into the future is not enough. (Thus the 'twin paradox' poses no problem at all for my argument, and nor does any other consequence of Special Relativity. That one twin ages less than another, and can in that sense be regarded as having time-traveled into the future, is not consequentially different from their having undergone cryogenesis.⁵ "Time-travel" into the future in this sense is not really time-travel, not really what we wanted when we desired to travel into the future; unless you can come back again, not just to meet your twin, but rather (say) to meet your twin when they were younger *than when you set out*. Or alternatively, of course: to meet yourself before you set out.) In short: To actually be willing to continue to apply the term "time-travel" to any activity, one requires that one can potentially voyage *and* return. This implies directly that one will not on reflection countenance speaking of time-travel into the future unless one can already also countenance speaking of time-travel into the past. For, once we arrive in the future (e.g., after a good night's sleep, or through any other 'means'), it is pointless to speak of our having traveled through time unless we can return into what has become the past.

12. What about a sentence such as, "If we burn all the world's coal, then we are buying a one-way ticket to a horrendously bad destination"? This doesn't seem to include any possibility of 'return.' But it is important to note that a remark like this is clearly metaphorical and not literal (cf. III b, below); and that in any case it once more does not seem to involve any commitment to a notion of time-travel in any way that is troubling. All the troubling invocations of time-travel which result in paradox, all the really interesting cases that grab us the most, *do* involve commitment to the possibility of 'return.'

13. Therefore, in order to determine whether or not it makes sense to talk about time-travel, in the sense in which we (philosophers, and sci-fi



authors) wanted to imagine 'it' as possible, we are compelled to consider whether or not it makes sense to talk about traveling into the past.

PART II: THE PAST

i. You want to travel back in time. You want to see the past. You want to *be* there.

ii. OK; so you employ a time-machine to zip a hundred years into the past.

iii. But a problem immediately arises. You want(-ed) to travel into *the* past. Into *your* past. Not into some parallel universe, not into one of many worlds, not into virtual reality. 'Into' the past; you don't want to change anything/everything such that what you are traveling into is some different history. But how can you venture into the past without changing it? (This point may, rightly, bring to mind 'Niven's Law' of time-travel, that time-travel erases itself, because time-travel back 'into the past' could never be into the very past into which one wanted to travel. But my claim here will be a radicalized version of this: I am suggesting that what this really means/implies is just that there is and can be nothing worth your actually on reflection calling time travel. Traveling 'back' 'into the past' is, I will shortly argue, simply not compossible with its being *the past*.)

iv. For: there is no record in the past of you having been there, nor of anyone else from the future, no matter how distant or technologically sophisticated that future becomes.

v. Maybe you (or they) traveled there very quietly and carefully? After all, there is no record of a lot of things in the past. Maybe you made no impact at all, even?

vi. But how is that possible? And note this: in order not to have changed the past, *and made it something other than the very thing that you wanted to voyage into*, you indeed cannot have had any impact at all, not even one so slight that it evaded all records and notice.⁶ You cannot have affected the energetics of the atmosphere, the trajectories of light-beams, etc., etc. You must have been entirely subtle.

vii. The implication seems clear: travel back into the past is only possible if the 'you' that does the traveling is entirely ethereal. For the slightest impact upon the past will generate a 'causal loop.'⁷

viii. But now it seems questionable whether it is really *you* that is doing the 'traveling.' If the only way that one can travel into the past is by giving up one's bodily existence and becoming spirit, then (unless we make an absolute split between mind or soul and body, unless we are committed to some implausibly strong Cartesian or superstitious doctrine) it seems highly questionable that it can mean anything at all to talk about traveling back into the past. For there is no genuine person—no *you* or *I*—who can intelligibly be regarded as undertaking such a journey.

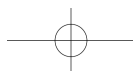
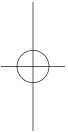


ix. If we imagine ourselves as pure spirits observing the past, then we would be pure observers, not genuinely able in any way whatsoever to be *involved* in the past, not able to do anything at all there. (For example: we cannot feel anything physical, for fear of altering the past, such that it is no longer the very 'place' that we wished to 'go' to. Our supposed journey into the past (and, presumably (following the spirit of the conclusion of Part I, above), to be of any use to us and to others, our potential return 'back' again, to the present, to our embodied selves) could not involve any change at all in our actual physical existence as we are, alive, here and now.) Indeed, there is a very serious issue about whether one can make sense at all even of the concept of being a 'pure observer.' For what is it that then observes, and *how*? Can such an 'observer' *see* anything? *Hear* anything?⁸ Surely one wouldn't really *be* there, and couldn't truly be said to observe anything at all.

x. But perhaps all is not lost; for, in this case (i.e., *vis-à-vis* the past), it seems nevertheless that there is something that it can be—that it can mean—to speak of *us*—the actual people, flesh and blood creatures, that we are—traveling back into the past. Namely: seeing photographs, watching films, reading archaeological evidence, etc., As Frank Ebersole remarks: "A dramatic archaeology professor might say, "We are looking at the distant past" while displaying some unusually realistic paintings of pre-historic man."⁹ Some would say the same while looking at the stars.¹⁰ (One might of course also speak of traveling through time, into past or future, by means of dreams, stories, memories, prophecies, etc. I certainly have no principled objection to that.)

xi. We might then say that you really can see the past: exactly as it has come down to us. One might put it this way: one already has in one's possession a time-machine, if one has a camera—or indeed a photo-album.¹¹ (And in any case: If all you want to see is something *resembling* the past, then certainly photos and representational paintings, etc., are quite good enough. (They show scenes that resemble or that depict/represent what was present in the past.) As good as 'going back into the past'—such that it was inevitably only something *resembling* what you wanted to 'travel back into' that you saw, not the thing itself—would be.) One might even say: if one has nothing more than a memory, then one travels back into the past, more or less at will . . .

xii. In other words: just as there is no good reason not to use the term "traveling into the future" to describe the phenomenon of going to sleep, unless we (quite reasonably) insist upon being able then to travel back into (what has then become) the past, so there is no good reason not to use the term "traveling into the past" to describe truly being pure observers of the past, without affecting it, as we can (as we might not unreasonably put it) observe the past in numerous ways already: in old footage, in art, and so on, plus of course by means of others' recollections (and our own). But, once more, this will seem unsatisfactory (and in one sense



quite reasonably so), not what we wanted when we spoke of ‘traveling into the past.’ When we used the term “time-travel” to refer to ‘traveling back into the past,’ we didn’t want to end up only (making sense by talking about) looking at old photographs, etc.

xiii. But this is the best that we can mean.

xiv. Therefore there is (and can be) no such thing as traveling into the past in the sense in which we imagined (that we imagined)¹² that there could be.

xv. Therefore (given also points 11 & 12 in Part I, above) there is and can be no such thing as time-travel. For what was necessary in order for us to be willing to call something “time-travel” (namely, its being meaningful to speak of travel ‘back into the past’) is just not available. Our relation to the past is necessarily spectatorial, in a doubled sense: We cannot interfere with it, and we cannot even observe it except ‘from a temporal distance.’ It turns out that it means nothing to suppose otherwise. (This is *why* our statements about the past are truth-apt, and have an ‘answerability’ (in roughly Travis’s sense of that word)—to something *independent* of us. This *is* the reality of the past, and the wrong-headedness of constructivism about the past.)

xvi. By rough analogy with Russell’s Paradox (and this is why I wanted to place the present Chapter straight after Chapter 1; for in *the present* case the Paradox actually matters, in the sense of ruling out what we might have assumed was at least logically possible . . .), we might put the insoluble problem in this way: The creator/user of a time-machine has set herself a non-existent task. She has to travel back into the past of all those people who do not travel back into their own pasts.¹³ If she is such a person, then she isn’t.

PART III: DIAGNOSIS

a. The future isn’t a place that you can go—let alone come back from (There simply are no return tickets). A general underlying problem here, as I have explained and explored in previous work, is the suspect way in which we are continually tempted to use terms whose employment we only perspicuously understand *spatially* (e.g., “travel,” “forward,” “back”¹⁴) in order to allegedly make sense of matters *temporal*.¹⁵ We understand what traveling is—through space. When we project this ‘language-game’ into ‘the fourth dimension,’ then we potentially set ourselves up for all sort of headaches. For time is, as we might therapeutically put it, a device for rating changes.¹⁶ (Changes that occur, of course, in space.) It was never intended to be regarded an independent *medium* that one can travel in or through; whatever ‘time-travel’ is, it is not relevantly similar to traveling through space. (One reason we think time ‘is’ spatial is that we call it a dimension and put it on graphs as one: i.e., we repre-

sent it spatially. But graphicality makes something not one jot more like (what is 'measured' by) the other lines (the other axes) of the graph. There is such a thing as what we call measuring 'the passage of time,' of course, but it has very little in common with measuring spatial objects nor even with measuring the passage of objects through space.) As a result, it shouldn't greatly surprise us that incoherences tend to multiply, when one tries to take time-travel-tales seriously. What it would mean to travel 'through time' has just not been carefully thought through. For instance: while time-traveling, one remains, typically, fixed in space. But hang on: the Earth is flying through space all the time. How come, when one travels back into the past or forward into the future, one still magically ends up being on the Earth?¹⁷

b. A substantial body of work in recent 'Cognitive Science' now exists that can help us to understand why and how we talk about "the passage of time" and to understand the rest of what I have laid out in point (a), above; and thus (when extended as I am in effect extending it here) it can help us therapeutically diagnose and dissolve away the attractions of time-travel-talk. The founding text of the body of work in question is Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By*,¹⁸ which powerfully argues the case that the way in which we develop temporal concepts is primarily through *conceptual metaphors* drawn from motion and (more generally) from spatial concepts (e.g., 'Times are places'). Vyvyan Evans's *The structure of time*¹⁹ takes forward, details and (at points) corrects Lakoff and Johnson. The point of departure for Evans's investigation is this, pertinent, question: "Why is time lexicalised in terms of space and motion through three-dimensional space and not in its own terms?"²⁰ Evans's book is a detailed account of how and why we spatialize time. It can help afford one greater freedom with regard to the felt compulsion to spatialize, a compulsion rampant in time-travel-talk. Time-travel-talk, I am suggesting, is a consequence of being *gripped/captured* by spatial pictures of time. Of plunging headlong into a spatialized view of time, without realizing that one has allowed one's metaphors to run away with one (For: What makes sense, of space, just doesn't always make sense, of time. Space travel involves going from place to place. Time travel involves going from time to time—but the meaning of the term "going" in this case is radically unclear!). Evans's book details the various—the several quite different—conceptual metaphors for time and how they work. Evans develops (and facilitates reflection upon) the *various* conceptions of time involved in what he calls the "duration sense" of time, the "moment sense," the "instance sense," the "event sense," the "agentive sense," and the "measurement sense" (time as measurable and time as measure), to name most (but not all) of the main senses of time that he distinguishes. I would sum up the upshot of his detailing of these roughly as follows: time is a family resemblance concept. The various conceptual metaphors for time are not *consistent*, in Lakoff and Johnson's sense of that term.²¹

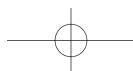
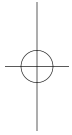
they cannot be non-contradictorily combined into one whole. So often, what philosophers do is to take (a few of—or just) one such metaphor, and proclaim that these/this alone reflects the nature of Time, or of the universe. (My argument might itself appear to be doing this, but that would be a misunderstanding; for I am not objecting against any of the metaphors we use to engage in time-talk; I am only pointing to the harm that these can do when they run out of our control, and create ‘time-travel’-talk.) The great failure of the metaphysics of Realism and Anti-Realism with regard to time is of this nature: these metaphysics pretend to ‘capture’ the whole nature of time when actually they each capture only a fragment of its grammar.²² The same is true, I would suggest, of the endurantism vs. perdurantism (or three-dimensionalism vs. four-dimensionalism) dispute within ‘Realism’:²³ The logic and detail of Evans’s work can help one to see that these would-be metaphysics of time take one particular temporal conceptual metaphor (invariably, with a spatial basis: such as the concept of having *parts*, or *slices*), and unwisely project it to ‘capture’ the essence of temporality itself. That is what Lakoff, Johnson, Evans and Wittgenstein can help us to see that metaphysics of time *is*: the unaware projection of fragments of our time-talk, taken from powerful conceptual metaphors and projected onto the nature of reality itself. This awareness helps one achieve what Wittgenstein aimed always to help one achieve in philosophy: freedom from capture/unaware-compulsion at the hands of deep conceptual metaphors (e.g., of time), *without* seeking, either, to leave them behind definitively. For *that* is a nonsensical goal. For, as Lakoff, Johnson and Evans teach us: conceptual metaphors are essential to our thought/cognition, ineliminable from any thinking of above a minimal complexity.

c. So: to the possible objection that I am committed to dubious ‘Heraclitean’ assumptions in the present paper,²⁴ I reply: Not at all. Rather, what I am pointing out is that ‘the observer-effect’ differs between time and space. It is part of what it *is* for there to be spatial entities such as rivers and buses and universities that you can step in and out of them from the outside. A river that you couldn’t step into without it no longer being a river wouldn’t be a river at all (A body of water of this nature, in relation to which what Heraclitus said might be said to be right, would be, perhaps, a bucket (of water), that the water mostly sloshed straight out of when you stuck your leg in and thereby displaced it (the water)). But it is, I have suggested, on the basis of thinking (not unreasonably, I take it!) from the perspective of someone in the present, no part of *the* past that someone from the future was there. You can step into the same river twice, but you cannot step into the same moment twice (‘If you did,’ then it wouldn’t be the same moment). Or rather: it means nothing to ‘do’ so (Unless: in memory, etc.). Clarity about conceptual metaphors for time makes this evident, and reveals (both) the attraction of and the hopelessness of wishing otherwise.



d. The more specific underlying problem that Parts I and II (above) bring out is that the very characteristics of the past and the future which make them the past and the future are *the very characteristics which 'time travel' as we would like to imagine it tries to flout*. Roughly, and running (for the sake of therapy) the risk of speaking in a crude and un-Ebersolian fashion: The past is 'fixed': and 'traveling back into it' requires that it not be fixed.²⁵ While the future is 'open': and 'traveling forward into it' requires, in a way that incidentally commits one almost *en passant* to a grandiose determinism, that we can lay down fixed points 'there,' in the future,²⁶ as of course we would do in the ordinary nature of things, *if* we were (say) cryogenically suspended and then emerged and started doing things, living again. (We could speak of traveling forward into a possible future, one of many; but then that wouldn't be *the* future; it would be more like a vision. Or a prophecy. Or even a hypothesis. That isn't what time-travel is supposed to be. I am supposed to be able to travel to the year 3000; not to *a* year 3000 . . .) Our desires in relation to our words come to grief, hereabouts (in time-travel-talk). We want both to be able to speak of "the past," history; *and* for it to be present, being made. We want both to be able to speak of "the future," what is to come; *and* for it to be present, now (to us). We are hovering between incompatible uses of our words. We have to *decide* how to use them. We could decide to speak of remembering things (or at least: of "flashbacks," etc.) as involving traveling through time into the past; but it would probably usually be more trouble than it was worth, to do so. It would run together things that should be kept apart (unless we simultaneously gave up speaking of Dr. Who, etc., as engaging in time-travel.). We could decide to speak of going to sleep as traveling through time into the future; but wouldn't such revisionism be pointless? A profitless performance?²⁷ Again, a running together of things that we would be best advised, therapeutically speaking and for the sake of clarity, to keep apart. It seems better to give up (most of) our use of the term "time-travel," except to index certain fantasies which are dependent upon *illusions/delusions* of sense.

e. We desire to fluidize and experience 'directly' the past, and to experience 'directly' and fix the future. This is a perfectly natural human desire. (And it partly explains the enduring appeal of narratives of 'time-travel,' from H.G. Wells to *Star Trek* and *Dr. Who* and *Back to the Future* and the *Terminator* series and so on and on.) But: it is perfectly hopeless. (And so: these narratives are in the end nonsense—from start to end.²⁸) It doesn't mean anything, to travel into the past and kill one's own grandfather, or to do anything else 'there.' The great failing of David Lewis's famous 1976 paper, "The Paradoxes of Time Travel" is that it abjectly fails to explain why it is impossible for a time-traveler to kill their grandfather.²⁹ Saying that such a killing is not compossible with the time-traveler's birth, etc., *explains* nothing. It is just a bare statement. I agree that there is an impossibility here, and indeed a very general one: but



I claim that this signifies that one has to have some argument/explanation for how the impossibility is ensured/undergirded. Lewis doesn't have/give any such thing.³⁰ But on my account, a compelling reason *is* available to explain roughly this. Namely, that we have not succeeded in giving any stable meaning to the notion of "backward time travel." There is an impossibility between being oneself and traveling back into one's past. Such that no meaning has been assigned to "traveling into the past" to meet and kill one's grandfather, nor moreover to do anything else; nor indeed to "traveling into the future" to meet one's own grandchild, except in the normal way (i.e., by means of living, and getting a decent amount of sleep *en route*). If one could time-travel into the future and meet one's own grandchild (I mean a grandchild unconceived at the time one 'left'), then (if I am right that time-travel is only time-travel if travel 'backward' in time is conceptually possible too) one could travel back into her past (back to one's own present) and kill one's sexual partner (or for that matter, oneself)—a 'grandfather paradox'³¹ arises again, then, just as if one goes back into one's own past and kills one's own grandfather. One wants to lay down fixed points in the future. One wants, hopelessly, for the future *to have (already) happened*, when one 'returns' to what is then the past.

f. Given this, it is perhaps worth taking a moment to reflect on why 'time-travel' is such a relatively modern idea, more modern/recent than space travel. We might venture the following two speculations on this question: (1) It is unsurprising that space-travel has been thought about for a long time; for it makes sense. (2) In any case, 'time-travel' is not a particularly attractive idea until one has a sense of a common time applying across at least one's own country. Until a couple of centuries ago, there were disparate times even within most relatively 'developed countries.' Until there is a certain definiteness to time, there is little sense to fantasies of traveling through *it* — because it is fairly clear that there need be no 'it.'³²

g. In (e), I stressed an asymmetry between our desires *vis-à-vis* 'travel into the future' on the one hand and 'travel into the past' on the other (Namely: the desires, respectively, to fix what is fluid, and to fluidize what is fixed). There is also a partial symmetry between them. Namely: to desire to visit the past is to want to really be there and genuinely experience it . . . without affecting it. It must remain 'fixed.' But it cannot remain fixed if *you* are actually to 'go' there. Symmetrically: The desire to visit the future is/commits the fantasy that there is something definite going on there that is already visitable. Something that is fixed. But your being there and experiencing the future as something actually *happening* where people undertake actions requires that it be fluid. So: one wants to lay down fixed points in the past—but the laying down of such points stops it from actually being the (your) past. From its being, that is, what you wanted to travel into. And: one wants to lay down fixed points in the

future—but the laying down of such points (whether it is you or others who lay them down) stops it from actually being the future, what has not yet happened, what is not yet 'fixed.' (Moreover, as Ebersole stresses: even to desire / to talk of "fixed" events in the future is in fact already to court conceptual absurdity, and to risk leaving ordinary language, in which one can successfully make sense, behind. I would add: Our metaphors of time-travel are 'derived' from and indeed construct and make possible perfectly ordinary uses, and thus *can* be unproblematic; but they can easily mutate into problematic attempted employments where one is hovering. Attention to how we ordinarily use them can be one useful tool in leading one back to a condition in which one is no longer hovering . . .)

h. "Time-travel" supposes that past events, 'events in the past,' are still somehow there now. The past allegedly exists now, because you can go to it now (or could, if you had a time-machine). But: those events are over. You want to be present at events that are over. As suggested in (a) and (b), above, talk of "the past" and "the future" can easily confuse us. It may be better, when such confusion beckons, simply to talk about *before* and *after*.³³ That way, one can accomplish all that one needs to in ordinary life—and the Einsteinian physicist can say all that s/he needs to say, complexifying that talk³⁴ —but one doesn't create the unwanted impression that the past and future are explorable countries, in the way that time-travel tall tales typically do. That is the impression that one needs to overcome: that, in the sense in which we speak of tourism in space (or indeed space-tourism!), there can be time-tourism. The past is not an undiscovered or unexperienced country. 1900 is no more truly 'out there (somewhere)' than is that elusive room that we 'see' 'inside' the mirror. Don't let deflationary, useful expressions such as "The past is fixed" mislead you into thinking that the past is still there waiting to be visited. It is precisely *because* there is (now) no 'there' there that the past is fixed, unalterable.

i. It *seems* that it means something to talk about "time-travel"; a patina or ring of sense accompanies the things one wants to say, including some of the things that I have said (I mean: the things, the stories that I have described, the desires that I have tried to inhabit) in the above. But this ring of sense is only the sound (as if) of sense, not the actuality of it. As with Wittgenstein's (not unrelated!) question, "What time is it on the Sun?" The question appears well-formed. But, unless and until we find a genuine use for it that reflects to some degree at least the reason why we were inclined to ask it in the first place, the correct conclusion to draw is that it is actually not. It is (latent) nonsense.

j. It will be objected that what I seem to be saying is that because the grammar of our language does not accommodate time-travel then it is not possible. It will be objected, in other words, that I am illicitly inferring from the limits of our language to an alleged limit to (the possible nature of) our world or of our accomplishments in that world. That I am limiting

our freedom because I am accepting ‘merely’ linguistic limitations. But I might just as well—just as rightly—have said this: “Because the grammar of our language does not accommodate *sdlfhjdsfg*, then *sdlfhjdsfg* is not possible.”³⁵ Because, strange as it sounds, we might say that this *is* basically correct. Because *sdlfhjdsfg* is nonsense; it hasn’t yet been successfully assigned any meaning; so, if we want to or if we are pushed to we might say that ‘it’ certainly isn’t possible. And the same is true of (what we seemingly *wanted to mean* by) time-travel. We *can* assign a meaning to “time-travel,” sure: see e.g., I 3,5,8, and II x, xi, above. But these assignments probably won’t satisfy us; they won’t give us what we wanted, when we wanted to talk about going back in time and killing our grandfather, or seeing the Battle of Hastings actually happen, or so on. What my argument tests is ‘only’ the claim that it means anything of the kind that we evidently *wanted* to mean to talk about time-travel. Just as it doesn’t mean anything to talk about *sdlfhjdsfg*. . . . Of course, in the case of *sdlfhjdsfg*, it is harder to imagine someone wanting to say that ‘it’ is possible. But the only difference here is a psychological one. *Sdlfhjdsfg* is patent nonsense, time-travel is latent nonsense.

k. My thinking here is also Wittgenstein’s. Compare to my line of thinking in (j) his important remarks that:

Though it is nonsense to say “I feel his pain,” this is different from inserting into an English sentence a meaningless word, say “*abracadabra*” . . . and from saying a string of nonsense words. Every word in [“I feel his pain”] is English, and we shall be inclined to say that the sentence has a meaning. The sentence with the nonsense word or the string of nonsense words can be discarded from our language, but if we discard from our language “I feel Smith’s toothache” that is quite different. The second seems nonsense, we are tempted to say, because of some truth about the nature of the things or the nature of the world. . . . The task will be to show that *there is in fact no difference between these two cases of nonsense, though there is a psychological distinction in that we are inclined to say the one and be puzzled by it and not the other*. We constantly hover between regarding it as sense and nonsense, and hence the trouble arises.³⁶

l. An objector might continue to insist that I have shown, at most, that time-travel is ‘only’ conceptually impossible. But this is just another version of the objection considered in (i). If I have succeeded in convincing you that our concepts do not allow for there being anything worth calling “time-travel,” then that is quite enough. Gestures at other we-know-not-whats or we-cannot-says do not interest me. Could we be completely wrong about the nature of time, completely wrong in our understanding of what time is? No. Or at least: there is no sense that we can make out of a ‘Yes’ answer to such a question. A ‘Yes’ answer to it opens the door to unconstrainedly saying just anything at all that we might feel inclined to say, Humpty-Dumpty-style.³⁷

m. There is of course no bar on using the term "time-travel." (This point distinguishes my (therapeutic, Wittgensteinian) approach clearly from a Hackerian approach, which would proceed rather by trying to insist that certain expressions simply must be taken 'out of circulation,' that (as it were) our language itself insists on it. Whereas at every point I appeal to my reader. It is *as you please* whether or not to continue to use these terms (such as "time-travel"). But it seems to me that the attractions of so doing have (not inconsiderably) waned.) There is no word-policing going on here, to ban talk of "time-travel"; it is just that 'it' is surely not what we (thought we) had in mind when we wanted to employ the term in the first place. (One's desire to employ the term "time-travel" will surely shift roughly *in inverse proportion with the meaningfulness of the scenario one is describing by using the term*. Talk of time-travel inexorably involves hovering between (different, uncotenable) intelligible uses of words, unless the scenario one is describing is quite 'ordinary' (as those described above in, for example, I: 8, II: x, etc.).)

n. A more accurate (though less snappy) title for the present paper might then be: "It is as *you please*³⁸ whether you call anything "time-travel" or not, but anything you end up successfully and sensically continuing to call "time-travel" is not going to be the very kind of thing that made you want to speak of "time-travel" in the first place."

o. That is: in the 'sense' (which turns out to be no sense at all) in which we have an internally consistent desire to speak of time-travel, we might just as well say simply that there cannot be any such thing. The very idea of time-travel, in the sense in which one desires it to mean 'more' than things like going to sleep, looking at old documentaries, imagining what happened or what is about to happen, etc., is what is flawed.

p. It is as you please whether you call going on archaeological digs or fossil hunts, etc., "traveling back in time"; but it isn't as you please whether or not you hover in your use of words, as you will inevitably do if you seek to regard the time-travel scenarios depicted in *Dr. Who*, etc., as intelligible once one thinks them through. Or again: the latter *is* as you please; provided you are not dismayed at using words in ways which are in tension with other ways that you yourself want to use them. You are welcome to this 'paradise' where 'anything' is 'possible'; only look around you, and ask yourself whether on reflection you really want to call this a paradise—or a land of nonsense.

q. Conclusion: The unavoidable paradoxes of time-travel ought to lead one who values speaking clearly and intelligibly to give up the very idea of "time-travel" as it is envisaged in virtually all the cases in which philosophers and writers tend to care about and employ the term: i.e., in such doubly fictive scenarios ("Doubly fictive," in that they are not just fictions (i.e., stories); they are *grammatical* fictions. They can't genuinely even be imagined. One can only *imagine* that one imagines them . . .).

CODA

There is a good reason why time-travel stories involve *people* traveling through time (I mean, a good reason, beside the obvious reason—that stories involving only the travel through time of simple physical objects are just not very interesting, as Monton’s recent article in *PQ* admits.³⁹). Ironically, it is this: that they can help to keep one honest.

Monton’s founding argument for time-travel without causal loops describes a world in which there is one particle continuously moving in one direction spatially which comes at a certain point in time to start reversing its direction temporally.⁴⁰ But ‘the’ particle will then be in two places at once. My response to Monton thus is that it becomes extremely unclear that there really is just one particle, moving continuously in one (spatial) direction, as Monton said that there was in describing his ‘world.’ There seems no good reason not to say that there are in fact two particles in this world. If Monton’s particle had been a person, this trouble would not have arisen (and his scenario would not have been possible): for a *person* can’t be in two places at once, simultaneously experiencing two different things. Persons as opposed to particles as time-travelers keep one honest about this, and thus can prevent illusions of time-travel from arising.

But this case can also lead us to see that people traveling through time also cause problems and create temptations that are absent when one is restricted to particles. And this is in fact a bigger problem. Most actual time-travel stories *seem* to work because of the first-personal experience described in them apparently compelling us to think that ‘*personal*’ time can differ from ‘*worldline*’ time.⁴¹ No such assistance is available in the ‘world’ that Monton abortively or pointlessly attempts to describe. But: we should not be taken in by a first-person narrative of time-travel, any more than we are taken in by fairy-tales in which lions and pots can speak. Much as Schrodinger’s cat cannot live in a superposition—cannot be both alive and dead—so it makes no sense, we have found, to suppose that I can be alive before I was born, or carry on living after I am dead. We have given no sense to such ‘ideas,’ and found no sense for ‘them.’ First-person narratives and presumptions of personal identity play, I submit, an essential role in seeming to make most time-travel-talk convincing. Without them, we have no compelling reason to grant the description of time-travel as apparently occurring, in the first place. But: we do not need to be compelled, and we should separate what *seems* to from what can *actually* make sense.

Time-travel will inevitably lead to causal loops which will inevitably lead to grandfather paradoxes, etc., unless one either (A) simply dogmatically rules the latter out (as Lewis appears to), or (B) finds some way of arguing for time travel without causal loops (as Monton seeks to—abortively, I have argued).



The paradoxes of time-travel result inevitably from the 'nature' of time-travel. That 'nature' results inevitably from the unaware and excessive projection of conceptual metaphors of time that are in fact based on motion, on travel (through space). 'Time-travel,' we might even usefully say, is a fantasy of *travel through travel*. A fantasy of traveling, not through the space from A to B, but somehow, absurdly, 'through' the very traveling itself. ("Through," not in the sense of "by means of," but in the sense of "[passing] through.") This is, it would very much seem, an incoherent nesting.⁴² Thus: merely a fantasy of sense.

Once we gain a clear view of why we cannot satisfyingly speak of time-travel, then time-travel tales need not be committed to the flames, but will be relegated to the same shelf as the most absurd of fairy tales. For they *essentially* involve delusions of sense.⁴³

NOTES

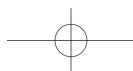
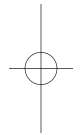
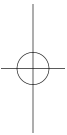
1. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009, p.76. (McGilchrist here is thinking of time in a manner similar to my approach in Part 3 of my *Applying Wittgenstein*.)

2. Volume Two, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, p.438.

3. A concept very roughly along those lines is employed by Dr. Who to defeat (to age to death) Sutekh, in *The Pyramids of Mars* (Written by Stephen Harris, Season 13, BBC TV, 1975)—though, considerably reducing the effectiveness of the portrayal, the Doctor has a conversation (just one short conversation, *with* Sutekh), while the ageing process is occurring. Sutekh lives for thousands of years—while having one short conversation. This is a typical example of the failure of time-travel-tales to logically convince. I aim in this paper to explore the reasons why such failure is not merely accidental (and, in passing, to treat of further such examples, of which there are plenty).

4. D.H. Mellor, *Real Time II*, (London: Routledge, 1998), 123–24. My presentation thus directly undermines the claim of Phil Dowe on p.443 of his "The case for time travel" (*Philosophy*, Vol. 75, 2000: 441–51) that such cases of 'travel' into the future constitute time travel "on any reasonable definition."

5. For further detail on why 'time-dilation' does not amount to time-travel, see n.1 of Read, "Against 'time-slices,'" *Philosophical Investigations* 26:1 (2003), 24–43. See also Chapter 19 of Vyvyan Evans's *The Structure of Time: Language, Meaning, and Temporal Cognition* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2003), especially p.249, for an interesting argument drawing what might seem to be the sting from Special Relativity in this connection (And see also the beautiful presentation (of how a proper understanding of Einstein can help us to remove the air of paradox that a crude or sensationalist rendering of him creates) on p.134 of John Wisdom's *Paradox and Discovery* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965)). To generalize: if I had space and time, I would argue that Relativity ought not to be taken overly literally/literalistically. I suspect that it is only an overly literalistic reading of Relativity that makes it appear to us as though it requires time-travel to be possible. See the chapter on causation in Lakoff and Johnson's *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), for their discussion of Relativity as literal or metaphorical, to back up my thought here. General Relativity, which alone might pose real problems for the argument against time-travel that I am giving in the present chapter, is at present widely open to interpretation / little more than mathematics alone in its relatively unmetaphorical



'hardcore.' Thus I don't think it can be said without hesitation that General Relativity really/definitely *does* pose problems for my argument in the present piece.

What about recent results from CERN about seeming faster-than-light neutrinos, etc.? My argument below will be that, without travel 'backward' in time, there isn't really any time-travel to speak of. If the CERN result is right, as I understand it, then it is ('literally') orthogonal: it will not yield 'backward' time-travel. It will yield movement in the 'space' outside the light-cone. That isn't the same as movement 'backward' in time. It wouldn't upset my conceptual points.

6. A scenario somewhat along these lines is to be found in Daphne Du Maurier's *The House on the Strand* (London: Virago, 2003).

7. Thus, as Bradley Monton rightly argues ("Time travel without causal loops," *Philosophical Quarterly* 59: 234 (2007), 63–64), Richard Hanley ("No End in Sight: Causal Loops in Philosophy, Physics and Fiction," *Synthese* 141: 1 (2004), 123–52) and others have been much too optimistic about the prospects of eliminating causal loops. I shall come below to what is wrong with Monton's own would-be elimination/sidestepping of such loops, in the Coda, below.

8. Compare for instance P.F. Strawson's useful argument in Chapter 2 of *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics*, (London: Routledge, 1959). And Ebersole's, in *Language and Perception* (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1979), p.114.

9. Frank B. Ebersole, "How Philosophers See Stars," *Mind* 74: 296 (1965), p.526.

10. I allude here to the view of A.J. Ayer (e.g., *The Problem of Knowledge* (London: MacMillan, 1956) pp.94–95), and similar views in R. Chisholm (*Perceiving: A Philosophical Study* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1957) p.153) and Russell (*Human Knowledge, Its Scope and Limits*, (London: Routledge, 1994) p.205) to the effect that we can know/see the past, and indeed *only* the past. These views are beautifully presented, dissected and their attractions greatly diminished, in and by Frank Ebersole's marvellously therapeutic ordinary-language paper, "How Philosophers See Stars" (*op.cit.*).

Despite Ebersole, we might say—bending over backwards to be 'charitable' to Ayer et al—that, if philosophers and others are so keen to 'travel through time,' then they might as well just look outside the window at night (Or indeed, at anything else—the only difference being that the light from the stars has taken somewhat longer to get here than the light from other objects surrounding them.). Only: this is of course still most unlikely to satisfy the one who wanted to 'travel through time.' And the reason why is the very reason that Ebersole presses: because saying that we see the past when we see the stars is in the end likeliest merely to be a tedious piece of (merely) linguistic/lexicographic revisionism, not in any sensical sense an exciting discovery . . .

11. Ted Hughes's fine poem, "Six young men," (see, e.g., www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3Ws3DsskMM) is a great meditation on the profound truth in the claim that a photo can potentially enable us *to see the past*. Or here is a different but equally lovely case, from Iris Murdoch's *The Philosopher's Pupil* (London: Penguin, 1983), p.64. An old lady, Alex is looking at the photographs and paintings dominating a house of hers, the "Slipper House":

There was also a picture of Alex as a pretty little girl holding some flowers.
And a slim beautiful golden-haired youth. Alex's elder brother who had been killed in the war, a shadow now, a shade, scarcely ever entering Alex's thoughts except when she saw his image in this place. She turned from it.
The Slipper House lived in the past, Alex's hall of meditation was a *time machine* . . . (Emphasis added.)

12. I have in mind here the important distinction made by Cora Diamond between imagining and merely imagining that one is imagining, in her "Ethics, imagination and the method of the *Tractatus*," in my and Crary's collection, *The New Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 2000).

13. Monton's 'many-particle' argument does not refute this point. For (as one sees, on closely inspecting pp.59–60 of Monton, "Time travel without causal loops"), the

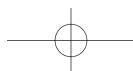


particles he therein describes as time-traveling do not really travel back into their own pasts. They travel through space as well, into adjoining regions or edge-regions, and without their doing so Monton's argument would not work. Monton has no argument that enables a particle to travel back into the past (without generating a causal loop) except by simultaneously traveling to a region of space closed from the region that the particle originated in (In practice, a different universe. Monton only manages to counter the presumption that he *is* presupposing a different universe by proposing particles that do not interact with any other particles—in effect, much the same as my pure-spirit would-be observers in (vi)–(ix), above). His proposal therefore need not convince or detain us.

14. 'Time's arrow' points only in one direction: thus there is already something deeply suspect about what we are wanting to do, in using terms such as "back" (and not being content only with terms such as "forward") in relation to 'time-travel.' For, if we speak of the twin who travels to near a black hole (Cf. I: 11, above) as traveling forward through time, this at least will be harmless, so long as we do not then expect there to be such a thing as traveling backward through time that symmetrically mirrors what the twin undergoes. (See also on this n.60 of my *Applying Wittgenstein* (London: Continuum, 2007; edited by Laura Cook.) For Wittgenstein's own most-detailed deconstruction of the compulsion to spatialize time-talk, see pp. 26–27 of Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969 (1958)).)

15. See in Part 3.2 of my *Applying Wittgenstein* (Cf. also Frank Ebersole's "The precarious reality of the past," in his *Things We Know* (Eugene: U. Oregon, 1967), pp. 136–41, which explains further the (dubious) attractions of the spatial and place-like pictures of past and future). As I make clear there (and see also n.5, above), it should *not* be assumed by my saying that there is always something potentially problematic about modeling time on space that I am going into competition with Einsteinian physics. For instance, at the most basic level: talk of 'time-lines' and spatial mapping of them certainly *need* not cause any problems at all, so long as we take care (On which, see p.82f. of my *Applying Wittgenstein*). And it is even harmless to talk of time as a dimension so long as (as physicists generally do) one distinguishes between time and 'time-like dimensions' on the one hand and space and 'space-like dimensions' on the other hand. I am only issuing some warning signs (reminding one that employment of the word "dimension" for instance does not guarantee that all aspects of what one is talking about can be modeled on our pre-existing understanding of 3 dimensions, and that otherwise talk of "the 4th dimension" *will* be misleading) and putting down some kind of prose 'constraint' on what physics can successfully mean, beyond its math, its geometry (On Einstein as having primarily given us 'only' a geometry, compare Mendel Sachs's interesting work). I am of course not constraining physics from anything—for nonsense is not any kind of realm at all. It is only an absence of successful sense-making. (A great example of that absence, of a spatial metaphor for time that has run out-of-control, is this, from T. Sider: "Persistence through time is much like extension through space. A road has spatial parts in the subregions of the region of space it occupies; likewise, an object that exists in time has temporal parts in the various subregions of the total region it occupies." (Theodore Sider, "Four-dimensionalism," *Philosophical Review* 106: 2 (1997), p.197.))

16. For further exposition, see p.93 of my *Applying Wittgenstein*: A therapy for our habit of substantializing time, and turning it into a medium, is, as I put it there, to think "of time as at base involving *comparative* statements." Again, this point is buttressed by the work of Lakoff and Johnson—see their *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (*op.cit.*), especially p.139. Their approach was to some extent anticipated by James Gibson's ecological psychology: See Gibson's 1975 paper, "Events are perceivable but time is not," in *The Study of Time*, ed. J.T. Fraser and N. Lawrence (Vol.2, New York: Springer-Verlag, 1975), pp.295–301. Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge, 1961 (1922)) is also a helpful antecedent here; see especially 6.3611: "We cannot compare any process with the "passage of time"—there is no such thing—but only with another process (say,



with the movement of the chronometer). // Hence the description of the temporal sequence of events is only possible if we support ourselves on another process.”

17. What *sense*, moreover, does it have to speak simply of traveling through time, when one understands the Universe, as nowadays we do, to be something that is full of movement and change, something that is ‘unfolding’—and rapidly expanding—in time and space (in space-time)? (Notice that the same worry does not apply to ‘traveling through space’: we don’t mean by that, traveling through space without time passing (i.e., the allegedly logically possible phenomenon of instantaneous matter-transmission).)

18. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003 (1980). (For a wonderful satirical exploration of the *limits* of spatial metaphors for time, from an earlier generation, see Part I of O.K. Bouwsma’s “The mystery of time (or, The man who did not know what time is),” *Journal of Philosophy* LI:12 (June 10, 1954), pp.341–63.)

19. Vyvyan Evans, *The Structure of Time: Language, Meaning, and Temporal Cognition*.

20. *Ibid.* p.13.

21. See particularly their powerful discussion at pp.219–22 of their *op.cit.* As they say, on p.221:

[I]t is one thing to impose a single objectivist model in some restricted situations and to function in terms of that model—perhaps successfully; it is another to conclude that the model is an accurate reflection of reality. There is a good reason why our conceptual systems have inconsistent metaphors for a single concept. The reason is that no one metaphor will do. Each one gives a certain comprehension of one aspect of the concept and hides others.

22. I argue this case in some detail at pp.97-98 of my *Applying Wittgenstein*.

23. For detailed discussion, see pp.108–9 of *Applying Wittgenstein*.

24. As perhaps William Grey is, in his “Troubles with time travel,” *Philosophy* 74 (1999), 55–70.

25. (For Ebersole’s relevance here: See n.26, below.) For a useful account of this point already in the literature, see p.57 of William Grey’s *ibid.*

26. Ebersole’s “Was the Sea Battle Rigged?” (in his *Things We Know*) is a wonderful diagnosis of how (wittingly or unwittingly) we can find ourselves (as philosophers) drawn to picture the future as fixed or wish it to be fixable ‘in advance.’ We fail to differentiate the future adequately from the past. (See especially p.220, against the desire to say that there can be fixed points in the future, things we can lay down as true, by means of (say) a time-machine.)

It might be objected that I *can* lay fixed points down in the future. e.g., killing myself now ensures that it is fixed in the future that I won’t be there. But this is not what is meant hereabouts by “laying down fixed points in the future.” The idea is supposed to be that I can make myself *present* in the future and thus ‘directly’ lay down fixed points there.

27. Cf. p.120 of Wittgenstein’s *RFM*.

28. Of course, there is much in these narratives that is still of value. For example: (1) They have of course all sorts of ethical and existential and political interest, etc., (2) They sometimes seem to rise to self-reflexive awareness of their own nonsensicality, in ways that are interesting and harmonize with the argument of my paper: that is one type of value that they can have. See for instance the apparent emerging awareness in the *Dr. Who* story *The End of Time* (BBC Wales, 25 December 2009) that it cannot make sense for the ‘Time Lords’ to exist except as pure spirit. If one then realizes that that in turn cannot make sense (cf. II: vii–ix, above), then the concept is at an end. (3) Perhaps most interestingly of all, they very occasionally/subconsciously perhaps involve a still more phenomenologically/experientially *deliberate* nonsensicality, a deliberate running against our (fantasized) ‘prisonhouse’ of the present. A bringing into prominence of the nature of Dasein through a fantasized escape from it. One is reminded of the way in which Heidegger deliberately used nonsense, at famous moments in his “What is



Metaphysics?" Lecture (evans-experientialism.freewebspace.com/heidegger5a.htm), such as (in) his remark that "The nothing itself noths."

A famous time-travel tale which seems to partake of the character of both (2) and (3) here is Robert Heinlein's "All you zombies": www.users.humboldt.edu/jwpowell/rheinleinZombies.pdf.

29. David Lewis, "The Paradoxes of Time Travel," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 13:2 (1976), p.149. There is a useful discussion of the complement to Lewis's failure to give reasons for why time-travel will not cause paradoxes (i.e.: of the reasons why it *will* do so) at p.303 of Alasdair Richmond's "Recent work: Time travel," *Philosophical Books*, Vol. 44, 2003, pp.297–309. (According to Lewis, backward time travel need not involve making what did happen not to have happened - the backward traveler can only change the past in a counterfactual sense, as opposed to a replacement sense. I think that Lewis simply offers no reason at all to believe that the counterfactual is, as it were, actual, rather than fake. He offers no reason to believe that an actual time-traveler could not do the impossible things that time-travel-fictions posit such a traveler as doing. And I think, moreover, that if one cannot change the past in a replacement sense, then one cannot change the past.)

30. (Nor does Peter Vranas, in his "Can I Kill My Younger Self?: Time travel and the retrosuicide puzzle," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 90 (2009), pp. 520–34.) It might be said that he does, in that—for Lewis—some things are metaphysically possible—given a set of facts—while other things aren't. Why imagine that time-travel involves doing impossible things?

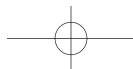
But the problem remains this (and compare here n.29, above): what is supposed to *stop* me from killing my grandfather, once I am 'back' there? There is just no account of this in Lewis (nor in Vranas, nor, in any way that is convincing, in any account in the broadly Lewisian paradigm with which I am familiar. There is what strikes me as a wonderfully and tellingly crazy attempted (but utterly unconvincing) defence of Lewis's view in Nicholas J. J. Smith's aptly named "Bananas enough for time travel?": *Brit J. Phil. Sci.* 48 (1997), 363–89.). His restriction on this happening is just arbitrary. (In thinking this, I have fellow-travelers: see again Grey's *op.cit.*, and K. Vihvelin's "What time travellers cannot do," *Philosophical Studies* 81 (1996), 315–30.) The only way actually to stop it from happening is something like my account, which shows how and why the very idea of going 'back' there is absurd.

31. Due originally to Rene Barjavel's *Le voyageur imprudent* ('The imprudent traveler,' Paris: Denoel, 1943). I am arguing that, for all that we enjoy time-travel tales, when one presses on them, they all fall apart. Completely. They have a *ring* of sense. But that's all. These stories—Barjavel's, the *Terminator* series, *Back to the Future*, *Dr. Who*, etc.,—become at their core little more than a jumble, when one really tries to think them through. They are latent nonsense (Cf. n.28, above).

32. For useful discussions of the importance and effects of the standardization of time, see the work of Eviatar Zerubavel. I am suggesting speculatively that (amidst all the good that it has done us) a harm that this standardization and rationalization has caused is making us more vulnerable to the attractions of time-travel-talk.

33. Clearly, I am in the present chapter rejecting the weirdnesses and nonsenses inevitably generated by constructivism / by a strong Anti-Realism about time: that is the burden of my emphasis on the past being 'fixed,' etc., I will leave it to others to judge whether, even so, there is a sense in which the line of thought I am suggesting amounts to a kind of therapeutic and post-metaphysical revisioning of the ideas present in McTaggart's famous take on time.

34. Time-travel is often spoken about in terms of Special and General Relativity, which can appear to leave our common concepts behind. Does this latter point undermine my 'diagnosis'? No, for ultimately special and general relativity have to have *some* relation to our common concepts. Otherwise they can have nothing to say that would in any way at all cause any difficulties for them, or affect how we think of ourselves in the universe (once we emerge from the mathematics).



35. Are we *limited* by our concepts? No more than God is limited, by not being able to speak or think or do nonsense. (To the objection that I am proposing that we are limited in the sense that the inhabitants of 'Flatland' are allegedly limited, see 3.2.3 of my *Applying Wittgenstein*, "Are we limited beings?" The fundamental failing of 'Flatland' is already implicitly contained in the name: It is really Flat-Universe. Or rather, and better still: this different Universe is only 'flat' to outsiders, who fail to appreciate its actual phenomenology. We have no good reason, *not even by analogy*, to believe that there could be beings who could see or move across time, as we can across space.)

36. Emphasis added. Quoted from unpublished Lectures of Wittgenstein's, on p.106 of Cora Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1991).

37. Those unconvinced by this, and looking for further reason to believe it, are advised to consult Sharrock and Read's *Kuhn* (Oxford: Polity, 2002), which makes the (Kuhnian) argument that it means nothing to contemplate giving up on our 'paradigms' completely, except with a view to replacing them with some concrete alternative, which invariably cannibalizes the old paradigm.

38. See *PI* section 16.

39. e.g., on p.62 of his *op. cit.*

40. Monton, *op. cit.*, pp.56–58.

41. Monton's helpful terms, from p.56 of his *op. cit.* Along the lines noted in III:a, above, incoherences do tend to multiply, once one tries to take seriously and in detail the very scenarios that in the first place psychologically motivate or apparently make credible time-travel narratives. For instance, the travel 'forward' through time of the protagonist in H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine* is depicted as 'continuous time-travel' (where the traveling through time itself experientially takes some time, as opposed to instantaneous 'jump' time-travel). The time-traveler sees long periods of time passing in a 'speeded-up' fashion around him. But this raises the question: If he can see everything changing around him, why can't those around him see him there, changing only very slowly? And it is of course very implausible indeed, then, that he would not be interfered with, during this very long period, by people / creatures / physical processes in the vicinity. Moreover: how are we supposed to imagine the border between his pocket of space and theirs? What time is it there? (Similar worries apply to Monton's thought-experiments, insofar as those involve traveling along borders between radically different regions of space, as some of them do.)

42. In this, it closely resembles the deeply tempting but deeply dubious desire to speak, in language, about language as from outside it. The desire/fantasy that Wittgenstein first exposed as nonsensical, in the *Tractatus* (as we saw in Chapter 1 above), and that I will explore in more detail in Chapter 3, immediately to follow.

43. Thanks to Weggi Weggis, to commenters on the "Talking Philosophy" blog, and to a number of students over the years for help thinking these matters through. Thanks to Iain McGilchrist for his inspiring work (including the discussion at pp.152–53 of *The Master and his Emissary*, which provides an experiential and *moral* context for my thinking here about the nature of time.). Thanks to an audience at the University of East Anglia for very useful feedback and discussion. And many thanks to Oskari Kuusela, Don Levi, John Powell, John Collins, Jerry Goodenough, Bradley Monton, Angus Ross, Alasdair Richmond, Ruth Makoff, and Wes Sharrock, for very helpful comments on earlier drafts.

DRAFT

THREE

A Paradox for Chomsky: On Our Being Through and Through 'Inside' Language

"I find myself torn between two conflicting feelings—a 'Chomskyan' feeling that deep regularities in natural language must be discoverable by an appropriate combination of formal, empirical, and intuitive techniques, and a contrary (late) 'Wittgensteinian' feeling that many of the 'deep structures,' 'logical forms,' 'underlying semantics,' and 'ontological commitments,' etc., which philosophers have claimed to discover by such techniques are Luftgebäude [houses of air]." —Saul Kripke, as quoted by Jerry Katz at the opening of *The Metaphysics of Meaning*¹

"It is one thing to say that Chomskian linguistics and the other academic specialities that bill themselves as parts of 'cognitive science' are respectable disciplines—arenas in which very bright people engage in spirited debates with one another. It is another thing to say that these disciplines have contributed to our knowledge. Many equally respectable disciplines have flourished and decayed without leaving such contributions behind them. Fifteenth-century Aristotelianism, seventeenth-century hermeticism, and twentieth-century logical empiricism are familiar examples. // Wittgensteinians think it is an open question whether cognitive science will go down in history as a successful attempt to bring the procedures of natural science to bear on the study of mind and language or as yet another attempt to set philosophy on the secure path of a science—one that eventually collapsed, like all the others, of its own weight." —Richard Rorty, "The Brain as Hardware, Culture as Software"²

The two chapters that follow this one will seek to implode would-be Kripkean scepticisms, 'semantic' scepticisms which (allegedly drawing on the paradox that Wittgenstein mentions in *PI* 201) have been alleged

to cause problems for the Chomskian paradigm in linguistics.³ So will I have given Chomsky a hand, by removing a potential cause of such problems?

Possibly; but only so that the Kripkensteinian castle-of-air can be cleared away in order that the *real* problems for Chomsky can be set out. That is what my aim is in the present chapter: to raise a paradox that I think *does* arise from broadly Wittgensteinian thinking, with regard to the Chomskian project. Somewhat as (in the previous chapter) I found the whole notion of time-travel as that idea is usually presented problematically paradoxical through and through, so here I will seek eventually to place a question mark over the very project of Chomskian linguistic theory, and to place radically in question its vision of 'language.'

But in order to do *that*, we first need to get clear on the significant common ground, often unrecognized, that there is between Wittgenstein and Chomsky:

I have given the present chapter, I think, an intriguing pair of epigraphs. They make an intriguing *juxtaposition*. Let me hasten to point out however that, while my own feelings are far more strongly 'Wittgensteinian' than 'Chomskian,' I don't entirely accept the dichotomy that is assumed by both Rorty and Kripke. The following two quotations from Chomsky might help to explain why:

Perhaps one might argue that recent semantic theories supersede the intuitions of Wittgenstein . . . because of their explanatory success. That does not, however, seem a promising idea. . . . In general, we have little reason now to believe that more than a Wittgensteinian assembly of particulars lies beyond the domain of [syntax].⁴

As for semantics, insofar as we understand language use, the argument for a reference-based semantics seems to me weak. It is possible that natural language . . . has a "semantics" only in the sense of "the study of how this instrument, whose formal structure and potentialities of expression are the subject of syntactic investigation, is actually put to use in a speech community", to quote from the earliest formulation in generative grammar . . . influenced by Wittgenstein, Austin and others.⁵

These quotes already suggest why it is that a Kripkensteinian attack on Chomsky (even were it able to be coherently formulated, as I will suggest in Chapters 4 and 5 it cannot be) would be / is unlikely to hit its target. More generally: It is not widely enough appreciated that a genuinely Chomskian approach can share in common with a genuinely Wittgensteinian approach to language a profound scepticism about scientific projects in semantics and pragmatics.⁶ The only place where they appear to disagree, then, is in relation to syntax. For Wittgensteinians tend to think that (to put the matter—somewhat anachronistically but in this instance perhaps helpfully—for a moment in broadly Saussurean terms) *langue*

can be constituted by *parole*, that it can be *parole* 'all the way down'; whereas Chomsky wants of course a science of language to apply to / to be constructible for the 'foundation,' syntax.

It is helpful to be clear about this: about the limits to the disagreement between Chomsky and Wittgenstein. Chomsky's 'science of language' would leave virtually everything 'as it is' at the 'ethno' level, the level of the methods of people using and sometimes reflecting on their terms. Linguistics as a science, for him, doesn't tell us what the concepts that philosophers worry about ('desire,' 'meaning,' etc.) really are/mean. Nor does he regard these (ordinary language) concepts as freighted with allegedly false pseudo-scientific assumptions, the way some of those who he criticizes (e.g., B.F. Skinner) certainly do.⁷

In this chapter, I lay out one significant *remaining* problem for Chomsky considered as a philosophical theorist of language, even once we get clear about the significant areas where there needn't be disagreement between Chomsky and Wittgenstein. I aim then to indicate a paradox that I think that Chomsky cannot escape, though a Wittgensteinian can slide right by it. That is, I will question the coherence of the Chomskian endeavour to be able to speak as if from outside language about language. Once one questions that (as I shall argue) paradoxical quest, what one finds seems to imply that Chomsky's great discoveries may be little more than houses of cards—or, better, 'houses of air' (*Luftgebäude*).

WE ARE 'INSIDE' LANGUAGE

Language is normative. For language *unavoidably, necessarily* involves meaning; and meaning is, we might say, a normative phenomenon. Meaning is, one might say, not only inside us; meaning is also something that we are inside. Thus language is not only, as the Chomskians like to think and say, inside us; language is also something that we are inside. I don't (just) mean here that we are 'inside' our community, which tends to be a misleading (perhaps Anti-Realist) position that revisionistically fantasizes a notional outside to such community, an outside that we are excluded from. I certainly don't mean either that we are *trapped* within language, as some post-Modernists think. I mean that there is *no such thing as* an external point of view on language. The kind of point of view that we unproblematically take up on physical phenomena, e.g, when we theorize and experiment about matter. Our own through-and-through embodied existence does not prevent us from imagining coherently the most *recherché* theories of matter. Roughly: In science, we do not come at matter through being beings made of matter. But we through and through come at language, whether we like it or not, through being beings 'made' of language, linguistic beings.

The difference here is rather like the difference between being in love, and scientifically investigating love. The latter attitude may indeed reveal to us some things not revealed in the former; but the converse is also very much true. There is a very great deal about love that one cannot understand except through being in love, or at least through finding out from being with others and learning from others what being in love means. The analogy's main limitation, and it is a deep one, is that one can be in or out of love. But there is no such thing as being out of language, except (roughly) being very, very young, or being dead. In other words: language as a phenomenon is *less* liable to be susceptible of a scientific approach than love.

Or if the love analogy is too wet for you, then perhaps a better analogy (for you) for the 'being in' language idea would be that of a fish being in or out of water. Think, then, of a fish out of water as an analogous figure to a human 'out of language.' A fish can be out of water in the sense that it is possible for it to somehow get or be taken out of water; however, a fish can't 'be' out of water in the sense of surviving, breathing, thriving, roaming around, etc. A fish out of water could not, as it were, then study better its own biology. In ordinary language-use, there is no such concept as 'being out of language.' However, there is (are) such (a) thing(s) as not being able to speak (yet, ever, now or again). We say of young children that they "can't speak yet," we can be lost for words if we are shocked, we can be born or rendered dumb by illness, disability, or death; we say someone will "speak no more." But in all of these ways in which, roughly, we can properly be said to 'be out of' language, there is no sense in which we could 'be out of' it in the way we would need to be if we were to study language scientifically in the way Chomsky recommends—similarly to the distinction between the sense in which a fish can't 'be out of' water in the sense that it would need to if it were to roam about and live on the land, etc. (Though once again, the analogy is, if anything, too weak. For *us* at least, it is still too easy to imagine being out of water, and roaming about on the land (and didn't fish eventually leave the oceans, deep in our evolutionary past?). So perhaps a better analogy still would be: being taken outside the atmosphere (but not in a space-suit); cf. *PI* 103. Or, possibly better still: 'outside' the universe?)

The hard task then is to see how deeply our being in language conditions us—but *not* to fantasize that we would see more truly and fully if we were to escape from it. For we wouldn't then see at all (any more than a fish would see the true nature of its being through being dragged out of the water).

We fail to notice our being through and through 'inside' language because of the depth of this inside-ness. "The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something—because it is always before one's eyes.)" (*PI* 129) As a result, "We predicate of the thing what lies in the

method of representation. Impressed by the possibility of a comparison, we think we are perceiving a state of affairs of the highest generality." (PI 104) Failing to notice that our method of representation of language, implicitly and then explicitly learned from and inextricably as part of our very cognitive beginnings, involves notions such as noun and verb, and thenceforth endlessly more subtle notions, we think we are discovering the structure of language, the thing itself. We look at our way of seeing, without realizing that that is what we are doing, and think we are discovering a new object. *We predicate of the 'thing' we think we are observing what actually lies in our very method of thinking about it* (as to some degree of everything else). When we re-present in mangled form the very most constitutive parts of what for present purposes I will label, somewhat crudely, our 'conceptual scheme,' we think we are discovering truths of the most fundamental kind of all, of the highest generality (e.g., 'linguistic universals': which are in any case only generated by means of translating other natural languages into our own in ways that can be made to guarantee us finding what we want to find. I.e., if we are determined to find linguistic universals, we can always gerrymander the structure of other languages to fit that of our own, e.g., through making the translation scheme produce 'contracted' or 'omitted' pronouns where there are none (so-called "pro-drop").⁸

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein expressed this as follows: "Propositions cannot represent logical form: it is mirrored in them. What finds its reflection in language, language cannot represent. What expresses itself in language, we cannot express by means of language. Propositions show the logical form of language. They display it." (TLP 4.121) The 'cannots' here should not be misread, by the way; when one understands the method of the *Tractatus*, following Conant and Diamond, Wittgenstein is seen not to be here limiting our abilities, nor saying that there is anything hereabouts that we cannot do. The point is, rather, that the enterprise of seeking to look at language as if from the outside, as if it were limited, is an absurd one. It generates only an illusion of objectivity, or scientificity.

We fail to notice, when in the grip of such an illusion, that the whole 'structure' of noun and verb, of syntax, etc., ought, if we are truly going to study language, to be only a *topic* of such study, not a *resource* for it. The problem with generative linguistics thinking is that it is both. It is used as a resource, unawares, and it is also the topic. The topic and the resource are found—surprise surprise—to match, and this is taken as a dramatic scientific discovery, rather than what it actually is: a kind of gigantic tautology. "One thinks that one is tracing the outline of the thing's nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing the frame through which we look at it. // A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably." (PI 114–5) We will be entrapped by the picture of language as having something like a deep structure which is genuinely

empirically/scientifically discoverable, until we recognize that such a structure is itself a picture that our language tends to murmur to us every single time we use it.

'Syntactic structure,' one might say, comes to us as a secondary elaboration of the language-ness of language. We become tempted to think it a discovery; it is rather a 'resource' we use in order to discover . . . itself! Grammar is something we are *in*, in arguably a more profound sense than the sense in which it is something within us. Crudely (and dangerously!) put, it is a set of transcendental spectacles that we fantasize we can take off and look at, when we do generative linguistics. (But if we really took the spectacles off, there would be no looking.)

Compare Wittgenstein, here:

[I]t may come to look as if there were something like a final analysis of our forms of language, and so a single completely resolved form of every expression. That is, as if our usual forms of expression were, essentially, unanalysed; as if there were something hidden in them that had to be brought to light. . . . // This finds expression in questions as to the essence of language, of propositions, of thought. —For if we too in these investigations are trying to understand the essence of language—its function, its structure, —yet *this* is not what those questions have in view. For they see in the essence, not something that already lies open to view and that becomes surveyable by a rearrangement, but something that lies *beneath* the surface. (PI 91–92)

I believe this to be an acute observation/diagnosis of the kind of movement of thought that finds 'deep structure' to be, not just a re-presentation for particular purposes of our grammar (see PI 122 & 130–32), but a discovery of 'the' 'truth' about how language is really structured, and even of what language really is.⁹

My paradox for Chomsky, then, is this: You want to be able to tell us the true nature of language. Scientifically. This requires you to take up an external point of view on language.¹⁰ But this is an absurd ambition.¹¹ When you seek to tell us the real nature of language, you inevitably draw upon it as a resource,¹² rather than simply topicalizing it. You do not escape language's serpent, which trails over everything, when you seek to tell us about language. Your desire to tell us how language is really structured is a natural human desire,¹³ but one which (naturally) runs into the sand. The order you claim to find in language is inevitably an order that you partly impose upon it.¹⁴ Your very effort to describe to us the true nature of language reveals in the end only that you are a language-using creature; and we knew that already. You are caught in your desire to escape language *so as* to be able to describe / explain it 'fully.' But, paradoxically: If you were able to escape language, you wouldn't be able to tell us anything about it. If a Chomskian were to speak from outside language—the place that he would need to speak from, if he were

truly to tell us something truly surprising about the very nature of language—we would not understand him . . .

And now we can see a deep connection between Chapter 1 and the present Chapter: for in both cases the crucial point is that of the ineffability of logical form (which, understood correctly, I have suggested, is itself a transitional idea, giving way in the therapeutic movement of ladder-ascent and ladder-throwing to the overcoming of the very idea), the necessary inefficacy of efforts to produce a science of the 'deep structure' of language. What Frege saw, and Wittgenstein saw more clearly, is what apparently eludes Chomskians: roughly, the very point laid out in Wittgenstein's name by Kripke, in the epigraph with which I opened this chapter.

Oskari Kuusela¹⁵ argues against those (including those 'Wittgensteinians' who think that the essence of language is to be governed/structured by rules)¹⁶ who would seek to find it a deep truth that language allegedly has something worth calling a deep structure, as follows:

It is not a *truth* that language has a structure constituted by grammatical rules, though one may, for particular purposes, describe it as having such a structure. . . . It is not [for Wittgenstein] that the structure of language is to be found on the surface of language rather than beneath it. Rather, the idea of a structure is to be recognized as a particular picture of language, and descriptions of language as possessing a structure constituted by rules are to be identified as employing a particular mode of presenting language.

"The structure of language," far from being something intelligibly seekable, is at best a constructed product of one's investigation (cf. PI 130–2) or a method for undertaking such an investigation.¹⁷

It might be said that this is true of science too; it gives us a system of principles, etc., and calls it a theory. It in some sense produces what it claims to uncover, too.¹⁸ But the sense in which a scientific paradigm, in Kuhn's sense, does this, is far more limited.¹⁹ For instance: The paradigm doesn't intrude into changing the reality it aims to facilitate the 'capture' of. Whereas a theory of language is seeking to capture something that responds to such efforts, and that is *formed* in part by our relation to it and our reflection on it. "The structure of language" is in that sense a moving target, always moving out of reach of theorists' graspings.²⁰

Chomskians think that by limning syntax, they can limn or 'speak' the very form of language itself. Such an ambition is self-defeating, as I have described. Syntax alone doesn't amount to language; meaning, use are *essential*, if what one touches is to be language, and not just a fragment or aspect of it. This is not to identify a deep structure of language, not even one on its surface: it is to indicate the nature of a project of investigating the nature of language (A paradigm example of such an investigation is: (The entire progress of) *Philosophical Investigations*). It is not clear in fact

that the category of ‘syntax alone’ makes sense, even. Is something even ‘syntax’ which is purely uninterpreted ‘symbols’? To be even *syntax* of a *language*, what is required is meaningful units applied to meaningful ends. Dividing syntax from semantics and pragmatics is in the end *not possible*. This is one deep lesson of the progress of *Philosophical Investigations*. This is what is so fatally paradoxical about the Chomskian project. That, as we might risk putting it: it fails in the end to concern *language*, at all . . .

We turn now to Kripke’s ‘Wittgensteinian paradox,’ which, far from raising problems for Chomsky’s theory (which, we have seen, has quite enough problems already), I will argue cannot itself get off the ground. ‘Cannot’ be as much as formulated.²¹

NOTES

1. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990.
2. *Inquiry* 47 (3), 2004, p.222.
3. See for instance <http://paginaspersonales.deusto.es/abaitua/konzeptu/nlp/kripke.htm>, which includes references to Chomsky’s main response(s) to ‘Kripkenstein’ (and offers Kenny Huen’s interesting response to those).
4. “Explaining language use,” in *New Horizons in the Study of Language and Mind* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p.45 (original article 1992).
5. “Language as a Natural Object,” in *Ibid.* (Original article 1994; pp.26–27. The nested quote is from pp.102–3 of Chomsky’s own *Syntactic Structures* (The Hague: Mouton, 1957)!). One can find other intriguingly pro-Wittgenstein moments scattered through Chomsky’s corpus: e.g., on p.45 of *Reflections on Language* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975). Thanks to John Collins for pointing this out to me.
6. I am presupposing here that a genuinely Wittgensteinian approach is radically context-sensitive, *à la* Travis, Hertzberg, Cavell, some Searle, etc., and not crudely semantically rule-governed, *à la* Hacker, Malcolm, the early Winch, Roy Harris, etc. I presuppose also that Wittgenstein does not believe in a Hackerian ‘autonomy of grammar’ thesis. ‘Language-games’ ought not to be read as isolated units, and (and this is crucial) ‘grammar’ as a body of rules in such ‘games’ does not have any philosophical ‘authority’ over speakers. The absence of any ‘autonomy of grammar’ thesis is also conducive to latter-day Chomskians who are in some cases very sympathetic to Travis, etc. Use, meaning, facts about the world: they all enter into anything *actually* amounting to (what Wittgensteinians might rightly call) ‘grammar,’ which is always a dynamic work-in-progress.
- It should be noted that there is a risk that the language-game analogy doesn’t adequately *capture* that dynamism. (For an effort to do so somewhat better, see Part 1 of my *Applying Wittgenstein* (London: Continuum, 2007; edited by Laura Cook).) The fluidity of ordinary discourse is ill-served by the typical rigidity of game-structures. (Thanks to Rod Watson for reminding me of this point.)
7. On this, see Chomsky’s major reviews of Skinner’s books (Thanks to John Collins for pointing me toward these in this connection). In those reviews, Chomsky sees our ordinary language as determined by and partially determining our understanding of one another; and he shows that Skinner’s jargonistic redefinition of terms of our ordinary language oversimplifies rather than sophisticates that understanding (and in no way constitutes a scientific endeavour). In this particular respect, Chomsky’s line of thinking is very like my general line of thinking in *Wittgenstein among the Sciences* (ed.

Simon Summers, Farnham: Ashgate, 2012). Like Chomsky (and like Summers) I think that most 'human sciences' are pseudo-sciences.

8. Why are languages then inter-translatable, it might be asked? The question is itself to a large extent a misunderstanding. Insofar as the question makes sense, what I would suggest is that the answer is not that they have in common enough of a deep syntactic structure that could be otherwise, but because they encode basic features of human being which are mostly in common. In other words: the things in grammar, in human language, that are the same, may come *from our deepest shared preoccupations*. And these shared preoccupations / basic features of human beings probably include, I would suggest (following Rod Watson and others), paired social *actions* such as questions and answers, etc., which seem pretty universal. (Exceptions, where these features are not held in common, may include the apparently anomalous features of Piraha; and also cases such as the Moving Time model of time being worked out differently in Aymara from in most other languages—see Vyvyan Evans's fascinating discussion of the latter, in his *The Structure of Time: Language, Meaning, and Temporal Cognition* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2003), for detail.)

9. A fuller investigation here would work through Wittgenstein's own remarks about "what language really is," at *PI* 65ff. For my take on these remarks, see the second part of my "How and How Not to Write on a Legendary Philosopher," in *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 35: 3 (September 2005).

10. Cf. the Introduction to Crary and my *The New Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 2000). See also Diamond's "Throwing away the ladder" in her *The Realistic Spirit* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1991). She shows at the end of that chapter how the ambition of producing a science of logic is shown already by the *Tractatus* to be an absurd one. I am suggesting a reason for thinking that the same is true of the Chomskian effort to produce a science of language. In order to do so, one would have to stand outside language—in the way that the *Tractatus* already undermines the idea of standing outside (logic).

11. See *TLP* 4.114–4.121.

12. The negative consequences of this for Chomsky's ambition are detailed in the critiques of him by Lakoff and Johnson: see their *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003 (1980)) and *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

13. In this connection, cf. the work of Stanley Cavell.

14. It might be retorted that this is in some sense true of physics, etc., too. And of course that is true—in *some* sense. But in a much more limited sense. The chief such limitation on the analogy is this: that in physics, there is no close parallel to the sense in which we *inhabit* language (and it inhabits us). Language is formed by and through us (we saturate it (and vice versa)) in a way that physical matter simply isn't. (It might be asked whether the rampant metaphoricity of my writing in this chapter is expressive of a weakness, a lack of rigour in what I am doing, at least compared to the figure / the tradition that I am daring to criticize. I would respond that it is not. Rather, it's almost certainly unavoidable. For what we are dealing with here is the 'limits' (sic.) of both language and the project of limning language. There could only be an escape from metaphor into science hereabouts if the project of describing and explaining 'the structure of language' as if from the outside *were* a genuinely well-founded one.)

15. At p. 231 of his *The Struggle Against Dogmatism: Wittgenstein and the Concept of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

16. Including, 'ironically,' Peter Hacker—who (mistakenly) takes himself to be a fervent *opponent* of Chomsky.

17. Compare here the early pages of my argument with Simon Summers in the interview that rounds out our *Wittgenstein among the Sciences*, wherein I make a concrete suggestion concerning how to think of the way in which we find language to have a structure.

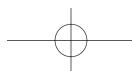
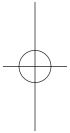


18. And certainly I agree that sometimes what are in effect quasi-scientific theories are not recognized as such: I would say this of Hacker's system, for instance. Cf. n.16, above.

19. I speak of Kuhn here because it is his philosophy of science that in my view best understands the nature of (real) science—see my *Wittgenstein among the Sciences*, Part I.

20. For more on this, see also n.14, above, and also the conclusion of my forthcoming paper co-authored with Tom Greaves on the nature of environmental value, "Where Values Reside."

21. Thanks to Oskari Kuusela and Angus Ross for helpful readings of this chapter. Thanks also to Jessica Woolley, from whom I have borrowed the formulations above which analogize language to the water: language is the sea *we* swim in. . . . This chapter is a kind of 'sequel' to my paper "How I learned to love and hate Noam Chomsky," in *Philosophical Writings* (15 & 16 (2000/1), 23–48), and a partial discharging of a promissory note issued in the interview referred to in n.17, above.



DRAFT

FOUR

Kripke's Rule-Following Paradox— and Kripke's Conjuring Trick

(Note: This chapter in its original form was co-authored with Wes Sharrock.)

"This was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with a rule. The answer was: if everything can be made out to accord with the rule, then it can also be made out to conflict with it. And so there would be neither accord nor conflict here. // *It can be seen that there is a misunderstanding here* from the mere fact that in the course of our argument we give one interpretation after another; as if each one contented us at least for a moment, until we thought of yet another standing behind it. What this shows is that there is a way of grasping a rule which is not an interpretation, but which is exhibited in what we call "obeying the rule" and "going against it" in actual cases." —Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* 201.¹ (Emphasis added.)

So far, we have been considering chiefly famous paradoxes that the history of logic and of philosophy has thrown up (Russell's Paradox, and the paradoxes of time-travel) to show how a Wittgensteinian way with them can perhaps do away with them, and I have *raised* (broadly Wittgensteinian) paradoxes (for Chomskian theory, and for the very idea of time-travel) of my own, that I think are not overcomeable. In this chapter and the next, we switch attention to an alleged paradox found within Wittgenstein's *own* work. Kripke's thinking on Wittgenstein as allegedly a paradox-monger springs of course from the very wording of the famous section at the heart of the controversy, *PI* 201: "This was our *paradox* . . ." (Though the term "was" in fact already offers the attentive reader a clue to how Wittgenstein takes himself to be able to dissolve, or even already to have dissolved, the paradox . . .).²

This chapter concerns, then, the ‘constitutive’ paradox that Kripke was struck by when he read Wittgenstein’s ‘rule-following considerations.’ I aim to undermine that paradox systematically, by casting doubt, *via* Wittgenstein’s own form of philosophical thinking, on the possibility of expressing ‘it.’ I suggest that Kripke’s ‘conjuring trick’ was effected before we even noticed that the prestidigitation had begun; but that, by unveiling its secret in the cold light of day, one can potentially deprive *his* paradox of lasting attractiveness, entirely.

Many of those who want to resist Kripke’s interpretations, arguments, or conclusions have failed to place the problem with these far enough back. Even those, such as for instance McDowell or Boghossian, who have most effectively or brilliantly undercut Kripke’s Wittgenstein, have not, in my view, been sufficiently . . . *skeptical* of Kripkean skepticism. Almost all of Kripke’s readers have allowed that the problem which Kripke tries to delineate can at least in some sense be delineated. It is that presupposition which I challenge. I believe that Kripke has taken in most of even his more ‘skeptical’ readers, at least to the extent of apparently presenting a genuine philosophical problem, a real and novel challenge. I believe that so many have been taken in at least to this extent because, even when some incoherence has been detected in Kripke, it has not been noted quite how very early in Kripke’s presentation that incoherence begins.

