



**WITTGENSTEIN'S LIBERATORY
PHILOSOPHY**

**THINKING THROUGH HIS
*PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS***

Rupert Read



Highly engaging and thought-provoking. Read's central claim that it is time to cash in the worn-out metaphor of Wittgenstein's later philosophy as therapy in exchange for a liberatory understanding of his work, together with the detailed readings of the *Philosophical Investigations* that support it, is likely to provoke much debate.

– Edmund Dain, *Providence College*, co-editor,
Wittgenstein's moral thought

This timely, provocative and original reading of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* argues that the point of his later philosophy is fundamentally ethical and political: to free us from our preconceptions. In pursuing this goal, Read has the courage of his convictions, criticising not only Wittgenstein's previous interpreters, but even Wittgenstein himself. A reader comes away from this book with a new appreciation of Wittgenstein's relevance to our current global and environmental challenges.

– David Stern, *Univ. of Iowa*, author, Wittgenstein's
Philosophical Investigations

Rupert Read's book is a seminal contribution to the conversations that Wittgenstein's daring approach to the practice of philosophy initiated. It contends that if liberation constitutes the ethical heart of philosophy, and is one of the ultimate justifications of philosophical activity, then philosophy must be conducted in a dialogical, social spirit. Philosophy comes, and *must* come inevitably, with an ethical attitude. Read presents a radically relational interpretation of Wittgenstein, as distinct from an individualistic one. Wittgenstein is wise when he observes that language cannot be private. Language only has its being in a living cultural context that necessarily transcends the individual. What is less obvious is that if this is true, nor can freedom be a private affair. This is the burden of the courageous book the reader holds in his hands. Read cautions against a passive reliance on an ethical *system*, as though that exempts us from the active responsibility to be good, something Read quotes Gandhi on. As successive chapters throw light on a wide range of questions pertaining to language, freedom, and the good life, the book serves as an insightful guide to Wittgenstein's master-work *Philosophical Investigations*.

– Aseem Shrivastava, *Asboka University*, author,
Churning the Earth: The making of global India

Rupert Read has long been one of the most passionate and prolific contributors to contemporary attempts to get Wittgenstein's way of doing philosophy properly into focus. This systematic engagement with the *Philosophical Investigations* pulls together his previous work in a way which highlights the unity of its underlying concerns, and clarifies the internal relation between its content and its very distinctive form. For this book presents Read's eagerness to engage so widely with the work of other commentators, and to make startling connections with writers in other disciplines, all in prose of unmistakable idiosyncrasy, as a sustained expression of his belief that Wittgenstein's work is meant to attract us to the task of liberating ourselves from compulsions and prohibitions that inhibit our capacity to achieve individuality in community. And if that task requires dispensing with stances central to his earlier writing, or even reformulating Wittgenstein's own signature concepts and claims – what one might call liberating himself from his philosophical exemplar, and from himself – then Read doesn't hesitate. It's a radical embodiment of an ethics and politics of thinking.

– Stephen Mulhall, *Oxford Univ.*, author,
Inheritance and originality

In this bold and precise book Rupert Read provides a careful reading of Wittgenstein's posthumously published *Philosophical Investigations*. The book will obviously be of interest to all Wittgenstein specialists. One hopes it will reach many more readers as well, because Read's work presents nothing less than a full-scale portrait of the formidable resources Wittgenstein offers for political philosophy. The key to Read's success is his resolute overcoming of the influential notion that there are two Wittgensteins: One, who was a great philosopher of language, meaning, logic and other topics familiar to professional philosophers, and another, who was a conservative, Viennese critic of progressive modernity. The persistence of this schizophrenic image of Wittgenstein is one of the great scandals of philosophy in our times. Read's work invites us to read Wittgenstein as a philosopher whose work is indispensable for all who are engaged in the theory and practice of justice, dignity and freedom in the age of ecological crisis and authoritarian capitalism.

– Thomas Wallgren, *Univ. of Helsinki, author,*
'Transformative philosophy'

An impassioned and exciting call to see the philosophy of Wittgenstein (and beyond) in a radically new light: as second-person in perspective, transcending the merely subjective or objective, *fundamentally* ethical in nature, and yet avoiding the pitfalls of 'philosophy as therapy'. An inspiring work.

– Iain McGilchrist, *All Soul's, author,* The master and his emissary

Rupert Read's "liberatory" account of Wittgenstein opens up an exhilarating new way of looking at this philosopher. In his detailed and sympathetic analysis of key sections of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* Read seeks to show how the idea of liberation from ideologies, ideas, and assumptions that we have adopted unthinkingly is crucial to that text and how Wittgenstein conceives of liberation as an interactive and interpersonal process. In highlighting this aspect of Wittgenstein's thought, Read seeks to bring out its deep ethical and political significance. We can be sure that the book will stimulate a whole new line of thinking about Wittgenstein's work.

– Prof. Hans Sluga, *Berkeley, author,* Wittgenstein

The phrase 'philosophy as therapy', especially as a way of looking at Wittgenstein's philosophical procedure, now tends to elicit either a shrug or a snarl. Rupert Read, like the late Gordon Baker, sees that what is central to Wittgenstein's analogy with therapy is *liberation*. On the one hand, those who are genuinely gripped by a picture that they cannot see beyond, or whose craving for generality is so insatiable that they gloss over vital differences, may be freed from such tyranny by 'the liberating word'; on the other, such freeing is entirely non-coercive: in Waismann's famous words, 'There is to be no bullying with the stick of logic or the stick of grammar'. Read, moreover, sees something that Baker never quite did: clinging to Baker's later work were, in Read's words, 'the eggshells of our civilisation's "individualism" and concomitantly ... its reluctance to take the 1st-person- and 2nd-person- *plurals* seriously'. And, wonderfully, Read does something which Baker almost never did: apart from his work on the disastrously misnamed 'private language argument', most of Baker's later writing was programmatic. In this magnificent book, Read shows in detail how this vision of Wittgenstein's philosophical procedure sheds new light on all the familiar passages and 'topics' in *Philosophical Investigations*. This is the Wittgenstein book I have been waiting for.

– Dr. Katherine Morris, *Oxford Univ., co-author with Baker of Descartes's Dualism and editor of Baker's posthumous Wittgenstein's method*

Wittgenstein's Liberatory Philosophy

In this book, Rupert Read offers the first outline of a resolute reading, following the highly influential New Wittgenstein 'school', of the *Philosophical Investigations*. He argues that the key to understanding Wittgenstein's later philosophy is to understand its liberatory purport.

Read contends that a resolute reading coincides in its fundaments with what, building on ideas in the later Gordon Baker, he calls a liberatory reading. Liberatory philosophy is philosophy that can liberate the user from compulsive (and destructive) patterns of thought, freeing one for possibilities that were previously obscured. Such liberation is our prime goal in philosophy. This book consists in a sequential reading, along these lines, of what Read considers the most important and controversial passages in the *Philosophical Investigations*: 1, 16, 43, 95 & 116 & 122, 130–3, 149–151, 186, 198–201, 217, and 284–6. Read claims that this liberatory conception is simultaneously an ethical conception. The *PI* should be considered a work of ethics in that its central concern becomes our relation with others. Wittgensteinian liberations challenge widespread assumptions about how we allegedly are independent of and separate from others.

Wittgenstein's Liberatory Philosophy will be of interest to scholars and advanced students working on Wittgenstein, and to scholars of the political philosophy of liberation and the ethics of relation.

Rupert Read is an associate professor of philosophy at the University of East Anglia. His books include: *Applying Wittgenstein* (2007), *Wittgenstein among the Sciences* (2012), *A Wittgensteinian way with Paradoxes* (2013) and *A Film-Philosophy of Ecology and Enlightenment* (2018). He was co-editor of the curriculum-changing collection *The New Wittgenstein* (2000), also with Routledge.



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Thinking Through His
Philosophical Investigations

Rupert Read

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“The philosopher strives to find the liberating word, that is, the word that finally permits us to grasp what up until now has intangibly weighed down our consciousness”.
Wittgenstein.

“A picture held us captive”. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*.



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Preface and Acknowledgements

A human being is imprisoned in a room, if the door is unlocked but opens inwards; he, however, never gets the idea of pulling instead of pushing against it.

Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value* (C&V)

If there is a book that I have in me that really ‘captures’ what I have to say about and to offer from Wittgenstein, it is *this* book. This book is, if you will, my life’s work on his work.

This book has been the hardest to write of anything I’ve yet written. Close-reading Wittgenstein’s work imposes on one a great discipline. But it’s also been the most joyful because, I think, of the great *freedom* I have found in the vision of Wittgenstein’s way of working that has come to me in the long course of writing this book.

This book is inspired and informed above all by the later Gordon Baker’s method, including as taken up by Katherine Morris. In a way, its inspiration goes back to listening to Baker’s joint lectures with Hacker at Oxford from 1986 onward – and realising with shock and interest that they no longer agreed so much, because Baker was moving away from the ‘Baker-and-Hacker’ vision. This book is also deeply inspired by my teachers Cora Diamond and James Conant,¹ and more generally by the project of reading Wittgenstein’s *oeuvre* resolutely, a project that I sought to help focus, by putting together *The New Wittgenstein* (TNW) (2000) collection, two decades ago now, for, while I am closer to Baker than to anyone else in terms of my thinking on the later Wittgenstein (as can be seen from the amount I quote and reference his book in this book, second only to the amount I use *Philosophical Investigations* (PI) (1958) itself), and while I find deeply encouraging the extent to which his vision of Wittgenstein’s method overlaps or coincides with the project of reading resolutely Wittgenstein’s later work, I believe, following Wittgenstein himself, that the later Wittgenstein can only be understood properly against the background of the early Wittgenstein, properly and sympathetically understood: and making the latter available in this way is probably the greatest achievement of Diamond, Conant et al.²

More briefly, the late Stanley Cavell was also my teacher, and I owe a signal debt to him too, I hope. His name is found less in these pages than those of Conant and Diamond, let alone Baker, but this is perhaps because of how very close I am to him in certain key respects; it is as if his attitude to Wittgenstein almost saturates some of my thinking. I'll highlight one example here which is important methodologically in what follows: Cavell's emphasis on Wittgenstein seeing 'proof' is as much a 'literary' as a logical category. The task of convincing others of something is intrinsically aesthetic; this is not an inessentiality or something to be regretted.

I have also been influenced more recently by the fascinating work of Hannes Nykanen and Joel Backstrom. As I was creating the orientation to Wittgenstein's work to be found herein, it was a joy to discover that they were creating a somewhat similar orientation. In particular, there is a profound point of connection between my conception and theirs, in the emphasis throughout this book on *the 2nd person* as an alternative to the clapped-out debate between 'subjective' and 'objective' approaches to philosophy, and in the cognate emphasis that develops increasingly through the text below on (liberatory) philosophy as *ethics*, an ethics of relationality.

This book has been *profoundly* influenced by the work that Phil Hutchinson and I have co-published together over the past 15 or so years. Much of this is referred to, and on occasion quoted, throughout the book. The book also reflects much work that we undertook together and had hoped to publish together, but in the end did not. This applies primarily to parts of Chapters 1–3 and also to the portion of Chapter 4 on 122 (a small portion of which is reworked from our published paper "Towards a perspicuous presentation of 'perspicuous presentation'" (Hutchinson & Read 2008)). My debt to Phil Hutchinson is immense, the most immense of all; it is not calculable by me.

Deep gratitude also to those who read my manuscript in full, and provided wonderful, at times transformative commentary on it: especially Katherine Morris, Andrew Norris, Duncan Richter, Ryan Dawson, and three anonymous referees.³ Deep gratitude also to my PhD students across the years who have worked with me on this material, especially Joshua Smith and Anton Leodolter, with whom I have walked a soteriological and ethical-aesthetic path of reading Wittgenstein.

This book includes a reworking of some previously published material that I sole-authored:

Early in Chapter 4, the treatment of ordinary use is based loosely on a small part of my chapter "Ordinary/everyday language" (Read 2010a), which is here heavily revised.

Within Chapter 5, the treatment of 133 is based loosely on part of my paper "The real philosophical discovery" (Read 1995), which is here heavily revised.

Chapter 7 is based loosely on, and is a greatly expanded and heavily revised version of, my co-authored (with the late James Guetti) paper on “Acting from rules” (Guetti & Read 1996).

Chapter 8 is based loosely on, and is a greatly expanded and heavily revised version of, my “Is there a legitimate way to raise doubts about the immediate future ‘from the perspective of’ a *doubted* immediate past?” (Read 2001).

Chapter 9 is mostly based, loosely, on my paper “Throwing away ‘the bedrock’” (Read 2005b), which is here heavily revised and expanded upon.

Chapter 10 includes a reworking and significantly expands and improves part of my paper “Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* as a War Book” (Read 2010b).

Thanks to the original publishers of these for permission, which has been sought and granted, to ‘reprint’ (sic) portions of these articles.

The reworking of these is however in most cases very considerable (the partial exception being Chapter 10, where the ‘source-text’ is of much more recent vintage; here, portions of that material remain largely intact, while still very heavily embroidered on, and thoroughly revised and updated). This is primarily because, in coming to create this book, I realised that some of my previously published work on these matters had been marred by dogmatism. I found my earlier self trapped by (an over-rigid, over-abstract and insufficiently reflective rendition of) ‘resolute’ thinking into assuming at times that ‘language’ is one thing, that the question ‘Is philosophical language ordinary language?’ and similar questions require (‘straight’) answers, and so forth. I had been, in other words, insufficiently later-Bakerian/Wittgensteinian, in some of my work, tending to over-*generalise*. (One could also see this as a great failing from a properly austere ‘resolute’ standpoint; consider the way in which one must thoroughly self-apply the need to overcome, according to that standpoint, a need which I had thought I had been taking ultra-seriously, but hadn’t applied deeply enough.⁴ After all, how could thinking to oneself something along the lines of ‘Language is one thing’ possibly be anything other than a prompt to throw away a further ladder, in the manner epochally laid out by Diamond with regard to the wonderful *Tractatus* remark, “There is only logical necessity”?) This self-criticism applies especially to the source texts in my own published work for parts of Chapters 4, 5, and 9. Readers familiar with the previously published work of my own that formed the basis of those chapters will, I hope, be pleased to see the change of vision evident in the philosophising there, the way in which ‘the early Read’ has been transcended...

Something somewhat similar also applies to those portions of the book (especially the last part of Chapter 4) where my thinking has diverged somewhat from Hutchinson’s. Here, the problem is a different

one; especially, I have come to think that there are problems with later Baker's take on perspicuity which I did not previously (want to?) see. I have sought in the present work, roughly, to follow up Baker's legacy in some considerable detail, such as to (seek to) allow that marvellous legacy to be much more fully *born* – (but) in such a way as to shake from it what I see as the remaining *eggshells* of his magisterial previous joint work with Hacker, that were clinging to it,⁵ and (and this turns out, as we shall see, to amount to much the same thing) the eggshells of our civilisation's 'individualism' and concomitantly of its reluctance to take the 1st-person and 2nd-person *plurals* seriously, or even, often, to notice them.⁶ (Occasionally, I wonder whether this fault of Baker's and others is derived from Wittgenstein himself; in other words, are there elements of Wittgenstein's own thinking that are marred by a residual and sometimes even proud individualism? I think there are: such as in his comment in *Zettel* (1967b) (Z) that the philosopher is not a member of any thought-community, and that that is what makes him a philosopher (1967b, 455).

Thus, while (Baker-and-)Hacker set out in the most impressive scholarly detail the kind of would-be-sympathetic would-be-Wittgensteinian 'official'⁷ reading of *PI* that at times I take as a dialogical foil in the book, I aim too in this book consistently to move beyond the letter even of the later Baker, though very much still in his spirit. Later Baker stressed individuals as opposed to stressing abstract positions: the moves made to untie a knot must replicate in reverse the moves made to tie it, and these moves can't be generalised or made into an all-purpose formula.⁸ But in leaping to the assumption that the alternative to centring one's philosophical attention on abstract positions must be centring it on the problems of *individuals*, Baker fails to be free, because he fails to see that there are other alternative possibilities. In particular, as our culture so often does, such an assumption bypasses *us*: bypasses cultures or multi-human unities.

And this is perhaps the most original aspect of the present work: contesting the individualism present in later Baker, and presenting a liberatory vision of Wittgensteinian philosophy which is thoroughly inter-subjective and relational. I argue that liberation properly understood is above all *from* images of human separation. We are rather thoroughly 'internally related' to each other (and to our world).

My stress on freedom may nevertheless carry with it a risk: of over-egging the pudding, over stressing the liberatory. There is a particular risk here in fact of assuming that one has oneself arrived at freedom, as opposed to other people who are mired in unfreedom. As I shall set out in the body of the book, philosophy as I see it needs therefore to involve a largely unceasing endeavour not to be caught by 'liberation' itself. In roughly 'resolute' terms: the '*transitionality*' of philosophising doesn't come to an end. The 'ladder' one ascended, one finds sticking to one's

hands, without one even noticing. One inevitably *carries bits of it up* with one, however far one ‘ascends’. In roughly Bakerian terms: The very way in which one achieved some perspicuity or uncaptivity will so often become a new prison, if one is complacent, unvigilant.

One can see this very process in over and over again in Wittgenstein’s own, honest, self-critical approach to philosophising. Consider the following splendid and relatively little-known case, from *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics* (LFM) (1976):

What I wanted to talk of is logical inference and what one might call the peculiar rigidity of inexorability of it. I said something like “There is no such thing as a logical mechanism”. I said this because I wanted to throw light on statements of this kind.

One might say, “Isn’t this an absurd thing to say? For what is it whose existence you are denying?” It seems as though, if you deny it, you must know what it is.—Again and again, I’ll either say such things, or we’ll come across them. Compare: “There isn’t such a thing as an infinitesimal.”

When one says that there is no such thing as, for instance, a logical mechanism, one is making a fishy statement.

(1976, 198)

There are no master-moves in philosophy. We need to avoid the impression that we know what something is that we were actually wanting to say doesn’t amount to anything, ‘is’ nonsense. Again and again, culminating in Chapter 10 where I set out how we need to take seriously that ‘private language’ is nothing but a tissue of temptation, I’ll work to avoid that impression. But: Saying that “There is no such thing as...” is no more immune to quietly becoming a new tyranny as any other kind of move we can make. One has to keep re-applying the effort of philosophical activity. To re-liberate.

That is what I am seeking to do, in this book.

I use the Anscombe or Hacker-Schulte translation of *PI* (or occasionally a combination of the two) in this book, depending on which I find best. I sometimes also use my own translation, or one offered by one of my University of East Anglia colleagues. Where needful, I sometimes comment on the translation, in the endnotes or (especially in Chapter 5) in the main text. I often put into play a broadly Bakerian understanding of Wittgenstein’s uses of terms such as “Die Sprache”, “Die Grammatik”, etc. – and of Wittgenstein’s diacritics, which I generally restore if they have been obliterated by editions or translations (See the “Note on diacritics” in the “Introduction”, for detail on this point).

Philosophers, as Wittgenstein noted prominently, are most typically attracted by the ‘model’ of science, a model that causes no end of problems in our discipline. What is in some respects a better (closer) object of

comparison or centre of attraction for philosophical activity will quite often be the activity of *translation*. One important feature of translation is that, while it is quite clearly a rational activity which can be done better or worse and can easily be done plain wrong, it does not have a goal of uniquely perfect correctness, and so it preserves, constitutively, significant scope for the freedom of the translator. These features are reminiscent of exactly what we shall see *vis a vis* philosophy in this book, especially (explicitly) in Chapter 2. The importance of freedom for translators and in translation would be worth pondering deeply in relation to the essential freedom of the philosopher as laid out in this book.⁹

One important difference between the two is that it would of course be completely misleading to characterise translation's *goal* as liberation; 'liberatory philosophy' is thus far easier to parse than 'liberatory translation'! And this brings us to the key, obvious, determinative point at which treating translation as an object of comparison for philosophy gives out: that philosophy, if Wittgenstein is right, is not the translation of something pre-existent and determinate into philosophical prose. On the contrary, the freedom of the philosopher lies precisely in there being no such thing, in the way that there quite plainly is such a thing for any translator (aka 'the source text'). The challenge of philosophy is not to abuse that immeasurably greater freedom by turning it into a license for speaking nonsense.¹⁰

Having said that, one might wonder whether there is however a closer parallel between the two after all: for doesn't the philosopher, after Wittgenstein, treat something like 'our use of words' as what is (relatively) pre-existent and determinate, and philosophy as finding patterns in that usage? Isn't 'ordinary language' the Wittgensteinian equivalent of the source text? There is something to this thought, but (in Chapters 1, 3, and 4, especially) I shall suggest that it has been overblown. One of the key surprising things that this book I hope accomplishes is to free us from servitude to the idea that Wittgenstein is a philosopher of language(-use).

I seek in this book to 'pull' you along with me – sometimes, by strength of example or even of metaphor alone – in an effort for us to free ourselves, together, from the grave (scientific, metaphysical, etc.) constraints that our culture and 'even' philosophy have subjected us to.

And such freedom, if it is to be real, will – and as I shall explain, as is already implicit in my leaning on later Baker above – be most acutely of need in relation to the danger of entrapment by the concept of freedom itself...

Notes

- 1 A special place goes to Diamond, here; for she was my teacher in graduate school (in New Jersey, one year back in the early 90s when she visited Princeton as a Professor). She taught me ethics (the class on ethics I took with her

- was the most revealing class by far that I have ever taken on moral philosophy), and at the same time she taught me the resolute reading of Wittgenstein, in its infancy. (Dick Moran's teaching was also important to me while I was at Rutgers and Princeton, including in relation to the 2nd person.)
- 2 Ergo, I believe that the later Baker, like the early Baker, was unjust to the early Wittgenstein. (I also believe, as I note on occasion in the text of the present work, that later Wittgenstein was himself occasionally unjust to early Wittgenstein.)
 - 3 Dawson and Morris in particular have suggested improvements on almost every page of a number of chapters, many of which I have adopted, to the great benefit, I believe, of this text.
...Huge thanks also to my editorial assistant Atus Mariqueo-Russell, without whom!
 - 4 Or consider Witherspoon's beautiful genuinely 'contextualist' vision of how to be resolute, in *The New Wittgenstein* (Witherspoon 2000), a vision that helps resist one's own remaining tendency as a Wittgensteinian to over-generalise, across contexts.
 - 5 Perhaps I'm especially alive to this, having attended Baker-and-Hacker's lecture series in Oxford in 1986–1987 and (more sporadically) afterward, at the very moment when Baker was breaking away from Hacker, in real time, as we saw in some of the interchanges in those lectures. I (have) spent years trying to detach the eggshells of the 'official' Oxford Wittgenstein from my own thinking.
 - 6 I detect this fault in Nykanen and Backstrom; it is the source of my main disagreement with them, as set out in my "Private language?: Wittgenstein and Løgstrup 'versus' Levinas" (Read 2019).
 - 7 The phrase "the 'official' Wittgenstein, to refer to the detailed reading offered by (Backer-and-)Hacker, is Crispin Wright's, developed in his "Wittgenstein's Rule-Following Considerations and the Central Project of Theoretical Linguistics" (1989, 223–264).
 - 8 Big thanks here to Katherine Morris for suggested formulations of this point.
 - 9 Some of these matters are touched on in Philip Wilson's very interesting book, *Translation after Wittgenstein* (2016).
 - 10 I seek to rise to that challenge throughout this book, but especially in Chapters 8 and 9.



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0 Introduction

Thinking *through* Wittgenstein

[The studies that follow] are the record of a long and tentative exercise that needed to be revised and corrected again and again. It was a philosophical exercise. The object was to learn to what extent the effort to think...can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently.

Foucault, *Introduction to the History of Sexuality* vol. 2 (1985, 9)

0.1 Why ‘Liberatory Philosophy’?

This book argues that the key to understanding Wittgenstein’s later philosophy is to understand its *liberatory* purport. Its design is to help free one. What is ‘liberatory’ philosophy? It is philosophy that enables liberation of the user from compulsive (and destructive) patterns of thought, freeing one *to do* or *for* things previously obscured. Liberation is *our* prime goal in philosophy. It is the telos of Wittgenstein’s primary mode in philosophy: “our goal is to break the thrall in which certain forms of expression hold us”.¹ Or at least: liberatory philosophy constitutes a key neglected aspect of Wittgenstein’s methods, especially as expressed in his master-work, *Philosophical Investigations* (1958); I aim to end this neglect.

I aim to prove (i.e. to test) this by following and developing the work, especially of the later Baker.² *Simultaneously*, this will mean essaying a thoroughly ‘resolute’ reading (i.e. one along the lines indicated by Diamond and Conant et al.) of all the key ‘pivot-points’ in Wittgenstein’s *PI* up to and including the anti-‘private-language’ considerations, the key points at which the text pivots, but also at which the text catalyses *philosophy itself*, producing kinks in its evolution. As *my* text shall manifest, I think that it turns out that a resolute reading of later Wittgenstein, when fully realised, *is* a liberatory reading. But speaking of ‘liberation’ has advantages over speaking of ‘resoluteness’ (or, still more so, over ‘therapy’, for all that ‘therapy’ from Freud to later Baker indexes a proud set of efforts at such liberation), as I’ll explain: above all, in that it’s more explicitly what Wittgenstein does, and in that it does what it says on the tin. It liberates.

2 Introduction: Thinking through Wittgenstein

We will also find, *en route*, that such committed Wittgensteinian philosophy – when one philosophises resolutely, one *commits* oneself,³ rather than remaining suspended or hovering between possible (fantasies of) meaning – turns out to be ethically inflected. Liberation as a goal is liberation from unwilling adherence to ideology, *not* from other beings: on the contrary. Liberatory philosophy turns out to put into question the standard 1st-personal (methodologically solipsistic, ‘subjective’) and 3rd-personal (pseudo-scientific, ‘objective’) modes of philosophical investigation. Whether writing in the 1st person or the 3rd person, though they appear such opposites, one writes *in one way*: as if the existence of others is a matter of indifference to one. In the 1st person, because they might as well not exist; in the 3rd person, because one abstracts from subjects (including oneself) and imagines a wholly distanced ‘view from nowhere’. But either way the effect is the same: one then isn’t present *in relation with* others. I shall suggest instead 1st-person-*plural* and 2nd-personal (including 2nd-personal-plural: I-You[plural]) modes as focal. The jumping-off point for this suggestion is the very manner in which Wittgenstein writes the *PI*.⁴

This book consists mainly then in a sequential reading of what I consider to be the most important (and, often, most controversial) moments in the *Investigations*. (It thus amounts to a partly-worked-through liberatory ‘programme’ for how to read the whole book.⁵) We will see how those moments work better when they are understood through the prism of Wittgenstein’s liberatory goal. The book brings together the considerations I marshal on the nature of a normative (liberatory and, I submit, *internally-relatedly*, ethical) reading of Wittgenstein with a liberatory mandate for philosophy generally, especially, in the black times in which we live, times in which our failure to think and act beyond hegemonic frames points towards the likely collapse of our civilisation (Read & Alexander 2019).

Thus I extend an *invitation* to the reader: to join an actually existing and (broader) invitational ‘we’ seeking to experiment with this *timely* liberatory-ethical approach to (Wittgenstein’s approach to) philosophy.

In this introductory chapter, I will set out briefly the intellectual background to the project. Wittgensteinian ‘therapeutics’ and liberations are work on the self as ethical work (as was clear to the Hellenistic philosophers⁶): an ethical work that centres upon us overcoming our deep tendency to manifest heteronomy. I strive, that is, to help midwife autonomy, but absolutely *not* in the sense of “as opposed to dependence on others”. I take such dependence as ubiquitous, enabling and desirable. Rather, in the sense, roughly, of as opposed to *dependence on ideas/assumptions that are not freely and openly understood*. We fail to be autonomous because we allow ourselves to be constrained. Including, crucially, by assumptions about how we allegedly are independent of others... I will seek therefore to bring out how this work is primarily

work on ourselves; not on a would-be isolated self. This bringing-out begins with my following Wittgenstein in frequently emphasising *our* method(s) in philosophy, philosophy as it is for *us*, according to *our* conception, etc.: *this* 1st-person plural is both partly actual and invitational. (I also consider in this Introduction why the metaphor of ‘therapy’ has not persuaded. Has not proven able to shake free of the egg-shells and memories clinging to it. And why it should thus give way: to liberation and *its* associated metaphoric.)

I seek then to bring us beyond the long fantasy, so dominant in philosophy, that a single mind can figure everything out. Rather we need the greater unity of genuine dialecticality. Compare here Wittgenstein’s great phrase, “our method”. He talks of *our* method, I believe, because he has a sense of this way in which his approach to philosophy is against the grain of the tradition. And he wants to share that sense...

The ‘New Wittgensteinian’ work of Diamond and Conant, of Stanley Cavell *and* (the later work of) Gordon Baker, all of them my teachers at University/ies and my intellectual mentors, are my direct inspiration. These writers have made it possible for me to inherit Wittgenstein by understanding him to have been a practitioner of what I term liberatory philosophy. Drawing on the directions which they have pointed in, this book seeks to illustrate how resolution is an ethical task for the philosopher and one which, *through being* a tough discipline, frees one from both of over-reliance upon *theory* (which facilitates a great deal of – distorted or contorted – thinking, and ‘saves’ one from having *to think for oneself*) and of *license* (which provides an illusion of freedom at the cost of emptiness and verbiage: I shall investigate this phenomenon repeatedly, but especially in Chapter 8). The temptation to theory is, roughly, a 3rd person temptation; the temptation to license is, roughly (as reflection on Kripke’s Wittgenstein makes clear: see especially Chapters 8 and 9) a 1st person temptation. This book steers a course orthogonal to those, and thereby offers the first worked-through outline of *a resolute reading of the PI*, building on the fragments towards such a reading that can be found in *TNW* as well as in the work elsewhere of Diamond (1989) and other colleagues from our ‘school’. And my suggestion is that such a reading is necessarily an ethical and a liberatory one.

Baker’s heritage in this regard goes back of course to Wittgenstein’s one-time interlocutor Waismann’s explicitly liberatory vision of philosophy. Now, while I shall sometimes quote Waismann’s freeing, broadly Wittgensteinian ‘arguments’ and *aperçus*, especially on the nature of philosophy as ‘we’ see it, I shall not in this book undertake the scholarly task of delving back into Waismann’s fascinating ‘programme’. I start instead from the likes of later Baker’s explicitly Waismannian-Wittgensteinian “A vision of philosophy”, in Baker’s *BWM*.

One reason why I shall not go into Waismann’s work is that Wittgenstein himself could not find it satisfactory even at the time, presumably

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partly because of its ‘thesis’-like statements in Waismann, its overly systematic appearance. Wittgenstein objects to controversial theses being employed in philosophy, and to interlocutors being ‘forced’ to accept theses. (What are theses for Wittgenstein? A metaphysical thesis is an expression that purports to be factive but which actually serves only to place dictates on the use of an expression. It pretends to express ‘necessary characteristics’ or essences and in effect lays down a rule. For example “The man who says ‘only my pain is real’ doesn’t mean to say that he has found out by the common criteria... that others who said they had pains were cheating.... [He] objects to using this word in the particular way in which it is commonly used. On the other hand, he is not aware that he is objecting to a convention.”⁷

Another reason for not dwelling more, in the present work, on Waismann is that Wittgenstein’s thought clearly developed somewhat between the period of his collaboration with Waismann and the authorship of the *PI*, and it is the *PI* which is my main focus in the present work: in particular, psychoanalytic elements reduced. Waismann’s presentations are too doggedly ‘(psycho-)therapeutic’.

Further reasons for my being unconvinced by Waismann’s approach are his tendencies at times towards scientism (noted by Baker at n.11 of *BWM* (2004, 47)), his being more willing than Wittgenstein (or I) to call what society or philosophy exhibits ‘progress’ (Read 2016) his overly linguistic emphasis at times (this plays into the common misreading of Wittgenstein as a ‘linguistic philosopher’ or (worse) a philosopher of language, when what he ‘really’ (sic) is: a philosopher of freedom, *and* of culture and even of inter-being), and his generally being (and this, unfortunately, Baker inherited from him) too individualistic; I deal with this last point in Chapters 2 and 10.

What Waismann nevertheless *is*, par excellence (and in this way he is the granddaddy of the present text), is an advocate of such a multilevelled philosophical *liberation* (thus what became his maxim, “The essence of philosophy lies in its freedom”) and of *vision* in philosophy. To see how these are two sides of the same coin, consider the final, ringing sentence of *Principles of Linguistic Philosophy* (1997) (PLP),

We cannot constrain anyone who is unwilling to follow the new direction of a question; we can only extend the field of vision of the questioner, loosen his prejudices, guide his gaze in different directions: but all this can be achieved only with his consent.

(Waismann 1997, 417)

Thus it is obvious that, at level of fundamental conception, this book follows Waismann, despite my numerous significant divergences from him.

Above all, the present work focuses on *Wittgenstein*, and especially on *PI* (and especially on the first 350 or so sections thereof), the work that

is by far closest in Wittgenstein's entire later oeuvre to being a completed book that he was happy with. I shall sometimes draw upon 'liberatory' passages from Wittgenstein (and, occasionally, Waismann) from prior to the *PI* (some of which are of course connected with 'therapy' or psychoanalysis). I shall draw from time to time upon (portions of) *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (1967a) (RFM) which have an intimate relation to *PI*⁸ in terms of their would-be publication-history. But my book will fail, at least as a work of interpretation, unless the reading of the key passages in *PI* that are my primary focus can eventually stand without any of those. In the end, while 'external' evidence may help us and while quotations from earlier manuscripts can directly orient us, the *PI* must speak for itself.⁹ I shall suggest that a metaphoric of liberation *in* that book is an important aspect of it that has been neglected, and that those metaphors can be helpfully extended quite a long way to places where they are not explicitly nor even implicitly present. There are, quite obviously, other metaphors that matter for understanding Wittgenstein's method too, but there is none as fertile as that of liberatory philosophy.

How does Wittgenstein's *PI* speak to liberation? That is what this book, if it has worth, will teach one, via the passages from *PI* that I examine. We might here initially venture the following general line of answer to the question: By means of meeting interlocutors in their personal/inter-personal specificity, seeking genuinely to understand and dialogue with them, and offering liberating pictures and aspects which render the pictures which had held them in their grip non-compulsory:

In this matter it is always as follows. Everything we do consists in trying to find the liberating word. In grammar you cannot discover anything. There are no surprises. When formulating a rule we always have the feeling: That is something you have known all along.

Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle (Wittgenstein 1985, 77)
(W&tVC)

What we aim at is to *free* the reader/practitioner/self, more profoundly than could ever be achieved by theoretical philosophical approaches; such as Kantianism. Now, I do not aim to *establish* this point here in the Introduction. Rather, I am gesturing at an important sub-theme of this book: namely, experiencing how the Wittgensteinian approach frees the reader/practitioner from the heteronomy that, ironically, is inevitably involved in the hidden *pseudo*-autonomistic assumptions of Kantianism.¹⁰ I shall read Wittgenstein, as one might put it, as realising (by transforming) the crucial, unfulfilled promise of Kantianism in this connection: that of autonomy.

This work of freeing requires courage, integrity, and honesty with self and others: it requires intellectual virtues to be lived and played out

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in the context of caring about other and self.¹¹ Thus the present work might be felt as a contribution towards a ‘communitarian’/relational intellectual-virtue ethic. A (virtue) ethics of our thinking even (cf. *PI* 109). The honing of the intellectual virtues could helpfully be seen as an integral part of what Wittgenstein is about, throughout his career. This is a task for every person; each individual has to get to terms with philosophical bewilderment in her own thinking, and can’t be handed a ready-made solution by another. *But* I suggest that *we will not* accomplish *this task except together*; ultimately by making some changes in our intellectual culture. (There’s a word for this process: politics... At the least, intellectual politics. Part of Wittgenstein’s legacy, as I set it out in this book, should be understood as a way of making philosophy, as liberatory, emancipatory.)

I submit that there is no ineradicable tension between 1st person singular (once it is properly understood) and 1st person plural perspectives: for we are never purely ‘I’s. But the appearance of tension is best dissolved by moving to a different register. I will now essay an initial explication of that register: *the 2nd person*. (See also Section 0.5.) Internal relation between I and *you*. Our ‘we’s are, pretty obviously, deepened – realised – by our constantly knowing each other in connection, being *you* to each other. And deepened by us turning together to face a(-nother) You.

Much philosophy gets conducted on the seeming tacit assumption of a fundamentally 3rd person orientation: telling us The Truth, as if from nowhere and by nowho, about life, the universe, and everything. Some philosophy, (in-)famously, posits instead a primacy for the 1st person: and invariably ends up limiting us to our own heads. There is but little philosophy that emphasises plurality: the 1st-person *plural*; (or) the ‘I’ in utter *relation* to others.¹² And specifically, there is but very little philosophy that picks up on the possibility typically suborned completely by the hackneyed battle between objectivity and subjectivity: namely, the 2nd person.

The reader might wonder why I do not draw on most of the (small) ‘standard’ literature on the 2nd person, such as (most prominently) Stephen Darwall’s work (2006). The answer is that I find such work inadequate to the true challenge and radicality of the 2nd person, which, as inherited by Wittgenstein and those few Wittgensteinians¹³ who have grasped it, prescinds entirely from the struggle between 1st and 3rd persons which has dominated philosophy. Let me illustrate very briefly, via a couple of illustrative quotations from the opening of Darwall’s well-known book *The Second Person Standpoint* (2006):

Call the second-person standpoint the perspective you and I take up when we make and acknowledge claims on one another’s conduct and will.

(1)

Our questions...are normative. A command is a form of address that purports to give a person a distinctive kind of (normative) reason for acting, one I call a second-personal reason. What makes a reason second-personal is that it is grounded in (de jure) authority relations that an addresser takes to hold between him and his addressee. Unlike practical reasons of other sorts, therefore, second-personal reasons must be able to be addressed within these relations. And, as I show, second-personal reasons are distinctive also in the kind of claim they make on the will.

(2)

It can be seen already here how distinctive I-you understanding, the kind of ‘internal-relatedness’ (of persons) which I suggest Wittgenstein thinks in his later work, becomes instead reduced to fairly standard 1st-person/3rd-person reasoning with its ‘normativity’, ‘reasons for acting’, ‘making claims’ and ‘authority relations’.

0.2 Why Not ‘Therapeutic Philosophy’?

The nugget of validity in the ‘therapeutic’ conception of philosophy can be understood in just this way: what the idea of Wittgenstein as a therapeutic philosopher was trying to embody and evoke is philosophy as neither the work of an isolated ego nor a hopeless attempt to step entirely outside our skins but philosophy as a profound *inter-relationship* between me and you. This 2nd-personal vision has been difficult to hear, within the conventional clamour of subjectivists and objectivists.

But is this last remark enough of an explanation of the lack of pragmatic success of the ‘therapy’ frame? No, I don’t think it is. Why, in more detail, *has* the frame of ‘therapy’ not proved able to realise this vision, the centrality of the 2nd person? This may be a matter of regret,¹⁴ but it seems to be a matter of fact.

‘Therapy’ is often considered an apolitical, ‘neutral’, private thing. A matter for individuals, not groups or polities. It can suggest what Foucault calls a ‘normalising’ approach: encouraging the recipient to change themselves rather than considering changing societal/institutional conditions. It most easily suggests a permanent hierarchy (between therapist and therapee), an authority-relation that doesn’t fit the situation even of philosophy teaching in the classroom terribly well, let alone the situation of free-flowing conversation between philosophical equals (and thus therapy is *politically* suspect, as a model for (liberatory) philosophy, for something not dissimilar to the reason that Darwall’s version of the 2nd person is). It can also sometimes seem to connote complacency on the part of the practitioner: as if one did not need ‘therapy’ oneself; as if one was in a position to treat or even manipulate one’s interlocutor, rather than simply: to try to figure things out with

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them. (Furthermore, the concept of therapy has become caught up in our culture of narcissism.)

The term “therapy” has been taken to mean that one must learn to stop wanting to put forward metaphysical theses, which then can sound like one should learn to stop wanting to do philosophy. But the fact that we are inveterately tempted by metaphysical theses is part of what makes philosophy possible, necessary, worthwhile. Moreover, I shall show at various points in this book (especially in Chapter 4) that any given metaphysical thesis itself is almost certainly not without value as it can become part of the practice of comparison or perspicuous presentation which leads us past the problem/confusion/trap. As Wittgenstein says in the *Manuscript* (Ms), we must do justice to these theses since “they contain so much truth” (112, 99r).

The resistance to therapy as a mode of understanding Wittgenstein has for these reasons proved formidable.¹⁵ And this brings us to another reason why, for Wittgenstein(-ians), on a broadly liberatory conception of his work, it is time to let go of the therapeutic reading/prism: *because* it has largely failed.

In ‘traditional’ philosophy, where what is at issue is the truth or correctness of the philosophy, then it doesn’t matter if the philosopher propounding it is in a minority of one. In Chapters 3 and 4, I will suggest, broadly following later Baker, that such a conception of perspicuity (the conception I will suggest is implicit in Hacker) is by Wittgenstein’s lights an imperfect conception. For it matters, if one’s philosophy fails to convince: it constitutes *prima facie* evidence of there being something inadequate in its conception and/or execution. The very fact that there has been such sustained resistance to therapy even when the concept has been judiciously and sympathetically expounded is in the end a *prima facie* argument against it.¹⁶ That argument is defeasible, of course; the resistance might all be coming from bad faith, stubbornness, etc.¹⁷; and surely some of it *is* coming from balking before the tremendous moral and existential challenge that is implicit in Wittgenstein’s liberatory philosophy (This point indeed constitutes an important theme of this book, as it does of the like-minded post-Freudian work of Hannes Nykanen and Joel Backstrom. If one’s work doesn’t arouse some ethical resistance, that is probably because one’s work is not serious or radical enough...). But simply: we have reason to believe, from the last generation or two of Wittgensteinian philosophy, that ‘therapy’ tends on balance *not* to liberate. It is time to try something likely to work a little better.¹⁸ Even this might only work for a few. But one keeps trying, to engage and to be *more* effective; there’s no alternative, if one is and would stay a philosopher.

The prism of liberation has numerous advantages (over ‘therapy’). It is largely immune to the demerits outlined in the previous four paragraphs. Furthermore, it has a crucial exegetical advantage: it is, I shall show,

simply far more present in Wittgenstein's later texts. In *PI*, therapy is present explicitly only in 133 (as I will discuss in Chapter 5) and, implicitly, possibly, in a few of the following 64 sections. Otherwise it is almost entirely (and certainly so far as being explicit goes) absent. Whereas I shall show the explicit and implicit presence of the concept of liberation and of cognate and directly related concepts (tyranny, captivity, freedom, autonomy, etc.) again and again across large key tranches of *PI*, including at many of its 'pivot-points', the passages to be examined in the most detail in the chapters to follow.

Thus, even if a notion of therapy less open to the standard version (which amounts to something like psychotherapy) just critiqued – say, a notion of 'self-therapy', or of *physical* therapy¹⁹ – managed to be successfully defended as a way of understanding Wittgenstein's philosophy, this would *still* be manifestly inferior to liberation as a heuristic totem for exegesis of the *PI*.

It isn't good enough to blame the failure of 'therapy' on the inadequacies of the 'patient', nor even on the inadequacies of our culture or perhaps of human nature, real though these may be. Something better is available, and present in Wittgenstein. It's time it were tried.

0.3 Being 'Resolute'

What about the prism of 'resolution'/'resoluteness'? Why doesn't that offer a better way forward than 'liberation'? The prime problem *here* is that a focus on being resolute threatens to drag one overly into exegetical disputes about *TLP*. I largely avoid such disputes in the present work; in the present work, I invoke the *TLP* almost exclusively *only* when doing so offers the best route to illuminating the *PI*. (*However*, there are a number of respects/instances where this *is* the case, and so there *are* some moments of resolute reading of the *TLP* in what follows.)

I believe strongly that it is a serious mistake to limit the idea of 'resoluteness' to Wittgenstein's earlier thinking. As the very structure of the *TNW* collection (the first part of which we entitled "Wittgenstein's later writings: the illusory comfort of an external standpoint", and the second part, "The *Tractatus* as forerunner of Wittgenstein's later writings") was designed to suggest, the real pay-off of the resolute reading is a deeper understanding of Wittgenstein's later work, and in particular a reading of later Wittgenstein as seeking commitment from himself and his reader, and as committing not to 'hover' between things that might be meant, committing to sense (This commitment, the practice of resolution, is, as we shall see, itself an ethical one: it involves an intellectual virtue which shades into committing one to more general ethical virtue(s)).

Committing to use one form of words rather than another as a mode of disambiguation is one way of manifesting this resoluteness. This is

not the same thing as committing to/attaching to a ‘picture’, nor, as I shall explain, to a technical term(s) – on the contrary. The point, our *need*, is to achieve freedom from the *grip* of pictures; the only or best way to do this, frequently, is to stop hovering between forms of words, one or both of which are attractive to one *because* of the (often *latent*) attraction of a picture. (And so the change of attitude being required of one is very radical: from the search for a picture that provides a general account to the more piecemeal search for a clarity in all that one does. Wittgenstein seeks to *discomfort* the reader enough to force her to confront the need for such a change).

When one commits with awareness to speak one way rather than another, one’s hovering stops.²⁰ Though this will only work if one’s resolution is not premature; i.e. if we have paid attention to the (reasons for the) hold on us of the particular picture(s) limiting us. Then, that picture doesn’t grip or ensnare us any longer because we have reminded ourselves of the variety of the relevant phenomena; then, rather than variety being equated with unclarity, and seeming intolerable, such that we incline to cleave dogmatically to what is at best a partial characterisation of some phenomenon, we can instead overcome heteronomous slavery to (certain) pictures.

Such perspicuous reminding serves to point us back to actual practice, and forward to our freedom.

Here is a helpful passage, for taking one beyond the unwise limiting of the resolute reading to early Wittgenstein:

[T]he uneasiness which one feels with the expression: “The rose is identical with red” could make somebody conclude that something is wrong with this expression, which, in turn, means that it somehow does not agree with reality, hence that it is an incorrectly formed expression and that sometimes reality guides grammar. Then one would say: the rose is really not identical with red at all. However, in fact this only means the following: I do not employ the words “rose” and “red” in such a way that they can be substituted for each other, and therefore I do not use the expression “identical” here. The difficulty I run into here, that is the uneasiness, does not result from a non-agreement of the grammatical rules with reality, but from the non-agreement of two grammatical rules which I would like to use alternately. The philosopher does not look at reality and ask himself: is the rose identical with red? What is warring inside the philosopher are two grammatical rules. The conflict that arises in him is of the same kind as one’s looking at an object in two different ways and then trying to see it in both ways simultaneously. The phenomenon is that of *irresolution*.

(Baker 2003b, 235)²¹

This passage from the 1930s is so remarkable (although it is not the only such passage in Wittgenstein's *nachlass*) because it culminates in explicitly indexing the very concept that has come to be most closely associated with the resolute reading of *TLP*. This passage – from Wittgenstein's 'middle' period, from which sprang the project of the *PI* – explicitly places centrally in his method the phenomenon of irresolution, and (by implication) the opposing phenomenon, of resoluteness... One no longer imagines that one can find evidence in reality to settle one's problem; one *takes a step*. One commits to a way of expressing oneself.

Compare the following, from the same period:

[O]ne can only determine the grammar of a language with the consent of a speaker, but not the orbit of the stars with the consent of the stars. The rule for a sign, then, is the rule which the speaker *commits himself* to.

(Baker 2003b, 105)

For amplification, compare also *Voices of Wittgenstein* (Baker 2003b, 277f), which begins by distinguishing clearly the philosopher's task from that of the socio-linguist:

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.

In these three quotations, I think we can see how 'resolution' connects to freedom: in this last case, one's interlocutor's freedom from tyranny at the hands of the 'grammar-police'. In other words: my liberatory reading/philosophy *is* also *inter alia* a resolute reading.

0.4 Liberation as Supra-Individual

Is the concept of liberation problem-free? Perspicuous and without risk of being misunderstood? Of course it isn't. What is? In fact, the concept is potentially a highly *dangerous* one: because our time (by which I mean: the last few hundred years, and especially the present day) is one that is obsessed with the idea of freedom, gripped by (crude, monomaniacal versions of) it. One might in fact argue that what our time needs more than anything else is: freedom from that grip by the concept of freedom....²² But, that one needs – we need – such (meta-)liberation is of course very much grist to my mill. For intellectual liberation, from the tendencies and pictures that hold us captive, is what, closely following

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Wittgenstein, I aim to offer here, perhaps above all. And I believe that he and I are well placed to deliver on such an offer: precisely *because* I follow Wittgenstein and indeed go perhaps a little further than him in being a sceptic of most of what passes as liberation. *And* in being a critic of the dominance in our time of a dogmatic concept of freedom.

So I aim to make Wittgenstein's liberatory philosophy available. But an essential feature of just such philosophy is a programme of resistance to the siren lure of an over-aggrandising or under-reflected-upon (conception of) liberation.

I regard the praxis I follow here to be Wittgensteinian in recommending that it is for each of us to figure out for ourselves, *with each other*, and as part of a historical process and broader community, a liberation that, if it is to be successful, will ultimately be for a *society* that is 'ill', immature, resistant, captive. Again: one is free to make this move while remaining within the concept of therapy – we can talk about curing a sick society, etc. – but the move is more difficult to execute successfully than if one works within the metaphoric of liberation. Our achieving freedom, and to some degree necessarily achieving it *together* – our achieving liberation *societally* – makes easier sense than does thinking of 'societal therapy'.

To illustrate, think of calls for political revolution (e.g. those made in Tunisia in 2010–2011, at the dawn of the 'Arab Spring'). They are often expressed as calls for freedom. Are they calls for individual freedom? *Freedom (only) for the call-er?* Plainly not. They are calls for collective freedom. Freedom for (the) society from tyranny. (That is what democracy *is*: a quintessentially collective freedom.²³)

This point is truer than ever today. As Arendtians sometimes helpfully point out, it means virtually nothing to achieve personal freedom in a society where one's choices are above all constrained by choices as to what technologies we do or do not develop, *choices which are inherently societal* (Chapman 2007). You or I individually cannot choose to take up (or efficaciously to reject) genetic engineering or geoengineering.²⁴ Choosing here is a matter of choices being made which all will then abide by. Thus such choices must be democratic.

Fixing societal ills, achieving collective freedom, may seem vastly difficult, especially in an age of hyper-individualism. And yet there is hope: for, societal pathologies are problems humankind has set itself, and Wittgenstein would I think tend to agree with Marx that we do not set ourselves in-principle insoluble problems. For a riddle without any conceivable solution is not even a riddle. It is merely a playing with words. (Where Wittgenstein would differ from Marx is that Wittgenstein thought it very difficult to solve or dissolve certain problems. Philosophical problems – and the cognate problems that afflict our society so grievously, such as our being consumed by the concept of 'progress', and by technophilia (Read 2016). What is conceivable may be at best only

barely feasible. Thus Wittgenstein was intellectually more pessimistic than Marx. Recent events, including notably the ongoing anthropogenic mass extinction and the ‘progress’ of our world towards climate-nemesis, suggest that such pessimism is warranted (the coronavirus crisis probably gives us a last chance to reset in a way that arrests such ‘progress’), for, while insoluble conceptual problems are not problems, we may well have the potential now to set ourselves challenges which are physically or at least politically unachievable. We might be on the cusp of doing this, with regard to global over-heat. ...I return to these matters in the Conclusion.)

Liberation, on my conception, is therefore necessarily ultimately political. It concerns what is possible (even if, often, it be very difficult, requiring improbable, ‘unreasonable’ levels of will, boldness or faith); it is (or ought to be) frequently collective public, and *cultural*, not just individual and private. I reject liberal-individualist and purely rationalist-scientistic visions of liberation. In this, I follow Michel Foucault. Foucault characterises the Ancient Greek quest for *sophosyne* as a quest for liberation: “*Sophrosyne* was a state that could be approached through the exercise of self-mastery and through restraint in the practice of pleasures; it was characterised as a freedom.” (1985/1990, 78) He goes on: “The freedom that needed establishing and preserving was that of the citizens of a collectivity of course, but it was also, for each of them, a certain form of relationship of the individual with himself.” (1985/1990, 79) This last might raise the spectre of what was at issue here being a proto-liberal-individualist freedom. Foucault dissolves the spectre:

This individual freedom should not, however, be understood as the independence of a free will. Its polar opposite was not a natural determinism, nor was it the will of an all-powerful agency: it was an enslavement—the enslavement of the self by oneself.

(1985/1990, 79)

It is such enslavement that Wittgenstein (and, (not) incidentally, the Buddha²⁵) has in his sights. As Gandhi saw clearly,²⁶ a free country (e.g. a free India) is not possible, if its would-be-citizens are enslaved to ideas, desires or practices that ensure heteronomy. (National/collective) self-rule requires (individual) self-rule – and that in turn requires a (shared) enterprise of freeing ourselves. The two are *tied together* in a virtuous circle: one cannot separate out the active project of a community (or nation) coming to rule itself from an active project of mastering dogmatic and unacknowledged commitments, a self-mastery. And the latter needs to be happening at scale for the former to be meaningful.

The kind of discussion contained in the previous paragraph(s) manifests one *reason* why this book is called ‘Liberatory philosophy’. This work involves freeing oneself of delusions, including (crucially) about

liberty. The work *turns out to be through-and-through ethical and political*, a thoroughly *critical* task. As I will set out on occasion in the following chapters,²⁷ this sets my approach apart from Eugen Fischer's thorough but somewhat mechanistic and scientific version of therapy.²⁸ And as intimated above, it also takes me beyond even the later work of Gordon Baker, which is in other respects probably my chief influence: for Baker erred in locating the task in 'isolated' individual persons. Rather, another crucial theme of my book, as already clearly hinted, is the 2nd person nature of *society* and of *philosophy*.

0.5 The 2nd Person

Traditional philosophy is almost entirely caught up in the polarity of subjective vs objective. Or again: 1st person vs 3rd person. Wittgenstein in his mature thinking increasingly moves towards a 'middle way', that I will emphasise strongly in this book, taking up the possibility 'between' these apparently dichotomous terms, a possibility that turns out radically to subvert them: *the 2nd person*. It's no longer a question of the absurd quest of reaching objectivity from subjectivity (as in 1st-person 'Cartesianism', etc.), nor of the equally absurd quest of eliminating everything but objectivity (as in 3rd person scientism/metaphysics). Rather, it's about being with each other, being *addressed* by one another's presence or existence. Helping each other in our sufferings (see especially Chapter 10). Even: Reaching each other in our hearts.

This is a re-centring of philosophy in (an) ethics. Ethics is traditionally regarded as secondary or tertiary to metaphysics and epistemology. These 'hard' subjects come first, both in teaching and in philosophers' lives. Wittgenstein is among the (few) counter-hegemonic philosophers who turn this radically around. *If* it makes sense to talk of 'first philosophy' at all, ethics is it. (Thus I'll speak occasionally of a broadly 'Levinasian' aspect to Wittgenstein's philosophy.) *This* ethics-as-first-philosophy sees the 2nd person as the great modus of philosophy, both on what we might provisionally term (though the crudeness of the labels should be obvious, given the paradigm shift we are seeking) the 'meta' level and the 'object' level:

- At the 'meta' level, *philosophy itself is above all a 2nd person enterprise*. One liberates another (or oneself as another), including importantly by encouraging them to find their own way. Wittgenstein *addresses* us. And he allows us full freedom, in that address. He does not try to 'break out from' (let alone to remain stuck) within his own head (subjective/1st person); those who think of themselves as necessarily beginning within their own head are doomed to end there. Nor does he try to 'purify' philosophy of that head (objective/3rd person); such an enterprise too is utterly doomed to fail, for reasons

writ large in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy as well as Wittgenstein's. His entire philosophical demeanour is to address us, and to entreat us to listen to him, to try to understand his purpose and to 'converse' with him.²⁹ This begins in *TLP*, with the crucial matter of the form of what are possibly the most crucial passages in the book, 6.53 and 6.54. And it constitutes, I shall suggest, *the entire orientation* of *PI*.

- At the 'object' level, society, indeed, we might venture that *life itself is above all a 2nd person enterprise*. The interest of Wittgenstein in 'rule-following' is misunderstood when it is (as it invariably has been) forced into a mould of 1st and 3rd persons (see Chapters 6–9). Teaching another is a 2nd person enterprise. The interest of Wittgenstein in critiquing the fantasy of 'private language' (cf. especially Chapters 8–10) is misunderstood when it is (as it invariably has been) forced into a mould of 1st or 3rd persons. Pain, I will suggest, provocatively, is for us primarily a 2nd person phenomenon. Pain *addresses* those who witness it (and they do witness it, not merely its 'symptoms'); pain as it were asks for caring, and the caring relation might, as I shall explain,³⁰ helpfully be characterised as an internal relation.

Does what I have said commit me to an apolitical doctrine romanticising two people connecting via the eyes as a philosophical paradigm? Not at all. The 2nd person as I see it is not paradigmatically or certainly not *essentially* a relationship between two persons.³¹ The 2nd person is not a power only of 2. The 2nd person can be and frequently is we-you, or I-you[plural]. For the 1st-person – the one who is *internally related*³² to (a) you in a 2nd person way – can be plural, just as I can address directly/intimately more than one person at once. Our endemic tendency in the modern West to privilege allegedly separate individuals and to downgrade collectivities infects the greatest of efforts hitherto to think the 2nd person: Levinas's, and Nykanen & Backstrom's.

There is to be no privileging of individuals: we can and frequently do identify as *fundamentally* part of some larger-than-self unit. Or again, as I put the matter in Chapter 10, (we are free to take up either mode of description); our very selves may be taken to be larger than what we have hitherto called 'in-dividuals'.

Arguably, *if* it makes sense to talk of a fundamental unit at all, the fundamental unit is the community. Rousseau's starting-point in posing an original libertarian freedom of natural individuals was wrong. Human beings are, I think we can say on the basis of anthropology and biology, profoundly social animals from any beginning. (There is (there ought to be) no privileging of individuals: if anything, in fact, as a corrective to the standard individualist prejudice, we ought (temporarily) to privilege collectivities, persons in relation. *Even if* you are not convinced by what I just said about a case for the fundamentality of community.)

The 2nd person relationship has as its background root our mammalian nature, and then more specifically our primate nature. One paradigm for that relationship is friendship (Backstrom 2007). But another is the mother-child bond (and more generally, the parents-children bond); a profoundly asymmetric relationship that places a premium on care rather than on openness. In any case, arguably lying behind or expressing (or expressed) by both is our fundamentally group nature. In terms that I will align with Wittgenstein in the 2nd half of this book: Language is a commons.³³

So in this book I will radically interrogate the prejudice of the necessity of a 1st or 3rd person starting point in philosophy. Affinitously with Hannah Arendt, I will emphasise our necessary plurality as well as a necessary striving for our individuality, and for our meeting and even unity.

I address you, the 2nd person (individual/plural).

As I say, even if you find the inclination towards an element of communitarianism present in the previous paragraphs uncondusive and unconvincing, you can still embrace the main thrust of my point in this section. The great liberatory point hereabouts is: to avoid dogma. *It is dogmatic to take it that the 2nd person is paradigmatically/essentially a matter of two 'individuals' in inter-relation.* It is dogmatic, a thought-binding prejudice (one probably over-determined, in my view, by our culture's individualist ideology, its obsession with a certain simplistic vision of freedom, aka license), to disallow the very possibility of 'the 2nd person' relation sometimes involving something more or other than just two people.³⁴

I turn now to a crucial way in which Wittgenstein seeks to midwife a reader's greater freedom from entrapment, and to take one into the realm of the 2nd person: by his peculiar way of writing. Writing like speaking. Writing that (in its matured form, in *PI*), constantly uses punctuational and other devices to this end.

0.6 A Note on Diacritics

First, a straightforward remark: when I quote from *PI* in the present work, I normally simply give a section-number (i.e. numbers without book-references accompanying them are sections of *PI*); and when I emphasise within quotes, in the present work, I use underlining. But: Not all of my diacritics, 'unfortunately', are as normal as or can be explained quite as straightforwardly as that. I will (try to) explain this, with reference to how Wittgenstein writes.

I have gestured earlier at the importance for Wittgenstein of being able to come as close as possible to 'capturing' (sic!) exactly the illusion that is captivating oneself and another (see on this especially *PI* 254 & 295), and of dialogical engagement to ensure that one is not under a

self-satisfied illusion in setting out what this is. I've gestured at how this means that – when philosophy is being written for general consumption, and thus is not *tete-a-tete* with another (or with oneself as another) – philosophy requires of one a mode or modes of effectively modelling or reproducing (or simulating) such contact, such dialogue. At how this means that one needs-must write in a way that is different from the standard philosophical treatise or article.

I turn now to thinking proleptically about how this translates into the 'oralising' of one's prose. Into infusing into that prose the *2nd-person* aspect so vital to philosophy/ethics as I see the mature Wittgenstein conceiving of it.

Above all,³⁵ to how one needs, in Wittgensteinian philosophy, as Wittgenstein did, to avail oneself of a full range of (sometimes unusual or even seemingly 'excessive' use of) diacritical devices, in order to accomplish these ends. To provide a kind of replication of the way in which, in ordinary speech, subtle timbres of emphasis, of tone, etc. colour and create one's meaning, in dialogue with another(s).

"Logic must take care of itself", Wittgenstein tells us in the very first remark in his 1914–1916 *Notebooks*. "Language must take care of itself", we might say, in later Wittgenstein's voice. Language can't be 'justified', since any attempt at such justification will have already to presuppose language. This reminder counts I think against those who would seek to explain to us the grammar of our language; to justify language by way of grammar.³⁶ But it would be a grievous mistake to think that the idea that "Language must take care of itself" should be read as meaning that language (grammar) is somehow autonomous to (autonomous of) its *users* – I reject the versions of this thought common to thinkers otherwise as diverse as Chomsky, Hacker and Saussure, throughout the present work.³⁷ I mean something like the opposite of this. I mean that, when *we* do not speak nonsense, then our signs are alright. Language doesn't need any extra help from some fantasised outside of "meanings" (e.g. the mind considered as a realm apart, or some quasi-Platonic realm). I mean, that is, something already anticipated in what Wittgenstein means when he immediately goes on, in the *Notebooks*, to say this:

Let us remember the explanation why "Socrates is Plato" is nonsense. That is, because *we* have not made an arbitrary specification, NOT because a sign is, shall we say, illegitimate in itself!

It must in a certain sense be impossible for us to go wrong in logic. This is already partly expressed by saying: Logic must take care of itself. This is an extremely profound and important insight.

We should ideally be able to mean what we want to mean, simply by working with full attention and effort and courage to say what we mean.

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Even in philosophy. We are absolutely not (*contra* some moments in Jameson, Derrida, etc.) terminally trapped or imprisoned by language. Language must and can speak for itself (Cf. *BWM*, 154). And thus, potentially at least, we can speak for *ourselves*...

However, philosophers, especially when writing (principally because writing can too easily generate an illusion of ability to control one's own expression (saved as one is from having continually to calibrate it with another as one does in speech) while simultaneously being deprived of many of the features of speech (gesture, tone, facial expression, etc.) that *enable* us to *reach* a much finer grain, including of qualification or uncertainty), will always struggle to express adequately the struggle with their own temptations to misunderstand language that *is* philosophy as Wittgenstein understands it. This is because philosophising, when done aright, always takes one to the 'limits' of language, and necessarily involves dalliance with nonsense. We're continually bumping up against the limits of normal expression. We're continually needing to create (and reflect upon) new, 'live' metaphors, etc.

For this reason, standard prose-forms are rarely enough to get to the heart of the philosophical matter. It is difficult to capture in academic prose the flow of how one wants to say something but feels discomfort and perhaps then reacts in the direction of a seeming opposite which also doesn't sit right. In confusion we have the feeling of not having the words we want. To manifest all this, so that one can address this confusion, one needs, rather than typical academic organisation and expression, more unusual formats and modes of self-expression: the ways of writing of a Heidegger, a Wittgenstein, a Cavell, a Conant (Conant 1989), and so on.

One crucial tool, in this regard, is punctuation, diacritics. To make written philosophy, very roughly, a little more like speaking.³⁸ Or at least to make it '*speak*'; to force it to be distinctively and unusually 'aware', awareness-raising. Where/when language can't speak for itself is at each of (and at all of) the points where it gives out, (or) where there is nothing to say, or where one doesn't know what to say, or is caught hovering between different things one wants to say – all the points where philosophy *is*, and is most needed. What one *wants* to do at such points is things like: speaking with a metaphysical emphasis.³⁹ Emphasising (more and more?) words, while simultaneously realising and coming to realise better that there is something fishy about one's desires with regard to one's words: sometimes, one is reduced to expedients such as simultaneously italicising and scare-quoting a word, in a manoeuvre that is both semi-self-cancelling and yet genuinely expressive of one's dilemma, of one's desires. *One wants to stress the word, but also realises that one's use of it is straining against the limits of sense, and thus one simultaneously wants to scare-quote it.*

As we shall see, Wittgenstein led the way here, in sometimes doing just this himself. A notable example of this is in the *Blue and Brown Books* (1969) (BB):

It has been suggested that such words as “there”, “here”, “now”, “this” are the ‘*real proper names*’ as opposed to what in ordinary life we call proper names, and, in the view I am referring to, can only be called so crudely.

(BB, 80–81)...

Consider the expression ‘*real proper names*’: What can justify the use together, simultaneously of italics – normally considered a kind of emphasis – with single quotes – normally considered a distancing device? I have explained what. There is a ‘double movement’ here: the scare-quotes in a sense take away what the italics have added. But then is not this like a double-negation; would not it be better to simply use plain text? No. For the very thing that we need to express in cases like this is the very tendency not to find plain text adequate; we are driven to expedients such as simultaneously scare-quoting and emphasising precisely in order to connote the pressing up against the limits of the expressible. (And now note how naturally I reached for the word “driven”, in the previous sentence. This too marks some presence of a desire for metaphysical emphasis. This is a matter neither simply of us looking from outside, dispassionately or disapprovingly, at someone driven to metaphysics, nor of us falling right into ‘metaphysical use’. Rather, at such moments, we are far less far than we would like from being metaphysicians, but there is no alternative, *if* we are to ‘catch’ the character of that very ‘drive’, that very desire, which is so much what we want to understand (and thus to be able to hold in check), in doing philosophy. Which is exactly what, in a well-known passage, *PI* 254, Wittgenstein states as a crucial role of philosophy: “to give a psychologically exact account of the temptation to use a particular kind of expression”.)

Another fine example is to be found in *PI* 208.⁴⁰ Wittgenstein writes that “Teaching which is not meant to apply to anything but the examples given is different from that which ‘*points beyond*’ them.” Things like this, this wanted *and* dangerous idea of ‘pointing beyond’, an idea which could lead us into grave temptation in postulating (e.g.) “rails to infinity”: such things, that need scare-quoting, are things that we precisely *want* to emphasise. As it were, the desire for a metaphysical emphasis comes first. The italics come first. The scare-quotes are a recognition of the danger of our own desire to italicise. The two together enable something of philosophical moment, a temptation and its recognition, to be compressedly expressed in a way which would be completely lost, were we to think of the one as simply being without residue cancelled out by the other.

Thus it is that, when ‘we’ do philosophy according to our method, like Wittgenstein, we find ourselves necessarily quite using a lot of such techniques, in our writing. This might sometimes appear eccentric, but it is not an optional stylistic quirk: *it is of the essence of the subject-matter* with which we are concerned, and contending. If one can’t echo in one’s writing the pauses and hesitations and repetitions and verbal gestures and facial expressions – including crucially those which reveal or aim to express some dissatisfaction with our own words – that *essentially* accompany real philosophising, real speaking, real thinking, then one’s *philosophising* is imprisoned, and cannot be at peace.⁴¹ And part of what one needs to do hereabouts, as I have said, is to find ways of accomplishing such ‘echoing’ in such a way as to give full expression to one’s *nonsense*, as well as to one’s sense.⁴²

And the reader will therefore often find me doing just that kind of thing, in the present work.

Now let me guard against a possible over-interpretation of what I have just written. For: It is an illusion that by means of punctuation one can *make* one’s writing mean the things one wants it to mean, if it does not do so already. That illusion is what Derrida rightly critiques, and would be a *denial* of the need for language to speak for itself. It would be the illusion that language can be *made* to speak some things rather than others, that linguistic strings can be policed and marshalled by their own punctuation. Of course, the fundamental reason why this is an illusion is simply: that punctuation, diacritics, etc. *are just more language* (Cf. *PI* 22, where Wittgenstein treats precisely of the illusion I’ve just mentioned, that Frege was subject to). One has to understand diacritics *in use*: This is why, for example, when one is correcting proofs for a piece of writing to be published, one has to work quite hard sometimes to make clear where one’s proofs begin and end. If one wants to insert the following addition into some proofs, for instance: “‘The end’”, one has to find a convention or a way for making clear *whether or not the outer quote-marks are to be included in what one wants inserted*. (And no such convention or clarification is immune to potential misunderstanding.) Quotation-marks do not of themselves tell you definitively whether they are being used or mentioned. And nor does any other diacritical device, ever.

This is why there cannot in the end be any punctuation-mark for assertion, or for questioning, etc.: on which, see again 22.⁴³ Or again: why any such sign is only a punctuation-mark, and thus open to potential misunderstanding, to quotation, etc. like everything else. In the end, tone of voice, like punctuation marks, etc. can’t *prove* anything (Thus Wittgenstein’s and mine is not what Derrida would criticise as ‘a philosophy of presence’): the utterance/sentence as a whole, in context, has to *work*. Language has ‘to speak for itself’; we have to take responsibility for what we actually do with our words, along with others.

One might say: It is in use only that any part of language whatsoever, anything being treated as language, actually *is* language.⁴⁴

But: what is *not* an illusion is the splendid role diacritics can play in helping to make visible in writing a philosophical issue, an urge, and the modalities around one's efforts at dealing with that issue or that urging (This is often visible in Wittgenstein's important, subtle and intense uses of modal terms, and in his use of all sorts of qualifiers and 'hesitations', explored in some of the chapters that follow⁴⁵). Again, this is why Wittgenstein wrote as he did, *especially* in his greatest writing of all, the *Investigations*. His extremely extensive and unconventional use in that book of italics, underlining, spaces, dashes of various kinds, quote-marks of at least two distinct kinds, and (as noted above) *combinations* of these even when those combinations seem superficially to involve a mutual cancelling-out: these are not a *blemish* in the text; they mark, rather, how it does justice to the sophistication and subtlety of what it deals with. (One might venture: they are a mark of its attainment to the status of true philosophy, on our method.⁴⁶) To read most of Wittgenstein's interpreters, you would think that his unusual writing style, at its *height* in *PI*, was indeed a blemish, an 'obscurity' or such-like. Such interpreters are left with the difficult task (never undertaken) of explaining why the writing that he worked over the *most*, his *masterpiece* (i.e. the *PI*) has by and large the *most* (and the most systematic) of such alleged 'blemishes'!

I by contrast am plainly not in such a quandary. One direct aim of mine in this book is to help to explicate and make visible why Wittgenstein's writing, especially the *Investigations*, has the form and style that it does, and how these manifest an integral part of Wittgenstein's mature philosophy.

My writing style is less unusual than Wittgenstein's own. But it is still 'non-standard' in various ways that will already to some extent be evident,⁴⁷ and that will only become more so as the book proceeds.⁴⁸ I 'apologise' for this – and I don't apologise for it. It is of the essence of the task.

One rough general indication of my diacritical practice can be somewhat summed up as follows: I use double quote-marks for actual quotes, and single quote-marks for 'scare'-quotes. That is: in this book I use single quotes and double quotes in a way which conforms mostly to the way that Wittgenstein so used these devices.⁴⁹ Another, already hinted at above, can now be summed up somewhat thus: Many of my uses of italics are a running up against the limits of language, and my occasional uses of italics combined with scare-quotes are to be understood further as outlined above, as exhibiting a (surely delusive) wish for – and simultaneous *awareness* of the utter hazards of – a would-be metaphysical emphasis. *Exhibiting* (not *using*), in short, a 'metaphysical use'.⁵⁰ (Philosophical speaking is *fundamentally* about being honest, in 'our'

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understanding: this is part of the base-line commitment to an ethical mode of philosophising that I find in Wittgenstein, and is part of why my liberatory reading is an ‘ethical reading’. It is honest to confess one’s desire to give ‘metaphysical emphasis’. It is dishonest, I suspect, to have an overly plain prose that buys scholarly ‘respectability’ at the expense of being in denial about such desires.)

The terms “rough” and “somewhat” in the previous paragraph are unavoidable. ‘Our’ practice has of course to be understood *in use*; and the complexities of actual use make such a simple schema over-simple. (For the complexities of that use are bound to far outstrip any simple rule, especially as what is in play is the difficulty of philosophy! The complexity of one’s Wittgensteinian diacritics cannot be *reduced* to a rule or schema; the difficulty of philosophy, the endless variation in seeking to reflect back the character of the particular temptation towards nonsense that one is facing at any one time, in oneself or another, ensures this.) For example, it is quite often almost arbitrary whether to use single or double quotes (What does one do if one is imagining a quote? Imagining someone (Oneself?) wanting to say something? Etc.).⁵¹ But the schema is, I think, a helpful rough guide and starting-point. I learned it from reading Wittgenstein himself, supplemented by the later Baker’s marvellous in-depth treatment of these too-often neglected matters in *BWM*.

What large-scale variegated use of diacritics (and of qualificatory figures of speech, etc.) allow, far from obscurantism, is actually *a greater precision of expression* than is available in flat prose. One can express subtleties that otherwise are cruded out; in particular, subtleties of what one *wants* to say (but knows may even be unsayable, unmeanable⁵²), subtleties giving oneself or others a chance of understanding another who is seeming to want to say things that are (d)elusive, and so on. This precision is clearly not ‘absolute’; in particular it is quite different in *character* from numerical or theoretical precision. But it is (a living form of) precision, of necessary rigour, all the same. (The point here is structurally analogous to that at play in *PI* 71 & 76.) To limit oneself from such possibility of precision is to dogmatically render oneself unfree in relation to what is of critical importance in philosophy: the ability to find not just the liberating ‘word’, but, in the right context where it can do its job, the liberating *expression*. The expression that delivers, that sets free, by *untieing* (erlosen) what has held one captive. Loosening the bonds.

When Wittgenstein says things like “I want to say...”, we ought typically to hear this as him saying: I want to say this, I really do; but *the very fact* that I have to note that inclination, rather than just going ahead and *saying*, tells us that there is something hereabouts too that one needs freeing from. The noting of the inclination already puts one halfway to freedom. To get the rest of the way there, one needs to keep searching:

for modes of expression that as precisely as possible capture any remaining will to entrap oneself in confusion.

0.7 What Is in This Book

The main body of this book consists in a working through of what I see as the key ‘pivot-points’ in (most influential and crucial, most carefully prepared and worked over, first half or so of the) *PI*: the moments in the text that are most well-known, or (on my understanding) most important.

Perhaps the most important thing that I aim to convey and work out here is an *attitude*: the liberatory-ethical attitude to (the question of) how to philosophise.

What this book is NOT is a running through of a list of ‘technical terms’. This is because I do not think that Wittgenstein HAD technical terms (I justify this claim in Chapters 4 and 9). He aims to demonstrate and convey a way of philosophising (and of living); not to promote a jargon. He aims to keep (one’s) thinking constantly *alive*.⁵³

What then of his at times seemingly unusual use of terms such as “nonsense”, “ordinary”, “criteria”, “language”, or “grammar”? And of his employment of more or less novel terms such as “depth grammar”, “family resemblance”, “language-game”, and “form of life” (and his ‘mention’ of novel terms such as “private language”⁵⁴)? All of these will interest us pretty deeply in the course of this book. They will interest us insofar as they are used in some of the passages upon which I focus, passages which I either follow the crowd in thinking crucial to the progress of the *PI*, or want to highlight because I think their crucialness has been neglected. We need to look at *the actual use* of these terms (in Wittgenstein, etc.), and *not* presuppose that (as technical terms would) they have the same use whenever they occur.⁵⁵ They will interest us especially inasmuch as they really help provide tools for ongoing liberatory philosophical activity. Moreover, in the case of a number of these terms, very good account has of course already been given of them elsewhere.⁵⁶

Wittgenstein’s search for liberatory terms⁵⁷ – for words, phrases, sentences, passages that will conduce to liberation – is typically read, wrongly, as his proposing technical terms. This is of course *exactly what he most feared*: as he put it, in the mournful closing remark of *LFM*: “The seed I’m most likely to sow is a certain jargon” (p. 293).⁵⁸ Fixation on the novel terms he sometimes coined is a fallacy of misplaced concreteness. It is to mistake bait for real nourishing food. Philosophical nourishment comes from whatever helps achieve a real intellectual ‘autonomy’: to achieve ethical comportment with regard to oneself and others (and one’s words).⁵⁹ It is a mark of philosophic unfreedom to be hooked on a jargon.

It is of course worth reflecting on how best to use some of Wittgenstein's terms, and so I do a significant amount of this in this book: especially with regard to the terms "grammar" (see Chapters 3 and 4), "ordinary language", "everyday", and "perspicuous presentation" (Chapter 4), "object of comparison" and "therapies" (Chapter 5), "internal relation" (Chapter 7), "bedrock" and "form of life" (Chapter 9), and "private language" (Chapter 10), in the case of each of which I propose at some length an approach more or less at odds with the 'standard reading' use of these terms. I also, of course, propose in the course of the book as a whole a reading of Wittgenstein's remarks on liberation, freedom, etc. *But* any such reflections are rendered worthwhile, if they are, *by their fruits*. It is not about a narrow exegetical 'correctness' for the sake of it. It is above all about the liberatory (and ethically conditioned) task that can justify the use(s) of terms one way rather than another.

Moreover, it is in any case crucial to see how (as later Baker explicates) what really exercises Wittgenstein – what we need liberation with regard to – is 'pictures', not language. In other words: while one often gets caught up in words (including: Wittgensteinians sometimes get caught up treating Wittgenstein's own 'special words' as if they were a necessary jargon, the mere use of which is itself 'therapeutic'), the point is always how to extricate oneself/ourselves from confusions and delusions which *attend* those words, or precede or follow from them. The point is: not to be caught up in what Wittgenstein often calls pictures, which are often formed from *over-attachment* to particular words, or to certain uses of words. Pictures are unconscious/taken-for-granted ways of going on or of preconceiving the situations. Biased ways of seeing which queer the pitch.

What is in this book is then above all a working through, with a view to freedom from pictures that *hold one captive*: of section 1 of the *Investigations*, of Wittgenstein's explicit invocations of the reader's freedom, of Wittgenstein's famous alleged reduction of meaning to use, of his so-called 'metaphilosophical' reflections,⁶⁰ of his rule-following considerations, and of his anti-'private-language' considerations.

0.8 Outline Summary of Chapters to Follow

It will be a burden of my reading to show how these 'topics' here investigated turn out not really to be (separate). There are to some extent different topics in that there are particular confusions/traps. But these bleed into one another, or we find the same kind of self-entrapment again and again in superficially separate 'areas' of philosophy.

What matters is one's development of the capacity to philosophise, to *see*. That capacity to philosophise has as one very important feature the *King-Lear*-like injunction to teach/learn/see *differences*. This crucial sub-theme in the present work is well-summarised in *LFM*: "we are

much more inclined to say 'All these things, though looking different, are really the same' than we are to say 'All these things, though looking the same, are really different'" (15). The desire behind metaphysics is a desire to feel 'in control', and to be *knowing*: where one doesn't know as well as where one does. It is an out-of-place or out-of-control knowingness, and therefore ultimately an immaturity,⁶¹ though not one that one can simply grow out of. I will aim in the present work to teach differences, as Wittgenstein quintessentially sought to do, without relying on those differences being supposedly once and for all codifiable in 'the' grammar. I aim, that is, to teach differences while preserving and indeed *enhancing* the reader's space of freedom. For this to work, one must be willing to be freed and to free by not remaining trapped in the felt compulsion to generalise/to *essentialise*. That craving, whose apogees are scientism and metaphysics, I seek to escape or overcome.

The book stands or falls,⁶² in the end, on whether the interpretation that I offer here, sequentially, of the crucial 'pivot-point' sections that I have picked out from *PI*'s main 'chapters' is adequate, illuminating and (to some extent at least) novel. The test of Wittgenstein's method is its usefulness, and the test of interpreters is to show how to understand and use it so as to make manifest how useful it can be. The reader's experience will show whether I've passed the test.

Now, it might seem unclear how homing in on these 'pivot-points', sometimes on specific sections, sometimes leaving aside significant chunks of text that come between them, can possibly give a whole reading of Wittgenstein's *PI*. And indeed, the present work has no ambition to read every section even of the first half of what we used to call 'Part I' of *PI*, nowhere near that. But what I believe is developed is a set of possible *exemplars* of Wittgenstein's (liberatory) practice in the text, a set moreover that frequently do connect well with each other, across even significant 'gaps'. The reader will, I hope, find the book *surprisingly connected and unified*, even though there might seem superficially a lack of side-by-side numerical continuity between most of the passages focussed upon. That is to say: it is easier than you might expect, for me to draw a kind of red thread between the passages that I have picked out as the 'keys' to *PI*: 1, 16, 43, 95–124, 130–133, 149–151, 186, 198–201, 217, and 284–286. These turn out to be, as it were, 'centres of attraction' (of our attention) which thread together the text.

And in any case, the way in which I read the book could, I believe and hope, easily (sic) be extended to 'fill in the gaps' more or less completely. (Perhaps one day someone else might even do something like that.) The 'exemplars' offered below offer a kind of set of worked examples, which could give rise to a practice. But, if my approach is right, the practice will never (in any case) simply be able to be copied or extended by rote. The burden of freedom cannot be sloughed off, if one is to consistently undertake liberatory philosophising.⁶³

- **Chapter 1: The Philosopher and Temptation: Wittgenstein's Augustinian Opening Move**

In this chapter, I examine the opening section of *PI*, seeking to show how one can be freed from dubious but 'natural' and attractive and even seemingly compulsory assumptions about the nature of language, etc. by means of close attention to the progress of section 1. I stress what is often missed: an *ethical* aspect to Wittgenstein's structuring of 1. Wittgenstein's confessional addressing of us is philosophy in the 2nd person. It follows Augustine's similarly confessional, 2nd-personal approach.

I argue further that Wittgenstein's philosophising should be seen as involving centrally a journey to *maturation* of us collectively/culturally. This journey is begun by overcoming the essentially childish – simplistic and potentially hubristic – state of Augustine as *pictured* in section 1 of *PI*. But the chapter also seeks to free us from the prejudice that we have seemingly become locked into, so far as Augustine's relation to Wittgenstein is concerned. For sure, 1 critiques Augustine; but from a position of great closeness to him. Thus, with some audacity, I characterise 1 not just as a deep critique of a moment in Augustine, nor even just as setting an Augustinian picture alongside one of Wittgenstein's own without prejudice, but as *itself* pretty thoroughly *Augustinian*.

- **Chapter 2: "It Is as You Please": *PI* 16 as an Icon of Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Freedom**

This chapter centres on a reading of 16, a key (unduly neglected) source for a (liberatory) reading of Wittgenstein. I address thereby the key question raised against the kind of vision of the Wittgensteinian method I am proposing: that it amounts to a kind of relativism/subjectivism. My answer will make good the following response: that this charge is true to a significantly lesser extent than is commonly assumed. Here I set out a certain disagreement with the later work of Gordon Baker inasmuch as he seems to imply otherwise, through promoting an excessive philosophical/cultural 'individualism' which I do not share, and which I believe is vitiated by the anti-'private-language' considerations, (and) by understanding the true ethical, existential and political dimensions of the philosophical task, after Wittgenstein.

Wittgensteinian liberatory philosophy certainly does not amount to reducing freedom to a mere license of 'anything goes'. For 16 simply does not reduce Wittgenstein's method to what 'relativism' is normally thought problematically to connote. And Wittgenstein's 'treatments' offer important purpose-relative and audience-relative philosophical *insights*, so long as we use them as intended, as tools in the toolbox, and don't erect them as buildings, would-be permanent dogmatic claims. The liberatory turn is not from one theory to another (it does not involve

an observer trying to capture a phenomenon from which they are separate) but, contrariwise, I shall claim, towards the realisation of our central role as interconnected *participants* trying together to avoid being captured by a desire to remain separate and magisterially ‘above’.

- Chapter 3: What Is (Wittgenstein’s Own Account of) Meaning?: PI 43 and Its Critics

In 1, we saw Wittgenstein seeming to reject a widespread proto-account of linguistic meaning (though actually we saw that the situation was much more complex than that; indeed, other than that). In 16, we saw him giving *us* the responsibility of determining how to speak of the nature of language. In 43, it has appeared to many readers that Wittgenstein comes clean and finally offers up *his* account of linguistic meaning: as reducible to use.

The questioner assumed in the title of this chapter assumes something like the latter. Such a questioner assumes that Wittgenstein is inquiring into the *nature* of meaning, and aiming to provide thereby something worth calling a true *account* of meaning. Such a questioner will typically assume that that account is in terms of use in the language. But: once one articulates the hitherto-often-hidden assumption that Wittgenstein *must* have an account of meaning one can acknowledge *its* status (as non-obligatory) and subject it to scrutiny. (This is, of course, *itself* an instance of liberatory philosophising.)

That examination, this chapter undertakes. I give reason for thinking that, paradoxical as it might sound, the best thing to say, on balance, is that Wittgenstein offers no account of meaning, *at all*, no matter of what kind. Alternatively, we are free to say that Wittgenstein entertains various accounts – that such accounts are in *that* sense very much present within his text – but that none is presented as definitive/dogmatic and they are only offered up as objects of comparison to work through a particular problem(s). In this latter sense too, Wittgenstein is not offering an account in the sense in which that term is standardly used in philosophy: an account that one attaches to or privileges.

One is free nevertheless to continue to insist that Wittgenstein’s is an account. If mine *is* (thus still seen as) an account, nevertheless it refers the *accounting* on to the *person(s) in question with whom we are in dialogue*. This is a radical development in the history of philosophy: no longer do we see accounts as being given by philosophers themselves; at least, except in co-operation with other/ordinary language-users. Escaping fantasies of objectivity, and embracing the 2nd-personal nature of philosophy, I remark that if you are determined to go on speaking of “accounts”, then such ‘accounts’ are, implicitly, given by competent users of language, in their actual practice of language with one another (and with us). There is no *place* for the expert account-ant, the would-be

'language-policeman'. Truly, Wittgenstein gives us speaker-hearers/users the responsibility of determining how (if at all) to speak of the nature of meaning.

- Chapter 4: When Wittgenstein Speaks of 'Everyday' Language, He Means Simply *Language*: A Liberatory Reading of 95–124

This chapter is in some ways the heart of the book. It is certainly more ambitious than any other chapter in the present work save possibly for Chapter 10. For this lengthy chapter focusses on an entire and central *sequence* in the heart of Wittgenstein's consideration of how to conceive of and practice philosophy, 95–124 (especially on 95, 116 and 122). It therefore works through ideas such as "everyday" and "perspicuity" which are then relied on in subsequent portions of the book.

I endeavour here to explicate how, despite some appearances to the contrary, this central sequence of Wittgenstein's 'on philosophy' need not be read as embodying theses, no matter of what kind (in particular, not about philosophy). These remarks rather function as routes for 'returning' one to (ordinary) language. For example, to certain uses that we can see-as ordinary of terms such as "ordinary" or "everyday"... This helps one to realise how radical is Wittgenstein's aim: to escape the elitism of philosophy's standard setting itself up in judgement over the ordinary (This thematic of the chapter thus directly extends the non-accountative or non-expertise-based logic of Chapter 3).

The chapter begins with a succinct discussion along the lines just indicated: a discussion, namely, of how the mode of reading Wittgenstein offered in the present work applies to terms such as "everyday" and "ordinary"; What is the 'liberatory' character of these terms and of the work they do for Wittgenstein?

Having established *that*, through emphasising that for Wittgenstein "everyday language" is basically equivalent to "language", I *work through* sections 95–121 of *PI*, showing just how illuminatingly they read according to this fashion.

The chapter culminates in a reading of *PI* 122, wherein Wittgenstein famously wrote that "perspicuous presentation" is a concept of *fundamental* significance (*for us*). I argue that the standard reading of that concept fails to connect with its liberatory purport, as an achievement-term marking someone's coming from captivity to perspicuity, rather than as denoting some kind of 'objective' mapping of a 'conceptual landscape'. I.e. A perspicuous presentation is one that makes the matter presented perspicuous to one to whom it is given, and in that sense the term has an essentially 2nd-personal aspect. I further suggest that, even insofar as such 'objective' mappings *can* be made, they have *no inevitable normative force*. My interpretation draws out the ethical and even political dimension of 122 (as stressed by Hans Sluga) in drawing

direct attention to the real *dangers* of the aspiration for a *generalised* perspicuous presentation, a ‘world-view’. I seek to walk a middle way between later Baker’s pro-perspicuous-presentation and Sluga’s ‘anti’-perspicuous-presentation readings of and uses of Wittgenstein, suggesting that this is one moment in Wittgenstein’s text where there might even be a genuine (Wallgrenian) ‘polyphony’: we need not read Wittgenstein as choosing/requiring one only of these two readings.

I end the chapter by briefly reviewing 124 in the light of 95–123 as I have read them, and stress that, just as one needs to understand a term like “ordinary” for Wittgenstein by reference to the right contrast-class, so with a phrase like “leaves everything as it is”. Wittgenstein in 124 is by no means expressing some kind of conservatism; he is contrasting philosophy’s task with that of scientific explanationism. (This point is important because it leaves more space for the ethico-political ambitions of the present work.)

- **Chapter 5: Objects of Comparison to the Real (Philosophical?) Discovery: *PI* 130–133**

The critically important sections introducing Wittgenstein’s notion of ‘objects of comparison’ are here considered. This notion, *itself* an ‘object of comparison’, is read as intended to displace the hegemony of ‘scientific’ (i.e. scientific) *modelling* in philosophy.

We move from 130 to 132 directly into Wittgenstein’s famous invocation of therapies and (the discussion of) the real discovery – the one that allegedly enables one to stop philosophising – in 133. The point of the therapeutic comparison is argued here to be its essentially 2nd-personal nature. 133 brings out the way in which, as noted throughout this book, (our method in) philosophy proceeds in a manner quite different from the 3rd and 1st person models that dominate Modern philosophy.

The translation of 133⁶⁴ is carefully pondered, and a reading proposed wherein this passage certainly does not amount to any crude ‘end of philosophy’ thesis, but rather engages once more with our *temptations* towards hopeless desires for such things. In other words, I ask the question: Is “the real discovery” actually posed as one that Wittgenstein thought he had made, or even one that he thought could conceivably be made? I tentatively suggest not, certainly unless we speak instead of “real discoveries”, making each relative first to a problem and then to a person(s) with that problem.

- **Chapter 6: Wittgenstein Dissolves the Know-How vs Knowledge-that Debate: *PI* 149–151**

There has been a swathe of writing in Analytic philosophy during the past decade or two aiming to undercut the ‘Rylean’ category of

'knowing-how'. The "intellectualist" desire, focal in the work of Timothy Williamson and his followers, to convert know-how into knowledge-that, is a seemingly captivating desire, one that is troublingly easy for philosophers to fall into and not be able to get out of again. But, I argue here, it is not a desire best countered simply by a defence of know-how as an independent category of knowledge. Nor even by claiming it necessarily to be a more fundamental category of knowledge. To the contrary: we ought to question whether there *is* any such thing as an over-arching category of 'knowledge' at all; we ought to question therefore whether know-how is well-understood as a *kind of that* (of knowledge); *and*, only insofar as it *might* (not '*must*') be seen thus ought we, roughly, to follow Ryle et al. in *inverting* the supposed pre-eminence of knowledge-that over 'knowledge-how'. Understanding the heart of Wittgenstein's discussion of knowledge and understanding, which opens with *PI* 149, enables one to do these things; that is, enables one to appreciate the depth of the *difference* between know-how and our 'paradigms' of knowledge(-that), a difference that recent Anglo-American philosophy has tended to obliterate. Such understanding requires one to place this sequence in its correct context: which goes back ultimately to *PI* 16 (Cf. Chapter 2).

- Chapter 7: Logical Existentialism?: An Approach to *PI* 186

Contra mainstream interpretations such as that of Baker-and-Hacker, Wittgenstein's 'rule-following considerations' do not require any kind of tacit or ineffable structure (or metaphysics) of internal relations. 'Internal relations' are transitional relations, or relations in which what was foregoing gets presumed.

I emphasise, in developing my deflationary 'model' (sic) of rule followings (as actions interleaved with the rules which they may be said to instantiate), that acting *from* rules may always involve a transition from one (point in a) grammar to another – sometimes quite novel – one. We should be open to speaking of grammar as something that is far more in flux than philosophers (especially many 'Wittgensteinians') usually like to suppose. The attempt to capture in GENERAL terms how our words mean is to a very large extent a futile task; but this does *not* mean that words can't be used to convey as exact a meaning as anyone may need at any particular point.⁶⁵

The only 'logical' relations among points in a dialogue, among rule and act and rule, are presumptive and even constructed. As a sequence of discourse occurs, each moment in the sequence gets presumed in what follows. But then these relations *are not all fixed*: they do not have the kind of atemporal 'hardness' that, I argue here, is tacitly ascribed them (despite their best intentions) by Hacker et al. They can sometimes (and in certain cases need to) *develop*, as a creative process, even.⁶⁶ One might imagine a settled grammar or unarguable perspicuous representation of

'internal relations' *if* those were taken as Baker-and-Hacker had proposed them. One will *not*, for presumptive relations. Rather, we should note carefully that Wittgenstein says in 186 that it would almost be more correct to say that a new decision is needed at every stage of the development of an arithmetic sequence. The idea of 'logical existentialism', mocked by Baker-and-Hacker, is not quite so far away from Wittgenstein's intentions as has been thought. One might even risk saying: for Wittgenstein, one is/we are condemned to be free, even, in a certain sense – to some greater than zero extent – in matters of logic. We certainly feel very strongly impelled to go on in the same way and we in fact agree in our results: but *we* are the ones who are responsible for that which we do. There is no higher (metaphysical) motivator.

So the paradoxical phrase "logical existentialism" does seem at times – *almost* – to catch some of the complexity and surprisingness of Wittgenstein's treatment of rule following, of his realistic vision of the full fluxing nature of language-in-action in the world. A vision in which human agency is not subordinate to rule-tyrannies in the way that some authoritative 'Wittgensteinian' voices have seemed to suggest, but rather, rules are understood, through and through, *through* their practical presence in actual and possible human and social life.⁶⁷ A presence which, as Sartre might have said, is most present in their seeming absence: for it is when rules are acted *from*, and thus in effect *no longer* stand there like signposts (*PI* 85), that their purpose is fulfilled.

- Chapter 8: The *Faux*-Freedom of Nonsense: Kripke's Wittgenstein and Wittgenstein's Wittgenstein at *PI* 198–201

This chapter comprises my critical discussion of the epic exegetical struggle around *PI* 201f., and my own 'resolute' reading of this, the climactic moment in the so-called 'rule-following considerations'. I advance a reading of these passages of *PI* which serves to throw into question what one can be stably wanting to mean if one wants to purvey a 'constitutive' scepticism *a la* Kripke's Wittgenstein ('Kripkenstein'). For, if one's present meanings are thrown into doubt (as Kripke seems to claim), then the doubts that one raises (in the present) about the past are *also* thrown into doubt. But this deprives one of the resources needed even to (seem to) state the constitutive scepticism. One concludes that Kripke has not succeeded in assigning any stable meaning to his central 'claims' in his reading of Wittgenstein. Kripkean scepticism need not trouble us, because 'it' fails even to exist. Kripke's Wittgenstein evinces merely a fantasy of 'total' freedom, rather than anything coherent. It is freedom as mere license; it is the 'freedom' of nonsense without due attention: the purveyor of nonsense is free to 'say' whatever they want, but, sadly, they don't actually succeed in saying anything at all.

- Chapter 9: Overcoming Over-Reliance on ‘the Bedrock’: On *PI* 217

This chapter considers the sense in which, in *PI* 217, Wittgenstein means us to be able to rely on bedrock, where our spade is turned, as a conversation-stopper, as something which we can and should count on – *and* the under-appreciated sense in which he does not. For there is a key sense in which ‘the bedrock’ is a transitional term only. It cannot diminish the sense in which one is inevitably free, in philosophy. (Free to be wise, or otherwise.)

This consideration helps us to understand better the sense in which Wittgenstein resists the temptation towards a set of ‘technical terms’ in philosophy (including potentially “bedrock” – and “form of life”), and the sense in which the idea of the bipolarity of the proposition is not a theory nor a true (nor a false!) thesis but rather an object of comparison. We come in turn to see what is going on in sections such as 217 itself better, insofar as we appreciate these respecifications of what Wittgensteinian philosophy accomplishes.

- Chapter 10: The Anti-‘Private-Language’ Considerations as a Fraternal and Freeing Ethic: Towards a Re-Reading of *PI* 284–309

Here I lay out why talk of ‘the private language *argument*’ in *PI* 243ff. is on balance unhelpful and ultimately indicative of a misunderstanding of what is taking place in these famous passages. In this regard, I contest the work of authors (such as Severin Schroeder) who have offered reconstructions of the ‘argument’ putatively contained within these passages. In the course of my re-reading, I draw out neglected ‘existential’ and ‘ethical’ aspects of Wittgenstein’s meditations on solipsism and ‘private language’. (All of Wittgenstein’s writing in the *PI* is ethical, on my understanding, as it is concerned with a struggle for clarity and honesty and to offer freedom; but some of it is doubly so (in that it concerns how to comport oneself towards others or how to act in the life-world): including portions of 243–315.) Attention to the particulars of these neglected aspects help free up the reader from the grip of the ‘private language argument’ picture: both in substantive philosophical terms (by questioning the very idea of what a ‘private language’ was meant to achieve for one) *and* as a reading of what Wittgenstein himself was trying to do (by questioning the assumption that Wittgenstein offers what is best regarded as an ‘*argument*’ against the supposed ‘private language’ idea). Self and other can be helpfully seen as ‘internally related’: so long as this is not seen as an excuse for not having to put in the *work* of attending to others. (Here, Wittgenstein is close to Gandhi’s notion that what is wrong with ethical *systems* is the phantasy they suggestively evoke that one can be saved the trouble of having to be *good*.)

One's unavoidable freedom not to acknowledge others' pain is directly tied to the import of the utterly basic ethical demand to do so.

The ethical and the liberatory readings of the *Investigations* are, in this sense, one and the same: they culminate in the same realisation, the same human condition.

The anti-'private-language' considerations are a culmination of the entire liberatory trajectory of Wittgenstein's text from section 1 onward: these considerations are 'just' another form of the question with which the early part of *PI* was clearly concerned, 'What are *you/we* willing to *count* as language, and why?' ...Thus Chapter 10 brings the body of the present text to its logical conclusion. The entire trajectory of Wittgenstein's text in the *PI*, from Augustine and the 'builders' to 'private language', has the same fundamentally ethical, fundamentally 'liberatory' character (though it is in 284–315 especially that this character, as I put it above, 'doubles': that is, fully flowers, or matures.)... The anti-'private-language' considerations are the natural continuation of the offering to the reader of the opportunity to decide where they stand on the question of what it takes for something to be counted as a language (and related/parallel questions) that began in the early sections of – the 'overture' to – *PI*...

- Conclusion: (A) Liberating Philosophy

The version of Wittgenstein's method that this book foregrounds involves one gaining autonomy in relation to one's disturbing inclinations to mire oneself in (what one oneself takes, on reflection, to be) nonsense. This *is* philosophical liberation.

Transfiguring Kant by way of Wittgenstein: autonomy is primarily *collective* freedom with regard to the hegemonic. It involves the recognition of picture-driven heteronomy. Of the attractions, for us especially, of pictures that constrain us in 'happy' states of not having to be free, or else in a fetishised freedom (from which we need freeing).

I suggest that a notable virtue of my approach to Wittgenstein has been that it makes the *way* (including the *style*) in which Wittgenstein wrote a great strength, critical to the possibility of success in his enterprise and indeed to the very nature of that enterprise, rather than (as it usually appears, even among sympathetic writers) as some kind of obscurity or encumbrance to be overcome.⁶⁸

I close the book with some brief thoughts about how liberatory philosophy in the sense in which I have developed it in the present work leads to being genuinely liberatory in the field(s) of political philosophy and politics 'proper'. In other words, I draw Wittgenstein's thinking as I understand and read it from ethics further through into politics itself; an important task 'perhaps', in the great and gathering darkness of *this* time.

Picture-driven narrow-mindedness is implicated in literally killing us: extinguishing our chances of a future, through extinguishing the web of life.

0.9 This Book as a Whole

This book as a whole seeks to read Wittgenstein in such a way that the book's major key (liberation) and its minor key (ethics) come to be seen as two ways of unlocking the same door. The two come to be seen as internally related, in honesty in particular and the intellectual virtues in general. More originally and ambitiously,⁶⁹ they come to be seen as internally related in the intimate connection that emerges between autonomy in Wittgenstein's sense (as opposed, not to others, but to captivity by delusion) and relationality to other beings.

One might parse what I have said here in this way: Does Wittgenstein in his philosophising issue commands or request? Certainly *not* commands. But "requests" doesn't have it quite right, either. Wittgenstein offers *a way*. He engages in a practice, and invites one to find one's own way too, with him, with others, in engaging in (some) such practice.⁷⁰

Being free of delusion *is* caring, *is* loving. It is openness to intimacy. It is, as Iris Murdoch saw, attention. *Seeing* the other (and not as: an Other). It is life, as opposed to the machine which our world is being remade in the image of.⁷¹ This practice, this task, is also that of the overcoming of scepticism, as Cavell saw.

Philosophy is the love of true freedom, in the intellectual realm; that *is* wisdom. Liberatory philosophy, I will claim, is a freeing – and *simultaneously*, a thoroughgoingly uniting-with-others – way of seeing Wittgenstein's philosophical activity. The final and crucial liberation we need, and that he helps make available, is from banal, widespread fantasies of 'liberty'. We need to be freed from the crude delusion of freedom 'itself' by which we are possessed. We need to be freed from our obsession in politics and economics, across most of the contemporary world, with (such) 'freedom'.

I begin at the beginning. With *PI* 1. Specifically, with Augustine. If we were to change our understanding of who he was for Wittgenstein, we would turn around the whole axis on which our investigations turn. And free ourselves of the *faux* freedom from nonsense or from theory offered by the conventional picture of Wittgenstein's alleged damning of 'the Augustinian picture' of language.⁷²

Notes

- 1 Cf. Wittgenstein's remark, "As I do philosophy, its entire task is to shape expression in such a way that certain worries disappear." (Wittgenstein 2004, 310). See Chapter 5 for a potential worry about this kind of expression of philosophy's task.

- 2 Chiefly collected in *Wittgenstein's Method: Neglected Aspects* (2004) (BWM).
- 3 Thomas Wallgren explains the simplicity of the meaning of this:

If what I say has no connection with what I do, it does not matter what I say. That is why it is unclear what it would mean to say that someone speaks about the meaning of concepts, but without committing herself.

(2006, 390)

Contrast this with Kripkenstein conception, critiqued in Chapters 8 and 9.

- 4 A partial precedent for my thought here can be found in Katherine Morris's book, *Starting with Merleau-Ponty* (2012, 173). The context for the following quotation is the famous Royaumont conference:

Merleau-Ponty's question concerned *second*-person propositions: 'When I listen to M Ryle, it is indeed certain that I consider him a first person who is not me. Does this transfer of the first person outside of us seem to him to pose a problem, to furnish the occasion for a philosophical elucidation?' (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 96) ... [H]ad Ryle been more open to Merleau-Ponty's question, he might have seen that to focus on the first-/second-person 'asymmetry' as opposed to first/third-person asymmetry is to introduce interaction and the interworld ..., and that from this perceptive the [1st person vs 3rd person] 'asymmetry' is far less pronounced: the first person looks less 'privileged', and the second person more so, than Ryle was prepared to acknowledge.

- 5 In this way, my book resembles Matthew Ostrow's *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: A Dialectical Interpretation* (2002). Ostrow, like me, takes as his guiding star Wittgenstein's remark about the philosopher striving to find "the liberating/redeeming word". Roughly, *I do in this book for PI what he did for Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922) (TLP).
- 6 On the affinity between Hellenism and Wittgenstein, see the section entitled "The ancient roots of Wittgenstein's liberatory philosophy", in my "Placing Kripkenstein in the history of philosophy" (forthcoming in Kuusela et al.). This was clear also to the massively-influential Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna, and often to the 'Madyamaka' school more generally. Consider for instance this clearly liberatory remark of Nagarjuna's (from the *Yuktisastika* 51; added emphasis mine): "By taking any standpoint whatsoever one is attacked by the twisting snakes of the kleshas. But whose minds have no standpoint are not caught." And this (from the *Vigrahavyavartani* 29): "If I had any thesis, that fault would apply to me. But I do not have any thesis, so there is indeed no fault for me." It is fascinating how much these remarks anticipate key 'metaphilosophical' moments in *PI* (and *LFM*), moments that will be present in this book.
- 7 From the *Blue and Brown Books* (Wittgenstein 1969, 56–57) (BB). See Kuusela's helpful discussion of this (2008, 1 & 97).
- 8 And, among Wittgenstein's lectures, especially on *LFM*, which partially shares that intimate relation.
- 9 Though in the 'Note on diacritics', below, I remind one that this is of course a metaphor. In the end, it's always a person(s) who speaks, 'even' in writing. And this is not an unimportant point, highlighting as it does the *relationality* that I take to be fundamental to Wittgenstein's method and to his 'ethics'.
- 10 Such as the rationalism, individualism, etc. diagnosed by Lakoff and Johnson in their important work, *Philosophy in the Flesh* (1999). While my book implies a massive criticism of the 'individualism' of Kant, it takes the promise

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of the concept of autonomy as central to its task. But what it is to deliver on that promise turns out to be profoundly different from what Kant/Kantians have supposed.