It is this deficit in the large ‘literature’ on Kripke’s Wittgenstein which I aim to correct. I will shortly explain how.

But first, a preliminary question or two. Why is it so important to get Wittgenstein right, hereabouts? Why is it so important to show that Kripke is wrong? Why care about the precise details of how to understand what is philosophically most apposite to say concerning perhaps ‘recondite’ matters of rules, meaning, understanding and skepticism?

Because I think that these questions are not quite so recondite. They more or less dominated Wittgenstein scholarship for a generation, until relatively recently, and not without reason. ‘Kripkenstein’ still attracts great interest and an ongoing stream of publications. And the issue here is at the heart not only of Wittgenstein’s philosophy and of Kripke’s thinking, but also (as the chapter to follow makes clear) of much more besides.

Kripke’s ‘skeptic’ threatens our understanding (of Wittgenstein, and *simpliciter*). His novel brand of ‘skepticism’ would create a philosophical revolution. And if Wittgenstein is in fact the true underlying promoter of such a revolution, if Wittgenstein is the purveyor of a drastic novel paradox, then a book entitled *A Wittgensteinian Way with Paradoxes* can hardly ignore it.

I think it vital, therefore, to show just how fundamentally Kripke’s ‘challenge’ fails. Kripke’s Wittgenstein’s ‘rule-following paradox’ has cast a long shadow. This chapter aims to use Wittgenstein’s way with philoso-

phers' paradoxes, to help you dissolve it back into ordinary language. That is: to dissolve it away.

INTRODUCTORY

"The decisive movement in the conjuring trick has been made, and it was the very one we thought quite innocent." —Wittgenstein, *PI* 308

In *On Certainty*,³ Wittgenstein advises questioning the intelligibility of philosophical skepticism, refusing 'the skeptic's'⁴ attempt to impose an insatiable onus of justification upon us, and subjecting 'the skeptic's' supposed doubts to searching interrogation. More precisely, Wittgenstein encourages us to wonder whether anyone *need* ever take the relevant forms of words we sometimes find ourselves inclined towards uttering to be genuinely and ultimately attractive, whether those forms of words can ever actually satisfy us; whether, in short, there can be, even temporarily, 'positions' worth calling 'skepticism(s)' which could satisfy our real needs: linguistic, epistemic, semantic, or pragmatic. Whether skeptical paradoxes can ever *matter* to us.

The prevalent style of response to 'the skeptic'⁵ tends to involve attempting to rebut or answer the latter's challenges, but such efforts are, I want to suggest to you, both futile and unnecessary. The fact that we humans, and we philosophers, cannot satisfy 'the skeptic's' apparent demand for justification does not put us at any epistemic disadvantage, and certainly does not mean that we are therefore bereft of justification for what we do.⁶ 'The skeptic's' contention that I cannot justify *X* is correct only in a superficial way, and it is misguided to suppose that this point exposes the dubiety or insecurity of the relevant practices. Our practices do not—not even 'ultimately'—rest upon, and are not founded in, an imaginary quite general justification (and justification tends, after all, to be usefully described (for 'prophylactical' purposes) as something which takes place 'only' within one practice or another.). The point then is this: 'The skeptic's' challenge is not really a *challenge*. 'It' offers *only* purported doubts, baseless pretences of disbelief, not authentic and substantiated queries, and does not, therefore, deserve to be offered justifications or anything remotely resembling them, in response. Or this, at any rate, is what I shall endeavour to substantiate in what follows; this is what I shall try to persuade those who (through feeling strongly the attractions of the words of skepticism, or of the dialogue or dialectic with and against it) imagine themselves to be imagining otherwise.

But I am not making the case in general terms. I do not need to; my target is more specific. Even if what I have said thus far in this section is somehow wrong, as concerns ordinary Cartesian, etc., skepticism (as mostly Wittgenstein's target was in *On Certainty*), it is, I shall suggest,

right as concerns ‘Kantian’ skepticism: ‘rule-skepticism’ or ‘constitutive skepticism.’ Skepticism concerning the meaning of language itself. The ‘skepticism’ promoted by Kripke in Wittgenstein’s name.

Thanks to Saul Kripke, skepticism in the philosophy of language (and certain associated or implied forms of ‘Anti-Realism’) has been given a renewed period of vitality, though Kripke’s attempt to extract a ‘skeptical paradox’ from *PI* fundamentally does nothing to change the situation outlined above (in fact, as already mentioned: Kripke’s argument suffers from the situation above *whether or not* one agrees that conventional epistemic skepticism does).⁷

Kripke himself is perfectly ready—acting as the surrogate of an imagined skeptic—to indulge ‘the skeptic’s’ purported challenges, to look for a general justification for our practices of rule-following and meaning-attribution, and, failing to find any, to conclude that ‘the skeptic’s’ challenges are unanswerable. I, for my part, cannot presuppose the intelligibility of ‘the skeptic’s’ arguments, do not accept that these arguments do in fact ever satisfy the person entertaining them or purportedly putting them forward as accurate representations of ‘what [they] want to say,’ and, most importantly, regard Kripke’s patent difficulties in giving voice to ‘the skeptic’s’ purported challenges as much more than trivial or provisional ones.⁸ This last point will turn out indeed to be of *fundamental* importance, for it is my overriding contention that ‘the skeptic’s’ arguments are at very best ineffable. And this word “ineffable” is to be read *à la* Cora Diamond and company. That is, ‘the skeptic’s’ inability to say what s/he wants to is not correctible, for ‘the skeptic’ does not gesture at an ineffable truth—rather, ‘the skeptic’s’ words come away from his/her intent in using those words, until eventually s/he is (one would hope) persuaded that there is no point in uttering those words in the first place; or, at least, any more.

I will seek to demonstrate my contention by highlighting the clash between meaning skepticism and the scenarios that appear to give it form. In particular, I will analyze in detail the way in which this clash is absolutely inevitable in and from the very first moves in the dialectic of Kripke’s argument.

KRIPKE’S OPENING MOVEMENTS

“Now suppose I encounter a bizarre sceptic. This sceptic questions my certainty Perhaps, he suggests, as I used the term ‘plus’ in the past, the answer I intended for ‘68 + 57’ should have been ‘5’! Of course the sceptic’s suggestion is obviously insane. My initial response to such a suggestion might be that the challenger should go back to school and learn to add. Let the challenger, however, continue” —Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, p.8.

Let us see how 'the skeptic's' purported doubt that "as I have used the term 'plus' in the past, the answer I intended for '68 + 57' should have been '5'" (which would be the result given, so Kripke tells us, if I were actually computing the 'quus' function rather than the 'plus' function) can be rightly be said to be without grounds.

The imagined challenger's suggestion is baseless because it can be shown to be entirely unevicenced and unexplained, and thus *empty*. It does not involve the proposal that there is some system of arithmetical operation that I *actually* have or even could have in which 68 plus 57 does equal 5.⁹ The addition of 68 and 57 is not being *seriously* proposed as a sum to which the imagined 'quus' function really applies. (It would be serious if something like a new mathematical system were being proposed, but it is not), for 'the challenger' is making no definite assertion that the result in this case should actually be five, but is only offering the quite indefinite contention that (perhaps) at *some* point in the process of addition I should . . . what, exactly? $68 + 57 = 5$ is not any kind of proposal, but a mere placeholder, an 'as it were' example only, to represent some numbers which, of course, the challenger cannot specify directly. So: Why let the challenger continue?

The imagined challenge does not, then, involve any definite assertion such as might be specifically gainsaid; which means, of course, and all-too-conveniently for Kripke, that there can be no specific remark which I can make to counter it; but this should be treated as a deficiency of the would-be challenge, not as manifesting any failure on our part. 'The challenger's' challenge at this stage is, then, that I cannot rule out a certain imagined possibility as to what I might do or might have done if, in the past, I had done something that I did not in fact do. I cannot rule out the possibility that I might have . . . what, exactly?

'The skeptic' raises his question, if such it is, not with respect to this or that sum, nor with respect to some large but doable collection of sums, but with respect to no sum in particular, with respect to *some sum that I have not previously done*. What basis, he asks, *excluding* all arithmetical grounds for asserting that 125 is the correct answer to $68 + 57$, do I have for asserting that 125 is the correct answer?

It is part of Kripke's strategy to insulate the skeptical 'challenges' from all possible evidential grounds by treating 'the skeptic's' questions as 'metalinguistic,' thereby quite calculatingly excluding the arithmetical basis for asserting the correctness of a certain answer to a sum, or of invoking the stark difference which is apparent at the moment of reading between the 'plus' function and the 'quus' function, both in their formulation as abstract functions and in their illustration. The quus function, with its injunction to sum everything over a certain number to "5," certainly does not at all closely resemble the operation of addition, and the equations " $68 + 57 = 125$ " and " $68 + 57 = 5$ " are certainly not equivalent. (Further, Kripke is, nominally at least, not at this point challenging our

current arithmetical practices and uses of words; and it actually cannot, therefore, *currently* be denied that these differences are apparent, actual, substantial differences.) In the face of these patent, glaring differences, Kripke wants to ask: What grounds do we have for thinking we are following a ‘plus’ and not a ‘quus’ function? He wants to ask this, *despite* the fact that the ‘quus’ function *does not*, as just explained, closely resemble the ‘plus’ function, with the latter being something entirely familiar to us, normally unproblematically presumed by us, while the former is something utterly alien.¹⁰

YOU DON’T ALWAYS GET WHAT YOU WANT

“The more narrowly we examine actual language, the sharper becomes the conflict between it and our requirement.” —Wittgenstein, *PI* 107.

Is what I have been discussing in the above section, though, the ‘skeptical challenge’ that Kripke is attempting to articulate? Kripke is seeking to work his way toward the conclusion that the notion of consistency in addition (or in the use of words in general) is without content, that there is no contentful way of *saying*, still less of ‘guaranteeing,’ in advance of doing some sum (or of using some word), that the way in which one does the sum or uses the word is consistent with the rule. Kripke, by formulating the issue with respect to what one might have done in the past,¹¹ makes it very tempting to say that his skepticism is as to whether there is any content to the notion of consistency between past and present practice; but, of course, that cannot be allowed as the formulation, for, as I shall detail, ‘the challenger’s’ argument in practice evades comparison with actual past *practice*—it is about ‘past practice’ only in a very ‘particular’ (and arguably purely notional) sense.

Does the notion of ‘quus’ assist ‘the skeptical challenger’ in saying just what, exactly, the challenge amounts to? It is, I suggest, both an indispensable (rhetorically and ‘logically’¹²) but also—ironically—a useless notion; for it appeals to, depends upon, the very notions of consistency and inconsistency that are (at least supposedly) up for head-on challenge! Let me explain:

The argument from ‘quus’ is that there is allegedly some arithmetical function which is (exactly like) addition up to a point, but which specifically differs from it; one which yields, for all the sums that someone has done, the results which (regular) addition yields, and which may, as I go on talking and acting, continue to yield the results of (regular) addition, but which might at some point come into play to yield results other than that which I would now, at this moment, regard as the correct ones.¹³ Again, of course, this is not a substantive proposal, to the effect that there *is* such a function, which has certain determinate resemblances to, and

differences from, arithmetic as we, and 'the skeptic,' do it; for, as before, the apparent viability of 'the skeptic's' challenge tacitly *requires* that there be no firm proposal in place. Any actual proposal can be tested and found wanting. " $68 + 57 = 5$ " is just a dummy 'proposal,' as would be any 'example' that Kripke replaced it with. That is: The stating of particular arithmetical properties could only be on pain of exposing 'the skeptic's' argument to the test of seeing what I actually did do or will do at the particular juncture in the series of additions nominated as the point of departure between 'plus' and 'quus.'

Thus it may *look* as though 'the skeptic's' challenge asserts this: "*One cannot rule out the possibility that though I think I am proceeding according to the function 'plus' I may nonetheless be proceeding according to some different function, 'quus.'* Since I cannot rule this out, I cannot produce decisive evidence that I am doing plus and not 'quus.'" However, the challenge is *actually* this: "*One cannot rule out the possibility that, however many sums I do, and however extensively they conform to the pattern of regular addition, nevertheless, for some sums, amongst those I have not yet done, I shall (or rather: I should correctly (I might not, if I am very drunk, or in an LSD frenzy, or what-have-you)) respond to them in a way very different from (regular) addition.*" The actual challenge, then, is a challenge to provide a determinate way of countering an indeterminate suggestion, namely, that in some vague sense I might be following some other arithmetical function than addition. The only characteristics with which that alternative function is endowed are those of resembling (regular) addition for all cases of addition hitherto encountered, but differing in ways which no one can specify because:

- (a) nobody is seriously proposing that such a function, coherently definable, exists, and that 'quus' is it;¹⁴ and
- (b) its only characteristic is that if it did exist no one can say in just what respects it does/would differ from addition, save that the point of departure could be manifested only by sums which I have not yet done.¹⁵

Kripke *can't* example what he means (—this is a grammatical remark). " $68 + 57$ " is, of course, an example of arithmetic; specifically, of 'plus' in operation.¹⁶ This is a sum which adds up to 125 and not to 5. If 'quus' *did* require that I answer " 5 " and not " 125 " to this addition sum then that would be evidence that I am following plus and not quus. Except, of course, that 'quus' is (practically) indiscernible from 'plus' for all the sums I have so far done,¹⁷ in that 'plus' and 'quus' coincide over vast tracts of addition. The example of having " $68 + 57$ " add up to 125 and 5 is 'only illustrative': *if there were* some function 'quus' which related to 'plus' in the required way, then it would be entirely coincident with 'plus' over vast tracts of addition. When it did differ, the differences between it and (our regular) addition would be as sharp and stark as if it

were the case that one were to answer “5,” not “125,” to the addition sum “68 + 57.”

Someone might object here that I am flatly contradicted by the evidence of Kripke’s text, in which the ‘quus’ function appears to be quite clearly stated/defined (x quus $y = x$ plus y if $x, y < 57$, and otherwise $= 5^{18}$); but this is not so, for my concern is with the use which must be made by an expositor of rule-skepticism of such a statement. My concern at this point is not with establishing precisely how little Kripke’s statement resembles a properly formed mathematical function but rather with the *status* of such a formulation as his. My question might be put thus: does this formulation comprise a serious proposal or merely an item literally of would-be stage-setting, an arithmetical ‘Potemkin village’?

Let us continue the line of objection a moment longer, in order to clarify and sharpen the point here: Couldn’t Kripke be saying that ‘quus’ is the function people apply? But: what basis could he have for asserting this? If he is asserting this, then it is easy enough to give the sum (e.g.) “68 + 57” to people who have not done it before and see whether they answer with “125” or “5”. It is only the fact that the ‘quus’ function ‘sketched’ in the opening pages of his book is *not* advanced as a serious proposal which makes Kripke’s a skeptical argument, for if it were advanced as a determinate suggestion about what people could do, then, once more, we could check it out.¹⁹ What is essential to the formulation and ‘employment’ by Kripke of ‘quus’ is, however, that it is not put forward as a serious proposal in its own right, but merely as a conceivable but *imagined* instance of rule-following (or otherwise)—so, of course the skeptical challenge which it poses would not be answered by checking what people did, and finding that they answered “125” and not “5”. For that would not rule out ‘the skeptical point,’ which is not that *there is* a ‘quus’ function as ‘specified,’ but that there might be some function from among any number of arbitrarily conceivable ones which would differ from our addition in the same perverse-seeming way that “68 + 57” equaling 5 does. Kripke himself can have no reason for thinking that the quus function, as specified, *really is* the function he or I are following,²⁰ rather than any one of the other, arbitrarily conceivable functions or quasi-functions that could have been conjured out of thin air for use in illustration.

It should be clear, then, that were Kripke to attach himself to the ‘quus’ function as specified in the early pages of *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* as a serious proposal, he would thereby liquidate the ‘skeptical’ status of his discussion; for he would have to substantiate the falseness of our supposition by demonstrating the correctness of his proposal, rather than merely deploying it as a means of casting doubt on our suppositions without having to back up his own contentions. Kripke’s ‘skeptic’ is deeply traditional in the sense of purportedly needing to argue nothing stronger than ‘it is not logically impossible’ that (in this

case) we are following a 'quus' not a 'plus' function, to achieve the objective of apparently shifting on to us the burden of proof. Arguing that there *is* a quus function and that we *are* following it would be an altogether different and vastly more problematic (because, ultimately, straightforwardly refutable) project. For you would have to get to the point of understanding what *the* quus function is. But Kripke's dummy quus function is not the 'real' quus function. We never arrive at the real thing. That $68 + 57 = 5$ we never take seriously. Yet that there could be some function *like* the quus function that generates that sum is supposed to worry us. However: what that function is, we are never told and never can be told (for each time we were told it we would not take what we were told seriously).

The difficulties compound. One might perhaps say: *if the argument for 'quus' were conceded*, then addition would not exist. People were always and are only doing *quaddition*, in which case it is a nonsense to talk about a function 'quus' which differs from 'plus' since the two are names for one and the same function: plus and quus are identical. However, one can then ask what has been gained, for, it now starts to seem as if perhaps the *only real* difference between them is in the (change of) name. (Perhaps it is emerging more clearly now why, at the start of this chapter, I emphasized that there are no words, no sentences, which will end up satisfying the would-be entertainer of skepticism, that s/he will not find a way of expressing what s/he wants to, and will be left frustrated at the 'constraints' imposed upon us by our language—as if 'behind' our language one could think or gesture at the 'pure truth' of skepticism.) Thus: the purported point of 'quus' just cannot be stably, coherently stated.

'The skeptic' cannot of course settle for the only real difference between the two functions being a nominal one, i.e., the (change of) name; because the idea of there being a difference, albeit (currently) indiscernible, between 'plus' and 'quus' is essential to Kripke's motivation for invoking the notion of 'quus' in the first place—for the whole challenge which the introduction of 'quus' seeks to communicate is that we are unable to substantiate that we are doing 'plus' because we cannot rule out the possibility that we might equally well be doing 'quus.' It is (purportedly) much less than certain, therefore, that we are following 'plus.' We are not allowed to eliminate that alternative possibility through pointing to what we are doing, since everything that we can demonstrably identify counts just as much for the alternative possibility, since 'quus' can parallel—overlap with, be identical to—addition in every case one can adduce. Hence, our inability to eliminate the possibility that we are doing 'quus' could (only) seem significant if there were enough of a difference between 'plus' and 'quus' to matter. If plus were the same as quus in every case then there would of course be no sense in talking about 'quus' as an *alternative* possibility. If there were no purported difference between, at the least, what I think²¹ 'plus' is and what 'quus' is

then, of course, there is no other possibility (than that I am doing what I think I am doing—namely, adding) to be ruled out, and the sense of there being a challenge evaporates.

‘The skeptic,’ it now emerges, must maintain no less than three quite inconsistent things—concealing their inconsistency to a degree by depending on them at different points in the argument:

((A)) that there is no difference between plus and quus (There is no difference up to a point; but the point *never gets specified*; it is an eternally moving target, always about to arrive, never here);

((B)) that there is a definite difference between plus and quus, albeit an (as yet) indiscernible one;

((C)) that there is a difference, and it is discernible—thus the identification of a ‘quus function’; and the $68 + 57 = 5$ example is essential to conveying the idea of how great the difference between ‘plus’ and ‘quus’ could be. But (*contra* ((A))) that example draws upon the notion of a substantial, determinate difference between them—between, presumably, what I think I would come up with if I did a certain sum (‘under the spell’ of ‘plus’ while reflecting on these matters rather than simply practicing arithmetic, perhaps) and what I would (or at least should) actually do when I came to that sum (for the latter, the answer given, would clearly have to be markedly incongruous with our before-the-fact intuitions, as with the “5” *vs.* “125” contrast, to have any philosophical significance).

One obvious way might be thought to remain in which ‘the skeptical challenger’ could parry: by holding that the above does not capture the force of ‘the skeptic’s’ challenge, which is to *the very idea* of consistency. Which is, of course, true, in intent at least, for the elaboration of Kripke’s argument holds that the idea of consistency (and therefore, conjointly, of inconsistency) in doing addition and in the use of words in general is ‘groundless.’ Well indeed, in an important sense it is non-grounded; but that does not mean that it is therefore or thereby thrown into any doubt.

In any case, challenging the very idea of consistency yields the kind of massive and immediate incoherence that I have already noted (and will note in relation to further aspects of the skeptical case)—for the way in which the ‘quus’ argument is brought in precisely presupposes the idea of consistency, presupposes that the pattern of ‘quus’ is in some important respects inconsistent with the pattern of ‘plus,’ that (up to some point which I have not yet reached) I proceed according to both ‘plus’ and ‘quus’ because, to that point, they are *consistent* with each other,²² and that beyond that point, at least for some of the argument (!), they are different from each other, their answers are inconsistent, and would/could differ as drastically as “5” and “125” as answers to the same sum.

LEAVING EVERYTHING AS IT IS

"With cheerful indifference [O.K.] Bouwsma would say to a Kripkean sceptic: forget it! Your doubt makes no difference." —Hacking, "On Kripke's and Goodman's Uses of 'Grue,'" p.292.

The root difficulty in attempting to state 'the skeptic's' position is I think becoming more apparent. In order to state an argument worth calling 'the skeptic's' argument, it is necessarily one which must be presented as confronting the way one thinks things are. Things are not, perhaps, the way one conceives them as being. They might be different than they seem. But how might they be different—how would it be 'if 'the skeptic's' thesis were true? The problem is that the only real answer to this which can be given, if one must be given, is actually: just as they are . . . Playing along (with the challenger) for a while, one might ask this: If *per impossibile* 'the skeptic's' thesis that 'there was/is no determinate sense to the rules of arithmetic or indeed of language generally' were true, then what? Then it would always and ever have been the case that there was no determinate sense to rules or words, and that though the way in which I have been proceeding *seems* to proceed according to rules, with consistency between subsequent applications and uses, there would have been no such consistency between them. What, in that case, would be the difference between it seeming in every particular that there is consistency in our additions and in the way I use my/our words—and that there is a contrast between following the rule and deviating from it—and there being no such difference? There would, of course, be no tangible, manifest, detectable, discernible difference between them. Being generous to Kripke's lexicon elsewhere in his *corpus*, one might say: The world in which there is consistency is (insofar as anything that anyone can point to is concerned) exactly the same as one in which there is allegedly none, differing in not one in-principle-identifiable feature.²³

But yet 'the skeptic' needs to be able to *contrast* consistency with inconsistency. And: the definition of "quus" still depends thoroughly, utterly, on consistency! It is, of course, necessary for the 'quus' argument that the *only* evidence for the 'quus' function is exactly the same as the evidence for the 'plus' function: the 'quus' function is something which, for actual instances, gives us the results which I call "results of addition," which I say derive from the application of 'plus,' making the notion of 'quaddition' derivative upon that of addition. 'The skeptic' can only propose the notion of 'quaddition' by *borrowing* our understanding of addition—quaddition is an intelligible function only insofar as it is one which (in terms of the sums I have done) gives us the results of what I have hitherto termed 'addition.' The specification could not, of course, be intelligibly accomplished the other way around²⁴ —for, as noted more than once above, 'the skeptic' is in practice incapable of saying what 'quaddi-

tion' is actually like in respect of its (actual, as opposed to notional) difference from addition (for 'quaddition' was never anything but a notional entity). In short, the only 'evidence' (sic.) there is for 'quaddition' is the fact of addition. I obey rules 'blindly'—as Wittgenstein said.²⁵

Thus this section helps to make clear the overarching purpose of this chapter: to help the fluttering would-be rule-skeptic to come to rest, or to escape the fly jar that they have imagined themselves and all of us interred in. For what is increasingly clear is how Kripkean constitutive skepticism couldn't possibly *matter*. As Hacking remarks that Bouwsma would remark to Kripkenstein: it doesn't make any difference to anything.

ON CONVERSING WITH 'THE SKEPTIC'

"For the skeptic to converse with me at all, I must have a common language. . . . Of course ultimately if the skeptic is right the concepts of meaning and of intending one function rather than another will make no sense. . . . But before I pull the rug out from under our own feet, I begin by speaking as if the notion that at present I mean a certain function by 'plus' is unquestioned and unquestionable." —Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, pp.11–14.

What I have illustrated, then, is that 'the skeptic' is in a vicious double-(at least)-bind: there must be a difference, but there is no difference; s/he explains what the difference is, then denies that the explanation makes sense / means anything. 'The meaning-skeptic' might invoke Kierkegaard in their defence, and say that they pretend that what the other says makes sense, in order gently and effectively to show that it doesn't. But Kierkegaard doesn't, as 'the skeptic' does, notionally wipe out the meaning of *everything* that gets said in the encounter. Kierkegaard (and Wittgenstein) seek to show that *some specific thing* that one wanted to say was delusive, that one was hovering; but this is a quite different form of move from being committed to everything that the other (and oneself!) says being nothing. The move from some to all undercuts the possibility of encounter altogether.

This suggests that there is something extremely odd about debating with 'the meaning skeptic.' Kripke writes:

For the sceptic to converse with me at all we must have a common language. So I am supposing that the sceptic provisionally is not questioning my present usage of the word 'plus'; he agrees that, according to my present usage, '68 + 57' denotes 125. . . . He merely questions whether my present usage agrees with my past usage, whether I am presently conforming to my previous linguistic intentions. . . . He ['the sceptic'] does *not*—at least not initially—deny or doubt that addition is a genuine function . . .²⁶

If 'the skeptic' denies the existence of a common language, and if a common language is the essential precondition of a conversation, then it is not possible to have a conversation with 'the skeptic.' It is not possible for the following reason: If 'the skeptic' is right' (in what s/he *wants* to mean²⁷), then I simply *am not*, however I proceed, whatever argumentative steps Kripke takes, having a conversation with 'the skeptic.' Though Kripke's 'skeptic' does not assert at the very outset the conclusion that we are not entitled to the 'assumption' that any of our words have meaning,²⁸ this is plainly the terminus of the argument, one toward which s/he is always pretty rapidly manoeuvring, not one which is 'incidentally' its outcome. What 'the skeptic' is asserting, implicitly, is not that some of our words have no meaning, whilst others do. The differentiation between our past and present usages is gratuitous to 'the skeptic's' arguments *per se*, and comprises only a *façon de parler* (It is misleading at best to present the matter as though doubt could be focused on some particular expression uttered at some particular time when 'the skeptic's' doubt wants to be about *every* word ever in our mouth and his.). 'The skeptic' does not want really to distinguish between our past and present usages, but is putting forward arguments which ('ultimately') purportedly apply to all of them: there is no fact which establishes what a word means, and hence no basis for saying it means one thing and not another, or assigning it any determinate meaning at all.²⁹ Hence, if the conversation-facilitating gambit is adopted, it can only involve a misleading presentation of 'the skeptic's' argument, setting this out as though it applied only to past usages, when, of course, it is actually applied to past and present (and future) alike.

This of course eventuates in 'the skeptic's' direct self-contradiction (such that s/he is not actually succeeding in saying anything), for, as I have argued elsewhere:

"How can one doubt whether one means plus (*rather than, say, quus*) in the present on grounds of doubt about whether "plus" meant plus in the past. For, if one's present meanings are thrown into doubt, then the doubt one raises (in the present) about the past must also be thrown into doubt. One cannot entertain that one meant quus by "plus" on past occasions unless one knows (or, better, presumes) now the meanings of "plus" and "quus". So I see no way in which present use can be undercut without an undercutting of the very past use with which present use was supposed to be undercut."³⁰

It would be deeply misguided to treat 'the skeptic,' as too many philosophers I think do, as being *able* and ('generously') *willing* to abstain for a while from the flat-out statement of the skeptical 'position,' of comprehensive doubt about the capacity of any word to mean. Does s/he make this concession *to us*? No; leaving our present usages unquestioned conveniences, aids and abets, rather, 'the skeptic.' (After all, "if words do not

have meaning, if they do not mean one thing rather than another," then 'skeptics' cannot say what they (want to) mean, such as this, either.) And this dynamic is clearly at work in the situation as described above.

It is the *'Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus'*³¹ which contains the best advice to 'the skeptic' — that 'whereof' we cannot speak, 'thereof' we cannot speak, and we ought not to continue endlessly to keep (describing ourselves as) trying to. 'The skeptic' supposes that s/he has something to say, which is that no one can have anything to say—including presumably 'the skeptic.' Or are the words "Words have no determinate meanings" somehow exempt from the general ban on meaning, the *only* words which can now legitimately be used?! If we do not suspend Kripke's 'skeptic's' assumption with respect to our discourse, our conversation with 'the skeptic,' then, of course, it is 'the skeptic' who cannot continue, for it is s/he, not we, who must be the first to abandon dependence upon the 'assumption' of a common language. If I do not 'assume' that there is a common language, but rather, and unselfishly and generously, agree to attempt to adopt, from the beginning, Kripke's 'skeptic's' position on this matter for the sake of argument, then still 'the skeptic' is really no better off, for now I have no reason to suppose that 'the skeptic's' words have any more meaning than ours 'allegedly' do, that 'the skeptic' is asserting or denying anything definite. To paraphrase Kripke: who is to say what the words "Words cannot have determinate meaning" might mean in 'the skeptic's' mouth; or if they mean anything at all (Perhaps they mean (e.g.,) what I (think we) mean by " $68 + 57 = 125$ "?! Or: perhaps they mean "Words are normally perfectly meaningful, in use.")? Presumably, I do not myself know what I mean (or even mean anything) when I wonder idly in that way—if that is what I am doing; if I am doing anything? In all of this, of course, *the skeptic is undercutting*, at least as much as our supposedly questionable presupposition, *his own standpoint for framing any skeptical doubts*.

PROVIDING FOR ONESELF

"In giving explanations I already have to use language full-blown (not some sort of preparatory, provisional one)." —Wittgenstein, *PI* para.120

The Kripkean 'skeptic' ties himself and his readers into all sorts of knots. He besets himself and us with paradoxes: actually, these paradoxes are indicators of his having failed to choose how to use his words. He hovers between things that could be intelligibly meant. He flutters and flutters against the glass of the fly bottle, and perhaps we flutter with him. How can rest, peace, be best and most stably achieved, in this context?

Some readers may still be inclined to think that in Kripke's text, and the 'literature' it has spawned, there remain to be addressed many questions that make sense—problems to which philosophy must give constructive answers. Let us then focus in on a key misleading element of Kripke's 'skeptics' making of a 'concession' to us, one which is integral to the thought that there may be genuine puzzles here, even if they are 'hard to express,' and one which (once we catch it) may at last facilitate philosophical peace hereabouts. I refer to the presentation of 'the skeptic's' 'concession' as a 'provisional' step: "I am supposing that the skeptic, provisionally, is not questioning my present usage of the word 'plus'; he agrees that, according to my present usage, '68 plus 57' denotes 125."³² This move is supposed merely to facilitate the setting out of the skeptical argument, enabling 'the skeptic'³³ first to cast doubt on our past usages, and then, having obtained argumentative leverage with those, ingenuously to extend them to our present ones, as though this were the upshot of the first part of the argument, rather than simply its full (and, I have argued, incoherent) oblique statement. The truly misleading element is, however, the pretence that this concession is made "provisionally" to get the argument going, as though at some point in its course the 'assumption' that s/he has made is to be withdrawn. It is not. (Precisely as with the 'assumption' of a common language, it would *not make sense* to suppose that this 'provision' that Kripke makes *for himself* could intelligibly be withdrawn.)

And yet: at some point in the argument 'the skeptic' will reveal that *all along* the assumption that any of our words can have determinate meanings was what the skeptical argument has been directed against! An essential 'assumption' of Kripke's argument was just what the argument was directed against! A deep internal tension—a pronounced hovering—indeed (The argument is just the same for present usage as for past usage, as discussed briefly above.)

In sum: There is a difference between saying what 'the skeptic' says and suspending the 'assumption' that there is a common language. For, of course, 'the skeptic' does not suspend—cannot (grammatically) suspend—this assumption at any point in the argument.³⁴ And yet suspending this assumption is exactly what Kripke's 'skeptic' is committed to doing. Things are just the same with Kripke's 'provisionally' not problematizing the present—it is another aspect of just the same difficulty.

Further, to speak of 'conceding' present usage, i.e., to 'concede' the supposition of a common language, itself supposes that 'the skeptic' knows what the difference is between proceeding *as if* there were a common language, and proceeding *without* that 'assumption.' It would therefore be perfectly reasonable—and most 'interesting'—for us not to make the concession but simply rather to invite a defender of skepticism to implement the program that s/he wishes to pursue, and to see how things would then proceed

The difficulty I have in relating to ‘the skeptic’ in the absence of a common language is not like that which I can encounter in a real situation where I lack a common language, as when someone who speaks only English meets someone who speaks only Chinese. In the case of ‘the skeptic,’ s/he seemingly speaks exactly the same language that I do (One might say: Kripke’s book is written mostly in pretty plain English, after all!)—save for the supposed fact that there is purportedly no such thing as ‘the same language.’ Does suspending the ‘assumption’ that there is a common language make any difference to what ‘the skeptic’ says, to how s/he talks? Whilst I offered a moral of the *Tractatus* earlier, in a sense I admit that it would not necessarily be incumbent on ‘the skeptic’ to remain silent. S/he might implement her program by going on garrulously; for, since ‘the skeptic’s’ (and everyone else’s) words have never meant anything, and that has never stopped anyone talking in the past, why should it do so now? Why not just go on spouting nonsense, albeit nonsense that is indifferentiable from our ordinary use of language (i.e., from what is in fact the paradigm of sense!)?

It seems, then, that the actual force of ‘the skeptic’s’ argument, if any, is that there is no discernible difference between talking *as if* there were a shared language, and talking in a shared language *simpliciter*, that the capacity to carry on a conversation does not hinge upon the assertion or denial of the contention that a shared language is available—for the simple truth is that there is no way to say what would be the difference between the case in which there was a shared language, and one in which there was/is not.

But this is a lesson one can learn without all the headaches and *angst* of ‘skepticism’; for I might usefully say, paraphrasing Wittgenstein, that if *everything* looks as if there is linguistic meaning then there *is* linguistic meaning. An analogy with money might help here: It is only slightly tendentious to say that “If it’s used as money then it *is* money. It doesn’t matter whether it’s a cheque written on the side of a cow, or a piece of plastic, or what have you, or even so well forged that no one knows the difference (including, after they have parted with it, the forger); if it works, it’s money!” (And now, I invite the reader to compare the close of *PI* 120.) Even if an individual *knows* that a note they own is forged or that a credit card they have is stolen generally that doesn’t stop them being *able* to use it, especially if they are the only one who knows (If a forged note or coin fools *everyone*, including the forgers, and permanently enters the system of exchange, then to *all* intents and purposes it *is* money! Money is as money does; it is not defined only by a central bank or a government (The old ‘Socialist’ economies knew this; the people of Greece may soon know it, too). One might think that nonsense that seems sensical is definitely still nonsense. But ‘nonsense’ that seems sensical to everyone forever and that works perfectly in our actual language—that is just an empty category . . .) That someone allegedly *believes* that they can

only speak nonsense needn't stop them being able to make perfect sense. As was mentioned in connection with Hacking's take on meaning-skepticism earlier, it seems the only answer I can/need to give to the question, "Grant if you possibly can that 'the skeptic' is right; now, how ought one to respond?" is "Carry on as usual!"³⁵

HIS INTENTIONS

"We get a more radical divergence from Kripke, however, if we suppose that the thrust of Wittgenstein's reflections is to cast doubt on . . . the thesis that whatever a person has in her mind, it is only by virtue of being interpreted in one of various possible ways that it can impose a sorting of extra-mental items into those that accord with it and those that do not." —John McDowell, "Meaning and Intentionality in Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy,"³⁶ p.45.

Kripke's chief idea of how to search for relevant facts *via* which to found meaning involves an inventory of the mental realm, and in particular a search for some *intention*. What is really queer is not the absence of any requisite fact or super-fact, but Kripke's idea of what it would be to follow a rule, and of what might justify one's confidence that one is adding, not quadding. Kripke's notion of learning a rule is that one's past intentions regarding addition should determine a unique answer for indefinitely many new cases.³⁷ This is, indeed, the basis upon which Kripke seeks to shift the issue from an arithmetical one to a 'metalinguistic' one. It is thus Kripke's assumption, from the start, that the idea of 'grasping a rule' requires something over and above our being enabled to take the steps that the rule requires; that if one performs a computation to add 68 to 57 "obtaining, of course, the answer '125' [then] I am [merely?] confident, perhaps after checking my work [how many times?], that '125' is the correct answer. It is correct both in the arithmetical sense that 125 is the sum of 68 and 57, and in the metalinguistic sense that 'plus,' as I intended to use that word in the past, denoted a function which, when applied to the numbers I called '68' and '57,' yields the value 125."³⁸ It is Kripke's way of formulating what is involved in adding, or indeed in learning to add, that exposes the matter to 'the skeptic's' doubt. The admittedly bizarre skeptic challenges thus: that if one is "now so confident that, as I used the symbol '+,' my intention was that '68 + 57' should turn out to denote 125, this cannot be because I explicitly gave myself instructions that 125 is the result of performing the addition in this particular instance. By hypothesis I did no such thing."³⁹

At this point I might reiterate that the notion of 'addition' is already simply being 'reiterated'; though here it is not so much the word that is being reiterated as the idea; 'addition' is already being imagined in a doubled or homuncular fashion; it is being as it were 'put back behind

itself.' That is: To suppose that one could 'give oneself instructions' that, when one added 68 to 75 this would compute at 125, is an absurd caricature of what is involved in adding or in learning to add. Notice Kripke's turn of phrase: "[T]his cannot be because I explicitly gave myself instructions *that* 125 is the result of performing the addition" (emphasis added). It is certainly true that 'by hypothesis' one does no such thing—insofar as 'giving oneself instructions' that certain computations one had not done should have a certain result is no part of the learning or practice of addition. Since the remark about the absence of such a 'mental operation' as giving oneself instructions is attributed to 'the skeptic,' I am presumably meant to understand it not as a truism about addition, but as a reproachful comment—the suggestion is, presumably, how could one learn addition if not by 'giving oneself instructions'?

The absurdity of this 'giving oneself instructions' idea is, I trust, patent. One learns, in learning addition, not the answers to particular sums, but a general procedure of *figuring out*, of working out, the answers of indefinitely many such sums.⁴⁰

The whole point about learning a *rule* or *procedure* is that it does not involve knowing how to go on in an *occurrent* sense; it does not involve having any (or, at least, many) outcomes in mind⁴¹—and, if one does not have an outcome in mind for a particular sum at the time when one learns the rule, then the outcome that one gets cannot be either the same as or different from the outcome that one had in mind! Certainly, one's confidence that one's arithmetical practice is consistent cannot be assured by looking for mental occurrences, such as intending that a certain sum should issue in a certain result. And hence searching one's memory for the occurrence of any such laying down of intentions can give no reassurance—but does this mean that one has no basis for one's confidence, that one should now worriedly wonder whether there is any consistency in one's arithmetical practice? Hardly. And is that only because I have defeated 'meaning-skepticism'? No; it is because *there isn't any such thing as meaning-skepticism to defeat*. There is only the illusion of it: somewhat like the illusion of the standard idea of time-travel.

Our arithmetical practices simply are fine as they are; they need *no* philosophical shoring-up against Kripke.

So: Many philosophers have felt that Kripke correctly identifies a major strand of thinking in Wittgenstein's *PI*, a strand that purportedly finds alarming the absence of a certain kind of 'grounds' which one might have imagined that one needed, in order to be justified in using any given word in a certain determinate way, or in the way which comes most naturally to one. Kripke's 'skeptical challenge' is purportedly one heuristically vivid way of making this point, of dramatizing this strand allegedly in Wittgenstein's own thinking. I have questioned 'from the ground up' whether there is in fact any way whatsoever of making this would-be point vivid. I have done so by means of challenging the notion that any

coherent challenge whatsoever is laid down by Kripke's 'Wittgensteinian skeptic.' It is very true that Wittgenstein brilliantly tunes into and expresses, in the course of the 'dialogue' that runs from *PI* 185-202, an inchoate aspiration toward an abyssal worry, a 'constitutive' or what is sometimes called a 'Kantian' skepticism about meaning, etc. But it is *only* an aspiration, and an inchoate one. Any attempt to systematize it is utterly hopeless. Kripke's effort to state a constitutive skepticism and to draw conclusions from it is utterly without hope. Wittgenstein's interlocutorial worry (in *PI* 198) concerning how it can be that a rule can show me what I have to do is only the form or outline of a worry. The outline cannot be filled in. *Whatever* response one makes to the purported worry commits one to not believing in the worry; one shows, continually, in every practice one engages in, that the worry is without substance. One shows, continually, and unavoidably one's commitment to normativity (See on this the brief discussion toward the close of Chapter 3, above), to rules, to meaning.

Thus the mainstream debate around Kripke's Wittgenstein has been over what the *overall* conclusion immanent in *PI* is, and in particular whether *PI* embraces (or, leaving Wittgenstein-exegesis aside, whether one ought really, philosophically, oneself, to embrace) 'meaning-skepticism,' or whether rather the moral is only that a certain wrong view of what it is to understand a word, or to attach a meaning to it, leads to 'meaning-skepticism.' By contrast, I have gone beyond the latter 'moral,' by means of questioning whether 'meaning-skepticism' has any intelligibility whatsoever. The mainstream debate over Kripke's work finds interesting those questions such as how one is to understand counterfactuals about meaning (e.g., "If she means addition by "plus," then she would have given the answer "125" if asked what "68 + 57" makes"), given that *PI* 138-202 'appears' to make it problematic what the truth of such counterfactuals consists in. By contrast, I have tried to bring out the bizarreness of the first clause in such counterfactuals, the emptiness of the shuffle involved in *any* notion of the meaning of terms 'lying behind' them, given that Kripke simply has no consistent way of satisfying himself or us about how his 'alternative meanings' for such terms ("quaddition") are to be construed, are to be understood. In short, I argue, it is actually not that the premises of meaning skepticism—which Kripke's Wittgenstein suggests lead inexorably to meaning-skepticism—need not be maintained, or are false. Rather the 'premises' of 'meaning-skepticism' turn out not to amount to anything whatsoever (e.g., 'quaddition' does not turn out to be a determinate mathematical function). Neither Kripke nor his supporters nor most of his opponents have succeeded in meaning anything at all by 'meaning-skepticism' (except, at best, as a purely sociological phenomenon). They have not even succeeded in actually describing what 'meaning-skepticism' would be. They have only exhibited and

inhabited a hovering between different (and mutually incompatible) things that they could conceivably succeed in meaning.

In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein tries mightily hard to persuade us away from the idea that understanding or meaning are some kind(s) of mental occurrence or mental state, and to recognize that the words “understand” and “mean” are not the names of episodes or processes, but rather, roughly, stand in for or connote capacities or abilities. Learning to add is a matter of acquiring an ability to do certain kinds of operations, and, as such, I do not acquire evidence of, or confidence in, my ability to do something by introspection, by locating some present or prior mental occurrence which evidenced the possession of that capacity. I acquire evidence of and confidence in my abilities by exercising them, by finding that I can do certain sorts of things, by a record of having successfully done those very things on previous occasions—or, of course, by making determinations as to how the thing to be done stands to what one is confident one can do. I can be confident that I can lift twenty-five-kilogram weights—I have never lifted this weight before, but it is less than weights which I have quite easily lifted. Could I lift one hundred kilograms? I have not tried to lift this weight before either, but I do not know whether I could lift it or not—not just because I have never tried to lift this particular weight before, but because this weight is much greater than any weight I have previously tried to lift. Of course, even my confidence can very definitely be misplaced: the fact, if it is one, that I have lifted one hundred kilograms before can be the basis for my confidence that I can lift *this* weight, here and now, but, of course, I may find that I cannot now do this, that I can no longer lift this weight—age and lack of relevant exercise have now taken their toll.

Kripke’s argument is correct, then, only in the extremely attenuated sense that it correctly supposes that the basis for my confidence that I know how to proceed with adding—and that it is adding, not ‘quadding’ or whatever, that I am doing—does not, of course, derive from having undertaken any self-conscious laying down of the intention that, when I come to add 68 to 57 it will come out as 125. But he fails to draw the proper implication, that this is because such a laying down is in general *immaterial* to the possession of such confidence, and that the absence of such a laying down does not count against the consistency of our practice. After all, to lay down such an intention would not be something I could do in advance of (doing) the sum, it would in effect be *a matter of doing the sum itself*—my confidence that 125 was the correct answer, entirely consistent with everything I have been taught, would normally come from doing the sum correctly (i.e., in just the way one was taught).

In the first instance, of course, our confidence that we can get the answers right comes from authority; our teacher simply tells us that our response is or is not the right answer.⁴² Our confidence about our capacity to get the sum “Take 68, then add 57 to it” right would not normally

derive from the fact that we have done it before, but from the fact (if such it is) that we have been taught arithmetic, such that, until we reach the limits of our abilities, we can do (such) sums, without hesitation, with ease.⁴³

CONCLUSORY

“The ladder must be finally kicked away.” —Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, p.21.

I have intended and endeavoured to test the arguments of ‘the skeptic,’ as voiced by Kripke,⁴⁴ tirelessly, to their complete (self-)destruction—or (simultaneously) to probe what use they can be put to, what sense can be made out of them (Not *quite* zero—though only almost indiscernibly more than that . . .).

We might then sum up by saying that Kripke’s conjuring tricks (some of which one might easily miss, so very early do they enter into his text)—his prestidigitations—aim to create the illusion that the irrefutability of ‘the skeptic’s’ arguments is more than an artefact of their contrivance. But an illusion it is, from the very outset, albeit in certain respects and in certain contexts a very tempting one; until the ladder is, as it must be, kicked away from under it; until it comes crashing down like a house of cards (or, more accurately, of air?); or until, to use a somewhat more gentle image, the rabbits are placed gently back into their hats, into their homes.

Am I a ‘spoilsport,’ spoiling the philosopher’s games? Why has my tone in this piece been at times quite brusque, negative? Why haven’t I been more ‘charitable,’ and patently ‘therapeutic’? We might applaud the conjuror for his skill and dexterity, but we are likely to be less sympathetic if he pretends that he really can do magic. Unfortunately, in philosophy it is all important to unmask the conjuror’s tricks if and when the philosophical conjuror *does* pretend to be able to do magic. We must unmask, rather than allow ourselves to be overly delighted and *taken in* by trickery.⁴⁵ I contend that even many of those who have correctly resisted both Kripke’s interpretation of Wittgenstein and his conclusions about meaning do not show clear evidence of having understood what I have tried to show clearly: that Kripke’s quus ‘thought-experiment’ is simply not well-defined in the first place. That Kripke’s dramas and sleights-of-text (and the urges and compulsions of those who write after him) cannot, consequently, alter in the slightest the humdrum facts about digits—about numbers and our lives with them—and about language-use and human life more generally, that they (merely) *appear* so radically to challenge. It is not possible to be charitable to a nothing that merely

appears to be a something. ‘Something’ about which nothing definite can be said. . . .

The thinking that Kripke wanted to launch is even worse off, if that is possible, than the thinking under consideration and critique in most of the rest of the present work. Can it mean anything at all to worry about whether “addition” really means ‘addition’? We have found it hard to see how one can even get started with such a question. Doubting that one’s hands are real or worrying about how there can be heaps given the apparent ineluctability of the sorites are problematic enough. Seeing how such doubts and worries rarely matter is a key element of dissolving them. But at least the doubt in these cases can straightforwardly seem (at least!) to be stated. It is just that first move, the very stating of the puzzle, that is the conjuring trick that cannot, on even the most basic reflection, be performed, in the case of rule-skepticism. Does “addition” mean ‘addition’? That is not even a question. Our best option is to say that it only looks like one.

EPILOGUE

“[Solipsism] can never be demonstrably refuted, yet in philosophy it has never been used otherwise than as a sceptical sophism, i.e., a pretence. As a serious conviction, on the other hand, it could only be found in a madhouse, and as such it stands in need of a cure rather than a refutation.” — Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*⁴⁶

The last word on Kripke, however, needs perhaps to re-orient one toward what I have hinted at periodically in the body of this Chapter, above, by referring to the *futility* of efforts to refute skepticism, to the *attractiveness* and temptingness of the forms of words used by skeptics, and to the importance of the broadly ‘Cavellian’ project of endeavouring to understand the deep cultural and human reasons for ‘our’ condition, our condition of being subject to influence sometimes from even the most evidently absurd skeptical doctrines, the most doomed would-be paradoxes. Rule-skepticism as a would-be substantive philosophical doctrine fails even to get off the ground in the very slightest. ‘It’ lacks the kind of stability that ideas need in order to be so much as identifiable. It does not even exist. . . . But showing so, and even persuading someone rationally so, does *not* necessarily remove all ‘its’ charms.

I have shown that, the best intentions notwithstanding, there is nothing worth calling genuine conversation with ‘the (rule-)skeptic.’ But that does not of course mean that someone genuinely attracted by Kripke’s words will be effectively (and without residue) persuaded by my words.

Skepticism is in the final analysis a matter not of narrowly intellectual conviction but of *mood*,⁴⁷ albeit often of mood consequent upon a particu-

lar mode(s) of intellectual comportment and of a certain 'over-rational' concentration upon (say) the contents of our minds rather than our embodiment and embeddedness in a world of ground, of fellow actors, and of practices (of getting things done). My entire discussion can only hope to convince someone whose grip on and placement in practices of inter-subjectively comprehensible rule-following is pretty secure. If someone actually is in the grip of a frenzy, or is subject to LSD flashbacks (scenarios gestured at by Kripke), then even our best efforts at cure—cure of the intellectual disease stoked by Kripke—are most unlikely to be effective.

For my own part, I am thankfully subject to such conditions only extremely rarely, at least these days. Perhaps Kripke or some of those impressed by his thinking have the misfortune to be less ontologically and epistemologically secure, as I once was. But what I find irritating or even somewhat repugnant is those who purport to be taking up or at least considering a serious skeptical 'position,' while actually they have *no* doubts, and probably no empathy for what it is like really to have terrifying thoughts along the lines of (for example) "Maybe I don't even know how to use any words properly any more; maybe everything is meaningless; maybe I'm losing my mind" flit across one's mind.⁴⁸

For those who are really in the grip of the kind of thoughts proposed by Kripke, weighty and genuine conversational interaction is going to be an extremely tricky and probably counter-productive enterprise, and so even our best Wittgensteinian efforts at diagnosis and cure are unlikely to be efficacious. While: for those—and I suspect that this class includes virtually all philosophers virtually all the time—who do not know skepticism as other than a sophism, my sometimes polemical or short-tempered tone in this piece is perhaps appropriate. I have hoped in this chapter to coax any readers genuinely tempted by Kripke's writing (but yet far from the terror that is almost inevitably going to attach to really feeling an abyssal absence of meaning) away from his clever trickery and back toward 'the everyday,' as present in and implicated in Wittgenstein's own work. Such coaxing has in the main proceeded by attempting to take seriously Kripke's words (and the 'temptations' they express), and finding that there is just nothing that I can count as doing so. But for those readers and writers who pretend to be impressed by Kripke's (would-be) doubts, but are actually just using those ideas for the purposes of propounding abstract intellectual (e.g., semantical) doctrines or of intellectual gymnastics, I have little respect. Such philosophers need to understand not only that the conjuring trick does not get off the ground, but that—to those who nevertheless *actually feel as if it does*—the matter is too *weighty* (and too much a matter of mood rather than of purely rational conviction) to play philosophical games with.

Thus this chapter dissolves Kripke's paradox-mongering back into the ordinary language and practice(s) from whence it came. I have not offered here a refutation of skepticism, but rather a fragment of a cure for

the impulse toward skepticism, an impulse which is a matter ultimately less of narrowly philosophical than of existential origination and significance. And one reason why this is only a fragment is: that a fully effective cure, insofar as there can be any such thing, likely involves changes in one's life and perhaps the life of one's entire society. So I do not have an unduly rosy picture of the likely effectiveness of my writing here. Cartesian and 'Kantian', etc., impulses⁴⁹ toward Kripkean skepticisms are likely in the end to diminish seriously only if the kinds of changes in 'form of life' which Wittgenstein urged parenthetically but powerfully upon his disciples and readers—upon his (and our) culture—were to be realized. . . .⁵⁰

NOTES

1. New York: MacMillan, 1953, 1958 (posthumous; transl. Anscombe.). Strikingly, tellingly—fatally—Kripke never refers to the second paragraph of this section! (Cf. n.7, below.)

2. (See n.1, above . . .) For a detailed explication, see my "Getting rule-following right: The anticipation in *Philosophical Investigations* of sections 201–2 by section 197–99," in *UEA Papers in Philosophy* 11 (2000), 25–36. Far too many philosophers/exegetes have fixated on 201, to the exclusion of 198; in 198, Wittgenstein is already clear about how to overcome/empty 'the rule-following paradox.'

3. Oxford: Blackwell; New York: Harper, 1969 (posthumous; transl. Anscombe and von Wright). For a fuller consideration of the precise nature of Wittgenstein's engagement with skepticism in *On Certainty*, consult my "The first shall be last . . . The importance of *On Certainty* 501," in Brenner and Moyal-Sharrock (eds), *Readings in Wittgenstein's On Certainty* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

4. I place 'the skeptic' in scare-quotes as a way of recurrently—indeed, perhaps annoyingly (and thus effectively?)—reminding the reader of a point which follows from what will be my main point herein (that 'the rule-skeptic' can have nothing intelligible to say, and cannot therefore be considered to have an authentic position to hold); namely, that in fact no one exists (not even a philosopher) who could accurately be described as *being* a rule-skeptic. (The figure of 'the skeptic' is truly, at least in relation to meaning, only a textual/linguistic figure, even if in some contexts an important one. Thus if I appear to be hostile to 'the skeptic,' this is decidedly not a counterexample to my general claim to be charitable and interested in engaging in dialogue with any philosophical interlocutor interested in helping themselves and others; for 'the (rule-)skeptic' is clearly *not* such a real individual.)

5. Though not the only style. More effective in my view, for instance, is that offered by Cora Diamond in her "Rules: Looking in the Right Place," in Phillips and Winch (eds.), *Wittgenstein: Attention to Particulars* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), where the approach is by way of emphasizing the life, the contexts, in which rules live, and of stressing the distance from that life not only of Kripke's approach but also of that of many of his would-be 'constructive' opponents. See also Diamond's *The Realistic Spirit* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1991) and Peter Winch's criticisms of Kripke in his *Trying to Make Sense* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987). An approach which shares a great deal in common with my own is Sharrock and Button's "Do the Right Thing! Rule Finitism, Rule Scepticism and Rule Following," in *Human Studies* 22, 2–4, 1999, 193–210. (For philosophical background to 'Kripke's Wittgenstein,' see Alexander Bird's 2009 piece, "Kripke," in Christopher Belshaw & Gary Kemp (eds.), *Twelve Modern Philosophers*,

Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, and Bryan Frances's forthcoming "Saul Kripke on Meaning and Linguistic Understanding":

faculty.fordham.edu/bfrances/kripke.doc.)

6. As will become clear, what I am in fact rejecting is not 'the skeptic's' claim that I have no justification, but the suggestion that I need justification; that in the kind of cases 'the skeptic' raises, it is intelligible to ask for any justification where I do not normally give any, or for further justification than I could ordinarily give. (Though see the Epilogue section, below, for a cautionary note.)

7. Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1982; henceforth "Kripke"). I will not spend time establishing the point, made extensively elsewhere, that Kripke's reading has little to do with what is actually in Wittgenstein's text, the purported paradox being attached to *PI* only by the most bizarrely selective reading (e.g., the complete ignoring by Kripke of all but the first three sentences of the crucial section of *PI*, no. 201). See, e.g., A. Collins's paper, "On the Paradox Kripke Finds in Wittgenstein," in *Mid West Studies in Philosophy* 17:1 (1992), pp.74–88; or my own previously published writings on Wittgenstein, Kripke, and Goodman (from whom Kripke in the first instance got his central ideas on this matter).

8. Cf. n.4, above.

9. In the following section, "You Don't Always Get What You Want," I respond to the possible objection (to the argument here) that Kripke allegedly *does* in fact make a serious proposal for a modified arithmetical system.

10. Kripke needs both to give the impression that "quus" requires us to do something different than "plus" does—and not to mean that at all! (This is a version of the general diagnosis that I have already outlined: that there is an unavoidable clash between what Kripke wants to do with his words (i.e., produce an argument for 'meaning-skepticism') and what he finds himself able to do with them (i.e., generate various inchoate and pathetic sketches of scenarios which *cannot* actually be filled out, without him compromising his objectives in offering them). Kripke is hovering, irremediably. The problem here is much the same as the problem facing Frege's attempt to speak of 'logical aliens,' a problem detailed for example in the papers by Cerbone and Crary in Crary and Read (eds.), *The New Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 2000). Kripke's 'quus' idea is no better off than was Frege's 'logical aliens' idea, a hundred years earlier. The vacuity and absurdity of Kripke's project was thus already clearly laid out in advance by Wittgenstein's own complete undermining of Frege in this regard.)

11. See again p.8 of Kripke, also p.12f.; and the sections of the present chapter following this one.

12. I.e., given the 'logic' of the 'Kripktic' argument I am examining here. . . .

13. The notion of 'quus' is invoked to suggest the point that doing addition might not be what I think it is; that I am not able to prove that I am doing addition by pointing to what I have done or am doing, for I could, for all I know, be following a system which would suddenly reveal itself to have properties other than those I had hitherto taken it to have, which I—presumably, though how is anyone to say whether I do or don't?—would not presently take it to have.

14. As so often in trying to take meaning-skeptical arguments seriously, there is a devastating irony available here: If I *can* understand "quus," and if I can understand the notion of a continued 'quusification' of our language (Kripke sketches, in desperate endeavour to buttress his exposition, further terms such as "quum," "quimular," "quame," etc.—see, e.g., p.23, pp.20–21), then what is to stop us from re-interpreting these terms or others used by Kripke as 'plus', etc., were re-interpreted, i.e., *in a quus-like fashion*? E.g., I could reinterpret the numeral "57" in the 'definition' of 'quus' to mean "57 in all contexts except definitions of 'quus,' and otherwise minus 63" ('Who is to say' it doesn't mean this?!). That way, (our definition of) quus would be functionally equivalent for all numbers to plus—here is another way then, one which Kripke can hardly say I am not entitled to, of stopping the skepticism from even getting the

slightest millimeter off the ground. (One could go on; e.g. Why not read “quusification” in a quus-like fasion, such that quusifying terms is actually by our lights doing nothing to them (except when applied to terms *marked* as quus-like)? I leave it to the reader to go on having some knockabout fun through what she can do with these materials, for herself (and cf. Wittgenstein’s *Culture and Value*, p.77 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1980 (Transl. Winch; posthumous))).

15. Recalling here that, as argued earlier ‘quus’ as Kripke initially ‘defines’ it is merely a placeholder.

16. It might be worth noting here that the way in which Kripke and many of his commentators talk of the function ‘plus’ as though it were more ‘basic’ than arithmetic itself, or of ‘+’ as though it were more basic than ‘plus’ (or *vice versa!*) is most peculiar. It is as if “each one contented us at least for a moment, until I thought of yet another standing behind it” (*PI*, para. 201).

17. See p.8 of Kripke: “Let us suppose, for example, that ‘68 + 57’ is a computation that I have never performed before. . . . *In fact . . . finitude guarantees that there is an example exceeding, in both its arguments, all previous computations.*” (Emphasis added.) One suspects that the reference of “so far” or of “never . . . before” simply moves on into the future in perpetual tandem with the would-be rule-skeptic. There is never a crucial experiment, never a moment when the doubts become *present/actual*.

18. Kripke, p.9.

19. Cf. Ian Hacking’s argument in his ingenious paper, “Rules, Scepticism, Proof, Wittgenstein,” in Ian Hacking (ed.), *Exercises in Analysis: Essays by Students of Casimir Lewy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). Hacking sets out an actual historical example which could be described as an abyssal indeterminacy found in the rules of Chess; but the very fact that it is an actual example means that (i) it cannot be generalized across language/games, and (ii) it can be ‘checked out,’ as it was, by what historically occurred. Kripke’s, by contrast, is not a definite proposal. The ground shifts every time it is about to be taken as one. The apparent statements of the problem *aren’t*, actually. ‘*The problem never actually gets stated.*’ Thus no paradox is ever generated. (In this way, there is a parallel with the paradoxes of time-travel. These get avoided, according to my argument in Chapter 2 above, by returning to semantic sanity. In such a way that time-travel-talk gets abandoned; as does meaning-skepticism-talk, in the present context.)

20. Indeed, as was pointed out in n.14 (and n.16; cf. also n.19) above, it is only by virtue of (by his own lights, unjustifiably) presupposing that the terms he uses—terms like “quus,” “quum,” “quusify,” and “quimular,” not to mention all the other more familiar terms (terms of the English language, indeed) featuring in his text—are not themselves open to the threat of massive sudden disjunction in our use and understanding of them, that Kripke can even begin to engage us with his drama, with his arguments.

21. The sense of “think,” or of “imagine,” in contexts like this is, as I would hope is evident to the reader by now, somewhat peculiar. Imagining a concept in isolation is often tantamount to imagining merely ‘*de dicto*,’ to imagining that I can imagine something (For exposition, see Cora Diamond’s “Ethics, Imagination and the Method of Wittgenstein’s ‘Tractatus’” (*Wiener Reihe*, 1991, pp.55–90), reprinted in *The New Wittgenstein* (*op.cit.*)). Nearly all of the present chapter involves engaging the reader with sentences and ‘thoughts’ which one either simply cannot find ways of understanding consistently—or which turn out to be mundane facts and truisms, etc., disguised as something more.

22. It may be worth pointing out here another irony of this initial consistency, and of the ‘definition’ Kripke gives of “quus” (parasitically upon “plus”): that Kripke appears to think that arithmetical rules ought to be quite literally rails to infinity. He defines “quus” as though the idea of ‘plus’ is completely unproblematic for us, *reflectively*, and *to infinity*. Hacking (on p.294 of “On Kripke’s and Goodman’s Uses of ‘Grue,’” *Philosophy* 68 (265), 1993) argues that it is (t)his Metaphysical/Platonist Realist presupposition that apparently sets one up for the skepticism. If one has al-

ready read and understood (e.g.) Wittgenstein or Dewey on rules and human practices, one will not be tempted in the first place by Kripke's 'Realist' construal of rules.

23. Hacking's gloss on this point (see pp.289–91 of his "On Kripke's . . ." (*op.cit.*)) is to distinguish between 'fearful' skepticism (e.g., serious inductive skepticism) and 'existential' skepticism (about whether one is being true to one's (past) self—e.g., in word-meanings). Kripke's is then *at best* an existential skepticism—one with no consequences whatsoever. (Though see the 'Epilogue,' below, for clarification of just what I mean by this.)

24. It might seem as though quus can be interdefined 'symmetrically' with plus, as in a certain sense grue genuinely can be interdefined 'symmetrically' with green and blue (see, e.g., p.282f. of Hacking's "On Kripke's . . ." (*op.cit.*)). But in fact this is false; 'quus' is worse off than 'grue.' Here is about as close as one can get to such a definition of "plus": X plus Y means X quus Y for $X, Y < 57$, and otherwise means what X quus Y would mean if one went on in the same way, rather than giving the answer "5."

Clearly, this is a 'viciously' circular and entirely useless definition, depending among other things on an anti-quus-like reading of 'same way.'

25. Kripke himself invokes Wittgenstein's use of this particular turn of phrase (Kripke, p.17), but as though it conveyed a notion equivalent to that of "an unjustified or random stab in the dark." Doing a piece of arithmetic, working out the answer to a sum, is not, however, at all what I should ordinarily consider an "unjustified stab in the dark"—the former would specifically contrast with such cases as when, lacking the means to calculate an answer, I make a guess. It is much better, I think, to understand Wittgenstein's use of "blindly" as referring only to the fact that I apply the rules of addition I have been taught without prior deliberation, following them without reflection and without question. Think of applying Kripke's characterization of following a rule as an unjustified leap in the dark to a practical case such as that of one's behavior upon suddenly seeing a traffic light up ahead! (For discussions of 'experiencing' the difference between rule-following and other behavior, see J. McDowell's work; and also J. Guetti and R. Read, "Acting From Rules: 'Internal Relations' vs. 'Logical Existentialism,'" *International Studies in Philosophy* XXVIII:2 (1996), pp.43–62)

26. Kripke, pp.12–13.

27. I.e., my (scare-quoted) locution here does not amount to a retraction of my underlying argument that there is no such thing as 'the skeptic' being right here (unless the position is re-read so charitably as to amount to the kind of banalities and reminders we are all able to agree on—see the section on "[Kripke's] intentions," below), because no sense can be extracted from persistent attempts to state 'the skeptic's' position, due to its irresolvable internal tensions. Thus 'If 'the skeptic' were right . . .' is only a pseudo-counterfactual. This is just me being as generous as I can to 'the skeptic,' seeking once more to take his bad money as good.

28. Though this *is* explicitly enunciated as early as p.13, after only 5 pages of the argument. One does not have to wait for the more famous announcements of meaning-nihilism on p.21 and p.55.

29. See p.21 and p.13 of Kripke; also, p.55, p.62, p71.

30. R. Read, "Is there a Legitimate Way to Raise Doubts about the Immediate Future from the Perspective of a Doubtful Immediate Past?" (*Wittgenstein Jahrbuch* 2000, ed. Wilhelm Lütterfelds, Andreas Roser, and Richard Raatzsch, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, December 4 2001, p.105.)

31. London: Routledge, 1961 (1922); transl. Pears and McGuinness. See section 7; cf. also p.3.

32. Kripke, p.12.

33. *Seemingly*; for of course, as I have already made clear, exemption of our present use from those arguments can only be a pretence or a vain hope, for there is nothing relevant to those arguments about our past usages which differentiates them from our present ones.

34. Because, again, the suspension of the 'assumption' of a common language would have retrospective force, and would, thus, deny that the prior course of the

discussion had ever had any meaning, that it could ever have been a discussion. 'The skeptic' must retain the 'assumption' of a common language even as s/he denies it, must adopt the assumption not just as a first step in the argument, but as an essential presumption throughout its course; and must assert the conclusion about the meaninglessness of words in the very words his conclusion denies have meaning.

35. In sum: Kripkean 'existential skepticism,' purporting to 'build' on the 'fact' that "There can be no such thing as meaning anything by any word" (Kripke, p.55) has at best zero consequences!

36. *MidWest Studies in Philosophy* XVII (1992), pp.40–52.

37. See Kripke, p.8f. (And for an effective critique at a higher level of generality of this Kripkean notion, see McDowell's paper, "Meaning and Intentionality in Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy.")

38. Kripke, p.8. (Parenthetical insertions mine.)

39. *Ibid.*

40. There is nothing mysterious nor even particularly remarkable about the notion of managing to get even what are called 'infinite' results from 'finite' procedures and beings, *contra* Chomsky *et al*, for talk about infinity often means (in mathematical practice) simply that there is no 'stopping' injunction included in the rules that I learn. It is, of course, integral to the notion of a 'rule' or 'procedure' that it is in principle not a 'one-off' matter (see, e.g., *PI* 199)—but this does not require anything over and above our setting down something as a rule.

41. It seems that Kripke and those impressed at least with the questions he raises want a model for understanding rule-following which makes it into something essentially different—much as philosophers have traditionally been anxious to 'understand' inductive methods in a manner which makes them into something quite different (usually, either into deduction or into pieces of scrap).

42. One must be wary here, of course, not to give the impression that mathematics consists in some kind of authoritarianism, for one's deep dependence on one's teacher is only an essential to one's getting started. The teaching, as it develops, gives me ways of checking and cross-checking mathematical results for myself, and, once I have developed proficiency, of checking up on the teacher too.

43. In the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978 (1956, posthumous; revised ed.; transl. Anscombe)), Wittgenstein tells us that mathematics is a matter of transforming symbols according to paradigms, and that it is the correspondence between what I do and the paradigm that can be used to waylay doubts. My confidence that I can do addition is not based upon my possession of inner resolutions, but upon my capacity to consult paradigms of arithmetical practice—either in the form of lists of answers (is this how Kripke wishes to imagine all of arithmetic—only with the lists being mental?), or (more often) of perspicuous paradigms of calculative practice. (It is very easy to misunderstand Wittgenstein's work on mathematics. Cf. Chapter 1, above.)

44. Or rather, *unvoiced*, or pseudo-voiced—there actually isn't any such thing as their being voiced.

45. Of course, for Wittgenstein, being taken in by the tricks our language can be seen to play on us, etc., can be a vital, necessary moment in the philosophical dialectic. It is (for example) what allows us to treat the problems with patience and the required level of detail to understand them. But we have to be careful with the notion of 'problems' here. We need to avoid committing ourselves to thinking of philosophical problems as having a certain kind of genuine *structure*. Perhaps some do; but, if so, 'meaning-skepticism' is not one of them. Its failure to get off the ground (or even onto the ground), I have suggested, is more radical than (say) Cartesian skepticism's.

46. Quoted on p.xvi of Louis Sass's *The Paradoxes of Delusion: Wittgenstein, Schreber and the Schizophrenic Mind* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1994). Sass's book, and indeed his entire corpus, is strongly recommended to those interested in the issues I raise in this Epilogue.

47. On this, see the Conclusion to my *Applying Wittgenstein*.

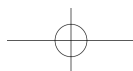
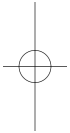


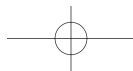
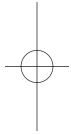
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48. For some detail on the linguistic phenomenology of borderline-psychotic experiences, see Chapter 9, below.

49. See James Conant's "Varieties of scepticism" (in Denis McManus (ed.), *Wittgenstein and Scepticism* (London: Routledge, 2004)) for fuller explication of these terms.

50. Acknowledgements for helpful readings of this chapter go to Oskari Kuusela, Angus Ross, Alice Crary, Jeff Coulter, Dave Francis, and an anonymous referee. Thanks also to the late James Guetti, for some guiding ideas. Above all, thanks of course to Wes Sharrock, without whom this chapter, the original version of which we wrote together, would forever have been at best nothing more than a glint in the mind's eye.





DRAFT

FIVE

The Unstability of Kripkean Skepticisms

The previous chapter aimed to establish to the reader's satisfaction that Kripke does not succeed in stating a meaning-skepticism. That the very effort to state a 'constitutive' rule-following paradox dissolves on itself, falls apart in one's hands, or falls through them all the quicker the more one tries to construct something with 'it' (To generate and build on Kripke's 'Wittgensteinian' paradox is like seeking to move one's hands so quickly and deftly that one can build and sculpt an elegant tower of sand whose foundations rest on the very hands that seek so to build . . .). The present chapter draws a corollary from that. I suggest here that a constitutive 'concept-skepticism'—the would-be application of Kripkensteinian thinking directly to the realm of the mental—is equally futile.

It has already been shown elsewhere¹ how Saul Kripke's 'Wittgensteinian paradox'—that "There can be no fact as to what I mean by 'plus,' or any other word at any time"²—neither is Wittgenstein's nor, *a fortiori*, leads us to a skepticism that Wittgenstein in any sense endorsed. It has arguably further been shown how 'Kripke's Wittgenstein's' skepticism would, *if (per impossibile)* it were able to be presented and comprehended at all, be absolutely unanswerable (his 'skeptical solution'—and others' purported solutions—*notwithstanding*).³

But what is the force of the "*if*" in the previous sentence? Do we have any substantive reason, beyond the trivial point that the words of the sentences used to set up this skepticism are (at least mostly) words of the English language with which we are familiar, to believe that Kripke's rule-skeptical arguments are meaningful, that they are in substance comprehensible, presentable, *statable*? I have argued in the previous chapter that the views of Kripke's Wittgenstein actually only *appear* to be *statable* (by means of—apparently—being stated). In the present chapter, I shall

further illustrate this by arguing it in the important case of the would-be *extension* of Kripke's arguments, to mental content—so-called “concept-skepticism.”⁴

This might appear to leave open the possibility that the extension of Kripke's arguments might indeed be untenable or self-contradictory, but that the arguments themselves still require addressing in the case of linguistic rule-following (as opposed to purely ‘mental’ rule-following). This possibility is I think already sufficiently—because thoroughly—undermined by the considerations adduced in the previous chapter. But, in any case, not having seen the view (that the two cases are *essentially* different) defended in print, and not being able to see any reason which could be offered for its defence, I shall concentrate here (with a focused mind) on the unstability of Kripkean concept skepticism; and conclude by suggesting how these considerations may be extended back to undermine, if such undermining still be needed, Kripke's Wittgenstein's linguistic rule-skepticism ‘itself.’⁵

J. Sartorelli has argued, against C. McGinn, that concept-skepticism is both structurally identical to Kripke's Wittgenstein's linguistic rule-skepticism (or ‘semantic skepticism’) and defensible:

[This is] how we must describe the situation of . . . the skeptic if the skeptical reasoning is to apply in the case of concepts as it does on the case of meaning. Instead of intending to connect the same meaning as before with a word . . . the interlocutor must intend to use, in his present thought, the same concept (correctly, of course) as he used earlier in his earlier thought. It is true that there is no word involved explicitly here. But that doesn't matter. What matters is that there be a target (the earlier application of a concept in thought) which he is intending to be guided by and in terms of which he intends his performance (i.e., his employment of concepts) to be evaluated.⁶

The worry which I wish to raise might be put in this way (cf. *PI* 304): is “the earlier application of a concept in thought” something about which nothing further can be said? In other words, what gives us any confidence that expressions such as “the earlier application of the concept” have any application, that they succeed in denoting anything, outside the context of the purported doubt as to whether or not “the concept” is being applied in the same way now as before? (For such doubts had better not be ‘self-validating.’) If there is no other application, then the skeptical doubt Sartorelli is purporting to raise is being raised purely by *fiat*—it does not have any *content* that we can discuss.