- 11 I expect Phil Hutchinson will develop this thought much further than I have, in his forthcoming book offering an ethical reading of Wittgenstein. An extant place where this thought is present which has been important to me is Chapter 7 of Thomas Wallgren's (2006).
- 12 One important exception is Arendt; and thus it seems uncoincidental that efforts to understand Wittgenstein's potential relation to ethics and politics have, from Pitkin onward, often returned to her. Another important exception of course is Cavell.
- 13 Most notably, Backstrom and Nykanen; my formulations here are strongly influenced by Nykanen.
- 14 I speak as a past-champion of the therapeutic approach. Though attentive followers of my *oeuvre* (if any) will have noticed a long-term moving away from it, towards a liberatory hermeneutic. This is most obvious in my *Wittgenstein among the sciences* (2012a), which is *structured* around a (to some readers surprising) liberatory refusal to police language, *vis-à-vis* the concept of 'science'.
- 15 It might have been less so if it had been understood less as psychotherapy, more simply as *healing* in general. Psychotherapy has a bad rap in our society; admittedly, partly because it often *has* been overly individualistic (cf. Nussbaum's *The Therapy of Desire* (1996, 46)), normalising, depoliticised, etc. (Cf. n.19 in this introduction.) Physical therapy, or healing in general, considered as a model, still constitutively risks being asymmetrical, hierarchical (Nussbaum 1996, 344–345 & 329). The metaphor — the *practice* — of liberation is more likely to evade this risk.
...Of course, one should also note a simpler reason for the resistance to therapy, one I do *not* accept: the widespread *non*-resistance to *theory* in philosophy. The scientific attraction of theory, by my lights, captures even the greater majority of those who later Baker called *soi-disant* Wittgensteinians.
- 16 This is one regard too in which there is a genuinely Pragmatist aspect to Wittgenstein's later work (Read & Hutchinson 2013).
- 17 (Cf. *BWM*, 149). That such self-deceptive behaviours occur in philosophy is certain. But that they entirely account for (more or less the entire) resistance to therapy appears improbable. Thus Baker's effort for instance to offer a thoroughlygoingly *therapeutic* account of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy and of Wittgenstein's place in the history of philosophy (*BWM*, 68) seems to me much less credible than the vision I am developing in the present work, drawing on another aspect of Baker's Waismannian inheritance: a *liberatory* vision.
- 18 As I see things, roughly the same is true of the *TLP*. It has the potential to liberate, to work (on and with) one, philosophically, but it tends not to. This, and not its alleged intrinsic flaws and mistakes nor even its alleged covert metaphysics (though see the discussion of 95–107 in Chapter 4), is in my view the single most important reason to move beyond it, to the kind of methods and styles used in the later work. I set this case out in some detail in "The possibility of a resolutely resolute reading of the *Tractatus*" (Read & Deans 2011).
- 19 The best case for thinking of physical illness and physical therapy as *Wittgenstein's* 'model' is of course *PI* 254–255. 255 could be helpfully translated either as "A philosopher treats a question like an illness" or "A philosopher *treats* a question; like an illness". The latter seems to me, in the light of the

- close of 254, and in the light of the German wording of 255, probably on balance the best translation; it takes one close to the general (or physical) healing-metaphor.
- 20 For a good case, see *PI* 16, as discussed in Chapter 2.
 - 21 Cf. also Waismann's uses of the same term, "irresolute"; e.g. *PLP* (70). In this important respect, Waismann is an (*as-yet*) *unheralded prophet of the resolute reading of Wittgenstein*.
 - 22 One might expand and embroider on the ringing, marvellously ambiguous final sentence of *PI* 109 roughly as follows: "Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment – the captivity – of our intelligence. It is a means of liberation. The captivity is within language, and the means of liberation is in *our* language, too".
 - 23 And in *this* respect a broadly Rousseauian impulse may be detected in the present work. (Though not in other respects: crucially, as I mention later in this Introduction, the thought-experimental 'contractarian' individualism with which Rousseau begins his most influential works has in my view been disastrous for us.)
 - 24 By which I mean: if you take up genetic engineering, you affect what is possible for me: because of spread of pollen, contamination of 'non-GM' crops, etc.
 - 25 Cf. Chapter 11 of my *A Wittgensteinian Way with Paradoxes* (2012b), on the parallel here between Wittgenstein and Buddhism; especially prejudice-shattering, liberating Buddhism such as Zen.
 - 26 This is the master-argument of Gandhi's first book, *Hind Swaraj*.
 - 27 Especially Chapter 2, and the Conclusion.
 - 28 Fischer's method works for some of the less philosophically-sophisticated moments in the history of 'the scientific revolution' / Empiricism. But I am deeply sceptical that it will work, when it comes to the kinds of mythic hazards and (un-)ethical temptations that feature in *PI*. (See also n.66.)
 - 29 This methodology was perspicuous in the way that Wittgenstein at times wanted to write what became *PI*: as what today we would call a hyper-text, in which the reader can pick their own unique way through the book. Jos De Mul argues to this conclusion (De Mul 2008). He draws particularly on a very suggestive remark at *MS* (118: 95v), where Wittgenstein speaks of a "network of numbers" which will enable the reader to work in the way that meets their own needs through the complex inter-connections of the thoughts that Wittgenstein is seeking to offer, and that (as he repeatedly complained) a linear presentation subverts or occludes.
 - 30 Briefly below and in more detail in Chapter 10 (though bearing in mind certain notes of caution elaborated in Chapter 7).
 - 31 And in this respect I disagree with Hannes Nykanen and Joel Backstrom. I have outlined this disagreement further elsewhere (Read 2019a).
 - 32 My emphasis in previous works, following Peter Winch (following Wittgenstein), on human beings as internally related to each other, is the same thing as a 2nd person (or 1st-person plural) conception of human being. See especially 2.1 of (Read 2012a).
 - 33 In the sense implicit throughout Annette Baier's *The Commons of the Mind* (1997).
 - 34 We should at least be open to the possibility that the 2nd-person can be an internal relationship between larger-than-self groups; or again (you are free to put this either way), that *the self may be larger than the 'individual person'*. (The latter formulation is present in an intriguing form in Nassim N. Taleb's work (Taleb 2018)).

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- 35 Here I have in mind the emphasis placed on these matters by the later Baker: see his “Quotation-marks in Philosophical Investigations Part I” (Baker 2002a), and his “Italics in Wittgenstein” in *BWM*. These two articles are a crucial influence upon this section.
- 36 Hacker and his followers sometimes sound as if they think something like this; examples follow in the body of this book. Perhaps it is a half-awareness that such a thought cannot be right that leads them to reach instead for the ‘autonomy of grammar [i.e. of language, viewed *under* their conception of ‘grammar’ as its ‘essence’] thesis’, as a kind of (over-)reaction. Such an ‘autonomy of grammar’ thesis is, in my view, an Anti-Realist alternative thesis to a metaphysical Realism that would *ground* our language in its fundamentals in the ‘innermost’ nature of reality. Such a thesis attracted Wittgenstein at times in the 1930s; it is overcome, by/before *PI*.
- 37 See especially my argument in Chapter 3.
- 38 It is no coincidence that Socrates and Wittgenstein and various other key canonical and counter-canonical figures in philosophy’s history (Pyrrho, Diogenes – and Kierkegaard) have been at best decidedly ambivalent about philosophical *writing*. Derrida’s campaign against speech and for writing is decidedly unhelpful in this connection: Derrida would deprive philosophy of its ability to come closer to its possibilities of expression, if he were to win in this campaign. Derrida is broadly right to be sceptical of speech as the alleged bringing to ‘full presence’ of mind; but he is wrong to think that the deconstruction of *that* endeavour must entail a giving up on the living attempt to make as present as one can, including in one’s physical comportment, the temptations to which one is subject and the possibilities of overcoming those temptations, etc. The latter attempts will be fostered by the possibilities of expression in speech (of emphasis, of frustration, etc.), and by what ‘apes’ those possibilities in writing (e.g. extensive use of punctuation, emphasis etc., as carried out by the fully mature Wittgenstein, and as sometimes stressed or copied, in the present work).
- 39 This idea is central to my discussions in Chapter 4.
- 40 This is especially relevant to my discussion in Chapter 7.
- 41 I am thinking here of Wittgenstein’s meaning in 133: cf. Chapter 5, for discussion of just this.
- 42 Cf. the epigraphs to Chapter 1.
- 43 Sometimes, the new punctuation mark of a ‘hash-tag’ at the start of a word or phrase or sentence (“#”) functions as something like an ‘assertion-sign’. But it is reasonably-often deployed *ironically*. The possibility of such deployment is already enough to undermine any Fregean ambitions for it.
- 44 This thought of mine aims to inherit *PI* 108:

The philosophy of logic speaks of sentences and words in exactly the sense in which we speak of them in ordinary life when we say e.g. “Here is a Chinese sentence”, or “No, that only looks like writing; it is actually just an ornament” and so on.

(For detailed argumentation, see Chapter 2)

- 45 Explicated in Morris (1994). My use of phrases such as “One might say” is generally of the kind that Morris in that paper calls “‘outer’ modals”, a use neglected by most ‘Wittgensteinians’.
- 46 This evinces just how wide of the mark is Paul Horwich’s well-known effort to comprehend Wittgenstein’s philosophical methodology. For amplification, see my review of his *Wittgenstein’s Metaphilosophy* (Read & Uçan 2014).

- 47 And that are also strikingly evident in the most brilliant of the works of Conant and Diamond, in their very (style and) method: I am thinking especially of Diamond's "Throwing away the ladder" (1988), and (once more) of Conant's "Must We Show What We Cannot Say?" (1989).
- 48 Including in the employment of sometimes-awkward sounding neologisms, which aim to 'catch' a desire or express a nuance of what one is seeking transitionally to achieve (i.e. How one is seeking to effect a movement from latent to patent nonsense; cf. especially 254, also 464). Again, I apologise for these insofar as the reader finds them unpleasant on the ear; but I don't apologise for them, in pursuit of what matters, the liberatory goal.
- 49 This is *philosophically consequential*, in a way internally related to the topic of this Introduction. It has to do with the way in which, roughly (!), philosophy does not much involve ordinary saying. See again Gordon Baker (2002a).
- 50 See Chapter 4 for the meaning of the term "metaphysical use", which can easily lead one astray: into thinking that metaphysics is just another subject, like astronomy or history.
- 51 It is difficult to convince publishers and proof-readers to stay with Wittgensteinian diacritics — i.e. with diacritics 'copying' Wittgenstein's own. This itself illustrates the cultural hegemony of a certain conception of (philosophical) writing.
- 52 As with my earlier remarks about the limits of language, the limits of the expressible, etc., I hope it is obvious from my commitment here to being resolute (and from my past published work) that I do not mean to endorse an ineffabilism.
- 53 Consider here Waismann's observation (cited in Ray Monk's *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (1991, 340)) that Wittgenstein had the great gift of always being able to see everything as if for the first time. (This is notably the pre-requisite for Zen practice according to Shunryu Suzuki: see Chapter 11 of my *A Wittgensteinian Way with Paradoxes* for the parallels between these two thinkers (Read 2012b).)
- 54 See 269. As discussed in Chapter 10, it's important to note that Wittgenstein does not as it were himself *employ* the term/concept "private language". It is introduced — *mentioned*, rather than *used* as such — as the name of a metaphysical temptation. (See also n.57, below.)
- 55 On this, see *BWM* (67). See also of Moore's notes on Wittgenstein's Lectures, as collected in *Philosophical Occasions*: "[Wittgenstein] concluded finally that "'makes sense' is vague, and will have different senses in different cases", but that the expression "makes sense" is useful just as "game" is useful, although, like "game", it "alters its meaning as we go from proposition to proposition", adding that, just as "sense" is vague, so must be "grammar", "grammatical rule" and "syntax"." (Wittgenstein 1993, 67) — a conclusion that I think we could here extrapolate further.
- 56 On "nonsense", see *TNW*. On "criteria", see Cavell's *The Claim of Reason* (1979). For (more on) "grammar" than I provide in the present work (cf. Chapters 3 and 4, especially, for some detailed treatment of the term), see "Grammar" (Hutchinson & Read 2017). On "depth grammar", see Chapter 3 of *BWM* in which Baker makes the brilliant argument that what Ryle, Hacker etc. treat as "depth grammar", Wittgenstein regards as surface grammar, making such *soi-disant* Wittgensteinians the *target* of the critical intention of 664. On "family-resemblance", see Odai Al-Zoubi's (2014), and the final part of my "How and How Not to Write on a "Legendary" Philosopher" (Read 2005c) (and see also the opening portion of the Conclusion

to the present work). On “language-game”, several good accounts are available: see for instance Chapter 4.2 of Stern’s *Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations* (2004), or Lars Hertzberg’s “Language-games and private language” (2010). See also the important point made by Baker specifically resisting the technicalisation of “language-game” as a term in *BWM* (194). On “form of life”, see 1.2 of my *Applying Wittgenstein* (Read 2007a) (and see also Chapter 9).

- 57 Including specifically, sometimes, for liberatory nomenclature, a search which we ought to mirror in our exegeses of him. Thus for instance I propose in Chapter 10 renaming the so-called “private language argument” as the “anti-‘private-language’ considerations”. Because so doing is less likely to trap one in dubious assumptions concerning the form of Wittgenstein’s ‘argument’, and the nature of its critical target. (The scare-quotes are advised: for, while, of course, we can if we wish (we are free to) call what Wittgenstein provides an argument — and indeed, *faute de mieux*, I not infrequently use the term “argument” to refer to my own procedures in the present work, without being quite comfortable in doing so —, we nevertheless need reminding periodically that this is not an argument in the way that most philosophical arguments are. It lacks standing — lasting — premises and conclusions. It results in no theses to cleave to. It is not genuinely deductive or inductive or abductive. Etc.)
- 58 This worry will be discussed explicitly in different ways in Chapter 4, Chapter 9, and the Conclusion.
- 59 This is very much the way Gandhi thinks about autonomy in his great pamphlet, *Hind Swaraj* (Ghandi 2009). There might be a common root in Tolstoy to the tendency I identify here in Wittgenstein.
- 60 I do not really accept the term “metaphilosophical”: it wrongly implies that there is in Wittgenstein another level beyond ‘ordinary’ philosophy which we reach in reflecting on philosophy. 121 helpfully and absolutely directly undermines this view, a very widespread one in contemporary philosophy.
- 61 As will be visible in Chapter 1.
- 62 Except for the following — huge — wrinkle: as discussed in some detail in the Conclusion to the present work, ‘application’, use, *knowing how to go on* is, in the final analysis (and as hinted towards the end of 0.7), far more important than exegesis... As Nussbaum notes (drawing on Epictetus), what really matters in a philosopher is what they can do with what they have learned, not what they can say about what others have taught (Nussbaum 1996, 346). Surely it is obvious from Wittgenstein’s writing that this is what he, too believed: just by virtue of the way in which he put so very little emphasis on worrying about whether what he was saying had already been said by others, let alone on scholarly apparatus, etc. Also by virtue of the way he cared about his students’ thinking in civil and political life, more even than in philosophy; as famously expressed in the interchange with Malcolm (about the latter’s use of the concept “British national character”) which I remind one of at the opening of my “Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* as a war book” (Read 2010b).
- 63 Alberto Emiliani has helpfully suggested to me (personal communication) an analogy here with so-called Part II, of the *PI* where Wittgenstein talks about psychology and says that psychological knowledge is not based on a system of rules; that psychological mastery is in the ability to grasp subtleties in tone etc.; that there *are* rules but they do not constitute a *system*; and that, in short, the ability to do psychology does not consist in the mere mastery of techniques. Would all this not also apply, *a fortiori* to philosophy?

64 Cf. the Preface, on my translation-practice in this book.

65 Thanks to Lars Hertzberg for great help in formulating this point.

66 This deepens my concern about Eugen Fischer's approach. For the way that he concentrates on inference cannot work, for understanding the occurrence of novel insight. Here is Waismann writing in *How I See Philosophy* (1968) (HISP) on the latter; he says that what "is so wrong with the whole way in which such discoveries [as those of a Descartes, an Einstein, or a Picasso] are so often presented" is their being presented

as if they were the result of a 'method' or 'procedure', as if the great men arrived at their solutions by drawing logical inferences. This leaves out the most essential thing - the flashing of a new aspect which is non-inferential. The moments of seeing cannot be foreseen....

(HISP, 37)

It will not do, to seek to 'capture' such non-inferential vision as if it were actually a 'tacit', 'unconscious' inference, as Fischer does.

67 In the Conclusion to the present work, I develop the thought that we should not expect more than this. I.e. Wittgenstein's thinking (as explicated in the closing pages of Chapter 4), cannot and indeed should not hope to 'capture' (sic!) the 'essence' or totality of our being-in-the-world. It aims rather to establish —*with you*—*some* perspicuity. The level of ambition of and in Wittgenstein's thought, if it is (as I believe) broadly successful in this aim, is itself already high, and his metaphors and re-orientations multiform. It would be hubris to hope to 'capture' everything that Wittgenstein himself is succeeding in doing, *let alone in one metaphoric*. The liberatory hermeneutic does not aim at an overweening completeness; (similarly, or as a case in point:) that 'logical existentialism' *clearly* does not 'completely' 'catch' Wittgenstein's vision of humans-linguistically-in-action-in-the-world is no objection to it as a temporary slogan, an object of comparison.

68 This connects with the sense in which I have meant the title of this my Introductory chapter, 'Thinking *through* Wittgenstein', to represent the activity of the book in connoting both the rethinking of *thought* (thought in general, and philosophical thought in particular) in the light of Wittgenstein's *PI*, and the rethinking or re-receiving of Wittgenstein in the light of the ethical and resolute conception of the activity of philosophy – the *liberating* (of) *philosophy* – that I here champion, following later Baker and Conant, Diamond and Cavell, following Wittgenstein.

69 Though obviously, one can find partial precedents for this idea; for instance, in Hegel.

70 I owe much of this formulation to conversation with Susan Edwards-McKie. Also to Ben Walker's work.

71 I am thinking here especially of Iain McGilchrist's terrifying and brilliant conception of the Industrial Revolution (cf. Read 2011a). Wittgenstein would have been very sympathetic with McGilchrist's way of questioning 'progress'.

72 Deep thanks to Phil Hutchinson for thinking with me in detail for years about the subject-matters of this Introduction. And deep thanks to Lars Hertzberg, Alberto Emiliani and Andrew Norris for lovely sets of comments on a previous draft. Thanks also to some anonymous referees.

1 The Philosopher and Temptation

Wittgenstein's Augustinian Opening Move

The inclination, the running up against something indicates something: St. Augustine knew that already when he said: "What, you swine, you want not to talk nonsense! Go ahead and talk nonsense, it does not matter!–

Wittgenstein, 1929 (in W&VC, 68)¹

Don't for heaven's sake be afraid of talking nonsense! But you must pay attention to your nonsense.–

Wittgenstein, (C&V, 64)

1.1 Augustine throughout the *PI*

The body of *PI* opens not with words of Wittgenstein's own but with a quotation from St. Augustine's *Confessions*.² Why? Who is Augustine, to the author of the *Investigations*?³

We might look at 'external' evidence to answer this question. Thus, Drury reports Wittgenstein saying not only, famously, that he "could not help seeing every problem from a religious point of view", but implying that the *Confessions* is salient to such seeing of his. Because, quite simply, Wittgenstein took the *Confessions* to be "the most serious book ever written" (Rhees 1984, 90).

This remark is, to say the least, very suggestive indeed. It strongly suggests that it was not just chance that Wittgenstein opened his book with a take on Augustine's great book. It certainly didn't merely provide a convenient stalking horse, a handy quote to lay into. But something much more. And quite *different* from that.

But it would be even more satisfying if there were 'internal' evidence with which to answer the question, too. Let us then ask the following question: after the famous opening sequence of the text,⁴ *how does Augustine feature in PI?*

The first striking thing to note is that Augustine's name and the name of his text occurs in *PI* more often than *anyone* else's. But so far that proves little. Possibly, as is widely supposed, Augustine remains little more than a convenient stalking horse for Wittgenstein. A kind

of dupe who can be shown up. Someone whose words we can handily stick a negation sign in front of. Wittgenstein's remark to Drury strongly suggests otherwise; but one is still free, if one wishes, to seek to see Wittgenstein's Augustine thus.

Let us look. Not think or surmise, but *look*. At who Augustine is, to the author of *PI*.

There are three further explicit sets of mentions of Augustine in *PI*, after his heavy featuring in sections 1–4 and section 32 (which rounds out what is sometimes called the 'overture' of the *Investigations*). These later (generally comparatively neglected) moments in the text are very striking.

First, there is 89–90. Here, at 89, Wittgenstein's entire text makes an important pivot, as he initiates a more explicit reflection on the nature of philosophy by asking: "These considerations bring us up to the problem: *In what sense is logic something sublime?*" He seeks to address this question, crucially, by noting Augustine's famous remark in the *Confessions*, that "quid est ergo tempus? si nemo ex me quart scion; si quaerenti explicare velim, nescio." He comments, "This could not be said about a question of natural science (What is the specific gravity of hydrogen?" for instance). Something that we know when no one asks us, but no longer know when we are supposed to give an account of it, so something that we need to remind ourselves of.⁵ (And it is obviously something of which for some reason it is difficult to remind oneself.)"

Does this...*remind* you of anything?

Most obviously, it pretty directly anticipates *PI* 127: "The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose". We need to be 'reminded' of something that we are told we ought to "give an account of"⁶; but *actually* what we need is to be re-minded *vis-à-vis* that something. That is: We need to be(come) mindful of it, not take it for granted and then merely see 'through' it, nor try to *explain* it as from afar or above. We need to become comfortable with it in its everyday actuality. We need to be '*returned*', via a more freeing route, to 'the thing itself'. No longer something we feel compelled to penetrate (to 'explain'), but something that we are willing now to allow to be. (The closing parenthetical remark in 89 is connected with Wittgenstein's important remarks, scattered through his later *oeuvre*,⁷ about the real difficulty of philosophy being one of having the intellectual willingness to look at what one doesn't want to look at, and more generally the willingness to see the world aright (i.e. as it is), rather than being a *narrowly* intellectual difficulty requiring elaborate theories or cleverness. We will return to this point.)

In other words, *Wittgenstein clearly sees Augustine here as a far-seeing forebear*, anticipating his own methods in and conception of philosophy. This role that Augustine plays here in Wittgenstein's writing is borne out by how the discussion continues, in *PI* 90:

We feel as if we had to *penetrate* phenomena: our investigation, however, is directed not towards phenomena, but, as one might say, towards the ‘possibilities’ of phenomena. We remind ourselves, that is to say, of the *kind of statement* that we make about phenomena. Thus Augustine recalls to mind the different statements that are made about the duration, past present or future, of events. (These are, of course, not *philosophical* statements about time, the past, the present and the future.)

This is if anything even more striking. Let us be absolutely clear on what is happening here. Wittgenstein is setting out the version of what would become called “Ordinary Language Philosophy”⁸ that he is offering the reader. Who is his exemplar for this procedure?; Who is the closest there is to an antecedent worth citing, at the birth of Ordinary Language Philosophy (henceforth OLP)?: *Augustine*.

The importance of this portion of *PI* can be seen moreover in the way *PI* 90 continues:

Our investigation is therefore a grammatical one. Such an investigation sheds light on our problem by clearing misunderstandings away. Misunderstandings concerning the use of words, caused, among other things, by certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of language.

Wittgenstein is setting out here for the first time really the heartland of his method. And it follows directly from his following of Augustine.⁹

Now note carefully, because we will have cause soon to come back to this, the parenthesis in the above-mentioned quotation. “[T]he different statements that are made about the duration...of events” are not philosophical statements in the sense that they do not state a philosophical theory and are not intended as philosophical remarks at all. They are simply ordinary everyday remarks of all sorts and kinds. These are what enable us to start to gain clarity in philosophy. When we recall or imagine the kind of statements we make about phenomena, then we can head off the kinds of confusions that we mire ourselves in. In their very unaware non-philosophical-ness, such remarks offer us a resource. But, there is presumably no guarantee that philosophy (or: ideology) will not infect some such statements. When one’s guard is down, perhaps. Before one has noticed that one is even doing it/that there may be any such ‘infection’ present, perhaps.

Augustine’s procedure in the *Confessions*, etc. as it anticipates OLP, provides, in Wittgenstein’s understanding, a healthy alternative to metaphysics (N.B.: what this means for Wittgenstein is explicated properly in Chapter 4). But perhaps nevertheless even the best of us might sometimes fall short of such health. Even the best potentially non-metaphysical

philosophical mind (or method) may sometimes import some dubious philosophical pseudo-theorising or picturing unconsciously into its deliberations. (Certainly, Wittgenstein was clear over and over of the likelihood and factuality of this – including crucially in his *own* case.)

Augustine appears next, explicitly, at 428–438. This develops the sense of Augustine as anticipating Wittgenstein’s own creation of a viable OLP, while this time indicating also an ambition of Augustine’s that problematically exceeds that of OLP. 436 is the section that draws the sequence together, explicitly invoking Augustine once more. Wittgenstein remarks,

...it is easy to get into that dead-end in philosophy, where one believes that the difficulty of the task consists in our having to describe phenomena that are hard to get hold of, the present experience that slips quickly by... Where we find ordinary language too crude, and it looks as if we were having to do, not with the phenomena of everyday, but with ones that “easily elude us, and, in their coming to be and passing away, produce those others as an average effect.”

(Augustine: “Manifestissima et usitatissima sunt, et edam ruses nimbus latent, et nova best invention eorum”)

The nested quote is once more from Augustine’s great dialogical investigation of time, and specifically from his description of the way we tie ourselves up in knots trying to account for the nature of time. How we might be said to know it when we don’t look directly at it and not to know it when we do. Here is the whole paragraph¹⁰:

“Time” and “times” are words forever on our lips. “How long did we speak?”, we ask. “How long did he take to do that?” “How long is it since I have seen it!” “This syllable is twice the length of that”. We use these words and hear others using them. They understand what we mean and we understand them. No words could be plainer or more commonly used. Yet their true meaning is concealed from us. We have still to find it out.¹¹

Augustine doggedly seeks in Book XI of the *Confessions* to get some perspective upon our time-talk. He investigates it at length, considering real cases of it (from ordinary language), appealing to God over and over to help him to get somewhere in the investigation. Wittgenstein, I claim, admires this – he finds it deeply serious – and, crucially, will have admired and agreed with Augustine’s plain willingness to admit that what is plain and commonly understood is so: “*They understand what we mean and we understand them*”. There is no problem, so long as we remain at the level of ordinary discourse, nor even when we note the efficaciousness of such discourse. When we don’t gaze directly at time-talk, we get along just fine.

So Augustine in these regards comes close to Wittgenstein's ideal. Nevertheless, Wittgenstein naturally would have been concerned that Augustine was still inclined to express his continued philosophical seeking with the notion that the "true meaning" of time-words and of other terms that fox us, philosophically, is "concealed from us".¹² We can see Wittgenstein's alternative (to Augustine's approach) clearly in play in *Philosophical Remarks* (Wittgenstein 1980a) (PR) 81–82; he is discussing here the way in which we find ourselves *caught* by a desire to uncover 'the nature' of time, and it is worth quoting at length, because of its plainly liberatory character:

Perhaps this whole difficulty stems from taking the time concept from time in physics and applying it to the course of immediate experience. It's a confusion of the time of the film strip with the time of the picture it projects. For 'time' has one meaning when we regard memory as the source of time, and another when we regard it as a picture preserved from a past event. If we take memory as a picture, then it's a picture of a physical event. The picture fades, and I notice how it has faded when I compare it with other evidence of what happened. In this case, memory is not the source of time, but a more or less reliable custodian of what 'actually' happened; and this is something we can know about in other ways, a physical event.—It's quite different if we now take memory to be the source of time. Here it isn't a picture, and cannot fade either—not in the sense in which a picture fades, becoming an ever less faithful representation of its object. Both ways of talking are in order, and are equally legitimate, but cannot be mixed together. It's clear of course that speaking of memory as a picture is only a metaphor; just as the way of speaking of images as 'pictures of objects in our minds' (or some such phrase) is a metaphor. We know what a picture is, but images are surely no kind of picture at all. For, in the first case I can see the picture and the object of which it is a picture. But in the other, things are obviously quite different. We have just used a metaphor and now the metaphor tyrannizes us. While within the language of the metaphor, I am unable to move outside of the metaphor.

The problem, then, is that tyranny, which comes from the metaphysical urge to define (as it were, to measure) the concept of time itself, an urge that outlasts Augustine's clarity about the clarity of our ordinary language *vis-à-vis* time.¹³ The problem is: getting stuck in one metaphor, which one mistakes for the concept itself, rather than retaining and indeed expanding a space of autonomy *vis-à-vis* one's metaphors.

Augustine thus features in 436, etc. then not, as he is usually taken,¹⁴ as an exemplar of blatant philosophical error, but as an exemplar of

well-intentioned, spirited, partly on-the-nail philosophy, who nevertheless has in a sense seriously strayed. Fallen at the final hurdle.

Or just possibly not even there. Consider another translation of the crucial Latin passage, this time from Pusey: “Most manifest and ordinary they are, and the self-same things again are but too deeply hidden, and the discovery of them were new” (Augustine 2017). These things are manifest, ordinary; and yet somehow the self-same things seem hidden from us. Is not this actually highly reminiscent of Wittgenstein’s sense, similarly suffused with paradox, that the very things that we constantly see often cannot be *seen*, properly *noticed*, by us just because of their familiarity? (Cf. especially *PI* 129, as well as of course 435.)

Finally, consider *PI* 618:

One imagines the willing subject here [in the previous section(s)] as something without any mass (without any inertia); as a motor which has no inertia in itself to overcome. And so it is only mover, not moved. That is: One can say “I will, but my body does not obey me”—but not: “My will does not obey me.” (Augustine). // But in the sense in which I cannot fail to will, I cannot try to will either.

Considering this passage fully would take some considerable time because it lies in the midst of a complex subtle sequence of dialectical moves and ‘counter-moves’, orchestrated by Wittgenstein, concerning the nature of the will. In the course of which he alludes to Augustine’s similarly complex and subtle series of considerations on the nature of the will and the phenomenon we call “weakness of the will”. Hacker’s treatment of 61¹⁵ reads it undialogically. He supposes that Wittgenstein is speaking ‘in propria persona’ throughout 618 and simply elaborating a stance or position or view. And that he is contrasting his own ‘view’ with that of Augustine.

But we can already see that something is awry with that interpretation by virtue of the way that Wittgenstein begins 618 by commenting on how the willing subject has just been imagined (in the course of his own investigation) and uses a picturesque metaphor. It is clear that Wittgenstein is explicating here that the picture he has employed in 617 was invoked to free the reader from alternative potential rival or indeed dominant pictures: such as of the will as a kind of great power (as in Schopenhauer, for instance). But no more than that; the 617 picture is *not* endorsed or stated or opined by Wittgenstein as anything like a thesis, a ‘view’. If one has a ‘position’ in philosophy, if one adheres to some controversial opinion, then one has in this troubling sense a ‘view’ (cf. Read & Deans 2011 for further explication). (Of course, we are free to use the word “view” to mean something that Wittgenstein has, if we want to: one viable way of doing so would be (as we shall see in Chapter 4) that if Wittgenstein offers a perspicuous presentation in order

to resolve a difficulty that might be called a view of sorts; *but* only a view of the resolution of that difficulty, not a definitive ‘account’ of the phenomenon/expression (e.g. time).)

In any case, the closing sentence of 618 makes clear the dynamic: in Wittgenstein’s use of the word “But” (“Aber”), of which Hacker can make no sense, *given the occurrence already of a “but” in the previous sentence*. The (second) occurrence of “But” here suggests that Wittgenstein wishes to *complicate* the picture that he is describing in the first paragraph of 618, not simply (as Hacker claims) to endorse and elaborate on it. There would be no “But” here, if Hacker were right, only an “And” or such like.

To undergird my exegetical claim *vis-à-vis* Wittgenstein and my criticism of Hacker, it is critical that we go into the invocation of Augustine here. Is Augustine, as Hacker supposes, committed to saying doctrinally that there is an empirical possibility of my will not obeying me? Far from it. If one looks at the source passage¹⁶ – especially in its context which, as I say, is, much as Wittgenstein’s text is, taken up with an involved and open ‘linguistic phenomenology’ of the way we speak of, think of and experience the will – then one can see that Augustine makes no such statement. Moreover, it is not really clear that he makes any statement at all. Rather, he investigates. He explores the terrain in a broadly dialectical manner. He cites and examines his own experiences as instances of self-hatred for giving into temptation, of feeling oneself divided, of having a will that is irresolute.¹⁷ I don’t think that Wittgenstein meant at all – as he has been read as doing by Hacker – to claim that Augustine full-bloodedly states or is committed to a bizarre notion such as “My will does not obey me”. Rather, Augustine is interested in how to understand what happens when one’s will is divided or irresolute; when one is allowing oneself to be unclear over what it would *be* to obey oneself. He is interested, in other words, in the kind of situation in which one may be *tempted* to say something like “My will does not obey me”, but in which *to say this would itself be to be in bad faith*, unwillingness to take responsibility for one own failure to attain resolution.¹⁸ By contrast (with Hacker’s take), here is what Augustine actually says [with interpolations from me in parentheses]:

During this agony of indecision I performed many bodily actions, things which a man cannot always do, even if he wills to do them. [By which I take it Augustine means: even if he does something like say to himself “I am so angry with myself, I will tear my own hair out.” For: actually going on, actually coming through and actually succeeding in *tearing one’s hair out* is another step beyond allegedly determining that one will do so. (This itself of course is a point familiar to us from Wittgenstein’s considerations on ‘knowing’ how to go on.) It would be a crude - indeed, a rather bizarre reading - of this sentence to say

that Augustine is claiming here that one's will can fail to obey one.] If he has lost his limbs, or is bound hand and foot, or if his body is weakened by illness or under some other handicap, there are things which he cannot do. [These are simple examples of how one can be unable to act upon one's will. Wittgenstein gives similar cases, in 617.] I tore my hair and hammered my forehead with my fists; I locked my fingers and hugged my knees; and I did all this because I made an act of will to do it. But I might have had the will to do it and yet not have done it, if my limbs had been unable to move in compliance with my will [i.e. if he were physically bound, or such like]. I performed all these actions, in which the will and the power to act are not the same. Yet I did not do that one thing which I should have been far, far better pleased to do than all the rest and could have done at once [i.e. could have done in the sense that there was no obstacle such as being bound would have been in the relevant case, stopping him], as soon as I had the will to do it, because as soon as I had the will to do so, I should have willed it wholeheartedly... To will it was to do it [if one were in possession of oneself; in possession of a unified will]. Yet I did not do it. My body responded to the slightest wish of my mind by moving its limbs at the least hint from me, and it did so more readily than my mind obeyed itself by assenting to its own great desire, which could be accomplished simply by an act of will.¹⁹

This marvellous passage could no doubt be improved upon still further by some even greater literary care or philosophico-conceptual subtlety; what couldn't? But I would be amazed if Wittgenstein had, as he read it, felt anything other than deep respect: for the honesty of it and for the diligence of the essayed description of such challenging-to-parse phenomena. Augustine is remembering his seeking to be resolute, *and* is (in very roughly Conant-and-Diamond- and Kremer- style terms!) seeking to be resolute in his description of that seeking. Doing so takes one into some surprising linguistic places, and one must pay attention to one's desire to say such borderline-nonsensical things. But it does *not* commit one to weird revisionist doctrines about the will.

My reading of Wittgenstein's invocation of Augustine here is that he features not, as Hacker presupposes, as a simple target of criticism, for allegedly saying "My will does not obey me" (which he *does not* say). Rather, Augustine is invoked as someone who investigates the desire to say surprising things about one's will, in horrible situations.

Augustine gets *tempted* to say odd things that would be a bit like saying like "My will does not obey me". But *he overcomes those temptations*. (After all, some paradoxes may just require humility before God.²⁰) The truth is, for him, harder to bear: that he was not able to act in accord with God's will at that time, because he had not a resolved will to obey God.

In sum, when we review the totality of Augustine's presence in *PI* – and particularly the passages later in the work than those offering 'the Augustinian picture', passages that, perhaps tellingly, are typically neglected – we see that Wittgenstein's Augustine may not be who we have been taught he is. Perhaps we have indeed become gripped by prejudice about the respects and degree to which Augustine features in Wittgenstein's text as a target of criticism.²¹

1.2 Two 2nd Persons

With the above noted and in our minds, and so perhaps with fresh eyes, eyes no longer prejudiced against the man who Wittgenstein quotes, we can at last start at the beginning, and read *PI* 1:

[a] [W]hen my elders named some object and accordingly moved towards something, I saw this and grasped that the thing was called by the sound they uttered when they meant to point it out. Their intention was shewn by their bodily movements, as it were the natural language of all peoples: the expression of the face, the play of the eyes, the movement of other parts of the body, and the tone of voice which expresses our state of mind in seeking, having, rejecting or avoiding something. Thus, as I heard words repeatedly used in their proper places in various sentences, I gradually learnt to understand what objects they signified; and after I had trained my mouth to form these signs, I used them to express my own desires.

(Augustine, *Confessions*, I.8)

[b] These words, it seems to me, give us a particular picture of the essence of human language. It is this: the individual words in language name objects—sentences are combinations of such names.—In this picture of language we find the roots of the following idea: Every word has a meaning. The meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands.

[c] Augustine does not speak of there being any difference between kinds of word. If you describe the learning of language in this way you are, I believe, thinking primarily of nouns like "table," "chair," "bread," and of people's names, and only secondarily of the names of certain actions and properties; and of the remaining kinds of word as something that will take care of itself.

[d] Now think of the following use of language: I send someone shopping. I give him a slip marked "five red apples." He takes the slip to the shopkeeper, who opens the drawer marked "apples"; then he looks up the word "red" in a table and finds a colour sample opposite it; then he says a series of cardinal numbers—I assume that he knows them by heart—up to the word "five" and for each

number he takes an apple of the same colour as the sample out of the drawer.—It is in this and similar ways that one operates with words.—“But how does he know where and how he is to look up the word ‘red’ and what he is to do with the word ‘five’?”—Well I assume that he *acts* as I have described. Explanations come to an end somewhere.—But what is the meaning of the word “five”?—No such thing was in question here, only how the word “five” is used.
(*PI*, §1)

This opening passage is standardly read as a denunciation of what has been widely termed “the Augustinian picture of language”. Baker-and-Hacker’s very influential interpretation states that the latter is “Augustine’s pre-theoretical, pre-philosophical picture of the working of language which informs Augustine’s own remarks on language as well as a multitude of sophisticated philosophical analyses of meaning” (Baker & Hacker 2005a, 61). They find this picture present in 1a and denounced by Wittgenstein in the rest of the section, and in everything subsequently. This ur-picture, they argue, provides the archetype within which Frege (in *Foundations of Arithmetic*), Russell (in *Principles of Mathematics*), and Wittgenstein (in the *Tractatus*) operated. Baker-and-Hacker state that what is salient to Wittgenstein in Augustine as indexed in *PI* §1 is not a picture of mind,²² still less any kind of genuine dialectic of temptation and correctness,²³ but merely a number of relatively ‘prosaic’ though philosophically significant issues pertaining to word meaning. They write:

[Wittgenstein] is concerned only with the points explicit in the quotation in [a]:²⁴ Words signify or name objects. Sentences are combinations of words. That a word signifies a given object consists in the intention with which the word is used. The intention with which a word is used (i.e. the intention to *mean* that object) can be seen in behaviour, bodily movement, facial expression, tone of voice, etc.
(61)

The visit to the grocer’s shop in paragraph [d] is said, by Baker-and-Hacker, to set out “different types of words” (63): “The example is designed to stress the fact that the contention that the three words are of different types rests on the differences in the operations carried out in each case, and on the ordering of the operations” (63).²⁵

There is much to question here. I open with the following:

How can (Baker-and-)Hacker *know* that Wittgenstein is only interested in what is ‘explicit’ in the quotation from Augustine? They take this for granted. As if compelled, they leap to it as a conclusion. By contrast, I hazard that there *can* be (and is) interpretive significance in the allegedly ‘accidental’ details of Wittgenstein’s text. After all, Wittgenstein

laboured in an unbelievably detailed and dogged way to get the details of *PI*, especially its first third, right: to find “the liberating word[s]”. As we have already seen, there is likely to be a little more to the strange beginning of this book, with an unexpected quotation from Augustine (and then, as we shall see, the strangest of grocer’s shops), than has met the eye of those who are certain that Wittgenstein is concerned only with the points that they explicate.

Baker-and-Hacker explicitly reject the thought that it is of any significance that Wittgenstein opens *PI* with a passage *from Augustine*. I want to ask what they leap over: Why did Wittgenstein pick a passage from Augustine’s *Confessions*, rather than one from a better-recognised work featuring centrally in the philosophical canon? (And: if he *was* going to pick a work of Augustine’s, then why not one of Augustine’s more ‘theoretical’ works?: Would not that have made richer pickings for Wittgenstein; been of more consequence? (And: if he was *set* on having a passage from the *Confessions*, why not a passage which recognisably engages in some form of explicitly philosophical (or indeed metaphysical) argument?...After all, there are plenty of such passages late on in that work, the whole of which Wittgenstein was very familiar with.))

One might commence a worthwhile response to that question (those questions) by essaying the following general remarks about why it might make sense to launch Wittgenstein’s unusual philosophical text with a quotation from Augustine’s great work of confession. *PI* is in a certain important sense a work of autobiography (as the Preface to it makes crystal clear). It has even been said to *be* a work of confession (of philosophical and connectedly, I shall suggest, of ethical ‘sins’) (Thompson 2000). And if we think of the etymology of “confession” – as referencing a kind of speech-act which requires acknowledgement on the part of an other for its fulfilment, indeed for its very nature – then we instantly come close to the thoroughly 2nd-personal character of Wittgenstein’s conception of philosophical activity. For confession beseeches the reader/hearer to acknowledge what you say, not as true, but as *truthful*. It *requires* such acknowledgement, for its completion.

Wittgenstein’s philosophy has often previously been called ‘therapeutic’ *because* of this vital semi-Freudian dimension: that philosophical truth is not a matter of impersonal quasi-oracular pronouncement (a 3rd person model) nor of private exhibition (a 1st person model), but a matter of seeking acknowledgement from the other of some failing on their part, and, absent such acknowledgement, continuing to keep open the possibility of some failing on one’s own part (or both). Wittgensteinian philosophy *is* in this sense thoroughgoingly confessional: it aspires to mutual confession (thus: without the hierarchy found in religious and psychoanalytical models), mutual acknowledgement, a ‘conversational’ honest trying to make sense without end.

Without a spirit of acknowledgement one has nothing, in philosophy.

Here we should note the following, from section xi of *PI* 'Part II' (222):

The criteria for the truth of the *confession* that I thought such-and-such are not the criteria for a true *description* of a process. And the importance of the true confession does not reside in its being a correct and certain report of a process. It resides rather in the special consequences which can be drawn from a confession whose truth is guaranteed by the special criteria of *truthfulness*.

Confession is not a matter of an 'outing' of something 'inside'. It depends rather on sincerity, integrity, for it *depends* on our being able to *trust* the confessor who is addressing us. It is inherently an ethical process and a 2nd-person one, i.e. confession is necessary to another person(s).

We might characterise Augustine as *the* great thinker of our falling away from a personal – i.e. 2nd person – relationship with God, and of restoring this relationship. And of Wittgenstein as the great thinker of our falling away from a 2nd-personal relationship with each other, and of restoring it?

The *PI* is *not* a work written in some remote 3rd person, but it is also much more (complicated) than a book written in a simple 1st person. Like Augustine's book, it is *addressed* to an addressee(s). It is to a considerable extent written then *in the 2nd person*. I follow Buber, and Backstrom and Nykanen, in thinking that the 2nd person is the quintessentially ethical mode of writing. (We shall in one way or another come back to this crucial point (already highlighted in the Introduction) in every chapter in the present work.)

The addressee in Augustine's case was God – and the implied reader-as-sinner. The addressee(s) in Wittgenstein's case is (are) not so very different. Recall these words from the Preface that Wittgenstein wrote to *PR*:

I would like to say, 'this book is written to the Glory of God', but nowadays... it would not be correctly understood. It means the book was written in good will, and so far as it was not but was written from vanity etc., the author would wish to see it condemned. He cannot make it more free of these impurities than he is himself.

One might say, adding to that that expressed what Wittgenstein wanted to say, that the addressee in the *Investigations* is Wittgenstein himself (who does not, as Augustine *at times* might *appear* to do, regard himself as decisively having *overcome* the temptations that he sets out in his book²⁶) – *and* his reader-as-sinner. Furthermore, in both books, much of this addressing occurs by way of questions which are not necessarily answered: there are far more questions, especially without answers, in the *Confessions* and the *Investigations* than in most comparable works.

Actually, I follow Rowan Williams (and Richard Eldridge, and Caleb Thompson) in being highly suspicious of the reading of the *Confessions* that has its author figure himself as self-satisfied. The remarkable thing about Augustine in fact is his willingness (throughout his life) to entertain the possibility that he is wrong. He is a model for Wittgenstein in being self-interrogating (constantly questioning and re-questioning), honest, humble – including crucially being humble enough to admit that *he is still vulnerable to temptation*. In Williams’s words, “Augustine’s distinctiveness is the refusal to present a narrative that in any sense claims clarity or finality.... [He exposes] his continuing confusions and irresolution as an encouragement to others” (Williams 2016, 3; emphasis added).

The *PI* is plainly, like Augustine’s *Confessions*, written to be engaged with by its reader; Wittgenstein speaks to the reader, in the 2nd person,²⁷ and asks of the reader many things, including, crucially, to seek to rethink and (as we shall see) refeel her relations with others, beyond the obscuring core philosophical tropes of retreat into the self or mere speculation on others. In as full awareness as possible of the difficulties and temptations to irresoluteness that one is likely to encounter all along the way.

Wittgenstein’s interest in writing his book is plainly a *pedagogical* one in the highest sense of that word.

It would be a gross mistake to think of these works as somehow directed only within their author (in the kind of way that, for instance, Marcus Aurelius’s *Meditations* may be argued to be).

These thoughts may help quite a lot, in orienting one towards *PI* at its opening; but we still need to go further. For these thoughts do not yet connect with what it was in the particular passage that Wittgenstein focused in on that he wanted to address. Why pick *this* (‘autobiographical’²⁸) passage from Augustine?

My response is however already implicit in my earlier discussion of the occurrences of Augustine’s name after the famous, early, ‘overture’ sections of *PI*. It is this:

Wittgenstein took Augustine

... to be as deep a thinker as there was;
 ... to be a philosopher whose approach anticipated Wittgenstein’s own in real and important respects;
 ... to be someone who was explicitly determined not to give into temptation –
 ... *and yet* to have given into it, when his guard was down. When that is *he least thought of himself as doing philosophy*. And *this* weakness, Wittgenstein found in the passage in question.

Wittgenstein took Augustine to be an exemplary philosopher, for good *and* for ill.²⁹ Thus *what he himself said* when asked why Augustine: He

answered that he chose to draw on Augustine because he took him to be a “natürlich-klar denkender Mann”: “Und was Augustinus sagt ist für uns wichtig weil es die Auffassung eines natürlich-klar denkenden Mannes ist, der von uns zeitlich weit entfernt gewiß nicht zu unserem besonderen Gedankenkreis gehört.”³⁰

He took Augustine to be a splendidly, *naturally* clear-thinking person, but vulnerable to dogmatism just where he wasn't aware of making any claim at all. (Much as the early Wittgenstein, if he dogmatizes, does so in his helping himself to methodological claims that he (the author of the *Tractatus*) did not notice he had helped himself to.) These were things that he thought *must* be so, things that *went without saying*.

It is such compulsive commitments that liberatory philosophy seeks to free one from.

And once we are open to thinking about the 2nd person character of the philosophical etc. work of both Augustine and Wittgenstein, it perhaps becomes easier to see what philosophers often struggle to see: the 2nd person character of so much ordinary discourse. The way that the primary relation is between speakers and each other, not, as the 'Augustinian picture' would have it, between speakers and objects. As pointed up by Andrew Norris:

One might say that [the philosophers criticised by Wittgenstein, Austin, Cavell] assumed the basic linguistic relation to be that between the sentence and the object it describes, rather than between two or more speakers who sometimes describe things to each other and sometimes make promises to one another [etc.]

(Norris 2017, 18)³¹

1.3 *PI* 1 as Ethics

Given what I have summarised in the previous section, it makes sense, I think, explicitly to widen one's sense of the kind of thing likely to be philosophically salient and important in the work of a thinker with whom one is engaging, be they explicitly a 'philosopher' or otherwise. For part of what's wrong with seeing *PI* 1 *purely* as an (alleged) attack on a particular picture of language's innermost nature or of language-world relations³² is, I think, this: what attracts Wittgenstein to focus on the Augustine quotation is the *immediacy* and felt 'naturalness' of Augustine's leap. His *leap to 'conclusions'* which do not present themselves as conclusions, but simply as how things *must* be, how language *must* operate.³³ Compare James Wetzel's helpful description, of how Augustine does not have genuine recollections of what he 'describes' in the passage quoted at the opening of *PI*: rather, he is offering “what his sense of himself *must* [allegedly] *have been like* at the time of his initiation into language” (Wetzel 2010, 220).

It is very important here for me to clarify the nature of my claim. There is of course no *incompatibility* between Hacker's claim that Wittgenstein is *attacking* in *PI* §1 a certain representationalist picture of the relation between language and world, on the one hand, and the thought that we (/Augustine) make inferential leaps to such a picture too easily, 'naturally', *automatically*, on the other hand. It would be a serious misunderstanding of the nature of my divergence from (Baker-and-)Hacker, here and elsewhere, to think that I am alleging such an incompatibility. I do not seek to put a 'QED' at the end of my critique of Hacker et al.; that is not the point at all. Like later Baker, I self-consciously have no knock-down argument against them, just as I believe that Wittgenstein's mature thinking is not about such arguments. Rather, it is an important question of emphasis. I am suggesting that Hacker misses what is (most) important. I am suggesting construing *PI* 1 not as an attack on a doctrine, but as the first move in a subtle stratagem of getting the reader to consider the importance of and felt naturalness of a leap to conclusions,³⁴ the kind of leap that one doesn't even notice one has made. I am suggesting pivoting the fulcrum of our investigation; seeing what matters as a matter of our too-easily seeing-as in certain ways, rather than, as 'Analytical philosophy' does, seeing what matters as always a matter of provably illegitimate steps in a more or less formalisable argument. (In this dispute, Hacker is not so far from (say) A.J. Ayer, or Crispin Wright, and, I am suggesting, not so close to Wittgenstein.)

In short, the 'automatic'³⁵ aspect of Augustine's thinking, or pre-thinking, is what I am suggesting is most salient here.³⁶ This automaticity is not, at root, the kind of thing discussed by Eugen Fischer in his work over the last decade or more: it is not a matter of 'too hastily' jumping to conclusions, nor exactly even of one having systemic cognitive biases into which one has no introspective insight, but rather about desperately clinging to whatever thoughts that hide the things one does not *want* to see. Philosophers do not make purely accidental logical mistakes that are this grave. The real, determinative mistakes in philosophy, the ones that matter and endure, are not really *mistakes* at all; they are an *unwillingness* to face reality, or to look deeply (including, most crucially: at oneself, and others). As the contemporary term of art has it, such unwillingnesses are partly based on 'motivated reasoning', reasoning wherein people's self-conceptions are at stake. Philosophers don't want to see what would undermine their own iconic views; or what would make them have to be less 'autistic' (or, in Augustine's case: what would require a more genuinely social and less supernaturalistic picture of language-learning).

Wittgenstein and Augustine are great examples of thinkers who have risen to the challenge of thinking through what they don't want to see, to consider: albeit, not quickly (It took both of them decades). Augustine and Wittgenstein diagnose their own earlier willingness to be self-deceived.

We need to act with both determination and humility, we need to look searchingly and honestly not only at language but at ourself/ourselves, in order to loosen the thought-constraining grip of the 'Augustinian picture'. If we do so, then the desire to attack it, to defend it, or to propound theories on the basis of it will simply melt away, no longer 'required'.

This (Wittgensteinian) line of thought immediately implies that this passage of Augustine's is not *just* a piece of 'spontaneous' metaphysics: it exemplifies his/our temptation to a kind of hubris,³⁷ a felt entitlement to an attitude of *knowingness* to which he/we are not in fact entitled.³⁸ Compare this lovely remark of Caleb Thompson's:

Wittgenstein is interested in the distance between a religious point of view (like Augustine's) which does not presume to grasp what is beyond human reach, and the point of view of someone who thinks that in fact he has managed in language to do just that.

(2000, 25)³⁹

Wittgenstein famously saw himself as approaching every problem from a religious point of view. A point of view of modesty, of 'unknowing', of wonder at the world. A point of view we lose grasp of when we slip into temptations to what he calls metaphysics (e.g. into what in my previous books on Wittgenstein's philosophy I have diagnosed as scientism). Efforts of will are needed to overcome such obstacles to such a point of view.

The Augustine passage (1a) functions as an exemplar of just how easy and widespread it is – in 'philosophy', but way beyond the confines of philosophy as an academic subject – to be *tempted* and to *fall* in the way that Wittgenstein, in the *Investigations*, as we shall see,⁴⁰ is pre-eminently interested in investigating (Furthermore, he's focally interested in supplying one with the tools with which one can liberate oneself from these propensities to 'sin'). And here we should perhaps remind ourselves too that for Augustine the soul's fall *is a choice*.

In other words: this (section 1 of *PI*) *is already an ethical moment* in Wittgenstein's philosophising, and Augustine already an exemplar of the very attitude that quintessentially requires exposing and freeing up. It would be *a liberation* no longer to be constrained by the rails that seem inexorably, without one meaning to or realising that one is, to send one off into a certain 'natural' mode of what is actually speculation. Based on (a) prejudice.

So the matter here is already not just a 'dry' question of 'philosophy of language' or the like: what is in play is already the incorrectness and indeed, more crucially, the moral dubiety, the tacit failure of intellectual honesty, of the assumption, the presumption, that "I know how language works / how people work". Really: do you? Children too (such as Augustine obviously and infamously once was, as 'described' hereabouts in the *Confessions*) can be very vulnerable to this kind of hubris:

because the world is often so difficult for them, so new, and so out of their control; it is only natural that they should therefore seek to control it at least at the level of their minds. They often do not want any more than most adults do to be humble enough to be willing to wait in a state of unknowing, and prefer to believe that they are already in possession of a reliable picture of the essence of human language, etc.. There is something understandable but...childish about a *'knowing'* attitude to philosophical questions, a hubristic leaping to the belief that no deep thinking or questioning of presumptions or effort is needed, to get clear about them.

It is, one might almost say, as if Augustine thinks he had philosophy all-figured-out, even as a very young child, in 1:[a]... And now recall *PI* 32: "Augustine describes the learning of human language as if the child came into a foreign country and did not understand the language of that country; that is, as if he already had a language, only not this one." As if, in other words, he were already in possession of the capacities and responsibilities of an adult... Mulhall's discussion of the undue 'precocity' of the Augustinian child (2001, 49), is exemplary: Mulhall argues that the difference between Wittgenstein's child and Augustine's is, in the end, that the former has the advantage over the latter of "his elders' desire to reciprocate his desire, and their willingness to play". In other words, Wittgenstein's child is not *isolated*. Augustine relied on God to give him powers to understand language *as an individual*: that last turns out to be key to what Wittgenstein found substantively troubling about the 'Augustinian picture'.

In the very first footnote to *The Human Condition* (1988) Arendt remarks on Augustine's attempt to read Genesis as distinguishing the species character of animal life from the unique and singular creation of human individuals. It is *this* kind of distinction – and in particular its fetishisation in the Western philosophical tradition – which I think really marks out the difference of Wittgenstein's philosophy as I seek to expound it in the present work from Augustine's. What we really need freedom from is dogmatic, atomising individualism.

Augustine's famous picture of children as would-be little sinners – as selfish desiring-machines constantly sinning – is very unpleasant. Compare the following drastic example, from shortly before the passage that Wittgenstein has made famous:

Who can recall to me the sins I committed as a baby? For in your sight [, God,] no man is free from sin, not even a child who has lived only one day on Earth... Was it a sin to cry when I wanted to feed at the breast? I am too old now to feed on mother's milk, but if I were to cry for the kind of food suited to my age, others would rightly laugh me to scorn and remonstrate with me. So then too I deserved a scolding for what I did...It can hardly be right for a child, even at

that age, to cry for everything... This shows that, if babies are innocent, it is not for lack of will to do harm, but for lack of strength.
(Augustine 1961: 27–28)

But it is now somewhat striking that omitted from Augustine's long list of young children's alleged sins is, as we might put it, the one more or less 'genuine sin' that Wittgenstein has implicitly identified: a proto-explanatory hubris; perhaps a nascent theoryism; certainly *a tendency to leap to conclusions and to pretend to know what one actually barely understands at all*. (Somewhat similarly, it is striking that, while Augustine attacks moralistically the 'primary narcissism' of the child, he does not question the *philosophical* primary narcissism manifested in the formation of one's words allegedly merely to embody one's desires, rather than to be *in authentic relation with other people*. Augustine, as we might put it, centres his work in the 2nd-person relation to God, but this seems to occlude from him the primacy of genuine 2nd-personal relations to other humans?)

That hubristic tendency is, I am suggesting, Wittgenstein's primary concern at the opening of the *PI*, that tendency to leap to conclusions that later in life can find full flow in overgeneralisation and dogmatism in one's thinking, e.g. in the influential tendency of modern thought that especially concerns Wittgenstein: scientism. Augustine's is a proto-explanatory ambition that (unlike, say, Russell's) doesn't even reveal itself to be one, and is all the more dangerous for that. It is as if Augustine's inclination to find his younger self an inveterate sinner hides from him and from the casual reader the one deep way in which there *is* something ethically problematic about his presumption to 'know' (and thus also, I would tentatively suggest, about his relationship to his God⁴¹). The sins he *confesses* should be forgiven or not counted as sins at all; the sin he is in bad faith about is the one that, philosophically and in terms of a deep honesty, really counts.

Baker's Waismann (and thus his Wittgenstein) expresses this kind of point uncompromisingly, sketching the inherent meeting of liberatory and ethical concerns that is central to the present work:

Waismann's stress on freedom is correlative to a particular conception of personal responsibility for confusions. On this view, philosophical misunderstandings are *motivated* misconceptions. They are wilful, and we are ourselves responsible for them... We cannot escape blame for our own confusions. Hence 'our method' embodies an uncompromising and uncomfortable - **moral** - point of view.
(*BWM*, 198)⁴²

Now, obviously, my point is not to attack children: what on Earth could be the point of that? But it is worth recognising how...*early* some of the

deepest philosophical inclinations to which Wittgenstein wants us to pay attention get set in: especially, the tendency to leap to conclusions; the *knowing* presumption that one has basically – in its *essential* outlines – a full grip on the world's nature. What is tempting and natural or to be expected for a child becomes a great weakness or vice *in an adult*: this is the sense in which I am suggesting that the progress of the *Investigations* is from the beginning crucially a progress of proper *maturation*, an arrival at the kind of wisdom of that ought to come with age, sensitivity and hard reflection.⁴³

So, once more: the key part of the answer to the question of why Wittgenstein chose a passage from Augustine's *Confessions* and not one from a recognised work in the philosophical canon, I believe, is connected directly his being interested to take a passage which is plainly not just a *philosopher's* theorising, but the kind of quasi-theorising – the 'automatic' thinking that underlies much implicit theorising that does not even get recognised as such – that we *all* fall into all too easily and naturally and unhumly. All of us (me, and you, and even Augustine, – and even Wittgenstein himself – as well as 'the man in the street', not to mention the scientist, especially when he is in the street or on the radio rather than in his lab). This, Wittgenstein thinks, is a very widespread assumption or presumption, one that since then has become yet more dominant in our culture, especially our academic culture. He means to challenge it in the broadest possible way, returning us to some sanity of sociality and community.⁴⁴ (Though even here we should be careful not to overdo the extent to which Augustine functions as an object of criticism. Sociality is palpably *not* absent from Augustine's picture – indeed, it is present in diverse and potentially rich ways *in the very passage* with which *PI* opens. The problem lies in where and how it is still, crucially, *inadequately* present here, and/or absent in the sense of *subsequent* (to the initial move in Augustine's presentation), in the manner I have indicated earlier.) The initial move in the conjuring trick of someone doing lay or professional philosophising is often the kind of 'unconscious theorising' fallen into by Augustine.

The accidental hubris of Augustine, that Wittgenstein culminatorily reflects on in section 32 of *PI*, is bound up in his in effect imagining that as a child *he was already (as if) an adult*. (This projection of the adult back into the child is then made worse by the 'mechanistic' assumptions concerning what an adult would be, which are dehumanising: they deny such things as judgement and put in its place alleged mechanical processes.⁴⁵) A striking example of such imagining can be found in the opening of *Confessions* I:8, in the part of the passage that *immediately* precedes and becomes the quotation that Wittgenstein focuses on, in *PI* 1. It runs as follows:

I can remember [my early boyhood], and later on realized how I had learnt to speak. It was not my elders who showed me the words by some set system of instruction, in the way that they taught me

to read not long afterwards; but, instead, I taught myself by using the intelligence that you, my God, gave to me. For when I tried to express my meaning by crying out and making various sounds and movements, so that my wishes should be obeyed, I found that I could not convey all that I meant or make myself understood by everyone whom I wished to understand me. So my memory prompted me: When my elders named some object...⁴⁶

Wittgensteinian liberatory philosophy essentially involves overcoming such methodologically solipsistic ‘Augustinian’ hubris, and achieving instead what we might call an ethic of maturity. The invocation of the term “maturity” might strike some as unnecessarily denigrating (by way of its contrast-class: immaturity). My moral criticisms here are not, I believe, *moralistic*. I am aspiring to be sensitive to the extreme difficulty of overcoming the prejudices and inclinations that our scientific culture normalises, while drawing on the way in which metaphors and pictures of child and adult are so prominent, in later Wittgenstein (and in Augustine), as Cavell has helpfully instructed us to note.⁴⁷

Wittgenstein is seeking to radicalise and ‘complete’ the enlightenment project, of human maturity – but in a way that *overcomes* the individualistic, rationalistic and thus limited – in a way, *insufficiently* ambitious – nature of that project as one finds it in Kant and Habermas. In this sense, Wittgenstein is perhaps closer still to an important strand in Foucault, at least as expounded by Dreyfus and Rabinow (1991).⁴⁸ Liberatory philosophy is post-Enlightenment thinking after a radical non-rationalistic kink.⁴⁹ The maturity Wittgenstein seeks, through his invocation in us of a constant vigilance and self-criticism, is genuinely social, embodied, without the ‘post-Cartesian’ illusions and *deformations professionnelles* of mainstream philosophy. It must moreover in the end be serious about context in every sense: historically situated and culturally sensitive (in the kind of way taught us by Peter Winch), and politically unnaive.⁵⁰

Of course, this raises important questions, questions to which I will recur later in the present work. Broadly political questions, and questions about the nature of philosophy as an ethical endeavour. I think a key *reason* why Wittgenstein’s ethical pre-occupations are not obvious is that one has to discover them for oneself, while reading through and against a desire not to do so. This is a crucial *part* of the task of freedom, as envisaged, I argue, by Wittgenstein. And, crucially, what the ethics *is* that emerges, that one grows into and co-creates, is not something that can be settled in advance.⁵¹

1.4 The Counter-Picture in 1

But: Does 1d commit *Wittgenstein* to a *new* brand of hubris, a new nascent theory?

For sure, 1d involves *some* kind of tacit promotion or at least consideration by Wittgenstein of a would-be *counter-picture* to Augustine's (cf. *BWM*, 270). The world's weirdest grocer can easily be seen as embodying a radical *externalisation* of cognition.⁵² And it is worth noting how directly this (cor-)responds to a desire powerfully present in Augustine's account, aside from the particular passage that makes up *PI* 1a. Take for instance this passage, in which Augustine claims, slightly earlier in his text, to be describing his babyhood:

Little by little I began to realise where I was and to want to make my wishes known to others, who might satisfy them. But this I could not do, because my wishes were inside me, while other people were outside, and they had no faculty which could penetrate my mind. So I would toss my arms and legs about and make noises, hoping that such few signs as I could make would show my meaning, though they were quite unlike what they were meant to mime. And if my wishes were not carried out, either because they had not been understood or because what I wanted would have harmed me, I would get cross with my elders....

(Augustine 1961, I:6, 25–26)⁵³

Such an 'externalist' 'counter-picture' is often attributed to Wittgenstein himself as his own doctrine. *But* its function is rather simply to radically problematise the lack of modality in Augustine's account. To kick-start the sense of an alternative possibility to Augustinian knowingness; to ensure that hubris need not lead to nemesis. Its function is as it were to write in front of Augustine's account: "Here is one possibility...". And to say, then "There are also others...". It is thus thoroughly liberatory in purport.

Thus it would be properly Wittgensteinian to commentate *on PI* 1d roughly as follows:

These words, it seems to me, give us an alternative particular picture of the essence of human language. It is this: Meaning and understanding *are* operating with words. - In this picture of language we find the roots of the following idea: Every word has a meaning; Its meaning *is* its use.

The counter-picture operates to displace the Augustinian picture. It is an alternative possible claim to essence. It can, if handled aright, enable us to achieve a certain scepticism as to all such claims as to essence; and thus a freedom of manoeuvre. As I will explore in Chapter 3, it could therefore have real utility for a Wittgensteinian. Thus far, I agree with the purveyors of the well-known allegedly Wittgensteinian 'Meaning is use' thesis. *But*, purveying that thesis risks a potential behaviourism

(consider e.g. the reductionism seemingly implicit in turning meaning *into* use, allowing nothing to meaning that is not there in actual use). And purveying the *thesis* that ‘Meaning is use’ (i.e. if that thesis is meant to stand firm, to be philosophically storable and stable) *is far from being what Wittgenstein himself recommends*. As becomes clear for instance in *PI* 305–308, and as is already made explicit in 43 (as I shall argue in some detail in Chapter 3), the aim rather is to be *gripped* (*held*, as it were) by *neither* picture. The aim is, as Diamond puts it, to overcome the temptation to attach to some/any “general conception of meaning” (Diamond 2004, 217).

The Wittgensteinian commentary on 1d that I imagine, above, is needed, as soon as anyone starts to think the picture perhaps implicit in 1d as anything more than a counter-picture, intended only to dislodge, not to be, in turn, attached to.

Of course, strictly speaking, the ‘Augustinian picture’ is a *subset* of what I am calling the ‘counter-picture’ of 1d (and 43). That’s why Wittgenstein can go on to say what he does in the opening of 3. But surely the right way to think of pictures and counter-pictures is, roughly, as heuristic maxims. The point is: what your attention is being directed to as fundamental. What the ‘counter-picture’ directs one’s attention to is very different from what 1a directs one’s attention to (at least, as Augustine is spun here by Wittgenstein). Thus they can easily function as rival claims to essence.

The Wittgensteinian aim as I read it is to free one from all such claims and to free one from the compulsive quest for (the one true) theory in philosophy. Thus:

When one describes simple language-games in illustration, let’s say, of what we call the ‘motive’ of an action, then more involved cases keep on being held up before one, in order to show that our theory doesn’t yet correspond to the facts. Whereas more involved cases are just more involved cases. For if what were in question were a theory, it might indeed be said: It’s no use looking at these special cases, they offer no explanation of the most important cases. On the contrary, the simple language-games play a quite different role. They are poles of a description, not the ground-floor of a theory.

Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology vol 1
(1980b, 633) (RPP 1)

Connecting this directly to the nexus between *PI* 1 and 43, let us note the following helpful passage of Mulhall’s:

Is...the notion that meaning is use...the alternative picture we seek? In one sense the answer must be ‘Yes’; the differences between kinds of words, and Augustine’s elision of them, are highlighted by

Wittgenstein's tale [of the world's weirdest grocer] purely because it emphasises how differently its key words are used. However, Wittgenstein also explicitly denies that this focus on use is an answer to the question of what a word's meaning consists in. For when his interlocutor presses that question with respect to the word "five", his response is to say that "No such thing was in question here, only how the word "five" is used." This suggests that Wittgenstein is not proposing that we picture meaning as use, but rather that, if we answer the question of how a word is used, then we will have no inclination ...to attempt to picture, its meaning. Talk of use is an alternative to talk about meaning, not an extension or refinement of it. // ...Wittgenstein's proposed alternative to Augustine's picture is not something that will allow normal (that is, quasi-scientific) philosophical techniques...theory-building to continue in more fruitful and progressive directions; it is rather designed to render such techniques uninteresting or pointless, to establish an orientation in which they will no longer appear to attract or satisfy us. If, then, Wittgenstein's emphasis on use is a paradigm, it is a paradigm to end all theoretical paradigms; it may not spell the end of philosophy, but it aims to break the spell of philosophy as theory.

(Mulhall 2001, 42–43)⁵⁴

We are free tacitly to liken Wittgenstein's practice to Kuhn's, though we need to be clear on the deep differences between philosophy and scientific theorising set out in Wittgenstein. My suggestion is: it will turn out that only a liberatory reading of *PI* can do Wittgenstein and his non-theoreticist investigations sufficient justice. And such a reading indeed breaks the spell of leaping to the conclusion that philosophy must be a form of theory.

A reading of *PI* that keeps Wittgenstein tied to doing more than seeking to free us from unaware commitments to pictures (a reading like that advanced by Baker-and-Hacker) ultimately commits Wittgenstein to the very commitments he was trying to *free* us (and himself) *from*. This should now come as little surprise, for the resistance to the liberatory-ethical interpretation of *PI* is born in a desire to uncover the hidden (pseudo-deductive) *arguments* 'in' *PI*; these 'arguments' must, in turn, be founded upon a prior commitment to a vision of philosophy other than the liberatory one. For arguments, if conceived of as issuing in conclusions that are storable, theses that *stand*, involve one necessarily in having opinions, views.⁵⁵ The desire to see Wittgenstein as basically an analytic 'Oxford' philosopher – albeit an 'obscure' or frustratingly inexplicit one – drives the kind of interpretation that we find in Baker-and-Hacker. Freed of captivation by this desire,⁵⁶ one can start to gain some perspicuity on Wittgenstein's/'our' method in philosophy (Hutchinson & Read 2005). (Baker came to see this, starting in about

the mid-late 1980s.⁵⁷) This chapter shows, I hope, how, from the very start of the *Investigations*, this can make possible a liberatory ‘take’ on Wittgenstein’s words that will loosen the *grip* upon one of *any* picture.

1.5 A Wittgensteinian Art of Living?

Wittgenstein opens the *PI* with a passage from Augustine, and furthermore with the particular (kind of) passage that he does, one seemingly (i.e. at the conscious level) innocent of philosophical baggage, because he wants to take on the hardest case. He doesn’t make things easy for himself. He takes the bloody hard way. What would be the point of anything less, in philosophy, if one actually is determined, as *part* of our will (for: all of us are divided, none of us are ever fortunate enough to be *simply* resolute) at least is determined, to do one’s best to free oneself and others from captivity.

A(nother) great case of this occurs in the anti-‘private-language’ considerations, at the other end (from this opening of the book) of the arc of Wittgenstein’s concern with language. Why does Wittgenstein focus on pain? Why not on (say) factual beliefs? For it would be relatively easy to convince us *they* ‘cannot’ be private. ...Exactly. That is *why* he goes for the hardest case. (Aren’t other cases *equally* hard? How about pleasure? Here I am tempted to cite Tolstoy, one of Wittgenstein’s other deepest influences. The opening sentence of *Anna Karenina* famously runs, “All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.” The mystery of pain tends to isolate us more than that of pleasure. We naturally join in pleasure, but pain can seem to divide us into agonisingly separate worlds.⁵⁸)

For the hardest case is the one gripping us most perniciously. And, as we’ll see in Chapter 10, it is harder than we suppose to recover the simple, inhabited encounter with others’ pain; because part of us doesn’t *want* to do so. Resists. This is how philosophy bleeds into an ethics of everyday life, an ethic of responsiveness to suffering.

Augustine is for Wittgenstein an exemplar of someone who works on himself, and works permanently⁵⁹ to attain a deserved philosophical insight. He is arguably at his best in works like the *Confessions*, when he is determined first and foremost to give an honest account of himself, and less inclined deliberately to theorise than he is in some of his more overtly philosophical works. Nevertheless, even he failed in his ambition at times; most strikingly, at times when he didn’t even realise that he was making a philosophical move – in effect, theorising – at all.

Exactly this is the risk that later Wittgenstein felt that early Wittgenstein had exposed himself, too. To embracing a dogmatic commitment when he thought that he was doing nothing of the kind, but (in his case) only endorsing a method.⁶⁰ My own view (for which I offer some support in Chapter 4) is that this tends to be an over-reading of what is

wrong with the *Tractatus*. I agree that later Wittgenstein tended sometimes to read the *Tractatus* in this way, retrospectively, and in this respect the parallel between Augustine and “the author of the *Tractatus*” is close: they are two authors who Wittgenstein enormously respected, but thought had entered into metaphysical assumptions without realising it. However, I think that a more charitable reading of the *Tractatus* is possible. Wittgenstein was notoriously uncharitable to himself (among most others) (Read & Deans 2011).

So, my suggestion is that there is at times a negative over-reading of the *Tractatus* in the later Wittgenstein. And perhaps, symmetrically, there risks at times being a negative over-reading of the *Confessions* passage in later Wittgenstein, too. I have stressed in this Chapter how commentators have over-played Wittgenstein’s criticism of Augustine. But perhaps I haven’t gone far *enough*: perhaps Wittgenstein still over-plays his *own* criticism of Augustine, too. Perhaps he sometimes makes a strawman of Augustine in this text, as, I would suggest, he on occasion makes out of the author of the *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein puts Augustine’s text to a non-innocent use, from which he extracts a truly non-innocent picture (Pichler 2013).

For we ought to note that, as Burnyeat argues, “Wittgenstein’s reasons for denying that language is taught in the way his Augustine depicts are strikingly similar to some of the historical Augustine’s reasons for denying that language, or anything else, is taught” (Burnyeat 1987, 1).⁶¹ What is the implication of what Burnyeat says for our present purposes? Burnyeat is implying that, when Augustine was philosophising explicitly about language, meaning, and teaching, he pursued a careful dialectical course that has much in common with Wittgenstein’s own (along somewhat similar lines to those I tease out in the first ten or so pages of this chapter).

Burnyeat, in mentioning “Augustine’s reasons for denying that language... is taught” is referring primarily to Augustine’s work of ‘philosophy of language’, *De Magistro*. It is by contrast early in the *Confessions*, when Augustine was less focused on engaging with matters philosophic, that he traps himself through inattention into adherence to a picture that Wittgenstein then excavates for us. Augustine, I have submitted, is an exemplar, an influence of seriousness including philosophical seriousness, for Wittgenstein; and one can *see* this when one notes the parallelism between the ideas of *De Magistro* (and of most of the *Confessions*) and those animating the *Investigations*. It’s when he is ‘distracted’ – when he thinks he is simply reporting on his own experience, or slips into actually surmising what it ‘*must*’ have been like (i.e. slips towards a self-entrapment) – that he is most vulnerable. Wittgenstein is interested much less in philosophy as an academic discipline than in philosophy as a standing risk, and need, for us *all*. Thus, far from being abstract or mere word-play, we might even say that his philosophy is as concrete as can be (Cf. *TLP* 5.5563).

That is what Wittgenstein opens *PI* with: a for-instance of a great philosophical mind unconsciously mirroring himself in a 'conjuring trick' (cf. *PI* 308). Augustine, the philosopher of temptation, gets tempted to philosophise in a way that does not anticipate Wittgenstein (except inasmuch as Wittgenstein felt himself constantly vulnerable to such temptation, too!) precisely when he does not realise that this is what he is doing. Here we see the full fruit of our consideration of *PI* 90 at the beginning of this chapter. Augustine fell, was tempted into his most dangerous kind of entanglement with philosophical myth, not when he was writing proto-Wittgensteinian philosophy or even 'philosophy of language' but when he took himself to be making straightforward statements about his own earlier life. He fell then into speculation that had the kind of form that Wittgenstein critiques in 1ff. To err is human. Even Augustine erred, mythicalistically.⁶²

As Wittgenstein put it at *PI* 340:

One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to *look* at its use and learn from that. // But the difficulty is to remove the prejudice which stands in the way of doing this. It is not a *stupid* prejudice.

What resists freedom, agency, capacity on the part of a reader or conversationalist, is not a *stupid* prejudice. Rather, it is a resistant *wilful* prejudice; a pre-judging that traps one, in something like a bad faith, that one typically, experientially, prefers to the alternative. It is not easy to look at how an expression functions. It can be complicated and subtle and one can easily get lost.

Our prejudices let us continue to feel as if we are 'in control'. That is a key reason why it is typically bloody hard to work through them. ... Unfortunately, Fischer and Hacker tend to make the prejudice(s) that need working through look stupid. This evinces a lack of respect for those prejudices (and for all those subject to them).

It is crucial, then, to look in the right place if one looks to offer Wittgensteinian criticisms (of Augustine). I have suggested in this chapter that (Baker-and-)Hacker tend to look in the wrong place.⁶³ I have gone quite a long way towards partially 'rehabilitating' Augustine, as he features for Wittgenstein, relative to the criticisms standardly made of him. I have suggested respects in which Augustine functions even in 1 not (just) as a foil but as a *model*. Wittgenstein's *own* effort in 1 is itself in part Augustinian, *not* (just) 'anti-Augustinian'. We might usefully speak of Augustine as Wittgenstein's object of comparison (or *subject* of comparison?); not an easy target, but a model with much to offer and even follow.

But I have also complicated that iconoclastic picture. By seeing where and why Augustine actually goes wrong. And let me now deepen that complication, by remarking that there is for many of us something

deeply troubling about the whole *apparatus* of “sin”, “transgression”, “temptation” and so forth, hereabouts (and elsewhere). If Wittgenstein’s dialectic of temptation and its overcoming is sound, it needs, for those of us who feel this sense of troubledness, to escape what in that apparatus tends moralistically or hubristically to enclose one and to prevent a genuine shared philosophical liberation.

What is it in the Augustinian apparatus that causes this trouble? It is the way that Augustine is, sometimes (for instance, in relation to the body), unduly confident about what is and isn’t a transgression (as opposed to: being ‘dialogical’ about it). It is the way in which so many *acts* (transgressions) are *forbidden*. It is the way in which all this is imposed heteronomously upon one. (Though we should recall too that there is a kind of liberatory dimension even to Augustine’s ethics. Compare for instance his famous remark in the sermon on 1 John, “Love and do what you will.”⁶⁴)

Instead of over-confidence, we need (an adequate – non-techno-scientific – version of) ‘*tecne*’. An art of living/of the self. Though, in invoking the concept of the self, one must not – as Foucault perhaps sometimes does,⁶⁵ and as the Ancient Sceptics and Epicureans and so many philosophers in fact have tended to do – make the error of leaping from this to some fantasy of atomisation; of an alleged sunderedness of human beings from each other. As I stress especially in Chapter 10: Wittgenstein’s vision (to which Stoicism tends to be closer) is of our being by contrast elementarily (though deniably, fallibly) utterly intertwined with one another. Co-creating each other.

An art of living, of selves (living together), then. As opposed to: a dictating to others, whether on behalf of God or of Grammar.

This is the very contrast that Foucault supplies, in volume 2 of *The History of Sexuality* (1986), with specific reference to Augustine.⁶⁶ He considers Augustine’s “juridico-moral codification of acts, moments and intentions” by contrast with the Greeks’ treatment⁶⁷ of the same themes (of sex, death and aggression) in a quite different way: rather than being

a codification of acts...[their] objective was to develop a technique of existence... This *techne* created the possibility of forming oneself as a subject in control of his conduct; that is, the possibility of making oneself like the doctor treating sickness, the pilot steering between the rocks, or the statesman governing the city.

In short, “a whole art of the self” (Foucault 1986, 138–139). Such that “The moral reflection of the Greeks on sexual behaviour did not seek to justify interdictions, but to stylise a freedom – that freedom which the “free” man exercised in his activity” (Foucault 1986, 97). We might even experiment with ‘updating’ this to characterise Wittgenstein’s task in *PI*, roughly thus: “The moral reflection of Wittgenstein on philosophical behaviour [or: on use of language] did not seek to justify interdictions,

but to stylise a freedom – that freedom which persons seeking to become free [aim to] exercise [together] in their activity.”⁶⁸

Arguably, if Wittgenstein is a philosopher of temptation, it is less insofar as he follows Augustine, at least insofar as Augustine is considered as a Christian thinker, and more insofar as he is akin to Foucault’s Hellenes. Wittgenstein’s model of temptation, as we might put it, is on balance more an Ancient Greek than an Augustinian Christian one. It is (the likes of) *Hacker* who is, ironically, closer to the Christian model. Hacker is a true ‘Augustinian’ in the troubling sense that I have lately adumbrated, inasmuch as he focuses on logico-grammatical *transgressions*. This is inhumane, in the way that Augustine is. It fails to engage deeply with our humanity: our capacity for developing what I have called autonomy, for coming to a deeper understanding interactively of both our peers and ourselves; and our ability to speak back with and thus gently redirect (or, as it were, sublimate) those who accuse us of transgressions.

By means of this case, what I hope this chapter has set out is a set of markers for a main hermeneutic for the book (i.e. for *PI*, on my reading thereof – and also, thereby, for the present work): a ‘programme’ of anti-dehumanisation.⁶⁹ A rigorous intention of *bringing the human back in*, based around a concern that mainstream philosophy and overzealous thinking in admiration of the sciences tend to screen or push ‘it’ out.⁷⁰ A remaking of the human in the image of the human,⁷¹ rather than a remaking of the whole world in the image of the machine.⁷²

Compare *PI* 183 as a fine example of this. In discussing “Now I can go on”, and comparing it closely to “Now I can go on walking”, Wittgenstein closes by warning,

here we must be on our guard against thinking that there is some totality of conditions corresponding to the nature of each case (for example, a person’s walking) so that, as it were, he *could not but* walk if they were all fulfilled.

Here Wittgenstein is opposing mechanism, what we might call ‘circumstantialism’, and (more generally) denial of the human, denial of agency. He is preserving a necessary space for (the discourse and the reality of) *freedom*.

1.6 Conclusions

Why is *Philosophical Investigations* 1–32 framed by the quote that Wittgenstein uses, from Augustine, and with sustained engagement on his part with that quote and with Augustine (an engagement explicit in 2, 3 & 4, and implicit thereafter, until 32, and indeed onward through the book)? Because the great Augustine made deep, mythic mis-moves, and without even noticing that he’d made a move at all.⁷³ Like the author

of the *Tractatus*. The first and critical move in the conjuring trick is made without even a full conscious awareness. We play this trick on ourselves (Cf. “If you use a trick in logic, whom can you be tricking other than yourself?”(C&V, 24e).

The real problems – the things which should concern philosophers the most – with the passage from Augustine that Wittgenstein picked on (*PI* 1a) are far from where they have been typically located. To be fair to Augustine, one would have to take seriously aspects of the quote ignored by Wittgenstein and by nearly all commentators: such as our social/human inter-relations, “the natural language of all peoples”, the play of the eyes, etc. But even if we were just in our treatment of these, the earlier issues I have raised would remain. One place at which those issues reach a peak is in Augustine’s invocation at the end of the passage of “my own desires”. As if those desires *pre-existed* all sociality; as if language is fundamentally about the conveying of such already-extant desires from one brain to another. There we see a guileless presentation of a picture the kinds of effects of which we will be dealing with in all the chapters to follow, culminating at the end of my book in consideration of the desire for a ‘private language’.⁷⁴ A desire that is, as we preliminarily noted above, already justly questioned by Wittgenstein at 32:

And now, I think, we can say: Augustine describes the learning of human languages as if the child came into a strange country and did not understand the language of the country; that is, as if it already had a language, only not this one.

We might put it thus: Part of Augustine’s story (in 1a) is a *grammatical* fiction, that grips us as if it were God’s own truth. As if things *must* be like that. And so we need freedom. And that is what 1, at least in the context of the relevant following parts of the book which it opens, can deliver: autonomy from thought-constraining prejudice.

But Wittgenstein spent so much time in dialogue with Augustine and the author of the *Tractatus* because they come perhaps closer than anyone else to getting philosophy *right*, not (as the tradition has had it), to getting it *wrong*. This is why the trouble with progress is that it is invariably less than it appears; we never make progress except by giving our great antecedents their due, and this is hard, partly because they were so great that it is hard even to catch up with them.⁷⁵

An *envoi*: I stress in the present work the crucial connection in and after Wittgenstein between the intellect and the will: the way in which the project of liberation depends critically upon the latter, and cannot rely only on the former. Implicit in this chapter, I believe, has been a final sense then in which Augustine is *par excellence* the philosopher for Wittgenstein, and for liberation (to his own version of which the *Confessions* was devoted, as a goal): for Augustine is *the* great thinker of the

intimate connection between intellect and will, *the* writer who has contributed most, at least prior to Wittgenstein himself, to thinking how the intellect – or in particular, how the urge to over-generalise (to theorise), to model, the urge to be *clever* – ‘ensnares’ us and how the way out can only be found through a prolonged, repeated *effort*... Wittgenstein’s struggle in *PI* was to confess the things that even Augustine, *the* model of therapeutic confession, didn’t manage to get a hold of...

We turn now to perhaps the first moment in *PI* wherein Wittgenstein deliberately exemplifies, investigates *and* foregrounds the methodological aspects of his own approach that I have introduced above, and that emerge so clearly when we get a sense of the ways that Augustine and the author of *Tractatus* were, for Wittgenstein, exemplars of deep and serious minds that have a lot broadly right in their mode of approach but are nevertheless unwarily in bondage. We turn, that is, to Chapter 2 of this book: to *PI* 16, and Wittgenstein’s uncomfortable explicit ‘forcing’ of one to be free.⁷⁶

Notes

- 1 Recorded by Waismann; as Kevin Cahill notes, this “is Wittgenstein’s [loose] paraphrase of Augustine’s remark early in the *Confessions* that “Yet woe be-tide those you are silent about You! Those who are verbosely loquacious cannot find words to describe You; they have nothing to say.” (Cahill 2011, 193) (The translation here is my own, with thanks to Caleb Thompson for advice.)
- 2 I will *unless otherwise indicated* be using the Penguin Classics (1961) edition throughout this book.
- 3 N.B. There is less trace of Augustine as I understand him here (i.e. the Augustine found especially *after* the beginning of *PI*) in Wittgenstein’s pre-*Investigations* works, such as *BB*: in the Brown Book, Augustine appears in the opening section like in *PI*, but *only* there. I see that point as *underscoring* the validity of the interpretation I will offer here: it appears that Wittgenstein’s rendition of Augustine is more sophisticated in *PI* than it was in earlier works – a common pattern.
- 4 And the important mention in 32, which arcs back to the start of the book. [Note: throughout this book, references to numbers alone are to section numbers in *PI*. (And underlinings in quotations are my own emphasis).]
- 5 Wittgenstein remarks on the same facet of his methodology at a number of places. A striking instance can be found at *PI* 428, where the case is the nature of thought rather than of time, but leads into a return to the theme of time. See below, for some discussion...
- 6 Cf. Chapter 3, for detailed development of what is questionable about the supposition that we ought to give an *account* of what-have-you, in philosophy.
- 7 See Chapter 5.
- 8 Cf. the first pages of Chapter 4 for discussion of what this version is: it is importantly different from how OLP is normally understood.
- 9 In 91–97, Wittgenstein goes on of course (as I will discuss in Chapter 4) to considerably qualify the picture he offers of “our method(s)” in philosophy, by way of heading off likely confusions that he thinks the form of 90 may engender. But nothing in what follows takes away from the headline import of 89–90.

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- 10 Using here Pine-Coffin's translation, from the 1961 Penguin Classics edition, in which the English used is more straightforward than in the version offered in the *PI* translations.
- 11 Consider also Outler's translation: "They are quite commonplace and ordinary, and yet the meaning of these things lies deeply hid and its discovery is yet to come" (Augustine 1955). This translation serves as a kind of 'bridge' (an 'intermediate case?') between that offered by Wittgenstein's translators and that of Pine-Coffin which are so different from one another that it can be hard to see them even as a translation of the same passage!
- 12 Augustine's effort to seek out the "true meaning" led him towards the end of the *Confessions* to lapse into theory, into metaphysics. I think Wittgenstein admired the long seeking that preceded such a moment; and the credit given by Augustine to ordinary language prior to that point. But, as we shall see, Wittgenstein's real worry about Augustine lay at the other end of the *Confessions*: in Augustine's committing to a picture prior to even realising it, and far far before his resort to any acknowledged metaphysics.
- 13 Compare Waismann's critique of Augustine on time (*PLP*, 40–43).
- 14 See A. Matar's anti-Augustine reading of 436 (Matar 2006, 108).
- Cf. also Hacker (1996a, 87) who criticises Augustine's tendency to spatialise time. But what that misses is what Rowan Williams highlights: Augustine's repeatedly putting "a question against the way in which we constantly make it harder for ourselves to think clearly about being an intelligence working in *time* by imagining it in *spatial* terms" (2016, 2) (cf. also Williams 2016, 101). In this regard, Augustine is working on and through metaphors self-consciously, and again pre-figuring Wittgensteinian methodology in doing so. (For a Wittgensteinian rendition of the perils of spatialising time, see Part 3 of (Read 2007a) and Chapter 2 of (Read 2012b). For Augustine's own healthy attitude of 'unknowingness' towards time, and his healthy undermining of spatialisations of time, see especially sections 20, 24, 25 and 30 of Book XI of the *Confessions*; though one should also note the more problematic quasi-psychological theorising that creeps in in 27 & 28.)
- 15 Hacker claims that "It makes no *sense* to say "I failed to will" or "I tried to will", since willing is not an action" (Hacker 1996a, 600–601). This is a piece of would-be grammar-policing, but sits somewhat ill our actual linguistic practice, and in particular with Augustine's (his practice, not his theory). Can we really make no sense of Augustine's repeated lament for his failure to make an "act of will" of giving himself to God, while various other more humdrum "acts of will" came easily to him?
- 16 Book 8 section 8 of the *Confessions*.
- 17 Thus Augustine, in *Confessions* VIII:8:

My inner self was a house divided against itself... // I was beside myself with madness that would bring me sanity... But it [required] a resolute and whole-hearted act of the will, not some lame wish which I kept turning over and over in my mind, so that it had to wrestle with itself, part of it trying to rise, part of it falling to the ground.

- 18 Is Augustine an exemplar for Wittgenstein partly because he is serious about the problem of irresolution as central to philosophy, serious about the will being ultimately of more moment than the intellect? I think he is. (See the 'envoi' at the end of this chapter.)
- 19 Immediately thereafter, in 9, Augustine reflects on why such weakness of the will is possible, and again answers that

[t]he reason, then, why the command is not obeyed is that it is not given with the full will... It is therefore no strange phenomenon partly to will

to do something and partly to will not to do it. *It is a disease of the mind*, which does not wholly rise to the heights where it is lifted by the truth, because it is weighed down by habit.

(Italics added.)

This now sounds like a kind of common sense – and a distinctively ‘Wittgensteinian’ kind, proleptically!

- 20 In a secularised fashion, I make a similar argument in the second half of my *A Wittgensteinian Way with Paradoxes* (Read 2012b).
- 21 One might conjecture that the reason that many readers have tended not to want to see who Augustine was, for Wittgenstein, is connected with a self-image that is attractive for Analytic philosophers. A self-image as non-religious, non-literary, non-confessional, etc.
- 22 Cf. *Confessions* I:6, quoted below, for a hint as to why they are likely wrong about this. (Cf. *BWM*, 39).
- 23 As Cavell has taught us to see the beginnings of, from here. Cf. my explicitly ‘Foucauldian’ discussion of Hacker’s take on Wittgenstein on Augustine, below.
- 24 Paragraph (a) of *PI* §1. Contrast later Baker’s liberatory and anti-essentialist reading of 1 (*BWM*, 181).
- 25 Incidentally, Hacker’s emphasis on ‘types’ of words appears to contradict his helpful emphasis in some places elsewhere (e.g. in the Luckhardt volume) on taking the Context Principle seriously.
Cf. also (*PLP*, 96), Waismann’s explicit liberatory construal of the question of “types of words”.
- 26 Though bear in mind once more here the content of n.14. See also immediately below.
- 27 As of course he did in the *Tractatus*, most famously, at the end of the book (and in the *Preface*). This point is integral to the resolute reading as initiated by Conant and Diamond.
- 28 My reason for scare-quoting ‘autobiographical’ will shortly become clearer. Augustine’s right to assume that this passage in fact *was* autobiographical rather than quasi-theoretical, the tacit setting out of a philosophical *urbild*, will soon come into focus, and into question.
- 29 I think Wittgenstein would have been interested in Peter Brown’s take on Augustine (Brown 1967), generally considered now the definitive biography. Brown explicitly characterises Augustine as the first therapeutic thinker. *The Confessions* is, he argues, the first example in history that we have of self-therapy, self-examination. This is, for our purposes, suggestive and instructive, to say the least.
- 30 Ms-111: p.15f, see Pichler (1997, 40).
- 31 Cf. also this from Cavell: “The philosopher, understandably, often takes the isolated man silently bent over a book as his model for what using language is. But the primary fact of natural language is that it is something spoken, spoken together” (1969, 33). I develop these themes in Chapter 7.
- 32 As Baker-and-Hacker see it as being: I critique this shortly.
- 33 I discuss *this* kind of “must” at length in Chapter 4. ...To be fair to Augustine, we must also note that Wittgenstein leaves it open whether Augustine is actually *committed* to those ‘conclusions’ that he leaps to.
- 34 Such (to say the least) incautious leaping-to-conclusions and refusals to attend are explored in Chapter 10 in the context of thinking thoughts such as “Jews/Tutsis/blacks/slaves [etc.] are sub-human; they might as well be robots; they don’t have souls; they don’t really suffer (as we do).”
- 35 Compare/contrast the sense in which Fischer uses this term (Fischer & Engelhardt 2017). Augustine leaps to conclusions without pause for thought.

That is an intellectual vice. But going beyond Fischer: this connotes a logico-*ethical* failing. Unfortunately, it appears to me to be exactly such a pathology of knowingness, something more than just an error of cognition, that Fischer *himself* risks falling into, in taking himself to know in advance what the sources of philosophical delusion are.

- 36 On the sense of compulsion that Augustine is subject to, that requires certain leaps to conclusions, see Baker's take on Wittgenstein's use of the term "essence" hereabouts (*BWM*, 261). I would venture to add that the Augustinian automatic jumping to conclusions here is already itself a 'mechanical' move, of the kind I mean to criticise throughout this chapter (and especially, towards its conclusion, below). It tacitly denies one's humanity, one's freedom of thought and of manoeuvre.
- 37 One of my main hermeneutic suggestions in this chapter then could be put thus: *as in Wittgenstein's early thought*, one gets to understand Wittgenstein better if one sees him in the *Investigations* too as thoroughly concerned with the inextricability of logic and sin. See on this the work of Michael Kremer and James Conant, and also Philip R. Shields's *Logic and Sin in the Writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein* (1998).
- 38 Alois Pichler points out to me then that one of the mythicalistic 'mistakes' that is attributed by Wittgenstein to the Augustinian account is that one is more or less happy with doing only what seems easily doable and thinks / pretends that the rest can be dealt with later or is not important. This mistake, I would add, is very characteristic of philosophy at large, in philosophers' tendencies to theorise and ape scientific method. Especially in the English-speaking world (for instance, in the Davidsonian tradition).
- 39 This paper has influenced the point of view of this chapter much more significantly than the number of times I explicitly cite it might suggest.
- 40 Once more, I am broadly following, of course, Cavell's influential hermeneutic of the two main 'voices' in the *Investigations*.
- 41 And about his not seeing how this presumption is connected to the infantile 'sin' I've identified.
- 42 The challenge, it seems to me, is how to apply that thought without doing so *moralistically*: and thus without, in particular, unseeing the beam in one's *own* eye. For discussion, see below.
- 43 In something roughly like the Aristotelian sense of all this.
- 44 As I discuss in more detail in "The anti-'private-language' considerations", Chapter 10. The *social* sanity that Wittgenstein aims to mid-wife in us could be described as 'post-autistic' (in the sense for instance of the so-called 'Post-Autistic Economics Movement': <http://www.paecon.net/PAEmovementindex1.htm>). I see the opening of *PI* as *already* a critique of the 'autistic' theory of mind present for instance in the Theory of Mind theories of autism, and implicit in *PI* 242–243 (Read 2012a, 103 & 144.) *PI* 1a offers us a sense of the sense in which children are order-creating beings, which (who) start from the self. *In children*, this is not a vice. But it *is*, in adults. Including – especially – in philosophers!
- 45 In this connection, my reading of Wittgenstein to highlight the importance of 'mechanistic' assumptions and the ethical importance of their overcoming might be described as 'Merleau-Pontyan'. Consider his use of terms such as "empiricist-mechanical" (1945).
- 46 Jessica Woolley (personal communication) points out to me that we should be careful here not to read too much 'rationalism' into this description – we should remember that Augustine did not have all the terminology we have now to describe the cognitive capacities of babies for learning. He says that he 'taught himself' to speak using his God-given 'intelligence' – but maybe

- he is trying to say that he was able to pick up language *without being formally taught*, due to the cognitive capacities with which he (as most other babies) was born? Of course, this would bring Augustine much closer to Wittgenstein even than I have already brought him... (Cf. n.61 and *supra*, below.)
- 47 Cf. also this remark of Cavell's: "[P]hilosophy becomes the education of grownups...The anxiety in teaching, in serious communication, is that I myself require education. And for grownups this is not natural growth, but *change*." (Cavell 1979, 125).
 - 48 Dreyfus and Rabinow seek to explain how Foucault aimed to follow and improve upon Kant. (Cf. also (Hacking 1991), which again explores the closeness of Foucault and Kant, this time on the question on the centrality of and yet lack of substance to freedom. Obviously, I see Wittgenstein as sharing a sense of freedom as central and as an open project, not a clear and simple objective. To really gain autonomy, to really achieve liberation, is a constant task, a constant vigilance, and requires an integrity which will not settle for the immature freedom of 'libertarianism', of intellectualism (or anti-intellectualism!), of anti-social individualism, etc. (I return explicitly to these points in the Conclusion to the present work.))
 - 49 That I explore at some length in Chapter 2. (One might of course instead speak of Wittgenstein's project as one of recovering rationality without delusions of rationalism. As I will explore in Chapter 2, one has a Waismannian freedom here (in regard to which way to speak), and the decision one takes as to which such description to emphasise is partly a strategic one, i.e. partly potential-audience-relative.)
 - 50 Wittgenstein himself did *not* succeed in being sufficiently historically situated or politically savvy; I aspire in the present work to so succeed.
 - 51 That is: one might even say that it is not something (ever) to be *settled*, while yet not being relativistic or subjectivistic. (Or one might even risk embracing one of those 'isms' (cf. Chapter 2) – provided one appropriately specifies the specific, limited sense in which one is so embracing it/them; and thus pre-empts the compulsive horror at them that tends to grip philosophy as a discipline.)
 - 52 One might of course also see a radical externalisation of cognition as equating to a behaviourism: a doctrine often attributed to Wittgenstein (I rebut the attribution, in Chapter 10).
 - 53 This is an extremely striking proto-mentalist proto-'account', of precisely the kind subject to dissection in *PI* 243–428.
 - 54 This quotation anticipates some of what I will set out at length in Chapter 3, in which I explicitly turn to 43.
 - 55 I elaborate on this questioning of whether we are best-off using the trope of 'argument' to characterise philosophy undertaken according to '*our*' method, in Chapters 2 and 10.
 - 56 Or at least: of what Buddhists call *attachment* to such a desire.
 - 57 As a student, sitting at the feet of Baker and Hacker in two courses of lectures in the mid-1980s, I was amazed to find Baker repeatedly casting doubt on the exegeses given by Hacker. Their divorce had already begun.
 - 58 Cf. Chapter 10 for further discussion of this.
 - 59 Caleb Thompson notes that Augustine accepts that philosophy will involve perpetual struggle (Thompson 2002). On the same point, see Richard Eldridge (1996). Both Wittgenstein and Augustine could in this regard be likened to Buddhism; and Pyrrhonism. I have in mind Sextus Empiricus's deliberate anti-dogmatism. His determination, enunciated at the opening of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, to go on seeking.

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- 60 For detail of this reading, see Kuusela's *The Struggle against Dogmatism* (2008). See also Conant's various relevant works.
- 61 Garth Hallett notes that *De Magistro* criticises the kind of primitive picture of meaning that we find exposed in the *Confessions* passage in *PI* 1 (1977, 73), but he does not make any serious effort to think through why this might not undermine but indeed is grist to the mill for the kind of approach to Wittgenstein on Augustine undertaken in this chapter.
- For a fuller take on these matters with which I am in more sympathy, see Rowan Williams, on Augustine's vision of language, as opposed to the pre-vision that he lets slip in the passage quoted by Wittgenstein in 1 (Williams 2016).
- 62 As Philip Cartwright remarks, "if Augustine was making a mistake, he wasn't making a *stupid* mistake" (Cartwright 2011). He then helpfully refers one to *PI* 340, which is surely one of many remarks in *PI* which, without explicitly mentioning Augustine, has him in mind.
- 63 As also suggested by Mulhall (2001, 39), Wittgenstein *has no objection to* Augustine-style statements such as "'five' is the name of a number", so long as they occur in contexts where they are salient for/helpful to one's co-conversationalist (see *PI* 10).
- 64 Thanks to Caleb Thompson for reminding me of this.
- 65 Foucault guards against the risk of over-individualising the philosopher's task somewhat (1985, 92), where he recognises that self-mastery is crucially inflected by the way one relates "to himself in the relationship he [has] with others". Thus, if everyone else were deceived or held captive, one would not be able to (be) free *oneself*. The philosophical task is not one of policing others, it is one of practicing the (intellectual, etc.) virtues oneself-along-with-others. This is the difference between the 'Christian' and 'Greek' models of 'temptation and correctness', as I describe them below.
- 66 The point was partially anticipated, as Katherine Morris reminds me, by Sartre's criticism of Descartes's conception of freedom (Sartre 1947, 1969, 2013). Morris writes,

It is Descartes's view of freedom, that 'the will or freedom of choice ... is not restricted in any way' (*Meditation IV*), or that the will 'can in a certain sense be called infinite' (*Principles I.35*), that Sartre sees both as the key to Descartes' whole philosophy and as his greatest insight. Descartes's only problem was that his courage failed him at the last possible moment; having recognized that it is in virtue of his unlimited will that man most resembled God, Descartes nonetheless put the choice and the definition of the ultimate end for man in God's hands, instead of in man's hands where it belongs.

(Morris 2008, 143)

The reader might however wonder whether Sartre's vision of freedom ends up being a vision of human beings as atomised from one another in just the way I *question*.

- 67 In and of the period of the flowering of Hellenistic philosophy.
- 68 That is something like my ambition in this book. By contrast, the 'standard' reading of Wittgenstein has him spend his time fanatically 'justifying' interdictions.
- 69 The kind of programme that Hacker in theory embraces, but in practice undermines. See Chapter 7.
- 70 *PI* 1d sets out what would be business-as-usual for a Turing machine, or for behaviourism (there is no real difference between the two. Understanding *this* helps one to understand a little better how negligible, at a deep

- philosophical level, is the difference between dualism, cognitivism, functionalism and behaviourism.)
- 71 Take another example: the ‘reading-machines’ (*PI* 157). Here, Wittgenstein considers a basically-behaviourist, unpleasantly (and unethically) reductive-mechanical mode of human beings treating other humans. In order to see what light can be shown on our nature through such a comparison – and, implicitly, what cannot. (The ‘reading-machines’ are thus ‘objects of comparison’ which leave to the reader what the reader can do.)
- 72 See, on this, also Iain McGilchrist’s work, especially the chapter on romanticism and the industrial revolution in his *The Master and His Emissary* (2009). Cf. on which (Read 2012c).
- 73 My reading differs strikingly of course from that of Warren Goldfarb (1983). Goldfarb argues that there is no proto-explanatory hubris, no leaping-to-conclusions sin, in the remarks of Augustine’s that Wittgenstein picks on. Goldfarb’s view is thus more charitable/‘extreme’ than mine. The appeal of Goldfarb’s view is that it puts the emphasis entirely on we the readers and the moves that we are tempted to make rather than on anything that Augustine did wrong. I have allowed roughly such an emphasis – but I think the “entirely” goes astray, and whitewashes Augustine. Wittgenstein was interested in the moments at which even great philosophers, such as himself and Augustine, do go wrong. And I think I have said enough to indicate why I find Goldfarb’s *complete* defence of Augustine unconvincing; there is something wrong in Augustine’s picture, only not what the mainstream has thought that thing was. (Thanks to Caleb Thompson for discussion that has made possible this note.)
- 74 As in effect noted by Wetzel: “Augustine reads his desire for command back into his infant awareness, apparently under the supposition that he once had, and perhaps still has, the ability to fix the meaning of his words on his own” (2010, 11).
- 75 And in fact, as I will suggest at times in subsequent chapters, Wittgenstein did not succeed in the task, even in *PI*. As my old teacher Anthony Kenny has it, at times he is too hard on himself, his earlier self, and the criticisms he makes are at times only of a “ghost of the *Tractatus*”, rather than of that work at its best.
- 76 Thanks to Anne-Marie Christensen for stimulating talk(s) on the topic of this chapter. Thanks also to an audience at the Crewe Wittgenstein workshop, in May 2012, and to another at the closed Conference that was held at St. John’s College, Oxford, in September 2012, to mark the 10th anniversary of Gordon Baker’s death, where, alongside Phil Hutchinson (to whom the biggest thanks go for making this chapter possible), I co-presented a much earlier version of one key portion of the material in this chapter: thanks especially to Joel Backstrom, Stephen Mulhall, Charles Travis, Avner Baz, and our respondent Ben Walker. Thanks also to Oskari Kuusela (especially), Eugen Fischer, Angus Ross, Catherine Rowett, Kevin Cahill, and Jessica Woolley for very helpful comments on parts of earlier versions of this chapter. Thanks to audiences for this chapter at UEA, at Abo Akademi, and at U. Helsinki, for helpful feedback. Thanks finally to Alois Pichler, Ryan Dawson, Hannes Nykanen, to three anonymous referees, and to colleagues at the UEA Wittgenstein Workshop in late 2017, for wonderful sets of comments on this chapter, comments that have I hope enriched it immensely.

2 “It Is as You Please”

PI 16 as an Icon of Wittgenstein’s Philosophy of Freedom

You say what you are inclined to say. And it has interest only because we too feel the same temptation to say it. However, now it is not yet true nor merely probable, but the object of our investigation.

Wittgenstein (Ms 179, 22v, 23r)¹

Do not think you have to say // Anything back. But you do Say something back which I // Hear by the way I speak to you.

W.S. Graham, section 33 of “Implements in their places” (2004)

2.1 Introductory Summary

This book proposes a vision of Wittgensteinian method: as liberatory. This chapter focally addresses a worry that may put the reader off from that vision: that it (allegedly) amounts to a kind of relativism or subjectivism. That ‘liberation’ is really (merely) license. That, rather than being matters suitable for genuine rational public discourse, philosophical problems are reduced to being the upshot only of the varying urges and orientations of individual persons. This worry threatens to derail liberatory philosophy at an early stage. That is one reason for dealing with it here, relatively early in this book. Another is that Wittgenstein makes the move that could invite the charge from a relatively early stage in *his* book. Especially, as we shall see, in *PI* 16.