The import of these claims may as yet appear obscure. Let me clarify by reference to a philosophical debate that I think the reader will recognize as almost identical, structurally—that over the interpretation and soundness of Davidson's so-called “Omniscient Interpreter Argument”

(or “OIA”).⁷ Edward Craig has observed that this argument gets us nowhere, “. . . unless *we know what the beliefs are* that the omniscient interpreter ascribes to us. Otherwise all we know, everything being granted and allowed, is that the belief we evince when we assent to the sentence ‘Here is a hand’ is true, *whatever it may be.*”⁸ In trying to respond to difficulties such as this with Davidson’s argument, Anthony Brueckner has argued that a hierarchy of meta-beliefs could take care of the problem, with the possibility of massive error excluded at each level.⁹ But consider his first move in constructing this hierarchy:

[S]cepticism about knowledge of which first-order content is expressed by my sentence ‘I have a hand’ involves the claim that (i) I have a belief about which content is so expressed. . . . Which second-order belief is required by (i)? Presumably, I believe that my sentence ‘I have a hand’ expresses the content that *I have a hand.*¹⁰

What makes Brueckner believe here that the italicization of “I have a hand” allows it to express a conceptual content? However many times or however strongly a phrase is emphasized (or, for that matter, nested in a hierarchy of beliefs about it), all Craigian skeptical questions are begged if one implies (believes?!) that one can unproblematically express, or even refer to, a particular content, in expressing one’s anti-skeptical arguments.

“But doesn’t this admission support skepticism? How can one get away with begging skeptical questions?” On the contrary—the *real* problem is in allowing that the skeptical questions could even be expressed in the first place, could even be there to be begged or responded to. For in order even to *pose* his problem, Craig had to presuppose that all his words expressed the contents that he took them to (and the analogue is presumably true of his beliefs). The moral is not that we don’t know, until we have further philosophical justification, what content, for example, “hand” has (some would say: what content *hand* is); the moral is that we cannot but presuppose that “hand” means what we invariably take it to mean,¹¹ and that skeptical arguments to the contrary cannot even be coherently stated/thought. When such arguments appear to be undermining our grasp on the concept *hand*, they can only do so if they already covertly presuppose that we grasp that concept (such that we can ‘target’ *hands*, in seemingly entertaining the thought that we do not grasp the concept). Thus they cannot even get started. For Craig and his reader/critic already have to be correctly conceptualizing hands in order for them to be able even to conceive of content-skepticism as to *hands*; and therefore the only reason that the response to such skepticism fails to answer it is that there is only the *appearance* of there being any real doubts to answer.¹²

Part of what Craig seems to have missed is that the general demand that we should *know* that we know empirical propositions is hyperbolic,

and skepticism here is only the making of such hyperbolic demands. (His demand is as misconceived as Brueckner's unnecessary and hopeless attempt to satisfy it.) Analogously, I can, quite straightforwardly, refer to my hand in the course of meaningful sentences without knowing or even believing that "This is my hand." For that is presumptive; one does not *know* what is part of the very grounds of one's utterances.¹³

To return then to Sartorelli: I am suggesting, analogously to the argument I made in the previous chapter, that Kripkean concept-skepticism simply cannot be conceived of, or coherently stated. We can see this—we can see why—in Sartorelli's closing 'elucidation' of the nature of concept-skepticism:

The question . . . is: what is it correct to do now? The answer is: conform to one's earlier intention . . . the intention to apply the concept __. The earlier intention provides the target: . . . it is employing (in thought, or *thinking*) the concept __. The requirement is that I conform to this intention, and be guided by this target, and the skeptical question is: how can this earlier intention, in providing a target, have required what I initially considered right to do on this new occasion . . .¹⁴

We may ask, rhetorically, "Which earlier intention??" It is in a certain sense inevitably a rhetorical question, for the Kripkean skeptic evidently has nothing to say to us in reply. Evidently and obviously, the blanks in Sartorelli's case (the " __ "s) cannot be filled in, at least not without overtly imploding the skeptical argument in the admission that we 'always already' have to presuppose its emptiness.

But isn't this just the familiar point that semantic and conceptual skepticisms are (merely) *pragmatically* self-refuting, because their conclusions are, if true, unstatable, or unthinkable? This is not the place to enter into a prolonged discussion of whether arguments leading to conclusions such as "Concepts are inherently unstable" or "Meaning is impossible" are 'merely' pragmatically self-refuting, or whether such self-refutation extends to both the statability of the arguments as valid *and* their conclusions' truth, etc. This is not the place; for my point has been not merely that the conclusions of such arguments cannot be stated, but that the premises too, the arguments *in toto*, cannot be stated. For at every stage such arguments (such premises) presuppose what they deny (this is why the would-be concept-skeptical argument cannot even be read as a *reductio ad absurdum*: it *begins* in absurdity). As soon as they are apparently stated they engage the reader in assumptions to the effect that, "When I use this term (e.g., "hand," "plus") in *formulating* the argument, you know what I mean, yes? (Only, not only will it turn out that you don't, but it is true right now that you don't.)" Otherwise, no substantive question could possibly have been thought to have been asked when it was enquired, for example, "How does one know, who is to say, that "hand" means *hand*?"



In the ‘statement’ of concept-skepticism, nothing has actually been said. Concept-skepticism is not a candidate for truth or for falsity—it cannot even get as far as being false.¹⁵

To conclude, let me sketch how the considerations I have adduced here apply to precisely the constitutive rule-skeptical paradox purportedly presented us in the pages of *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*.¹⁶ When we ask whether by “+” in the past we have meant addition, we have in particular to presuppose that “addition” means addition. But this last re-statement is simply a shuffle—it does not *explain* anything; and so nothing can have been put into doubt when we supposedly doubted that “+” meant addition. In short, we have to presuppose the very thing that we are supposedly putting in question by entertaining Kripke’s paradoxical thought. (And no employment of ‘quasi-quotation marks,’ or of italicization, or any other device can overcome this difficulty—these are only tricks used by those who purportedly present Kripkean skepticisms, in order to deflect our attention from their lack of content.)¹⁷

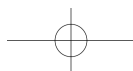
But doesn’t this show that we can never avoid begging the question against the skeptic, and all the better for skepticism? I hope to have made plausible that it shows rather that, contrary to appearances, there cannot be any such thing as even entertaining any Kripkean skepticisms. For, in whatever way these are purportedly expressed, we have immediately to rely on words which are not put into doubt, including words which are syntactically or analytically *identical* with the words supposedly doubted. When the so-called ‘object language’ and the ‘meta-language’ coincide, as they must if what is potentially at issue is any kind of generalized semantic skepticism, then just for that reason there cannot be any destabilization of one by the other, because there cannot be any genuine *separation* between them.

It is thus a deep mistake to think that Kripkean skepticisms are thinkable or statable. That *this* is a hand and that *that* is an addition sum are, normally, completely unproblematically *presumed*.^{18 19}

NOTES

1. In for instance McGinn’s *Wittgenstein on Meaning* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984); W.W.Tait’s “Wittgenstein and the Skeptical Paradoxes” (*Journal of Philosophy*, LXXXIII: 9 (Sept.1986), 475–88); G. Baker and P. Hacker’s *Skepticism, Rules and Language* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984, *passim*); Part 2 of my thesis on *Practices Without Foundations? – Skeptical Readings of Wittgenstein and Goodman* (Rutgers University, NJ, 1995); and in Guetti and my “Acting From Rules: ‘Internal Relations’ vs. ‘Logical Existentialism,’” *International Studies in Philosophy* XXVIII: 2 (1996), pp.43–62.

2. Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), p.21. As suggested above, in Chapter 4, the paradox that Wittgenstein cites in *PI* 201 is not Kripkenstein’s (and is in any case not one that he endorses).



3. *Ibid.* If one ‘concedes’ Kripkenstein’s framework, the endless iterability of his semantically skeptical worries leads inexorably to the absurd conclusion that “There can be no such thing as meaning anything by any word” (*ibid.*, p.55); or so I argue in depth in my *Practices without Foundations?* (*op.cit.*).

4. See Joseph Sartorelli’s “McGinn on Concept Skepticism and Kripke’s Skeptical Argument,” *Analysis* 51:2 (Mar. 1991), 79–84. (Actually, I am unconvinced that the subject-matters of Chapters 4 and 5 are distinct at all. As already suggested in Chapter 1, above, following Frege, concepts *shouldn’t* really be thought of as distinctively psychological. My allowance that we could think of what is sometimes called ‘concept-skepticism’ as distinctively concerning the realm of the mental is a *concession*, made for the sake of argument / of charity, to the interlocutors with whose work I take issue in this chapter. Even if it be made, I show here that this doesn’t help the cause of ‘concept-skepticism.’)

5. Colin McGinn has made a start: see (*op.cit.*), pp.144–49. Arguably, (linguistic) meaning skepticism *has* to be extended to concepts to hit *its* target—otherwise a Lewisian Conventionalism will be able to salvage meaning through speakers’ *intentions* to mean, etc. Cf. Peacocke:

The important question then becomes “Is *content* skepticism defensible?” Content skepticism is skepticism about whether by appealing to facts about an individual we can explain what it is to judge one content rather than another. If such skepticism is defensible, the theorist of thought cannot give a straight solution of the semantic skeptic’s paradox; if it is not defensible, appeal to the level of thought is more promising. It is clear that an elaboration of content skepticism will have to take a somewhat different form from semantic skepticism. . . . To fill in [an outline of a straight response] would require answering those who think that one cannot give an account of thought which is conceptually independent of an account of language: for if there is no such account, one would expect semantic skepticism to imply content skepticism.

(pp.266–67 of his “Review: Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language,” *Phil. Review* 93:2 (April 1984), pp.263–71). My own inclination is strongly toward the ‘no conceptual independence’ view; I think innumerable unclaritys and false hopes are founded on the fantasy that we can talk unproblematically about the contents/meanings behind or beside words, and hope here to contribute toward showing why.

6. Sartorelli (*op.cit.*), pp.81-2.

7. See critica.filosoficas.unam.mx/pg/en/descarga_ing.php?id_volumen=81&id_articulo=435 for a relevant account of this.

8. P.213 of “Davidson and the Skeptic: The thumbnail version,” *Analysis* 50:4 (Oct. 1990), 213–14. (Here, as throughout, emphasis is in the original unless otherwise specified.)

9. “Genova, Davidson and Content-Skepticism,” *Analysis* 52:4 (Oct. 1992), 228–31.

10. *Ibid.*, p.230.

11. And that *this* is to be judged by a non-philosophical, non-reflective standard of intuition or empirical observation of the employment of the word. In other words, from the ‘answers’ to questions like, “Would you please show me your hands (if they are clean)?” understood without (over)interpretation. Cf. sections 268, 371 and 501 of Wittgenstein’s *On Certainty* (Oxford: Blackwell / New York: Harper, 1969 (posthumous); transl. Anscombe and Von Wright.).

12. Incidentally, this reading of the debate around the OIA circumstantially supports R. Rorty’s reading of Davidson as *post-Skeptical* (i.e., not to be read as arguing against Skepticism at all, but only as presupposing its irrelevancy and seeing what philosophy looks like when it embraces Contingency). For indeed, as Craig remarks (*Op.cit.*, p.213), “What could induce someone . . . to offer this argument as a *rebuttal* of skepticism?”

13. These vital insights, I owe to an anonymous referee, and to D.L. Anderson's reply to J. van Cleve, "What is the model-theoretic argument?," in the *Journal of Philosophy* LXXX: 6 (June 1993), 311–22 (See also n.12 & n.11, above).

14. *Op.cit.*, pp.83–84.

15. In fact, 'it' is non-existent. Compare *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1981 (1922); transl. Ogden) 5.62: "In fact what solipsism means, is quite correct, only it cannot be said, but it shows itself." A rule-skeptical analogue of this (deliberately) absurd remark would strictly not get as far as being self-refuting, for it would not have defined a philosophical position at all. As Cora Diamond (in "Throwing away the ladder," in her *The Realistic Spirit* (Cambridge MA: MIT, 1991)), among others, has shown, a 'something' that is unstable is not a something at all, but merely a placeholder for nothing, a placeholder exemplifying a (particularly confusing) form of philosophic confusion.

16. The full quotation from the conclusion of Sartorelli's paper reads as follows:

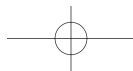
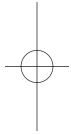
The two cases, then, that of using words with meaning and that of using concepts in thought, seem analogous with respect to the skeptical reasoning. The question in each case is: what is it correct to do now? The answer is: conform to one's earlier intentions. In the one case, the intention in question is the intention to mean __ by 'plus.' In the other case, it is the intention to apply the concept__. This earlier intention provides the target: in the one case the target is meaning __ by 'plus'; in the other, it is employing (in thought, or *thinking*) the concept __. The requirement is that I conform to this intention, and be guided by this target, and the skeptical question is: how can this earlier intention, in providing a target, have required what I initially considered right to do on this new occasion . . . (*op.cit.*, pp.83–84)

He has about as much difficulty (*viz.* the comic " __"s) in his abortive attempt to state 'meaning skepticism' as he does in trying to state 'concept skepticism.' The two cases, I have implied, are structurally identical, for good reason.

17. Compare the tortuous progress of n.8, on p.9, of Kripke (*op.cit.*). The point is: Kripkean skeptical arguments only have any plausibility against overly reified conceptions of 'meanings'—but meanings, *contra* much Analytic Philosophical lore, just do *not* stand behind or run along beside words. For amplification, (and) for the alternative picture of meaning as a phenomenon only in and of active language-use, see Guetti and my "Acting from rules: 'internal relations' vs. 'logical existentialism,'" and Guetti's "Idling rules" (*Phil. Investigations* 16:3 (July '93), 179–97).

18. I discuss in detail the problem arising from Kripke's assumption of normal meanings in the present—which are then supposedly undercut when the present is problematized by the arguments that were applied to the past (see Kripke, pp.12–14, and pp.21–22)—in my "Is there a Legitimate Way to Raise Doubts about the Immediate Future from the Perspective of a *Doubted* Immediate Past?" (*Wittgenstein Jahrbuch* 2000, ed. Wilhelm Lütterfelds, Andreas Roser and Richard Raatzsch, Peter Lang, December 4 2001); and forthcoming in my *Liberatory Philosophy*, joint with Phil Hutchinson).

19. My thanks to A. Ross, C. Diamond, C. McGinn, B. Loewer, the late J. Guetti, B. Matthews, C. Gillett, T. de Marco, R. Samuels, T. Underwood, and an anonymous referee, for help with this chapter's concept(s).



DRAFT

SIX

Heaps of Trouble: ‘Logically Alien Thought’ and the Dissolution of ‘Sorites’ Paradoxes

“[The sorites paradox] results from believing that the whole is the sum of the parts, and can be reached by a sequential process of incrementation. It tries to relate two *things*: a grain of sand and a heap, as though their relationship was transparent. It also presupposes that there must either be a heap or not be a heap at any one time: ‘either/or’ are your only alternatives. That . . . leads to paradox. According to the [alternative, ‘Wittgensteinian’] view, it is a matter of a shift in context, and the coming into being of a *Gestalt*, an entity which has imprecisely defined bounds, and is recognized whole: the heap comes into being gradually, and is a process, an evolving, changing ‘thing’ . . . ” —Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and his Emissary*¹ (pp.138–39)

“What ought our attitude to . . . vagueness be? Should we record the actual use of a word, variable and irregular though it be? This would at best produce a history of the use of words. Or should we set up a particular use as a paradigm? Should we say: Only this use is legitimate, and everything else is deviant? This would be a tyrannical ruling. If, however, we do none of these things, then the task of philosophy seems once more to evaporate. For it was to banish unclarity from the world by going back to rules; but how to manage this if there are no rules at all . . . ? // We [need] to examine an example which throws light on the method that we follow . . . ” —L. Wittgenstein, *The Voices of Wittgenstein: The Vienna Circle*² (pp.277–79)

Chapters 3 to 5 considered paradoxes from the history of the recent human sciences / philosophy, paradoxes that I claim to have found in Chomsky’s work—and that others claim to have found in Wittgenstein’s. The paradox that will now occupy us is much more ancient than these,

venerable. But I shall suggest in the present chapter that Wittgensteinian thinking, including of the general form indexed by McGilchrist³ in my epigraph above, can liberate us from this ancient paradox just as fully as I hope to have effected or to have offered a liberation from the Kripkensteinian ‘rule-paradox,’ from the paradoxes of time-travel, and from Russell’s Paradox. If we will only let it.

INTRODUCTION

For terms that sort things such that they do or do not fall under that term, we of course need a prior—or at least, a constitutive—notation of the conditions under which such a term may be properly applied. For example, there must be some condition(s) of distribution (of hairs) for “bald” to apply, and some condition(s) of contiguity (of grains) for the application of “heap”; and so on. How often is this requirement observed, in discussions of such ‘vague’ terms? How often do commentators treat with sufficient complexity the criteria for the application of such terms?

Discussions of ‘the ‘sorites paradox’ typically involve heaps with numbers of grains, or heads-of-hair consisting of numbers of hairs, or the like. And philosophers typically fixate on those numbers, almost exclusively. But a fairly clear non-case of a heap, such as 500 grains of sand compressed together under extreme force (such that they become a tiny lump, perhaps of semi-sandstone, that takes up only a minute amount of space), or an extremely clear non-case of a heap, such as the same 500 grains (or indeed 1,000 or 10,000 or even 10,000,000 grains) spread out widely over the floor of a large hall, might well be (or have been) a heap, if arranged appropriately: i.e., if *heaped* together, reasonably (but not overly) loosely. This crucial aspect of what it is to be a heap is unfortunately not sufficiently emphasized in most philosophers’ treatments of the matter.⁴ Such abstract treatments are, I submit, vitiated by this lack of appropriate emphasis. In other words: one of my points in this chapter shall be that the importance of context in dissolving the sorites is not sufficiently understood (not even by ‘contextualist’ solutions, which *theorize* context, thus presenting under the wrong aspect and thus in a sense always insufficiently emphasizing it).⁵

Let us for a moment consider directly how grains *do* need to be arranged, to be heaped, to be a heap. The above considerations I think imply directly that 2 or 3 grains of sand could not be a heap, even to someone using a microscope or magnifying glass, because they could not be arranged to form a heap. One might possibly start to get into a position to be able to form a heap with 4 grains. But more likely the number would be a lot higher.⁶ Just how much higher, is clearly (to say the least) hard to say.

We can already see from this consideration a central reason why there is a vague boundary to heap-dom. We can already see from this why the sorites paradox, as McGilchrist intimates in my epigraph, will not be a simple matter of subtraction, a 'backward-induction'-style 'numbers game.'

And, crucially, the point I have made can certainly be extended analogically to most standard sorites paradoxes; perhaps, indeed, to all of them. Think in slightly more detail, for instance, about baldness: it is—of course—not just the number of hairs, but their arrangement (and also their length, and even their thickness, healthiness, etc.) that crucially matters:⁷ Someone whose remaining hair is mostly concentrated in the 'sideburn' area is far more plausibly adjudged bald than someone with a thinnish spread over the crown. . . . In short, baldness isn't first and foremost an enumerative matter: it has to do with the visibility of areas of the scalp through the hair—at which point one is balding, where areas of the scalp can be seen. One could probably ask, "How many hairs did X lose before he became visibly bald?" but the baldness is the effect of the —'geographical'—totality of hairs lost, *not* of its numerical progression, hair by hair.

Moreover, these questions (can) *matter*, outside of philosophy.⁸ A heterosexual woman viewing a 'Personals' ad that claimed its author (not) to be bald would be rightly entitled to feel aggrieved, if the kind of points made in the preceding paragraph were implicitly not respected by the author of the ad. Similarly, it can matter whether or not something is a heap: whether or not an arrangement of sand constituted a heap might be an issue germane to a legal case that concerned (say) what a builder had been asked to do in order to unblock a driveway.

This question of what the *point* is of worrying about whether or not something is (e.g) a heap—and of whether a heap might be a 'forensic' concept, in roughly the sense of that term employed by Locke⁹ —is generally ignored by philosophers. This is deeply unfortunate. Because it tends to create a sense that the sorites paradox is a problem, when it may well be that the sorites only results from a lack of clarity about when we *need* (and when we *don't* need) to have clarity about the application of terms. In a legal case, or in the imagined case of the aggrieved Personals-ad-woman mentioned above, then the dividing line could matter. Otherwise, it just isn't clear that there is any issue.

And when the dividing line does matter, and needs settling, then such settlement is active, partly stipulative, and does not answer or show that there was a *need* to answer the question that the 'soritician' —the purveyor of the paradox—is gripped by. (Wittgenstein implicitly makes this point, in this remark of his about what happens when an authority precisifies a vague term: "What exactly we mean by a heap of sand is in a sense vague, because if you put grains of sand down one by one, you can ask when do they become a heap. If the government were to say that 5000

grains of sand make a heap, that would not fix our ideas in the past; it would make a new rule.”¹⁰ This remark already dissolves away the felt question of the heap, like a heap of sugar in tea.)

So: Most presentations of ‘soritical paradoxes’ tend to assume, roughly—and wrongly—that the sorites is *simply a numbers-game*. I have indicated that actual sorites ‘paradoxes’ (sic.) are *not*.

In objection to my argument thus far, it might be claimed that such ‘complications’ as I have indicated do not stop the sorites being ‘in the end’ simply a numbers-game. It might be claimed that one can always construct a relevant sorites sequence of actual and/or possible cases, ‘taking into account’ but ‘holding steady’ all the kind of subtle contextual factors that I have begun to indicate above. Keep the distribution of hairs uniform across the scalp, it might be said, keep the contextual purposes (for which baldness is being judged) fixed, etc., and you can still construct a pertinent sorites sequence—and, relative to that sequence, you can still construct a sorites argument. For example, take a sequence of possible monks, each with a slightly smaller bald spot either real (one’s inclination to use the word “real” here is revealing) or shaved—where the last guy’s bald spot consists of one hair he has plucked. The paradoxical argument will yield the conclusion that the last guy is bald—which he isn’t. Where does the argument go wrong?

My first counter to such an objection is simply that this just isn’t how terms like “bald” actually work. One can indeed construct an objection to my line of thought as above—and, in doing so, one renders oneself largely irrelevant to the actual interest of sorites cases, their actual relation to phenomena we really do encounter. In our world (outside the study) we are sometimes interested precisely in actual baldness, and actual heaps, but virtually never in profoundly artificial, profoundly unrealistic examples like the one just gestured at.

With a phenomenon like baldness, it is clear that the objection I have just considered is highly artificial. I have already indicated that it is artificial and unsatisfactory, too, with respect to ‘heapness.’ The condition of being a heap can look to a philosopher like a pure ‘numbers game’; it actually isn’t. And this is revealing.

But then are there any ‘pure’ sorites situations that we ever actually encounter? (If there are, then I will certainly need to do better than this first move against the objection under consideration.)

A ‘PURE’ SORITES?: THE CASE OF COLOR-TERMS

Color-terms might be thought to be a counter-example to the claim that I would wish to make, that there is no such thing in reality as a ‘pure’ sorites: for don’t colors (at least sometimes) have a greater simplicity or ‘purity’?¹¹ Aren’t the soritical problems that arise in relation to colors

something awfully like (simply and purely) a numbers-game (although, strikingly and ironically, color is 'dense' and so, strictly speaking, not enumerable)?¹² One simply proceeds from each shade of color to the next, along an ordered row. Now we don't seem to have any complicating factors like arrangement to worry about.¹³

So: we are strongly tempted to say that colors 'in themselves' are simple, unlike states of hair. But think first of actual contexts of use of color-terms: If I ask for a red car, I don't expect the tires or windscreen to be red; but if I ask for a red ball, I may well justifiably expect it to be wholly red. On the other hand, if I ask for a red apple, I might be happy if it was only partially red, and I certainly wouldn't expect/require its interior to be red; whereas if I wanted my flat painted red, I would surely expect the paint to be applied to what we call its interior, not its exterior; etc. And I might well care a lot whether the paint applied is actually red or russet; whereas I may well be happy to count russet *as* red, for the purposes of selection of a load of apples (unless perhaps I am a true *connoisseur* of apples . . .). And so on.

Think secondly of the following kind of observations, made by Wittgenstein in his *Remarks on Colour*: "The bucket which I see in front of me is glazed shining white; it would be absurd to call it "grey" or to say "I really see a light grey." But it has a shiny highlight that is far lighter than the rest of its surface (part of which is turned toward the light and part away from it), without appearing to be a different colour. (*Appearing*, not just *being*.)"¹⁴ From which nice observation, Wittgenstein concludes that, "The difficulties which we encounter when we reflect about the nature of colour . . . are embedded in the indeterminateness of our concept of sameness of colour."¹⁵ Only if one presupposes that our color concepts should be determinate—determinative of their extensions in all instances—does one generate a soritical paradox in the first place. If one can accept that color-concepts become just as determinate as we need them to be (and no more), once context is really taken into account, then such paradoxes do not get generated; or, if generated, are easily gently dissolved.

As we shall see more fully below, then: the apparently hardest, 'purest' type of sorites, such as a 'pure' color-based sorites, is one where we seem simply to have on our hands a numerically orderable array of pure colors—but it is in just such cases where our (color-)concepts are bound to run out, at borderlines. Where there will simply be genuinely undetermined borderline cases. Color-concepts simply are to some degree vague; and that's fine, and not grounds for criticism of them (or of us). For we do not understand color-concepts by where their *boundary* is, but by where their centre is (i.e., by means of paradigms, or paradigm-cases—see below, for expansion of this point.).

Is to say the likes of this to tarry with 'metaphysical vagueness'? Is saying what I have just said (about "genuinely undetermined borderline

cases”) saying that the things themselves Really Are vague; as it were, that they are vague even to themselves about what they are? Not at all. What I am suggesting is that in all real cases—cases with contexts—then either there will be a clean break-point in the alleged sorites sequence (*without* our having to endorse a revisionist ‘epistemic’ theory of vagueness), or *there will simply be a vagueness that awaits our specification of such a context*, should we need to so specify. There will be monks of whom we are as yet willing to assert with confidence neither that they are bald nor that they are not; or arrangements/amounts of grains of which we are as yet prepared to assert definitively neither that they are heaps nor that they are not. I am suggesting that seemingly ‘pure’ cases of the sorites simply *are* such—as yet not fully specified, as yet quite properly undecided—cases.

A DISSOLUTION OF THE SORITES

The reader’s conclusion from the discussion above will I hope already be that most discussions of sorites paradoxes are dangerously *de-contextualized*. That being de-contextualized is a deep matter; that context runs deep; determinatively so, in the case of the sorites.¹⁶ My submission is that the paradox in most (perhaps all) cases doesn’t even get off the ground without the de-contextualization. And if one re-contextualizes, if one considers our actual practice, looking carefully and fully for instance at the variety of factors which combine to help one to determine whether or not something is a heap (and whether or not to treat something as a heap), etc., then philosophical puzzlement largely (even, completely) *dissolves*. Where the only ‘context’ available by contrast is ‘a philosophical discussion,’ or ‘a desire to solve ‘the paradox itself,’” then one has condemned oneself to endless (pointless) debate. One has chosen to stay stuck in the fly bottle of merely philosophical paradox. When one enables oneself instead to look at how we actually make judgements *vis-à-vis* vague predicates, then the puzzle (thankfully) dissolves in one’s hands.

The reader is probably longing, by this point, for another / a more fully worked-out example of just what I mean: of how these considerations help us to deal with difficulties that arise at borderlines between (e.g.,) colored cars. Well, let us start with an example that I think proves especially helpful for seeing the relevance of contextual considerations: Let us examine the question, [A] “Is this man bald?” or even [B] “Who is balder, this man or that?” If this man has a bald patch, and that man has a receding hairline, [B] may be ‘undecidable.’ Which counts for more, this or that? Well, *it depends what for*. The background against which the question is being asked may enable us to decide the answer. (For instance, some monkish religious orders may see a certain (regular, circular) genus of (what an outsider might well call a) ‘bald patch’ as perfectly standard,

even *de rigueur*, and thus as little evidence of true/real baldness (in terms of hair-loss). "Bald," like "vague" itself, is an *evaluative* term whose valence varies according to context; we shall return to this point.) The desire for context-independent answers to questions like [A] and [B] is as one with the desire to solve the sorites paradox 'itself.' It is a desire we need to grow out of. (And thus we can see why I want to speak of a *dissolution* of the sorites, not, as Kuczynski has done,¹⁷ in an article I am generally in strong sympathy with, of a *solution* to the paradox.)

In sum: The sorites paradox 'itself,' no matter what differences there are from case to case of it (and I have already suggested ways in which these differences matter), always involves some version of the following two seemingly necessarily conflicting premises:

- i. Small steps alone cannot matter; yet
- ii. Enough small steps must matter, because they are *all* that *can* matter.

Thus far, I have principally questioned (ii), by means of pointing up how there are other things besides number (or rather, besides the small steps: there are small steps in the case of color too, albeit not strictly numbered steps,¹⁸ because of color's 'density') that matter.¹⁹ And I have outlined my suggestion that, when there are no other things that matter, it is as yet unclear that there is any paradox, as opposed to simply some tolerable, unproblematic vagueness. Thus I have generated in outline a *dissolution* of the sorites. But to complete that outline, I need to question (i), too.

THE FUNCTION OF 'PARADIGM CASES'

It will be objected against me that I have hardly yet shown decisively even that (ii), above, is wrong, for I have not undermined decisively the 'pure' versions of the sorites that can be generated, if one is minded to generate them: elongated color spectra with wide areas of indiscernibility, for instance.²⁰ How does my mention above of "paradigm cases" help with such 'pure' sorites paradoxes, which seem clear enough and where context seems to be irrelevant? The answer to this question that I consider to be *in practice* decisive comes toward the end of the present chapter. But I will build toward it by means of specifying further how mention of paradigms can help a great deal, even in allegedly pure, context-free cases. How they can provide what should be a theoretically, therapeutically decisive reason for giving up on the Sorites. How they can, in effect, provide a way of taming (i), as well as (ii), above.

I submit that soritical reasoning seems plausible only by means of treating the paradigm case (a heap, a head of hair, a red) as an *initial* case, a starting point. Other cases can then be admitted, the soritist suggests, either on grounds of close similarity to this case *or* on grounds of close similarity to other already-admitted cases. In other words, such reason-

ing gives us an account of predicate-application that involves a surrogate version of the principle of mathematical induction. But such surrogacy is unwarranted: for the paradigm case actually plays a regulatory role *throughout* the application of the predicate. The paradigm case plays a regulatory role throughout, not just with reference to the earliest cases in the soritist's sequence. This fact allows us at any point to come in and say "Enough is enough." According to the soritist, there is no license for saying this—but the functional role of paradigm cases is precisely to provide such license. Paradigm cases license us to come in at any time—or, rather, at the *right* time—and say, "There is no longer enough similarity to the paradigm case to justify application of the term."

Thus we can defuse the paradox, without having to resort to an 'epistemic' theory of vagueness (or a 'metaphysical' theory thereof). For it is us—I mean, us as practitioners in real contexts, not merely us right-thinking philosophers—who do the defusing. (Philosophers should not be theoreticians, dictating, but rather reflectors listening to the practice of masters of the language and of applied rational thought—i.e., of *all* of us.)

As David Houghton has written (in his unpublished manuscript, *Models of Meaning*):

The point is obvious when we are presented with a vague predicate, such as "looks like Jones," which explicitly introduces an object of comparison: Take the suggestion that, for someone to look like Jones, she must either be Jones, or be the spitting image of Jones, or be the spitting image of someone who is the spitting image of Jones . . . recursively. On first thoughts these conditions may seem too strong. On second it is clear that they are too weak. Indiscernibility is not a transitive relation— x may be indiscernible from y and y from z , but x not from z . But not only does close resemblance fail transitively to preserve itself. It fails transitively even to guarantee remote resemblance. We may end up with someone who does not look like Jones at all. // The point holds equally . . . for any term whose meaning has to be explained by reference to paradigm cases.²¹

Once we get clear on the ineradicable role of clear—of paradigm—cases, in the matters which matter to would-be soritists, the paradox is, I submit, dead.

A 'THOUGHT-EXPERIMENT': WITTGENSTEIN'S 'WOODSELLERS'

Some readers will still not be fully satisfied. They will not yet find the paradox to be psychologically dead, even when it has been confronted head-on, or pulled up by the roots, as in the section above, with regard to paradigm cases, let alone in the earlier sections. They will likely (and profoundly wrongly in my view, in the context of the issue under discussion in this chapter, at least) think that there is something awry with the

very idea of a 'paradigm case.' They will still therefore probably be feeling the pull of the paradox: a telling²² instance of the general pull, that is, towards thinking that vagueness poses a philosophical problem that will *not* happily dissolve. They will still be inclined to the very tendency toward abstraction and the very philosophical professional deformation that I have warned against. Let me try to satisfy them, genuinely to ease their ongoing psychological perturbation, by making first a kind of further concession: by moving away somewhat further from the actual world and actual (concrete, unconfused, non-metaphysical²³) language-use that has occupied me through most of the chapter as yet, to what may be possible worlds (possible social worlds): there certainly *is* a role in the consideration of the sorites for perhaps peculiar 'thought experiments.' We can enrich 'our diet of examples' appropriately by considering not just ways in which we might physically for instance (re-)arrange and manipulate grains of sand to produce cases that tug revealingly on our 'intuitions' about heaphood, but by considering possible perhaps-radically alternative socio-linguistic practices involving heaps.

Take a famous example from Wittgenstein's corpus, a famous imaginary scenario whose concepts he urges us to think through, but whose appositeness to our subject matter has never (to my knowledge) previously been noted: his "woodsellers."²⁴ These people, who seem to regard wood piled into heaps as having less quantity (and thus as worth or costing less) than wood that is spread out to cover a greater area on the ground, have typically been taken by Wittgenstein's 'critics' simply as irrational—or alternatively simply as 'manifesting' a conceptual impossibility. By Wittgenstein's 'followers,' they have been typically taken to demonstrate a true conceptual relativism, a possible radically other 'form of life.'

For reasons that will become clearer,²⁵ these responses seem to me deeply unsatisfactory.²⁶ Perhaps, though, it is already pretty evident how we might recast the strange 'woodsellers': perhaps they are a (conceivable) would-be real example of the kind of reasoning I displayed in the opening paragraphs of this chapter, above. Perhaps the correct way to 'paraphrase' the woodsellers' talk, to render them happily less deeply strange, is to hear them as talking about *heaps*. Perhaps they have an evaluative attitude to heaps of wood of very roughly the kind that we have to (the need for air/space in) meringues. That is: unheaphood itself matters to them. Specifically, in this case: if the planks of wood (compare grains of sand) are de-heaped (though without being *completely* scattered), they gain value for these people. I am not saying that this move already makes them unproblematically comprehensible to us. If we retain the assumption that they are principally buying and selling, it remains extremely hard to see *why* they have this negative attitude to heaps.²⁷ And why do they go so far as to say that there is actually *more* wood when it is de-heaped? But: possibly, for instance, as well as needing

wood with which to stoke huge fires or whatever, they pay more for non-heaps out of caring in a quasi-religious way, a way in which they are continually trying to train each other, for not having piles which (say) reach too close to the sky. So they say that the wood is worth more, and even that there is more wood—perhaps meaning, that there is more here of what a God wants, (or) of wood as it truly should be?—when the heaps are flattened out. (And after all, is even this so alien? And need it even be construed as quasi-religious? Think about the idea—which seems absurd, in the abstract—that if you want less you must pay more: and then consider the price of smaller quantities rather than bulk buys in supermarkets (which is of course sensible in respect of costing, production, and packaging contexts). A mini A-Z map sometimes costs more than a large A-Z of the exact same edition. And so on.)

The Wittgenstein ‘woodsellers’ case, it might be suggested, looks particularly bizarre because one supposes that the purchaser will have to heap up all the wood anyway, to transport it away. But it is important that the case is ‘under-described’: do we know exactly *what* “the woodsellers” are buying and selling (if those words are the right ones)? Again let us consider a possible specification—a ‘precisification,’ we might almost say—of the scenario: The unheaped wood might consist of willow or hazel prunings that could shoot to form new growth, if left undisturbed. Or possibly we are talking designer gardens and the arrangements of wood in question—that cost more—have been copyrighted. The woodbuyer who pays more for wood when there is ‘more’ of it—or as we would say, when it is spread out, de-heaped—is buying, perhaps, a license to use such a copyrighted design. There is more, again, perhaps, in that there is more of *just what they want*, when it is unheaped.

If something like the above were right, then the woodsellers need not be sub-human,²⁸ nor oxymoronic or impossible, nor even so different that we really cannot speak of them intelligibly (such that they could not properly (or at least reliably) even be termed *people* at all). They seem to have significantly different preferences or values from us (so far at least as wood is concerned), but they surely do not pose an insoluble problem of ‘conceptual relativity,’ with all the terrible philosophical difficulties that that notion can bring in its wake.²⁹ We can liken their practice, in order to understand it, to various of our practices, including, importantly, with practices which we might not at first have thought of as akin to theirs.³⁰

I think that my suggestion is potentially a live option, an interpretive possibility (or set of such possibilities) that could reasonably be regarded as ‘right,’ when reading Wittgenstein’s ‘woodsellers’ scenario. It brings into prominence that most philosophers have tended only to consider a relatively crude or constrained set of options, when confronted with this intriguing and difficult—deliberately ‘gnomic’—text of Wittgenstein’s. Rarely has anyone attempted to give, as I have here, a way of filling out

Wittgenstein's vague (!), lightly specified 'object of comparison,' such that these 'mathematical strangers' would retain their difference without being alien to the point of madness or sub-human-ness, etc. The wood-sellers, from my perspective, can be read as different (in the way that they are not keen on heaps) without having to be read, impossibly and absurdly, as 'logical aliens.'³¹ And comparing the woodsellers' case to our own can of course yield insights into the (limited³²) degree to which we can intelligibly relax the constraints on what we remain willing to call 'mathematics,' and similarly fundamental aspects of our world-view, of our life.

But the particular way of taking forward the comparison essayed here has the added virtue of helping to dissolve the pull on one of soritical reasoning. The 'concession' I made above turns out to have helped my case, not hindered it.

How might we characterize the help that my discussion of "the wood-sellers" has provided in dissolving the pull of soritical reasoning? Well, I began this chapter by trying to present the 'core' of 'the sorites paradox' (the tension between (i) and (ii), above), and to attend closely to its alleged 'peripheries' (e.g., to the *arrangement* of constituent items of the source of the apparently soritical thing (e.g., a heap, or a set of colored objects)). I made the suggestion that, without the apparently 'peripheral' aspects, the 'core' difficulty was much less (than) compelling. But that, when one became clear on the 'periphery,' the 'core' difficulty started to dissolve on the one hand into a number of manageable, unsurprising questions about real differences between (for instance) men with a thin covering of hair (probably not bald) and men with a hairless pate but a sprouting of hair in the sideburn area (probably bald), and on the other hand into the unsurprising fact of there being genuine vague borderlines/ borderlands (absent contextual factors that settle the question) between (e.g.) tall and short, or green and blue. Any allegedly pure, core sorites paradox that remained, I challenged by emphasizing the central and in-eradicable role of clearly clear cases—paradigm cases—to the terms that are soritically attacked. This discussion will have left a possible worry intact for some: perhaps there are nevertheless cases where soritical reasoning poses a real problem: perhaps I had not worked hard enough at imagining such cases, or had not abstracted sufficiently from our ordinary practices to find such cases. Perhaps, at least if somehow the 'paradigm cases argument' that I made above fails, then we should seek such stranger cases in which soritical reasoning can seem plausible. "The woodsellers" involves such abstraction, and can seem to generate just such a plausibly problematic case, where something absurd seems to be happening: only this time, through a series of small steps rearranging some stuff such that what we would call the same amount of stuff—the numbers in 'the numbers-game' don't vary here, *we* would say—comes to cost more, or less. So perhaps, when we take seriously the 'peripheral'

aspects of the sorites, we can see how a case like “the woodsellers” can be real. But precisely because it could be real, and understandable, *it does not result in a lasting paradox*. So the woodsellers case help us to see how, whichever way we come at trying to generate a lasting sorites paradox, we should expect to fail. And it defuses the psychical boggle one may feel when for instance confronted by the thought that surely subtracting just one more piece cannot make something cease to be a heap. If the woodsellers can after all be imagined, then they make startlingly perspicuous how, without even subtracting one piece, one can de-create a heap, and care about the fact! They make extraordinarily vivid and central the allegedly ‘peripheral’ aspects of the paradox.

My argument concerning the woodsellers does *not*, I believe, *contradict* the reasoning of ‘New Wittgensteinian’ authors (such as Stanley Cavell, James Conant, Alice Crary, and David Cerbone) who have argued that perhaps the most crucial (and all-too-rarely understood) aspect of ‘scenarios’ of Wittgenstein’s such as that of the ‘builders’ and the ‘woodsellers’ is that Wittgenstein *intends* for them to collapse under the philosophical weight we are tempted, in reading his work, to try to make them bear. The builders and the woodsellers, philosophically speaking, yield only houses of air, whose collapse leaves no more than empty rubble behind. . . . For, if we succeed in coming up with a way of imagining how they could be actual (as perhaps I have done, above), *then they no longer do the exciting philosophical work one had initially dreamed them up for*. For instance, the woodsellers were supposed to thrill one with the thought that there could be a people with a quite thoroughly conceptually different arithmetic or logic from us, a ‘logically alien’ arithmetic or logic and yet still an arithmetic / a logic. But when Wittgensteinian considerations dissolve Frege’s notion of illogical thought—a kind of thought that would be ‘radically’ different from our own, which is yet a kind of *thought*—into nothingness, nothing useful remains in the idea that we may have thought we had of logically alien thought: of (e.g.,) a ‘wholly’ different mathematics or arithmetic which is yet a mathematics. The woodsellers, far from being would-be mathematical aliens, dissolve back into being strange yet conceivable strangers. We *might* indeed, that is, call the woodsellers as I have interpreted them ‘mathematical strangers’—for their attitude to counting incorporates (say) a ‘religious’ aspect that is unfamiliar—quite strange—to us—but we certainly do not need to see them as posing a problem of embodying what we wanted to call a genre of genuinely ‘logically alien thought.’ There can be readings of the woodsellers wherein they could be actual—and, just by virtue of their being actual, we see that they would not pose a deep philosophical problem for anyone with any kind of sensible take on these matters. They would pose rather a (serious) hermeneutic problem, which can (with serious effort) be sorted out. (One might usefully compare here Winch on the Azande, or Kuhn on Aristotelian physics.³³)



In short, I have begun to supply above, I believe, a slightly more-detailed scenario(s) than Wittgenstein's own, a scenario(s) that fills out his 'example' in a way that 'gives' it sense. The appearance of contradiction or paradox in the description of the woodsellers can perhaps be dissolved, if we treat them as caring about whether things are heaps or not—and if we treat them thereby as having the unexpected happy result of being part, truly now, of a *dissolution* of the would-be paradox of the heap. After a struggle, perhaps we have then found here a possible way in which this famous 'imaginary scenario' of Wittgenstein's, which has so resisted actualization, and whose resistance has generated great therapeutic benefit, might possibly be actualizable after all.

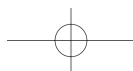
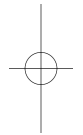
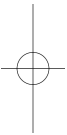
NOT REALISM, NOR ANTI-REALISM—NOR QUIETISM

It is very important not to assimilate what I have done so far to *any* form of objectionable conceptual relativism or anti-realism. My argument does not amount to the claim that a heap is no more than what we voluntarily choose to call a heap. Nor does what I have done here amount to a form of philosophical quietism.³⁴ My argument does not leave intact a pressing philosophical problem of what is to count as baldness or 'heapness' that it simply refuses to address. Far from it. To see why neither of these charges is apposite, it is enough I think to recall the following remarks of Wittgenstein's:

[S]omeone might object against me: "You take the easy way out! You talk about all sorts of language-games, but have nowhere said what the essence of a language-game, and hence of language, is: what is common to all these activities, and what makes them into language or parts of language . . ."

And this is true. __Instead of producing something common to all that we call language, I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all, __but that they are *related* to one another in many different ways. *And it is because of this relationship, or these relationships, that we call them all "language."*³⁵

I do not have to tell you what counts as baldness, any more than I have to tell you what counts as 'game-ness.' If you are a competent speaker of English, you know (That is: you know just as much as you need to know). Yet, as the italicized sentence above—a sentence so often ignored in accounts of Wittgenstein on 'family resemblance' . . . even, regrettably, by would-be Wittgensteinians—makes clear, there is no form of Anti-Realism here. It is the relationships of *cases of baldness to one another*, their complicatedly overlapping resemblances, that *is* the 'basis' for our understanding of what are and what are not cases of baldness, etc. The game-ness of games is 'surveyably' open to all; if you insist on continuing to



ask *what* it is that makes games games, the only needed answer available is: it is the similarities of games to one another (that makes them games).³⁶ The edges of this concept are variable (over time and space) and indeed we might well call them vague, but this vagueness, as I have been arguing throughout, need not pose a problem, need not be in any sense whatsoever a defect, except for one who is philosophically pre-determined that it shall do and shall be so.³⁷ Vagueness does not imply non-existence, nor need it imply that the existence of the vague object only comes at the cost of being wholly and objectionably dependent upon us.

The sorites is a focused example of the problem of vagueness. As the sorites dissolves, the philosopher wishing to hang onto it starts to find themselves appealing to *general* difficulties apparently raised by vagueness, as a means of continuing to find a problem. But games and languages and heaps and baldness are perfectly real. The usually vague yet sometimes very important borderlines where candidates shade off into non-cases does not require founding, nor does it require policing by philosophers. Competent language-users can take care of that, as and when they need to, by themselves.

Thus I take here neither an ‘epistemic’ view of vagueness nor a ‘metaphysical’ view of it. The idea of such views (or of a spectrum between Realism and Anti-Realism on which we can locate views of vagueness) falls away as an unnecessary and unhelpful abstraction, once one makes the moves I have made. The spectrum was to begin with a hopeless myth; because “vague” is primarily a term of *criticism* (cf. *PI* 88). As elaborated upon below: these matters are normative to begin with, and cannot undistortively be rendered as quasi-factual matters³⁸ that can be successfully theorized about.

So: Nor again have I not put forward a ‘Quietist’ view or theory. For I have not put forward any theory, *nor even any view*, at all. I have simply, one might say, *returned* us to our actual practices with words like “vague,” “heap,” “bald,” etc.

THE LAST STAND OF THE SORITICIST

Let us compare section 61 of Wittgenstein’s *Remarks on Colour*: “We are inclined to believe [misleadingly] that the analysis of our colour concepts would lead ultimately to the colours of places in our visual field, which are independent of any spatial or physical interpretation; for here there is neither light nor shadow, nor high-light, etc., etc.” I believe that such an inclination, risibly old-fashioned as it may sound,³⁹ lies at the root of the residual, hard-to-oust temptation to believe that there is a live sorites paradox even in cases where there is a pure numbers game or something similar in play. The unattractiveness of such a belief can I think be

thrown into sharp relief when one considers the following point: "tall" or "heap" or "red" are tempting candidates for soritical reasoning, but who would want to argue that "a lot" was a source of paradox? It is plainly not; it is *plainly* context- and purpose-relative. The boundary between "a lot" and "not a lot" is *exhausted* by the context and purpose of any utterance featuring these terms. But "a lot" is nevertheless in one fundamental respect a pure numbers game. Unlike with "heap," for instance, there is less question of the kind of 'woodsellers'-type points made earlier being relevant. There is no question of arrangement of the stuff making a difference: if 10 tons of sugar is first *called* "a lot," then it is a lot whether it is neatly piled up or accidentally spread all over the warehouse floor. (Though of course, what *counts* as 'a lot' of sugar spilled across the kitchen floor may only be a little if spilled across the warehouse floor! The term "a lot" too, of course, is in reality inextricably and utterly contextual/indexical.' The failure to see that both things are true—that "a lot" can be in one sense a pure numbers game and in another not—may lie at the root of the persistence of soriticism.)

My psycho-philosophical diagnosis of what happens if and when we persist in wanting to reason sorically—when one makes a last stand even when there seems nothing left to stand on, given the sequence of hazards and unattractivenesses to such reasoning set out in earlier sections of this chapter—is as follows: we do so because we unwittingly hover between two stances that are not cotenable. We persist in thinking *both* that there are essential conditions of application for the term in question such as the conditions of distribution and of contiguity principally relevant for the 'bald' and 'heap' cases, respectively, *and* that there are not. Only so long as we fail to see clearly that, *when all such conditions are eliminated entirely*, leaving (e.g.,) only the bare numbers (of hairs, of grains) and our particular purposes (a lot of sugar in my tea may not be a lot of sugar at the warehouse; a hundred policemen is a lot of policemen at a traffic accident, but not necessarily at a riot; etc.), then the appearance of paradox really does vanish,⁴⁰ . . . only that long, do we persist in being bamboozled by the paradoxes of vagueness. When we simply contemplate number, in the absence of any and all conditions of distribution and contiguity, and absent purpose-relative ways of settling the matter, there is no question of that number being 'a lot' or 'a little' (Is the number 77 a big number or not? Is the number 777,777,777,777 a big number or not? Is the speed of light in miles per hour a big number or not? Objectively?(?!)). The problem comes—there starts to feel as if there is a persisting paradox—when we start to include such conditions in our considerations, so as to have a problem at all, *but yet* want to eliminate them entirely (as 'impure'?) from the answers we give to the pressing questions that then start to (at least seem to) arise: *Is this a heap, or not? Is this man bald, or not?* Considerations of context are through-and-through inevitable, as soon as one has allowed conditions of distribution and contiguity to enter

into one's considerations *at all* (and now recall our discussion of allegedly 'pure' cases of the sorites, such as color spectra, earlier; think of actual conditions in which one encounters color-spectra, and how they vary); but yet we are tempted to look for a philosophical *answer* to the paradox (e.g., the claim that vagueness is merely epistemic; and/or that our language is in itself flawed; etc.) that can transcend what, following Wittgenstein and Garfinkel,⁴¹ I want to suggest are utterly unavoidable and normally utterly unproblematic 'indexical' features of our utterances, our practices.

In short, once more: Context matters. And part of context is the mat-tering of the case. It matters whether it matters or not. Philosophers tend not to see that only when it *matters* whether or not we apply the label "heap" or what-have-you is there a paradox in the offing; but that *in just those cases*, we can sort out what our answer will be, if necessary by stipulating a rule.

It only looks like there really is the paradox of the heap so long as we—unawarely (and absurdly)—hover, by wanting the term "heap" *to be both context-bound and context-independent* in its use.

CONCLUSION

What have I done, in this chapter? I have (I think) exhausted the defenses of the soritist, by laying out: (A) the incremental and fundamental significance of the omission of (or at best insufficient emphasis on or a wrong kind of emphasis on) context in standard treatments of sorites paradoxes, and (B) the insufficiently acknowledged significance of paradigms in some apparently pure sorites cases. Having thereby assembled a powerful set of arguments against those who think that sorites puzzles confront us with genuine paradoxes, I then allowed that someone might think that we can persuade ourselves of the actuality of the alleged paradoxes by imagining cases in which they are realized. I pointed out that there is a parallel here to certain readings on which Wittgenstein is taken to be trying to persuade us of the actuality of problems raised by logical deviance by presenting us with cases in which such 'deviance' is purportedly realized. I noted that there is a structural similarity between a central set of passages in Wittgenstein that gets discussed in this connection—the passages from the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* that deal with the so-called 'woodsellers'—and the case, central to discussions of sorites paradoxes, of heaps. I was then accordingly able to use my commentary on Wittgenstein to make I hope a fairly decisive deflationary persuasive move directed towards those who cling to the idea that sorites paradoxes are real. Such persuasion, I hope to have delivered while remaining properly Wittgensteinian in the sense of not invoking *any* new theory of vagueness.⁴² My approach has been (in terms of my reading of and man-

ner of application of Wittgenstein) 'resolute' in seeking to show the person tempted by soritical reasoning that such temptation always involves a kind of equivocation, a hovering between different things that one could be intelligibly wanting to mean by the words that one reaches for when one fixates on the sorites.

There is, I submit, no interesting sorites paradox to be garnered from imagining (say) an idling unused *imaginary* color-chart. One has at the least, rather, to imagine one actually being looked at, employed. When one does so, then, while it remains quite natural to say that there will normally be borderlands where one might well simply refrain from judging which color precisely one was seeing,⁴³ it also becomes much easier, for instance, to imagine aspect-shifts (which might come at various points, depending on circumstances) in the color one was looking at. Such that one would reasonably say of two shades which might be abstractly indistinguishable that the point of transition between (say) red and orange happened *there*.⁴⁴ That is: I might well not be making any kind of mistake or producing any kind of myth, if I were to judge, if urged or forced to pronounce on the matter, that a certain point in a real color-chart was where the transition from red to orange was best said/judged to be effected.⁴⁵ Even if, were I to be presented with the two shades either side of the transition-point I picked, isolated, in a psychological experiment, I could not distinguish them from one another. (Even indiscernibility on top of induction (roughly: my (i), above: a series of small steps) need not imply a soritical paradox.)

Again, colors are in the first instance defined by their paradigm-cases, not by their edges; that is why none of this should be surprising (Here, I am recapitulating and building on the argument begun in the section, "The Function of 'Paradigm Cases,'" above). Houghton, from *Models of Meaning*, again:

In any procession of cases of the kind which the Sorites paradox invites us to consider there will come a point, no doubt an unstable one, where the next case appears memorably, as well as observably, different, not indeed . . . from the preceding case, but from the case with which we started. The paradox works precisely by fooling us into disregarding the emergence of these salient differences and concentrating on the lack of salient differences in a pairwise comparison of neighbouring cases.⁴⁶

In sum: For our purposes, which vary, there will be points at which one member falls under a predicate and the next does not, *even if* those members are, *in isolation*, pairwise-indiscernible. (That is, of course, leaving aside what we will often do in such cases: which is simply and happily to speak of a 'gray area,' a borderland, a zone where the case in question is neither one thing nor the other.) Thus there will be—unstable, of course—sharp boundaries drawable for most vague predicates, without this in the slightest contradicting the 'nature' of vagueness. (The scare

quotes are advised, because one of the ways we are fooled into thinking that we are thus contradicting the 'nature' of vagueness is by being fooled into thinking that 'it' *has* a nature. One might then usefully say: 'Vagueness' is not a phenomenon we find *in* the world; it is, rather, perspectival. Even, better: It is a *value*-term. See once more especially *PI* 88.)

The same with height:⁴⁷ If I were presented with two men one of whom was 0.05 of an inch smaller than the other, I would most likely judge either that both were tall or that both were small (Though the qualification—"most likely"—is needed; for it would depend on the purpose of the judgement). If I were to judge both as "tall," and you were to judge both as "small," there is not yet a *paradox* any more than there is if one of us thinks three sugars in a cup of tea "a lot"⁴⁸ and the other doesn't! And if we lined up a whole lot of men in a great long line, and their height very gradually dropped, and (*per impossibile*) everything else stayed the same (because of course in the real world girth, etc., might affect judgements of tallness, etc.), then there would still not need to be any paradox: at some point, if one didn't simply (and not unreasonably!) reject the whole exercise as artificial and meaningless, one would no doubt judge that there was no longer tallness in the man before us, even if the difference between the two men between whom one drew the line would, *if the two were considered in isolation*, be insignificant or *even imperceptible*. Given that the two were/are *not* being considered in isolation, there need be no paradox.

These considerations, I believe, are the final and decisive laying to rest of soriticism. The importance—the centrality—of paradigm cases deserves central emphasis, as others have made clear and as I made clear in an earlier section; and the exemplified considerations that I have adduced above, since beginning my rebuttal of what I have called "The Last Stand of the Soritist," are I think (I hope) likely to prove therapeutically decisive, in ending the attractiveness of soritical reasoning to philosophical minds, especially minds that are in the slightest open to learning from the actual humdrum morals—as opposed to fantasized Relativist or Anti-Relativist morals—of Wittgenstein's consideration of 'the woodsellers.' When we consider 'logically alien thought' in tandem with the sorites, the latter ends up looking as absurd, as conceptually non-existent, as the former. Where and when it apparently *does* exist, it is just not enduringly logically alien, not enduringly paradoxical.

To put all this in roughly the terms in which Analytic philosophers like to put them: The felt force of the sorites paradox crucially rests on the 'induction premise' that features in all soritical reasoning: to the effect that (in the case of color, e.g.,) if patch n is red, then patch $n + 1$ is red (where the patches in question are lined up in order of decreasing redness but are pairwise indiscriminable with respect to color). This is in effect my (i), from earlier: small steps cannot matter. One might then put

my suggestion in this way: given enough context, we'll 'find' a clean break-point in any alleged sorites sequence—that, at some point, the induction premise, (i), ceases to hold. *Not* given enough context, there will be genuinely undetermined borderline cases: but so what? Just fill in a context, and your problem disappears. I have also argued that (ii) from earlier is probably false: there are, I have suggested, other things—usually, and perhaps (I rather suspect, though of course I have not exactly *proved* this) *always*, in real sorites cases—that matter, besides the small steps that philosophers usually focus on.

This chapter may appear to have put forward a familiar enough 'theory' of vagueness: some form of a ('strong'!) 'contextualist' theory.⁴⁹ But again: I have not put forward any theory at all. I have in the end simply roundly rejected the standard presentation of what the sorites *is*; and have then worked with the reader to dissolve the recurring appearance of (recurring) paradox. I have simply returned the reader to the humdrum unavoidable centrality of context, in a deep and wide enough sense of that word.

In the present chapter, then, I have (if you must) defended roughly a context-relative, interest-relative, 'indexical' 'view' of vagueness—except that I have endeavored also to defuse one's sense that a *view* is really being put forward here at all. Certainly, I hope to have avoided the (to my mind) deeply dubious theoretical assumptions in semantics that 'contextualists' typically depend upon. Most notably, I hope that, despite seemingly similar 'conclusions,' no one could mistake what I have set out here for the kind of theorizing undoubtedly purveyed by (for instance) Scott Soames.⁵⁰

I hope in fact to be preserving here the substantial nuggets of insight in *both* 'supervaluationism' and 'contextualism,' *but without actually putting forward any theory of the 'phenomena' at all.*

As Wittgenstein 'argues' extremely powerfully between *PI* sections 65 and 88, there need be no enduring puzzle around vagueness, if only we do not trap ourselves into one. Wittgenstein's reflections do not amount to any controversial theses, I believe, nor do mine. And it is worth remarking that Wittgenstein rightly places centrally in his considerations a point about 'vagueness' almost universally neglected in the philosophical literature: that "vague" is usually intended, in actual usage, *as a term of criticism*. It is really just silly to think that one could have a theory or a thesis that accounts for a term of criticism as if it were a fact needing to be explained! I have tried to show, contrariwise, that, where there *is* potentially ground/room for criticism, then there is room for tighter specification, that can be achieved; and that elsewhere there just is not ground for criticism.

For there *remain* of course contexts in which we don't really know how to apply an expression; but all that this tells us is that our expressions don't carry membership conditions with them from the abstract

into the concrete. There may sometimes not be a univocal and unequivocal answer to the question “Is he bald, or not?” or “Is this a heap, or not?” But why should this surprise us? Any more than it surprises us or dissatisfies us, and is thereby cause for criticism, outside the priggish philosopher’s study, to hear people saying things like, “Well, he’s a *bit* bald”; or, simply, “*Yes and no.*”^{51 52}

So much for the sorites. It has haunted us (philosophers) a long time. Let us turn now to a close cousin of it: the surprise-exam paradox. A more recent addition to the philosopher’s brain-teasing/tormenting menu, which too can yield, I will suggest, to my Wittgensteinian therapy, and to thinking about how what philosophers regard as ‘paradoxes’ can actually play out in imaginable real-life scenarios.

NOTES

1. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009.
2. By Ludwig Wittgenstein and Friedrich Waismann, London: Routledge, 2003, ed. Gordon Baker.
3. Who, not entirely incidentally, has powerful criticisms to make of Chomsky, criticisms that mesh well, I think, with mine, in Chapter 3, above.
4. E.g., It is given no role whatsoever in R.M. Sainsbury’s widely respected and influential textbook treatment, (in chapter 2 of) his *Paradoxes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
5. An interesting example partly parallel to the example of a heap needing to have a certain amount of physical looseness—of air—in it to *be* a heap, an example not often considered, is the vague term, “meringue.” A certain amount of egg whipped up but with very little air present will not constitute a meringue; add (*in the right way!*) a bunch more air, and you have your meringue. . . .
6. Because he ignores this aspect of the sorites, Hanoch Ben-Yami’s proposed “Wittgensteinian solution to the sorites” (*Philosophical Investigations* 33:3 (July 2010), pp. 229–44) is inadequate. Furthermore, Ben-Yami leaves intact the inductive series that motivationally generates the sorites. Thus he will not satisfy, as I aim to do, those caught up in soritical reasoning. (He does not ‘therapeutically’ *resolve* or *dissolve* the impulse to soriticism; he merely offers what will certainly be taken to be an inadequate attempted *solution* to a problem whose formulation he does not challenge.) He will inevitably be perceived, not without justification, as not having given any *reason* why arguments to the soritical conclusion are invalid.
7. This point is already well made by Linda Burns (see, e.g., her “Vagueness and Coherence,” *Synthese*, Volume 68, Number 3 (1986), 487–513) and by Don Levi (see especially p.485 of the latter’s “The Unbearable Vagueness of Being,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 34 (1996)).
8. A Wittgensteinian way with baldness (etc.) thus takes seriously its contextual (and social, etc.) reality as much more than a numbers game, and its *mattering*. (See also on this, for other examples of how point of onset of / the existence or otherwise of a heap, etc., can matter, p.473 and p.476 of Levi’s *op.cit.* As Levi points out, at p.476, sadly philosophers typically don’t think it matters whether or not the examples considered in the course of discussions of the sorites matter or not. This is a grave error: for if and how they matter in fact matters crucially to the question of whether (and if so how) a paradox is generated. See below for more on this.)

9. "Wherever a man finds what he calls himself, there, I think, another may say is the same person. *It is a forensic term, appropriating actions and their merit; and so belong[s] only to intelligent agents, capable of a law, and happiness, and misery.*" (Emphasis added; Book II Chapter XXVII entitled "On Identity and Diversity" in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689).) This aspect of Locke's famous thinking on personal identity is not nearly enough appreciated. It is normally thought that Locke is simply trying to answer the abstract question, "What is a person?" This passage helps give the lie to that view.

10. P.90, *Wittgenstein's Lectures: Cambridge, 1930-2* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980; ed. D. Lee).

11. See Wittgenstein's *Remarks on Colour*, (Transl. Anscombe, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), Part I section 61: "We are inclined to believe [misleadingly] that the analysis of our colour concepts would lead ultimately to the colours of places in our visual field, which are independent of any spatial or physical interpretation; for here there is neither light nor shadow, nor high-light, etc., etc." This dubious inclination is one powerfully attractive version of the inclination to hear "[shade of] color" as a term yielding a greater 'purity' than (say) "[degree of] baldness."

12. Very roughly: colors are, so far as we can tell, at least for human purposes, (very roughly) not enumerable. I.e., they seem to us to contain an 'infinite' gradation of shades.

13. And of course cases like this can be constructed for baldness, etc., too. What about photographs of someone going bald over time? Wouldn't that look similar to the line-up of monks that we just envisaged, in the previous section? If the photos started at the present day and worked backwards, that doesn't seem too artificial or unrealistic (which I said the monks example was). The bald man might be reminiscing through an album, yearning for his full-head-of-hair-days, and ask himself with a sigh, "Just when did I go bald?"

Sure. But: would he expect an 'exact' answer? My guess is that he might well answer something like: "I guess it was in my 40s." And this wouldn't mean: it (the process of going bald) started the second of his fortieth birthday and ended the second of his fiftieth. It would simply mean that during this time the 'event' (sic.) of his going bald occurred; but *not* at any exact moment. To think that it must have happened at some exact moment is simply to think in a way that fails to mesh with the way our language works. And work it does.

14. Wittgenstein, *Remarks on Colour*, Part I, section 50. I have amended the translation slightly. See also sections 63, 67 and 59.

15. *Ibid.*, Section 56.

16. (I shall argue much the same of the Surprise Exam Paradox, in Chapter 7, immediately to follow.) John-Michael Kuczynski, in his "Implicit comparatives and the Sorites," *History and Philosophy of Logic* 27 (Feb. 06), 1-8 takes context insufficiently seriously, despite all his efforts, and despite his absolutely correct focus on 'implicit comparatives' as a key to (*dis*-)solving the sorites. For instance, it is not necessarily true that "The sentence 'Bob is fast' makes a false statement if Bob is a cheetah whose top running speed is 30mph" (p.3). It depends on the context—on, indeed, the implicit or explicit comparatives surrounding it. (If Bob is being compared to other cats, for instance, he may well still be fast.) In n.4, Kuczynski sets pragmatics aside, to focus on semantics as the key issue for one taking on the sorites. This is a deep mistake: 'pragmatics' is always inextricable, integral to the point being made, when someone compares. Context, we might say, goes all the way down. . . .

17. See his *ibid.* Kuczynski, like my colleague David Houghton before him (in his 'Vagueness, Stipulations and Context,' *UEA papers in Philosophy* Vol. 11 (August 2000)), wants to hold that "this paradox can be solved while holding on to all the laws of classical logic" (Abstract, p.1). But actually, what is needed to lay the sorites to rest is to *dissolve* it, and simply to let the so-called 'laws' of logic fall as and if they may.

18. Unless, perhaps, we think of the numbering being a 'real number'—rather than a 'natural number'—numbering.

19. Implicit in my suggestions about these other factors that matter is also a challenge to (i): for, sometimes—in the right kind of context—small steps alone *plainly* do matter. Or again: you might for instance at some point just have too few grains of sand with which to make a heap.

This can seem intuitively a hard claim to pull off with regard to grains of sand, because of their tininess, in comparison with us: the reader may wish to switch example to roughly cubic toddlers' duplo-bricks. It is fairly easy to see how, suitably arranged, 4 such bricks might make a something worth calling a (fairly small) heap. Remove one of the bricks, and it is much harder to arrange what remains into anything worth calling a heap. Remove another, and I submit that it is now quite plain that one does not have a heap, however the two remaining bricks are arranged. This shows, indeed, that, whatever the broader context, both number *and* arrangement will *always* matter to some degree. For even in the case of the color-spectrum, it is liable to make a difference, whether or not one arranges the colors in a graded line or not. (For detailed justification of these points, see the section of this chapter shortly to follow, entitled "The Function of 'Paradigm-Cases'")

Note again here also how the sorites is to some degree a motley of genuinely different cases, importantly varied across the (i)–(ii) structure they share in common, as they are standardly presented: for baldness is importantly different from 'heapness,' in relation to the degree to which individual / very small numbers of (small) steps can make a *difference*. Very small numbers of hairs cannot be so crucially determinative in the case of baldness as I have suggested they *can* be in the toddlers' duplo-bricks version of the 'heap paradox' just discussed. This is because the place at which baldness arises is probably always somewhere further out from zero than in that case. I.e., Someone with *hundreds* or even possibly *thousands* of hairs on his head may well be quite properly called bald. Again, philosophers' treatments tend to forget this.

20. Though we should in any case note that, as Ben-Yami points out, on p.231 of his *op.cit.*, indiscernibility is of course *not* a *necessary* condition for the sorites. This can easily be shown with examples of monetary gain (as in Ben-Yami) or of adding grains of sand, or bricks (as in my examples, above).

21. Kuczynski's argument is similar; but I have suggested that it is unhelpful to—as he does—take oneself to be presenting a *theoretical solution* to a *well-defined* problem, when one *reminds* one's readers of the import of 'implicit comparatives.' I return to this theme in my "Conclusion," below.

22. The sorites is a paradigm-case of vagueness, perhaps? . . .

23. For explication of what this means, see for instance Gordon Baker's "Wittgenstein on metaphysical/everyday use," *Phil. Quarterly* Vol. 52 (July '02), 290–302, reprinted in his *Wittgenstein's Method* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

I am not, of course, seriously entertaining/suggesting the risible claim that people never ever reason soritically to the point of paradox outside Philosophy Departments; I am, however, suggesting that people do not end up reasoning soritically to the point of paradox once they have overcome metaphysical confusion and abstractions. When people reason soritically in everyday life, a relatively rare phenomenon, the reasoning is most typically brought to an end by their interlocutors responding at some point (roughly) that a point has been stretched beyond breaking-point, that they have taken their argument too far. That enough really is enough.

And that is usually enough, and rightly so.

24. See *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978 (1956, posthumous; revised ed.; transl. Anscombe)), Part 1 sections 140–53, especially 149–50. Alice Crary gives these people (if that is the right word—see below) the potentially more fruitful name, "mathematical strangers." See her powerful discussion in "Wittgenstein and political philosophy," *The New Wittgenstein* (eds. Crary and Read, London: Routledge, 2000). And see below.

25. And that are already clear in Crary's "Wittgenstein and political philosophy," and in David Cerbone's deeply intriguing "How to do things with wood," both in Crary and Read (*ibid.*) (and in James Conant's work on this, most notably his "The

Search for Logically Alien Thought: Descartes, Kant, Frege, and the Tractatus" (*Philosophical Topics*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1991), pp. 115–80)).

26. A more satisfactory way of understanding the point of 'the woodsellors' in Wittgenstein's discussion is perhaps as being against the idea of practices as quite discrete from one another, and against the (related) idea of mathematics, or a part of it, as (as it were, metaphysically) *complete*, as if a practice which doesn't have what we have is *short* of it. Though see also Crary and Cerbone's discussions, *op.cit.*; and see also below.

27. An interesting analogue in our language is the term "wood" (as in "forest"). So: one wood can be bigger than another because it covers a wider area *even if it contains fewer trees* (and, even, less volume of wood), being less densely planted. . . . See also the notes below, for some further analogical discussion on this point.

28. For Sainsbury (*op. cit.*), presumably, the woodsellors would be this, or at best (!) plain stupid. *If* it is clear and indubitable that only the number of grains or planks matters (and not their arrangement), as Sainsbury very much implies in discussion of the sorites, then the woodsellors would be simply wrong/irrational. But sometimes, as argued above, whether something is (arranged into) a heap (or whatever vague term you please) *matters*; it is not only the quantity of matter that matters. Consider the discussion of meringues, earlier, which indicates at least that 'arrangement' of the 'same stuff' tends to take for granted things like air, which cannot always be taken for granted. Or, slightly fancifully but not I think literally absurdly: if there were a democratically agreed scheme for bald men to be compensated for their (let us imagine) allegedly lower quality of life, it would presumably be their baldness (or otherwise), and not the sheer number of hairs on their head, that was considered to be to the point. A broadly supervenient account—suitably deflated by a broadly Wittgensteinian emphasis on context and practice, such as mine—such as that offered by David Houghton (in his "Vagueness, Stipulation and Context") may help at this point, in enabling us to recover the ordinary. That is, to see through our philosophical bewitchment, and to see clearly (again) how we can reliably and (crucially) purpose-relatively *judge* that such-and-such is or is not bald, without having to *solve* 'the sorites paradox' in the abstract.

29. As exposed by, for example, Davidson, "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme" (in *Inquiries Into Truth and Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)); though, *contra* Davidson, I think that some of those who he criticizes as conceptual relativists, notably Kuhn, are in fact quite consonant with the line of thought I am sketching in this chapter. For detail on how to interpret Kuhn as largely invulnerable to correct Davidsonian reasoning, see my *Kuhn* (Oxford: Polity, 2002, joint with W. Sharrock), and 1.2–3 of my *Wittgenstein among the Sciences* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012, ed. Simon Summers).

30. *My* practice here is much influenced by Peter Winch's epochal discussion of the Azande in his "Understanding a Primitive Society" (*American Philosophical Quarterly*, 1964, 64; 1, 307–24), in which, to avoid misunderstanding them, he likens some Azande practices closer to religious practices (e.g., Christian prayer) than to the scientific-technological practices beside which Evans-Pritchard had tended to place them. One could compare here also Thomas Kuhn's splendid hermeneutical efforts and successes *vis-à-vis* apparently 'alien' science, such as Aristotle's *Physics*. (By contrast, on the fantasy of 'logically alien thought,' see my various published papers critiquing Louis Sass. See also Hutchinson, Read, and Sharrock, *There is No Such Thing as a Social Science: In Defence of Peter Winch*, (London: Ashgate, 2008).)

31. See the discussion below of Conant et al. on Wittgenstein (and Frege) on "a hitherto unknown kind of madness": 'logically alien thought.'

32. See again Crary's and Cerbone's papers, for a forceful account of the limitation.

33. On which, see my discussions in *Wittgenstein among the Sciences*, for detail.

34. Unless perhaps by "quietism" one means to index a line of thought such as that of Cerbone at the close of his (*op.cit.*).

35. *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958 (1953); henceforth *PI*) section 65; emphasis mine. (For further discussion of this passage, see my discussion of Nickles et al. in my “How and How Not to Write on a Legendary Philosopher,” in *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 35: 3 (September 2005).)

36. Call this the truth in essentialism, if you like. Hopefully, this ‘truth’ is ‘woolly’ and contentless and ‘question-begging’ enough to seem as *trivial* and *uncontroversial* as I mean it to sound. If it is a thesis, it is not one that anyone who understood it would see as a matter of opinion, a matter for controversy. Everyone would simply agree to it. (For further explication, see my critique of cognitive-science renditions of Kuhn and of Wittgenstein on games, in my “How and How Not to Write on a Legendary Philosopher,” *op.cit.*)

37. On this, see especially Wittgenstein’s masterly discussion in for instance sections 68–71, 76–77, 80–84, & 88, of *PI*.

38. For more explication of my meaning here, see my extended debate in the years 2000–2003 with Michael Dummett in the pages of *Philosophy*, on ‘Realism’ and ‘Anti-Realism’ with regard to time. Or see 3.1.4 of my *Applying Wittgenstein* (London: Continuum, 2007; edited by Laura Cook), where the key passages are collected.

39. Section 262, *Remarks on Colour*; “I would like to say “*this* colour is at *this* spot in my visual field (completely apart from any interpretation).” But what would I use this sentence for? “*This*” colour must (of course) be one that I can reproduce. And it must be determined under what circumstances I say something is this colour.”

It probably sounds less risibly old-fashioned to most readers if put as a problem of the pure existence of colors as spectra, rather than as basic sense-data. But there is no difference, structurally, between these two. Their philosophical dissolution is the same.

40. The point here is much the same as that I will make in Chapter 7, below (especially at n.18 and *supra*) concerning the way in which the surprise exam paradox and cognate ‘backward induction’ paradoxes actually vanish as *paradoxes* if they are understood as narrowly (as little more than glorified exercises in counting backwards) as they are often understood in Analytic presentations. This should not greatly surprise us: for the sorites *too* can of course be (and most frequently is) understood as a backward induction paradox.

41. Harold Garfinkel, the founder of the anti-social-science of ‘ethnomethodology’; see e.g., his *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Cambridge: Polity, 1984 (1967)); see also relevant expository work on ethnomethodology and indexicality, etc., by Mike Lynch, Wes Sharrock, and Rod Watson.

42. If we now revisit Sainsbury’s (representative, standard) failure to complicate the alleged sorites-paradox of color by considering actual instances of use of color-terms, and by considering actual instances (which will vary) of encounter with and use of color-charts and the like, Sainsbury’s failure starts to look not merely (proto-)typical but in a way unsurprising. Attention to Wittgenstein (i.e., to consideration of actual or potential practice) can help prevent such failures.

43. And indeed, further, as mentioned earlier, in respect of what precisely one is comparing or ‘charting’ the colors will itself be an issue, in any real context. As Wittgenstein remarks, in section 251 of Part III of *Remarks on Colour*: “The difficulties which we encounter when we reflect about the nature of colours . . . are contained in the fact that we have not one but several related concepts of the sameness of colours.” For example, as Wittgenstein says, in section 255: “Our colour concepts sometimes relate to substances (Snow is white), sometimes to surfaces (this table is brown), sometimes to the illumination (in the reddish evening light), sometimes to transparent bodies. . . .” Similar passages, similarly devastating to the soritist’s effort to set up a (real) sorites paradox, can be found in Merleau-Ponty—see, e.g., p.85 of Katherine Morris’s *Starting with Merleau-Ponty* (London: Continuum, 2012).

44. Also salient here is Charles Travis’s important point at p.361 of his “Vagueness, Observation, and Sorites” *Mind*, XCIV (375), 1985, that “‘If A is red and B visually indistinguishable from A, then that provides excellent reason for judging that B is red.’

As long as we stick to reasons for judging, and concern ourselves with how judging is to be done, paradox simply cannot arise."

45. And the exercise would be less likely to feel merely forced, if my judgement was somewhat consequential: e.g., if it were at least part of a set of decisions on a color-scheme for a redesign of (say) the Philosophy Department building. Though we should note that the consequentiality of one's decision as to which shade of paint one was picking is not yet matched by a consequentiality in one's decision as to what to call it. In 'pure' sorites cases, the question to ask is always: Why does it matter, whether you call this red or orange, or baldness (see n.8, above) or not?

46. Houghton, *Models of Meaning*, p.16.

47. See p. 23 of Sainsbury's (*op.cit.*).

48. On the context-sensitivity of "a lot," see pp.362–363 of Charles Travis's piece, (*op.cit.*). Here is what he says there about 'Wang's paradox.' It is salient and powerful enough to be worth quoting at *considerable* length:

The premises are: (A) 1 is a small number; (B) If n is a small number, then $n + 1$ is a small number (for all n). The first thing to note is that this paradox derives much of its plausibility from the fact that, like most philosophical conundrums, it is stated outside of any context of use. What about (A), for example; is 1 a small number? Consider the following: one air traffic controller to another: 'How many jumbo jets have crashed today?'; other: 'Only one'; first: 'Well, that's a small number.' // Seeing whether a number is small tout court is more than just a difficult task, and troubles begin with 1. The problem is not that matters get less clear by degrees as numbers get bigger. For there is no degree of clarity or justness with which 'is small' fits a given number as such. Rather, there are many ways of marking off the small from the non-small, each correct for some judging of the matter. What is unclear on one way may be quite clear on another, and what is clearly small on one way clearly not on another. The multiplicity of ways such matters are sometimes to be decided naturally makes it hard to spot a unique boundary which is correct tout court—not because it is unclear where such lies, but because there isn't any. Where circumstance indicates a particular way of bounding the small, there may still be unclear cases, of course. But at least there may also be clear ones. // With the above reservation, let us let (A) pass and turn to (B). . . . (B) really ought to be rephrased: since, for most purposes, 1 does not make a great difference to the size of a number[;] if we take it, for some n , that n is small, we thereby have excellent reason to take it that $n + 1$ is small. Such reason, of course, is subject to coming into the balance with other reasons, including reasons against calling $n + 1$ small. If there are such, it will have to be weighed up with them. What the other reasons are will depend heavily on context and purposes. Which is why it would be nice to have some on hand. Suppose, for example, we are interested in the number of people who inhabit various cities. Then for many purposes, we may be able to agree that 7,000,000 is a large number. This means that any reason for calling 7,000,000 small, derived from its proximity to small numbers, or numbers which there is some reason to call small, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. If 7,000,000 is large, then it transmits reasons to its neighbours downwards by the same considerations by which 1, if it is small, transmits reasons upwards. 6,999,999, for example, is quite close to 7,000,000, which provides excellent reason for saying that it, too, is not small. For any given number between 1 and 7,000,000, the competing reasons from these two sources, and any other reasons, if they are present, will have to be weighed up. Even though it is numbers we are concerned with, adding up reasons is not an arithmetical process, nor a precise one. So there may be many cases where we cannot perceive any clear outcome of the weighing. That does not matter, so long as there are cases where the outcome is clear, such as 2 and 6,999,999. The

principles which it is reasonable to accept (not quite premiss (B)) can thus be seen not to entail that all numbers are small. There is no [sorites] paradox.

Like Travis, and somewhat like Don Levi, my argument in the present chapter is that, when we really understand that and how context is king, we can lose our sense completely that there need be a sorites *paradox*.

49. See, e.g., D. Raffman, "Vagueness without Paradox," *Philosophical Review* 103 (1), 1994, pp. 41–74; and "Vagueness and Context-Relativity," *Philosophical Studies* 81 (2–3), 1996, pp. 175–92; S. Soames *Understanding Truth* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999).

50. See Soames's *ibid.*, and his "Replies," in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 65 (2002), 429–52. Of the standard Analytic accounts, I am closest perhaps to Graff's subtle account, but even her account is much more a (revisionist) theory than mine is: see her "Shifting Sands," *Philosophical Topics* 28 (2000), 45–81. (In McGilchristian terms: Even most of those Analytic philosophers who are genuinely looking, along with me, to escape the anti-contextual straitjacket of overly analytical or compositional thinking generally end up getting tied back into 'left-brain' prejudices. "Heap" just *isn't* an analytic category, and "context" can't be totally theorized. The philosopher's first mistake is to think otherwise, to suppose that there ought always to be a hard and fast answer, theoretically derivable, to the question of whether or not something is a heap or not, and to the question of what 'the' context of something is.) The nature of my reasoning, especially perhaps in "The Function of Paradigm Cases," above, is indebted more to the work of David Houghton and Mark Platts.

51. Levi is excellent on this point, at p.474 and pp.478–79 of his *op.cit.* Such yes-and-no answers may sometimes (such as in the case of someone who, because of the delicate point they are at in their maturation, is and is not an adult) be *precisely* the right answer, rather than some alleged unsatisfactory fence-sitting or than just a fancy or elusive way of saying "I don't know."

52. My thanks to the members of the Philosophy Evening Reading Group at UEA, especially to John Collins, Cathy Rowett, Ruth Makoff, the late Nadine Cipa, and (above all) Angus Ross. Thanks also to Wes Sharrock, and (especially) to David Houghton, for helpful comments on an earlier version of this chapter, and also to two anonymous referees and an audience at the New School University, New York.

DRAFT

SEVEN

The Dissolution of the ‘Surprise Exam’ Paradox—and its Implications for Rational Choice Theory

The present chapter, like the previous chapter, concerns a paradox of interest ostensibly only to philosophers—and a much more recent one, to boot, that might seem mostly ‘for fun,’ even for them (us). Have we moved from the would-be sublime to the actually ridiculous?

I think not. For, while it is true that the ‘surprise exam paradox’ is hardly of world-shattering importance in itself, it is nevertheless a paradox that, as we shall see, at the very least tells us a great deal about the wont of philosophers to mire themselves in paradoxes. As with my diagnosis of the ‘sorites,’ in Chapter 6, above, thinking about what goes wrong in (generating) the surprise exam paradox can tell us a lot about how deeply allegedly ‘deep’ thinking can go wrong, and about how thinking can instead go right.¹

Moreover, and still more importantly, as will also unfold, there are deep parallels between the surprise exam paradox and other ‘backward induction’ paradoxes that are of huge importance in the field of ‘game theory,’ and (thereby) of economics (Thus the term “philosophers” can certainly helpfully be broadly interpreted, in the present context, to include practitioners of other disciplines). Getting clear about the ‘surprise exam’ will help us to get clear about *these* paradoxes, and about the (dangerous) assumptions about rationality often made in them, assumptions which have had a significant and largely deleterious influence on the world around us in recent times.

The ‘surprise exam’ paradox is different from some other philosophers’ paradoxes in that it doesn’t initially *appear* to be a paradox at all. One has

to *argue* that it is/generates a paradox. One has to argue, that is, that, contrary to appearances, one cannot announce at the start of the term that there will be a surprise exam sometime during the term. The paradox is *that* one cannot do this thing that seems on the face of it eminently doable.

Let me start then by provisionally accepting that, as philosophers typically describe the ‘surprise exam,’ there cannot be any such thing. That is: there cannot be (such) a pre-announced surprise exam. The paradox, if it can be stated, is insoluble. I mean by this, that the standard argument by backward induction (The exam can’t take place in the last class of term, because it wouldn’t be a surprise; but then it can’t take place in the next-to-last class; etc., and so on, back to the present) is valid. So long as you allow/insist that there cannot be a surprise exam in the final class of term,² then the backward induction is unavoidable.³

Within its own terms, the surprise exam paradox is (in this sense) ungainsayable. Surprisingly—paradoxically—there cannot be such a (pre-announced) surprise exam, in a class where the students understand why there cannot.⁴

Should this chapter then end here? No, for more than one thing has already gone wrong. Some of those things can be traced back to important phrases above, such as “as philosophers . . . describe the ‘surprise exam,’” and “within its own terms.” Here is a key thing that goes wrong in those descriptions/terms: Philosophers typically pay no attention to why the setting of an (actual) surprise exam can matter, to how and why it makes a difference:⁵ namely, the fact that having the threat of a surprise exam hanging over the students’ heads may incentivize them to work harder throughout the term, and to stay prepared, ready to be examined. The paradox depends then on the assumption that the teacher is making a *claim* about *what will be true of the students*, namely, that they will be surprised, rather than (what is surely a far more realistic assumption) that the teacher is simply trying to *motivate* them to do the reading and otherwise be prepared for each class. As we shall see, the paradox thrives on our failure to consider how its paradoxical conclusion would/could actually be avoided. However, even before that, the bizarre nature of what the teacher is assumed to be saying or doing needs to be clearly highlighted—as philosophers never, typically, highlight it.⁶

A real teacher making a surprise exam announcement is not bothered about what will be true of the students, except in the unusual though interesting kind of case (considered below) where the teacher is interested in the students’ relation to the logic of the surprise-exam announcement itself. The teacher is bothered about trying to get the students to take a different attitude to their studies: a more diligent and prepared attitude. This is the *point* of the announcement that the teacher wants to make. We lose sight of it at our peril, as we shall see in greater detail below.

So: The surprise exam paradox is that it seems as though one should be able to set a surprise exam and announce that there will be such an exam; but yet, if we accept the scenario as philosophers typically announce it and limit ourselves to that, there can't be / one can't. One can prove that there can't be / that one can't (and I have for the moment at least accepted that the proof is valid: 'on its own terms'). It's paradoxical: to allow (or indeed: to prove) that there cannot be a pre-announced surprise exam. (That I cannot say "I am going to set you a surprise exam sometime this term" and be saying something true.)

The next question to ask, however, is what becomes of the concept of a 'pre-announced surprise exam,' now that we have shown that (in the form in which it is purveyed by philosophers, and provided we—wilfully, troublingly—ignore the *point* of the announcement) there can be no such thing. What is this (that there cannot be)? Is the case like that of the would-be trisection of the angle with a ruler and compass?⁷ A nothing which appears to be a something? A (pseudo-) 'task' ill-expressed as being 'impossible'?

We thought we knew what it meant to speak of a pre-announced surprise exam; but it turns out that, thus far, we *didn't*, and don't.

It starts to look, then, as though the word "cannot" above is misleading, too. It's not so much that philosophers have proved that there cannot be a pre-announced surprise exam, that this would-be event cannot take place. It's rather that when we spoke about such an alleged exam we were unwittingly hovering in our uses of words. There is, it seems now, no 'it,' no 'thing' that there cannot be, here. There was only the illusory appearance of one, that fooled us.

What is it that was supposed to have been proven to be 'impossible'? The surprise exam paradox now starts to look like a riddle, in something like Diamond's sense of the term "riddle."⁸ It is misleading to think that *the* surprise exam has been shown to be impossible. We haven't yet, it would now seem, specified anything as meeting the conditions for being *the* would-be surprise exam.

But all this presumably means that we need to specify 'the pre-announced surprise exam' more closely. There is as yet no there there; so we need to attempt explicitly to provide one. Let's have a go:

In a class which meets regularly for a limited period of time (a term), and in which the teacher announces early in the term that there will be a surprise exam taking place in regular class-time in one of the class-meetings during the term, there cannot be such an exam (that is a surprise).

That is slightly less wieldy than we might expect. Why did I need to stipulate so many conditions (already)? Because, if one doesn't, *then it becomes obvious how there can be (pre-announced) surprise exams*. Here's how:

- If the students were assuming that the exam would take place during class-time, and the teacher surprised them with the exam taking place outside class-time, they would be surprised. One very easy way to do this would be to surprise them with a *take-home* exam.
- Another would be to surprise them by springing on them an extra class-session just for the purposes of taking the (surprise) exam: either just after the end of term, or between classes during term.

There are also slightly less easy ways of achieving the same object:

- The exam could take place randomly out of class-time altogether. (E.g., The teacher could surprise the students in the corridor, after class, and spring an exam on them there and then.)

We needn't even get so radical. Reverting back to the exam taking place in normal class-time, during term-time, here are some other ways in which it is possible to achieve a true surprise exam scenario:

- The teacher could pick a date out of a hat, and not tell any of the students what date had been picked out. Then, only if the date picked happened to be the last day of class would students not be surprised by the exam: and even then, they would still be on tenterhooks until the penultimate class. (This possibility makes clear a crucial point about the surprise exam paradox, a point to which we will return: how deeply it depends on the *teacher's* state of knowledge (as well as the students') about what is going to happen.)
- The teacher could pre-announce a surprise exam in this way: "You are probably / almost certainly going to have a surprise exam sometime this term." The lack of certainty about the exam 'having' to be in the last class if it had not happened by the time of the penultimate class would be enough, then, to ensure that the exam was a surprise whatever class it fell in.
- The teacher could announce that there will be a surprise exam during normal class-time, during term-time sometime—and then immediately give the exam, there and then. (This option relies on the 'conversational implicature,' if that is the right term, of the exam that is 'pre-announced' not being expected to take place immediately! It is indeed surprising if someone, similarly, announces: "One day, I'll throw myself off a cliff" — and then promptly does.)⁹

These scenarios forestall a successful backward-induction in one or another way.

What we are doing is examining, as philosophers too rarely do, the civil status of the surprise exam (paradox), or its status in civil life (Cf. *PI* 125). We are examining what in the previous Chapter we called, deliberately prejudicially, the alleged 'periphery' of a paradox, and showing how it can become central. And what we are uncovering is: how there *can*

be surprise exams, in ordinary language, in real life. Especially once we see how the surprise exam *is not just 'a numbers-game.'* Not just a matter, as it were, of counting back to zero (that is, of working through the backward induction quasi-mechanically).¹⁰

It seemed a harmless condition, it seemed that it could be simply *presumed*, that the class had a specified finite number of meetings. But we are now seeing that it is a condition that does actual work. It cannot *simply* be presumed. Consider a class that goes on meeting for the whole of the rest of one's life. Or if that is too outlandish, consider a class which meets several times a day every day for a year (roughly as some intensive English-language classes do). Can the backward induction argument be run, in such a class? Well, of course it can, 'in theory.' A philosopher will say that it makes no difference, how many class-meetings there are. But consider:

- In a class that met every day, and several times a day, for a year, would it be reasonable to assume that in every class the students were pre-occupied about the possible surprise exam? I suggest not. There would come a point at which their state of constant preparedness would surely wane. (Ironically then: the pre-announcement of a surprise exam might ultimately be less effective in achieving its presumed motivational *point* in a class where the exam was more likely to be genuinely a surprise when it came!) I suggest that, the more class-meetings there are, the less focus there will be on such a pre-announced exam. Students are more likely to forget that there has been the announcement. It is possible to spring a genuine surprise exam even when it has been pre-announced, if one reaches the point that students have forgotten about / become bored of thinking about the announcement. (If this still for some reason seems a stretch to you, then think of this analogous case: I tell you that sometime this year I am going to give you a surprise kick. You reason that I can't do it just before midnight on New Year's Eve, because then you will be expecting it; by backward induction, it is therefore impossible for me to do it at all. But in fact of course it is perfectly possible. As soon as you have got bored with being fixated on not getting surprised by me, I will find a convenient moment to creep up on you and deliver the kick to you. I foresee you being, among other things, surprised)
- Or: there might be a serious vagueness as to the length of the term, and as to when the last class(es) will fall. The element of doubt that this introduced would be enough to make a pre-announced surprise exam possible.

Is this kind of reasoning that I have been exploring just a trick? Am I failing to take the paradox seriously, by taking seriously such potential 'trick' ways around it? *On the contrary:* I am taking it seriously precisely

because I look upon it not just as a piece of disguised mathematics (I.e., I take seriously the conditions of the class, the conditions of utterance, the conditions of the participants . . .).

What is starting to emerge into focus is that the actual/civil status of the surprise exam depends among other things upon the state of knowledge (both individually, *and mutually*¹¹) of / the cognitive abilities of the ‘audience,’ and of the exam-setter. Here are some other ways in which this point can be brought out:

- There is no paradox if the teacher is a little dumb. If the teacher hasn’t thought through the backward induction, and especially if the students know that it is likely that the teacher hasn’t done so, then there is no problem. (It’s enough if the students can’t be *confident* in the smartness of the teacher. An element of doubt will be enough to make an exam’s occurring a surprise, whenever it comes.)
- Similarly: there is no paradox if the students figure out / surmise that the teacher can reasonably rely upon / has relied upon their (the students) not being very smart, and not being able to see the backward induction. (Though there might then be a kind of ‘meta-paradox,’ once the students ‘figure out’ that they are smart enough to have figured out *this*.)
- There is no paradox, likewise, if the students are relatively cognitively undeveloped. So: If I announce to a class of 5-year-olds that there will be a surprise exam in class this term, I can probably take it for granted that they will not do a backward induction. So: whenever I actually spring the exam (except possibly in the last class: maybe they will have figured out by then that I have refuted myself?), I will surprise them.
- There is probably no paradox in a situation in which the teacher’s authority is utterly unchallenged. So, perhaps in some extremely strongly mentally disciplined Jesuit schools, for instance, one could successfully pre-announce a surprise exam. Because even bright students would trust utterly the authority of the teacher: they would simply assume that there must be something wrong with their own reasoning; they wouldn’t trust the backward induction.¹²

We may now start to suspect that even a somewhat unwieldy formulation like the one I gave earlier—“In a class which meets regularly for a limited period of time (a term), and in which the teacher announces early in the term that there will be a surprise exam taking place in regular class-time in one of the class-meetings during the term, there cannot be such an exam (that is a surprise)” —is nowhere near specific or detailed enough. We may start to suspect that the listing of contextual conditions that will be needed to pin down under what conditions a pre-announced surprise exam is ‘impossible’ is *indefinitely (infinitely?) long*. (This would

be a pretty disastrous result, for the alleged proponent of 'the (sic.) surprise exam paradox.')

For there remain yet further ways in which we could seek to find a way around the formulation we gave. Alternatively to the explorations we have already made, we might push on another element of the conditions on the surprise exam. Here are some ways in which there could be a surprise exam, through *the nature of the exam itself* being very surprising:

- For starters, the teacher could examine the students without them realizing that they were being examined. (This could happen in numerous ways, such as simply them being set some questions in class which were then collected in—and marked.)¹³ In posing that possibility, am I equivocating on the meaning of the term "exam"? Possibly. So what? Doesn't the best (philosophical) education frequently involve just such 'equivocation'? The *best* kind of exam might be one in which the students didn't realize that they were being examined. . . . They might even profit most of all from the retrospective realization that they had been examined—and/or surprised—without realizing it (The best learning might take place in and after an exam which surprised the students precisely because they hadn't realized that it was an exam.).
- In sum: The best exam *might* even be: no exam at all. . . .¹⁴ For instance: reaching the end of term and not giving a surprise exam might end up becoming the fulcrum of an examination of the students' understanding of the nature of language and of communication: The teacher might explain that there could not after all have been a surprise exam, after the announcement, and investigate which students realized and what possibilities (such as the above) they came up as ways in which they might after all have been surprised.
- And so why shouldn't the announcement of a surprise exam itself, especially in a logic or philosophy class—by virtue of the conundrum it involves the students in—*constitute* or co-constitute a kind of extended exam which might be the best of the best, an exam like no other, an exam in which one learns deeply through trying to figure out how if at all *it itself is possible*. . . .

We are now very close to a crucial realization, a realization offered us in a great remark of Wittgenstein's, a realization that seems to me to cut through any remaining resistance to the resistance to the surprise exam paradox:

When I came home I expected a surprise and there was no surprise for me, so, of course, I was surprised.¹⁵

We might put the point here thus: Even if one ignores that one is ignoring what the motivational point is of the teacher giving the 'standard' sur-

prise-exam pre-announcement, and even if one somehow specifies exactly what a surprise exam would be allowed to be, giving an indefinite number of conditions to elucidate this, and even if one thus succeeds in ruling 'it' out (the would-be pre-announced surprise exam, a concept one has now reduced to seemingly no interest at all, and thus one has removed the feel of paradox from its ruling out in the process) by means of backward induction, there can *still* be a surprise exam! The meta-surprise exam, as we might call it, is the scenario indicated by Wittgenstein. It comes to the last day of class. The students now know that the exam will be on this day; so it can't really be a surprise. The exam nevertheless comes—and so, of course, they are surprised. . . .¹⁶

In fact, the same logic applies on any day. To the student that has figured out that there is a paradox preventing the teacher from giving what she has pre-announced—a surprise exam—every day is like the last day of class. Every day is a day on which the meta-surprise exam will work equally well.

Now; what if the students are bright enough to figure out *this*, too? I.e., what if they figure out the possibility of what I have called the 'meta-surprise exam.' Then nothing can surprise them? You could say that: or, and (I think) better, that they will be equally surprised¹⁷ whenever the exam is, in something not unlike the ordinary way that surprises ordinarily surprise us: *and that is just the definition of a surprise exam!* The very thing that the surprise exam paradox seemed to rob us of is exactly what we now get. If the students work through the 'full logic' of the surprise exam paradox, including realizing the possibility of a Wittgensteinian 'meta-surprise,' in roughly the way that we just have, then *they* will have dissolved the surprise exam paradox. They will have returned to the place at which they began, knowing it in one sense more fully than they then did, while in another sense knowing it just the same. For them, now, whenever the exam comes will be *just as surprising* as it would be for someone who simply accepted the teacher's word that there was to be a surprise exam sometime during term, and who never stopped to think that there was supposedly a paradox preventing this from being possible.

Thus what I have called the 'meta-surprise' trumps or renders supererogatory everything that has come before. Even if somehow and somehow the full series of bullet-points that I have developed above were rejected, the meta-surprise would do the trick.

For the teacher's announcement of a surprise exam, if interpreted *in the way that advocates of the paradox want it to be*, as a quasi-factive claim about what will be true of the students (that they will not know when the exam is going to take place) rather than simply as a motivational device, seems, paradoxically, contrary to hypothesis, to have given the students a way of predicting (by backward induction) when the exam can be held. Something worth calling a prediction-method hereabouts would have to predict when it (the exam) was going to be held, such that it will no

longer be a surprise. But the actual implication of the prediction-method in question is that it can never be held. So the method of prediction fails to predict, and (so) *whenever the exam occurs it will be a surprise*. The teacher can successfully surprise the students by holding the exam in any normal class session.

Let us sum up. *If* we stay within the narrow terms of the standard backward induction model (ignoring the various bullet-pointed ways around this, above, and ignoring the likely actual-communicative nature of the teacher's announcement), then, 'paradoxically,' there can be no pre-announced surprise exams. Actually, the model *guarantees* that there cannot be. In this sense it *removes*, in fact, the paradox.¹⁸ (A helpful way to see this is to compare it with someone announcing "Let's have a surprise party for ourselves, this evening!" or "I'm going to spring a surprise party on you, this evening!" It is at least at first hard to see what such a person could possibly be wanting to mean (Although again various possibilities can be concocted: e.g., perhaps the party will be at a radically surprising location; e.g., in the bus you thought you would simply be taking as a vehicle to travel home to where the party would normally have been presumed to be taking place.). If I wanted to throw a surprise party this evening, I would probably be best off doing what we sometimes call *keeping it a surprise*.¹⁹ Similarly, if I announce "We will be having a surprise exam, this term," then, by backward induction, it ends up much the same as saying, "I will be throwing a surprise party for you this evening." The latter claim, as I've said, is *prima facie* hard to interpret, except for instance as saying something ordinary like that you hadn't until now been expecting that you would have a party thrown for you this evening. And so: the former claim is hard to interpret, too. The very announcement of the surprise exam is in this respect precisely what risks stopping it from being a surprise. And this should hardly surprise us: for if I want to completely surprise you with something, the best advice, *ceteris paribus*, remains: for me not to tell you about it.²⁰)

But there remains something paradoxical about the claim that there cannot be pre-announced surprise exams. It seems as though there should still be able to be. And this turned out to be right. It turned out that the way to dissolve the lingering air of paradox here was simply to allow oneself to note/'discover' the various kinds of ways in which a pre-announced surprise exam may justly be said to be / is indeed possible. (And thus also various ways in which the paradox depends on a *false stabilization* of the term "surprise." An oversimplified notion of what something's being a surprise must entail.) Most crucially of all, definitively, via the 'meta-surprise,' which, perhaps surprisingly, can be seen as fully restoring the possibility of a pre-announced surprise exam.

Before moving on, let us note explicitly that the morals of what has been expounded here—the reality of the kinds of ways in which in real life the paradox can be subverted, the ‘meta’ surprise, etc.—are by no means limited to the surprise exam paradox. Many of them apply to *any* paradox which focuses centrally, as the surprise exam paradox does, on backward induction over time, to get itself up and running. So, if my thinking in relation to this backward induction paradox is right, and if any of that thinking generalizes to other backward induction paradoxes, this will be a useful result. Useful, and potentially important: for, many of the surprising ‘results’ of game-theoretic ‘Rational Choice Theory’ *precisely concern backward induction paradoxes*. Such as, for example, iterated sequences of Prisoner’s Dilemmas in which backward induction from the last ‘game’ can seem to make it irrational ever to cooperate at all.

This lies at the very heart of what is troubling about such Game Theory (GT).²¹ So: In the case of the influential ‘centipede’ backward induction paradoxes,²² assumptions about the mutual knowledge or rationality of the parties play an important role. My reasoning in the present chapter is closer than one might expect to the more sophisticated of practitioners of game-theoretic approaches to backward induction paradoxes such as the ‘centipede,’ for instance, practitioners such as Philip Pettit or (my UEA colleague) Bob Sugden. GT has increasingly turned, over the last generation, away from pure mathematical abstractions and toward embracing the complications consequent upon taking seriously (for instance) the power of assumptions about knowledge of rationality, *and* the power of making communicative moves that put them into question. It has thus started to complexify its understanding of the nature of rationality away from crude abstractions and purely theoretic assumptions and in the direction of the actual subtle methods that real people use. Thus it has at last started to approach the extraordinary ordinary power of people to do what it used to find simply ‘paradoxical’ or ‘irrational’: to communicate, and to cooperate for mutual benefit.²³

The (mention of the) term “communicative” above is thus crucial to how GT has managed to start to crawl out of its abyss of finding cooperation irrational and/or paradoxical. Practitioners of GT started to see how, at least in iterated games, moves which seemed ‘irrational’ could/can be used to communicate with other players, and how this could lead away from Nash equilibria that were bad for all. One way of summing up much of what I have done above in reconsidering the surprise exam paradox is: by seeing the teacher’s opening announcement not *necessarily* as a bizarre seemingly self-refutational statement, that requires a great hermeneutic effort from us, but *as a communicative act*. One can see the full fruits of this in cases such as the ‘self-reflexive’ surprise exams, including (at the apex of these) the surprise exam announcement as itself co-constituting an extended exam of the student’s logical powers, a kind of extended exam (that could presumably be marked/graded, if necessary!)

that itself helps to develop those powers perhaps better than any other teaching the teacher engages in. Once we understand the surprise exam announcement as potentially *a communicative act with the students*, and when we consider what that might involve and how various forms of iterated 'dialogue' might issue from it, then we have moved far beyond the crudely narrow consideration of the paradox. According to which, if it could be generated at all, by means of a one-off paradoxical announcement-statement (with regard to which the philosopher fixates on its truth-value, rather than its communicative/motivational intent), then it would indeed, if heard one-dimensionally simply as issuing in a backward induction, be unanswerable/fatal to the announcer's intentions, and the philosopher's endless endeavours to solve it would be akin to the flutterings of Wittgenstein's famous fly bottled fly.

Thinking seriously about communication is gradually revolutionizing GT. The paradoxes of GT / Rational Choice Theory (RCT) mostly come of course from defective assumptions/models of rationality or of its elements or pre-conditions. It is these defective assumptions that can seem to make altruism, or reciprocal behavior, or even simply collective action, (seemingly) paradoxical.²⁴ Such paradoxes can be escaped by understanding how RCT-style thinking can itself be the problem,²⁵ and by seeing how these that can appear to be paradoxes themselves point us toward saner assumptions than those standardly inhabited by / inhabiting RCT:

To pursue what is best for me as an individual (let alone what is best for everybody) may frequently involve not pursuing what I *calculate* is best for me as an individual. What's best for me is not for me always to pursue what would be best for me if everyone (including me) did only what was best for themselves considered individualistically. What's best for me is generally not *pursuing* what is best for me.²⁶ Let alone what's best for all of us: that is certainly not best aimed-at by aiming at what is best for me-narrowly considered.²⁷ Insofar as it occludes our understanding things like this, 'Rational Choice Theory' is nothing less (or more) than a virulent form of the disease (irrationality) of which it takes itself to be the cure. . . .

What lies at the end of the long march of 'Rational Choice Theory' toward the ordinary understandings that members of social settings normally *already* have—and towards a political and ethical sanity that most non-economists happily and thankfully take for granted—is the insight that great philosophers such as William James^{28 29} made visible long ago: that our not having a 'rational' basis for believing something is, in a number of circumstances, not a good reason not to believe it. In fact, to the contrary. For many of the best things to be able to be true, we must believe them. This is 'the will to believe' or, perhaps better, 'the right to believe.' To achieve a good society, we need to commit ourselves to *hope* that it is possible. Without such hope, which can be argued to be 'irration-

al,' we can be certain that it will not be achieved. With such hope, it might be. It is in the deepest sense of the word "rational" (it is more than merely "reasonable"), I submit, to find ways, as in real life we do, around the barriers that paradoxes such as the backward induction paradox(es) place against our 'rationally' achieving social success, together.

Thus it is *important* to demonstrate the failure of the standard narrowly Analytic approach to backward induction paradoxes, which tends to find them compelling, nagging, even irresolvable. It is important to see that human beings have numerous ways of making things possible, which, on a 'rational' theoretical basis appear not to be.

The discussion in the present chapter, which resulted, perhaps surprisingly (sic.), in our finding the pre-announced surprise exam to be possible under a wide variety of real-life circumstances after all, leads us naturally into Part II of this book. In the following way:

What we have examined here is the civil status of a particular paradox. The way it dissolves into real life.³⁰ There is such a thing as spoiling a surprise / making a certain kind of surprise impossible; and there is such a thing, under *certain* circumstances or in *certain* respects, as flagging up a surprise to come. And the latter might be a complicated kind of communicative act, paradoxical perhaps in the best sense, not merely (as with much of what we have examined in Part I) in the worst. These points will come as little surprise except to certain philosophers/economists. In Part II of this book, we will focus on cases in which a Wittgensteinian way with paradoxes does not do away with (all) paradoxes—far from it. Just as we might say that there is normally no paradox to things, so there are *certain* paradoxes that are *lived*; paradoxes and contradictions that matter in civil life that are not—or at least are not purely intellectually (at least *if* we do not include in the intellect our emotionality, 'the will,' action, practice, including perhaps political practice)—dissolved by a Wittgensteinian treatment. It is quite wrong—180 degrees wrong—to think of Wittgenstein as bringing an end to all puzzlement. He in fact gives real paradoxes their real due; which is only possible once one has done away with philosophers' fake *versions* of them. As I hope to have done, in Part I of this book. For in Part I, we have disposed of a bunch of 'fake' paradoxes, merely philosophers' paradoxes, and, in *some* cases, we have thereby started to make room for real paradoxes (such as inevitable paradoxes of philosophical methodology and of similar 'phenomena' encountered for instance in meditation).

In Part II of this book, the kind of 'ethical' or even 'political' moment that emerged into focus most clearly at the end of the present Chapter will be much more common than it has been in most of Part I. For what we are about to find is that, when paradoxes actually arise in civil life, or when we find a positive place for them in our lives (or when we are subject to a negative place for them that we cannot seem to extricate

ourselves from, thus mirroring in actual civil life the predicament that the mainstream philosopher finds themselves in in the abstract), the existential, ethical and political stakes are often high. . . .³¹

NOTES

1. If, as McGilchrist urges (cf. once more the epigraph to Chapter 6), we give up the effort to fix with 'the left hemisphere' what can only be seen aright from 'the right side of the brain' . . . (Also, as we shall see, much more directly even than the sorites, the surprise-exam benefits from consideration of *realizable* imaginary scenarios, to break us outside of the narrow confines in which Analytic philosophy tends to keep us in order to generate paradox . . .)

2. We return to this point below, in connection with an important remark of Wittgenstein's.

3. By the same logic: As Robert Aumann has argued (Aumann, R. "On the Centipede Game," *Games and Economic Behavior* Volume 23, Issue 1, April 1998, pp.97–105; cf. also the useful presentation of Broome and Rabinowicz, in "Backwards Induction in the Centipede Game," *Analysis*, Vol. 59, No. 4, October 1999, pp.237–42), *so long as you allow/insist that players in an iterated sequence of prisoner's dilemmas must at the end defect*, then there is no way to defeat the backward induction argument that insists that the rational thing to do is to defect at the first opportunity. (By implication: the place to target the Rational Choice model of rationality is at its opening stage (or at the stage of the final move in a game: it comes to the same thing). But actually: We should *not* accept that the rational move to make in a one-shot prisoner's dilemma is to defect. Only a defective model of rationality / of human being, which conceives of us as isolated means-ends-obsessed individuals, results in the sub-optimal outcome which is typically taken as standard, as the default/equilibrium 'solution' by Game Theorists. I return to this point at the end of the present chapter.) This defeats the logic pursued by Frank Jackson in his alleged solution to the Surprise Exam Paradox in Chapter 7 of his *Conditionals* (New York: Blackwell, 1987), and the parallel logic pursued by Sugden and Pettit in their alleged solution to "The Backward Induction Paradox" (*Journal of Philosophy* 86: 4, April 1989, 169–82).

To explain: Sugden and Pettit argue that if one makes an initial move of cooperation in an iterated series of prisoner's dilemmas, then one is giving the other player some reason to believe that one is irrational, and, therefore, that some kind of tit-for-tat strategy until somewhere prior to the end of the game may be rational for that other player to adopt, in hope of escaping together the fate of a whole series in which both players endlessly defect and both suffer for it. But to persist in thinking that cooperation is evidence of irrationality (as opposed to already being evidence of some more nuanced form of rationality) is just disastrously crude (*contra* the assumption of Sugden and Pettit at p.180); but, once we admit that cooperation can be to some degree rational, then to persist in believing that it is clear nevertheless that one must *eventually* defect is enough (*contra* to the argument of Sugden and Pettit at p.176) to launch one on a backward induction that will eliminate all cooperation. For if one reasons (for instance) that 'tit-for-tat minus 1' (i.e., an initial effort to cooperate, with a tit-for-tat defection in the case that the other doesn't cooperate, but defection in the final round regardless) is thought to be a potentially nuancedly rational strategy, then, if both players reason accordingly and reason that the other will too, it can be seen how 'tit-for-tat minus 2' is *more* nuancedly rational (is a 'dominant' strategy relative to 'tit-for-tat minus 1'). Now we have a new backward induction launched that will take one all the way back to the opening round, suggesting eventually that 'tit-for-tat minus *n*,' where '*n*' is the number of rounds, is the most rational available, the optimal, the dominant strategy. Again: only if it is not assumed that it is rational to defect in the final round can one, within the paradox-mongers' assumptions, avoid the backward

induction that eventually shows that it is *always* rational to defect. (Similarly: only if it is not assumed that there cannot rationally be a pre-announced surprise exam that takes place in the final class-meeting can one avoid, within the constraints set up by the paradox-mongers, the backward induction back to there not being able to be a surprise exam in any class at all. I will suggest below how one *can* overcome that seemingly inevitable assumption.)

4. We shall see later that there is a crucial assumption already made here: If there is a lasting irrefutable paradox here, it is dependent on the claim that the students know that that there cannot be a surprise exam being true (and on their knowing that this will remain true come what may). The state of the students' knowledge and understanding will be an increasingly important consideration, as we proceed.

5. In this regard, there is an important connection back to the previous Chapter: in our consideration of the sorites, we periodically emphasized and returned to what philosophers, typically, again ignore, at the cost of their engaging in an inquiry which has lost sight of its own point: the reason(s) why it can matter that such and such is or is not a heap/pile, a bald head, etc.

6. This paragraph is thoroughly indebted to the influence and words of Don Levi (personal communication). In terms of the actual social logic of pre-announcement (as opposed to philosophers' narrow fantasies thereof), the reader is recommended to consult Alene Kiku Terasaki's "Pre-announcement Sequences in Conversation" in Gene Lerner (ed.), *Conversation Analysis: Studies from the First Generation* (Santa Barbara: University of California Press, 2004).

7. See Floyd's paper on this in my and Crary's *The New Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 2000), for an exemplary presentation.

8. See her discussions thereof in *The Realistic Spirit* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1991).

9. This option has in this way something in common with the 'meta-surprise exam': on which, see below.

10. And now the reader may become clearer about a deep connection with the various lines of thought that I took in Chapter 6, above, in seeing aright and dissolving the 'sorites' paradox. The sorites can seem quite insoluble, so long as one thinks of it narrowly as a pure 'numbers game'; as a matter simply of taking away one grain, and then another, and then another, down to one (or even zero!). Similarly: the surprise exam paradox can seem quite insoluble, so long as one thinks of it narrowly as a pure numbers game; as a matter simply of going back in one's mind from one class, to the next, back to the class in which the announcement was made. But there are, we now see, numerous *other conditions* on it which are essential. Both paradoxes are in part 'backward induction' paradoxes. It is crucial to see this commonality between them; *and* to see that this feature (that they have in common) is *not* the only important feature of them. They also have in common that there are other 'contextual' factors potentially determinative of whether or not we have on our hands an actual heap / surprise exam, etc. The latter point is so often missed.

11. That is: the level of mutually assured understanding / knowledge / information (cf. n.4, above) is a crucial factor. We will return to this point below: it opens up a genuinely dialogical element to the surprise exam paradox. It will make a big difference, for instance, whether or not students and teacher are allowed to dialogue, to communicate over the seeming-paradox, and what form that dialogue takes, and how much each party can trust the other. The default assumption in philosophical presentations of the surprise exam is that teachers and students are not allowed to communicate about the status/possibility of the exam / of the backward-induction, etc. Think for a minute about what a bizarre assumption that is. These are, after all, *teachers* and *students*. . . .

12. I use the word "probably," here, advisedly. Because of course there is something most strange about this scenario. It might be expressed this way: Students in the class seem to be committed to thinking something like "There will be a surprise exam in this class (because the teacher, who is infallible, says so) even though I don't believe it (because, by backward induction, it is not possible to pre-announce a surprise exam)."

The situation, in other words, is remarkably close to being a real-live for-instance of Moore's Paradox, discussed in Chapter 9, below. (I suggest there that it may be possible to believe a Moore-type-sentence in cases of various kinds of failures of rationality; and the case under description here, in which one hands a veto-like authority on one's own rational thinking to the teacher, *is*, interestingly, such a case.)

13. We should of course admit that this solution to the paradox is not available to parallel paradoxes, such as the paradox of the surprise hanging (And similarly with some other possibilities that we might concoct as answers to the surprise exam paradox, such as the *content* of the exam turning out to be the genuinely surprising thing). You can't exactly hang someone without their realizing that they are being hanged (. . . except in the limited sense that you could take them by surprise so fast that they don't get to experience their own dying; or consider the case in which you drug them so that they don't understand that they are in the process of being led to the scaffold and executed, and then perhaps you 'bring them around' at the very last instant, so that they experience surprise; etc.; there are plenty of ways, unfortunately, in which the surprise hanging, too, might be rendered specifically contextually 'interesting,' specifically possible . . .). Incidentally, it is pretty clear that surprise-hanging/surprise-execution is possible. I say that, because it is actual: <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/news/712073/posts>. This should be a much bigger worry for proponents of the 'surprise exam paradox' than it appears to be. . . . (It should also be a big worry for anyone concerned about cruel and unusual punishment—which of course matters rather more.)

14. Here, one is reminded of the lovely 'Dr. Who' tale, *Enlightenment* (BBC TV, 1983). In this tale, a macabre race among the stars is performed, to seek to gain the prize lying at the end of the race: an extraordinary crystal that apparently gives/yields/constitutes 'Enlightenment.' The prize is in the end offered to the Doctor's rogue companion, Turlough, who is on the winning team. The price for his actually being granted the prize is, however, the Doctor's life. Tempted though Turlough is, he gives the prize up at the last moment. The Doctor's other companion marvels at Turlough's having given up the chance to have Enlightenment. The Doctor responds, both gently and acerbically, "You're missing the point. Enlightenment was not the diamond; enlightenment was the choice." Turlough has come to understand (/ to decide) what he really cares about: *that* is true enlightenment. (Cf. Chapter 11, below.)

15. MS 128, p.46 (1944); from *Culture and Value* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1980 (Transl. Winch; posthumous)), p.52. The 'meta-surprise' is relevantly similar to the surprise—foxing the convinced believer in game-theoretic rationality—that would be delivered by someone's cooperating (rather than defecting) in the last move of an iterated series of prisoner's dilemmas, and thus seeming to refute the 'assumption' of 'rationality': see n.3, above.

16. The point here bears some resemblance to that made by Laurence Goldstein in his useful article, "Inescapable Surprises and Acquirable Intentions," *Analysis* 53:2 (April 1993), pp. 93–99. Cf. also Chow's famous approach to the paradox of the unexpected hanging—see n.20, below.

17. I.e., you then don't have any particular reason to think that the exam will be on any class-day rather than any other.

18. My reasoning here is identical to that employed by R. Sugden and P. Pettit on p.181 of their *op.cit.*, in their argument that insisting on 'Common Knowledge of Rationality' (CKR) as Game Theory understands it is inconsistent with any possibility other than permanent defection in a series of iterated prisoners' dilemmas. There would only be a *paradox* if it were intuitive that one should cooperate, for mutual benefit, but this intuition is eliminated in a principled fashion by CKR as Game Theory (unfortunately) understands it. (My reasoning here will also be familiar to those who picked up the sense in which I argued, in Chapter 6 above, that the sorites is actually eliminated by efforts to completely 'purify' it.)

19. And the only way such a surprise party will be a surprise is through the 'meta-surprise': through one being surprised that it was possible for one to be surprised by a

pre-announced 'surprise' party. Of course, we should, however, note that the surprise effect is likely to be in one key respect therefore a lot less than if one had had a party simply sprung upon one: for, in that case, one probably wouldn't be pre-occupied with the logic of (surprise) parties in the way that the announcees are, in the case of a pre-announced 'surprise' party. So: unsurprisingly, it remains true, in this regard, that a surprise exam or a surprise party or a surprise hanging is most safely kept a surprise if unannounced. Best kept a *secret* in the ordinary sense.

20. Cf. n.19, above. In this regard, there is once more a connection too with Moore's Paradox (For the situation now becomes saying something like / could be transcribed as "You will be hanged tomorrow, but you do not know that," or "I will be throwing a surprise party for you this evening, but you don't know that I will be—because of course, if you knew that I would be, then that would hardly be a surprise." Cf. Chow's approach to the surprise exam, etc., "The Surprise Examination or Unexpected Hanging Paradox," *American Mathematical Monthly*, 105, January 1998, pp.41–55.). Cf. on this Chapter 9, below. But, as I tentatively suggest there, Moore's Paradox should not really be thought of as a 'mere' 'pragmatic self-refutation' (And this is where 'classic' treatments of the surprise exam paradox as a paradox of impredicativity tend to be insufficient, don't go deep enough: I am referring especially to Shaw's "The Paradox of the Unexpected Examination," *Mind* 67 (267), 1958, pp.382–84 and Kaplan and Montague's "A Paradox Regained," *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic*, 1, 1960, pp.79–90.). Rather, what has become clear in the paragraph to which this is an endnote is rather that we might helpfully (if somewhat paradoxically) say that the 'paradox' has been created in such a way that there isn't any paradox: there isn't any thing that gets as far as refuting itself. (And this is of course my fundamental move, my 'deep' move, with regard to the seemingly 'deepest' philosophers' paradoxes encountered in Part I of this book: we saw it in detail in Chapters 4 and 5, in showing that one cannot even get as far as stating/formulating Kripke's alleged 'constitutive' paradox. Recall now that we remarked, on the first page of this Chapter: "The paradox, if it can be stated, is insoluble.") There isn't actually any claim that gets made, by the purveyor of such a 'paradox.' There is only the *appearance* of a claim, which generates the (mere) *appearance* of a paradox.

21. See for instance "Backward-induction arguments: A paradox regained," by Jordan Howard Sobel (*Philosophy of Science* 60 (1), 1993, pp.114–33). Sobel argues that backward induction arguments are essentially insoluble, and thus that cooperation even in iterated Prisoners' Dilemmas is irrational. To reassure us that this need not have dire consequences, he suggests that the implications of this for "ordinary imperfect" players are few. It is this identification of 'failure' to abide by the 'rationality' which insists that cooperation is irrational as "imperfect" that I find so troubling, so unacceptable. (Cf. also n.3, above.)

22. For which, see Sugden's presentation in section VIII of "Rational Choice: A Survey of Contributions from Economics and Philosophy," in *The Economic Journal*, 101:407, July 1991, pp.751–85. (For a primer on Alfred Schutz's account, an account which describes beautifully the barriers implicit in 'the natural attitude' that protect us, in real life, against backward inductions, see plato.stanford.edu/entries/schutz/.)

23. For the reasons offered at length in my *Wittgenstein among the Sciences*, I still find the methodology of Sugden et al, their *direction* of approach, troubling, hereabouts. They are starting from the opposite of everyday life and building a very basic puppet-house (the opening mathematical model) and then furnishing it with what are increasingly realistic assumptions; but a beautifully furnished puppet-house is still a puppet-house. By contrast, the method I am seeking to employ in this chapter aims to build in real life from the beginning.

24. We should of course note that it is possible to have altruistic or reciprocating preferences, under RCT. But (1) they are the exception, not the rule, according to RCT-advocates; and, more crucially, (2) it is not clear that they are *ever* really genuinely taken at face-value in RCT, in this sense: RCT does not deviate from the grounding individualistic assumptions that (like in liberal political theory) mean that whatever

values one has are taken rather as merely *preferences* or *interests*. Altruistic, etc., preferences are taken by RCT, as Rawls takes them (throughout his *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985)—and his later work), as merely preferences that an individual *has*, like any other preferences. They are not allowed to cross the gap that sunders individuals from one another; (and) they are not allowed to be *constitutive* of individuals/society.

25. I am thinking here for instance of Jon Elster's long march to seeing the self-defeat of much RCT-style thinking (on which see, e.g., Hollis, Martin, "Why Elster is Stuck and Needs to Recover His Faith," *London Review of Books*, 24. January 1991, 13 (2):13–13). There are many, many circumstances in which the application of RCT-style thinking is harmful and/or self-defeating. (To mention just one famous, controversial example: It might for instance be better (notably, for the child) to decide who gets custody of a child by a coin-toss than by an attempt to choose rationally who should get custody.)

26. These are, one might then seek to say, 'true' paradoxes. There are things to be said for but also definitely against such a designation: There is a deep connection here with the understanding of Buddhism (and specifically of meditation) that I arrive at and promote in Chapter 11, below.

27. The result of this, in terms of its political implications, is the topic of my forthcoming book, *The end of Liberalism and the dawn of a culture of permanence*. The key is to overcome the *individualist* prejudice that tends to rule economics / rational choice theory: cf. n.24, above.

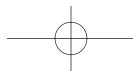
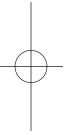
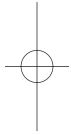
28. With his concept of "The will to believe"; see "The Will to Believe," *The New World*, Volume 5, 1896, pp.327–47 (educ.jmu.edu/~omearawm/ph101willtobelieve.html).

29. And Blaise Pascal, on Chomsky's reading of him: see for instance www.alternativeradio.org/programs/CHON068.shtml.

30. A simple deflationary point to be made here, against overly 'Analytical' interpretations of the surprise exam Paradox, is of course simply to note that, were the students to *ask* the teacher how she can possibly intend for there to be a surprise exam, now that they understand that there cannot be such now that it has been announced, it is open to the teacher to reply, "I didn't mean it like *that*," and then to explicate her actual meaning, which might be for instance one of the possibilities that we bullet-pointed earlier.

Or again, she could just reply, "Wait and see." A philosopher might respond to this, "But if she simply does that, without further explication, then, when the exam occurs it won't be a surprise." But what we have seen in the present chapter is some good reasons to believe that *that isn't true*. Most strikingly, what I have called Wittgenstein's 'meta-surprise' point decisively undercuts it. Thoughtful students and unthoughtful students alike (though for different reasons) will be surprised, when the exam occurs . . .

31. Thanks to Rod Watson, Shaun Hargreaves-Heap, to Bob Sugden, to Ruth Makoff, and to an audience at the UEA Philosophy Society, for very useful comments on this material. Thanks especially to Don Levi and Angus Ross, for deep insights on the real flaws in the surprise exam paradox.



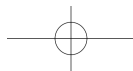
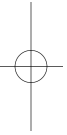
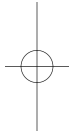
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II

A Way With Lived Paradoxes

A Wittgensteinian way with paradoxes, as will have become clear already from certain moments in part I, above, does not do away with all paradoxes—far from it. There are paradoxes that are lived; contradictions that matter in psychical or in civil life that are not dissolved by a Wittgensteinian treatment (Unless we expand our understanding of what falls under the heading of such treatment to include cases such as the cure through acknowledgement of the paradoxical desire not to see some humans as human (see chapter 8) and/or the cure of the pathological desire (roughly) not to see oneself as human (see chapter 9).). Most crucially: there are paradoxes that are good: methodologically and/or practically (see chapters 10 and 11). It is quite wrong—180 degrees wrong—to think of Wittgenstein as a would-be bringer of an end to all puzzlement. He in fact gives real paradoxes their real due; which is only possible once one has done away with philosophers' fake *versions* of them.

Let us now, then, give real, enduring, not-merely-philosophers' paradoxes their due.



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EIGHT

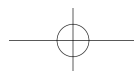
Swastikas and Cyborgs: The Significance of *PI 420*, for Reading Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* as a 'War Book'

"The point of solipsism, often missed, was that it abolished morality."
—A reflection of John Robert Rozanov, the titular philosopher, modeled to some extent on Wittgenstein, at p.132 of Iris Murdoch's *The Philosopher's Pupil*.¹

"Do we encounter . . . doubt [of someone's pain] in everyday life? No. But maybe something which is remotely related: indifference toward other people's expressions of pain." — Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on Philosophy of Psychology Vol.1*,² 240.

The present chapter is an investigation into a real paradox, a lived paradox, not of paradox(es) as merely fantasized by philosophers. The paradox in question is the looking upon other human beings quite as if they were perhaps machines, mere 'animated' bodies, not human beings—while being possessed of the knowledge that really of course they *are* human beings, who suffer as we do. I find this paradox vividly present in the terrible history of Nazism and like-minded movements of thought and action. It is present also as a topic at one point in *Philosophical Investigations*,³ a point at which, moreover, Wittgenstein appears implicitly to be contemplating the Nazi frame of mind. (Or so, at least, I shall tentatively suggest, in what follows.)

It is well-known that the Preface to Ludwig Wittgenstein's second great masterpiece, the *Philosophical Investigations*, includes a powerful allusion



to “the darkness of this time” (*PI* vi), the time in which the book was written. But it is a fact rarely noted that the book was begun in about 1936 (as the Nuremberg Laws come into force and Germany remilitarizes the Rhineland) and that it and in particular the Preface was indeed completed at a perhaps-still-darker moment in human history: (January) 1945. (Most notably of all, perhaps: Wittgenstein wrote the vast majority of the anti-private-language considerations (he wrote most of *PI* 240–421) as late as the second half of 1944.⁴)

And there is a remarkable ‘coincidence’ here, an extraordinary and perhaps telling symmetry: Wittgenstein’s first masterpiece, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*,⁵ was completed in 1918. . . . It seems to me truly rather remarkable that so little has ever been made of this ‘coincidence.’

Of course, this is in part because Wittgenstein’s writing seems on the surface apolitical, ahistorical, and even deliberately so. But Marjorie Perloff has done a fine job of laying out how the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein’s first masterpiece, can be seen as a ‘war book,’⁶ a book owing itself in significant part to the dark time in which it was written, while the young Wittgenstein was a soldier fighting for the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the First World War.

Perloff does not make the same case for the *Investigations*. That is my self-appointed task in this chapter. I wish actually to go much further than her: To argue that the *Investigations* is exactly the kind of work one would expect of an intensely abstract and analytical mind that is nevertheless concerned with the deepest and (in a deep sense) most concrete problems there are: *in fact, with the underlying central ethical and political problem of its time.*⁷ Wittgenstein’s *PI*, I claim, is deeply open to what was without doubt the fundamental issue of its time (i.e., of the time of Hitler et al): acknowledging, really acknowledging, the humanity of all contemporaneous human beings, and not merely of a favored sub-set thereof.⁸

In the 1930s, Wittgenstein became increasingly preoccupied with the rise of fascism and Nazism. It is interesting to note that during this time the vaguely anti-Semitic nature of a few of his personal jottings during previous years gradually drops away to nothing. My hypothesis (following David Stern) is that Wittgenstein came to feel that his occasional tendency toward anti-Semitism, as he reflected on his own part-Jewish heritage, etc., manifested unacceptable immaturity, in the time of the 1000 year (/ 12 year) ‘Reich.’

So, how am I suggesting that this is manifest in the text of the *Investigations*? For it is one thing to make an easy hypothesis concerning explicit scattered remarks about Jewishness in his notebooks; quite another, to claim that the apparently highly cerebral/abstract and non-politically specific investigations that make up the *PI* can be plausibly read as relating directly to a similar topic.

I suggest that Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* is Wittgenstein’s attempt to perfect himself, away from the failure that was present

DRAFT

The Significance of PI 420, for Reading Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations 161

in the kind of immature 'self-indulgence' that tarrying with self-hating anti-Semitism involves at a time such as the 1930s. The *Investigations* atones for this failure by centrally involving, I submit, an attempt to take seriously our common humanity; it is a deep reflection upon our human tendency to deny the humanity of others (and of ourselves).⁹ And it is a therapy for that tendency. It is, in other words, a kind of reflection upon tendencies such as Nazism, a reasoned and impassioned line of thinking against the dangerous and immature belief that such an 'inhuman' ideology as Nazism could only be a product of Germany (see also for example Wittgenstein's parallel remark directed against Malcolm's naïve and dangerous belief that the 'British national character' would not be capable of uncivilized or underhand behavior towards Germany¹⁰), and a profound meditation upon what is actually necessary to overcome the easy attractions of such widespread human tendencies of mind and, instead, to really look at one's own and other people's lives. Wittgenstein's investigations, unlike so many others, persistently aim to go, as he always insisted it was essential to go,¹¹ to the *root* of the lived delusion that could issue in the kind of profound inhumanity that, from the mid-late 30s thru to 1945—as in a different but closely related way before, in 1914–1918—he was living through. This is then a great example of Wittgenstein's 'perfectionism,' in Cavell's sense of that word.

(It is important to be clear also on what I am *not* saying. I am not saying that the *Philosophical Investigations* is literally *about* the Second World War, in the kind of way that (say) books like Anthony Beevor's are.¹² That would be a bizarrely silly claim. In saying that the *PI* can be read with real profit as a 'war book,' I mean: a book not only influenced by the war, but deeply concerned with the ways of thinking that spawned the war and were manifested in the war. *This* is what I shall aim to show is manifest in Wittgenstein's text.)

The *Philosophical Investigations* involves a teasing progress in which we gradually come to appreciate that in order to understand what a person is 'in their essence' we have to comprehend the totality of what a person is (not just fragments, as is traditional in philosophy, such as: their rational mind); similarly, we need to think through what a language is (not just fragments, as is traditional in philosophy, such as: declarative sentences, or indeed 'atoms' of meaning from which sentences are 'composed'). And we come to understand (among other things, and crucially) how very deeply a person *needs* the other people around them that, along with them, together form a society *in order to be a person*, at all. We come to understand this by a process of working through for ourselves unsatisfactory formulation after unsatisfactory formulation, each typically a little more complex or potentially directly helpful than the one before. These formulations are in many cases more or less robotic or machine-like¹³ 'models' which inevitably fail adequately to characterize human or

social being—though quite often they successfully characterize *something*, and they certainly have their attractions.

Thus ‘for example’ (and in very brief, and very roughly) the book can be said to consist sequentially of: a therapeutic examination of what the reader wants out of concepts such as ‘language’ (sections 1–88) and thus of what the reader is prepared and not prepared on reflection to call “language”; a reflection on the conception of philosophy implicit in the examination thus far and to follow (89–133); a therapeutic examination of (what the reader wants out of concepts such as) ‘rules’ (sections 134–242); and then what is often (and in my view rightly) considered the greatest prize of all, a therapeutic examination of the reader’s (and the author’s) inclination to fantasize that a ‘private’ language will satisfy his desires, giving him certainty, the kind of foundation that he philosophized in order to obtain (243–428). I shall therefore focus here on certain of these, Wittgenstein’s anti-‘private-language’ considerations. (These considerations amount to an attempt to persuade the reader that the desires in question—for certainty, for a foundation, etc.—are otiose and self-defeating, and that our language and our life can proceed perfectly well without them.) They are the most crucial fruits on the tree; and they are what, if anything, above all makes this a war book.

I am *not* (with one important exception, as intimated in my title: *PI* 420) going to essay a reading of Wittgenstein’s discussions of pain, etc., in the anti-‘private-language’ considerations. I do not need to: I don’t need to rehearse all that the fine works of Cavell, Mulhall, Eldridge, Conant, the later Baker, etc., have already suggested or established, on this score, and also that I myself have already laid out elsewhere.¹⁴ We already have extant in outline a strong ‘resolute’ reading, which is also necessarily at one and the same time an ‘ethical’ or ‘existential’ reading,¹⁵ of Wittgenstein on ‘private language.’ So, in the remainder of this chapter, I wish simply to focus on a connected series of issues that this kind of reading (that they have given and that I have given and am giving) raises, and on how I think that these establish the case that I am making in this chapter as a strong one: how this series of issues signals the aspect (of Wittgenstein’s second masterpiece) that I am endeavoring in the present chapter to make available, and indeed makes it pressing.

First: what was it about *Wittgenstein* that put him in such a strong position to engage in this kind of thinking? Why was he so strongly attuned to the simultaneous centrality and fragility of acknowledgement, of fellow-feeling? Was it an internal argumentative logic that assured the presence in his work of the crucial moments and orientation discussed here in this chapter—or was it something else (too)? *Why*, in sum, *was Wittgenstein* (in my view) *so closely attuned*, some appearances notwithstanding, *to the war and its underpinning attitudes*, in his philosophizing?

DRAFT

The Significance of PI 420, for Reading Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations 163

I believe that Wittgenstein was particularly ready, ripe, for placing centrally in his philosophy our oneness with one another, our intrinsic empathy, and the ever-present danger of its loss, not just because of the time in which he lived, nor just because of the pre-existing internal logic of his philosophizing, but also because of his pre-existing psychical temperament. The particular nature of his emotionality and mind, which we can see expressed in intriguing ways in his work (as well as in his life).

I am referring to what (exaggerating somewhat) Louis Sass has called his 'schizoid' tendencies combined with his (always) hyper-self-aware and hyper-self-critical intuitions about and philosophical concerns with these tendencies, which made him (according to Sass's intriguing account) also the greatest of anti-schizoids.¹⁶ So I think there was something in him, independently of the occasion/context of the war and of Nazism, that made him particularly sensitive to these issues of acknowledgment and of failure to acknowledge others (and of failure to be acknowledged) and of willful *resistance* to such acknowledgement. Because: to be somewhat schizoid is, Sass argues, not just to have a tendency to see others from a distance; it is also a strong tendency to be able to get outside of oneself; and sometimes this takes one especially powerfully into the standpoint of others.¹⁷ (One of the many weird and brilliant things about Wittgenstein was his own ability to distance himself from his own tendency to distance.) All this is explored and played out in *Philosophical Investigations*, I would boldly submit, with great piquancy and intensity in relation (if abstractly) to the horrors of wartime racism and depersonalization-of-the-other; but I think that it is fair to say that, without the war, much of it might well have played itself out anyway; there might well have still been much of the same anti-'private-language' considerations still.

I might put it this way: Wittgenstein's extraordinary sensitivity and the reactive coldness with which I think he managed to live with that sensitivity put him in an extraordinarily strong position to enter into the heart of humanity's conflicted relation with itself that we find exemplified in the anti-'private-language' considerations (and in the War). Empathy with the naturalness of empathy—and empathy with the failure of empathy. . . . As I expand upon below, it is perhaps the latter, empathy for the anti-empathic, which is in the final analysis truly challenging psychically and morally, and into which, in his profound entering into the appeal of solipsism and the like, his deep endeavor truly to understand and to bring to self-understanding the prevailing anti-empathic philosophical modes of thought—to understand both the philosophers and the wider attraction of their modes of mind—Wittgenstein led us.

The extreme racism and war of his time made that task—the task of venturing mindfully into that darkness—all the more urgent, and intensified, I think, the intensity with which Wittgenstein always approached it. As we shall see, it seems likely to have helped facilitate the thinking

which would result in his greatest and most concise nailing of the close relation between two related issues. On the one hand, the inhuman human failure to acknowledge others (and the issue of the naturalness and yet non-inevitability of such acknowledgement) which is central to the consideration of the 'private language' fantasy and its attractions. On the other (unless it is the same) hand, the concrete issue of Nazism and its ilk: as an exemplar of such failure.

Next: Why *pain*? Why is Wittgenstein's key exemplar, throughout the anti-'private-language' considerations, *pain*? (It could so easily, for example, have been pleasure, or contentment, or indeed something else like color(-perception¹⁸.) The reason, I believe, is this: that pain is the felt phenomenon that *most* inclines one to think that it is private, that it is unutterable (It easily *feels* more private, one might say, than color, and even than pleasure or happiness. One is inclined to think, perhaps, following, as one might say, Tolstoy (and the *Tractatus*—see below), that happy people are all alike, but that people in pain are unhappy each in their own way. . . . For in pain, people retreat each into their private 'worlds,' whereas happy families are precisely together in their happiness. .) In its severity (sometimes), its (apparent) indescribability, its power to seem to put an end to words or make them inadequate (How does/can one comfort the truly afflicted?). This is another way of saying that there can easily be genuinely felt to be (as one might put it) a peculiar difficulty in genuinely attributing pain to others, and vice versa. (Pain is the easiest case for someone inclined to the 'private language' fantasy to make; and so the hardest (and thereby the most important—for if he wins this one, then *a fortiori* he will surely be able to win all the rest) case for Wittgenstein to make.) But this in turn is, I think, really just another way of saying that the real reason for picking pain is that human beings' failure to acknowledge one another is likely to be 'felt' most keenly here. In the case of pain, the felt (or unconscious) attractions of failure to acknowledge another are strongest. Pain above all seems private; the body in pain inhabits a world different from the body not in pain, one might want to say.¹⁹ And the case is especially important, whenever there are untold millions suffering, in one's continent and across one's world, from pain being deliberately inflicted upon them. . . .²⁰

In his earliest considerations of these matters, Wittgenstein tends to focus on *toothache* more than on pain. That shift—from toothache to pain—already seems significant. For, while the dreadful revelations of U.S.-sanctioned torture via 'dental work' undertaken without anesthetic in the course of the terrifying so-called 'war on Terror' in recent years have brought home to us how pain in and from one's teeth is absolutely no trivial matter, nevertheless, pain is more prone to matter in the kind of way that I am focusing on in this chapter than is toothache, which can seem a little more (we might say) mild or parochial, less 'total,' less (felt-)world-absorbing—or (actual-)world-occluding.

DRAFT

The Significance of PI 420, for Reading Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations 165

Pain appears with reasonable frequency in the *Philosophical Remarks*²¹ and in the *Blue Book*.²² But it is not until 1936–1938, until Wittgenstein actually begins work on what will become the *Investigations*, that pain in particular, and indeed the anti-‘private-language’ considerations in general, start to become central. (And they only achieve centrality in the passages written *during* the total war that was the Second World War: c. 240–428.) Look for instance at the *Brown Book*,²³ or at the *Big Typescript*²⁴ or at *Philosophical Grammar*²⁵ — there, they are peripheral. Put these books side by side with *PI*, notice the overlaps and what is missing in one that is present in the other: what I am saying is then pretty clear. It is in the *Investigations* that it becomes clear that the undermining of the so-called ‘private language’ fantasy is perhaps the greatest fruit on the tree of Wittgenstein’s mature philosophical writing, and in which *pain* becomes the prime way in which that fruit is approached, understood, and harvested. It is in the *Investigations* that the case of others’ suffering and of their need for acknowledgement is expanded — investigated — in detail. The ‘coincidence,’ at the least, between this timing and the approach and onset and then deepening and widening of Hitler’s war, is striking. (The ‘calculus’ of pain and suffering, and the concern with *acknowledgement* in Wittgenstein’s writing (picked up famously by Stanley Cavell), becomes central and elaborated in the most detail, as pain spread across the continent, across the world.²⁶)

Wittgenstein chose pain, one might then say, because it is a, or even *the* nodal point for the human tendency to fail fully to acknowledge the humanity of others, and probably the most important phenomenon requiring such acknowledgement, such being-with. The *Philosophical Investigations*, one might therefore say, is a book whose central concern is the ease with which we can fail this ultimate test, the kinds of conditions under which we do so, and the ways in which we can learn to overcome this failing.

One of those conditions which greatly interested Wittgenstein might be helpfully summed up under the heading of: over-intellectualism. A tendency to construct others through an intellectualized picture of them, as opposed to simply living with them / acknowledging them in their and one’s own everydayness.²⁷ This, of course, is one of the features which makes Wittgenstein’s philosophy so unusual, so refreshing, so contrary to the *déformation professionnelle* normally to be expected of a philosopher: the tendency to assume that intellectual solutions to problems are the best ones, and the related tendency to assume indeed that ordinary life *is* (or at least *ought* to be) basically intellectual. For example: To assume that the way we relate to other minds is pre-eminently to *theorize* them as existing (or not), an assumption which arguably has us take as the problem of autistic people (their lack of an effective theoretical orientation toward other human beings) what is in fact their attempted *solution* to the

deeper problem that they really have: their lack of any effective *non-theoretical* orientation toward other human beings.

For having an orientation in which other people *naturally* strike us as minded, real, embodied, etc., is the ‘solution’ that non-autistic people effortlessly practice to the ‘problem’ of other minds. Our standard *non-theoretical* orientation toward one another is what the autistic is missing; and the philosopher who takes the problem of other minds to be a pressing theoretical problem is unconsciously echoing the reaching-for-theory that autists are forced to engage in, rather than getting anywhere near to the ‘natural attitude,’ the *intuitive* attitude as we might put it, that overcomes any suggestion of a theoretical (as opposed to an ethical) problem, hereabouts.

Philosophers, as we saw sometimes in Part I of the present work, tend dangerously to assume, that is, that the failings of ordinary life are generally failings to be intellectual *enough*. On this, take for example (one key part of) the superb demythologizing sequence on consciousness, that runs from about *PI* 412 to 428, and that opens with one of Wittgenstein’s relatively rare explicit invocations of paradox, in 412:

412 The feeling of an unbridgeable gulf between consciousness and brain-process: how does it come about that this does not come into the considerations of our ordinary life? This idea of a difference in kind is accompanied by slight giddiness,—which occurs when we are performing a piece of logical sleight-of-hand. . . . When does this feeling occur in the present case? It is when I, for example, turn my attention in a particular way to my own circumstances, and, astonished, say to myself: THIS is supposed to be produced by a process in the brain!—as it were clutching my forehead.—But what can it mean to speak of “turning my attention to my own consciousness”? This is surely the queerest thing there could be! It was a particular act of gazing that I called doing this. I stared fixedly in front of me—but *not* at any particular point or object. My eyes were wide open, the brows not contracted (as they mostly are when I am interested in a particular object). No such interest preceded this gazing. My glance was vacant . . . // Now bear in mind that the proposition which I uttered as a paradox (THIS is produced by a brain-process!) has nothing paradoxical about it. I could have said it in the course of an experiment whose purpose was to show that an effect of light which I see is produced by stimulation of a particular part of the brain.—But I did not utter the sentence in the surroundings in which it would have had an everyday and unparadoxical sense. And my attention was not such as would have accorded with making an experiment. (If it had been, my look would have been intent, not vacant.)²⁸

An eerily Cartesian interlocutorial voice tries to resist this line of thought, in the opening sentence of 420:

DRAFT

The Significance of PI 420, for Reading Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations 167

But can't I imagine that the people around me are automata, lack consciousness, even though they behave in the same way as usual?—If I imagine it now—alone in my room—I see people with fixed looks (as in a trance) going about their business—the idea is perhaps a little uncanny. But just try to keep hold of this idea in the midst of your ordinary intercourse with others, in the street, say! Say to yourself, for example, "The children over there are mere automata; all their liveliness is mere automatism." And you will either find these words becoming quite meaningless; or you will produce in yourself some kind of uncanny feeling, or something of the sort.

Seeing a living human being as an automaton is analogous to seeing one figure as a limiting case or variant of another; the cross-pieces of a window as a swastika,²⁹ for example. (Emphasis added)

I hope that you find that concluding sentence, in the present context, very striking. The reason why it is so can hardly not have struck Wittgenstein himself in the writing of it. For what were the Nazis failing to do, if not: seeing a class of living human beings as no more requiring acknowledgement from us as fellows, as brothers and sisters, than automata do. . . .³⁰

It is critically important that this case of aspect-seeing is strikingly different from the more well-known cases that Wittgenstein considers (the Necker cube, the duck-rabbit, etc.) elsewhere. For in *this* case, in order to see the cross-pieces of a window as a swastika, it is not just that you have to see in a particular way; you have also to *deny* something that you are seeing, too. To avoid simply seeing the surround of the window as a complete square, you have to avoid seeing some of the window-surround; you have to 'shut your eyes' to it. It isn't just a switch from one aspect to another that naturally occludes it (as with the duck-rabbit, etc.). It is a switch from one aspect to another that deliberately, voluntarily, occludes it, and thereby makes strange. Likewise with the deliberate unseeingness of those wearers of swastikas, the Nazis, who are unseeing to some of the human beings around them: the denial of something enables something else to appear. . . . *What* now appears, exactly? The human being becomes merely a human body; a paradoxical new kind of 'cyborg' has been born, from the attitudinal depersonalization that turns a person into an (as-if) machine.

And, crucially, it is only of those we recognize as human beings that we feel the kind of disgust that (in Nazi rhetoric) leads to a denial of humanity. It is in the 'falling away' from 'full humanity' that such revulsion most resonates. Notice how this applies at the level both of the Nazi *and of our attitude toward the Nazi*. The Nazi is revolted by the allegedly less than fully human 'cyborg' that he fantasizes as standing before him; and *we* are revolted in turn by just this failure of humanity in the Nazi. We feel most acutely the call of humanity, the power and pathos of it as a concept, perhaps, in reflecting on such a disturbing parallel: that less-

than-human is not only how the Jew appears to the Nazi, but how the Nazi appears to us.