The ‘relativism’ charge against liberatory philosophy goes back to (responses that have quite often been felt/made to) Waismann’s and the later Baker’s invocation of broadly liberatory takes on Wittgenstein’s/ Wittgensteinian philosophy. I will argue that this charge is true to a significantly lesser extent than is commonly assumed *provided* that one focuses on what Wittgenstein (and the present author) are about, and not too single-mindedly on Baker. In other words: I think that Baker does go a little too far in this connection, and in particular that he over-states the extent to which philosophical problems are reducible to the quiddities of *individual* persons:

2.2 Against Baker's Individualism

Here then I set out my disagreement in particular with certain moments in the later work of Gordon Baker where he seems to court an excessive philosophical/cultural 'individualism' which I do not share. Indeed, my suggestion hereabouts would be that the very idea of an 'individual' needs to be carefully examined, and then recast²: that the concept of an individual is, in the words of Hanna Pitkin:

every bit as...abstract, as *conceptual*, as our concepts of society and culture. What an individual is depends as much on the grammar of "individual" as what a society is depends on the grammar of "society"... // Society is not just "outside" the individual, confronting him, but inside him as well, part of who he is... // We are tempted to suppose that society is a mere concept while individuals are really real because individual persons have tangible, visible physical bodies. But deeper reflection easily reveals that our concept of the individual is by no means equivalent to that of his physical body....
(Pitkin 1973, 195)³

Moreover, our concept of self is often significantly larger than that of a single person. Myself may be or include a family, a community, a tribe; it may include a place.⁴

This complexity and non-foundationalness of the concept of the individual are not perspicuous, in Baker's writing. Here is a for instance. Baker writes, "The patient [in psychoanalysis] has no incontrovertible authority to settle whether particular events occurred in his childhood, but his own acknowledgement is the sole criterion for how he felt about the episodes in his life" (*BWM*, 172). That is false. It might be quite true that the patient's acknowledgement is the sole criterion for how he now feels about the episodes in his life. But it is telling that Baker projects this back into the past too, bloating the individual person's sovereignty. It may well be for instance that the rest of the family can shed light on how you felt about episodes about which your memory has become distorted, possibly wilfully, possibly ineradicably. Our very existence is fundamentally interpersonal (fundamentally 2nd-personal, and fundamentally communal) in a way that Wittgenstein, unlike Baker, understands, I believe (see Chapter 10). We lose sight of acknowledgement as a paradigmatically interpersonal practice, by fixating overly on the patient's self-memory, or indeed on authors as isolated individuals.⁵

Baker sometimes is not responsive enough to moments in Wittgenstein such as this: "Language contains the same traps for everyone; the immense network of well-kept//passable//false paths" (*TS* 213, 90). Baker rightly emphasises Wittgenstein's "[c]oncern with *pictures* which

individuals may associate with the use of particular words”, but over-emphasises the tie of these ‘pictures’ to *individual* persons. For many are widely shared; some seem societally or even humanly hegemonic or even constitutive. They form a kind of ‘collective unconscious’, constraining (or enabling?) our entire culture, or constraining specific sub-cultures (e.g. specific institutions or groups, such as arguably ‘Analytic philosophy’, that are saturated or even constituted by scientism, more than society as a whole is). Moreover, even some which might seem more idiosyncratic and ‘personal’, such as some literary/aesthetic effects, actually turn out to be again very widely shared; and this actually explains a great deal of how literature/art *works* on us.⁶ I would suggest that in fact the idea that such pictures are essentially personal in their operation is largely a delusion fostered in us by widespread cultural fantasies of the alleged uniqueness of our allegedly separate minds and of the alleged mutual-inaccessibility of our minds (and especially of our imaginations, our creative powers, etc.) to one another or in other words, ‘privacy’.

It might be argued back, on Baker’s behalf, that he could fully acknowledge that certain pictures are widespread, yet still see the prime task of the philosopher as treating *individuals* gripped by these (widespread) pictures. My first response to this would be that this point neglects the point made earlier that in some cases it seems clear that pictures are not merely as a happenstance widespread, but that they *constitute* a collective. They make it. The individuals in that collective *essentially* share that picture. (Think of ideologies, football clubs, or some families.) More generally, as in my suggestion of a kind of ‘collective unconscious’ to language and thought (one might see an idea along these lines in Lacan *vis-à-vis* language as one of his rare ideas that ought to attract a wide following), we should worry that an individualist treatment of philosophical psychopathology may lead us to look in the wrong place to tackle that psychopathology: i.e. it will lead us away from tackling it at source, in deep neurological, biological, historical, cultural, ethical, and political difficulties that are in most cases far beyond the quiddities of specific individuals.

Furthermore, even if the point made on Baker’s behalf were granted, then a reason would still have to be given for why the treatment of different individuals needed to be *different*. It is true that in a philosophical conversation one needs often to search out the particular key that might unlock someone’s mind on some particular topic. But it shouldn’t be assumed that that key will need to be different for each separate (sic) individual, any more than it would need to be assumed that, to become free, different individuals all need different civil and political liberties.

Moreover, and relatedly – and crucially in the context of thinking through Wittgenstein – I believe that the very concept of “individual person” as Baker presupposes it is in a broad sense mitigated (or indeed

viated) by the anti-'private-language' considerations. (I'll come back to this point.)⁷

And this key point really ought to have been available to the later Baker, for (as we shall see) he relies on it and promotes it repeatedly: namely, that this (what I seek to offer in the present work, and *a fortiori* what Wittgenstein offers) is *our* conception of philosophy. Wittgenstein's invitational 1st-person-*plural* immediately both radically qualifies any individualism that he allegedly espouses, *and* (through its prioritisation of an example to potentially follow rather than of an order that one '*must*' follow) places a question mark against overly 'cognitive' or 'rationalist' or 'universalising' self-images for philosophy. You do not *have to* enter into our (*our*) way of doing philosophy. All such necessity claims are exactly where and how metaphysics...captures us, or holds us captive. It is as you please whether or not you accept our invitation to join us: although we think you are likelier to remain captive, and displeased with your lot, so long as you refuse to enter our garden. Which is why we'd love you to try out joining us here.

The 'device' that I use in order to provide a focal point for this discussion is a passage I consider unduly neglected: *PI* 16. This is a key passage in the unfolding of (neglected aspects of) Wittgenstein's method, in that it is the first passage in the text of *PI* in which there is an *explicit* challenging invitation to the reader to 'go your own way'.

One may work, with some profit, to find something like such an invitation in earlier passages; indeed, as we have seen in the previous chapter, perhaps already in 1. But in 16, for the first time, there is no doubt. Here, Wittgenstein explicitly *requires* of the reader that she face her own freedom.⁸ And thus 16 provides a crucial 'test-case'. If Wittgenstein were giving us over to something like a subjectivism of whatever kind,⁹ then this would be where we would first clearly see this happening.

True, there is an unavoidable respect in which Wittgensteinian philosophy is 'person(s)-centred', and, while open-ended, unknowably time-bound. We are trying to liberate actual people, not ideal types or fantasies of people. Our philosophical work must truly engage with them, and there is no such thing as a 'sideways-on' perspective or 'Archimedean point' from which to validate the process. Rather, the process is in its fundamentals 2nd-personal: to think of it as ideally having to be quasi-scientific, objective, as if from outside, is to miss the core of its character.

Such 'objective' validation is not required: it is enough if we bring some greater freedom, (even just) for a while. To one who always insists that our freedom might be illusory, it is enough to reply with the kinds of moves that Wittgenstein offers in *On Certainty* (1975), and so to say things like this: you are demanding a kind of 'absolute proof' that is absurd. If we are to take seriously your (hyperbolic-sounding) doubts, if we are to take seriously even that they actually *are* real doubts, then you need to share with us your concrete grounds for them. If you have any.

To avoid misunderstanding the point I am making it helps one if one bears in mind the point made by Witherspoon (2000): namely, that being nonsensical is best understood not as a property of sentences, nor even as a property of sentences in contexts. Rather, a condition of alienation from our own words, of having conflicting desires in relation to those words, of 'hovering' between alternative assignments of meaning to them, of irresolution: *that* is what licences or at least makes pertinent the claim that a would-be claim is nonsense, is not yet even a claim. And so, equally: an unalienated condition, a dissolution of such conflicts: what more could be hoped for?

2.3 *PI* 16 as an Icon of Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Freedom

But some may continue to nurse the following perhaps nagging worry: is not there still a concern over the 'subject-centred' nature of this conception of philosophical success. Is philosophy itself, when practised thus according to what Wittgenstein often called 'our method', *not* a method of *reason* at all? Do claims of reason give out hereabouts; does a successful liberatory move of the kind made by later Baker or by Wittgenstein's resolute readers amount to the same kind of thing as a hard tap on the skull which happens to rearrange the subject's brain such that they are no longer troubled by a given philosophical problem?¹⁰

My final answer, below, will be that it is unreasonable to exclude liberatory philosophy from the domain of the reasonable merely on the grounds that it does not match prominent taken-for-granted paradigms of reason. And in this regard, I take strong inspiration from Baker's moves to this effect. But before we come to that there is a pressing need to establish both the reasonableness and the efficaciousness of the aim of re-arranging those paradigms, and to base that re-arrangement in Wittgenstein's own process. It is time then to turn to *PI* 16. For here, Wittgenstein seeks explicitly, provocatively, directly to recast one's sense of what to require of a philosophical text/author. And, concomitantly, of what the resolution of a philosophical problem looks like. He undermines our sense that a philosophical author *must* be there *to answer our questions*.¹¹ He weakens the hold of that picture on us, freeing us to consider the possibility of other models of philosophical writing, interlocution, and excellence. Thus, in the pattern, we will see often in the present work: the form, the method of 16 is *itself* a liberatory manoeuvre. I mean: Wittgenstein is not just working to free us of particular felt compulsions and confusions. He is thereby directly enabling a freer sense of what philosophy *itself* is/can be.¹² *He refers the questions that we want to ask back to us.*

PI 16 opens as follows, with a quoted question: "What about the colour samples that A shows to B: are they part of the *language*?" "Die

Sprache” is translated here in 16 by both Anscombe and Hacker-Schulte as “the *language*”.¹³ So far so good (I say this, because sometimes in practice it gets understood as simply “*language*” or “language”, which is liable badly to mislead readers, as it seems to suggest a kind of reification of language.) But then, given this, we should ask: “*What language?*” For talk of “the language” is unobtrusive, almost bizarre, without some such specification, given especially that the question opens so specifically, referencing *colour-samples that A shows to B*. And the answer, if one reads the text with a modicum of attention is indeed specific: it is language-game 8. So 16 refers us back to 8, to the discussion of colour-samples there. ...It is vital that we resist *the craving for generality* that would turn Wittgenstein’s specific remarks into contextless theses, when they are often highly specific in their intended context.¹⁴ Such as here.

According to many – perhaps most – of Wittgenstein’s readers, implicitly, the answer to the question of whether (*the*) samples are part of (*the*) language seems to be something like this “*Yes, they are, and in fact they must be – they necessarily are*”.¹⁵ It is Baker who explicitly pointed up what should have been obvious to everyone (and: that it was not, itself *tells* us something), what I’ve just highlighted: that Wittgenstein at the opening of 16 is referring back to language-game 8...and thus, indirectly, back to 1, wherein we first met colour-samples, in the ‘mechanical’ grocers. He is NOT making a general ‘grammatical’ claim about all of language. As Baker puts it:

[T]o note that a colour-sample in language-game (8) can be regarded as an instrument of the language is certainly not to formulate part of an explicit explanation of any colour-word within language-game (8), nor is it even to give part of any standard explanation of how we are to use the word ‘sample’ in our language.

(BWM, 69)

Whereas by contrast most readers in practice unfortunately take Wittgenstein to have some kind of tacit doctrine about samples, about language-acquisition, etc. They take him to be asserting a new role for samples, as (necessarily) part of language.¹⁶ Thus, they take 16 to involve a key element of the assertion of the alleged ‘autonomy of language/grammar’ thesis. ...The fact that this is termed a thesis should surely already give one pause. There was a sort of autonomy/arbitrariness of grammar thesis in *The Big Typescript* (Wittgenstein 2004) (BT). There is none in *PI*. Instead it is, as we shall see, *as you please* whether you see language as autonomous or not. (Thus consider carefully the wording of 497: “The rules of grammar may be called arbitrary, if that is to mean that the *aim* of the grammar is nothing but that of the language.”) The autonomy of grammar thesis is dogmatic and tends towards Anti-Realism. Wittgenstein’s method in 16 is neither.

But, as I say, often readers miss this and take 16 to help provide an alleged thesis-basis for his coming deflating of ostensive definitions and his famous alleged 'denial' that such definitions connect language and reality, whether in public or in 'private' cases. But what Wittgenstein actually *says* is strikingly different. He doesn't assert anything about the alleged essentiality to language of samples. Rather, he says: "Well, it is as you please."! He thus returns the issue to the reader.

He proceeds to elaborate on *why* he says this:

They [the colour samples] do not belong among the words; yet when I say to someone "Pronounce the word "the", you will count the second "the" as part of the sentence. Yet it has a role just like that of a colour-sample in language-game (8); that is, it is a sample of what the other is meant to say.

Samples are typically taken to be part of the language without question, when they are words. But they have a very different role.¹⁷ Roughly, they do not *mean*. For they are as it were mentioned, rather than used (and now here we are of course using the word "use" in a more specific way than in a general way according to which one speaks of the use of the word "the" to be (say) a paradigm of English pronunciation. We are quite free to do so; provided we *recognise* (and make clear) that that is what we are doing.).

This "it is as you please" is an epochal moment in the text. Completely deflationary, completely non-assertoric, and without even the slightest hint of a necessity claim. Putting the 'burden' onto the reader, rather than insisting on any claim (or opinion) of his (Wittgenstein's) own whatsoever. (And this of course fits like a glove with a philosopher who seriously meant to be putting forward no theses, to have no opinions *qua* philosopher, etc., and to be concerned, not with telling his reader what to say, but with offering one the means to an autonomy worth having.¹⁸)

It is true, in the same section he later goes on to say: "It is most natural,¹⁹ and causes least confusion, to reckon the samples among the instruments of the language". Note first here the lovely wrinkle, too easily passed over, caused by the phrase "among the instruments of" (Or in Hacker and Schulte's rendition, more simply, "as tools of"). Are instruments/tools of something a proper part of that something? A workman's tools are essential for his trade, but there is something odd in insisting that they are a proper part of him. Without his tools, he is not a workman at work; but still, that sense of oddness remains. Are a workman's tools really part of the workman? The best answer seems to be: Yes and no. Are a language's tools part of the language? I would say: Yes and no. This I think helps militate against the tendency that even a liberatory reader might become subject to over-read 16 as a dogmatic claim that the samples ARE part of the language. In other words:

Just as he does in 43 (as we will see in Chapter 3), just as he does so often, Wittgenstein is seeking here to write in such a way that one has the best chance of not unconsciously relapsing into an imprisoning dogmatic slumber. His diacritics, his modals, his qualifiers and *relata*, are intended not to issue in a true detailed theory but in a multiform set of 'warnings' against tendencies to re-trap oneself, as one strains towards philosophical insight.²⁰

In any case, it is already clear, from the way that that sentence begins ("It is most natural and causes least confusion..."), that it is *itself* a would-be liberatory move, or offering. Simply a suggestion, as to what Wittgenstein thinks is least *likely* to cause *confusion*. (Least likely to leave one stuck in a picture according to which *language must be words and words only*.) NOT really a *claim* at all, let alone a 'necessary truth'. He wants to help the reader out of their confusion, out of their desire to leap to conclusions. He wants to free one from the limiting mental constraints, more or less self-imposed, that give one what he sometimes called "mental cramps". We *could* choose to exclude colour-samples from our conception of the language.²¹ But then, to be consistent, we should feel the need to exclude words (sic?!) such as "the" from the language too, *as* they feature in sentences such as "Pronounce this word: "the"." And it is easy to see how that might in turn be confusing! Re-entrapping.

So 16 involves a subtle willingness to consider philosophical difficulty in its complexity, and not to answer dogmatically the question about whether samples are part of (the) language. What we are working upon in philosophy is our own instinct to simplify. It is a common instinct and that is what gives the work its inter-subjective salience. We tend to simplify in the same ways, in response to the same traps.

What Wittgenstein proposes is a different, *possible* point of view on the language-reality nexus from that that is usual in philosophy, and which causes all sorts of headaches and captivations. This is perhaps more perspicuous in the similar passage (to 16) to be found at *BB* (84), a passage in which it is obvious how what is in play here is philosophy on *our* conception:

It is natural for us to call gestures or pictures elements or instruments of language... The pictures...and other instruments of language which have a similar function I shall call patterns... (This explanation, as others we have given, is vague, and meant to be vague).²²

The parenthetical remark is of course beautifully consistent with what I have said in the Introduction (and elsewhere) in this book about Wittgenstein's counter-hegemonic 'programme' of resistance to theory, to technicalisations of terms, and so forth.

And 16 does explicitly what occurs over and over again, implicitly, in the entire first half of the *Investigations*, the subject matter of the present work: Wittgenstein in effect asks you, the reader,

So, are you prepared to call this, all things considered, language? And how about *this*? And that? (And what will follow from your willingness or otherwise? And how might you - and I - be helped or hindered, philosophically, by means of the package?)

I see 16 as being part too of a broader ambition to free one from the nightmare of philosophical history... Modern philosophy has had as one of its central problems 'the connecting' of language with reality. *PI* 16 helps undermine the notion that there is any real general problem here at all. Wittgenstein suggests that it is only an artefact of our usual modes of categorisation that makes it appear as though there is anything definitively odd in what we would normally treat as part of the world (e.g. a sample of a colour, being used perhaps as the 'basis' for what colour a wall should be painted) being treated rather, most naturally, as part of a sentence. If we can harmlessly and naturally 'scoop up' parts of the world to converse by means of - if these parts of the world are ready-to-hand in this way - then we have *already* overcome the alleged gap between language and reality.²³ (But note again that we do not *have* then to assert that some of reality *is* language. We retain our freedom.)

Wittgenstein sometimes gets at all this in a way much more strikingly 'counter-intuitive' even than that of 16. Compare the discussion of *LFM* (250-251) (the whole framing of which is extremely strikingly liberatory):

I say the way I'll go is...: "Prince has blue trousers" is a proposition about blue, and "Blue is more similar to purple than to yellow" is not. The latter type—like "A sofa is longer than a chair"—is grammatical. And here there is great danger.

The proposition which appears to be explicitly about blue, Wittgenstein suggests - but leaving us our freedom to go with him or not - is best conceived not to be about blue at all! Because it is about how we speak.

He continues, making the (meta-)liberatory point (parallel to that which I have suggested is present too in *PI* 16) still more explicit,

I don't say it's *wrong* to say that mathematical propositions are about numbers, that the other way of speaking is right. I only want to *point it out*. Because unless you see that there are two ways—you are liable to be misled.

(Actually, the point generalises or can be made to come in at an even earlier stage. There was always already something bizarre about debates

about 'the' 'connection' between language and reality. One key reason why is because language itself, even in its written and spoken form, is of course thoroughly worldly. The very act of speaking or writing already includes the world (The spoken or written word is never a purely 'ideal' object, but always physical too), and thus brackets questions that would raise questions about how 'reaching' the world is possible. The trail of the vast serpent that is the world is already over everything human. That we manage to forget this, and need reminding of it, says a lot about the extent to which, in philosophy, a powerful *deformation professionelle* is the tendency to idealise away from these 'messy' (even perhaps 'dirty'), inconvenient vestiges of physicality, and to veer instead into systems and pictures that have a purely formal or mathematical or ideal nature. This is, I think, what comes of living too much in one's head – as we unworldly philosophers, unsurprisingly, tend to do.)

Wittgenstein's enterprise (cf. "It is as you please") is about what *you* are prepared to accept as an answer to the questions raised. In Wittgenstein's philosophical method, one cannot escape *responsibility*. For the freedom is present at every step of the way. One can at any point resist. Though, if one does, then sometimes one will most likely have to re-assess *commitments* one has previously made. Freedom is in every step, but some steps can only be taken with the willingness to take *other* steps. Again, this helps explain how this is not a licentious "Anything goes" freedom. This point applies at the 'meta' level, too, as Baker helpfully reminds us: "Phrases like "in our sense", "in a certain sense", etc. are reminders of previous decisions, and they are ubiquitous [in Wittgenstein's practice] and vitally important" (BWM, 194). The (would-be) liberated philosopher does not blow with the wind; she seeks to achieve integrity and a certain *consistency* within her practice.

The reader's, the co-conversationalist's, responsibility to be honest – to dig as deep as one needs to (though hopefully no deeper), to be consistent, committed where one is committed, free where one is free – is absolute. And this, we might helpfully remark, is most definitely *inter alia* an ethical remark.

2.4 Liberation as Ethics

As can be both directly and indirectly seen from 16, what is at stake hereabouts is the unaware hold upon one of pictures such as "Language must consist of words", "Language is another thing from the world, categorically separate from it", and so forth. And, at the meta-level, the hold upon one of the picture of the reader of a philosophical text as a passive recipient of the author's knowledge or wisdom.

Why should this matter? Why (to return to the question we asked at the opening of this chapter) should one practice such liberatory philosophy?

We can I think now make the following deflationary response: One does not have to have a REASON to free people, to free oneself, from such slavery to dogma – it is just the kind of thing that decent human beings tend to do, without even being asked to!²⁴ (Though this of course doesn't make every non-Wittgensteinian indecent! The inclination towards dogmatism is in all of us, after all.)

Here then ethics and liberation are seen as two sides of the same coin.

So, “It is as you please” is NOT a gesture of indifference. One is rather *with* the other, trying to help them extricate themselves (oneself) from a network of ideologically charged assumptions. We can see this, in both the form and content of “It...causes least confusion if...”. One works to save confusion from being probable, in *people*. In fellow-strugglers, fellow-travellers on the road to some enlightenment.

All this starts to bring out a potential limitation in the widespread assumption or insistence that philosophy must be a cognitive activity, or be nothing: For philosophy depends on something that some would suggest is not best-described as ‘cognitive’: our instinctive understanding that freedom is better than captivity, and that other people deserve our help freely given. To ask for a *reason* to do the decent thing is to ask, as Bernard Williams famously put it, “one question too many”.

Now consider the passage of Hertz's that most famously influenced Wittgenstein:

[W]e have accumulated around [the term] “force” more relations than can be completely reconciled amongst themselves. We have an obscure feeling of this and want to have things cleared up. Our confused wish finds expression in the question as to the nature of force. But the answer which we want is not really an answer to this question. It is not by finding out more and fresh relations and connections that it can be answered; but by removing the contradictions existing between those already known, and thus perhaps by reducing their number. When these painful contradictions are removed, the question as to the nature of force will not have been answered; but our minds, no longer vexed, will cease to ask illegitimate questions.

(Hertz 1956, 7–8)

Note that phrase in the great quotation from Hertz: “these painful contradictions”. When someone is in pain, one moves to staunch the pain, to comfort the person and ameliorate their suffering (see Chapter 10). In a genuinely effective way: one moves, if possible, to eliminate the cause of the pain, not just to suppress symptoms. One tries, roughly, to heal.²⁵ Once again, the ethical imperative enters clearly into the matter, from the get-go, *prior to thought*. One naturally moves to assist,

to help. Compare now the following marvellous, explicitly liberatory passage:

We are inclined to be puzzled by the three-dimensional appearance of [a] drawing [[a schematic representation of a cube]] in a way expressed by the question “What does seeing it three-dimensionally consist in?” And this question really asks ‘What is it that is added to simply seeing the drawing when we see it three-dimensionally?’ And yet what answer can we expect to this question? It is the form of this question which produces the puzzlement. As Hertz says: “Aber offenbar irrt die Frage in Bezug auf die Antwort, welche sie erwartet” (p. 9, Einleitung, Die Prinzipien der Mechanik). The question itself keeps the mind pressing against a blank wall, thereby preventing it from ever finding the outlet. To show a man how to get out you have first of all to free him from the misleading influence of the question.

(BB, 169)

One needs to displace the felt need for an answer to a question such as “What is force?”²⁶ – or “What does seeing a line-drawn cube three-dimensionally consist in?” – by means of releasing one from the tension between the different contradictory things that one *wants* to say, hereabouts. One is released, by being freed of the felt need to say some of these things, or by coming to see a way in which they need no longer contradict, or so forth. This freeing is *how* one helps. To show someone how to get free you have to free them from the question which is trapping them. Prior to such freeing up, we suffer from mutually incompatible wishes with regard to our words: with regard to *what we want them to mean*.²⁷ But we may or may not know this. (And if we say it of another, we may or may not be right.)

This then is a disarming reply we can make to any charge of relativism²⁸: Relative to one who is *incapable* of consciousness of their own capture, we admit that our method may have no purchase... But I see signs of this captivity all over the place, including among many who are not necessarily incapable of consciousness of it, even if it appears that they *are* fairly deeply ‘in denial’ about it (e.g. some ‘Cognitive Scientists’, many popular-science writers, some logicians or mathematicians when they venture or trip into philosophy; most propagandists, many religious and anti-religious writers or political ‘leaders’; many business ‘managers’, and ‘even’ university managers...). Relative to those who knowingly or otherwise²⁹ are in philosophical discomfort or despair, our method may help as soon as one can (*if* one can) find a way in for it. (And provided that we do not project confusion into where it turns out that it is not present.)

2.5 'Our Method' as 'Non-Cognitive'?

One then *can* claim that the method (*our* method) is 'non-cognitive', *a la* Fischer (2008).³⁰ And we have already seen a genuinely good reason or two for wanting to say something like that. Ours is after all a method where the language of discovery is treated as suspicious, as a possible marker of the metaphysical claim to have discovered the essence of a concept. Our aim is to get past what troubles us by doing justice to what one can find in the language of or the picture behind the metaphysics, and also to expose what the picture neglects. To empower us by a variety of examples and (counter-)pictures to see overlooked aspects of how we use our language. You are certainly then free to say that our method is non-cognitive, if you want.

I do not think that quibbling over this word, "(non-)cognitive", is in the end that important. *But*: the word in this context seems to me likely to be, on balance, misleading. It will cause least confusion not to go along with Fischer.

True, I suggested earlier a sense in which one might helpfully cast philosophy not as being confined to the cognitive realm. Even so, one suspects that *requiring* that liberatory philosophy be classified as '*non-cognitive*' is liable seriously to mislead because it depends on one having in mind what could be argued to be a rather impoverished conception of cognition or of rationality, such that the kind of activity that occurs in going to the aid of others,³¹ or in psychoanalysis, in philosophical works of literature, etc. is deemed 'non-cognitive'. I would prefer on balance to suggest that mental liberation is generally a broadly rational and (among other things) broadly cognitive affair, if it involves working with the mind to reveal to the mind the mind's own foibles and offering alternatives that can liberate, i.e. on a broad enough conception of reason. *And* provided also that we do not monomaniacally attribute everything needful and good to reason alone.

It is rational to want to help others (One does not do it (only) *because* it is rational; but it is still rational). It is rational to want to heal oneself. It is rational, *ceteris paribus*, to heal oneself through whatever means are effective. If those means involve thinking through transitionally connected notions, even if (when stabilised temporarily – when reified) those notions are nonsensical, then this seems maybe enough to deserve the honorific label, 'cognitive'. At any rate: Liberation and ethics cut deeper than cognition, but I hesitate to label them 'non-cognitive'.³²

It is *as you please* whether or not to call this conception of philosophy "non-cognitive". Such decisions are partly 'tactical', and always 'audience-relative'.

This that I have just been elaborating is what Baker calls a "dimension of freedom in Wittgenstein's philosophical methods" (*BWM*, 277). It is what I tentatively suggested earlier might be called a 'meta-liberatory'

move. The situation is parallel to that that arises in relation to questions such as “Is economics a science: should it be made more scientific, by [for instance] incorporating into it the value of nature; or should it be said to be forever non-scientific?” (Read & Scott Cato 2014) or “Is the Precautionary Principle a new, deeper way of broadening our concept of what is to count as evidence; or does it offer rather an alternative criterion to that of evidence, which has additionally to be taken into account?”³³ One is constitutively free, with regard to such questions. That's (meta-)liberation.

When one commits, at least temporarily, to one answer rather than another (to them), then one is *expressing* one's freedom (and one's politics).³⁴ Choices are not real unless they have consequences. Freedom is nothing without such choices. Freedom without consequences – without commitments – is empty. But in making such choices, one is not signing up to a dogma. *Not* committing to a controversial thesis that then gets set in stone. We work in philosophy to grow the sphere of intellectual autonomy. But it would be self-contradictory to do so in a way that involved a constrictive set of philosophical methods and prevented us from using words freely in our own practice. Indeed, in some cases we can even use words ‘inconsistently’; we can use them in one way in one place, and in another which seems to contradict the first way in another (though see the earlier material about the effects of our committing ourselves). This was already implicit in my not-unsympathetic remarks about (context-)relativity and ‘relativism’, earlier. We can raise one danger in one place, and another pointing in seemingly the opposite direction in another. We can do all this without creating an actual problem, provided we do not purport to make substantive claims that would stand firm. Provided we do cleave to opinions.

This is not mere license; not post-modernistic nor relativistic doctrine.³⁵ That is, not the kind of thing that Wittgenstein critiques so subtly:

An infinitely long row of marbles.... Imagine these coming in in some kind of fairy tale. What application, even though a fictitious one, might be made of this concept? Let us ask now, not “Can there be such a thing?” but “What do we imagine?” So give free rein to your imagination. You can have things now just as you choose. You only need to say how you want them. So (just) make a verbal picture, illustrate it as you choose – by drawing comparisons etc.! Thus you can – as it were – prepare a blueprint. – And now there remains the question how to work with it.

(Z, 275)

We are continually brought back from any such brink by the *practical* nature of the criterion of success, in our enterprise; we do not, then,

proceed from doctrines, such as those. And we are brought back by the requirement to adhere to and develop the intellectual virtues outlined already; we must seek to be at all times honest, attuned to the task at hand or the dialogue in process, just, etc. We are part of a tradition that has always valued these things highly, or at least claimed to; we aim to take that valuation to a new level of 'confessional' seriousness. Moreover, Waismann provides us with a great freedom *from* a hopeless aspiration that is shot through the history of philosophy: *the fantastic, hopeless dream of turning philosophy into deductive logic*.³⁶ Rather, philosophy on our method is a series of 'journeys', journeys essayed out of a particular problem. The risk is that a step from within the journey is taken apart from this context. The risk, in other words, is that a particular move be read dogmatically as a final analysis on some general topic rather than a step towards getting through the problem at hand, clearly.

2.6 Language as a *Begriffsschrift*

If you are going to get better, you have to *want* to. You have to *will the means*.³⁷ One might even hazard: you have to overcome the illusion that you were ever ill. (And here we free ourselves from one kind of grip that the concept of 'therapy' can have on us, if it places us in a permanent role of client, or victim). There was always a level at which you, your thoughts, language have merely *to be recovered*, regained, returned to, rather than even to go through a process of what doctors (let alone economists) call recovery. Or convalescence. Philosophy leaves everything as it is, once the veil of ideology is torn away. Language itself is the closest we have to a *begriffsschrift*, if only one will let it be...

Something like this last point can be found in the continuation of the dialectic from 16. In 17, Wittgenstein goes further into a question (of how to classify words) that we saw present in 1, in Chapter 1. He thus seeks to return us to our words and ourselves, clear about how clear our concepts are.³⁸ Baker-and-Hacker, in opening their exegesis of 17, comment that "Wittgenstein distinguishes different kinds of words" (Baker & Hacker 1984, 42). But this is not right, in one crucial respect. For 17 actually opens thus: "It will be possible to say"³⁹: In language (8) we have different *kinds of word*." Thus, we might say, Wittgenstein explicitly keeps an openness present, that Baker-and-Hacker close down. It would have been perfectly possible (more succinct) for Wittgenstein to have written the first sentence of 17 without including that opening clause, "It will be possible to say:". But Wittgenstein chose carefully, deliberately to include it. Baker-and-Hacker omit from their account this crucial modal qualifier, which signifies from the outset the important live option of remaining free, of not being captured by the new system of classification (of types of words) that (as we saw in Chapter 1) Hacker seems unconsciously captivated by (and wants to capture you within).⁴⁰

It will (then, truly) be *possible* to talk of kinds of word: (but) not compulsory. Other possibilities may also be imaginable: e.g. That we would focus more strongly on context (in the manner of Travis, Hertzberg and the Conversation Analysts – all of course influenced by Wittgenstein) as our way of seeking to ensure that we do not get confused by the delusively similar appearance of words to one another. Moreover, Wittgenstein goes on to urge, even if we remain within the possibility of speaking of different kinds of words, then “how we group words into kinds will depend on the aim of the classification, – and on our own inclination.⁴¹ // Think of the different points of view from which one can classify tools or chess-men.” There is no such thing as an inherently privileged representation. This clarity that there is no such thing as a representation that is in and of itself superior, correct, in philosophy, runs counter to a long philosophical ambition. Wittgenstein is laying groundwork here for the specific conception of perspicuous presentation that he will go on to introduce (on which, see Chapter 4), one which is *not* well understood as analogous to (say) what one sees below one from the air; and laying groundwork too for the conception of ‘objects of comparison’ which will follow upon that (cf. Chapter 5).

More immediately, he is laying groundwork for the passage that immediately follows 17: namely, the famous ‘city’ analogy of 18. Coming into 18 with our ‘liberatory’ reading of 16–17 under our belts, it starts to look a little different perhaps from what we have been used to. We are perhaps more attuned now to the way in which 18 explicitly and solely concerns modes of representation or of imagination with regard to language and to ‘primitive’ language games. We are invited not to “be troubled by the fact that languages (2) and (8) consist only of orders”; we might well still ask ourselves though whether we can fully succeed in accepting the invitation. I note that Wittgenstein follows this by saying,

If you want to say that this shows them to be incomplete, ask yourself whether our language is complete; whether it was so before the symbolism of chemistry and the notation of the infinitesimal calculus were incorporated into it; for these are, so to speak, suburbs of our language.

Rather than leaping to the conclusion that our language is complete, try seeing it as a historical process, always in progress. Ask yourself whether it is complete; moreover, do not pre-judge either that Wittgenstein is covertly *stating* that it is not. The next sentence: “And how many houses or streets does it take before a town begins to be a town?”; well, how many? If you do not have a ‘clear’ answer, that is unlikely to be a fault of yours. Nor is there necessarily a sorites paradox of townhood lurking, if you and others ‘lack’ such an answer.⁴² “Our language can be seen as an ancient city”; Wittgenstein I think thinks this a very fruitful analogy, and

wants one to feel a little suspicious of the addition to the ancient heart of the city of the “new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses”.⁴³ But even this feeling is hardly compelled; indeed, it is hardly more than hinted at, by the context of the rest of his work (and life).

2.7 Liberation as a Non-compulsory Frame

Am I now covertly insisting that everything be forced into the frame of the liberatory approach? That would hardly be self-consistent... ‘Liberation’ is to some extent *an object of comparison*,⁴⁴ an analogy that, like all analogies, comes to an end somewhere. The last thing that this book wants to be is a pseudo-monomaniacal, decidedly un-Wittgensteinian forcing of *everything* into the (Is there only one?) liberatory mould. The concept of philosophy, even practiced according to ‘our method’, is hardly *exhausted* by the concept of liberation, nor *saturated* by it. But again, I think it probably a very long-lasting analogy, an object of comparison that yields up riches. I appeal here to the experience of philosophers who have experienced (for instance) release from the tightness and sense of constriction present in “mental cramps”.⁴⁵ Even sometimes, a sense that one has wandered into some Edenic space of new possibility, or been partly reborn, able to see things entirely afresh. I hope the present work can sometimes deliver – mid-wife – that nourishing feeling of openness for one.

I am not sure that the charge of ‘relativism’ against the liberatory conception of philosophy ultimately needs any more meeting than is provided by and in such experiences.

And, as I started to suggest already in the Introduction to this book, ‘liberation’ is arguably advantageously *less* an object of comparison than ‘therapy’ is – and more, simply, what these experiences *are* – in the following sense: ‘therapy’ tends to be an idea introduced ‘from outside’ the experience: philosophical experiences are *likened to* therapy. (Whereas liberation is more strikingly itself the feeling of what happens.)

Of course, so far this may be saying very little, because there are so many rather different things that are called therapies (cf. *PI* 133 (see Chapter 5)).⁴⁶ Insofar as it is psychotherapy that is in play as the object of comparison, then we ought to carefully distinguish between those psychotherapies that are – and those many that are *not* – easily likenable to Wittgenstein’s process. In the former category, think for instance of Sandor Ferenczi’s ‘mutual therapy’, which avoids the unhelpful possible implication that the therapist and the patient have fixed, hierarchically identifiable identities/roles, etc. Or think, similarly, of turn-taking in Co-Counselling. Such an innovation is arguably the natural next step forward (the crucial step, in Wittgensteinian and humanistic therapy alike) from the (already-widespread) step of becoming ‘client-centred’. However, even after all this, there are still pretty glaring problems with

the therapy analogy: even in 'mutual therapy' or 'co-counselling', the *roles* of client and therapist are fixed for the time-period of each person's session. This has precious little in common with the free flow of real philosophical discussion, 'even' in the classroom seminar of a 1st year philosophy class, let alone in a fuller-fledged philosophical dialogue. As already intimated in my Introduction to the present work, the idea of liberation is far more inherently non-hierarchical, and much more conducive to being located anywhere – on any 'side' – in the course of a profoundly open conversation.

The role of the doctor or therapist is (and this is crucial) *compared* to that of the philosopher. But images, feelings, experiences of freedom seem to come more spontaneously from the actual philosophical adventure itself. They don't come as a secondary *likening*. Similarly, moments such as Wittgenstein, seeking to deepen and extend that adventure, initiated in *PI* 16, with its "it is as you please", are moments that *could* be *likened* to moments in psychotherapy⁴⁷ but that simply *are* directly expressed as offerings to the reader of a choice, revelations of an unexpected freedom. Offerings of the kind that Wittgenstein makes very explicitly at the opening of the *LFM*:

I may occasionally produce new interpretations, not in order to suggest they are right, but in order to show that the old interpretation and the new are equally arbitrary. I will only invent a new interpretation to put side by side with the old one and say, "Here, choose, take your pick." I will only make gas to expel old gas.

Lecture 1 (14)

Even so, might not a doubtful interlocutor continue to insist that liberation is a non-compulsory frame? That it may sometimes cast unwanted shadows, occlude, be imposed from without, or so forth?

Sure. Or indeed: *It is as you please*. In the end, philosophy (the seeking after wisdom) depends on the good faith of its participants. Say what you want, so long as you see 'the facts',⁴⁸ so long (that is) as you see the lay of the linguistic 'land' clearly,⁴⁹ as long as you have awareness of the reasons for what you want to say and the limits of saying it. As long, that is, as you recognise the constraints that you yourself accept and have to accept (because you co-create them, and because much else that you co-create depends on them) on what you can intelligibly say. And when you see all these things clearly, then there is a good deal that you will no longer (even want to) say...

I do not really care whether one says that one really is freeing people, or so forth. What matters, in the end, is what one *does*.⁵⁰ Philosophy is an *activity*: philosophy is as philosophy does. According to philosophy practiced according to "our method", one *achieves* (we achieve) philosophical liberation – in relation to some more or less specific matter,

to some extent, until something or someone else throws one back into captivity or into doubt about one's achievement; and so forth.

Am I then a 'liberal', in the political-philosophy/political-theory sense of that term? This book actually aims to midwife freedom FROM the prejudices of our liberal culture; and to nourish the ability to see through individualist propaganda. Thus 'ours' is not a liberal individualist autonomy, it is a communitarian anti-propagandistic autonomy – an autonomy necessarily largely achieved together, socially – that works against the grain of much of the history of Western thought. Thus where Rawls in his later work extends the principle of toleration to philosophy, and states that there will be a wide diversity of thought in any non-autocratic culture, I understand the motivation but question the formalism of Rawls' approach. Rawls thinks that the wide diversity of views he finds and promotes is simply a natural product of human reason when freed up from constraint, whereas I see *some* of that diversity as a 'sickness', resulting in part literally from well-funded individualist propaganda (including advertising), as well as from the ideology of scientism, etc.⁵¹

I might be claimed to be (worryingly?!) 'liberal' in not insisting that certain words be used, or in certain ways, or in not forbidding that certain words be used, and so forth. And indeed I reject the kind of 'forcing' (not even a 'forcing to be free'⁵² but simply a forcing, a compulsion) that characterises too much 'Wittgensteinian' philosophy: the would-be forcing of everyone to use certain 'approved' forms of words, to 'obey' delineations or grammatical 'categories', etc. Compare Baker: "Our method differs from much philosophical argument in calling for scrupulous respect for individuals, for their subtly varying points of view and their *autonomy*" (*BWM*, 182, emphasis his).⁵³

But, crucially, there is no *license* in the 'liberality' or the allowing of space for the other that our method involves. As Katherine Morris writes,

...acknowledgement must itself be free, not coerced. Likewise, giving up this picture, and adopting a new picture, are to be done freely, and the person is always free to refuse to do so — and not simply in the sense that one is 'free to talk nonsense if one likes'.

(*BWM*, 8)⁵⁴

Rather than license, there is a dialogical openness to the other, and a humility. As made clear in the earlier paragraphs – and following Wittgenstein in *PI* 79:

Should it be said that I am using a word whose meaning I don't know, and so am talking nonsense?—Say what you choose, so long as it does not prevent you from seeing the facts. (And when you see them there is a good deal you will not say).

Say what you choose: this is liberatory philosophy. But hardly without constraint: be in good faith, and there is a good deal that you will not choose to say. "Nonsense" is an important term of criticism for Wittgenstein; but it is *not* applied as an external critique to others' practice. It is, rather, 'invitational'. One invites one's interlocutor to consider the worry that sometimes it just really appears to us that they have not succeeded in ascribing consistent meanings to their words.

2.8 A 'Middle Way' beyond Impersonality and Complete Individual Personalisation

The standard philosophical line is that reason is something non-personal. To think as Baker appears to that the alternative to this is the complete personalisation of the problem⁵⁵ is to recoil from that standard line into a delusion. It is to over-react and to set up a false dichotomy. It is to re-reify individuals.⁵⁶ Liberation is in fact a profoundly interpersonal matter; for *these* three reasons:

- i Most obviously and basically: because it is very often (normally), in fact *prototypically*, undertaken *between* individuals, beginning in education (and can we imagine philosophy at all, without the *professing* of philosophy, complex though that notion is?). We might put helpfully it thus: the pre-eminent mode of philosophical liberation is *2nd-personal*. As in Socrates, *dialogue* is the model; that dialogue as internalised is a special case (albeit an important one for Wittgenstein). Bakhtin remarks as follows:

The word in living conversation is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer-word... Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by *that which has not yet been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word*. Such is the situation of any living dialogue.

(Bakhtin 1981, 280, my emphasis)

The answering word(s), in the normal case, will come *from someone else*. And this moment in Bakhtin can be connected with numerous moments in Wittgenstein. See for instance *PI* 198, arguably the pivotal passage in the rule-following considerations, as a rejection of some "It's all merely a matter of interpretation" claim, and simultaneously as a noting of how utterly basically – presumptively – sociality in the service of mutual clarification enters into our life with language.⁵⁷ (I will return to discuss this in some detail in Chapters 7 and 8.)

- ii In addition: it is in any case simply obvious that there is a very large overlap between the problems to which we are exposed and from which we suffer, prisons from which we need freeing. Our culture

necessarily unites us in most of these. It is at best a misleading exaggeration, given this, to claim that liberation is overwhelmingly a personal matter.⁵⁸ It is rather overwhelmingly a social, cultural, interpersonal matter, and is *purely* personal only at the margins. Generally, we free each other, if at all, together.⁵⁹ Liberty is misconstrued when it is construed as merely indifference, mutual unconcernedness or disinterest, or even isolation. Rather, especially in philosophy, it is freedom, prototypically *together*, from what, riffing on Jung by way of Lacan, we might call the collective unconscious of language.

- iii Most profoundly and crucially: the strict boundaries between persons which are necessary if liberation is to be a purely personal matter *do not exist*. As Marcus Aurelius put it: "Sooner...one will find anything earthy which comes in contact with no earthy thing than a man altogether separated from other men." (Aurelius 1996, IX: 9)⁶⁰ We are, as Peter Winch saw, *internally related* to one another.⁶¹ Thus even at the margins, even where the quest for freedom is apparently a genuinely purely personal matter, one still, paradoxically, cannot intelligibly regard it solely as such. Even purely personal matters are not after all puristically personal, to creatures that are through and through social, creatures internally related one to another, part of a greater whole, part of *one another*... (This is the deepest sense in which I am no 'liberal'; I do not accept the model of the primacy of 'the individual' which liberal individualism generally presupposes.⁶²)

One might helpfully put the matter in this way: It is as *we* please.

Here is Merleau-Ponty addressing this matter, in remarks which I think are uncondusive to a Hackerian point of view, but which nevertheless provide a helpful corrective to an overly individualist later-Bakerian point of view:

In the act of speaking, the subject...bears witness to his autonomy... and yet at the same moment, and without a contradiction, he is turned toward the linguistic community and is dependent on his language. The will to speak is one and the same as the will to be understood. The presence of the individual in the institution, and of the institution in the individual is evident in the case of linguistic change.

(Merleau-Ponty 1988, 54–55)⁶³

And here is a useful remark of Joel Backstrom's, pointing up the particular way in which this kind of point needs to be inflected, in a society such as ours at the present time:

[I]mbibing and expressing the trends, the collective spirit, around us is what we do by default, as it were, insofar as we do not struggle

for clarity. Philosophy, as Wittgenstein practices it, is precisely this struggle for clarity, and so a struggle against the domination of collective conceptions and identifications – and here we should note that individualism in its various forms is one of the most powerful collective conceptions of our times.

(Backstrom 2011, 738)⁶⁴

Precisely. The genuinely heroic individual, at the present time in history, needs to battle perhaps above all against... our domination by an image or images of heroic individuals. The quote from Backstrom continues: “We all tend to think of ourselves in the same way, as autonomous individuals”. Our all ‘thinking in the same way’ suggests that we may be less thinking, more automata... This suggests in turn that perhaps we ought not to give up as much as we seem to be doing on the term “individualism”. For our society is *not* really ‘individualist’ (any more than it is ‘anthropocentric’ – would a truly anthropocentric culture gamble so madly as we are doing with its own very survival?). Because we are obsessed with socially dictated goals (e.g. “individualism”, “liberty”). We are virtually carbon-copies of one another. We are virtually all problematically doctrinal relativists or subjectivists (believing in the justice and inevitability of consumerism). Without much freedom to think. It is against these conditions that philosophers must non-violently join battle, for liberation. For, in short: our culture’s individualism is not even a real one. This *faux* individualism dominates so much of our thinking and our policy-goals, and yet even on its *own* terms it fails. It does not even deliver an individualism worthy of the name.

Perhaps later-Baker is in need of the distinction nicely made by Foucault in *The Care of the Self* between “the individualistic attitude, characterised by the absolute value attributed to the individual in his singularity” and “the intensity of the relations to self, that is, of the forms in which one is called upon to take oneself as...a field of action” (Foucault 1986, 42).⁶⁵ Baker does not separate these two. But the first corresponds to an object of Wittgensteinian *critique* (and, I am now adding: the critique is radical, in that its conclusion is something like this: the obsession with positively valuing the individual, being shared virtually everywhere now in common, amounts, ironically, even to an absence of any real valuable individualism, and to a tacit peer-pressure and failure to think for oneself); while the second corresponds to Wittgenstein’s *practice*.⁶⁶

2.9 In Conclusion

Early in the present chapter, and again just now, I differed from later Baker, because I insisted that the individualism (i.e. the element thereof

that has the character of the first of Foucault's types of individualism, above) and subjectivism to which his Wittgenstein is prone were non-compulsory and undesirable. But, 'on the other hand', I have also suggested elsewhere in this chapter that we could legitimately follow Baker as far as perceiving something that *could* even be heard as a 'subjectivist'/'relativist' *strand* in Wittgenstein's radically liberatory method, *without* that being used as a basis for dismissing that method. It is indeed, I would submit, precisely what the discipline of philosophy requires if it is to be relevant to our age. For it opens the door for philosophy to liberate us by means of enabling us to achieve a more self-aware and *truer*, more agentic relation to our own words and the uses thereof... (This is what *PI* 16 makes perhaps fully available to us, for the first time). And this movement of thought crucially includes opening up some space in which to make critically visible the widespread dangerous tendency towards a dogmatic individualism (even: a kind of solipsism⁶⁷) in life, in politics and in linguistics alike.

So we might choose, provocatively, to embrace a sense in which there is something relative or even subjective in our method. There is no compulsion on us either to do so or to reject doing so.

Philosophical liberation comes from not being *subject* to words,⁶⁸ but neither from *floating free* of them (and, obviously, their meanings-in-use, their history). But this balance is only *possible* for philosophers relatively free both of hubris (i.e. a tendency to Humpty-Dumptyism) *and* of an excessive humility (i.e. a willingness to be tyrannized by received language or 'wisdom'). And this may well not be fully possible until we have changed our times so that they are more likely to produce more intellectually virtuous philosophers for us to become, and to be in community with...:

The sickness of a time is cured by an alteration in the mode of life of human beings, and it was possible for the sickness of philosophical problems to get cured only through a changed mode of thought and of life.

(RFM, 132)

But does this, and the limited sense in which I have allowed that charges of "Relativism!" do not have to be utterly 100% feared and rejected – a specific sense in which they turn out *not* be charges/criticisms – mean that we can have nothing to say to those who aren't already 'in our game'? If you do not *feel* unfree in philosophy, does that directly mean that you are *not* unfree?

No, that just does not follow. Just because: of our ongoing freedom as philosophers (which is a *task*, not a complacent condition); *and* our ongoing care for and permanent inter-involvement with others. The latter, I have started to emphasise in this chapter in a manner that Baker does

not, and this emphasis will only grow as this work proceeds.⁶⁹ On the former, here is a strong and helpful explication, from Baker:

[It] always *makes sense* to engage in [our] task of persuasion or conversion. You may urge somebody to try to look at things differently, and he might succeed in complying with your request. (In this sense, how he sees things is *voluntary*.) Success might come in different orders of magnitude. You may effect a change in the attitude of a single person, or you may succeed in transforming the intellectual scene for *many* others, for a whole generation, or even permanently.
(BWM, 147)

In this quotation is a deeply needed hopeful vision. Philosophy is *not* just relevant to those who are puzzled already. So let us aim high, in our aspirations to freedom. The test of philosophy is whether it resolves disquietudes (whether patent or latent) and allows philosophy to be done non-dogmatically. The desire to get past dogmatism and past the veering from one dogmatic position to another is, I would submit, often present *in mainstream philosophy*. Liberatory philosophy offers one a means of *realising* it that is, certainly judging by history, contrariwise very unlikely to be achieved by coming up with the 'position' that everyone will agree to join.

In this chapter, we have seen the utility of *PI* 16 in the quest for liberation: and the central thrust of 16 will recur again and again,⁷⁰ in subsequent chapters; starting with Chapter 3.

I turn next to deal with the charge that I have over-stated Wittgenstein's antipathy to theory/theses. I turn, that is, to a crucial case-in-point of/for this. To Wittgenstein's most famous formula concerning meanings-in-use. Namely: his alleged definition of meaning AS use. I will seek to read this in a way that does not re-confine us in a picture, or a theory, or a thesis, or a view, or an opinion, or a dogma.⁷¹ Nor even an 'account'.⁷²

Notes

- 1 This movement of inclinations or intuitions from being conceptualised as resource to being conceptualised as topic is a revolution in philosophical method.
- 2 This suggestion works up to becoming a central theme by the final chapter & Conclusion. I argue for it at length in (Read 2019c).
- 3 Cf. also McGilchrist's splendid Romanticism-influenced 'exegesis' of "individual" (or, as I would put it, internally-related to a greater whole) (2009, 201).
- 4 Thanks to Nassim Taleb for discussion that has influenced this remark.
Many of us in Europe and America find this less natural than identifying the self as this one physical-mental thing, ending at one's skin. But some version of it or other *has* been natural to most humans for almost our entire

- history, and still is in much of the world. I believe that we are the poorer, if we do not share this, let alone if we do not even understand it.
- 5 This is why it helps to keep in mind face-to-face dialogue as a (the?) paradigm of philosophical practice. Because then we are less likely to get lost in individualism as we do if we think of authors alone in garrets. I think that Baker, while helpfully placing the importance of dialogue centrally, sometimes nevertheless loses sight of it thus. (See *BWM* (208) for what seems to me a case in point. See also Chapter 7 for investigation of this paradigmicity of dialogue and conversation.)
 - 6 For detail, see Guetti (1993b), *passim*, but especially the Introduction to that book. Guetti coins the intriguing term “grammatical effects” to refer to these supra-individual effects of language upon us, these shared strikings of notes upon the imagination’s keyboard.
 - 7 And in this regard, this chapter lays a little key groundwork for what is in more than one way the culminating chapter of this book: the final substantive Chapter 10, on the “anti-‘private-language’ considerations”. (See also the reading of 122 I offer in Chapter 4, for a buttressing of the way in which it cannot be philosophically adequate to fixate on the individual person as the locus of philosophy, in the way that Waismann and Baker do.)
 - 8 My language here deliberately echoes something like Sartre’s. The liberatory reading of Wittgenstein might in some respects provocatively be dubbed ‘the existentialist reading’. Or even, in respect of rule-following etc., almost a kind of ‘logical existentialism’. I address this point explicitly in Chapter 7. (A crucial difference between the two philosophers lies precisely in the anti-individualism that I’m attributing to Wittgenstein.)
 - 9 As, in Chapter 8, I argue that *Kripke’s Wittgenstein does*.
 - 10 A structurally parallel debate is that over the nature of metaphor. Here, Davidson (followed by Rorty) takes up a stance somewhat attractive to Wittgensteinian thinkers – that metaphors mean nothing but what their words considered non-metaphorically mean, but are otherwise akin to effectors of sudden aspect-shifts, such as blows on the head can purportedly be – but what the Davidsonic move fails to register (and here there is a resemblance to later Baker) is the systematicity of metaphorical effects, unlike the effects of blows on heads; Lakoff & Johnson are better on this.
 - 11 This sense was already in question by the end of 1 (and I expand on it in Chapter 3). But the blunt remark that “Explanations come to an end somewhere” may nevertheless have seemed premature, or unsalient, to the reader of 1. In 16, Wittgenstein offers a *rationale* for his conception of philosophical authorship and of what a philosophical author ought to leave to the reader to do for herself.
 - 12 16 is, if you will, both liberatory and ‘meta’-liberatory.
 - 13 Baker makes the powerful suggestion that quite often (though, I add, not always: it doesn’t fit 240–242, to give an important for instance) it would be better to translate “die Sprache” as “what we say” (*BWM*, 61). What someone is saying clearly takes in things beyond their words: it often depends utterly on indexical features of their placedness, for instance. This is true occasion-sensitivity; this moves decisively beyond arid ‘conceptual geography’ (see *BWM* (70, n.4), on this in relation to 16).
The one way we *could* read “die Sprache” in 240–242 as “what we say” would be if we heard it as something like “what we *all* say”. So, precisely not opinions (which differ), but that which marks out our very concepts.
 - 14 For this purpose, Baker’s “Some remarks on language and grammar” (in *BWM*) is a key aid. As Baker notes thereof, Wittgenstein tackles the prejudice that “die Sprache” must refer only to words at several points in *PI*

- (BWM, 60–61): besides 16, one could look with profit at 50 & 78, superb instances of liberatory philosophical practice.
- 15 See BWM (53), for discussion. See BWM (95) for references.
- 16 Waismann too errs on this point. While at PLP (65) he is strong on the importance of avoiding metaphysical theses about grammar, and his detailed discussion of grammar (PLP, 34–40) is mostly brilliant, nevertheless it unfortunately issues in the would-be thesis that “*Grammar Is Autonomous and Not Dictated by Reality.*” Now, this remark is arguably in a sense harmless in that the word “dictated” is setting up a kind of straw man; did anyone ever believe that reality *dictated* grammar, had ‘100% responsibility’ for it? But the remark is still unfortunate; firstly, precisely in its straw-man ‘opponent’, and thus in its lacking clarity that is about its own status (as, presumably, a purpose-relative reminder: we should ask, when *would* such a remark be useful?); and secondly, in that it does not make available what PI 16 does: our freedom as to whether or not to say what Waismann italicises here. (A reason we may *not* wish to do so is that doing so risks preserving the very separation of language and reality that, ultimately, Wittgenstein will bring into question: see n.13 and 14; and also see below.)
- 17 A very different (KIND of) *use*: see Chapter 3.
- 18 Cf. Chapter 4. Cf. also (Hutchinson & Read 2005).
- 19 For discussion of this word in relation to 16, see BWM (70, n.2).
- 20 *This* is a meaning of his lovely remark, “My sentences_are_all supposed to be read slowly” (C&V, 57e).
- 21 Notice: *our* conception. As later Baker writes, that is what Wittgenstein is offering: a/‘our’ conception of language. He notes:

And what is the alternative? Is it plausible to think that careful description of actual use of the phrase ‘instruments of a language’ would clearly endorse the claim (truism?) that *samples* (and *gestures*) fall under this concept? If I refuse to go along with his recommendation (16), do I exhibit misunderstanding of the phrase ‘instruments of a language’?
(BWM, 270)

- My task here is: agreeing with such astute and profoundly helpful remarks while addressing the concern that they might seem to evoke a problematic relativism. (Cf. also BWM, 275.)
- 22 See BWM (288) for the inspiration for this citation.
- 23 My argument here bears a certain resemblance (though one that should not be over-stated) to Hackingian ‘entity realism’ (or ‘instrumental’ or ‘experimental’ realism) which, somewhat similarly, subversively bypasses metaphysical debates to refocus on what our practice already takes for granted. “If you can spray them, they’re real”, Hacking famously says (of positrons; for discussion see Kukla (1988, 90–91)). Somewhat similarly: If you can speak *by means* of them, they’re real. The existence of samples, and their role in our language-games, as re-contextualised or clarified by Wittgenstein, already puts to bed abstract debate (especially, debate over scepticalistic questions) about ‘the’ language-world ‘relation’.
- 24 See Chapter 10, where I connect this thought with the suggestion of reading Wittgenstein’s as an Enlightenment of sentiments, not just of thoughts, and with the suggestion that an ethic of care is already present *in the very idea of pain/suffering*, if we get right that idea as it exists in our practice.
- 25 Here the Epicurean image of the philosopher as a doctor of the soul may come to mind. This great Ancient ‘therapeutic’ conception, with clear ethical inflection, is less vulnerable to misunderstanding than ‘standard’ Wittgensteinian ‘therapeutic’ tropes (cf. 255; including as featured in n.19 of the

Introduction to the present work). Anyway, that vulnerability is not of central concern to *us*: 'therapy' for us is mostly just a staging-post toward the liberatory conception.

- 26 Cf. "What Is Time?": as discussed in Section 1.1.
- 27 To think now in Buddhist liberatory terms: one is a 'bodhisattva' of a special sort if one helps one's interlocutor to overcome their trappedness. (An advantage of Buddhism, as an object of comparison for Wittgenstein hereabouts, is that the ethicality of the bodhisattva's soteriological practice is patent.)
- 28 For a like-minded approach, see Ulrich Arnsward's argument that philosophy as activity escapes the charge of relativism (2009, 21–22).
- 29 For one can be suffering without realising it, of course. Kierkegaard held that the truest despair is unaware that it IS despair. More mildly: the resistance to change so visible in that to 'therapeutic' readings of Wittgenstein (and also perhaps to successor readings, such as the resolute or liberatory), is itself worthy of deeper investigation. (Paul de Man once wrote a book called *The Resistance to Theory* (1986). He was mostly wrong: there was, it turned out, surprisingly little such resistance. The resistance to *therapy*; that's more like it. It remains to be seen whether there will be the same resistance to liberation. As outlined in 0.2, I think, just maybe, for good and bad reasons, that *there might not be*.)
- 30 The outcome of a philosophical investigation is, for Wittgenstein (*contra* Hacker) NOT fixed in advance by grammatical rules. As Kuusela puts it (along with supportive references to Wittgenstein's texts): "Wittgenstein *denies himself the right to want a specific outcome* [to a philosophical investigation]" (2008, 248). I offer in the course of this book a number of key quotations from *LFM* that are very clear about this.
- 31 Is ethics itself a cognitive or non-cognitive matter? In that huge debate, I resist taking sides; but it is safe to surmise that again I'm on balance in most contexts least likely to take the side of its being non-cognitive. The danger of confusion being the greatest, I think, on that side. Because 'non-cognitivism' is more likely to be *revisionist* (in the sense rejected, as un-Wittgensteinian, in the "Introduction" to *The New Wittgenstein*; see also McDowell's classic essay, "Non-cognitivism and rule-following" (McDowell 2000) in that collection). 'Non-cognitivism' tends to make ethics seem a projection (a "spreading"), or something secondary, or even an error. This is foreign to my vision of ethics, as inherent, non-negotiable, deeper than deep. (In this, I follow Knud Logstrup; cf. Chapter 10)
- One promising possibility is to *refuse the cognitive vs. non-cognitive dichotomy altogether*.
- 32 Partly, for broadly McDowellian reasons – see again his essay in *The New Wittgenstein* (McDowell 2000).
- 33 Cf. my work with Nassim Taleb in this area (Taleb et al. 2014). 'Though' we have published together on it, we tend to lean in different directions on *this* question. Taleb favours the former option, basically because he thinks our top priority ought to be undermining the scientificity of the 'evidence-based' orthodoxy that we are critiquing, but while keeping in place the overarching aim of having access to the best evidence and the best science, for the sake of ourselves being taken as seriously as possible by the mainstream. I tend to favour the latter option, basically because I think it the most effective way of challenging the hegemony of scientism. The choice between the two approaches is essentially a *rhetorical* one, in the best sense of that word.
- 34 And thus this once more is no mere voluntarism. This is very different then from the 'freedom' we find at times in Derrida's practice. Derrida's

- 'deconstructive' freedom tends to the excessive: at moments such as in *Spurs: Nietzsche's styles* (1979), and in his irresponsible deconstructive reading of and partial apologia for Paul de Man's wartime writings, it becomes evident that it amounts to self-indulgent license. Furthermore, "Signature event context", the crude jumbling together at crucial moments of concepts of use and mention is in effect an attempt to avoid ever committing to anything: this is an immature attempt to preserve an ideal freedom – but without one's freedom ever actually being properly expressed, manifested, in a choice, that has consequences. There are, as Martin Stone (and Henry Staten) have stressed, 'deconstructive' *moments* in Wittgenstein and Austin, but those moments do not take over the whole show, as they tend to do in Derrida at his worst.
- 35 See Chapters 8 and 9 for a fuller investigation of the faux attractions of license.
- 36 See Chapter 10. See also the distinction between philosophy and logic emphasised in Chapter 4.
- 37 For detail, see the chapter on *The Lord of the Rings* in my *Philosophy For Life* (2007b), and the much longer treatment in my *A Film-Philosophy of Ecology and Enlightenment* (2018a).
- 38 Including: no clearer than they are or ought to be. And this applies *a fortiori* to our conceptual work as philosophers.
- 39 Or, in the new Hacker-Schulte translation, more simply: "We could say". My point still stands. Hacker does not account for this 'modal' qualification. (The case is similar to the more well-known one at *PI* 244, concerning how words like "pain" are learnt: "Here is one possibility:". Too often, this has been ignored or taken simply to be a *modest* way of Wittgenstein's introducing his own 'theory'. It should be seen, rather, as a prologue to a reasonable picture whose point is to displace an existing picture and thus to free us, not to capture us completely to itself. (I use the word "reasonable", to distinguish Wittgenstein's method from that of some of the Ancient sceptics, to whom in certain respects he is methodologically a close ally. Unlike them, Wittgenstein is not content to use any considerations including weak arguments to free us from belief. The possibility indicated in 244 is a reasonable one, a picture or a proto-hypothesis worthy of investigation. But Wittgenstein no more cleaves to it as an opinion or dogma than the Pyrrhonians cleaved to anything at all.))
- 40 Here I am thinking Wittgenstein's remark,

Our method in a certain sense resembles psychoanalysis. In its form of expression it could be said that what is at work in the subconscious, the parable, becomes harmless whenever it is spoken aloud. And this comparison with analysis can be carried further. (And this analogy is certainly not a matter of chance.)

(Ms 302, 28)

Thanks to Oskari Kuusela for pointing out this quotation to me, and to Philip Wilson for the exact translation I employ here.

- 41 This last clause does indeed sound potentially a little worryingly subjectivistic, and is perhaps one of the remarks that prompts Baker's interpretation. Perhaps this clause can be recuperated or defused by its being heard simply as a statement of fact rather than a recommendation?
- 42 See Chapter 6 of my *A Wittgensteinian Way with Paradoxes* (2012b), for amplification of the point here.
- 43 For some elaboration on the need for such suspicion, see (Read 2016) and (Read 2017).
- 44 See Chapter 5.

- 45 And more generally to those who have ever experienced the sense of freedom and openness that more or less Wittgensteinian deliverance can offer one. This feeling of freedom is what advocates of therapeutic takes on Wittgenstein would characterise perhaps as real mental health.
- 46 Cf. *BWM* (201, n.9), for Baker's connectedly pointing out of how many different things therapy can mean.
- 47 The *non*-psychotherapeutic medical sense of 'therapy', which I praised in the Introduction to the present work, has, noticeably, no purchase any more, in relation to moments such as this, in 16.
- 48 In the broadest possible sense of that term – see *PI* 79, as cited below.
- 49 But see also the closing portion of Chapter 4, on 122, for the perils of this analogy!
- 50 I return to this in the Conclusion, where I note a sense in which the ambition of this work extends way beyond Wittgenstein exegesis, and might even come into conflict with the results of the latter.
- 51 In a 'Wittgensteinian' (and ecological, humane, more equal) culture, the field of being would be more unified, and views such as libertarianism and scientism would belong to cranky fringe groups only. There would not be as much that one allegedly needs to tolerate, because much of that "much" is the product of intellectual forces that Rawls naturalises, mistaking them for rational products of free minds when actually they are effects of avertible cultural dis-eases.
- 52 Am I *forcing* you to be free? Yes and no. The only such force is moral force, or (in the best sense of the word) rhetorical force. The kind of 'force' *present* in this book. What I do not do is make any claims that language/grammar itself forces you to be free or anything else.
- 53 Baker goes on: "Hence it requires us to refrain from producing stereotypes of 'the opponent' and from trying to paste together the juxtaposed remarks into Wittgenstein's positive doctrine."
- 54 There is a clue here as to how later-Bakerianism may after all avoid a problematic form of relativism.
- 55 Baker speaks of the method as "radically individualistic" (*BWM*, 181). See *BWM* (68), for a concrete instance Baker's going slightly too far in stressing the purely individual character of philosophical illnesses; I have noted other instances, during the course of this chapter (and this book).
- 56 And here is one significant point where I do not completely disagree with Hacker. Hacker lists five features of the later Baker (Hacker 2007, 91–92 & 99). With four of them, I very much go along, and so reject Hacker's rejection of later Baker. But with one of them (feature 2 on the list, to do with whether philosophy is radically individual in its essence), I have some real sympathy with Hacker.
- 57 Or, likewise, note the rejection of some fantasy of 'total' freedom in the below-the-line remark at *PI* 38:

Can I say "bububu" and mean "If it doesn't rain I shall go for a walk"?—
It is only in a language that I can mean something by something. This shows clearly that the grammar of "to mean" is not like that of the expression "to imagine" and the like.

- 58 Recall my epigraph to this chapter: "You say what you are inclined to say. And it has interest only because we too feel the same temptation to say it." The "only" is possibly too strong. But, even without that, this quotation rebuts Baker's individualistic reading. (Later-Baker himself saw his individualism, I think, as a reaction against the hyper-rationalism (and the 'groupthink') of Analytic Philosophy and 'Linguistic philosophy' (cf.

- 'Oxford philosophy'). If so, it was nevertheless a falsely-dichotomous over-reaction. I am inclined to speculate that later Baker's individualism rather was a kind of egg-shell clinging to his later interpretation from some of his earlier work joint with Hacker. Consider for instance the strikingly individualistic image of rule-following that Baker-and-Hacker expounded. (For my non-individualistic (though certainly not Kripkean, not (his version of) pseudo-'communitarian'!) take on rule-following, critiquing Baker-and-Hacker's, see Chapters 7 and 8.))
- 59 This answers the criticism that Magnus Aardal thought he was making of Hutchinson and myself (Aardal 2011, 172).
- 60 Cf. also IX: 23.
- 61 For explication, see Read (2012a, 106–107).
- 62 See my "The significance of *PI* 420 for reading Wittgenstein's *PI* as a 'war book'" in Read (2012b) for an 'argument' that it is natural for the Wittgensteinian to undermine the purported primacy of the individual as a unit of social or political analysis. Moreover, I charge (actually-existing) 'individualism' with not even being individualism. It is rather a form of heteronomy: a timid groupthink, a conformist being-dominated – or less or more willingly enslaved – by our culture's hegemonic ideas. See also Chapter 10, and the Conclusion to the present work, for detailed development of this point. Liberal individualism in our age is, ironically, a form of herdthink.
- 63 Compare the remark from Pitkin that was quoted early in the present chapter. Cf. also Guetti (1993b, 13f). Guetti delicately draws out how, even in literary language, we should not over-state the purely 'personal' or 'private' quality of language upon us.
- 64 See also Backstrom (2011, 736).
- 65 The latter of the senses is what Foucault understands as the care of the self. As he puts it, "The care of the self, for Epictetus, is a privilege-duty, a gift-obligation that ensures our freedom while forcing us to take care of ourselves as the object of all our diligence" (Foucault 1986, 47).
- 66 And, as I suggested in the previous chapter, to Augustine's.
- 67 Cf. here again my "Swastikas and cyborgs: The significance of *PI* 420...", in Read (2012b).
- 68 Nor forcing others to be subject to them: as in the frequent 'Wittgensteinian' (sic) trope of word-policing.
- 69 Culminating in Chapter 10 and in the Conclusion.
- 70 In that regard especially, this Chapter is a crucial one for the whole book.
- 71 *So far as the risk of re-confinement is concerned*, these words as it were stand in line behind each other, as per *PI* 96.
- 72 Much of the material in this chapter was born in thinking and writing that Phil Hutchinson and I essayed together and I'm ever in his debt for this. I do not know however how much of the chapter as I've re-penned it he would agree with.

3 What Is (Wittgenstein's Own Account of) Meaning?

PI 43 and Its Critics

[I]n philosophy we often *compare* the use of words with games and calculi which have fixed rules, but cannot say that someone who is using language *must* be playing such a game.¹

PI 81

One can't shake oneself free of the idea that using a sentence consists in imagining something for every word.–

PI 449

3.1 An Account of Meaning?

In 1, we saw Wittgenstein *seeming* to reject a widespread proto-account of linguistic meaning, though actually we saw that the situation was much more complex than (in fact, other than) that. In 16, we saw him giving *us* (or at least: fully *sharing* with us) the responsibility of determining how to speak of the nature of language. In 43, it has appeared to many readers that Wittgenstein 'comes clean', offering up his *own* account of linguistic meaning: as reducible to use.

I give reason in *this* Chapter for thinking that Wittgenstein offers no account of meaning *at all*, no matter of what kind.

This might sound bizarre; if so, I will endeavour to work through the reader's bizarreness-reaction. A first gesture in the direction of doing so might be to note that my intent herein is not as *unprecedentedly* extreme as it might seem. Compare John McDowell:

There is indeed room to complain that Wittgenstein reveals a need for something but does not give it... But what we might ask for more of is not a constructive account of how human interactions make meaning and understanding possible, but rather a diagnostic deconstruction of the peculiar way of thinking that makes such a thing seem necessary.

(McDowell 1992, 51)

Also, this helpful non-accountative remark,

Given a satisfying diagnosis, the inclination [to give a philosophical account answering questions as to the nature of meaning] should evaporate, and the question should simply fall away. There is no need to concoct substantial philosophical answers to them. The right response to “How is meaning possible?” or “How is intentionality possible?” is to uncover the way of thinking that makes it seem difficult to accommodate meaning and intentionality in our picture of how things are and to lay bare how uncompulsory it is to think that way.

(McDowell 1992, 47)

In this chapter and in the rest of the book I rely on no account being given by Wittgenstein (not a theoretical account *nor* any other kind) of meaning (nor of anything else). The vision of Wittgenstein's method that I aim to exemplify here involves us, rather, centrally making ourselves 'transparent' to ourselves and thereby able to gain autonomy with respect to our disturbing and confining inclinations to mire ourselves in what we will ourselves on reflection take to be nonsense. As outlined in previous chapters, this is *simultaneously* an ethical and liberatory practice. In holding *this*, I follow Conant/Diamond, and later Baker, in their varying of Socrates and following of Wittgenstein. Quoting here from Baker: “attaining self-knowledge is conceived [on ‘our method’] as the means for enlarging human freedom” (*BWM*, 200).² I say, following and expanding upon McDowell, that this freedom extends not just to being held captive by an account of meaning, nor to the rejection of dogmatic accounts of meaning (though it certainly includes both these points), but to questioning the alleged necessity of having an account of meaning at all.

Of course, no word is banned; far from it. The word “account” is used diversely: think of its occurrence in financial contexts. Or of its more explicitly moral freighting in an expression like “Kindly give an account of yourself, young sir.” One is free to continue to speak of an “account” of meaning, and *not* just free in the sense that one is free if one wants to fantasise that one is in paradise when one isn't. *If*, in wanting an account of meaning, one wants *an* account (not *the correct* account: see Chapters 4 and 5), *for (our) particular purposes*,³ then fine. Consider this useful brace of quotes from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Grammar*, assembled by Baker: ““For us, meaning is the correlate of explanations of meaning.” “Meaning, in our sense, is embodied in explanations of meaning”” (*BWM*, 270). These manifest the kind of thing later Baker has in mind as a perfectly viable objective for what I am calling liberatory philosophy, in his important essay “Wittgenstein:

concepts or conceptions?”⁴ A conception of meaning, just to enable us to get free of certain confusions, etc. attaching to our concept thereof: so far, so good. ...But it seems as though philosophers almost invariably want more than this. They want to tell us what meaning really is: they may be possessed by an idea of a full analysis that would leave no *room* for further questions. This objective is, I submit, the same whether they offer a ‘grammatical’ account, a theoretical account or an outright meta-physical account.⁵ I hope in the below to bring that objective into focus *and thus into doubt* for you.

3.2 Reading the Whole of 43

Let’s begin with a remark of Wittgenstein’s that brings together nicely his liberatory objectives with his determination to pay close attention to and to respect ordinary use:

We do not see the human eye as a receiver, it appears not to let anything in, but to send something out. The ear receives; the eye looks. (It casts glances, it flashes, radiates, gleams.) One can terrify with one’s eyes, not with one’s ear or nose. When you see the eye you see something going out from it. You see the look in the eye. // “If you only shake free from your physiological prejudices, you will find nothing queer about the fact that the glance of the eye can be seen too.” For I also say that I see the look that you cast at someone else. And if someone wanted to correct me and say that I don’t really see it, I should take that for pure stupidity. // On the other hand I have not made any admissions by using that manner of speaking, and I should contradict anyone who told me I saw the glance ‘just the way’ I see the shape and colour of the eye. // For ‘naïve language’, that is to say our naïve, normal way of expressing ourselves, does not contain any theory of seeing--does not show you a theory but only a concept of seeing.

(Z, 222–223)

Wittgenstein aims to *free* us here from the damaging assumption that ordinary language, ordinary use, embodies a theory that could be laid out in full, or proven wrong (rather it contains *a* concept (a conception, in Baker’s terms)); and to free us from the desire to replace ordinary language with something ‘truer’ or ‘more exact’.⁶ But: does *that* depend upon something theory-like nevertheless, ratifying a certain specific role for ordinary use? That question is naturally approached by way of *PI* 43, where Wittgenstein tells us that “...the meaning of a word is its use in the language.” That *seems* clear enough. And so, tacitly or openly, most philosophers take it to be.

Openly: By those who take Wittgenstein to have a use-theory of meaning.⁷ Call this the doctrinal reading of Wittgenstein. It takes Wittgenstein

to have a doctrine that he is at last stating openly in 43. *Tacitly*: I mean by this those who deny that they take Wittgenstein to have a use-theory of meaning, and instead claim that there is a 'grammatical connection' between the use of a word and its meaning. Call this the 'elucidatory' reading of Wittgenstein.⁸ It takes Wittgenstein to be giving 'grammatical remarks' that 'elucidate' 'the' connection between meaning and use.

But; what about that opening ellipsis in 43? Here is the actual main sentence of 43, in full:

For a large class of cases – though not for all⁹ – in which we employ the word 'meaning' it can be explained thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language.¹⁰

It should be clear from the emphases I have added into the earlier sentence how hard it is for a use-theorist of meaning to find the doctrine they adhere to genuinely in Wittgenstein, at least in any remotely straightforward manner. These multiple – including modal – qualifications, these calls for art and hesitancy, sit ill with any claim that 'Here be theory'. 43 concerns how *we* employ the *term* "meaning". It does not claim generality (Moreover, readers frequently ignore the final sentence of 43, which explicitly buttresses this modesty, by offering an orientation to an alternative set of cases: "[T]he *meaning* of a name is sometimes explained by pointing to its bearer", cases which better fit the 'Augustinian picture'.). 43 is offered tentatively, reflectively; for the purpose of characterising what we do (in philosophy), by way of setting up an object of comparison that one can place alongside what others (e.g. 'Augustinians') do.¹¹

Does the 'elucidatory' camp fare better? Does it succeed in sitting closer to the actual text; does it conform better to Wittgenstein's methodology and to the conception of philosophy he professes?

Hacker is a leading example of the 'elucidatory' camp. Consider:

Contrary to what has sometimes been supposed, this section [§ 43] is not a declaration of adherence to a theory of meaning, but the application to the case in hand of the observation that there is a grammatical nexus between 'the use of a word' and the 'meaning of a word'.

(Baker & Hacker 2005a, 118–119)

Naturally, one welcomes the declaration that 43 does not express "adherence to a theory of meaning". In my view, however, the rest of the sentence, which is really its substance, will turn out to be less welcome. A passage like this appears still covertly in thrall to a picture not dissimilar at the level of 'depth grammar' to that of the doctrinal readers of Wittgenstein. Hacker seems still as it were to be *trying to fill a theory-shaped hole*.¹² His insistence that "there is a grammatical

nexus” here turns out, I submit, not to be so very different from the claims of theorists.

Similarly, I am resistant to *any* ‘thesis’ concerning grammar, to the effect that it is ‘arbitrary’ (which is what Hacker claims: the propounding of such a *thesis* seems a strong sign that Hackerian ‘*elucidation*’ may be only nominally different from doctrine), *or* to the effect that it is not. There are respects and contexts in which grammar can usefully be said to be arbitrary, *and* to the contrary. This is why Wittgenstein says things such as this:

Why don't I call cookery rules arbitrary, and why am I tempted to call the rules of grammar arbitrary? Because “cookery” is defined by its end, whereas “speaking” is not. That is why the use of language is in a certain sense autonomous, as cooking and washing are not.
(Z, 320)

This remark is both striking and revealing. We should note carefully the crucial modals/qualifiers that Wittgenstein (unlike Hacker) employs here.¹³

Consider also *PI* 520:

“If a proposition too is conceived as a picture of a possible state of affairs and is said to shew the possibility of the state of affairs, still the most that the proposition can do is what a painting or relief or film does: and so it can at any rate not set forth what is not the case. So does it depend wholly on our grammar what will be called (logically) possible and what not, —i.e. what that grammar permits?”—But surely that is arbitrary!—Is it arbitrary?—It is not every sentence-like formation that we know how to do something with, not every technique has an application in our life; and when we are tempted in philosophy to count some quite useless thing as a proposition, that is often because we have not considered its application sufficiently.

This explicitly tempers any alleged thesis of the ‘arbitrariness’ of grammar.¹⁴ There is a certain pragmatic semi-criterion in the final sentence of 520; a sense in which, while one might hazard that what is possible depends on what our grammar permits, what our grammar permits is *not* an arbitrary matter. Grammar is not ‘random’ in relation to our life-world.¹⁵ And a key point for the present work: the arbitrariness vanishes when one commits to a rule, to a use. As recorded by Moore (in *Philosophical Occasions* (1993) (PO)); the nested quote is straight from Wittgenstein): “all single words are significant only if “we commit ourselves” by using them, and...to say that a rule is an established rule in the language we are using is to say that it is not arbitrary” (Moore

1993, 70). Sequential use of language and dialogical orderliness is very far from arbitrary, especially in philosophy (see also Chapters 7 and 8 for more on this).

What I will now undertake is to question the presumption that one must at least give or be tacitly committed to something worth calling an account of meaning of some kind, whether that account be a theory or 'grammatical'.¹⁶ My contention will be that a set of grammatical remarks that are supposed to 'stand' – that are quasi-'permanent', not situation- and audience- relative – is still an account, and differs far less than it ought from a theory/doctrine.

How *do* I understand the nature then of 'grammatical remarks'? They are usually best understood not as saying anything. Nor as showing anything (Read 2005a; Read & Deans 2003). They do not state the 'content' of logic. They are *purpose-relative* 'reminders' (or indeed pictures).¹⁷ And that means, crucially, that, if they appear to contradict one another, nevertheless they do not. Rather, they exist to help us do something (e.g. overcome a confusion); they are subordinate to that end. Thus Baker helpfully notes, "[D]ifferent explanations (or pictures) of the use of words may be complementary, not discordant" (*BWM*, 193). I would add: even when they appear directly 'discordant'!

An example of such discordancy can be found in comparing two seemingly-mutually-contradictory key remarks of *On Certainty* (OC) (1975). Compare the close of 56, "everything descriptive of a language-game is part of logic" with the opening of 501: "Am I not getting closer and closer to saying that in the end logic cannot be described?" The first grammatically characterises our practice when we follow Wittgenstein's method. The second appears to undercut the possibility of that practice. But what the second is actually doing, I submit, is undercutting a tendency to ossify the first kind of remark. 501, in other words, could be characterised as a grammatical remark that guards against the reification of earlier grammatical remarks. Such vigilance is a crucial component of our liberatory method.

Thus there is something misleading about the idea that grammatical remarks are non-temporal, as many Wittgensteinians of various stripes like to say they are. They might be said to be, compared to ordinary empirical remarks, by way of a certain kind of clarification of their nature. But they are not, in relation to one's philosophical progress (or otherwise).¹⁸ They are through-and-through context- or occasion-dependent.

Grammatical remarks are always relative to an audience, an occasion, or to a moment in the Wittgensteinian dialectic. Similarly, Baker goes on,

[I]t is to be expected that explanations are local and purpose-specific, hence variable, not uniform and invariant. This need not raise worries about [alleged] inconsistency. Nor need we explain

variations by claiming that Wittgenstein changed his mind, or that later explanations supersede earlier ones.

(BWM, 193)

We are entitled to make such claims, if and when they seem genuinely justified; *but* we *need* not so ‘reconcile’ appearances of internal conflict within Wittgenstein’s/my remarks, by doing so. For: the remarks are *not intended* to ‘add up’ to a ‘whole’.¹⁹ They don’t add up to an overarching *account* that presents itself as the definitive word on the matter, or as capturing its essence. They are not, as Hacker might have it, intended to add up to a “perspicuous representation” of ‘*the* grammar’ (see the reading of 122 in Chapter 4). But: because they do not ‘add up’ *at all*. Grammatical remarks concern *our* grammar (not ‘the’ grammar). Grammar as one might put it, is alive in us; this is what it means to oppose heteronomy, and to be free.

Grammatical remarks are directed to an audience, in a context. They do not therefore amount to an account, if by an account we mean something like ‘the (correct) account’, no matter of what kind.²⁰ And that is why it is possible helpfully to offer grammatical remarks that are ‘discordant’ – i.e. grammatical remarks that would (appear to) ‘*contradict*’ each other. (For development of this point, see the discussion of 251–252 in the following section.)

3.3 From ‘the’ Account to Accounting?

There is a widespread assumption that getting to the bottom of things is what philosophy does – in the sense of *exposing the deep essence of concepts*. I claim that the desire for *the* account of meaning is likely still to conceal a version of that assumption, risking dogmatism.

But: Is it even *possible* for one not to have an account, of some minimal – or tacit – form, at least? I am submitting that the assumption that one *must*, an assumption very widespread indeed in philosophy,²¹ is a thought-constraint, a hidden dogma. The leaping to the conclusion that any would-be non-account *must* still actually be an account – that one cannot escape giving an account, on pain of giving up philosophy, or of being subject to an account that one is unaware of – can pass itself off as no leap at all; it can appear as simply a statement of (to cite Basil Fawley) the bleedin’ obvious.²² But I submit that *it is* a leap. Its makers are, it seems to me, being held captive by a picture. (They need at least to *consider the possibility* that there might be something worth calling not having an account while not being in want of one, if they are to consider all the live possibilities. Rather than ‘*knowing*’ in advance that that can make no sense.)

Perhaps we can be charitable to that picture by moving a little way: from the concept of an “account” to the concept of “accounting”. Perhaps

we might speak of *accounting* for meaning – in a way that did not commit us to providing *an account* thereof? Now, perhaps this doesn't get us any intelligible distance at all: can there really be accounting without the provision of an account? But possibly there can: the ethnomethodologists²³ talk of members of society engaging in accounting practices constantly (accounting for what we are doing, as we go along), *without* this amounting to the offering of anything quite worth picturing as solid as an account, in most cases. Certainly, there is no explicit account, and the ethnomethodologists tend to suggest that this means that there must be an implicit one risks being a revisionist imposition.

The verb-al formulation gives us then perhaps an initial hint of the direction of travel we could helpfully have in mind: from the provision of some-thing (an account) which is supposed to solve our philosophical problems ('What is meaning?'), to action, agentic *conduct* undertaken in a way such that those problems do not arise, and the source of our previous confusion is identified or made apparent – or enabled to disappear. (From the provision of a grammar, to 'grammaring'?) Returning us to the way we are constantly employing words such as to account for what we mean by them, or by words that have gone just before or that will soon follow.

But do not take my words for it. Let Wittgenstein shed some stronger light:

[O]ne can only determine the grammar of a language with the consent of a speaker, but not the orbit of the stars with the consent of the stars. The rule for a sign, then, is the rule which the speaker commits himself to. // This commitment to a rule is also the end of a philosophical investigation. For instance, if one has cleared away the scruples about the word 'is' [its alleged philosophical structural ambiguity] by making two or three signs available to a person instead of the one, then everything would now depend on his commitment to this rule: ε is not to be replaced by =.

(VoW, 105)²⁴

This passage places the 2nd person front and centre. It expresses powerfully the way in which *we* take Wittgenstein to inflect the concept of grammar. It undermines the notion that grammar is anything like a record of usage providing external normative force with which to settle a dispute. On *our* way of seeing, following Wittgenstein as quoted earlier, what Wittgenstein is doing in 43, etc. is not that, but, rather, reminding one of the characters of what it is that we can remind ourselves (and others) of in order to get into a position of being able to understand what, if anything, another person (or oneself) does and can mean. In short, we can only do this that we centrally do in philosophy *with the consent of the speaker*. We cannot (we ought not) bash the other over

the head with 'the grammar' to insist that they simply must change their ways (of speaking). We need to remain in dialogue, in an I-You relation, with them.

3.4 Referring any Accounting Onward to the Speaker with Whom One Is Speaking

Here is a possible objection to my reading of the passage from VoW quoted from, just above: "The opening of this passage, contrary to what you say, seems fully committed to an 'account' of meaning, according to which "The rule for a sign is the rule which a speaker commits herself to". Furthermore, Wittgenstein's bringing in the word "also" in the way that he does indicates that this general account of meaning is subsequently brought to bear on philosophical method: in particular, onto the matter of how to 'end' a philosophical investigation. Wittgenstein seems, then, *precisely* to be offering an account of language *and then* basing his method on it."

My response to such an objection would be this (and this is possibly the most important point in this entire chapter): Well of course, if you want to call this an 'account' of meaning, you can. You can insist on using the word "account" to cover such an approach (as mine and Wittgenstein's). There is nothing to stop you – for the rule for a sign is the rule that a speaker commits herself to... I'm not giving a definition of what is allowed to count as an 'account' or necessary or sufficient conditions for it or anything like... What could be less useful in making progress hereabouts than a stipulation which pretends to be something more than merely that? For it could not be compelling. And what could be sillier than the fantasy that we could 'discover' once and for all what the word "account" *really* means? But: I would urge that you think very carefully before extending the use of the word "account" to cover this vision of (or approach to) meaning. Because I have been trying thus far (and will go on doing so) to start to essay a difference that is I believe worth teaching between the kinds of things considered as candidate-accounts at the opening of this chapter and what *we* do... What the objector that I have imagined wishes to call my 'account' is not an account at all, in the following sense: it has no *content* whatsoever that can be arrived at independently of a (contextually and situationally relative) process of dialogical/conversational investigation. *If it is* ('must'²⁵ be) viewed as an account, it is at most a place-holder: for everything depends on what happens in trying to figure out with the person in question what it is they actually want to say and can succeed in saying.

So here is the key point: If mine is (seen as) an account, nevertheless it refers the *accounting on to the person in question*. (While bearing in mind of course, as set out in Chapter 2, the extent to which philosophical problems, and thus philosophical accountings, will usually in any case

be largely *shared*. And often literally co-constructed.) The 'account', if such it is, is not mine to impose on them. Rather, it comes from them towards me, and it is then up to me to engage with it, co-operatively rather than from a stance of objective independence and would-be superiority.

This is a radical development in the history of philosophy: no longer do we see accounts as being given by philosophers themselves, in effect stipulated or imposed upon others. No longer can there be philosophical experts; no longer is there a structural or permanent asymmetry between (using the old lingo for a moment) 'therapist' and 'patient'. I.e. No longer is there any hierarchical separation between 'therapist' and 'patient'! (And this dissolves away the usefulness of the 'therapy' object of comparison, and suggests the preferability of a liberatory metaphor.) Rather, if you are determined to go on speaking of "accounts", then such 'accounts' are, implicitly (and sometimes explicitly, e.g. when we challenge them and engage in dialogue with their 'authors') given by competent users of language, in their actual practice of language/in what they do both without and with words, with us.²⁶ There is no room, no *place* for the expert account-ant, for the language-policeman. Instead, there is a free and freeing dialogue between co-conversationalists. No-one 'adjudicates' these from outside, as the 'elucidator' would do. (How *could* there be a role for such alleged validation or otherwise of the illumination received in such dialogues, given that what is mostly at play in the dialogue is an open-ended process of comparison (and contrast)? Comparisons are not true or false; they are in various respects illuminating (or otherwise). (For elaboration, see my take on 130–132, in Chapter 5: Wittgenstein's concept of "objects of comparison" is a better place to start, in relation to thinking about meaning, than is any notion of accounts of meaning that would be more than such 'objects'.))

Wittgenstein has no theory of meaning at all, no elite account, because he *doesn't take a spectatorial stance*. The deep problem with the desire to provide an *account* of meaning (or of anything else in philosophy), no matter of what kind, is that imagines philosophy a 3rd-person enterprise. But philosophy is paradigmatically a 2nd-person (or if you wish a 1st-person-plural) exercise. It involves us doing something, together. (Thus again, as in Chapter 2, it is critical to understand that what I am suggesting here does not commit to some kind of individualism.)

Philosophy isn't about magisterially standing outside the fray and deciding what 'ism' best captures (e.g.) the nature of human knowledge going on there down below somewhere. Perspicuity isn't about a view as if from above; it's a democratic willingness to encounter humanity on an equal footing. Philosophy is (on our method) recognising us all as semantic-pragmatic agents. All needing to commit in our uses of words. So: accounting is something we all do. As already implied in Chapter 2, the liberatory empowerment of Wittgensteinianism *is* the returning of the power of accounting to each and every one of us, together.

The moral of the previous paragraphs applies by further iteration (as already hinted earlier in the reason for saying, "There is nothing to stop you...") to the very point at issue here: i.e. We cannot succeed in establishing that the way we wish hereabouts to use and not to use *the word "account"* is right, except by the consent of the speaker(s). In this case: of someone objecting to the exegetical account of Wittgenstein offered here.

I am willing to talk in an ordinary, unfreighted way of giving some kind of account of *what Wittgenstein is doing* in his texts. ...Though much of what one does as one does that has the same character as what Wittgenstein does: it's *transitional*; it cannot abstain from dallying with nonsense. This is a key insight of the resolute reading of Wittgenstein's corpus: One can say little of use about the *Tractatus* or *Investigations* without oneself not only seeking to overcome but also, along the way, uttering what one can oneself be brought to see or indeed volunteer up-front is nonsense. ...I think it misleading to characterise any of this that is actually worth anything as being an account of *meaning*. (One is rather *dependent* on the good faith and honest engagement of *one's reader/interlocutor*, if any philosophical progress is to be made in and by what one does. Here one is reminded positively of Descartes in the 'Preface to the reader' of the *Meditations*: "I would not encourage anyone to read these pages unless they are willing and able to meditate with me seriously" (Descartes 2000, 3).

To take stock then of where we've reached thus far in this (& the previous) section: If there *is* value in the idea of an 'account' of meaning, it's in the way a person's actions and reflections on those actions can themselves be considered (as they are, in ethnomethodology²⁷) as in a certain sense an account²⁸ of those actions. What one means by one's words is in that sense inherently account-able. But *not* necessarily by others: by what the ethnomethodologists call an 'irony'. Not by others, then, except insofar as they understand/truly engage in dialogue with oneself, without imposing an external analytic schema, an account or theory of meaning, no matter of what kind.²⁹

As Baker puts it, "Grammar is the responsibility of the participants in any particular discussion. It is open to these individuals to negotiate and renegotiate the meanings of their words; they are free to stipulate how their words are to be used" (BWM, 197).³⁰ Here (especially in the play of the words I have emphasised within this passage) we see a great example of the liberatory dynamic integrated thoroughly, as it has to be real, with the ethical dynamic.

Compare also this, in which Baker can be seen as intimating a direct connection between 1 (as I read it in Chapter 1), and 43 (as I am reading it here):

Just as Augustine's picture leaves indefinite flexibility in distinguishing kinds of object (hence kind of word-use), so too this picture

[of meaning as use] leaves indefinite flexibility in distinguishing kinds of use (hence kinds of word-meaning). It seems a virtue - not a defect - that 'use' is not precisely pinned down. What counts as use is open to negotiation, from case to case. (This is another dimension of freedom in Wittgenstein's philosophical methods).

(BWM, 277)

Baker is emphasising a key difference in methodology between *philosophy* (when practiced *a' la* Wittgenstein) and *science*.³¹ Metaphysicians expect our 'models' to put an end to further discussion as occurs (supposedly) when a scientific theory is verified. For metaphysicians, this occurs when one reveals everything of a concept by means of an essence (My worry has been that talk of the correct account of meaning inherits the defects of this approach). Wittgenstein expects models 'merely' to offer enlightening comparisons. Scientists model (in Kuhnian 'normal science' at any rate, which is virtually all of science³²) by way of similarities; philosophy 'models' by way of differences, *and* 'vision' of possible radical alternatives.

The point can be extended: When philosophers extract an account from Wittgenstein which they hope stands firm through all contexts, this does not do justice to the gulf between the methods of the empirical sciences on the one hand and philosophical enquiry on the other. For Wittgenstein helps us to see that philosophy's task consists in being *just*: "Our only task is to be *just*. That is, we must only point out and resolve the injustices of philosophy, and not posit new parties - and creeds."³³ This is a quite different enterprise from that of science: from finding out facts, constructing and proving or disproving theories, etc. To be just is simply to seek ongoingly to be responsive to the phenomena, and to untangle and recontextualise *all* accounts and theories. To be just in this sense is to be in authentic relation with another(s); it is a 2nd-person phenomenon. (Hacker thinks of himself as a vigorous opponent of scientism; but, by these lights, he appears a very subtle practitioner of it. For his picture is thoroughlygoingly objectivistic, 3rd-personal.)

One (overtly or covertly) starts to turn philosophy into something more akin in character to astronomy or physics (taking it as if one were uncovering the facts, rather than talking *with* people), as soon as one wants one's linguistic-philosophical work to issue in an account. It is a confusion born of metaphysics to hope to discover facts about concepts as apart from how we use words; i.e. apart from our relations with each other. That is why I say that even if, as Hacker does, one sets one's face against the scientific self-image of recent philosophy, one then nevertheless at a subterranean level *re-accepts precisely that self-image*.³⁴ One has instead to rise to the challenge described by Wittgenstein (and latterly by Baker, Cavell, and various like-minded others to whom I have already pledged my efforts at inheritance): The challenge of giving up

our pretensions to be ('meta'-)experts or to have a body of knowledge that one can use to discipline our discipline and more. The challenge of instead taking seriously that meaning 'looks after itself'. Meaning: That it is the actual practice of meaning by real people in real contexts that is paramount, and that Wittgensteinian philosophy is only ever a way of 'reminding' one of or 'returning' one to or attuning one to.³⁵

Take this passage, another directing our attention to the primacy of such real people:

We can only convict another person of a mistake... if he (really) acknowledges this expression as the correct expression of his feeling. // For only if he acknowledges it as such, *is* it the correct expression. (*Psychoanalysis*).

(BT, 410)³⁶

Here we see how one might with some profit see Wittgenstein as a (unique kind of) inheritor of the Enlightenment project: Freedom is not something that can be granted to one by another. One must reach for it, oneself. Though the process is paradigmatically dialogical.

Freedom from servitude to pictures of which one is largely unaware is not something that one can complacently assume that one is in possession of, or already enacting. Rather, it is (always, we should presume) something yet to be attained. We do not *know* in *any* detail *what* it is, or how to get there. To suppose that we do is to suppose that Wittgenstein's remarks are merely a well-defined proven skilful means to a wholly pre-determined end, simply a pedagogical tool enabling us, the ones who allegedly know, to help 'them', the great philosophically-unwashed, to get to where we know 'they' need to go. No. *This is not* Wittgenstein's conception. Following Socrates, one has to take seriously that *one does not know*.³⁷ One has to let go, to give up a sense of knowingness. To be ready to referee oneself at the very moment when one had thought oneself already truly free. Liberation is always for oneself (too), never just for the other. (Thus once more, as suggested in Chapter 2: freedom is standardly, actually, something we attain together, not isolatedly. And it is not well thought of as something that one *possesses*, at all.) It is not that later Wittgenstein knew the answers and can then tell us *en masse*. Each interlocutor might conceivably have their own confusions. Though likely there will be massive similarities, shared tripping points (traps laid in language; cf. Chapter 2). And in any case, each has to actually find their way out. What Wittgenstein had and shared in his writing was an approach, a way or ways.

Eugen Fischer makes the tempting assumption that he knows the solution.³⁸ He thinks that Wittgenstein's 'therapy' is a process of taking the one who does not know, the one who is confused, through a series of pitfalls and temptations that are fully understood to a 'health' the nature of which is fully clear and which can be simply inhabited.

This, I strongly suspect, is not part of the family of therapies that Wittgenstein alluded to at *PI* 133.³⁹ The kind of counsellor who confidently gives *advice*, the kind of therapist who 'knows' what the patient's problem is and how to solve it... these tacitly egocentric or would-be 'objective' stances (once again, the difference between the 3rd person and the 1st-person singular is here *less than the difference between both and the 2nd-person*) do not attain to any of the depth of the practice that Freud began (and then tended to lose sight of). *This is why the patient's consent is required*. Because we *genuinely* do not know that we have got the matter right, unless and until the other freely acknowledges that we have. Compare here this lovely remark of Proust's:

Every reader, as he reads, is actually the reader of himself. The writer's work is only a kind of optical instrument he provides the reader so he can discern what he might never have seen in himself without this book. The reader's recognition in himself of what the book says is the proof of the book's truth.

(Quoted in Loy 2010, 63)

The reason why the truth of a psychoanalytic interpretation, in a radical departure from (any previously-existing vision of) science, *depends* upon the patient's consent, is that the patient is, roughly – and provided, crucially, that they carry out the psychoanalytic dialogue in good faith and *as a dialogue* – their own authority. *Contra* fantasies of 'social science' or 'human science' (Hutchinson et al. 2008), the only role that an 'expert' can have is of midwifery, or dialogue, or support, etc. Of facilitation. Not of preformulated expertise. The metaphor of midwifery needs to be taken seriously⁴⁰: what is to be born comes *from within the other*. (But for that very reason one is, I submit, under a deep delusion if one thinks that its form is *under one's control*, that one already *knows* what it will be like. Rather, its form both comes from within in a way that one needs to allow to be *born*; *and* is actually necessarily inflected by the 2nd person. Just not, *contra* widespread hierarchical fantasies, under the control of that 'expert', either.)

What analysis, therapy, counselling are, at their best, when they escape from scientism and from delusions of hierarchical control on the part of the analyst/therapist/counsellor, are specific forms of or (better) specific vehicles for liberation. The liberation of the 'patient' (sic), through an ethically-saturated transformative social process, from delusions, self-imposed constraints, etc. *What* these are only becomes clear in the process. I really mean it, then, when I say that liberatory philosophy is a radical departure from previous philosophical methods.⁴¹ There can be no account of (e.g.) meaning, consequent upon our (/Wittgenstein's) mode of philosophising, understood aright, because the *activity* of liberatory philosophy – and that is what it above all is, an *activity* – does

not have person(s)-non-relative results. Those results are rather always relative to its ongoing practice, to the place one is in in a series of ongoing conversations (including *tete-a-tete* with oneself, treating oneself as if a 2nd person).

Of course, this is not in the slightest to excuse mere stubbornness or dogmatism. Any would-be philosopher has to take *responsibility*, as I emphasised strongly also in the preceding two chapters. The demand for consent is simultaneously a call to integrity. It is not to legitimate mere holding out for the sake of it, dishonesty with self or other – *on the contrary*.

Engaging with (say) Kierkegaard, Nietzsche or Wittgenstein is working to free oneself from a condition of ‘heteronomy’. Hoping to extract from such an author his advice as a set of standing propositions, or a sound argument, is really missing the point. Rather, the task is one of employing their thoughts in helping oneself in extracting oneself from partially self-imposed captivity.

This further helps us see why and how the form of Wittgenstein’s works is important too. This is why they are written as they are, in forms that ‘mainstream’ philosophy finds ‘obscurantist’ or ‘vague’, etc.. (And this is why they demand a *higher* standard of intellectual honesty than is often present, on all sides. One cannot be freed if one is determined to remain captive. As Gandhi remarked, you may be able to wake someone up who is asleep. But, sadly, you cannot wake someone up who is *pre-tending* to be asleep... (Ghandi 2001, chapter 154).

You undertake this process to learn about yourself, about the culture which you co-constitute,⁴² to reflect and remould yourself, to mature, to become less vulnerable to the hazards that have previously unhealthily gripped or tormented you, to free yourself along with others. This is an ethical task whose standards you must rise to of your own volition. Thus the book (*PI*) has to be a partly open-ended series of dialogues/interior pseudo-monologues, in which, as Cavell has stressed, ‘the’ subject-position is at times as peculiarly unpindownable as that of (say) Daniel Paul Schreber in his *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* (2000). The literary form of Wittgenstein’s writing is essential to its philosophical nature, and to the radicality of its mission. The peculiar progress of the *PI*, the way for instance that Wittgenstein’s reflections on conception of philosophy are found *in media res* in the text rather than being placed neatly at (say) the start of it – a way reflected in the progress of my own book here – is non-accidental.

Asking Wittgenstein for his account of meaning, or of language (or of life), is rather like (say) asking J. M. Coetzee for his account of grace and disgrace, or of moral growth (and not being content if he simply, silently, proffers you his book once again, in reply). This indexes why the liberation ‘model’ is novel. Why it involves a radical shift in the expectations and self-image of academics. Why it is so difficult to assimilate. One’s

resistance to it is a resistance of the will. There is, that is, a sense in which many of us don't, as we think we do, value freedom. One perhaps does not *want* to give up the comfortable feeling of being the one who *knows*. Probably one does not *want* to yield up any power, ongoingly, to other people and other texts, in an open-ended process. One almost certainly does not entirely *want* to know oneself, in the forever-uncompleted⁴³ way one knows oneself when one takes the risk of engaging with thinking which questions whether one knows many of the things one was most confident about 'knowing'. One probably does not *want* to place oneself in a position of vulnerability *vis-à-vis* others, and to own up to that vulnerability and one's own need and imperfection.

Giving up the *aspiration* to metaphysics is perhaps even more challenging. It means giving up the idea of discovering *essences* (so as to be able to give a direct and definitive answer to a question such as 'What is consciousness?' – or 'What is meaning?'). For many philosophers, this aspiration may be part of their self-image and their deepest hopes for the subject.

Real Wittgensteinian philosophy requires owning up to not much *wanting* to have to seek to give these things up, not much wanting to become vulnerable in the way just described – but doing so anyway. This work requires always being ready to start again, as Wittgenstein was.⁴⁴ And it requires *not* hubristically assuming that one has the answers. Real philosophy is without *answers*. It involves rather a (mutual) process of growth, evolution away from myth (e.g. scientific myth) and into a (shared) autonomy. A space beyond *knowingness*.

3.5 Meaning Is Use?

There is a widespread dangerous scientific desire – a desire which in the writings of some prominent Wittgensteinians (such as for example Peter Hacker and his followers) has gone subterranean, and thus become, potentially, more problematic – for grammar to be independent of *consent*.⁴⁵ This can lead to the rather odd phenomenon, extremely widespread among Wittgensteinians, of language itself and as a whole being blamed for our philosophical problems. I see this as a form of bad faith, a dogmatic leap from Wittgenstein's text to absolve ourselves of our 'sins'. (As I've noted already, it is Wittgenstein himself, unfortunately, who began this tendency; he was insufficiently clear that blaming language is a dubiously self-exculpatory move.)

Here is how Baker puts this:

It might seem paradoxical...to summarise what seems a contingent and variable feature of certain persons' degree of understanding of the use of their own words in the comment that our *grammar* (the use of our words) is lacking in the property of perspicuity (as

it were globally and absolutely). Does it make sense to find fault with a natural language...on the grounds that we sometimes fall into conceptual confusions by blindly following the lead of 'surface grammar'? Would this not be comparable to claiming that gravity is blameworthy on the grounds that people sometimes fall and injure themselves?

(BWM, 56)

The desire for grammar to be some external 'thing' or 'force'⁴⁶ can risk occluding the agency – the autonomy – of human beings. Here I pick up again, explicitly, the project of identifying an ethics in Wittgenstein's *Investigations*, in opposition to the nascent intellectual tyranny and anti-humanism of 'elucidation' without liberation and without a thorough inter-relation. To seek a way of stating the grammar of a language which states that grammar as if it were independent of what grammar the speaker of a language is committed to is to misunderstand the grammar of the word "grammar" when that word is used most usefully by a philosopher...

One certainly does not need to and ought not to attribute to Wittgenstein a use-theory of meaning. But further: One does not need to think that Wittgenstein, *qua* philosopher, seeks to furnish us with *any* answer to the question with which we opened this chapter. *Nothing* need fill the 'hole' that not having a theory of meaning (including, say, a use-theory) leaves: because what Wittgenstein is teaching is that the hole in question is only felt – only *seems* to exist – against the background of a set of covert assumptions about what philosophy ought to do (and about what we need in order to go on) that are *optional* and that are moreover, when seen more clearly, undesirable:

What is it that is repulsive in the idea that we study the use of a word, point to mistakes in the description of this use and so on? First and foremost one asks oneself: How could that be so important to us? It depends on whether what one calls a 'wrong description' is a description which does not accord with established usage – or one which does not accord with the practice of the person giving the description. Only in the second case does a philosophical conflict arise.

(RPP I, 549)

The opening of this passage remarkably viscerally bucks the expectations of those who think of Wittgenstein as a kind of philosophical socio-linguist! The idea so often *attributed* to Wittgenstein is one that he here declares *repulsive*. And the passage's close not only brings to mind (say) the unwillingness of the would-be solipsist to practice what he preaches, or the unwillingness of Russell to limit the use of the concept

of 'proper name' in the way that the 'theory of descriptions' would suggest: it directly supports the orientation towards 43, etc. that this chapter proposes. In short: Providing an account that in any way theorises use is philosophically irrelevant at best.

Have I however in this chapter been rather hard on the idea of "meaning as use"? Is there not still an awful lot to be said *for* that idea? Indeed there is. Meaning *as* use: *no* objection has been made to that, here. For that idea might be parsed as: Take use as your prime⁴⁷ *object of comparison*, in relation to meaning. A gambit which I welcome.

The problem is when *as* turns into *is*. "Meaning is use" taken to be a doctrine, or (even) taken to be a 'grammatical remark' that would stand constant, as an end in itself, regardless of its context-relative liberatory purport: that is the locus of the trouble.

And yet; actually, even "Meaning *is* use" can be harmless, when heard aright. "Meaning is use" *itself* might usefully be thought of (then) *as an object of comparison*, rather like "Thinking is operating with signs".⁴⁸ It is not a truth, not even a 'grammatical truth' or 'grammatical fact' (sic). (A lexical marker of where Hacker's reading of Wittgenstein goes wrong can be found in the fact that he speaks of Wittgenstein as allegedly reminding us of "grammatical facts" (Hacker 2007, 105).⁴⁹) It is rather a means by which we become re-oriented, freed up from inherited assumptions (in these two cases, especially, of a mentalistic form). Indeed, as Kuusela explicitly suggests, we should think of such sloganistic objects of comparison as effecting perspicuous presentations:

perspicuous presentation involves, among other things, as Wittgenstein says, the introduction of novel expressions with the purpose of making it easier to achieve a clear comprehension of conceptual relations. (An example of such a novel expression would be a concept re-defined in a simplifying way in order to highlight a certain aspect or aspects of the actual concept ...[M]eaning defined as rule-governed use can be regarded as an example of such a simplified concept).

(Kuusela 2008, 234)⁵⁰

On my understanding of the term "grammatical remark", it has a close kinship with the term "perspicuous presentation" (On my understanding of *that* term: for more detail on which, see the chapter following this one). It is fundamentally an *achievement* term. Would-be grammatical remarks *do not contradict one another*, even when they appear to; because they are not, in my understanding of them, the shadows of – or opposites of – doctrines, not the settings out of a new structure.

On this point, see 251:

- a "What does it mean when we say: "I can't imagine the opposite of this" or "What would it be like, if it were otherwise?"—For example,

when someone has said that my images are private, or that only I myself can know whether I am feeling pain, and similar things.

- b Of course, here “I can’t imagine the opposite” doesn’t mean: my powers of imagination are unequal to the task. These words are a defence against something whose form makes it look like an empirical proposition, but which is really a grammatical one.
- c But why do we say: “I can’t imagine the opposite”? Why not: “I can’t imagine the thing itself?”
- d Example: “Every rod has a length.” That means something like: we call something or *this* “the length of a rod” but nothing “the length of a sphere”. Now can I imagine ‘every rod having a length’? Well, I simply imagine a rod. Only, this picture, in connection with this proposition, has a quite different role from one used in connexion with the proposition “This table has the same length as the one over there”. For here I understand what it means to have a picture of the opposite (nor need it be a mental picture).
- e But the picture attaching to the grammatical proposition could only shew, say, what is called “the length of the rod”. And what should the opposite picture be?
- f ((Remark about the negation of an *a priori* proposition.))”

[a] considers the fantasies of unfreedom we are subject to. [b] deflates those fantasies. Re [c]; we *could* say “I can’t imagine the thing itself”. That might, ironically, be a sound liberatory move: *provided* it were not understood as about my powers of imagination (cf. [b] again), but rather about the very strangeness, actually, of saying “I can’t imagine the opposite of this.” Saying “I can’t imagine the thing itself!” (or saying, “It would be just as good to say “I can’t imagine the thing itself!””) however doesn’t properly *contradict* “I can’t imagine the opposite”; it does its work mainly by showing that one is not *compelled* to say “I can’t imagine the opposite”.

If we don’t choose to make the kind of move suggested in the previous paragraph, then what is the “grammatical proposition” in 251? Presumably, it is “Every rod has a length”. But now note how Wittgenstein treats this in [d] and [e]. By making clear how these words are used without opposition⁵¹ – without potential contradiction – when they are used to make a grammatical remark. And by starting to imagine a context in which it would make sense to make the grammatical remark in question (for, without such a context, there is no grammatical remark. Wittgenstein’s treatment of “Every rod has a length” is thus very different from what (say) G.E. Moore’s would be.).

So the negation of an *a priori* proposition (see [f]) is nonsense. But this means that very great care is needed in stating *a priori* ‘propositions’. They will only be statable under very specific circumstances; and, even then, there is something pretty peculiar about the idea that they

constitute a *statement*, at all. There is something deeply misleading about the idea that “grammatical propositions” are a sub-class of *propositions*, and that “empirical propositions” are another such sub-class. That makes the two seem *not different enough*. Rather, “grammatical propositions” should be thought of as something like audience-relative prompts to recollect. This becomes clearer in 252 (and in 253): “This body has extension.” To this, we might reply: “Nonsense!” – but are inclined to reply “Of course!”. To one inclined to take “This body has extension” – or “Every body has extension” – as a grammatical remark, we should point out that, while one can surely do so, calling it nonsense might well be just as valid a response (and in fact, would usually be more so). Grammatical remarks are only so in the proper context, with the proper (honest) intention and understanding. The grammaticality of a remark or proposition *cannot be read off a string of words*.

Grammatical remarks are contributions to mutual understanding and attunement. ‘The’ grammar does not exist stably, independently of one’s interlocutor; it is always (already) a work in progress, malleable at the limits, negotiable. Indeed, as hinted earlier, it may well even be better to think of grammar pre-eminently as something we *do* than as something that *is*, at all. One might say: we do grammar, we understand and make grammar together, when we work to align our ways of speaking so that we can become clear with ourselves and with each other as to when, how and why we are or have been unclear. When, in other words, we free ourselves, together.

3.6 No (Requirement for an) Account of Meaning

Any case that is of potential philosophical moment is always ‘negotiable’.⁵² There is always an ‘open question’, when it is put to one that one is misusing a word in any philosophically-consequential context. One can claim metaphor, or a new usage, or (and this is usually the most difficult – in part, because it is so hard to tell the difference between a mulishness on the part of one’s interlocutor and on the part of *oneself*) one can just deny that there is a misuse going on; and one may or may not, in the latter case, allow that there has been any conceptual change, in the process. Any ‘compulsion’ on the speaker to simply agree that they are misusing a word would be a denial of human agency, of intellectual independence/autonomy. It would be a denial of language use as an *activity*. One can *feel* compelled – that is a different matter; that of course is exactly what Wittgenstein over and over warns about, the felt compulsion of philosophical belief and delusion...

One must be one’s own physician,⁵³ and cannot ‘contract out’ (or ‘offshore’) the process to anyone else (though the process is hardly a ‘private’ one, and essentially involves *our* language). Liberation begins at home. One cannot rely on a catalogue of use or a theory or account

of meaning to do the hard work for one, as 3rd-personal perspectives would suggest. One can only struggle, alongside others (and thus the importance of the Cavellian emphasis on how appeals to ordinary language are appeals to a 1st-person plural, to the voice of the community), and *do* this work.

It is difficult to overcome the inclination to think that there is “some general conception of meaning”⁵⁴ in Wittgenstein’s work; this is why I have dwelt at length on the matter. It can be all too tempting to lean on what I’ve previously called a tacit “language-game theory” of language.⁵⁵ It is hard to give up the attraction, the *pull* of the idea that Wittgenstein, early and late, must surely at least be *telling* us *something* essential about the nature of language (or of its ‘connection’ with the world).⁵⁶ How language really is: surely that is what Wittgenstein’s ‘account’ of language-games enables us to say and to see?⁵⁷ As I discussed near the opening of this chapter, it can seem indeed *platitudinous* to say so.

...When something looks as if it *must* be thus-and-so—then *look out*.⁵⁸ The attraction here is parallel to – congruent with – the attraction that I’ve been questioning throughout this chapter. Hard though it is, one needs to overcome the temptation to give an answer to the question, “With what account of meaning (or language, or practice, etc. etc.) does Wittgenstein provide us?” One needs rather to question the pertinence of the question, for it rests on assumptions we’ve found to be unfounded, to be (‘thankfully’) unforced.

Taking seriously Wittgenstein’s conception of philosophy means taking seriously that Wittgensteinians have no *opinion* on philosophical questions; for we do not assume that the questions are really answerable. On Wittgenstein not having an opinion on philosophical questions, see the progress of his dialogue with Turing in the course of *LFM*. Cf. especially this:

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

(*LFM*, 103)

In one sense of the word “view”, the sense most often employed nowadays in philosophy, in which having a ‘view’ commits one to quasi-permanent claims or assertions about the philosophic matter in question, Wittgenstein *has no views*. Again, truly to take this in and apply it is hard. It is ‘complete Bolshevism’⁵⁹ in philosophy considered as a domain with content.

A key point of employing prominently the object of comparison of 'liberation' for our activity (our activity, when we do philosophy after the fashion of 'our method') is to force the reader/our interlocutor (and... ourself/ves) back onto her own resources. Wittgenstein tells one nothing. That's why I've suggested one should take seriously the thought that, very like a latter-day Socrates, and perhaps more sincerely than him, he *knows* nothing, *qua* philosopher (though he will embody a judicious set of skilful means for undertaking his idiosyncratic task(s) of facilitation, indirection, etc.). One's relation with the reader is then a particular kind of agon.

"On what authority do you 'correct' me?!", 'cognitive scientists' and 'metaphysicians' ask 'Wittgensteinians', when the latter try to police the language, to tell one what meaning really is, how it can be identified, how language actually is (e.g. that it 'is' a set of language-games), what combinations of words will result in nonsense and why, and so on. The question, I believe, is a valid one; the implied rebuke contained within it, I suggest, a perfectly reasonable one. I *agree* with these would-be 'metaphysicians' etc. that would-be 'Wittgensteinians' have no leg to stand when they try to argue for a use-theory of meaning or try to set out a 'bird's-eye view' of meaning, or to allege a compulsory and consequential grammatical 'nexus' between meaning and use. There is no future in trying to *tell* other philosophers how they can and cannot use words. One's own desire to do this is nothing more than the place at which one *starts* in dialogue with them.⁶⁰ It is itself a *topic* for philosophical investigation, not an alleged 'resource'.

What one has to do, rather, is genuinely to engage with the desires of other philosophers (and of oneself) to say the things that they (we) say. To work with those desires; to reflect them and the (conflicting) forms of words that they eventuate in, back to their utterers.

To try to get them (us?) to see why one thinks that they cannot really want to say (some of) the things that they say. 'Our method' in philosophy is as powerless as this. And on the perhaps-rare occasions when it clearly works (when someone is actually persuaded), as *powerful* as this. For there is nothing more powerful than someone taking responsibility for change. Actually allowing something that they don't want to think to be thought, and allowing its effects. Compared to this, the power of a philosophical 'dictionary', or of an allegedly-true theory, or even of brute force, is weak indeed...⁶¹

The task of a Wittgensteinian is to try to achieve and facilitate a kind of '*authenticity*': That's another way of explaining why it's semantic *bad faith* to shuck off onto anyone (or anything) else the decision as to how one is to go on using words with others, how one is to go on meaning.

Once one has absorbed this, then the radicality of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy, the revolution involved in ceasing to view philosophical inquiry as something undertaken by experts in order to account

for seemingly-problematic concepts, can show itself and be witnessed and practiced. The centrality of practice (or use), *not* as something to be reified and used to police future practice, but to index our continual task of dissolving philosophical temptations *and* the interventions designed to resist those temptations back into everyday language, becomes manifest.⁶²

It is in this context that we should consider then the following quote from Wittgenstein, a marvellous, neglected passage from the *Blue and Brown Books*:

Philosophy, as we use the word, is a fight against the fascination which forms of expression exert upon us... Philosophers very often talk about investigating, analysing, the meaning of words. But let's not forget that a word hasn't got a meaning given to it, as it were, by a power independent of us, so that there could be a kind of scientific investigation into what the word *really* means. A word has the meaning someone has given to it. There are words with several clearly defined meanings. It is easy to tabulate these meanings. And there are words of which one might say: They are used in a thousand different ways which gradually merge into one another. No wonder that we can't tabulate strict rules for their use.

(*BB*, 28–29)

Think of this chapter then as a series of efforts to liberate from unaware assumptions concerning the alleged constancy and independence from us of grammar, the alleged possibility of reading meaning from a record of use, rather than in one way or another consulting with mean-ers.

Far from the record of use constraining one, and grammar being the prison-house that forms the scaffolding of that record, 'grammar' is a way of seeing what passes between us that enables us to do language together. Use, seen liberatorily as opposed to 'elucidatorily' or doctrinally, is what can set us free from thought-capture by philosophical ideology masquerading as a necessity.

3.7 Summary and Conclusions

I have argued in this chapter that my 'account' of meaning is not really properly regarded as an account at all, for it has no *content* whatsoever that can be arrived at independently of a process of more or less interpersonal, dialogical investigation. If 'it' is viewed as an account, it is at most a place-holder: everything depends on what happens in trying to figure out with another what it is they (or we) actually want to say and can succeed in saying. If mine is (seen as) an account, in other words, it refers the *accounting* on to the *person(s) in question*. This is a kink in the evolution of philosophy: no longer do we see accounts as being

given by *philosophers themselves*. No longer can there be philosophical experts. Rather, 'accounts' are at most given by all competent users of language, in their (our) actual practice of language with us. There is no *place* for the (fantasy of the) 'expert' accountant, for the would-be language-policeman, viewing things other than from immersion in language, seeing all 'from sideways' on. Instead, there is a free and freeing dialogue between co-conversationalists, from out of whose interaction the 'accounts' emerge. No-one adjudicates these 'from outside',⁶³ as the 'elucidator' would do. Any such 'adjudication' happens *co-operatively*. As part of a conversation between equals.

If my approach in this chapter is original, its originality consists primarily in this insight, and more generally in its development of – its *exemplification* of – the practice of would-be philosophic liberators, along such lines. Applied, of course, to the case that has been under consideration here: that of meaning and use, focused around *PI* 43. I hope that this chapter has afforded some perspicuity, in relation to that case. Not exactly a so-called 'perspicuous representation' of *the* nature of meaning, nor of the 'grammar' of meaning conceived of as something like a set of rules for how one can and cannot use this and cognate words,⁶⁴ but rather, perhaps: a contribution towards a perspicuous presentation of how *we* use the word "meaning", in order to help our readers and ourselves achieve philosophical peace and freedom.⁶⁵ No longer to be tormented, imprisoned. Including by questions, which may be less innocent than they seem. Such as: "What is meaning?"

Turn one last time then to 43 itself. In directing our attention to use, Wittgenstein seeks to free us from the tendency we are subject to: to rush from the idea of meaning to ideas of ideas (psychologism, or Platonism).⁶⁶ If we define meaning, for our purposes (at least so far as they relate to "a large class of cases"), as use in the language,⁶⁷ then we are less likely to be perplexed – by realising (for instance) that one can never *grasp* more than some portion of a word's 'overall' meaning, for words are vast, and always in flux – into thinking that there is some essential mystery of linguistic meaning, or into thinking that there cannot be definitions. (Definitions of words are perfectly possible; *PI* 65ff. should not be over-read as allegedly undermining the possibility of defining complex words. After all, 43 puts in play a 'definition' (or an 'explanation', a clarifying). Definitions can be perfectly adequate even though we don't grasp the totality of words' meanings, provided we do not expect more from definitions than we are capable of giving and receiving.) We are less likely, after taking 43 seriously, to be tripped up by phenomena such as coming to understand within a single moment what a particular word means,⁶⁸ and less likely (than a psychological or Platonistic thinker) to presume, instinctively (and hubristically), that we are masters of the entire meaning of a word. We are less likely, likewise, to fall into illusions of subjection to language: *we* make language, *we* can change it (though

not just any old way, and not *just* by ourselves). Is language created or discovered? Both; or then again, neither. A focus (of the right kind) on use reduces the risk that the phenomenon of discovering what a word means, or the phenomenon of creating meaning for a word, will be over-generalised and taken as the master-case, or even the only case.

“Meaning is/as use”, considered as an object of comparison, helpfully ‘self-deconstructs’. In its figure-ness, it undercuts the alleged essentiality of previous figures (such as the Augustinian), and then *its work is done*. 43 is a kind of schema for the use of “use” in philosophy. We might say: It does not state *anything*. We might even say: 43, in neither asserting nor denying anything, remains silent. What we need to *understand* is the (liberatory) purpose of its author in enunciating it, not anything it seemingly says.

Recall once more the ‘counter-picture’ that (in Chapter 1) I posited Wittgenstein as offering to the Augustinian:

An alternative particular picture of the essence of human language... is this: Meaning and understanding *are* operating with words.—In this picture of language we find the roots of the following idea: Every word has a meaning. Its meaning *is* its use.

This (counter-)picture is in effect *present*, in 43.⁶⁹ Cf. Baker: “Could it be a picture which [Wittgenstein] means to present in the slogan “The meaning of a word is its *use* in the language - a sentence is an *instrument* in a language-game?”” I would answer: yes.

We see that this picture has its use(s)⁷⁰; it could be just fine, from a Wittgensteinian point of view, *as* a self-conscious picture. Saying that “meaning *is* use” can help free folk. But⁷¹ *only if* one is not in turn captured by that picture. The problem with Augustine’s picture, as we saw in Chapter 1, is the compulsion he appears to be under, his ‘automatic’ leaping to conclusions. The Augustinian picture is like a Kuhnian paradigm: it enables but also radically constrains. This is OK in science, where, for research programmes within ‘normal science’ to exist, such constraint is necessary.⁷² But it is not OK in philosophy, if one wants to be able to think. Freely. Which one would hope a philosopher does; thus the importance of liberatory philosophy.

So I have argued in this chapter that there is no philosopher’s account of meaning which Wittgenstein wishes one to take hold of in the *Investigations*, neither at *PI* 43, where one finds the clearest statement of Wittgenstein’s alleged ‘theory of meaning’/‘account’ of its grammar, nor elsewhere. Once one brings out of its hiding place (its hiding place as a presumption structuring one’s felt options) the notion that Wittgenstein *must* have an account of meaning which would masquerade as *the* account, one can acknowledge its status (as non-obligatory) and subject it to critical scrutiny. One is freed from capture: One is no longer

imprisoned by the tyranny of having to have an 'account' of this matter, no matter of what kind. This is a liberation.

A final objection.⁷³ One could argue that what Wittgenstein has said about meaning has not been widely accepted, and that, by the very standard offered in this chapter and elsewhere in this book (recall e.g. 0.2), this should constitute an argument for dropping this means of expression, for no longer focussing on use in connection with meaning. And for looking for an alternative, in line with Wittgenstein's own claim that, were someone to object to something he said, he would immediately drop it and look for another way forward.

One could indeed argue this. And there is a very real sense in which I'd accept the argument: namely, if someone in good faith is just not freed by what we have to offer them, that is indeed a *prima facie* strike against the content of our offering. But perhaps by now the reader can see for themselves the successively reinforcing ways in which nevertheless I think the central thrust of this final objection can be absorbed or deflected without harm. First, we should note that I have suggested that 'what' Wittgenstein has said about meaning has not been widely accepted: rather, it has not been widely *comprehended*. If the liberatory approach has been rejected by the philosophical community, that *is* itself by my lights a *prima facie* strike against it. But it has not. ...Second, we might add that, when 'it' gets comprehended in the kind of way that has been offered in this chapter, there should be some real hope that it might be accepted.

And third and most important by far, we should emphasise that the main reason *why* is that what Wittgenstein has said about meaning is not something that can be transitively laid out. Wittgenstein does not have an account of (what) meaning (is), no matter of what kind. So *there is nothing for someone objecting to 'it' to object to*. And it is only what the auditor themselves is willing to accept and embrace that stands. If there is any accounting going on for meaning, it occurs in *you*, or (often better) in the relation between us. The offering we make *has* no 'content' outside of this.

The approach I have outlined to the use of "use" in this chapter is one which completely disarms the objection. When one understands aright what, on a liberatory reading – in which it is "as you please" (without being as you fantasise) – is going on in and around passages such as 43, one comes to see just that.

And so I'll end with the quotation which the final objection that I've just considered has in mind, from Wittgenstein's orientative remarks at the opening of his *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics*, and which I think we can now see makes clear the nature of this liberation:

You might, to be very misleading, call this [philosophical] investigation an investigation into the meaning of certain words. But this is apt to lead to misunderstandings.

The investigation is to draw your attention to facts you know quite as well as I, but which you have forgotten, or at least which are not immediately in your field of vision. They will all be quite trivial facts. I won't say anything which anyone can dispute. Or if anyone does dispute it, I will let that point drop and pass on to say something else.
(*LFM*, lecture 1, 22)

The nature of Wittgenstein's investigations is liable to be ill-understood if it is understood, as it usually has been, as an investigation into words' meaning. Actually, as in general terms later Baker and Waismann suggest, what is at issue is the possibility of vision in philosophy. *Vision*: being able to see things in a new manner, a new light. To see, especially, what is always in front of one's eyes.

In Chapter 4, we come to the lengthy sequence of remarks wherein Wittgenstein makes most plain to his reader *the conception of philosophy* motivating the 'accountless account' of meaning and use that we have sought to account for, in this chapter. (What on Earth do I mean by 'accountless account'? My model here is 'the gateless gate' of Zen Buddhism.⁷⁴ In the context of the present book, I would mark a key feature of that similarity thus: both seek freedom, by utilising and even embracing (as well as dissolving) what I call real, lived paradoxes. The gateless gate is what one must pass through to attain enlightenment. It is 'gateless' because *it presents as a barrier*. If (some)one continues to insist that Wittgenstein has an account of meaning, then one thing we might do is accede (because we have no wish to police the other's language; stipulating what they can or cannot see will not help free them (or us)); and term it an accountless account...) In Chapter, 4, through exegetically investigating *our* conception of philosophy, I will build up to a full understanding of Wittgenstein's concept of "perspicuous presentation" that I schematically likened earlier to his concept of "grammatical remark". The culmination of Chapter 4 will be to suggest that if "perspicuous presentation" is a (hopeless desire for a completed) *weltanschauung* – a would-be total view, as if from above, of grammar or what-have-you – as it has been in many Wittgensteinians, then it is a consummation devoutly not to be wished. Similarly, a way of understanding what I hope to have accomplished in this chapter is this: to have discouraged one from wanting use to be the core of a world-view. *So long as* (regard to) use is a mere tool – an object of comparison, in fact⁷⁵ – so long as it isn't overblown and world-view-ised, then it is all to the good.⁷⁶

Notes

- 1 The full significance of the 'comparison' trope will emerge in Chapter 5.
- 2 In relation to Conant/Diamond/Kremer, I am thinking especially of their crucial emphasis on the 'knowledge' that one gains in philosophy being

self-knowledge (see especially Kremer (1997)): knowledge of the nature of one's own (and others': self-knowledge, I would emphasise, following the line of thought I essayed in Chapter 2, can properly be knowledge of *us*, of the first-person *plural*) vulnerabilities to over-generalisation, to projects of essentialisation, to 'using' words in ways that one can oneself come to recognise harbour hostages to philosophical fortune and 'hidden' hoverings between discrepant endeavours to mean.

- 3 See Chapter 5, and my discussion there of 130–132, for the import of *us* making a *comparison*, for *particular purposes*.
- 4 Chapter 12 of *BWM*. This essay is an invaluable source on freedom, as opposed to *knowingness*, as a key Wittgensteinian objective in philosophy. (It would be interesting to compare later Baker's Wittgenstein on accepting and dwelling in 'unknowing' with Iain McGilchrist, Krishnamurtri, and some of the great medieval mystics.)
- 5 The compulsion to provide an account is exactly what Wittgenstein puts into question. As Warren Goldfarb, another antecedent for my project in this chapter, remarks, Wittgenstein investigates "what frames the first steps of a search for an account of meaning... . [W]hat Wittgenstein provides... is a convincing portrayal of how such a project comes to have a hold on us" (Cahill 2011, 488).
- 6 On struggling against compulsive attachment to 'exactness', cf.: "What I am resisting is the concept of an ideal exactness thought as it were to be given us a priori. At different times our ideals of exactness are different; & none of them is preeminent" (*C&V*, 45). This manifests this book's theme, of freedom, but *not* mere license: the absence of one over-arching conception of vagueness does not equate to 'anything goes'; it rather demands context and judgement.
- 7 Those who attribute a use-theory of meaning to Wittgenstein include: Alston (1964), Apel (1980, 1), Habermas (1984, 115; 1995, 58, 62–64), Horwich (1995, 260–261, *passim*; 1998a, 69–71, 93–94; 1998b, *passim*) Strawson (1971, 172), & perhaps also Von Savigny (1993, 72). For a recent case in point, see my co-authored review of Paul Horwich's book *Wittgenstein's Metaphilosophy* (2012) (Read & Uçan 2014).
- 8 Call them these, respectively, because that is what they are called in the excellent proposed taxonomy of Phil Hutchinson (2007). This taxonomy is also present in Hutchinson and Read (2008, 143). However, as I note in Chapter 4, my use of this terminology does *not* commit me to the notion that the 'elucidatory' reading produces what Wittgenstein would properly consider elucidations (On which topic, see Hutchinson and Read (2006)). Rather, as will emerge in this chapter, I see the 'elucidatory' reading as too often little more than a notational variant of the doctrinal reading. (Thus I will often scare-quote, thus: 'elucidatory'.)
- 9 Compare again here Wittgenstein's remarkable remark at *RPP I* (section 633), that "the simple language-games play a quite different role [from what one is inclined to expect, if one inclines to be a philosophical theorist]. They are poles of a description, not the ground-floor of a theory."
- 10 I have 'switched' here to the translation recommended by Andrew Lugg, for reasons he outlines (Lugg 2002, 83). One might go further, and replace the word "explained" with the word "clarified".
- 11 Note in this connection my use-based 'counter-picture' to the Augustinian, offered in Chapter 1. I recur to this explicitly toward the end of this chapter: my suggestion being, that this (counter-)picture is basically what is 'offered' in 43, *but* that it is vital to understand that it is offered as, roughly, *an object of comparison* (cf. Chapter 5), much as, indeed, Augustine's 'own' picture is

(by Wittgenstein). Augustine's picture finds a case for which it is apparently right, in sections 2–3 of *PI*. Similarly, the picture of "meaning as use" may sometimes be more or less right (see Section 3.5). But it will imprison us, if we project it beyond such a limited set of cases.

- 12 Here my thinking is close to that of Forster (2004).
- 13 Furthermore, we should note that a certain sense in which one may not unreasonably be at least tempted to use the word "arbitrary" or "autonomous" is tied here, not to the matter discussed in Chapter 2 (the 'relation' between language and reality), but rather to the crucial sense, brought out powerfully in Rhee's posthumous works, in which speaking, "Die Sprache", is non-end-goal-fixated, not defined by reference to prior-decidable aims.
- The payoff, so far as the reading of Wittgenstein goes, is to free up the way one takes the concept of grammar itself, as I start to do below (and see for a more detailed take on Wittgenstein on grammar (Hutchinson & Read 2017). And then, I will suggest, to start to see it, for instance, as almost more like a verb than a noun (or thing).
- 14 NB Any such thesis could be open to empirical refutation by phonologists or other linguists, who might be able to show for instance that certain features of grammar are genetically connected to word-sounds in a manner consequential to their use now; and so it is heartening to see Wittgenstein taking up a much more judicious 'stance'.
- 15 Kuusela explicates with precision the sense in which there is a non-arbitrariness to grammar, for Wittgenstein, in section 5.1 of *The Struggle against Dogmatism* (2008b).
- 16 In Chapters 7–9, I critique Kripke's reading of Wittgenstein. One reason I do so can already be seen here: that Kripke too offers his reading as the means to giving an *account* of meaning. Compare here Cora Diamond's perceptive criticism of Kripke's account by contrast with Wittgenstein's method; Diamond seeks to bring out how easy it is to relapse into 'accountism':

Here is how not to put it: [Wittgenstein] says that meaning is given, not by assertion-conditions, but by place-in-life. Rather, he thinks that, when we raise philosophical questions about meaning, we are...inclined not to attend to the place words have in our lives.

(Diamond 1989, 15)

- 17 And, as I argue in "A no-theory?" (Read 2006), Wittgensteinian reminders are misunderstood if they are taken to remind us *of* anything that can be stated. Their transitionality does not end, but is passed onward to the 'content' of the 'reminder'.
- 18 Here my thinking diverges from Kuusela's. For more detail on this theme in OC, see Read (2005a).
- The same point could be made in relation to the *Tractatus*. It consists in propositions that sound entirely non-temporal, but that also have a thoroughly occasion-sensitive aspect in relation to one's journey up the 'ladder'.
- (See n.20 for another putative example of discordancy between grammatical remarks, this time from the *PI*.)
- 19 In particular: not to one overarching 'worldview': see my discussion of 122, in Chapter 4, for explication.
- 20 I have previously given an example of the non-mutual-contradiction of grammatical remarks in *PI*: Wittgenstein [is] sometimes accused of being ambivalent between on the one hand the kind of conceptual relativism allegedly present in any talk of the formation of concepts different from the usual ones [i.e. in Wittgenstein's remarks at the close of *PI* 'Part II'], and on

the other hand the kind of quasi-Davidsonian or Hollisian anti-relativism allegedly present in Wittgenstein's famous claim that

"If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also...in judgements.

(*PI*, section 242)

It is sometimes thought that the kind of agreement 'transcendentally' required by the latter rules out the kind of deep conceptual differentiation seemingly allowed for in the former. But I see no contradiction between these two remarks. For both are grammatical remarks – which is to say, reminders, for particular purposes. If one is talking with someone who thinks that our concepts could or perhaps even must be absolutely the correct ones (perhaps even a quasi-Kantian or Davidsonian), someone who thinks that it *makes sense* to compare our concepts with reality, then it may be wise to cite Wittgenstein on the formation of (different) concepts. If one is talking with someone who thinks that there can be complete breakdowns of communication, of the kind suggested by some Sceptics, Solipists, or Relativists, someone who thinks that there can be no comparison of one person's or culture's concepts with another, then it may be wise to cite Wittgenstein on agreements in judgement. Such citations would be the starting-points in...attempts to mutually comprehend; ...not be what mainstream philosophy thinks of as 'positions'" (Read 2001b). And here we see clearly expressed the crucially *2nd-personal character of philosophical 'stating'*.

Furthermore, examples could be multiplied. For instance, it is not hard to imagine a context where one would state that "Thoughts are public", by way of offering a grammatical remark, *nor* to imagine a context where one would state that "Thoughts are private", by way of offering a grammatical remark (Cf. *PI* 248).

- 21 And also in 'Theory' (which includes many who reject Analytic philosophy, such as virtually all 'Literary Theorists', Post-Modernists, practitioners of 'Cultural Studies', etc.).
- 22 See Stone (2000) for a beautiful exercise in resistance to this particular leaping.
- 23 See e.g. the opening of Lynch (1993) for an overview. And cf. n.26.
- 24 By way of Waismann. We need to bear in mind the in-effect 'shared' authorship of much of *VoW*.
- 25 See the discussion of the metaphysical '*must*' and of the way it traps us in a set of dogmatic and hyperbolic assumptions, in Chapter 4.
- 26 For a much fuller setting-out of how to see accounting as something that is paradigmatically a matter for members of a society or linguistic community, *not* for philosophers or other elite theorists (e.g. sociologists, linguists), see the writings of Harold Garfinkel, Michael Lynch and Wes Sharrock on 'accounts' and 'accounting' and 'accountability'. Their way of working is known as '*ethno-methodology*'. I.e. It is the *methods* of (the) *people* themselves, not the versions of theorists, which actually matter, which actually settle questions in the social and human studies (and allied humanities). This radical – revolutionary – thought is a key legacy of Garfinkel and (and on my reading) of Wittgenstein (who, not incidentally, directly influenced Garfinkel and other ethnomethodologists). It has been singularly missed, even by most 'Wittgensteinians'...who, in missing it, remain, so far as I can see, in thrall (in ways that are generally opaque to them) to 'Analytic' philosophy and to scientism.

- 27 We should note here that the famous article “On formal structures of practical action” (Sacks & Garfinkel 1970) would warn one away from implying that an ‘account of what someone means’ can necessarily be gained by asking them “What do you mean by that?” They make a strong case against treating formulations of [[what I am doing]] as the order of [[what I am doing]]. This suggests once more the need for genuine dialogue, in the case of philosophical language. To bring into alignment what a person is doing (once we understand *that*) with what they say they are doing (once we understand *that*). This is inevitably an ethically inflected enterprise.
- 28 Note: *can be considered as* (in a certain sense) an account. Not *is* an account. As I said in Section 3.3: even talk of accounting and accountability does not necessarily commit one to talking of accounts.
- 29 My point here is closely related to the crucial point at the heart of Winch’s famous work on understanding others, such as at *The idea of a social science* (2003, III:6).
- 30 I however would add that “participants in any particular discussion” *become* thereby — and so, actually, ‘always already’ *are* (because, as we might put it, any particular human being is never removed from all human discussions) — more than ‘individuals’ as Western philosophy (and, especially, liberal political philosophy) tend to regard them (us). We inter-leave / inter-weave our very selves, in any honest conversation, any deep dialogue.
- 31 I will dwell on this difference *as thus emphasised* in detail in Chapter 9.
- 32 This claim gets justified in *Kuhn* (Sharrock & Read 2002).
- 33 From “Philosophy” from *BT* (*PO*, 181). Cf. also this: “THE GOAL [OF PHILOSOPHY]: THE TRANSPARENCY OF ARGUMENTS. *JUSTICE*” (*BT*, 171).
- 34 For some chapter and verse on how this happens in Hacker’s texts, see Hutchinson and Read (2008).
- 35 Now, it might here be objected against me by the likes of Peter Hacker (or by his followers – e.g. by Jeff Coulter (1995)) that I’m not taking seriously that there is (allegedly) a grammar because there are concepts and that concepts do not genuinely *change*: that there are *only* concepts or an *ersatz* replacement for them (or, less value-ladenly: a new concept). I have answered this objection in detail (Hutchinson & Read 2008). *But*, it is worth noting in passing at this moment that, in a devastating ‘irony’, Wittgenstein’s entire critique of and deconstruction of the ‘meaning-body’ conception of meaning, which one finds over and over again in his *corpus* (and very finely-wrought in particular at a number of points in *VoW*), is *mutatis mutandi* applicable to the kind of conception of meaning and of grammar that Hacker et al. hold to. For they take there to be legitimate and illegitimate combinations of meanings/concepts. This is in essence—their numerous protestations on this point notwithstanding—the very same idea as the idea of geometrically compatible and incompatible ‘meaning-bodies’.
- 36 (For more detail on the parallel with psychoanalysis, see the relevant chapters of *BWM*). This remark helps us see how in philosophy one cannot produce freedom via unfreedom. If philosophy is to liberate, it must *facilitate* freedom, not seek to ram it down someone’s throat. We have to *facilitate* freedom, we can’t literally force folk to be free (and this is why I typically scare-quote the vaguely Rousseauian idea of “forcing to be free” that I’m half-seriously half-jokingly attributing to Wittgenstein, on those occasions when I invoke it).
- 37 Wittgenstein’s philosophy might then usefully be characterised as a philosophy of unknowing. A philosophy that overcomes the temptation of

knowingness, a temptation writ large not only in scientific thinking but also in post-modernism. Cf. McGilchrist's critique of knowingness (McGilchrist 2009). Wittgenstein *delivers* on Socrates's unrealised promise not to know.

In this regard, Wittgenstein's most perceptive and important inheritor is Cavell. See e.g. Macarthur (2014).

- 38 Fischer shows expertly the implicit and more or less explicit presence of broadly 'therapeutic' language and methods in that portion of *PI* (Ammerreller & Fischer 2004; Fischer 2004). But (1) this portion of Wittgenstein's *PI* is to some extent unusual in this regard, and (2) Fischer's 'therapy' is, as I have explained earlier, somewhat far from my affinities to therapy, such as they are, let alone to my/our vision of liberation (and concomitantly of ethics).
- 39 See Chapter 5, for discussion.
- 40 See the Introduction to the present work.
- 41 Though, as stressed repeatedly earlier, and especially in the Introduction to the present work, this is of course absolutely not to deny that there are major precedents in the explicitly philosophical tradition (as well as in the psychological literature) for the Wittgensteinian project of liberatory philosophy. I have also indicated earlier a certain (radically-altered) Kantian/Enlightenment inheritance in Wittgenstein's thought: cf. also n.42.
- 42 And it is in respect of these that the version of autonomy that Wittgenstein makes available is mature in ways that Kantian autonomy is not. Wittgensteinian philosophy has a much richer and more realistic (in Diamond's sense of that word) understanding of what it means to be heteronomous or autonomous. It is not, for instance, a mark of heteronomy to find oneself integrally part of a community – on the contrary. (Wittgenstein himself sometimes fell away from *this* insight.)
- 43 Cf. here the following remark, from *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge 1932–35, from the Notes of Alice Ambrose and Margaret MacDonald* (1979) (AWL): "We might feel that a complete logical analysis would give the complete grammar of a word. But there is no such thing as a completed grammar" (AWL, 21).
- 44 I am thinking also here of the resemblances – assumed by Hacker (2000) to be non-existent, but actually quite real – between Wittgenstein and Zen, as explored in Read (2009). Cf. particularly here the opening of Shunryu Suzuki's *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* (1970).
- 45 Now, we should, to be fair, note here that in *Rules, Grammar and Necessity*, Hacker (with early Baker) suggests that, when engaging with an alleged metaphysician, "we should elicit from him the new rules according to which he is proceeding" (Baker & Hacker 1985, 53). Later, and more clearly still, Hacker insists that a subject employing a term according to a rule

must *acknowledge* this rule for using it; he must willingly *cleave* to it [...] There is no such thing as compelling somebody against his will to accept an explanation of what he means by a word. The cure of a conceptual confusion, like Freudian psychotherapy, depends on securing the patient's agreement about what he meant, in this case what rules or standards of correct use he conceives himself to be following.

(Baker & Hacker 1985, 154)

These passages, I find very amenable; they make me hopeful that (as I have sometimes found in person-to-person conversation with Peter Hacker) there is room for a meeting of minds, for an alignment of grammars. It is unfortunate that these passages appear to be incompatible with the more-dominant

- line of thinking in Hacker, that is noted and laid out and critiqued especially in all the first four chapters of the present work, and (in more detail) in my previously published papers co-authored with Phil Hutchinson.
- 46 If Wittgensteinians succumb to this idea, there they are inadvertently echoing Saussure, Althusser, Raymond Williams, Lacan... And that would be regrettable. In order to take seriously what it is that motivates someone to state a thesis such as that grammar is autonomous (from reality) in the first place, one needs (rather) to take seriously that individuals are not trapped in linguistic structures that are inherent to their community, culture or even species. One has some freedom to avow or disavow the grammar one inherits; to 'change' it, or to suggest in an open case how it ought to be taken. It is bad faith, a denial of one's freedom, and of one's part in the continuation of philosophical delusion, to blame *language*. (And I note once more here that even Wittgenstein himself falls into that trap, not infrequently.)
- 47 *Not*: your only. Compare/contrast for example 457: "Yes: meaning is like going up to someone".
- 48 Roughly as analysed, expertly, by Hutchinson (2010).
- 49 Further such markers can be found in his talk of "Wittgenstein's views" (e.g. Hacker 2007, 94). Of course, Hacker is hardly alone in these fallings-short or confusions.
- 50 The crucial concept of an object of comparison in Wittgenstein's sense (cf. Chapter 5) in this connection thus connects directly with the crucial concept of a perspicuous presentation (as explored in Chapter 4).
- 51 For further clarification of what this means (and how it *can* create trouble), see Chapter 9 (and Chapter 4).
- 52 One's correction of the deviant pupil, the many ways in which (as Wittgenstein repeatedly emphasises) training, rote-learning etc. is frequently foundational for more sophisticated or philosophical language-use, is no counter-example to what I am saying here. The point is that at every point where a language-policing approach (whether offered by a so-called 'Ordinary Language' philosopher, or a Hackerian/'Oxford' Wittgensteinian, or whoever) attempts to resolve any matter *where there is actual or a genuinely potential dispute*, precisely there and then it will fail. It will give out at exactly the moment where it could actually be hoped to do some work; and where *work* is indeed needed.
- 53 For discussion, see the close of my and Hutchinson's "Therapy", which, though through a different metaphoric, partly anticipates this moment in the present work (Read & Hutchinson 2010).
- 54 This phrase is offered (as an object of criticism) in Cora Diamond's "Criss-Cross Philosophy" (Diamond 2004, 217). (And see also the early pages of Juliet Floyd's "Wittgenstein and the Ineffable" (Floyd 2007).) In relation to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, this inclination takes the form generally of failing to understand the crucial way in which the *Tractatus's* method is 'retail' or *piecemeal*, in that there is no global criterion of sense to apply, no global distinction of sense from nonsense held to by the author of the *Tractatus*. Diamond's paper is a brilliant critique of those who fail to see the true nature of Wittgenstein's later piecemeal approach, through for instance taking him to turn from a purported global/generalistic approach to meaning in the *Tractatus*, to another purported global approach to meaning, in the *Investigations*: namely, what Diamond calls "the dogmatic method of language-games." (See also n.55, and *supra!*).
- 55 See Read (2005a, 303). Language-game theory could also, pretty naturally, be considered a (genus or species of) 'use-theory'.

- 56 Baker in chapters 2, 3, and 13 of *BWM* specifically questions the assumption that there must be some sense in which Wittgenstein is telling us about the essence of language, in the *PI*. He does so in part by leaning on a powerful piece of evidence against this assumption: the actual, and oft-neglected, wording of *PI* 65.
- 57 For criticism specifically of the idea that perhaps Wittgenstein, early and late, enables us to see though not to say the nature of language, see the chapter on 'Language' in Read (2007a).
- 58 Cf. "What it looks as if ... we should look out" (*RFM* II, 41). (See also my discussion of "must" in philosophy, in Chapter 4.)
- 59 Or one might vary Wittgenstein's metaphor, and talk — more accurately, I think — of 'anarchism' instead. (Cf. Cipa (2005), which offers in this sense an 'anarchist' reading of the *Tractatus*).

For detailed discussion of the usefulness of overcoming the attraction of the assumption that Wittgenstein has 'views' *qua* philosopher, see Read and Deans (2011).

- 60 And, better still: with oneself.
- 61 And that is why much of my own work consists precisely in engaging directly with the desire to say strange or culturally-attractive-but-ultimately-(I-believe-)unclear things of people who are in practice doing philosophy, whether they be 'cognitive scientists' or political propagandists or what-have-you. See also Phil Hutchinson's *Shame and Philosophy* (2008), for a beautiful extended set of case-studies in this *genre*.
- 62 Compare here the following prescient passage, from Marx and Engels:

...The philosophers have only to dissolve their language into the ordinary language, from which it is abstracted, in order to recognise it, as the distorted language of the actual world, and to realise that neither thoughts nor language in themselves form a realm of their own, that they are only *manifestations* of actual life.

(Marx & Engels 1970)

- 63 There *is* no outside. Cf. *PI* 103 (dwelt on at some length in Chapter 4).
- 64 For, crucially, as Hutchinson, Sharrock and I display in *There Is No Such Thing as a Social Science*, it is an illusion to think that 'the' rules constantly underly our actions, just waiting to be exposed (Hutchinson et al. 2008). Rather, as Lucy Suchman puts it:

Situated action [...] is not made explicit by rules and procedures. Rather, when situated action becomes in some way problematic, rules and procedures are explicated for purposes of deliberation and the action, which is otherwise neither rule-based nor procedural, is then made accountable to them.

(Suchman 1987, 54)

This latter is roughly what is in play when, following Baker's and Cavell's Wittgenstein, one formulates the rules which one *acknowledges*.

- 65 Cf. the discussion of the wording of 133, in Chapter 5.
- 66 Compare in this connection this helpful remark:

An answer to the question: 'What is the meaning of a word?' would be: 'The meaning is simply what is explained in the explanation of the meaning'. This answer makes good sense. For we are less tempted to consider the words 'explanation of the meaning' with a bias than the word 'meaning' by itself. Common sense does not run away from us as easily

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when looking at the words 'explanation of the meaning' as at the sight of the word 'meaning'. We remember more easily how we actually use it.
(VoW, 161)

67 Cf. once more here *PI* 340:

One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to look at its use and learn from that. // But the difficulty is to remove the prejudice which stands in the way of doing this. It is not a *stupid* prejudice.

One is prevented by that prejudice from enjoying the ability to investigate how words are used. What is this prejudice, today, for *Wittgensteinians*? I think we could say that it is our image of ('the') grammar. As something that allegedly is superordinate to the authentic reflective 'account' someone might offer us of their apparently discrepant use of some term(s).

68 Cf. *PI* 139ff.

69 Early in "Wittgenstein: Concepts or Conceptions?", at *BWM* (262). Cf. also *BWM* (269).

70 Cf. Baker.: "A picture gives no information; hence no incorrect information. "Not facts; but as it were illustrated turns of speech" [*PI* 295]" (*BWM*, 264).

71 Just as I laid out in Chapter 1, in relation to this 'counter-picture'.

72 For detailed explication, see my book *Kuhn: Philosopher of Scientific Revolution* (Sharrock & Read 2002).

73 Due to an anonymous reviewer of this book in manuscript.

74 As I argued in Chapter 11 of *A Wittgensteinian Way with Paradoxes* (2012b), there is, *contra* various commentators including Hacker, a serious similarity between Wittgenstein and Zen, provided we understand Zen in a serious way, and not as a kind of set of quasi-Post-Modern jokes.

75 See the first portion of Chapter 5.

76 Thanks to Eugen Fischer for helpful comments on an earlier version of some of this material. And deep thanks to Alberto Emiliani for a reading of the chapter that helped me rework its emphasis further beyond Baker.

This chapter is based in significant part on a reworking of material co-written with Phil Hutchinson, without whom much of my thinking here would never have been possible... However, I should note that Hutchinson would not agree with some of my formulations here concerning the would-be liberator's task.

4 When Wittgenstein Speaks of ‘Everyday’ Language, He Means Simply *Language*

A Liberatory Reading of *PI* 95–124

We...change the aspect by placing side-by-side with *one* system of expression other systems of expression.—The bondage in which one analogy holds us can be broken by placing another [analogy] alongside which we acknowledge to be equally well justified.

(*TS*, 220: § 99: the manuscript source from which 122 originally emerged)

[Is it] nonsensical to talk of a locality where thought takes place? Certainly not. This phrase has sense if we give it sense.

(*BB*, 7)

Rather than focusing on a single section, this chapter offers a unified reading of and perspective on a central *sequence* in the heart of Wittgenstein’s consideration of how to conceive of and practise philosophy, 95–124. I endeavour here to explicate how, some appearances to the contrary, these passages need not be read as embodying theses, no matter of what kind. These sections rather are routes for ‘returning’ one to (ordinary) language (in its full, extreme, normative complexity, and sometimes heterogeneity or ‘undecidability’; in its creative open-endedness and negotiability), for example, to certain uses of terms such as “ordinary” or “everyday” which we can judge to be themselves not metaphysical. This helps one to realise how radical is Wittgenstein’s aim: to escape the elitism of philosophy’s standard setting itself up in judgement over ‘the ordinary’. (In this way, the present chapter directly succeeds the emphasis on this in the previous chapter, especially my allowing there that we can happily speak of Wittgenstein’s/‘our’ account of meaning, *provided* that this amounts to a gesture of handing on *to those who we are trying to understand*/to dialogue with. They of course (should) do us the same kindness; and then we can see a sense in which we might more deeply speak of *our* conception of meaning. A primacy of community, in its true senses (i.e. not as distorted by the likes of Kripke into a chaos of individual felt licences that at best happen to sync – as I shall set out in Chapters 8 and 9).)

Thus, Wittgenstein allows the ordinary to be. As it is.

The chapter begins with a brief discussion along the lines just indicated: a discussion, namely, of how the mode of reading Wittgenstein offered in the present work applies to terms such as “everyday” and “ordinary”; what is the ‘liberatory’ character of these terms and of the work they do for Wittgenstein? Having broadly established the way that that character is expressed, by way of its turning out that, when Wittgenstein uses those terms, he generally uses them in a certain sense without opposition (“ordinary language” is not some proprietary approved chunk of language), I work through sections 95–121 of *PI*, showing how they read according to this fashion, and dwelling especially on the extremely striking explicit liberatory metaphors of many of the great sections to be found (t)here. (*If you have time or attention to read only one part of this lengthy chapter, I'd urge you to read that part, 4.4, which delivers perhaps the most significant chunk of the chapter's 'cash-value'.*)

The chapter culminates in a reading of *PI* 122, wherein Wittgenstein famously wrote that “perspicuous presentation” is a concept of *fundamental* significance (*for us*). I offer a partly novel, liberatory, and anti-scientistic reading of 122 in the context of the preceding passages. This ‘account’ draws out the ethical and even political dimension of 122, as stressed for instance by Hans Sluga, in drawing direct attention to the real *dangers* of the aspiration for a *generalised* perspicuous presentation, a ‘world-view’ (especially, one that unjustly or prematurely smooths out heterogeneities, profound open-endednesses and contestations, within what we are ‘surveying’). I seek finally then to walk a middle way between later Baker’s pro-perspicuous-presentation and Sluga’s ‘anti’-perspicuous-presentation readings of and uses of Wittgenstein/of 122, suggesting that this is one moment in Wittgenstein’s text where, as one might put it, there is perhaps a genuine ‘polyphony’: we need not read Wittgenstein as choosing one only of these two readings.

4.1 Two Possible Sense of “Ordinary”

Wittgenstein is in practice generally thought to be a philosopher who takes ordinary language (as opposed to scientific language, to ‘technical’ language, or to its bastard child, ‘super-scientific’ (‘metaphysical’) language) to be our keystone, our starting-point, our *resource* in philosophy; and who thinks that philosophy can proceed therefore only by means of paying careful attention to the way we normally actually speak and prohibiting uses that conflict with the way we normally actually speak.

It is indeed true, and important, that Wittgenstein repeatedly denied, somewhat surprisingly, that he was himself extending the sense of words

such as “grammar” or “ordinary” or “everyday”. Consider the following well-known account of this, from Moore’s notes on Wittgenstein’s lectures:

With regard to the expressions “rules of grammar” or “grammatical rules” [Wittgenstein] pointed out..., where he first introduced the former expression, that when he said “grammar should not allow me to say ‘greenish-red’”, he was “making things belong to grammar, which are not commonly supposed to belong to it.”; and he went on immediately to say that the arrangement of colours in the colour-octahedron “is really a part of grammar, not of psychology”; that “There is such a colour as a greenish-blue” is “grammar”; and that Euclidean Geometry is also “a part of grammar”. ...[Wittgenstein] insisted at the time that he was using the expression [grammar] in its ordinary sense.

(PO 69)¹

And it’s true and important that in some sense, clearly, he repeatedly ‘appeals’ to how words are ‘ordinarily’ used. But Wittgenstein does *not* survey all ordinary language *en masse* and simply draw patterns or probabilities from it, and then use those to battle those usages that he does not approve of. If ordinary usage being appealed to as a quasi-sociological category with which to settle philosophical disputes, there would be either a crude sociologism, or a blatant cherry-picking, or some combination of both.

The true function of the appeal to ‘the ordinary’ becomes clear, once we see it as rather *already a normative category*. As a way of seeing (one way deliberately chosen from among others, for broadly liberatory purposes) or re-seeing what *we* do...²

This normativity of the ordinary as a category raises the criticality of what ‘ordinary/everyday language’ *is* taken to be *opposed* to. The first key point of this chapter is to suggest then, *contra* what still tends to be the prevailing wisdom, that the crucial mistake in ‘Wittgenstein studies’ has generally been to misidentify the contrast class that Wittgenstein intended.

But what can that contrast class possibly be, if it is not with some field of actual language? One might answer by saying that, in the end, what Wittgenstein means by “ordinary language” is mostly simply: language. As in *PI* 494, “I want to say: It is *primarily* the apparatus of our ordinary language, of our word-language, that we call language; and then other things by analogy or comparability with this.” Putting this together with 116–120, I will suggest we hear the point here as being about ordinary language as *simply language*³: as opposed to metaphysics; i.e. as opposed to (latent) nonsense ... i.e. as opposed to what is, from a resolute ‘point of view’, nothing at all.

4.2 "Everyday", as Opposed to What?

It is not sociological facts of usage with somehow an alleged crushing normative force that Wittgenstein 'reminds' one of. We might venture that one is not really reminded by Wittgenstein as if of a fact, not even a 'fact of grammar'; it is more like the kind of 'reminder' one experiences if and when (for instance) one has a near-death experience.⁴ Not exactly even the reminder that one is mortal. Rather, better still: the reminder *that one is alive*.⁵ Here, one might take succour from the Hacker-Schulte translation of 127: "The work of the philosopher consists in marshalling recollections for a particular purpose". The term "recollections" here, is, it seems to me, consonant with the later-Bakerian approach by virtue of being more *personal* than the term "reminders".

The kind of reminder in play here then is one which may deeply affect one. One wherein ground suddenly becomes figure, or the axis of (the character of) one's entire understanding pivots. Suddenly one can *attend* to things properly, can really see them. This is the kind of 'reminder' delivered e.g. by a suddenly *vivid* experience of something perfectly... ordinary.⁶ One's *way* of seeing has altered.

'Reminders' in Wittgenstein's sense don't add *up to* a theory nor even to an account.⁷ As Wittgenstein puts it, with compressed paradox, "You must say something new & yet nothing but what is old" (*C&V*, 45). What Wittgensteinian 'recollections' remind you of is only what you need to know in order to be freed up; nothing that *stands* as a would-be fixed point,⁸ nothing immune to a further turn of the liberatory dialectic.

So reminders are not contrastive. (And after all, there isn't anything that it could be to be reminded that one is dead.)

So there is not a genuine contrast-class, between what Wittgenstein is seeking to remind us of and some viable possible alternative. Everyday vs. metaphysical is a distinction with a 'liberatory' purpose. The purpose is to become liberated from capture by the temptation of metaphysics. We find what that liberation amounts to in the warp and weft of coming to see the temptation as one.

The (Wittgensteinian) distinction between ordinary or everyday on the one hand and metaphysical on the other is a distinction *that* subserves a 'liberatory' purpose that in turn it helps to fill out. In itself, the distinction is of no moment. It is *not an attempt to categorise or theorise language* – though it will doubtless often be *heard* as such (as it nearly always was for instance even from the mouth of one as subtle and as innovatively inheritative of Wittgenstein as Austin); and working through the inclination so to hear it will itself doubtless be of philosophical worth... And the purpose is what we need to keep focused on: the purpose being, to focus one's attention on one's target in philosophy. Namely: 'Uses' of language that are *systematically* unclear, and that are not satisfying even to their purveyors.

As Baker remarks:

[T]he parameters of describing the meaning (or use) of expressions are themselves open to negotiation and renegotiation. This freedom is constantly exploited [by Wittgenstein and others practitioners of 'our method']: the freedom to choose different forms of representation of our language (of our form of representation). [[Footnote:]] In this important respect, our method openly rejects one of the procedural norms of modern science: it does **not** demand uniformity in describing the grammar of our language.

(BWM, 194)⁹

So, it is as you please. But: You must take responsibility for what you do. Including, crucially: for the ways you use words.¹⁰ As Wittgenstein takes responsibility for the provocative use he makes of the words "ordinary"/"everyday" in speaking of our life with language, juxtaposing them principally to "metaphysics"/"nonsense", rather than to (say) "scientific"/"technical", and in that sense relying on the unfolding of the strange concept(s) of "metaphysical"/"nonsensical" to *teach* us what he means by "ordinary"/"everyday".

This latest remark might seem paradoxical. Well, yes; it can reasonably be seen as paradoxical, and deliberately so: precisely because the category of the "ordinary" and of the "everyday" in Wittgenstein, especially in *PI*, turns out, as I am showing, to be in one sense more complex and strange than philosophers and exegetes have supposed. It is decisively *not*, I have stressed, some kind of socio-linguistic category. Instances of the ordinary (as Cavell has also stressed) are not identifiable by inspection as opposed to other things. The distinction between the ordinary and the metaphysical is in this regard a little like the Fregean distinction between objects and concepts: anytime you think that you have spotted a case of one which can be directly compared to the other, you have erred, by bringing the two concepts (i.e. *concept* and *object*) too close to one another (Read 2012b, chapter 1). You are then not making different enough. And not making different enough, not teaching differences, is a form of captivity to scientism or metaphysics.

When something escapes our attention through over-familiarity (cf. 129: "One is unable to notice something – because it is always before one's eyes"), it controls and imprisons us. What Wittgenstein draws attention to is not one thing rather than another, and certainly not some set of resources that can then be wheeled in to solve our philosophical difficulties for us. He re-minds us, eventually. Of our life with language; with each other.

In a way that inevitably and rightly preserves (y)our freedom. Take 142: "It is only in normal cases that the use of a word is clearly prescribed; we

know, are in no doubt, what to say...". Just such knowledge is precisely what is ever in doubt, in the practice of philosophy. We are no longer in the realm of the "prescribed" (nor, *contra* received 'Wittgensteinian' 'wisdom', of the *proscribed*); we have a freedom that we are 'condemned' to / commended to.

Ordinary/everyday language is what lies between us. And it is in that sense open to us: both to view and to change. My line of thought in this chapter thus continues the thinking of Chapters 2 and 3: when we remember the primarily second-personal character not just of philosophy but of life, then the paradoxes that can otherwise seem to bamboozle or constrain us eventually evaporate.

4.3 Beyond the Concept of 'Example'

Why have I given so few examples of ordinary or everyday language (so far) in this chapter? Has this chapter not so far been slightly...abstract? Un-ordinary?

But the very term "example" here is a misnomer, in its implication that there is content prior to the examples, that 'examples' only ever illustrate something greater than themselves, a generalisation that they instantiate. *This* is the very kind of assumption that a properly Wittgensteinian emphasis on ordinary language will overcome...

This chapter is designed to subserve a liberatory purpose, and in trying to subserve that purpose, and to liberate oneself and others from the compulsion to seek a solid guarantee of what words mean (in order, one in effect fantasises, to save one from the hard work of actually doing the needful self-examination), I have taken the necessary risk of using a few odd modes of expression, of engaging in metaphorical and even conceivably metaphysical uses ('uses')... For what is the alternative? We could stick resolutely to using what is without doubt ordinary language (cf. *TLP* 6.53), but this would be unlikely to be satisfying/effective. Or we could stick strictly to pointing out would-be instances of metaphysics (cf. again *TLP* 6.53), but this would still not quite satisfactorily amount to what Wittgenstein is after when, as he does in *PI* 116 etc., he invokes and utilises terms such as "everyday" language.

Why, in sum, have I thus far given so few 'examples' of ordinary/everyday language in this chapter? One might risk the following reply: Because, in context,¹¹ *everything* is ordinary. (This is the way we look at things.¹²) Everything that *is* anything, is ordinary. There is thus no such thing as proprietarily pointing to *the* everyday (nor *the* grammar).¹³ To do so would be as absurd as trying to point to one's visual field, or to point out the universe. Or as trying to describe normal vision as if doing so were an enterprise relevantly similar to describing being deprived of it.

"The everyday" is itself as everyday a concept as the universe (that is: perfectly so); but, ironically, if it is to be fully useful in freeing us, it needs

to be heard sometimes as a 'non-everyday' 'category'. A 'transitional' category.¹⁴ It shares something in common with metaphysics, in that is *not* some-things-rather-than-others... So, if we cannot example the everyday by contrast with anything else, is not the only option still available to proceed after all simply by giving 'examples' of metaphysical uses of language? But the scare-quotes cannot be dropped: because in truth *there are not any* such. Metaphysics is an aspiration or a falling only. It is *not* an achievement-term... (Compare and contrast "perspicuous presentation", as discussed in Section 4.5.)

What Wittgenstein means by "ordinary language" and the like is (usually) simply: language. Language, as opposed to metaphysics, i.e. as opposed to nonsense, i.e. as opposed to *nothing at all*.

But let's check the conception that I have outlined. Let's consider the actual progress of Wittgenstein's reflections on these matters...

4.4 A Liberatory Reading of 95–121

We can now *see* the heart of Wittgenstein's lengthiest continuous considerations on the nature of philosophy in the *Investigations* (in the light of the proposals I have outlined earlier). This heart can now be seen as entering deeply into our desires to be entangled in 'metaphysics', and as facilitating a disentanglement. For what I outlined earlier is a way of understanding what Wittgenstein is about, in these sections. That way will, as we shall see, issue in roughly the following progress:

- > Wittgenstein sets out to *inhabit metaphysics* with us. That is, to take seriously its (constrictive) pull upon one; to enter into it.
- > Then, to *free* one from 'it'; by coming to terms with the idea (even: the reality, that one does not want to come to terms with) that there is no '*it*', there's no *there* there.
- > Rather, there is just (ordinary) language, 'just' (everyday) life, plus our desire for there to be something 'deeper'. The motivation to see something deeper is a way of trying to avoid all the complexity and difficulties unavoidably present in our complicated form(s) of life.
- > If our work of freeing works, then, "the philosophical problems should *completely* disappear" (133; see the chapter after this one, 5, for discussion of how to take this).
- > Throughout, Wittgenstein claims no superiority, and helps himself to no alleged resources that can settle these matters out of hand. In Baker's words:

Analogical descriptions of grammar stand *on the same level* as the unexamined analogies which they are intended to displace in dissolving philosophical problems.... Conscious analogies and comparisons are useful tools for curing diseases of the intellect,

whereas unconscious ones generate insoluble problems by exercising an imperceptible tyranny over our thinking.
(BWM, 34)¹⁵

The 'medicine' is of the same order as the dis-ease; freedom comes from judicious use of the same materials that trapped one.

I will now work through 95–124, showing what I think one may now see of all this, in some detail, no longer 'hidden', in this crucial heartland of Wittgenstein's greatest text.

95–97

I begin with 95 (not, as is more conventional, with 89 or 81), for the following reason: *This* is where Wittgenstein begins a profound analysis of what I call the 'metaphysical *'must'*'. Not the more famous 'logical *'must'*', though there is a key connection between the two, as will emerge.

At *RFM* VI, Wittgenstein remarks in self-interrogatory style, "What you say seems to amount to this, that logic belongs to the natural history of man. And that is not compatible with the hardness of the logical *'must'*" (49). His task hereabouts is to provide possibilities to enable one to escape the felt incompatibility between logic as something that humans do on the one hand and the hardness of the logical *'must'* – the necessity of logic which is such that in the *Tractatus* he went so far as to call it the only necessity – on the other.¹⁶ Wittgenstein does not want to *diminish* the hardness of the logical *'must'*¹⁷; as ever, there is no revisionism here. He is *not* saying something like "logic is *reducible* to human practices, which could be *completely* different".¹⁸

The metaphysical *'must'* is a different matter. It seduces us (cf. *PI* 93) into thinking that something extraordinary and deep and essential is going on; it *masquerades as* a/the logical *must*, but is actually a felt compulsion on which we need to *work*. Compare this salient remark:

"But I have to understand a command in order to be able to follow it." Here the "must" is suspicious. If this really is a must — I mean, if it is a logical must — then we're dealing with a grammatical remark.
(*BT*, 14)

This remark directly supports what I have just said (as does *TLP* 6.37, a crucial passage for resolute readers of Wittgenstein). Wittgenstein, when speaking, roughly, *in propria persona*, seeks to reserve the term "must" (the idea of necessity) in philosophy, insofar as he uses rather than mentions the term, for *logical* musts.¹⁹ Metaphysical *'musts'* by contrast are would-be impositions, of which we should be suspicious. And the scope

of this point is wider than might be supposed: bear in mind Baker's indication that such metaphysical musts can actually be disguised, in Wittgensteinians, as mere uncontroversial 'grammatical observations' that all allegedly 'must' accept:

The 'musts' and 'cannots' that are characteristic of grammatical dogmas pick out what Wittgenstein calls 'the metaphysical uses of our words', and they illustrate what Wittgenstein meant by claiming that pictures hold us captive or that similes (or analogies) are embedded in our language. There is nothing wrong with these analogies in themselves; they are not to be repudiated or discarded. Rather, the 'patient' needs to learn to recognise these analogies *as* analogies, hence to resist the temptation to suppose that they reveal the essences of things; for example, there are similarities between propositions and pictures which are worth following up.

(BWM, 157)²⁰

Compare here also Waismann's helpful remark (*HISP*, 21) that philosophy essentially involves the making of *decisions* (*resolutions*, commitments). (The full importance of this will be seen in Chapter 7.) Waismann goes on:

And this makes the philosophical procedure so unlike a logical one. He [the one seeking to do philosophy] compares, for instance, the case before him with analogous ones and has to judge how far these analogies hold. That is, it is for him to decide how far he is willing to accept these analogies: he has not, like a slave, to follow blindly in their track.

While freeing ourselves from the logical 'must' is a delusive project of Anti-Realism (i.e. a classic form of metaphysical delusion),²¹ freeing ourselves from the metaphysical '*must*' is a key project of liberatory philosophy. The difference between the two "musts" is sometimes marked by Wittgenstein's italicising and/or scare-quoting the metaphysical one (see e.g. 101, discussed below).

Instead of *metaphysical* musts, Wittgenstein offers *conceptions* (see the discussion of 122, below).²² As Katherine Morris puts it, "Wittgenstein is not in the business of opposing one dogma by another: e.g. opposing 'The meaning of a word *must* be the object for which it stands' with 'The meaning of a word *must* be its use'" (BWM, 9). This is a striking, freeing comparison. I hope the reader can see how it pulls together (or rather: anticipates) considerations that were marshalled in Chapters 1–3.²³ Wittgensteinian perspicuity *is not a matter of setting out how things 'must' be; au contraire*, it is a matter precisely of *freeing* one from assumptions of how things '*must*' be!

Here then is 95:

“Thought must be something unique”. When we say, and *mean* that such-and-such is the case, we—and our meaning—do not stop anywhere short of the fact; but we mean: *this-is-so*. But this paradox (which has the form of a truism) can also be expressed in this way: *Thought* can be of what is *not* the case.

It is sometimes claimed that 81–133 and other similar remarks in *PI* are relatively ‘flat-footed’ compared to the rest of the text, in that they simply state Wittgenstein’s own way of seeing philosophy itself, and thus cop out of the full dialectic of temptation and correctness that much of the text yields. There is *something* to this claim: when Wittgenstein offers up his conception of philosophy, he is, roughly, offering what *we* do, how we ‘see’ things. And thus sometimes, *within* the ambit of “our method”, there is an unhedged assertoric forthrightness to his remarks in this genre, compared to the more dialogical approach typical elsewhere, or to the actual ‘modality’ and hedgedness (recall what we saw in 43, in the previous chapter) of what are sometimes (wrongly) claimed to be his doctrinal (or grammatical!) *claims*.²⁴ However, the extraordinarily rich remark that I have just quoted, 95, manifests with extremity the tendency of so much of Wittgenstein’s text, even within 81–133, and *especially* in fact in the sequence from 95 to 107²⁵ (wherein he frequently more or less *dwells* in the land of metaphysical temptation, getting its full measure of pull upon him and you and me), to show how the claim (of ‘flat-footedness’ in Wittgenstein’s ‘metaphilosophical’ remarks) just mentioned does serious injustice to Wittgenstein. Sections 95–107 include some of Wittgenstein’s most difficult remarks that have been widely misunderstood (or, often, simply passed over), precisely because they tarry with the nonsensical.²⁶ They express much that Wittgenstein certainly does not wish simply to state (though their expression is also his expression, as someone subject to the felt ‘force’ of such ideas).

95 begins (“Thought must be something unique”) with a classic example of the kind of thing we are inclined to say, when we are in the grip of a thought-constraining ‘metaphysical *‘must’*”. Wittgenstein, in responding to this, does not (as an ‘elucidatory’ or ‘doctrinal’ thinker might expect) correct it by offering instead a ‘grammatical truth’ or an opposing thesis. He rather explores why it is that we feel compelled to say things such as that thought *must* be something unique. Not just that it might be, but that it ‘must’ be (Note here *PI* 599: “In philosophy we do not draw conclusions. “But it must be like this!” is not a philosophical proposition. Philosophy only states what everyone admits.”). His exploration *partakes* nevertheless of the quality of the inclination, the felt compulsion. That is, it involves some honest remembrance or confession, and plainly presses up against the limits of language. “*This-is-so*”:

this is *strikingly* reminiscent of the kinds of formulations offered in the *Tractatus*, such as the picturing picture of meaning,²⁷ or, still more, the general form of the proposition: “This is how things stand” (TLP 4.5). (The italics in the second sentence of 95 suggest our tendency to want to give a ‘metaphysical emphasis’ to some words that we find ourselves as-if-forced towards, in philosophy: this is an expression of the power over us of the metaphysical ‘*must*’. Which is another way of saying: *we* actually allow, even create, this power. We must take responsibility for it and for freeing ourselves from it.) This is why Wittgenstein makes the paradoxical remark, concerning the second sentence of 95, that “this paradox...has the form of a truism”.²⁸ We feel as if we are stating something that *has* to be: something that *could not* be other than true.²⁹ But actually this ‘statement’ is paradoxical; for have we actually succeeded in saying *anything at all*, when we ‘say’, so emphatically, “*This-is-so!*”? Unless, that is, we were actually to say – mean – something *specific* by it. Recall that in 134 Wittgenstein will go on to write:

Let us examine the proposition: “This is how things are”.— How can I say that this is the general form of propositions?—It is first and foremost *itself* a proposition, an English sentence.... But how is that sentence applied—that is, in our everyday language? For I got it from there and nowhere else. // We may say, e.g.: “He explained his position to me, said that this was how things were, and that therefore he needed an advance”. So far, then, one can say that that sentence stands for any statement. It is employed as a propositional *schema*, but *only* because it has the construction of an English sentence.

“This-is-so” is employed as a propositional *schema*. We may then think we are saying something of perfect generality by means of it; but we are not yet saying anything at all (And *this* is exactly what Wittgenstein says in 96). In striving for perfect generality we take the expression (e.g. “This is how things are”) out of its *home* (Cf. again 116 as well as 134). In seeking perfect generality, we are failing to achieve any saying at all, however strongly or earnestly we might emphasise the words making up the proposition, as in the desperate italicisation of “*This-is-so!*” – and the equally desperate exclamation-mark. The emphasis, however full-on it becomes, will not get us any further; unless we actually commit ourselves to meaning *something*, something specific, by this English sentence. We are as it were stuck within a propositional form, failing to see that form is nothing without use. The metaphysician has failed to spell out a specific use. A *use*.

From 95 to 121, “must” (“muss”) occurs 22 times. Over half of these occurrences are critical. Moreover, between 95 and 103, I would argue that every single occurrence of “must” is to some degree deliberately doubtful, or critical. By which I mean, these are occurrences where

Wittgenstein wants to place a serious critical question-mark over them, rather than simply being moments where he is genuinely and unreservedly employing the word “must” to characterise what we do when we practise philosophy according to our method (An example of *the latter*, that we have already seen, occurs in 116: “...one must always ask oneself: is [a philosopher’s word] ever actually used in this way in the language, which is its home?”). Though, as I have just urged, it would be far too crude to see most occurrences of a metaphysical ‘must’ in Wittgenstein merely as mentions, purely as objects of criticism as if from outside. On the contrary, a number of these occurrences, especially from 95 to 107, are, I have suggested, well and truly *inhabited*. This is again *how* Wittgenstein’s thinking and writing are involved in a project of resoluteness: ‘paradoxically’, *by means of* employment of *transitional* remarks, hopefully-transitional nonsense. The transition is *away* from something one is encouraging seeing/seeming to be nonsensical. And towards where one already is: in practice. The transition is not then one that arrives at a new definite place, which would tacitly be a new dogma. Wittgenstein is in the best sense Socratic here: there is *no knowing* where one arrives. ‘It’ is (in the way I will set out in Chapter 7) a space of change and conversation, like our lives.

Wittgenstein feels the pull of the metaphysical ‘must’, and takes it that a reader who does not is one who is not getting the difficulty of philosophy. Not feeling the power of the pull to entrap oneself, or at least to remain comfortably in traps which have long been invisible to one.

Take 97:

Thought is surrounded by a halo.—Its essence, logic, presents an order, in fact the *a priori* order of the world: that is, the order of *possibilities*, which must be common to both world and thought. But this order, it seems, must be utterly simple. It is *prior* to all experience, must run through all experience; no empirical cloudiness or uncertainty can be allowed to affect it—It must rather be of the purest crystal.

Wittgenstein is here vividly *expressing* a powerful, historically-very-influential philosophical picture. (A picture that seems non-optional, a *must*. That sense of compulsion, once more, is what Wittgenstein is seeking in time to help himself and ourselves out of.³⁰) Indeed, he appears in 97 to suggest directly that this picture gripped the author of the *Tractatus*.

On the one hand, I think he risks being too hard here on his earlier work, as he so often was on himself; *TLP* 5.5563 does not quite assert, on my reading of it, that the crystalline purity that he sets up in 97 is the hardest or most concrete thing that there is *in the sense that seems implied in 97*, but rather Wittgenstein submits there (in 5.5563) that our problems have to do with our actual, tangible, “concrete” language,

not some ideal purified phantasm (cf. *PI* 100, as discussed immediately below). For, as he says in 5.5563, "All propositions of our colloquial language are actually, just as they are, logically completely in order." It is *realising* that (and *how* one realises it – see below) that is the real philosophical task.

On the other hand, of course this picture surely *did* tend to grip the author of the *Tractatus*; for after all, Wittgenstein still feels its pull, now. As surely do we all.

98–102

The worry that Wittgenstein pursues in 98–102 is at its best not, as I read it, a blunt attack on his earlier work, but rather a highly-sophisticated worry to have about the *Tractatus* (and works written similarly in this regard: i.e. overly influenced by a hidden metaphysical 'must'). It concerns *how* the author of the *Tractatus* had gone about realising the – wonderfully would-be resolute – thought that all propositions of our colloquial language are actually, just as they are, logically completely in order. The thought first put forward in *TLP* 5.5563 is expressed clearly in 98. I mean that pretty literally: we could see 98 with profit as a clarification or re-interpretation of 5.5563:

On the one hand it is clear that every sentence in our language is "in order as it is". That is to say, we are not *striving after* an ideal, as if our ordinary vague sentences had not yet got a quite unexceptionable sense, and a perfect language awaited construction by us.—On the other hand it seems clear that were there is sense there must be perfect order.—So there must be perfect order even in the vaguest sentence.

The final sentence here can seem unexceptionable. It can, indeed, seem a way of being 'on-side' with our ordinary colloquial language, a way of being a philosopher of the ordinary. Wittgenstein is quite clear here, in 98, that the author of the *Tractatus* was no ideal-language theorist. Standard interpretations of *TLP* fail woefully to do justice to it because they fail to appreciate the sophistication of the level at which Wittgenstein was already working in that work, and thus the level at which he later needed to critique his earlier work. 5.5563 is a standing rebuttal to virtually every interpretation of the *Tractatus* prior to the resolute readings, and 98 helps us see this clearly.

But the problem is that 5.5563 still risked complicity with a hidden metaphysical 'must'; because of *its continued complicity with the very notion of perfect or complete logical order itself*. 'Ironically', later Wittgenstein is absolutely not criticising early Wittgenstein for being too hard on our ordinary language-games. No; Wittgenstein is gloriously

consistent, throughout his career, in holding that, as I put it in the title of this chapter, what we call “everyday language” is simply: language. Our actual language, as opposed to metaphysical sweet nothings (They might *sound* nice, but that is all³¹). If anything, later Wittgenstein’s criticism is almost the opposite; he is worried that the *Tractatus*, by allowing every one of our actual sentences to ‘pass muster’ equally, by working to fend off the traditional philosophical valorisation of the ideal over the actual in the way that it does, does not allow us to distinguish between our sentences in the various ways we actually do, and thus that there is a sense in which the *Tractatus* remains an entrapping work for our intellects. It is the criticism he offers over and over, in *PI*, of *TLP*: that the author of the *Tractatus* should have had a richer diet, should have actually considered a wider variety of cases and of language-games than he allowed himself to do, should not have appeared methodologically and thus perhaps metaphysically to have little interest in the actual everyday. He is criticising the *Tractatus* for placing all our language-games on the same scale(s); for continuing to believe that ‘logical order’ was one, constant thing. For setting up too uniform a way of appraising all our linguistic activities. Never mind that the *Tractatus* is willing to appraise “all propositions of our colloquial language” equally highly; the problem is the compulsion to engage in the appraisal at such a level of abstraction, at all. It is *that* deep methodological commitment that the author of the *Tractatus* still needed freeing from.

Thus we should *not* actually be lulled into thinking that the two final sentences of 98 are unexceptionable. What “seems” clear actually is less than clear. And the claim that “there *must* be perfect order even in the vaguest sentence” is a classic for-instance of the metaphysical must.

And just that thought is what Wittgenstein proceeds to develop, in 99–102. 99 asks us to imagine a situation where there is an enclosure with a hole in it and notes our propensity to leap to the conclusion that such an enclosure is useless. But it is easy actually to imagine situations in which it is far from useless: e.g. if the hole is rather small; or perhaps if one wants the being who is enclosed to have the seeming option of exit. The *Tractatus* encourages us to see perfect order in vague sentences. A wonderful piece of praise for ordinary language. But too wonderful, too gloss-y. In this key regard, *the author of the Tractatus was too dogmatic a fan of Ordinary Language!*

101 elucidates the criticism of the *Tractatus* and of similar conceptions further. In seeming to praise or exculpate ordinary language, the picture unconsciously forming *TLP* 5.5563 still tacitly projects an ideal, unnecessarily, *into* ordinary language. 101 basically gives one my conception, of the metaphysical ‘*must*’ on a platter, and repeatedly:

We want to say that there can’t be any vagueness in logic. The idea now absorbs us, that the ideal ‘must’ be found in reality. Meanwhile

we do not as yet see how it occurs there, nor do we understand the nature of this “must”. We think it must be in reality; for we think we already see it there.³²

This “must” we ‘cannot’ understand (while continuing to be held by it); for it dissolves upon understanding. (Similarly with the “can’t” in the first line. This is a “[metaphysical] must not”; Wittgenstein has already set up the mode in which we can deflate it, of course, back in 67–88.)

103

103 is one of my very favourite passages in all *PI*. It is if anything even richer than 95 or 97. (Again, it is intriguing and perhaps a little worrying how little it has tended to be discussed.) 103 begins with the continued positing that everything ‘must’ in fact instantiate the ideal; a potential defect, as we have just seen, in the *Tractatus*, in regard to its (excessive) praising of everyday colloquial language for allegedly doing so.

The opening sentences of 103 manifest with quite extraordinary vivacity the phenomenology of being gripped by the power of ‘the ideal’. What is so very striking is the way in which Wittgenstein employs mutually-incompatible metaphors to express this phenomenology: “You can never get outside [‘the ideal’]; you must always turn back. There is no outside; outside you cannot breathe.” At least three separate, clashing accounts right there (in that short space) of the nature of the problem: you can never get outside; there *is* no outside; you can get outside but you can’t breathe there. Why the clash?³³ Because we are dealing here with something that presents as a limit to *our* power (we might imagine (that we imagine) God being able to *see* the logical form that all sentences share), but that is *not* a limit in the way that actual limits have two ordinary sides. So our attempts to express it needs...must always seem inadequate. We pile them one on top of another, in a desperate effort to ‘do justice to’ something which no justice can be done to, because it fails in the final analysis even to exist. When we manage to let go of the imperial power of ‘the ideal’ of perfect order everywhere, that *is* seeing that there need be nothing of the kind that we tried to imagine (and tried abortively to state) saturating all language. Rather, there are various distinctions that we can make, for particular purposes, as we go about inhabiting our life-world: this sentence is vague, that one less so (relative to the expectations of one’s listener); this one vague in certain respects, that one in different respects; this one useless for the purpose, that one somewhat more useful, this one adequate ‘even though’ not conforming to a certain arbitrary pre-existing standard, that other one perfectly adequate (for the purpose), *this* one extremely elegant, that one “just perfect”; and so on, endlessly.

The closing three sentences of 103 offer of course an explicit metaphor for being freed up, relative to the vision-narrowing grip a concept of

ever-present purity has on us. The idea of the ideal “is like a pair of spectacles on our nose through which we see whatever we look at. It never occurs to us to take them off.” But take them off we can; albeit usually with considerably more difficulty than the metaphor provocatively intimates (seeking to read Wittgenstein charitably, we might hazard that your being able to take them off if and when you need to is the real ideal one seeks: for discussion, see my take on 133, in Chapter 5).

The realisation that Wittgenstein offers here is quintessentially freeing. The picture is no longer compulsory; we can see (that we can see) *through* it, in both senses (we see *via* it, *and* we can learn to see not via it); its ideological power is thereby dissolved, or at least sapped.³⁴

What we thought *must* be the case, we might even say, turns out on closer inspection to resolve into the standing possibility that we can potentially clarify things whenever we need to. ‘The ideal’ as something unshakable, permanent, is not necessary, once we’ve realised that – if we ever go wrong – if we ever fail to communicate adequately, in everyday discourse or philosophy alike, this failure can be repaired. That’s all that we need.

One source of the strength of ‘the ideal’ was the (not wholly unreasonable) presumption that in logic there can be no vagueness. But this turns out to be a reasonable *paradigm*, not something that *must* be the case (For we can broaden the term “logic” to apply where we will often say that there plainly is vagueness, such as certain ordinary non-technical or non-rule-determined practices). As ever, what appeared metaphysically compulsory is not so unless we dogmatically insist on its being so.

104–107

The (liberatory) import of 104 is primarily in its second sentence: “Impressed by the possibility of a comparison, we think we are perceiving a state of affairs of the highest generality.” One is gripped by a picture that one thinks that the world itself forces upon us. Then one sees examples in a distorted light. Any awkwardness of fit is (then) taken to mean that the metaphysical picture which one is enraptured by applies at a ‘deeper’ level.

I have discussed already the would-be “state of affairs of the highest generality”. We may have been almost literally impressed (as with the pressing of a design into a piece of pottery that someone is moulding, leaving an impress)³⁵; what should present to us as a comparison – and the realisation that what is in play *is a comparison* is one which itself can free us up³⁶ – rather presses hard and unnoticed upon us as if it were a deep substantive truth that we are discovering (cf. *PI* 111). It seems to press us to say things that fail to add up to something that we can make consistent sense out of. We are finding what we have been struck by to be ‘impressive’ even where it does not well fit. The picture becomes a

lens through which we get stuck seeing. Thus “We predicate of the thing what lies in the method of representing it”. One compared ordinary language to “games and calculi which have fixed rules” (104 connects back directly to *PI* 81), and thus stood on “the very brink of a misunderstanding”; now, that misunderstanding takes the form of insisting that ordinary language *must* have such fixed rules even if one cannot at first see them.³⁷ That ordinary language must (as discussed re 98, above) *already* be ideal in such a way.

Thus 105: “When we believe that we must find that order, must find the ideal, in our actual language, we become dissatisfied with what are ordinarily called “propositions”, “words”, “signs.” Again, the felt hardness of the metaphysical ‘*must*’ that admits of no other option. Because we think that what there is to say about (even: in would-be praise of) our (ordinary) language ought somehow to – must – abstract from the *distinctions* that we make between various propositions, etc. Those variegated and varying distinctions, the existence of the kind of differences that were among those that (‘following’ Shakespeare’s *Lear*) Wittgenstein wishes in this book to teach, seem somehow arbitrary, not deep enough, not “pure and clear-cut”, regrettably not “extremely subtle” (cf. *PI* 106).

107 makes starkly clear the liberatory stakes of the struggle one is engaged in, hereabouts: “The more closely we examine actual language, the greater becomes the conflict between it and our requirement. (For the crystalline purity of logic was, of course, not a *result of investigation*: it was a requirement.)”. We set down a requirement; though its nature seemed to come to us unbidden from the very structure of reality. The requirement radically constrained our options; while seeming to connote – to *be* – simply how things (at the deepest possible level) are. It is time to let go of the requirement and to take in that there are other possibilities. Including those conditional upon conducting a philosophical investigation which does not limit one radically, by presupposing its own results. And this presupposing is why metaphysics is so radically unlike science, despite the aspirations of some philosophers.

Thus 107 marks a bit of turning-point, a pivot-point; from 108 onward, Wittgenstein will inhabit one’s compulsion for ‘the ideal’ a little less, and seek to promote his brand of philosophical investigation a little more.

The close of 107 thus brings the sequence from 95 (or, looking a little wider, the sequence that began in 89, with the question, “In what sense is logic something sublime?”) to a kind of close: “Back to the rough ground!” From 108 onward, we are exposed to more of what Wittgenstein’s own conception of philosophical investigation actually is.³⁸ In its full ‘deflationary’ character. In the first portion of this chapter, I already said quite a bit about this. In working now through 108–121, we focus primarily on the quite explicitly *liberatory* dimensions of these passages.

108 can now, I believe, appear very clearly to us. It concerns how one can (how one ought to) preserve the logical 'must', while giving up blind adherence to the metaphysical 'must'. "The *preconceived* idea of crystalline purity can only be removed by turning our whole examination round." Away with (such) preconception, which makes autonomy impossible; instead, we examine everything (this is philosophy, after all), including what presents to us as unexaminable, a 'must' too deep for excavation. This is a new, *true* rigour. This approach is corrective of what is so unrigorous (even irresponsible) in metaphysics.

For now uses of pictures become an explicit object of investigation rather than what frames. Holding pictures up against examples and comparing for both similarity and dissimilarity is a way to do this. It shifts the significance of the pictures. (This points forward to the 'object of comparison' conception, which I will come to explicitly soon now, in Chapter 5.)

In undertaking such investigations, we seek to recollect the workings of language, "*in despite of an urge*" on our parts "to misunderstand" those workings. The German word here, in 109, is actually "Trieb", or "drive" – which, strikingly, is the word most employed by Freud, in relation to the "drives" which, too often, compel or 'run' us. Of course, some of these urges are natural, and we shouldn't be blamed for falling into them. But we can justly be blamed for not being serious enough about getting out of them. In part, we are in this regard often unserious because (as I argued in Chapter 1) we want things to be simple/pure, even when we are old enough to know better.

Our language is so complicated that we are bound to get lost in it. But staying lost indefinitely is less easy to defend.

Philosophy works, by means of language, to battle our intelligence's "bewitchment" by language (109). Cavell writes, "The aim of philosophy's battle, being a dispelling - of bewitchment, of fascination - is, we could say, freedom of consciousness, the beginning of freedom" (Cavell 1989, 55). The metaphor of bewitchment is one of our culture's most powerful ways of expressing an unwanted entrapment that, typically, one has done something to deserve, or at least to cause / to allow to be brought about, or at minimum to allow to continue.

"Language (or thought) is something unique" – this proves to be a superstition (not a mistake!)..." (110). 'Superstition' evokes a very powerful picture of how one is entrapped by dogmas which, again, are not simply imposed upon one from without; bear in mind that any idea hereabouts that one is a complete victim (the idea imposed by the impression, sometimes given by Wittgenstein and often by his interpreters, that one is powerless in the face of language's 'own' power to bemuse) is *itself* a denial of agency and thus an expression of heteronomous bad faith.

Mistakes are what one can simply *correct*. If the 'voice of correctness' were merely telling us what the actual grammar is (as 'elucidatory' readers typically suppose), then there would be no harm or risk of mischief in talk here of "mistake[s]". But it *does* do mischief; the concept of a superstition is better, because it comes far closer to capturing the phenomenology: of a *difficult* process of attaining *liberation* from "grammatical *illusions*".

112 caps the sequence of metaphors with a stark liberatory summing up of how we can become entrapped by hidden similes and metaphors: "“But *this* isn't how it is!” – we say. “Yet *this* is how it has to be!” When it looks as if something *has* to be, *must* be, we should look out.”³⁹

113–115

113 opens with another of these expressions of metaphysical capture: "“But *this* is how it is _____” I say to myself over and over again.” Compare “*This-is-so*”, as analysed earlier. And 114 repeats the gesture, worrying that the *Tractatus* was vulnerable to the charm of seeming to penetrate to the essence of things, when all that one was doing was inadvertently expressing one's commitment to a world-view (On the concept of which, see my discussion of 122).

A liberatory reading of Wittgenstein need hardly labour over the justly famous 115, a lynchpin remark for my book:

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.

I will comment that we should note the occurrence of “we” and “us” here. This indexes a pretty general phenomenon of philosophical capture, running to encompass all those of us in need (whether or not we are aware of that need) of pursuing “our method” in philosophy.⁴⁰ And I'll note too, once more, that it would be a falling away from Wittgenstein's labours thus far to think that the picture can be blamed upon language as if language 'itself' and never us were to blame for this state of captivity. For note again: “it lay in our language”. It lay, as we might put it, in language as we found it, as we inhabited it, before *investigating* it. (It lay – it lies – in what *we say*; here, once more, one appreciates the helpful later-Bakerian translation of “Die Sprache” as “what we say”.)

The word “seemed” here in 113 confirms my reading. Our language *seemed* to repeat something to us inexorably. Well; did our language *actually* carry out this repetition? Of course not! Language does not *do* anything. *We* do things... Wittgenstein's use of the “seemed” judiciously clues us into the bad faith we exhibit, when we try to escape responsibility for our captivity.

One might expand on 115 thus:

A *picture* held us captive?! A 'mere' *picture!*⁴¹ How is that even possible? (Actually, of course, it is not quite possible; the talk I reached for of a picture holding us captive was in an important sense a bad-faith would-be self-exculpation; we *allowed* ourselves to be gulled by a picture. However; we should not be too hard on ourselves. Pictures of *which we are unaware* are potent.)

Baker helpfully notes a key corollary of this kind of reading of 115 et al: "Wittgenstein's philosophy involves *negotiations* with others (his readers and interlocutors, real or imaginary) about pictures, *Auffassungen*, conceptions" (*BWM*, 269).⁴² This is a radical kink in philosophy's evolution, and potentially a powerful way of characterising the liberation of philosophy itself from thought-constraining quasi-scientific ambitions.

116

This is the most crucial passage, for understanding Wittgenstein's term, "everyday use". Examining this passage will therefore enable us to justify further the opening sections of this chapter:

When philosophers use a word – for instance "knowledge", "being", "object", "I", "proposition", or "name" – and try to grasp the essence of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the *language*, which is after all its home? // What *we* do is bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use.⁴³

The first thing to say about this famous passage is that it opens with the suggestion of a *question*; and that the sentence that follows does not answer the question that Wittgenstein says one ought to ask oneself (or at least, does not 'reveal' it to have been a merely rhetorical question). The suggested question ought to be regarded (at the very least provisionally) as a genuine question, motivating one's subsequent philosophical activities. Thus (for we who wish to follow Wittgenstein's method) it is always initially an open question whether or not the philosophical remarks we are interrogating can potentially be seen as involving 'home-spun'/'home-baked' language uses, or not. (We will return to this key presumption for interpretive charity and accuracy.)

Furthermore, Gordon Baker⁴⁴ helps one to understand what is going on in this potentially deceptive passage when he suggests that one ought to regard the concept that one as it were starts from, here, as the metaphysical. As we saw in the early pages of this chapter: Rather than presupposing (what there is precious little textual warrant for in

Wittgenstein) that the everyday is an unproblematic resource, some secure area of language that we can look to for forceful guidance as to how logic will 'permit' us to speak, we might rather be guided by the fact that predecessor-versions of this remark in earlier texts of Wittgenstein's *Nachlass* all feature the word "metaphysical", but oscillate between *various* other words as its possible contrast-class (*BWM*, 100f).⁴⁵

In pursuing philosophy after the fashion of "our method" in some given real instance we start with the question as to what one is trying to do if and when one uses a word (such as "being" or "object" or "this" – or "language", or "grammar", or "form of life") in a sense which does or is or would be – so far as we can tell or say – something entirely extraordinary,⁴⁶ or which strives to establish an 'essence' where it is non-obvious that an essence can be established or would be of any real help even if it could be.⁴⁷ What's happening, when words are used in a way we struggle to grapple with, in an effort "to grasp the essence of the thing"? For example, when "This" is said to be a name, in fact the truest or realest name of all, and when (what we actually call) names are said to be only degenerate cases of names (*Cf. PI 38ff*). Wittgenstein wants us to examine what it is (in us) that radically constrains us by opposing "an examination of details in philosophy", and that is instead dogmatically "convinced", prior to any examination, that such and such *must* or *cannot* be the case, at the 'deepest' level (See 52). For sure, for some specialist words an essentialist definition may not be dogmatic. The pawn in chess can be defined by stating the moves allowed by its role. But many words, most – and *all* the words by which we allow ourselves to be entrapped, when philosophising – have meanings too various and subtle for this (and thus, as I discuss in Chapter 7, we are in danger of being misled into over-simplification, if we take chess too often as our object of comparison for language, as Wittgenstein sometimes appears to do). We may think we can capture that variation under a simple rule – but *that* typically leads us to dogmatism. But in metaphysics we don't see that, as we think we have discovered a deep truth apart from the messiness of use.

Philosophy is about trying to make sense of things which, it is said, *must* be the case, though there does not seem to be a secure warrant for the "*must*": and thus the importance of a liberatory approach.⁴⁸ Such 'things', such essentialisings, we provisionally call "metaphysical". For note that trying "to grasp the essence of the thing", once and for all telling us *what it is*, is an essential aspect of what could justly be called "essentialism", and that Wittgenstein in 116 calls "metaphysical". Thus Baker's brilliant, scandalous implication, at times, in *BWM*, that we could even read 371, "Essence is expressed by grammar" as an ironic commentary on the likes of Ryle: such philosophers, in seeking to eternalise a kind of 'general grammar', can be seen as a new 'linguistic-turned' version of the ancient, hopeless quest of essentialism.⁴⁹

If the philosopher with whom we are in dialogue⁵⁰ can convince us that she has developed a novel use (that really is a use, or, as we might put it, that *has* a use), then we should allow that this is part of the language. If, on the contrary, we can convince her that she has not specified a use for her words, then she allows that what she has come up with is nothing that has a sense. Non-sense.⁵¹ An idle wheel. Language, as (Anscombe's) Wittgenstein memorably puts it, "on holiday".⁵²

Here, then, it is crucial to point up a deliberate ambiguity in the word "use", in *PI* 116 (an ambiguity with a family-relation to that in the word "satz"⁵³ in the *Tractatus*⁵⁴), again to avoid being deceived by it. We can speak of metaphysical uses of language, in the sense of uses of words where the speaker intends to do metaphysics with her words (intends to provide an essentialist definition, to say what *must* be the case), or in the sense of uses of words where we suggest to the speaker that she is willy-nilly employing her words metaphysically (such that they are 'flickering'; what flickers borrows from the context that it seems to promise to fit into while never stably doing so: "When something seems queer about the grammar of our words, it is because we are alternatively tempted to use a word in several different ways" (*BB*, 56). But none of this turns metaphysical uses into, as we might put it, a *genuine* kind of use of words, in the sense that there are uses of words to (e.g.) ask things as opposed to state things, or (e.g.) to do history as opposed to do science. Metaphysical use is, roughly, only a variety of use in the same kind of way as a decoy-duck is a variety of duck... (And 'it' partakes indeed of somewhat the same kind of character: as *bait*; it provides, that is, much the same kind, perhaps, of distractions and indeed potentially 'fatal' [!] consequences...)

"Metaphysical use" is not intended by Wittgenstein in *PI* 116 to be (as it were) a genuine category of language-use: in the phrase "everyday use", the term "everyday" is, for Wittgenstein, pleonastic (It is worth noting that the terms "everyday" and "ordinary" are relatively rarely used by Wittgenstein. In that regard, they're somewhat akin to (though less extreme than the case of) his term "form of life"⁵⁵; and somewhat *less* like his term "language-game", a term which tends⁵⁶ to involve to some extent a novelty, for the purposes of jarring our minds out of what may be taken-for-granted tracks by making an unexpected comparison; as opposed to being *fundamentally 'truistic' in purport.*). The term "everyday" or "ordinary" is employed by Wittgenstein chiefly as a *reminder*: to use these words is to remind one(-self) of something that one so utterly swims in that one can forget it completely. Less one's spectacles, more one's cornea. Though of course the reason one *needs* such reminders is because one is struggling to see something 'obvious'⁵⁷; and in *this* regard one needs to be jarred out of one's normal inhabitation of life/language, and achieve something like what sociologists call "perspective by incongruity". In this regard, then, there is a fundamentally liberatory

nature to Wittgenstein's employment of terms such as "language-game" and "ordinary use", alike. ...All these terms have in common that they are devices for transitionality. 'Ladders'; they are not to be *attached* to.

And finally, I note the invocation in 116 of "we". It is even italicised by Wittgenstein, to seek to ensure one cannot miss it: "What *we* do is to bring words back...to their everyday use". This helps us guard against residual tendencies, powerful in our society and a *deformation professionnelle* for philosophers (for we are inveterately loners and contrarians), towards individualism.⁵⁸

117–121

In 117, we might note particularly the notion of the "aura" of a word as would-be carried along with it. For we might now connect this with the etymology of the word "metaphor": carrying over, from one place or context to another. We might venture that the criticism of metaphysics in 116–120 is one of a carrying over (a bringing along with) *without a bringing back*. Whereas a returning rather than a remaining on holiday is our real need. Metaphysics is *metaphor that masquerades as if it were literal*. It is like a hero's journey that never brings back what the hero has learnt for wider sharing. It is like a hero remaining stuck in a 'special world', a land of fantasy.

In 118, it is worth noting the beautiful literal meaning of "Luftgebaude": houses of air. This expresses better than "houses of cards" what is at stake: one's captivation by sweet-sounding *nothings*. The liberation Wittgenstein is offering is like when one sees through houses of air: there was not anything there, only something as absurd as the smile on a fully vanished Cheshire cat.

Thus when Wittgenstein speaks of "the limits of language" (119), we should not be misled by the apparently-quasi-spatial metaphor.⁵⁹ Philosophical discourse is essentially elucidatory⁶⁰ in the way described by Conant in *The New Wittgenstein* (Conant 2000)⁶¹: *these* limits do not limit us *from* anything. As I set out earlier in this chapter, logical space is (as it were) all that is the case. Thus our autonomy is attainable *without* degenerating into license, a mere faux-freedom which would suggest, childishly,⁶² that any 'limit' to language is something to be fought against, railed against. (Wittgenstein agrees with this licentious critic however (and albeit for different reasons), in holding that we must not throttle *prematurely* the urge to mire ourselves in nonsense. On the contrary, we must give it space; cf. my discussion of 95ff., above. Only by doing so can we get to lay it to rest.)

As for 120: the closing post-Augustinian picture-switch, moving from word-meaning as parallel to money-cow to a parallel instead being drawn between money and money's *use*, offers a great example of *how* one can emerge from philosophic captivity. How one's mind can be

raised off tracks that seemed to lead it as if to infinity. (Note: the very kinds of metaphors (e.g. rails to infinity) that cannot be summarily dismissed with regard to logical necessity (viz. rule-following) are the cause of one's trouble with regard to 'metaphysical necessity'.)

And what stands out now (i.e. immersed deeply as we are now, I hope, in a liberatory metaphoric!) about 121 is the presence (and criticism) of its metaphysical '*must*': it can seem, errantly, as if "there must be a second-order philosophy".

I commented earlier, in introducing my interpretation of 95–97 that the majority of the occurrences of "must" in 95–121 were metaphysical musts. What of the remainder? As I already implied there, it turns out that virtually *all* of them invoke a much more hypothetical version of necessity: the must that they involve, as most famously in 116, is of what is necessary *if* one is to adopt our method in philosophy. As we saw in Chapter 2, doing so is not compulsory. The claim is that our method does on balance the best job, is most likely to satisfy, reaches parts that other philosophies cannot reach. One may have to suck it and see. The claim is contestable.

So, Wittgenstein's own uses (rather than, roughly speaking mentions) of "must" are of this form. They are not metaphysical. They are, rather, invitational.

What, finally, does a liberatory reading of 122, and of its "fundamentally" important (and contested) concept of 'perspicuous presentation', into which Wittgenstein is seemingly inviting us, look like?

4.5 A Liberatory Reading of 122–124

In "Towards a perspicuous presentation of "perspicuous presentation"" (Hutchinson & Read 2008),⁶³ Hutchinson and I presented a later Bakerian alternative to the 'standard' Baker-and-Hacker reading of 122. I still hold to most of what we set out there.⁶⁴ My own view, under the influence of Hans Sluga, has now however shifted somewhat from this straight-later-Bakerian one. I discuss some salient aspects of this shift below.⁶⁵ I will thus examine, incrementally, the substantive perils of 'perspicuity'; for they are crucially relevant to the political and ethical presumptions or consequences of 122.

I use the term "perspicuous presentation" for my/later-Baker's version (very roughly, as do Stanley Cavell and Nigel Pleasants), and "perspicuous representation" for (Baker-and-)Hacker's version. This largely fits the practice of the authors in question. I see "presentation" as less liable to mislead than "representation". A representation is more likely to be an object, a standing thing, something quasi-visual. Presentation helps bring to mind more the *action* of presenting, *to* someone/someones. A presentation is something one gives; a representation is something one passively sees. "Presentation" is more helpfully processual, while "representation" inclines one to a delusion of objectuality.⁶⁶

Here then is the interpretation of this fundamental concept of Wittgenstein's that I would offer:

I see a perspicuous presentation as one that actually does help make the matter⁶⁷ presented perspicuous⁶⁸ to one to whom it is given.... It has, that is, *an essentially 2nd-personal aspect*. It is addressed to the other or (one might say) to their perspective (their confusion). The choice of objects of comparison and the *process* of comparing will be tailored to loosening a particular grip. The employment of (as we might call it) *perspective by perspicuity* is thus a practice quintessentially of freeing-up.

But I now emphasise: only where (and *to the extent that*) this is possible. Where it is to a large extent not possible (and that kind of case, Baker somewhat neglected), then the most that we can hope for may be a (re-)presentation that is itself perspicuous, and is *recognised* clearly as *an object of comparison*, not as the thing itself. So "perspicuity" is, as Baker held, an achievement-term, and always to some extent in the eye of the beholder; but often perspicuity is not to any great degree achievable. 'Perspicuity' is (ideally) an achievement-term; but we mustn't overstate *what* gets achieved.

The earlier point implies that the term "perspicuous" is not being used 'attributively' in "perspicuous presentation"; i.e. perspicuity in such cases cannot properly be reduced to or identified narrowly with a property of the presentation made, and must instead be 'earned'. By its deeds ye shall know it. Sometimes (actually, often (actually, virtually always?)), this means that the most we can hope for is a *presentation* that has the property of some perspicuity relative to an audience, a presentation which casts *some* light on *what* is being presented. For here we might helpfully note *PI* 435:

If it is asked: "How do sentences manage to represent?", the answer might be "Don't you know? You certainly see it, when you use them." For nothing is concealed. // How do sentences do it?—Don't you know? For nothing is hidden. // But given this answer: "But you know how sentences do it, for nothing is concealed" one would like to retort "Yes, but it all goes by so quick, and I should like to see it as it were laid open to view".

I take it that Wittgenstein here is hardly endorsing this idea that "it all goes by so quick" as an unproblematic take on our difficulty in philosophy! *Similarly*, therefore, the ambition of laying it all (sic) open to view⁶⁹ is surely questionable here. It's something one would *like* to do: but you really can't always get what you want. What would *actually* be needed to bring philosophy peace, at a time like this, would be a way of puncturing

the impression that the 'knowledge' one has of how sentences represent has itself a substantial content that can be represented. Rather, it is the kind of 'knowledge' one 'recollects', in (if you will) Wittgenstein's special sense of that term. There is thus no "it" to lay "open to view".

Indeed, *any* kind of ambition towards perspicuous presentation might justly seem to be put into question by 435. (I'll return to this point.)

We should expect that in cases where the subject matter is complex (as is almost invariably so, whenever philosophy is difficult), there are or will be or could be numerous possible perspicuous presentations, differing perhaps radically and lastingly from each other in form, 'angle', etc. Moreover: we should not remain confined to presenting 'the' rules of 'the' language, but can have recourse/reference potentially rather to *our* language (i.e. the way that *I/we* am/are using that language, inflecting it, perhaps expanding it). When Wittgenstein speaks of demonstrating "a method by examples" I think he means to demonstrate *his* way, *our* approach. A perspicuous presentation of his approach... And in itself this yields a vision of philosophy.

The *progress* of the *Investigations* as a *whole* can be seen as an attempt at something that we *might* even risk calling a (relatively) 'perspicuous presentation' of (human) life in general, gradually working towards it in its full complexity (Cf. my discussion of Hutchinson/Levi, below). *But*: that complexity will be uncontrollable, endless. Thus, as Sluga holds in his book *Wittgenstein* (2011), our forms of life must nevertheless remain (to a significant degree) forever unsurveyable: the product of reading *PI* is not a totalising vision.⁷⁰ 'Total, permanent freedom' from any and all present or future entrapment is not a meaningful aim. Certain traps are particularly tempting and difficult. Those get priority with the intention of empowering us to deal with others. As we progress through *PI*, and (hopefully) learn a/'our' way, we overcome potential and actual routes of entrapment and confusion – and probably unconsciously pick up others. To imagine that we could perspicuously present our entire language and life at once without residue is to overreach.

So to think that one can/could in theory concatenate perspicuous representations into an overall survey as 'from above' of the grammar as a whole would be a hyperbolic (mere) fantasy of freedom: the (absurd) freedom of achieving a spectatorial distance on language⁷¹; and then the freedom of a dictator: i.e. the freedom, once the grammar has allegedly been seen from this distance, to tyrannise language-users with an alleged normatively-unimpeachable set of quasi-facts about grammar. No; by contrast perspicuous presentations do not lead to one overall *representation*, let alone as from above.⁷²

Waismann's marvellous 'dialogical' presentation hereabouts is worth comparing at some length. It may help, I think, in giving us deeper understanding of some of Wittgenstein's wording (especially the otherwise-slightly-mysterious invocation in 122 of "*intermediate cases*"):

...we don't force our interlocutor. We leave him free to choose, accept or reject any way of using his words. He may depart from ordinary usage - language is not untouchable - if it is only in this way that he can explain himself. He may even use an expression one time in this, another time in that, way. The only thing we insist upon is that he should be aware of what he is doing. If we strictly adhere to this method - going over the argument, asking him at each step whether he is willing to use an expression in a certain way, if not, offering him alternatives, but leaving the decisions to him and only pointing out what their consequences are - no dispute can arise. Disputes arise only if certain steps in this procedure are omitted so that it looks as if we had made an assertion, adding to the world's woes a new apple of discord. This would be the true way of doing philosophy undogmatically.