Similarly then, part of the beauty of Wittgenstein's remark is in its even-handedness, its refusal crudely to refuse to understand, its refusal merely to condemn and thereby to repeat the structure of the Nazi gesture. Seeing a living human being as an automaton is not simply an error, not simply an upshot of stupidity or cant; nor is it quite a complete and utter existential impossibility, an idle fantasy. It is something that one can lead oneself toward doing, e.g., by the 'phenomenonological' method described in outline in 412. The method of bracketing *oneself*, placing oneself in a position of complete spectatoriality to the reality of others (See the excellent analysis of the kind of passages in *PI* central to this chapter, in Gaita's *A Common Humanity*: "Wittgenstein diagnosed the trouble to lie at the beginning, with the assumption of the spectator's stance."³¹ The key philosophical question, which is explored in Wittgenstein's work on the psychopathology of philosophical delusion, links here with the key historical question in relation to Nazis and their ilk, a question answered in different ways by the likes of Goldhagen and Browning: what gets one/them/us to that point, that point of paradoxical disregard for the ordinary, for the evident?³²).

One might say: the Nazi (and perhaps even more, the bystander) placed himself as a spectator to the cries of his victims. He heard them, but he denied them, in the sense of not hearing them as cries to help. He didn't hear them as containing a *call* to respond to, as manifesting a shared humanity. He saw them, we might even venture to say, as mere behavior, to which a fundamentally *spectatorial* relation could even be regarded then as proper. (Here is a significance of course to the Nazis' repeated characterization of their adversary 'races' as "sub-human," or of the endless Hutu Power characterization of Tutsis as "cockroaches." These are metaphors we live by—or die by.) And from mere behavior, one can never 'construct' actual feeling, interiority, a true other, an other with (in the relevant sense) a face. (The only one who the Nazi allows real empathy for is *himself* and those racially linked to him. The Nazis, like most other agents of genocide, constructed *themselves* as the 'real victims,' of 'Jewish international finance,' 'Jewish Bolshevism,' of a 'stab in the back' during the First World War, etc. This incoherent (how could they possibly square simultaneously condemning 'the Jews' quintessentially as Bolsheviks *and* as international financiers?) and essentially and mordantly *self-pitying*, self-deceptive attitude makes real empathy for others near-impossible. As Arthur Koestler held: it is not just power that corrupts. Worse still is deliberate victimhood that then attains power, rulers who attain power in an already pre-corrupted state. Such that victims (or 'victims') become killers. . . .)

Seeing a living human being as an automaton is, then, an (un-)ethical possibility just barely—but constitutively—open to us by virtue of the

DRAFT

The Significance of PI 420, for Reading Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations 169

fragility of the criteria and the acknowledgement on which we mutually depend. This fragility of the mutual compact of humankind is an absolutely central theme of Wittgenstein's work, properly understood.³³ Other (though *not* entirely unrelated) methods are possible: for instance, *practice* (The homely phrase "Practice makes perfect" comes uncomfortably to mind here. It is a fact that ought, I think, to strike us more than it generally does as crying out for some kind of deeper explanatory understanding that most concentration camp guards, SS troopers, etc., found their bloody task *easier*, not harder, as time went by. And that, as Lifton argues,³⁴ the long slippery slope from sterilization through involuntary 'mercy killing' and systematic 'medicalized' killing at the concentration camps through finally to the extermination camps made the latter far more feasible than they would have been without the earlier items on that slope).

No: seeing a living human being as an automaton is in some sense *possible*; it is a kind of *limiting case* of what is for human beings (open as we are interminably to seeing-as) normal vision. 'For example': it is like seeing something entirely harmless and everyday *as* a swastika. Something that perhaps any of us could potentially do, especially given the right (e.g., historical) context. It is almost certainly wrong, foolish self-deception, to pretend (as perhaps Norman Malcolm would have) that, even given enough 'context,' we definitely could not also potentially see something essentially harmless and everyday (e.g., someone from another 'race') as dangerous, as a bacillus in the body politic, as not requiring of us acknowledgement of the kind we unthinkingly lend our own kind. (One way of seeing this, for a philosopher, is precisely to see how alarmingly the classic philosophical stance of spectatorialism and of the allegedly live possibility of solipsism mirrors the Nazi attitude to 'sub-humans.')

We commit roughly the same *kind* of available and avoidable wrong, if and when we fail to recognize how humanly available—even conceivably (Dare to acknowledge it) to us, to you—the Nazi-style mode of seeing (or at least modes categorically akin to it) are. The human includes all that Wittgenstein ranges over in the anti-'private-language' considerations, *all* those less-than-fully human modes of thinking and (not-)feeling that centre on being willing to exclude others, at least notionally, from measuring up to the full humanity that one normally unthinkingly attributes at the very least to oneself and one's kin. (Modes found in standard Western epistemology, as well as in racism.)

That is: we see the swastika, at the limit of what *is* humanly possible for us. We may well see a window as ('containing') a swastika, in the unusual circumstances when it becomes natural to do so. When, 'for instance,' there are (or rather, were) swastikas all over the continent. . . . If there are swastikas everywhere, and if people wearing swastikas are accomplishing this extraordinary self-deceptive feat of seeing human be-

ings as if they were no more valuable or truly human than automata, then *in response* one might find oneself seeing the cross pieces of a window pane as a swastika; that extraordinary pseudo-achievement will be a little less extraordinary, under such circumstances.

Of course, we shouldn't exaggerate the historical relevance of the precise point here: If one deliberately and sadistically gets the other to violate what is most sacred to the latter, and takes pleasure from this pain, then there is a sense in which one is far from treating one's victim as an automaton. One rather knows with exquisite cruelty of their humanity.³⁵ So the phenomenon I am deducing from Wittgenstein's remark only applies directly to *some* racist/anti-Semitic thinking and action. But it nevertheless applies indirectly to most or all of the rest of it. For the *paradoxicality* of such thinking is *general*: It is essential to understanding genocide to understand that it is *people* (fantasized as sub-human/"cockroaches," etc.) that it is about. So even when what one has is the knowing sadistic, vindictive or torturing infliction of pain without reservation, the character of paradox in something like the sense focal in this chapter remains salient.

Most of the behavior of (e.g.,) the Nazis in World War Two, was demonic *in and through* its ordinariness, its 'banality,' its lack of extreme sadism and yet its calm, casual—genocidal—callousness. Compare for instance the entirely technical discussions of the burning of human corpses that took up such a large part of the 'cultural life' of Auschwitz. Lifton quotes a senior Nazi doctor as saying of this: "It was a purely technical matter. "Ethical" plays (sic.) absolutely no [part]—the word does not exist."³⁶ (This was the consistent message of all Lifton's informants on this matter, with the exception only of newly arrived prisoners.) Lifton comments that the problem was perceived entirely as one of "getting rid of the waste material of a routinized communal enterprise."³⁷

Similarly, Christopher Browning's definitive study of some of the German mass murderers who got their hands bloodiest is entitled, intriguingly for our present purposes, *Ordinary Men*.³⁸ Some would object to my reading of *PI* that Wittgenstein's concern was only the ordinary, not the extraordinary, the political, etc. To this, I would reply that the opposing term to "ordinary" for Wittgenstein was not "extraordinary" but "meta-physical," or sometimes "nonsensical."³⁹ In other words: the ordinary includes *everything*; everything except that which we utterly fantasize, that (nothing) which we (merely) imagine that we imagine.⁴⁰ In particular, then, it includes war. In particular: it includes war when war is the norm, when it is quotidianly ordinary. When it affects every aspect of your life (think, in Wittgenstein's case, of rationing, blackouts, your family under siege and under threat of death, even growing knowledge of unprecedented atrocities against your kind under cover of the war,⁴¹ and so on and so forth). The challenge is: not to let the hard times that you are alive in turn what is empirically ordinary into a subtle 'justification' for

DRAFT

The Significance of PI 420, for Reading Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations 171

committing appalling crimes. Those that Browning (and Lifton) studied rose in sadly few cases to that challenge.

In this crucial remark of Wittgenstein's that I am here focusing on, PI 420, we see Wittgenstein impress upon us the *uncanniness* resulting from the effort to see (e.g.,) a group of children as automata. Something extremely striking in Browning's account is that before (as well as after) their 'Aktionen,' the men of Reserve Police Battalion 101 would almost invariably get drunk. Is it too much of a stretch to suggest that being drunk is in turn a way to block out that uncanniness? I think not, for surely that *is* just what it is: inebriation enabled ordinary men to overcome their internal division and even their unreality-feelings that were consequent upon seeing (and acting) in a way that is profoundly unnatural. This is for instance what led Robert Jay Lifton⁴² to talk extensively about "psychic numbing" and "numbed violence," the state in which most *Einsatzgruppenaktionen* were carried out. A drug-induced (i.e., alcohol-induced) sense of detachment or unreality/derealization, a recession away from their full ordinary humanity, prevented the seeing-as-inhuman uncanniness from settling in on them and too drastically disturbing them (or indeed sending them mad—which did sometimes happen; though Rudolf Hoss reports⁴³ that suicide was more common). You can't do violence to an automaton; how handy then, to be able to see one's victims (roughly) as or as-if automata.⁴⁴ But how difficult: so how necessary (for all but a small psychopathic minority) to deaden one's intuitive sense of uncanniness at the distortion. In other words: to be able to see one's victims as automata, it helps, to see *as an automaton sees*.

And here it is extremely striking that none other than Josef Mengele, 'Dr. Auschwitz,' for some the ultimate incarnation of Nazi evil, was not infrequently described by survivors in terms like these: "like an automaton"; or as "Hitler's robot."⁴⁵ The tendency to allow other humans to become unpeople, as-if-automata, mere bodies that could be extinguished and dissected, etc., at will, has within itself, it seems, a tendency to help turn the perpetrator *themselves* into something very like what they take themselves to be dealing with: an automaton.

On which, compare this brilliant passage from Lifton:

There is always a technical element to medicine and a necessity for a mechanical model of the body. The ordinary doctor, in effect, says . . . to the patient: "Allow me to look at your body as a machine, in order to do what I can in the service of your overall health as a human being." *But the Nazi doctor held to an absolutized mechanical model* extending out into the environment. The machine of the body was subsumed to an encompassing killing machine, and Auschwitz inmates had no standing except as they could be seen as contributing to that larger machine. *The Auschwitz self of the Nazi doctor was also part of that environmental machine . . .*⁴⁶ (Emphasis mine)

The Nazi doctor ever-increasingly turned his patients (his victims) into machines, pawns inside a vast machinery of state and of death. The Nazi doctor, iconically, had to 'treat' the victims as if automata, as part of a functioning machine that *ultimately required him, the doctor, to become as if a machine / an automaton himself*. . . .

Am I distorting the process? Some would say that what actually happened in many cases was less to do with a paradoxical and self-deceiving seeing-as less-than-human in the sense of somehow *robotic*, and more in the sense of bad-faithedly projecting your self-loathing onto the other, vividly. I am thinking for instance of Klaus Theweleit's remarkable work. Well; I think that my reading, following Wittgenstein, is eminently compatible with what is right in that approach, as well. You strip away the humanity of the victim, and project your self-loathing, especially your loathing of your own body and/or of your homosocial or homosexual desire and/or of the female body, onto them. They become a tacit vehicle for your self-disgust; their independence of mind or action is bracketed. This is structurally much the same as them being seen as *in themselves* automata. It is only your 'projection' that 'animates' them. And in the process, it greatly helps once more if *you* can become machine-like. If, as Theweleit puts it in *Male Fantasies*, you can "live . . . without any feelings," in the grip of "the fascination of the machine."⁴⁷

There is an important, ordinary sense in which seeing a living human being as an automaton is not just difficult, but *impossible*. A sense in which it cannot be done. I mean this chapter and my reading of Wittgenstein here to be entirely alert to that, too. For what this does is alert us to the crucial sense in which the Nazis did not believe their own words, their own propaganda.⁴⁸ Do we truly believe our own words, when we say that we acknowledge others' pain? The answer is shown largely in our actions, in how easily or otherwise we fall tacitly into some version of denial. Did the Nazis or others like them truly believe their own words when they denied humanity to their victims, when they called them sub-human, etc.; or again, the Hutu *genocidaires* when they consistently called Tutsis 'cockroaches'? Part of the answer is shown in their efforts to deny what they were doing;⁴⁹ that is, in their tacit and overt acknowledgements of the *limits* of denial (of others' humanity). Seeing humans as cockroaches or as vermin of whatever kind is not just difficult; it is a *limiting case* of something that is possible.⁵⁰ I.e., it is in a certain sense conceptually impossible to attain stably, and yet remain sane and honest, un-'doubled.' This is another aspect of what is lastingly important, I suggest, about Wittgenstein's formulation, "Seeing a living human being as an automaton. . . ."

In the Second World War, as he wrote his second and greatest work, Wittgenstein worked as a medical orderly, contributed to a brilliant disquisition on 'wound shock,' and in sum contributed as best he could in a

DRAFT

The Significance of PI 420, for Reading Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations 173

manner befitting a late-middle-aged man lacking in the kinds of 'vocational' skills that his colleagues Keynes (e.g., in his 1940 *How to Pay for the War: A Radical Plan for the Chancellor of the Exchequer*) and Turing (in his work on breaking the Enigma code) possessed to helping the allied war effort against fascism. Meanwhile: Wittgenstein wrote *his* war book.

The *Philosophical Investigations* was a book designed among other things to try to help overcome the suffering of a suffering world.⁵¹ It lets one deep into the worldview of those (at times: all of us) who are inclined in one of various ways to deny that suffering. And in particular, then, to play its part in helping to ensure that the likelihood of the rise once more of the kind of ideology that sparked the Second World War is kept as low as possible. One thing necessary for that likelihood being kept low being precisely: *acknowledgement* of its deep psychological/intellectual roots and attractions, its easy appeal, its not simply being a historical accident or a one-off calamity of evil.⁵² Failure to acknowledge or to understand the failure to acknowledge or to understand is simply to repeat the failure, and to make its yet further recurrence more likely.

To overcome the inclination to an attractive philosophic delusion, one needs to dig it up over and over again from the roots. This is hard work, and requires one to circle the delusion again and again, to handle it both genuinely and *gently*,⁵³ to approach it in its most attractive form(s), to approach the forms of it that can work on all of us and not just the extreme forms which have gripped those who we like to think we are absolutely not like. Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* is a book which brilliantly diagnoses the habit of the mind, which is also a habit of the heart, the inclination to believe fully only in one's own suffering or in the suffering of others who one judges/allows to be alike/akin to one. It lets one into the heart of that darkness, including crucially in one's own heart. If we are to acknowledge fully the reality of others, to acknowledge with deserved depth their shared personhood, we must also acknowledge fully why it is that this acknowledgement can be a difficult matter for us. An *ethical/existential* challenge, a *political* challenge, even.

It is arguably at least in relative terms easy to love and sympathize and empathize with the oppressed. To feel at least pity (See *PI* 287).⁵⁴ The even tougher task, which sooner or later must be undertaken, is to understand the oppressors, and to acknowledge them too (while not abandoning in the least one's complete clarity that *they*, and not their victims, were the ones in the wrong.). For the ultimate attraction is to think that one has nothing in common with the perpetrators.⁵⁵ But this *is not true*. All great Holocaust-writing/literature aims to establish in us this point that we resist and resist; Wittgenstein's book is no exception.

The full flourishing of other humans depends upon our acknowledgement of them. And so does *our* full flourishing.⁵⁶ The oppressor makes it harder for the oppressed to achieve a complete liberation, a complete flourishing, because the very humanity of the oppressed is battered. They

overtly or covertly wonder at base whether they can really be deserving of full acknowledgement, if *that* (so ‘basely’) is how they have been treated. But moreover, the oppressor decisively prevents *themselves* from being fully human. In this one particular sense, the harm the oppressor does to themselves is even worse than the harm they do to those they oppress. And by the same token it is harder, emotionally and psychologically, for us to risk relating to them.

What does this mean? This: that Wittgenstein is investigating the truth in what we are saying when any of us ever says or thinks or is inclined to think (in the grip of an othering anger) things like “To act in that way [e.g., as racists do] is inhuman”⁵⁷ or “They [e.g., Jews, blacks, etc.] are sub-human.” We need to humanize the oppressed by recognizing their full being and by helping to lift from them their oppression. We need *to humanize the oppressor* by recognizing how very easy it is—how human, all-too-human it is—to fall into the traps sprung by language and culture that result in them being (acting) less than human, by means of them seeing others as less than human.⁵⁸ (Philosophy, we might then say, is a battle against the bewitchment of our humanity by means of language.)

Thus Wittgenstein offers counter-propaganda.⁵⁹ To undermine the hold upon us that dangerous propaganda can easily attain: For seeing a human being as a human being is in one sense the easiest thing imaginable, completely natural.

In another sense, though, it is a philosophical achievement requiring will: requiring the kind of distance on our normal attitude that follows from a certain ‘bracketing’ or ‘alienation.’ (*Taken too far*, that bracketing or alienation becomes something deeply paradoxical: the attitude of the solipsist or of the Nazi. It becomes not seeing a human being as a human being. Sadly, good enough propaganda can make the paradoxical seem ordinary. . . .)

In yet a third sense, truly seeing a human being as a human being is an ethical achievement, the kind of thing called for by the saints and by Levinas. It is unusual, but not at all paradoxical (for it is ‘simply’ a heightened, fully realized form of / transformed version of our natural attitude, a natural attitude in which one has *no* sense of seeing a human being as a human being precisely because (what Stephen Mulhall would call) doing so is so thoroughly natural). It is what we would do if we treated each other (and other beings, and indeed our planetary home) as if they were part of us,⁶⁰ or as dear to us as anything can be. . . .⁶¹ Only after recognizing the possibility of the paradoxical but (tragically) possible failure to acknowledge others (the failure to recognize/realize that there’s strictly no such thing as (simply taking) a human being as an automaton⁶²) can one be said to exercise that acknowledgment ethically. (This deals with the potential objection to my argument that, if seeing others as humans has no real alternative, then there’s nothing special/ethical about it, no real *achievement*. It also reminds us of Wittgenstein’s injunction to ‘look

DRAFT

The Significance of PI 420, for Reading Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations 175

closely' (to look, rather than thinking/theorizing) as a, or even *the* fundamental ethical reminder. This is how—as we might even put it, albeit at the slight risk of over-intellectualizing ourselves—turning Levinas's formula around, *philosophy is first-ethics*. . . .)

Wittgenstein's analyses of the delusions that tend to grip philosophers, all of us, are *directly* parallel, I am saying, to the analyses that are needed if one really wants to understand the attractions of racism, and how to overcome it. And it is an understanding that we must be truly ready to apply to (and to find for) *ourselves*.

We might even put it as grandly as this: Wittgenstein offers humanity liberation and humanity. For, as I have in effect briefly laid out: one can't truly have (philosophical) liberation without being/becoming human. And one can only have complete liberation, if the whole community is liberated. All of us. *All*.

I don't wish to exaggerate my case. Wittgenstein's intellectual development was no doubt to some considerable extent self-contained. Consideration of pain as a paradigm case was in any case already underway in his mind as early as 1929. The *Investigations* is still mostly not as political-philosophical a work as it might have been (and as perhaps it should have been). Wittgenstein himself mostly shunned 'real' politics. It is hardly proven that he fully practiced what he preached to Malcolm in his famous rant against him (that I mentioned in n.10). And a *Philosophical Investigations* for *our* time ought I believe to be more explicitly political, much less 'indirect,' than was Wittgenstein's. For the time now is not only dark, it is short. (The change to our climate that man has induced waits for no man.)

But I don't want to understate my case either. *Philosophical Investigations*, understood aright, is (much more than its predecessor texts in Wittgenstein's *oeuvre*) just the kind of book needed to dissolve the deepest (and most 'abstract') seeds of war and genocide, the seeds born of and watered precisely by over-abstraction (by a wallowing in abstraction and spectatorship at the cost of the engaging with empathy explicated and recommended by Wittgenstein). And it took that form exactly in that dark time, 1939–1945. Like most of the other greatest artistic works that concern the Second World War, its worst episodes and the ideology which spawned it, such as the writings of Georges Perec and works such as *Waiting for Godot*, the *Philosophical Investigations* does not wear on its sleeve that it is a war book. (Such sleeve-wearing is arguably inimical to most truly great artistic, etc., creativity.⁶³) But I hope that this chapter may at least have made available to you an aspect, a fertile possibility: I believe that *seeing* the *PI* as such a book is fertile for understanding the real nature and huge significance of Wittgenstein's anti-'private-language' considerations. . . . For (think here of *PI* 255), it contains and offers a multi-faceted cure: a set of reminders of one's humanity, a diagnosis of

the habits of mind-and-heart that can loosen one's grip on others' humanity (and 'by extension' therefore on one's own), and—through the power of heteronomy become autonomy—an enabling of the midwifing in oneself and others of a deeper and less vulnerable (to loss) humanity, because of one's greater awareness and understanding of what that humanity requires (namely, above all, acknowledgement of vulnerability to pain, suffering, loss—and inhumanity).

And that is why I disagree with the judgement made by many, and possibly implicitly present in Max Sebald's *Austerlitz*,⁶⁴ to the effect that Wittgenstein in his work was silent about the Second World War, and thus about the greatest issues of its time.

I hope to have shown that *PI* is much more of an existential text (as *TLP* explicitly is, in a slightly different way) than most people have realized. (One cannot think 'the mind-body problem' properly, it turns out, without thinking ethics.) This is one of the central reasons why the perspective of Cavell, Diamond, Conant, Mulhall, Kuusela, etc., on Wittgenstein's writing is important. The ethics that *PI* develops, or (better) creatively reminds us of, is partly prompted by its time. The problems of its time lead this ethics in a certain political direction. Wittgenstein says nothing at all, explicitly, about that political direction, but it is to some real degree implicitly there, in the ethics, in the interests and examples of the book. Understanding all this makes it easier for us philosophers of *our* time to go on to do what Wittgenstein did not do (and, more important, what he could not do): be stimulated to think the ethics and the politics that *our* time needs.⁶⁵ Wittgenstein helps open a clearing in which we can help to (for example) think in ways that will preserve and grow our forests, and thus, preserve our very civilization. . . .

This chapter is then an exercise in pushing a boat out. It might be that I have pushed it slightly farther than it can in fact be pushed out. That's fine—so long as doing so has revealed relatively clearly just how far it *can* be pushed out. If the *Tractatus* was a 'war-book' that was (is) a work of ethics then, I say, *Philosophical Investigations* was a 'war-book' that was (is) a work of ethics too, and even to some degree of politics and history. A therapy for our culture. A work that reveals a paradox that we are inclined to, *precisely* inasmuch as we are inclined to racism and its ilk (as we are).

In closing, then, one might see my thought in concrete terms in something like this way: Seeing a living human being, paradoxically, as worthy of being treated as nothing more than an automaton—a kind of cyborg in the mind's eye—is analogous to the habits of thought most centrally subject to critique in the anti-'private-language' considerations. Let us instead see the *Philosophical Investigations* as a meditation on Nazism and the like, our attractions to it, and how to expose them relentlessly to view so that they might—if we are lucky, and determined, and courageous—die.⁶⁶

1. London: Penguin, 1995.
2. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
3. London: MacMillan, 1958 (1953).
4. See David Stern, "Tracing the Development of Wittgenstein's Writing on Private Language," (in Nuno Venturinha (ed.) *Wittgenstein After His Nachlass* (London: Palgrave, 2010) pp. 110–27), p.110.
5. London: Routledge, 1961 (1922); transl. Pears and McGuinness.
6. I am thinking especially of her "Russell and Wittgenstein on War: The Avant-garding of the *Tractatus*," *Common Knowledge*, II, 1 (Spring 1993): 15–34.
7. See *Philosophical Investigations*, sections 107–8, and also sections 116 and 120. Think once more of Wittgenstein's emphasis in 125, on the *civil status* of a contradiction: "The civil status of a contradiction, or its status in civil life: there is the philosophical problem." Compare this great remark from the *TLP*, 5.5563: "Our problems [in philosophy / in this book] are not abstract, but perhaps the most concrete that there are."
8. In the limiting case: just one. Solipsism can be seen as a kind of extreme version of racism. In this connection, it is worth noting Stanley Cavell's telling remark, in his discussion of the nature of slavery, at p.376 of *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), "[The slave-owner] means, indefinitely [by any remarks to the effect that slaves are not human beings], that slaves are different, primarily different from him, secondarily perhaps different from you and me." It is very *natural* to read Daniel Paul Schreber (in his *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*, New York: New York Review Books, 2000.) as holding solipsism as a kind of racism taken to its logical conclusion, for instance, in his remarks on Aryanism, and on breeding a new race of 'Super-Schrebers,' etc. Eric Santner develops this theme somewhat in his *My Own Private Germany: Daniel Paul Schreber's Secret History of Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). See also Gaita's argument for why we need a philosophical understanding of racism, in the chapter of *A Common Humanity* (London: Routledge, 2002) entitled "Racism: The Denial of a Common Humanity." It is a striking 'coincidence' in this context, and in the light of the rest of the chapter below, that Robert Jay Lifton (in *The Nazi Doctors* (New York: Basic Books, 2000 (1986); also available at www.holocaust-history.org/lifton/contents.shtml) refers to Mengele as exhibiting during his conduct of 'selections' at the entrance to Auschwitz an "almost casual solipsism." (p.344) Nazism is akin to solipsism, I shall be arguing in this chapter, so long as we see how the patho-logic of solipsism is directly akin to the patho-logic of racism, taken to a logical extreme.
9. I don't want to be drawn into a long and peripheral discussion of the status of my claim in terms of 'authorial intention.' My work in recent years has indeed mainly been about *applying* the thought of Wittgenstein (see, e.g., my *Applying Wittgenstein* (edited by Laura Cook; London: Continuum, 2007)). I am not most interested in occurrent thoughts that may or may not have been present in the mind of the man Ludwig Wittgenstein (though I *shall* below reflect on Wittgenstein's psychology in speculating about why *he* was so closely attuned, some appearances notwithstanding, to the war and its underpinning attitudes, in his philosophizing). My claim is primarily about *what actually gets expressed in the text and about the implied author of the text*, albeit in the light of facts about the historical context and about the mind and the man, Ludwig Wittgenstein. My interpretation suggests a historical mode of *seeing-as* that (applied to the text) produces the best (most charitable and most fertile) available reading of (a crucial portion and aspect of) that text. If it be asked whether it is ethical to read Wittgenstein in this way (if one considers the concept of an 'ethics of reading' in the spirit of Hillis Miller), then I can only reply that the present chapter is an exercise in pushing out a boat as far as it can reasonably be pushed (I return to this point at the chapter's end). I don't think it is unethical to engage in such an exercise, so long as one

is ready for one's readers to push back a little, so that, as a result of such 'dialogue,' we end up in the right place.

10. As in this excerpt from the opening of Esa Saarinen and Tommi Uschanov's article, "Philosophy as a service industry, or, Reintroducing the philosophical life," at www.helsinki.fi/~tuschano/writings/service/, drawing on a famous incident in Wittgenstein's life:

In the autumn of 1939, Wittgenstein and his friend Norman Malcolm were walking along the river Cam in Cambridge when they saw a newspaper vendor's sign announcing that the German government had accused the British government of instigating an attempt to assassinate Hitler. When Wittgenstein remarked that it wouldn't surprise him at all if it were true, Malcolm retorted that "the British were too civilized and decent to attempt anything so underhand, and . . . such an act was incompatible with the British 'national character'." Wittgenstein was furious, and the incident broke off his relations to Malcolm for some time (Malcolm's *Memoir* (Oxford: OUP, 1958), p. 30). Five years later, he wrote to Malcolm:

Whenever I thought of you I couldn't help thinking of a particular incident which seemed to me very important. . . . you made a remark about 'national character' that shocked me by its primitiveness. I then thought: what is the use of studying philosophy if all that it does for you is to enable you to talk with some plausibility about some abstruse questions of logic, etc., & if it does not improve your thinking about the important questions of everyday life, if it does not make you more conscientious than any . . . journalist in the use of the DANGEROUS phrases such people use for their own ends? You see, I know that it's difficult to think well about "certainty", "probability", "perception", etc. But it is, if possible, still more difficult to think . . . really honestly about your life and other people's lives. (Malcolm, p. 93)

What is the use of studying philosophy if it doesn't improve your thinking about the important questions of everyday life? Contradicting the standard academic account of what Wittgenstein was up to, we believe that this is the pressing question he asked himself throughout his philosophical career. It was also a question Wittgenstein thought of as outweighing any specific philosophical theses or theories. But it is also exactly the question that has been forgotten and even laughed at by the mainstream of today's professional philosophy.

Like Saarinen and Uschanov, I mean to overturn such forgetting. (Compare also Anat Matar's lovely essay, which is very like-minded to mine, "Lonely beating: Wittgenstein's automaton and the drums of war," in A. Biletzki (ed.) *Hues of Philosophy* (London: College Publications, 2009).)

11. See, e.g., *PI* 103, 115, 129; and 308: "How does the philosophical problem about mental processes and states and about behaviourism arise?—The first step is the one that altogether escapes notice. We talk of processes and states and leave their nature undecided . . . (The decisive move in the conjuring trick has been made, and it was the very one that we thought innocent)." And compare also this, from the *Big Typescript* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005), 423: "Human beings are deeply embedded in philosophical—i.e., grammatical—confusions."

12. See, e.g., his *Stalingrad* (London: Penguin, 1999).

13. To a degree, one can 'read' off how to see the world aright precisely by what is wrong with these overly crude and mechanical—robotic-pseudo-models. They provide, as it were, a photographic negative for the "perspicuous presentation" that one seeks. (But this point must not be exaggerated, for several reasons, including crucially that the guidance thus attained is actually only guidance that moves one away from error, not, I would suggest, toward 'truth.' It is in that sense actually rather like

DRAFT

The Significance of PI 420, for Reading Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations 179

Darwinian evolution. Wittgensteinian philosophy issues not in a quasi-theoretical representation of 'the grammar,' but in a compendium of techniques and hints for how, successfully, to move *away from* confusing and delusional orientations towards our language, our life.)

What the robotic moments certainly give us is a strong preparatory counterpoint to those moments in Wittgenstein's anti-'private-language' considerations, in particular perhaps *PI* 281–83 and 286, when Wittgenstein actually explicitly gives us an emotional setting for or a human conclusion to the dialogical movement of thought he has created. The latter can be regarded as the telos of the former. (In part this is because the robotic scenarios, if they succeed in depicting anything at all that makes sense, amount in most cases to alarming or uncanny failures of humanity, too. For instance, the 'reading-machines' of *PI* 156–79 fairly clearly involve an (un-)ethical abuse. That is to say: people being treated as the 'reading-machines' of those passages are treated would I think be fairly said to be having their humanity violated. Somewhat similarly: neoliberal economic efficiency, the self-fulfilling prophecy of 'homo economicus,' not to mention call-centres and the like; all tend to make workers, consumers, buyers and sellers more and more machine-like. . . .)

14. See especially my paper in *New Literary History* (41, 3 (2010)), "Wittgenstein's *PI* as a war book"; and "The anti-'private-language' considerations," in my and Phil Hutchinson's *Liberatory philosophy*, forthcoming. See also chapter 1 of my *A New Covenant with All Beings*, forthcoming.

15. A 'resolute' reading of the anti-'private-language' considerations does not attempt to state what a 'private language' would be and argue that it is impossible; rather, it sees the text as engaging with the reader's desires for 'something' that she would like to call a 'private language' (and 'private objects,' etc.) and suggesting that (and how) those desires don't come to anything that she actually at the end of the day wants or needs.

Why is the 'resolute' reading one with being an 'ethical' reading? I think the answer is present implicitly throughout the work of Cavell, recent Putnam, Conant, recent Mulhall, Kuusela, etc. It has in part to do with being serious about understanding 'being clear' as constituting an ethical imperative. Furthermore, as I hope this chapter as a whole brings out: Philosophical problems such as 'the mind-body problem' are in any case intrinsically involved with ethics. You can't hope to solve nor to dissolve nor even really to understand 'that problem' without an ethical sensibility.

We should also note here the very interesting slightly different perspective on Wittgenstein's method contained in Thomas Wallgren's *Transformative Philosophy* (Oxford: Lexington, 2006). Wallgren thinks that we can't explain the form of the *PI* well if we think there are relatively definite lessons of the 'resolute' kind to be drawn from it. He thinks the ethics of the *PI* is a more thoroughly polyphonic and 'democratic' one, the message sceptical and hence, the implications intensely political. Hence: He sees *PI* as embodying transformative philosophy in which logic, ethics, and politics are one. Not resolute/therapeutic philosophy in which logic and ethics are one.

My response in very brief would be this: the interpretation of Wittgenstein implicit in the present work aims to draw the best from both what Wallgren calls 'therapeutic' and 'polyphonic' interpretations. I aim in this chapter and this book to take polyphony seriously without being tempted toward relativism, and to take therapy seriously without being at all patronizing. I aim moreover to produce the outline of a more 'ethical' reading of *PI* than has ever been produced, to date. And my reading doesn't shy away from politics either, where appropriate—as the present chapter (and also the chapters either side of this one, chapters 7 and 9) makes plain.

I think that there is a danger of a lack of *commitment*, in the Wallgrenian 'polyphonic' approach, a danger of too much tarrying with quasi-relativistic liberal 'pluralism'. . . . I think that Wittgenstein would have had little truck with this, and that one *should not* take up a 'democratic' (sic.) or 'skeptical' stance, *vis-à-vis* such matters as genocide. . . . Seeking to understand the perpetrators (as I do here) does not give their voices any more legitimacy than they had at the outset. . . .

16. See Sass's "Deep Disquietudes: Reflections on Wittgenstein as Antiphilosopher," in James Klagge (ed.) *Wittgenstein: Biography and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). My view, for what it's worth, is that it would be more psychiatrically accurate to describe Wittgenstein as having merely mild *schizothymic* rather than 'schizoid' tendencies.

17. Also, like Sass, I tend to agree with the British 'object relations' (and Kretschmerian) view of the schizoid/schizothyme as combining a capacity for coldness and distance with hypersensitivity. (Guntrip et al. argue that the coldness and detachment is actually a defence against a deeper neediness and sensitivity and concern. For more on all of this, see Sass's *op.cit.*) Thus Wittgenstein would be peculiarly well-suited for exploring, with profound emotional resonance, the human tendencies to know *and* to deny the other. (Including the tendencies starkly visible in the Nazi doctors, most of whom exhibited schizoid or 'doubling' tendencies to a high degree. This is explicitly suggested in Lifton's *op.cit.* at p.398 and in Chapter 19.)

18. And, to be fair, there is a great deal of discussion of color as a key example in the anti-'private-language' considerations: see, e.g., section 273f. (Wittgenstein moves fairly seamlessly between the two cases (pain and color) and others. This of course tells us something deep about Wittgenstein's method, and about the absurdity of dividing philosophy into rigid alleged sub-disciplines.) But pain tends to dominate as the example in *PI*, in a way in which it does not, in the works that preceded *PI*. It supersedes too, notably, toothache. Pain, I think, is a more apposite case to focus on, in a time of war and genocide.

19. Compare *TLP* 6.43. And see of course Elaine Scarry's important work, *The Body in Pain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

20. This last remark perhaps raises the question: What would a *Philosophical Investigations* for our time—a time when, as Gaita argues (in the middle chapters of his *A Common Humanity*), the intellectual battle against racism has been to a large extent won—look like? This is a question that I take up and aim to answer to in my *A New Covenant with All Beings*.

21. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Remarks* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980 (1930)).

22. *The Blue and the Brown Books*; New York: Harper, 1965.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Wittgenstein, *Big Typescript*.

25. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1978.

26. Those who doubt the real and prominent presence in Wittgenstein's life of such considerations during the war should read about the fascinating and somewhat-influential treatment of 'wound-shock,' influenced by Wittgenstein's own work, which emerged during 1943 at Guy's Hospital. See for instance: <http://www.wittgen-cam.ac.uk/cgi-bin/text/biogre.html>

27. There is a moment of connection here with Husserl, who took the crisis of European/world culture to be in one central respect a crisis of over-intellectualism. And now we might risk asking this: Did Heidegger's casual despising at times of 'ordinary everydayness,' conceived of as a state that allowed of an alternative superior attitude and space, leave him peculiarly vulnerable to the appeal of Nazism? Is this a—more or less philosophical—clue to why these two great German-speaking voices of the 20th century jumped in opposite directions, on the crucial question of their time, from 1930 thru 1945? (Thus in worrying about Heidegger hereabouts I am not thinking only of his infamous Rector's address, nor even of the similarly troubling moments (concerning for instance membership in the S.A., normalized and considered as a desirable goal, albeit an insufficient one) that one can similarly and easily find in his 1934 lectures on *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language* (New York: SUNY, 2009) and in a few of his later musings; I am thinking also of certain moments in *Being and Time* (Blackwell, 1978). But I am not expert enough in Heidegger to be able to judge the answer to the question that I have asked here.)

28. One thing that I particularly like about this example is that it helps refute the silly accusations sometimes made against Wittgenstein of his being allegedly an anti-

intellectual or anti-scientific thinker. For here, the anti-intellectualist route is precisely a scientific route: i.e., mentioning a scientific experiment as a case of everyday activity. The ordinary or everyday, as Wittgenstein means the term, is *not* counterposed to the scientific; only to the metaphysical / the nonsensical. (On this, see also my "Throwing Away 'the Bedrock,'" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 2005, vol. 105 (1), pp. 81–98; and the discussion in the text, below; and Chapter 11 below.)

29. Wittgenstein had already developed the swastika case of seeing-as at some length in the *Brown Book* (*op.cit.*, e.g., p.164), wherein he emphasizes how much cognitive work it takes to see a square with diagonals as a (limiting case of a) swastika. The automaton parallel, the 'cyborg' of human-(seen)-as-automaton, is however absent here: it only enters into the scene several years later, in *PI* itself.

30. Such that they could be experimented upon, discarded at will, etc. This naturally brings to mind Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, London: Gollancz, 2004 (A question to which the answer is: No, they too, if they dream, dream of real sheep) / Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (Warner Bros. Pictures, 1982), and the beautiful Wittgensteinian analysis of the latter made by Stephen Mulhall, e.g., in his "Picturing the Human (Body and Soul): A Reading of *Blade Runner*," *Film and Philosophy* 1 (1994). An important moment for Mulhall's paper is section iv of the so-called 'Part II' of *PI* (see also especially, in the present context, *PI* Part I sections 281–83, 359–60, 422), where Wittgenstein suggests the following: "'I believe that he is not an automaton," just like that, so far makes no sense. // My attitude toward him is an attitude toward a soul. I am not of the *opinion* that he has a soul." This is drawing a kind of consequence from the discussion in *PI* 240–315. A soul is not a thing within a body. Its existence can in a way be read off how we act/ behave toward one another: not (as a Behaviorist might have it) how we behave toward bodies, but how we behave toward *people*. And a strong enough failure to behave toward another as toward a person evinces something very like the delusion that someone inclined to speak a nonsense such as the bare unoccasioned utterance of "I believe he is not an automaton" is prone to. Of course, a racist belief often has enough 'context' and 'back-up' that establishing that it is nonsense is much harder, its metaphysical status much murkier. It will take a huge undoing of propaganda. The kind of undoing, in fact that the thought of great philosophers takes—not the kind of easy pickings that most so-called 'Wittgensteinians' make it sound like (cf. n.33, below). Rather: the kind of unpicking that Wittgenstein actually, painstakingly, carries out.

It is quite as if Dick, or at least Ridley Scott, had read Wittgenstein, in fact. (And of course *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* was intended as an allegory of Nazism/ racism.) For another, related, case, take this intriguing (in the context of our 'political' reading of the anti-'private-language' considerations) and helpful remark of Stanley Cavell's (from p.377 of *The Claim of Reason*): "It could . . . be said that [the slave owner] takes himself to be private with respect to [his slaves], in the end unknowable by them." Now compare these excerpts from the Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000 (1831)), pp.249–51:

When all men . . . are ranked in an irrevocable way according to their occupation, wealth, and birth, . . . each caste has its opinions, its sentiments, its rights, its moral habits, its separate existence. Thus the men who compose it [a caste] bear no resemblance to any of the others; they do not have the same way of thinking or of feeling, and if they believe themselves to belong to the same humanity, they do so just barely . . . // It is easy to see that the lot of [slaves] inspires little pity in their masters and that they [the masters] see in slavery not only a state of affairs from which they profit, but also an evil that scarcely touches them. In this way, the same man who is full of humanity for his fellow men when they are at the same time his equals becomes insensitive to their sufferings the moment the equality ceases.

Tocqueville argues that *equality* is the best guarantor for the ability to see one's fellow humans *as humans* (Note though that this phrase, "seeing humans *as humans*," must be understood, *contra* Stephen Mulhall's general argument in *On Being in the World: Wittgenstein and Heidegger on Seeing Aspects* (Routledge, 1990), as a purely *transitional* description. As Silvia Panizza will argue in forthcoming work, there is something very odd about the term / the idea of 'seeing humans as humans'; for what can it mean, other than (simply) seeing humans? Or possibly, seeing as a saint sees, seeing deeper; I return to this point at the close of the present chapter.). If we are impressed by this line of thinking, then we might naturally connect Wittgenstein's *PI* with a political philosophy that is *genuinely* egalitarian. (See my "Wittgenstein vs. Rawls," in the *Proceedings of the Kirchberg Wittgenstein Symposium*, 2010, on this score. Rawls said in an autobiographical sketch, near the end of his life, that "Three years spent in the U.S. army in World War Two led me to be . . . concerned with political questions. Around 1950 I started to write a book on justice." Raymond Geuss (in his "Neither history nor praxis," *European Review* 11:3 (2003), pp.281–92) argues that it is a bizarre response to World War Two to think that what it suggests is the need for an abstract answer to an abstract question, "What is the correct conception of justice?," and moreover to think that the abstractions in question ought to be in the form of a plan for the correct distribution of rights, 'goods' and services. One needs to think, rather, of power, and of selfishness, and of the human motivations or failings that can lead toward failing to see the aspects of others and of the world that we need to see, and (thus) that lead to injustice. My argument in the present chapter is that Wittgenstein's response to his time was, some appearances to the contrary, much more relevant than Rawls's. For Wittgenstein, I am suggesting, in effect asked "How are ideologies like Nazism possible? What are their intellectual conditions? What settings of and failings to see aspects enable them? What is the nature of their attractions? How can we overcome those deep attractions? (Etc.)")

31. *Op.cit.*, p.265.

32. A fascinating answer to this question is given also in Iain McGilchrist's marvelous book, *The Master and his Emissary* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009), which sees much of the history of human culture as a history of a series of motivated denials of the aliveness of the world around us, including of other people, as the synoptic perspective that McGilchrist associates with the right hemisphere of the brain is gradually repressed and mastered by the devitalizing and atomistic (and indeed schizoid) perspective that he associates with left-hemisphere dominance.

33. The failure to acknowledge this fragility, a failure present in 'standard' readings of the so-called 'private language argument' as offered for instance by Norman Malcolm and by Baker-and-Hacker, is thus of real moment. In their pretence or hope that human beings can definitively establish one another's humanity, and definitively overcome the sense of any possible gap between them, these writers betray a lack of any sense of vertigo (and in this, they contrast strikingly with 'New' Wittgensteinians such as McDowell and Cavell—see, e.g., p.43 of McDowell's "Non-cognitivism and rule-following," in my and Crary's edited collection, *The New Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 2000)), a lack of sensitivity to the endless human temptation to fall away from freely given mutuality, a temptation that is one key part of the very reason why the later Wittgenstein *writes* in the almost-painful circling semi-unending fashion that he does. Thus for these 'standard' writers/readers, Wittgenstein's mode of literary self-presentation can never be truly defended against those still-more-standard philosophers who find this mode simply obscure, an encumbrance, and who are concomitantly unimpressed with what then (understandably) appears to them to be the quasi-behaviorism or question-beggingness of the so-called 'private language argument' presented by 'standard' 'Wittgensteinians.'

34. In his *The Nazi Doctors*. (See p.197, for a powerful account of how practice normalized, at Auschwitz.)

35. See, e.g., the example cited at p.68 of *A Common Humanity*, of a rabbi forced by a Nazi to spit on the Torah, and then, when he ran out of saliva, being 'supplied' by the

Nazi with more—i.e., the German spat into the rabbi's mouth, so that the rabbi could continue to spit on his holy book.

Claude Lanzmann, the director of the great Holocaust film *Shoah*, famously believes that there is something morally wrong in attempting to understand everything about the perpetration of the Holocaust. Anecdotes such as this one might be cited as among the 'evidence' for his intriguing moral stance (as might Derrick Jensen's argument in *Endgame*, (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2006) especially his powerful reflections on the inefficacy of empathy toward abusers as a strategy for ending the abuse. And compare Coetzee's/Costello's argument in 'Lesson 6' of J. M. Coetzee's *Elizabeth Costello* (London: Vintage, 2004), to the effect that understanding perpetrators is dangerous and not necessary for all.). Clearly, the stance that I am exploring and recommending in the present chapter is different. I am suggesting that our moral destiny as humans is to attempt to understand everything about ourselves, however repellent, and to use that as a basis for extending acknowledgement even to those who we are most inclined to deny it to: perpetrators. (This is a kind of expansion of the attitude of interpretive charity that deeply characterizes the 'resolute' reading of Wittgenstein, that I broadly presuppose in the present work.)

I will (I hope) address the Lanzmann/Jensen/Costello view more seriously / in greater depth, in future work.

36. Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors* p.178.

37. *Ibid.*, p.179.

38. *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).

39. See my "Ordinary/everyday language" in *Wittgenstein: Key Concepts*, ed. Kelly Dean Jolley (Acumen, 2010).

40. Cf. Diamond's essay on the concept of imagination in philosophy in Crary and Read, *The New Wittgenstein*.

41. Compare p.213 of Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors*, on Auschwitz as, paradoxically, generally a "calm" place. And the least awful and most 'normal' of the Nazi doctors at Auschwitz, Dr. B, quoted on p.320: "[F]or me [Auschwitz] was also *everyday* living, you see." (Emphasis added). (Though see also p.447 of Lifton, on a certain sense in which places like Auschwitz did become entirely removed from the ordinary world, from Planet Earth.)

42. E.g., at p.15 of his majestic *The Nazi Doctors*. See also pp.159–60, and pp.442–47, and see p.193, p.195f., p.231, and p.443, for fascinating analysis of the crucial role that alcohol played in this numbing. Cf. also, e.g., p.228, on derealization in the camps.

43. See p.159 of Lifton, *op.cit.*

44. Here once more of course *Blade Runner* is profoundly relevant; see n.30, above. (Of course, one of the themes of *Blade Runner* is that one who runs along the edge of the blade that separates (e.g.,) the oppressed and the oppressor is best-placed to project themselves into the mind of either group. To play the detective as best it can be played. (This is the central theme of Thomas Harris's *Red Dragon* (New York: Putnam's, 1981), and of the masterful film *Manhunter* thereof made by Michael Mann (De Laurentiis Entertainment Group (DEG), Red Dragon Productions S.A.: 1986).) Wittgenstein is a maestro at understanding minds that are misunderstood, and at understanding the nature of the mastery of and failure to understand mind, full stop. In future work, I hope to return to the question of the psychological danger and pain consequent upon the project of entering into such psychical territory, hazards known to the protagonist of *Manhunter*, to Wittgenstein, and of course to historians of the Holocaust.)

45. Quotes taken from Lifton's *op.cit.* p.344 and p.377. The point under discussion here is significant for my argument in the present chapter. The perception of 'the other' as human involves appropriate, human response, 'reactive' (in, roughly, Strawson's sense) rather than detached. Of course, not all 'reactive' responses are 'nice' or ideal, but the key point is that such 'reactive' attitudes constantly manifest a real or at least a would-be *engagement* with the other, an escape beyond spectatorialism.

46. Lifton, *op.cit.* p.455

47. *Male Fantasies* (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1987), cited at p.495 of Lifton (*op.cit.*). Compare also Lifton (p.462) speaking of the apogee of “anti-empathic male power” in Nazism. The risk of lack of empathy that Wittgenstein examined philosophically could be writ large in the ‘hardness’ of the Nazi male ideal examined in cultural-historical detail by Theweleit.

48. This is the flip-side of the concern presented in the version of this chapter published in *New Literary History* in relation to *PI* 286, etc.

49. The Nazis were of course the first Holocaust deniers, and their political heirs today continue that practice. (On the alleged ‘sub-human’ status of the victims, compare this, from p.206 of Lifton (*op.cit.*): “Nazi doctors, as a Czech doctor, Erich G., observed, would “treat Jewish people as having a human form but not a human quality”.”)

50. Cf. p.55 of Gaita’s *A Common Humanity*.

51. As Wittgenstein completed *Philosophical Investigations*, he also wrote a letter to Victor Gollancz (I have seen a copy at the von Wright archive, in Helsinki; see also sammelpunkt.philo.at:8080/445/1/19-1-95.TXT), out of being appalled at the failure of most of his contemporaries, especially the media, to take sufficiently seriously the suffering of the survivors of Buchenwald, of the famine-victims in central Europe (including in Germany), and so on. He wrote of his horror at the unspeakable horror of Buchenwald being underplayed. And he wrote of his discomfort at Gollancz’s own (he thought) over-intellectual—rather grandiose and verbose—response to these horrors and failures. Wittgenstein’s own preferred method of ‘response’ was, I am tentatively suggesting, far more ‘indirect’: his philosophical work. (Though quite possibly Wittgenstein would have found the present piece too to be overly grandiose? Cf. n.9 and n.10, above.)

52. This is connected with Gaita’s remark at p.xvii of his *A Common Humanity*: “[A] preparedness to see (and in that sense to judge) a situation in a severe moral light while at the same time refusing to blame strikes some people as incoherent. That, I think, is the effect of a moralistic conception of morality.” I mean to be developing roughly such a non-moralistic political ethics, like Gaita, from Wittgenstein (though I do not of course mean by this remark to be withholding blame from Nazi war-criminals). Seeing, acknowledging, and severely judging, without descending into the unseeing othering which *merely* blaming others leaves one condemned to. (Cf. also p.xxiii of Gaita.) And as Lifton has argued (see the Foreword and Introduction of *The Nazi Doctors*): we also fear (perhaps rightly) *contagion* from perpetrators of great evil. This is one reason why we are inclined to insist or to presuppose, dangerously wrongly, that we are utterly unlike the perpetrators.

53. Kierkegaard was especially insistent upon this (as James Conant has been, latterly).

54. And cf. Gaita’s exegesis thereof at p.267 of his *op.cit.* It is worth noting in this connection that at Dachau, the ‘model’ of the Nazi concentration camp ‘empire,’ “camp guards were to be trained in cruelty and to dispense it with pitilessness (or “hardness”).” (Lifton, *op.cit.*, p.153) This observation fits with Gaita’s stress on the knowing humanity-violation of Nazism. (Cruelty was in certain respects vast, deliberate, and systematic.) It fits also with Theweleit’s subtle emphasis on “hardness” as an important factor. It is in its aspirations a wafer away from the simple absence of pity that would be appropriate if one were handling (say) automata. In the psychological manoeuvre that Lifton calls “doubling,” Nazis were often able to ‘forget’ (or rationalize away) that they were dealing with human beings at all, and in that sense *not* to be cruel, but merely technical (see the discussion of the burning of corpses at Auschwitz, *supra*). Or they were able to somehow denialistically think that they were minimizing the suffering (perhaps to zero) of their victims, who in that sense *approximated* to beings not feeling any pain (e.g., automata). Take for instance this from Hoss, commandant of Auschwitz, quoted at p.162 of Lifton (*op.cit.*):

DRAFT

The Significance of PI 420, for Reading Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations 185

I had always thought that the victims [of gassing via Zyklon B] would experience a terrible choking sensation. But the bodies, without exception, showed no signs of convulsion. The doctors explained to me that the prussic acid had a paralysing effect on the lungs, but its actions were so quick and so strong that death came before the convulsions could set in, and in this its effects differed from those produced by carbon monoxide or by a general oxygen deficiency. // I always shuddered at the prospect of carrying out exterminations by shooting . . . *I was therefore relieved* to think that we were to be spared all these blood baths, and *that the victims too would be spared suffering* . . . (Emphasis mine)

The paralysis notionally converted the Jewish and other victims into non-sufferers, into harmlessly merely terminated bodies. (Compare also the important remark Hitler made in his suicide note / 'last testament,' to the effect that "more humane means" had allegedly been used to murder the Jews than "Europe's Aryan peoples" had painfully suffered during the War. (Quoted by Raul Hilberg at p.635 of his *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Press, 1967 (1961)).))

55. That is: with those one recognizes as perpetrators/oppressors. Often, the easiest path is simply to fail to recognize oppression at all, and to identify with the oppressors rather than with the oppressed.

56. On this point, see also my detailed discussion of the anti-'private-language' considerations in my "Wittgenstein's *PI* as a war book," *op.cit.*

57. There are a number of powerful examples of this, for instance, in Anthony Beevor's *D-Day* (New York: Viking, 2009). As R.W. Johnson remarks in his review thereof, ("A Formidable Proposition," *London Review of Books*, 10 Sept. 2009, pp.21–22): "To most allied soldiers the Germans' behaviour was mad, even subhuman, and reports of Nazi atrocities merely confirmed them in their view." (For a moving and brilliant discussion of the atrociously absolute internal relatedness of inhumanity to humanity in places like Auschwitz, see p.116f. of Phil Hutchinson's *Shame and Philosophy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008).)

58. Compare here my analysis of *The Lord of the Rings*, e.g., in my *Philosophy for Life* (London: Continuum, 2007). Compare also this important moment in Cavell's great essay on "Knowing and Acknowledging," in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1969): "[Y]our suffering makes a *claim* upon me. It is not enough that I know (am certain) that you suffer—I must do or reveal something . . . In a word, I must *acknowledge* it, otherwise I do not know what 'your (your or his) being in pain' means . . ."

59. Wittgenstein's emphasis on this (counter-propaganda) has been particularly strongly taken up in the later work of Gordon Baker. (Cf. also Gaita's statement (p.xx, *op.cit.*) as to what his book is fundamentally about: "Were I pressed to state the central concern of *A Common Humanity* I would say that it is with the ways human beings are sometimes invisible, or only partially visible to one another, with how that effects and is effected by a understanding of morality.")

60. See Joanna Macy, *World as Lover, World as Self* (Berkeley CA: Parallax Press, 1991).

61. My discussion here should make visible how very different this case is from the case of the duck-rabbit. In terms of its non-visibility, its ethical saturatedness, and the lack of equality between the different ways of seeing or sense in which seeing-as is occurring in them.

62. We should also remind ourselves that it is also thoroughly human (all-too-human) to see another (or indeed even oneself—see Chapter 9, below) as an enemy to be fought. Detachment is not the only evil.

63. This accounts also, I think, for the 'indirect' route taken by Resnais's cinematic masterpiece, *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (Pathé Films, 1959), in trying to comprehend the atomic bomb attacks on Japan and the failure of acknowledgement upon which they were premised and which the reaction to them in the West reflected.

64. According, that is, to the reading suggested by Nina Pelikan Straus, in her “Sebald, Wittgenstein, and the Ethics of Memory,” *Comparative Literature*, 2009, 61(1), pp.43–53. I am (to say the least) unconvinced by Straus’s reading of Sebald, and she does little to make a strong case for her claim that Wittgenstein is subject to criticism by him for his (Wittgenstein’s) alleged silence over the war. (Compare also Will Self’s rather more sophisticated take on Sebald’s own semi-‘silence’ over the war; listen here: <http://www.bclt.org.uk/events/sebald/>) But, in any case: In much the way that she sees *Austerlitz* as Sebald’s implicit critique of Wittgenstein for his alleged silence over the war, I see *PI* precisely as an implicit *speaking* about the war.

65. I am also thinking here of the following remark from the Preface to *PI*, which follows immediately upon Wittgenstein’s remark about the darkness of the time: “I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking. But, if possible, to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own.” And in the end, of course, it matters comparatively little how much of the *philosophy* in this chapter is Wittgenstein’s, how much is Cavell’s, etc., and how much is mine. What matters much more is whether there are present here the resources to do the job: roughly, the job of understanding and overcoming the inhuman in the human (in all of us). The job that Wittgenstein explicitly indexes in an early draft of the Preface to *Philosophical Remarks* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980 (1930)), *in which he refers directly to fascism as (of) the current of contemporary European civilization that he was writing against*. . . .

66. Deep thanks for very helpful readings of prior drafts of this chapter to Angus Ross, Thomas Wallgren, Marjorie Perloff, Louis Sass, Hans Sluga, Oskari Kuusela, Stephen Mulhall, Simon Glendinning, Gavin Kitching, Richard Hamilton, Michael McEachrane, Silvia Panizza, Ruth Makoff, and to helpful audiences at the Abo Academy, Finland, at UEA Norwich, and at Manchester Metropolitan University, Crewe. Thanks also to Michael O’Sullivan.

DRAFT

NINE

From Moore's Paradox to 'Wittgenstein's Paradox?': On Lived Paradox in Cases of (Moral and) Mental Ill-Health

In the previous chapter, we looked at Wittgenstein's exposition of a paradox that was uncannily and dreadfully present in the large worst recesses of the history of the time when he wrote his great later work: The paradox(es) *inherent in seeing some class of human beings¹ as if they did not suffer or did not matter*. In this chapter, we turn to a paradox inherent in seeing *oneself* as if one does not matter / is unworthy of consideration / is through and through bad. 'Via' a paradox associated with the name of Wittgenstein's friend and fellow-founder of Analytic Philosophy,² G. E. Moore. I shall argue here that Wittgenstein developed a real-life moral-psychopathological 'version' of Moore's Paradox that can help us to understand how psychopathology functions. And thus can perhaps start to give one a hint as to how to overcome it.

Moore's Paradox is that it may be true that (e.g.,) it is raining and also true that I don't believe that it is (raining), but that it is absurd or means nothing to say "It's raining, and I don't believe it [i.e., that it's raining]." (Usually such a sentence is regarded as 'merely' an absurd utterance, and the paradox as ('merely') pragmatic. For the kind of reasons outlined in Chapters 4, 5 and 7, above, I myself believe that, *ceteris paribus*, the sentence means nothing at all (We have not assigned any meaning to it that does not terminally 'flicker'), and regard the paradox as semantic (For there is no meaning when there is nothing that can be *said*, uttered, or *thought*. Wittgenstein held Moore's Paradox thus to be a contradiction. For "I believe that x " = " x ."³ (We shall explore cases below in which this is no longer, perhaps, the case.)). But if you are not convinced by that take

on Moore's Paradox, you can still, as I will explain, be convinced by the bulk of the presentation that I will make in this chapter; I do not *rely* on that take, in what follows (though I do return to it, especially toward the chapter's end.)

Moore's one-time-student, friend, and colleague Wittgenstein once remarked: "*Nobody can truthfully say of himself that he is filth.* Because if I do say it, though it can be true in a sense, this is not a truth by which I myself can be penetrated: otherwise I should either have to go mad or change myself."⁴

This has an immediate corollary, which has not until now been noted. It is this: That it might perhaps be true that someone is simply filth—a rotten person through and through—and it might even be true in a certain attenuated sense that they believe that they are filth (at least in this sense: that they would be inclined to answer the question "Are you filth?" affirmatively—see the discussions below), but that it is in fact absurd / means nothing simply to say "I'm filth" and to leave it at that. (It is absurd / means nothing, for the reason given by Wittgenstein in the quotation above.) And now it looks like we might have on our hands a new analogue to Moore's Paradox. For "I'm filth" seems to give us just this: something that might seem and does in this case sound as though it should be perfectly sayable (for, after all, it might be true), but that actually isn't. (In this way, it is also somewhat like the surprise exam paradox (see Chapter 7, above).)

Why exactly can't I truly say "I'm filth," if (given, for the sake of argument, that) it is true that I am? I cannot successfully take up the stance, roughly, of regarding myself as another, in a case like this (and there are other cases like this, as we shall see). For pretty much just the reason that Wittgenstein actually gave. For: even entertaining the possibility seriously *already prevents it from being true of one that one is (simply) filth.* If you entertain it, then already you have at least the decency to ask the question. If we try to model "I'm filth" on "He is filth,"⁵ then you/one just can't say "I'm filth" and simply mean it. In the act of saying it, it is already less than fully true. Nor can you even say "It may be true that I'm filth" and mean it, and it still be true that you are (simply) filth.

So then: Precisely why is it impossible to actually be pure filth 'even' if one declares that one is? It means nothing to say that one is filth through and through, because the very act of recognizing one's alleged 'filthiness' indicates the presence of *some kind of moral centre.*

This then, "I'm filth," or, if you like, "I'm filth, and I believe it [i.e., I believe that I'm filth]," unlike (at least, on the conventional reading of that Paradox) Moore's Paradox, is a paradox that cannot even be *entertained* in the first person.

But can't "I'm filth" be true? Are there not self-aware forms of being evil, e.g., ways of relishing one's evil even in the face of, in the knowledge of, a moral system?⁶ I shall come back to the question of the inclination to

believe that one is evil as a form of pathology and of suffering—as an extreme neurotic self-loathing—below. But for now, it suffices to point out the following: “filth” is here intended (as it was clearly intended in Wittgenstein’s remark) as *a term of criticism*. In the case of an amoralist, as in self-aware evil, it is no longer a genuine term of criticism. So that’s the point: There isn’t any such thing as saying “I’m filth” as a self-criticism and meaning it / believing it. To be able say it at all and mean it in this way, one must still *have* a moral centre, not be some kind of pure amoralist. And thus ‘it’ cannot be said (because saying it seriously proves it not to be true). Honesty and sharp-eyedness, a decency in wanting to criticize oneself and hold oneself up to a standard one feels one is not meeting; these are already incompatible with pure filthiness.

We should note in passing that, as we would expect from understanding Moore’s Paradox, it is possible for someone to say of someone else “He’s filth and he doesn’t believe it.” But it would be much more likely in fact, and more apposite, for one to say, “He’s filth and he doesn’t *know* it.” This is telling; this point brings out the loveliness and sophistication of actual ordinary language, as against the crudeness of philosophers’ prejudices. Because this tacitly indexes once more that there simply isn’t anything that it is for one to believe that one is filth. Whereas one *can* be in ignorance of oneself to some degree: one *can* not know things about oneself. If he is filth and doesn’t know it, then there is simply a truth about him that he doesn’t know, and *that truth* is the main subject of our remark, when we say “. . . and he doesn’t know it.” *We* can know that he is filth while he doesn’t; but it would be peculiar to say that we can believe that he is filth while he doesn’t, because it would seem (wrongly) to imply that there could be such a thing as him entertaining such a belief himself. Roughly: there is potentially such a thing as the truth that he is filth, but there is no such thing as the belief on his part that he is filth.

Thus this is the situation: Wittgenstein’s remark, as explicated by me here, depends completely upon the peculiar status of the sincere utterance, “I’m filth.” That is why there is a question-mark in my title.

For: There *is* a clear sense in which there is a direct similarity to Moore’s Paradox here: that, roughly, is why Wittgenstein says after saying “Nobody can truthfully say of himself that he is filth” that “it can be true in a sense.” It can be true perhaps that someone is filth; but it cannot be truthfully said by someone of himself. This aspect of the situation is akin to Moore’s Paradox.

But: there is *also* a sense in which we are concerned here with something quite different from Moore’s Paradox. It is (truthfully saying; i.e., *believing*) “I’m filth” that does all the work here, while, e.g., “It’s raining” alone does no work. Thus, this is a paradox that *cannot even be entertained*. In that sense, it might be justly thought of as ‘stronger’ even than Moore’s.

It means nothing to say “It’s raining and I don’t believe it.”⁷ But, as already mentioned: There *is* a certain sense in which one can consider that it maybe it is raining even though one doesn’t believe that it is. Namely: One can consider the possibility that one may be wrong in one’s belief (that it isn’t raining). Whereas: One can consider that someone else may be filth; but it turns out that one cannot seriously even consider this, with regard to oneself. *To consider it is already not to need to consider it*, or, at least, not to need to consider that it may simply and wholly be true. One cannot be wrong about not being filth. One cannot simply be right in the claim that one is filth. Or, roughly as I shall put it below: The ‘part’ of you that notices you are filth (with this judgement intended as a self-criticism) cannot itself be filth; otherwise it would not notice. If we try to imagine someone who is filth through and through, then we cannot find any purchase in them for making a self-criticism to that effect.

But wait; there remains another segment of Wittgenstein’s remark that we have not yet considered. That I’m filth “is not a truth by which I myself can be penetrated: *otherwise I should either have to go mad or change myself*” (emphasis added). Are there motivated forms of psychopathology, of madness, that *can* produce remarks that genuinely resemble (a) Moore’s Paradox and/or (b) The unstability and unconsiderability of “I’m filth” (which perhaps we should dub ‘Wittgenstein’s Paradox’)?⁸

I believe that there are, or at least that there may be. The remainder of this chapter examines cases which arguably fit one or another of these. These make this topic potentially of genuine importance, I believe, to psychiatrists and psychologists as well as to philosophers.

Let us begin with (a), Moore’s Paradox. Remarks such as “P, and I don’t believe that P” cannot be intelligibly made. I would say: They express no thought. At least, not for normally rational beings in anything remotely resembling normal circumstances. But what if one is in a situation in which one *finds* oneself believing things against one’s will and even against one’s judgement?⁹ Or again: if one finds oneself being moved to assert things as true which one doesn’t really believe?

I think that those two scenarios are more or less inter-changeable. That is because they are ways of attempting to describe a situation where our normal concepts have partly broken down, and where as a result there is an inevitable lack of clarity/definiteness about how to describe a situation.¹⁰ The kind of situation inhabited by some persons embroiled in psychotic delusions.¹¹ Or, to use Wittgenstein’s crude and old-fashioned but evocative term: “mad.”

Here is a real case. This is a case of someone well-known to me, an intelligent young man with indeed some philosophical training, who suffered a very prolonged borderline-psychotic episode. He would seemingly *find* himself with a handful of beliefs that did not fit in with his general world-view at all, and that he found extremely unpleasant and terrify-

ing—and bewildering. (He did not hear voices; he simply couldn't shake off these terrifying 'beliefs.')

The most persistent of these 'beliefs' was that, because of what a thoroughly bad person he (allegedly) was (clear echoes here of the would-be situation under consideration by Wittgenstein), the Devil (or sometimes it was God, but God conceived of as thoroughly malevolent¹²) was out to get him, was closing in on him. Now—and this is where it gets truly strange—this man did not even *believe* in the existence of the Devil (nor of a person-al God, malevolent or otherwise). Or at least, he still averred what had previously been his settled disbelief therein. And yet he would at times say—and even, say again and again—that he felt that the Devil was about to “get” him.

On one occasion, he expressed his quandary to me in just this way: “This is what I feel strongly inclined to say: *The Devil is out to get me, and I think about to get me; though I don't actually believe in the Devil!*!” This (the emphasized sentence) is very close to a Moore's-Paradox-style remark. Though it is of course needfully striking that the remark was preceded by a sort of 'Wittgensteinian' prefix: “This is what I feel strongly *inclined* to say.” (And indeed that it was apparently motivated by a sort of—questionable—quasi-Wittgensteinian inclination to take oneself as filth.) As it were: he recognized that he wasn't quite actually *saying* this. Not actually affirming it. This is important.

On another occasion, he wrote the following words in a letter to me: “The Devil's chasing me; Well, even though I don't actually *believe* this, I somehow can't help feeling intuitively that it is *true*.” This is, if anything, even closer to manifesting as psychologically real and uttered the pragmatic or semantic absurdity or nonsense that is Moore's Paradox. Though again the 'hedgings' are important. Most notably, perhaps: “somehow” and “can't help feeling.”

On yet another occasion, and this is perhaps the strongest and strangest case of all, he wrote this down while recording his thoughts, and showed it to me later: “I find myself believing that God is going to annihilate me, even though I know it isn't true.” (And naturally, he found this depressing, terrifying—and ongoingly confusing.) However, there is of course something subtly but tellingly different here from the standard 'Moore's Paradox' formulation: the place of the truth/fact, and of the belief, are *reversed* from how they are in the normal presentation thereof. Rather than 'x, but I don't believe x,' we have here something very roughly along the lines of 'I believe x, even though not-x.' While it is clear, as we have already noted, that the situation of this young man was one that he intrinsically found difficult to describe, and this itself is an important 'datum' and partially accounts for the superficially very different presentations of his felt dilemma, I think that *this* is actually the most 'natural' way for something *somewhat* like a lived instantiation of Moore's Paradox to occur: the belief in this case is something which seems to be forcing itself upon one, even though one remains immune enough to it to not

grant it truth . . . (and even though, of course, what seems to be forcing itself upon him might be said to be precisely: its truth . . .).

I am not sure exactly what to make of these remarks, and of this case. What is important about the three ‘examples’ here from this one young man, is that they each exhibit *something* along the lines of the kind of impossible ‘split consciousness’ that explains why we speak of Moore’s *Paradox*. (A kind of consciousness, as I remark below, bearing certain important features in common with the kinds of consciousness focally analyzed by R.D. Laing in *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness*¹³ and by Louis Sass’s writings.) This is surely more than ‘just’ a case of a conflict between different inclinations to say.

A couple of remarks from Wittgenstein’s discussion of Moore’s Paradox in *Philosophical Investigations* come strongly to mind:

- i) The language-game of reporting can be given such a turn that a report is not meant to inform the hearer about its subject matter but about the person making the report.¹⁴

The utterances of this young man that we have looked at here, one might say, hover between being one of these and being the other.

- ii) “Judging from what I say, this is what I believe.” Now, it is possible to think out circumstances under which these words would make sense. // And then it would be possible also for someone to say “It is raining and I don’t believe it,” or “It seems to me that my ego believes this, but it isn’t true.” One would have to fill out the picture with behaviour indicating that two people were speaking through my mouth.”¹⁵

Is the case we have been examining of this latter kind? Not quite; that would be too extreme a way of looking at. But it points us in something like the right kind of direction, so far as understanding the self-dividedness of someone who says something like the sentences that we have been examining here.

Provisionally, then, we might say at least this: That phenomena of first-person utterance are surprisingly similar in some key respects to Moore’s paradoxical case can be deliberately asserted, sometimes, by people subject to but not saturated by a delusional belief. Or again: That one can seemingly say and mean something and yet not believe it, in certain extreme circumstances which put one’s rationality and sense of the world—or one’s sense of oneself as a unitary agent—under extreme pressure.¹⁶

As mentioned above, this young man was also seemingly close to (b), ‘Wittgenstein’s Paradox,’ too, in that he was inclined to say things roughly along the lines of “I’m filthy; I’m bad through and through.” But once more it is important to note—because, I think, it tells us something about the limits of what is *possible* hereabouts—that he was *inclined* to say

things like this: he didn't actually (simply) say them. Usually in fact he explicitly said things like, "I find myself wanting to say / to think that I'm just bad." Sometimes it seemed to me as if his inclination to say or believe this was perhaps something like an *effect* of his quasi-belief in the Devil chasing him. I.e., it seemed to me sometimes that he was reaching for the possibility that he was completely bad as an *explanation* for why it might be that the Devil/God was (so he alleged) out to get him. In that sense, it seemed a kind of theoretical hypothesis that he was endeavoring to entertain, and sometimes nothing more. (It is also worth noting in passing that for his anxiety to reach a peak, it was necessary for him to believe that the Devil (or God) was *nothing but* malevolence; was saturated by or (to use Wittgenstein's phrase) *penetrated by* malevolence. Whenever he reflected on the possibility that such a powerful and more or less omniscient 'demonic' figure would perhaps also feel some identification with him, or have some capacity to recognize mitigating circumstances, or to find some good in him that even he (the young man in question) sometimes found it impossible to find, or to find some good in itself (i.e., not itself to be penetrated by malevolence), his anxiety eased. He wasn't inclined to think that he was simply and entirely filth whenever he reflected upon the possibility or probability that any powerful supernatural agency that did exist wasn't likely to be simply and entirely malevolent.)

If we are to find something with a stronger claim than that just examined to be a case of (b), 'Wittgenstein's Paradox,' then, we may need to consider a different psychopathology. I believe that there is one that may be closer to the mark. I am thinking of certain cases of extreme depression. Cases where a neurotic self-loathing reaches an almost unimaginable (and potentially psychotic) pitch. Where we might usefully think of speaking of a delusion about the self's moral status or nature.¹⁷

It seems most likely that such a state—I mean, a state in which one is inclined to say something like "I'm filth," and not to notice that one cannot sanely (note that word) continue to say this while one is 'penetrated' by it, cannot simply mean it fully and seriously—could arise for someone in a particularly negative portion of a bipolar depressive condition.¹⁸ For the state would need to be one in which one fails to notice the kinds of points Wittgenstein makes, and thus fails to notice that the 'I' saying "I'm filth" could not be just filth. The 'part' of you that notices that you 'are' filth cannot be itself fully filth (otherwise it would not notice). One could only then say "I'm filth" and fully mean it in a situation in which one was dead to the self-refuting nature of the claim. That would require a situation of failure of rationality, and/or a situation of such complete negativity that one managed somehow to seem to oneself to repeat the operation (of regarding oneself as filth) instantaneously with regard to each moment or 'part' of such realization. I.e., that one found the self that did the realizing that one was filth instantly itself to be filth in turn, and so on indefinitely.¹⁹

Is this kind of supra-Laingian phenomenology possible? Is it possible for a human being to live this?

I am, for the logical reasons explored earlier, doubtful of this, to say the least. But: I am not sure.²⁰ Our concepts do, as I say, importantly give out somewhat at these extremes of psychopathology. It might perhaps in some sense be possible, in a state of sufficient psychological self-loathing that one fails to notice the rational limits of that loathing.

It might be said that failure to notice something is very common and quite intelligible: thus it could easily be said by someone and meant that “I’m filth.” Well, in that case, let’s put the point thus: Isn’t it transcendently obvious at least that “I’m nothing but filth” can’t be truly said? When one brings out the totality of the would-be claim, surely it is less plausible to think that refuge can be taken from it in mere failure to notice, or confusion.

Think, analogically, of someone ‘completely angry’ with themselves. Isn’t this possible? But then: who is angry? Mustn’t the one who is angry be somehow other than the one they are angry with? Or compare suicide. Someone might write a suicide note saying “I’m filth—therefore I have decided to do myself in.” But mustn’t they then at least give themselves the credit of being decent enough to do the deed. I.e.: mustn’t the shooter when they actually shoot be less than fully filth?²¹ (This may partly explain a phenomenon that Wittgenstein considered of some importance: that people have in many cases to ‘trick’ themselves into suicide, or to push themselves into it suddenly before they get the chance to think it through; how difficult it is to form a fixed and full will that aims at one’s own death, and how difficult it is to find a smooth path over time to carrying out that will. For the formation of such a will is incompatible with believing that one is a being of a kind that clearly ought to die. . . .)

To generalize: There must be some separation between criticizer and criticized, on pain otherwise of hypocrisy. But when one is criticizing oneself, this means that a ‘total criticism’ is not possible. Or, better: that it just doesn’t mean anything to be completely critical of oneself, in the sense that it could mean something to be completely critical of someone else.²² (Though an intriguing ‘meta-paradox,’ leading to a risk of a kind of infinite regress would I suppose arise, if one thought that self-criticism itself was a sin. . . . And in fact something not unlike that frequently happens, in depression; one endlessly criticizes oneself—including for criticizing oneself. . . .)

I think we should say this: for both (a) and (b), it may well be phenomenologically possible for people to have the experience of at least believing that they believe what they are saying. That is: in the grip of certain more or less delusional conditions, persons who have certainly not lost all touch with rationality, and are still very much seeking to understand themselves and their world, may in effect *believe* that that they believe that “P, and I don’t believe that P,” for *certain* specific values

of 'P' (such as 'The Devil is out to get me'), and/or may imagine that they believe that "I'm filth, through and through." That there isn't anything that it actually is to believe these things may not necessarily prevent people in extreme psychopathology from believing that they believe them. . . . (There is of course a connection here with the mad belief in the non-humanity of certain kinds of humans that we considered as a 'limiting case' in the second half or so of Chapter 8, above.)

To conclude: The paradox in the case of "It's raining but I don't believe it" or in the case of "I'm filth" is that it can be true that "It's raining" and that I don't believe that it is, and true that I'm filth—but nevertheless these things can't in these circumstances be said (by me). Why can't something true be said? That is the paradox. In Moore's case it is more obvious than in Wittgenstein's that there's something fishy going on with the desire to say these things. But I have suggested that there is no possibility of one oneself saying any of these kinds of things except at the cost of some dire failure of rationality or of some other failure of self-hood. Dire: because if we agree, as I have suggested we should, that semantics and pragmatics hereabouts can't really be separated, then the inability to say these things oneself is not a 'merely pragmatic' issue. It expresses a *logical* problem.

In this way, the matter of this chapter has been different from the matter of the cases considered in Part I of this book. Those cases were various, but several of them involved paradoxes that tacitly led to nonsenses: thus I convicted Kripke of nonsense-mongering, and found his 'rule-paradox,' his paradox of the meaninglessness of meaning, to collapse into nonsense, into nothing, into a quasi-Kantian void; and I argued that the paradoxes of time travel indicated the nonsensicality of time-travel. The same is true of 'Wittgenstein's Paradox': but *this* is a nonsense that can perhaps genuinely be lived, as those probably cannot be (though there *might* perhaps be a lived Kripkean scepticism, a lived endless would-be deferral of meaning; I suppose that 'Deconstruction' sometimes aspires to this condition . . .).

I believe that the deeper moral of the story in more general terms is this, and, so far as the ambitions of many philosophers and 'cognitive scientists' are concerned, it is not a happy moral. We have here, I think, a strong reason not to take "believe"/"belief" to be a natural kind term or anything much resembling one.²³ The concept of belief fits certain central or 'paradigmatic' cases well, and then gradually falls away as it hits harder and harder cases, such as those explored above. It works in ordinary language in ways that do not fit the philosopher's paradigm, and that fit it less and less, the more demanding the case. The notion of belief breaks down gradually. *What to say* starts to break down, in multiple ways.²⁴

“Belief” is so much *better* than / more than a natural kind term. Its degree of sophistication is what we’ve seen here. Its subtlety and complexity.²⁵

This is, I believe, what my ‘strengthened, ethico-psychological’ ‘version’ of Moore’s Paradox (that I have tentatively called ‘Wittgenstein’s Paradox’) brings out: that one just doesn’t have to give a systematic scientific account of “belief,” at all.²⁶ What Moore’s Paradox itself already intimated becomes clearer yet in the cases that I have treated here: that, in ‘limit’ cases, the very ambition of taking “belief” to be something like a natural kind term dissolves upon one. This is a crucial lesson of Wittgenstein’s thinking, which a philosophically psychologically therapeutic vision of that thinking can help us to see.

But there is a bigger prize still here. For the central insight of this chapter remains the confirmation (after the investigation that we have conducted) of the insight that is present in the great remark of Wittgenstein’s that contains ‘Wittgenstein’s Paradox’: namely, that there is a deep paradox²⁷ to saying “I’m filth.” The bigger prize, then, is this: This insight *generalizes* beyond just this verbal formulation, to other parallel cases, cases of great importance. For there are various other claims that bear a structural similarity to “I’m filth,” and some of them are of great moment to us and our culture.

Let us take a moment briefly to outline how these parallel cases might go:

As already hinted above, we can start in this generalization/extension exercise with the assertion “I’m insane/mad.”²⁸ (Likewise with: “I’m thoroughly irrational.”) Having this level of (what psychiatrists call) “insight” is incompatible with what seems to be the assertion here being fully—simply, straightforwardly, and wholly—true.²⁹

We can go on to collective cases. Take the broadly Laingian claim, “We live in an insane society.” (Or: “Our society is saturated with irrationality”) To say it is already to say—to *show*—(that) it isn’t so. If you have achieved enough freedom to be able to make such a claim, then *you* (part of the society in question) already show the claim up as at least not-entirely right.

Similarly, take claims of the kind sometimes made by Foucauldians, such as “Freedom in our society is impossible. The project of liberation is itself a chain.” To state this is to (some degree to) refute it.

Or think of claims such as this, sometimes unthinkingly made by Post-Modernists: “Language is a prison-house.” Again, to state this is to refute it. You have stepped outside any alleged ‘prisonhouse’ in the very act of the characterization.

Or finally, how about “We’re filth. Our society is through and through bad.”³⁰ The very saying of this, the very desire to say it, is enough to prove that there remains hope for us, for our society, for our world. The task then is to turn that recognition of would-be heteronomy into an

active autonomy, to turn a putative resistance into an actual resistance (and re-form). To work to ensure that it never becomes possible for someone outside our society truly to say that of us, while we wallow in a state *in which we are no longer capable even of thinking it*.

The kind of state that Orwell's thinking aims both to indicate and to prevent.

The kind of state that Sartre worried we would be in, under Fascism, and that can seem to follow from Kripkenstein's 'communitarianism'³¹ but that is already undermined once we move away from an authoritarian conception of community—the very conception of community that is native to Fascism (see Chapter 8, above).³² As we saw in Chapter 4, the thing that Kripke's presentation can occlude is that it is not simply my being in a minority of one that makes how I want to go on (mathematically—or politically) questionable, even paradoxical. It is rather a question of my acting *from* a rule,³³ with integrity. Neither obsessing with rule-formulations, nor taking myself to be vertiginously free to do anything I please.

To be someone who helps make it true that we're not filth is to exercise and instantiate freedom responsibly, and with—or toward—others, not in some vain or pointless 'libertarian' gesture-politics.

These extensions of the argument of this Chapter matter. Some of these points were probably already familiar to you, reader. And they don't necessarily *require* the argument that I have made in the present Chapter. But the investigation that I have conducted here helps not inconsiderably, I think, to underscore them (and points some way toward how to investigate each of them in turn in more detail). And, given their considerable importance, this is already an achievement worthy of some happiness. For it would indeed be unhappy, were the various 'quoted' claims that I have just been considering to be true. . . .³⁴

I turn now, in the penultimate substantive chapter of this book, to considering Nietzsche's subtle philosophy of 'truth,' in connection with Wittgenstein's methodology. I want there to argue overtly that paradox is not present only in bad ideologies or in psychopathologies but in the method and some of the results of *good* philosophies, too. . . .

NOTES

1. Which might, for someone striving, impossibly, for solipsism, be: all but oneself. The true sociopath is the closest we have to this.

2. See n.32 of Chapter 1, above, on how, unfortunately, Moore's (and Russell's) view rather than Wittgenstein's of what such philosophy could be turned out to be victorious. (Though we might take some comfort from the fact that, on *Wittgenstein's* conception of philosophical victory, the winner of the race is the one who arrives last!)

3. See the discussion in *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology* (henceforth *RPP*) Vol.I, (transl. Anscombe and von Wright, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988) pp.484–502, especially 490.

4. *Culture and Value*, amended second edition, edited by G. H. von Wright (Blackwell, 1998 (1980)). See also the interesting treatment of this remark in Peter Winch's important 'therapeutic' paper on early and later Wittgenstein, "Persuasion," *Midwest Studies In Philosophy*, Vol. 17, 1, pp.123–37, September 1992.

Another possibility presumably would be to kill oneself: I return to this point later. Though already we can notice that the problem repeats here: If one killed oneself for being complete filth, would the killer not thereby already have transcended being complete filth?

5. And this conditional clause gives us an inkling of an alternative route that one could take, that I shall not take at any great length here (I will leave the exercise to the reader!), but which is suggested by the method pursued in much of Chapter 7, above. One could, that is, seek at greater length to find understandings of "I'm filth" which are *not* paradoxical.

6. On which important and difficult topic, see the closing chapters of Rosenbaum's *Explaining Hitler: The Search for the Origins of His Evil* (Harper Perennial, 1999). And cf. the discussion of relishing cruelty, etc., in Chapter 8, above.

7. Unless, again, we find an ordinary interpretation for it, *à la* the method I undertook in the body of Chapter 7, above—see n.5, above. (Cf. also here Wittgenstein's *RPP* Vol.I, 489.)

8. Other examples which would be fascinating to consider, and which are in my view not distant from this (in terms of (implicitly) indexing subtle phenomena of denial and even self-disgust), include "The end of cheap oil is imminent but I/we don't believe it" or "Manmade climate change is happening and is potentially utterly deadly but I don't believe it." J. P. Dupuy and A. Grinbaum, in "Living with uncertainty" (*Geoscience* 337 (2005), 457–74), at pp.468–69, make a similar point, in reference to potential climate disaster, with an astoundingly close relation to Moore's Paradox: "The obstacle [that keeps us from acting in the face of catastrophe] is not just uncertainty, scientific or otherwise: its equally, if not more, important component is the impossibility of believing that the worst is going to occur. *Contrary to the most basic assumption of epistemic logic, one can know that P, but still not believe in P.*" (Emphasis added)

9. Now: *Is this belief?* The second way of describing the situation avoids the claim that it is, and so avoids incoherence. But here's the thing: I think that the first (believing against one's will) can *lead smoothly* to the second (believing against one's judgement). On believing against one's will, compare also n.11, below.

I am seeking in the present chapter to overcome the inclination to give an overly *intellectualized* account of belief. That is in itself one *reason* for focusing on real cases of psychopathology. We need to pay attention to the way in which filth-feelings, etc., actually manifest. One might be inclined to say that if you feel you are filth, then you believe you are, but that the belief in question needn't be more than the feeling and may not have any logic to it.

However, note that I am not primarily concerned with someone who just has some inchoate feeling that they are scum/filth. I am primarily concerned with someone for whom the thought "I'm filth" rises to full consciousness, and is endorsed without reservation. In that case, I think the worries I work through in the present chapter and the way I work through them are entirely salient.

10. See my argument in 2.2 of my *Wittgenstein among the Sciences*. And see also the conclusion that I draw below, about how "belief" is not a 'natural kind' term.

11. Indeed, they arguably begin to arise already in less extreme circumstances. I'm in an aeroplane that is about to land. The plane is about to land; I trust the plane; I trust the pilot; I am confident that the plane is about to land, safely . . . and yet. . . My palms are sweaty, all sorts of 'crazy' thoughts are starting to flit through the back of my mind. . . . (Here I have been somewhat influenced by the thinking of Sydney

Shoemaker. And Tamar Gendler's work on 'aliefs' might at this point also be relevant. See brainvat.wordpress.com/2009/06/14/paul-bloom-and-tamar-gendler-discuss-alief/ for a useful and accessible explication.)

The reason I prefer to consider the serious mental illness cases that I have now flagged up is this: they provide I think the clearest and starkest case for saying that perhaps something like Moore's Paradox can be lived. There are possible replies to the case where my body seems not to believe what my mind insists on which will not work, in the case of (e.g.,) a psychotically divided self.

12. Which is a scarier prospect even than Satan! See Gregory and my argument in our Review of J. Whiting et al, *Essays in honour of Annette Baier*, in *Mind*, Jan. 2007, 116 (461), pp.173–76; and also my www.uea.ac.uk/~j339/LOTR2.htm

13. Penguin, 1990.

14. P.190, section x of Part II of *Philosophical Investigations* (New York: MacMillan, 1953, 1958 (posthumous; transl. Anscombe)). Cf. also here *RPP* Vol.I 485 and 495.

15. P.192 of section x of Part II of *PI*. Cf. also here *RPP* Vol.I 486–87, in which Wittgenstein 'actualizes' this scenario by imagining someone who in their professional capacity has to announce/assert something which they do not believe.

16. Let us note here that the case being considered is not at all the same as the one that David Finkelstein works though in his *Expression and the Inner* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2003), p.117f. (some interesting superficial similarities notwithstanding):

A number of writers have . . . noted that Moore's point does not hold for self-ascriptions of unconscious belief. In other words, there's nothing wrong with saying, "I unconsciously believe that p, and it is not the case that p." I'm calling something further to your attention—that, prima facie, there does seem to be something wrong with saying, "I unconsciously believe that p, and it is the case that p" (even though, as with Moore's Paradox, both conjuncts might be true). When we consider unconscious mental states, we find not only the failure of Moore's paradox, but, as it were, the inversion of it. We might call this "Eroom's paradox."

Indeed; or we might call it Finkelstein's Paradox: it is a neat piece of philosophical thinking. But the potential case(s) that I am considering are 'crazier'; they involve beliefs (if that is what they are) that are conscious.

17. Here are references to a couple of possible examples, on the web, of subsequent self-reportings of such a state. They are worth a quick perusal (and there are many more like them that can fairly easily be found): www.erowid.org/experiences/exp.php?ID=25005 and www.crackwalker.ca/cracked/disorders/avoidant.html

18. That this may be possible might be taken already to show that my 'Wittgenstein's Paradox' is not a genuine paradox in the sense that Moore's is. It could be unknowingly lived, and perhaps could be somewhat transitionally knowingly lived. But that it would need a non-transparent-to-itself less-than-rational mind to subsist in order not to function as such a 'genuine paradox' already implies, I think, that it *is* a genuine paradox. It just takes a little longer to show that it is such a paradox than it takes in the case of Moore's Paradox.

19. We might compare here also the following passage from p.174–75 of Richard Moran's *Authority and Estrangement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001):

There's a well-known line from a novel by Kingsley Amis that concerns a married man with family, who at one point in the story spends an evening at a nightclub with another woman he knows from work. As he sneaks back home after the encounter, he describes himself in his guilty reflections as "feeling a tremendous rakehell, and not liking myself much for it, and feeling rather a good chap for not liking myself much for it, and not liking myself at all for feeling rather a good chap." What has gone wrong in this man's reflections?

Moran proceeds at length to answer this question in ways amenable to the discussion of this entire chapter. He begins by saying this: "One problem we can see right off is that the chain of reversals of his previous assessment of himself could easily proceed indefinitely, each current exoneration followed by an even harsher condemnation, ad infinitum." (We should note here also that there are some fascinatingly similar moments of oscillating vanity and self-condemnation in *Wittgenstein's own diaries* (the 'Koder' diaries); these remarks are analyzed by Louis Sass in his useful essay, "Deep disquietudes," in James Klagge (ed.) *Wittgenstein: Biography and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).)

20. It seems to me that the now-quite-extensive body of detailed research in ethno-methodology and discourse analysis on 'mad talk' have not yet addressed this question. Doug Maynard's paper "Social Actions, Gestalt Coherence, and Designations of Disability: Lessons from and about Autism" (*Social Problems* 52: pp.499–529, 2005) sometimes comes close to the topos of the present chapter, as does Jaber F. Gubrium's paper, "Narrative Practice and the Inner Worlds of the Alzheimer's Disease Experience." (pp. 181–203 in *Concepts of Alzheimer Disease: Biological, Clinical and Cultural Perspectives*, edited by Peter J. Whitehouse, Konrad Maurer, and Jesse F. Ballenger (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999)) The locus classicus in my view remains "'mother is not holding completely respect": Making social sense of schizophrenic writing," by Keith Doubt (with Maureen Leonard, Laura Muhlenbruck, Sherry Teerlinck and Dana Vinyard), in *Human Studies* 18, 1995, pp.89–106, but not even that beautiful paper can plausibly be read as answering the issue under discussion in the present chapter. Though I hope my interpretive approach is broadly in sympathy with Doubt's.

21. Cf. n.4, above.

22. Sartre had a range (a broader range) of penetrating similar thoughts concerning the importance of the 1st-person / 3rd-person asymmetry, some of which are usefully expounded by Katherine Morris in her *Sartre* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008). See also again Richard Moran's writings in this area.

23. There are of course many philosophers who could be cited to buttress this moral, including Angus Ross, J.O. Urmson, Geoffrey Warnock, R.W. Hepburn (with his important distinction between 'belief-that' and 'belief-in'), and Richard Moran. But in my view, the work of Anne J. Jacobson (see n.26, below) over the last decade is the most important contemporary source for casting doubt on the assumption that "belief" is something like a natural kind term (see below). Jacobson suggests instead that beliefs are not functionally defined states at all, but (rather) are non-individualistic and epistemic phenomena. They are more akin to artefacts than to natural objects. They are states caught up in networks of social (as well as individual) norms. These norms will come to an end somewhere: we have been exploring one such place, in this chapter.

24. I explore how this happens in one important class of cases, in my "On approaching schizophrenia through Wittgenstein," in *Philosophical Psychology*, 14: 4 (2001), pp.449–75, the epigraph to which is Wittgenstein's remark: "Suppose you say of the schizophrenic: he does not love, he cannot love, he refuses to love—what is the difference?!" Which of these things to say becomes meaningless, or arbitrary, as it is *not* with 'normals.'

25. Think for instance of a case like "He thought [believed] she was a swan." Cf. www.metrolyrics.com/polly-von-lyrics-peter-paul-mary.html. "Belief" can take on strange unexpected roles/figures in locutions more complex than dreamt of in most philosophies. It connects sometimes with explanation; sometimes with giving an *account* of oneself; and so on and so on.

26. In fact, my deepest debt in connection with the general topic of this chapter is to my mentor Anne J. Jacobson (cf. n.23, above), with whom an on-off correspondence on these matters ever since I was her graduate student has been hugely important for me. Her non-scientistic account of belief can for example be found in her paper "Empathy and Instinct: Cognitive Neuroscience and Folk Psychology," *Inquiry*, 2009, 59 (5), pp.

467–42. There's a lot more on this coming out in her forthcoming book manuscript *Keeping the World in Mind*. There's also an emerging Jacobsonian theory of concepts which is very relevant to belief, in "The Faux, Fake, Forged, False, Fabricated and Phony: Problems for the Independence of Similarity-Based Theories of Concepts," in *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, Volume 33, Issue 2–3, June 2010, p.215.

27. This is another reason why it seems to me misleading to call it a 'merely' 'pragmatic' paradox. For the claim that 'I'm filth' enters into a *dynamic* or *dialectical* relationship with the rest of one's psyche and life and commitments and values, etc. (And here there is a connection of course with the course of the argument in Chapter 7, above, concerning the dialectical/communicative (and not, as philosophers usually have it, merely mutually spectatorial) relationship between teacher and students.) It isn't 'merely' that one can't say 'it': one can't say it *because* saying *makes* it not so. That is to say: Saying it seriously and sincerely already *indicates* that it cannot be so.

28. This might be thought of as a 'meta' version of Wittgenstein's Paradox. For, as we explored above, it seems as if it might be possible to say "I'm filth," in certain extreme conditions of sanity/rationality-breakdown. But even in those conditions, one wouldn't be able to say, straightforwardly and truthfully, "I'm [completely] insane"; at *least*, so it would seem. . . . (In a fuller presentation, we could doubtless investigate in more detail, as Louis Sass has done (see for instance the closing chapters of his *Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature and Thought* (Harvard University Press, 1994), and the whole of his *The Paradoxes of Delusion: Wittgenstein, Schreber and the Schizophrenic Mind* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1994)), how there might be lived conditions that could to a surprising degree at least *mimic* such a situation, lived conditions in which the inherently paradoxical seems to become 'sayable.' . . . We should note furthermore that Sass argues convincingly that by "mad" one needn't mean *irrational*. In *Madness and Modernism* he shows that various typically dysfunctional schiz-spectrum psychopathological states and conditions are not necessarily irrational in the sense of contrary to logic. Rather, they inhabit paradoxical ways of being *consequent* upon sticking tightly to logic, even to logic alone. . . . These brief remarks closing out the present chapter, then, run the risk of appearing (misleadingly) to identify insanity with irrationality. . . . Even such an identification, however, would not necessarily do any harm, provided one *recognizes* where any such identification is occurring—and does not take these somewhat-gestural closing remarks of mine to apply unproblematically or straightforwardly to the actual nature of actual psychoses.)

29. We are unsure what to say in such cases. Such assertions are of course a *proof* neither of sanity nor of rationality. And if we concluded that such a person was wholly irrational, we certainly wouldn't conclude it by believing *what they said*. The key point for my purposes is this: That our unsureness of just what to say is coupled with a sureness that what to say is not simply that they are right in what they say about themselves. (Compare here my argument in Part Two of my *Applying Wittgenstein*.)

30. It might be argued, further, that people simply can't be complete filth. That to be human is already not to be through and through merely filth. This would be a kind of extension of Wittgenstein's logic in his remark about "I'm filth," but on an independent basis.

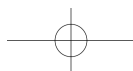
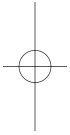
31. Cf. for instance p.110 of Kripke's *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982); and Chapter 4, above.

32. And see also, more importantly, my analysis of different conceptions of "community" in the version of "Wittgenstein's 'Philosophical Investigations' as a war-book" published in *New Literary History*, 41, 3, 2010. There, I argue that Wittgenstein's own conception of community is one both intrinsically open, a 'field' conception, and unified, 'individual.' I oppose this to a Fascist conception of community, which is basically a grandiose and rigidly policed extension of solipsism (on which, see Chapter 8, above).



33. In the sense that I explored in Guetti and my "Acting From Rules: 'Internal Relations' vs. 'Logical Existentialism,'" *International Studies in Philosophy* XXVIII: 2 (1996), pp.43–62.

34. Grateful thanks to Louis Sass, Anne J. Jacobson, Katherine Morris, Oskari Kuusela, Michael Clark, Angus Ross (whose forthcoming work in this area will doubtless improve on my discussion in various respects), Phil Hutchinson, Wes Sharrock, Jeff Coulter, and an anonymous referee, for comments and thoughts.



DRAFT

TEN

Lived 'Reductio Ad Absurdum': A Paradoxical and Proper Method of Philosophy, and of Life

"[W]e psychologists of today cannot get rid of a certain mistrust *towards ourselves*. . . . [The ascetic ideal] probably infects *us* as well." — Nietzsche, opening of section 20 of *The Genealogy of Morality*.¹

"Paradox is everything simultaneously good and great." —Frederick Schlegel (as quoted by Iain McGilchrist at p.200 of *The Master and his Emissary*,² in discussing the positive attitude of "Romanticism" toward paradox).

The previous chapter worried about whether it was possible, as an individual, to inhabit a 'place' in which there was no outside to self-criticism, nothing but such criticism. The present chapter worries about whether it is possible as an individual (and nascently as a culture, as a 'we') to speak from a 'place' which doesn't seem to exist yet. Like Chapter 9, then, the present chapter suggests, that is, that individual (and cultural) self-criticism that is apparently total is paradoxical. *And yet*, like and *unlike* in the previous chapter, I argue here that such a process can nevertheless (*perhaps*) occur, and even be healthy. Provided one adopts the method as self-consciously paradoxical, as wilfully transitional, and not (as was envisaged in Chapter 9) as a would-be static place to rest (and perhaps rot) in.

The present chapter aims to do all this by connecting the therapeutic vision of Wittgenstein's philosophical writing and practice, early and late, which animates the present work, with a centrepiece of the vision of Friedrich Nietzsche. Specifically: I develop a parallelism here between the structure of the *Tractatus*³ and the structure of (the 3rd essay of) Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morality*. I believe that this parallelism can help us to understand the concept of an 'inhabited' and in a way *lived 'reduc-*

tio ad absurdum,' a concept that philosophers tend to find hard to grasp but that is crucial to the possibility of understanding the non-assertoric nature of Wittgensteinian (and Nietzschean) philosophy,⁴ which is in the end a philosophy of culture and of life.

In short: I read the *Genealogy* as leading, (deliberately) paradoxically, to a conclusion which implicates the work itself in the very ascetic ideal which the work is critiquing—an authorial strategy virtually unnoticed by commentators to date. I suggest that Nietzsche, to those who have open eyes, shows self-consciousness concerning this; and so Heidegger's reading and critique of him is, roughly, unnecessary—Nietzsche had already got there, himself. Nietzsche already anticipated (and was thereby beyond) his reception as the last metaphysician. *Just as Wittgenstein did, for him-self, in the Tractatus* (on the resolute reading of that work, which I am presupposing and at times expounding, and *putting to work*, in this book).

NIETZSCHE: THE FIRST PERFECT NIHILIST?

Friedrich Nietzsche wrote at the opening of *The Will to Power* that he considered himself to be Europe's "first perfect nihilist."⁵ For those who have some familiarity with Nietzsche's philosophy, this declaration tends to come as something of a surprise. "Surely," one says to oneself, "Nietzsche was a ferocious *opponent* of nihilism. Surely, for example, he savagely criticized Christianity, and its dead God, precisely on the grounds that it was nihilistic. Surely he wanted instead to argue affirmatively for the vigorous pursuit of life, and for the creation of new values."

Well, yes . . . and no. For arguably, Nietzsche believed that the creation of new values was only possible once we had thoroughly expunged the old from our systems. And he believed that that was a lot more difficult to achieve than it would be tempting to think. (As I detail below.) He believed, I posit, that it was going to take a remarkable kind of stratagem and effort to achieve this. To *work through* this nihilism.

In part, because ascetic ideals, those 'ideals' at the epicentre of nihilism, are virtually everywhere, including perhaps in some surprising places. We have already a reasonably strong hint of this at the very opening of the Third essay of *The Genealogy of Morality*:

What do ascetic ideals mean?—With artists, nothing, or too many different things; with philosophers and scholars, something like a nose and sense for the most favourable conditions of higher intellectuality;⁶ with women, at most, one *more* seductive charm . . . ; with physiological casualties and the disgruntled (with the majority of mortals), an attempt to see themselves as 'too good' for this world . . . ; with priests, the actual priestly faith, their best instrument of power and also the 'ultimate' sanction of their power; with saints, an excuse to hibernate at



last . . . their rest in nothingness ('God'), their form of madness. *That* the ascetic ideal has meant so much to man reveals a basic fact of human will, its *horror vacui*; it needs an aim —, and it prefers to will *nothingness* than *not* will.⁷

This encapsulated preview of almost all that will follow suggests the breadth of Nietzsche's target in this Essay, and, among other things, immediately leads us to wonder what we sometimes have to wonder about Wittgenstein when he makes criticisms of and raises questions about philosophy—might he himself / his writing be included in the target-range of the criticisms? Can he really escape that target-range altogether? While I think that the later Wittgenstein tends by and large to make evident, to an attentive reader, when and when not he is talking about philosophy as practiced by himself (philosophy after the 'kink' in the evolution of philosophy which he spoke of, "our method" in philosophy), this is in not-a-cut-and-dried manner, and is still less so in his earlier work, wherein what might have been taken to be a paradigm for philosophy (his own 'arguments' and 'positions' in the *Tractatus*) themselves become central objects among his criticisms—in the *Tractatus*.⁸ Still *less* does this turn out to be cut-and-dried in Nietzsche; this is what we will discover, when we attend carefully to his words (especially in the *Genealogy of Morality* and certain other important moments in his 'later' writing), below.

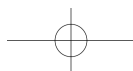
But, as already mentioned, Nietzsche is 'naturally' taken, especially in these his later works, to be a ferocious foe of nihilism. Just how could this be; where does this thought stand in relation to his remark about his being "the first perfect nihilist"?

In order to see how texts such as the *Genealogy of Morality* (in part) genealogize so as to show contingency and to revolt/repel one from the particular *character* of the contingent (and thus how they start to offer a possible way toward an alternative⁹), we need to look closely at the structure of Nietzsche's rhetoric, of his argument.

ESTABLISHING THE NATURE OF NIETZSCHE'S ARGUMENT: PREPARATORY, GROUND-CLEARING MOVES

Why exactly is establishing the nature of Nietzsche's argument this important? In addition to what I have already written, above, let me also say this, about why:

There is one significant supplementary reason why it turns out to be important to understand just how it is that Nietzsche's argument in the 3rd essay of the *Genealogy* actually works, and just how different this is from how it has usually been taken to work and from how it looks at the start as if it is going to work.¹⁰ This is that the perpetuation of the divide



between Anglo-American and Continental philosophy is I think, possible only because of the failure of the two 'traditions' to understand the virtues of each other's argumentative strategies. Notoriously, Continental philosophy is disrespected by Anglo-American philosophy because the English-speaking world normally finds in the Continental 'tradition' an allegedly congenital obscurity of presentation, a failure to take sufficiently seriously the virtues of *arguing* in clear terms for one's conclusions, of producing deductive, abductive, or inductive claims for things. But I am suggesting that something else is also true. That the Anglo-American tradition has signally failed to appreciate the pre-eminent (but very different) *style(s) of argumentation* within the Continental thinkers.

Thus, when they look at a text by Nietzsche, or Heidegger, or Derrida, or Sartre, or even Wittgenstein,¹¹ most Anglo-American thinkers ask, "What is this? *Where* is the argument?" They try to convert what they are reading into an argument of the kind they recognize, or they focus only on certain fragments of the texts that they are looking at which actually are genuinely arguments of that same kind. Or else they think: This isn't really philosophy at all.

What they miss, then, is the big argumentative picture. For the great Continental thinkers *do* make (things that are worth calling) arguments—and moreover, I will suggest, arguments of a very powerful kind, arguments which actually are of the essence of what philosophy needs. (Because, being a Wittgensteinian, I take that to be not the putting forward of philosophical theses, propositions, constructive arguments, or positions, but the effort to get clearer about what we already know, about what we say, about what it does and doesn't make sense to say. On this reading of Wittgenstein, there turn out to be deep affinities between Wittgenstein on the one 'side' and Kant, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, Weil, Heidegger, Foucault, and more on the 'other.'¹²)

It is the *kind* of argument, its scale and subtly indirect nature, a nature not that much found outside philosophy (unlike the ordinary 'good sense' arguments commonly made in Analytical Philosophy, arguments much like good arguments in newspaper leaders or debating societies, etc.), that makes Continental Philosophy what it is, and that makes it essential reading for Anglo-American philosophers interested in doing serious philosophy, in really thinking to the essence of what their 'discipline' can deliver.

Crucially, 'remarkably,' Wittgenstein has been misunderstood in much the same fashion. The argument-structure of the '*Tractatus*' has been most obviously misunderstood. Time and again, readers have failed to attempt to take Wittgenstein seriously in his repeated claims, at the outset and at the close of the *Tractatus*, that there is nothing that it is to understand the *Tractatus* and that the *satze* of it need to be overcome.¹³ I'll now take a little time to look into this, in order to provide what I think

will prove a helpfully close ‘object of comparison’ to the rhetoric / the nature / the method of Nietzsche’s remarkable, ‘indirect’ argument.

THE TRACTATUS AS A ‘THERAPEUTIC’ WORK

The two dominant modes of interpreting the *Tractatus* have been appositely characterized by James Conant as the ‘Positivist’ and the ‘Ineffability’ interpretation.¹⁴ The Positivist interpretation of *TLP* is in essence that the *TLP* rules out as nonsense, as metaphysics, all that does not fall within the ‘picture theory’ of language. The problem is that Positivism has no way of legitimating its own status: it too falls victim to the picture theory’s strictures on meaningfulness! All the references to ‘saying’ and ‘picturing’ in the *Tractatus*, so beloved of the Positivists, are in a certain central sense re-assessed as nonsense by the closing pages / passages of *TLP*—the Positivist interpretation can make nothing coherent of these, and has to ignore them. Unfortunately, though, if you ignore these pages, then you still simply fail to grapple with the inevitable fact that the ‘picture theory’ condemns much, including philosophy, including itself, as nonsense. The Positivist reading of the *Tractatus* simply fails to deal with the end of the text—but even so is caught in a straight, if implicit, contradiction. Interestingly enough, *this is of course exactly what happened to Logical Positivism*—to Carnap, Hempel, et al.—in real life, over the next twenty years! I.e., Positivism spent almost its whole life desperately trying to find some status for itself, some status for its central ‘Verificationist criterion of meaning.’ It never succeeded. The Verificationist criterion could not itself begin to be verified or falsified. And thus Positivism had to conclude that if it was true, then it itself was meaningless. If only Carnap, Hempel, and friends had read the *Tractatus* to the end, and thought about it more, they could have saved themselves the waste of time which they spent the next twenty or more years mired in!

The kind of problem the Positivists found themselves facing is in fact illustrative of the peculiar philosophical problematic with which I am suggesting Continental Philosophy has wrestled and trafficked in more than Anglo-American Philosophy (actually, again: the greats of *both* traditions—including Berkeley, Hume, Kant, Marx, Frege, and Foucault¹⁵—have always wrestled with this problematic. But this fact, this commonality, has been insufficiently noted.). What is that problematic, what is the paradoxical method that might enable us to find a path beyond an apparent straight self-refutation?

Something like this: A *reductio ad absurdum*—but where the absurdity is something which we cannot understand—not merely something absurd in the sense of ‘obviously false.’ And: a *reductio* that is *inhabited*, that is worked through and felt. This is what I am talking about. That is what (Nietzsche and) Wittgenstein in particular have to offer us, I claim. A

method of indirection which, rather than arguing against something or for something, involves you being committed to something which is then gradually undermined from the inside. Therapeutically midwifing your eventual emergence clear from the inclination to embrace the attractions that you have now inhabited.

Following Diamond and Conant, I would suggest that the Preface to the *Tractatus* is extremely revealing of the book's point, 'content,' and form. Arguably: it is very hard to square entirely with the single most popular reading of *TLP*, which has until recently been the conventional—the 'Ineffabilist'—reading of the *Tractatus*, as 'containing' many doctrines which can perhaps be thought, but cannot be said, and can 'strictly' only be 'shown':

Where, for example is ineffabilistic 'showing' in the Preface?

(Is it (only) . . . 'shown'?)

It is strikingly absent. . . .

Wittgenstein wrote that his work consisted essentially of elucidations. If this is so, then it will be of no use to attempt to understand Wittgenstein as producing *over the course of the Tractatus* anything remotely resembling a deductive argument. For each numbered remark is a *commentary* on one or more preceding remarks, to shed light or not, *not*, strictly, a deduction of *consequences* from it that can build up deductively toward the next remark.

Wittgenstein offered us (in the *Tractatus*) elucidations, not philosophical propositions; and he held (hoped) that ultimately one would come not to need these elucidations, that one would be able to give up even the pseudo-propositions of the *Tractatus* itself.¹⁶ This is in fact the telos of reading the *Tractatus*. The form of Wittgenstein's argument in the *Tractatus* could then be said to be a massive exercise in overcoming the desire to find or to cleave to (in the ordinary/usual sense of that word) arguments in its text, and instead to be able to find it as a whole an exercise in overcoming 'itself.'

Wittgenstein switched in his later work to a very different style, having witnessed the failure of the *Tractatus* to be understood; indeed, having seen it repeatedly utterly misunderstood. Whole schools of thought were founded on its misinterpretation. Most notably, Logical Positivism; also, Ryleanism.¹⁷ Wittgenstein's later work under a certain aspect actually looks rather like his prescription at the end of the *Tractatus* for what the correct method in philosophy would be; a prescription he himself had not followed there, and which had been again catastrophically *ignored or misunderstood* by Wittgenstein's opponents and 'followers' alike.

But in this later work, too, Wittgenstein has been radically misunderstood. He has been often here too interpreted in practice as some kind of theorist: a Behaviorist, and even as some kind of Verificationist or Positivist—even, again, by those claiming to be his followers. Even sympathetic and subtle readers have often failed to take seriously Wittgenstein's



style, his refusal to assert positive philosophical assertions (e.g., to make claims concerning the form of language), his refusal to begin a new jargon or to put together a new set of technical terms; and his insistence that the important thing about his philosophy is not the finding of any answers to problems/questions, but the finding of some methods which can be of use in dealing with philosophical confusion.¹⁸

The example I am going to focus on pre-eminently here—while making comparisons to others, and especially in fact to Wittgenstein—is of course how to read Nietzsche. How to avoid making the same mistake with him.

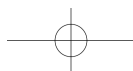
THROWING AWAY THE TRUTH: HOW TO READ “WHAT IS THE MEANING OF ASCETIC IDEALS?”

It is ‘well-known’ that Nietzsche would sometimes rather tarry with what can appear to be nihilism than tarry with the truth. His sometime advocacy of lying, or of caring about neither truth nor falsity, and his sense of the great power and strongly tempting qualities of nihilism—the lack of almost anything culturally influential save life-denyingness—these have led some to suggest that he is himself a nihilist of sorts. And certainly, he aims to participate in the nihilation of much that is culturally taken for granted.

But, as already mentioned, it is probably rather more ‘well-known’ that Nietzsche does not in the end—or indeed, really, at *any* time—actually endorse nihilism himself, nor is it thought by most commentators that his own views actually do or should eventuate in nihilistic conclusions. On the very contrary; he is taken to be the most ferocious opponent of nihilism. And, in a way, this is quite right.

Thus we find, for example, Nietzsche condemning moral values, Christian values, and more besides, in the name of other, life-affirming values. The very final section of *The Anti-Christ*,¹⁹ Nietzsche’s magnificent and ruthless polemic against Pauline Christianity, runs as follows:

With that I have done and pronounce my judgement. I condemn Christianity, I bring against the Christian Church the most terrible charge any prosecutor has ever uttered. To me it is the extremest thinkable form of corruption, it has the will to the ultimate corruption conceivably possible. The Christian Church has left nothing untouched by its depravity, it has made of every value a disvalue, of every truth a lie, of every kind of integrity a vileness of soul These are the blessings of Christianity!—Parasitism as the sole practice of the Church . . . ; the Beyond as the will to deny reality of every kind; the Cross as the badge of recognition for the most subterranean conspiracy there has ever been—a conspiracy against health, beauty, well-constitutedness, bravery, intellect, *benevolence* of soul, *against life itself* . . .



Wherever there are walls I shall inscribe this eternal accusation against Christianity upon them—I can write in letters which even the blind can see . . . I call Christianity the *one* immortal blemish of mankind . . .

And one calculates *time* from the [unlucky day] on which this fatality arose—from the *first* day of Christianity!—*Why not rather from its last—From today?*—Revaluation of all values!

Well . . . no doubt about where he stands on that, then. Very firmly against it. Surely there can be no question about that. And so, presumably, he stands for something else.

And so one would expect to find his arguments against it set out in the pages that precede it. But: when Anglo-American commentators look for (what they call) arguments (e.g., arguments against nihilism which are arguments for an alternative ‘position’ to it) in Nietzsche, they often find themselves, again, somewhat disappointed. Especially when they look for arguments in what probably look on the surface like Nietzsche’s two most conventionally argumentative, quasi-Analytical texts: *Beyond Good and Evil* and (especially) *The Genealogy of Morality*.²⁰ So they—and journeymen philosophers and scholars more generally, whatever their home town—often seek to interpret Nietzsche’s ‘argument’ in ways which do violence to it. They produce ‘hard’ interpretations of it—Nietzsche as elitist, anti-democratic Romanticist. Even, of course, Nietzsche as Nazi.²¹ They emphasize then Nietzsche as ‘psychologist’ and even ‘physiologist’²² (This latter conception often goes further than the medical metaphors of course employed equally by Wittgenstein; it suggests that Nietzsche’s diagnosis of cultures that are ill is *not metaphorical*). Or: They read Nietzsche as giving us a new metaphysics, a monist metaphysics of the will to power, to ‘replace’ the subject vs. object dualism. They try to pin down Nietzsche’s writing into handy memorizable formulae, into theses.

I will now seek to show a little more why this is—and (more importantly) why this is inadequate. I will offer a reading of the *Genealogy*; specifically, of its culminating third essay. I think this reading has Nietzsche making something worth calling an argument, but a long argument with an unusual rhetoric hard to understand on casual inspection and almost impossible to render compatible with the constructive (and piecemeal) spirit of Anglo-American philosophizing. An argument of a somewhat special kind, a kind crucial to understand if one wishes to understand Continental philosophy and its contribution (actual and potential) to the last one hundred and fifty years or so of ‘Modern’ thought. And an argument whose nature has not generally been understood at all well, even among those who have been influenced by Nietzsche, and even influenced by it.

In the early stages of Essay 3 of the *Genealogy*, things may appear to proceed smoothly for the advocate of a straightforward, roughly analyti-

cal reading of Nietzsche. Nietzsche makes clear initially what he is taking a stand against.

Although: the long list in section 1 as mentioned above might already give us pause. If there are so many diverse forms that ascetic ideals take, then it may be harder than one expects to find an opposing voice to them.

And this is exactly what we find as we read the third essay, as we progress through it. He considers one possible candidate after another for opponents to asceticism; and one after another they are judged utterly to fail. Including: artists, even great ones like Wagner; philosophers, even great ones like Kant and Schopenhauer.

And thus Nietzsche's target gradually widens. And by Section 23 he asks—increasingly despairingly, perhaps: “[W]hy has more effective resistance to it not been offered? The ascetic ideal expresses one will: where is the opposing will, in which an opposing ideal might express itself?”²³ And he then considers a powerful candidate, one which we might naturally assume he will indeed embrace: science:

I am told that [the rival ideal to the ascetic ideal] is not lacking, not only has it fought a long, successful fight with that ideal, but it has already mastered that ideal in all its essentials: all our *modern science* is witness to that,—modern science which, as a genuine philosophy of reality, obviously believes only in itself, obviously possesses the courage to be itself, the will to be itself, and has hitherto got by well enough without God, the beyond and the virtues of denial.²⁴

And this is where things become really interesting. For Nietzsche categorically denies this. And calls science “not the opposite of the ascetic ideal but rather the latter's own *most recent and noble manifestation*.”²⁵

The danger of nihilism is to be found *as much* in science and, in Section 24,—and here we are perhaps genuinely shocked, if we reflect as we read—in *atheism*. Nietzsche, the great recorder or proclaimer of the death of God, warning us that *atheism* too is a knell of nihilistic asceticism? Something remarkable is happening here.

How is this to be understood? Nietzsche is clearing away the rubble, the rubble of what has already been destroyed, even if some of its advocates do not yet see that it lies in ruins. Here again, comparison with Wittgenstein is instructive:

Where does our investigation get its importance from, since it seems only to destroy everything interesting, that is, all that is great and important? (As it were all the buildings, leaving behind only bits of stone and rubble.) What we are destroying is nothing but houses of cards and we are clearing up the grounds of language on which they stand.²⁶

But there is still a crucial further turn of the screw. Wittgenstein sometimes (most famously, as we have remarked, at the end of the *Tractatus*) turns such destruction back onto himself, or at least onto his own words. Might Nietzsche do the same?

By this point in *GM*, Nietzsche may seem to be saying, “I am alone! This is why I will be born, if at all, posthumously. You my readers—you too are nihilists. You too, you worshippers of the truth; you are not yet free spirits; *you are not yet free of piety, of truthfulness*. (I am against all of you!).”²⁷

But perhaps by now my reader has guessed the truth. *Nor is Nietzsche*. And he knows it. This is precisely what we find, as we read on into Section 24. Nietzsche partially resists identifying himself with the “atheists, Antichrists, immoralists, nihilists”²⁸ . . . but how can he in the end help doing so?:

[T]hese last idealists of knowledge in whom, alone, intellectual conscience dwells and is embodied these days,—they believe they are all as liberated as possible from the ascetic ideal, these ‘free, *very* free spirits’: and yet, I will tell them what they themselves cannot see—because they are standing too close to themselves²⁹—this ideal is quite simply *their* ideal as well, they themselves represent it nowadays, and perhaps no one else, they themselves are its most intellectualised product, its most advanced front-line troops and scouts. . . . They are very far from being free spirits: *because they still believe in truth* . . .³⁰

Nietzsche’s own text here becomes a devious, insinuating, seductive, indirect, ‘therapeutic’ one. Necessarily. His is not an external attack on the ascetic ideal at all. It self-implicates. For what is Nietzsche, if not the hardest of hard truth-tellers about God and asceticism? It is, finally, Nietzsche who denies us our biggest and oldest lie, belief in God. (He is the one who has come too soon for his own birth, to tell us that God is dead and ascetic ideals are a disease.) He still, most profoundly, believes in truth, and that is why. *Übermensch*en will thus have to overcome Christianity—and Nietzsche. For he is not beyond truth-and-falsity; far from it. When religion is swept away by science and atheism and Nietzsche, then these must be swept away too, to leave a ground uncontaminated by asceticism, and open to true (sic.) creators.³¹

Nietzsche *does* straight away go on (during Section 24) to identify at last something truly outside of the ascetic sphere:

When the Christian Crusaders in the East fell upon that invincible order of Assassins, the order of free spirits *par excellence* . . . somehow . . . they received an inkling of that symbol and watchword which was reserved for the highest ranks alone of their *secretum*: ‘nothing is true, everything is permitted’ . . . Certainly that was freedom of the mind, *with that* the termination of the belief in truth was announced.

But it is absolutely clear that here we have arrived at something *external to Nietzsche himself*. He is very far from believing that *nothing* is true. He wants on the contrary to force us to escape from our denial and to face the truth:



Our faith in science is still based on a *metaphysical faith*,—even we knowers of today, we godless anti-metaphysicians, still take *our* fire from the blaze set alight by a faith thousands of years old, that faith of the Christians, which was also Plato's faith, that God is truth, that truth is *divine*. . . But what if precisely this turns out to be more and more unbelievable . . . what if God himself turned out to be our *oldest lie*?³²

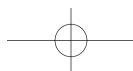
Those “we”s and “our”s tell one all one needs to know. Nietzsche's faith is a *purified* version of the fire lit thousands of years ago by the first ones who had religious faith. Insistence that God is dead is itself the ultimate form of faith: in truth. And “unconditional will to truth . . . is faith in the ascetic ideal itself.”³³ “Unconditional will to truth,” means will to truth without any reason or justification having to be given for it, without conditions; it means will to truth no matter what, including no matter how harsh the consequences. Nietzsche is expressing the ascetic ideal in its purest form, purified by means of not being any longer able to grant itself the claim—the lie—that God exists.³⁴

In this sense, *God is alive*. Very much so. And in this sense Nietzsche's madman did indeed come too soon: for God will only really be dead once there is no longer faith in truth, but rather something is being created that is beyond such faith. And we are *very* far from that situation; we may be on the path to it (That is precisely what Nietzsche intends), but that path is marked at present by an intensified form of that faith. As Nietzsche remarks: “I know all this from too close up, perhaps.”³⁵

Admittedly, he goes on: “The will to truth needs a critique—let us define our own task with this—the value of truth is tentatively to be *called into question*.”³⁶ Yes; but that *task* is hereafter. The path to that calling-into-question lies via the extreme will to truth that Nietzsche himself and this text embodies.

Finally then we come to the final substantive section of *GM* III, section 27, where we read this, the capstone that confirms our reading:

[T]he ascetic ideal has, for the present, even in the most spiritual sphere, only one type of real enemy and injurer: these are the comedians of this ideal—because they arouse mistrust. Everywhere else where spirit is at work in a rigorous, powerful and honest way, it now completely lacks an ideal—the popular expression for this abstinence is ‘atheism’—: *except for its will to truth*. But this will, this *remnant* of an ideal, if you believe me, is that ideal itself in its strictest, most spiritual formulation, completely esoteric, totally stripped of externals, and thus not so much its remnant as its *kernel*. Unconditional honest atheism (—that alone is the air we more spiritual men of the age breathe!) is therefore *not* opposed to the ascetic ideal as it appears to be; instead, it is only one of the ideal's last phases of development, one of its final forms and inherent logical conclusions—it is the awe-inspiring *catastrophe* of a two-thousand-year discipline in truth-telling, which finally forbids itself *the lie entailed in the belief in God*.



Nietzsche is no comedian of the ascetic ideal. The repeated use in this passage of the word “honest”; his self-positioning as among the most “spiritual” elite of men; his use again of the word “we”; his suggestion that a philosophy such as his is the “inherent logical conclusion” of the will to truth that is a direct descendant of the accepted highpoint of asceticism in days of yore: we simply cannot keep from ourselves any longer that Nietzsche himself (and his words) is (are) the ultimate form yet that the ascetic ideal has taken.

So: Nietzsche might even declare, “I am Truth, I am Christianity . . . I am the last perfect nihilist, I am nihilism come at last to destroy itself in preparation for something new and better. *In* and through me, ascetic ideology comes to self-consciousness, and can be destroyed, overcome.”³⁷

My interpretation of Nietzsche is in a certain important respect strikingly similar to Heidegger’s—only Nietzsche is already beyond being the great, last metaphysician. Precisely *because*, and not in spite of, the fact that *he knows that he is complicit in that which he is critiquing*. He knows all too well, and makes very clear, to those willing to see, that he is not yet free of the truth, of truthfulness, of asceticism.³⁸ He is trying to clear the ground—but it is not only us but also him which he needs in the end to clear it of. He would be a metaphysician if he stood magisterially and bombastically against all he surveyed; if he thus proposed a counter-system. But he does not. He fights the systems he is against—and is willing to recognize that he does not fight them from outside of them, but by exploding or imploding them from within their motivation-set.

What is the 3rd essay of the *Genealogy*? What is Nietzsche? Dynamite.³⁹ Or, better still: a purgative. The Pyrrhonians had it right. As Sextus Empiricus implied, a purgative is a better metaphor (though are we sure that we want the best possible one?⁴⁰) than a ladder, or a bomb.

We’ll only throw away the truth if we are shown it in its full horror; if we realize it, and live it until there is nothing left. That is why I call this paradoxical method: a lived *reductio*.

Can there be any such thing as overcoming the whole discourse of truth? I doubt it. And I certainly doubt that it would be on balance desirable, even if it were possible. Thus a (large) caveat with regard to what I am saying: My own view is that it is *not* entirely clear in the case of Nietzsche—whereas I think it is quite clear in the case of Wittgenstein—that by reading him/them in the fashion that I am suggesting we can emerge with a ‘correct’ philosophical perspective, with something which is not only nonsense when staticized or fixed, but also of some real dialogical *use*. But I am urging that we must at least try to read him/them in the fashion I am suggesting—because there is no other available which does not radically fail to read the words of their texts. Fail to appreciate their indirection (their challenging what they challenge *by means of their*

own complicity in it), the power and nature of the process of purgation and of overcoming that is here called for.

But we can at least note here another ‘small’ but perhaps extremely telling connection between Nietzsche and Wittgenstein; the use by both of the term, “überwinden.” That’s right; the very word which Wittgenstein famously uses at the end of his *Tractatus* to refer to what we are supposed to do with even his ‘propositions’ is the very same word which Nietzsche famously uses to refer to what we are supposed to do to those things which he is critiquing; things which ultimately, I am claiming in this chapter, include his own words, his own attempts to clear the ground for the *übermenschen* to come after him. *Das überwinden*⁴¹ is, explicitly, their shared goal. . . .

Can it now be seen how very close the form of the two grand arguments are, how very close are their aims and hoped-for-outcomes? Both urge us to overcome the words in which they themselves are expressed. Just as Wittgenstein, in the closing passages of the *Tractatus*, urges us to understand *him*, and not to ‘understand’ the nonsensical ‘propositions’ he has offered us, so, if we understand Nietzsche (and he asks more and more, in his last years, whether he has been understood), we will find his texts, his words, to be so many provocations and invitations to recognize ourselves, to recognize the self-delusion and the nothingness that we are, and our kinship with the very traditions that we might like to imagine we simply stand against or put an end to as if from the outside. Nietzsche, in offering us the *Genealogy of Morality*, invites us to overcome this. And “this” here refers, as I have indicated, not just to morality, but also to the genealogy, the (nihilistic) philosophy, which exposes it, and is toward the end itself exposed.

We can take this seriously, or at least we can try to. We can read Nietzsche, like Wittgenstein, as he demands to be read; as in fact he must be read, if, again, we are not to ignore his words, including but not restricted to those words in which he specifically invites us to read him in certain ways (not, notably, ‘universalistic’ ways.⁴²).

Nietzsche is in fact then, strictly, on this point a John the Baptist, more than a Jesus. He died for the truth to come, the truth that we can only barely begin to conceive, as yet—the truth that there is no truth, that there should be no truth, that the *übermensch* will have no truck with truth.

He invites us to overcome truth; but really to throw away truth is perhaps to recognize that there is/was nothing to throw away, only the appearance of something.⁴³ For we are nihilating something that was itself nihilistic (as happens when we show latent nonsense to be patent nonsense in disguise, and nothing more, and when we understand nonsense aright, *as* nothing.). He invites us to throw away truth; but, insofar as we are still within the economy of truth and falsity—and he and we surely still are—then it’s a *very* tall order. If this is an end of nihilism, or

philosophy, then it is an end or *telos* of nihilism, or of philosophy, which stretches on, for now, indefinitely far into the future.

NIETZSCHE: THE FIRST COMPLETELY FULFILLED—THE FIRST PERFECT—NIHILIST

As I alluded to at the outset: In the Preface to *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche makes explicit—in fact, rather too explicit, somewhat crude, in comparison⁴⁴—some of what one has to carefully read and find in the subtle, extraordinary, elaborate, original, bizarre argument-structure of the third essay of *The Genealogy of Morals*. In that Preface, Nietzsche writes that it is now (1888) plain that the advent of nihilism in European culture is inevitably upon us, “violently, headlong, like a river that wants to reach the end, that no longer reflects, that is afraid to reflect.”⁴⁵ And then he speaks of himself, in Section 3 (of the Preface):

He that speaks here, conversely, has done nothing so far but reflect: a philosopher and solitary by instinct, who has found his advantage in standing aside and outside, in patience, in procrastination, in staying behind; as a spirit of daring and experiment that has already lost its way once in every labyrinth of the future; as a soothsayer-bird spirit who looks back when relating what will come; as the first perfect nihilist of Europe who, however, has even now lived through the whole of nihilism, to the end, leaving it behind, outside himself.

“The first perfect nihilist . . . ”—what could make it plainer that the reading given in this paper of Nietzsche as the self-conscious nihilist ending nihilism, setting himself at the apex of the tower of playing cards that is ‘asceticism,’ and thus showing that it is merely a card-tower, and taking it down with him, is correct? That this is the true Nietzsche?

But, one is tempted to respond, what of the qualification in the above quote: “. . . who, however, has even now lived through the whole of nihilism, to the end, leaving it behind, outside himself?”

If only. This is a wish Nietzsche has for himself, but he must now see that it has not been realized in his own life, or even in his own works. And indeed, surely we can see this even in the passage itself. Nietzsche reads himself as a “soothsayer-bird spirit,” but one that says sooth about *the future*, in which he allows that his spirit has “already lost its way once in every labyrinth [thereof].”

Section 4 of the Preface reads as follows:

“The Will to Power: Attempt at a revaluation of all values”—in this formulation a countermovement finds expression, regarding both principle and task; a movement that in some future will take the place of this perfect nihilism—but presupposes it, logically and psychologically, and certainly can come only after and out of it. For why has the



advent of nihilism become *necessary*? Because the values we have had hitherto thus draw their final consequence; because nihilism represents the ultimate logical conclusion of our great values and ideals—because we must experience nihilism before we can find out what value these ‘values’ really had.—We require, sometime, new values.

But not yet. Or rather: we require them already, perhaps, but we cannot really have them until we have experienced nihilism, perfectly. In some future, Nietzsche’s countermovement will find expression genuinely, sometime. But this can only happen *after this perfect nihilism*, the nihilism of Nietzsche, the nihilism that forbids us the lies involved not only in religion but even in (the self-images of) science . . . and atheism . . . and philosophy. Only then will an attempt at thoroughgoing revaluation have a real chance of success.

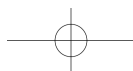
What is your aim in philosophy, Nietzsche? To show the ascetic the way out of asceticism. But: while recognizing that we are *all* ascetics⁴⁶ (just as we are all, in Wittgenstein’s famous metaphor, flies)—and that the way out is (thus) *extraordinarily* difficult. Where one will be when one emerges, no one yet knows. A place that has to be made, that is not there waiting for us like another world.

Nietzsche is not really an end-of-philosophy philosopher, any more than Wittgenstein is.⁴⁷ Because ‘ending philosophy’ can at best be a piecemeal and open-ended project, not a state that any of us now can arrive at simply through will-power or such-like. One can stop doing philosophy—but absolutely not just whenever one wants, unless one is merely *stopping* doing philosophy (which is O.K.), rather than ending it or giving it peace.

Nietzsche ends Section I of the Third Essay of the *Genealogy* by writing: “Have I made myself understood? . . . ‘Absolutely not, sir!’—So let us start at the beginning.” But in his beginning is his end, for of course Section 28 famously ends:

It is absolutely impossible for us to conceal what was . . . given its direction by the ascetic ideal: this hatred of the human, and even more of the animalistic, even more of the material, this horror of the senses, of reason itself, this fear of happiness and beauty, this longing to get away from appearance, transience, growth, death, wishing, longing itself—all that means, let us dare to grasp it, a will to nothingness, an aversion to life, a rebellion against the most fundamental prerequisites of life, but it is and remains a *will!* . . . And, to conclude by saying what I said at the beginning: man still prefers to *will nothingness*, than not will. . .⁴⁸

One shouldn’t perhaps read *too* much into this particular circular movement, this lovely classical rhetorical flourish—but I venture that it is legible as one more confirmation of the unusual ‘argument-structure’ of the *Genealogy*, as I have laid it out in this chapter. Nietzsche writes a fairly



long essay to tell you . . . exactly what he told you at the beginning of the essay.⁴⁹ It is as though you have to read the Essay for yourself, come to think the thoughts that are expressed in it—only then will you be able to get out of the fly bottle (cf. *PI* 309), and fly away. In fact, cut the “as though” in the previous sentence. Nietzsche’s book is not a text-book—it will perhaps be comprehensible only to one who has already thought the thoughts that are in it—or, rather, who has attempted to (for, as I’ve said, it is not at all clear that one can possibly succeed). It is a provocation to one to think for oneself, of course, for sure—it points you along a road that can lead precisely to this possibility of thinking for oneself, a possibility as yet hardly attainable, under the apparently unavoidable tyranny of truth.

To look a little closer at those last two sentences of the essay: Can all that be what ascetic ideals mean? For sure, in the preview (in Section I), a vast range of things were specified as coming under the ascetic ideal, but perhaps that was merely to get us interested? No; what we saw in looking at the trajectory of the essay, especially latterly, was just how much does indeed fall under the purview of this ‘ideal’; even ourselves. Nietzsche means the penultimate sentence of the Third Essay—he means, for example, that the will to nothingness which has dominated humankind is a horror not just of longing but also “of reason itself.” A telling inclusion, this last one. What has dominated humankind to date, what it is whose tutelage is almost impossible to escape from, and whose tutelage and power Nietzsche himself admits, as we have seen, he cannot yet escape from, is a horror of virtually everything that human beings have been, and that life is. Reason itself is a horror of and at reason itself, for example. When we try to think this, we are in a position way beyond the easy logic of a polemic, or of a piece of standard rational informal logic, or of a (broadly scientific) theory, or even of a standard *reductio ad absurdum* form.⁵⁰ We are, instead, in the territory of what I am calling a lived or a self-implicating *reductio ad absurdum*. Nietzsche’s methodology is deeply paradoxical. But deliberately so. There is no other way of seeking to do what he is seeking to do.

Nietzsche argued in *The Genealogy of Morals* that science and even atheism are nihilistic, because they still have faith in truth, they still believe in a god—Truth.⁵¹ Until we can get beyond such faith, which Nietzsche himself of course shared, and indeed exemplified, Nietzsche holds that we have no chance of creating truly new values, of dancing and affirming in a space beyond good and evil, beyond truth and falsity.⁵²

So, what is Nietzsche’s solution in *The Genealogy of Morals*? It is this (or so, at least, I have argued): to attack nihilism, but then to reveal that even the attack is still nihilistic (because it is exposing the lies involved in religion, etc., but *all in the name of a new god, Truth*), and that he, Nietzsche, himself, is in fact the apogee of nihilism. The reader is then encour-

aged, if s/he can, to start to get beyond both Nietzsche and what Nietzsche criticized, in his or her own way. Nietzsche destroys nihilism, but from the inside, as a participant in it; like a virus, or an emetic. . . . That's the perfect way to do it.

Nietzsche is the perfect, complete, fulfilled nihilist, because he reduces even nihilism (and himself / his work, in the process) to nothing, and thus clears the ground for something new. He embodied a truth that destroyed its nemesis from the inside, by both becoming and exposing it. *Nietzsche took nihilism to its logical conclusion*, and in him, the anti-nihilistic nihilist, it perished of the truth, of the contradiction, of itself.

So, once more, the startling realization that comes to one once one has got *The Genealogy* right, once in particular one has understood the remarkable self-implicating dialectic of its Sections 24–27, is indeed as follows. That Nietzsche's truth might be expressed thus: "I am nihilism—come to realize its own nature, come home to roost . . ." ⁵³ To roost, that is, in the reader's comprehension. *The Genealogy* is like a mirror. Only the reader takes an awful long time to recognize her own reflection in it. ⁵⁴ One so wants to believe that one is already outside, beyond, or at least before nihilism. One is encouraged in this hope by the example of Nietzsche—if he can think pure anti-nihilism, then, we think, perhaps we can too. Nietzsche shows us that even he isn't beyond nihilism; indeed, that he manifests it in its purest form, and our hope collapses—finally, perhaps, there is hope for us, because finally we can perhaps be persuaded. We see ourselves and our time in all our horror, as he did, and perhaps *then* we have the first inklings of an opportunity to rebel, perhaps *then* we have the opportunity to see where the truth has brought us to, and where, just possibly, we can go from here. To save humanity he/we had to destroy it. Or at least, better: truly to destroy *all* of its illusions. ⁵⁵

CONCLUSION

Nietzsche tells the truth more than he fictions, despite all his valorization of the latter. In him, *truth perishes of itself*—then something else becomes possible. No objects, no subjects—no things in themselves, no truth-in-itself. Only perspective-seeing, and an opening to joy.

And this philosophy is not 'universalistic': that is, not something which can straightforwardly be generalized from the achievement of the philosopher-author to the rest of us—again, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein are at one in wanting the reader to respond to this philosophy for themselves. Theirs are in this sense philosophical *self-help* books. ⁵⁶ One cannot do the thinking which has been begun or exemplified *for* the reader. One cannot *outsource* philosophical work. This is, again, an aspect of Wittgenstein's thought that has not been sufficiently understood or respected. It is quite plain in the Prefaces to his two masterpieces. Thus, in the *Investi-*

gations we have: "I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking. But, if possible, to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own."⁵⁷ While the opening of the *Tractatus* reads: "This book will perhaps only be understood by those who have themselves already thought the thoughts which are expressed in it—or similar thoughts. It is therefore not a text-book."⁵⁸

The resolute reading of Wittgenstein didn't exist until relatively recently. There have been many fine readers of Nietzsche; but I find it still striking that his central strategy, as I have outlined it in the 3rd essay of the *Genealogy*, has not been understood, to date. Nietzsche and Wittgenstein—have been understood little, all too little.

But we can understand them (a)right now, if we are willing to make the effort. If we understand the argument-structure of the *Genealogy* aright, we will understand at the end that Nietzsche actually opposes ascetic ideals, ferociously, *by being their most ferocious proponent*. He is the first perfect nihilist: he tries to bring nihilism to an end by if you like constructing its most perfect temple: a temple *designed* to self-destruct. A temple of air.⁵⁹

When this temple comes 'crashing' down, it could suck down with it the whole edifice of nihilism, which is (otherwise) vastly strong and self-regenerative. This will start to make possible, perhaps, he thinks, the valuing of life, rather than of truth.

Nietzsche's opponent is so powerful, so huge, that it includes *himself*. He recognizes this clearly, in a brave and audacious act of self-interpretation, an act of much the same kind as that engaged in by Wittgenstein when he wrestles philosophically tête-à-tête with himself.⁶⁰ He offers us a genuine philosophy of self-overcoming,⁶¹ which alone might be powerful enough, encompassing enough and subtle enough to catch his opponent.

Karl Jaspers's famous negative judgement against Nietzsche was half-right; Nietzsche's philosophy is in an important sense wholly negative. But this is a triumph. It is a triumph in the sense in which it is a triumph also in Marx, in Austin, in Foucault, and (above all, perhaps) in Wittgenstein (who only assembles reminders, and deals with philosophical problems as they come along, who has no philosophical system *at all* (not even in the *Tractatus*)). These were the first philosophers to effectively give themselves a self-denying ordinance for how the future, utopia, was to be (No wonder that they wondered whether they were really philosophers at all). Marx was occasionally tempted to describe what Communism would/could be like (what things would be like after the withering away of the state), as Nietzsche was to describe what life could be like after the perishing of the ascetic ideal; but both mostly managed to resist this impulse. This . . . asceticism, this holding back from the wish to write a philosophy hopelessly attempting to be 'in' the future, is, I am claiming, a triumph. It is high time that this remarkable achievement were recog-

nized. The precondition for that is the recognition of the novelly and deliberately paradoxical character of Nietzsche's argumentation, above all in the great culminatory third essay of *The Genealogy of Morality*.

I am now in a position to give a final summary of what has perhaps been achieved in this chapter. Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* destroyed philosophy from the inside. It offers the reader a 'self-implicating,' experienced *reductio*. The reader is invited to engage in the mode of thinking to be overcome and expelled. I have looked in this chapter at Nietzsche's effort to get society/humanity to overcome itself and to change itself radically for the better. (This is his philosophy for the future, but it is not trying (hopelessly) to be a philosophy *in* the future.) I argued that Nietzsche's route to doing so, in the final, epochal essay of the *Genealogy of Morality*, relies on a necessarily paradoxical methodology. A kind of inhabitation of absurdity, to flush out a very widely ramifying 'disease'⁶² to which there is, in truth, *almost* no outside at all.⁶³ I showed how this methodology can be elucidated by close comparison with Wittgenstein's methodology, especially (though not only) in the *Tractatus*. Heidegger thought Nietzsche was the last metaphysician; I have suggested ('by contrast') that Nietzsche here shows already awareness of this, and thereby overcomes being caught by this designation. His willing participation in a kind of lived *reductio ad absurdum*, for the sake of something that is still being given birth to, like Wittgenstein's, eventuates in a nascent autonomy, not in a heteronomy which can (as Heidegger alleged) only be retrospectively appreciated for its usefulness, from outside and beyond it. Thus a 'perfect nihilist' would be one who wants to fight nihilism, and is in that sense not consumed or saturated by it, but who recognizes that the only way to successfully fight it is to recognize its vast extent and to purify it to a point where it starts at last to consume itself. To take it to its logical (historical) conclusion.

Like Rousseau, then, who self-described thus, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein can illuminatingly be described as men of paradox rather than of thought-constraining prejudices. They, however, work tirelessly on and on *through* these paradoxes, and might conceivably thus come out, along with us perhaps, on the other side, saying and doing something clear, new, and valuable.⁶⁴ Their properly *paradoxical methodology* is a deep and powerful tool.⁶⁵

I now turn, in the final substantive chapter of this Part of the book and of the book as a whole, to another great source of potential affinities to Wittgenstein. From Nietzsche, to Buddhism (and especially to Zen). Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morality* stages and inhabits—and offers to the reader to inhabit—a potential destruction of what he thinks most problematic, our moralized system of morality, via letting (and helping) the moralized desire to tell the truth fully run its course. He aims to destroy this system from the inside. Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* stages and inhabits

(and offers to the reader to inhabit) a potential destruction of what he thinks most problematic (at least in philosophy): our effort to find a place external to language from which to critique it. He aims to explode this inclination from the inside of it. Buddhism is alive to such strategies, and its methodology thus has striking similarities to Wittgenstein's. As I shall now seek to show: drawing in the process a set of 'morals' concerning how and how not to live.

NOTES

1. Henceforth *GM*. I shall mostly cite, unless indicated otherwise, from the Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press 1994 edition, edited by Keith Ansell-Pearson.

2. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009.

3. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, London: Routledge, 1961 (1922); transl. Pears and McGuinness.

4. An essay which powerfully understands the commonality between the two on this point, and is therefore recommended to readers who don't already know it, is Erich Heller's "Wittgenstein and Nietzsche," in his *The Importance of Nietzsche: Ten Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1988).

5. *The Will to Power*, New York: Vintage, 1968, p.3. The question I am asking in this essay might be put thus: Is "I am asceticism, I am nihilism" Nietzsche's deepest truth? (I return to this, below.) Of course, *The Will to Power* wasn't strictly speaking a book that Nietzsche wrote. So there is something potentially phony about laying too much weight on the way 'it' starts. . . .

We should note here also that there is some question about whether "perfect" is a good translation here of the German here. "Complete" or "fulfilled" are possible alternatives—opening the way to the line of thought that I shall pursue below: that Nietzsche tries not only in a sense to *embrace* but also to *pass through* nihilism and *overcome* it. (Thanks to Tom Greaves for reminding me of these points.)

6. Does this—*could* this—exclude Nietzsche? Isn't he, for instance, a philosopher? And one notes already how close this formulation of asceticism is to—the will to power. . . .

7. *GM*, p.72.

8. At least, when read resolutely. See my co-edited collections, *The New Wittgenstein* (ed. Alice Crary and Rupert Read, London: Routledge, 2000) and *Beyond the Tractatus Wars* (ed. Rupert Read and Matthew Lavery, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2011).

9. Like Baker's Wittgenstein, and Foucault, Nietzsche thrives above all through presenting the reader with beginnings of *alternatives* to what they have taken to be *inevitable*.

10. That is to say: it looks at the start as if Nietzsche is going to make a straightforward ferocious polemical argument against ascetic ideals, from a position, naturally, outside of them. And this is how he is usually taken.

11. And even, in fact, Hume, Berkeley, Kant, Marx, and Frege, at their bests (cf. n.15, below). Thus we have here, I would actually claim, not (in the end) so much a divide between Anglo-American and Continental as between great philosophers and the journeymen of both traditions. Lesser Continental writers, at least in the Academy, tend to be more 'Analytical' than those they are writing on; and the same is true, I am alleging, of lesser Anglo-Americans.

12. For these affinities, see A. Nehamas's *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1998), and see James Conant's

magnificent paper, "Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and Anscombe on Moral Unintelligibility" pp.250–300, in *Religion and Morality*, ed. D.Z. Phillips (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996). See also n.11, above.

13. For discussion of the crucially ambiguous concept of 'Satz' in *TLP*, see my and Rob Deans' "Nothing is Shown: A 'Resolute' Response to Mounce, Emiliani, Koethe and Vilhauer," in *Philosophical Investigations* 26 (3), 2003, pp.239–68. See also on this n.81 of Conant's "Elucidation and nonsense in Frege and Early Wittgenstein," in Cray and Read, *The New Wittgenstein*.

14. See his essay, "Elucidation and nonsense in Frege and Early Wittgenstein" (*op.cit.*).

15. For a re-reading of Berkeley as manifesting 'the realistic spirit,' see the Introductions to Diamond's *The Realistic Spirit*. For a re-reading of Hume in outline along somewhat similar lines, see my own contribution ("In closing: The new antagonists of 'the New Hume': on the relevance of Goodman and Wittgenstein to the New Hume debate") to my and Richman's edited collection, *The New Hume Debate* (London: Routledge, 2000), and see also Anne J. Jacobson's writings on him. For a Kant considerably greater than his canonical version, see the various relevant writings of James Conant and John McDowell. For a 'Wittgensteinian' Marx, see my paper, "Marx and Wittgenstein on Vampires and Parasites: A Critique of Capital and Metaphysics," *Marx and Wittgenstein: Knowledge, Morality and Politics*, eds. Gavin Kitching and Nigel Pleasants, (London; New York: Routledge, 2002). For Frege re-read as a therapeutic philosopher, see Chapter 1 of the present work (including the references therein to Kelly D. Jolley). In future work, I hope to write on Foucault too as an ally to Wittgenstein.

16. This becomes strikingly clear if one takes the trouble to read Ogden's correspondence with Wittgenstein over how to translate the *Tractatus* (See *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein to C.K. Ogden* (Oxford: Blackwell; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973, ed. G.H. von Wright)).

17. For Ryle's misappropriation of the *Tractatus*, see Tony Palmer's book, *Concept and Object*, London: Routledge, 1988.