(HISP, 12)

So long as we do not omit steps, then the "intermediate links" as Waismann calls them will be perspicuous to us.

Perspicuous presentations are aspectival. They do not lead to anything like a literal *over-view*. They might well not even be consistent with one another (see above). Compare Wittgenstein:

In giving all these examples I am **not** aiming at some kind of completeness, some classification of all psychological concepts. They are only meant to enable the reader to shift for himself when he encounters conceptual difficulties.

Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology (LWPP-i)
(Wittgenstein 1982, § 686)

Perspicuous presentation is then for us internally related to the achievement of some liberation, some freeing from prior capture by some unwanted or unwarranted assumption about how things *must* be. Perspicuous presentation is 'relative' to an audience/an interlocutor; as, arguably, everything is. Again we see how the activity of perspicuous presentation ought to be understood as a 2nd-personal one, not a 1st- or 3rd-personal one. A matter of negotiation (see *BWM*, 269), not of oracular statement. Even mathematics is directed to those fellows with mathematical training. In *TS* 220, from which 122 is 'derived', Wittgenstein remarks (at 99b) that "It was the system of expression which held me in bondage". Perspicuity may be achieved by offering one's interlocutor alternative possible modes of expression or notations. Perspicuous presentations are essentially freeing. They are appraised by reference to this goal, not that of an absolute 'correctness'.⁷³ It is *metaphysics* (and its tacit-inheritors) which are hubristic in aiming to transcend being perspectival (e.g. in claiming to discover the very essence of concepts).⁷⁴

But it might still sound as if there is something unduly ambitious about the task to be embraced, as just described. That is, there is a potential unclarity in the way I might still seem to have set up this *goal*, of liberation, as something independent from the philosophical work of seeking perspicuity. Is liberation an independently intelligible goal or is it intelligible only as it takes shape within concrete philosophical work? My answer is that indeed it's not only the former; it's *both*. By which I mean, taking a leaf from later Baker's book: the *concept* of liberation is intelligible independently of/prior to the philosophical work one undertakes, but one's *conception* of it, the specific working form that it gradually takes, takes shape only within concrete philosophical work. What liberation means as a working conception, or as a 'thick' concept' if you will (as opposed to a 'thin', more formal concept), emerges only within one's/my/your/Wittgenstein's work. Liberatory philosophy is an idea that can make immediate good sense to the hearer, but what it turns out to mean in detail will only become clear in the detail of the text.

However, my highlighting in the previous two paragraphs of the 2nd person raises a further issue – that can no longer be ducked – that worries me about Baker's take on "perspicuous presentation". As I set out early in Chapter 2, I think that Baker's Wittgenstein is too would-be individualistic; too 1st-personal and insufficiently 2nd-personal. This is infelicitous because of broad social and 'private language' aspects of Wittgenstein's thinking; there is a risk inherent in the sometimes extreme individualism of the Waismann-Baker reading that they re-reduce human beings to something like 'windowless' atoms, and lose the fundamental sense of *us* that Cavell taught us to frame as our starting-point and destination in philosophy. Now let me make the following, related observation: this aspect of Baker is infelicitous furthermore because, as we have just seen, one ought to be clear that the paradigm case of philosophising is not monological, but dialogical or indeed more (multilogical – and this is why Wittgenstein's mature form of writing is more multilogue than dialogue; calling the *PI* a 'dialogue' badly oversimplifies it⁷⁵). Wittgenstein does not even really have a monologue 'with himself'; better, he stages or enters into dialogues/multilogues, and his teaching consisted in the same; within himself, and with others. A perspicuous presentation is offered in the first instance to others. The grave danger of Hacker-style pseudo-3rd-personal "surveyable representations" is their not really being relative to/intended for the other. Thus there is a danger that the pride that Hackerians take in their 'surveyable representations' is really a kind of patting oneself on the back, subject to the kinds of worries that Wittgenstein details at and around section 258, in the anti-'private-language' considerations. *But* there is a danger, insofar as they tend towards an absolute individualism in philosophy, that Bakerians may be subject to an obverse form of *the very same worry*. For they then lose the vital presence of the other, and perspicuity becomes

something purely in the eye of the presenter. ...We should always ask, "Perspicuous for what purpose *and* for whom?"

Baker notes that "Only someone who sees a particular aspect can ascertain that another is blind to this aspect of what is in plain view, and nobody can establish by himself that he is blind to an aspect" (BWM, 281–282). Right; and the converse analogue of this in the case of perspicuity is that no-one can *establish* by himself that he has achieved perspicuity. (We can also deduce this from *Remarks on Colour* I-83: "People sometimes say (though typically philosophically-mistakenly), "Only I can know what I see". But not: "Only I can know whether I am colour-blind." (Nor again: "Only I can know whether I see or am blind.")".)

One can establish only that one can (oneself) see an aspect; one can establish that *another* has achieved (some) *perspicuity*. There are aspects of these matters that are inherently supra-individual. My conception of 'perspicuous presentation' does justice to this, while Baker's (latently) and Hacker's (patently) do not do so. A future self could establish a blindness in a previous self, but it makes no sense for a self to see a continuing blindness in oneself now, *nor* to claim some 'full' perspicuity in oneself now: any more than it makes sense for one to say "I'm very stable",⁷⁶ "I'm entirely sane" or "I'm entirely a good person"; we would be instantly suspicious of any such person, and would have reason to believe, simply on hearing their remark, that it was self-undermining.⁷⁷

Free acknowledgement is essential in liberatory philosophy. But I emphasise that acknowledgement is paradigmatically an *interpersonal* matter.⁷⁸ One paradigmatically acknowledges something *to another*. It should not be reduced to a 'private' activity. Ironically, excessive philosophical individualism could leave Baker's take on perspicuity far less different from Hacker's than he desired. Because in both cases, without the emphasis on the thorough interpersonality of philosophical exchange, the paradigmatically social nature of achievement – of genuine elucidation, of 'enlightenment' – in philosophy, 'perspicuous presentations' can degenerate into presentations that do little more than make their creator (or beholder) happy.

If this excessive individualism be avoided, there looms another possible danger present in Baker's writing on perspicuous presentation, an oppositely valenced way in which his conception thereof can, ironically, once again fail to be as different from Baker-and-Hacker's as he would desire. Falling off the wrong edge of the quest for perspicuity by means of becoming *over*-impressed with what one can achieve by means of perspicuous (re-)presentation is possible for anyone, including (those of us influenced by) later Baker. It is equivalent to being tempted by the delusion of being able to *compel* one's auditor into a (controversial, non-neutral) world-view. This is to run together the kind of case of perspicuous presentation that is the 'colour octahedron' (a kind of 'paradigm' for Baker's Wittgenstein of perspicuous presentation, but an *unusually* clear

case; a case that can simply be *seen*) with the kind of far more complex and non-obvious case of perspicuous presentation that is (say) the culmination of Phil Hutchinson's book *Shame and philosophy* (2008), or of his chief subject-matter there, Primo Levi's *If This Is a Man* (which, we might say, gives one a perspicuous presentation of humanity (partly via its presentation of patent inhumanity)). But these two *kinds* of cases are really pretty different, and to run them together would be hubris, a typical instance of the kind of over-generalisation that Wittgenstein focally critiqued. (The concept of "perspicuous presentation" can usefully be seen as a *family-resemblance one*, and *should* be. And to fail to see this, to impute to all would-be perspicuous presentations the kind of character the colour octahedron has, is to risk ethical, political or cultural over-reach.)

The fantasy that language is surveyable as a landscape is, is pernicious, especially in its most subterranean form as a purportedly anti-scientific 'grammatical remark'. It involves one in bad faith with regard to one's own linguistic and creative capacities. The desire for perspicuity is a desire for clarity, but if it becomes a forced desire for clarity *where there is none*, (i.e. fabricating an artificial clarity) then it is a tempting wrong, a crudifying mismove, a scientific delusion. In just the kind of way that Wittgenstein makes clear in the following moment in *PI*:

The concept of seeing makes a tangled impression. Well, that's how it is. — I look at the landscape; my gaze wanders...I see all sorts of distinct and indistinct movements; *this* impresses itself sharply on me, *that* very hazily. How completely piecemeal what we see can appear! And now look at all that can be meant by "description of what is seen"! — But this just is what is called "description of what is seen". There is not one genuine, proper case of such description - the rest just being unclear, awaiting clarification, or simply to be swept aside as rubbish.

(*PPF* 160, section xi of 'Part II' of *PI*)

Likewise, a forced desire for more clarity than there *is*, than there can be, for more unanimity than can in fact be attained, is tacitly a desire for a linguistic police-force at one's beck and call. Wittgenstein's task was for things to become as clear *as they actually* are, *not* more so; this is what we saw already in the exegesis of 97–102, above. (As he said in relation to the *Tractatus*⁷⁹: we need to become clear about how propositions can "*become* clear that they ARE clear"; but, I would add, following I think later Wittgenstein: *only* as clear as they are.)

The desire for perspicuity becomes a desire for an imperial vision is thus a deviant overbearing desire. Instead of grasping for impossible surveyability or perspicuity, we need to 'grasp' what I outlined earlier: that perspicuity in literal terms is often most notably a characteristic (*at*

best) of our presentations *themselves* (as opposed to: of their objects). If we look for perspicuity beyond quite specific local domains of language ('language-games') etc., then this becomes more and more so. Wittgenstein sought to get us, more and more to attend to the deep *variety* of everyday uses of expressions. He sought to 'build' towards the true utter complexity of language/life, *not* as a modeller standardly does, i.e. not by creating simplified models that can be 'added together' to give a view of the whole; and *nor* by seeking 'directly' to be able to 'view' the whole as if from above; but rather by as it were feeling one's way from the inside (cf. *PI* 123) to a greater and greater complexity in which one is in a way always-already, if one will only let oneself be, at home. Offering the reader at every turn the opportunity to judge whether we have 'arrived' yet. (And we never quite do, of course; or at least, not for long: see Chapter 5.) Reminding one progressively of the limitless *qualitative* complexity of our language, of the centrality of our bodily nature/our emotions/our sociality, of the seeming ineradicability of some conflicts between human beings in how they understand many things (including these), of our tendencies to overlook and ultimately to *want not to see* all these things: all the things that most philosophy forgets or occludes (including the very tendencies themselves just mentioned). Thus *re-minding* us. Helping to overcome one temptation after another, in the cause of attaining a sustainable peace of mind. This is perspicuity at its boldest: re-finding our true relation to all these things (i.e. to us, to ourselves). Things that we cannot literally over-look – and so we tend systematically to *overlook* them...

But this brings with it the deepest sense in which the quest for perspicuity is balanced on a knife-edge. For one is continually tempted to fall away from the fine-grained subtlety of this (unsurveyably) vast complexity. *Even when one stays true* to the vision and quest in question, one is at every stage but a heartbeat away from failure. For one is continually tempted to think – at each insight in the growing process of complexification 'back' to the place where one actually is, the utterly multiform place that one is hoping to know one's way about for the first time – that one has definitively *arrived* (somewhere definitive, somewhere that could be worded).

For such arrival would be arrival at a *weltanschauung* (Sluga 2011, 102). And our's, according to Heidegger (and, I would tentatively add, Wittgenstein too, in his thinking through of Spengler), is, problematically, the age of the world-picture. This is the great final temptation that we (Wittgensteinians) are all subject to: to turn our quest for perspicuity into allegiance to a world-picture, a world-view. This is why 122 ends as it does: in question, *in uncertainty*, and, indeed, even in worry. The concept of a perspicuous presentation is of fundamental significance for us, for it is what we strive for, for good; but it can so easily become (for) ill. If the 'account' we give becomes staticised as a purportedly stable

and storable world-view, the alleged final true spectatorial picture of what human being-in-the-world is (like), then it will be for ill. For it will (would) have become a representation or promotion of what might be called, tendentiously or (worse still?!) accurately, *the* human world-view. A philosophical-anthropological 'master-theory' (or metaphysic) to cap all theories.⁸⁰ Such arrival at a 'world-view' risks closing down the essential openness of humanity – and, could then woefully, precipitately close down the should-be-ongoing task of philosophy itself.

We can get a clearer sense of the way in which Wittgenstein's attitude to perspicuous representations may be somewhat less than positive from the version of 122 found in the "Philosophy" section of *BT*.

The concept of a perspicuous representation is of fundamental significance for us. It earmarks the form of account we give, the way we look at things. (/A kind of 'world-view', as is apparently typical of our time. Spengler)/.

(*PO*, 175)

The "apparently typical" here indexes surely a way in which Wittgenstein is aware that he is likely to be of his time, and is *not happy* about being so. He realises that working via perspicuous representations is symptomatic of a way of doing things that can have severe downsides. That it itself perhaps might even be a moment in the decline of the West... This point seems to me easier to accommodate within a broadly later-Bakerian approach to the concept than within a Hackerian approach; for the beauty of the Bakerian vision of perspicuous presentation is that it becomes less and less LIKE (a) 'world-view', less and less like a way of seeing through to everything, a 'bird's eye-view'... *But* note that we *have* moved here some distance from the letter of later Baker's presentation of 'perspicuous presentation'. In particular, I am emphasising what he tends to pass over: that, while it might initially seem as if perspicuity were without doubt to be welcomed, actually the situation is more complex than that. The desire for a perspicuous presentation is always a heartbeat away from the desire for an imperial spectatorial quasi-theoretic *view*.

What I'm seeking to do is to help us to overcome more deeply the hubristic fantasy of the attainment of a full freedom that the very concept of "perspicuous presentation", or at least, for sure, the concept of "perspicuous representation" (as a would-be spectatorial flying free, and distantly looking down), can tempt one with. And I've been sketching how that is what I think Wittgenstein was seeking to help us to.

The situation *vis-à-vis* 'perspicuous presentation' is thus, it seems to me, slightly more complex than anyone (including even Sluga⁸¹ and Baker⁸²) has yet realised. This is what I have been trying to make clear in the latter part of this chapter.

Baker is right that it makes no sense to think of something being perspicuous independently of a perceiver's thoughts etc. about it. It goes without saying that perspicuity is purpose/confusion-relative. But further, perspicuity has to be either person-relative and/or comparative. Baker's Wittgenstein does not allow for the latter; on that front I move beyond him.⁸³ (Note: By "comparative" I mean '*compared to another would-be perspicuous presentation*').

The further question remains: what is the 'something' being made perspicuous. As Sluga suggests: it is just misleading in many cases to say that we can *actually much make* WHAT is being presented perspicuous. If we have really complicated cases of language-use in focus, like with (say) the word "human-being", then there will be a limit to how much perspicuity can be introduced to IT without deforming and crudifying it.⁸⁴ (And this is yet simpler than what is at play in an entire alleged 'world-view'.⁸⁵)

Thus a possible example of a perspicuous presentation in this more complex sense would, as I have said, be that offered of (some deep aspects of) human being (and more) in Hutchinson's brilliant, Levi-influenced book, *Shame and Philosophy*. But it would probably be deeply misleading to say that in this work Hutchinson simply and fully ACHIEVES perspicuity about what he is writing about. It would certainly be presumptuous to say so. I am quite sure that he would not make such an over-bold, over-simplifying, hubristic claim, himself (and his conceivably doing so would in any case run into the problem I identified earlier: that there is an inherent limit to the degree to which one can claim to know that one has *oneself* achieved perspicuity, as opposed to recognising or fostering it in others). Such cases are really very different from 'paradigm-cases' of 'perspicuous presentation' that fit Baker's 'model' tightly, cases such as the colour octahedron.

We are seeking here to teach/learn the *differences* between (say) Hutchinson's achievement on the one hand and the achievement of the colour-octahedron on the other, as well as the similarities. This is the sense again in which examples of 'things' that can function as perspicuous presentations are themselves often best understood *as objects of comparison*. (Or again: here we see a reason to think of Baker's concept of perspicuous presentation as *itself* an *object of comparison*.) And this underpins the crucial *comparative* sense of perspicuous presentation that I outlined earlier. Perspicuous presentation need not be an all or nothing affair.

Hutchinson's book⁸⁶ draws on more fine-grained cultural resources than does the colour octahedron; it is more ambitious. Some 'right-wing' thinkers might well resist aspects of the former but are unlikely to have had any problems with the latter! So we need to recognise that whatever the achievement of (say) Hutchinson is, and I think it is very real and impressive indeed, it is far less appropriate to think of it as

an-achievement-that-can-be-assessed-on-a-yes/no-basis than the kinds of examples that later Baker typically focuses on. 'Light dawns'; but we need to keep in sight that this is a metaphor, and so it will come to an end somewhere. The light will come to an end somewhere. Or will not be of the whole. What dawns may well be some light: but it is not a question of day vs. night.

Thus I stress – and aim to bring out in a way that Baker usually does not, at least explicitly – how '*achievement*' may itself be a very complicated matter, and a *matter of degree*. Inherently open to comparison. Perspicuity is about whether a presentation lets us do what we want to, i.e. frees us from the difficulty that was entangling us.⁸⁷ But, as I have laid out in my interpretation of 122 above, this is hardly ever an all or nothing affair. (And will as I have stressed depend, of course, upon who the 'us' is: i.e. what our troubles are that we need freeing up in relation to.)

To move then towards a summing up of this discussion of 122. As Baker himself notes, "Wittgenstein's concept of a perspicuous presentation is not itself perspicuous" (*BWM*, 23).⁸⁸ And as he goes on, "The colour-octahedron is in fact the sole labelled instance of a perspicuous representation (of grammatical rules) in all of Wittgenstein's published writings" (*BWM*, 23). This little-known fact about Wittgenstein's *oeuvre* should unnerve us slightly. It is in this context that I have sought in this closing portion of this chapter to produce in my readers and in myself a little more perspicuity about this fundamentally important concept, while recognising the difficulty of the task, recognising how difficult it is to know how to go on here; recognising, that is, that it is not evident that the kind of perspicuity that (I agree) is afforded by the colour-octahedron is at all likely to be fully available in the more complex cases common in philosophical (and political, ethical, historical, etc.) discussions and disputes. And that, even if it were/is available then, as implied in 435, *this would probably not be a good thing*.

The concept of a "world-view" tends towards a visual metaphoric, that could land Bakerians back in the very trouble that they (we) see Hackerians with would-be 'bird's-eye-views' as inherently saddled with. I say "tends", however, because this tendency is 'only' that (No word or concept is banned; none is fatally flawed, 'incorrect'). I have periodically stressed thus far in the present work how crucial it is to avoid committing Wittgenstein to an opinion or thesis or view, *qua* philosopher. But the term "view" could be seen as having two different connotations or flavours:

- The dominant one, perhaps, takes the idea of "view" to be more or less *transitive*. We can say *what* is viewed, what is seen. This is a visual metaphoric.
- But there is also the possibility of an *intransitive* way of hearing "view". The reader may have noticed that I sometimes use

expressions such as “In my view”, in the present work. Which might seem to contradict the worry I have expressed about talk of “views” tending to be un-Wittgensteinian. But it need not: if it is heard in *this* way, more or less intransitively. It could in fact sometimes be roughly paraphrased as: “In our way of seeing-and-doing things”.⁸⁹ A way which needs to be understood in the course of its actual development. This way *need not be complicit with quasi-literal fantasies of surveyability*. Rather, it is about ensuring that each ‘model’ is compared against ordinary uses for how it captures/distorts and doesn’t become elevated above examples as metaphysics. This necessitates an eternal (self-)vigilance, as ever the price of freedom.

Thus we may see that what I have been trying to produce in our consideration of 122 is roughly this: A presentation that is itself perspicuous of something that can itself probably be made only to some degree perspicuous: namely, *perspicuous presentation*... The danger of supposing more than this is that it leaves later Baker not having made as radical a break with Baker-and-Hacker as he wished to; it risks leaving him with a residue of (a fantasy of) overview as if from above of a totality.

To simplify, later Baker is pro- the conception of perspicuous presentation that he elaborates for us, as Wittgenstein’s.⁹⁰ Sluga(’s Wittgenstein) is basically anti- it. Where do I stand? I think that perhaps one does not need to take a stand. I think that 122 really does leave the reader to *decide*. In this instance, unusually, perhaps a truly polyphonic interpretation (*a la* Wallgren) actually works. 122 features some voices. Wittgenstein is perhaps in the end identified with none of these voices. “Is this a Weltanschauung?” He is not sure. If it is, he would be worried. But he is not sure that it is. That is why he asks the question, and leaves it there.⁹¹

In the terms of 16: It really is as you please... The reader of 122, I am suggesting, is ‘condemned’ to be free...

We come, finally then, to 123.⁹² In the light of my thinking *vis-à-vis* 122, what now makes sense about 123 is that Wittgenstein does NOT say this, “A philosophical problem has the form: “I don’t have an overview / a bird’s eye view””. Nor even this: “I can’t see clearly”. The metaphor he actually uses, rather, is closer akin to some notion such as a ‘tacit knowledge’ that we are missing. Some kind of ‘embodied’ sense of knowing how to go on, some sense of lived familiarity.

Knowing one’s way about is not having a world-*view*. Whereas seeking for an overview might well be. And that, Wittgenstein would not want.

As for 124, I have in the light of the chapter now drawing to a close just one point to make about it. It is a crucial one. Namely, to note how important it is for a liberatory reading of *PI* that one ask “So, philosophy leaves everything as it is *as opposed to what?*” and not assume that the

answer is “as opposed to wanting to change things”.⁹³ That is, we must not fall into the trap of thinking that when Wittgenstein says that “for *us*” philosophy “leaves everything as it is”, he means the contrast-class to be “as opposed to wanting to do things differently” or “as opposed to wanting things in the world to be different”. The relevant contrast-class here is *not* ethics, not politics, not normativity, but (rather) quasi-scientific explanation.⁹⁴ So this is not a dubious relativism (cf. Chapter 2) nor a quietism; it is once more a rejection of scientism in philosophy. Wittgenstein didn't think that philosophy could be seriously engaged in anything other than processes of description and understanding – as opposed to *explanation* (and interpretation). *That* is the contrast class intended in 124.

This brings us to the end of this lengthy chapter. For we have now worked through from 95 to 124, offering a liberatory reading thereof. If Wittgenstein is not putting forward theses, then I have suggested what he is doing: freeing up minds. Freeing them up to see connections – and differences.

Of course, we could go further: We could for instance think through for instance the vivid metaphor of “entanglement” in 125.⁹⁵

But: exegeses must come to an end somewhere. The present work would be far too big to be sold by present-day book-publishers, if it sought to go on to encompass ever more / all (!) of *PI*. I hope that the already substantial task undertaken above is sufficient, for now. That we can see now how and why, when Wittgenstein speaks of “ordinary” or “everyday” language, he generally means simply: language. That I have shown how the heart of Wittgenstein's presentation of his conception of philosophy, and especially the vital concepts of “everyday”, “ordinary”, “perspicuous presentation”, and the host of plainly liberatory tropes and manoeuvres practised in these passages (and the host of metaphors of captivity, etc. that they play against), conduce to the way of seeing Wittgenstein's work that I am about, here. That I have shown how 95–124 centrally concerns a quest for freedom; though *not* the faux-freedom of slipping about on ice (107), nor that of mere license – *nor* that of a tyrant or a police-state. And that I have set out how to embrace his conception of perspicuity as an *achievement* (while being careful not to overstate what such achievements make possible).

I hope finally that, after reading this chapter, what may strike you is the fertility of the ‘liberatory philosophy’ approach, itself. After looking as I've done here at 95–124, one can I hope start to see liberatory metaphors structuring the unfolding of Wittgenstein's method; one sees it present in places where one had not expected to; it itself perhaps *unlocks* something for one...

In any case, the reader doesn't have to step over more than a few sections, in coming to my next chapter. On 130–133.⁹⁶

Notes

- 1 By the time of *PI*, Wittgenstein might well have expressed these points more 'liberatorily' – *more in line with the way we saw him expressing himself in the passages I exegeted in Chapters 2 (& 3)*. (Cf. Baker's Preface to *PLP* (xxi).)
- 2 It is critically important to notice that 116, quite explicitly, concerns what *we* do. See Section 4.4. It is also critically important to notice that there is a signal difference between *ways* of seeing — seeing considered, if you will, *methodologically* — and achieving a world-view in the *objectual* sense, where the view in question is likened to *an object of sight* rather than to a way of seeing. Views as objects of sight, as quasi-factive results or things, are what philosophers endlessly, hopelessly desire. Our way(s) of seeing is by contrast exactly what is needed (on 'our method'). I elaborate upon this important point in the peroration of this chapter concerning 122.
- 3 Riffing on the close of the *Tractatus*, we might characterise 'ordinary language' as *einfach sinn*.
- 4 The kind of reminder that is the staple of the philosophy of Walker Percy. And resonates in a number of major philosophical works of art, such as Terence Malick's film *The Thin Red Line* (1998).
- 5 Thus enabling one's ability to see what is normally what one sees with, or through.
- 6 Cf. 129. (Cavell is the past master at understanding the ordinary as extraordinarily revealed. Heidegger is also worth attending to, in this connection; I am thinking especially of his concept(s) of "disclosure" or of "unconcealing". And *see* once more the films of Terence Malick, especially perhaps *The Thin Red Line* and *Days of heaven*.)
- 7 For my reservations about the term "account", see Chapter 3. For further reflections on how the 'content' of reminders do not add up, see my discussion of 122, in 4.5.
- 8 A fine example of the non-standing-ness for Wittgenstein of the normal can be found in *Remarks on Colour* (Wittgenstein 1979, IIII-165), whereat Wittgenstein lays out our dangerous temptation to think that describing normal vision is as possible, as executable a project, as describing blindness.
Similarly, my 'argument' in Chapters 1 and 3 has been that "Meaning is use" does not *stand*; it's rather a purpose-relative rule for action in the sphere of grammar, for employment in/on our conception of philosophy. It yields helpful comparisons, and relaxes the felt compulsion of other pictures that would intern us by seeming to stand. That is all.
- 9 The element of this that I have emphasised is of crucial importance in relation to the liberatory Wittgensteinian project of resisting the scientisation and technicalisation of philosophy itself.
- 10 As Cavell and Kuusela have it: Philosophy is a quest for justice, and is saturated by ethics. We might even venture that, for Wittgenstein, ethics is 'first philosophy'; I develop this thought in Chapter 10. This chapter concerns focally the taking of *responsibility* for what one says. But, because of its ubiquity, at least as an ideal (or a presumed value), one can only bring this clearly into view if one first gets into view the vanishing exception to this rule: those very peculiar types of (ultimately, abortive) speech acts etc. for which one cannot (because no-one can) meaningfully/practically take responsibility. I.e. What Wittgenstein calls metaphysics or "metaphysical use".
- 11 And, roughly: what a new metaphor so far 'lacks', we might say, is: a context(s), that exhausts or 'ordinary-ises' it.

- 12 And in the spirit of *PI* 122, we should now perhaps ask: Is this a world-view? See Section 4.5.
- 13 See the discussion of 116 in Section 4.4. For more detail, and to back up my whole line of 'argument' in this section and Section 4.2, cf. Read (2010a).
- 14 See again Diamond's work for more on the term "transitional". My suggestion that terms such as "example" – and similarly "reminder" – are *transitional* terms could be put in the following way: Their use tends in the end to fall away from Wittgenstein's aims with/in coining them. This may remind one in turn of the method of the *Tractatus*, as discussed by Diamond in "Throwing away the ladder" (1988). In Chapter 9, I offer a kind of 'transliteration' of a central passage from Diamond's epochal paper, replacing terms that are overcome in the *Tractatus* with terms that (I argue) are designed similarly to be overcome, in the later work: terms such as "form of life". Much the same exercise could usefully be undertaken with terms such as "example".
- 15 Clear echoes here of Sextus. Whereas, for Wittgenstein, Socrates, while an inspiration in certain respects that I set out in "The Ancient roots of Wittgenstein's liberatory philosophy" (in my "Placing Kripkenstein in the history of philosophy" (forthcoming)), tends to be an icon of philosophic unfreedom. See especially 518.
- 16 As analysed, brilliantly, by Diamond (1988). Cf. also Baker (2002a, 60). Baker notes there the contrast between uses (or *mentions*) of "must" and "cannot" in Wittgenstein of the 'metaphysical' kind found in 101, and more straightforward uses "to express logical necessity".
- 17 Though see Chapter 7: what this 'hardness' *amounts* to may be rather 'less' than many Wittgensteinians suppose.
- 18 That he is not saying this is the burden of several of the papers in *The New Wittgenstein* (Crary & Read 2000).
- 19 See *PI* 437–445 for exemplification of this claim, and for exploration of what the 'logical must' amounts to.
- 20 In *Applying Wittgenstein* I make a similar gesture to Baker's allusion here to the *Tractatus*, this time in relation to Dummett, on time (Read 2007a, 97–98). I argue there that the Dummettian and the 'classical' model of time alike can be helpfully seen, not as telling us what time really is (or is not), but as offering us objects of comparison for/certain *fragments* of a (our) grammar of time. Wittgensteinianism has the capacity to be far more charitable to what other philosophers are doing than one would guess from (say) Hacker's work. *Contra* Hacker et al., it is probably rare indeed for a(ny) serious philosopher's work to yield zero — still less less-than-zero — insight into 'grammar'. (Including, obviously, Hacker himself: whose work, properly taken, is frequently richly manifestative of (large) fragments of grammar.
- 21 And in *this* connection I depart slightly from Waismann, whose remark that "The essential difference between philosophy and logic is that logic *constrains* us while philosophy leaves us free" (*HISP*, 21) is unfortunate in that it gives the impression that logic substantively constrains us. Whereas: logic properly understood is simply enabling. It is simply a way of seeing how we say or mean anything.
- 22 For a listing of widespread metaphysical musts, cf. *BWM* (85). For the importance of displacing them with conceptions, rather than (alleged essential grammars of) concepts, see Chapter 11 of *BWM*.
- 23 I shall further develop this 'homology' of the allegedly meaning-is-use thesis with the Augustinian picture, in Chapter 9, by way of a positive comparison with Diamond's remedy for 'chickening out'.

- 24 Cf. 1c of “Toward a perspicuous presentation of “perspicuous presentation”” (Hutchinson & Read 2008), wherein Hutchinson and I make this point at greater length. See also our discussion of whether or not Wittgenstein identifies with what David Stern calls the ‘commentatorial’ voice, that one finds often especially in 108–133, in our “Whose Wittgenstein?” (Hutchinson & Read 2005).
- 25 I treat 107 as the pivot-point, because it ends with “Back to the rough ground!” From the start of 108 onward, Wittgenstein starts to emerge from the hegemony of the metaphysical “must” that pre-occupies him from 95 onward.
- 26 Cf. “Some aspects of the grammar of “aspect””, in *BWM*. The ‘reminders’ Baker offers are themselves transitional, nonsensical. They are *exhausted* by their liberatory purpose. No sense remains to them after this is accomplished.
- 27 The term “picture theory” understates the continuity, even with regard to this most seemingly doctrinal or positivist of ideas in the *TLP*, between the early and later work of Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein uses the model that he recalls of a traffic accident in order to produce a fertile metaphor for the representational power of language, in the *Tractatus*; but note that he would not expect that the model (the ‘map’) in such a case would remain constant over time, beyond its use at a specific moment in a court-case, nor beyond its use in relation to *certain desired specifics* of what is being there modelled, etc. As we shall see below (in considering 122), the belief, among ‘elucidatory’ advocates of the concept of “perspicuous representation”, that one can elucidate a solid conceptual ‘landscape’, can even be seen then as *less* satisfactory than what was *already* in the *Tractatus*, so far as the flux and purpose-relativity of linguistic ‘pictures’ goes. (For detail on picturing, a *non*-theoretical philosophical device in *TLP*, see Denis McManus’s resolute reading thereof (McManus 2010). Compare also the writings of Anthony Palmer.)
- 28 What I say here is different from what Andrew Lugg luminously says (2002, 162). But I do not think it is incompatible with it.
- 29 Another example of this phenomenon that Wittgenstein loves to use is “I am here”. We incline to get caught up in the idea that this sentence is necessarily always true. This forgets its actual use: in very specific circumstances. (See *OC* 348; and *PI* 514.) Cf. also *PI* 117, on “This is here”.
- 30 See 240–242 for a great sequence in which Wittgenstein midwives freedom from such compulsive ‘crystalline-isation.’
- 31 They are a *seduction*: see the tremendous liberatory sequence from 192 to 195.
- 32 102 goes on to explain the phenomenology of the illusion of already ‘seeing’ the ideal in the ordinary.
- 33 It is intriguing that even as perceptive a reader of the *Investigations* as Andrew Lugg fails to notice the clash (2002, 167f). This failure might be due to the fact that Wittgenstein says “Where does this idea come from?”, rather than something like “Where do these [clashing] ideas come from?” I take it that the reason for *that* is that, at a higher level of expression, all these clashing metaphors for the ideal are still: metaphors *for the ideal*. They are all hopeless attempts to express the same ‘(un-)thing’: a tissue of nonsense that deeply attracts us.
- The passage as I read it then echoes the broken pot of Freud’s *Interpretation of Dreams* (1997) (a text of Freud’s that Wittgenstein of course knew and commented on): It was fine when I gave it back to you, it was already broken when you loaned it to me, I never borrowed it. ... (Thanks to Andrew Norris for this ‘reminder’.)
- 34 Much as the ‘below the line’ quotation from Faraday at this point in Wittgenstein’s text, “Water is one individual thing – it never changes” comes to

look strange to one. In the context of 95–103, it looks like the remark of someone hopelessly captivated by a picture.

- 35 104 speaks of our being “Impressed by the possibility of a comparison”. This is worth comparing directly to the well-known remark 664, where, very similarly, Wittgenstein writes:

In the use of words, one might distinguish ‘surface grammar’ from ‘depth grammar’. What immediately impresses itself upon us about the use of a word is the way it is used in the sentence structure, the part of its use - one might say - that can be taken in by the ear. — And now compare the depth grammar, say of the verb “to mean”, with what its surface grammar would lead us to presume. No wonder one finds it difficult to know one’s way about.

(The German word translated in the two cases as “impress” is different, but the translation is both Anscombe’s and Hacker-and-Schulte’s, and seems sound.)

- 36 Cf. Chapter 5. See also Baker’s excellent discussion (*BWM*, 33).
 37 For detailed discussion, see Chapter 7.
 38 A (deliberately over-)simple object of comparison for our experience of reading 95–121, then, would be this: 95–107 = thought-constraining problem; 108–121 = liberating (dis-)solution.
 39 I am riffing here on *RFM* II (41).
 40 I return to the significance of this in the very final pages of the Conclusion to this book. 114–115 encapsulate the way in which Wittgenstein sought, boldly and yet (in his manner of doing it) humbly, an enduring freedom from the eggshells of his previous captivity.
 41 The scare-quotes are needed. As Baker puts it:

Augustine’s picture is primarily a form of representation, a way of seeing things... To displace or replace it is a tremendous undertaking. Wittgenstein aims at nothing less than transforming an *entrenched* way of thinking, habits of thought which are evidently still dominant among analytic philosophers. This is much more ambitious and radical than correcting a misdescription of the uses of words.

(*BWM*, 276)

This helps us understand why it is so hard to get anywhere, in philosophical dialogue. A Hackerian approach to philosophy leaves it a kind of mystery why Wittgenstein’s method has (palpably) not won the day.

- 42 This helpfully starts to put right the mis-emphasis I have suggested one sometimes finds in Baker of an overly individual-centred ‘therapeutic’ programme, not taking the paradigmatically inter-personal dimension of acknowledgement and negotiation seriously. (It also connects back to my line of thought in Chapter 3, re ‘accounts’.)
 43 My translation here is *based* upon the Anscombe translation, but varies it significantly. I believe that the Anscombe translation has unwarrantedly overly-encouraged many readers to search for a ‘language-game theory’ in Wittgenstein, in which one would segment ordinary language from scientific language from ‘metaphysical language’ etc., and thus immediately commit oneself both to a kind of relativism *and* to a kind of language-policing in order to secure the ‘boundaries’ of these ‘language-games’.
 44 See his powerful essay, “Wittgenstein on Metaphysical / Everyday Use”, in *BWM*, strongly-recommended for anyone serious about getting clear on Wittgenstein’s use of the concepts of everyday/ordinary.

- 45 And Baker thus suggests that the 'trouser' word here is actually "metaphysical", *not* "everyday". The normative point of the concept of everydayness is simply to contrast with the undesired zone of the metaphysical.
- 46 See the discussion of 95–97, below, for what this 'would' be.
- 47 I have in mind here Lakoff and Johnson's deconstruction of essentialist thinking (Lakoff & Johnson 1999). Cf. of course also *PI* 97.
- 48 I will dwell at length on the metaphysical 'must', in discussing 95ff., below. Such systematically dubious musts are at issue, quite explicitly, over and over again in the *PI*. (A wonderful case-in-point, especially salient to the discussion here, is 389.) Note that one relatively *secure* warrant for "musts" is hypothetical: there is no objection to saying you must do such-and-such *if* you want to have the result so-and-so. The problem with metaphysical "musts" is their liability to *take for granted* the end – even though it may well be problematic, or indeed absurd.
- 49 Cf. also *BWM* (103), on the metaphysical use of words engaged in by the 'Wittgensteinian' who argues that (say) "The meaning of a word *really* is its use in the language" (Cf. Chapter 3).
- 50 Frequently, of course, as I have repeatedly stressed in the present work: oneself. Though note that, *contra* (at times) Baker, that cannot be the *paradigm* case: for talk of "convincing oneself" is generally metaphorical, *modelled* on (talking of) convincing others. I return to this point, below.
- 51 Often, another good word for this is simply: metaphysics. When metaphysics is (latently) empty, a hovering only.
- 52 See again 38. Cf. also Wittgenstein's various remarks on language "idling", memorably-explored by the late James Guetti (1993a).
- 53 And here it may be important to remind ourselves that we have a freedom in relation to these words, rather than being their prisoners. Cf. this helpful liberatory remark from *Philosophical Grammar VI*:

The word "proposition" does not signify a sharply bounded concept. If we want to put a concept with sharp boundaries beside our use of this word, we are free to define it, just as we are free to narrow down the meaning of the primitive measure of length "a pace" to 75 cm.

(Wittgenstein 1974, 113)

- 54 The one is a kind of descendant of the other. And there is a close relation in the way in which both play a trick on one, if one thinks that they can do for one all that one, in philosophy, wants them to do, by way of theory-building.
- 55 See Chapter 9 for discussion.
- 56 "Tends to" – because the term "language-game" is used in a *variety* of ways by Wittgenstein. It needs itself to be read carefully in context, *in use*. Wittgenstein warns us of this himself; he actually announces that he will use the term variably, when he introduces it in *PI*!: See 7.
- 57 Cf. 340, on why one nevertheless shouldn't be too hard on oneself for one's failing to see it.
- 58 This once more is the point where I part company with Baker.
- 59 The point here builds on my remarks in relation to "limits" and the inherent difficulties with (limits to!) the spatial metaphors one reaches for in philosophy, *vis-à-vis* 103, above.
- 60 I make this argument — that elucidations *in the 'true' sense of that term* as all that philosophy, at heart, is about — jointly with Rob Deans in our essay "The Possibility of a Resolutely Resolute Reading of the *Tractatus*" (Read & Deans 2011).

- 61 Not in the way the 'elucidatory' readers of Wittgenstein take it to be. For, as I've suggested, *their* elucidations turn out to be, roughly, doctrines in disguise.
- 62 In the way that libertarians (and subjectivism, and consumerism) are childish... Such childishness is virtually a dominant ideology in our world, today. (Cf. my analysis of such a trend in Kripke's Wittgenstein in Chapter 8.)
- 63 This article was a straight-later-Bakerian exegesis of 122 and critique of Hacker et al. It drew on the first full-fledged article penned by 'later Baker', his own rebellion, in "PI 122: neglected aspects" in *Wittgenstein's Method*, against the Baker-and-Hacker 'overview' interpretation of 122.
- 64 And so the reader is invited to consult that article, if they wish to be appraised of detailed respects in which the approach to 122 manifested here differs from Hacker's.
- 65 I do not want however to get too hung up on the minute scholarly details of the shift in my own view, which are probably (to put it mildly) not of the utmost interest to most readers. I'll *mostly* simply set out here seven features marking the nature of my still-broadly-mostly-later-Bakerian presentation of "perspicuous presentation".
- 66 Cf. n.2. (I object to the translation alternative proposed in the new Hacker-Schulte edition of *PI*. This translation at times seems to me, frankly, designed to beg (to pass over) interpretive questions.)
- 67 And bear in mind that, following later Baker, I do not see perspicuous presentations as restricted to being of grammar. See below for development of this point.
- 68 Here, I concur with Haller, who points out that Wittgenstein "reproaches Spengler for repeatedly making the mistake of extending the scope of statements true of the archetype of contemplation to the objects of contemplation" (2015, 84). This criticism could I believe be extended to apply to Hacker.
- 69 Which sounds just like Hacker's conception of perspicuity.
- 70 This is one way of putting the central argument of the book that Hutchinson, Sharrock and I co-authored *There Is No Such Thing as a Social Science* (Hutchinson et al. 2008). Wittgenstein-influenced ethnomethodology, as briefly discussed and expounded in that book, is one place in the social studies where this radical conclusion, that flies in the face of the programmatic ideology of social science, is recognised. Social scientism fantasises that we could in principle additively portray social/human reality accurately, as it is, in totality. But this is an *absurd* quasi-theistic dream.
- 71 Hacker speaks of conceptual mapping, indeed of "conceptual topography" (2001a, 37). The kind of distancing implicit in Hacker's metaphors is self-defeating. One cannot separate one's language from one's responsibility for and one's involvement in it, in the way that mapmakers can usually separate what they map from their responsibility for their mapping of it. Thus the mapping metaphor beloved of 'elucidatory' readers is a standing invitation to bad faith, an (un-)ethical temptation.
- 72 Rather, 'from within'; cf. 123: "I don't know my way about".
- 73 See (*BWM*, 30–31). My take on the lengthy example he offers there of such use of alternative notation (*vis-à-vis* how to disambiguate "is") in order to free one is that *such objects of comparison can perspicuously be treated as perspicuous presentations*. (Cf. the early portion of Chapter 5. Compare in Chapter 3 n.50 and n.51 and *supra*.)

Furthermore, we should bear in mind the respect that I've outlined in which perspicuous presentations should be treated as objects of comparison.

For not even the colour-octahedron presents an entire zone of discourse univocally and fully. As becomes clear in *Remarks on Colour* (Wittgenstein 1979b), colour-language is actually significantly more complex than the octahedron could lead us to believe; most crucially, because spatiality (e.g. looking *through*, as in transparency) cannot be untied from the logic of colour discourse as it emerges in its full complexity.

- 74 The classic (Hackerian) interpretation of perspicuous representation comes to look like a moment of metaphysics.
- 75 For discussion, see the discussion of Stern's book in "Whose Wittgenstein?" (Hutchinson & Read 2005).
- 76 Cf. this well-known tweet of Donald Trump's: "I'm a very stable genius". Available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/01/06/politics/trump-genius-tweet-analysis/index.html>.
- 77 For detailed argumentation to this conclusion, see Ch. 9 of *A Wittgensteinian Way with Paradoxes* (Read 2012b).
- 78 Compare/contrast: "The rules he follows, which comprise the grammar of *his* language, are none other than what he *acknowledges*. This is precisely the point highlighted by Waismann's emphasis on freedom as constituting the essence of philosophy" (*BWM*, 154). It seems to me that talk of "the grammar of *his* language" risks being in serious tension with our taking seriously the anti-'private-language' considerations. When he acknowledges what rules he follows, he is acknowledging *us* in the same moment. This breaks him free of idiolecticism; but also of the kind of absolute *personal* freedom that Baker's Waismann, unfortunately, seems prejudiced in favour of, at the expense of the enablingness of our always basically shared language. (Cf. Baker's discussion of acknowledgement (*BWM*, 159). See also the discussion of problems in Baker's discussions of acknowledgement that I already undertook in Chapter 2.)
- 79 See *Letters to C.K. Ogden* (Wittgenstein 1973, 49).
- 80 When what is required is rather a better job at facilitating an aspect-shift for particular purposes.
- 81 Sluga thinks (personal communication; see also the relevant (final) chapter of his *Wittgenstein* (Sluga 2011)) that the method of perspicuous representation is the one we must adopt, *and* that there is not and is not going to be a single, comprehensive perspicuous representation of our grammar (language, culture, form of life). To assume that there is going to be such was Spengler's mistake. It is a mistake characteristic of monomaniacal theoretical understandings of human life, understandings of the kind that interested Wittgenstein for their power, but above all for their danger, and for the need to overcome or guard against them in philosophy.
Sluga also believes that this mythic mistake is deeply embedded in our culture. I agree; but I think that somewhat more than Sluga allows can be gotten out of drawing a distinction between perspicuous presentations and perspicuous representations, as a resource for combating this 'mistake'. I worry that Sluga's stance veers too much toward being Hericlitean, asserting unsurveyability in a quasi-metaphysical manner. Whereas for me any unsurveyability of language is a methodological point.
- 82 Though we should note here a wonderful remark of Baker's in a related context:

Like visual aspects, conceptions are transiently exclusionary; it is impossible to see thinking simultaneously as an inner accompaniment to speaking and as operating with signs... . Conceptions too are essentially

non-additive: attempting to combine them [into one 'master'-conception] produces, not a more comprehensive way of looking at a concept, but muddle.

(BWM, 284)

Leave aside the somewhat inapposite use of the word "impossible"; the basic thrust of the first sentence here is right (and I will explore some of the consequences of it in Chapter 9). The second sentence is the crucial one for my purposes here: This is Baker making clear his scepticism as to the 'goal' of *comprehensiveness* in conception. And this crucially assists with the thrust of what I am saying at the present time in this chapter: that such a goal *vis-à-vis* perspicuous presentations is dangerous. (So perhaps full reconciliation between later Baker, Sluga and myself may yet be achievable.)

83 Though not necessarily beyond Baker himself: see (iv) (BWM, 44).

84 This is a kind of Winchian/ethnomethodological point – for explication, see my *Wittgenstein among The Sciences* (Read 2012a), and Chapters 1 and 3 of *There Is No Such Thing as A Social Science* (Hutchinson et al. 2008). (My thinking in this area has been crucially influenced by Phil Hutchinson.)

85 Does Wittgenstein's aiming for complete clarity (cf. 133) contradict what I say here? See the next chapter, for why I believe not.

86 If you are not familiar with it, then substitute Primo Levi's *If This Is a Man* (1979) (on which it extensively draws).

87 Who is the judge of that? I essayed my answer to this question already, in Chapter 2.

88 Similarly, Juliet Floyd: "perspicuity is not itself perspicuous" (TNW, 236).

89 And "for the purposes of trying to overcome the stuckness we have found ourselves in here". (Cf. also n.2.)

90 Here I disagree, for example, with Baker: see BWM (51, n.29). See also the discussion thereof at the opening of Chapter 2.

91 The question may get answered in our practice. Wittgenstein invites us to try an approach and see if it works - and see *at what cost* that work might get done.

92 About which we have already said a fair deal in anticipation, above.

93 I think what Baker says in BWM (270) is also correct: 'just' changing our way of seeing so that we can come to understand what is in plain view for the first time is itself a profound change in which "nothing has changed, yet everything appears differently".

94 For this reading of 124, see Read (2002).

95 125 connects in this respect positively back to TLP 4.1121, which offers the reader a strikingly similar notion of entanglement as the problem facing Wittgenstein's predecessors and himself. (And TLP 6.54 is of course legible as a metaphor of how to free oneself from such entanglement, by overcoming the *satze* that tempt one.)

It also connects to PR:

Why is philosophy so complicated? It ought, after all, to be *completely* simple. Philosophy unties the knots in our thinking which we have tangled up in an absurd way; but to do that, it must make movements which are just as complicated as the knots. Although the *result* of philosophy is simple, its methods for arriving there cannot be so. // The complexity of philosophy is not in its matter, but in our tangled understanding.

(PR, 52)

96 Many thanks to Angus Ross, Sebastian Greve and Oskari Kuusela (especially), two anonymous referees, Andrew Lugg, Catherine Rowett, Odai Al-Zoubi,

Kelley Dean Jolley, Garry Hagberg, Alun Davies, Simon Summers, Katherine Morris, Daniel Moyal-Sharrock and Gavin Kitching, for very helpful readings of drafts of parts of this chapter, and to Avner Baz and Stephen Mulhall for inspiring comments that helped prompt or improve it. Thanks also to audiences in York and Norwich for my presentation of some of this material there, previously. Huge thanks also to Hans Sluga and Jessica Woolley for vital thoughts. The final portion of this chapter, on 122, owes by far its deepest debt to Phil Hutchinson, with whom I co-published material to which, through a reworking, it is the direct heir. This chapter thus would not exist without his work and inspiration. However, Hutchinson I know would not agree with some of what I have written here; he cleaves more closely to later Baker's take on "perspicuous presentation" than I (after deeply engaging with Sluga) do.

5 Objects of Comparison to the Real (Philosophical?) Discovery

PI 130–133

Has not philosophy itself, at least since Plato, claimed for itself the task of therapy, or say liberation from bonds of illusion, superstition, bewitchment, fanaticism, self-distortion?–

Philosophy the Day after Tomorrow (Cavell 2005, 211)

5.1 Introductory

In the previous lengthy chapter, we saw the liberatory metaphors writ large through the heart of what is sometimes called (misleadingly, I have suggested) the ‘chapter on philosophy’ in *PI*. I there read 95–124 in this spirit, re-orienting one towards key terms such as “everyday” and “perspicuous presentation” in the process. This far shorter chapter ‘completes’ the process.¹ By giving a reading of “object of comparison”, as this crucial concept is introduced in 130–132, and of the famous ‘-end-of-philosophy?’ discussion at 133, including *PI*’s one and only direct invocation of “therapy”.

I suggest that the notion of ‘object of comparison’ is *itself* an object of comparison, and that it is intended to displace the hegemony of ‘scientific’ (i.e. scientistic) would-be *modelling* in philosophy. (In this respect, this chapter dovetails seamlessly with a *sequence* through Chapters 3, 4, 6 and 7, manifesting a continuous progress thoroughly questioning such scientism. My working assumption is that scientism attracts us especially *because* its mode of modelling appears to remove as (power-)fully as possible the need to pay attention to particulars, the need to take *responsibility* for one’s words. Thus the ultimate motivation for scientism may lie in its reducing the felt need, a need we feel a dubious desire to reduce, for philosophy as an exercise in moral responsibility.) This leads straight into the well-known invocation of therapies and the discussion of ‘the real discovery’ – the one that allegedly enables one to stop philosophising – in 133. The translation of 133 is pondered here, and a reading proposed wherein this passage certainly does not amount to any crude ‘end of philosophy’ thesis, and is rather profoundly manifestative of the kind of self-reflexive aspect to Wittgenstein’s writing that we have already seen in passages such as 1, 43, 103, 122, etc.: i.e. 133 too turns

out not to be a ‘statement’ of Wittgenstein’s ‘position’, but a set of temptations that need careful work by one for one to avoid entrapment by.

5.2 The ‘Object of Comparison’ Object of Comparison

Let’s begin by looking at the main thrust of 130–132; I add emphasis here to make perspicuous liberatory² tendencies and occurrences therein:

PI 130: “Our clear and simple language-games are not preliminary studies for a future regimentation – as it were, first approximations, ignoring friction³ and air resistance. Rather, the language-games stand there as *objects of comparison* which, through similarities and dissimilarities, are meant to throw light on features of our language.”

PI 131: “For we can avoid unfairness or vacuity in our assertions only by presenting the model as what it is, as an object of comparison – as a sort of yardstick; not as a preconception to which reality *must* correspond. (The dogmatism into which we fall so easily in doing philosophy.)”⁴

PI 132: “We want to establish an order in our knowledge of the use of language: an order for a particular purpose, one out of many possible orders, not *the* order. For this purpose we shall again and again *emphasize* distinctions which our ordinary forms of language easily make us overlook...”

This sequence sees Wittgenstein setting out in a beautifully succinct way the distinction between quasi-science and philosophy (according to ‘our method’ of philosophising). In physics, the idea of preliminary studies makes sense, the idea of excluding friction and air resistance from one’s model makes sense. Not in philosophy, where precisely what we need is....friction (107). The quiddities and haecceities of the everyday.⁵ So, for instance, drawing on a key Wittgensteinian trope: words are like tools (*We* use ‘tool’ as an object of comparison for ‘word’ or ‘concept’), but we are on the cusp of a grave misunderstanding if we try to shoehorn wordness entirely into toolness.

Wittgenstein then introduces (in 130–131), in counter-position to the quasi-scientific idea of a model, the idea of *objects of comparison*. The crucial difference between these and (the searching for) models, theories, etc. is that objects of comparison are by contrast *meant* to throw light through similarities *and dissimilarities*.⁶ Why lay stress on dissimilarities? Because this redresses the imbalance that exists, especially in our scientific culture, in favour of similarity and against difference. Differences are the very thing that Wittgenstein insisted he teaches.

One *builds in* that such analogies, models, etc. come to an end somewhere; this is not an unfortunate fact that one tries to deny, battle

against, or ignore; it is rather a plain inevitability, a ‘limit’ – which (in the spirit of the Preface to the *Tractatus*) is not really a *limitation* at all. For one can potentially gain (learn, teach) just as much from dissimilarities as from similarities, and both will always exist. It would only be a limitation if we were *constrained* from doing something that we actually on balance and on reflection want to do – something that amounts to doing something – by our analogies coming to an end. But one does not – with objects of comparison – seek to simplify so as to match an ‘essence’ of what one wants to ‘model’; one does not fantasise a ‘perfect’ analogy (an analogy which would have to be an identity, and so *not* actually an analogy at all); rather, one leaves everything as it is. What changes is one’s way of looking.

Another (kind of) example then of an object of comparison could be “Meaning is use”! One can learn from its advantages and disadvantages: its advantages deliver its perspicuity (One could also even call “Meaning is use” a perspicuous presentation – one likely ultimately less perspicuous however than 43).⁷ One does not ‘attach’ to it, so long as one is clear that it is ‘only’ an object of comparison.⁸ It is indeed something like a yardstick, that one holds alongside our accountings for language; and the possibility of such a yardstick existing (demonstrated by its use) punctures the delusion that (say) the Augustinian picture shows how we *must* measure word-meaning.

One typically picks an object of comparison because of similarities. Wittgenstein’s central liberatory goal in the *Investigations* centrally involves the freeing of one from the tendency to over-generalise. In thinking *through* (by *means* of) the object of comparison before one, one is encouraged to be aware that one will likely exaggerate similarities at the expense of differences.⁹ Thus, as a central liberatory procedure, one ought if anything to *emphasize the differences* over the similarities. This is a way in which the ‘object of comparison’ object of comparison focusses *our* activity less riskily than the ‘model’ object of comparison; this again of course underscores the profound difference between the scientific sensibility and ‘our’ philosophical sensibility. For modelling is focused primarily on the similarities, typically ignoring the dissimilarities in just the way that Wittgenstein draws attention to in 130.¹⁰

Thus, the great importance of the ‘object of comparison’ object of comparison. (For we should describe what kind of thing an object of comparison is in *that* way; for we can see now how clearly it is better to think of *this* move of Wittgenstein’s too (i.e. that of 130–132) as setting out an object of comparison than to think of it as setting out a quasi-scientific model or any such-like. At this meta-level then, we compare the object of comparison conceptual object with that of perspicuous presentation, with grammatical remarks; with metaphor; with picture; with quasi-scientific model, etc.) Compare the following remark, which sets

out clearly the close connection between family-resemblance and objects of comparison:

Spengler could be better understood if he said: I am comparing different periods of culture with the lives of families; within the family there is a family resemblance, while you will also find a resemblance between members of different families; family resemblance differs from the other sort of resemblance in such & such ways etc.. What I mean is: We have to be told the object of comparison, the object from which this approach is derived, so that prejudices do not constantly slip into the discussion. Because then we shall willy nilly ascribe what holds of the prototype of the comparison to the object to which we are applying the comparison as well; & we claim “it must always be...”.

(C&V, 21)

The last sentence shows starkly the stakes: metaphysical capture, versus a liberatory dynamic. Objects of comparison help to free us. For, in making us alive to differences, and not entrapping us in an obsessive fixation only on similarities, they enable us to escape metaphysical ‘*musts*’.

Note however that this is not a way of merely derogating metaphysical statements: far from it. They can now even potentially find a use; a different kind of use to that mentioned in 116. They too can function as objects of comparison. Consider again an example we have recurred to several times now: “Meaning is use”. That ‘presents’, in truth, as a metaphysical statement: a would-be definition of essence. But considered instead as an object of comparison, I have shown in earlier chapters how it might be harmless, and indeed helpful.

We will be “unfair” – this occurrence of *Ungerechtigkeit* (in 131) could just as justly be translated as “unjust” – if we fall away from the seeking after ‘objects of comparison’ into a seeking after ‘models’ in the usual philosophical sense of that word (or indeed: into metaphysical systems). There is an ethical *cum* political force to the need to base one’s philosophical thinking around objects of comparison. One will fail to be fair – to those who one might be disagreeing with – one will fail to have integrity, if one does not give dissimilarities their due just as much as similarities. And one will almost invariably *incline* – this is at the very root of the deep attraction of scientism¹¹ – towards over-estimating the power of the similarities *which inclined one in the first place* towards the object of comparison one picked. Thus philosophy is a constant battle against the-bewitchment-of-our-intelligence-by-means-of-our-own-desire-to-find-things-to-be-more-alike-than-they-are. Philosophy is a moral-cum-political task of resisting the tendency that we have towards leaping to conclusions that obliterate the differences that philosophy essentially teaches.

Philosophy essentially involves seeking to be just to what it is that one is oneself most deeply wanting and needing to say and succeeding in saying, and to be just to others *in just the same way*.¹² Justice comes not from cold calculation, but from a willingness to struggle – and a willingness to listen.

Such justice, such willingness, is our method. Such justice distinguishes those who follow Wittgenstein (on the resolute reading) in adhering to a principle of charity (such that charging “Nonsense!” is a last – not a first – resort), from ‘*soi-disant*’ Wittgensteinians who are out to catch their ‘opponent’ in a violation of ordinary language or of ‘logical syntax’. When this justice is practiced, in philosophy, then we might say, echoing Tibetan Buddhism, that all is liberation.

And crucially, self-consistently, notice (as we anticipated in Chapter 2) that one is not even as it were *compelled*, as if from outside, by this offer of liberation.¹³ *We* want to establish an order. That is what we are trying to do, for particular purposes. To establish *an* order; not *the* order! (Carnap, Ryle or Hacker too often make it sound as if they are establishing ‘the’ order of language, *simpliciter*.¹⁴) Thus Baker remarks that Wittgenstein “seeks *das erlösende Wort* in the form of exhibiting an order (*eine Ordnung*) which, as if by magic, transforms what seemed chaotic into something intelligible” (*BWM*, 280). Hopefully, this new possibility of perspicuity, this would-be liberating word, will persuade. If it does not, one should always remain open to the possibility that it really is *not* the harbinger of redemption that one had hoped it is, and open to the possibility that one may oneself *still* have got things wrong.

This overcoming of the impression of disorder in our very concepts, this seeking of the liberating word(s), thus has the purpose of seeking to make philosophical problems (completely) disappear. Or so, at least, Wittgenstein now goes on to (seem to?) suggest.

5.3 Wittgenstein and the End of Philosophy?

In 133, Wittgenstein introduces¹⁵ an object of comparison for philosophy: that of therapy. Or rather: that of therapies. This reminds us that if we speak of “Wittgenstein’s method” or of “our method”, we must avoid being corralled into thinking that we are talking about one thing. There is rather a set – even perhaps, a motley – of ways in which philosophical liberation can be achieved. Speaking of “our/Wittgenstein’s method” risks manifesting a craving for generality: *unless*, as ‘we’ do, we constantly remind of the *neglected aspects* of ‘the’ method. Reminding repeatedly of such neglected aspects, correcting biased (monological) images of Wittgenstein by which we are too often possessed, amounts to the same thing as speaking of plural methods.¹⁶

Here is the Anscombe translation of that crucial final sentence of 133: “There is not *a* philosophical method, though there are indeed methods,

like different therapies.”¹⁷ She translates “gleichsam” as “like”. A better translation, in context, would I think be: “akin to” (or, slightly awkwardly but quite helpfully: “alike to”). Such a translation would bring out clearly the genuine parallel that is intended here. *This* is an object of comparison where we are meant to take very seriously the similarity. (I return to the translation of this sentence below, where I press this point further, by considering the arguably-more-literal translation now employed by Hacker-&-Schulte.)

Now, in this book, I aim *inter alia* to follow in some footsteps of Cora Diamond and James Conant, writers who have most efficaciously shown how the *Tractatus* is best read not as gesturing at profound, unutterable truths, but rather as *engaging* our *temptation(s)* to utter nonsense; and as *committed* to there being *no philosophically relevant difference* between purported types of nonsense. The question this stance raises in relation to thinking Wittgenstein’s later conception of philosophy is of course in what respects, if any, this conception was altered in Wittgenstein’s later work(s). Does he break completely with the ‘Tractarian’ approach? Or does he move to “the only strictly correct method” as recommended in *Tractatus* 6.53? ...Or do the commitment and engagement just mentioned *continue*, in simply a more piecemeal (and thus more *consistent*: with his avowed ‘particularistic’, contextual atheoretical method) and less grandiose form?

Some version of the third possibility is what resolute readers of Wittgenstein such as myself tend to hold to. A potential *difficulty* for that possibility is presented by the apparent consideration (in *PI* 133) of this piecemeal method contiguously with the idea of an end to philosophy. This poses a potential difficulty because it can *seem* decidedly unparticularistic, decidedly grandiose:

...[T]he clarity that we are aiming at is certainly a *complete clarity*. But this just means that the philosophical problems should *completely* disappear.

The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of breaking off philosophising when I want to.- The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* in question.

(*PI* 133)

Now, Kelly Dean Jolley, an excellent close-reader of Wittgenstein, claims in a paper on 133 that “Wittgenstein...seems to have had an idea of what it would be like to have reached philosophy’s end. Wittgenstein thought he could accomplish this feat simply by making what he called ‘the *real* philosophical discovery’” (Jolley 1993, 327–328). However, surprisingly, he (Jolley) leaves entirely open – i.e., unexplored, unarticulated – what “the real philosophical discovery” is or could possibly be, only claiming

that "...Wittgenstein did not think he had made the real philosophical discovery" (Jolley 1993, 328). There is something right about the last sentence here, as I shall discuss below. But, not having been given an idea of what the *content* of such a discovery would be (as opposed to merely considering in the abstract its *role* in 'ending philosophy'), why ought we to presume that (according to Wittgenstein) there is or could be any such thing, any more than there is one singular philosophical problem? The possibility opened up for us, as I see it, by Diamond, Cavell et al. is that, even here, when he seems to be posing the possibility of some such discovery, the *real* discovery even, Wittgenstein is in fact still dealing with a temptation. To put the point bluntly, even polemically, for the sake of clarity by means of finding where we stand (by means of effecting a comparison): *is* it actually clear, in the end, that the implied author of *PI* is counselling us *unreservedly* to aim at "*complete clarity*"? Might it not be rather (following up on my Sluga-style reconceiving, in Section 4.5, of the very achievability or indeed desirability of perspicuity) that one's right aim can best – or even only – be realised by means of appreciating that a third way is possible, one that does not *simply* buy into the 'correct'/'conceptual clarificatory' mode of proceeding (that would allegedly make the problems "*completely disappear*"), even as it depicts clearly the mythicalistic erring of interlocutorial voices that would in effect counsel metaphysics or scientism (by aspiring at a general level to provide a theory answering all the problems).

For, after all, as we saw in Chapter 4, most of the preceding 60 sections or more (including, notably, 122) engage critically such *temptations* both away from *and toward* clarity. Why not here too? That is to say, if we can agree that the "sublimity" of logic, the "hidden essence" of language, the ideal of "crystalline purity", the desire for an 'overview'... if we can agree that these conceptions are not allowed to masquerade as unproblematic, truly well-formed, by the implied author of *PI*, even when (or perhaps even especially when?) they seem absolutely to *press* themselves upon one, should we not be similarly willing to entertain the thought that the conceptions of "*complete clarity*", of the complete disappearance of philosophical problems, of "the real discovery", even of "[giving] philosophy peace", may well themselves – in the end – be similarly problematic?

To argue thus is not to commit to a totally polyphonic model of *PI* in the sense of holding that there are no passages in the text that we can provisionally identify as being closer to Wittgenstein's implied 'view' than any others. But this is *only* because the 'correct' voice *would* as it were be correct, were we still able simply to engage in an old-fashioned philosophical debate with more or less substantively and definitively misguided interlocutors (We might call this, with a nod to Cavell, the "conditional correctness of the later Wittgenstein's philosophical 'position'"). But it is not, and we are not; and this is not something in the

end to be regretted, either; it is a deep feature of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy. We find ourselves wanting to say that Wittgenstein's view would be correct (and therefore that e.g. we could hope to make "the real philosophical discovery") were it statable (Though this is not to imply that there actually is something which is not statable which it ideally would be¹⁸). The problem is that once we've perhaps grasped the conception that Wittgenstein can best be read as manifesting, once we've grasped therefore that there is no statable *content* to 'it' to grasp, and that it really is through and through an activity, and that a key aspect of our method self-reflexively-speaking is to work to avoid any metaphysics being covertly imported in the guise of a purely methodological requirement (and, as we saw in Chapter 4, Wittgenstein feared that he had not successfully executed such avoidance, in the *TLP*), then we need – in order to elucidate and to follow Wittgenstein – to go beyond the 'correct' voice, too, and no longer seek for a philosophical position, of *whatever kind*.

We don't want to refine the system of rules for the use of our words in unheard-of ways, because in the final analysis the philosophical task *is not even most perspicuously presented as being about clarifying language*. Or if it is, it's 'meta'-clarity: It's about becoming clearer about our clarity and unclarity, and about being careful *not* one-sidedly to favour an endless drive towards clarity. That is, it is about our own *various willingnesses* (and here Wittgenstein is close to Sartre's contemporaneous observations concerning "bad faith"¹⁹) to be tempted, fooled; to be slipshod, to over-generalise. To give up when bloody hard work is needed, including unexpected work, such as resisting a tyranny of the ideal of clarity. (If *that* is something that we were to manage as a civilisation to change, philosophical problems could start to disappear.)

5.4 "The *Real* [Philosophical?] Discovery"

Are there any candidates that for "the real philosophical discovery" that Wittgenstein did not repudiate? Hilmy tries to put some flesh on Jolleyian bones: in *his* paper on *PI* 133 he argues that the discovery in question is *how ordinary language operates* (and he suggests that Wittgenstein made this discovery) (Hilmy 1991). This is at least a substantive contention that we can assess, one of the only such proposals for the content of "the real philosophical discovery" that I am aware of; however, assessing it does not take us very long. For, as I showed in the first sections of Chapter 4, one cannot (for philosophically consequential purposes) accurately be said to *discover* the nature of some particular linguistic terrain.

The strongest candidate is that offered by Oskari Kuusela (2008b, 49–51). Based on investigation into the nachlass, Kuusela suggests that the real discovery is of a/the new method of "calm progress" in philosophy.

The discovery is of a method that enables philosophy to proceed problem by problem, in a way that does not bring itself into question.

This might well be right. And yet I'm still not quite convinced. My methodology in this book is to be slightly suspicious of any reading of *PI* that *depends* upon material not in *PI* for its meaning. Though of course I draw at times in this book on passages from Wittgenstein not in *PI*, I aim in the end to read *PI* as a great text, that can stand alone. I am suspicious of readings that depend too deeply on pre-*PI* material because they run the risk of crudifying the writerly sophistication of *PI*, and of importing ideas or even doctrines that Wittgenstein earlier toyed with into a work that I see as rigorously post-doctrinal. In particular, the hard question that nachlass-based interpretations can never answer satisfactorily is why the passage (in the nachlass) that is allegedly so wonderful and allegedly decisively settles the interpretive issue *was not included in PI*.

Kuusela's reading, while itself sophisticated and broadly on the right track (in the next section, I am in fact very close to his reading, in suggesting that the move towards thinking of philosophy as composed of problems rather than one big problem is a key clue to reading 133 adequately) runs these risks, because it depends very much on passages not in *PI*,²⁰ and so runs the risk of overly homogenising or monising Wittgenstein's 'method' in *PI*, 'from outside' as it were. Recall the vital last parenthetical sentence of 133; Wittgenstein is insistent against such monism.

I aim in this chapter to make 133 itself (and its context) my primary resource. And my central suggestion is that there is no indication that Wittgenstein thought the notion of the "real discovery" mentioned in 133 to be *definitively* attainable, *nor even definitely sensical*. If one reads *PI* after the fashion of Diamond et al., then one thinks that Wittgenstein not only did not complacently assume he had made or could make "the real philosophical discovery" (as Jolley notes) but wanted us to question why such apparent aims hold the attraction they do for us, while understanding that they do. I'd issue this challenge to Jolley, Hilmy, Kuusela, and all those who read Wittgenstein here in a similar way: show us a textual source *in PI* for the thesis that there could possibly be such a thing as making "*the* real philosophical discovery." Otherwise, we shall be licensed to conclude that – *here*, just as (more demonstratively) in earlier sections of *PI* (and elsewhere) – Wittgenstein is, *inter alia*, engaging our latent desire to mire ourselves in nonsense.

My thought hereabouts has been supported²¹ most vigorously by Andrew Lugg:

'The real discovery', as Wittgenstein sees it, would be one that enables us to stop doing philosophy when we want to, 'one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring itself into question'. (Elsewhere, Wittgenstein says,

‘Thoughts that are at peace. That is what someone who philosophises yearns for.’) But a discovery of this kind is out of the question.
(Lugg 2002, 199)

You can’t always get what you yearn for. For Wittgenstein (as he quoted Augustine as saying), “the search says more than the discovery” (Z, 457).²²

5.5 A Problem – or Problems

What I hope to have shown already is this: that one of the passages in Wittgenstein’s work that might appear most strongly to resist the Diamond/Cavell manner of availing oneself of Wittgenstein’s philosophy can be read without difficulty as explicating or, better, exemplifying it. I have suggested that 133 *dramatically continues the dialectic of temptation and correctness* that characterises so much of the text of *PI*. It is in this sense itself very much a *2nd-personal passage*. The key truth in the therapy object-of-comparison is the essentially 2nd-personal nature of the therapeutic encounter. 133 does not, as it has too often been taken to do, embody a declaration. Rather, it calls for and part-stages a *dialogue*. (And this is how radically it resists scientism. There is no place for a cold 3rd-personal survey here.)

There is nothing dogmatic about 133; it does not violate Wittgenstein’s cautions against a would-be philosophical finality, on my reading of it. It plays into – temporarily fuels, even – our desire for such an end to philosophy, a desire that one can see Jolley being caught up in even against his best intentions; *and* it midwives a working through of that desire. It seeks to free us from the dangers of that ‘final’ desire, for a finality to philosophy itself.

One problem that may remain is this. Consider this moment in 133 again: “The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy... [t]he one that gives philosophy peace so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* in question.” If “the real discovery” is something we desire but that we should not assume that we *should* (simply) desire, then, despite the importance of Wittgenstein’s remarks on the not-necessarily-problematic character of philosophising about philosophy (there being no need for a “second-order philosophy” (121)), there remains a sense in which Wittgenstein’s later work must run the same risks as the *Tractatus* evidently ran: philosophy will always periodically be bringing itself in question.

But perhaps that, while it seems regrettable, is unavoidable? For note a key way (one that, thus far, I have let slide) in which Jolley’s interpretation of 133 is dogmatic. Jolley speaks of “the real philosophical discovery”. But the word “philosophical” here is a leap, an unwarranted insertion into Wittgenstein’s prose. Wittgenstein in fact speaks only of “the real discovery”.

“The real discovery is the one that enables me to break off philosophising when I want to.” This is palpably an image of liberation. But (I am saying) we should be careful. We should be careful not to assume that such liberation is available in the way that we want it to be.

The price of (philosophical) freedom, on my reading of Wittgenstein, is vigilance whenever needful, including at certain times when one thinks one is no longer in need.

Consider in this connection a famous passage from *Zettel* on this:

Disquiet in philosophy might be said to arise from looking at philosophy wrongly, seeing it wrong, namely as if it were divided into (infinite) longitudinal strips instead of into (finite) cross strips. This inversion in our conception produces the greatest difficulty. So we try as it were to grasp the unlimited strips and complain that it cannot be done piecemeal. To be sure it cannot, if by a piece one means an infinite longitudinal strip. But it may well be done, if one means a cross-strip. –But in that case we never get to the end of our work! – Of course not, for it has no end.

(Z, 447)²³

There are always more cross-strips in prospect. So we never get to the end of our work. *The one* real discovery: no, I am suggesting, that is alien to Wittgenstein’s conception, his sensibility. Many – endlessly many – ‘small’ ones, via discoveries of liberating words and the like: perhaps yes. We proceed problem by problem, ‘retail’ not ‘wholesale’.²⁴ We proceed dialogically, so as to achieve this ‘retail’ liberation (rather than imposing heteronomously a wholesale dogma on what is to be done and how to do it). Philosophy has no end; but in pursuing it with a view to what we might call *co-freedom*, one/we may be lucky enough to experience little ends; even (as the French might put it) a series of little deaths.... ‘The’ real insight/‘discovery’ is then perhaps deflationarily characterisable as: becoming sufficiently practiced in resolving or making some kind of real progress with specific philosophical problems such that the problems start to feel resolvable and lose their depressing or sirenic air of insolubility or deep mystery. It isn’t at all a definitive end to philosophy or philosophising but it is a very significant shift. In one’s attitude, one’s sense of confidence (on which, see below). In our sense of active hope.

And we should be able to see this point from *Zettel* at least partly present now, in the wording of 133 itself: “But now we demonstrate a method by examples, and the series of examples can be broken off. – Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated), not a *single* Problem.” As we get accustomed to reckoning with and eliminating these difficulties, perhaps it is confidence in our method(s) that brings some peace? This would fit with a resolute/liberatory reading especially as it could be said to position the ‘real discovery’ as *a kind of know-how*.²⁵

But... even the notion of many endlessly small real discoveries, we should be very careful not to over-read. One of these discoveries may work, for some people (or at bare minimum one person),²⁶ for a while. We should not bank on any more than that. Baker puts it thus,

Both the claim that the order [emphasised in 132] is purpose-specific and the acknowledgement of the possibility of different orders indicate that [Wittgenstein's] aim was to produce for each problem an order which would make *it* completely disappear, not to establish a single order which would make every problem disappear.

(BWM, 37)

I would add to this a more explicit audience-relativity and a sense of likely temporariness. This suggestion is consistent with Wittgenstein more or less deliberately courting temptation in the construction of 133, along the lines that I outlined earlier.

As I have said in Chapters 2–4, I think there is an element of making philosophy *more rigorous* about all this. Treating pictures/models as objects of comparison lets us progress beyond warring factions talking across one another in would-be permanent dedication to their own picture or position. While we continue to battle over favoured pictures philosophy's own legitimacy will remain in question. For it will/would then keep bringing itself in question in a regrettable way.²⁷

5.6 'Therapy' – and Freedom

Let us return to where 133 then *leaves* us. The Hacker-and-Schulte translation of the key final sentence of 133 is helpful²⁸: “There is not a single philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, different therapies, as it were.” This makes clear that the comparison with therapies is non-accidental. These different methods of philosophy ARE – *as it were* – different therapies. That is what is being said here. In its full directness – and qualifiedness. The therapy object of comparison is worth taking seriously. (While remaining an object of comparison, not an identity.)

For Wittgenstein *might* have said, ‘there are [different] methods [of philosophy], like different species of sea shells [or: different breakfast-cereals]’.²⁹ But he did not. For this would have been a less than helpful thing to say; for, evidently, the point of the analogy with different therapies is rather stronger than that. In other words: it is decidedly a deliberate example. It is an extremely carefully chosen comparison (i.e. object of comparison). It is chosen because of the deep parallels that can be drawn, for our purposes, between philosophy and therapy/ies.

Let's underscore then that the point of the therapeutic comparison might helpfully be remarked to be its essentially 2nd-personal nature.

And 133 brings out the way in which, as noted throughout this book, (our method(s) in) philosophy proceeds in a manner quite different from the 3rd- and 1st-person models that dominate Modern philosophy. The “different therapies” have in common that they are all best conceived as constitutively involving something like a *dialogue* – not a monologue, whether of a 1st-personal or 3rd-personal kind (i.e. whether a solipsistical monologue or a God-like monologue...³⁰).

*But...*by the time of writing *PI*, of course, these likenings of philosophy to therapy, let alone to psychoanalysis, have virtually disappeared: 133 (and 255) are the *exceptions*. This again is why I find the liberatory hermeneutic increasingly powerful (and...freeing, from prior *assumptions* about what Wittgenstein is up to. The liberatory hermeneutic is far more the result of an investigation into Wittgenstein’s *PI*, far less a dogmatic requirement.). Thus my suggestion for where 133 leaves us: it leaves us with a picture of our methods as akin to therapies, *but* it palpably does not *bind* us to that picture. That is: We remain free, at the ‘meta’-level too! And, building on what I showed earlier in this chapter, we can now venture that, even in 130–133, the one place in the book where the word “therapy” (or rather: therapies), famously, appears, *we already see a liberatory hermeneutic more keenly at work than a therapeutic one*. Thus this is a successful ‘crucial experiment’ for my case that liberation (and ethics) are a more satisfactory prism for seeing 2nd-personal-philosophy now – for expressing the legacy of Wittgenstein’s *PI* – than therapy.

One liberates a person(s). One doesn’t find an objective solution. One works fundamentally in the realm of the 2nd person. I will close this chapter by offering a kind of object of comparison for 133 as Wittgenstein wrote it. Here is an (‘expanded’) ‘version’ of 133. It may help deliver some perspicuity; some freedom from possession by the wording of 133 that has at times vexed us:

The clarity we *want* to aim at is *complete* clarity. But that would mean ‘simply’ that the philosophical problems should *completely* disappear. Such disappearance is sometimes in principle possible — we should be open to the task of aiming toward it, searching for it; no-one is entitled to insist dogmatically and knowingly that it is impossible — ...and sometimes even achieved. At least for a while; if we come up with ‘liberating words’.

Going further still: we would *like* a once-and-for-all discovery that would put an end to all our philosophical vexations, delivering that desired complete clarity as an all-in-one package. But is there good reason to believe that *this* is even *possible*?

The real discovery, in the case of *each* philosophical problem that grips someone or some group or some culture, is the one that makes them capable of stopping doing philosophy in respect of that

problem. I.e. In each specific case. (Once again: don't rashly assume that this is possible forever. Don't assume, but *look*, and work.)

Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated), not one *single* great problem, as the desire for *the* real once-and-for-all (philosophical?) discovery would have us believe.

In philosophy we demonstrate a method — *our* method(s) — by examples. The series of examples can be broken off, once it has done its job (if and when it has, at least for now), with regard to one of those problems. We free ourselves from torment, perhaps - for a while. (But; there will surely always be more problems. Philosophy will begin again; and will even bring itself in question again.)

Properly speaking, there is not *the* philosophical method. There are different methods; different therapies, as it were.

This 'reworking' is rather prolix; but perhaps that's justified, given that 133 is rather concise. But of course what my 'rewording' therefore risks, even (or even *especially*) if it is a helpful object of comparison, is: *not* leaving to the reader what the reader can do for themselves.³¹ And thus perhaps interfering with the organic process of self-liberation? For my central suggestion has been that *the wording of 133 deliberately embodied a 'final'* temptation that the philosopher-as-liberator needs to wrestle with: *the fantasy of the ending of philosophy via one discovery.*³²

This brings to an end our re-reading (in this chapter and the last) of the so-called 'chapter on philosophy' in *PI*. If this reading has fruits, then we can apply them. Beginning with what Wittgenstein turns to fairly soon thereafter: an investigation into what we might call, roughly after later Baker,³³ the depth grammar of knowledge, as a way into the rethinking of 'rule-following'.³⁴

Notes

- 1 Nevertheless, if the reader is particularly short of time or attention, let me suggest that the fullest 'cash-value' of this chapter is to be found in its closing two sections: "A problem - or problems", and "Therapy - and freedom".
- 2 And, in 131–132, ethico-political.
- 3 Recall 107. We in fact *need* "friction".
- 4 As Kevin Cahill helpfully reminds us (2011, 130–131), this passage, in the 1937 precursor of it, continued thus:

But then what is the relation between an approach like Spengler's and mine? Injustice in Spengler: The ideal doesn't lose any of its dignity if it is posed as the principle determining the form of one's approach. A good unit of measurement.

Here, Wittgenstein emphasised a feature of the point of objects of comparison that connects them back to my discussion in Chapter 2 (wherein, following Baker, I emphasised how one need not apologise for one's mode of liberatory approach not having to be the approach of 'everybody') and in Chapter 4 (wherein I developed the sense in which perspicuous presentations

are not ‘objective’). *PI* 130–132 retain their/our dignity, in their affirmation of the purpose-relativity of philosophical comparisons, and, tacitly, of the requirement (of and on the philosopher) for justice.

- 5 Thus, as Lugg notes, it is a serious misreading of Wittgenstein to think that the language-games he has been introducing in the text of *PI* are “a first step on the road to a full-scale account of language” (Lugg 2002, 197). (Cf. my critique of the desire for an account, in Chapter 3, and my critique of the desire for a world-view, in the closing portion of Chapter 4.) Part of the importance of this emerges in 144, in Wittgenstein’s declaring that what he wants to achieve is a willingness on the part of his co-conversationalist “to compare [a given case] with *this* rather than *that* set of pictures. I have changed his *way of looking at things*.” Not: his theory, *nor* his ‘view’ in the sense of ‘position’. (Cf. My discussion of the different senses of ‘view’ in 4.5.)
- 6 Thus there is here a deep, obvious connection with “family-resemblance”: the latter could *itself* helpfully be seen as a kind of object of comparison (a ‘yardstick’ designed to displace the felt inevitability of concepts such as essence, and of definition-via-necessary-and-sufficient-conditions, *not* a preconception to which reality must correspond, nor a vehicle by means of which to ‘model’ language), but *also* yields a key clue to *how* objects of comparison work. That is: one notes and thinks and sees *via/through* the resemblances (and dis-resemblances!).
- 7 Cf. also 248. One looks for good objects of comparison; but not for the sake of simplification let alone for the sake of theorisation (as scientists do). One looks to free up the other’s *way of looking at things* (Cf. again 144).
- 8 For related discussion, see (*BWM*, 44–45).
- 9 And thus to experience the comfort of the familiar, and of the already (allegedly) solved. Iain McGilchrist gives a marvellous exposition of this tendency in *The Master and His Emissary* (2009).
- 10 To be clear: this is normally not a problem in *science*. Rather, it is *de rigueur*. It’s a key feature of (what Kuhn calls) ‘*Normal science*’. See the chapter of that name in *Kuhn: Philosopher of Scientific Revolutions* (Sharrock & Read 2002).
- 11 As outlined for instance in the *Blue Book*, where Wittgenstein suggests that a main source for

Our craving for generality [is] our preoccupation with the method of science. I mean the method of reducing the explanation of natural phenomena to the smallest possible number of primitive natural laws... . Philosophers constantly see the method of science before their eyes, and are irresistibly tempted to ask and answer questions in the way science does. This tendency is the real source of metaphysics, and leads the philosopher into complete darkness. I want to say here that it can never be our job to reduce anything to anything, or to explain anything... // Instead of “craving for generality” I could also have said “the contemptuous attitude towards the particular case”.

(*BB*, 18–19)

Wittgenstein teaches – emphasises – differences, and thus breaks the imprisoning spell upon us of the craving for generality.

- 12 Cf. again on this my analysis of the ‘ethic’ of *PI* 1, in Chapter 1.
- 13 In this connection, we should worry about the wording of Wittgenstein’s notion that “our ordinary forms of language easily make us overlook” key distinctions. The felt force of such “making” is exactly what, as we saw in Chapter 4, the phenomenology of philosophical illusion can manifest as; but (I have suggested that) it is bad faith to simply buy fully into that

phenomenology, and thus to shuck off what is our responsibility onto language 'itself'. I return to develop this point further in Chapter 7.

- 14 See the discussion of 122 in Chapter 4. Compare also:

[Wittgenstein's] method for dissolving [philosophers'] problems is to persuade another to acknowledge [their] prejudices and to replace them by a different *Auffassung*. This is a matter of establishing an order in our knowledge of the use of language; not of establishing any linguistic facts about a public practice. (Here is a clear contrast between two conceptions of 'describing the grammar of our language').

(BWM, 290)

I'd prefer to say, remaining more strictly within a liberatory hermeneutic: to offer a different *Auffassung* to the hegemonic one (so its hegemony is broken), though not necessarily to *replace* the one with the other.

- 15 I mean: it is the first time that this analogy is introduced in *PI*.
- 16 And thus the title of Baker's book, *Wittgenstein's Method*, is harmless, because of the subtitle: *Neglected Aspects*. The use of the singular, indexing "our method", doesn't contradict 133, so long as one constantly reminds oneself and others of its multiformedness.
- 17 Recall my noting in the Introduction – in 0.2 – that such therapies are not restricted to psycho-therapies. Cf. 255.
- 18 I.e. I am in this parenthesis seeking to avert an 'ineffabilist' reading of 133.
- 19 See, on this close parallel, Katherine Morris's brilliant 'Wittgensteinian' ('therapeutic') reading of Sartre on intellectual bad faith, as undermining the case for (i.e. the effectiveness of) philosophical *arguments* (because the whole point of bad faith is that it is evidence- and argument-resistant), in a manner highly conducive to that pursued in the present work (Morris 2016).
- 20 What of the possibility, suggested to me by an anonymous reviewer of this book manuscript, that Wittgenstein's careful introduction of what itself be called the method of language-games, in the opening sections of the *PI* onward, is/was itself the real discovery? But there is something odd about saying that the 'discovery' of the kind of method pursued in section 1ff. of a book entitled *Philosophical Investigations* is "what makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to". There's something odd about saying that the very method by which Wittgenstein re-initiates the doing of philosophy at all is exactly the 'discovery' that enables him to stop doing it at will. As I've said: my case begins by agreeing with Jolley that we should not regard "the real discovery" as being something which Wittgenstein thought he had himself unequivocally made (and which by extension we (allegedly) succeed in helping ourselves to). To think so would risk being hubristic, unhumble. See also n.22 for an analogy here between such humility and the humility sought in Buddhist practice; and see n.32(iii) for an important quotation from Wittgenstein himself which undermines the attribution to Wittgenstein of any notion to the effect that he made a discovery that enabled him to stop philosophising when he wanted to.
- 21 Since I first published it, in the journal article upon which this chapter is loosely based.
- 22 Once again there is a pretty deep connect between Wittgenstein and Buddhism: the Buddha stressed that it was important not to think that the 'road' to Enlightenment had an end-destination at which it was possible to arrive. (My point here then is akin to that made by the Zen koan, "If you meet the Buddha, kill the Buddha". To think proudly that one has arrived at enlightenment is ipso facto not to have arrived.)

- 23 A helpful exegesis of this passage can be found at: <https://kellydeanjolley.com/2011/08/31/easy-pieces/>.
- 24 And this is why I noted in the previous section that actually my interpretation is very close to Kuusela's. Why, to follow up the query considered in n.20, isn't the method of language-games in the 'overture' to *PI* a method that gives philosophy peace?: I am suggesting in the present section that we may indeed be willing to say that it does so: *but retail*. There is no end-of-philosophy, though there may be lots of little (very-likely-temporary) ends. (We see such 'retail' work in action *throughout* this book, as *throughout* Wittgenstein's. That is why *PI* begins as it does '*in media res*' with 1; and it is why *PI* 89–133 is not 'meta-philosophy' but 'just' more philosophy (as Wittgenstein says quite clearly in 121).
- 25 Cf. Chapter 6. Cf. also Michael Kremer's interpretation of the kind of knowledge attained by the (awakened reader of the) *Tractatus* (Kremer 1997).
- 26 Compare *BWM* (213): "[Wittgenstein] targets 'philosophical problems, i.e. the particular disquiets of individuals which we call "philosophical problems" (von Wright 1982a, Band XI, 35). 'Our method' is aimed at getting philosophical problems to disappear completely – *in this sense of 'problem'*.'" (I would however argue of course that this remark errs in being over-individualistic.)
- 27 Philosophers too often pitch battles, endless arguments which purport to be logical but in which each side fails to make contact with the other's perspective. *That* is part of what we can be liberated from.
- 28 Especially helpful, in that these two scholars (Hacker especially) are no friends of the 'therapeutic' interpretation of Wittgenstein. Thus their translating this totemic passage of *PI* thus is perhaps doubly-significant.
- 29 And "different kinds of sport" or "different ways of gardening" would hardly have been any more helpful, here. Wittgenstein described himself as a disciple of Freud; I think it hard to imagine himself describing himself as (say) a *disciple* of Donald Bradman, or of some famous gardener. Perhaps "different martial arts" (suggested by Oskari Kuusela (personal communication)) would have been a little better; but, if so, then that's because it might actually have meant something profound for Wittgenstein to have compared his activity positively with that of Muhammed Ali, or Bruce Lee (though it is still rather hard to imagine him calling himself their 'disciple').
- 30 These are not as different as is commonly supposed. See Louis Sass, *The Paradoxes of Delusion: Wittgenstein, Schreber and the Schizophrenic Mind* (1994). There is an unstable oscillation between 1st and 3rd person positions in the schizophrenic mind as interpreted by Sass, a way in which the drive towards solipsism inclines one towards a God-like pseudo-objectivism; this mirrors such an oscillation in philosophical thinking. Thus once again we see how the apparently-radical difference between 1st and 3rd persons is delusive; it is the 2nd-person that is actually radically different from both these.
- 31 "Whatever the reader can do too, leave to the reader" (*C&V*, 77).
- 32 Compare Wittgenstein's reported later remark to Rhees, "In my book I say that I am able to leave off with a problem in philosophy when I want to. But that is a lie; I can't" (Hallett 1977, 230). Does this contradict my interpretation? Three points about this: (i) The wording of this remark should not be taken to be exact; it is based on Rhees's later reported remembrance of a hasty conversation; (ii) If it *were* exactly accurate, it would surely be a classic for-instance of something that happened not-infrequently, namely, of Wittgenstein being a rather poor – a *harsh* – interpreter of his own texts; for as it stands it is clearly a somewhat crude reductive (mis-)reading of 133...

(iii) Most importantly by far, there is a key sense in which the thrust of the remark *supports* my interpretation. For my argument is precisely that the last temptation of the Wittgensteinian philosopher, a temptation I argue that 133 works through, is the idea of being able to stop philosophy. And what Wittgenstein makes clear in this remark that Rhees has given to us is that it would be a deep mistake to think that philosophy can be terminated at will. I think that what was probably happening, when Wittgenstein made the remark that Rhees later sought to transmit, is that Wittgenstein was recording this kind of deep temptation (to believe in a real discovery that is capable of ending philosophy) as something that had been *aired* – offered to the reader, by way of a logical temptation – in 133.

33 See especially his radical reconception of what ‘depth grammar’ should be taken to be, in Chapter 3 of *BWM*.

34 Thanks to two anonymous referees for this book manuscript and to Hannes Nykanen, Andrew Lugg, Philip Wilson, Kelly Dean Jolley, Dennis Patterson, Louis Sass and Oskari Kuusela for comments, conversations and correspondence that have enriched this chapter.

6 Wittgenstein Dissolves the Know-How vs Knowledge-that Debate

PI 149–151

[T]he effort really to see and really to represent is no idle business in face of the *constant* force that makes for muddlement.–

Henry James, Preface to *What Maisie Knew* (2010)

6.1 Introductory

PI 149: “If one says that knowing the ABC is a state of the mind, one is thinking of a state of an apparatus of the mind...by means of which we explain the *manifestations* of that knowledge. Such a state is called a disposition. But it is not unobjectionable to speak of a state of the mind here, inasmuch as there would then have to be two different criteria for this: finding out the structure of the apparatus, as distinct from its effects. (Nothing would be more confusing here than to use the words “conscious” and “unconscious” for the contrast between a state of consciousness and a disposition. For this pair of terms covers up a grammatical difference.)”

Consider first the final parenthesis in this remark. One is free to talk instead about (say) ‘unconscious awareness’ and that is *potentially* OK: but if one does so, one needs to be clear how radically different a thing ‘unconscious awareness’ is from ‘conscious awareness’. They sound like two sorts of the same overarching kind of thing – but they are not, any more than God’s eye is one of the same kind of thing (eyes) as your eye, – or, indeed, than a decoy duck is a kind of duck...¹ For virtually none of the things that are true of ‘unconscious awareness’ so-called are true of conscious awareness, and vice versa... If one uses such a term, one needs to be very very wary of covering up a grammatical difference.

This is a classic example of the depth of the liberatory teaching of differences that Wittgenstein practices, focally in *PI*. In this chapter, I seek to investigate the teaching concentrated in 144–154 so as to make manifest the profound grammatical difference between know-how and

knowledge-that; thus undercutting the currently-popular project of reducing the former to the latter – and the too-blithe assumption that know-how is even wisely to be ‘reduced’ to being a class of knowledge.

This chapter is the first of four that work through key moments in the full sequence of Wittgenstein’s ‘rule-following considerations’, 143–242. It aims to outline a Wittgensteinian approach to the issue of ‘know-how’. I will quote extensively from *PI* to illustrate and undergird that approach. Wittgenstein moves at 143ff. to apply his conception of philosophy (on which, see especially Chapters 4 and 5) to questions of rules, normativity, etc. properly understood. I will show that in order to see the full value in these applications we should see Wittgenstein’s remarks concerning the status of different kinds of knowings and attitudes towards knowledges and practices as at the forefront of his concerns, in relation to rules, etc. In particular, I emphasise the importance of 149–151, wherein it seems to me the heart of a Wittgensteinian capacity to free us from the Analytic ‘knowing-how vs knowing that’ debate can be centred.

There has been a swathe of writing in Analytic philosophy during the past decade or two aiming to undercut the ‘Rylean’ category of ‘knowing-how’ (Bach 2012). The “intellectualist” desire, focal in the work of Timothy Williamson (2000) and his followers, to convert know-how into knowledge-that, is a desire that is troublingly easy for philosophers to fall into. Why “troublingly”? Because I believe, as I shall explain in a little more detail below, that it involves a classic instance of what is perhaps the philosopher’s ultimate *deformation professionnelle*: the desire to see everything that matters as a matter of propositional knowledge, rather than of activities/doings. In this way, it involves a privileging of the life of the mind over ‘real life’/the rest of life.

I will suggest in this Chapter that the desire to explicitise the implicit is a desire well worth questioning but *not* one best countered simply by a defence of know-how as an independent category of knowledge. To the contrary (and these constitute my main endeavours in this chapter): we ought to be willing to question whether there *is* an over-arching category of ‘knowledge’ at all, and we ought most definitely to question therefore whether know-how is well-understood as a *kind of that* (of knowledge). Even insofar as it *is*, we ought, *roughly*, to consider the possibility of *inverting* the supposed pre-eminence of knowledge-that over ‘knowledge-how’.² Certainly, we ought to question the alleged pre-eminence of knowledge-that over knowing how. In these latter two regards, I am relatively close to and I would lean towards Ryle (et al.)³; but with the large proviso that the methodological context is very different from his: Because I (will) have questioned the alleged master-category of ‘knowledge’; because I question whether know-how is a branch of knowledge; and also because I seek deliberately to avoid giving here an *account* of know-how,⁴ to avoid enunciating an alleged general truth

concerning ‘it’; and finally because I aim to be rather more humble than is the norm on *either* side in this debate.

6.2 A Wittgensteinian Way with ‘Intellectualism’

PI 150: “The grammar of the word “know” is evidently closely related to the grammar of the words “can”, “is able to”. But also closely related to that of the word “understand”. (To have ‘mastered’ a technique.)”

Is the kind of double-relation noted here in 150 intellectually accessible to the advocates of ‘knowledge-that’? Let us start our investigation with a perhaps-telling moment in a recent constructive critique/exposition of broadly-Williamsonian intellectualism. Yuri Cath (2011) seeks what he thinks of as a kind of halfway-house between Ryleanism⁵ and standard intellectualism; he seeks to compromise on the claims of the latter (He calls this ‘revisionary intellectualism’). We might therefore, if we are nervous of intellectualism, reasonably take him as *a good case for as happy an intellectualist-influenced picture as is feasible*. If his account fails us, then the situation of more intellectualist accounts will not look promising.

In sympathetically critiquing Williamson et al, Cath offers the following example:

The Lucky Light Bulb. Charlie wants to learn how to change a light bulb, but he knows almost nothing about light fixtures or bulbs (as he has only ever seen light bulbs already installed and so he has never seen the end of a light bulb, nor the inside of a light fixture). To remedy the situation Charlie consults *The Idiot’s Guide to Everyday Jobs*. Inside, he finds an accurate set of instructions describing the shape of a light fixture and bulb, and the way to change a bulb. Charlie grasps these instructions perfectly. And so there is a way, call it ‘w1’, such that Charlie now believes that w1 is a way for him to change a light bulb, namely, the way described in the book.

(Cath 2011, 115)

Cath goes on to argue that nevertheless there might be a problem with Charlie’s belief, a problem with it being credited as ‘knowledge-how’: due to a complex (‘Gettier-style’) set of circumstances⁶ that Cath stipulates and elaborates, in this particular case the instructions, while accurate, are in one important sense not reliably arrived at. *But* note just how much Cath has already ceded to the standard intellectualist, in even getting as far as he gets in the quote as given earlier. Charlie “...grasps these instructions perfectly. And so there is a way, call it ‘w1’...”, such

that, were it not for the Gettier-like peculiarity that Cath in fact goes on to generate in the case, he would happily agree that Charlie knows that *w1* is “a way for him to change a light bulb”, and so *knows how* to change a light bulb.

I begin by remarking that too much is conceded towards intellectualism if one concedes that instructions consist in words that are given such that in reading them alone one can come to know how to do something. Consider: Instructions for screwing a lightbulb in place seldom tell one the direction in which one should screw it. Nor do they say that all tokens of lightbulbness will be threaded in the same way. One brings to the reading of instructions participation in or enculturation into many basic ‘background’ practices or ways of going on that enable one to draw on a diverse complex of skills that one has.

Cath might respond that these things that I have just drawn attention to are ‘assumptions’ that *could* be explicitated. I think that that is deeply implausible; I think that the ethnomethodologists (as referenced in Chapter 3) show why there couldn’t be any such thing as total explicitation of the ‘assumptions’ ‘underlying’ our practices. Any such explicitation would be infinite.

How does one execute something that would seem to require an infinite set of instructions, to deal with every conceivable aspect (not to mention every possible context, every conceivable misunderstanding), and so forth?! A clue, I think, to what may have gone wrong in Cath’s presentation, lies implicitly in the word “grasps”. What is it, to “grasp” something? The metaphor is very suggestive: when we grasp something, we hold onto it and use it to move us somewhere or to move it. Grasping a set of instructions is holding onto them – and *then* actually *doing* something with them.⁷ Or at least, being concretely in a position to do something of the right kind with them. (One might not actually go on to do what one now knows how to go on to do for all kinds of reasons – e.g. dropping dead, getting bored, getting interrupted, etc..) In relation to the concept of knowing how to go on, I am thinking of Wittgenstein’s acute discussions at, for instance, 323, 179 & 154 of *PI*.⁸ Wittgenstein of course powerfully reminds us here that it is not enough, in order to be entitled to say “Now I know how to go on!”, merely to *feel* as if one does, nor even to have (e.g.) the right ‘knowledge-that’ item occur to one. One has, normally, actually *to be able* to go on. Thus Wittgenstein indexes the importance of practice, and not merely of cognition. (In this way, this set of thoughts of his famously crystallised around the phrase “Now I know how to go on” are, as we shall see, supportive of my case in this chapter.)

Cath happily cedes to the standard intellectualist that at *t1*, where *t1* refers to a moment just after Charlie has “grasped” the instructions in *The Idiots Guide*, Charlie knows how to change a light bulb. My question at this point would be this: Does Charlie really know how to

change a light bulb until he is doing it/has done it? (Doesn't knowing how to change a light bulb normally involve some concrete ability, a set of bodily comportments, systematic/artful movements of oneself and of the light bulb etc.?) Of course, I am not blankly asserting that it *must* involve this; that would contradict my method. It is easy to imagine counter-examples to any such claim of essence: e.g. Think of someone who has spent a lifetime fitting and changing bulbs but who now lacks the manual dexterity to do it. The point is rather that such cases seem, roughly, *parasitic* upon the concrete ability/bodily comportments, etc. point.) Does knowing how to change a light bulb not involve, in this sense, at least *applying* the rule given by the instructions? And one cannot take for granted that such 'application' can be taken for granted, once a rule is (only) *intellectually* 'grasped'.⁹ One has to understand what such an application actually amounts to: the extent to which it involves *leaving behind* the intellectual grasp of the rule.

It might seem initially, to an English-speaking philosopher, as if the natural answer to my question(s) is: Yes! He may well know it, even before doing it. And indeed, he *may well*. But I think a clue that this natural answer may not quite be an *answer* – and that thinking that it is may already involve an over-reaching on the part as it were of a cognitive prejudice (a prejudice in favour of thought and at the expense of embodied conduct) – is available, if we entertain the following consideration: If you *asked* Charlie *at t1* whether he knows how to change a light bulb, I think that, if he were unhubristic, he would likely reply something like: "I hope so; let's find out!" Or simply, with a wry smile, "Well, I don't entirely *know*, yet!?" Or, if he were slightly more prolix, "Only when I have done it will I be confident that I do; and there's many a slip betwixt cup and lip." And how many more slips, as any of us who have sought to grasp instructions for machines, etc. know all too well, betwixt reading a set of instructions and actually embodiedly knowing *what* to do *in the sense of knowing* how to do it.

Here the below-the-line remark at 138 is helpful in guarding against such intellectualist over-confidence:

Must I *know* whether I understand a word? Don't I also sometimes imagine myself to understand a word (as I may imagine I understand a kind of calculation) and then realise that I did not understand it? ("I thought I knew what 'relative' and 'absolute' motion meant, but I see that I don't know.")

The entire discussion from 138 to 155 is similarly helpful. (It seems to me that the entire intellectualist orientation in recent philosophy has forgotten this discussion. Forgotten, that is, the power of Wittgenstein's considerations towards the effect that an intellectual occurrence alone is insufficient to amount to knowledge of how to go on.)

Cath suggests that know-how can be reduced to the right kind of true justified belief, in knowledge-that. In *this* (central) regard, he remains a full-on intellectualist. But I am suggesting that we've already seen enough to know that cannot be the right stance. Instead, we should consider the possibility that know-how involves, rather, a decisive step *beyond* any relevant knowledge-that. In the example under consideration we might, following Wittgenstein, essay the following way of putting this: When Charlie reads the instructions and allegedly grasps them perfectly, nevertheless, *does he know how to go on?* And now we might bring to bear the weight of Wittgenstein's 'rule-following considerations' against the rash assumption that he does. Take for instance *PI* 184:

I want to remember a tune, and it escapes me; suddenly I say, "Now I know it", and I sing it. What was it like suddenly to know it? Surely it can't have occurred to me *in its entirety* in that moment!—Perhaps you will say: "It's a particular feeling, as if it were now *there*" — but *is* it now there? Suppose I then begin to sing it and get stuck? — But may I not have been *certain* at that moment that I knew it? So in some sense or other it was *there* after all! — But in what sense? Perhaps you would say that the tune was there if, for example, someone sang it through, or rehearsed it in his imagination from beginning to end. I am not, of course, denying that the statement that the tune is there can also be given a quite different sense, for example, that I have a bit of paper on which it is written. — And what does his being 'certain' he knows it consist in?

Part of the point here, I take it, is that the actual singing is another thing from the alleged 'recalling' of the tune; and what Wittgenstein does here in 184, I take it, is to recall to us some of the ways in which that otherness can make itself known to one. But perhaps this quotation seems to you not quite directly enough addressed at the question of whether he knows how to go on. In which case, try this one:

179: "It is clear that we wouldn't say that B [in section 151] had a right to say the words "Now I know how to go on" just because the formula occurred to him unless experience showed that there was a connection between the formula's occurring to him (his saying it, writing it down) and his actually continuing the series. And obviously such a connection does exist. — And now one might think that the sentence "I can go on" meant "I have an experience which is empirically known to lead to continuing the series". But does B mean that when he says he can continue? Does that sentence come to his mind, or is he ready to produce it in explanation of what he means?

No. The words "Now I know how to go on" were correctly used when the formula occurred to him: namely, under certain

circumstances. For example, if he had learnt algebra, had used such formulae before. — But that does not mean that his statement is only short for a description of all the circumstances which set the stage for our language-game. — Think how we learn to use the expressions “Now I know how to go on”, “Now I can go on”, and others; in what family of language-games we learn their use.”

As Wittgenstein implicitly noted in *PI* 150 (quoted earlier), there is a reason why we speak of know-how and of knowledge-that — there is a reason why the ‘root’ term “know” is present in both cases. There is a relationship between them. A family-resemblance, possibly? But there is *also*, I want to suggest, again following Wittgenstein (see e.g. *PI* 149, quoted earlier) a good case for emphasising the *difference* between them. The profundity, indeed, in many contexts, of the difference. Such differences are precisely what Wittgenstein wanted to teach (cf. the ‘motto’ to *PI*)¹⁰; they are what he thought the (scientific) temptation to generality and simplicity most likely to occlude.

Talk of knowing how is often pertinent to — called for because of — there being explaining how (to do it). ‘Know-how’-talk is a kind of bridge, often, between ability¹¹ and explanation.¹² But we need to remember that there are many cases where an explanation is not relevant, not fully possible, or even not possible at all. Where one cannot explain (how), there are cases where one might best say: “I don’t *know how* to do it: I (can) just do it!”. And where indeed one can.¹³

Let *us* seek to develop some objects of comparison/simplified ‘models’ that may shed light on the difference between knowledge-that and know-how:

- We might characterise knowledge-that very roughly thus: when you know how to go on in virtue of knowledge-that, you can state that such and such is the case. That is definitional of knowledge-that, in the normal run of cases.
- ‘Knowledge-that’ can easily seem an undeniable *paradigm* (of knowledge), to an ‘intellectualist’, a paradigm to which it can seem that all cases must fit. *It itself* should be treated rather as an object of comparison, a ‘model’ we can hold up against cases to bring out their variety.
- We might characterise know-how very roughly thus: know-how is such that when you know how to go on, there *may* well be little or even nothing to say. You go on in the right way. You do not necessarily say how; there may be nothing to express in a proposition.
- The intellectualist story about know-how is a dogmatic story, even in Cath’s ‘modest’ version of it (and recall: we chose to consider his version because it is about the most modest version, the most charitable reading, of anything one could come up with still worth

calling ‘intellectualism’). It is a story from which we need freeing because it tends to restrict attention only to the (at best, limited; more likely, null?) class of cases of know-how where there can be ‘full ‘explanation: i.e. where one can at least in principle explain fully and contentfully what it is that one knows. Where there actually are determinate ways of doings things that we can intelligibly imagine being fully itemised.