18. For justification of these exegetical claims, see my "Throwing Away 'the Bed-rock'" (Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society 2005, vol. 105 (1), pp. 81–98), and also my *Liberatory Philosophy*, forthcoming with Phil Hutchinson. In these, I take on head on the views of some, hostile to Wittgenstein, who argue that "language-game," "grammar," and "form of life" end up as technical terms in the *PI*. Though I am the first to admit that some so-called followers of Wittgenstein practically treat them as such.

19. London: Penguin, 2003 (1888).

20. See the opening words (p.3) of Kaufman's editorial introduction to *GM* (New York: Vintage, 1969).

21. And I hasten to add that I am not suggesting in this chapter that there are no grounds for such interpretations. What I will argue is that Nietzsche's magnificently ambitious effort to overcome from the inside the will to truth is not only somewhat-absurd (but this isn't necessarily an *objection*, to transitional philosophy . . .) but also dangerous, an all-too-desperate remedy. I am not *advocating* it. I am mostly just trying to make it possible to *understand* it, or at least to make it possible to understand what it was trying to achieve.

22. Cf. e.g., Joseph Keeping's book review, of Daniel Ahern's *Nietzsche as Cultural Physician* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1995), "Nihilism and Physiology," www.ualberta.ca/~di/csh/csh11/Ahern.html

23. *GM* III, p.115.

24. *GM* III, p.116.

25. The word "noble" should already clue us into what I am arguing. Nietzsche's *own work* is at the culmination of this nobility.

26. *PI* 118.

27. Cf. *GM* II 24, the culmination of the 2nd essay:

“Is an ideal set up or destroyed here?” you might ask me . . . But have you ever asked yourselves properly how costly the setting up of every ideal on earth has been? How much reality always had to be vilified and misunderstood in the process, how many lies had to be sanctified, how much conscience had to be troubled, how much ‘god’ had to be sacrificed every time? If a shrine is to be set up, *a shrine has to be destroyed*: that is the law—show me an example where this does not apply! . . . [The] man of the future will redeem us not just from the ideal held up til now, but also from the things *which will have to arise from it*, from the great nausea, the will to nothingness, from nihilism, that stroke of midday and of great decision which makes the will free again, which gives earth its purpose and man his hope again, this Antichrist and anti-nihilist, this conqueror of God and of nothingness—he *must come one day* . . .

This is how Nietzsche sets one up for the subtle and devastating argument he will make in the essay immediately to follow. Furthermore, the structure of the second essay in the *Genealogy* is arguable already anticipative of—fundamentally the same as—that of the third. David Graeber argues this case convincingly at p.78–79 of his *Debt: The First 5000 Years*, (Brooklyn, Melville House, 2012). Graeber suggests that essay 2 of the *Genealogy* is a ‘lived’ reductio of the ‘common-sense’ about human nature prevalent in his time. That Nietzsche was already thus undermining the kind of standard bourgeois assumptions about humans as rational calculating machines that I criticized in Chapter 7, above.

28. GM III, p.118.

29. Nietzsche here appeals of course to the power of philosophical self-reflection; one must be able to engage in dialogue with and work on the self. One must face oneself with relentless honesty. Again, Wittgenstein would agree completely.

30. GM III, p.118.

31. “[A]rt, in which *lying* sanctifies itself and the *will to deception* has good conscience on its side, is much more fundamentally opposed to the ascetic ideal than science is: this was sensed instinctively by Plato, the greatest enemy of art Europe has yet produced. Plato *versus* Homer: that is complete, genuine antagonism.” (p.121, section 25 of GM III). But Nietzsche himself in his method is, as we shall shortly see, instead fired by *Plato’s* faith. He does not create pure art. He writes philosophy that forces one to face unpalatable truths, truths that Plato and Christianity, etc., have shied away from and denied.

32. This is the culmination of section 24. It is in fact a quote by Nietzsche himself from the great 5th book of his own *Gay Science* (New York: Vintage, 1974 (1887)). This passage is misinterpreted in a way very revealing of the general failure to understand Nietzsche hereabouts that I am highlighting in the present chapter by Bernard Williams, at a key moment (near the start, at p.14) of his *Truth and Truthfulness* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002). In a fascinating review of Williams’s book, Richard Rorty writes of Williams’ thinking here that Nietzsche is here avoiding (as Post-Modernists, etc., fail so to avoid) throwing out “the baby of intrinsically valuable truth with the Platonist bathwater.” (“To the sunlit uplands,” Richard Rorty, *London Review of Books*, 31 Oct. 2002, pp.13–15). But of course Williams has really got the wrong end of the stick, on my interpretation of Nietzsche. He correctly perceives that Nietzsche is determined to tie the intrinsic value and valuing of truth to a Platonic heritage, and dimly perceives the crucial point that Nietzsche is himself fully implicated in this; but he fails altogether (see p.18 of his book) to appreciate that Nietzsche intends for the baby and the bathwater both to be expelled, in the better hereafter that he (Nietzsche) is aiming to clear the ground for. The pursuit of truth come-what-may, Nietzsche thought, could, counter-intuitively, be the best and only route to the eventual (self-)destruction of truth. . . .

33. GM III, p.119.

34. It might be objected here that Nietzsche’s faith in truth is different, because conditional. And this objection might be supported by reference to Nietzsche’s re-

markable critique here of Copernicus, etc., as (essentially) risking lowering the value of humanity, by decentering us. But this objection seems to me inadequate, a dodge: I think it far more plausible to see Nietzsche as forcing us to face the emergent truth of the death of God, of the for-now-utterly ineradicable place of science in our lives: of, as I have said, and as Nietzsche himself says, a *purified*, more unconditional faith in truth and in its power. We bow down before truth, we godless anti-metaphysicians. . . .

35. Here I am using the Kaufman translation of *GM*, section 24, at p.151. In a footnote to this, Kaufman asks “Is Nietzsche referring to himself?” He answers in the negative, and fingers Overbeck, instead. I find this a grave failure of nerve. The “stoicism of the intellect” which Nietzsche highlights here is precisely what is present in his stoical insistence upon denying us the lie of God, no matter what the consequences, on the grounds of its being a lie. *We* knowers, *we* godless anti-metaphysicians, *our* fire comes from and results in just this.

36. *GM* III, p.120.

37. That is: In and through him as the implied author of this text. This text that impugns itself, and forces the reader, who wants to understand Nietzsche *and to realize his promise*, to ‘overcome’ it.

38. He writes, at the end of section 27: “what meaning does *our* being have, if it were not that that will to truth has become conscious of itself *as a problem* in us?” Yes—but still yet under the banner of truth. Forbidding itself *any* lie. Destroying the will the truth may be done by the will to truth; but, if it is, it will still be the will to truth, in its purest form, doing the destroying. Clearing the ground.

39. *Ecce Homo*, p.326 (London: Penguin, 1992).

40. In relation then to *Tractatus* 6.54: If you throw away the ladder after climbing it, does that leave you still up the ladder? Or do you collapse with the ladder? You would have to be standing somewhere new, to be not just back where you started, lying in a heap, with broken bones. You would have to be on a platform (or a cloud?) or something, able to survey what is below. (And the later Wittgenstein also uses metaphors of survey, of perspicuous overview. But these metaphors are precisely the dangers that he is warning of. This is why Sluga’s reading of ‘perspicuous presentation’ in his new book, *Wittgenstein* (Maiden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), is of such value; and why Hacker’s, and Johnston’s, reading of (as discussed in my and Hutchinson’s “Towards a Perspicuous Presentation of ‘Perspicuous Presentation,’” in *Philosophical Investigations* Vol. 31 (2), pp.141–60, April 2008) the same is profoundly dangerous.) Where is this alleged platform? Is its location describable?

What if the ladder were a long one in non-Euclidean space, or in Relativistic space where space is ‘curved’? One *might* then, even if one ‘literally’ (!) and not only ‘so to speak’ climbed up, end up at the foot of the ladder again after climbing it. Wouldn’t that be a T.S.Eliot-style result (I am thinking here of the famous close of his *Four Quartets*) that Wittgenstein himself would desire?

If you climb up a ladder ‘so to speak,’ do you climb *to* anywhere? (Or would it be better to say that you *grow* up the ladder—up the trellis—of this book? This metaphor seems indeed to work better—but that may be its danger! For part of the point about the ladder metaphor must surely be that it *itself* is also to be thrown away, as Conant and Diamond imply. . . .)

41. See Goldfarb’s essay in my and Lavery’s *Beyond the Tractatus Wars: The New Wittgensteinian Debate*, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2011.

42. By which I mean, as explicated further below: that their texts are not intended as ‘textbooks.’ They do not in that sense have a potential universal direct application. They are rather only for those who want to try to work with and through them, *for themselves*.

43. If this is right, then the concept of truth for Nietzsche should be treated similarly to the concept of ‘substantial nonsense’ for Wittgenstein.

44. Treating *The Will to Power* (New York: Vintage, 1968)—which, after all, was an unpublished collection of notes—as the key to interpreting *The Genealogy of Morals* is at best rather like treating Wittgenstein’s *Notebooks 1914–1916* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004),

as the key to interpreting his published work, the *Tractatus*. A very dubious and potentially misleading exercise—see my review of David Stern’s first book, *Wittgenstein: Mind and Language*, that does this, in the *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 35:1 (1997), p151. (Somewhat likewise, *Ecce Homo*—a marvelous work in its way, but a work of irony and grandiosity and more besides—is not a simple key to how to read what came before. The devastatingly subtle and all-pervasive ground-clearing philosophy of Nietzsche as expressed in the third essay of the *Genealogy* is not gainsaid by occasional moments of apparently greater ‘directness’ in the lovely breezy pages of *Ecce Homo*.)

45. *The Will to Power*, p.3.

46. Kaufman’s Introduction to *GM*, p.12. (Just as we are all victims of philosophical delusion, for Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein does not crudely imagine himself free of the delusions he aims to diagnose: on the contrary. Some ‘Wittgensteinians,’ unfortunately, ‘forget’ this point.)

47. For the latter point, see my “‘The real philosophical discovery’: A reply to Jolley’s ‘Philosophical Investigations 133: Wittgenstein and the End of Philosophy?’” *Philosophical Investigations*, 18 (4), pp. 362–69, October 1995.

48. *GM III*, p.128.

49. Nietzsche’s philosophy involves, we might suggest, elucidations in roughly Wittgenstein’s sense of this word. This is very different from any standard argument structure. For again: What follows explains what comes before, *not vice versa*.

50. In future work, I hope to show how actually even the standard *reductio ad absurdum* form is misunderstood virtually whenever it is applied in philosophy.

51. Nietzsche’s ‘affirmative’—and paradoxical—philosophy of love and science is summed up in the marvellous notion of ‘the gay science’ itself. Crucially, Nietzsche argues that there is no such thing as presuppositionless knowing, more powerfully than even James or Kuhn. This puts faith and passion back into (our concept of) science—at the cost of rendering science asceticistic and nihilistic in Nietzsche’s special, broad sense of those words. For, as I have followed Nietzsche in stressing, Science is not beyond faith, and this, not because scientists have faith in themselves—but rather “*they still have faith in truth.*” (*GM*, Kaufman’s edition, Essay II, Section 24; p.150) That science (and human inquiry in general) has yet to recognize this leaves it wanting, for Nietzsche, in the court of intellectual conscience: for it has not yet drawn the conclusion against itself that it should do, if it were ‘hard’ (*sic.*) and conscientious and ‘truthful’ enough to . . . put all will to truth into doubt, as Nietzsche himself attempts to begin to, while recognizing that he himself, paradoxically, remains as yet in fact the purest representative that has yet been produced . . . of the ascetic ideal! For he is trying honestly and truthfully to face the horrifying fact of the consequences of the will to truth, the passion for truth above everything else. . . .

52. As the Assassins did, as cited in section 24 of the 3rd essay of the *GM* (as cited above).

53. Nietzsche is nihilism, perhaps, in the sense that one of his semi-‘heroes,’ Napoleon, also was when he said of himself, “I am the Revolution.” He is (allegedly, aspirationally) its essence—not (just) its antithesis . . . (We should of course note that there is an important distinction in relation to the *Tractatus* between its author and its meaning. We can understand its author’s intention in writing it, says Wittgenstein, *by* understanding its necessary lack of meaning. Some similar distinction should be kept in mind *vis-à-vis* Nietzsche: That his method is, I am arguing, paradoxical, does not somehow, strictly speaking, make him as a person paradoxical (whatever exactly that would mean).)

54. Here there is once more of course a strong and direct connection with *TLP*. Wittgenstein, in taking the so-called picture theory to its ultimate conclusion, is holding up a mirror to those in the grip of philosophical nonsense in order to reveal it for what it is. He is in fact in the whole of the *Tractatus* holding up a mirror to us, therapeutically (and the picturing picture is in this crucial regard itself a therapeutic device, one of several). He says something intriguingly along these lines absolutely

explicitly in *Culture and Value* (revised edition; p. 25 (quote comes originally from MS 112 p.225, and was composed on 22 Nov. 1931)):

I must be nothing more than the mirror in which my reader sees his own thinking with all its deformities and with this assistance can set it in order."

55. There is a connection here in this paragraph I think with Winch's argument from the opening onward of his great paper, "Persuasion" (*Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. 17, 1, pp.123–37, September 1992), a connection which in future work I would like to explore. This connection is perhaps already evident from Chapter 9, above. (Cf. in this connection also n.54, above.)

56. I owe this thought to Kelley Dean Jolley.

57. *PI*, p.x. Preceding this in the Preface, we have the following:

[T]he essential thing [about his book as Wittgenstein envisaged it] was that the thoughts should proceed from one subject to another in a natural order and without breaks. // After several unsuccessful attempts to weld my results together into such a whole, I realised that I should never succeed. The best that I could write would never be more than philosophical remarks; my thoughts were soon crippled if I tried to force them on in any single direction against their natural inclination.—*And this was, of course, connected with the very nature of the investigation.* For this compels us to travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction . . . // It is not impossible that it should fall to the lot of this work, in its poverty and in the darkness of this time, to bring light into one brain or another—but, of course, it is not likely. (*PI* ix-x; emphasis mine).

The early part of this quotation illustrates again how very much Wittgenstein is likely to be misconstrued if one takes him—as have so many, including Waismann, Pears, C.McGinn, and even Hacker (in practice)—to be writing philosophy in a form which can be 'translated' successfully into a style radically other than his own. For more detail on the view of style and philosophy which I am here endorsing, see pp.3–4 of A. Nehamas's *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault*.

58. P.27 of the Ogden edition (London: Routledge, Kegan, Paul, 1922; transl. Ogden).

59. I am thinking here of Wittgenstein's lovely neologism, 'luftgebaude,' in *PI* 118, that above we quoted instead the well-known Anscombe translation of.

60. Cf. *Culture and Value* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1980 (Transl. Winch; post-humous)), p.77 (where you will find a lovely quote that comes originally from Wittgenstein's MS 137 p.134).

61. One might even seek to say something like this: Nietzsche, like Jesus Christ, and like Socrates, might be thought of as a sacrifice. A willing lamb, a bridge to something else that sacrifices itself in the process. This thought should be compared with Nietzsche's authored strategy from the very opening words of his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Penguin Books, Ltd., 1974 (1883–1885)).

62. The scare-quotes may remind us once more of what was of course focal in Chapter 8: the *available* danger of over-reading Nietzsche, as a proto-Nazi. Nietzsche himself did not guard nearly sufficiently against this danger. He did not, that is, take precautions against being read as thinking that certain human tendencies were almost literally diseases against which surgical measures with lethal consequences might be justified. . . .

63. Cf. Chapter 9, above, where we considered the possibility of someone seeking to think that there was absolutely nothing at all in themselves outside of filthiness (or, perhaps, as it might be: of nothingness?). It can now be seen how close the subject-matters of Chapters 9 and 10 run alongside each other. For some of the conclusions that in Chapter 9 I applied against over-inclusive self-judgements might of course also be argued to apply to Nietzsche, here. . . .

64. Once again, I hasten to point out that I am not committing myself to regarding what Nietzsche actually wants as valuable. I share his distaste for moralizing, but not his aspiration to overcome truth and morality altogether. I believe those aspirations to be in considerable part either undesirable or unachievable (cf. also n.21, above). I have sought in the present chapter to *interpret* his work, believing as I do that extant interpretations clearly fail to do its aim justice. But, largely unlike in the case of Wittgenstein, if I were Nietzsche, I would also have *changed* his work. . . .

65. Thanks to all those who have helped with my thinking in the very long gestation of this chapter, including most recently Craig Taylor.

DRAFT

ELEVEN

Leaving Things As It Is (sic.): Philosophy and Life 'After' Wittgenstein and Zen

"My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak *throw away the ladder*, after he has climbed up on it.) // He must *overcome* these propositions . . ." —Wittgenstein, *Tractatus* 6.54 (my emphasis).

"The most important point is to establish yourself in a true sense, without establishing yourself on delusion. And yet we cannot live or practice without delusion. Delusion is necessary, but delusion is not something on which you can establish yourself. It is like a stepladder. Without it you can't climb up, but *you don't stay on the stepladder*." —Shunryu Suzuki, *Not always so: practising the true spirit of Zen*, p.41¹ (my emphasis).

What is Wittgenstein's method in philosophy? *Throughout* his writing, it is, I believe: to show the fly the way out of the fly bottle. Or, as it was put in the Introduction to *The New Wittgenstein*: "Wittgenstein's primary aim in philosophy is . . . a *therapeutic* one."² (This way of understanding Wittgenstein's work, that I have on a number of occasions leant on or manifested in the present work, is becoming increasingly popular, although it remains controversial especially with regard to his early writing, in some quarters. Some, such as Beth Savickey, have claimed that Wittgenstein's notion of 'therapy' is not central to his philosophical method, and have even claimed that other metaphors that Wittgenstein uses, such as that philosophy is like gardening, might be just as (or as little) important. My response to such claims would begin with the following observation: Wittgenstein famously described himself as a "disciple" of

Freud. Is it even a starter, even remotely plausible, that he might have described himself as a disciple of Alan Titchmarsh, Geoffrey Smith, Charlie Dimmock, or whoever your favourite guru of gardening is? (Or, if you are concerned that these names are too contemporary, then substitute instead great gardeners of the past, more from Wittgenstein's era: names such as 'Capability' Brown, William Robinson, or Vita Sackville-West. The moral of the comparison will remain, I think, the same, and suggests a basic flaw in Savickey's thought hereabouts.)

How can his celebrated *Tractatus* be read this way? As was discussed in Chapter 10, the *Tractatus* is usually taken, rather, as a metaphysical theory or account that cannot account for itself. But look at the epigraph above from Wittgenstein. The ladder is to be climbed up and *thrown away* (or *overcome*). The ladder—on the account Wittgenstein offers—is nonsensical.³ What can be understood of nonsense? What can be deduced from nonsense? Nothing. Indeed, nonsense *is* nothing; it is only nothing that masquerades as something. It deludes you into thinking that it is something. You can establish nothing on such delusions.

The ladder, then, never was an account. And the 'propositions,' the *Sätze*, of which it appeared to consist? *They never really were* (such). To understand Wittgenstein's point in producing such a puzzling text, one must overcome those 'propositions'; wrestle them down to the ground—and realize that one was wrestling only specters. As Zen Buddhism speaks of a gateless gate through which one must pass, so one might say here that this is a ladderless ladder indeed. The Preface to the *Tractatus* intimated that all this would be so:

[This] book will . . . draw a limit to thinking, *or rather—not to thinking*, but to the expression of thoughts; for, in order to draw a limit to thinking we should have to be able to think both sides of this limit (we should therefore have to be able to think what cannot be thought). // The limit can, therefore, only be drawn in language and *what lies on the other side of the limit will be simply nonsense*.⁴

Only the *appearance* of a ladder will be generated. Wittgenstein is not gesturing at ineffable truths, nor speaking 'contradictory truths.' He is simply 'returning' us to ourselves, to the full power of (the kind of thing that Suzuki-Roshi calls) our big—our non-finite—mind. But one will not be returned if one attaches to any of Wittgenstein's words. To *any* of his words—including these very 'framing' remarks to his text.

We might say: You haven't *learnt* anything, when you've read the text while 'understanding' Wittgenstein's point in writing it. You haven't come away with any doctrines—not even ineffable ones. You haven't arrived anywhere new. You haven't come anywhere or gone anywhere. (This might be,⁵ in its full flowering in Wittgenstein, an unprecedented method of philosophy—at least in Western philosophy. . . .)

Wittgenstein has 'deluded' you into giving up your metaphysical delusions. The therapy of the *Tractatus* is: not solving problems, but enabling you to overcome the sense that you had any problems you needed to solve. And the method used to undertake this tricky task? Engaging that problem-solving energy in a self-defeating task. Mobilizing the ego-energy⁶ of philosophy, including its long traditions (most notably Kantianism and empiricism, both finding their demise in the *Tractatus*, as, Wittgenstein believed, does 'the old logic' of Russell and Frege⁷). Engaging you right here, right now, while you're trying to do philosophy. Deluding you for a while into thinking that you've been granted a workable philosophical theory, or at least a theory to end all theory. The delusion of a theory that the *Tractatus* generates as it returns you to yourself (and to your ground in and with others and language) is a delusion that you don't stand upon, and that you don't stay upon. Rather, you find yourself standing on the earth, and so perhaps at last (at least for a while) seeing the world aright.

Shunryu Suzuki remarks, "Real enlightenment is always with you, so there is no need for you to stick to it or even to think about it. Because it is always with you, difficulty itself is enlightenment. Your busy life is enlightened activity. That is true enlightenment."⁸ The remark "Your busy life [itself] is enlightened activity" could be closely compared with a remark that (as I have argued elsewhere⁹) the early Wittgenstein might have made: that our everyday language itself is '*Begriffsschrift*.'¹⁰ (We should note in this connection that *Tractatus* 5.5563, a much-neglected passage clearly indicating how Wittgenstein's early philosophy closely anticipates his later work, reads, "All propositions of our colloquial language are actually, just as they are, logically completely in order. (Our problems are not abstract but perhaps the most concrete that there are.)")

When you read Wittgenstein's completely surprising book while understanding what turns out to be its author's purpose in writing it, you have learnt nothing.¹¹ And if you have really learnt from the (experience of engaging with this koan of a) book, you will not claim to have learnt anything from it. You will not 'stick' to it—you will not *attach* to it—nor even to the 'enlightenment' it can yield. What you may have learnt is something about yourself and perhaps others: namely, something about (y)our susceptibility to be systematically confused by certain thoughts. Or, better: something about the way we/you are inclined to be deluded by certain kinds of strings of words. *This is what Wittgenstein thought that philosophy is*—at least, philosophy practiced according to what Wittgenstein would later call "our method."

Philosophy, for Wittgenstein, is: not trying to change the way that one thinks. But: *Letting* oneself think the way one does. Accepting that one is tempted to think in all these ways; noting it. Letting—watching—that same thinking come fully to consciousness, such that when one sees it all clearly some of it will in turn no longer appeal to one and will wither.

Not telling you to shut up about anything, not policing the bounds of sense with a policy of preventing word-crime, let alone thought-crime. “Whereof we cannot speak, thereof we must remain silent,” ends *Tractatus*.¹² Well, of course. When we are thus silent, we are not silent *about* anything. We are just not “gassing” anymore.¹³ Rather, roughly: we use language as (what Buddhists term) a skillful means, or not at all.

In particular, Wittgenstein is not telling you that you’re not allowed to say certain things because they disobey the alleged ‘rules of our language.’ On the contrary: say what you’d like. Give voice to what it is that you incline toward saying. It is a complete misunderstanding of Wittgenstein, early or late, to see him as a ‘language-policeman.’ Wittgenstein was no positivist. Compare the following important remark, from *Culture and Value*: “Don’t, for heaven’s sake, be afraid of talking nonsense! Only don’t fail to pay attention to your nonsense.”^{14 15}

Again: what Wittgenstein was about was coming to know one’s way about the temptations one suffers to say things that one will come to see as not saying anything at all. Coming to know, coming to terms with, the temptations you are subject to—and thus being liberated from them.

Thus, as anticipated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau,¹⁶ and as in meditation (as will be explicated below), *the remedy is in the evil*. The change that Wittgenstein wants to bring about is a change that is brought about not by repressing or suppressing a part of yourself or some part of your thoughts, but by allowing it to full consciousness:¹⁷ by accepting that you really do have this inclination—and neither repressing it nor attaching to it. This is the real difficulty of philosophy: a difficulty of the will, not of the intellect. One must have the ‘willpower’ (an endlessly meta-willpower; ‘meta,’ because the temptation to relapse into willful intellectualism recurs at every level¹⁸) to suspend one’s will, to allow one’s mind to cure itself.

It is a change that is not brought about by *explaining* anything, but simply by telling it / observing it as it is. As Wittgenstein famously puts it in *Philosophical Investigations*,¹⁹ at PI 124: “Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it . . . *It leaves everything as it is.*” Likewise PI 128, which urges that philosophy, contra popular belief, has nothing to do with advancing controversial theses or dogmas. It is not by *suppressing* nonsense that one follows Wittgenstein but, to the contrary, by marshaling and above all *allowing* one’s very inclinations to nonsense.

As noted above, it is not only the *Tractatus* that demonstrates Wittgenstein’s ‘therapeutic’ method, the method of disclosing nonsense as what it is. As I have sought to demonstrate and exemplify in the present work, I am a ‘New Wittgensteinian,’²⁰ a follower of Cora Diamond and James Conant, and I believe that their reading of the *Tractatus*, as a resolutely therapeutic work, not a work of metaphysics, can be applied to the spirit

of Wittgenstein's work *throughout* his life. For the remainder of this chapter, I attempt briefly to display how.²¹

In what now follows, I have taken some of the crucial closing portions of Diamond's founding 'New Wittgensteinian' paper, "Throwing away the ladder: How to read the *Tractatus*,"²² and just slightly re-written them. I have replaced elements of the *Tractatus* discussions with roughly symmetrical elements of a key *Investigations* discussion (the famous discussion of meaning in relation to use). It seems to me that the result stands up pretty well, and is illuminating (and poses thereby some interesting difficulties for a variety of the (of course very various) 'old Wittgensteinians,' who would I think be tempted to say one or more of the things that I put into question, below).

Wittgenstein, I claim, says, roughly, that we cannot say "Meaning is use."²³ How so? Well, in *PI* 124–8 he indicates that there could be no such things as philosophical theses. Everyone would agree with them, as trivialities—and that is not what one wants a thesis to be. One wants it to be something troubling, controversial—something that *says* something. But his remarks do not say anything. He makes no claims. He has no opinions.²⁴ So, when he says that we cannot assert philosophical theses, that we cannot have philosophical opinions, when he thereby says that we cannot assert "Meaning is use," he does not mean "Meaning is use, all right, only *that it is* has to get expressed another way." That the sentence means nothing at all and is not illegitimate for any other reason, we do not see. We are so convinced that we understand what we are trying to say that we see only the two possibilities: *it* is sayable (positivism/anti-realism), *it* is not sayable (ineffabilism). But Wittgenstein's aim is to allow us to see that there is no 'it.'²⁵

It's not that one cannot assign a meaning to "Meaning is use." Of course one can. It is that one has strong grounds for thinking that no assignment of meaning (to "Meaning is use") will be lastingly satisfying to one.²⁶ No assignment of meaning which stops us 'hovering,' which rids us of a systematic unclarity about what we are trying to do with these words, will seem to have expressed what we took ourselves to be aiming to express. No assignment of meaning will do for us what we want a philosophical thesis to do.

And so you see that there is no coherent understanding to be reached of what you wanted to say. It dissolves: you are left with the sentence-structure "Meaning is use" (or "What has to be accepted, the given, is . . . forms of life"²⁷ ; or what-have-you) standing there, as it were, innocently meaning nothing at all, not any longer thought of as illegitimate because of a violation of the principles of what can be put into words and what goes beyond them. Really to grasp that what you were trying to say shows itself in language is to cease to think of it as an inexpressible content: that which you were trying to say.²⁸

Take Wittgenstein's remark that "I must speak the language of every day. Is this language somehow too coarse and material for what we want to say? *Then how is another one to be constructed?* And how strange that we should be able to do anything at all with the one we have!"²⁹ Clearly, there is a sense in which Wittgenstein here is denying the intelligibility of anything which would justly be called a non-everyday-language.

But then this remark is itself ironically self-destructive. It has the form, the syntactic form, of "There is only this sort of thing," i.e., it uses the linguistic forms in which we say that there are only thises rather than thises and thats.³⁰ It belongs to its syntax that it itself says something the other side of which can be represented too. If there is only squiggledly wiggle, the language allows wiggles that are not squiggledly as well. But whatever Wittgenstein's remark aims to do for us, it is not to place the necessity and centrality of everyday language in opposition to an intelligible opposite. It is not that this opposite has a sense that is nonsensical. It does not convey to us the philosophical but unsayable fact that there is only everyday language not genuinely supra-everyday language. In so far as we grasp what Wittgenstein aims at, we see that the sentence-forms he uses come apart from his philosophical aim. If he succeeds, we shall not imagine everyday language or forms of life or uses as things, as entities, at all. And we shall not imagine the sentence that "[T]he given, is forms of life," or "Meaning is use" as informing us of anything, or even as instructing us to do something rather than an intelligible other thing. We throw away the sentences about "forms of life," and even about "use," and about "language-games"; they really are, at the end, entirely empty. But we shall be aware at the end that when we go in for philosophical thinking, the characteristic form of such thought is precisely that *the sentence-forms we use come apart from what we have taken to be our aims.* Not because we have chosen the wrong forms.³¹

Diamond's paper is called "Throwing away the ladder." She is trying to explain how Wittgenstein is really serious at the end of *Tractatus* in wanting you to throw away / overcome his words. What the above 'transliteration' shows is what I would want to mean by 'throwing away (e.g.,) "the bedrock"'—by doing the same, *vis-à-vis* Wittgenstein's later work, as Diamond does *vis-à-vis* his early work. For what Wittgenstein is famously inclined to say in *PI* 217 ("If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: 'This is simply what I do.'") is a perfectly fine thing to say—in certain very particular circumstances. But it would be a mistake to think that anything can be hung or built on it.³² As it would be a mistake to think that it can or even should *force* someone to change their ways, to roll over and acquiesce in a 'practice-based account' of social life, or whatever.³³ No. *PI* 217 is itself no more than a transitional move in a dialectic, an effort to persuade a reader to give up *absurd* ambitions—e.g., for a foundation to practice. Justifications come to an end somewhere, we will say to such a

person. And there are probably many more things to say before they are persuaded. (And we are not in possession of truths which make it essential or rationally necessary that they be persuaded. This implies: that part of the responsibility of the philosopher, including (and in fact above all) the 'therapeutic' philosopher, is to engage in a genuine dialogue with someone whom one is hoping to explain something to. . . . The criterion of the dialogue being genuine is in part this: that one is ready oneself to be persuaded away from one's preconceptions. Wittgensteinian therapy is not like most forms of psychotherapy or psychoanalysis. It is non-hierarchical, a conversation between equals.³⁴ It is corrupted the moment one is convinced of one's own rectitude, and (therefore) single-mindedly trying to cure the other. Such cures can go both ways; a Wittgensteinian who has ceased to practice therapy on herself, and who is certain of her prescriptions for others, is no Wittgensteinian.³⁵)

Compare once more the wonderful closing sentences of Ed Witherspoon's essay, "Conceptions of nonsense in Carnap and Wittgenstein":³⁶

"Applying Wittgenstein's conception of nonsense . . . requires an intense engagement with the target of criticism; an examination of the words alone is not enough. When Wittgenstein criticizes an utterance as nonsensical, he aims to expose, *not a defect in the words themselves*, but a confusion in the speaker's relation to her words—a confusion that is manifested in the speaker's failure to specify a meaning for them."³⁷

There is nothing wrong with words like "bedrock" or terms like "form of life"; but if, as the Buddhists would put it, we 'attach' to them, we will be lost. We need thoroughly to overcome our attachment to them. To put the point just slightly 'poetically': we need to throw away these words, if we feel like holding onto them, having thrown away all metaphysics by means of them. We need to overcome these words,³⁸ if we are to truly follow Wittgenstein. Most of Wittgenstein's 'followers,' regrettably, *hold onto* his words, and in effect turn them into technical terms that they are attached to in exactly the sense I have just criticized.³⁹

Our problem—the underlying reason for instance why the jargonization even of Wittgenstein is such a strong trend, even though it was the one thing above all that Wittgenstein feared would happen to his work, and wanted to avoid⁴⁰ —is, as already suggested earlier in the present chapter, at bottom one of will and lived attitude, not one of carrying out a once-and-for-all intellectual achievement or discovery. Our problem is one of finding a way of responding to good efforts at philosophical therapy which does not turn such efforts, as one always can turn them if one is so minded, into the statement of a 'position' or 'view' or opinion, into a reified philosophical object . . . and yet which does not, in the course of being impressed or persuaded by the attempt at aspect-switching involved in the therapeutic manoeuvre, attach to the manoeuvre itself. There are deep lessons to learn, I think, from mystical spiritualities and

philosophies, perhaps especially from Zen, on the question of how in practical terms to do what Wittgenstein urges. Buddhist traditions such as Zen⁴¹ have a long tradition of ‘conquering’ the will, of ‘conquering’ our desires—not by repressing them, nor by giving in to one’s desire to fight against them, but rather by simply letting them be, and observing them until they die back of their own accord. And Zen, perhaps especially among Buddhisms, has a venerable tradition too of providing skillful/practical means of attaining insight *without becoming attached to those means*. A challenge for those impressed with Wittgenstein’s philosophizing is to find ways of doing the same, without being committed to the insights attained being ineffable truths. As the Buddhists might put it: if you see a Wittgensteinian on the road to enlightenment, kill him.⁴² ‘Our’ task as Wittgensteinians, let us not forget, is one of leaving everything as it is. The true insight is the ‘returning’ to the ordinary. An ordinary which includes, of course, all the strivings for the extraordinary without which life might well be tedious or inhuman. . . .

When Wittgensteinian philosophy really works then, as with Pyrrhonian skepticism (see Chapter 10, above), the cure is expelled with the disease, the purgative with the purge. One doesn’t keep holding onto—attaching to—“everyday” or “bedrock” or whatever. One overcomes these terms, too. That is, just insofar as these terms risk continuing to mislead one, they need to be ‘thrown away.’ (Of course, if no one is misled by some particular use of them, in that sense they are just fine. In this sense ‘therapy’ is *always* retail, rather than wholesale, and always pragmatic, rather than dogmatic.) The work of a concept like “form of life” or “the bedrock” in Wittgenstein is probably only done *when* one in turn throws it away.

Even very well-chosen words will tend to ‘ossify,’ over time; the process of purifying oneself of attachments to particular terms is one which a wise philosopher will continually pursue *vis-à-vis* their own work, as Wittgenstein himself did, as we ‘New Wittgensteinians’ need to do, as Buddhism has very long experience of doing. The words in this book, the words in this chapter, these very words, are no exception. Even if they are well-chosen, and well-placed, there can be no such thing as a guarantee against their being misunderstood, against their seeming to state a position, or seeming to be *the* liberating words. As soon as one thinks one has found *the* liberating words, at least for oneself, one is probably again in delusion.

What is delusion?: Let us see what Zen Roshi Shunryu Suzuki has got to say about this:

Dogen-zenji said, “You should establish your practice in your delusion.” Even though you think you are in delusion there is your pure mind. So, if you realize the pure mind in your delusion that is practice. If you have the pure mind, the essential mind, in your delusion—delu-

sion will vanish. It cannot stay when you say, this is delusion. He will be very much ashamed of it. He will run away. So you should establish your practice in your delusion. To have delusion is practice. . . . So you will attain enlightenment before you realize it. Even though you do not realize it, you have it. So, when you say 'This is delusion' that is enlightenment. But when you try to expel the delusion it will stay and your mind will become busier and busier to cope with the delusion you have. That is not so good.

Just say, 'this is delusion.' That is enough and don't be bothered by it—'oh, this is just delusion.' When you see delusion you have your true mind—calm, peaceful mind. When you start to cope with it you will be involved in delusion. So, when you sit, whether you attain enlightenment or not—just to sit is enough. When you try to attain enlightenment, then you have a big burden in your mind. So your mind will not be clear enough to see things as they are.⁴³

What then is Zen Buddhism? It is not a doctrine or a dogma. It is more of a way, a practice. Let's say: in the Rinzai school of Zen Buddhism, it is the attainment of 'enlightenment' through dwelling on koans until the power of one's ego-intellect is 'broken' by them and the mind flows; in the Soto school (of which Shunryu Suzuki was a great practitioner), just sitting ('*shikantaza*') until, through meditation, the same goal is attained. Why is it so hard? Because the overwhelming temptation is *to try to achieve the goal*.⁴⁴ This will make one impatient with the present moment. Whereas in truth the 'goal' is precisely to be at ease in and with the present moment. . . . The skillful means of Zen are actually already the goal, 'surreptitiously.' But this leads to the grave danger that one will *attach* to those means.

This also further explains why the route taken in Zen must be 'indirect'; why the practitioner has to be 'deceived' into the truth.⁴⁵ There could not possibly be any such truth as one imagines there is in the 'direct' route. For what one has to be cured of is exactly the temptation to think that there is anything, even anything unstatable/ineffable, which is the truth of Buddhism, the truth of life. The means *are* the end—but one must not attach to the means (either).

The deep similarities to a vital minority tradition in Western philosophy, a tradition at whose culmination arguably stands Wittgenstein, are very evident. Why have they been so little seen, so rarely perspicuously presented? Why has the extreme closeness of Wittgenstein and Zen not been widely understood and practiced?

Wittgenstein's method is widely misunderstood, including by most of his 'followers.' The most famous scholar of Wittgenstein alive today is perhaps Peter Hacker. In his well-known attack on the 'New Wittgensteinians,' Hacker repeatedly ridicules the suggestion that Wittgenstein's method is akin to that of Zen; e.g.,: "It is a mistake to suppose that [the *Tractatus*] is a work consisting of transitional nonsenses culminating in

wholesale repudiation, or a work of Kierkegaardian irony or of a Zen-like dialectic."⁴⁶ Every claim in this sentence (and in others like it in Hacker's text) seems to me mistaken:

James Conant has argued beautifully to the effect that the *Tractatus* (and I would add—only in more piecemeal fashion—Wittgenstein's later writing) is precisely a work of Kierkegaardian irony, which treats nothing so gently as the delusions in one's readers) that it is working to overcome (and the delusions in oneself—though, with regard to these, one invariably needs the help of others; at the very least, of textual-others. For a delusion in oneself that one recognizes is no deep delusion, and so the task of delusion-recognition cannot often be done truly by oneself; this is a central reason that one *requires* the help of others, in philosophy as in any sensible religion or mysticism).

As for Zen: I think, as will now be evident, that just how extraordinarily close Wittgenstein is to Zen has not been sufficiently rendered. Wittgenstein *does*, I submit, as Hacker denies, write "in a spirit of Kierkegaardian irony [and] in the manner of a Zen master."⁴⁷ He is precisely a practitioner of a kind of "Zen pedagogy."⁴⁸ Zen and Wittgenstein may be two, but they are also one. . . .

If Hacker knew Zen better, he would perhaps not fail to notice the extremely subtle logical thought-processes involved in examples such as the following, from Shunryu Suzuki: "You stick to naturalness too much. When you stick to it, it is not natural anymore."⁴⁹ He would not then be so inclined to treat the category of Zen as a category of near-ridicule, as if Zen were merely a kind of irrationalism. If Hacker understood more of Zen, as presented here, he might not think it so risible to think of Zen as akin to Wittgenstein.

I would also argue that this is true of other Wittgensteinians' understandings of Zen. Some Wittgensteinians have tried to take the potential comparison more seriously, and have written thoughtfully and at greater length about the possible parallels, before (in most cases) coming down on the negative. But the fundamental problem remains the same: they tend not to understand Wittgenstein adequately, and to have too narrow a diet of examples of Zen. For instance, D. Z. Phillips' acute piece, "On Wanting to Compare Wittgenstein and Zen,"⁵⁰ rightly critiques Canfield⁵¹ for making Zen and Wittgenstein seem just a bit too much like theories. Phillips' own piece has as its 'killer' blow against the aligning of Wittgenstein and Zen the claim that Zen, unlike Wittgenstein, wants to change our lives, our ways of being:

[T]he distinction which has to be drawn between 'just doing' in Zen and 'just doing' in Wittgenstein [is that] 'just being angry' or 'just cursing' could not be instances of 'just doing' in Zen, whereas that is precisely what they are in Wittgenstein. 'Cursing' appears in Wittgenstein's list of language-games.⁵² A confused language-game, given Wittgenstein's use of the term, is a self-contradiction. Yet the cursing



DRAFT

Leaving Things As It Is (sic.): Philosophy and Life 'After' Wittgenstein and Zen 239

boatman [in a Chuang Tzu story under discussion in Phillips's piece] is said to face occupancy which must be emptied, a confusion of soul, which he is exhorted to rid himself of. Zen would say the same of anger. Yet, in Wittgenstein, anger is an instance of 'just doing' (see "Remarks on Frazer's *The Golden Bough*"). The lover does not smash the portrait of his beloved in order to express his anger. This is the form his anger takes. It is an instance of 'just doing,' but not one which Zen would recognise as 'just doing.'⁵³

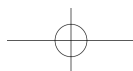
There are a number of problems with this passage. Let me focus on just the following two (symmetrical) problems:

(1) Phillips is trying to argue that Wittgenstein only 'contemplates' and does not seek to change.⁵⁴ But I have suggested in this book that Wittgenstein was passionately interested in contributing—*indirectly*—to a *fundamental change in Western civilization*. He wanted us to overcome scientism, and deeper still, to find ways of overcoming delusional habits of mind that are to some large extent an inevitable consequence of the flowering of reason and language, of our whole deeply complicated form of life. Dis-eases of our humanity. Sure, Wittgenstein would not necessarily *qua* philosopher want us to rid ourselves of anger; but then, no more would Zen (see (2) below), unless we transform our understanding of what such 'ridding' involves into a genuinely 'meditative' one, along the lines broadly intimated above. But he *would* very much welcome, I think, an almost unimaginably huge change in form of life such that there were rather fewer *occasions* for anger (cf. Chapters 8 and 10, above), and such that anger when it still emerged would be neither dishonestly pretended away nor attached to. What he wanted above all was a change in way of life that would render his philosophy henceforth superfluous.

(2) Phillips does not seem to understand the extent to which Zen can allow such things as cursing and anger. If these are in some sense 'ideally' to be rid of, they are nevertheless not to be wished away or suppressed. The method of taking care of them is fundamentally different from that: indeed, to use a word which Phillips liked, the method is *contemplative*, in much the same way that Wittgensteinian contemplation is intended to persuade one that where one is or wants to be in philosophy (e.g., Cantor's 'paradise' of infinities) is not actually where one is or wants to be. Consider the following couple of instances of Zen, which are particularly hard to reconcile with Phillips' characterization:

(i) Here is S. Suzuki again:

The Buddhist way is to try hard to let go of . . . emotional discrimination of good and bad, to let go of our prejudices, and to see things-as-it-is. // When I say to see things-as-it-is, what I mean is to practice hard with our desires—*not to get rid of desires*, but to take them into account . . . We must include our desires as one of the many factors in order to see things-as-it-is.⁵⁵



(ii) And here is his great follower, Katagiri-Roshi:

Zazen is not about destroying our thoughts or doing away with our subjective points of view . . . // If you believe zazen is a means to an end, then it is easy for you to use zazen like a raft to reach the other shore. // . . . Sometimes people think they should carry their zazen around with them after reaching the other shore. But if you do that, you should know you haven't actually reached the other shore. You have just come up on a sandbar somewhere in the middle of the river. *Desires are endless*, and if you look carefully, you will see you are still caught by them. // . . . This is just how most of us are confused. We don't appreciate the fact that desires are endless. We have to come to realize that there is nothing to get into our hands, and that zazen is not a vehicle, not a means.⁵⁶

These quotations seem to me to indicate clearly that Zen can perfectly well accept (and work with) desires such as those that are expressed in/by anger, and does not compulsively need to deny or eliminate it/them; i.e., 'just doing' *could* under some circumstances include (say) 'just cursing.' So much, then, for Phillips.

Now, it might nevertheless be objected that, even if we leave aside the misunderstandings of a Phillips or a Hacker, nevertheless, Buddhism doesn't have the same positive orientation as Wittgenstein does towards 'ordinary language.' But,⁵⁷ I do not believe that *Wittgenstein* does have the special reverence for ordinary as opposed to other 'kinds' of language that he is often alleged to have. (This is one respect in which 'the New Wittgenstein'—the 'therapeutic' interpretation of Wittgenstein laid out above—moves decisively beyond (at least the ordinary understanding of⁵⁸) 'ordinary language philosophy,' which in this respect is akin to Hackerian Wittgensteinianism, with its undue respect for 'grammar' as a grid of rules which must be obeyed.)

Let us tarry a little longer with the objection, which might be continued as follows: an Indian Madhyamaka like Candrakirti, for example, deeply values ordinary life, and advocates 'returning' to what the world accepts (*lokaprasiddha*), but doesn't 'return' to it via a diagnosis of how philosophers go astray through being bewitched by strange views on language. The culprit for him is not confusion about language usage, but is "reification" (*satyabhimana*, *bden 'dzin*), i.e., grasping things as *being* truly thus and so. This reification is *not* just a philosopher's problem. For Candrakirti the ordinary man falls into "reification" too,⁵⁹ and in a very important sense is even mixed up about the ordinary world. The ordinary is to be understood/rediscovered—it is fundamentally fine as is (when you get it right and don't reify it)—*but* it is difficult for anyone to realize in this unreified way and it is thus "uncanny" (to cite Cavell's formulation,⁶⁰ drawing in turn of course on Freud et al.).

And it is of course the mention of the likes of Cavell that offers the key to an enlargement upon my response to this 'objection': As I have clearly

suggested in recent chapters (this is in a way the whole point of Part II of the present work), Wittgenstein does not think that going astray is 'just a philosopher's problem' either. These 'philosophical' problems are problems of (our) culture, and more. Wittgenstein doesn't write for those self-identifying as philosophers, far from it: Wittgenstein's writings/methods are *for whoever needs them*. For whoever falls into or dwells in these kinds of delusions. Those who reify who Wittgenstein himself was particularly intent on de-deluding included some scientists, mathematicians, psychologists, and theologians—and indeed sometimes simply ordinary people going about their business, who are yet vulnerable to the siren call of delusional thinking of the kinds that Wittgenstein meant to show us. (Wittgenstein certainly did not think that *all* science however necessarily involved what Candrakirti calls reification. Only science that gets out of its depth, or falls into *scientism*.⁶¹)

The Rinzai and Soto schools of Zen Buddhism, too, are (if pushed into explanations) probably on balance closer to targeting "reification" rather than language-game confusions. And what I am suggesting is that in this respect, they are closely aligned with Wittgenstein. The 'New Wittgenstein' is fundamentally directed against the thought that Wittgenstein is interested in targeting 'language-game confusions' in any narrow sense. As I have sought implicitly to show more and more as this book has proceeded, Wittgenstein and Zen are fundamentally *aligned*⁶² in thinking that philosophical error is by no means the preserve of academic philosophers nor indeed necessarily of academics of any kind, and in thinking that the task of overcoming one's own inclinations to delusions of a mythic nature or gravity is a task utterly bigger than and different from any policing of mere linguistic confusions.

To return now to Hacker, an exemplar of a reader of Wittgenstein who unfortunately takes him, in practice, to be merely a tedious language-policeman: Hacker gives no evidence of understanding much of anything about Zen; but nor does he fully understand *Wittgenstein*. Once one is a practitioner of both, one is in a position to see in Wittgenstein, as it were, a Western elective affinity with Zen, following somewhat in Buddha's footsteps, and going already, in many respects, further down the road that masters such as Shunryu Suzuki and Thich Nhat Hanh have laid out for their Western/worldwide audiences, in recent years. Zen and Wittgenstein alike find life and reality themselves to be in some key regards paradoxical, and they work intensely with that paradoxicality. It is absolutely central to their methods; to truly find the remedy in the 'evil' is necessarily paradoxical. Exposing nonsense (delusions of sense) to the 'light' (like exposing potatoes to the light to stop them from sprouting—but far stranger than that, because in this case what is exposed is only nothing, under the aspect of seeming as if it were something) is necessarily paradoxical. For one necessarily practices by means of doing things that are apparently or actually absurd ('answering' absurd riddles, think-

ing so as not to think, engaging with one's temptations to speak what one is oneself inclined to judge as nonsense 'as if' it were not . . .).

To show what I mean, here are a few lines from David Loy's *The World is Made of Stories*:⁶³ "The Diamond Sutra says that the Buddha attained nothing from perfect enlightenment, and that that non-attainment is itself perfect enlightenment. // Such paradoxes implode by defeating identification with either assertion."

In (Zen, etc.) Buddhist and Wittgensteinian practice, as I understand them (it), one does not believe that the philosophic truth can be said. But one does not believe either that there is an unsayable truth. For that would make the telos of one's practice sound much too alike to what one does not believe is available, in principle, full stop. Just as Descartes made mind and matter too alike to each other by making them both kinds of *stuff*/substance; just as talk of the actual infinite or of infinity as existing *betrays* infinity by making it too alike to the finite; just as too much theology and philosophy of religion makes God sound like a super-man; just as talk of saying and showing is precisely what needs to be overcome, because it makes showing sound like just another kind of saying: Zen and Wittgenstein, when seeing the world aright, take care not to make it seem like they are seeing some thing, or some truth, that cannot be put into words. That that truly cannot be put into words is not something which if it *could* be put into words would say such and such. . . .

And so we see, crucially, that unless the great Zen masters who have brought Zen to the West—and Dogen and (I would add) Nagarjuna—and Wittgenstein are less subtle thinkers than I take them to be, they cannot be ultimately stating that reality is *contradictory*, or that there are true contradictions. For saying so makes the secret of their practice seem too alike to what is exactly the target of *criticism* in their practice. A 'true contradiction' is something true that one can *say*, about the meaning of life or some such topic. What Wittgensteinian psychology/therapy/philosophy/spiritual practice and Zen spiritual practice/psychology/therapy/thinking are interested in engendering is not *anything* that one can say. Not *any* kind of truth. This is how things are roughly as Loy describes, basing his words in the words of the great Diamond Sutra—from which the Buddhist notion of 'throwing away' is centrally derived⁶⁴—above.

All the same, aren't I quite close to 'dialetheism'? Aren't I covertly saying, here, in Part II of this book, that there are true paradoxes? Irresolvable paradoxes. Ways in which life is paradoxical. I am Buddha, and I am an ordinary man⁶⁵ (and Buddha was/is not an ordinary man). Maybe so. As I already toyed with saying in Chapter 7, above, maybe it isn't harmful to speak of true paradoxes. But it remains the case that I don't think that there are (paradoxical) truths which *stand*, as *propositions*, in the way that the dialetheist thinks, of 'true contradictions.' The dialetheist remains too much a philosopher, too abstractly and intellectually con-

cerned with saying true things. Whereas: Zen and Wittgenstein 'simply' show how to change your life, your practice, your way, while leaving everything as it is. That is what Buddhism is, above all, about: working through delusion, no longer living in it. Using paradoxical methods to work, over and over again, through the problems one finds oneself in. 'True paradoxes' are always (and this is what I have sought to illustrate in this and the previous Chapter) invitations to one *to continue to work*,⁶⁶ to continue to think and *transition*. As we might even put it: To live in truth, in paradox, in process. . . .

Is it just equivocation, to say, as Shunryu Suzuki does,⁶⁷ that I am Buddha and an ordinary man and that I don't know how this is possible but yet it is so? It might be, but I don't think so. But to see why not, and to see why (and how) we might hold this paradox open and live, we may need to move in ways that are uncomfortable for us, given our philosophical training. Take as an instruction in how perhaps to do this the following remark of Eugene Gendlin's, the great Wittgenstein-influenced pioneer of 'Focusing':

It isn't a matter of integrating opposites! It is a matter of going to a different place. If . . . you stay at the level of conceptual formulation, then you can't integrate opposites; they round each other off and you have nothing. If you go to the felt sense, then you can look for how the opposite statement also comes from there. Then the opposite understanding doesn't actually make an opposite.⁶⁸

Having set out my understanding of Wittgenstein's method, and having already intimated some connections between it and (especially Zen) Buddhism, I wish now to focus in a little more depth on an example, to explore further my idea and subject it, via exemplification, to some scrutiny. Complementarily to my approach in Chapter 2, above, I will briefly sketch here a consideration of (a few aspects of) Zen Buddhism on *time* and time-experience. I hope this example will bring into the foreground a commonality in approach—and, if you like, in 'conclusions'—between Wittgenstein⁶⁹ and Zen.

Take this important remark from Wittgenstein, *Tractatus* 6.4311:

Death is not an event in life: we do not live to experience death. If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present.

If "living in the present" actually means something, what it means surely must reflect the rich phenomenology of everyday life, not the rarefied fantasies of Anglo-American philosophers. For instance, it must mean things more like "I am walking down the street through Camden Town to meet my mother," or like "A rose, an exquisite rose, this," than like "Red spot here now." . . .⁷⁰

This thought reflects the general tenor of Wittgenstein's thinking; but it also reflects the Zen idea of existence moment to moment, of a life lived in enlightenment as coinciding with a life lived unselfconsciously; an idea quite close to Wittgenstein's crucial thought that time is not a problem to us so long as we do not try to bring pure reason to bear upon it,⁷¹ and that philosophy leaves everything as it is. The fly that has learned to find the way out of the fly bottle is simply back in the ordinary world. That, I think, is very like true Buddhist enlightenment/liberation (which, like Wittgensteinian liberation, is always in process, never a once-and-for-all achievement). *One knows no thing that one didn't know before.*

One is an ordinary person—and one is Buddha.⁷² (This means nothing, or virtually nothing, without practice. Deprived of a context in (what Buddhists call) practice, it might as well be a wall-decoration.) The gain one makes in philosophy then can be described as one of self-knowledge: so long as one doesn't think of self-knowledge as a *kind* of Knowledge. The danger I am after here, in thus exploring Buddhism, is that, unless one has truly thought the thoughts which are expressed here, or similar thoughts, one will probably have only the illusion of understanding what I am saying. The easiest way to have such thoughts is probably actually to allow oneself to have some kind of psychopathological experience, for example through the assistance of 'mind-expanding drugs.'⁷³ (However, I am *not* recommending that. It is *much* too risky a course to recommend to anyone.) Psychopathological experience of time, and the insight it affords through seeming to take one to the place that metaphysics of time yearns for—a place outside ordinary experience of time—offers a quick route; Buddhist practice takes a lot longer. But if one has neither then there is a serious risk that one will never really come to grips with what one wants out of philosophy of time. And that one will *think* that one will be satisfied by a theory that, in fact, merely *imposes* on time.⁷⁴ The kind of insight into time potentially available through appreciation of or 'expansion' of ordinary time-consciousness, through psychopathology, drugs, meditation, etc., is much more likely to leave one able to 'leave time as it is,'⁷⁵ than is metaphysics of time. In Zen, what is crucial is not reaching a narrowly intellectual enlightenment, for instance via metaphysics, but actually feeling the transiency of life, not as only a tragedy, still less as a potentially terrifying psychological disaster (as in schizophrenia, following Louis Sass's understanding thereof⁷⁶), but as simply something to accept, and perhaps to marvel at—the incredible fact of one's existence, moment to moment. Zen stresses that none of its formulations matter, unless one really *feels* them. Emotionally, and in one's practice.

Compare the following quote, from the founder of the great Soto Zen tradition, Dogen:

Do not regard time as merely flying away. Do not think flying away is its sole function. For time to fly away there would have to be a separa-

DRAFT

Leaving Things As It Is (sic.): Philosophy and Life 'After' Wittgenstein and Zen 245

tion (between it and things). Because you imagine that time only passes, you do not learn the truth of being-time.⁷⁷

The truth, that is, that time and our being are one and the same. The self does not exist outside time, nor *even over time*. This (the true meaning, I think, of the Buddhist idea of 'no-self') is something that is just 'incommensurable' with most Western philosophy. So much the worst, I suggest, for most Western philosophy. Only in the likes of Wittgenstein (like Zen Buddhism, leaving everything as it is) and Heidegger (like Buddhism on being-in-the-world) do we find a clearing opening up for it.

Most metaphysics of time seem to me a desperate effort to escape the human condition, the condition of changing and becoming, including all its wonders and beauties. These are sacrificed in favor of an alleged sense of time as an endless series of static 'snapshots,' or in favor of an alleged perspective upon time such that it appears to be a kind of object, or a kind of space, and such that the universe and all our lives within it can indeed be seen as unchanging, as if from outside or from sideways-on; by a God, roughly.

It is hardly surprising that contemporary philosophy in the English-speaking world looks like this. We are talking about a vision that goes back at least to Plato's forms, and to his founding horror at life. But it is I think time that we took more seriously the deep alternative insights available into these matters in (especially) Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger; and, still more so perhaps, in Eastern philosophy, especially, again, Buddhism.⁷⁸ And when I speak of "insights" here, part of the point is this: that narrowly intellectual insights are at best only partly to the point. Wittgenstein and Heidegger were about (us) changing our lives, changing our civilization. That is why they have proved so inassimilable to the contemporary academy. Buddhism will be, perhaps, harder still to assimilate.

In part, this is because the Buddhist approach is so deeply centered in a practical activity: meditation. And 'meditation' of course does not mean here what it meant to Descartes. *What is meditation?*⁷⁹ It is: *not* blocking out or suppressing thinking. Mystics have long known that such strategies are absolutely ineffective, in all but the shortest of terms, at achieving the goals of meditation. But neither, obviously, is meditation simply *thinking*. That might have been what Descartes meant by the word, and even what passes for meditation much of the time in the West, but it is certainly not what contemplative traditions mean by the word.

I submit that meditation (along the lines of which I have just sought to offer an 'essence') is this: the paradoxical act of not trying to do anything; not even trying to think more intensely; nor even trying *not* to think. How do you not do anything, not even think (nor not think)? Or, to put much the same question in 'layperson's' terms: how do you stop yourself from thinking, without acting and, in particular, without suppressing your

thoughts? The answer surprisingly turns out to be: by giving up trying to stop yourself from thinking, and by allowing yourself to think, if that's what happens.

"I want to think less," you say to yourself. Your ego works (and thinks) hard to fulfill the commandment. It works to satisfy your desires and to solve your problem(s), or the problem(s) you set for it. How does meditation work? By *watching* what happens. Thus the ego is engaged in a *wonderfully* self-defeating task. That hard-working mental energy gradually—or suddenly—transmutes into something else.

This is mindfulness.⁸⁰ The energy of one's small mind is mobilized to produce, by an indirect route, the goal actually hoped for. The ego—the constant thinking that can be deep suffering—gives up, or becomes instead an indulgent grandmother watching her children play, always with a half-smile.

This is Buddhism—as what I understand it to be above all: a therapeutic spiritual practice. A psychology-in-action. A practice for working through the way we suffer from suffering. One example of the latter is that the ego loves to attach to answers, to problem-solutions. But some difficulties, and indeed some attachments, are too profound to yield in that way. An *indirect* approach is necessary. You may need to be 'de-luded'/tricked into the right answer, or rather, into seeing that the idea that there *is* an answer may be the greatest delusion. (If one tries to benefit oneself by meditating, one will not. The best way to benefit oneself and others, paradoxically, is—as I already suggested toward the close of Chapter 7, above—endlessly not trying to benefit oneself and others.) This indirect approach *is* meditation.

What one comes to understand, when one sees one's fears and sees one's experience, in deep meditation, is (among other things) respects in which our ordinary experience and knowledge of time is sophisticated, inviolable, and deeper than any intellectualization of it;⁸¹ and respects in which our ordinary experience and knowledge of time is subject to change, evaporates and reappears, and may not 'in advance' even be fully adequate to some of the possibilities of the mindful, embodied self.⁸²

Suzuki called what he did "leaving things as it is."⁸³ This deliberately paradoxical phrase brings out I think something latent in *PI* 124–6, which of course almost directly parallel it. It makes visible a paradox Wittgenstein means us to unearth. In phrases like this, we can see that the meeting of Wittgenstein and Zen is starting to happen. Not before time. Hopefully, just in time for our intellectual world—and for our civilization. For, as I hope to have sketched successfully here, Wittgenstein and Zen Buddhism can *mutually* inform: on the methodology of philosophy, on time, on scientism, and metaphysics—and probably on much more besides.

To overcome the vast sea of delusion in which we find ourselves swimming, in the 21st century, in philosophy and wherever similar delu-

sions flourish, we are going to need all we can get of the joint forces of thinkers like Ludwig Wittgenstein and Shunryu Suzuki.⁸⁴

NOTES

1. New York: Quill, 2003.
2. Cray and Read, *The New Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.1.
3. See n.39 of Chapter 10, above.
4. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, London: Routledge, 1961 (1922); transl. Pears and McGuinness, emphasis added.
5. I say "might be," for, as I noted in Chapter 10, there are surprisingly strong precedents, in Wittgenstein's great predecessors.
6. For explication of this term, see the writings of Eckhart Tolle.
7. On this latter point, see especially Juliet Floyd's beautiful argument in "The Uncaptive Eye: Solipsism in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*," in Leroy Rouser (ed.) *Loneliness* (Notre Dame: U. Notre Dame Press, 1998), and in particular n.8 thereof. See also Hutchinson and my "An Elucidatory Interpretation of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*: A Critique of Daniel D. Hutto's and Marie McGinn's Reading of *Tractatus* 6.54," in *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* Vol. 14(1), 1–29.
8. suzukiroshi.sfzc.org/archives/index.cgi/710212BV.html?seemore=y
9. See my paper, "The possibility of a resolutely resolute reading of the *Tractatus*," in *Beyond the Tractatus Wars: The New Wittgensteinian Debate*, ed. Rupert Read and Matthew Lavery, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2011.
10. For explication of 'Begriffsschrift,' the reader is referred back to Chapter 1, above.
11. As I proceed here, I find myself (like in Chapter 10) laying on paradox after paradox, in an effort to explain Wittgenstein's 'teaching.' The point I am seeking to make is that this is inevitable. *This is how this teaching proceeds*, if it is to work. As I will shortly explain more, this brings Wittgenstein surprisingly closely into alignment with Zen pedagogy.
12. *TLP*, section 7.
13. I am meaning to nod here to a famous remark of Wittgenstein's made in his (famous) letter to Ficker, as quoted for instance here: www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1969/jul/10/wittgensteins-strategy-2/?pagination=false.
14. Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, amended second edition, edited by G. H. von Wright, Blackwell, 1998 (1980), p.64. (From MS 134 20).
15. Note also this alternative translation: "Don't for heaven's sake, be afraid of talking nonsense! Only don't fail to pay attention to your nonsense."
16. The classic text here of course is Jean Starobinski *Le remede dans le mal*, Paris: Gallimard, 1989 (and see also the close of Chapter 10, above). Cf. also www.mail-archive.com/zenforum@yahoogroups.com/msg02731.html for a charming account of this process in Buddhism.
17. If you remain skeptical of this as a description of Wittgenstein's method, then consider the following marvelous passage from Wittgenstein in his diary, in "Discussions between Wittgenstein, Waddington and Thouless," in *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Public and Private Occasions* (edited by James C. Klagge and Alfred Nordmann (Rowman and Littlefield, 2003)), p.139 (emphasis added):

In my mind I already hear posterity talking about me instead of hearing myself, the one who, because he knows me, is of course a far less appreciative audience. // *And that is what I must do: listen not to another in my imagination but to myself. That is, not watch the other watching me—for that's how I do it—but watch myself.* What a trick, and how infinitely great again and again the temptation to look at the other and away from myself.

Excepting the negative self-judgementalism, this could be a deep and valid description of the (deep) challenge of meditation.

18. Cf. also on this point n.44, below.

19. New York: MacMillan, 1953, 1958 (posthumous; transl. Anscombe).

20. See Cray and my *The New Wittgenstein*.

21. Some of the next few pages are liberally adapted and updated versions of some thinking of mine that began life (in print) in my "Throwing Away 'the Bedrock'," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 2005, vol. 105 (1), pp. 81–98; this material was then adapted once again into raw-material for my "Just In Time: Notes for the Meeting of Wittgenstein and Zen," *UEA Papers in Philosophy* (Volume 16, 2005, pp. 32–45), to whom thanks for the permission to reprint here.

22. In Diamond's *The Realistic Spirit* (Cambridge MA: MIT, 1991). Readers unfamiliar with this epochal passage in the creation of—this existence-proof for—the 'resolute' reading of Wittgenstein are recommended if possible to read it before reading my later-Wittgenstein-oriented-reworking of it. (As I make clear in my contribution to *Beyond the Tractatus Wars*, I differ from / go beyond Conant and Diamond, in the extent to which I think it is possible to read later Wittgenstein as continuous with early Wittgenstein, provided one has a genuinely resolute enough reading of early Wittgenstein. Thus I suspect that Conant and Diamond would think the 'transliteration' that I am about to undertake excessive. Well, the reader can judge for themselves whether or not it is; whether or not it succeeds.)

23. Cf. *PI* 43. In saying this I am of course flying in the face of the 'orthodox' view of Wittgenstein. For an account of why—of what it means, to do so—see Part 1 of my *Applying Wittgenstein*, and see also n.26 below.

24. See the remark cited in Ray Monk's *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (New York: MacMillan, 1990), during Wittgenstein's debates with Turing: "Obviously . . . the whole point is that I must not have an opinion." (P.420 (see also p.418). In passing: I disagree with Monk's own comments on this remark in his text: Monk's view of the later Wittgenstein's 'views' is in the end positivistic. He takes Wittgenstein to have quasi-verificationist, finitist 'views' in the philosophy of mathematics.)

25. "Throwing away the ladder: How to Read the *Tractatus*," (*op.cit.*), pp.197–98; the Diamond passage is in discussion of Wittgenstein's seeming-claim that "There are objects." See also Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* (Oxford: Blackwell / New York: Harper, 1969, para. 35f); and compare Hume's critique of the notion of "object" (contrast 'the New Hume's' defence of the metaphysical idea of objects). See, e.g., my "The new antagonists of 'the New Hume'," in my *The New Hume Debate* (co-edited with Ken Richman; London: Routledge, 2000).

26. For detail on this, see my and Hutchinson's "Towards a Perspicuous Presentation of "Perspicuous Presentation,"" *Philosophical Investigations*, Vol. 31 (2), pp.141–60, April 2008. The "strong grounds" I allude to here are detailed there.

I do not of course wish to deny that there could be occasions on which saying to a particular interlocutor that "Meaning is use" or that "What matters is that there are forms of life" could be philosophically illuminating: it might conceivably play a role, for example, in the process of trying to disabuse someone who claimed that her understanding of a particular expression was incommunicable, or of trying to remind a person perplexed by the seemingly inexorable status of arithmetical formulae that they have a concrete and readily identifiable role in certain familiar contexts, respectively. Rather, I am warning against any attachment to or eternalization of these 'theses' (see below); and I am urging that they are unlikely to be effective until they come to seem trivial, banal, or obvious. In other words, they don't tend to do work. The work is done by persuasion, not by language-policing. On this latter point, see Hutchinson and Read, "Whose Wittgenstein?," in *Philosophy* 80 (313), pp. 432–55, July 2005.

27. *PI*, p.226.

28. Of course, most 'old' Wittgensteinians think that Wittgenstein's later work is a vast improvement on his earlier work precisely because it suggests a legitimate use to which sentences of philosophy can be put: crucially, to express rules for the use of

expressions (and thus not to gesture at ineffabilia). However, I am arguing at this particular point of my 'transliteration' both against such quasi-positivist 'grammar-police' old Wittgensteinians (for effective detailed arguments against these, see for instance Witherspoon's and Conant's essays in Crary and my *The New Wittgenstein*), in their emphasis on the violation of logical syntax, which should (as it did in self-aware Logical Positivism) lead to their finding their own work to be self-refuting. . . . and also against the minority of old Wittgensteinians who are at least deep enough to recognize that the temptation toward ineffabilism remains a strand in the later Wittgenstein, and that the tendency to ineffabilize "form of life," etc., is actually one step *beyond* the widespread quasi-positivist reading of later Wittgenstein. The ineffabilist reading of later Wittgenstein (a strong instance is to be found in John Koethe's work) is at least one step further up the ladder—the ladder that Wittgenstein had already 'climbed' and thrown away, back in 1919. . . . For a full-length exposition of positivism and ineffabilism as tendencies in (and, crucially, overcome by) later Wittgenstein, see my "Meaningful Consequences" (jointly written with James Guetti), *The Philosophical Forum*, Vol. 30 (4), pp. 289–314, Dec. 1999, and my "The first shall be last . . . : the importance of *On Certainty* 501," in William Brenner and Daniele Moyal-Sharrock (eds), *Readings in Wittgenstein's On Certainty* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

29. *PI*, 120.

30. It is worth noting parenthetically one important implication: that it is an appalling caricature of the 'resolute' reading of Wittgenstein's philosophy to take Diamond *et al* literally to be claiming that "There is only one kind of nonsense." Just look at the form of such a remark! (For more detail on this point, see my "A No-Theory?: Against Hutto on Wittgenstein," *Philosophical Investigations* 29 (1), pp. 73–81, 2006.)

31. I.e., not because the real/right forms are available somewhere, only not speakable. This is a transfiguration of Diamond's "Throwing Away the Ladder: How to Read the Tractatus," pp.197–99 (emphasis mine).

32. For some examples of such build-ins, see Kripke's 'deconstructive' reading of this passage, and the Anti-Realist theorizing that emerges therefrom, in his *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1982; cf. also Chapter 4, above); David Bloor's slightly similar community-based social theory of practices; and compare also Hacker's numerous invocations of "bedrock" as a conversation-stopper, as a consequential 'policing' philosophical move.

33. Again, Kripke and Bloor come to mind here; as do Meredith Williams (see e.g., *Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning: Towards a Social Conception of Mind*, London; New York: Routledge, 2002) and Robert Brandom.

34. Though this is not to imply that the dialogue is *always* 'equal': I might have been inside this fly bottle before and maybe can therefore help you out. It only doesn't follow that I am immune from being the recipient a moment later. (I owe this thought to Michael McGhee.)

35. Something similar can be said of Buddhism. It really is unclear that one is a Buddhist if one is not *practicing* Buddhism. If one is not meditating, and living mindfully and well. (For some related considerations about the centrality of practice to religion more generally, see chapter 3 of my *Philosophy for Life* (London: Continuum, 2007), "Religion without belief." Cf. also Stephen Batchelor's *Buddhism Without Beliefs: A Contemporary Guide to Awakening* (New York: Penguin/ Riverhead, 1998).

36. In Crary and Read, *The New Wittgenstein* (*op.cit.*).

37. P.345 in *The New Wittgenstein* (*op.cit.*).

38. For explication of just what "overcome" here means, see my argument in Chapter 10, above.

39. I justify this remark in my "Meaningful Consequences," "Whose Wittgenstein?" and "Throwing away 'the bedrock.'" (*op. cit.*) In particular, I think that Wittgenstein is traduced by those who, in claiming to give a reliable or even 'official' account of his later work, turn ideas like "grammatical rule" into technical terms that end up turning Wittgenstein's philosophy into an ineffective opposite of what it was supposed to be. The writings of Gordon Baker's last decade very clearly express the

insight I am drawing on, here, including in direct criticism of his (Baker's) earlier collaborator, Peter Hacker. Hacker and most of his followers are, in effect, more *Ry-lians* than actually Wittgensteinians.

40. See for instance his remark "The seed I'm most likely to sow is a certain jargon," the final remark of his 1939 Lectures, *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics* (University of Chicago Press, 1989; ed. Cora Diamond).

41. Some readers will already be thinking that these remarks are relevant to the disparaging attribution by Peter Hacker of a close kinship with 'dialectic,' with post-modernism, with Zen, and with Kierkegaardian irony, to the New Wittgenstein (see his "Was he trying to whistle it?," in Cray and Read, *The New Wittgenstein*). I will address this shortly full-on in the text. To anticipate briefly: The kinship with post-modernism has been greatly exaggerated; there are several published texts showing this, including of course Martin Stone's "Wittgenstein on deconstruction," which argues powerfully for the differentiation of the two, in *The New Wittgenstein* itself. But it seems to me that the concept of 'dialectic' can be an extremely helpful to one in understanding Wittgenstein's method; I think that Conant is quite right to emphasize the deep parallelisms between Kierkegaard's method and Wittgenstein's; and what I am pointing up in the present chapter are the powerful and underestimated commonalities in method and 'substance' between Wittgenstein and Buddhism, especially Zen. I suspect that part of the problem is that Hacker has an inadequate understanding of the philosophical sophistication of Kierkegaard, and indeed, if usually utterly implicitly, of Zen.

42. Cf. www.shambhalasun.com/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=2903Itemid=247

43. Taken from suzukiroshi.sfzc.org/dharma-talks/?p=552

44. There is a clear connection here with the inefficacy of the 'direct' route to getting what one wants as an individual pursued by Game Theory / Rational Choice Theory, as critiqued in the closing pages of Chapter 7, above. One can generalize this: As Buddhists often say, if you want to be happy, don't seek your own happiness. *Give*, instead. Only: you must not secretly be giving so as to become happy. . . . And here is how the paradoxical method is wonderfully endless. Each time you catch yourself still secretly trying to achieve the goal, you need to act meditatively again (And not, incidentally, to beat yourself up about it: that is just more pursuit of ego, in disguise.)

45. Shades here of course of Kierkegaard, especially when interpreted after Jim Conant's fashion.

46. "Was he trying to whistle it?" (*op.cit.*), p.370.

47. *Ibid.*, p.378.

48. *Ibid.*, p.381.

49. Cited in Chadwick's *Crooked Cucumber: The Life and Zen Teaching Shunryu Suzuki*, New York: Broadway, 1999, p. 382; one could quote any of a number of similar remarks—similar in terms of their deep rationality (in the true sense of that word).

50. *Philosophy*, Vol. 52 (201), July 1977, pp. 338–43.

51. "Wittgenstein and Zen," *Philosophy*, Vol. 50 (194), 1975, pp.383–408.

52. *PI* 23.

53. Phillips, "On Wanting to Compare Wittgenstein and Zen," p.342.

54. It may well be in fact that this is a false dichotomy; that contemplation is *indissoluble* from change.

55. Cited in Chadwick's *Crooked Cucumber* (*op.cit.*), p30; emphasis added.

56. Dainin Katagiri, *You Have to Say Something* (London: Shambhala, 2000), p.6. Katagiri's words here demand comparison to Wittgenstein's late insistence that philosophy does not come to an end, that we practice it endlessly, most notably in his *Zettel* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975, ed. Anscombe and von Wright). One might call his ("our") method a methodless method. Again: It does *not* seek seriously to eventuate in the goal of ending philosophy. On the futility of the latter project, with reference to Wittgenstein's philosophical method, see my "The real philosophical discovery": A reply to Jolley's 'Philosophical Investigations 133:

Wittgenstein and the End of Philosophy?," *Philosophical Investigations*, 18 (4), pp. 362–69, October 1995. And cf.:

"The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to—the one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* in question. —Instead, we now demonstrate a method, by examples; and the series of examples can be broken off. —Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated), not a *single* problem . . . 'But then we will never come to the end of our job!' Of course not, because it has no end." (Ludwig Wittgenstein, "The Big Typescript," quoted in *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Philosophical Occasions 1912–1951* (Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993, ed. James Carl Klagge and Alfred Nordmann) p.325; emphasis added).

57. As I have argued in my paper "Ordinary/everyday language," in Jolley's *Wittgenstein: Key Concepts*, ed. Kelly Dean Jolley (Acumen, 2010).

58. As will be argued in my and Hutchinson's *Liberatory Philosophy* (forthcoming), there is however a case either for seeing Ebersole, Austin at his best, and Strawson at his best not as ordinary language philosophers, or for seeing 'ordinary language philosophy' as decisively escaping or transcending the usual understanding of it.

59. And indeed, one might just look at this point at my arguments in Chapters 8 and 9.

60. See Stanley Cavell's "The Uncanniness of the Ordinary," *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, delivered at Stanford University, April 3 and 8, 1986 (www.tannerlectures.utah.edu/lectures/documents/cavell88.pdf).

61. For my analysis of which, see my *Wittgenstein among the Sciences* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012, ed. Simon Summers).

62. They are one. They are also separate. We might cross this paradox then by saying that they are aligned.

63. Boston: Wisdom, 2010, p.33.

64. See n.75, below. The Buddhist tradition of throwing away, of overcoming, profoundly joins the Wittgensteinian one, in the line of thinking which I am presenting in the present piece.

65. For Suzuki-Roshi's own beautiful presentation of this paradox, see suzukiroshi.sfzc.org/dharma-talks/?p=855#more-855 or listen to suzukiroshi.sfzc.org/dharma-talks/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/69-03-30-ns7-t.mp3.

66. Of course, the idea of 'continuing to work,' taken by itself, might equally be taken to describe any standard Western philosophical 'research programme' designed to solve paradoxes. My point here, as my use of the term "transition" (and here I am somewhat following Cora Diamond's thinking about the nonsense of the *Tractatus*, for instance, being *transitional*) indicates, I hope, is that the work in question is more like work on oneself, work that includes the paradoxes in which one is caught up as both problem and potential-remedy, than work on a problem designed to solve that problem. And that there is no expectation of an end to that work, any more than there is a realistically available and actionable expectation that the work of living, of ethical choice, etc., can come to an end (except in death). Whereas in Analytic philosophy, for instance, there is a tacit expectation that the 'solution' to any given paradox is always 'just around the corner'—when the truth is that the very mode of searching for a solution guarantees that what one is producing is an insoluble problem (as I argued, for instance, in Chapter 6, above. See also 2.5 of my *Wittgenstein among the Sciences*).

67. See www.shunryusuzuki.com/suzuki/index.cgi/690330Va180.html?seemore=y

68. P.109 of Linda Heuman's "Interview with Gendlin," in *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*, Fall 2011. (The "felt sense" is Gendlin's term for how this 'thinking at the edge' can be done *in the body*, and not just in the mind.)

69. For detail on my Wittgensteinian understanding of time, see my debate with Michael Dummett in the pages of *Philosophy* in 2002–2003 (and my "Against time-slices" in *Philosophical Investigations* 26:1 (January) 2003, pp.24–43 (reprinted as Chapter 2 of this volume)), from which a couple of the paragraphs below are loosely adapted.

70. On the inclination to say things like “Red spot here now,” as most prominently in the heyday of ‘sense-data’ theories (which still have huge attraction, despite repeated undercuttings and defusings of them), compare remark 262 of Wittgenstein’s *Remarks on Colour* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978): “I would like to say “this colour is at this spot in my visual field (completely apart from any interpretation).” But what would I use this sentence for? “This” colour must (of course) be one that I can reproduce. And it must be determined under what circumstances I say [that] something is this colour.”

71. Cf. also Iain McGilchrist’s impressive (and more or less Wittgensteinian) sense of time as an “undivided flow” at p.76 of *The Master and his Emissary* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009), and (similarly) elsewhere in that work his emphasis on how a failure to bear this sense in mind / in practice results in getting caught up permanently in unprofitable paradoxes.

72. This is once more from the teaching of Shunryu Suzuki. See e.g., his *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind* (ed. Trudy Dixon; New York: Walker/Weatherhill, 1970). The transcriptions of Suzuki’s lectures here serve beautifully as an introduction to modern Zen, for those not very familiar with it.

73. Cf. the ‘Epilogue’ to Chapter 4, above.

74. I.e., that merely projects onto time something alien to it or, at best, takes one fragment of time-talk or time-experience and mistakes it for the whole. For my account of the latter, see IIIb of Chapter 2, above. (As is, I trust, by now obvious, the present portion of the present Chapter connects directly with the topic of Chapter 2 and with my argument therein.)

75. There may seem a contradiction here; how can I advocate “leaving time as it is” while leaving open the possibility and even desirability that one’s sense of time will, in a sense, be radically altered by the kinds of ‘experiments’ undertaken in (e.g.) Gestalt Psychotherapy, and/or in Buddhist meditation? The answer lies largely in the phrase “in a sense,” as already hinted above: I believe that, unlike some psychopathological time-distortions, those arrived at through (e.g.) meditation never *reject* ordinary time-sense. Everything has changed, and yet everything remains the same. This lived paradox is very much to the point in Wittgenstein, too. Philosophy leaves everything as it is, when it is done right, in the sense of nothing being explained or having to be revised; but one’s sense of what one has been thinking about is nevertheless in a subtle and yet perhaps life-changing way, fundamentally altered, by reading Wittgenstein properly. And one may go on, for example, to criticize and alter precisely those things that were not changed by one’s philosophical reflections as such. *Contra* such writers as Gellner, Nyiri, and D. Z. Phillips, Wittgenstein contains no basis for ‘conservatism’ (for argument, see Alice Crary’s “Wittgenstein and political philosophy,” in her and my *The New Wittgenstein*). (In fact, I suggest that if anything Wittgenstein points the other way from conservatism, in my “Marx and Wittgenstein on Vampires and Parasites: A Critique of Capital and Metaphysics,” *Marx and Wittgenstein: Knowledge, Morality and Politics*, eds. Gavin Kitching and Nigel Pleasants (London; New York: Routledge, 2002).) Nor need Zen be conservative—Shunryu Suzuki was not, and nor are David Brazier’s *Zen Therapy* (Robinson Publishing, 2001) and *The New Buddhism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), nor some strands in Thich Nhat Hanh’s (“Thay’s”) Zen engaged Buddhism (N.B.: See [video.google.com/videoplay?docid=4240638521557497291](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4240638521557497291) for Thich Nhat Hanh’s take on the Buddhist practice of “throwing away,” which is close to Suzuki-Roshi’s but not identical to it. This talk of Thay’s again, naturally, repays comparing to Wittgenstein’s vision at the close of the *Tractatus*. As indeed does the Buddha’s own vision in *The Diamond Sutra*, which is the basis for this crucial proto-Wittgensteinian tradition in Buddhism; see, e.g., thedailyenlightenment.com/2010/03/throwing-away-the-four-notions-in-the-diamond-sutra/ for a primer.).

76. See, e.g., his *The Paradoxes of Delusion: Wittgenstein, Schreber and the Schizophrenic Mind* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1994).

77. As quoted at p.133 of Joan Stambaugh's "Time, Finitude, and Finality," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 24, No. 2, (Apr., 1974), pp. 129–35.

78. And above all, Zen Buddhism (along with certain strands of Tibetan Buddhism) has, I am suggesting, penetrated to the heart of these matters. See again Suzuki's work; though again, beware: you may not understand much of it, simple though the English mostly is, if you do not know meditation personally.

79. Of course, there are many different meditation practices, and what I say here will not apply equally well to all. I intend what I am writing here as a kind of 'ideal type' or 'object of comparison,' nothing more.

80. For more on this, the reader is recommended to consult Thich Nhat Hanh's *The Miracle of Mindfulness: The Classic Guide to Meditation by the World's Most Revered Master* (New York: Beacon, 1999).

81. These respects are often well set-out in ethnomethodological presentations of (time-)experience, of practices, of life.

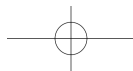
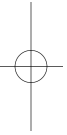
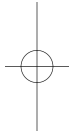
82. And nor is conventional philosophy of mind/psychology or of language adequate thereto. Take for example the concept of 'expressivism,' which imagines that we already have a prior handle on 'facts,' and on 'expressions.' This is alien to Wittgenstein's approach in *PI*. (For detail on why and how, see Part I of my and Cray's edited collection *The New Wittgenstein* and Cavell's "Notes and afterthoughts on the opening of Wittgenstein's Investigations," in *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*, ed. Hans Sluga and David G. Stern, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.) We need to give enough voice to Wittgenstein's intention to investigate; *not* assume that we already know a great deal, as philosophers, before the investigation begins. Wittgenstein supposes otherwise, in a manner somewhat reminiscent of the great Zen masters: See, e.g., Suzuki's brilliant line of thought at www.cuke.com/bibliography/ZMBM/prologue.html; and this famous Zen story:

The Japanese master Nan-in gave audience to a professor of philosophy. Serving tea, Nan-in filled his visitor's cup, and kept pouring. The professor watched the overflow until he could restrain himself no longer: "Stop! The cup is over full, no more will go in." Nan-in said: "Like this cup, you are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup."

(See www.purifymind.com/EmptyCup.htm) As the self becomes more mindful, prior categories of ordinary experience/knowledge of time may change, or even in certain respects be transcended.

83. See, e.g., suzukiroshi.sfzc.org/dharma-talks/?p=1032#more-1032.

84. Thanks for useful comments on an earlier draft of some of this material to Daniel Whiting. Thanks also to Phil Hutchinson, and to audiences at UEA and at Cambridge. My deepest debt in regard to finalizing this material is to Vincent Gaine, who helped me to reorganize it. A portion of this material appeared in a different, earlier form in my "Wittgenstein and Zen Buddhism: One Practice, No Dogma," in *Pointing at the Moon*, ed. Garfield et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). Another portion appeared in my "Just in time: Notes for the meeting of Wittgenstein and Zen," *UEA Papers in Philosophy* 16 (2005), 32–44.



DRAFT

TWELVE

Conclusion: On Lived Paradoxes

"[Y]ou look with suspicion on what is normal and are the slaves of every paradox that comes your way." —From the Mytilenian Debate, Book 3, Thucydides's *History of the Peloponnesian War*

"A student asked Nakagawa-Soen during a meditation retreat, "I am very discouraged. What should I do?" Soen Roshi replied, "Encourage others."" —James Shaheen, "Encourage Others"¹

I have distinguished in this book between dissolving paradoxes, the usual (and usually correct) Wittgensteinian move to make in the vicinity of a paradox, and recognising *genuine* paradoxes, paradoxes not merely of abstractive philosophy but of real life. This distinction corresponds, very roughly, to the dividing line between what is in Part I and what is in Part II of this book.²

Emphasis needs, however, to be placed on the qualification, "very roughly." For there is a substantial 'gray area' that exists, which undermines the appearance of a neat separation into two parts of the present work. Or better: the two Parts of the book *necessarily* overlap.

One way of seeing this is to see the following: A decent case could possibly be made for Chapters 6 and probably for 7 to be placed in Part II;³ similarly, a decent case could perhaps be made for Chapters 8 or 9 (and possibly Chapter 10) to be placed in Part I. Most strikingly, perhaps: in relation to the surprise exam, we saw how the awareness of the paradox actually worked as a factor in the deliberations of students. How mutual assumptions about intelligence/knowledge make a substantial difference as to whether there is a paradox or not, and as to (if so) what it is. When the possible presence of paradox itself enters into a paradox, then we have reached a point of 'self-knowledge' that enables us clearly to transcend the normal *modus operandi* of philosophers in relation to paradoxes: staying 'on a level' with them and simply working at them as

if on the puzzles of a ‘normal science.’ We have reached a point then in which, as we might put it, philosophy knows itself. (The direction in which philosophy should always be aiming, and in which this book explicitly is aimed.) We saw somewhat similar considerations at work in Chapter 9, in the reflections/insight of the would-be utterer of remarks such as “I’m filth” as to the character of the lived paradox that they were wanting to mire themselves in; we looked, in a way, to give meaningful (but still I think distinctively ‘philosophical’) help to a sufferer from a (moral or) psychological pathology.

I might summarise what binds the two Parts of the book closely together in sequential order then, in roughly this way: I aim to *take* one (on a ‘step-by-step’ *journey*) from mere philosophers’ paradoxes to real-life situations in which paradoxicality may be present but isn’t a problem in the same way (Typically: It isn’t a *merely* intellectual problem, but is a real-life issue. And may even be a boon, a skillful means.).

Looking back at the book that this has been in a little more detail, I think we can see in retrospect how it proceeded, along those lines, in a step-wise fashion . . . including in the following—more local—sense: The chapters work together as braces, pairs. . . . :

The Introduction and Chapter 1 form the first pair. The Introduction, considered the concept of *paradox*. Chapter 1 went on (or back) to consider the concept of *concept*, and, by means of doing so, to offer a dissolution of Russell’s Paradox.

Chapters 2 and 3 are exceptional in Part I of the book, in that they focally involved me proactively finding paradoxes in / setting them for others, rather than just dissolving philosophers’ paradoxes. Chapter 2 argued that the only way to dissolve the paradoxes of time-travel was to dissolve the concept of *time-travel itself*, which intrinsically fosters otherwise indissoluble paradoxes. (I proceeded to dis-ambiguate the very idea of time-travel, into harmless notions on the one hand and into non-notions—mere ideas of ideas, phantasms which incline one to keep wanting to talk about time-travel—on the other.) Chapter 3 argued somewhat similarly that a paradox results from Chomsky’s thinking about language, and that the only way to defuse it is to dissolve the philosophical basis/pretensions of that thinking altogether.

Chapters 4 and 5 are clearly a pair. Together, these chapters used Wittgensteinian thinking to undo Kripke’s purportedly Wittgensteinian ‘rule-following paradox,’ suggesting in successive and ramifying ways that there can be no such thing as a would-be ‘concept-skepticism,’ a constitutive skepticism about meanings and/or concepts.

Chapters 6 and 7 dissolved two paradoxes that tellingly grip philosophers: the sorites paradox and the surprise-exam paradox. As was made clear, these dissolutions are connected and range further in their effects. Importantly: Both paradoxes are in part ‘backward induction’ paradoxes. It is crucial to see this commonality between them; and to see that this

feature (that they have in common) is *not* the only important feature of them.⁴ For both paradoxes offer cases which reveal the failure of philosophy to appreciate when it would matter that there is or isn't a heap before one / what the teacher who aims to set a surprise exam is seeking to do. In other words, both are paradigm cases of how focusing on how the matters on which they focus *matters* (or doesn't), and on how rarely philosophers focus on this. And, thus, on how rarely philosophers get these paradoxes into focus: in a way that, when one does, swiftly dissolves them away, like ice under a magnifying glass on a sunny day.

(Chapters 2 through 7 fit most closely 'New Wittgensteinian'⁵ paradigms for how to deal with philosophical paradoxes that grip, fox, or constrain one: when I speak of 'dissolution,' above, this could often be re-expressed as offering a way or ways of ending/overcoming hoverings between incompatible aspirations for one's words. The activity of dissolving paradoxes away thus corresponds fairly closely to the vein of therapeutic diagnosis (which is widely misunderstood as a form of imposed language-policing) that, in the 'tradition' of Diamond and Conant, takes "nonsense" seriously as a term of criticism.)

In Chapters 8⁶ and 9 I considered thinking, of a broadly or analogically philosophical character, that has done actual harm in the world: in the political pathology of hatred of (specified groups of) others, and in the psychopathology of self-hatred.⁷ I put Wittgensteinian thinking to work to try to start to understand and to dissolve these, while acknowledging the vastness of the tasks—and their unamenability to a purely intellectual cure. (The 'cure' in relation to the subject-matter of Chapter 9 for example probably necessarily involves care and love; that in relation to the subject matter of Chapter 8 might involve these, but might also necessarily involve something like 're-education,' or even threats or force.)

And in Chapters 10 and 11 I found a positive use for paradoxical *methodologies* in Nietzsche and in Buddhism, and in paralleling both to Wittgenstein, properly understood. I drew out morals for living with paradox and in transition and change (as one always is), especially in Chapter 11.⁸

(Chapters 10 and 11 sum up in the light of the progress of the book from Part I through Part II how we can think of Wittgenstein's and related methods in philosophy as themselves putting to work the 'energy' that comes from paradoxes. . . . Paradoxes are not merely things to be overcome, in this sense; they can help provide one with *direction* in one's philosophical methodology. The way in which philosophers' paradoxes in Part I of the book are typically 'dissolved' thus gives way to a different way in which paradox is the ongoing meat and drink of philosophy. When one understands the way Wittgenstein writes in sections 89-133 of the *Investigations*, for example, one understands how integral writing paradoxically is to successful philosophizing.⁹)

This completes my outlining of a way *or two* with paradoxes, after Wittgenstein. This completes then my main self-appointed task in this book (Though, in saying that, I want also to remind the reader of what I said at the very outset, in the Preface. That a ‘completed’ work like this book is nevertheless also, invariably, incomplete. And here one is reminded also perhaps of the close of the Preface to Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*, and, in a different but not unrelated way, of the general tenor of the Preface to his *Investigations*. These make clear how even as great a mind as his is not hubristic enough to think that the work that one has written has achieved what one hopes, or is complete.)

But finally, the reader may still want to ask, one last time, a question which may seem still present or called-for, even after all of the above: just why *do* painful paradoxes arise? Why, that is, does language, etc., throw them up so consistently and insistently, such that so much variegated and effortful work needs to be done to extricate oneself and others from them, and to appreciate also where such extrication is a task with political, ethical, psycho-therapeutical, etc.—as well as explicitly philosophical—dimensions?

I hope that the above chapters have in fact offered a pretty good ‘composite’ answer to those questions. And I would urge in closing what I stressed in the Introduction and mentioned again in connection with Chapters 6 and 7, just above: that the persistence of merely philosophers’ paradoxes, of the kind that made up Part I of this book, is predominantly due to the failure of philosophers to take an interest in how and why it *matters* whether the subject-matter of a paradox is significant to real people. (And this failure is due a good deal, I think, to the ill-placed veneration of science and of ‘theory,’ and also to elitist tendencies fostered and encouraged by academia and by the broader culture of our incredibly inequalitarian society.) It is really rather ludicrous, for example, to ask how a heap is possible, but not to take any interest at all in why people might care about the concept of ‘heap.’ Why it might matter to them at what point something ceased to be a heap.

But it is, I think, also worth ‘adding’ this, a point I have not much made explicitly, in the body of the present work: We have philosophical problems with language, thought, etc., of the kind that have emerged into focus in this book partly because if we (humans) focused all the time on philosophy we would never get anything done. We’re ‘designed’ to *do*: To act, with our bodies, with our words, together. But deliberately not (too) much to understand *how* we do. Too much of the latter is a disaster for us.

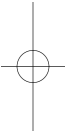
To many philosophers, the kind of thought that I gave voice to in the preceding paragraph will probably seem a woeful evasion, a ducking of the hard philosophical questions, a mere taking refuge in our embodied



existence to avoid those questions. It seems, in short, like ‘anti-philosophy,’ or simply not *philosophy* at all.

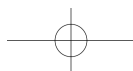
Such a sniffy spirit of superiority hides, I think, a quasi-Cartesian illness-at-ease with the body, with our sociality, with our practical nature. I believe that the (legacy of the) work of Alfred Schutz, of Iain MacGilchrist, of Louis Sass, of Lakoff and Johnson, and of course of Wittgenstein himself,¹⁰ exposes and gives the lie to such sniffiness. I hope that the present work may play its small part in helping to overcome the kind of obsessional dwelling in the thinking side of our nature that is a completely predictable *déformation professionnelle* for philosophers in particular (and for academics in general); that can give philosophy a bad name as deliberately un- or anti-worldly; and that can foist on us all a dubious ideology that holds our minds captive, in the very name, ironically, of freedom. In the very name of freedom, philosophers too often look with suspicion on what is ordinary/everyday, what comes naturally to us, our doing and living of life—our practices, emotions and through-and-through-embodied experiences—and hence typically become the slaves of every paradox that comes their way.

The stakes—as I have sought to show previously in my *Wittgenstein among the Sciences*,¹¹ as well as quite explicitly in Part II in particular of the present work—are pretty high. I hope this book might help play some role in the search for a truer intellectual freedom. An intellectual freedom genuinely at home in our thoroughly social and embodied nature. In our lives that are so empty of what philosophers typically call ‘paradoxes’—and yet nonetheless, sometimes, so full of paradox.



NOTES

1. www.tricycle.com/editors-view/encourage-others
2. I seek to *dissolve* the paradoxes in Part I, often by seeking to show that being in their grip amounts to the phenomenon that resolute readers (and *Wittgenstein himself*, at p.235 of *The Voices of Wittgenstein* (ed. Gordon Baker; London: Routledge, 2003)) call *irresolution*. Whereas, in Part II, I seek to make visible paradoxes of life that are almost certainly not going to go away (though we should, especially in the cases examined in Chapters 8 and 9, seek to reduce them (yet it is crucial that we do so *in the right way* and not in the wrong way—for instance, seeking to reduce people’s tendency to self-hatred by getting them to think that they should always be guilt-free no matter what they do would be a disastrous own goal, for reasons that Chapter 8 I think already helps to bring out)), and that in some cases (see especially Chapter 11) even *ought* not to go away.
3. Possibly also Chapter 4, bearing in mind the ‘Epilogue’ thereto. Possibly even Chapter 2, bearing in mind, for instance, a fine philosophical film like *Donnie Darko*, that aims to understand how psychopathological experience or deep trauma might induce one to think of time-travel as necessary or real (and that also shows, I think, how time-travel could not possibly have the then-desperately desired outcome).
4. These two chapters, besides perhaps Chapters 1, 4, 5, and 9, are the chapters of this book most obviously focused on targeting what philosophers standardly and uncontroversially call “paradoxes.” But I hope it is pretty obvious to the reader now



how close the family resemblances are which tie all the particular projects—all the chapters—of the book together under the heading of (concerning) “paradoxes,” despite the signal differences of approach that mark out the pair of Parts that together make up the book, and that mark out the pairs of chapters that I am describing, from each other.

5. This book has been an experiment in a roughly Diamondian/late-Bakerian, as opposed to a Hackerian, vision of Wittgenstein, an experiment in the virtues of that take on philosophy as applied to liberate us from the sequence of paradoxes that we have explored (especially in Part I), and into a happier relation with those that emerged especially in the latter part of Part II. (Cf. also n.2, above.)

6. It is perhaps worth remarking here that Chapter 8 (in its consideration of *PI* 412) completes a consideration in this book of all three of the only explicit references to “paradox” that occur in the *Philosophical Investigations*. The two previous were 182 (which we discussed in the Introduction) and of course 201 (which occupied us in Chapter 4).

7. To remind the reader: the paradox that I call “Wittgenstein’s Paradox” in Chapter 9 arises because someone who really means “I’m filth” is undermining what she is saying *by* saying it, because saying it is evidence that she is not (just) filth. A person who really thinks she is worthless or evil demonstrates that she has some worth *by* really thinking—and saying—this. Thus sufficiently extreme self-hatred self-refutes.

8. I hope that this ends the book on what can fairly be called a positive note. . . .

9. I will develop this point at length in my and Hutchinson’s *Liberatory philosophy: Thinking through Wittgenstein’s ‘Philosophical Investigations’* (forthcoming). It is already more or less present in many of my exegetical writings on Wittgenstein.

10. Chapters 10 and 11, I hope, have already shown the reader why the charge of ‘Anti-Philosophy!’ against Wittgenstein is so misleading.

11. Farnham: Ashgate, 2012, edited by Simon Summers.

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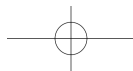
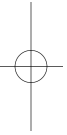
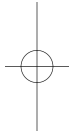
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Index

- abstraction, 12, 97, 114, 121, 122, 123, 126, 129, 131, 134n23, 135n28, 148, 151, 175, 177n7, 182n31, 231, 255
- addition, skeptical challenge to, 78–96.
See also scepticism.
- aliefs, 199n12
- analytic philosophy, xi, 10, 13n9, 31, 35, 36n6, 40n32, 111n17, 130, 136n40, 138n50, 150, 151n1, 155n30, 187, 206, 207, 210, 222n11, 243, 251n66
- analytic versus synthetic distinction, 37n15
- anti-logicism, 20, 34, 40n28, 42n39
- anti-realism, 52, 63n33, 67, 78, 125–126, 136n38, 233, 249n32. *See also* realism.
- anti-semitism, 160–161, 167–172, 173–175. *See also* automatons, seeing humans as; Holocaust; humanity, (non) acknowledgement of; Nazism; racism.
- arithmetic, grounding of. *See* mathematics, foundations of.
- asceticism, 203, 204, 204–205, 209–222, 222n5, 222n6, 222n10, 224n31, 226n51
- aspect seeing, 129, 167, 169, 171–172, 177n9, 181n29, 182n31, 185n61, 235
- Asperger Syndrome. *See* autism.
- atheism, 211–214, 217, 218
- attachment, 230–237, 239, 246, 248n26.
See also concepts, non-attachment to; contemplative method (of dealing with negative emotions); delusion—philosophical; mindfulness; overcoming; theses, philosophical.
- Auschwitz, 170, 171, 177n8, 182n34, 183n41, 184n54, 185n55, 185n57. *See also* automatons, seeing humans as; Holocaust; humanity, (non) acknowledgement of; Nazism.
- autism, 165–166
- automatons, seeing humans as, 9, 159, 161–162, 167–172, 174, 176, 178n13–179n14, 181n29, 181n30, 184n54. *See also* anti-semitism; humanity, (non) acknowledgement of; racism.
- Ayer, A.J., 60n10
- Azande, 125, 135n30
- backward induction, 8–9, 115, 136n40, 140, 142–144, 146–149, 151n3–152n4, 152n11, 154n20, 154n21, 154n22. *See also* paradoxes—backward induction; game theory; rational choice theory.
- Baker, Gordon, xi, 4, 41n37, 182n33, 185n59, 249n39–250n40, 260n5
- baldness, 114, 115, 116, 118, 118–119, 123, 125–126, 127, 131, 132n8, 133n13, 134n19, 135n28, 137n45, 152n5
- Barjavel, Rene, 63n31
- Baz, Avner, 14n21
- bedrock, the, 234–235, 236, 249n32
- behaviorism, 181n30, 182n33, 208
- bipolar disorder, 188
- Blade Runner*, 181n30, 183n44
- borderline cases. *See* vagueness.
- Bouwsma, O.K., 62n18, 85, 86
- brain, right versus left hemisphere, 138n50, 151n1, 182n32. *See also* McGilchrist, Ian.
- Brooks, Cleanthe, 1–2
- Browning, Christopher, 168, 170–171
- Brueckner, Anthony, 107, 108
- Buddha, 241, 242, 243, 244, 252n75
- Buddhism (Zen), 4, 12, 155n26, 222, 229–253n84, 257. *See also* meditation;

- Rinzai (form of Zen); Soto (form of Zen).
- Burns, Linda, 132n7
- Canfield, John V., 238
- causal loops, 48, 58, 60n7, 60n13–61n14
- Cavell, Stanley, 13n12, 72n6, 73n13, 96, 124, 161, 165, 176, 177n8, 179n15, 181n30, 182n33, 185n58, 186n65, 240
- Cerbone, David, 36n7, 37n14, 124, 134n25, 135n32, 135n34
- CERN results, 60n6
- Chisholm, R., 60n10
- Chomsky, Noam, 6–7, 65–74n21, 75, 102n40, 132n3, 256; on concepts, 67, 69
- Christianity, 204, 209–210, 212, 214, 224n31
- civil status (of paradoxes). *See* paradoxes—civil status of.
- classes, in logicism, 20, 24, 25, 26–27, 35n1, 39n24, 40n32. *See also* paradox—Russell’s; Russell, Bertrand—no-class theory; self-inclusion, problem of; set theory.
- Coetzee, J. M., 182n35
- cognitive science, 51, 65, 136n36, 195
- color: concepts. *See* color—terms. : as sense data, 243, 252n70; in anti-private language arguments, 164, 180n18; charts, 129, 136n42, 136n43; terms, 116–118, 119, 123, 126–127, 128, 129, 130–131, 133n11, 133n12, 134n19, 136n39, 136n42, 136n43, 137n45
- communicative acts, 148–149, 150
- community, conception of, 67, 175, 197, 201n32
- Conant, James, 124, 134n25, 176, 179n15, 184n53, 207, 208, 223n15, 225n40, 232, 238, 248n22, 250n41, 250n45, 257
- concepts: breakdown in normal use of, 190, 194, 195, 200n20, 200n26. *See also* logic—in psychopathological illness. ; color. *See* color—terms. ; depiction within this manuscript of, xi; forensic, 113; importance of context/civil status for. *See* conditions for application of terms; paradoxes—civil status of; context, importance of. ; limitation by, 55–56, 64n35; logically alien. *See* logically alien thought. ; non-attachment to, 236; *See also* attachment. ; time. *See* metaphors—of time. ; time travel. *See* time travel—conceptual impossibility of; metaphors—of time. ; *See also* Frege, Gottlob—on concepts; Kripke, Saul—on concepts; Chomsky, Noam—on concepts.
- conceptual independence, 110n5
- conceptual metaphors. *See* metaphor.
- conceptual relativism. *See* relativity—conceptual.
- conceptual scheme, 69, 135n29
- conceptual vagueness. *See* vagueness.
- conditions for application of terms, 7–8, 114, 127–128, 131, 141, 144, 145, 146, 152n10. *See also* paradox—civil status of a; vagueness.
- consciousness, 166–167, 192
- consciousness, split, 192
- consistency in rule-following, 80, 84–85, 92, 94
- constitutive conceptualization of logic. *See* Frege, Gottlob—constitutive conceptualization of logic.
- constructivism, 50, 63n33
- contemplative method (of dealing with negative emotions), 239, 245. *See also* meditation; mindfulness.
- context principle, Frege’s. *See* Frege, Gottlob—context principle.
- context, importance of, 2, 8, 39n23, 72n6, 98n5, 114, 116, 117–119, 120, 123, 127–131, 132n8, 133n16, 134n19, 135n28, 136n43, 137n48–138n49, 138n50, 140, 144, 152n10, 133n13, 169, 181n30, 244, 248n26. *See also* conditions for application of terms; paradox—civil status of.
- contextualism, 8, 114, 131, 131
- continental philosophy, 206, 207, 210, 222n11
- contradiction. *See* paradox.

- civil status of a. *See* paradox—civil status of a.
- contradictions: in formal systems, 19, 27, 29, 30, 33–34, 37n13, 38n18, 40n32, 42n39; true, 9, 13n9, 242–243
- conventionalism, 41n37, 110n5
- cooperation as rational action, 148, 151n3, 154n21
- Craig, Edward, 107–108, 110n12
- Crary, Alice, 124, 134n24, 135n26, 135n32
- cryogenesis, 45–46, 47, 53
- cyborgs. *See* automatons, seeing humans as.
- Dasein*, 62n28
- Davidson, Donald, 106–107, 110n12, 135n29
- Deans, Rob, 14n19
- delusion: lived, 161, 181n30, 236–237; of sense, 53, 59, 241; philosophical, 168, 173, 175, 179n14, 215, 226n46, 229, 230, 231, 236, 238, 239, 240, 241, 243, 246. *See also* paradox—of delusion; philosophical theses. ; psychological, 10, 14n16, 190, 192, 193, 194
- Descartes, René, 46, 242, 245. *See also* dualism—Cartesian; skepticism—Cartesian.
- determinate meaning, possession of, 85, 87, 88, 89, 92, 117
- Diamond Sutra, the, 242, 252n75
- Diamond, Cora, 4, 11–12, 13n11, 25, 37n14, 37n17, 60n12, 69, 73n10, 78, 98n5, 111n15, 141, 176, 208, 223n15, 225n40, 232, 233, 234, 248n22, 249n30, 251n66, 257, 260n5
- Dick, Philip K., 181n30
- dissolving paradoxes. *See* paradox—dissolving of.
- doubling, 180n17, 184n54
- Doubt, Keith, 200n20
- Dr. Who*, 6, 53, 57, 59n3, 62n28, 63n31, 153n14
- dreams, 46, 49, 181n30
- drugs, 244. *See also* LSD.
- Du Maurier, Daphne, 60n6
- dualism, 210; Cartesian, 48, 166–167, 242, 259. *See also* skepticism—Cartesian.
- duck-rabbit, 167, 185n61
- Dupuy, J. P. and Grinbaum, A., 198n8
- Ebersole, Frank B., 13n12, 49, 55, 60n10, 61n15, 62n26, 251n58
- economics, 9, 139, 155n27, 179n14
- elucidations: *See also* indirect argument; transitional nonsense. : in Frege, 19, 21–22, 23, 24, 25, 26–29, 31, 32, 32–33, 34, 35, 36n12–37n15, 39n20, 40n32, 41n36, 42n40; *See also* Frege, Gottlob—propositions as elucidations. ; in Nietzsche, 226n49; in Wittgenstein, 33, 36n10, 41n35, 208, 229
- empathy, 97, 163, 168, 175, 182n35, 184n47
- endnotes, guidelines for interpreting, ixn3
- enlightenment, 153n14, 231, 236, 237, 242, 244
- epistemology, 42n39, 97, 169
- equality, 182n31, 258
- ethnomethodology, 136n41, 253n81
- Evans, Vyvyan, 51–52, 59n5, 73n8
- everyday: life, 9, 13n12, 55, 57, 97, 123, 135n28, 134n23, 146, 147, 149, 154n23, 159, 165, 166, 168, 169, 170–171, 174, 178n10, 180n27, 180n28, 183n41, 236, 243, 259; language. *See* language—ordinary.
- expressivism, 253n82
- faith, 204, 213, 218, 224n31, 224n34, 226n51
- family resemblance, 2, 51, 125, 260n5
- fascism, 160, 173, 186n65, 197, 201n32
- filth (being), 10–11, 188–190, 191, 192–195, 196–197, 198n4, 198n5, 198n9, 201n27, 201n28, 201n30, 227n63, 256, 260n7
- Finkelstein, David, 199n16
- fish out of water, 68
- Flatland, 64n35
- Floyd, Juliet, 13n11

- fly-bottle, 86, 88, 118, 149, 217, 218, 229, 244, 249n34
- focusing, 243
- forensic concepts. *See* concepts—forensic.
- Frege, Gottlob: analytic interpretation of, 23, 31; basic law V, 27, 33, 39n20; *Begriffsschrift*. *See* concept script. ; concept script, 22, 23, 27–28, 29–31, 32, 33, 34, 36n12–37n13, 37n14, 37n17–38n18, 39n21, 39n22, 40n28, 40n32, 42n40; constitutive conceptualization of logic, 42n40; context principle, 21, 25, 32, 40n28; on concepts, 6, 19–43n41, 256; on objects, 6, 21, 22, 23, 24–25, 26, 27, 30, 42n40; propositions as elucidations, 21–22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29–30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 37n13, 37n15, 41n36. *See also* elucidations—in Frege; propositions. ; symbolism, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32–33, 37n17; therapeutic understanding of, 6, 22, 35; truth, 22, 23, 26, 27, 37n15, 42n40; *See also* classes, in logicism; logicism; Paradox—Russell’s.
- future (the) of philosophy, 216, 216–217, 220, 221, 224n28. *See also* time—the future.
- Gaita, Raimond, 168, 180n20, 184n52, 184n54, 185n59
- game theory, 139, 148, 148–149, 151n3, 153n15, 153n18, 250n44
- games, 125–126. *See also* game theory; language—games; numbers game.
- gardening (as philosophy), 229–230
- Garfinkel, Harold, 128
- Geuss, Raymond, 182n31
- giving oneself instructions, 91–92
- God, 64n35, 122, 191, 193, 204, 205, 211, 212–213, 224n28, 224n34, 225n36, 242, 245
- Gödel, 22, 37n14, 37n16
- Goldstein, Laurence, 39n24, 40n32
- Goodman, Nelson, 99n7
- Graff, Delia, 138n50
- grammar, 41n37, 52, 55–56, 66, 70, 72n6, 73n8, 179n14, 223n18, 240, 249n29, 249n39
- grammatical fictions, 57
- grammatical remarks/reminders, 37n13, 38n18, 81
- grandfather. *See* paradox—grandfather.
- grasping a rule, 75, 91
- gray areas. *See* vagueness.
- grue, 101n24
- Hacker, P, 12, 41n37, 57, 72n6, 73n16, 74n18, 182n33, 225n40, 227n57, 237–238, 240, 241, 249n32, 250n40, 250n41, 260n5
- Hacking, Ian, 85, 86, 90, 100n19, 100n22–101n24
- hands, belief in, 96, 107–108, 109, 110n11
- Hanh, Thich Nhat, 241, 252n75
- Hanley, Richard, 60n7
- Harris, Thomas, 183n44
- heaps, 7–8, 96, 113–116, 118, 119, 121–131, 132n5, 132n8, 134n19, 135n28, 138n50, 152n5, 152n10, 257, 258
- Heidegger, Martin, 11, 62n28–63n29, 180n27–180n28, 204, 206, 214, 221, 245
- Heller, Erich, 222n4
- Heraclitus, 52
- Holocaust, 10, 173, 182n35, 183n44, 184n49. *See also* anti-semitism; Auschwitz; automatons, seeing humans as; humanity, (non) acknowledgement of; as; Nazism; racism.
- horse, concept of, 20, 21, 23, 23–25, 26, 27, 28
- Houghton, David, 120, 129, 133n17, 135n28
- houses of air, 65, 67, 95, 124
- hovering, 5, 23, 25, 53, 55, 56, 57, 86, 88, 89, 93, 99n10, 127, 128, 129, 141, 192, 233, 257
- Hughes, Ted, 60n11
- humanity, (non)acknowledgement of, 160, 161, 163, 165, 167–175, 175–176, 179n14, 181n30, 182n33, 184n54, 185n57, 185n59, 195. *See also*

- automatons (seeing humans as); empathy.
- Hutchinson, Phil, 185n57, 248n26, 251n58
- ideal language theory, 38n18
- imagining one can imagine, 6, 48, 49, 50, 53, 54, 57, 60n12, 67, 68, 70, 77, 79, 82, 83, 86, 91, 100n21, 129, 170, 195. *See also* metaphors—of time.
- indirect argument / indirection, 184n51, 185n63, 206–207, 208, 214, 237, 239, 246. *See also* elucidations; transitional nonsense.
- individual benefit, pursuing, 149, 151n3, 154n24–155n25, 155n27, 250n44. *See also* game theory; rational choice theory.
- induction from past to future practice, 78, 79, 80, 86, 87, 89, 90, 91, 100n17, 101n24, 101n33, 109, 111n18, 116
- ineffabilism, 22, 33, 41n36, 71, 78, 207, 208, 230, 233, 236, 237, 249n29. *See also* elucidations; truth.
- infinity, 100n22, 102n40, 133n12, 239, 242, 243
- intellectualism, over-/narrow, 4, 12, 96–97, 165–166, 175, 180n27, 180n28, 184n51, 198n9, 232, 235, 242–243, 244, 245, 246, 256, 257. *See also* attachment; philosophical theses, unnecessary of.
- Jacobson, Anne J., 200n23, 200n26–201n27
- James, William, 149, 226n51
- Johnson, R.W., 185n57
- Jolley, Kelly D., 39n24
- Katagiri, Dainin, 240, 250n56
- Kerry, Benno, 21–22, 23, 24, 27, 41n36
- Kneale, Martha and Kneale, William, 40n32
- knowledge, 107, 142, 144, 148, 152n4, 152n11, 159
- Kripke, Saul, 6, 7, 11, 65, 66, 71, 72, 72n3, 75–111n19, 114, 154n20, 195, 197, 249n32, 249n33, 256. *See also* skepticism—Kripkean. ; on concepts, 7, 105–111n19, 256
- Kuczynski, John-Michael, 119, 133n16, 133n17–133n18, 134n21
- Kuhn, Thomas, 64n37, 71, 74n19, 125, 135n29, 135n30, 136n36, 226n51
- Kuusela, Oskari, 71, 176, 179n15
- ladder, throwing away the, 12, 22, 71, 95, 214, 225n40, 229, 230, 233, 234, 249n29
- Laing, R., 192, 194, 196
- Lakoff, George and Johnson, Mark, 51–52, 59n5, 61n16, 73n12, 259
- language: argument regarding (anti-)private, 9, 160, 162, 163–165, 169, 175, 176, 179n14, 179n15, 180n18, 181n30, 182n33; being inside, not outside, 6–7, 24, 64n42, 67, 67–72, 73n10, 73n14; common/shared, 73n8, 86, 86–87, 88, 89–90, 101n34; deep structure of, 6, 65, 69, 70, 71; as founded on logic. *See* ideal language theory. ; games, 1, 36n10, 50, 72n6, 125, 192, 223n18, 238, 241; grammar of, 41n37, 55–56, 70, 72n6, 73n8, 179n14, 223n18, 240; meta- versus object-, 109; ordinary, 13n12, 33, 37n17–38n18, 55, 67, 68, 72n6, 72n7, 77, 90, 97, 143, 231, 234; policing, 2, 57, 126, 232, 241, 248n26, 249n29, 249n32, 257; as rule-governed, 72n6. *See also* concepts; meaning; grasping a rule; rule-following. ; tricks of, 23, 76, 77, 95–96, 97, 102n45, 109, 143, 178n11
- leaving everything as it is, 67, 85–86, 232, 236, 243, 244, 245, 246, 252n75. *See also* meditation; mindfulness.
- left brain. *See* brain, right versus left hemisphere.
- Levi, Don, 132n8, 138n49, 138n51
- Levinas, Emmanuel, 174–175
- Lewis, David, 53–54, 58, 63n29, 63n30, 110n5
- lifting weights, 94
- Lifton, Robert Jay, 169, 170, 171, 171–172, 177n8, 180n17, 183n41, 184n47, 184n49, 184n52, 184n54

- linguistics: Chomskian, 6–7, 65–74n21; generative, 69–70; as science. *See* linguistics—Chomskian.
- Locke, John, 115, 133n9
- logic: of backward induction. *See* backward induction. : constitutive conception of, 42n40; foundations for, 30, 32, 41n36, 73n10; as foundation for language. *See* ideal language theory. ; as foundation for mathematics. *See* logicism. ; meta-perspective on, 22, 23, 32; in psychopathological illness, 10, 190–195, 198n9, 201n28; *See also* concepts, breakdown in normal use of; delusion—psychological; madness. ; as a science, 42n40, 73n10; Wittgenstein’s philosophy of, 25, 28–29, 33–34, 37n17, 38n18, 39n24, 42n40, 73n10, 179n15; *See also* language.
- logical paradoxes, merely. *See* paradoxes—philosophers’.
- logical positivism. *See* positivism.
- logical versus psychological, 21, 25, 42n40, 110n4
- logically alien thought, 8, 99n10, 123, 124, 128, 130
- logicism, 7–6, 231. *See also* classes, in logicism; contradictions—in formal systems; conventionalism; Frege, Gottlob—concept-script; horse, concept of; Kerry, Benno; paradox—of the barber; self-inclusion, problem of; set theory.
- lot, a, 8, 127, 130, 137n48
- LSD, 81, 97. *See also* drugs.
- machines, seeing humans as. *See* automatons, seeing humans as.
- madness, 8, 10, 11, 78, 123, 171, 185n57, 188, 190, 195, 196, 200n20, 201n28, 205, 213
- many particle argument, 60n13. *See also* Monton, Bradley.
- mathematical strangers. *See* logically alien thought; woodsellers.
- mathematics: as complete, 135n26; as grammar, 41n37; logical foundations of, 20, 27, 28, 31, 32, 33, 34, 34–35, 38n18, 39n20, 41n35, 41n36, 41n37, 42n40. *See also* logicism. ; philosophy of, 32, 35, 36n6, 39n20, 40n31, 41n37, 42n39, 42n40, 102n43, 248n24; possibility of other kinds of, 75–103n50, 79, 80–81, 85, 99n9, 123, 124, 135n26; *See also* logically alien thought; quus; quaddition; woodsellers. ; teaching and learning of, 94–95, 101n25, 102n42, 102n43; Wittgenstein on, 28, 31–32, 33, 34, 38n19, 39n20, 40n32, 41n35, 41n37–42n38, 42n39, 42n40, 101n25, 102n43, 124, 135n26, 241, 248n24
- McDowell, John, 76, 91, 182n33
- McGilchrist, Ian, 45, 59n1, 113, 114, 115, 138n50, 151n1, 182n32, 203, 252n71, 259
- McGinn, C., 106, 110n5, 227n57
- McGinn, M., 41n35
- meaning: determinate. *See* determinate meaning, possession of. : intention as foundation for, 91–92, 94–95, 108, 110n5, 111n16; as mental state(s), 91, 92, 94, 102n43, 105, 106. *See also* concepts; rule-following. ; metalinguistic, 79, 91; as use, 39n23, 57, 66, 71, 88, 233–234, 248n26
- meditation, 12, 14n18, 150, 155n26, 232, 237, 239, 244, 245–246, 248n18, 249n35, 250n44, 252n75, 253n78, 253n79, 255. *See also* Buddhism (Zen); contemplative method (of dealing with negative emotions); leaving everything as it is; mindfulness.
- Mellor, D.H., 46
- Mengele, Joseph, 171, 177n8. *See also* Auschwitz.
- mental ill-health, 10, 11, 187–202n34. *See also* autism; bipolar disorder; concepts, breakdown in normal use of; consciousness, split; delusion—psychological; filth (being); madness; schizoid tendencies; schizophrenia.
- meringue, 121, 132n5, 135n28

- metaphor conceptual, 51–52, 62n21
- metaphors of time, 51–52, 59
- metaphysics, 11, 52, 63n33, 100n22, 117, 120, 121, 134n23, 170, 180n28, 204, 207, 210, 213, 214, 221, 224n34, 225n36, 230, 231, 232, 235, 244, 245, 246
- meta-surprise exam. *See* surprise exam — meta.
- mindfulness, 163, 246, 249n35, 253n82. *See also* attachment; contemplative method (of dealing with negative emotions); leaving everything as it is; meditation.
- mirror, holding up a, 219, 226n54
- money, as analogy for linguistic meaning, 90
- Monk, Ray, 248n24
- monks, baldness of, 116, 118, 133n13
- Monton, Bradley, 58, 60n7, 60n13–61n14, 64n41
- mood versus intellectual conviction, 96–97
- Moran, Richard, 199n19–200n20, 200n23
- Morris, Katherine, vii, 14n19, 200n22
- Muhlenbruck, Laura, 200n20
- Mulhall, Stephen, 162, 174, 176, 179n15, 181n30–182n31
- Murdoch, Iris, vii, 60n11
- natural kinds, 10, 195–196, 198n10, 200n23
- Nazism, 9, 159, 160, 161, 163, 164, 167–172, 174, 176, 177n8, 180n17, 180n27, 181n30–182n31, 182n35, 183n41, 183n42, 184n47, 184n49, 184n52, 184n54, 185n57, 210, 227n62. *See also* Auschwitz; anti-semitism; Holocaust; racism; swastika.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich, 11, 197, 203–228n65, 245, 257; first perfect nihilist, the, 204–205, 214, 216–217, 218–219, 220, 221, 222n5. *See also* nihilism. ; *Genealogy of Morality*, 11, 203, 203–204, 204–205, 210–216, 217–219, 220, 221, 224n31, 225n35–225n36, 225n44, 226n51, 226n52; last metaphysician, the, 11, 204, 210, 213, 214, 221, 224n34, 225n36; *Will to Power*, 204, 216–217, 222n5, 222n6, 225n44
- nihilism, 101n28, 204–205, 209, 210, 211, 212, 214, 215, 215–217, 218–219, 220, 222n5, 224n28, 226n51, 226n53
- nonsense, 3, 5, 10, 14n15, 19, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30–31, 33, 36n10, 36n11, 37n13, 37n14, 37n17–38n18, 39n20, 39n21, 40n32, 42n40, 56, 64n37, 90, 141, 181n30, 170, 187–188, 190, 191, 195, 207, 214, 215, 225n43, 226n54, 230, 232, 233, 235, 237, 241–242, 247n15, 249n30, 251n66, 257; of being outside language, 7; time travel as, 6, 50, 52, 53, 55–56, 57, 58, 61n15, 62n28–63n29, 63n31, 63n33, 64n35; transitional. *See* transitional nonsense.
- nothing, (attaining) in enlightenment, 240, 241–242. *See also* enlightenment.
- nothing, meaning. *See* nonsense; skepticism — meaning.
- nothing, saying, 22, 24, 25, 29, 86, 95, 96, 97, 98n4, 109, 111n15, 187–188. *See also* nonsense; skepticism — meaning.
- nothingness, 63n29, 124, 205, 215, 217, 218, 224n28, 227n63. *See also* nonsense.
- numbers game, 115, 116, 117, 123, 127, 132n8, 143, 152n10
- numbers, ontological status of, 41n37
- omniscient interpreter argument, 106–107
- othering, 9, 163, 164, 165, 168, 168–170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 176, 180n17, 181n30–182n31, 182n32, 182n33, 183n45–184n46, 184n52, 185n59, 257. *See also* anti-semitism; automatons (seeing humans as); empathy; humanity, (non)acknowledgement of; racism.
- overcoming, 7, 8, 10, 11, 22, 35, 36n7, 39n20, 55, 71, 75, 98n2, 134n23, 152n4, 155n27, 161, 165, 166, 171, 173, 175, 182n31, 182n33, 186n65, 187, 198n9, 206, 208, 212, 214,

- 214–215, 220, 221, 222n5, 223n21, 225n37, 228n64, 229, 230, 231, 234, 235, 236, 238, 239, 241, 242, 246–247, 249n38, 251n64, 257, 259. *See also* — indirect argument; ladder, throwing away the; mindfulness; transitional nonsense.
- pain, 9, 56, 159, 162, 164–165, 170, 172, 175, 176, 180n18, 185n55, 185n58. *See also* language — argument regarding (anti-)private.
- Palmer, Tony, 223n17
- paradigm cases, 71, 90, 102n43, 113, 117, 119–121, 123, 128, 129, 130, 134n19, 134n22, 175, 195, 257
- paradigms, 63n30, 64n37, 66, 71, 102n43, 113, 117, 128, 195, 205, 257. *See also* Kuhn, Thomas.
- paradox: backward induction, 9, 136n40, 139, 148, 150, 151n3, 152n10, 154n21, 256. *See also* backward induction; paradox — sorites; paradox — surprise exam. ; of the barber, 25–26; civil status of a, 2, 8, 13n12, 29, 113–138n52, 139–155n31, 177n7, 201n28, 258; *See also* conditions for application of terms; context, importance of. ; definition of, 1, 2–3, 5, 6; of delusion, 14n16; *See also* concepts — breakdown in normal use of; delusion; paradox — Moore's. ; Eroom's, 199n16; Finkelstein's. *See* paradox — Eroom's. ; grandfather, 53–54, 56, 58, 63n30; Kripke's rule-following, 7, 72, 75–111n19, 154n20, 195, 197, 256; Moore's, 10, 15n28, 153n13, 154n20, 187–202n34; of philosophical methodology, 4, 9, 11, 14n18, 150, 157, 197, 203–253n84, 257; *See also* paradox — Wittgenstein's. ; Russell's, 6, 19–43n41, 50, 256; sorites, 7–8, 96, 113–138n52, 139, 151n1, 152n5, 152n10, 153n18, 256; surprise exam, 8–9, 132, 133n16, 136n40, 139–155n31, 188, 255, 256–257; therapeutic diagnosis of, 2, 6, 22, 35, 50, 51, 53, 57, 63n33, 71, 95, 119, 130, 132n6, 196, 257, 258; paradoxes — dissolving as; philosophy as therapy; Wittgenstein, Ludwig — therapeutic method. ; twin, 47, 61n14; unexpected hanging, 153n13, 154n20; of vagueness, 127; *See also* paradox — sorites; vagueness. ; Wang's, 137n48–138n49; Wittgensteinian. *See* paradox — Kripke's rule-following. ; Wittgenstein's. *See* paradox — Moore's.
- paradoxes: dissolving of, 2, 2–3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 17, 51, 75, 77, 96, 97, 105, 114, 116, 117, 118, 121, 123–125, 126, 131, 132n6, 133n18, 146, 147, 150, 152n10, 157, 179n15, 196, 233, 255, 256, 256–257, 259n2. *See also* paradox — therapeutic diagnosis of; philosophy as therapy; Wittgenstein, Ludwig — therapeutic method. ; lived, 4, 9–12, 150, 157, 159–260n11; philosophers', 1–9, 17, 19–155n31, 157, 159, 175, 255, 256, 256–257, 258, 259, 259n4; *See also* delusion — philosophical. ; real-life. *See* paradoxes — lived. ; true. *See* true contradictions.
- paradoxical methodology. *See* paradox — of philosophical methodology.
- Parfit, Derek, 45
- Peacocke, C., 110n5
- Perloff, Marjorie, 160
- perspicuous presentation, 178n13, 225n40, 237
- Pettit, Philip, 148, 151n3, 153n18
- Phillips, D. Z., 238–240, 252n75
- philosophical practice, vii, 11, 14n18, 19, 39n20, 135n28, 203, 231, 234–235, 237, 241–242, 243, 250n56. *See also* philosophy as therapy; practice; Wittgenstein, Ludwig — therapeutic method.
- philosophical theses, unnecessity of, 8, 24, 41n36, 41n37, 71, 118, 120, 126, 129, 131, 136n36, 138n50, 165–166, 175, 178n10, 206, 208, 210, 230, 231,

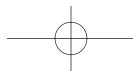
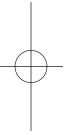
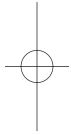
- 232, 233, 238, 244, 249n29, 249n32, 258. *See also* attachment; delusion—philosophical; elucidations; intellectualism, over-/narrow; truth.
- philosophy as therapy, 2, 53, 132, 161, 176, 179n15, 229, 231, 235, 236, 242, 252n75, 258. *See also* Wittgenstein, Ludwig—therapeutic method.
- Pirates of Penzance*, 1
- plus function, the, 78–80, 81–82, 83–84, 85–86, 87, 89, 91, 93, 99n10, 99n14, 100n16, 100n22, 101n24, 105, 108, 111n16. *See also* quus function, the.
- positivism (logical), 37n14, 41n36, 207, 208, 232, 233, 248n24, 249n29
- possible worlds, 121
- post-modernism, 67, 196, 224n32, 250n41
- practice, vii, 4, 11–12, 14n18, 19, 23, 24, 39n20, 41n37, 77, 78, 80, 92, 93, 94, 97, 100n22, 102n43, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 126, 128, 135n26, 135n28, 135n30, 136n42, 150, 166, 169, 182n34, 203, 229, 231, 234–235, 236–237, 239, 241, 242, 243, 244, 246, 249n32, 249n35, 250n56, 252n75, 253n79, 253n81, 259. *See also* induction from past to future practice; philosophical practice.
- pragmatics, 66, 72, 133n16
- pre-announced surprise exam. *See* paradox—surprise exam.
- prisoner's dilemma, 148, 151n3–152n4, 153n15, 153n18, 154n21
- private language. *See* language—argument regarding (anti-)private.
- propositions, 19–20, 20–28, 29–30, 31, 32, 35, 36n10, 36n11, 37n13, 37n15, 37n16, 38n18, 39n22, 39n23, 39n24, 40n32, 41n37–42n38, 42n40, 47, 50, 56, 69, 70, 82, 83, 100n19, 100n21, 105, 107, 107–108, 109, 133n16, 136n39, 148–149, 153n13, 161, 187, 206, 208, 215, 229, 230, 231, 233–234, 235, 242, 248n28–249n29, 252n70. *See also* Frege, Gottlob—propositions as elucidations.
- psychopathology, 4, 10, 15n28, 168, 171, 187, 190, 193, 194, 195, 197, 198n9, 201n28, 244, 252n75, 257, 259n3. *See also* mental ill-health.
- psychotherapy, vii, 2, 235, 252n75. *See also* paradox—therapeutic diagnosis of; philosophy as therapy; Wittgenstein, Ludwig—therapeutic method.
- Putnam, Hilary, 42n40, 179n15
- quaddition, 83, 85–86, 93. *See also* quus function, the.
- Quine, W. V., 13n9, 37n15
- quotation marks, use of in writing, xi, 109
- quus function, the, 79–84, 85, 87, 95, 99n10, 99n13, 99n14, 100n15, 100n20, 100n22, 101n24. *See also* quaddition.
- racism, 9, 163, 169, 170, 174, 175, 176, 177n8, 180n20, 181n30. *See also* anti-semitism; humanity, (non)acknowledgement of; othering.
- raining, belief that it is, 187, 189, 190, 192, 195
- rational choice theory, 148, 149–150, 151n3, 154n24–155n25, 155n27, 250n44. *See also* backward induction; economics; game theory.
- rationality, 96, 97, 121, 135n28, 139, 148–150, 151n3–152n4, 153n13, 153n15, 154n21, 155n25, 161, 190, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 199n18, 201n28, 201n29, 218, 238, 250n49. *See also* delusion; madness; rational choice theory.
- Rawls, John, 155n25, 182n31
- realism, 52, 100n22, 125–126, 136n38. *See also* anti-realism.
- redness, 117, 119, 127, 129, 130, 136n44, 137n45, 243, 252n70. *See also* color.
- reductio ad absurdum*, 11, 40n32, 108, 207, 214, 218, 221, 226n50. *See also* ladder, throwing away the; overcoming.
- relativism: conceptual, 121, 122, 124, 125, 135n29; ethical, 130, 179n15–180n16

- relativity: general, 59n5–60n6, 63n34;
special, 47, 59n5, 63n34
- resolute. *See* Wittgenstein, Ludwig—
resolute reading.; *See also* paradox—
therapeutic diagnosis of;
philosophy as therapy; transitional
nonsense; nonsense; Wittgenstein,
Ludwig—new (reading of);
Wittgenstein, Ludwig—therapeutic
method.
- riddles, 1–2, 13n11, 141, 241
- Rinzai (form of Zen), 237, 241. *See also*
Buddhism (Zen); Soto (form of
Zen).
- Rorty, Richard, 65, 66, 110n12, 224n32
- rule-following, 7, 75, 76, 78, 80, 81, 82,
83, 85, 86, 91, 92, 93, 97, 98n5,
100n22, 101n25, 102n40, 102n41, 106,
113, 116, 128, 197, 240, 249n39. *See also*
grasping a rule; language—as
rule-governed; language—games;
language—policing; paradox—
Kripke’s rule-following;
skepticism—rule. ; consistency in.
See consistency in rule-following. ;
linguistic versus mental, 106
- rules. *See* rule-following.
- Russell, Bertrand, 6, 27, 30, 31, 34,
36n12, 37n14, 37n15, 37n16, 38n18,
39n20, 39n24, 40n32, 41n36, 41n37,
42n38, 60n10, 197n2, 231. *See also*
paradox—Russell’s. ; no-class
theory, 35n1; Russell’s paradox. *See*
paradox—Russell’s. ; theory of
types, 20, 22, 32, 33, 34, 40n32; *See also*
set theory.
- Ryleanism, 208, 223n17
- Sainsbury, R.M., 13n9, 132n4, 135n28,
136n42
- Santner, Eric, 177n8
- Sartorelli, Joseph, 106, 108, 111n16
- Sass, Louis, 14n16, 102n46, 163, 180n17,
192, 200n20, 201n28, 244, 259. *See also*
delusion.
- Sätze, 206, 230. *See also* propositions;
skepticism.
- scare quotes, use of, xi, 98n4, 130,
227n62. *See also* quotation marks.
- schizoid tendencies, 163, 180n16,
180n17, 182n32. *See also*
psychopathology.
- schizophrenia, 200n24, 244. *See also*
psychopathology.
- Schreber, Daniel Paul, 177n8
- science, vii, 65, 67, 71, 73n14, 74n19,
135n30, 211, 212, 213, 217, 218,
224n31, 224n34, 226n51, 241, 256,
258; cognitive. *See* cognitive
science. ; fiction, 6; of language, 67,
71, 73n14; of logic, 32, 42n40, 73n10;
philosophy of, 74n19, 226n51
- sciences, human/social, 73n8, 113,
136n41
- scientism, 42n40, 66, 196, 200n26, 239,
241, 246
- Scott, Ridley, 181n30
- seeing-as. *See* aspect seeing.
- self-criticism, 11, 161, 163, 172, 189, 190,
193, 194, 203, 257, 259n2, 260n7
- self-hatred. *See* self-criticism.
- self-inclusion, problem of, 20, 33. *See also*
paradox—Russell’s.
- self-loathing. *See* self-criticism.
- sense, felt, 243, 251n68
- sense of time, a, 45, 245, 252n75
- sense, having/making, 31, 34, 36n11,
39n21, 42n40, 47, 49, 50, 51, 54, 55,
56, 57, 58, 61n15, 62n17, 62n28,
63n31, 72, 73n8, 85, 86, 90, 95, 125,
192, 206, 232. *See also* delusion—of
sense; nonsense.
- sense-data, 136n39, 252n70
- sentences. *See* propositions.
- set theory, 20, 34, 38n18, 40n32. *See also*
Russell, Bertrand—theory of types.
- Sider, Theodore, 61n15
- silence, invocation to, 88, 90, 232
- skepticism: Cartesian, 77, 98, 102n45,
166–167. *See also* Descartes, René;
dualism—Cartesian. ; concept, 105,
106, 106–109, 110n4, 110n5, 110n12,
111n16, 256; constitutive, 78, 86, 93,
256; *See also* skepticism—meaning. ;
content. *See* skepticism—concept;
skepticism—meaning. ; epistemic,
77, 78; ethical. *See* relativism—
ethical. ; existential, 101n24, 102n35;

- inductive, 101n23; *See also* induction from past to future practice. ; Kantian, 78, 93, 98; *See also* skepticism—metaphysical. ; Kripkean, 7, 65, 76, 78–98, 98n4, 99n6, 99n10, 99n14, 100n17, 100n19, 100n22, 101n24, 101n27, 101n34–102n35, 105–111n19, 195; *See also* skepticism—rule. ; linguistic. *See* skepticism—meaning. ; meaning, 65, 77, 78, 89–91, 92, 93, 99n10, 99n14, 100n19, 101n34–102n35, 102n45, 105, 106, 109, 110n3, 110n5, 111n16, 111n17; *See also* skepticism—constitutive. ; metaphysical, 7, 100n22; *See also* skepticism—Kantian. ; philosophical, 77, 96, 96–98, 98n4; (post-), 110n12; pragmatic, 77; Pyrrhonian, 236; rule, 7, 78, 82, 86, 96, 96, 98n4, 100n17, 100n22, 105, 106, 109, 111n15; *See also* skepticism—Kripkean. ; of scientism, 66; semantic. *See* skepticism—meaning.
- slavery, 177n8, 181n30
- Sluga, Hans, 225n40
- small steps, 119, 123, 129, 131, 134n19.
See also paradox—sorites.
- Smith, Nicholas J. J., 63n30
- Soames, S., 131
- Sobel, Jordan Howard, 154n21
- social being, 162. *See also* community, conception of.
- solipsism, 4, 96, 111n15, 159, 163, 169, 174, 177n8, 197n1, 201n32. *See also* automatons (seeing humans as); racism; skepticism—Cartesian.
- sorites. *See* paradox—sorites.
- soritical reasoning, 7, 115, 116, 116–117, 119–120, 123–124, 127, 129, 130, 132n6, 134n23; *See also* paradox—sorites.
- Soto (form of Zen), 237, 241, 244. *See also* Buddhism (Zen); Rinzai (form of Zen).
- soul (a), 48, 181n30. *See also* aspect-seeing.
- spatial metaphors. *See* metaphors—of time.
- spectator’s stance, 50, 168, 169, 175, 184n46, 201n27
- statements. *See* propositions.
- stars, as time travel, 49, 60n10. *See also* time; time travel.
- Stern, David, 160
- Straus, Nina Pelikan, 186n64
- Strawson, P.F., 13n12, 183n45, 251n58
- Sugden, Robert, 148, 151n3, 153n18, 154n22, 154n23. *See also* rational choice theory.
- suicide, 62n26, 63n30, 171, 185n55, 194, 198n4
- supervaluationism, 131, 135n28. *See also* vagueness.
- surprise exam. *See also* paradox—surprise exam. : as a communicative act, 148–149, 150; conditions for impossibility of their being a (pre-announced), 141, 143, 144; conditions for possibility of there being a (pre-announced), 141–142, 143, 144–145, 147; meta-, 146, 147, 148, 152n9, 153n15, 153n19, 155n30; as a motivational tool, 140, 143, 145, 146, 149; philosophers’ description of, 140, 141, 147
- surprise kick, 143
- surprise party, 147, 153n19–154n20
- surprise, getting a, 145. *See also* paradox—surprise exam; paradox—unexpected hanging; surprise exam; surprise kick; surprise party.
- surprise, spoiling or keeping a, 147, 150, 154n20
- Suzuki, Shunryu, 229, 230, 233, 236, 237, 238, 239, 241, 243, 246, 247, 252n72, 252n75, 253n78, 253n82. *See also* Buddhism (Zen); Soto (form of Zen).
- Swastika, 9, 167, 169, 169–170, 176, 181n29. *See also* Nazism.
- symbolism. *See* Frege, Gottlob—symbolism.
- tallness, 123, 127, 130

- tautology, 23, 25, 29, 41n35, 69
 tea cup, Zen story of, 253n82
 theory. *See* philosophical theses.
 therapy. *See* philosophy as therapy;
 psychotherapy.
 Theweleit, Klaus, 172, 184n47
 time: as a dimension, 50, 51, 52, 61n15;
 endurantism vs perdurantism, 52;
 as fixed, 53–55, 62n26, 63n33. *See*
also metaphors—of time. ; future,
 conceptualization of the, 46, 47, 49,
 50–51, 53, 54, 54–55, 61n15, 62n26;
See also future (the) of philosophy;
 induction from past to future
 practice; metaphors—of time; time
 travel—future. ; machine, 45, 46, 47,
 48, 49, 50, 55, 60n11, 62n26, 64n41;
 metaphysics of, 51, 63n33, 244, 245;
 past, conceptualization of the, 48,
 49, 49, 50, 52, 53, 54, 55, 61n15,
 62n26, 63n33; *See also* induction
 from past to future practice;
 metaphors—of time; time travel—
 past. ; spatial metaphors for. *See*
 metaphors—of time. ; tourism, 55
 time travel. *See also* paradox—
 Grandfather's. : conceptual
 impossibility of, 6, 56, 62n21, 256;
 future, 45–48, 49, 50–51, 52, 53–54,
 54–55, 59n4, 61n15, 62n26; *See also*
 future (the) of philosophy; time—
 the future, conceptualization of. ;
 Niven's Law, 48; of particles, 58,
 60n13–61n14; past, 47, 48–50, 51, 52,
 53–54, 55, 60n10, 60n11, 61n14,
 63n29; *See also* time—the past,
 conceptualization of. ; photographs
 as, 49–50, 60n11; as pure spirit,
 48–49, 61n14, 62n28; requiring
 return journeys, 47, 49, 50, 54, 60n6;
 sleeping as, 46–47, 49, 53, 57; spatial
 metaphors for. *See* time—spatial
 metaphors for.
 time's arrow, 61n14
 Tocqueville, Alexis de, 181n30–182n31
 toothache, 55, 164, 180n18
 transitional nonsense, 43n41, 71,
 182n31, 199n18, 203, 223n21, 234,
 237, 243, 251n66, 257
 Travis, Charles, 50, 72n6, 136n44,
 137n48–138n49
 true contradictions. *See*
 contradictions—true. : *See also*
 paradox—civil status of a.
 truth, 209–216, 218–219, 220, 221,
 222n5, 223n21, 224n32, 224n34,
 225n38, 225n43, 226n51, 228n64, 237,
 242–243, 244–245, 251n66. *See also*
 attachment; enlightenment; Frege,
 Gottlob—truth; ineffabilism. ; in
 language, 10, 13n9, 22, 23, 26, 28,
 37n15, 39n24, 42n40, 50, 56, 70–71,
 78, 83, 109, 136n36, 149, 179n14, 188,
 189, 190, 191–192, 197; *See also*
 elucidations; indirect argument;
 ladder, throwing away the.
 Überwinden. *See* overcoming.
 uncanny, 167, 179n14, 240
 undetermined borderlines, 117–118,
 123, 126, 131. *See also* vagueness.
 universalistic philosophy, 215, 219,
 225n42
 universals, linguistic and social, 7, 69,
 73n8
 vagueness, 113, 114, 115, 117–118, 119,
 120, 121, 123, 126, 127, 128, 129,
 129–130, 131, 132n5, 134n22, 135n28,
 143. *See also* paradox—sorites;
 soritical reasoning; undetermined
 borderlines.
 verificationism, 207, 208, 235
 Vranas, Peter, 63n30
 Waismann, F., 227n57
 Whitehead, Alfred North, 31
 will, the, 2, 149, 150, 163, 174, 190, 194,
 198n9, 205, 210, 211, 213, 213–214,
 217, 218, 222n6, 223n21, 224n28,
 224n31, 225n38, 226n51, 232,
 235–236
 Williams, Bernard, 224n32
 Winch, Peter, 72n6, 125, 135n30
 Wittgenstein, Ludwig: ethical reading
 of, 9, 10, 160, 162, 163, 168–169, 173,
 174–175, 176, 179n14,
 179n15–180n16, 184n52, 185n61,

- 187, 196, 243, 251n66; on Frege's logicism, 6, 19, 22, 25, 28–29, 30, 31–35, 37n17–38n18, 39n20, 40n32; ineffabilist reading, 22, 33, 41n36, 207, 208, 230, 233, 236, 248n28–249n29. *See also* ineffabilism; Wittgenstein, Ludwig—positivist reading. ; on mathematics. *See* mathematics—Wittgenstein on. ; new (reading of), 5, 12, 124, 182n33, 232, 233, 236, 237, 240, 241, 250n41, 257; *See also* Paradox—therapeutic diagnosis of; paradoxes, dissolving of; philosophy as therapy; Wittgenstein, Ludwig—resolute reading; Wittgenstein, Ludwig—therapeutic method. ; *On Certainty*, 77; orthodox view of, 248n23; *See also* Hacker, P; Wittgenstein, Ludwig—ineffabilist reading; Wittgenstein, Ludwig—positivist reading. ; *Philosophical Investigations*, 1, 7, 9–10, 19, 29, 32, 65, 68–69, 70, 71, 71–72, 73n9, 75, 77, 78, 80, 88, 90, 92–94, 99n7, 100n16, 131, 159–186n66, 192, 218, 223n18, 227n57, 227n59, 232, 233, 234, 246, 253n82, 260n6; picture theory, 3, 69, 71, 207, 226n54; positivist reading, 41n36, 207, 208–209, 232, 233, 248n24, 249n29; *See also* Wittgenstein, Ludwig—ineffabilist reading; Wittgenstein, Ludwig—orthodox view of. ; *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, 8, 30, 36n10, 39n23, 40n32, 42n39, 42n40, 102n43, 128, 134n24; resolute reading, 5, 7, 11, 14n18, 14n19, 35, 129, 162, 179n15, 182n35, 204, 220, 222n7, 232, 248n22, 249n30, 259n2; *See also* Wittgenstein, Ludwig—new (reading of); Wittgenstein, Ludwig—therapeutic method. ; therapeutic method, 2, 5, 11–12, 14n18, 22, 35, 36n9, 41n35, 41n37, 57, 71, 161, 162, 176, 179n15, 196, 198n4, 203, 207–209, 226n54, 229, 231, 232, 235–236, 240, 242, 257; paradox—therapeutic diagnosis of; paradoxes, dissolving of; philosophy as therapy. ; *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 11, 11–12, 22, 25, 29, 30, 32, 33, 36n11, 38n18, 39n20, 39n24, 40n32, 40n34–41n35, 64n42, 69, 73n10, 88, 90, 111n15, 160, 164, 176, 177n7, 203, 204, 205, 206–209, 211, 215, 220, 221, 221–222, 223n16, 225n40, 225n44, 226n53, 226n54, 229, 230–233, 234, 237–238, 243, 251n66, 252n75, 258; Zen Buddhism compared to, 12, 221–222, 229–253n84, 257
- woodsellers, 8, 121–125, 127, 128, 130, 135n26, 135n28
- word-policing. *See* language—policing.
- World War One, 160, 168
- World War Two, 9–10, 161, 162, 163, 165, 170, 172–173, 175, 176, 180n26, 182n31, 185n55, 186n64
- wound-shock, 172, 180n26
- Zermelo, Ernst, 41n37



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