- The story is dogmatic because it purports to generality (and indeed exclusiveness) without actually having/earning such generality.
- Moreover, even where the intellectualist story *does* apply, it is arguably never the whole story: we must remember that formulae need to be *applied*, and that this sometimes requires skill and judgement¹⁴; we must remember that *contextual* factors are always relevant; and so forth.

This run of considerations puts any kind of intellectualist in deep difficulties.

Let me now go further. Having set out how setting out a “grammatical difference” between know-how and knowledge-that can de-captivate us, I want to suggest that it is worth seeing such a difference also even between know-how and knowledge, the alleged master-category. I will indicate just how and why it is that, paradoxical though it may sound, I think it might be most natural, and cause the least confusion (cf. *PI* 16), to suggest that know-how is not (on balance, in context) best seen as a kind of knowledge, *at all*. For the question is one of one’s purposes. *Here* the purpose includes: to be able to see more of the genuine variety of cases.

6.3 Is Know-How Most Perspicuously Presented as a *Kind* of Knowledge?: A Reason for Thinking Not

PI 30: “[D]o not forget that all sorts of problems attach to the words “to know””.

As Wittgenstein here tersely notes, the concept of knowledge is more complex and problematic than it typically looks at first. Let us start this section by looking for a moment at the term “knowledge-how”, used not-infrequently by the intellectualists in their debate against Rylans. There seems to me something tellingly-odd about this term, a term which (perhaps, also, tellingly) is not, I believe, used anywhere outside of academic philosophy. It *sounds* less clear or right or apt than the term “knowledge-that”. (Similarly: the term “know-that”, set out by Gascoigne and Thornton as an alleged parallel term to “know-how”, seems inapt, even inept (Gascoigne & Thornton 2014, 10).) In me at least, the term induces a modest but persistent bizarreness-reaction. Why is this?

Here is my suggestion as to why: Because, partly for the very reasons given in the previous section of this chapter, there is something fishy about thinking of know-how as equivalent or reducible to a store of *information*, or to a state of *mind*. “Knowledge-how” tends to suggest or intimate that knowing how to change a light-bulb is knowing some information. Something that can be ‘reified’ as knowledge. In other words: *the term knowledge-how already prejudices - pre-judges - the debate*, and tends unwarrantedly to suggest a potential assimilation of know-how to knowledge-that.¹⁵ (And this insight, if such it is, starts to suggest something further: that assimilating know-how to knowledge may already be unobtrusive.)

Compare the penetrating ‘below-the-line’ discussion, *supra* to sections 150 & 151:

- a “Understanding a word”: a state. But a *mental* state? – We call dejection, excitement, pain, mental states. Carry out a grammatical investigation...: we say
 - “He felt dejected the whole day” // “He was in great excitement the whole day”
 - “He has been in pain uninterruptedly since yesterday”.—
 - We also say, “Since yesterday I have understood this word.”
 - ‘Uninterruptedly’, though? -- To be sure, one can speak of an interruption of understanding. But in what cases? Compare: “When did your pains get less?” and “When did you stop understanding that word?”
- b What if one asked: When *can* you play chess? All the time? Or just while you are making a move? And the whole of chess during each move? – And how odd that being able to play chess should take such a short time, and a game so much longer!

There is usually something very fishy about thinking of know-how as a state of mind (or as a state with what Wittgenstein calls genuine (or continuous) duration).¹⁶

It might be objected that “I used to know it, but now I’ve forgotten” applies both to knowledge-that and know-how. But I think that even that isn’t quite right. It is true that we might under certain very specific circumstances say, “I used to know how to ride a bike, but now I’ve forgotten”, though one will need to tell quite a story for this to be other than a somewhat odd thing for any normal human-being to experience/ say (Cf. the stock-phrase/common-sense that “You never forget how to ride a bike.”). But even then we surely wouldn’t actually say “I used to know it, but now I’ve forgotten”, of riding a bike, as we would say it of (say) the name of the Leader of the Liberal Democrats. At most, we would say “I used to know how to do it.” Know-how, it seems, isn’t parsed by us as a state of mind that we are in (or not in).¹⁷

There is an endless, problematic temptation, manifest in spades in ‘intellectualism’, to ignore the kind of point just made, and (seek to) to turn know-how into knowledge-that. Let us ask, from where does this temptation spring? One key source, that I already mentioned, is our *deformation professionnelle* as philosophers – as people who spend most of our time thinking, and are in many cases (let’s be honest) not very competent at real-life tasks, at doing unintellectual things – to think that everything that matters *is* intellectual, think-able, and that this (*being* intellectual) has *necessarily* something to do with knowing things (which seems a kind of surefire, reliable, non-hazy way of being able to set experts aside from non-experts: we *know* things.)... If things are not intellectual, *we* incline to see them as hazy, ontologically unclear, and/or second-rate. Thus we ‘naturally’ incline to think that know-how must *be* knowledge-that; or that to understand others one must have a ‘theory of mind’.¹⁸

One powerful way of resisting at a high level such a temptation (to assimilate know-how to knowledge-that), then, a way that we are free to take up however paradoxical it might sound, would be to resist the dogma that know-how must be conceived *as a kind of knowledge*, at all. Yes, for sure it matters that the word “know” appears in “know-how”. Yes, of course there is a *relation* between know-how and knowledge-that, and it is important that there is. But are we entitled to assume that they are well-related if conceived of as two species of the same genus? Two kinds of one thing, knowledge? As if knowledge were *something* in general, that we can/could then exhaustively mark out different varieties of.

And: as if knowledge were something that was always there, always present. Whereas: Normally, as Heidegger and Ebersole and ethnomethodology in their different ways emphasise, it is only when there is something to ‘repair’ that *knowledge* becomes salient as a category at *all*. Philosophers tend to think of (to picture) knowledge as like a storehouse, something constant. But it is unclear in the end whether this picture is very helpful even for knowledge-that – let alone for know-how. Perhaps we need often to note – to recollect – the respects in which know-how is something *sui generis*, not simply a form of something more fundamental whose nature we already allegedly know, ‘knowledge’, let alone a form of knowledge-that.

One reason for thinking this is that it is reasonable to claim that we understand know-how itself *better* than we understand (the more abstract and perhaps actually portmanteau-ish concept of) knowledge, if we only properly remind ourselves of the former. Thinking that we must explain know-how by reference to knowledge, rather than maybe even the other way around, is a case of the broadly Platonist fallacy of thinking that the more abstract is the more fundamental and thus more explanatory.

In closing this section, let me note that I am absolutely not stating that know-how is not a form of knowledge. That would probably be revisionist as well as dogmatic. Rather, it's the *automaticity* of the typical assumption/leap to the effect that know-how 'must' 'of course' a form of knowledge that one needs freeing from. One should be wary of the (more general) assumption that if there is knowing, if the word "know" is being justly employed, then there is knowledge. Ordinary language doesn't support this assumption. (See further on this my discussion of a couple of cases in the section on "2nd-person knowledge", below.)

6.4 Is Know-How More Fundamental Than Knowledge-That?: A Reason for Thinking It Is

Try not to think of understanding as a 'mental process' at all. For that is the expression which confuses you. But ask yourself: in what sort of case, in what kind of circumstances, do we say, "Now I know how to go on".

(PI 154)

Having considered a sense in which we may on reflection not want to assume that knowledge as a category is more fundamental than know-how, let us now very briefly¹⁹ ask whether we ought to assert that know-how is more fundamental *than knowledge-that*, or vice versa. We might helpfully ask: In what circumstances would one say something like *that*?

We could say for instance that the real knowledge in the case of Charlie (above) is not even putatively 'w1', but the kind of knowledge contained in 'muscle-memory' etc. This would be exactly a way of seeing know-how as primary. Now, someone might nevertheless respond at this point that this know-how can be understood still as knowledge-that: only the knowledge-that should be understood as vested in the body. When I am asked what my PIN code is, perhaps I do not know; my fingers, however, do know it.²⁰ 'They' know the code; *they* have knowledge-that. Well sure, one *could* say this; you are welcome to say it, if you really want to. It seems to me a somewhat forced way of saving an alleged primacy of 'knowledge-that'. It would seem to me slightly better (though still very far from perfect) to say that my fingers might be said to know how to get me into my account. They know, we *might* say, what to do (though I think saying even that is probably already going further than we need). But to say that they know *that* the code is (say) 4972 – i.e. that they have access to that semantic content – seems to me clearly to risk being unnecessarily 'strong', and homuncular.

What is pretty clear is that the ability to make knowledge-that claims is built on many capacities for know-how. Think of young children, or of dogs; we may say that a dog may know that his master is at the door, or that his master is playing 'Fetch' with him, but it seems pretty

unattractive to say that a dog that knows how to fetch a bone must have knowledge-that to undergird all of the many actions that he takes that constitute fetching. (The case against intellectualism can be well-made at the level of ‘primitive’ deeds, the level at which Wittgenstein so often worked.)

And this is where it seems that Ryle’s fundamental point about a primacy to know-how appears to remain sound from a Wittgensteinian point of view,²¹ unimpugned by the new intellectualist doctrines of Williamson et al.

6.5 Why Does All This matter?

I have changed his *way of looking at things*.

(PI 144)

Why care about what I am writing about in this chapter? Why does the ‘knowledge-that’ vs. ‘know-how’ distinction *matter*? I have offered hints in my earlier references to the deeper reasons why it makes sense to talk hereabouts about the risks inherent in an overweening ‘intellectualism’. The deep-set philosophical inclination to take theorisation as a more basic process or phenomenon than it is; the privileging of mind over body; a way of looking that is a way of spectating rather than a way of doing and being-with; the cultural tendency towards an excessive ‘knowingness’: these are the real reasons why all this matters.

The ‘that’ vs ‘how’ distinction (and standard comportments towards it) involve typically a profound and dubious privileging of mind over body. The desire to reduce know-how to knowledge-that, which is a central target of criticism in my chapter, is a latent or patent desire to reduce body to mind.²² Or to figure the body as a kind of a cloak, or an automaton. Almost as if the best model for a human being were a drone-pilot (and his drone).

Moreover, as implied at the start of the chapter, this may well have still broader ethical and even political implications. The question of whether all know-how is really knowledge-that, and the question of the viability of the concept of ‘tacit knowledge’,²³ are questions which may seem purely academic or more or less literally ‘scholarly’ issues. But this is not so. The moniker “intellectualism” is telling: it is indeed an intellectualist fallacy, a dangerous *deformation professionnelle*, for philosophers essentially to seek to turn us into minds animating ‘machines’, and to seek to explicitise the alleged ‘content’ of our minds.

As against those who think all knowledge is of a kind, and that that kind is always generalisable and codifiable in a ‘database’ for anyone to apply with equal success, I have argued here that there are good reasons for thinking that know-how is profoundly different to knowledge-that.

We could of course still felicitously make the move of calling knowledge a ‘family-resemblance concept’. That would likely be of some use in reducing the drive to reduce know-how to knowledge-that. For it is a way of saying that there is an important sense in which knowledge is not in the classical sense one thing. I think that this is the *least* we should do; for even calling knowledge a ‘family-resemblance concept’ runs the risk of making the members of the family sound insufficiently different, one from another.

And after all: you are *free* to redescribe knowing-how as knowing-that, if you insist on doing so. But what will it profit you? Somewhat similarly: You are not *compelled* to make knowing-how the fundamental category. To say that you were would be a tyrannical ruling. Ryle, in his writings on know-how and knowledge-that, sometimes makes it sound rather too much as if he has told us The Truth²⁴: that knowing-how is simply, always and everywhere, logically prior to knowing-that. I offer, instead, an aspect. And after all, Ryle is surely right that we are doing-creatures (i.e.: we can helpfully and revealingly see ourselves under that aspect); *but* we could do very little of what we do in this *complicated* form of life (indeed, we would *be* immeasurably less than we are), without knowledge-that.

So I haven’t wanted and wouldn’t want to *reduce* knowledge-that to knowing-how. Rather, I have sought a freeing move – not insisted on an allegedly permanent standing truth. I have moved to free us of unwarranted picture-driven assumptions that would have know-how be derivative and suggested that if anything the boot tends to be on the other foot. For we are in-the-world in a way that the philosophy of Jason Stanley, of Williamson, of Cath, etc. seems unable to provide a proper place for. Rather than propositional knowledge, which imprisons us apart from the ready-to-hand in a spectatorial stance, it is (reminding ourselves of) an immersive purposive orientation, a *mattering*, that matters most, to free us up from the deformations that naturally accompany our discipline, a discipline typically dominated (at least in the English-speaking world) by knowing rather than doing or being.

6.6 2nd-Person Knowledge

In philosophy we do not draw conclusions. “But it must be like this!” is not a philosophical proposition. Philosophy only states what everyone admits.

(PI 599)

An advantage of calling knowledge a family-resemblance concept – and seeking thus to deflate the debate between advocates of the primacy of know-how vs those of the primacy of knowledge-that – would be that

it would make room for what I think to be the case: that there are very important categories of knowledge that can be adequately understood *neither* as know-how *nor* as knowledge-that. We are not *compelled* to either category. There's no *must*.

I am thinking for instance of the kind of knowledge (or wisdom) involved in or resulting from meditation. A kind of knowledge that is not just know-how (because meditation concerns – manifests – nothing if not a 'pure' consciousness, abstracted from ordinary doings) but that is not knowledge-that at all (because its character is precisely its prescinding from thinking, and from setting out claims or beliefs).²⁵ Though perhaps the 'raw knowing' that I am bringing into the picture here is so different that it too – as I tentatively suggested earlier with know-how – risks being ill-treated if regarded as a sub-category of knowledge at all, even on a family-resemblance or portmanteau conception thereof. This way of knowing that is not a thinking nor a doing is perhaps not a (branch of or producer of) knowledge at all, either?

Perhaps a clearer example then is *knowing a person*. I mean, not in the sense of "Do you know *x*?"; "Yes, I met her when I breezed into that party last week", but rather in the sense of "I finally feel that I know *y* now, after this traumatic experience we just went through together", or, better still, of "It is just so good to really know you now, my love". It would be decidedly odd to call such knowing of another person not a kind of knowledge at all; and yet it is definitely deformed if it is forced into the mould of the kind of (3rd-personal) knowledge that is knowledge-that. For, while knowledge-that undoubtedly can *help* our knowing of another person – we may come to know another much better when we find out some salient fact about their childhood that has influenced their emotional development, for instance – still our knowing *them* utterly exceeds any such knowledge. Really knowing another person is not knowing facts *about* them. Somewhat similarly, the kind of knowledge of the 'ready-to-hand' that is know-how is at most an aspect of knowing others (roughly: the knowing *how to* know them) which it would be baldly reductive to reduce knowing them to.

Such knowing, real knowing of other beings, is among our deepest desires and needs. It is arguably foundational for the very possibility of social life,²⁶ and thus of *any* knowledge or philosophy (for reasons I will come to in Chapter 10). It is a knowing, or a knowledge, *of a quintessentially 2nd-person form*. And thus we see a key reason why the know-how vs knowledge-that debate is not exhaustive, and at times misfires: because both are commonly construed as 3rd-personally, as simply objective; and if not, then they are construed as 1st-personal-singular, as 'private' (*This* is sometimes how know-how is in effect conceived; Merleau-Ponty comes dangerously close to this at times²⁷). A possibility is omitted: that our interaction as beings (our *inter-being*) may be *constitutive* of some of our knowledge, and perhaps foundational for all our knowledge.

And this should hardly surprise us. Think for instance of the importance of smiling as Wittgenstein characterises it:

It's always presupposed that the one who smiles *is* a human being and not just that what smiles is a human body. Certain circumstances and connections of smiling with other forms of behaviour are presupposed. But when all that has been presupposed someone else's smile is pleasing to me. // If I ask someone on the street for directions then I prefer a friendly answer to an unfriendly one. I react immediately to someone else's behaviour. I presuppose the *inner* in so far as I presuppose a *human being*.

(LWPP II, 84)

An 'objectivist' approach might be to deduce or induce from a body smiling to a person. But that is a radical falsification, a delusion. We react immediately to what another does; we are *involved* with them, without hesitation, with trust. *They* smile. To seek to lever all of this into knowledge-that is dreadfully deforming. But to lever it all into know-how is only marginally better; to characterise all this play of inter-being as equivalent to (say) a knowing one's way about some streets or some such is to dehumanise, 'debeingise'. Knowledge of language might perhaps be well-taken as a know-how; but to reduce knowledge of persons to the same is to miss the very thing that makes life worth living, rather than it's just being a series of mechanical exercises or games.

A philosopher who never saw the importance of (e.g.) a natural smile being pleasing to one would be living or projecting an utterly impoverished life-world.

Or think of the (even greater) importance of looking into someone's eyes: "[I]f someone has a pain in his hand, then the hand does not say so (unless it writes it) and one does not comfort the hand, but the sufferer: one looks him in the eye." (This is 286, to which we will return in Chapter 10.) This remark brings us...face to face with the way in which we really can meet another in their soul. This *is* the 2nd person. To reduce this to knowledge of some fact about his inner state would be disastrous; to reduce it to knowing how to deal with people who are in pain would be at most only marginally better. These moves would miss the essential feature of the situation; that I take his hand to comfort *him*; that I look a *person* in the eye. I "look into his face" (to give the Anscombe translation of 286). Our eyes *meet*. Such a meeting involves equality, openness²⁸ or nakedness. It claims us. It tests us.

These – smiles, or meetings of eyes – sometimes give one a kind of knowledge that transcends anything accessible in a classroom or lab or workshop.

Or think of the 1st-person-plural character of many of our social institutions, a product ultimately of many interactions in the 2nd-person

(singular or plural); think for instance of the extraordinary character of money (as characterised by Wittgenstein at the end of 120); or more generally of trust.

When we take the 2nd-person seriously, we see not only beyond the paradigm of “knowledge-that”, but *also* of “know-how”.

6.7 Concluding Summary and Methodological Reflection

PI 16: “[I]t is as you please.”

Finally, it might seem to some readers as I have repeatedly contradicted myself, in this chapter. How can I suggest these various things, which seem in obvious tension with each other? E.g. If know-how is not really a form of knowledge at all, then how could one possibly also go along at all with the Rylean suggestion that knowledge-that be considered properly a form of know-how?! But such a genre of response is to misunderstand what I have been doing, throughout this chapter. Which is of course: to practice Wittgensteinian ‘liberatory’ method. I have not, as one might put it, actually said *anything*. Nothing, at any rate, that would stand firm. I seek to make no 3rd-person ‘objective’ pronouncements. Rather, my own approach aspires to be thoroughly 2nd-personal. Doubly so: At the ‘meta’-level, I have offered *you* different possible strategies for avoiding being bamboozled by the high seas of language that rise around the concept(s) of knowledge/ knowing. At the ‘subject’-level, I have emphasised how often cases of knowing have a dimension that cannot be reduced with crudification to any 3rd-personal (or 1st-personal) phenomenon. That is neither objective nor subjective.

If (and when) mine have been ‘grammatical remarks’, it matters not if they appear to be mutually contradictory²⁹; because grammatical remarks are not factive nor quasi-factive. I have not been cartographising language; I have been offering tools to the reader desirous of not trapping themselves in language. The aim, one might say, is not so much truth as justice and freedom. To do sufficient justice to the nuances of the various things we call knowing so as to be able to resolve problems connected with a biased, cloying perspective.

I have sought in this chapter variegatedly to manifest the freedom which, on ‘our’ method, is of the essence to Wittgensteinian philosophising. We can experiment with different ways of arranging our concepts and their uses, different *conceptions*, in order to seek to do what Wittgenstein suggested we do in 130–132. These different conceptions need not be even mutually compatible (in the sense of standing, together, or being able to be made parts of one coherent ‘theoretic’ whole),³⁰ for what we are doing to be intelligible and liberatory. They need only be efforts to really see, resistances to the illusion which presses itself upon us: in the

case of this chapter, above all, the influential illusion, the material to overcome which I have found in 138–155 (and especially in 149–151), that we are compelled to represent all knowing as ‘knowledge-that’. But also the illusions typically fostered by those who would overcome that illusion...

It is “as you please” which of the possibilities that I offered earlier you take up. The deeper point is not to feel *compelled* any more to take *one* dogmatic route with the concept(s) of knowing. And this is the final, overarching way in which what I have offered in this chapter is a kind of case-study in liberatory philosophy.

Part of what has started to emerge in the above is that there’s a whole spectrum of differences that risk being flattened out or obscured if one relies on the catch-all category of ‘rules’. The ‘rule-following considerations’ run the gamut from 2,2,2,2... to the dynamics of human conversation; it would be extremely rash to assume that the morals of the former kind of case carry straight over to that of the latter! (And this is part of what I shall explore specifically in Chapter 7.) Hereabouts there is a deep consonance between my approach and that of the radical occasion-sensitivity promoted, after Wittgenstein, by Travis and Hertzberg.³¹

Thus this chapter serves as a prequel to the three that follow, chapters that seek (relative to the tradition) to complicate considerably our understanding of rules after Wittgenstein, and to free us up from unconscious assumptions about what rules are and how they work. For Wittgenstein’s discussion of rules in effect begins, not, as is sometimes said, at 185, but already around 143; obviously, rules and normativity have already been a theme and subject-matter of this chapter. We have already seen reason here to suspect that the ‘standard model’ of the ‘rule-following considerations’ is not right. Specifically: Seeking to turn all knowledge into knowledge-that, seeking to turn all human comportment and practice that is valid into knowledge (of whatever kind), and seeking to explicitise whatever ‘is’ implicit, are all philosophical orientations that ‘fit’ with a strong – possibly ‘tyrannical’ – relationship of rule to application. If there is, as I have argued, something wrong with those orientations, then there is surely something wrong with the standard model of Wittgenstein’s discussions of ‘rule-following’. The following chapters make good the suspicion that already animated this chapter. I shall start, in Chapter 7, by arguing that, in taking seriously reminders of Wittgenstein’s such (as) that in obeying a rule we obey it blindly, we must not occlude human agency and the profound – ‘grammatical’ – difference of the *activity* of rule-following from the mere accord/correlation with rules that is to be found in machines.³²

Notes

- 1 For detail on how to construe talk of the unconscious without falling into the kind of confusion that Wittgenstein warned against, see e.g. David Finelstein’s work, especially his *Expression and the Inner* (2003).

- 2 I shall not however *undertake* that task here. I do so in Read (2019b).
- 3 I will offer no exegesis of Ryle here (and rely on none of his work here); that would take us too far afield. Cf. again Read (2019b), for such exegesis.
- 4 Cf. Chapter 3 for what I mean by this form of needful avoidance.
- 5 To get a clear sense of Cath's relation to Ryle, see the useful discussion in the comments here: <http://tar.weatherson.org/2006/07/22/ryle-on-knowing-how/>. Further, Cath is happy with a Ryle-style 'dispositional analysis' of belief(s). (As already signalled earlier, my own 'view', influenced by Ordinary Language Philosophy in the true sense of that term, will be that *any* overarching analysis/categorisation of 'belief' or of 'knowledge' is flawed, by virtue of being over-reaching and essentialist. If anything, this chapter tends to be (*too?*) *concessive* to Analytic philosophy, in sometimes considering some such quasi-essentialist categorisation. This is for the sake of charity, practiced as demanded by the practice of a resolute reading of Wittgenstein. Better too charitable, than not charitable enough.)
- 6 The details of which need not concern us here.
- 7 For detail on the need for the doing move, and not for mere holding, see my argument in the Chapter following this one, Chapter 7, on "Acting from rules".
- 8 See below, especially my explicit consideration of (184 and) 179.
- 9 In this sentence (and the one following), a direct connection with Chapter 7 is set up: in that chapter, I question the 'standard model' of the 'rule-following considerations'.
- 10 "I'll teach you differences!"
- 11 Which connection is, I would suggest, what Ryle was really interested in (Read 2019b).
- 12 Such metaphors of 'bridging' are investigated in detail in Chapter 7.
- 13 Malcolm Gladwell gives a number of such important cases in his book *Blink* (2005). Or think of the chicken-sexer, a skill that takes three years of training to master.
- 14 See Chapter 7; cf. also Kuhn on normal science.
- 15 Cf. here *PI* 14, where Wittgenstein seeks to teach differences by asking, in response to the quasi-interlocutorial suggestion that "All tools serve to modify something", whether we really gain anything by saying (for instance) that what is modified by a ruler is "our knowledge of a thing's length", etc., using the following resonant form of words, "Would anything be gained by this assimilation of expressions?"
- 16 Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (2012) supports in brilliant detail the kind of move being made by Wittgenstein, here. See especially, where he speaks of how the 'habit-body' is not restricted to the present or to periods with duration in the way that knowledge-that often is (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 95).
- 17 Of course, we should note too that there is already something strange about calling knowledge-that a mental state. Does it have continuity akin to pain? Not usually! Is knowledge reducible to the way in which thinking can involve or centre upon mental states? No, in that knowledge is 'externally' tethered. Knowledge-that is, roughly, a normative category.
These points are merely gravy, for my present purpose: which was first to establish that know-how is unlike knowledge-that *even if* knowledge-that were something we could make sense of as an 'informational' state or an 'internal' state of mind. And second to go on to query, provocatively, whether we should even best think of know-how as a genre of knowledge at all.
- 18 Cf. in this connection the powerfully suggestive remarks of Henry concerning the question of knowledge of (for example) sexuality: "[W]hat can [the]

“results” of [social scientific inquiry into human sexuality] be? What can they teach us about the essence of sexuality that we don’t already know? What can they teach us that is different from the knowledge that one has in oneself inasmuch as one is alive, if it is the case that each one of the ideal determinations in science is related to this prior and presupposed knowledge? Is it not this prior knowledge, so-called vague and indeterminate (it only seems to be this way in the view of the objectivistic project of science), that must be deepened in a philosophical analysis?” (2012, 83). For my own detailed argumentation to the conclusion that the ‘human/social sciences’ typically involve a crudification of knowledge that as members of societies/communities we already have, and of modes of know-how that we effortlessly practice, see *There Is no Such Thing as a Social Science* (Hutchinson et al. 2008), and my book *Wittgenstein among the Sciences* (Read 2012a).

- 19 Only briefly, because full consideration of this requires another paper. That paper of mine has been published as: “An Austinian/Wittgensteinian qualified defence on Ryle on know-how” (Read 2019b).
- 20 Compare Merleau-Ponty:

If habit is neither a form of knowledge nor an involuntary action, what then is it? It is knowledge in the hands, which is forthcoming only when bodily effort is made and cannot be formulated in detachment from that effort.

(2012, 166)

There is a danger here that Merleau-Ponty is captive to a picture – for why does he not actively consider the possibility that we may indeed not need to assimilate habit to knowledge? Forcing everything into the knowledge-form, as in their mutually-opposed ways Jason Stanley and Merleau-Ponty too; Wittgenstein would ask *what is gained by such an assimilation of expressions?*

- 21 Why only “appears to”? See my point below about it being inadvisable, from a Wittgensteinian point of view to insist that know-how *must* be prior to knowledge-that.
- 22 The reduction of know-how to knowledge-that, in other words, is of attractive interest to mind/body reductionists because they think that propositions can be represented in the mind/brain, etc.; and they want to overcome their despair otherwise at doing anything comparable with knowing how to fix a motor, etc. (as well, perhaps, and perhaps ‘unconsciously’, as their despair at their own inability actually to (e.g.) fix motors?...). The kind of thinking found in Stanley and Williamson et al. is a virulent scientific version of Philosophy’s long-standing hatred of what is not itself: of anything that can’t be reduced to mind. Our being is in the world such that it is not a propositional knowledge, but an orientation, a mattering, that here matters.
- 23 Addressed implicitly, as I hope can be seen, in the progress of this chapter; and explicitly in Read (2019b).
- 24 See especially the way he presents the thesis that knowing-how is logically prior to knowing-that, in “Knowing How and Knowing That” (Ryle 1971).
- 25 This has the implication that, as Wittgenstein always stressed (see e.g. 246), *self-knowledge* is not necessarily best construed as a kind of knowledge at all. Here is another key difference that needs to be taught. I develop this point slightly further in the Conclusion to the present work.
- 26 We might foreground here the importance of secure attachment, *a la* Winnicott. Within the family. For society. And we might note that it is there – in the family – that the 2nd-person, who both resembles their parents, and

- begins anew from them, is (literally) born. Of course, this would take us beyond the confines of the present work to examine with any seriousness.
- 27 For instance, at times in the chapter on “The Cogito” in *The Phenomenology of Perception* (Merleau-Ponty 2012).
 - 28 Here I am thinking of the great analyses in the texts of Nykanen and Backstrom of such moments of eyes meeting.
 - 29 I explained and exemplified this point in Chapter 3.
 - 30 Section 4.5 explains this.
 - 31 See especially Hertzberg’s “The Sense Is Where You Find It” (2001). Implicit (and occasionally explicit) in Chapters 7–9 will be how this line of thinking differs from the extremism (the would-be meaning-nihilism) of Kripke’s Wittgenstein.
 - 32 Thanks to various colleagues, especially to Yuri Cath, and to Don Levi and Nassim N. Taleb, for ideas and input into this chapter. Thanks also to John Lee, for very helpful comments which I doubt I have done any real justice to, here, and to Ryan Dawson, Tim Thornton, Eugen Fischer, Anne J. Jacobson, Rupert Higham, Mark Coeckelbergh, Angus Ross and Timur Ucan, for very helpful comments which I hope to have done some justice to here. And thanks especially to Phil Hutchinson, for separate previously-published past joint work of ours whose *spirit* has contributed towards the central thrust of the thinking in the latter half of this chapter.

7 Logical Existentialism?

An Approach to *PI* 186

The rule that a speaker is now following might be one to which he assents when we suggest it to him. In this case it is a revocable decision which validates our taking this to be the rule that he is following.

–Waismann (*PLP*, 148)

7.1 This Chapter in the Context of This Book

I've argued (beginning in Chapter 4) that Wittgenstein seeks to help us see our way out of philosophical problems by working past 'the metaphysical must'. This chapter seeks to follow that thought up, by putting the *logical* must in its right place. By ensuring it does not actually slip into tyrannising us (cf. *PI* 437). By seeking a middle way between a heteronomous determinism of rules (as in Baker-and-Hacker) and an anarchy that would dispel rules (as in Kripke's Wittgenstein). A way which doesn't pretend that a calculus can do the work for us, nor that, in the absence of such heteronomy, autonomy must mean that anything goes.

This chapter finds its way by building on the groundwork accomplished in Chapter 6. There I began a reconsideration of the 'rule-following considerations' by following (Kuhn¹ and) Wittgenstein in challenging the traditional broadly Leibnizean conception of 'perfect' fully justified knowledge as necessarily knowledge-that: as allegedly necessarily verbally explicit, as including the reduction of skills to (explicitisable) rules. Whereas: An important reality to remind ourselves of hereabouts is that rule-based performance is often methodical in the pejorative sense – mechanical, plodding, inefficient, by contrast with the fluidity of expert performance.²

This is the first of three chapters seeking to offer a liberatory take on 185–242. I hope that, taken together, these three chapters will contribute towards undermining the widespread idea that this 'portion of' the *Investigations* has a well-defined proprietary topic, 'rule-following'. As if rules were just one thing. As if what 'following a rule' is independent of context. As if the 'rule-following considerations' were all and only about...rule-following, when actually it might well be better to think of 'rule-following' as an object of comparison or 'paradigm' for a broader

range of norm-involving activities. (This is a key reason why I sometimes scare-quote, thus: ‘the rule-following considerations’.) This is part of my general campaign in this book against dividing *PI* up into ‘chapters’,³ and against technicalisation of Wittgenstein’s terms (a campaign that he himself led; and see Chapter 9, for further development of this campaign). And helps explain too why my own seemingly-discrete chapters actually bleed into one another and are thoroughly mutually-dependent. This is criss-cross philosophy. We need freedom in philosophy from dogmatic assumptions about the division of philosophy itself into well-defined sub-fields. *That* (standard) conception of philosophy is itself confining, and ill-fits the ‘wholism’ and iconoclasm of Wittgensteinian liberatory practice. ...This remark of mine hopes to follow Baker’s remark (*BWM*, 193), that

the variability and contextualisation of explanations is everywhere evident in Wittgenstein’s work. He defined, then made use of the phrase “a process involving a rule” (*BB*, 13). His discussion is surely misunderstood when this is treated as a context-independent analysis of the concept ‘following a rule’ and then criticised as embodying too restrictive an account of that concept.

Baker then references his own earlier ‘seminal’ work on *Rules, Grammar and Necessity* (Baker & Hacker 2010, 156–158) (*RGN*), joint with Hacker, as a case-in-point of such misunderstanding.

In this chapter, I offer therefore a perhaps-provocative reassessment of ‘rule-following’ itself, questioning the hegemony of the so-called ‘elucidatory’ (or so-called ‘grammatical’) reading of rules, a hegemony which neglects human agency in real dialogical contexts.

In fact, this is doubly so: at both the ‘object’ and ‘meta’ levels: at the ‘meta’ level, I oppose the tyranny of seeking to force others to speak in one particular way about rules; and at the ‘object’ level, perhaps more controversially, I oppose speaking about rules themselves as if they *always* (or always should) require us to do just one thing without us as it were having to be actively involved in the actual doing of it.

I shall not always even distinguish between the two ‘levels’; for Wittgenstein too at times sees them as (at times) directly analogous, at least. That is: at times he risks explicitly likening the logical ‘must’ to a metaphysical ‘must’, bringing out their parallels, and not only (what is usually, rightly emphasised), their differences.⁴ *Too* much compulsion by rules, too strong a sense of their ‘power’ over one, is heteronomous. Compare my epigraph, from Waismann. Here is another fine example, from Wittgenstein:

...I say to the child, “106 is not analogous [to the sequence 2, 12, 102; 4, 14...]”, or “Surely 106 is not analogous”. I am training him

to use the word “analogous”... // You might say, “You’re talking nonsense, Wittgenstein; you don’t know how the word “analogous” is used. It’s used for conveying information.” —But then why did I—quite automatically—put in the word “Surely” when I said “But surely 106 is not analogous”? // Compare Professor Moore on “see” — “Surely I see in the same sense...” What does this mean? // Obviously this is a way of buttonholing him, trying to make him do something. // It is to show him how in this case I use the word “analogous”—otherwise I can contradict him. I have given him something like a definition. I try to give him an idea of how I’m going to use “analogous”. It is part of a skill.

(*LFM*, 60–61)⁵

So long as the ‘buttonholing’ is honest and open, then that’s O.K.. That is what ‘training’ is sometimes like. But it is not honest, if we try to pretend that rules *themselves* compel something from us without *any* human agency being involved on either side, without any possibility for a different ‘decision’ or a different institution. One could say (Wittgenstein seems to say just this) that to use the word “Surely” already admits this; for one only says “Surely” precisely when one wants to close down a space for some kind of different possibility *that one tacitly admits is there...* Compare here the strikingly *liberatory* turn of phrase Wittgenstein employs at *PI* 231: “ “But, surely you can see...!” That’s just the characteristic exclamation of someone who is compelled by a rule.”

And compare this striking passage:

“From ‘*all*’, if it is meant *like this*, *this* must surely follow!” — If it is meant like *what*? Consider how you mean it. Here perhaps a further picture comes to your mind—and that is all you have got.— No, it is not true that it *must* — but it *does* follow: we *perform* this *transition*. // And we say: If this does not follow, then it simply wouldn’t be *all*— and that only shows how we react with words in such a situation.

(*RFM I*: 12)⁶

It is not true that it *must*: and the “must” here seems as much logical as metaphysical. Rather, it simply *does*. And then, also strikingly: we *perform* it. We do it, we act in this way, thus making it happen. This is the emphasis I shall take up in this chapter.

My re-reading, in this chapter, culminates in a re-reading of a key moment in the opening of the famous 185–202 sequence: specifically, of 186. I emphasise a sense in which the notion of ‘logical existentialism’, while clearly not simply right as an interpretation of what Wittgenstein is doing, nevertheless is not as downright crazy, as instantly and obviously dismissable, as Baker-and-Hacker make it out to be. It sheds

some aspectual light on the agency/freedom element arguably at play in the kind of scenario under consideration in 186, and certainly at play in other norm-involving or *-creating* contexts where we are less 'rule-constrained'.

One might say that in this chapter I am influenced by Ryle but *without* the dogmatism unfortunately shot through his work. I follow Ryle in emphasising the importance of our acting, and of our acting from rules. Of our actualised knowing-how (though, as we have seen in Chapter 6, one might, paradoxically, reasonably wonder whether knowing-how really has to be understood as a species of the genus "knowing"). Knowing a rule is (typically) perspicuously presentable as a knowing-how.⁷

This chapter thus continues the work of Chapter 6, by virtue of filling out in much more detail what was only sketched, anticipated, in Chapter 6: the sense in which acting from rules leaves those rules (in mind/language) *behind*.⁸

7.2 Internal Relations?: *and: Rules as Grammar?*

This chapter proposes a new 'object of comparison' for what occurs in (linguistic) rule-following situations, one free of the infelicities that arguably characterise hitherto proposed accounts. To clear the ground, I subject to some in-depth criticism what remains to date the most sustained and detailed justification of Wittgenstein's apparently anti-sceptical view of human rule-following activity: Baker and Hacker's claim in *Scepticism, Rules and Language* (Baker & Hacker 1984, 59) (*SRL*) that the relation between rule and act or application is grammatically or logically "internal"⁹).

'Rule-sceptical' doubts have been most dramatically attached to Wittgenstein's treatment of rule following, as is well known, by Kripke (1982). But the difficulties which *he* imagines proceed at least in part from a confusion of two quite different *statuses* of rules. For, rules in a condition to yield the multiple and conflicting "interpretations" which found Kripke's scepticism is merely *idling* concepts, whose very exposure to interpretation amounts to their isolation from any action in which they could be taken *as* rules, *realised* as rules-in-action.¹⁰ And the awareness of multiple possibilities generated by one's entertaining or scrutinising such inactive concepts is quite unlike one's *employing* concepts as rules, in the same way that one's awareness of the aspects of a figure – as Wittgenstein shows in 'Part 2' of *PI* and in *RPP* – is quite unlike one's taking that figure in some particular way or to some particular purpose. Thus the most salient feature of Wittgenstein's argument in section 201 of the *Investigations*, in connection with Kripke's discovery of a "skeptical paradox" there, is the admonition that "there is, for any rule, a way of taking it which is *not* an *interpretation*." It has elsewhere (indeed, repeatedly) been shown how deeply Kripke's problem depends

upon his completely ignoring that last proposition so that he can claim that “every action according to the rule is an interpretation”.¹¹

For Baker and Hacker, by contrast, the relation between rule and application is not at all a matter of “interpretation” (so far so good) – and the regularity (and intelligibility) of our behaviour according to rules is built into the very grammar of language. The “relations” that exist between rules and applications are “internal”, they argue, to that grammar. This concept of the “internal relation” is an intriguing one, because it seems to name something that both is and is not a “relation.”¹² The most deliberate definition that Baker and Hacker offer for it follows; it is taken from the *Tractatus*, in explicit connection with the “relation between a true proposition and the fact that verifies it” (RGN, 86):

A property is internal if it is unthinkable that its object should not possess it, and a relation between two objects is internal if it is unthinkable that *these* two objects should not stand in *this* relation (TLP 4.123).

(RGN, 85–86)¹³

It is striking that Baker-and-Hacker are forced to look to the *Tractatus* as an authority here, hardly their usual procedure! If the concept of ‘internal relations’ is so essential to Wittgenstein’s account (sic) of rule-following in the *PI*, then why not instead lean on Wittgenstein’s use of that term in the *PI*?

The answer to that question is simple and revealing. The term “internal relations” never occurs in *PI*.¹⁴ The lynchpin of the Baker-and-Hacker reading has been abandoned by Wittgenstein, by the time he writes *PI*. I seek in what follows to stick rather closer to the text of *PI* than they.

But it would (of course) be premature, unjust, to make this the end of the matter. Possibly, even despite Wittgenstein’s having come to let the term go, the concept of ‘internal relations’ can somehow shed essential light on the challenging matters under discussion in 185–202, etc. Before going on to examine Baker and Hacker’s treatment of rule following in terms of such “internal relations” we might then begin with profit by looking more closely at the context in the *Tractatus* of the definition they have cited. For they maintain that these relations and the practices that depend on them are matters of ‘grammar’, and the context in question sheds some light on what, for Wittgenstein, this might mean.

Section 4.123 of the *Tractatus* is a development from the better-known argument that there is no such thing as representing the “logical form” of propositions:

Propositions can represent the whole of reality, but they cannot represent what they must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it--logical form.

In order to be able to represent logical form, we should have to be able to station ourselves with propositions some-where outside logic, that is to say outside the world.

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...

What *can* be shown, *cannot* be said...

In a certain sense we can talk about formal properties of objects and states of affairs, or, in the case of facts, about structural properties: and in the same sense about formal relations and structural relations.

(Instead of “structural property” I also say “internal property”; instead of “structural relation,” “internal relation.”)

I introduce these expressions in order to indicate the source of the confusion between internal relations and relations proper (external relations), which is very widespread among philosophers.)

It is impossible, however, to assert by means of propositions that such internal properties and relations exist: rather, they make themselves manifest in the propositions that represent the relevant states of affairs and are concerned with the relevant objects.

(*TLP* 4.12–4.122)

Of course, in his later work Wittgenstein would likely not have written that propositions had this “logical form” “in common with reality” since such a claim would require – just as much as *any* effort “to represent logical form” – that we had or should have some extra-propositional way – some way ‘outside language’, some perspective ‘from sideways on’ – of apprehending this reality and measuring its relation to propositions. But of course Wittgenstein is already aware of this, in the *Tractatus*: see the very wording of the quote here, in combination with the closing sections of *TLP*. And so we would do better just to say that in his later work he took even more *strictly* what he maintains *already* here and elsewhere in the *Tractatus*: that “it is impossible ... to assert by means of propositions that such internal properties and relations exist.”¹⁵ The first and massive mistake that Baker and Hacker make is in thinking that “internal relation” was *ever* a stable, quasi-technical term that Wittgenstein thought one could simply unproblematically employ. Rather, “internal relations” are through and through transitional. They stand at or ‘beyond’ the limits of language.

The logical form of a proposition may be *displayed*, to be sure, by citing that proposition as an example of such form. But such a citational display must not be confused with a description of that form or indeed with an assertion of any sort. Wittgenstein¹⁶ was continually alive to the danger of conceiving citational “employments” of language as if they

were *uses* of language. This confusion may be observed most often in claims concerning language's alleged "self-reflexivity", where citations are held somehow to "describe themselves." Now, a description may make use of an exemplary citation, which itself may 'expose' the logical form that is under description. But no example of *itself* says or can say what it is an example of. The wider 'syntax' in which it finds itself must do that, if anything does. Linguistic or grammatical structures may of course be described in their nonfunctional or idle condition. But normally active logical form – for example, the *functioning* form of these very descriptions – by contrast, is "transparent". One might even go so far as to call it "*invisible*" (as I shall try to show, in what follows). Thus there is no role for the 'linguistic morphology' of working language which the concept of "internal relations" seems to want to play a part in.¹⁷ On this, resolute, understanding of Wittgenstein, the *Tractatus* was less thrown away or even overcome than its ruling ideas were taken to a new level of seriousness and self-consistency, its potential remaining dogmatism and *narrownesses* overcome. Thus it would actually be extravagantly *generous* to say (of Baker and Hacker) that "internal relations" may function as they wish them to (in a philosophical explication), even 'at the limits of what can be said'. The concept of the "internal relation", insofar as it pertains within the linguistic activity to an actual application of a rule, cannot really be used to *explain* or to *justify anything*.¹⁸ For it is *itself* a limit, itself of transitional merit, rather than being (as they want it to be) some kind of reliable 'technical term'.

I shall now demonstrate that and how and why the Baker-and-Hacker concept(-ion) of 'internal relations' cannot do any real work, for any particular and active case (i.e. for any case) of rule-following. And that to conceive the "internal relations" between rules and applications as connections of any sort *within grammar* is both inaccurate as a reading of Wittgenstein and ineffective as a response to scepticism.

In Baker-and-Hacker's defence, one might cite the following remark of their's, which backs away from the term "internal relation" somewhat: "[O]ne must beware of mystification here (a danger which explains why [Wittgenstein] was chary, in his later writings, of using the expression 'internal relations' and preferred to talk of 'grammatical' relations...)" (RGN, 104). The hazards of "mystification" are indeed serious, but the parenthetical comment once again signally misleads. For once again, if we search the text of *PI* for the phrase "grammatical relation", we again come up with a revealing answer: it never appears.¹⁹

But, as I've said, let's endeavour to be as charitable as we conceivably can. Let's try to see how one might defend a way of figuring rules around the concept of the 'internal relation'/'grammatical relation', and see where it leads us.

Baker and Hacker take as their best case for illustrating the internal relation between rule and application the one in which these "are

connected *in language*” in the most obvious way, in that the expression of the rule and a description of an act in accord with it seem very similar or even the same (RGN, 88). The relations of desires to their satisfaction and of expectations to their fulfilments (e.g. my expecting that it will rain to its raining) are taken by them as simply and completely *parallel* to the relations of rules and acts: such relations are conceived as obviously, grammatically “internal” because “a single description holds for both,” or the “same symbol” is used in both (RGN, 88). But, whether or not this seems obviously true of expectation and fulfilment, it is important to note that it is *that* relation – *that* context – and not the one between rule and application, with which Wittgenstein is explicitly concerned in the source of Baker and Hacker’s paraphrase, “are connected *in language*”: “It is in language that an expectation and its fulfilment make contact” (PI 445). The allegedly exact-parallelism (between, e.g., expectation and rule) remains as yet wholly unestablished.

Let’s note too that the later Baker thinks that (even) the expectation-fulfilment nexus is inadequately (i.e. over-)interpreted by Baker-and-Hacker. See especially *BWM* (63–64); Baker uses here a liberatory trope, pointing out that

With respect to matching the description of the event which fulfils the expectation, each form of the expression of an expectation raises its own peculiar problems, e.g. about variation in the moods and tenses of verbs, systematic differences in pronouns and indexicals, and modifications of word-order; moreover, any claim that any of these expressions *must* exhibit parallel structures has the disquietingly dogmatic ring of an *a priori* limitation on the possible varieties of linguistic expression.

He seeks to undermine the repeated Baker-and-Hacker trope, that I have noted, of such and such allegedly occurring “in language”; his critique is thus highly-consonant with my approach in this chapter:

Perhaps Wittgenstein could be best understood as remarking that an expectation and its fulfilment make contact ‘in what we say’, perhaps with the intention of undermining our desire to persist in posing the question ‘how does an event fulfil an expectation?’
(*BWM*, 64)

As we have noticed in previous chapters, translating “der Sprache” as “what we say” helpfully starts to move us beyond the *narrowly* grammatical. And helps restore our agency, our autonomy; we are freed from the vaguely Lacanian or Jamesonian sense that one sometimes has, in reading Hacker, of language as if as a thing imposed upon us, a prison. Hacker is trapped, it would seem, within a picture of language

as something like a system (in roughly Saussurean fashion); he neglects, in practice, the practice aspect of language, (as) something that we *do*, the aspect that Wittgenstein repeatedly sought to remind us of (precisely because he thought it liable to be neglected).

In any case, even if we allowed that desire or expectation *can* be understood after the fashion urged by (Baker-and-)Hacker, the parallelism with rules still may well not go through. As an illustration of the purported parallel, of how this conception works as well for rules and applications, Baker-and-Hacker propose that “the rule that the king may not move through check in castling is complied with by not castling through check” (*SRL*, 114). But in such examples, where the rule-expression and the application-description are so similar, the latter is characteristically difficult to apprehend, as if one had not succeeded in getting sufficiently beyond the mere expression of the rule to perform any description. This strangely recitative aura that ‘descriptions’ of applications possess when their phrasing matches the expression of a rule may, I suggest, be a phenomenological indication of inevitably *logical* conditions, which might be elucidated as follows: rule-expression and application-description may be highly superficially similar, even identical, but *rule* and *application* nevertheless surely should be said to differ. This is, I believe, another key example of the trope of “teaching differences” that is so essential to *PI*. Of course in one sense rule and application are closer than close, clearly ‘internally related’: for otherwise, *this* wouldn’t be an application of *that* rule. But in another sense, they could hardly be more different. For an application is an *action*; whereas rule(-expression) and application-description are directly alike, in both being simply – only – ‘in language’.

If this is right, then, in the proposition that the “internal relation” between rule and application is a grammatical one, “grammatical” would have to mean something other than “related as one part of grammar to another.” Otherwise, the application takes on the character of the rule, as if it were just *part of* the rule, something already in place within the rule (cf. *RGN*, 94); and the consequences of such an assimilation would conflict with Wittgenstein’s way of working in two ways: first, a rule would contain any and all of its “acts of following” in a way that he explicitly rejects on many occasions²⁰; and, second, since any rule can be further interpreted, *all applications bound so ‘internally’ to it would be just as susceptible to such (re-)interpretation*. Which would re-open the way to rule-scepticism?

This suggests that nothing is gained by claiming that the connection of application to rule exists *within grammar* where “grammar” is conceived as a standing set of logical relations. For such a model serves scepticism just as well as its apparent opposite, anti-scepticism: if an application belongs to a rule *in the same way* as a possible ‘interpretation’ belongs to any concept that is just standing there (cf. 198), then the

problem of how any actual, particular application might be determined or constrained has *not*, as yet, been confronted. Whatever grammatical relations may be deemed in place at any moment, what we call an *application* of grammar must consist in something other than those relations, something beyond or in addition to them, some further step:

I see that it is red--but how does that help me if I do not know what I have to say or how, in some other way, to give expression to my knowledge?

For sooner or later I must make the transition to expression. And at this transition all rules leave me in the lurch. For now they all really hang in the air. All good advice is no help to me, for in the end I must make a leap. I must *say* "That is red" or act in some way, which amounts to the same thing.²¹

Now we can see the direct connection between Chapter 6 and this chapter. How knowledge bleeds into expression, into action. How we act from rules, rather than the rules determining everything by themselves. How, in sum, we need to ensure that the *agency*, the autonomy, is not bled out of knowing and understanding.

Here, it is worth noting *PI* 505–506:

Must I understand an order before I can act on it?—Certainly, otherwise you wouldn't know what you had to do!—But isn't there in turn a jump from *knowing* to *doing*?— // The absent-minded man who at the order "Right turn!" turns left, and then, clutching his forehead, says "Oh! right turn" and does a right turn.—What has struck him? An interpretation?

If there is anything at all to the idea of there being a 'jump' hereabouts, it is not going to be accomplished by means of the concept of interpretation; *nor* by that of grammar in Hacker's sense – *nor* by means of the concept of intellectually knowing the rule.²²

Come back to the earlier quotation about redness and rules. Seeing "that it is red," of course, is here important not as a "mental act," but as what we might helpfully call a grammatical identification and recognition. The problematic "transition," therefore, is not from some mental "inside" to some expressive "outside" but from the acknowledgment of a grammar to the use of some one of its possibilities. The stipulation that this transition to use involves a "leap" suggests that Baker and Hacker might be *right* in this instance to say, "if the method of application is a bridge between a symbol and what it symbolises, it is at any rate not built until the application is made" (*SRL*, 52). But this Wittgensteinian claim that acting according to a rule involves a "leap", a "jump" – or a "bridge" built only during/after the fact – now needs further examination.

7.3 Cases

Let us consider a chess game, in which, for one reason or another (probably they are both beginners), the players as they play need to hold in one hand – or to position beside the board – a table or chart of the possible moves of the pieces. Before any move, they look back and forth from the game board to their charts. But when they actually come to the moment of moving a piece, they no longer do this but give their attention to the positions on the board. This ‘model’ seems a fair picture of (a nice object of comparison for) the relation between *applications* and *rules* if the former are considered to amount to “leaps” from the latter, since here applying a rule literally involves looking or turning *away* from the rule-formulation. And, awkward as such a picture may appear, I want tentatively to propose that it in this key respect it is generalisable to (much) rule following.

“Surely,” it might be argued in response,

the relation of rule and application is ordinarily much *closer* than is the case with your green or absent-minded chess players! But even *they* might first look at their tables to see what a knight could do anytime (and this might be like understanding a general rule of grammar), and then look back at the board to see how this rule was “localized,” how the position on the board restricted and refined this general capacity. They might then even imagine further positions, which might further restrict what they should do with the knight at this moment.

I would agree that they *might* well indeed do all this, and more; but I would suggest that no matter how articulated or restricted the rule for the knight’s movement became as the result of such speculations – no matter how closely the rule thus “approached” a description of the eventual application – the application itself would be something different, something more. Something that leaves all rules behind (“in the lurch”), that transitions or ‘jumps’ beyond them. (So different, in fact, that the application might occasionally be considered to articulate or *develop* the rule in ways for which neither the rule of itself, nor any preliminary contemplation of it – no matter how detailed – could provide ahead of time, and – in this way at least – the application might even be considered to “*construct*” the rule.)²³ For at some point they still have (as it were – and literally) to *turn away from* the rule-book and actually move a piece.

Wittgenstein expresses the point with marvellous concision at *RFM* (IV, 35), when he remarks that “We acknowledge [a mathematical rule] by turning our back on it”.

I am proposing, then, that one should take Wittgenstein to mean all that “I obey the rule *blindly*” says (*PI* 219). One who acts according to

a rule may be “blind,” that is, not only to other possible interpretations of the rule but also, at the moment of action, even to the interpretation (or rule-formulation) – even, then, in a certain important sense, to the rule – ‘upon’ which one acts. But we need further to inquire how this could be so. If one “leapt” from the “ground” of the rule towards something that the rule, just because it *is* an action-able rule, cannot describe, then how could one know one was obeying the rule? Evidently *part* of the answer here is an emphasis on “practice”: it is not so much that one leaps “toward” anything as that one acts ‘the way one has acted before’, or as others are acting or have acted. But such an accounting still does not quite provide for Baker and Hacker’s claim that “rules are transparent parts of rule-governed activities” (RGN, 157), which has possibly an intriguing implication that one who applies a rule somehow “sees *through*” (i.e. by means of?) it.²⁴ So we must consider another *sort* of example, in which the way concepts “lead us ... [and] direct our interest” (PI 570) seems more exposed to such vision.

Two people are walking in the country, in light woods along a stream, and just ahead of them several birds fly up from some high bushes and down along the water, and then return fluttering to the bushes. “Waxwings!” says the one who was looking in that direction. And now the other looks. What is the relation of that word – “waxwings” – to his action? Probably we should think that his looking for the birds, or his seeing them, was directed in some way by the word naming them. And he might quickly have them in view, and perhaps as quickly say “So *those* are waxwings;” or “There they are,” or perhaps even just “Waxwings!”

Now the quickness – or even “automaticness” – of the latter’s responsive linguistic expression might make it seem that the word “waxwing” – or perhaps the “concept of waxwing” – was present to the situation, or even to the minds of both our two friends, all the while and continuously: as if the rule were maintained expressly throughout the application, and as if there had been no “leap” from any “grammatical ground.” But this conception would yield certain curious inferences: as if the first speaker used a concept to direct the second to a *concept*, or as if there were no difference between “waxwing” as uttered by the first speaker and as rejoined by the second. Now *these* and similar accounts would of course fit nicely with the conception that rule and application “are connected *in language*.” But perhaps it is already becoming clear how much that conception may ignore, or shield from sight.

It takes no account of the second speaker’s non-linguistic *action*; what did he *do* with the first speaker’s remark? What was the influence of that remark upon his apprehension of the soft grey-brown birds with their of yellow-black markings, or of their quick, dancing movements in flight? And if the second speaker *did* something with the first’s exclamation, then is it plausible to hold their two expressions to be the same, to

constitute identical moves in the language-game? How should the relation among the increments of such a sequence be understood?

These questions may be illuminated by remarks occurring late in Part 1 of *PI*:

“Were you thinking of the noise or of your pain?” If he answers “I was thinking of the piano-tuning”—is he observing that the connexion existed, or is he making it by means of these words?—Can’t I say both? If what he said was true, didn’t the connexion exist—and is he not for all that making one which did not exist?

(*PI* 682)

What is there in favour of saying that my words describe an existing connexion? Well, they relate to various things which didn’t simply make their appearance with the words. They say...that I *should have* given a particular answer then, if I had been asked. And even if this is only conditional, still it does say something about the past.

(*PI* 684)²⁵

Now these passages are perhaps not much more explicitly concerned with the “connection” between rule and application than those emphasised by Baker and Hacker, but let me mention a useful and *substantive* parallel in this case: consider the compromised complexity of describing the relations between a thought and an expression of it, a curse and its object, or a person’s name (or the person themselves) and a sculptural representation of them. In each case, the “connection” seems both already in place – to pre-exist its making – *and yet* only to come into being when it is actually and actively made. And this same ‘paradox’, I suggest, is generally indigenous to descriptions of relations between the taking of any concept as a rule and any particular developments from that concept.

At the least this means that we must not ignore the action of the “developer” – of the 2nd person, the responding second speaker in the example of the waxwings – or suppose that continuous grammatical relations were all there were to that case.

Meaning, and grammar, is something that *develops* in conversation. Meaning exists *between* us and develops between us. Here in Wittgenstein, we see a kind of break (or at least a real *development*) from earlier basically 1st-personal conceptions of meaning – and of ethics.²⁶

In other words, the acknowledgement that the second speaker’s responsive action was already in some sense established or provided for in grammar (i.e. in what was *possible*) does not mean that it was not an action (something *actual*), and in some respects a novel one. This would suggest that a “bridge” metaphor may indeed be appropriate here; but, that bridge, if it is conceived, as Baker and Hacker suggested, as grammar,

does not exactly *connect* rule and application. We might rather conceive the situation thus: we build a bridge *across* the application to the next (temporarily-)stable increment of the sequence of the language-game. We do this to connect the invocation of a grammatical rule to a subsequent confirmation of it or to an invocation (or construction) of some related rule. In these terms, the bridge in question is *footed in grammar on both sides*. And in this metaphorical picture the *application*, the second speaker's action in accord with the invoked rule, occurs in the *interval* the bridge spans. It even creates that span; it *is* the speedy building of it. In this interval, evidently, there is action away from one grammatical position and towards another, such that grammar, at most, regulates the action from either side, and not as some sort of continuous – static, 'inner' – structure throughout.

But so far this picture does not tell us enough about what happens in this "interval" between two obviously more or less linguistic "positions." So we could use a more logico-grammatical description of this transitory condition: a description of what at that moment happened to the word, to an expression taken and used. Here it might seem untendentious to propose that "waxwings" worked as *some* kind of 'cue' for the linguistic etc. action in question (i.e. that of the second speaker in the sequence). But the next step along this line is liable to be a mis-step: one's interest in the action from the word may redefine "cue" into something like "stimulus," and transform one's account of rule following into a causal explanation on the "conditioned reflex" model. What I am investigating, however, is not whether a word can eventually be a 'stimulus' for some quasi-behaviourist 'response,' but – once more – what must happen to the word as used *in order* for it to (be able to) function in that or in any other 'causal' way. Causal accountings, for these philosophic purposes, are irrelevant; they leave out the linguistic dynamics which, roughly, are open to view in a way that various physiological or 'mental' processes are not. To put this differently: if the notion of a *purely* and obviously grammatical relation between rule and application (where "grammar" is understood as a static set of logical connections) too closely identifies them, the notion of a causal relation makes them look *too* separate, and turns us back towards grammar again asking, why and how does *this* word normatively incline us to do *that*? So it is the logical status of the 'linguistic cue' that must be described. As yet it is illuminated neither by grammar alone (thinking of grammar as, as I put it earlier, what regulates the action from either side, not as an alleged – a fantasised – continuous structure determining the whole), nor yet by any causal explanation.

In the simple case of directing someone to look at the waxwings, that word might be said to work like a pointer.

And so we should ask: *what is the status of a pointer as it points?* Now, as anyone who has sat in a classroom on a warmly drowsy afternoon might testify (or as anyone who has a cat, equally, might testify),

it is crucial *not to fix upon the pointer itself*, but to look from it or by means of it towards something else, on the blackboard perhaps. This is the way the pointer “guides” one; if one looks *at* it, it will cease to do so. One must look beyond it.

And any potential loss of direction hereabouts, the kind of confusion generated by looking at the pointer rather than from it, seems akin to the skeptical possibilities that may be generated by staring fixedly at *unapplied* or “idling” rules.²⁷

Once again, here, much as one turns away from the rules in order to move a chess-piece, we see the vital role – both in practice, and in terms of what we can remind ourselves of or ‘picture’ by way of bringing that practice into view – of a turning or moving (away) *from*.

But there is at least one difference between the condition of the pointer in this example and that of most grammatical rules upon which (or ‘from’ which) one might act: we usually are not tempted to suppose that pointers have any particular kind of “fit” with what they point out; so there is little danger – as there so often seems to be in considering rule-following – of anyone’s mistaking contemplation of the pointer for active attention towards that to which it points. And here there arises a sense in which the arithmetical examples that (beginning with Wittgenstein himself of course) have tended to dominate the ‘rule-following’ literature are liable to be misleading. A rule like “ $5+7=12$ ” may – especially in philosophy – easily be mistaken for its application, e.g. putting a basket of fruit together in a particular way, with five apples and seven oranges. For “ $5+7=12$ ” seems somehow rule and application *at the same time*. (So arithmetical examples of rule following would appear doubly tricky: they both overemphasise the ‘presence’ of the rule in the application, and they seem already to be applied even as they are stated as rules. By contrast, see the more complex cases/practices discussed in “More complex cases” (Section 7.6), below.) Wittgenstein focussed on arithmetical examples *because they are the hardest case*; just as he picked on pain because it is the case in which we are *most* likely to be tempted by delusions of ‘privacy’.²⁸ This is called ‘going the bloody hard way in philosophy’. It is the way in which one can actually succeed (because, if one succeeds, then one frees at source, not only partially or with reference to a symptom); but it is hard. Wittgenstein sought to target the temptation towards thinking of rules as ‘super-hard’, magically compelling, by tackling that temptation at its strongest: in cases such as the arithmetical and logical. Baker-and-Hacker seem to *want* to make rules super-hard, through their conception of the ‘internal relation’, and then expand that super-hardness from the arithmetical case to all other cases. Such covertly metaphysical and then scientific methodology is the *opposite* of Wittgenstein’s (and, one can add with charity, the opposite of Baker and Hacker’s honourable intentions).²⁹

My example of the pointer would then better resemble the application of words – and perhaps seem more ‘open’ to (and thus *just* towards the inclination towards) rule scepticism – if there were a *different* pointer for every increment on the blackboard,³⁰ and as the instructor moved from one to another she had to pick up one after another pointer from her desk. In this more language-like case, it would perhaps be understandably difficult to stay attuned to what we are claiming to be the case for all cases of pointing: that when a word – or a grammatical rule – is used in this way, it becomes peripheral to one’s vision or attention; the action of the pointer is accomplished *by* its fading from view. The pointer effaces itself, in the service of something that happens (away) ‘from’ it. It will not work *unless* it does so. We need to look not even through let alone at the pointer; we need to look plain beyond its end. I suggested earlier that an application of a rule is qualitatively different from the merely idle contemplation of a paradigmatic sample. But: the further step of application depends upon the marginalisation or even the ‘disappearance’ of any such paradigm. And if we consider the following remark of Wittgenstein’s, we may begin to understand how such linguistic ‘effacements’ must be involved in the progress, from increment to increment, of meaningful linguistic sequences:

It perplexes us that there is no moment at which the thought of a sentence is completely present. Here we see that we are comparing the thought with a thing that we...possess as a whole; but in fact as soon as one part comes into being another disappears.

(Wittgenstein 1974, 108)

It has been set out at greater length elsewhere how these incremental “disappearances” to which Wittgenstein refers may be seen to constitute the ordinary development of (e.g.) a *dialogue*, in which each advance of the verbal sequence depends upon the peripheralisation and presumption – or the transformation to *functionally* logico-grammatical status – of what previously occurred in that sequence.³¹ This dependence ‘relation’ is reciprocal: each increment of a linguistic sequence is presumed *in order for* another to follow it or transformed to presumptive status *when* that further step occurs. But what is most important here is that if this ‘relation’ between logical presumption and syntactic-semantic-pragmatic advance is indeed similar to the relation between a simple grammatical rule and an action according to it, then we may say that the succession from a concept to an action upon it depends upon the *presumption* of that concept: that it is presumption (and *hence* invisibility) that transforms a rule-formulation into a rule being acted on, or from. ‘Internal relations’ are best re-seen as relations of unavoidable presumption.

Now we may see more clearly, perhaps, why actively applying rules differs so from idly contemplating them: not because “we cannot do two things at once”, but because we of course ‘cannot’ speak of, cannot make sense of, doing at once two *logically exclusive* things; *expressly conceiving* a rule and *presuming* it at the same time. Of course, there is no actual thing here that we cannot do; our ‘inability’ to do this ‘thing’ actually simply bottoms out into the lack of sense in the attempt to describe the alleged thing in question.

Grammatically, a rule in action can be said to be ‘invisible’ just in virtue of the fact that, to be taken as a rule – to be an action-able concept – it needs to be *un-expressed*, *un-exposed*. Not merely there open to view, an intense vein of possibility (in the way concepts very often are in poetry), but taken up, and thereby passed beyond (bridged from). And this may at last illuminate why the very idea of the ‘internal relation’ was originally connected (in *TLP*) with Wittgenstein’s insistence that the logical form of a proposition – of an actively meaningful expression – ‘cannot’ itself be meaningfully represented; which in specific relation to rule scepticism means, of course, that neither can such form be questioned, or interpreted, or, for that matter, justified.³²

7.4 Presumptive Relations

So: if the link between rule and application is to be described as one “internal” to “grammar,” it must be in a quite special way. Baker and Hacker one more time:

It should now be evident that Wittgenstein’s remarks about the terminus of justification are not intimations of a bizarre form of logical existentialism. What he wrote was that my reasons will soon give out, not that I have none. But when I have given my reasons, I need not and typically do not have reasons for holding the reasons I have given to be reasons. For I will quickly reach bedrock, exhaust all justifications, and say, “This is simply what I do”... But this does not mean that I have no justification for what I do. On the contrary, I cite the rule I am supposed to be following as a justification. It is the pattern for my actions. Nor is any justification *missing*, for it makes no sense to *justify* a grammatical nexus.

Hence too the remark that “I follow the rule blindly” signifies not the blindness of the sleep walker but the certitude of one who knows his way. I know *exactly* what to do. I do not choose, after deliberation, for I have no doubts at all. The rule “always tells us the same, and we do what it tells us” (*PI* 223), “we look to the rule for instruction and do something, without appealing to anything else for guidance” (*PI* 228)... These remarks do not signify yawning chasms of irrationality beneath our rule-governed activities. On the

contrary, they point toward the firm grounds of grammar and of our practices of using language. To be sure, these have no support, but they need no more support than the globe itself.

(RGN, 105–106)³³

This passage can seem very convincing. And in a way there is nothing I want to *object* to in it. And yet... Is the metaphor of grammar and of our practices themselves as “firm grounds” felicitous? An ‘internal relation’ does not have any grounds, any foundation or quasi-metaphysical basis whatsoever. Rather, better it is alive *in* our practices. Surely the rule functions as “the pattern for my actions” (though, as we saw already in Chapter 6, this will not always amount to my *knowing* “*exactly* what to do”). Yet although the “justification” that it might provide is not “missing,” neither is it *present* in or to the action in any way that would make it knowable at the very moment of action (so it is *at best* otiose, and more likely actively to mislead, to claim that I *do*, nevertheless, have a justification). “Citing” a rule, once more, is incommensurate with following it; for this express way of “knowing the rule” – as by explaining how to follow it – is not the sort of “knowing” that might be said to occur when the rule, in its action, is logically presumed.

It may be that Baker-and-Hacker are merely claiming that the only “knowing” we can *talk about* here is what we reveal in explicit justifications of the application; that this sort of talk, to the extent that it is available, is just what justification is. But the “grammatical nexus” so expressed – this ‘internally’ conceptual relation of rule and application – I have maintained, is not the same as the “nexus” of their active relation. When one actually *does* something. Thus one might consider that the phrase “grammatical relation” should have two clearly differentiated senses. The idle relation between the exposed (or expressly considered) rule and its equally exposed application may be said, once again, to be “grammatical” because in the history of linguistic practice these may be seen to belong to each other. But this, again, is just what Baker and Hacker call “an intra-grammatical articulation” (RGN, 88). Whereas the link between rule and application *in action* is the relation between grammar and its employment, its use. *This* relation – between (the stock of) “usage” and its (agentic/future) *use* – does not inhere in standing grammar, and if one chooses to call such a relation “grammatical”, one embraces the more complex and dynamic conception of grammar-in-action, or applied, to which Wittgenstein held in most of his later work³⁴:

...It is a rule of grammar dealing with symbols alone, it is a rule of a game. Its importance lies in its application; we use it in our language. // When we talk about propositions following from each other we are talking of a game. Propositions do not follow from one another as such; they simply are what they are. We can only prepare

language for its usage [use]; we can only describe it as long as we do not regard it as language. The rules prepare for the game which may afterwards be used as language.

(Wittgenstein 1980d, 57)³⁵

What is remarkable here (though perhaps not so remarkable, in the light of what we have seen in Chapters 2–6) is the suggestion that “language” is not even language *until* it is used, that whatever our “preparations” are – whatever purely grammatical considerations may be anterior to the employment of same – one does not so much as regard these “as language” until they are used; until they become ‘der Sprache’ in the sense of ‘*what we say*’. And, most important, I am on balance inclined to say that there is no such thing as *taking* language *as* language – that is, using it – *and* simultaneously continuing to *describe* it: which, in terms of the foregoing arguments, means that while we are justifying, drawing-out, interpreting or otherwise *considering* grammatical relations, these just are not *active* linguistic rules.³⁶

An objection: What about when I give an example in illustration of a rule, showing the rule by using it? If I move a knight-piece purely to show someone how to move the knight, that moving might I suppose be describable as itself a description of the knight’s move; but just because it would not itself be a move *in chess*; only an exemplification of what such moves are.

So when Baker and Hacker propose that “an internal relation *is* a shadow of grammar, and can as well be called a grammatical relation” (RGN, 105), I have to take issue with their phrasing. For if “shadow of grammar” seems a nice metaphor for the presumptive and marginal condition of grammatical rules in applications, this is just because it seems to point to a ‘relation’ that is *not* an expressible one. Resolving skeptical concerns in this context is best achieved not by claiming that everything about rule-applications is contained and revealed in grammar, but rather by granting to scepticism the very ‘shadowiness’ of the rule-in-action that *conditions* it, and then demonstrating, as I have sought to do, that this amounts not to the vagueness or insubstantialness of the rule but to the exact reverse: its logical presumption. I am even inclined to say that rules *must* be ‘shadows’ in the course of action; otherwise there is no action. Perhaps more judiciously: We should expect rules to recede into the background (where they can in philosophising easily come to appear as shadows) in the moment of action – this recession is ‘just’ a (doubly) *logical* shift in focus. That is: the shift is both logical as opposed to illogical, and logical as opposed to merely empirical.

It may now be evident *why* skeptical questions here unavoidably attempt to penetrate a ‘bedrock.’³⁷ Since we philosophise in reflection, removed from contexts of action, it can be especially tempting, to mistake the “interpretive” apprehension of inactive grammatical possibility for

the use of grammar in action, because in that use/action grammar itself has no representation. And the reluctance to recognise the condition of *active* grammatical rules thus leads to a more simply logical impasse. If asked, “But how can I *know* what I presume?”, one might justly reply, “You ‘cannot’. But this is only to point to the ineluctable difference between ‘knowing’ and ‘presuming.’ Your question itself misses the depth of this difference.”

At least one of the implications of Wittgenstein’s claim that “my reasons will soon give out,” therefore, is that “reasons” do not continue through the actions that follow upon them in any way amenable to a ‘knowing’ philosophical description. “But can you doubt that you meant *this?*—No; but neither can I be certain of it, know it.” (PI 679). Elsewhere, and especially in *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein is concerned to *distinguish* “certitude” and “knowledge” in relation to rule following. We may choose to say that we “know” what we are certain of; but more often we restrict “know” to matters which are quite empirical, about which we are fallible. The certitude of the rule follower is not a case of “knowing” in this latter, more usual sense of the concept.³⁸

7.5 Logical Existentialism?

For Baker-and-Hacker, the “line of thought” I have been pursuing here would be one that “leads in the direction of a kind of logical existentialism,”³⁹ in which “pure acts of will are required. One is tempted to say that a new *decision* is necessary at each application of the rule (PI 186)” (RGN, 104). But in *Philosophical Investigations* 186 the interlocutor’s assessment that Wittgenstein is saying that “a new insight – intuition – is needed at every step” is not so peremptorily rejected; for what Wittgenstein does is to *explore* that misconception, to see what light is nevertheless shed by it. Similarly elsewhere in Wittgenstein’s corpus⁴⁰: see e.g. LFM (30–31):

Doing after I, II, III; going from 1 to 2 to 3, etc., —is more like an act of decision than of intuition. (But to say “It’s a decision” won’t help [so much] as: “We all do it in the same way”.)

This passage is a million miles from what Baker-and-Hacker say to Kripke.

Nor, in 186, is the notion of a new “decision” at every step in following a rule *merely* a “tempting” misconception (As if such temptations ever were merely “*mere*”...). As the interlocutor continues to ask for an entirely logical and even automatic regularity, the ‘main authorial voice’ maintains that things are not so simply describable: in Anscombe’s translation, “It would almost be more correct to say, not that an intuition was needed at every stage, but that a new decision was needed at every stage.” The German: “Richtiger, als zu sagen, es sei an jeden Punkt

eine Intuition notig, ware beinah, zu sagen: es sei an jeden Punkt eine neue Entscheidung notig". The German seems to me more clearly than Anscombe's translation to set aside "intuition" *before* the possibility of "almost" saying "new decision" is introduced. Thus it is not so much that "decision" is "almost" more correct than "intuition," but perhaps that *almost saying "decision" is more worthwhile than entertaining seriously the notion of "intuition" at all.*⁴¹

Now look at 219:

"All the steps are really already taken" means: I no longer have any choice. The rule, once stamped with a particular meaning, traces the lines along which it is to be followed through the whole of space.— But if something of this sort really were the case, how would it help?

No; my description only made sense if it was to be understood symbolically.—I should have said: *This is how it strikes me.*

When I obey a rule, I do not choose.

I obey the rule *blindly*.

It doesn't help, to say things like "All the steps are really already taken." It would arguably be a bit less bad to say, "There's a kind of choice involved". For I still actually have *to take the steps*.

But...it is (probably) better still not to speak of choice, at least in *arithmetical*, etc. cases; for, in the vast majority of (such) cases, one simply acts, as one is struck, by the symbolic metaphor of *feeling* compelled by the rule, feeling as if one has no choice. One acts, thus, 'blindly'. Any active intellectual attention to rules (reconsidering them, perhaps remoulding them, etc.), as it were, always slightly precedes the latter moment. Though recall that, as we've seen, action itself involves what we might call a step beyond the rule too, just by virtue of being action rather than something that is (as one might fantasise) accomplished *by the rule itself*.

The *rejection* of "intuition" in 186 occurs only in *almost* allowing for new 'decisions.' Thus it seems very much as if Wittgenstein wants to preserve the integrity of each application of a rule, that he wants to grant rule followers a certain flexibility, or a certain agency, in the 'work' of application, *without* attributing to them (still less, *requiring* of them) any new "insight" or "interpretation." And in these terms the "decision" in question might very well amount to an "act of will": at least the will *to go on acting* (Cf. "This is just what I *do*"...). The developments in a language-game under way – the continuing applications within it – are not (we might say) quite *exhausted* by logic. For they require human agency; they require judgement(s).

Consider here 242, the culmination of the 'rule-following considerations':

If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in

judgements. This seems to abolish logic, but does not do so.—It is one thing to describe methods of measurement, and another to obtain and state results of measurement. But what we call “measuring” is partly determined by a certain constancy in results of measurement.

A degree or quality of constancy. This results from the agreement of the almost-decisions that are made, as we go on together. Wittgenstein here blurs the lines between the conceptual and the non-conceptual, the logical and the non-logical, sketching how (as one might put it) they interleave. There still are lines between them. But not the kind of absolute division – and not the kind of ‘determination’ by (say) formulae standing somehow entirely apart from human practice – that we can be drawn to fantasise, when we philosophise without sufficient care for the nuances involved in everyday actions.

7.6 More Complex Cases

The wonderful transitional pseudo-concept of the ‘internal relation’ is one that we may find compelling when we are contemplating arithmetic. Even there, Wittgenstein is seeking to show the limits of any attempt to thoroughly ‘grammaticalise’ or ‘logicalise’ what we call rule-following, attempts that seek to take the human out of it. How much more flawed are such attempts, when it comes to various other human activities. Consider the following:

- *Legal ‘interpretation’.* What it is to obey some law is something that (some-)one (or some specified group, say, of judges) sometimes has to seek to arbitrate.⁴² Especially, but not necessarily only, when it comes to what are called ‘hard cases’. The law provides a ‘template’ to ‘follow’; but that template does not lay down rails to infinity nor anything like that. If legal decisions are ‘internally related’ to the law they seek to manifest, nevertheless they can be said sometimes too to ‘develop’ or ‘construct’ that law. To say this is not to be revisionist; it is a perfectly routine way of understanding how for instance it is possible for judges (and indeed, in some systems, juries) to make law. Legal decisions and the law are thus not, I would say, internally related in the same way that 5 and 7 are to 12.⁴³ To speak of ‘intuition’ in relation to developing or arbitrating the law would be an idle wheel. But it might well be right to speak of ‘decision’, sometimes.⁴⁴ And that, after all, is what we do in (relation to) the law.
- *Following a paradigm/exemplar in science.* As Kuhn sets out, drawing at one point⁴⁵ explicitly on Wittgenstein’s conception of ‘family-resemblance’ (see below), it takes plenty of skill and indeed creativity for a scientist to be a normal scientist. To suggest that rule-following in science amounts to doing just the same kind of thing

as adding 2 is liable to occlude a significant difference; it would be, frankly, insulting to scientists.

- *Using a “family-resemblance” term/following the rule for how to use such a term.* Think of the development of the concept of ‘number’ (PI 67–68). Or think of Cavell’s famous analysis of ‘projecting’ a word, in *The Claim of Reason* (1979); following the grammatical rules for the use of words can either be said to be only one part of what we do in using such terms, *or* to be something which is really quite different from how we incline on balance to think of ‘Add 2’. What cannot usefully be said is that following the grammatical rules for the use of words, if conceiving of those rules as would-be pre-determining that use, exhausts what we do in using such terms.
- *Engaging in a conversation.* Take the ‘waxwings’ case outlined earlier, or a more complex case; as Rhees (in his posthumous writings) sought to argue, to think that such cases get exhausted by the object of comparison (for⁴⁶ *that is what it is*, no more) of ‘mastery of a language(-game) as a rule-governed activity’ is to think inadequately. We are frequently projecting, ‘stretching’ words; we are responding to new contexts that may require new responses; we are responding to one another and perhaps ‘building’ something new together; language is not something that hangs over us or substantively constrains us; rather, language is *what we do/say*. It has a permanently open frontier. Again, the development of that frontier involves something perhaps more akin to decision than to intuition.⁴⁷ And, obviously, conversation thoroughly involves us both. It is a paradigm of the 2nd person. It helpfully escapes the preoccupation with ‘subjective’ or ‘objective’ cases typical of too much philosophical ‘literature’.
- *Ethical action.* I titled this chapter “Acting from rules”. I hope that the meaning of and justification for the title is by now quite evident. Now let’s take a step further still. By noting that, ethics isn’t rules. Not even on a deontological conception of ethics. Ethics is acting *from* rules. In something like the manner I’ve made space for herein.

Wittgenstein focused on arithmetical examples and the like because they were the kind of case that is most likely to tempt one into entangling oneself in delusion about an extreme ‘power’ over one of rules. As I’ve already noted, the fixation in the literature on arithmetical and chess examples takes its ‘cue’ from Wittgenstein’s own practice, his going the bloody hard way in considering the hardest examples for his purpose: that of wondering about the ‘logical must’ in cases where it seems absolutely non-negotiably hard. In order to avoid being entrapped *by his discussion*, one has not only to follow him in going this hard way; one has *also* to continually refresh and *enrich* – enlarge – one’s diet of examples.

And one has in particular to resist the temptation of thinking that one can follow Wittgenstein by means of using the concept of rule to categorically typologise, in philosophy. Consider here this revealing, freeing passage from *LFM*:

I have no right to want you to say anything except just one thing: "Let's see"... One cannot make a general formulation and say that I have the right to want to make you say that. For what could that general formulation be? My opinion? But obviously the whole point is that I must not have an opinion.

The only thing which I have a right to want to make you say is, "Let's investigate whether so-and-so is the case."

For instance, I have no right to want you to say that mathematical propositions are rules of grammar.

(*LFM*, 55)⁴⁸

The final sentence is of course a strong piece of evidence in support of the interpretation that I have marshalled in this chapter. The point is getting us to do something we don't want to do: (*not* to have to use words in a certain way, but) to be willing to question our prejudices, and thus to gain intellectual autonomy. An autonomy that functions to some degree not only at the 'meta' level, *qua* philosopher; *that* autonomy is a reflection of an autonomy which is already present in *2nd-person relations*.

7.7 Summary and Conclusion

Baker-and-Hacker tend to write as if the rule or 'internal relation' did the work of rule-following *for* us. Thus, ironically, once again (cf. Chapters 1 and 4, especially) they deprive human beings of autonomy. *Contra* mainstream interpretations such as that of Baker-and-Hacker, Wittgenstein's 'rule-following considerations' do not require any kind of tacit⁴⁹ or ineffable quasi-metaphysics or hidden structure of 'internal relations'. 'Internal relations', *if* they are to do the job that is needed, will be conceived of, rather, transitionally: as presumptive relations. They will not stand forever solidly in grammar; and, if they *do*, then they will not yield the *actions* that are applications of rules, and that are not necessarily at all well-understood as 'pre-determined'.⁵⁰

The concept of the 'internal relation' is thus actually doubly-transitional:

- It is 'object'-transitional in the way I brought out through the metaphor of the bridge, etc, above. Language [der Sprache, what we say] simply *is* (we might say) in this sense a matter endlessly *of effecting transitions*, not of static statements or pseudo-statements whether of facts or of rules or of anything else. In this sense, we might helpfully

say that everything in language is dialogical, and virtually everything 2nd-personal.

- It is ‘meta’-transitional in that, within a liberatory hermeneutic, it transitions to make way for other concepts (such as presumption: which in turn we will not try to force to *stand* forever either, but only to hang around as long as it can do its work of freeing).

We should note carefully that Wittgenstein says in 186 that there is something not completely wrong about the notion that a decision is needed at every stage of the development even of an arithmetic sequence (let alone of the various other cases that I have mentioned, that make up the warp and weft of human life). The idea of ‘logical existentialism’, mocked by Baker-and-Hacker as self-evidently laughable and un-Wittgensteinian, is not quite so far away from Wittgenstein’s intentions as has been thought. One might even risk saying: for Wittgenstein, one is in one way condemned to be free, even in matters of logic.⁵¹ This seems to abolish logic, but does not...⁵²

But readers might be sceptical of this. Has my line of thinking in this chapter not ended up being revisionist? Have I perhaps gone too far, turning freedom into an abstract dogma, and undermining the normal taken-for-granted-ness of our following rules? Have I for instance contradicted the careful efforts of the various authors in *The New Wittgenstein* (Crary & Read 2000) who sought to engage with ‘the rule-following considerations’ in a way that could truly avoid any revisionism while simultaneously avoiding any doctrine? Consider the close of David Finkelstein’s essay on “Wittgenstein on rules and Platonism”:

According to Wittgenstein, it is only when we conceive of words as cut off from the applications that living beings make of them that there even appears to be a question concerning how, in general, rule-informed judgements — e.g. the judgement that a particular recipe calls for the beating of egg whites — can be true. Freed from such a picture of words, we can meet a query like: “What constitutes the truth of your judgement that the recipe calls for the beating of egg whites (rather than yolks or heavy cream)?” with a genuinely flat-footed response: “It *says* to beat egg whites. You can look for yourself”.

(Finkelstein 2000, 69)

I do not mean to disagree with Finkelstein here. I am rather emphasising a different aspect from that which he mostly does. The *doing* aspect, a *freedom* aspect. And after all, both these are present in his remarks (as I have indicated in my added emphasis within the quote), at both ‘object’ and ‘meta’ level. (That meta-level freedom, as Baker notes,

involves, of course, choices and decisions: “There is to be no bullying with the stick of logic or the stick of grammar” (*BWM*, 190).⁵³ I just want to make these aspects a little more visible. And I am, needless to say, with Finkelstein in his reminding us that rules frequently ‘tell us’ what to do: Only, whom are we informing of that? And on what occasion? (Cf. *PI* 296). My aim has been to emphasise the importance of our *acting*, and of the word “action” being inappropriate unless there is freedom in (that) action. Such that we are immunised more strongly against the drive to think of ourselves as if we were something like machines; or, against a tacit mythology of rules; or, against a mythology of tacit rules...

Nothing I have said in this chapter, then, undermines the ‘flat-footed’ sense in which (as we can and should remind ourselves, after the expansive vision I have offered) a rule isn’t the rule that it is unless it includes instruction on what to do in order to follow it. This might be termed a *constitutive* way in which rule and application are related.⁵⁴ For example, moving the knight in an L-shape in chess is related to the rule about the move of the knight in the sense that what that action *is*, i.e. moving *the knight in chess*, is constituted by the *rules* of chess. That is, it’s because of those rules that that movement is intelligible as the kind of move it is – instead of, say, as just pushing a piece of wood across a larger flatter piece of wood.⁵⁵

In that way of understanding things, rule and application are ‘internally’ related in the sense that the application is intelligible as the sort of action it is in light of its relation to the rule. And I am ‘only’ urging us to resist the hypostatisation or reification of this. Reification that would undermine our agency as reification always does. I am urging us to maintain and grow a rich diet of examples, such that the chess and arithmetic ‘paradigms’ don’t restrict our minds.

For: the so-called ‘rule-following considerations’ actually concern a wider field of (roughly) norm-involving conduct. And inasmuch as human conduct is normatively-saturated, they/it ought to be conceived of as a realm of freedom: for, roughly, normally, “Ought implies can”, and this means that anything in the broad field of norms and action is happening in the space of agency, and of the possibility of doing differently. Agency is non-existent without some freedom. Thus it should not be surprising that, when one thinks through rule-following and surrounding phenomena with care, one emerges with a ‘picture’, along the lines developed in this chapter, that determinedly resists a complete domination by – and projection onto a wider sphere of – ‘logical musts’. I have emphasised in this chapter our acting *from* rules; the rule vanishing, in action. That yields the meaning, the seriousness, of the logical must. But such emphasis is actually, properly *coterminous* with emphasising *acting*: not merely behaving, being in accord with, being mechanically comprehensible, being acted upon, etc. We act *from* rules, we leave them

behind, and bridge to the next moment. But; just because we leave them behind, this action is sometimes novel and surprising. ‘Action’ that is as predictable as clockwork isn’t actually action at all.⁵⁶

And thus my chapter title ties together these two aspects of rule-following: in speaking of “acting from rules”, the word “acting” emphasises the act, and ‘cues’ us to bring out the ‘developmental’, dynamic character of grammar, and to recall that Wittgenstein does not simply dismiss even the deviant pupil – while the word “from” emphasises the ‘blindness’ of rule-following, the way that the rule is left behind in action. Normally, the “from” is (as it were) dominant over the “acting”. But not always. If it were, there would be no action. And in any case the two come together in the way that the leaving of the rule behind means that it is a mis-taking of Wittgenstein to try to force the rule to be (as it were) permanently *present* and determinative, as metaphysicses of ‘internal relations’ would have it.

To connect then what I have said in this chapter with what I said in Chapter 3 about re-seeing grammar as ‘*our*’ grammar... The place we have now reached sees grammar as truly dynamic and inter-personal, as something we do. Something that develops in dialogue. This couldn’t possibly be taken as a purely objective 3rd-personal phenomenon magisterially describable as from above/outside, as from sideways-on. Nor can it be reduced to free-floating subjectivity, Humpty-Dumpty-style, a 1st-person running amuck (*PI* 392, 232 & 199). Rather, we have deepened further here our making pre-eminent the *2nd* person, the active (inter-)relation of one person with another/with others, with ourselves.⁵⁷

Finally, *must* one take the kind of line I have taken on ‘internal relations’? By this point in the book, I think the reader knows my answer: no. Such an insistence would be tyrannical. I have suggested that later Wittgenstein *deepens* the sense in which he characterised ‘internal relations’ as at the limit of what can be said, in his early work. That we should see the concept (sic) of the internal relation as a transitional one, and see the later work as *more* resolute even than the *Tractatus*. But I have suggested that it could serve equally well to characterise internal relations as (as we sometimes find in later Wittgenstein) ‘grammatical relations’, provided that that notion in turn is sufficiently *broadly* understood.⁵⁸ Either is fine; we are free to choose between them, and this dimension of freedom in Wittgensteinian philosophy *is* liberatory philosophy.

Similarly: I have suggested that there is a real sense in which rule and application are one, and a real sense in which they enduringly differ. This will look troublingly paradoxical to the captive eye, but in the methodology of liberatory philosophy, there are invariably such degrees of freedom precisely at the points where there is real puzzlingness. Precisely at the point where there is a need for philosophical vision.

I would submit that these points are manifest in *PI* 217–219, where Wittgenstein precisely breaks the binary between choice and no-choice. Where he brings out how the often neglected aspect of freedom is compossible with the typically needfully ‘blind’ felt nature of rule-following.

We turn to examine 217f. in greater detail in Chapter 9. But before that, we must pass through the eye of the storm: 198–201...

...This chapter has offered a novel way of seeing the opening of the sequence from 185 onward, the opening of the most contested sequence in Wittgenstein’s ‘rule-following considerations’. I turn now to examine in some detail the very apogee and epicentre of that contestation: to 198–201. And in particular, to journey further into what is wrong with the *faux*-freedom offered by the ‘rule-sceptic’. To make clearer how this differs from the *escape* from overly-tight ‘grammatical’ constraint by (a fantasy of) rules that I have indicated earlier, an escape that I tied to the intriguing, not-plain-wrong (though also not right) notion of ‘logical existentialism’. Kripke’s Wittgenstein, ‘Kripkenstein’, might to some appear to be a natural outgrowth of the kind of conception of rules and conduct that I have outlined here. I have already intimated how it is rather a deviant way of going on. Chapter 8 makes good that intimation and sets freedom apart from a nihilistic or subjectivistic fantasy of it.⁵⁹

Notes

- 1 See “The priority of paradigms” in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Kuhn 2012), and the second half of my “How and How Not to Write on a “Legendary” Philosopher” (Read 2005c).
- 2 (On which, see Dreyfus and Dreyfus, especially as explicated by Flyvberg in his *Making Social Science Matter* (2001).
Understanding verbally ‘inexplicit’ (sic) knowledge in such a way that you do not smuggle back in a wholly deterministic logico-linguistic character to it leaves little room for ‘cognitive science’. Moreover, fully scientizable knowledge would not actually be best said to be *knowledge* at all, no more than a chess-playing machine or a computer (or a book!) *knows* or *understands* anything. Any interesting sense in which an activity can be algorithmically understood or otherwise rendered in some way such that scientists can tell something fundamental about its very nature—for example, such that (cognitive) *scientists* can ‘tell’ us (and scientifically!) about how exemplars can be ‘followed’—is not a sense compatible with the activity being a human activity: flexible, ‘accountable’ (in the ethnomethodological sense), reflexive. (Cf. here the summing up at the end of this chapter.)
- 3 In its simplest form, what I am saying here implies at minimum then that it is unwise to take 185–242 in isolation from what is in fact a much longer discussion of rule-following and normativity, beginning at the *latest* in 143 (as per Chapter 6). More subtly, the point is that to take Wittgenstein as having any proprietary kind of *account* (see Chapter 3) of rule-following, wherever one locates it in the text, is already to be looking in the wrong way. Or at least: not to be looking in *our* way.
- 4 I noted at some length the usual pattern of differentiating the two in Chapter 4.

- 5 If you want an example from *PI*, cf. 192–193, a profound undercutting of metaphysics of rules. And 139–140, which emphasise our freedom:

The picture of the cube did indeed *suggest* a certain use to us, but it was possible for me to use it differently. // Then what sort of mistake did I make; was it what we should like to express by saying: I should have thought the picture forced a particular use on me? How could I think that?

When Waismann distinguishes logic from philosophy by saying that the latter involves decisions, we are now at the point of being able to ask: does that distinction overlook the extent to which sometimes logic does, too? That is one way of asking the question of this chapter.

- 6 It is of course easier to find passages in *RFM* that are in this regard seemingly more amenable to some kind of Anti-Realism with regard to rules than is the case in *PI*. See e.g. *RFM I* (113) for an almost Kripkensteinian example. Once again, as always, we ought to take anything pre-*PI* with a pinch of salt. Nevertheless, the fact is that this passage that I've quoted does fit rather well with the interpretation that I will be offering here: *an interpretation that I've managed to tie more closely into passages from PI than either Baker and Hacker or Kripke do.*
- 7 Cf. Ryle's "Knowing How and Knowing That" (1971, 217).
- 8 And it *deepens* the work of Chapter 6, in the following sense: here, I wonder about something that was not foregrounded in Chapter 6; namely, what, as we might put it, is required in order for knowledge to actually *be*. For knowledge, and especially know-how, is, in the end, as we might put it, nothing without use. (And here of course I echo also Chapter 3.)
- 9 I argue that their account is both exegetically incorrect and not adequate to answer or dissolve a determined 'rule-sceptic's' doubts. Baker and Hacker put it thus:

For inasmuch as the mastery of a language is mastery of a rule-governed technique, then a clear understanding of what it is for an act to be determined as being in accord with a rule must be a prerequisite for a proper grasp of the very notion of understanding.

(*SRL*, 59)

In effect, I shall contend that this commentary and others along similar lines fail to take seriously enough the potential dangers more or less inherent in thus speaking, in relation to linguistic behaviour, of "mastery," "governance," and "determination." Is language 'really' something one *masters*? Controls? (Fully?) Do rules *govern* techniques; even as a dictator governs? (Are *techniques*, in any case, enough? And here I think that there may be something awry with the final sentence of 199, "To understand a language means to have mastered a technique". I think that in this regard Rush Rhees might be right, that Wittgenstein has not opened up his thinking enough to the openness of conversation etc. (Rhees 1998)). And to anticipate briefly: the concept of being *determined* that is assumed here may bring with it a fantasised and undesirable 'total' unfreedom with regard to rules, a denial of agency.

- 10 See J. Guetti's paper "Idling Rules. The Importance of Part II of Philosophical Investigations" (1993a). See also Chapters 4 and 5 of my *A Wittgensteinian Way with Paradoxes* (2012b); and cf. Chapter 8, immediately following this one.
- 11 See *SRL*, Baker and Hacker's polemical attack on Kripke's claims; also, Colin McGinn's *Wittgenstein on Meaning* (1984); A. Collins' "On the Paradox Kripke Finds in Wittgenstein" (1992); W. W. Tait's "Wittgenstein and

- the “Skeptical Paradoxes” (1986). For a rejoinder to the *Davidsonian* conception of “interpretation” – which, like Kripke’s, holds interpretation to be ubiquitous and inevitable – see Ian Hacking’s “The Parody of Conversation” (1986). For Wittgenstein’s own insistence that it is dogmatic to insist that interpretation always takes place, one can go as far back as *BT* (16f).
- 12 In Katherine Morris’s lovely formulation, “very roughly, to say of “two” things that they are internally related is to say that neither would be what it is were it not for the other; an internal relation is a duality in a unity” (2008, 43).
 - 13 The same sort of relation, to this static ‘objectual’ grammaticality, Baker and Hacker claim, is involved in “the accord of an act with a rule” *as* in “the satisfaction of a desire or wish, the fulfillment of an expectation, the compliance with an order”; *this* claims will be an object of my critique, shortly. For it is of course striking that the invocation of “internal relations” in the *Tractatus* has nothing to do with rule-following.
 - 14 Or rather, strictly speaking: it never occurs in *PI* Part I (the only part of *PI* that Hacker, in the new edition of *PI*, recognises as, strictly speaking, *being PI*). It occurs once in ‘Part II’, and not in a context that has any direct connection with rule-following.
 We can ‘generalise’ the point: For it should be further noted that, in contrast both to his apparent concern with internal relations in the *Tractatus* and to Baker and Hacker’s intimations, Wittgenstein’s use of this concept – and surely therefore his estimation of its philosophical utility or coherence – declined *systematically* during his philosophical life. See my periodization of the invocation of “internal relations” in Wittgenstein’s work (Read 1997).
 - 15 For detail on how we can see Wittgenstein as practising – early *and* (still more) later – a resolute mode of taking ‘internal relations’, see Read (2007c).
 - 16 Unlike Derrida; just this is Derrida’s fatal mistake in “Signature event context”, in his attempted engagement with the Austinian tradition.
 - 17 On this vital point of exegesis, I’m with Diamond’s “Throwing away the ladder” (Diamond 1991).
 - 18 Of critical importance here is to note once more that the term “internal relation” *is entirely absent* from [Part I of the] *Philosophical Investigations* (see notes 15–17, and *supra*). Baker-and-Hacker rest the weight of their interpretation of the ‘rule-following considerations’ on a term that Wittgenstein had decided, by the time of writing *PI*, was net-unhelpful, with regard to understanding rule-following and alike normatively-saturated phenomena.
 - 19 Moreover, I’ll tend to suggest that the concept Wittgenstein was invoking when he referred to “grammar” (from *Philosophical Grammar* forward) was *increasingly* different from that of “internal relations”. See Section 7.3, below, i.e. I don’t think Baker-and-Hacker get the meaning/use of “grammar”, “grammatical relation” etc. right, either.
 - 20 Cf., for instance, *PI* sections 185–198, 217–223, 230–239; and *Wittgenstein’s Lectures, Cambridge, 1932–5*, (Wittgenstein 1979a, 133) (AWL): “To say that if one did anything other than write 110 after 100 [in following the rule, “Add 10”] one would not be following the rule *is itself a rule*”. This remark tends to disconfirm the Baker/Hacker’s exegesis, for they continually find themselves saying things like “[Continuing ‘1002, 1004’] is internally related to the rule of the series ‘+2.’ Writing anything else would not be following that rule correctly” (*RGN*, 83).
 - 21 Translated and quoted by Baker and Hacker (from *MS 129*) in *RGN* (148). It is important to realise here that the “transition to expression” is not any transition to (a formulation of) a rule; say, an ostensive definition. Rather it is to perform a descriptively linguistic action, which – as Wittgenstein

maintains in the last sentence here – is (in such cases) not qualitatively different from taking some non-linguistic action. Both are substantive actions or practices, as definitions or other grammatical recognitions are *not*, in the relevant sense.

- 22 On which, see the argument of Chapter 6. My idea of *acting from* rules directly parallels my criticisms there of the fantasy in intellectualism of a way of knowing how to go on which can be exhaustively comprehended as knowledge-that (for instance: of the meaning of a set of instructions).
- 23 For further treatment of this important idea in relation to chess, with a worked out historical example, see Ian Hacking’s “Rules, Scepticism, Proof, Wittgenstein” (1985); and my and James Guetti’s paper “Meaningful Consequences” (Read & Guetti 1999). See also the consideration of the way that the law occasionally gets constructed in its ‘application’, in Section 7.6.
- 24 Ryle uses the exact same metaphor of seeing through (1971, 218). I am *not* saying that the metaphor is all wrong. As we shall see, I think it pretty much dead right, *in context*. But I am also saying that it itself needs interpreting... In what sense do we look through it: does it refract? Is it invisible? (For cases, see especially the kinds of examples discussed in “More complex cases” (Section 7.6), below.)
- 25 Cf. also *PI* sections 666, 681 and 683; and Falk (1992).
- 26 The latter theme, I develop particularly in Chapter 10. (Thanks to Joel Backstrom for important conversation on this point.) Cf. again here too the wonderful poetry of W.S. Graham: for instance, this from “Implements in their places”:

Do not think you have to say Anything back. But you do
Say something back which I Hear by the way I speak to you.

(Graham 2004)

- 27 Grammatical rules may be used to do much more than point, of course; but such simple and “referential” cases still show something more characteristic of using language generally than is easily perspicuous in examples of rule following drawn from arithmetic. See below.
On staring, consider Wittgenstein’s phenomenological reflections upon this, e.g. at *PI* 412–420; I’ve analysed these in Chapter 8 of my *A Wittgensteinian way with paradoxes* (Read 2012b). Staring at rules, like staring at people spectatorially, inclines one to get lost in interpretations, rather than found in interaction.
- 28 I expand on this point early in Chapter 10.
- 29 I will come back to explore a little further the implications of this paragraph in the concluding section, 7.7.
- 30 Cf. *LWPP II* (51): “Operating with concepts permeates our life. I see some sort of analogy with a very general use of keys. If for instance one always had to open a lock in order to move something.” Now imagine that the key in each case is different, and you have the case I am discussing.
- 31 Arguments along these lines may be found in the “Afterword” of Guetti’s *Wittgenstein and the Grammar of Literary Experience* (1993b), and in our joint piece “Meaningful Consequences” (Read & Guetti 1999). Those arguments extend examples such as the “Waxwings!” one, considered preliminarily earlier.
- 32 Thus, the wedges that readers such as Kripke have attempted to drive between presumption and act will have no purchase; because the deliberate *separation* of the two is both abstract and idle in contrast to (the situation in) actual cases of rule following. As I’ve argued at length elsewhere (in

- Chapter 8; and also in my “The Unstatability of Kripkean Scepticisms,” Chapter 5 of my *A Wittgensteinian Way with Paradoxes* (2012b)).
- 33 On ‘bedrock’, notice the different method and *tone* of Cavell in his “The Argument of the Ordinary” in *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome* (1990, 70f), while subtly countering Kripke. (See Chapter 9.)
- 34 There are a couple of moments in Baker and Hacker’s *corpus* where they try to have it both ways with “grammatical”: that is, to figure “internal relations” as intra-grammatical *and* to take full account of Wittgenstein’s increasingly ‘dynamic’ and ‘open’ reading of “grammar.” The following is the strongest example of this effort on their part: “...[T]o understand the rule-formulation is not to grasp something that mysteriously contains a picture of its own application, but rather to grasp a technique of application (hence something dynamic, not static!)...” (*SRL*, 129). This is promising. But even if they did practice elsewhere what they preach here, it would still not be quite enough, for this effort is not strong enough; merely calling a “technique” a “technique of application” still does not address the *activity* of applying/actualising that technique (on which, see n.9 & n.2). As I argued in Chapter 6, any alleged ‘grasping’ of a technique needs to be actualised, acted upon, to give us confidence that it is actual. If one stares fixedly at a diagram while (applying one’s knowledge of geometry to assist one in) making a copy of the diagram, what is vital is the *projection* from diagram to copy. *In* this projection, I am claiming, (all) rules are simply presumed. One might say, in this and other cases, “Don’t look for what the rule ‘is’; (just) look at what gets done.” (So long as this were not an excuse for a Behaviouristic turn.)
- 35 This quotation supports my case particularly strongly due to its following hard upon (and thus problematizing) an invocation of internal relations concerning rules (in potential support of Baker and Hacker’s reading), one of only a very few such invocations in Wittgenstein’s *corpus*. Of course these remarks must be weighed as Lee’s *notes*, only tenuously corroborated; and yet, with the probable exception of the too-static-sounding word “usage” in connection with applications—where some more active concept is surely appropriate (such as, simply, “use”) — I read them as consistent with later Wittgenstein. Compare and contrast for instance, *PI* 49. Baker and Hacker claim that Wittgenstein resolved the ‘problem’ of “the harmony between language and reality” in the early 1930s (*RGN*, 85). My counter-picture might be: even if some such harmony be said to obtain, within grammar, it would not yield a model of the working *application* of language, and so could have nothing much to do with the way that rule and act are “in accord”.
- 36 The point here is directly analogous to the famous considerations marshalled *vis-à-vis* the case of the standard metre at *PI* 50. Or to putting one’s hand on top of one’s head in a vain effort to measure one’s height.
- 37 Cf. Chapter 9.
- 38 Cf. Juliet Floyd, “Wittgenstein on 2, 2, 2...: The opening of *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*” (1991). In this connection, it seems worth reiterating that there is no way of “knowing” – in the “non-certain” sense – particular rules without attending to rule-*expressions* or rule-*formulations*, which are the most that “interpretations” can be (cf. *PI* 201), and about which we *may* be mistaken, etc. Furthermore, it is just a truism, though one easily forgotten, that an application-description is not (yet) an act consisting of the application of the rule in question. Certainly it is often useful to describe applications, as Baker and Hacker do; but it is also necessary to understand that in these descriptions of possible actions one remains within

- the *merely* grammatical complex of the rule and its *possible* implications. To be charitable to them: what Baker and Hacker describe is an internal relation between rule-formulation and application-formulation. At a couple of points (*SRL*, 109 & *RGN*, 104) they almost seem to realize that this (e.g. pointing out the relations between the syntactic formations, “I expect Ludwig.”, “Who do I expect?”, and “Ludwig.”) is all they can hope by their method to achieve.
- 39 I note in passing that Sartre’s discussion of freedom early in *Being and Nothingness*, and his reflections towards the end of that book, reveal a conception quite unlike the somewhat crudified notion ‘critiqued’ by Baker-and-Hacker.
- 40 Though contrast *LFM* (237).
- 41 Ultimately here, “intuition” should *not* be said; “decision” almost should be (and *is*, elsewhere, e.g. *AWL*, (131)).
- 42 One also has to decide whether or not to obey the law; but that is a different matter...
- 43 One *could* insist that they are; just as one could insist that the transfinite yield a paradise, or that “this” is the only real name (*PI* 38–39); but such insistence will lead one somewhere that I have sought to paint as decidedly unattractive, even if, as of course one should, one overcomes metaphysical delusions about the arithmetical case. In other words: such insistence would lead us away from an aim of doing justice to the particular cases into a dogmatic insistence that a model must fit even when the alleged fit is unclear and makes us, if we are honest, uneasy, to say the least.
- 44 See Martin Stone’s detailed ‘New Wittgensteinian’ work on the law (1994). Though Stone might see my wording here as tending towards being revisionist, I claim that it is not; that it is rather simply seeking to be helpfully orientative and attentive to the reality of law as a human institution. Cf. my explicit bid to suggest how I am not revisionist compared to Finkelstein on rules, below; Finkelstein and Stone have very similar approaches to Wittgenstein on rules.
- 45 In the key section of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* entitled “The priority of paradigms” (Kuhn 2012).
- 46 *Contra* (Baker-and-)Hacker. This is a point of considerable importance. Recasting ‘mastery of language’ as an object of comparison rather than as a ‘fact’, let alone a ‘grammatical truth’, helps us no longer be determined or unduly governed by these concepts that Baker-and-Hacker relied on, when asserting that “mastery of a language is mastery of a rule-governed technique” (*SRL*, 59), as we saw them doing back at the opening of this chapter.
- 47 Consider for instance the way in which metaphor works, as discussed in “Towards a perspicuous presentation of “perspicuous presentation”” (Hutchinson & Read 2008). Cf. also the near-closing portion of Chapter 4 on *PI* 122.
- 48 (Which is of course exactly what (Baker-and-)Hacker seek to insist on: that one must say that they ‘*are*’ rules of grammar.) The quotation continues:
- I only have the right to say to you, “Investigate whether mathematical propositions are not rules of expression, paradigms - propositions dependent on experience but made independent of it. Ask whether mathematical propositions are not made paradigms or objects of comparison in this way.” Paradigms and objects of comparison can only be called useful or useless, like the choice of the unit of measurement.
- 49 Cf. Chapter 6 on why the concept(s) of the tacit/implicit is not the best way to represent Wittgensteinian insights into these matters; cf. also Read (2019b).

- 50 For discussion of the reality of how this works in social contexts, see *Wittgenstein among the Sciences* (Read 2012a, 106–107).
- 51 Compare here 139–140.
In the sense in which I am suggesting that Wittgenstein sees even logic as a realm not utterly devoid of a freedom, and as sometimes involving decisions, we can see Wittgenstein as going even further than Waismann, in the direction of a liberatory philosophy.
- 52 Cf. 242. Cf. again also 231: ““But surely you can see ...?” That is just the characteristic expression of someone who is under the compulsion of a rule.” Philosophy gives us some autonomy from that *compulsion*.
- 53 When one reads Baker-and-Hacker aggressively taking on Kripke et al., one cannot help but feel oneself a witness to an act of would-be bullying. That was most certainly how Kripke himself experienced their writing (personal communication).
- 54 It is what would be undermined by a constitutive ‘scepticism’, such as Kripkenstein’s.
- 55 Many thanks to David Egan for the formulations in this paragraph.
- 56 On this point, see the very opening of ‘Part II’ of *PI*: whereat Wittgenstein holds up for examination the bizarre notion of a ‘grief’ that alternated back and forth with the ticking of a clock.
- 57 As in this, for instance: ““How is one to define a feeling? One can only recognise it within oneself.” But it must be possible to teach the use of words! // What I am looking for is the grammatical difference” (*LWPP II*, 6). Teaching moves us from a fantasised realm of 1st-person license to the real realm of *2nd-person relations*. The realm of grammar, on our method.
- 58 Something like the latter and not the former is the approach taken by Katherine Morris in her splendid paper on “Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty on internal relations” (Morris 2018). I have no quarrel at all with Morris, except in so far as she suggests that there must be a quarrel between these two, or that early and later Wittgenstein must quarrel.
- 59 Huge thanks to my mentor and colleague the late James Guetti, without whom this chapter would never have been possible. Thanks also to Susan Edwards-Mckie, Alberto Emiliani and Jon Cook for helpful conversations on a recent draft; thanks especially to Jon for directing me towards W.S. Graham’s poetry, which, in poems such as “Implements in their places” and “The constructed space” seems to have been dwelling on (in?) the very interval between rule and application – and between co-conversationalists. Big thanks finally to Katherine Morris for detailed comments.

8 The *Faux*-Freedom of Nonsense

Kripke's Wittgenstein and Wittgenstein's Wittgenstein at *PI* 198–201

“But nevertheless can't I still imagine such a case?” The first thing to say is, you can *talk* about it. But that doesn't show that you have thought it through completely. (5 o'clock on the sun.)–

Wittgenstein (*RPP* 2, 94)

8.1 Introductory

There is no such thing as “nowhere” from which to view – and the very idea that there could be is itself one of the philosopher's deepest temptations. Furthermore, *‘the most’ we can do is to rebuild the ship as we sail* – and we should seek to overcome our regret that we ‘can't’ do ‘more’ than this.

Remarks such as those italicised here are (in my view, rightly) typically regarded as much less outlandish or disappointing than sometimes used to be the case in the twentieth century. They are, despite (or perhaps even because of) their initial surface-form, properly understood themselves as potential for-instances of a liberatory philosophy. They have themselves the transitional character that ‘resolutism’ has taught us to expect. They might be helpfully set alongside remarks such as *PI* 103, as analysed in Chapter 4; for they bring into play, inevitably (and, at least in my coining of them, deliberately), expectations and metaphors that *require* further reflection. But: how deeply has our philosophical culture begun to respect or absorb remarks such as these? In other words: When one actually engages with an intriguing theoretical or philosophical claim or possibility, does one respect such ‘Post-Analytic’ / ‘Pragmatist-Wittgensteinian’ maxims?

It may be worth our while to consider these questions in specific connection with an influential example... In this chapter, I consider perhaps the most ‘controversial’ portion of all of the *PI*, the (climax of the) ‘rule-following considerations’. My aim is to bring a liberatory perspective to bear on this. I do this by way of considering, specifically and in some depth, certainly the most famous and controversial interpretation of those considerations on rules and norms, one that was already mooted in the previous chapter: Kripke's.

Why still Kripke, now? In Chapter 7, we focussed on what remains the best-known objectivistic, 3rd-person-style account of Wittgenstein on rules: (Baker-and-)Hacker's, and I set out where I think it goes wrong and how we actually ought to read *PI* 186f. In this chapter, I focus on what remains the best-known 1st-person-style account of Wittgenstein on rules: Kripke's. Here, I shall set out where I think this goes wrong and how we actually ought to read *PI* 198–201f. By showing the way – not well-understood (because of the invocation Kripke makes of 'the community') – in which Kripke's Wittgenstein is an extreme subjectivist as well as (like Baker-and-Hacker's) an individualist, I shall make space for the (non-individualist) 2nd-person-style, liberatory take on the 'rule-following considerations' that I aspire to, in the present work.

Kripke argued in *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (1982) (*WOR&PL*) – on the grounds that one has, allegedly, no good grounds for believing "plus" to mean the same over time, to refer always to the addition function (rather than to some non-standard function, such as "quus", which is co-extensive with "plus" only for sums up to a certain number, and highly divergent thereafter) – that "There can be no such thing as meaning anything by any word. Each new application we make is a leap in the dark..." (*WOR&PL*, 55).¹

Kripke's are startling claims. They sound like (they would be) a hitherto unknown form of madness. Do they amount to – does "Kripke's Wittgenstein" enunciate – a coherent sceptical impulse or position, one which can actually be stated and understood at all without essential recourse to entirely self-defeating or ultimately deeply unattractive conceptual or metaphysical assumptions or strategems? (And, if not, what can we learn from the great attraction that Kripke's Wittgenstein has exercised for philosophers, over the past couple of generations?)

8.2 Kripke's Attempted Bracketing of 'The Epistemic'

When one turns to the relevant portion of Kripke's text, the situation emerges: Having first dwelt on the culmination of 201, and raised doubts as to *our knowledge* of our past meanings/rule-followings (taking our present meanings as fixed, so as to be able to formulate the problem), and having suggested that it is past instances that we *must* in general stay faithful to if meaning in the present is to be secure(d), Kripke goes on to repudiate the initial (epistemic) elements of his own presentation:

...the problem may appear to be epistemological - how can anyone know [what] I meant? Given, however, that everything in my mental history is compatible...with the conclusion that I really meant quus, it is clear that the sceptical challenge is not really an epistemological one. It purports to show that nothing in my mental history [or] past behaviour...could establish whether I meant plus

or quus. But then it appears to follow that there was no fact about me that constituted my having meant plus rather than quus. How could there be, if nothing in my internal mental history or external behaviour will answer the sceptic who supposes that in fact I meant quus? If there was no such thing as my meaning plus rather than quus in the past, neither can there be in the present. When we initially presented the paradox, we perforce used language, taking meanings for granted. Now we see, as we expected, that this provisional concession was indeed fictive. There can be no fact as to what I meant by ‘plus’, or any other word at any time. The ladder must finally be kicked away.

(WOR&PL, 21)

Think about that remarkable sentence, “When we initially presented the paradox, we perforce used language”... So when Kripke presents the paradox in its true form, he will *not* use language?? The position evidently involves at least pragmatic self-contradiction at some point – for Kripke must take many meanings for granted as he writes these very sentences. One could say, indeed, that he *made provision* for himself²; that the opportunity was provided (by means of his use of our common language) of raising the ‘constitutive’ sceptical question, before he then denied this opportunity to others, by means of “kicking the ladder away”. Thus his use of the term “provisional concession” smacks of duplicity, it smacks perhaps of a key ethical vice for philosophers – for it *appears* to refer to a hypothetical, but actually designates a ‘*provision*’ that Kripke makes for himself alone. Kripke can thus *appear* to have succeeded in generating a radical (even if self-refuting) ‘constitutive’ scepticism without himself having fallen into nonsense; though he has not, I submit, really done so.

Can Kripke legitimately/intelligibly pursue his argument even up to the point at which radically sceptical (and ‘incidentally’ self-defeating) conclusions are apparently arrived at? That is my question, in this chapter.

For the problem is this: Kripke is famous for having generated for us an apparently potent ‘constitutive’ or ‘metaphysical’ scepticism. But one may yet have cause to judge that it could only be motivated and successfully argued for in the first place through (more standardly epistemologically) sceptical arguments (thus explaining in part *why* Kripke couches the whole thing at first in more or less explicitly epistemically sceptical terms). And that these epistemically sceptical moves may themselves be subject to being *evacuated of content by the constitutive scepticism* itself.

This will of course be denied by those who see in Kripke’s ‘metaphysical’ (or ‘constitutive’ or ‘semantic’ or ‘transcendental’) scepticism essentially and only a ‘projectivist’ thesis which merely happens some of the time to be annexed to a sceptical vocabulary, a sceptical ‘mode of presentation’.

So I need to fill out the claim that the initially³ epistemic elements of Kripke's presentation are essential to the very generatability of the 'scepticism' which he purportedly presents us with.

8.3 Focussing on the Introduction of Kripkian Rule-Scepticism: The Epistemological and Metaphysical Elements in Kripke's Wittgenstein

In the early portion of his text, Kripke is pretty clear that the problem he is raising was both epistemological *and* metaphysical. Indeed, I am suggesting that it had to be...for the reasons mentioned just above: most importantly, because the more 'radical' metaphysical scepticism which he was intent on introducing was explicitly *introduced* and *made plausible* (and indeed further, and most crucially, as I have already implied, *made comprehensible!*) only through epistemological considerations.

This is where I see Kripke's conjuring trick.⁴ The key question in this chapter is to do with how (i.e. *if*) one actually gets *started* with Kripkian scepticism, and whether one can understand how to get started with it at all unless *via* 'epistemic' means. If those epistemic means become incomprehensible, then one has deprived oneself of any way of understanding where one is supposed to have got to. I think that Kripke provides for himself by using epistemic considerations, and then seemingly-wilfully 'fails to notice' that it poses a serious problem for him that he no longer has any *room* for those very considerations, by the time he states the 'full' scepticism he wants to state. Again, his 'provisional' concession of epistemic language is in reality the only way he can pose his sceptical position *at all*.

A major point of this chapter then is to challenge the very coherence of the 'position' (even, of the thought-experiment) Kripke sets up early in his famous book. Are the epistemic and metaphysical scepticisms he introduces *cotenable*, and if not, can Kripkean metaphysical scepticism possibly be made plausible (Can 'it' even, in fact, be formulated at all? Is it stable enough to be stated, to be statable? Is there any *there* there?)? Part of the very same question – and we shall turn to this formulation explicitly, a little later – is, I will suggest, as follows: Can doubts applied to the past (while 'privileging' the present) coherently be projected into the present (and future), to throw *them* into doubt too?

In order to sap one's confidence that one definitely meant and means plus, Kripke has both:

- 1 *to enable the sceptic to speak to/with us* (I will take this up in a moment), and
- 2 to bracket our sense that we know, without the possibility of a serious doubt, what the words of the English language mean, what the addition function is, and so forth.

In pursuing (2), Kripke appears in turn to have two strategies:

- First, it is implied that ‘I do not know of me any more than of you exactly what rule is being followed (“Who is to say...?”). As Wittgensteinians, we may be somewhat sympathetic with this line of thought; as is well-known, Wittgenstein challenges mentalistic prejudices to the contrary at a number of points in *PI* (see e.g. 187. Cf. also *RFM VI*: 23, & *RFM IV*: 8). However, I shall note below that it is unclear that *Kripke* can help himself to this Wittgensteinian challenge. For Wittgenstein’s version of the ‘challenge’ is different from Kripke’s; because Kripke seems to find it a matter of *regret* that there is allegedly not ‘Individualist knowledge’ of one’s own meanings; this is a way precisely of comprehending how his presentation is scepticalistic. While for Wittgenstein, self-knowledge conceived of in the standard ‘Analytic’ way as a knowledge of self just like the knowledge one has of others is a misconception.⁵ He is making purpose-relative / audience-relative ‘grammatical’ observations, not a revisionist attack on our knowledge.⁶
- Second, Kripke suggests the (“gruification” or) “**quusification**” of large stretches of language, should one continue to insist that one *does* know what the rule is (e.g. the addition function as applied to these numbers) that one is following. I.e. He suggests that the same procedure that he undertook with regard to plus (i.e. quusifying it) be extended systematically, universally, to other words.

Am I not reductively misreading Kripke, in taking a key tack (my “First”) in his pursuit of (2) to be directly epistemological? He tries to be fairly careful in the earliest pages of the text, as he introduces his “bizarre sceptic” and the “sceptical paradox” of rules, not to employ a specifically epistemic vocabulary; but I think that, to say the least, it is not unreasonable to suggest that when he writes (on p. 9 of his book), “Who is to say that [quus] is not the function I previously meant by ‘+?’”, he is already committed to suggesting *doubts* as to whether there is Individualistic *knowledge* of the meanings of expressions, at least in the sense in which we (supposedly) pre-reflectively suppose that there is. For, after all, that is the self-declared point of his enterprise: “How do I know that ‘68 plus 57’, as I *meant* plus in the *past*, should denote 125?” (*WOR&PL*, 12). In any case, the doubt that is supposedly raised via the introduction of “quus” is initially very specific: the sceptical hypothesis is that ‘I’ should have answered “5”, not “125”. In other words, ‘the sceptic’ suggests that by “plus”, “...I *always meant* quus; now, under the influence of some insane frenzy...I have come to misinterpret my own previous usage.” This is in the course of Kripke’s very first presentation of the problem. He is hoping to grip his readers, by means of a more or less classically (more or less epistemically) sceptical device. (And he is

plainly supposing that ‘the sceptic’ in turn claims to know, or at least to have some kind of warrant to believe, that ‘I’ may very well have meant quus by “+”.)

The argument I wish to make, in part, is this: that Kripke cannot help himself to the coherency of ‘quus’, make hypotheses and epistemological claims using it, and then simply repudiate it as *merely* a ‘dramatic device’. For doing so means that Kripke’s words, *throughout*, ‘flicker’, or ‘blur’. Exhibiting a lack of what, as we have seen earlier in this book, Wittgenstein calls *commitment* (or *resolution*). I want to say that the move from comparing “plus” with “quus” to throwing into doubt *all* meaning is not one which one can coherently make.⁷ It is in fact a classic instance of the dubious sceptical procedure of moving seamlessly from specific to general doubts.

I have noted that the First part of Kripke’s tack (2) in making his scepticism initially appealing is in making “quus” seem to some minimal degree a real alternative to “plus”. This tack would be threatened by protests against the:

...ridiculous model of the instruction I gave myself regarding ‘addition’. Surely I did not merely give myself some finite number of examples, from which I am supposed to extrapolate the whole table... Rather I learned - and internalized instructions for - a *rule* which determines how addition is to be continued... This set of directions, I may suppose, I explicitly gave myself at some earlier time. It is engraved on my mind as on a slate. It is incompatible with the hypothesis that I meant quus. It is this set of directions, not the finite list of particular additions I performed in the past, that justifies and determines my present response....

(WORLDPL, 15)

So what is to be done? Here is how Kripke continues; by invoking what I labelled as the Second part of tack (2):

Despite the initial plausibility of this objection, the sceptic’s response is all too obvious. True, if ‘count’, as I used the word in the past, referred to the act of counting (and my other words are correctly interpreted in the standard way), then ‘plus’ must have stood for addition. But...the sceptic...can claim that by ‘count’ I formerly meant *quount*, where to ‘quount’ a heap is to count it in the ordinary sense, unless the heap was formed as the union of two heaps, one of which has 57 or more items, in which case one must give the answer ‘5’...

It is pointless of course to protest that I intended the result of counting a heap to be *independent* of its composition in terms of sub-heaps...: the sceptic will smilingly reply that once again I am

misinterpreting my past usage, that actually ‘independent’ formerly meant quindependent, where ‘quindependent’ means....

(WOR&PL, 15–16; final ellipsis Kripke’s)

Kripke writes that “For the sceptic to converse with me at all, we must have a common language” (this is what I called tack (1), a necessary starting point for there to be any problem generated for us); ...*but* what if, every time we try to hang something on a term – any term whatsoever – and do something with it, the sceptic suddenly and smugly tells us that that term too can be (should be? already in effect has been?) ‘gruified’/‘-quusified’? (This is the Second and, we may now start to think, rather desperate strategem that Kripke is pushed to, in pursuing (2), above; if he doesn’t pursue this extreme ‘meta’ strategem, then his rule-scepticism quickly gets answered.)

How are we to understand what it is that the sceptic is telling us about our situation, while some (ultimately, it would seem, all!) of *the words with which we should like to and need to describe the situation are bracketed?*

The asking of this question makes plain what the reader probably already saw, above – the real *conflict* there is between (1) and (2). This is a difficulty which Kripkean (‘semantic’ or ‘constitutive’) scepticism has to a significantly greater extent than most other scepticisms, than ‘traditional’ scepticisms – it is actually hard to see how it can be so much as formulated and comprehended without being already evacuated of its supposed content.

And now we can connect this directly with Wittgenstein’s own discussions. It seems that ‘Kripke’s Wittgenstein’ has trapped himself in the very labyrinth that Wittgenstein aimed to show us the way about/to free us from. He has, absurdly, ‘embraced’ (i.e. sought to embrace, for there surely cannot be any such thing as *actually* embracing it) the paradox that, in 201, Wittgenstein speaks of as involving a “misunderstanding”. *The only way in which Kripke manages to make it look as if he has succeeded in presenting us with a paradox at all is by staying within the very play of unapplied interpretations⁸ that Wittgenstein in 198 and 201 critically scrutinises.* Exactly similarly, *the endless-quusification strategy only looks as if it could possibly succeed so long as we forget that interpretations have to come to an end somewhere*, quusifications have to come to an end somewhere. Otherwise, nothing at all has been said or done. Quusification without end is pure possibility only (in just the sense just now critically explored in Chapter 7), *not* the actual meaning of anything at all. It is a would-be endless string of (mere *unapplied*, abstract) interpretations/formulations. Kripke thinks he can use quusification-without-end as a device for evacuating meaning from language; but the only absence of meaning is in the would-be quusification-without-end itself. (We should

as it were be meaning-sceptical (only) about Kripke's *own* presentation; he has not succeeded in producing any genuine widely-applicable meaning-scepticism whatsoever.)

8.4 (The Politics of) 198–202

What *does* actually happen in 198–202? What is it that Kripke occludes?

Kripke most crucially ignores the second paragraph of 201: “That there is a misunderstanding here...”. What he offers, at length, IS that misunderstanding. (This is actually another way of saying what I have just said above.)

He is aided in this enterprise by further taking 201–202 (minus the second paragraph of 201) in isolation from its context in the surrounding considerations.

Most crucially, he ignores 198, which, at greater length, already works through the material returned to in 201. Again, this is an extraordinary thing to do: for 201 opens with the words “This was our paradox:”. The “was” refers back to 198; in which the Wittgensteinian “skeptical paradox” (Kripke's words) was already defused. (In fact, a better skeleton account of the text is roughly this: The paradox of interpretation was first introduced in 143–145, and embroidered on in 151: and is already addressed from there on. It returns to centre-stage in 185–186 and it is pretty much taken care of by and in 198.)

198 already exposes and renders thereby non-compulsory the ‘compulsion’ to insist that interpretation *must* take place. That there ‘*must*’ be interpretation is an anti-liberatory myth on the object-level; on the contrary, as we saw already in Chapter 7, there is only actually active rule-use when there is *no longer* interpreting going on. It is also a myth on the meta-level, as I already pointed out in Chapter 3: the thought that philosophy itself must involve theorisation, or must involve interpretation (rather than ‘just’ description, etc.), is a prejudice against the very *possibility* of the task that Wittgenstein sets himself.

These points are not new (Read 2000b). I will not detailedly rehearse them again. I want to do something else here, something newer. To look at what we might call the *politics* of 198–202, and especially of 201, the section on (two-thirds of) which Kripke fixates. If we get freed from Kripkean Humpty-Dumpty ‘freedom’ about (/from) word-meanings, what, in the real world, are we freed from (and for)?

And before that; what in real life, especially political and ethical like, is akin to what Kripke argues for? How might thus we come to comprehend the kind of temptation he is labouring under, that has proved so attractive to so many? What do 198 and 201, properly understood, throw into question?

My response to these questions begins as follows: Our time is one of fetishised individualism. We are awash in rhetorics of freedom which,

I have already tentatively suggested (in earlier chapters), are unreal, but no less dangerous for that. For they license instead practices of *atomisation* and alienation that enable only a faux-freedom or at best a very restricted freedom (that of Coke vs Pepsi, etc.), and that undermine the freedoms present in (e.g.) deliberative democratic decision-making about what direction our society will take, what technologies we will or will not embrace, etc.; and because they do not ground true liberation of the Wittgensteinian kind, a kind which suggests a founding of any real freedom in (a real, and realistic) freedom of *thought*, and in unconstraint by prejudices and by ‘undisciplined’ appetites, etc.⁹

Kripkenstein’s position is well-known for its alleged community-centricity, opposed by the outright individualism of Baker-and-Hacker, of Simon Blackburn, and of Colin McGinn. But actually, as I have already slightly implied, a wild would-be subjectivistic *individualism*, more extreme even than that of Cartesianism, lies at the root of Kripke’s stance. To *conceive* of what his ‘skepticism’ requires, we (would) have to cut ourselves off radically from our commonsensicalities of the mind, of language, and so forth. We (would) have (*per impossibile*) to conceptualise ourselves not as part of a *field* of inter-being, but as lacking even the resources to discuss and be together in our semantic predicament (or (in) anything else).¹⁰

What 198–201, somewhat similarly to (or: anticipating) 240–242, actually offer one, I believe, is precisely the antidote to exactly such wild pseudo-individualism. This is pretty clear in 199, a sometimes-neglected remark in these hugely-written-about sections, which culminates in this: “To follow a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess, are *customs* (usages, institutions). // To understand a sentence means to understand a language.”

But the antidote is present in subtler and more compressedly beautiful detail in 198 and in 201 themselves.

What there is in Kripke that is put into question above all in those two sections is (what in our time are) incredibly widespread and attractive tropes such as “It’s *all* a matter of interpretation”. The subjectivism of (the favoured form of relativism in) our time: supposedly an expression of freedom and tolerance, actually a dull semi-‘compulsory’ dogma.¹¹

Rather than everything being a matter of interpretation, “every interpretation hangs in the air together with what it interprets, and cannot give it any support.” (198) Subjectivism is in this sense simply a dangerous notation that acts as a distortive overlay to our ethics and politics. It is in this way very similar to solipsism, which Wittgenstein of course analyses at length later (and, in this way, this chapter anticipates Chapter 10 on ‘private language’ beyond rules). And Wittgenstein is already giving the lie to it, *in* 198–201.

To give a sense of how such subjectivism is corrosive, let me suggest, in a spirit of lightness but also of heaviness, a kind of instantiation – a

real case – of what Wittgenstein describes in the great second paragraph of 201, that Kripke regrettably passes over in silence:

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.

My suggested instantiation is: the ‘reasons’ that were offered by the Blair administration in the UK for invading Iraq in 2003. When each one unravelled, another ‘deeper’ reason was offered in its stead. There seemed no seriousness to any of them; only the wish to occupy us for a moment with one, until it had done its delaying work, whereupon another was substituted. Stopping terrorist attacks; eliminating weapons of mass destruction; regime-change... the procession of ‘interpretations’ of the action of attacking Iraq lacked substance, but was in fact only as if there (as if) to content us for a moment. Blair et al offered *one interpretation after another* of the pre-judged decision to go to war.

Kripke’s ‘quasification’ procedure, or his process of undermining his ‘provisional’ (sic) ‘concessions’, are cut from roughly the same cloth. Each stage in the process seems to content us for a moment and distracts us from the emptiness of the entire procedure, the lack of interest in the truth, or in the reality of our lived situation.

So:

- Blair’s explicit expression of his own sincerity as an alleged good reason for believing in his good faith in the process of justifying the war, while the string of justifications one after another was cynically offered;
- “You are entitled to your own opinion”;
- “It’s all a matter of interpretation”;
- Bullshit, on Harry Frankfurt’s understanding thereof;
- A consumerism of opinion, of thought, of truth, as in the concept of ‘Post-truth’¹²;

...the politics of such moves as these is essentially the same in each case. It is a ‘Post-Modern’ politics of subjective pseudo-truth, that leaves us ultimately cut off from each other with no recourse, no common universe of discourse.

The politics of 198–201 (by contrast) is one that our time badly needs.

To close this section, we should remark the wilfulness of insistence on reaching what is prejudged to be the ‘right’ solution. A would-be ‘total’ freedom of the kind would-be *licensed* by Kripke’s Wittgenstein is in practice usually a cover for prejudice: e.g. the prejudice of the war-monger, of the climate-denier, or of the selfish or egoic person. Once more

here, a tacit over-rigidity on the ‘object’ level *vis-à-vis* rules coincides with a similar over-rigidity at the ‘meta’-level. That is: Just as (as we saw in Chapter 7) it is important to preserve a certain freedom in the meaning of rules, without this collapsing into license, just so it is important to preserve a vital freedom in one’s operation as a philosopher, without that collapsing into license. What Wittgenstein means by countering will to intellect can be understood just so: as highlighting what one needs in order to oppose the wilfulness of the scientific thinker, the humanist thinker (i.e. one prejudiced in favour of our species at the expense of non-human animals), the wilfulness of any dogmatism, that always pre-judges what results will be allowed to count as right. The freedom of manoeuvre that dogmatism deprives one of: for it *cramps* one’s mind.

8.5 A Forebear Analogy: Grue

Let us return, thus armed, to dissecting the trouble with Kripkenstein in more detail. The fatal tension I excavated above between ‘(1)’ and ‘(2)’ is closely analogous to that which Stephen Mulhall finds between two elements of what is needed for the construction of Goodman’s “grue” (on which of course Kripke *modelled* his “quus”, taking Goodman’s problem to the ‘constitutive’ level; so this ‘analogy’ is hardly a coincidence! Grue is quus’s direct *ancestor*.) Mulhall suggests (1989) that “grue” must be both sufficiently consonant with our colour-terms as to be comprehensible to us as defined, *and* sufficiently alien to our own colour-terms as to satisfy the condition of equal relativity of positionality which Goodman laid down in response to the otherwise fatal objections of Davidson and others. Similarly, I have claimed that “quus” must, for Kripke, both be *comprehensible to us* (i.e. we must be able to understand the meaning-sceptic; (1)) and accompanied by a radical *distancing of us from (our grasp of) the meanings* of our terms (I.e. “plus” is put at a distance from us – we must be able to conceive that quus could be the meaning of “plus”, that “quus” *could* be the more basic term); (2). But: Can we so much as understand “quus” if we don’t *actually* understand “plus”? Again: it just is not at all clear that one can conceivably coherently combine (1) and (2). In fact: it seems clear that one cannot.

In an effort to try to answer the crucial question asked earlier – How is one to understand what it is that the sceptic is telling one about one’s situation while *the very words with which one would rely on to describe the situation intelligibly are suspended, bracketed?* – without appealing to elements of Kripke’s exposition which I have indicated will turn out to be utterly untenable, we should suspend Kripke’s failed resort to gruiification/quusification apparently *without end*, and ask, *modulo* such a resort, where we are left in our endeavour to follow Kripke’s effort to get us to understand and to find disturbing the claims of his sceptic.

Well, what perhaps remains comprehensible and disturbing is the thought that we may not have a sure grasp of what the rule was that we were using, in adding. That is: how do you – and I – know of me that I am following the ‘plus’ rule rather than the ‘quus’ rule?

This is cast (even by Kripke) *as an epistemological question*. Mulhall puts this question of Kripke’s as follows: “...the worry is one of self-knowledge, a worry about whether a...person can know if he is a linguistic alien to himself” (Mulhall 1989, 183–184).¹³

In other words, we are given some grip on Kripke’s ‘Wittgensteinian’ paradox, and its constitutively sceptical implications, through the introduction of “quus”, and the proposal that we do not have good grounds for denying that we may have been quussing, when we thought or assumed we were plussing, in the past. Our only manner of understanding Kripke’s paradox, of understanding what his constitutive scepticism might mean, is *through what he for one must regard as an epistemological proposal*.

8.6 The Metaphysics Evacuates the Epistemology of Content

Now, when Kripke’s doubts ‘go metaphysical’, when (most famously, on p. 21 of his book, quoted above) he denies that there is any (factual) basis for distinguishing between my meaning plus and my meaning quus, and indeed that there is any basis for distinguishing between my meaning a definite function by “+” and my meaning nothing at all, the manner in which the rule-following paradox was initially made plausible is evacuated of content. That is, if there is actually no non-arbitrary way to distinguish the “quus” hypothesis from the “plus” hypothesis, then it can mean nothing to ask of someone how they are so sure that “plus” *rather than* “quus” is the operation they are using.

This appears to be a profound deficiency in Kripke’s exposition – and not one that could be taken care of by making minor or even major expositional changes, or reasonable substantive adjustments, in the ‘position’ expounded. Kripke appears more or less to recognise the problem, but deals with it with remarkable insouciance. Firstly, having suggested that one may actually be using “quus” and be self-deceived in thinking otherwise, he simply brushes aside/breezily ‘throws away’ what we have characterised as the epistemological considerations by means of which the scepticism is made a problem which one can understand, and which can *grip* one:

Of course this bizarre hypothesis, and the references to LSD, or to an insane frenzy, are in a sense merely a dramatic device. The basic point is this. Ordinarily, I suppose that, in computing ‘68+57’ as I do, I do not simply make an unjustified leap in the dark. I follow

directions I previously gave myself that uniquely determine that in this new instance I should say ‘125’. What are these directions? By hypothesis, I never explicitly told myself that I should say ‘125’ in this very instance. Nor can I say that I should simply ‘do the same thing I always did’, if this means ‘compute according to the rule exhibited by my previous examples.’ That rule could just as well have been the rule for quaddition (the quus function) as for addition. The idea that in fact quaddition is what I meant, that in a sudden frenzy I have changed my previous usage, dramatizes the problem.

(*WOR&PL*, 10–11)

But in *what* sense is this “*merely*” a dramatisation of “the [pre-existing, self-standing] problem”? Do we have any grip on what it would mean for us not to find ourselves rationally compelled to answer “125” to the question “What is the result of summing 68 and 57?”, *aside* from some suitably expounded scenario which would sow doubts in our minds? Is Kripke’s presentation at this point not teetering on the edge of a drastic dishonesty or unclarity, a complete failure to make clear what it is that makes it possible (if anything does) to entertain the startling claims he wants us to entertain?

Perhaps there is an answer to my question here – I do not see Kripke supplying it anywhere, and therefore am concerned about the casualness with which he wishes to set aside *the very ‘device’* through which we can apparently come to understand what it is that he is putting into question.¹⁴

These considerations, I think, point strongly to the following ‘provisional’ conclusion: Unless somehow it were to turn out that we can somehow make sense of ‘gruifying’ an entire language – and I have suggested already why this idea is a non-idea, not amounting to anything, for it would be equivalent to treating *an entire language* in the manner critiqued in Chapter 7: as consisting in unapplied ‘interpretations’, never bottoming out in any actual meaning – then there is no reason to believe that Kripke’s Wittgenstein’s ‘scepticism’ is stable *or even stable*. For its metaphysical side cancels out its epistemic side; *but without its epistemic side, we cannot generate its metaphysical side*.

And now let us note a moment early in Kripke’s text where this realisation seems more or less present:

[B]efore we pull the rug out from under our own feet, we begin by speaking as if the notion that at present we mean a certain function by ‘plus’ is unquestioned... Only *past* usages are to be questioned. Otherwise we will be unable to *formulate* our problem.

(*WOR&PL*, 14)

Precisely. Kripke *is* unable to formulate ‘Kripkenstein’s’ would-be problem. No problem succeeds in being formulated. There is only the illusion

of such a problem being formulated. A tricky illusion, a latent nonsense that masquerades as something more than that.

8.7 Doubting 'From'... Nowhere

Kripke raises would-be doubts¹⁵ as to (our knowledge of) aspects of the past, from the secure standpoint of the present. He suggests seemingly-concrete alternatives to our usual conceptualisation of past practices. He goes on to doubt (our knowledge of) aspects of the present. But from what standpoint are *these* doubts raised? What would Kripke need still to presuppose, to hold steady (perhaps against his own wishes), in order actually and genuinely to generate such doubts?

And now we have reached the very crux of the matter. I do not understand how one can doubt whether one means plus (rather than, say, quus) by "plus" in the present on the grounds of doubts about whether "plus" meant plus in the past. For, if one's present meanings are thrown into doubt, then the doubts that one raises (in the present) about the past are *also* thrown into – complete – doubt. One cannot meaningfully entertain that one meant quus by "plus" on past occasions unless one knows (or, better, presumes¹⁶), now, the meanings of "plus" and "quus". So I see no way in which present use can be undercut *without undercutting the very undercutting of past use with which present use was supposed to be undercut*.¹⁷

One expresses any doubts in an (undoubted) present. And if one expresses one's doubts *using* "quus", then it is at best moot whether those doubts can have any content whatsoever if "quus" too *goes*; if we – Kripke's readers – are left without a means of distinguishing even notionally my meaning plus, my meaning quus, and my meaning nothing at all.

Am I attempting to force Kripke's sceptic to have a 'position' in a way which is disreputable or problematic, a way which misses the point of the sceptical exercise? No. I am asking a question: whether there is any perspective whatsoever from which the alleged 'sceptical doubts' are enunciatable, any honest perspective (any perspective that *is* so much as a perspective) from which 'they' can be said ultimately to amount to anything, any perspective whatsoever (other than one which contents us only 'for a moment' (see 201 again, as explicated in Section 8.4)) from which 'they' can be said to have content. I suggest that there is not, and thus that Kripke's doubts truly are, we might say, doubts from nowhere. That is: that they do not get as far as actually *being* doubts at all.

Kripke's scepticism is 'transcendental' in its ambitions – it really 'would be' about whether anything can be expressed at all. Can we entertain Kripke's doubts about the present without holding the present fixed? If, as I have laid out, we cannot – if there isn't anything that's anything that we could succeed in meaning by this – then it ought to be immediately obvious to one that just there are no such doubts to be

entertained. His would-be doubts cannot even be framed. In the very act of seeking to frame them, they self-undercut; or rather, more accurately (for ‘they’ don’t even get as far as self-undercutting): they simply dissolve on one. There is no there there. There’s only, so far as we can see, a flickering, a hovering. *The very tendency* that Wittgenstein aimed to expose in 198–202. Kripkean constitutive scepticisms cannot be constituted. Or again: ‘meaning-scepticism’ cannot actually be meant. (These “cannot”s are in turn *transitional*. There’s of course no actual thing here that *cannot* be done. Thus, crucially, no genuine restriction on our freedom.)

8.8 Summing Up

If my line of thought in this chapter is convincing, it will still be open to someone to appear to raise a broad and bald ‘meaning-scepticism’, simply by saying only (e.g.) “Maybe our words just don’t mean anything”. But such a saying is clearly without attractions and without even *apparent* grounds, once it is understood that there is no argument whatsoever to such a would-be conclusion without (e.g.) committing oneself to untenable claims regarding the (constitutively unstable) temporal positions from which such claims might conceivably be made. It is simply stark and obvious that such a broad and groundless would-be constitutive scepticism is an attempt to float far and free of the (non-bounded) boat in which one is, after Neurath, after Wittgenstein, always sailing.

And this appears to leave Kripke in the position offered by Guetti, in another context but with much the same lesson:

[W]e suppose that we can imagine more than we can say, that our imaginations are fuller, more active, and even clearer than our verbal means of expressing them; that in the progress from imagining to saying, something, at least, is always lost; and that, of course, some imaginings cannot be expressed at all. ...[W]e suppose that anything we *can* say, we can of course imagine. // ...I propose that it is the reverse of these notions that is more likely to be true. ... “[V]erbal” capacities far exceed “imaginative” ones.

(Guetti 1993b, 147)

Kripke himself says many things in his short, strange, stimulating book. And appears he perhaps to put us in a position to say whatever we want, everything (and nothing). I have submitted that the appearance is delusive. This is the freedom only of the person who says, self-righteously, “I’m entitled to my opinion!” Though they are typically *not* (because most opinions need some grounds beyond mere enunciation itself, or to be earned in some way). It is, to be precise, licentious freedom in the sense of the ‘freedom’ we all have to speak nonsense.

The lesson runs deep and wide. We might turn our minds back to ‘the builders’ of 2: the injunction to ‘imagine’ ‘them’, or to ‘conceive’ of their language as complete, is far less clear than it at first appears. Liberatory philosophy is about observing and then reining in our desires to say more than we can actually succeed in imagining. This might appear the opposite of freedom: but we are not enabled to do anything by being left spinning in a void, outside language(-games); and, by parallel reasoning, we are not prohibited from doing anything by giving up the wish so to spin.¹⁸

One is free to ‘speculate’ on what time it is on the sun. Say what you wish; but, once you have thought things through more thoroughly, there is a good deal that you will not any longer say.

In Chapter 7, I accentuated the kind of agency that Wittgenstein maintains in (relation to) rules, the way in which he undermines the idea of particular uses being (genuinely as opposed to psychologically) *forced* on us (see *PI* 140 for elaboration specifically of this way of putting the matter¹⁹), the way in which his philosophy of freedom cuts deeper than is generally thought. Nevertheless, I was careful there to outline the difference of this from any Kripkensteinian position; in other words, I continued to (seek to) do justice to ‘the logical must’. In this chapter, I have underscored the latter point, by making clear how Wittgenstein on rules, properly understood, shows precisely why the Kripke argument is absurd, and also dangerous.

I have argued in this chapter that there is *no good reason* to believe that Kripke’s Wittgenstein’s ‘scepticism’ is statable. For its metaphysical side cancels out its epistemic side; but without its epistemic side, we cannot generate its metaphysical side.

I have thus made room for a (middle) way of taking rules and the associated human practices and phenomena at issue in 185–242 that is neither dominative/tyrannical (as Hacker’s 3rd-personal conception is) nor absurdly licentious (as Kripke’s 1st-personal conception is). And that thereby overcomes the individualism that they *share*; by way instead of bringing us *together* in our linguistic commons. (In the kind of shared, dialogical development of grammar set out in Chapter 7, which works by way of 2nd-person inter-relatedness.)

‘Kripke’s Wittgenstein’ trapped himself and many of his readers in the very labyrinth that Wittgenstein aimed to free us from. Kripkenstein ‘embraced’ precisely the paradox that, in 201, Wittgenstein speaks of as involving a “misunderstanding”. The only way in which Kripke manages to make it look as if he has succeeded in presenting us with a paradox at all is by staying within the very play of unapplied interpretations that Wittgenstein in 198 and 201 critiques. Exactly similarly, Kripke’s quusification strategy only looks as if it could possibly succeed so long as we forget that interpretations have to come to an end somewhere: otherwise, nothing at all has been said or done. Quusification without end is

mere grammatical wheel-spinnings, not the actual meaning of anything at all. It is a would-be endless string of interpretations. Kripke thinks he can use quusification-without-end as a device for evacuating meaning from language; but the only absence of meaning is in the would-be quusification-without-end *itself*.

In order to focus my question in this chapter, I examined the rule-following paradox, 198–201. My final conclusions, derived from that examination, are as follows: you cannot (sic) even get so far as doubting the past from the ‘standpoint’ of a radically doubted present. Doubts presupposing possible alternatives are not compatible with doubts entailing the unreality of any alternatives. And doubts are simply not relevant in cases where there are no grounds for them, where there is *only* presumption, or certainty – rather than hypotheses, or regular knowledge-claims. For whereof we must presume, thereof we cannot put into question.

Philosophical arguments which suppose otherwise, implicitly or explicitly, should be abandoned – along with Archimedean points, logically perfect languages, *noumena*, God’s-eye views, and the rest.

None of this can ever be *taken for granted*; if it is, then we are relapsing into new dogma (as explored and discussed in the chapter immediately following this one, Chapter 9). Note well: It’s an *instantiation* of the ‘rule-following considerations’ that there can be no guaranteed ‘self-interpreting’ liberatory remarks, no guarantee against our being (re-)interpreted as advancing a new theory, or (worse) against our actually falling back covertly into such theory. None of this can be taken for granted; that’s all the more reason to remain vigilant. And to realise what the stakes are: as I sought to lay out, *vis-à-vis* the ‘politics’ of 198–201.

Kripke(’s Wittgenstein) offers a thoroughly *faux* freedom. Not the genuine element of freedom, of agency, elucidated in relation to Wittgenstein’s ‘rule-following considerations’ in Chapter 7, but merely a fantasy of being able to mean anything (everything: we can allegedly re-interpret any word to mean whatever we would like; but actually nothing: for endless interpretation alone never amounts to the meaning of anything) by any word.²⁰

I turn now to another justly famed moment in the rule-following considerations: 217. Bedrock is what we ‘cannot’ prescind from presuming. But how do we avoid being dogmatically captured in turn by *that* idea and its ilk, stuck in a new ‘Wittgensteinian’ metaphysical must?²¹

Notes

1 Kripke *regrets* here the absence of a fantasised light. This is one initial way of seeing how the stance he sets out is scepticalistic. (A Sceptic is a disappointed Metaphysical Realist.)

2 I owe this formulation to the late James Guetti.

- 3 I leave aside here the further trouble caused for Kripke by his own admission that constitutive doubts will have further epistemic *consequences*. For detail on this, see “Is there a legitimate way to raise doubts about the immediate future ‘from the perspective of’ a *doubted* immediate past?” (Read 2001a).
- 4 For detail, see “Kripke’s conjuring trick” (Read & Sharrock 2002).
- 5 This is another for-instance of the great (and tacitly liberatory) Wittgensteinian theme that runs through virtually all of *PI* (as of the present work): that of teaching differences. In this case: between first- and third-person cases.
- 6 ...And in any case we should be careful not to turn this challenge of Wittgenstein’s into a generalised dogma itself, say a behaviourist one. For there are of course plenty of normal occasions when I may have a better idea than you of what rule I am following; for instance, it may not (yet) be obvious to you, while it is clear to me (Think, say, of the ‘In the manner of ‘parlour-game, of adverbs.)
- 7 *Contra* in particular Kripke’s presentation in *WOR&PL* (21).
- 8 See Chapter 7, for detail on how radically a rule merely exposed to view — unapplied, an interpretation without action — differs from a rule one is acting from.
- 9 As Buddhism holds: a licentious ‘freedom’ of simply being blown this way and that by one’s desires is no freedom worth having. Cf. also Gandhi’s *Hind Swaraj* (2009) for a like-minded line of thought.
- 10 Both (1) *and* (2), in Section 8.3, express (in different ways) this alienation from the commons of language.
- 11 Magnificently exposed to view and ruin in the wonderful “You are all individuals” scene from *The Life of Brian*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHbzSif78qQ>.
- 12 And in particular as in climate-change-denial, the original Post-truth (cf. Read 2014).
Part of my thinking in this chapter is that it is absurd to think of truth as a *constraint*, as *limiting* one, as in effect some libertarians do – and as Kripkenstein provides room for doing. (On this, see the recent special issue of the *Nordic Wittgenstein Review* on ‘Post-truth’ (Read & Uçan 2019). Blair’s procedure pre-figured the terrifying ‘post-truth’ approach writ large in contemporary administrations such as Trump’s and Johnson’s.)
- 13 It is not necessarily an epistemological question only if one takes a radically non-standard view (as arguably Wittgenstein –*though not Kripke (nor ‘Kripke’s sceptic’)* – does) of the status of first-person knowledge. As mentioned earlier (see n.5): Wittgenstein raises questions somewhat like this, but not as sceptical questions, no matter of what kind. Rather, as questions designed to enable us to attain freedom from prejudicial assumptions concerning first-person knowledge. As, for instance, in *PI* 246.
- 14 Kripke *does* in any case – and against his explicit intent – go on to *use* the ‘device’ again after the point in the text quoted above. For instance:

...surely, if I use language at all, I cannot coherently doubt that ‘plus’, as I use it now, denotes plus! Perhaps I cannot...doubt this about my present usage. But I can doubt that my past usage of ‘plus’ denoted plus. The previous remarks - about a frenzy and LSD - should make this quite clear.
(*WOR&PL*, 13)
- 15 As is now becoming clear, these don’t actually get so far as being doubts at all: Wittgenstein’s considerations against doubts that need but lack grounds, doubts that thus lack substance, in *OC*, apply here.

16 For elucidation of “presumes”, see Chapter 7.

It is by trading on certain peculiarities (as regards its first person usability) and ambiguities that Kripke is able to fool us into thinking that there is a live sceptical issue here *re* meaning. One ‘reasonably’ wants to say, against Kripke, that one must know meanings; but it is safer to speak of their *presumptive* status in one’s discourse. One *presumes* much, in order that any doubts *etc.*, that one has, have a surround, make sense.

17 This remark is of course consonant with the way in which resolute readers of Wittgenstein such as Conant, Diamond and Floyd have laid out how it is a misunderstanding of the resolute reading of Wittgenstein to think that we think that Wittgenstein sets out theories that he then revokes – that would be a self-contradictory procedure. Rather, he puts one in a position to see how one was tempted by the illusion of such theories (or pictures). How there never really was a ladder, only one’s temptations.

18 The 2nd person – the *reality* of other people (in roughly Iris Murdoch’s sense), *their* co-presence to and with us – is what we get returned to after progressing through the nonsense of the imaginary scenarios which are a central methodological means of the *PI*. Wittgenstein’s imaginary scenarios enable a transitional journey through nonsense, back to rough ground of language-games.

19 And yet, supportively of the line of thought I seek to develop here, 140 closes by making clear how Wittgenstein is not party to Relativism; in this way, it anticipates 198, and sets up beautifully the argument of this chapter.

20 For detailed examination specifically of this point, see “What “There can be no such thing as meaning anything by any word” could possibly mean” (Read 2000c). Cf. also Wittgenstein’s marvellously deflationary response to a would-be licentious ‘total freedom’ of linguistic manoeuvre, in the ‘below the line’ remark at *PI* 37: “Can I say “bububu” and mean “If it doesn’t rain then I shall go for a walk?” – It is only in a language that I can mean something by something. This shows clearly that the grammar of “to mean” is not like that of the expression “to imagine” and the like.”

21 Thanks to my former teacher Saul Kripke, for wonderful conversations on the topic of this chapter. Needless to say, he would not agree with most of my conclusions... Thanks also to Susan Edwards-McKie and Anat Matar for stimulating and helpful conversations and comments on a recent draft. Thanks also to Anne J. Jacobson. Thanks finally to an audience for this material at the ‘Engaging Kripke with Wittgenstein’ 2-day workshop at UEA, 6–7 July 2019.

9 Overcoming Over-Reliance on ‘The Bedrock’?

On *PI* 217

[B]y way of (1) drawing attention to something to which “everyone would agree”, and (2) framing the rest as something “there is an inclination to say”, 201 ends by not saying (asserting or denying) anything; it ends, one might venture to say, in silence.

–Martin Stone (2000, 103)

9.1 Introductory

Chapter 6 began re-thinking ‘rules’ by re-thinking know-how. Chapter 7 counterposed Kripke’s with Baker-and-Hacker’s takes on rules in order to see how one might see their two accounts as rule-sceptical and rule-dogmatic extremes between or *beyond* which one might find a mean allowing a proper weight to be given to human agency and autonomy (cf. especially the wording of *PI* 186) in a context of constant inter-human dialogue, negotiation, and community. Chapter 8 deepened the critique of Kripke’s Wittgenstein, focussing upon *PI* 201 (and *PI* 198) to show how ‘he’ dangerously turned Wittgenstein diametrically on his head, delivering an absurd subjectivistic tissue of ‘anything goes’ (far from the alleged communitarianness which Kripke claimed). This final chapter of the ‘sequence’ in this book focussing directly on the ‘rule-following considerations’ of *PI* focuses *its* considerations through another justly famous passage therein: 217. By doing so, I hope to move more decisively beyond the kinds of ‘positions’ that have dominated the debate and make clearer the way in which one understands Wittgenstein on rules when one understands the liberatory intent that I have ascribed to and found in his philosophy and its key vehicle of returning us to a 2nd-personal stance, one which, unlike the 1st *and* 3rd persons alike, sees agential inter-relationship as entirely fundamental and irrevocable.

In thinking this passage (217), I also start to bring some of the matters with which this book has been concerned towards conclusion. Thus, through a thinking of “bedrock”, I return to (seek to settle) the issue raised in the Introduction to this book (and preliminarily examined in Chapter 4) concerning whether Wittgenstein has or is against technical

terms. I discuss how to take his (too?) famous concept of “forms of life” (in which ‘the rule-following considerations’ culminate, at *PI* 240–242), and I briefly reconsider also, in the light of this, “everyday use” (cf. Chapter 4) and the slogan “Meaning is use” (cf. Chapter 3).

I aim to help the reader to overcome (over-)reliance on ‘technical terms’, especially those that can appear to function, as “bedrock” does, as ‘magic’ words: that is, not only, as one quite generally fantasises technical terms as doing, holding their own meaning fixed throughout uses, but furthermore purportedly making something philosophically possible which is actually not.

9.2 Throwing Away “The Bedrock”?

Are technical terms eliminable from philosophical (and analogous ‘social scientific’¹) enquiries? This question hangs over the progress of the current chapter; I will seek repeatedly to tackle it, and to lay to rest persistent desires or assumptions which would have it that the answer to the question must be “No”. I suggest that there is *a sense* in which such would-be terms are and ought to be eliminated; or rather, better, to use terms drawn from Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* – because the term “eliminate”, with its Carnapian echoes, risks carrying the wrong connotations² – overcome, or, in Wittgenstein’s sense, ‘*thrown away*’. (The ‘elimination’, the overcoming of such terms is done when needed, and *by us*. By which, I mean: We, those in the middle of a philosophical dialogue/seeking to make progress in such a conversation, give these terms up, when we are willing and able to. The terms are not eliminated by ‘word-policemen’, once and for all; they are eliminated *in context*. They are overcome by those actually using them or tempted to, retail.)

I am going, in sum, to try to lay to rest the inclination to rely on technical terms.

This may seem surprising. Technical terms, terms being used in specified ways, in particular constricted or extended ways: Can this really be objected to? Is the use of technical terms not absolutely essential to the pursuit of rational enquiry? (Indeed we have been taught so, taught that philosophy (and ‘social science’) will proceed well if it proceeds rather like science, in this regard.)

...And what about Wittgenstein’s own work: Can his remarks not be turned against what I am claiming is his own practice? Surely, the various famous ‘technical terms’ which Wittgenstein *himself* employed give the lie to the thought that he might favour their complete elimination from philosophy. And so, again: *Are technical terms truly ‘eliminatable’, even in principle, from philosophical and allied enquiries?*³ Does Wittgenstein’s *own practice* not show that they are not?

This is the main question of this chapter. I pursue it by way of a focus upon a well-known remark, *PI* 217, in which Wittgenstein may appear

to introduce an important technical term, one which has been seized on by many of his admirers (and by some of his critics): "bedrock". *PI* 217, in the heart of 'the rule-following considerations', features an evocative use of this term not unrelated to the famous uses afterwards of the concept of 'form of life':

"How am I to obey a rule?"—if this is not a question about causes, then it is about the justification for our following the rule in the way I do.

If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and our spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: "This is simply what I do."

(Remember that we sometimes demand definitions not for the sake of their content, but of their form. Our requirement is an architectural one; the definition a kind of ornamental coping that supports nothing.)

That idea of supporting nothing is important, and directly relevant to what I have already suggested in this chapter. "Bedrock", and Wittgenstein's 'account' of it, is not a new foundation (e.g. for our 'rule-following' practices). When I learnt a little on the notion of "bedrock" in Chapter 7, I sought to take care not to speak as if it was (as Baker-and-Hacker, I in effect suggested, *do*). When, in *PI* 221, Wittgenstein remarks that his "symbolical expression was really a mythological description of the use of a rule", we should risk a connection with 217. We might say: better almost to think of "bedrock" as a *myth* even, than to think of it as a new form of foundation.

But nevertheless, there is a kind of psychological reassurance that *PI* 217 can give us, that we should a little be suspicious of. We Wittgensteinians may feel 100% satisfied, thinking thus about explanations coming to an end. And this reassuring satisfaction may, unless we are very vigilant, lead us in practice to treat a term like "bedrock" as a term that solves a (/our) philosophical problem (thus: a 'magic' term; a meta-metaphysical gift). And (thus) we come close to literalising the metaphor of 'bedrock', and treating it as a (new 'kind' of) foundation – the foundation for *our* 'philosophical theory'? – after all.

This, it seems to me, is what happens over and over again to commentators on and 'followers' of Wittgenstein. Under pressure from mainstream Anglo-American philosophy ("What is Wittgenstein saying? Where's the *argument*? What's your *position*?" Etc.), trying to explain and justify what one is doing to oneself and others, one seeks recourse to a new system, one seeks refuge in Wittgenstein's 'magic words'. Much as Heidegger has his many magic words, and Derrida has his ("hymen", "dissemination", "différance", etc.), so Wittgenstein apparently has his – and they are quickly gone to town on. The task of this chapter is explicitly to resist that danger.

9.3 A New Jargon?

As noted in Chapter 2, Wittgenstein's greatest fear⁴ was that he would foster only a new jargon. I think that his fear has been to a substantial degree realised. The sometimes problematically profligate use of the term "language-game", which is (as I have shown in some previous chapters) employed often as if it were the foundation of a new theory; the vast efforts expended on 'figuring out' what exactly (for example) "objects" (in *TLP*) and "forms of life" (in *PI*) allegedly 'are'; even the basic practice of what Crispin Wright has sometimes called the 'official' Wittgensteinians (Peter Hacker et al.) *vis-à-vis* 'rule-following' etc. etc. (a practice that I have sought to expose to view, in the chapters preceding this one); all these have, I think, involved the technicalisation and jargonisation of what Wittgenstein himself always insisted was and must above all be an *activity* (*TLP* 4.112), a set of methods without any controversial theses, without an assertoric content.

But our problem remains: did the secondary literature have any alternative? In his use of terms such as "bedrock", or "ordinary", or "form of life", *does Wittgenstein himself* (and do I) guard successfully against the not unreasonable fear that all that is happening is the fomenting of a jargon? In short, does Wittgenstein practice what he preaches? Or do his terms slip continually into being a pseudo-scientific jargon? And (how) *could* they (conceivably) do otherwise?

I think it is bound usually to be unhelpful, and even insulting, to wheel out *PI* 217 and expect that a rational co-conversationalist *must* be impressed by it,⁵ must see the logic of the alternative 'programme' (in this case, to that of scientific explanation of rule-following behaviour) that Wittgenstein allegedly lays out for us. We Wittgensteinians should not expect our opponents to be magically reassured by the mantras or architectonics which *PI* 217 *etc.* offer us. One reason why is that, as Wittgenstein himself sometimes says, what we are talking about here are our *inclinations*: and (as later Baker stressed) these may differ; they are even (in *some* cases) highly-individual. And if and as and when we do say "*This* is simply what *I* do", we must be aware that the whole point is that *there is no spelling out of the "This"*. Any further spelling out would indicate that we had in fact not yet reached bedrock. The "*This*" here is not susceptible in the usual way to being clarified by way of the question "As opposed to what?". For what it is opposed to is nothing one can take seriously, or (better) nothing that one can say. Or, more plainly: nothing. What it is opposed to is only the kind of nonsense that Kripke's Wittgenstein fantasises as an alternative – as I showed in Chapter 8. One might put it this way: in such a remark, there is *no genuine bipolarity*. As I am explaining in this chapter, this should in the end come as no surprise. The philosophical challenge for Wittgensteinians in our own philosophical practice is: *to avoid metaphysics* – and being adjudged

as metaphysics would be the fate of words used without antithesis but nevertheless used as if to *say* something – *without* having to be committed in the usual way to bipolarity as a dogma (for that is then just more metaphysics).⁶

Further; our 'claims' and definitions support nothing, claim nothing: they are only a way of trying to get us to think...what we already think. If we have not had these thoughts already, there is no strictly rational process of being got to think them (*TLP*, preface, 27). Recall (these key lines from) *PI* 217:

If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and our spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: "This is simply what I do."

I'm urging, don't insist on asking *this*, as opposed to what? We 'cannot' say, 'cannot' describe it further. For what it would be opposed to is non-sense. (Similarly: we cannot actually describe our form of life in contradiction to some other possible form: because the point of the term "form of life" is to point to something too basic for it to make sense to describe such an alternative. Which is *why* so many of Wittgenstein's 'imaginary scenarios' do not in the end add up to anything that adds up to anything.⁷)

But just *because* we cannot say, we cannot expect someone not already in sympathy with the Wittgensteinian take on philosophical matters to be instantaneously sufficiently impressed by any of this. They must be *persuaded*, rather, that there just is not anything of the kind that they imagine they *do* want to do/say that they do in fact want to do/say. In this case; persuaded that they can be satisfied with not asking more questions, when 'at bedrock'.⁸

What *we* do is: use words without real antithesis, transitionally, to liberate.

9.4 Cavell on Kripke's Wittgenstein on 217

One of the very few commentators who is I think in touch with the kind of points I am making above is, unsurprisingly, Stanley Cavell. I am thinking of his masterly teaching in "The argument of the ordinary: Scenes of instruction in Wittgenstein and in Kripke" (Cavell 1990).

To get us to see what has gone wrong in Kripke's apprehension of Wittgenstein, Cavell undertakes the following exercise:

I shall recast Kripke's reading in a form that allows it to be, so to speak, placed over a familiar passage from the Investigations, focusing on Kripke's phrases "inclined to do" and "inclined to apply"...

The familiar passage from the *Investigations* is at 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."

I recast Kripke's reading as follows:

If I have exhausted ... [etc.] Then I am licensed to say: "This is simply what I am inclined to do."

(Cavell 1990, 70)

Cavell's recasting – his deftly distinguishing here between on the one hand being inclined to characterise one's practices, for philosophical purposes, in a certain way, and on the other hand being 'licensed' to characterise one's inclinations (and only those) – is most well-taken, and fits my critique of Kripke in the previous two chapters. The crucial point about it in the present context is this: that Kripke, for all his 'scepticism', actually ends up *leaning on* an idea like bedrock (in a particularly dubious way). He thinks bedrock can be equated to something like *my inclinations*; and that these are all one can hope for. As I argued in Chapter 8: his Wittgenstein thus endorses a hyperbolic (and politically and culturally harmful, in fact would-be catastrophic) *subjectivism*.

Thus, just as I suggested in Chapter 8, it is very misleading to think (as the mainstream does) of Kripke as promoting 'the community' as opposed to individuals. Here is Cavell:

Suppose that driving you to work I say, "I'm inclined to run this red light"; if you reply, "My inclination agrees with yours," have you licensed me to run the light? You may be encouraging license. If when the light turns green I say, "I have faith in going now," and you reply, "My faith agrees with yours," have you made sense of me, and I of you? ... If the situation is as Kripke says Wittgenstein says, why ever say more than "I agree with you. That is my inclination too"? Paraphrasing a wonder of Wittgenstein's: What gives us so much as the idea that human beings, things, can be right? (Cf *PI* 283) If the matching of inclinations is all Wittgenstein's teaching leaves us with, then I feel like asking: What kind of solution is that to a skeptical problem? Kripke calls it a skeptical solution. Then I can express my perplexity this way: This solution seems to me more skeptical than the problem it is designed to solve.

(Cavell 1990, 75)

Exactly so. Kripkenstein's conception is not one of community. It is one of fantasised perpetual Crusoes. Of individualised *license*. Or again: of

the individuals fantasised by our (pseudo-)individualist society all alike in their separateness and mutual unreachability. All happy in their own boxes, with their beetles, and with their 'shadows' of each other on the walls of their computer-screens.⁹ They form a community, if they do, only in some brute 'additive' way, or worse, in a mode of seeking to impose themselves collectively, brutally on others, like a mob.¹⁰ As against this, Cavell is an expert mid-wifer of a genuine intellectual autonomy.

Kripke's question is something like, "Suppose we never agreed. Suppose bedrock conceived of as more than my own inclinations never arrived." These, as I sought to show in Chapter 8, are shadows – fantastical delusions – of suppositions, nothing more. It can't reassure, in the context of them, to 'find' a new bedrock in a happenstance of coincidence of inclinations.

Kripke gives a 1st-person-centric reading of 217. Cavell recovers for us Wittgenstein's 2nd-personal intention. Which leaves us forever in dialogue, rather than simply reeling off how it is with(-in) oneself. Kripke gives us a pseudo-communitarian position that is actually an extreme individualism (as I showed in Chapter 8). This individualism functions as an escape-hatch from the challenging *involvement* with others that comes always with 2nd-person inter-relations.

Thus we can frame Wittgenstein and his best interpreters as cluing us into a way that is neither individualistic nor communitarian. Kripke's 'communitarianism' functions as a pseudo-Humean replacement for something objective. This is not a genuine community, not a potential 1st-person plural in all its complexity and aspirationality¹¹; it is 'community' is framed as a thing (or as merely a sort of bloated self... solipsism writ large into a mob). The 2nd person pierces the tired dialectic of 1st vs 3rd person, subjective vs objective. (And this of course is a way of understanding why Cavell emphasises Wittgenstein's scenes of 'instruction'. Teaching is quintessentially a 2nd-person phenomenon.)

The challenge is, to understand all this, without seeking for a *substantive* reassurance from what Wittgenstein *does* say at *PI* 217. Not, in other words, to take *PI* 217 secretly to embody a thesis, a claim. To find it persuasive, without one's being persuaded *of anything*. Any substantive thesis or opinion. (In this way, what I am saying here resembles what I suggested in earlier chapters in terms of a non-standard but liberatory way of taking *PI* 127: one is reminded, in philosophy, one 'recollects'; but there is no fact, no 'it' that one is reminded *of*. Rather, roughly: one is re-minded. One re-collects (oneself).

Often what this amounts to is: one reconnects. To oneself and others, in context, environed in the natural and human world. (And these too are of course further such 'reminders', not proofs, not would-be cast-iron conversation-stoppers.) One is persuaded, we might say, to return to life.

9.5 Two Conceptions of Persuasion

In philosophy, persuasion is crucial – because there is no such thing as *proving* the opposite of nonsense. It means nothing to do so. Why? Because to assert the opposite of nonsense is to utter nonsense. Negating “Then, the cat sat on the square circular mat” (*viz.* producing “It is not the case that the cat then sat on the square circular mat”) produces something bizarre. It does not, I would submit, produce something sensical. For, while the latter formulation might be claimed to be ‘technically’ true, that’s like saying – as Russell, in his analysis of definite descriptions, would have us say – that “It is not true that the present king of France is bald.” You are free to say this. The remark is perfectly defensible if one insists on its defence; but it shows, it seems to me, a weakness in philosophy that and when it inclines (i.e. if we incline) to defend such a remark *rather than* simply to acquiesce in the bizarreness reaction that it naturally provokes.¹² It seems more felicitous to treat “The present king of France is bald”, if uttered today, as a piece of nonsense. (Though I won’t insist that one *must* say that, either. Doing so would be dogmatic, re-confining.)

We ought to consent without regret to the idea that it is perfectly hopeless to dream of proving the opposite of nonsense. But our conception of persuasion needs, as I emphasised in Chapter 2 especially, to remain much more robust than mere manipulation to agreement in inclinations. Kripke’s Wittgenstein would clearly not give us what Wittgenstein enunciates at *PI* 241–242: agreement in judgements. Agreement in *der Sprache*. In ‘form of life’. Kripke’s Wittgenstein can muster only at best agreement in opinions, opinions of more-or-less windowless monads.

What *we* do, then, is to try to bring words back to their everyday uses by means of trying to get others (and ourselves) to think that they (we) do not need anything other than everyday uses (that is, all the uses that there actually, successfully, are¹³) in order to do all that one really can do with language. Only: there is no *limitation* in this. And, in the (perpetual?; certainly pulsingly repeated) transition to it, it is perfectly *legitimate* to use terms in new ways, or (to use) new terms. Compare later-Baker, on...

...the freedom to choose different forms of representation of our language (of our form of representation)... our method openly rejects one of the procedural norms of modern science: it does **not** demand uniformity in describing the grammar of our language.

(*BWM*, 194)¹⁴

One can use words in novel ways – one can introduce new terms, conjure up dramatic and deeply-peculiar imaginary scenarios, etc. – and yet NOT be putting forth technical terms. Not be putting forth new

non-family-resemblance-defined terms, nor similarly 'well-defined' re-definitions of existing terms. And even if one *does* (seemingly) do this, one may be (had better be) doing it for *specific* context-relative purposes: as Wittgenstein sometimes does, as I have noted previously, with terms such as "thinking", "reading", "use". And it would of course make no sense for those purposes to be 'private'; they need to be inter-subjective. Baker again: "the concepts used for the purpose of describing the grammar of our language are themselves objects of philosophical investigation, and their content is the subject of negotiation" (BWM, 195).

To think that the idea of its being possible or necessary to do anything other than what such words as these are after is: only the fantasy of a thought, of an idea. Again (See Chapter 4): 'the everyday' is *not* (best) counterposed to science. It is counterposed only to metaphysics – to nothing. In being returned to ourselves and our words, everything actual is left as it is; *and* we are potentially transformed, through as it were encountering or knowing this everything for the first time. Because for the first time we are reminded of it, are mindful of it, without distortion.

What's more, as Backstrom has written,

looking at the everyday use of words involves uncovering and challenging the repressive function that is or may be part of that very use. Insofar as this is so, however, descriptions of that use will not only challenge metaphysical claims about it...but will also challenge *us*, the everyday users of those concepts.

(unpublished, 8)

As implied already by Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Grammar*:

A mathematician is bound to be horrified by my mathematical comments, since he has always been trained to avoid indulging in thoughts and doubts of the kind I develop. He has learned to regard them as something contemptible and, to use an analogy from psycho-analysis (this paragraph is reminiscent of Freud) he has acquired a revulsion from them as infantile. That is to say, I trot out all the problems that a child learning arithmetic, etc., finds difficult, the problems that education represses without solving. I say to those repressed doubts: you are quite correct, go on asking, demand clarification!

(Wittgenstein 1978, 381–382)

This helps to make clear what was already implicit in Chapter 4: that our invocation of "the everyday" in Wittgenstein's sense is far from invoking or amounting to quietism or a problematic conservatism, because *reflection and criticism and so on are part of the everyday*.

Baker in this connection uses the following bold words:

Freedom to choose how to speak about how we speak belongs to the essence of this conception of clarifying our concepts. We have constant need of freedom from being tied down to too limited a morphology of the uses of language...; freedom to look at things differently; freedom to reject (most?) descriptions of the grammar of our language (e.g. *PI* 50, 244, 371, 421); freedom to distinguish concepts...; freedom to depart from entrenched and largely unconscious paradigms of how to describe the use of our words.

(*BWM*, 196)¹⁵

This is how we can persuade, in philosophy. What I hope to be showing in this chapter, is how deeply this differs from what I, following Cavell, call “license”.

One *can* then usefully use a word (e.g. “bedrock”) in an extended sense when using ‘our method’. The point is that so doing is not using a technical term, but ‘simply’ enacting a particular, person/situation-relative liberatory manoeuvre. (The contrast implied here is, of course, itself almost inevitably misleading... It makes it sound as if we are (say) differentiating ordinary water from heavy water, whereas a better metaphor is perhaps differentiating *that* activity from alchemy. (That metaphor in turn is still no doubt potentially misleading, for basically the same reason...)) For example, one might usefully use a term, such as “ordinary” or “everyday”, in a bloated way, precisely to facilitate the understanding in one’s interlocutor that there is no contrast-class intended here. Understanding what a Wittgensteinian is doing with a term like “everyday” is letting go of the wish to turn philosophy into a quasi-science with technical terms, terms with more or less fixed meanings differing from ordinary usage, *and* is overcoming in particular the wish for “everyday” to be such a term (a would-be ‘meta’-technical term, in philosophy).

“Bedrock” is a way of expressing our *need not* always to keep digging. Good. And *then*: it is no doubt time nevertheless to overcome (the concept of) “the bedrock”. Such is a task of vigilance, of ploughing over our language, of resisting the tendency for our relation to it to *congeal*, a task that we are called to, over and over again. The search for liberating words is probably endless.¹⁶ For it needs to be continually remade, re-undertaken, as cultural conditions change, as personal life-trajectories – and philosophical educations, and trends – proceed and change, as one lowers one’s guard inadvisedly or falls into intellectual habits, perhaps culturally-hegemonic ones, unthinkingly; and so on.¹⁷ And in any case, even very well-chosen words will inevitably 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’ and

later-Bakerians need to do. 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, even if only for oneself, one is highly probably again already in delusion.

The process of philosophy as Wittgenstein (but in reality few of his 'followers' have) understood it is in crucial part a probably endless liberatory task of resolutely overcoming the nonsense that is implicit in taking Wittgenstein to have decisively overcome nonsense, through the terms and the 'ideas' of his writing. But then, of course, in the (thankfully unlikely) event that I have thoroughly and decisively convinced you of this, such that you even think that things *must* be seen this way, I (would) have failed...

9.6 'Case-Study': Overcoming "Meaning Is Use"

I hope in this chapter to have guarded one against the temptations of over-reliance on (terms such as) 'the bedrock'. I close this chapter by seeking to carry the lesson over to another case. What follows is an experiment in resolute-liberatory re-reading of Wittgenstein on "everyday" and on the meaning-use nexus (and on forms of life, and on bedrock). I hope thereby to draw together threads from earlier chapters (1 and 3 especially, concerning use) into the discussion of would-be technical terms/definitions in general (and of "bedrock" in particular) undertaken above, and culminating in the lessons I have drawn from 217.

In what now follows,¹⁸ I have taken a famous portion of the crucial main section of Diamond's founding 'New Wittgensteinian' paper, "Throwing away the ladder: How to read the *Tractatus*" (1988),¹⁹ and re-written them. The re-writing has gone as follows: *I have replaced elements of the Tractatus discussions with roughly symmetrical elements of a key Investigations discussion* (namely, the famous discussion of meaning and use, which was the focus of discussion in Chapter 3). What I seek to illustrate here is how Wittgenstein wants to free us up from compulsively thinking that the meaning of a word is the object for which the word stands, etc. (See the closing pages of Chapter 1). But *not* for the sake of compulsively thinking a replacement thesis, compulsively attaching to a rival picture: e.g. "Meaning is use."²⁰

Here then begins my rewriting of Diamond, 'transferring' what she wrote about the *Tractatus* (1991, 197–198) to work for the *Investigations*²¹

Wittgenstein holds (see *PI* 120–128) that there can 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 to others who one wants to disagree with; one wants it to be something that *says* something. But: his remarks do not say anything. He makes no claims, he has no opinions.²² So, when he says that we 'cannot' assert philosophical theses, that we 'cannot' have philosophical opinions, when he thereby says that in a way we cannot *assert that* "Meaning is use", he does *not* mean "Meaning *is* use, all right, only *that it is* has somehow to get expressed another way." That the sentence – considered as something that stands there permanently for us in philosophy, as something that would state something – 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 (ineffabilistic Realism). But Wittgenstein's aim is to allow us to see that there is no 'it'.

It's not that one cannot assign a meaning to "Meaning is use". You are perfectly free to.

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" (*PI* 266); 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.²³

Take Wittgenstein's wonderful 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!.

(*PI* 120)

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.²⁴ 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-use in opposition to an intelligible opposite. (It is not that this opposite has a sense that is nonsensical (cf. 500).)

120 does not convey to us the philosophical but unsayable fact that there is only everyday language and not genuinely supra-everyday language. In so far as we grasp what Wittgenstein aims at, we see that the sentence-forms he uses comes apart from his philosophical aim. If he succeeds, we shall not imagine everyday language or forms of life or bedrock 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", or "If I have exhausted...justifications I have reached bedrock" as informing us of anything, or even as instructing us to do one thing rather than an intelligible other thing. We throw away the sentences about 'forms of life' and 'bedrock', and even about 'use' and '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.*²⁵

In this way, we might think of Wittgenstein's later work too as ending in silence.²⁶ Not a forced, imposed silence, not a silencing. Nor even a pregnant silence. Rather, the silence of (a temporary) peace (Cf. 133, as interpreted in Chapter 5). The possibility of stopping, rather than endlessly 'having' to dig (analyse, reduce).

Wittgenstein differs crucially from logical positivists and others in that, while he is very interested in catching sentences in a failure to exhibit bipolarity, such a failure is not necessarily an exhibition of their... *failure*. For it depends on what is being done with those sentences (if such they are). Various kinds of literary employments of terms, for instance, seem not to yield anything worth calling genuine bipolarity.²⁷ But that is not necessarily a problem; for, as one might put it, literary authors need not be in the bipolar game. Somewhat similarly, in relation to philosophy itself. *When one does philosophy successfully*, then one tends in a particular way not to exhibit bipolarity in one's sentences. The difference from metaphysics is: that one does so self-awarely, and without 'hovering': without, that is, veering unstably between wanting to regard one's remarks as having a substance that captures the very essence of things, and being clear that one is 'only' working to free oneself and others from such felt 'capture' by linguistic forms.

Wittgenstein articulated in *Culture and Value* the thought that philosophy really ought to be written as a kind of poetry. One might then helpfully 'paraphrase' Zettel 160, as follows: "Do not forget that philosophy, even though it is composed in the language of information, is not used in the language-game of information." The forms we use, in philosophy, come apart from what we took to be our aims in using them (no-one *starts* philosophy thinking it is thoroughly transitional in character, and that its sentences lack informative capacity, bipolarity). But not because we have chosen the wrong forms. Rather, because, that is of the nature of philosophy. That it involves such transitional thinking.

Diamond's paper, that launched the project of resolutely reading Wittgenstein, was called "Throwing away the ladder". She endeavoured 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 much 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 what I have sought to show in this chapter is how it would be a mistake to think that anything can be hung or built on it.²⁸ 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.²⁹ No. *PI* 217 is itself no more than a transitional move in a dialectic, an effort to persuade a reader to give up *absurd* over-reaching ambitions – e.g. for a foundation to practice. Justifications come to an end somewhere (cf. *PI* 211), 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 even that they be persuaded. Part of the responsibility of the philosopher, including (and in fact above all) the 'liberatory' 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 ethical philosophical practice, mutually- and self-liberatory dialogue, is not like most forms of therapy (or psychoanalysis). For it is non-hierarchical, presumptively a conversation between equals.³⁰ Psychotherapy is a good model for philosophy in being profoundly 2nd-personal, but a bad model for philosophy in being profoundly inegalitarian.³¹ Philosophy is corrupted the moment one is convinced of one's own rectitude, and (therefore) single-mindedly tries to 'cure' the other. Such cures can, rather, go both ways; a 'Wittgensteinian' who has ceased to seek to be free, and who is certain of her prescriptions for others, is no Wittgensteinian.³²

My consideration of the so-called 'rule-following considerations' is now 'complete'. It began with my (sympathetic) critique of 'tacit knowledge' etc. in Chapter 6: I drew attention to the dangers of concepts such as 'implicit', because of their complicity with the concept of 'explicit'. To treat know-how as if it is knowledge-that awaiting explicitation is deformative.

One might now state the culmination as we have seen it in Chapter 9 of my consideration of the rule-following considerations roughly as follows: *you can't explicitise bedrock*. Or rather, of course you *can*; but

you will understand the undesirability of doing so, or the limits of doing so, or at least the grave downsides of doing so, if you understand what I have been laying out here. If one explicates 'bedrock', then it is no longer bedrock. (In the terms of Chapter 7: bedrock is presumed, or else it is not bedrock. You need to act *from* it; you need to leave 'it' behind, and not attach to or fixate on it.) Whereas if one leaves it as it is, then it lacks any decisive explanatory or persuasive power (Much as rules cannot prevent the possibility of deviant pupils.). Either way, what one has in 217 is not what most Wittgensteinians have taken it for. The remark itself is transitional, reorientative: it needs to be taken as liberatory (from a desire to look for turtles beneath turtles). And *nothing more*.

The 'rule-following considerations' are directly succeeded, famously, by what I term the anti-'private-language' considerations. I now investigate the latter and seek to make manifest their ethical and (I shall suggest, *simultaneously*) liberatory dimensions. *If* this objective gets accomplished, then we will have found a manner of re-reading the main 'pivot-points' of *PI* (or at least of its first (most carefully prepared (by Wittgenstein) and by far more famous) half, 1–315. We shall have then a kind of schema for the exegesis of the whole work.) I will, that is, in that case, have accomplished my main goal in this book, as I stated it at the beginning.³³

Notes

- 1 I am alluding here to the Winchian perspective on 'social science', laid out in my co-authored book, *There Is No Such Thing as a Social Science* (Hutchinson et al. 2008).
- 2 This term itself should be eliminated – or, rather, better, overcome... I used it at all only because "overcome-able" might perhaps seem to some readers a neologism too far: *a fortiori*, "throw-away-able"...
- 3 Here are *some examples from PI to have in mind during the course of our investigation*: language-game, form of life, family resemblance, depth grammar, grammar, grammatical remark, ordinary, everyday, perspicuous presentation, hinge, nonsense, agreement, internal relation, 'private language'. Most of these terms, of course, have already been re-examined 'retail', in some detail, in earlier chapters, and a few more will follow in the remainder of this book.
- 4 Cf. especially the very end of *LFM*: its mournful final remark, "The seed I'm most likely to sow is a certain jargon".
- 5 As per Chapter 4, I would remark that the occurrence of "must" in a philosopher's own discourse is a *prima facie* warning-sign.
- 6 One might compare "This is simply what I do" to "This is how things are". Their potential advantages are much the same; and *the need to overcome them* is much the same, too. (In the final section of this chapter, I do in fact essay just such a 'comparison' of the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*: with a view to showing what goes wrong in any dogmatic insistence upon bipolarity if it is conceived of as a pre-existing criterion for all language-use including philosophical language-use.)
- 7 This is the burden of a number of the essays in *The New Wittgenstein* (Crary & Read 2000).

- 8 My use of the term “persuasion” here echoes Winch’s essay “Persuasion” (1992). Winch draws it, of course, from Wittgenstein himself.
- 9 The formulation of this sentence has been influenced by conversation with Aseem Shrivistava.
- 10 A conception addressed and undermined in Chapter 10.
- 11 I have in mind here the beautiful way that Andrew Norris brings out the sense in which Wittgenstein’s community typically doesn’t exist yet (Norris 2017, 3).
- 12 In saying this, I may also be committed to suggesting that Cora Diamond ‘chickens out’ somewhat at this important moment in her presentation in “Throwing away the ladder” (1988, 1991). For, if I am not mistaken, Diamond, or at least Diamond’s Wittgenstein, does not object to Russell’s analysis of definite descriptions, but rather, draws a moral from it. But the natural and best thing to say, I suggest, is *not* that “The present kind of France is bald” is false. It is that this sentence is bizarre and indeterminate, or at best that its truth-value ought to be treated as unspecified. I’m tempted to add: It might even be said to be border-line case of being a *sentence*, at all. If you asked a well-informed ordinary person whether it was true or false that “The present king of France is bald”, I submit that most would be somewhat confused, and only a small proportion would reply confidently that it was false. It’s philosophical theorising, revisionism, to insist that most respondents would be in error, and I am surprised that Diamond appears to go along with it, or at least that she thinks that Wittgenstein would have had no trouble going along with it. I hope that Wittgenstein would not have gone along with it, for the very reasons revealed as quintessentially Wittgensteinian, resolute, in the closing pages of that seminal paper of Diamond’s. One might better then say, very much following the *spirit* of Diamond’s work (see especially (Diamond 1991, 191): it is not actually clear what sentence “The present king of France is bald” IS, if any. Provisionally: it is latent nonsense.
- 13 Recall here what I sought to lay out in Chapter 4.
- 14 Cf. the discussion of this point in Chapter 4.
- 15 I worry however that Baker might be going slightly *too* far here. This worry is deepened when he goes on to remark that “‘grammar’ is invented and voluntary... grammar is at it were the realm of freedom; only in stipulating meanings do we have complete freedom”. This claim of ‘complete’ freedom seems to me potentially rather misleading. The misleading impression is however reduced, provided we take seriously another moment in the same paragraph: “[grammar] is freely negotiated with one’s interlocutor or audience, and it owes its authority to free acknowledgement.” As I repeatedly emphasise in this book, we must mean the point about negotiation and about *inter-personal* acknowledgement. Otherwise, we endorse subjectivism and license, and play into the ‘private language’ fantasy. That would be losing touch with much that is utterly focal in (our conception of) language. For example, that it has an ‘internal relation’ to the concept of *communication*.
- 16 Cf. *BWM* (190 & 203, n.31). And Chapter 5.
- 17 As Oskari Kuusela puts the matter:

Because language is a historically changing phenomenon, philosophy is a historically situated undertaking. Philosophical problems arise, and re-arise, in particular historical settings: “The obsessions of philosophers vary in different ages because terminologies vary. When a terminology goes some worries may pass only to arise in a similar terminology.

[Wittgenstein, *AWL* p. 98]

Accordingly, philosophical problems have to be dealt with in historically determined contexts. Moreover, given the embeddedness of language in forms of life, to be engaged in a struggle with language may mean struggling with a whole culture and era—including oneself as a product of a culture and its traditions. In this sense also the problems with which Wittgenstein is dealing are rooted in more general tendencies of thinking embedded in the Western culture and philosophical tradition” (Kuusela 2008b, 271).

- 18 This section builds on (and reworks) work already undertaken in *A Wittgensteinian Way with Paradoxes* (2012b, 233–234). (And it builds, obviously, on the line of thought I laid out in early sections of Chapter 4.)
- 19 Any 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.
- 20 Cf. *PI* 43; cf. Chapter 3.
- 21 The Diamond passage is in discussion of Wittgenstein’s seeming-claim that “There are objects”.
- 22 See the remark cited in Ray Monk, during Wittgenstein’s debates with Turing: “Obviously...the whole point is that I must not have an opinion.” (Monk 1990, 420 (see also 418).)
- 23 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 *The New Wittgenstein* (Crary & Read 2000); as well as Chapters 3, 4, and 7), against 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 recognise that the temptation towards 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 “Meaningful Consequences” (Read & Guetti 1999); and “‘The First Shall be Last and the Last Shall be First ...’: A New Reading of *On Certainty* 501” (Read 2005a).
- 24 It is worth noting parenthetically here one important implication (that I already outlined in n.16 of Chapter 2): 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! It’s precisely the kind of remark that Diamond taught us that we must come to see as transitional, created in order to be ‘thrown away’: because it is without opposition. Because its form comes apart from one’s original aim in uttering it. (For more detail on this point, see “A No-Theory?: Against Hutto on Wittgenstein” (Read 2006).
- 25 I.e. Not because the real/right forms are available somewhere, only not speakable. (As noted earlier, this has been a transfiguration of Diamond’s “Throwing away the ladder: How to Read the Tractatus” (1991, 197–199).

- 26 Cf. my epigraph to this chapter.
- 27 For explication and examples see “Ordinary/everyday language” (Read 2010a).
- 28 For some examples of such build-ings, see Kripke’s ‘deconstructive’ reading of this passage, and the Anti-Realist theorising that emerges therefrom, in his *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (1982); (cf. 7, 8, and 4). Compare also Hacker’s numerous invocations of “bedrock” etc. as a conversation-stopper, as a consequential ‘policing’ philosophical move.
- 29 Again, Kripke (and David Bloor) come to mind here; as does Meredith Williams (Williams 2002) and Robert Brandom.
- 30 Though this is not of course to imply that the dialogue is *always* ‘equal’: far from it. I might have been inside this fly-bottle before and maybe can therefore help you out. It only does not follow that I am immune from being the recipient a moment later. (I owe this thought to Michael McGhee.)
- 31 For detail, recall the discussion of this point in Section 0.2 of the Introduction to the present work.
- 32 Something similar can be said of Buddhism. It really is unclear that one is a Buddhist if one is not *practising* Buddhism. If one is not meditating, and living mindfully and well. (Thanks for Luke Mulhall for discussion of this point.) If one sees someone who is fully confident that they have been enlightened, eliminate them/that confidence.
- 33 Thanks to several audiences over the years – including at ‘Mind and society’ in Manchester, at the Phil-Pol-Sociol seminar in Exeter, at St. Andrew’s, and at the University of North Florida – for help with some of the ideas of this chapter. Thanks also for helpful comments to Oskari Kuusela, Timur Ucan and Tamara Dobler.

10 The Anti-‘Private-Language’ Considerations as a Fraternal and Freeing Ethic

Towards a Re-Reading of *PI* 284–309

Look at a stone and imagine it having sensations.¹—One says to one-self: How could one so much as get the idea of ascribing a *sensation* to a *thing*? One might as well ascribe it to a number!—And now look at a wriggling fly, and at once these difficulties vanish, and pain seems able to get a *foothold* here, where before everything was, so to speak, too *smooth* for it.

(*PI* 284)

What is your aim in philosophy?—To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle.

(*PI* 309)

10.1 Introductory

We arrive at last to the portion of the *Philosophical Investigations* which has often exerted the most fascination and influence of all, to what is often (and reasonably) considered the apex of the book (and: to what is the apex of *my* book, the place where I complete the unification of the liberatory with the ethical and draw them together through the emphasis on the 2nd person that has threaded through this book). In short, we come to what is often called ‘the private language argument’. Because of the potentially-direct relation of these considerations of Wittgenstein’s to fundamental presumptions and conclusions of Modern philosophy, including in Cartesianism, Empiricism, and contemporary ‘Cognitive Science’, much of Wittgenstein’s significance as a philosopher is taken to follow from the sections (centred around §§243–315) of the *Investigations* which critically explore the possibility of a logically private language.

As I say, this portion of the text has come to be widely called “Wittgenstein’s Private Language Argument”. The label should not, however, in my view be seen as without controversy; I shall now suggest an important reason why one ought to be at the very least uncomfortable with that label (which of course was not Wittgenstein’s own). And thus my chapter title...

Let me start then by saying this. Wittgenstein’s remarks in this segment of the *PI* need to be read closely but also *felt* closely. At times, one is missing them, if one isn’t *moved* by them, and doesn’t move or *change* with them. In my view, as the reader of this book will by now be unsurprised to learn, they are designed to ‘work on’ (and with, and for) the reader rather than proffer forth prose arguments to conclusions which can then be summarised. Wittgenstein’s writings are designed to wean one away from certain alluring – though maybe ‘unconscious’ – commitments, pictures, analogies, and prejudices. One cannot merely summarise his ‘argument(s)’ and ‘conclusion(s)’, for there *is* (are) none, in the standard/traditional sense. The enterprise is more by way of a freeing from prejudices; and that is a psycho-ethical endeavour.

Or, as per the discussion of this matter in Chapter 2, if there *is* argument here – which one is of course free to say – then it is *not* deductive, nor even well-described as ‘transcendental’. Moreover, the progress through Wittgenstein’s book is not a progress only of thoughts, pretty much no matter how one reads the concept of ‘thought’, but also, as hinted in the previous paragraph, of sentiments.² A key danger of ‘argument’ as that trope gets employed standardly in philosophy is that the demand for objective arguments may tend to equate to the denial of sentiments that join us to one another.³ The tacit denial of relationship, connection.

For Wittgenstein, philosophy was always an activity and its goal ought to be to *free* us of problems formulated through our misunderstanding the logic of our language.⁴ Such freedom is not a narrow matter of cold thoughts. It involves recovering patterns of human feeling, interleaved with thoughts; recovering them from deformations that they have been subject to, often unknowingly at our own hands. Philosophical liberation is not freedom *from each other*: on the contrary. Such liberating *and rejoining* is something we must actually *do*; and it is something we often do not want to do.

I shall endeavour to show this in the below, by drilling down into certain of the remarks on ‘private language’. Principally, from the 280s and 300s in *PI*: not incidentally, I think that it might not be coincidental that the remarks that seem to me to yield the ethical heart of the anti-‘private-language’ considerations tend to come from the latter portions of those considerations. I think this is because Wittgenstein enters us into considering ‘private language’ *as if* it were a matter of a ‘standard’ philosophical (metaphysical and epistemological) argument, and then we gradually come to see that it is not. The resolution of metaphysics or epistemology into ethics begins to become apparent; and Wittgenstein’s writing starts to change, accordingly. These are sections whose (roughly-speaking) *existential* or *ethical* significance has in my view been insufficiently appreciated... rather than them consisting in the development of grammatical stipulations or ‘truths’, or the examination of how ‘private languages’ allegedly fail to meet the ‘essential’ criteria for language, or

any of the other things that mainstream philosophers (and nearly all mainstream – even when ‘loyal’ or aspiring to be deeply-sympathetic – Wittgenstein-exegetes) have taken them to be.⁵

Of course⁶ to the degree that mine is an ‘ethical’ reading of Wittgenstein, I stand on the shoulders of Diamond, Kuusela, Edwards, and Mulhall. However, I think that my inflexion of this idea is rather different from theirs, going ‘beyond’ theirs. They seem to seek something about what Wittgenstein does with language as such – or with/in philosophy – as being, quite generally, of inherent ethical import, whereas I have (additionally) found quite *particular* uses of language in his text which I claim demand themselves to be understood directly and specifically as ethical (and I have also noted associated moral-psychological conditions, claims, and quandaries). That is the burden especially of this chapter: giving a partial exegesis of the anti-‘private-language’ considerations that homes in on the ethical (and liberatory) character of the invitation to take seriously others’ suffering etc. found in certain of these passages.

In short: while finding what we might call a ‘*formal*’ ethic in Wittgenstein is not that uncommon (e.g. one based in praise of the intellectual virtues), and a number of readers have preceded me in finding the form of Wittgenstein’s philosophising thus ethical, I am trying to do something new: to find not only this but also elements of a ‘*substantive*’ ethic in Wittgenstein’s anti-‘private-language’ considerations, whose content might be summed up somewhat as a relational ethic of attention.⁷

To those hooked on mainstream ethics (Utilitarianism, Kantianism, etc.), it may seem as though what Wittgenstein does along these lines cannot really be considered an ethic. It may seem as though the reason there is seemingly no ethic in Wittgenstein’s later work is just that there *is* none. But I will suggest that this is a prejudice; that, once we are freed from the dogmatic assumption that ethics must take a certain form, one can and should find both a ‘formal’ *and* a ‘substantive’ ethic in the *PI*. Hence liberatory philosophy *enables* properly relational, ethical thinking.

10.2 Summary of What Is To Follow

My line of thinking in this chapter develops roughly as follows:

I prefer to term the passages that I am investigating in this chapter the anti-‘private-language’ considerations. (The scare-quotes are deliberate, as of course is the use of the term “considerations” (that I borrow from “the rule-following considerations”). The term “anti” is to highlight that Wittgenstein is concerned throughout to *question* a fantasy that *he* labels, with scare-quotes, ‘private language’; the term “the private language argument” fails to make that manifest.) In particular, I prefer not to term them the (anti-)private-language *argument*, a label that arrived on the scene after Wittgenstein’s death and was due to philosophers such as Malcolm and Strawson who, basically, do not understand Wittgenstein’s

conception of philosophy.⁸ For, as Bouwsma remarked: “[*PI*] contains no arguments at all. There are no proofs” (Bouwsma 1965, 24).⁹ For after all, if there were, then *why would Wittgenstein have written in the way that he did?* (Or was he just a lazy or systemically-obscure writer...?) If he was giving an argument in the ordinary (to philosophers) sense of that term, why didn’t he just say so and ‘get on with it’, lay it out, from premises to conclusion, clearly?¹⁰

The basic challenge ‘hidden’ in these considerations, the basic challenge that leads Wittgenstein to circle around and around in the way he actually does, I shall argue (and this is what I shall spend the most time on, in what follows here), is in the end an ETHICAL (and even perhaps a political) one. It is a challenge to face up to our ‘inter-being’, our responsibility to care about/for each other. Wittgenstein seeks to excavate the utter naturalness – but also the utter fragility – of our doing so. The real point about solipsism (and it is the person tempted by solipsism that we are above all seeking to lead out of the fly-bottle¹¹) is an ethical one¹²: solipsism involves (would involve) not caring about others. This attitude of not-caring can be possible. It can be fantasised, or forcibly insisted upon. *There is no such thing as ‘check-mating’ it.* It is not ‘strictly speaking’ a conclusion, and (more important still) it is not a conclusion (to an argument) that one can *force* someone to withdraw.

The nature of the challenge had in any case better not be this, for broadly resolute reasons: “*This* is what a private language is: _____; *and* there can’t be any such thing as *that*.” (And here it is important and helpful to note once more, in support of my point, that Wittgenstein does not talk about private language. Remember, he talks only about ‘private language’; cf. *PI* 202.) For that kind of move, that kind of presentation would catch one in a self-refutation. But roughly that *is* the form that most presentations of the ‘argument’ take! ...As Conant has argued, it is rather that Wittgenstein offers the reader possible formulation after possible formulation of a ‘private language’ and invites *the reader* to decide whether or not she is satisfied with it (Conant 2017).¹³ This is partly how Wittgenstein’s is a philosophy of freedom. For sure, Wittgenstein is suggesting reasons for dissatisfaction. But again, *there is no checkmate-move.* As Cavell has always stressed, the whole point about criteria in this domain is that they cannot force one to do anything. (The language of force that, following Wittgenstein, we repeatedly reach for hereabouts – often saying things like “I’m forced into speaking this way”, or “You are compelled to say *this*” – is a language of bad faith.¹⁴ Insofar as Wittgenstein *himself* sometimes seems to get stuck in such language, then he himself didn’t find the way out of self-entrapment. Language ‘itself’ has no agency or power; it is us who are responsible for our willingness to be ‘forced’ (sic) to say or think such and such.) The challenge always has a focally-ethical dimension. It is a challenge/problem of/for/to the will.

At *PI* 255, characterising what he is up to in philosophy in general and in the anti-‘private-language’ considerations in particular, Wittgenstein therefore writes, famously, “The philosopher *treats* a question: like an illness.”¹⁵ I believe, following later Baker and others, that this oft-repeated object of comparison for philosophy, one that Wittgenstein uses here and elsewhere, ought to be taken seriously (while of course we should all recognise that it is at the end of the day: (‘only’) *an object of comparison*,¹⁶ or an analogy. However deep it goes, it does not as it were go *all* the way down to capturing fully what Wittgensteinian philosophy *is*¹⁷). The philosopher *treats* a question like “How is it possible for me to know that others are in pain?” The philosopher ought to begin by noting that such a question sounds remarkably like a symptom of individualism: it sounds like a potential excuse for selfishness or unsplendid isolation. Or again: It sounds like loneliness of an awful or tragic degree.¹⁸

The anti-‘private-language’ considerations are a culmination of the entire liberatory trajectory of Wittgenstein’s text from *PI* 1 onward. They manifest a potent, historically-important and culturally-salient form of the focal, genuine question, ‘What are *you* (/we) willing to count as language, and why?’ Thus this chapter in a way brings us full-circle, back to the line of thought central to Chapter 1. *The entire trajectory of Wittgenstein’s text in the PI, from Augustine and the ‘builders’ to ‘private language’, has the same fundamentally ethical, fundamentally liberatory character.* One can (and should) be freed to actually meet with others in words, to actually *see* others (rather than remaining stuck in one’s own head). The anti-‘private language’ considerations are the natural culmination of the offering to the reader – of the opportunity to decide where they stand on the question of what it takes for something to be counted as a language – which began in the ‘overture’ to *PI*... But that question no longer appears an abstract question. It is tied (as we should always have realised it was: for how could a communication-system – a commons – like language possibly be a matter for oneself alone?) concretely not just to oneself, but inherently (to oneself *in relation*) to others...

10.3 Our Task

If we construe the grammar of the expression ‘private language’ on the model of ‘object’ and ‘designation’ (cf. *PI* 293) then the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant. The point then is: not so to construe it! You can insist on so construing it; that is a facet of your freedom. But doing so will land you far from paradise, a kind of paradise that, I’d boldly suggest, *is* potentially available in our actual ordinary lives. For when we move beyond such a misconstrual, we can see and feel more easily how we are not deprived of access to each other. Rather, we are potentially marvellously open to each other. Unhidden. Present.

Don’t get me wrong. I suspect that there is still a real – a huge, an endless – challenge and *task* involved in becoming truly open to one another. It is a real challenge actually to understand and care for others in the right way; that is, in a way that actually is understanding and caring.¹⁹ But that is because we constantly fall away from – or run in horror from – the possibility of mutual openness, and so we fail to learn how to care and keep on having to begin again to reach out to others. It is *scary* to think that all that stands in the way of one’s being-with another is: dropping the tempting ideological pretence that their ‘beetle’ and ours are forever mutually hidden.

As Cavell might have said: after dropping that pretence, we can feel a sense of vertigo. For there is nothing either to *secure* our sense of others (or of ourselves!) as beings worthy of care. Nothing – save for their and our being willing to be with one another, to not put up a wall against the other nor against one’s own *sentiments*.²⁰

There is no ‘private language argument’ permanently securing our mutual relationality. There is only our resolution, our determination to realise our relatedness, in all its naturalness and splendour, all its difficulty and fragility.

A central passage motivating my reading is *PI* 286:

What sort of issue is: Is it the *body* that feels pain?—How is it to be decided? What makes it plausible to say that it is *not* the body?—Well, something like this: if someone has a pain in his hand, then the hand does not say so (unless it writes it) and one does not comfort the hand, but the sufferer: one looks into his face.²¹

One comforts somebody; not a body. This, it seems to me, is a very powerful ‘reminder’ (see *PI* 127, to be reminded of what *this* means). But I use the scare-quotes advisedly: for, as I have argued earlier in the present work, it is not exactly a reminder *of* anything. Or, if we say that it is, then still it is not really reminding one of anything intellectual or factual (still less, theoretical) in any ordinary sense at all. Rather, one is reminded, one might say, of what it is to be a decent human being. One is reminded, not of things, but of beings. Or of being. Being-with-others. (I expand on this thought shortly.)

I am suggesting that some of Wittgenstein’s reminders are *at one and the same time* philosophically liberatory and substantively ethical. Compare a formulation of Diamond’s: “what appears from one point of view to be a *moral insight* appears from another to be a kind of *grammatical description* or *redescription*” (Diamond 2001, 134).

Thus when people claim that later-Wittgenstein didn’t discuss ethics, we should respond that they’ve (dogmatically) assumed that they know what ethics must look like in advance, and that their assumption is substantively questionable. Look at the *movement* executed by 286: a movement from a seemingly ‘merely’ grammatical issue at the start of it to

an ethical reminder by the end. (I’ve suggested that this movement also takes place on a macro scale between 243 and 309.)

286 reminds us that seeing another’s suffering *involves* a kind of communion with her. There is a kind of ‘field’ dimension to our inter-being; we no longer have a purely spectatorial (3rd personal) relationship with each other (Of course, we never really did). In a way, the other is no longer an *other* at all. It is almost as if one falls into the other when one looks into her face and manages to actually see the suffering. I *don’t* mean that the self-other distinction gets entirely effaced! Not at all. As I explain below, that would be too *easy*. But what I mean is that that the apparently essential mutual isolation of individuals that is the traditional hallmark of Western philosophy has been dissipated, sutured, perhaps dissolved into a drop of lived ‘grammar’. Into, as one might put it, a permanent possibility of a communion.

Developing further then the way in which we might see 286 in the light of 127: The particular purpose of this ‘reminder’ is to assist one in being mindful of what one has, one would hope, never forgotten, but certainly (at least sometimes) has: of how to *feel* for others, of what it is to do so. Of how to really *see* them. Of what it is to *attend* to them – in a non-spectatorial fashion.

Other *people*; *not* merely other bodies (Does it actually make any *sense*, to feel for a mere body? Any more than for a stone.). Wittgenstein (unlike most of the philosophical tradition) takes our embodiment entirely seriously; while not getting stuck in it in a way that could make sentience or humanity seem to evaporate into something purely material, as something like physics conceives of materiality.

Commonly, we are taught to think of Wittgensteinian reminders as reminding us of philosophical ‘points’ or ‘truths’. But I think we can now see just how much this insufficiently recognises the radicality of Wittgenstein’s philosophical method. For it is more the other way around: Wittgenstein uses philosophical dialogue to remind us of ourselves... To re-mind (and re-heart; and re-embody) us. To help us to re-humanise ourselves. (Wittgenstein reminds us of ‘what we do’ *because*: we do not always do it... We sometimes fail one another. We sometimes don’t look into another’s face, don’t heed another’s pain.)

Recall (especially from the discussion thereof in Chapter 1), in this connection, how *PI* 89, the first occurrence in *PI* of the concept of a “reminder”, proceeds:

Augustine says in the Confessions “quid est ergo tempus? si nemo ex me quaerat scio; si quaerenti explicare velim, nescio”. -This could not be said about a question of natural science (“What is the specific gravity of hydrogen?” for instance).

Something that we know when no one asks us, but no longer know when we are supposed to give an account of it, is something

that we need to remind ourselves of. (And it is obviously something of which for some reason it is difficult to remind oneself.)

I stress the parenthetical remark at the end. My take on this is that the difficulty is a *difficulty of the will*.

So: When I read, “[O]ne does not comfort the hand, but the sufferer: one looks into his face” (*PI* 286), I feel moved. And perhaps a little ashamed, of times when I myself have failed to do this. The appeal here is not ungainsayable; it is an appeal that can fail. But that is in the end *part of its very power*: one *knows* that it is possible to do this (to fail to respond to the suffering of another; or equally, to find the courage to respond to it, i.e. to *them*); one *knows* that one has so failed, oneself (sometimes).²²

So many of our practices *depend* upon our responses to each other.²³ We tend to under-estimate the extent or, better, the *depth* of our community.²⁴ Wittgenstein’s term “form of life” is sometimes misread as applying to cultures or nationalities, when, certainly in its employments in *PI*, it cuts so much deeper (as I set out in Chapter 9); its ambit runs so much wider than that, across the human (and beyond). His *Investigations* work this through.

10.4 Philosophy of Mind as Ethics

And so we can then say this: That what it is to see mind and body clearly is intrinsically – ‘internally’ – related to ethical and existential questions. To the question of our relatedness with one another, to what we ‘owe’ one another. To how we are internally related *to one another*.²⁵ To what we give each other, when we acknowledge one another.

In mutual acknowledgement, we cement an internal relation. As a therapeutic relationship moves from being one between two roles to being one between two people who become in a way intimate with one another, and as in a course of therapy defences are relinquished, one might helpfully talk of a transition from an external to an internal relation between the persons concerned.

Once an internal relation is present, it can then be ‘presumed’ as we go on *together* to something else that comes next. That is: as one forms or ‘returns to’ an internal relation, one can turn then to others, with one’s fellowship with the one(s) one is internally related to now able to be presumed (at least for now). This is brilliantly described by Saint-Exupery: “True love does not consists go gazing into each others’ eyes, but in turning faces outward together in the same direction, to face the world” (Saint-Exupery 2000). And of course to face, thereby, others, and realise relation with *them*. This is precisely my conception, and precisely what I find lacking in the work of Joel Backstrom and Hannes Nykanen: this sense of the internal relation between two people getting presupposed

(into an *us*) as one goes on to forge or recognise further such internal relations. And this enables us to see clearly how the 2nd person can involve plurals, on both sides. In particular, how it can sometimes be equivalent to the 1st person plural (as so emphasised by Austin, Wittgenstein, and (especially) Cavell).

I will elaborate on this crucial point about the 2nd person not needing to be a relation between individuals only, below. But first I want to make a claim that draws out how the point we have already reached already considerably disturbs philosophy’s traditional sense of itself:

Philosophers have often interpreted Wittgenstein’s anti-‘private-language’ considerations as if they were simply a novel intervention in ‘the mind-body problem’, considered as a technical or metaphysical or conceptual question. But they are not: because they reconceive that ‘problem’ as a (real) human, ethical problem. A problem that has of course very real and concrete political/historical embodiments. (The failure to see the ethics present in the relating of minds and souls to bodies, and the relating of (embodied) souls to others, as that is shown us by the likes of Wittgenstein, is a failure found in extreme form in Nazism and its ilk.)

Philosophical problems *are* existential problems, and versions of those problems can be and have been concretely realised or recognised in the extra-academic world.

Most philosophy has tended to think that metaphysics and/or epistemology are First Philosophy, fundamental philosophy. Wittgenstein puts this doubly into question. For him, clarification is the first and highest call of the philosopher, and clarification is itself a moral activity, a working on oneself, a project of lived-integrity; this much, Kuusela and others have certainly well taught us. And furthermore (and this is what I am seeking to add, as a new understanding of the anti-‘private-language’ considerations as embodying a kind of substantive ethic): part of *what* one is clarifying is necessarily the ‘internal relations’ (between matters conceptual and matters ethical; and *between you and me*) intimated earlier (Read 2012a, 107). Wittgenstein in effect submits, in these discussions, then, that you cannot do ‘First Philosophy’ without doing ethics. Ethics is inextricably (an aspect of) ‘First Philosophy’. One might call this, and especially 286, a proto-Levinasian moment in Wittgenstein. “[O]ne looks into his face”...²⁶

Or take the following powerful, representative passage, 374:

The great difficulty here is not to represent the matter as if there were something one couldn’t do. As if there really were an object, from which I derive its description, but I were unable to shew it to anyone.

What one needs liberating from here, Wittgenstein is saying, is precisely a fantasy of frustration, a *fantasy* of a frustrated will to freedom. The fantasy is that, were one able to do what is imaginarily-scenaried here, then one could be with others, could really know others. One projects the real need to acknowledge others – an ethical demand upon one²⁷ – into a fantasised would-be epistemological certainty. The fantasy might even proceed further. One might think that if one could only ‘*show*’ others one’s naked soul, and vice versa, and if this could only be done *en masse* the world over, then (one’s fantasy might continue) racism and war – conceived of respectively as a sort of mass-solipsism and an inhuman relation to (or: a lack of real acknowledged relation to) the other – would be inconceivable. One is concerned that one lacks what one thinks of as the standard kind of ‘*justification*’ for being entitled to have others hear/feel/acknowledge the truth of what one says (the truth, in this case, that we, *just* like them, feel pain). One has not seen/felt, that (any)one does indeed have the right to expect acknowledgement, *simply if one is in pain* and shows it – and/but that such acknowledgement is all the greater for the fallibility of its criteria. For its being deniable; for its not being guaranteed or automatic (as it *would* be, if there were a fantasised direct non-physical communion of souls-considered-as-objects. Or again: were it (say) to be programmed into an automaton that they should be ‘sympathetic’ to us.²⁸ Much as we are unimpressed by *automated* apologies for lateness, at a train station...).

10.5 Seeing a Soul

It is important to be clear what I am not saying here. I am (of course) not saying that the root of racism literally IS philosophical scepticism about other minds; that would be deeply silly. Rather,²⁹ I am saying that racism might be fomented by and is typically buttressed by something remarkably *like* a kind of partially-avowed scepticism about other minds. Somehow, one manages to half-convince oneself that the others do not really suffer as ‘we’ do, do not really feel as ‘we’ do; do not really matter as ‘we’ do.³⁰ And the terrible thing about the mainstream of philosophical thinking, and especially of epistemology, is that it points exactly in this direction. (Cartesianism is only an apogee of this.)

Nor am I saying that the route that Wittgenstein takes towards dissolving such prejudice is the only available one. Could the belief in an immortal, God-given soul not do the same job? Probably yes. Although this might be said to be ‘just’ another version of the same thing; I think that there is a broadly Wittgensteinian case for saying that. For Wittgenstein’s line of thinking is, very roughly, a gently ‘secular’ version of much the same point; the same point seen ‘from a religious point of view’ although not through any religious doctrine.

The Wittgensteinian way with such prejudice is, then, a way for our times.

Wittgenstein’s books are (of course) not explicitly political, and are in some ways deliberately non-political. But, insomuch as anti-racism is political, for instance, then I think that the *Investigations* deliberately at the very least *creates space* for the kind of politics that we need...³¹

And the political is personal, hereabouts. Wittgenstein is *pained*, or bewildered, in 304 to be ‘accused’ of wanting to deny the reality of pain, and rejoins that “We only [reject] the grammar which tries to force itself on us here.” We overcome heteronomy by overcoming the fantasy that grammar itself – or even a misplaced, ‘potent’ fragment of it – could *force* us to do anything at all. The responsibility is ours. As was made clear already in 140:

[W]hat sort of mistake did I make; was it what we should like to express by saying: I should have thought the picture forced a particular use on me? How could I think that?...Is there such a thing as a picture, or something like a picture, that forces a particular application on us...?—For we might also be inclined to express ourselves like this: we are at most under a psychological, not a logical, compulsion. And now it looks quite as if we knew of two kinds of case.

Which we do not, because ‘there is only logical necessity’. “Psychological compulsion” is itself always, in philosophy, *an expression of bad faith*. Compare the conclusion of 139: “The picture of the cube did indeed suggest a certain use to us, but it was possible for me to use it differently.” One’s freedom is not compromised. What we need to do in philosophy is realise the possibility of such possibilities of different use.

We need to acknowledge the complexity and ineradicability of our language around pain etc. As in this brilliant passage, which lances the desire for direct acquaintance with his ‘beetle’: “We would like to project everything into his inner. We would like to say that *that’s* what it’s all about. // For in this way we evade the difficulty of describing the *field* of the sentence” (*LWPP II*, 82). The field of the sentence is its surroundings in our life, its place in the stream of life. That field brings to light, as I would put it, the field nature of our being, that Wittgenstein is here precisely starting to bring out. Our not being isolated or sundered from one another, not in need of some absurd fantasised acquaintance with what it’s allegedly all about (in order to bridge this isolation): his ‘beetle’.

One is actually finding the proper place of pain when one refuses, with Wittgenstein, to give in to the deep attraction to think of pain as an ‘inner object’ (cf. once more *PI* 293). One rather at least starts to get clearer on what pain is – and on how easy to deny its reality can be, for one *unwilling* to acknowledge the full reality of another being and of their suffering. (Thus the importance of Iris Murdoch’s famous thought

concerning the difficulty, for many of us, often, of attending to others as *real*. A difficulty in doing something that can otherwise come completely naturally: it is, arguably, very difficult not to see the human being in the other, *without* a huge apparatus of ideology to help with the obscuring. Philosophers imbibe such ideology with their/our university learning of philosophy, itself arguably a consequence of Western culture of scientific distanciation and of atomistic individualism; and it comes especially ‘naturally’ to us, who live so much in our own minds...) The fragility of our community, of our relationality, is part of what it is for us to need to be ethical, for us to commit to acting in one way rather than another. If one could *force* another to yield to one’s soul by showing it them, that would remove the preciousness of having to (choose to) *do* the right thing³² rather than the wrong.³³

What is needed, if collectively we are to give up the desire for the fantasy (of ‘privacy’) that in fact keeps us apart from one another, is truly to *acknowledge, to realise* the ineradicability of our community, of our public inter-personal lives.³⁴ To set aside the so-called ‘inner object *is* to allow space for a realer, realistically-apprehended and -expressed inner life; and it is that life that is already alive in our interpersonal pain-talk.

We are inherently *able* to see another person, another soul. The challenge is to realise that ability, in real cases, over time. (Especially in hard cases, and hard times.)

And this is a proper contribution to the enterprise of philosophical grammar, as Wittgenstein presented it. As explicated by Baker (in the original, he references each of the following sentences to passages in Wittgenstein):

There is an important similarity between pain and pleasure in that both are evident in someone’s eyes, face or posture. ...[O]ne person’s pain may elicit strong ‘primitive’ reactions of sympathy or anguish in others. These remarks all contribute to describing the grammar of ‘pain’, but they do so by relating pain-ascription to ‘the stream of life’.

(BWM, 78)

The process (of realisation of the ability to see others³⁵) involves us directly in liberatory philosophy, as the flipside of the ethics we’re uncovering. Consider 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. Sometime perhaps we shall know more about them—we think... (The decisive move in the conjuring trick has been made, and it was the very one we thought quite

innocent.)—And now the analogy which was to make us understand our thoughts falls to pieces. So we have to deny the yet uncomprehended process in the yet unexplored medium. And now it looks as if we had denied mental processes. And naturally we do not want to deny them.

The conjuring trick is the thought-constraining, unnoticed, as-if-before-any-move-has-been-made-at-all move. *PI* 308 is patently liberatory philosophy. Wittgenstein seeks to facilitate the overcoming of prejudices. Such overcoming, here, builds *character*— and builds *connectedness* (with others). We do not want to deny anything; for, at our best, we will not deny anyone. We are in fact quite determined not to.

Crucially: there is no revisionism here, no truck with any form of revisionist scepticism, anti-realism, or behaviourism.³⁶ Compare on this another passage from Wittgenstein: “[W]hy do I say that I ‘project’ everything into the inner? Doesn’t it reside in the inner? No. It doesn’t *reside* in the inner, it *is* the inner” (*LWPP II*, 82; it is worth our noting here that, had Wittgenstein lived, this material would likely have been integrated into *PI*). Talk of ‘projection’ is revisionist, dubiously distancing. There is no problem talking directly about the inner, provided one doesn’t engage in any revisionism, including of a mentalist kind, when one does so. All that is revised is dubious philosophising, professional or lay. What we should want to do is: acknowledge our (non-compulsory) *assumption* that what we call mental processes need be in any sense akin to, shadows cast by, or modelled on the sorts of processes we encounter in other domains and about which we have *knowledge*. The assumption that ‘mental processes’ need to be explained as a species of processes is thought-constraining.³⁷

Escape from philosophical heteronomy is possible; we will have found (for now at least, hereabouts) ‘the liberating word[s]’ when we proceed roughly as above. And we will then in particular have been liberated from the profoundly anti-human doctrine of behaviourism, which as-if denies that *people* really exist, that persons (‘souls’) are really seen. (Look into his face...)

Thus *PI* 308 and the associated discussion calls upon us to face up to the consequences of denial and to address them. When one reads 308 in the context of 284–293f., one sees what I already intimated in Chapter 1, at the start of *PI*: the *ethical importance* of overcoming behaviourism, and its effectively-cognate (though allegedly opposite) ‘isms’, of mentalism and materialism.

10.6 Seeing as Already Ethical

Really seeing someone, actually attending to them (as per 286), might then be characterised helpfully thus, in ethical terms, if we were to

translate the Wittgensteinian approach I am exegeting into the terms of contemporary Western normative ethics: *seeing someone as a person is a necessary and sufficient condition for caring about that person, absent defeaters*.³⁸ A narrowly liberatory conception would stick to the necessary condition. But the liberatory, I have suggested, bleeds into the ethical: and thus we need and can have the sufficient condition too. The suffering of the other – whether manifested in a physical wound or something psychical or emotional – when attended to, yields care as a spontaneity, something that flows from our knowing how to be human.

Because seeing-as a person should, I suggest, be richly understood.³⁹ Seeing (as) should itself be seen as *already ethical*. In which case, my ‘holding’ the italicised passage just above would look less like a surprising claim, and more like a kind of (putative) ethical truism. But that, it seems to me, is as it should be. Because I don’t want to get into the game of making substantive philosophical claims, of holding necessitarian theses in philosophy. And, as I have made clear, I don’t believe there is an *argument*, as that term is conventionally understood, in 243–315: neither a transcendental nor even an ethical one. (A recollection is scarcely an argument!)

I think that seeing someone as a person already involves a kind of caring,⁴⁰ in the sense that seeing-as-a-person is not a kind of neutral quasi-factive phenomenon but already *involves* a kind of inter-involvement, a kind of inter-presence, what the Buddhists call inter-being. If it were to be objected to me, “One can see another as a person but still have no caring relation to them whatsoever; one can see another as a person and not care about them at all,” I would respond thus: except under various unusual circumstances, that seems to me only a new version of the old spectatorial fantasy. I don’t think that there is space *in general* for that kind of seeing, except as a kind of lived delusion or deformation, or simply a psychopathy.

The would-be objector thinks that there are two moments in seeing: the quasi-factive and *then* the caring (or otherwise), or something like that. But I think one can’t separate these moments out.⁴¹ I think that seeing-as should be thought of as always-already ethical (or unethical). I think that this is what we see, in and around 286.

The existence of other people addresses us. Or even: Pain addresses us.

Staying too much in the would-be-utterly-spectatorial 3rd person, or stuck *within* the 1st person, has been philosophy’s bane.⁴² Such ‘objectivity’ and ‘subjectivity’, far from being opposites, are but two sides of the same kind. Fixation on stuff in the objective world, and on ‘stuff’ in the head: these are,⁴³ at root, the same. The same delusion. The alternative is the living world of the 2nd person: being involved with others. Being committed (to them). Being...resolute. Being-as-relationality.

Part of the character of Wittgenstein’s anti-‘private-language’ marks that I have picked up on above might be expressed in this way: *we are addressed by Wittgenstein*. (As we saw explicitly at the opening of this

book: in Chapter 1, on the opening section of the *Investigations*.) Wittgenstein’s book does not seek to be a treatise that oracularly states that such-and-such is how things are.

Somewhat similarly: Pain is not something ‘private’ to his feeling it. On the contrary, we might even say that pain, for beings who have some understanding of and involvement with each other, is fundamentally a 2nd-person phenomenon,⁴⁴ *more than* a 1st person phenomenon. *Nor* is it a 3rd person, simply scientifically objective phenomenon. Pain necessarily concerns or creates a *relationship*. Pain involves a call; pain, we might even say, is *like* a shriek: like an urgent request for assistance, for *care*. One might even go so far as to wonder whether the worst possible thing about pain is not even how it hurts, but it’s not being taken seriously when it is not taken seriously, i.e the *address* not being heard.⁴⁵ Relations –‘internal relations’ – being ruptured.

This may help to explain, I would tentatively suggest, the ubiquity of healthcare across human societies and across human history and (so far as we can tell) pre-history, despite the fact that, until recently, much/most healthcare was, in ‘purely physical’ terms, harmful. My reading of this remarkable fact is that it is the caring itself – the attitude of care, the responsive hearing of the ‘address’ to one that another’s pain manifests – that is often crucial, not the content of the medical care ‘delivered’. The scare-quotes around ‘purely physical’ above were therefore quite necessary: there is no such thing, actually, as such purely physical medical interventions. The primary category of healthcare is caringness exhibited by humans for one another,⁴⁶ and trust in one another (and especially, of course, these days, in ‘expert’ *carers*) to exhibit this. ‘Physical’ medicine is secondary. Another way to put the point is this: the wonderful phenomenon of ‘placebo’ should be considered not some kind of puzzling aberration but rather as the primary phenomenon. Placebo is not an optional add-on to medical care; the delivery of medicines etc. is a *sub-category* of what we misleadingly label “placebo”. Care is the primary phenomenon. Because it is internally related to pain.

Pain *addresses* us. Its very expression is that of crying out for internal relations with another. Pain itself – not just the expression of it – addresses us. Suffering addresses us as carers for the sufferer. The pain someone is feeling as it were asks of us that we reach out to the other, to them. (Even if, as at the culminatory point of the philosophical film *Blade Runner*, that reaching-out consists simply of paying respectful attention, while an other dies.)

In provocatively calling pain a 2nd person phenomenon, I by no means want to deny that pain has origins deep in our animal history where it has little or nothing to do with the 2nd person. And yet: pain has changed since we became communicative (Pain is already to some extent a 2nd person phenomenon for (e.g.) corvids, and certainly for chimps, I’d suggest) and then *linguistic* creatures. Pain itself has become

about care. Pain is an ‘inner’ (as opposed to an inner – i.e. non-scared-quoted) process because it is internally related to pain behaviour.⁴⁷ And pain-behaviour is internally related to its expression, its understanding by others – and care. In Wittgensteinian terms: *care has become, for us, a primitive reaction:*

[R]emember that it is a primitive reaction to tend, to treat, the part that hurts when someone else is in pain; and not merely when oneself is — and so to pay attention to other people’s pain behaviour, as one does *not* pay attention to one’s own pain behaviour.

(Z 540)

That is why I say that the difference that communication and more recently language have made to pain is roughly this: they have made it a phenomenon that could justly be characterised as primarily 2nd personal and secondarily 1st personal, rather than being primarily 1st personal. Contra the vast, dominant philosophical tradition, pain is not primarily about something that happens to or ‘within’ me alone anymore; it is about my placedness in a relation, or (better) in a set of relations, a field. (Of course, the way that that placedness sometimes occurs is through my pain being not taken sufficiently seriously, or what-have-you; but *all* this is now nevertheless a 2nd-personal phenomenon. My pain occurs in a field of other beings, now. In a way that is simply not the case for (say) reptiles.)

Wittgenstein’s anti-‘private-language’ considerations overturn the philosophical mainstream, because, since Descartes and British Empiricism, pain is typically taken as fundamentally a 1st person phenomenon. Pain gets stuck behind an impenetrable barrier. It loses its quality of relation, of address, and becomes a mysterious special ‘private’ ‘object’. Then there is an endless effort to get an unobstructed view of that ‘object’, as if it *were* an object. Something in principle suitable for being spectated on. A constituent bit of a merely-existing (as opposed to living, inhabited, relational) world. Thus one in effect tries to 3rd-person-alise something that one specified as 1st-person-al... (One is being irresolute: systematically unclear on the object (sic) of one’s discourse.)

Not surprisingly, all such efforts have failed utterly. This mismatch between 1st and 3rd persons ensures this. A happier way forward would be: to start from the 2nd person ‘internal’ relation. To start to understand the *central* 2nd-person dimension of pain, that (following Wittgenstein) I have just foregrounded.

10.7 Wittgenstein’s Investigation in the Context of His Time

If you still think my reading of the anti-‘private-language’ considerations a little fanciful, then compare this extraordinarily striking sentence:

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, for example.

(*PI* 420)⁴⁸

You can (try to) see the cross-pieces of a window as a swastika. Just as you can (try to) see a human as an automaton, not really human. Doing so is uncanny; it might be easier, if the continent on which you have a window is swarming with swastikas...

These kinds of matters were not out of mind, I tentatively suggest, when Wittgenstein wrote *PI* 243–428. The *Investigations* reveal a mature philosophical and human mind at work, a mind wiser than that that wrote the great *Tractatus*, the immensely-innovative 1930s manuscripts, etc. A mind that has overcome its tendencies to (self-directed) anti-Semitism.⁴⁹ A mind with heart. One profoundly misses the point of *PI*, if one hears it as a cold or distanced work. One is 180-degrees wrong, if one makes that frequent misreading, a reading admittedly facilitated by the coldness of some of the scenarios that the book *imagines* or *mentions*. For, on the very contrary, the primary *topic* of the book, its *problematic*, is the coldness to life of most philosophical reflection (and in particular: to the lives of others), *a coldness that the PI is oftentimes designed to display* (Nykänen 2014, 83) *so as to midwife the overcoming of it*.

Think for instance of the ‘reading-machines’ (sic) of *PI* 156–157. In this sense, we might see the anti-‘private-language’ considerations as exploring, finally, what is begging to be explored in such earlier passages as that one. The ‘reading-machines’ idea is an idea of a kind of slavery, of some human beings’ worlds being subjugated by an attitude as if of mechanism towards them. In 284ff., by contrast, Wittgenstein re-involves us in an attitude towards a soul. One needs to be willing to hear the aliveness to the suffering of others manifest in passages such as *PI* 286, 287, 303, 304, and in the end throughout the whole thrust of the anti-‘private-language’ considerations (and indeed the whole book), if one wants to understand Wittgenstein.

Wittgenstein spoke of his goal in philosophy as peace. This, we ought to understand of course in the first instance as mental peace. Peace hard-wrought from discomfort, confusion, sickness, torment. But could we *also* hear this goal, and the difficulty in achieving it (think of the Nestroy epigraph to the *Investigations*, concerning how progress is always less than it seemed) in the context of an era in which peace and real civilisational (as opposed to technological) progress, i.e. cultural improvement, was shockingly absent – ‘for example’, the period of 1936–1945, during which Wittgenstein composed *PI* in general and the anti-‘private-language’ considerations in particular. The intellectual-and-more sickness which was Nazism, with (in a broad sense) roots that

I have intimated run surprisingly deep in our history and culture, and somewhat similar sicknesses, could potentially be cured; with a slow, difficult cure, taking courage and honesty, and involving us coming to feel and see ourselves as internally related to one another. I am suggesting that the anti-‘private-language’ considerations are an *ethical* and even perhaps, when seen aright, in a broad sense of the word a *political* centrepiece to Wittgenstein’s work. Even perhaps a response to certain imposed historical concrete sufferings *and* to the ease with which we can enable ourselves to ignore an existential call with a personal – a *second-personal* – basis. Real peace will not come without, roughly, thinking and working through our human all-too-human failure to acknowledge others’ pain.⁵⁰ Liberation for ourselves will not come without others being thus liberated, right alongside ourselves. For we are not sundered from others as philosophy has almost inveterately tended to teach us that we are.

What Wittgenstein’s anti-‘private-language’ consideration amount to might then be described as directed towards this goal, the goal of realising the nonsensicality of complete human isolation. But this goal, *contra* what philosophers have mostly hitherto appreciated or argued, has precious little to do with Robinson Crusoes, nor even with the issue of ‘private ostensive definitions’: *it is an ethical goal*. It relates to us relating to (or failing to) others, including right here, right now.

The pattern then is much the same as I observed in relation to the opening of the *Investigations*, in the opening chapters in this book; and at the opening of this chapter. Wittgenstein’s concern is to ask the reader (over and over again): Is this something that on reflection you are willing to apply the term “language” to? Or *this*? Or *that*? What does it need for something to be worth calling “language”, for it to be useful so to designate it? The first such explicit “this” is the ‘language’ of ‘the builders’, in 2. Their way of speaking is itself, we might say, *embedded* in whatever they construct; but is their way of life genuinely imaginable? Intelligible? Are their ‘calls’ a language? Further ‘cases’ are to be found at 4, at 8, at 16, at 32, and at 64. It is “as you please” with these. I.e. it is up to the *reader* – not the legislating philosopher as word-policeman – to decide. In the anti-‘private-language’ considerations, Wittgenstein is working with a concept, ‘private language’, that is not an ordinary concept. It is in effect a philosophers’ construct. Wittgenstein asks us: Are you willing/wanting to call this “(private) language”? Or *this*? Or *that*? Because we are dealing with a philosophers’ construct, there is no need ever to arrive at a constative answer: the quest is liberatory.

And we come to see the way in which language necessarily involves us in common with each other, including crucially in our sufferings. Instead of an answer to a philosophical question, what we arrive at then is *each other*. No longer seemingly separated into atoms or monads. As in 253, for instance, a passage that radically questions the ‘metaphysical *must*’

which would have us insist that “Another person can’t have my pains”, and instead opens the door back to our sharing our pain, our grief, our determination. In 253, we see what is becoming an increasing theme of my discussion: the meeting and mutual re-inforcement, the partial *identity*, of liberatory and ethical considerations. 251–253, like much of the anti-‘private-language’ considerations, indeed like much of *PI*, is strikingly, directly liberatory in intent: Wittgenstein wants to help free us from a *felt compulsion* to say things like “I can’t imagine the opposite of this”. And the “thises” that really *matter* here are such as “Pains are private”/“Another person can’t have my pains”. *The deep point of the liberation is a ‘return’ to ‘internal-relatedness’ to other beings.*

PI 290–299 bears this out. In 290–292, Wittgenstein seeks to free us from the compulsion to assimilate different uses of “describe”: the highest cash-value of such liberation is to escape the delusion of one having an utterly-unique, ‘privileged’ capacity to ‘describe’ one’s own sensations. (The point of 294–295 and 297 is similarly to overcome the insistence that binds, hereabouts.) 299 is a kind of culmination of these considerations, dwelling on (for the purpose of generating autonomy with regard to) our ‘inability’ in philosophy “to help saying something or other, being irresistibly inclined to say it”. 303 is one of many passages that draw the moral: ““I can only believe that someone else is in pain, but I know it if I am”. — Yes: one can resolve to say “I believe he is in pain” instead of “He is in pain”. But that is all.” One has the freedom to do this self-centred thing; but it is a *notational* freedom only, albeit one that might have real lived (not merely not(-at)-ional!) consequences. That freedom does not make the belief vs. knowledge contrast in the ‘interlocutorial’ remark true. Without in the least infringing on one’s freedom, without policing language, Wittgenstein points us back towards deeply relational ethics, which our quasi-Cartesian unfreedom “when we *indulge* in philosophical thought” (299) would close off from us.

Thus my reading gives a new politico-ethico-liberatory significance to the anti-‘private-language’ considerations, a new and deeper reason for finding them (as they have often been found before) to be the apex, the very *heart*, of Wittgenstein’s philosophical investigations.⁵¹

One’s freedom not to acknowledge others’ pain is directly tied to the import of the utterly basic ethical demand⁵² to do so. That’s why I say that the ethical and the liberatory readings of the *Investigations* are, in this sense, one and the same.

For it is clear, I submit, that Wittgenstein’s intent in *PI* 243–315 is fundamentally liberatory: thus, close to what is generally regarded as the close of the anti-‘private-language’ considerations, Wittgenstein offers the summatory image of the fly and the fly-bottle. We are flies, wriggling in philosophical pain (284); but, unlike flies, we can attain release from the fly-bottle (309) in which we are trapped, through philosophical awakening. What, collectively, we really need liberation *from* is the

delusion of windowless-monadicity so powerful in our civilisation; and that threatens to destroy that civilisation. The emergence of the individual person, the self, was arguably a liberation relative to the authoritarian power of the Church etc. but has become a prison, in which we struggle to meet each other, to forge community, to tackle the great collective-action problems of our time. The anti-‘private-language’ considerations offer the deepest route I know to overcoming that prison. Wittgenstein re-minds us, of our deeper-than-deep inter-connection. To draw out a metaphor from physics at which I have already hinted: the ‘atomic’ prejudice writ large across philosophy gives way to something more like a ‘field’ conception.⁵³ This is what is offered by Merleau-Ponty, for instance in his detailed evocation of “the social world, not as an object or sum of objects, but as a permanent field or dimension of existence: I may well turn away from it, but not cease to be situated relatively to it” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 421).⁵⁴ And it is present too at moments such as 241. Whatever else be said about Wittgenstein’s conception of “form of life” and of “agreement”, it is clear that they are *fundamentally* social in nature. They manifest an edging towards something too basic to be said⁵⁵: how we are a field, not two or more subjects (1st person) or objects (3rd person) facing off against each other. We are *reminded* in *PI* of the ‘field’ character of our consciousness, our mindedness. Your pain is not in some other universe to me (to mine); on the contrary, it is normally immediately visible, careable for.

This is not, of *course*, a *denial* of the existence of individual persons. How could it be, in a book about liberation and the partly personal character of philosophy? It is rather the reminder of an aspect (of our life) that gets neglected (especially: in a fanatically individualist civilisation, one that frequently fetishises individual consumer choice and what it calls “liberty” above anything else. Wittgenstein felt out of sympathy with such a civilisation – for good reason.). Moreover, insofar as individual persons exist, this can be a *problem* as well as a good thing or a plain fact. It may reflect *badly* on our society (it may undermine our society), that individual persons exist as much as they do...⁵⁶ Wittgenstein does not just return us to our language, but to our lives, to our ethical/communal nature.

It might still and quite reasonably be asked, though, why Wittgenstein didn’t say all this himself. I opened the this chapter by claiming that my way of seeing the anti-‘private-language’ considerations is more faithful to his text than is seeing it as containing an *argument*. But haven’t I (too) ‘broken faith’ with Wittgenstein by going beyond his words as much as I have?

Possibly. But on balance I don’t think so. For two reasons. First, this chapter is indeed partly me as well as Wittgenstein. It is me: taking inspiration from Wittgenstein, interpreting, embroidering, applying, updating, connecting, etc. And that is exactly what Wittgenstein wanted: to

inspire others to real thinking, of their own. Second, and perhaps more importantly; if Wittgenstein had done all that I have done here, then, not only would I patently have been unable to do it, but he would have not left me/you/us space to *think* about it for ourselves in the way he did. He didn’t say all these things, *for me, for you, for us*. He was determined wherever possible to stick to the dictum, “Whatever the reader *can* do, leave to the reader” (C&V, 77).

10.8 The Ethics of the ‘Private Language’ Sections

And now, with our coming to see more clearly the way in which Wittgenstein’s considerations against the ‘private language’ fantasm are a recapturing of our ‘field nature’, of our inter-involvement with each other in the 2nd person (singular or plural), the way in which his critique of tendencies towards isolation of human spirits each within their ‘boxes’ is of more than merely academic interest, I can state a reason for thinking that the claim made in this chapter, that there is not merely a ‘formal ethic’ but a ‘substantive’ or ‘contentful’ ethic immanent to the anti-‘private-language’ considerations, is, though surprising, correct, or at least ought to be...: One can plausibly argue that the ‘formal ethic’ reading of Wittgenstein must after all, be parasitic upon *some* substantive understanding of ethics, because otherwise why should we *care* about (say) achieving intellectual honesty or about achieving the intellectual orientation of the will involved in overcoming scepticism or solipsism...unless it is a needful part of (real) *life*, part of the good life, to do so? I have suggested that we can see how it is, by reflecting on what (*blindingly* obviously) is self-delusive, and simultaneously wrong, ethically, with solipsism. (This suggestion of mine functions as a kind of extension of the claims shot through earlier chapters of the book to the effect that we care about achieving philosophical liberation because we care about other people and about ourselves, etc.).

Still, the ‘substantive’ ethic I find in 243–428 might be thought to be almost wholly familiar. An emphasis on care is hardly new; our mattering to each other in the way we have in common our sufferings is hardly new. And indeed, there are clearly connections between what I have been saying and the claims of Feminist care ethics, of some happily non-theoreticistic Virtue Ethics, possibly too of Rorty on cruelty. But this is not yet to get clear on the novelty of what I have been purveying. The relationality of the Wittgensteinian ethic goes to another level: the move is like that that I made in Chapter 3, when I remarked that any Wittgensteinian account of meaning was actually in the end a re-empowering of the capability of accounting for meaning that is mutually present in all of us, capabilities that are manifest in our linguistic exchanges. It is no longer a philosophical preserve, no longer an elite matter, no longer something for a *narrow* ‘us’.

In the present case, the biggest clue to this is my earlier emphasis on the 2nd person. A 2nd person ethic is so very different from a traditional (1st personal (subjective, e.g. egoistic, or Nietzschean); or 3rd personal (as in all the great ethical systems)) ethic. Wittgenstein situates us in our radical inter-involvedness. And that relates us *internally*. Such mutual internal-relatedness is basic – and yet vulnerable.

Once we see this, then it no longer appears such a paradox to tie so intimately together liberation and ethics (as this chapter and this book seek to do). Freed from prejudice and dogma, we are ‘returned’ to ourselves – and our selves are not singular. For we are internally related. Autonomy, properly understood, *is* relationality...⁵⁷

One is recalled by Wittgenstein⁵⁸ to decency, to connection: this can’t be forced on anyone, it must be freely embraced. Though by now it should be clear that that doesn’t mean: individualistically, apart from others. For that would of course contradict the very point. And *that* thought reinforces the thought that we ought to conceive of philosophy itself as in the first instance a collective *and* fundamentally 2nd-person enterprise. This 2nd-person-ness can be a singular or plural relation,⁵⁹ and is often indeterminately or indiscriminately both/neither. When a we is truly present with another we, or an I truly present with another I, or a we truly present with an I, or an I truly present with a we, this is all: the 2nd person. Essentially involving a *you*. Thoroughgoingly relational. The 2nd-person is not necessarily a relation between two individuals, it is not necessarily dyadic. The 2nd person relation can involve more than two people... The relata may be larger units.

It is unwise to talk of a/the ‘private language argument’ unless we are *clear* that such an argument contains no metaphysical or quasi-deductive (i.e. (quasi-)logical!) ‘*must*’. The force of philosophy is *not* that of such a *must*: philosophy, as Waismann noted so clearly, and as I have sought in this book to adumbrate, is a zone of freedom. If *we* are thus clear, then we start to see more clearly the character of the *ethical* ‘*must*’. It is something whose importance cannot be overstated, and whose power or force runs (as Wittgenstein brought out from the *Tractatus* onward) in parallel to that of the logical ‘*must*’. But, unlike the latter, it can be painfully easy to forget or to fall away from... That possibility of failure haunts Wittgenstein and his most sympathetic and astute interpreters and successors (such as Cavell). But emphasis on the 2nd person certainly offers better scope for overcoming that failure than does standard 3rd person ethical/philosophical thinking.⁶⁰

10.9 Conclusions

Of course,⁶¹ once again, we *could* decide⁶² – instead of questioning the ‘private language argument’ locution – to radically revise (widen) our conception of what is to *count* as an argument. It is as you please.

Such a path is attractive to philosophers, in my view, because of the institutional identification with the idea of ‘argument’ as *what we do*. I think, unlike Baker (though here any disagreement is probably only ‘tactical’/rhetorical), that it instead may be of greater utility, more freeing, to provocatively raise a question as to whether the ‘private language argument’ actually is one. To suggest that we really got the wrong end of the stick, in talking about Wittgenstein’s ‘private language argument’.

In this, I (hope to) follow Cora Diamond, in *The Realistic Spirit* (1991, 306f).⁶³ Diamond outlines there how we need not restrict our paradigm of ‘rationally convincing’ to ‘convincing by way of argument’. Her way of doing so is, by the way, by my lights clearly liberatory. (See for instance her wariness of the “compulsion” that Onora O’Neill appears to feel, *vis-à-vis* an assumption that any and all ‘genuine’ convincingness necessarily implies argument).

And so then a final thought, before I turn to conclude this work. I have here proposed relabelling “the private language argument” as “the anti-‘private-language’ considerations” (though I have stressed that we remain free to reject the relabelling proposal, and am not closed to continuing to use the word “argument”, provided it be thoroughly reconceived along Waismannian lines or further). It is important to note once more that my suggestion not be heard as placing Wittgenstein in opposition to private language (without scare-quotes), for that would reinstate him as a player of traditional philosophical games of for and against. Wittgenstein is against – anti – a fantasy. A nothing. Something whose ‘substance’ such as it is if it is at all is ethical (or rather: unethical).

I remark now that this (mine) can actually be viewed as a rather conservative relabelling proposal, perhaps too conservative. We should at least consider more radical relabellings, that might help free us philosophically, while more directly seeking to *‘re-attach’* us to others (other beings). Here are a few such re-labelling possibilities (objects of comparison?), for the sake of perspicuity:

- Wittgenstein’s ‘reminders’ of our ‘internal relations’ to one another.
- Considerations on our inherent (though vulnerable) inter-relationality.
- Wittgenstein’s interrogation of ‘individualist’ prejudices.
- Wittgenstein’s considerations against the ‘privacy’ of suffering.
- The anti-‘private-suffering’ considerations.⁶⁴

For there is no pain in itself, for us. While it is so obvious (and this is what Wittgenstein emphasizes so strongly in 296, and in 304–305) that the 1st-personal aspect to pain is ineradicable that it goes without saying, it is a deep mistake to think that that aspect exhausts pain (as it would be, equally, to think that objective knowledge of c-fibres could do so). Rather, pain *is* in its meaning, in the responsiveness we exhibit to it. Someone in pain is what (i.e. *who*) is cared for. Pain is a relationality:

and pain that is unacknowledged might even be the best candidate for the use of the painful moniker, ‘private’. When and if you are in pain, and I just don’t care, *then*, for you, hell is other people. Then one suffers in silence, or silenced. And what is ‘private’ to you is not so much language, but rather a longing, and a felt knowledge of a painfully ruptured internal relation with another being.⁶⁵

Notes

- 1 Compare here also the explicitly liberatory *PI* 449: ““But mustn’t I know what it would be like if I were in pain?” *One can’t shake oneself free* of the idea that using a sentence consists in imagining something for every word.”
- 2 I allude here to Annette Baier’s epochal work on Hume (1991).
- 3 I detect this kind of danger in Severin Schroeder’s otherwise-impressive extensive writings on Wittgenstein’s anti-private-language ‘argument’ (Schroeder 2006).
- 4 See the Preface of *TLP*.
- 5 There are far too many examples (of the dominant trend, which I am questioning) to cite here. Let me just note that among those who I have particularly in mind are A. J. Ayer, George Pitcher, Norman Malcolm, Peter Strawson, Peter Hacker, and (*some* of the relevant writings of) Severin Schroeder.
- 6 And as I have noted earlier in this book.
- 7 I claim here to find this ethic in Wittgenstein. The reader will be the judge of whether that finding is authentic or not. If the verdict turns out to be ‘not’, then I’ll take the ethic up as my own (Wittgenstein (and others: such as Weil, and Murdoch) indicated a *path*. I’m journeying down it. Don’t be too surprised therefore if I end up going further than him.). Though, as I shall remark, it is in any case of course not by any means entirely original to Wittgenstein or to me.
- 8 On Malcolm, see Winch’s commentary in *Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View?* (Malcolm 1995). The situation *vis-à-vis* Strawson is more complex; but, from Strawson’s explicit reception of Wittgenstein in 1954 onward, there is a persistent strand of up-front rejection of Wittgenstein’s conception of philosophy.
- 9 Cf. *BWM* (147). Cf. also Juliette Floyd, “In philosophy...there are no proofs” (2000, 254).
- 10 More by way of an *explicit* response to these questions is proffered in my Conclusion.
- 11 The temptation of ‘private language’ is fundamentally solipsistic. The solipsist is Wittgenstein’s fly that he wants to free. Cf.: “The solipsist flutters and flutters in the flyglass, strikes against the walls, flutters further. How can he be brought to rest?” (*PO*, 258).
- 12 I take this thought from Murdoch (1983). It is also present prominently in Hannes Nykanen’s challenging oeuvre: one wants to deny the profound I-you interrelationship, so as to immunise oneself against the great potential that that relationship brings for moral censure (and for intimacy). The most effective, total mode of such denial is, as Cavell of course emphasised, the widespread philosophical temptation towards scepticism as to other minds, etc.
- 13 In this regard, the methodology of 243–315 is very close to that that Wittgenstein first highlights in 16; as discussed in Chapter 2. To me, this is unsurprising.
- 14 For a strong example in *PI*, see 140: discussed below.

- 15 I have amended the usual translation(s) slightly, to bring out what I take to be its deliberately and deeply ‘therapeutic’/curative orientation.
- 16 See *PI* 130–132; as exegeted in Chapter 5. Cf. also once more Chapter 2.
- 17 For further explication of this point, see Hutchinson and my chapter, using the earlier lingo of “Therapy” (Read & Hutchinson 2010).
- 18 303 makes clear how the philosophical desire flies in the face of our nature: “Just try — in a real case — to doubt someone else’s fear or pain.”
- 19 Thanks to Anne-Marie Christensen and Joel Backstrom for powerfully reminding me of this.
- 20 I have in mind here, as well as Annette Baier, Michael Frazer’s ‘sentiment-al’ reading of the Enlightenment, which I think is in some important respects conducive to the Wittgensteinian approach I take in this chapter, and indeed more generally in this book with regard to the Enlightenment as a partial antecedent of Wittgenstein (Frazer 2010).
- 21 Or, as one might alternatively, somewhat more ‘literally’, translate the end of this great remark: one looks into his eyes (Compare the new Hacker/Schulte translation). Or possibly: one looks him in the eye. Or even: one *sees him in* the — in his — eyes. Much as Wittgenstein remarks in various other places things along the lines of: one sees (into) another, through his/her eyes.
- 22 One might here add, thinking of the period of composition of the *PI*: Fascism grows out of failures such as these. Fascism begins at home... One *knows* that such failure (and on a vast scale) to treat others’ suffering as suffering is being trumpeted as a necessary overcoming of a common human reaction, at places around the world (even perhaps: in one’s old homeland), as one writes/reads... ...Or at least; that is certainly something *Wittgenstein* knew, at the time that he wrote the anti-‘private-language’ considerations, during the reign of Nazism, during the War. And: we should know it too — we too badly need to know it — today. Partly, because we are gradually causing the mother of all genocides, by causing ecocide.
- 23 Cf. McDowell and Cavell (Crary & Read 2000, 43).
- 24 As I argued in Chapter 8, it’s an illustration of the poverty of our intellectual culture — i.e. of the degree to which we tend to assume (are held captive by) a hegemonic dogmatic individualism —, that we ever allowed Kripke’s Wittgenstein to masquerade as a representative of a *community* view! When ‘his’ is actually a hyper-individualism, which gets critiqued in Analytic philosophy merely by other individualisms.
- 25 I am thinking here of Peter Winch’s book *The Idea of a Social Science and Its Relation to Philosophy* (2003). See especially *Wittgenstein among the Sciences* (Read 2012a, 106–107), for discussion of the conception of ‘internal relations’ between persons animating Winch’s book. (See also of course Chapter 7, wherein I suggest how we ought to see ‘internal relations’ as transitional thinking, because they are not really decomposable enough to be a genre of *relations*.)
- 26 Cf. also *PI* 281–284, and *PI* 581–583; and Simon Glendinning (2007, 154). And compare this marvellous remark of Wittgenstein’s to his disciple Drury, who had become a doctor:

Look at your patients more closely as human beings in trouble and enjoy more the opportunity you have to say ‘good night’ to so many people. This alone is a gift from heaven... I think in some sense you don’t look at people’s faces closely enough.

(Monk 1991, 389)

There are many more things that Wittgenstein said that have been recorded in Monk’s biography of Wittgenstein which could be taken to provide

anecdotal backing for my interpretation; I do not offer them here, partly for reasons of space *but also* because I want the main weight to fall on my interpretation of the *text* of *PI*.

- Soren Overgaard attempts to bring Wittgenstein and Levinas as close as they can be brought, on these matters (2005, 256). (See also n.27, below).
- 27 My language here intentionally connects Wittgenstein to Knud Logstrup. See “‘Private language’ and the 2nd person: Wittgenstein and Logstrup ‘versus’ Levinas?” (Read 2019a). (This piece also draws out how Wittgenstein and Logstrup are, as I see them, superior to Levinas in this new first philosophy. Because they do not fall into the abyss of dogmatically assuming ‘alterity’. Levinas writes, “The Other remains infinitely transcendent, infinitely foreign” (1969, 194). This is, I am suggesting, quite alien to Wittgenstein’s critique of ‘private language’. Levinas might have written “infinitely private”.)
- 28 Compare also Wittgenstein’s wonderful discussion at 350f; and section 295. Compare also Stanley Cavell’s important lifelong work on acknowledgement; my line of thought hereabouts has of course been influenced by that and by Cavell’s important reflections on how there isn’t an absolute force consequent upon criteria being satisfied, but rather the fulfilment of criteria has a fragility, and REQUIRES ACTIVE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT and consequent(ial) action.

And compare this moment in Mulhall’s *Wittgenstein’s Private Language* (2007a):

[T]he child can come to employ the word ‘pain’ with respect to himself and to others only in so far as others have already employed that term with respect to him... . But it is not just that those others must be able to see his behaviour as expressive of pain; they must also be willing to do so. One might say: his cries must be seen as, acknowledged as, cries of pain by those who make up his social world if he is to receive the gift or graft of pain.

(Mullhall 2007a, 30; cf. Mullhall 2007a, 36)

Mulhall is here reading *PI* 246. Which helps to underline that what I am talking about in this chapter can perhaps be seen as applying to *much* of the ‘anti-private-language’ considerations’, not just to the passages that I have picked out for particular emphasis here. And what is referenced hereabouts by Mulhall is also what makes the ‘(photographic) negative’ of our actual social relations that can be found in so many of Wittgenstein’s imaginary scenarios so crucial. The *absence* of acknowledgement of pain tells us a huge amount about our actual, fragile, beautiful life *with* others.

- 29 Somewhat along the lines laid out in the “Afterword” of Rai Gaita’s *Good and Evil* (2004).
- 30 Nor am I saying that the mode of failure of acknowledgement outlined in the earlier text is the only way in which a failure of acknowledgement can be motivated: there are others, such as seeing someone as ugly or in other regards ‘intuitively’ repulsive. (In this connection, see the interesting argument made by Bernard Boxill in “Why we should not think of ourselves as divided by race” (2007). See especially his examination of why ‘aesthetic’ considerations strengthened the pull towards racism of European whites against African blacks (Boxill 2007, 221–222).)
- 31 It would be completely absurd, then, to seek to read off (say) particular policies on immigration from Wittgenstein’s philosophy; politics is an art, contextually-sensitive, and requiring balance. But it would not be in the least absurd to associate (say) opposition to xenophobic attitudes towards

- immigrants with Wittgenstein’s philosophy. (As I shall suggest in the Conclusion, similarly some of the core drives of (say) Stalinism, or (neo)liberalism, will also be undermined by that philosophy. Insofar as they are, as I put it earlier, in certain respects quasi-solipsistic.)
- 32 The point here is of course similar to that motivating ethical defences of free will.
 - 33 Recall Gandhi’s important idea that the secret desire of those seeking a moral or political philosophy is, impossibly and self-defeatingly, to save human beings the trouble of having to seek to be good.
 - 34 Compare here Marie McGinn’s useful presentation of Merleau-Ponty’s sense of society/community as more fundamental than any of its nodes or constituents (McGinn 1998, 51). I would not however endorse McGinn’s criticisms of Cavell hereabouts, which are I think based on a misreading of Cavell as actually endorsing other-minds-scepticism. That kind of misreading, I aim (implicitly) in this chapter to correct. Other-minds-scepticism is a constitutive risk, but being tempted by it is an *ethical* (or a psychological – a psychopathological) and/or political failure. Such failure is precisely what Cavell is seeking to understand and to overcome. (Which is not to assert that he always succeeds in so doing.)
 - 35 Explored explicitly in some detail in the under-rated blockbuster movie, *Avatar* (Read 2013a).
 - 36 Following Wittgenstein (see e.g. the “Introduction” to *The New Wittgenstein* (Crary & Read 2000, 4), the point is not to issue any kind of linguistic or epistemological revisionary dicta, but rather to “leave everything as it is” (PI 124).
 - 37 Compare, an explicitly liberatory sequence: “It looks as if a sentence with e.g. the word “ball” in it already contained the shadow of other uses of this word. That is to say, the possibility of forming those other sentences.--To whom does it look like that? And under what circumstances? // We don’t get free of the idea that the sense of a sentence accompanies the sentence: is there alongside of it” (Z, 138–139).
 - 38 These defeaters might of course include many things: e.g. their having done something unforgivable.
 - 39 A fuller take here would draw on Wittgenstein’s remarks on aspect-perception. Mulhall has done some of this work, beginning with his seminal Wittgensteinian reading of *Blade Runner* (Mulhall 2007b).
 - 40 Obviously, there is a vast range of room for what kind, and how much!; indeed, in certain cases (I would suggest that these cases must be the exception rather than the rule) the caring may even be ‘negative’ – one may never want to see that person (again).
 - 41 My thinking here runs roughly parallel to that of Putnam in his criticisms of the fact-value dichotomy (Putnam 2002).
 - 42 And now we can see how the 1st and 3rd person perspectives if pursued dogmatically amount ultimately *to the same thing*: this is what Wittgenstein indicates at TLP 5.64. One can *see* their coinciding in the rational traps that schizophrenics endlessly make for themselves: see Louis Sass’s *The Paradoxes of Delusion: Wittgenstein, Schreber and the Schizophrenic Mind* (1994) for chapter and verse, especially Chapter 2. See also Richard Gipp’s “The narcissism of the private linguist” (2019). As Gipp writes,

[V]arious forms of the metaphysical impulse have taken the character of attempts to escape the context-bound character of human cognition, and it seems not unreasonable to read this omnipotent desire to ‘think’ the world from the outside as profoundly narcissistic. Where what is

narcissistic is... [t]he very idea...that we could, in a...self-authenticating manner, hold on to the meanings of our...terms outside of their deployment in the social contexts which constitutively embed our thoughts.

(Gipps 2019, 9)

The effort to absolutise the 3rd person is in effect a gigantic projection of the 1st person.

- 43 Much as we saw in a different context in my discussion of 103 in 4.4.
- 44 My thinking here is inspired by ideas of Hannes Nykanen’s. (And, in a looser way, by Martin Buber’s ‘I-Thou’ conception of ethics.)
- 45 Of course, sometimes people make too much of their suffering. I am not talking about such narcissistic self-pity, but about the opposite: the failure to take others’ pain seriously, to be *with* them in their travail. This is a more serious fault.
- 46 This probably isn’t even limited to humans; there is reason to believe that some of the same goes on among primates (and probably cetaceans, and elephants, and others). For evidence, see *Chimpanzee cultures* (Wrangham 1994).
- 47 I am drawing here on thoughts of Katherine Morris’s in a wonderful paper on internal relations in Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty (Morris 2018).
- 48 For detail *vis-à-vis* this extraordinarily suggestive passage, see my paper “Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* as a War Book” (Read 2010b); and my chapter thereon in *A Wittgensteinian Way with Paradoxes* (Read 2012b).
- 49 And, concomitantly, the mind of a person who has to some considerable extent overcome their painful temptation towards self-hatred on account of their sexuality, especially homosexuality. I do not wish to put *too* much weight on this point (emphasised to me by Nuno Coelho) in the present context, but I *do* think that an argument on this point could be made parallel to the argument I have made here (and that I have made in more detail elsewhere – see n.48) concerning anti-Semitism, anti-fascism:
- Wittgenstein suffered from prejudice as a homosexual as well as as a Jew; he internalised this prejudice to some considerable extent for much of his life – but less so as the 30s wore on (his relationship with Skinner was no doubt important in this process, so far as his homosexuality was concerned), as his person and his thought matured; this prejudice and its internalisation *and* (crucially) its overcoming gave him some personal insight into the deep workings of prejudice and its philosophical resonance (will and intellect; the difficulty and character of overcoming (philosophical and other) prejudices; etc); his philosophy can be read (as I have read it, on racist prejudice etc.) thus as meditating on what it takes to *see* other human beings, beyond prejudice (including beyond prejudice as to sexual orientation); all this took place closely against the suggestive backdrop of intense, growing Nazi persecution of homosexuals (as well of course as of Jews)...
- 50 As Marc Santos puts it, “While ethical obligation might be at the phenomenological root of existence, it does not in any way necessitate that we acknowledge such obligation” (Santos 2011, 773).
- 51 And this chapter is then rightly the culmination of the present work.
- 52 Here I am tacitly invoking Løgstrup, whose work is in my view quite deeply consonant with Wittgenstein’s. See *The Ethical Demand* (1997, 112), for his emphasis on the radically agentic character of freedom in the face of an ethical question. There is no contradiction between the force of the ethical (or Christian) ‘must’ and the freedom to uphold or deny it; on the contrary.

- 53 Cf. ‘the electromagnetic field’; and also the fundamental conceptions of quantum field theory: these may be useful metaphors *for us*. Also, cf. Arne Naess’s thoroughly relational, total-field image of life. A wonderful (though limited-to-humans) version of this is found in the final sentence of Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* (2012), which is a quote from Saint-Exupery, “Man is but a network of relationships, and these alone matter to him.” Merleau-Ponty saw the social world as “a permanent field or dimension of existence” (2012, 421). One might say, riffing on the early Wittgenstein: the world is the totality of relationships, not of things...
- 54 Cf. also p. 410, for his explicit invocation of ‘internal relations’ as a figure for our understanding our *inter*-relatedness to one another, and p. 412 for a vivid metaphor for this: “as the parts of my body together comprise a system, so my body and the other’s are one whole, two sides of one and the same phenomenon.”
- 55 As discussed in Chapter 9; and see also my discussion of how “form of life” is *inter alia* a temptation, not the essence of a doctrine (Read 2007a, 10–12). McDowell puts the point hereabouts very nicely (though I would inflect the point with more explicit normativity than he does, and thus I find the word “mistake” somewhat inadequate to the problematic at play hereabouts): “When [Wittgenstein] says, “What has to be accepted, the given, is - so one could say - forms of life”, his point is not to adumbrate a philosophical response, on such lines, to supposedly good questions about the possibility of meaning and understanding or intentionality generally, but to remind us of something we can take in the proper way only after we are equipped to see that such questions are based on a mistake” (McDowell 1992, 50–51).
- 56 In the Conclusion to the present work I develop the point that our ‘individualistic’ society fails *even to be adequately individualistic* — in part, precisely because of its forced shared prejudice of ‘individualism’!
- 57 If this has a Hegelian ring, so be it. My depiction of Wittgenstein as a radically subversive inheritor of — a radical rewriter of — Kant would fit with that. Eliminating all the dogmatic commitments of Kant in particular and the Enlightenment in general.
- What Hegel lacks is the 2nd person. His approach seeks to integrate 1st and 3rd persons, but faces forever aporias, because of the absence of any serious I-You element to his thinking, except possibly in the master-slave dialectic.
- 58 And by Merleau-Ponty (Read 2018b), and by Logstrup (Read 2019a).
- 59 (See Section 10.4.) Jean-Luc Nancy’s book *Being Singular Plural* (2000) sometimes understands this point quite deeply. On this point, I am broadly in sympathy with his work, and out of sympathy with Nykanen and Backstrom, who remain wedded, deeply unfortunately, in this particular respect, to our culture’s hegemonic (pseudo-)individualism.
- 60 Or indeed, obviously, than 1st-person ethical thinking, such as egoism or Nietzscheanism.
- 61 Is my suggestion in Chapter 2 that we don’t call Wittgenstein’s conception of philosophy and ethics “non-cognitive” in tension with my suggestion in this chapter that we seek not to speak of Wittgenstein as having “arguments”? In the end, for reasons already signalled there, I don’t think it is. But, in the end, it doesn’t necessarily matter even if to some degree it is. For, as I have argued (sic?) frequently in the present work, one’s freedom in philosophy includes the freedom to explore alternative perspectives, provided they do not have to be seen as directly logically contradicting one another with one occupying incompatibly the space that the other would take up. When we

take context-relativity, purpose-relativity, and audience-relativity seriously, then we see why, as I set out in Chapter 3, ‘grammatical remarks’ and perspicuous presentations that are seemingly in tension with each other do not really *contradict* one another (On this point, see Waismann’s excellent, parallel considerations concerning the logic of aphorisms: “A man who writes aphorisms may say a thing, and, on another occasion, the very opposite of it without being guilty of a contradiction... Two different aphorisms are not parts of one and the same communication” (*HISP*, 122)). This is not mere license; it doesn’t entitle one in the ordinary case to assert *p* and not-*p*. It rather illustrates that philosophy when done aright is not the ordinary case; it does not typically and focally involve truth-expressing assertions. Philosophers have typically fantasised that philosophy could or should be the most stable part of language, the enduring foundation for all disciplines and knowledges. The truth is more or less the opposite of this: philosophy is one of the *least* stable parts of language. It is thoroughly evanescent, because of its relativities, and because its interventions are transitional in character.

62 As Baker, following Waismann, does (*BWM*, 8–11, 153).

63 Cf. also Diamond (1991, 293).

64 In talking of ‘anti-private-suffering’, I am not urging that one must always share one’s sufferings; such an anti-Stoical thought would be alien to Wittgenstein. Rather, the point is that suffering is never *in principle* private (i.e. never ‘private’), and that we ought to make it our first responsibility to attend to/prevent/be present to and with others’ sufferings.

65 My thinking in the closing portion of this chapter has been influenced by (that is to say, formed in reaction against) work of Beth Savickey’s. And thanks to Richard Gipps, Timur Ucan, Andrew Norris, Silvia Panizza, Jeff Coulter, Katherine Morris and Oskari Kuusela for helpful thoughts *vis-à-vis* this chapter. Thanks also to various audiences at UEA, Helsinki, Abo Academy, and elsewhere. Finally, deep thanks to Anne-Marie Christensen and Matteo Falomi for wonderful comments on an earlier version. And to Hannes Nykanen, a partner in the enterprise of seeking to draw out the 2nd-person as a central theme in Wittgenstein.

11 Conclusion

(A) Liberating Philosophy

[W]e...change the aspect by placing side-by-side with *one* system of expression other systems of expression – The bondage in which one analogy holds us can be broken by placing another [analogy] alongside which we acknowledge to be equally well justified.–

Wittgenstein (*TS* 220, §99)

Willing liberates.

Nietzsche, *Thus spoke Zarathustra*

The will to a system is a lack of integrity.

Nietzsche, *Twilight of the idols*

The solution of the problem you see in life is a way of living which makes what is problematic disappear.

Wittgenstein (*MS* 118 17r; *C&V*, 31)

Recapitulation

Wittgenstein's philosophy is liberatory (and there is something profoundly ethical inherent to that endeavour). So far, that claim in itself might justly be considered to be not particularly original, being more or less present already in Waismann, later Baker, and Cavell. If there is value in the present work, it probably culminates in the criticism I have offered of individualist interpretations of the claim. In my (linked) emphasis upon philosophical liberation as an essentially shared endeavour. In my (linked) exploration of the 2nd person (including 2nd person plural (and 1st person plural)) as a key to Wittgensteinian liberatory philosophy. And in my (linked) development of the particular sense in which an ethics of relation, a reading of autonomy *as* relation, can be found in (or developed from) the *PI*. I shall seek to develop *these* broadly original thoughts, in this very final portion of this book, and to show how they should lead us not only to ethics but to politics.

I have endeavoured in the body of the book to offer a version and a vision of Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations which does not, as

so many sadly do, travesty him. Central to this project has been a stress on Wittgenstein's *methods*. The version of Wittgenstein's method(s) that I have offered involves realising the promise of Socrates the midwife, and even the promise of Stoicism and of Buddhism: the promise of liberation. Wittgenstein's philosophy, I have characterised as the activity of gaining (better: of seeking) autonomy in relation to one's disturbing inclinations to mire oneself in (what one oneself takes, on reflection, to be) nonsense. This overcoming of the heteronomy that *is* unaware fealty to such inclinations *is* philosophical liberation. It occurs, principally, by means of being-with-others in philosophical travail, and finding ways out. Especially, by way of creating new pictures that reveal that one was subject to a picture, and that it is non-compulsory. And the method is crowned by means of being-with-others (full stop), in a relationship of care born out of a shared capacity for suffering – and for care.

Intellectual freedom is better seen as a way than as a goal that one can hubristically fantasise once and for all arrival at. Freedom then is the process of maximising our chances of not being unwarily trapped. We free ourselves from attachment to dogma by acknowledging other possibilities, made available principally by each other, emergent from the *enabling* nature of human community: that is, from the way in which human sociality and community, far from constraining us, as is (ludicrously) assumed by the political philosophy of liberalism,¹ makes most of what we do possible. Our attachment to others (and to the world) is what makes possible our non-attachment to dogma and to our desires (excessive desires for generality, for simplicity, for not having to think or try).

Thus for the first time anywhere, here is a reading of the *PI* both resolute *and* following later Baker. Where these mentors and colleagues (and myself included!) have tended in the past to stress the therapy (or even the specifically psychoanalytical) object of comparison, I have made focal Wittgenstein's liberatory ambitions (though Baker and Waismann of course initiated this focus). And, more than them, more (especially) than later Baker, I have tended to stress how this work cannot normally be done fully by, let alone *for*, oneself. I would add that, insofar as the therapy object of comparison is useful, that is almost always *because* it can yield (an *inter-personally achieved*) freedom. (Philosophical work is both inherently inter-personal *and* unavoidably personal. A work on oneself, and on and with others each with their quiddities as well as with deep commonalities with one.)

Take the following case. Some time ago now, Hutchinson wrote the following, of "our method":

[W]hen the philosopher is faced with a seemingly insurmountable philosophical problem, that problem can often be traced to his being in the grip of a particular picture of how things must be. This

picture's hold over the philosopher is unconscious or unacknowledged. The task for the philosophical therapist is to break the grip this philosophical picture has over her interlocutor, that is, to show him there are other ways of seeing things. This is effected by the Wittgensteinian philosophical therapist facilitating her interlocutor's realisation that other pictures are equally valid.

(Hutchinson 2007, 694)

My emphases here are designed to bring out how the *work* in the 'therapy' picture is done *by the liberatory dimension of the task*, highlighted in my emphases.

The 'purely negative' nature of therapy has, as an object of comparison for (Wittgensteinian) philosophy, often attracted criticism. I expressed sympathy with much of that criticism, in Section 0.2 of this book. At the end of this book, we can see more clearly how, in this regard too, liberation is better off. The freedom that Wittgenstein seeks (to offer) is not some purely negative state.² It is autonomy among live options. No 'freedom' *is* freedom unless it offers up real choices. Wittgensteinian liberation is the capacity to choose freely – no longer captive to any given picture – between choices that amount to a freedom worth having. It is autonomy in a space made possible by the 'resources' of our shared language/community/ecosystem.

And we can now start to see better the potential political payoff to liberatory philosophy, that I will emphasise in this Conclusion. What we learn from Wittgenstein helps make clear the grave impoverishment of standard – liberal or libertarian – visions of freedom, in hoc as they are to 'negative freedom' which may well not – and in consumer capitalism typically doesn't – offer serious choices, choices worth having, despite offering superficially a veritable cornucopia of choice. In particular, genuinely democratic choices depend on the power of *shared* power, shared freedom, as in Arendtian images of what politics ought to be. Philosophy begins with "we". (Habermas and Apel too are alive to this constitutive need for communication, beyond Kantian individualism. To how freedom has to be together in a real democracy.)

Broadly similarly (to with therapy): I'd argue that the "I'll teach you differences" frame that is found repeatedly in *PI* (e.g. in 194, 196, 293, 311, 317, 339, 693...) – and that I have periodically emphasised in this book as critical to the understanding of Wittgenstein – *cashesh out* as fundamentally liberatory in purport. In opposing the *craving* for generality, in opposing scientism, one is seeking to free one's interlocutors (including oneself) from frames that steer them down narrow impoverished routes. One is seeking to facilitate *more* live options for expression and action, as opposed to the less that one ends up with if one keeps seeing the many as one. It is heteronomous to suppose that this philosophical liberation can be done *for* one, but it is hubristic to suppose that it

can be all done *by* one. Following the Ancients (starting with Socrates), I have suggested that philosophical knowledge is self-knowledge³: varying them (though building on a famous feature of Socrates's practice), I have suggested that it is pre-eminently *plural, collective* self-knowledge. Our coming to know *ourselves*.⁴ And I submit, following Wittgenstein,⁵ that 'self-knowledge' is not best seen as a form or sub-category of knowledge, but as something 'sui generis'. It is not that we first come to know what knowledge is, and then come to see what self-knowledge is. Self-knowledge is what it is and not another thing; it is itself...

All this, I have sought to show by working in sequence through most of the most celebrated moments in *PI* (as well as through some moments that should be *more* celebrated), from Wittgenstein's sustained and serious engagement with Augustine at the opening of the *Investigations*, through *the reader* being empowered through being given freedom ("It is as you please") how you answer philosophical questions, through 'meaning is use', 'ordinary/everyday language' and 'perspicuous presentation', 'objects of comparison' and 'therapies', understanding knowing(-how), and the crucible of the rule-following considerations, to the climax, of the anti-'private-language' considerations.

Further Prospects for the Method Used in This Book

The 'method(s)' shown here could easily be extended; and I encourage the interested or encouraged the reader to go do so. For example; among Wittgenstein's famous neologisms, etc. that help to structure *PI*, I have said comparatively little about "*family-resemblance*" in the present work. But I take that it should by now be fairly obvious roughly how the liberatory hermeneutic is present, and crucial, in *PI* 65–80. Once one has acknowledged its possibility, it jumps right out at one: most clearly, at the very start of Wittgenstein's discussion of the (language-)game exemplar for family-resemblance in 66, where a clearly liberatory trope is employed: "Don't say: "There *must* be something common, or they would not be called 'games'" – but look and see whether there is anything common to all. ... To repeat: don't think, but look!"⁶ Look; as opposed to already 'knowing' what you would see if you did look, because you already 'know' what is there to find. (This, again, is why I have called Wittgenstein's philosophy one of unknowing; its fundamental contrary is the self-satisfied spirit of *knowingness* that saturates most of our intellectual culture.⁷)

Then, in 67, when Wittgenstein introduces his suggested prism through which to see what we see when we *look*, "family resemblance", note that he introduces it very much as *his* prism: "I shall say: 'games' form a family." Wittgenstein offers us a possibility, a way of seeing, not a new compulsion or a proto-theory.

Likewise, with (his example thereof) the concept of number. The kinds of numbers, we might say, "form a family". We call something a number,

“perhaps”, because of its “affinity with several things that have hitherto been called “number”. An *affinity*. With things that have *hitherto* been called number. (Thus the ‘genetic’ aspect of the thing; language-families, like biological families, have, focally, a diachronic aspect.) One might note: you are *familiar* with the concept of number... And you can be ‘reminded’ of this. And Wittgenstein helps execute this reminding.

Once again, the *Investigations* here is a mode of reflection on what *you*, the reader, are prepared to call language, and why. Family-resemblance, rather than being a proto-theory, is, above all, a *possibility*. One might say: the key, philosophically, is simply that there *could* be family-resemblance-concepts (Not that such and such *is*, allegedly, definitively a family-resemblance concept).⁸ That it may be freeing to *look on* some concepts *as* having a family-resemblance character.

And what it is to attribute such a character to a concept is definitely not to place all its instances all firmly under one umbrella such that they become identical, gathered in a theory via a technical term⁹: i.e. ‘family-resemblance concept’ is *itself* presumptively a *family-resemblance concept!* There are ‘criss-cross’ similarities (and differences) between family-resemblance concepts. They are not all ‘the same’...

A final, charming, and important, aspect that the idea of “family-resemblance concepts” opens up for us then is that of understanding better its own nature...

And in this foundational method in the *PI* of asking the reader to engage in this thinking for themselves (with or by way of Wittgenstein’s exteriorised dialogues), we can already see how I aim to inherit Wittgenstein as a political philosopher. What being a ‘language-philosopher’ *is* for him necessarily includes being (in the way this book has manifested) a philosopher of freedom-in-community, of relation. For the un-gainsayable insistence on you taking responsibility for your use of this inherited word, “language”, is already an insistence on agency and on negotiation. There is already a politics implicit, in the very method of our figuring out where we will allow or (if you will) *will* the limits of any concept – starting with the concept of language itself – to fall. When we dispense with the fantasy of the language-police, and embrace this freedom (which as I’ve repeatedly shown is no mere licentiousness), we are already present in a kind of democratic politics.

In the remainder of this Conclusion, I explore further how this book demonstrates the possibility of the liberating of philosophy itself (from versions of itself in which the task of the philosopher is in bondage to scientific, etc. fantasies...). I explicate briefly (with relation especially to his liberatory metaphors) how a great virtue of my approach to Wittgenstein, if it is successful, is that it makes the *way* (including the style) in which Wittgenstein wrote a great strength, critical to the possibility of success in his enterprise and indeed to the very nature of that enterprise, rather than (as it usually appears, even among sympathetic writers) as

some kind of obscurity or encumbrance to be overcome. And I explore in a little detail the ethics and politics of the liberatory conception of philosophy – the liberating (of) philosophy¹⁰ – that I here champion, following later Baker et al, following Wittgenstein.

The Major Theme of This Book: Liberation, from What and for What?

Why ‘liberation’? Why in the end has this been the facet of Wittgensteinian thinking that I have most highlighted and aimed to develop, in this book?

As I hope to have made clear in the body of this book, liberation¹¹ is the heir to what used to be called ‘therapy’. For the therapy object of comparison has encountered various resistances over the years, some of which have proved recalcitrant without being obviously merely stubborn. That resistance has come partly, I suspect, from a dubious libertarian-individualist thread in our culture, a thread which itself is in need of overcoming. People should be ready to learn from one another, and to work hard and lovingly to overcome psychological suffering. But the resistance to therapy has partly been too a reaction against the idea of something being *done to* one by another. And, if that *is* therapy, then it is heteronomous, and I want none of it.

Thus once more the greater promise of the notion of liberation (as one finds that notion expounded for instance in Buddhism). Liberation is not something *done to* one, not something which one merely *undergoes*. In the end, one cannot be freed *by* others; nor *for* oneself alone. One is freed principally by oneself; but with and *for* others, and by way of *attending* to them in the kind of way outlined in Chapter 10.

And as already suggested above, I find liberation a particularly helpful object of comparison because it does not make one sound too negative, too underlabouring, too ‘anti-philosophical’: all objections that have not infrequently been raised against ‘therapy’. In particular, the negativity as it is often seen of the ‘therapy’ model is overcome by liberatory philosophy. Here is Baker on this, noting that “we combat prejudice through opening up new possibilities, new lines of thinking to explore. Hence... necessarily [enlarging] freedom!” (*BWM*, 191).¹² Crucially, these explorations involve new philosophical investigations. Wittgenstein over and over asks us to *do* something, to *try* something: to try out new, specific, potentially-liberating routes of investigating ‘grammatically’. This is a positive *task* for philosophy.

The project of seeking out liberating words, liberating turns of phrase and dialogues and facilitations, is (thus) a project (and a way of characterising a project) that I think particularly likely (at least, relative to the alternatives) to *work*. And this is what Wittgenstein wanted and kept seeking: a way of doing what he did that could actually succeed. Rather

than falling into what he thinks is the illusion that there can be context-free philosophical *knowledge* of how language works which makes possible philosophic enlightenment *without* having to engage in a struggle of the will.

Wittgensteinian enlightenment can then be enlightenment in its true sense (I will connect this below with Buddhism). A product of courage; in ongoing socio-linguistic awareness, a little like in meditation. And in the end there is a sense, then, paradoxically, in which the will of which Wittgenstein speaks is no-will. Is just allowing. Philosophy done in the right spirit, for Wittgenstein, is then like falling asleep, in the sense that it cannot be willed. The will that one most needs is the will *to allow oneself to do this kind of thing*. To stop compulsively thinking, thinking in a manner which entraps us in a tedious dimension.

There is a strange and splendid exemplificatory *image* of roughly this – of the difficulty of philosophy, and of what it is like to be freed – in *RFM*:

There is a puzzle which consists in making a particular figure, e.g. a rectangle, out of given pieces. The division of the figure is such that we find it difficult to discover the right arrangement of the parts... // Let us imagine the physical properties of the parts of the puzzle to be such that they can't come into the desired position. Not, however, that one feels a resistance if one tries to put them in this position; but one simply tries everything else, only not *this*... This position is as if it were excluded from space. As if there were e.g. a 'blind spot' in our brain here.—And isn't it like this when I believe I have tried all possible arrangements and have always passed this one by, as if bewitched? // Can't we say: the figure which shows you the solution removes a blindness, or again changes your geometry? It as if it shows you a new dimension of space. (As if a fly were shown the way out of the fly-bottle.) // A demon has cast a spell round this position and excluded it from our space. // The new position has as if it were come to be out of nothingness. Where there was nothing, now suddenly there is something.

(*RFM*, 55–56)

Wittgenstein asks, in effect: Do you want straightaway to produce a meta-physical theory, are you content with the results of doing so (including all the ways it will discontent you); or will you consider the possibility that there is an unconscious prejudice, a 'blind spot', an as-if *spell* that one feels oneself to be under, such that, if we realised our own power, and resolved/dissolved it, (then one) would eliminate the felt *need* for such a theory? Philosophical liberation is the undertaking of various actions and determinations that may make further philosophising unnecessary. Once one realises this, one is well-advised to try out what liberating philosophy offers *first*.

What is it thereby that we are offering freedom *from*? From the pull to metaphysics. And, closer to home, from the in-some-ways-deeper attraction of apparently metaphysics-free philosophisings that nevertheless prevent one from seeing how things are with us, our language and our world. Wittgenstein worried in the *PI* that the *Tractatus* (and Augustine) might, in some subtle ways – despite their depth and seriousness and having often hit the nail on the head – have this effect. The reason I have tended to be so hard on ‘standard’ (Hacker etc.) readings of Wittgenstein in the present work is somewhat similar: these proclaim vociferously that they have escaped from misconceptions of the philosopher’s task, and claim to be nonsense-free. If it turns out that they are likely on balance to entangle one still in the very kinds of webs that Wittgenstein hoped to help extricate his reader and himself from, then that is a weighty matter – especially if, as is the case, these ‘grammatical’ or ‘elucidatory’ (sic) readings of Wittgenstein claim to be compulsory, because they claim to be simply telling us facts that everyone *must* accept because they are facts about the grammar. We badly need to be liberated from these readings, and it is hard, if they entrap in the very name of liberation or elucidation, appealing to the very same texts that we do.¹³ Recall here Waismann’s important remark that “The liberator of today may turn into the tyrant of tomorrow” (*BWM*, 155).¹⁴ Replacing one picture with another, without being aware that that is what we are doing, is a recipe for such neo-tyranny.

Freedom worthy of the name depends on our willingness to engage in auto-critique. It requires that we look ‘within’, and not only without. Thus the ‘Wittgensteinian’ picture of freedom that I am sketching has real resemblances to that found in Gandhi’s philosophy of self-rule, as expressed in *Hind Swaraj*. And to Erich Fromm’s timely (he wrote it at the same time as Wittgenstein began writing *PI*) and prescient book about our tendency to want to *Escape from Freedom*:

[W]e are fascinated by the growth of freedom from powers outside of ourselves and are blinded to the fact of inner restraints, compulsions and fears, which tend to undermine the meaning of the victories freedom has won against its traditional enemies. We therefore are prone to think that the problem of freedom is exclusively that of gaining still more freedom of the kind we have gained in the course of modern history.... We forget that...the problem of freedom is not only a quantitative one, but a qualitative one....

(Fromm 1969, 125–126)

Compare also this ringing characterisation of the freedom that we are actually after, from Husserl: “the ultimate conceivable freedom from prejudice, shaping itself with actual autonomy according to evidence it has itself produced, and therefore absolutely self-responsible” (Husserl 1999,

47).¹⁵ This must be other than a thinking that brackets out the world. Wittgenstein can help fuel one with the courage, the will to do different, as well as to think differently. To stand against the self-image of the time.

We can go further still than Husserl, in setting out the benefits of the liberatory approach to Wittgenstein and to philosophy. For we need to ask also this: What are you free *for*?

The liberating dimension of Wittgenstein's philosophising is for freedom for the sake of having the possibility of being able to see how things are. Freedom for the sake of intellectual integrity: one cannot be *whole* if one is confined from being all that one is. And freedom for the sake of us all: in this way, the Wittgensteinian liberator figure is somewhat akin to the Buddhist bodhisattva. And is guarded against the risk, very present at hand in the Husserl quote (as in the book from which it is drawn), of *not* overcoming the prejudice of (pseudo-)freedom allegedly needing to be: freedom from community, or from the body.

What we are not free for is merely: for the sake of it. That is, once again, we must be clear on the profound critique of the freedom-*fetish* that I have found in and developed further than Wittgenstein,¹⁶ in this book.¹⁷ The deep-set (pseudo-)individualism, the mutual indifference, the widespread near-solipsism of our times: these are (will be) prime negative *targets* of liberatory philosophy.

As I noted just above, we need to avoid a mode of liberation that actually tacitly re-confines one, or re-confirms heteronomy. Not unconnected with this is the serious risk of imposition (and of revisionism) in the therapeutic conception of Wittgenstein's work. For there is little that is heart-on-sleeve therapeutic in his 'metaphilosophy' or in his philosophical practice, at least by the time one gets to the *PI*. *That is not the case, for the liberatory hermeneutic*. One starts to see it present all over the place in Wittgenstein's later thought, once one becomes attuned to it, as I hope this book might have helped attune you, reader. *In particular*, and hearteningly, it is explicitly present over and over again in *PI*, especially when Wittgenstein waxes 'metaphilosophical'. (This is the final importance of Chapters 2, 4, and 5, especially of Chapter 4¹⁸: we saw there how the liberatory hermeneutic is starkly, revealingly, consequentially present in some of the most important passages and sequences in the entirety of *PI* for establishing 'our method'.)

A vital aspect of this, which has been a prominent feature of several of the earlier chapters, is *how Wittgenstein writes*. He helps to free in a 'sustainable' way by providing *continual 'reminders' against self-entrapment*. He writes in such a way that the reader is 'forced' to find their own way through and response to his voices in the text; he encourages the reader to live up to their potential to make philosophical determinations for themselves. In this way, the multiform *multilogue* character of the text, its modalities and 'motley' character, can be seen decisively as a strength, not a weakness.

Liberation, unlike therapy, is arguably more than a strong object of comparison. As Baker puts it: “[It] is crucial to realise that such terms as ‘tyranny’, ‘thrall’, ‘bondage’ etc. are not hyperbolic; they are meant to be literal descriptions of serious loss of freedom” (*BWM*, 185).¹⁹ Often, liberation is simply what Wittgenstein does, how he writes, or, at least, how he finds it natural to characterise to us what he does, what he makes available. It is in my view an indispensable aspect of working towards a perspicuous presentation of Wittgenstein’s mature philosophy.

Liberation is however also an object of comparison. I have in this book set out the case for it as a superior hermeneutic for reading Wittgenstein and for ‘applying’ Wittgenstein in philosophy. But obviously I do not mean for it to become totalising, monomaniacal, hegemonic. That would be itself (as I have explained) un-Wittgensteinian, as well as implausible. Crucially, it would be *confining* (and thus self-defeating). There are other hermeneutics that offer something useful; even Hacker et al. have their ‘proof-texts’.²⁰ Liberation as I have set it out is an object of comparison, a picture. Judge it above all by its fruits, but do not expect it to crowd out all other fruits. It will not, and I would not want it to.

Wittgenstein’s philosophy is more complex and more multiform than any one object of comparison. This is a deep though in the end fairly obvious lesson of later-Bakerian thinking. It is exactly what we should expect from the Sluga-style twist I give to the concept of “perspicuous presentation”, near the close of Chapter 4. *The very idea of achieving a ‘fully’ perspicuous presentation of Wittgenstein’s philosophy is wrong-headed.* Such an idea is itself a trap, a false idol. What we do, in books such as the present work, is to seek some illumination. To share and try out some little progress, *some* success at de-neglecting aspects of what Wittgenstein himself achieved and of what he helped make possible for us to go on to do for ourselves. And what we do is to provide examples for and orientations towards the ongoing further work of (as I see it, liberatory) philosophy. If one has to choose between these two, the latter is more important; otherwise, one is merely engaged in Wittgenstein-worship,²¹ which is of course a powerful form of self-fettering. Becoming a disciple is profoundly attractive, and profoundly limiting. Wittgenstein himself, as we have at times seen, warned against it. I will expand on this important point of priorities, later in this Conclusion. The liberating of philosophy itself (see Chapter 5), as an *ongoing* project, will be impossible within the confines of ancestor-worship.

So the liberatory reading of Wittgenstein has no ambition to be totalising. That would be a self-defeating ambition for it. And Wittgenstein’s philosophy will not be liberating, unless it allows its practitioners freedom; including the freedom not to be *bound* to Wittgenstein’s text. Not to turn charity and respect for Wittgenstein’s genius into a dogmatic commitment to his always being right and to that being an end of it. Such dogmatism is the death of free thought...and the death of

Wittgenstein; it turns his philosophy (i.e. what should be philosophical activity genuinely inspired by his working) into a limited cul-de-sac rather than an open project.

A powerful way to understand this is to make a comparison with Kuhn. Kuhn shows one who is willing to see that there is not decisive ‘rigorous’ argument²² in science *when it falls outside its normal state* (of “normal science”). When a paradigm enters a state of crisis, science’s condition becomes closer to that of philosophy. And *philosophy is never truly within paradigms*. Dominant philosophical ‘paradigms’ can always (unlike in science) be rationally challenged. Doing so is often exactly what is called for, if we are to grow intellectual autonomy, and think freely.

Thus the present work pursues the liberatory hermeneutic. But it is *not*, I believe, dogmatic, even when it may superficially appear to be.

Indeed, this book can *itself* be considered a macro object of comparison.

What do I mean? What is the book, its exegesis and the approach to philosophy that it manifests, to be compared *to*? Well, to the *Investigations*. To other philosophy books, including books embodying other approaches to Wittgenstein and ‘Wittgensteinianism’. And, reader, to your own ideas or words.

Liberatory philosophy as I have presented it can be ‘measured’ against them, *and* they against it. If I sometimes ‘go too far’, then that may be O.K.; provided that the book be taken, as I intend it: as an object of comparison, an invitation to be experimented with, rather than some kind of dogmatic pseudo-instruction, let alone a ‘theory’ or a ‘grammar’ that all are allegedly ‘rationally compelled’ to adopt.²³

Once again, the way that Wittgenstein writes is legible as a constant assistant, in this endeavour. His frequent re-self-questioning; his circling back and back to the same matters and worries; various ways, that I have explored, in which his thought is self-reflexive or ‘self-applies’; and above all perhaps his insistence that he is not telling us for all time and for everyone what philosophy is, but offering up rather objects of comparison and a (possible) method(s): it is *built into* Wittgensteinian liberatory philosophy that it itself ought not to capture nor even quite to captivate one. Liberatory philosophy is not liberatory if it subjugates to itself.

The ‘Minor’ Key of This Book: Ethics, in old and new dimensions

The main theme of this book has been the liberatory hermeneutic, on occasion framed in quasi-existentialist language. In philosophical confusion, we are never merely victims; we are in bad faith. As Wittgenstein notes in this passage from the *Blue Book*: “[W]e already know the idea of “aethereal objects” as a subterfuge, when we are embarrassed about the grammar of certain words, and when all we know is that they are not

used as names for material objects” (BB, 47). One might say: for Wittgenstein, existence precedes ‘essence’. If the latter *expresses* grammar, the former, the stream of life, is what *realises* (and, as per Chapter 7, continually creates and recreates) grammar. When we fantasise ourselves as divorced from or superior to (real) life, then we are likely to ‘go aetherial’, i.e. to deceive ourselves as to the satisfactoriness of doing so.

And of course Wittgenstein himself was not immune to such bad faith. I have noted at times during this book for instance the worrying tendency he famously has to blame ‘language itself’ for our philosophical troubles; rather than being prepared to face up to our responsibility (often, culturally- or ethically-inflected) for these troubles. (Though this worry is mitigated if, following later Baker, we blame *der Sprache* in the sense of *what we say* for our philosophical troubles.)

The most significant *sub*-theme of the book has been emergent ethical dimension(s) of Wittgenstein’s philosophy (including that visible in the previous paragraph), dimensions that I see as so often proceeding necessarily or at least ideally in tandem with the aim of liberation, and that I have in recent chapters suggested actually amount in the end to the same thing (Autonomy *is* relationality).

The liberatory hermeneutic has been surprisingly little noticed, to date, certainly in recent years (the exceptions being Waismann’s pioneering programmatic work, and of course later Baker’s own vital work in this direction, on which foundation the present work is built²⁴). The ethical dimension of Wittgenstein has by contrast become a major theme in thinking about Wittgenstein, certainly ever since Cavell. (And in fact my suggestion that autonomy is relationality is partly anticipated by Cavell’s Emerson. As explicated here by Andrew Norris: “[I]n the central paradox of Emersonian perfectionism’s rethinking of autonomy, [one’s] self-relation is a relation to another – precisely what Kant sees as heteronomy. Or rather, Cavell equates the “recognition of an other” with the “acknowledgement of a relationship” (Norris 2017, 199).²⁵ In my terms: the primacy of the 2nd person relation *is* autonomy. It is what we wanted to mean by autonomy all along, without realising it.)

Much of this ethical Wittgenstein, I am a great admirer of (especially that due to Cavell, Diamond, and Kuusela), and again it is foundational for some of what I have done in the present work.²⁶ I hope sometimes (especially in the chapters bookending the present work, 1 and 10) to have gone beyond it (especially perhaps in relation to points (1) and (3), below). I believe that productive connections have been essayed, in the process, *between* my main theme and this key sub-theme. I have set out at a number of points in the present work how I see ethics and liberation as, ultimately, two sides of the same coin. As Baker put it: “Waismann’s stress on freedom, and his coupling freedom with responsibility, points towards ‘a moral dimension’ of the activity of clarifying concepts which is conspicuous in Wittgenstein’s work” (BWM, 199).

For ethics, as I see it, enters into Wittgenstein's work, and especially into *PI*, in a number of crucial fashions. Here are (the main) three of them:

- 1 The goal of the work is saturated with ethics. Simply put: we are seeking in philosophy to *help* each other (and ourselves). As Baker puts it, our concern is “with enhancing human welfare” (*BWM*, 218).²⁷ Philosophy is a kind of care, achieved crucially mutually. This is already signalled by Wittgenstein's talk of “us” and of “our method”.²⁸ And it connects directly, evidently, with the liberatory aim. Genuine humanity requires caring about others (and in particular about their freedom?).²⁹
- 2 The way is thoroughly ethical. The *will* both to do good ((1) above) *and* to be decent in the doing (thus: an (intellectual) virtue ethic) of it is central to philosophy; not the intellect conceived of narrowly as an agent of cleverness. Baker goes so far as to say that “We might even say that...grammar, like ethics, is “a matter of the will, not of the intellect”” (*BWM*, 190). The (broadly-intellectual) virtues are indissociable from true philosophical activity. Wittgenstein tends to stress honesty and integrity (to which are internally related justice and courage), a stress that I personally find on-the-mark. *This* virtue-oriented aspect of ethics in Wittgenstein has perhaps tended to be the one most well-received or oft-developed in ‘ethical’ readings of Wittgenstein, to date; for instance, in Kuusela.³⁰ It could be developed further by thinking in detail its relation to intellectual virtues³¹ such as phronesis. Arguably, everyone has practical wisdom. This is why the alleged expert position of the social scientist – and of the mainstream philosopher – is no longer valid/tenable. Authenticity, integrity and democracy then combine.³²
- 3 What one is being ‘returned’ to – the ‘resuming’ of our everyday intercourse with one another, our deeper-than-deep sociality, our internal relations one with another – is profoundly ethically-inflected.³³ This third sense is the sense in which I have had most originally to contribute, in this book. For, while various authors have written previously of the ‘formal’ strand of ethics in Wittgenstein in general and in relation to ‘private language’ specifically, the idea of Wittgenstein in *PI* offering a ‘substantive’ ethic is pretty much new. So, as the previous chapter brought out most strongly, Wittgenstein's ‘social ontology’ (sic) ought to be taken as a profound challenge to the ‘received wisdom’ (sic!) of our time, and to the fantasy of progress that has gripped us now for hundreds of years. Liberation from that focally includes liberation from the lived fantasy of the individual isolated person as the basic ‘building-block’, and gives us instead access to what we live but what often, in philosophical contexts (in the very broadest sense of that phrase), we typically

‘cannot’ recollect: our *field* nature. The commons of our mind and of our feelings and our senses. Our being constitutively (though not at all infallibly or irrevocably!) open to each others’ pain, and our being present with each others’ suffering and hope and more. This thoroughgoingly ‘relational’ conception of ethics, a 2nd-person-centric conception, is very much one necessary for our time.

To think of mine as an ethical reading, and of *PI* as embodying an ethic(s), will not be natural to one brought up on Mill or Kant. But to one who thinks further back, and who sees our great ethicists as including Epicurus, Seneca, and Epictetus, all three of the above senses in which Wittgenstein should be read as an ethical philosopher may be able to be relatively natural.³⁴ And to one impressed by Levinas or Løgstrup, the third in particular will be available.

One who has understood this is Hannes Nykanen, who, citing *PI* 546 (“Words can be *hard* to say”), remarks that “To say that Wittgenstein does not speak about ethics in *PI* amounts to nothing more than looking at ethics in the classical way that Wittgenstein was deconstructing” (Nykänen 2014, 78–79). Baker worried, rightly, that

The moral dimension of ‘our method’ has no place whatever in the sophisticated technology of modern analytic philosophy. There is widespread blindness to the possibility that philosophy might be a positive force in the promotion of freedom and imagination in human thinking.

(*BWM*, 200)

This last point perhaps suggests a tantalising possibility. A movement from morality into politics.

Autonomy and ‘Autonomy’

A key jumping-off point for thinking about the broader (ethical and) *political* significance of Wittgenstein’s method, as I have explored it in this book, of liberatory philosophy, is the importance and achievability of a greater and genuine intellectual autonomy. The possibility of becoming autonomous from the ingrained presumptions around freedom and reason in the work of a Habermas, for instance, as explored by James Tully in his classic article on Wittgenstein and political theory (1989). And as explored more generally by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Philosophy in the Flesh* (1999). (Though Lakoff and Johnson become somewhat caught up in the process in some problematic cognitive-scientific assumptions).

The possibility of attaining autonomy through awareness of alternative possibilities and aspects is Baker’s great legacy. Whereas what Hacker’s

‘autonomy of grammar’ thesis amounts to – as I argued in Chapter 3, “What is...meaning?” – somewhat surprisingly, is a *lack of autonomy on the part of lay people (as opposed to Wittgensteinian ‘experts’) actually using the language*. It was supposed to be about our alleged independence, in language, from the world, but ends up being about grammar’s alleged autonomy from *us*. Grammar’s autonomy equals in effect the intellectual imprisonment of people, according to the understanding I’ve claimed subsists in Hacker and his followers³⁵; Hacker has provided a new subterranean form of meaning-determinism. My concern in Chapter 3, “What is...meaning?”, with this seeming paradox was in large part that it is ethically problematic, in denying the autonomy of persons through insisting on ‘the autonomy of grammar’. I noted that such a view of grammar’s role in the lives of linguistic creatures is at variance with those lives as we actually ‘observe’ them. (Note: we never really merely *observe* them, unless we mean the kind of ‘observations’ made by a *participant-observer*).

In coming out ‘against’ the Hackerian thesis of ‘autonomy of grammar’, then, what does it mean to think the actual goal of liberatory philosophy, of autonomy (liberation)? Not “autonomy of grammar” but, as we might even temporarily put it, autonomy ‘from’ grammar (that is, from what a Hacker calls “grammar”)...

Of course there is a danger here, that was explored in detail in Chapter 2. Our agreement in language (see *PI* 240–242) is, as Cavell has suggested at various points in his oeuvre, at root a (deep) agreement in valuing. It is a ‘measure’ of us being fundamentally in relation to one another (cf. Chapter 10). Such an agreement cannot be achieved by tyranny, but of course does not equate to an anarchistic libertarianism either. As I have noted several times in the body of this book: It is not the freedom of mere license.

Autonomy properly speaking, liberation, for a Wittgensteinian, is incompatible with Hackerian heteronomy, obeisance to (what Hacker calls) ‘grammar’. But, as I’ve argued at several points in this book, most notably in Chapters 2, 4, and 10, there remains a problematic residue in later-Bakerian autonomy of Kant or Descartes or Sartre: in its individualism or ‘libertarianism’. Recall the list above of three ways in which ethics features in *PI*: Many of Wittgenstein’s readers have tended to stress Wittgenstein’s focus on the isolated philosophical thinker working on himself, but I have sought to bring out how *liberation after Wittgenstein is necessarily* dialogical, *and necessarily in significant part* collective, and, especially, 2nd-personal. The delusions are to a significant degree collective/mutual – and so is the way out of them. (Returning for a moment to the old medical analogy: we ought to think of philosophical work as requiring at least as much measures for *public health* as it does doctoring.³⁶ If one maintains an individualist stance, then one won’t see this.)

Here then is a crucial conclusion of this book, so far as autonomy is concerned: we need to become autonomous *from* broadly Kantian ‘autonomy’. Deontology is only one set of metaphors for morality, not a compulsory framing of all moral issues. We need to become autonomous from Reason-as-a-strict-father. We can only live in Reason in all its variety, including obviously and importantly the variety explored in this book (e.g. a broader conception of ‘argument’/a conception of philosophical reason as going beyond ‘argument’), if we are not as it were *dominated* by reason.³⁷

Such autonomy from more or less Kantian ‘autonomy’ includes focally the taking seriously of the body, of the emotions/sentiments, of care, of one’s *involvement* with others, and of broad (hegemonic) cultural and political trends that need a critical light shone on them.

Thus we escape from a dogmatic or broadly *liberal* conception of liberation.

In thinking of the potential *political* importance of liberatory philosophy, it is then possible (and important) to guard against a misunderstanding. As suggested already in Chapter 2, one’s advocacy of Wittgenstein’s liberatory aim in philosophy does *not* make one a philosophical ‘liberal’.³⁸ It commits one rather to retaining a certain element of *optimism*.³⁹ Roughly: of the will, not of the intellect...

Rawlsian liberals suffer an optimism-deficit when they aim only for (a pseudo-)justice, a barely-improved basically-uncaring version of the status quo, rather than for societal transformation. They show an elitist lack of trust in human goodness and in true democracy. They are not utopian enough. At this moment in history, there is little chance of human civilisational survival without the kind of changes that often get dismissed as ‘utopian’. One reason why there remains hope is that the coronavirus crisis has shown us that it is possible for citizens (I am thinking of heroic mutual aid efforts and mutual care) and indeed governments to act and change in ways previously dismissed as utopian or impossible. So perhaps it is not out of the question that, as Wittgenstein would put it, this civilisation may yet become a culture.

Similarly, the ‘Wittgensteinians’ who I have argued most against tend to suffer from a deficit of optimism insofar as they give insufficient credit to the transformative power of agency. They suffer a failure of nerve and a temptation to elitism, insofar as they aim to police language rather than trusting the spontaneous capacity of people to decide for ourselves how to use words and to battle for ourselves our desires to bewitch ourselves. As Baker notes, “Freedom is characteristic of the **conduct** of ‘our method’ of philosophy. There is to be no bullying with the stick of logic or the stick of grammar” (*BWM*, 190).

Agreement with Wittgenstein commits one, however strong the opposing forces, to deep effort to be *with others* in your and their philosophical efforts ((1), above), to a constant striving to be authentically

just, integritous and courageous ((2), above), and to our togetherness at a deeper level, of our fundamentally communal and ‘field’ nature ((3), above) – which we can either acknowledge and forge deeper, or deny.

This is why would be a deep mistake to assume that an equation can be made between liberatory and ‘liberal’. For, while there are important features of liberal democratic societies that I strongly endorse,⁴⁰ the political philosophy of liberalism/liberal political theory is emphatically not one of them. Its excessive ‘individualism’, that I outlined a critique of in Chapters 2 and 10 is one key reason for this. And this is *why* I have repeatedly distanced myself from later Baker in respect of his Waismanian (and Freudian; and, in fact, more or less Hackerian) individualism. Consider this of Baker’s, for instance, from the close of “A vision of philosophy”; a strikingly manifesto-like passage:

The ultimate goal of our method is to show how to bring to consciousness our own **individual** intellectual biases, prejudices, drives, compulsions - how to free our own thinking from their tyranny, how to conduct warfare against our own confusions. This is an **intrinsically** endless (dynamic) enterprise which enhances our own **freedom** of thought.

(BWM, 200)

The first emphasis (which, like the others, is Baker’s own) indexes for me the heart of the trouble. This risks neglecting the sharedness (that I’ve emphasised) of so many of our philosophical predicaments. *And* the sharedness (dialogicality) of genuine modes of escaping them. Our civilisation and its (dominant) language(s) have, as one might put it, a collective unconscious. Philosophy is *not* just about individual, personal problems. That risks moreover *depoliticising* it and the need for it.

It would be a mistake then to take my emphasis in this book on interpretive charity, and still more so on the absolute centrality ‘for us’ of the interlocutor acknowledging our ‘diagnoses’, as akin to a stance of liberal ‘neutrality’. This accusation that the liberatory ‘reading’ of Wittgenstein amounts to a form of liberalism hurts precisely because of my antipathy towards the political philosophy of liberalism (and, now, also because of the effort I have taken to worry about a ‘liberalism’ or ‘subjectivism’ in later Baker).⁴¹ How so? Well, when we (practitioners of ‘our method’) offer interpretations/diagnoses/resolutions of forms of words, we do so in a way that means to leave everything as it is only insofar as mutual honesty is in play *and* honesty with oneself. We believe that when people honestly reflect upon their desires with regard to their words – and with regard to their desires and fears with regard to the world – then there is much that they will not leave as it is.⁴² (And here one can start to see how the three ‘forms’ of ethics in Wittgenstein that I outlined above actually bleed right into one another. Integrity and care combine us,

recalling to us our inter-being, and calling us to struggle against aspects of our world that put acknowledgement of mutual suffering – and indeed our very world – at risk.)

Similarly, I find Cavell and most of fellow ‘resolutists’ insufficiently political in their concerns, and too ready to find something resembling the political philosophy of liberal individualism (in the legacy of Rawls) adequate to these concerns insofar as they have them. We might join Cavell in thinking of an ethical-liberatory philosophy as being constituted by disagreement about what kind of community we acknowledge. This is not intellectual disagreement in the conventional sense, and a good thing too. But we might worry that Cavell is sometimes too quick to consent to our failure to form community, i.e. too willing for us to remain apart from each other.

I want to claim that one’s ethical concern will tend to fail if it is not political too. That it’s not just that seeing politics as a domain devoid of ethics is a giving into cynical reason. But that seeing ethics as remaining pure if it stops short of politics amounts to the very same giving-in. There will be no salvation for us in working on ourselves if such work occludes from us the rebuilding of community. Insofar as Wittgenstein himself failed to make this insight available, then he too is part of the problem.

But on balance I regard Wittgenstein as a highpoint – the philosophical highpoint, to date – in the sweep in recent centuries of empathic consciousness (laid out for instance by Jeremy Rifkin’s book, *The Empathic Civilization* (2010)). This, I have sought to indicate, is the true significance of the anti-‘private language’ considerations. But this in turn must absolutely not be a ‘liberal’ or depoliticising thought: to the contrary. The other, in philosophy and in life, is above all one to *be* with and to sympathise with (as we exist in common in suffering), not to condemn; we are always trying to make sense, and trying to help the other; but these projects may hold one to the highest standards of non-violent (or even violent: think of World War Two) resistance or revolution, in certain contexts.⁴³

Wittgenstein as Critic of Ideology

Wittgenstein’s liberatory philosophy requires active resistance to hegemony. Earlier in this Conclusion, as periodically in the book (notably, in Chapters 2 and 3), I have spoken of ideology, without stopping to explain exactly what was meant. In what sense is Wittgenstein engaged in the critique of ideology?

Ideologies that are conscious and self-avowed are relatively harmless (and an ideology can be necessary/good if it is a consistent way of doing what is basically the right thing in its time).⁴⁴ The kind of ideology that it turns out that Wittgenstein, like Marx or Gramsci, was in practice

concerned about was, rather, ideology masquerading as common sense. Ideology with a veil of invisibility. Such ideology is far likelier to *grip* one, vice-like, even than fanatical adherence to a creed. Gramsci, the *doyen* of ideology-critique, writes of the danger of such *hegemonic* ideology. For such ideology (using now the terms of liberatory philosophy) removes one's freedom without one being even aware of this.

So what is the Wittgensteinian task in relation to such ideology? 'For example', scientism. It is first, to make it visible. (For, as Baker puts it, "an *Auffassung* may be invisible to one *generation* or *culture*, visible and even salient for another" (BWM, 285)⁴⁵).

Is it also to replace it with something better?

Yes and no. "Yes", in the sense that scientism is harmful both because it is invisible – we see through it, rather than it being focal – *and* because it is in any case harmful in substance – distortive, dangerously disenchanting, and so forth. It could be replaced with something less harmful in substance.

But "No", in the sense that that would hardly be much progress, if the new 'meta-paradigm' became invisible in its turn.

Wittgenstein's liberatory aim is to loosen the hold upon us of the old pictures, via new, fertile pictures. The latter may quite often (at least at some place and time with some given audience) be provisionally considered better pictures.⁴⁶ But the 'final', crucial aspect of this aim is: to really learn the meta-lesson that it is a fool's paradise to treat the new pictures as true, to cleave to them come what may, to dogmatically 'attach' to them.

Freedom from ideological capture is autonomy in which one is with others, not simply jumping from one hegemony to another. Being held captive by a Wittgensteinian 'view' is still: being held captive. I have stressed at a number of points in the body of this book that *such* captivity is likely to be especially dangerous because it will probably 'present' both as freedom from captivity *and* as resulting in an unavoidable, non-negotiable position. The beginning of overcoming of such (hard-to-shift⁴⁷) unaware heteronomy has been a key goal of mine. Or at least: the making of it unattractive, to those on the fence.

To those that see 'logical topography' as Paradise, I am seeking to say: Look around you, and then you might start seeing otherwise...⁴⁸ Following the following great passage from *LFM*:

Hilbert: "No one is going to turn us out of the paradise which Cantor has created." // I would say, "I wouldn't dream of trying to drive anyone out of this paradise." I would try to do something quite different: I would try to show you that it is not a paradise—so that you'll leave of your own accord. I would say, "You're welcome to this; just look about you." // One of the great difficulties I find in explaining what I mean is this: You are inclined to put our difference

in one way, as a difference of *opinion*. But I am not trying to persuade you to change your opinion. I am only trying to recommend a certain sort of investigation. If there is an opinion involved, my only opinion is that this sort of investigation is immensely important, and very much *against the grain* of some of you.

(LFM, 102)

Compare similarly this (LFM, 95):

TURING: "I see your point".

WITTGENSTEIN: "I have no point".

That is the point: to have no point, no view, no opinion, *qua* philosopher. But to be able to *see*, as if perhaps for the first time. That is intellectual freedom.

When executed in the right way, '*organically*', on a worked-out and addressee-relative liberatory conception, intellectual answers to intellectual problems are transformative.⁴⁹ This is a clue to how we too can perhaps become what Gramsci called organic intellectuals. If we work with those who are working to free our culture from its narrow (individualist, growthist, 'progressivist', economicist, managerialist, humanist, etc.) confines.⁵⁰

The ultimate goal, ambitious though it undoubtedly is, given the grain of most of us, is Liberation *of our time* from its scientific, etc. shackles. As Baker puts it:

Making [conceptions to which we are blind] visible requires waging war against the habits of a lifetime, and probably against the spirit of the culture in which one lives. We need, for example, to learn to mount stiff resistance to "our preoccupation with the method of science" (BB p. 18). We need to have the courage to stand against the force of the main current of Western civilisation and its fascination with the ideal of progress.⁵¹

The Fruits of a Liberatory Approach

Are the reflections I have engaged in above – on the politics of 'Wittgensteinian' liberation – out of place, in a book that has apparently been primarily a work of exegesis and interpretation? But I think that all we need to do to see that they are definitely not out of place, is to reconnect them directly to Wittgenstein, via noting a remark of Wittgenstein's own...such as this:

If certain graphic propositions for instance are laid down for human beings as dogmas governing thinking, namely in such a way that

opinions are not thereby determined, but the expression of opinions is completely controlled, this will have a very strange effect. People will live under an absolute, palpable tyranny, yet without being able to say they are not free. I think the Catholic Church does something like this. For dogma is expressed in the form of an assertion & is unshakable, & at the same time any practical opinion can be made to accord with it; admittedly this is easier in some cases, more difficult in others. It is not a wall setting limits to belief, but like a brake which in practice however serves the same purpose; almost as though someone attached a weight to your foot to limit your freedom of movement. This is how dogma becomes irrefutable & beyond the reach of attack.

(C&V, 32–33)

Drawing on remarks such as this and many more (mostly from *PI*), I have argued that the ‘liberatory’ reading of Wittgenstein is on balance the most plausible and fertile hermeneutic available; I have argued in some detail for it and against the rival, traditional readings (while most definitely *not* seeking for it a new tyranny, modelled on the old):

The only way...to avoid prejudice...is to *posit* the ideal as what it is, namely as an object of comparison - a measuring rod as it were - within *our way of looking at things*, & not as a preconception to which everything *must* conform. This...is the dogmatism into which philosophy can so easily degenerate.

(C&V, 30).⁵²

I have suggested that, once one sees the presence, the possibility, the availability and the fertility of liberatory tropes, gestures, and intent, one sees them all over the place, in Wittgenstein. The object of comparison, this metaphoric, *unlocks* something.

But in the end, of course, liberation is as liberation does: As suggested earlier in this Conclusion, in the *final* analysis, *readings* are not really to the point (That is, unless perhaps the idea of reading here becomes a *way* or process of reading, rather than a contentful *view* or anything like a paraphrase.). Exegeses come to an end somewhere.⁵³ If this book thinks through Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* – both in terms of working through its key moments, and in terms of thinking *by means of* it – it nevertheless means too to come out the other side. That is thinking through, and then beyond. A liberatory take on Wittgenstein needs in the end to throw away the ‘ladder’ that he (and his great book) is⁵⁴: A liberatory way of ‘going on’ or of acting *from* Wittgenstein’s texts is what counts.⁵⁵ At some point, one has to stop staring, catlike, at the pointer, and start visioning the direction that is being pointed *at*.⁵⁶ *Readings* are not most to the point: Because liberatory philosophy is something that

you (we) *do* – not a line of interpretation, however right or needful.⁵⁷ As Wittgenstein noted:

I'm not teaching you anything; I'm trying to persuade you to do something.

(*Ms*, 158, 34r)⁵⁸

This remark also recalls to us a further reason why readings can't be the most important thing, for Wittgenstein. Because in an important sense there *is* no (such thing as a) resolute or liberatory reading. I mean: there's no stating the outcome of such (a *process* – probably, as we have seen, a non-terminating process – of) reading because Wittgenstein's philosophy is not assertoric. It does not issue in theses. The message *is* the medium, the point *is* the process: the *activity* of reading/reassessing/conversing. Readings, exegeses, can hardly be primary in Wittgenstein, both because there is in a crucial sense no content to be garnered from them, and because what *is* to be garnered from them is a *way*.

This is ultimately why, while this book has quite obviously been in most significant part a work of exegesis, that is not the most important criterion by reference to which I would like it, *in the end*, to be judged. Philosophers have mostly interpreted Wittgenstein. The *point* is: to use Wittgenstein: to start to change the world. That is both the philosophical world and the world beyond philosophy (or at least: the philosophical world way beyond the confines of what you may have been taught to think of as 'Philosophy'). And that is what liberatory philosophy is for. I find that philosophy powerfully manifested and manifest, in the pages of Wittgenstein's books. But, in the end, I don't mind *that* much if you don't. So long as you take seriously or at least engage with the *idea* of (the) liberatory philosophising that I essay in this book.

Exegetical correctness as a fetish is in deep tension with (the purport of) non-assertoric, non-dogmatic 'readings' (sic). 'Readings' which bottom out completely into ways of going on.

I judge Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* to be an existence-proof for liberatory philosophy and have argued at length to that conclusion, working through pivotal points in *PI*, and engaging in extensive methodological reflection (assisted by Wittgenstein's words at every turn), *en route*. But, if I turned out to be wrong in that judgement that would not *too* greatly worry me: for what I think is of most significance in what I have done, if anything is, is the existence-proof for liberatory philosophy that is (present in) *this* book.

Wittgenstein as Enlightener

How new is this? Given what I have just been setting out, how in the end do we see (this) Wittgenstein in relation to forebears? Clearly, there

are ways in which (my) Wittgenstein is not an heir to the Enlightenment (think of his 'Tolstoyanism' for instance), and, I'd say, these ways are mostly a very good thing too. But I have presented in this book an important way that he IS an heir to the Enlightenment: in that he keeps true to the essence of its commitment to freedom of thought ... while sloughing off *all* its substantive commitments. True freedom of thought involves being willing to question/overcome everything potentially metaphysical that the Enlightenment gave us.

Thus Wittgenstein's ethic of maturity can be read as a 'constructive' immanent critique of the Enlightenment,⁵⁹ somewhat as can Foucault's; though only if that critique is read as radical. For Wittgenstein's Enlightenment puts under question all the shibboleths of the Enlightenment: the veneration of 'the individual', 'progress', the downgrading of spirituality and religiousity, the pre-eminence of 'Reason' and of 'argument', indeed, in a way enlightenment/Enlightenment itself. Enlightenment is *not* really, unless it is *willing* to ask questions that bring *itself* into question (cf. my interpretation of 133!). The discovery that would place the Enlightenment beyond question is not one that we should assume can be made, let alone *has* been made.⁶⁰

Once one has made these changes to the inheritance of the Enlightenment, one can justly place what emerges directly alongside very different, non-rationalist traditions of *enlightenment*, such as much Buddhism.⁶¹

Above all, perhaps, we need to re-understand ourselves as part of a field of living beings. Our's/Wittgenstein's is a practice of freedom *integrated with needed existential-societal transformation*. Liberatory philosophy as I have sketched (and, I hope, exemplified) it in the present work is simply not something for one person alone.

The Darkness of *This* Time

So...am I *optimistic* about the *prospects* for this liberatory vision of philosophy?

Not hugely. I am not quite as pessimistic as Wittgenstein himself sometimes perhaps has seemed to be.⁶² I think that his cultural pessimism risks being self-fulfilling. But a realistic assessment suggests that the prospects for liberatory philosophy are not particularly healthy. Indeed, it could be argued that they keep getting worse, on balance. Because of the seemingly-relentless cultural power of scientism. Also because of a number of other powerful developments, some of them allied to this, some of them pointing in a very different direction, including the hegemony, which Wittgenstein of course critiqued, of an ideology of 'progress' and of a liberal bastardisation of freedom (including of free thought), the rise of a global monoculture making genuinely alternative modes of thought more alien or inaccessible or indeed non-existent,⁶³ the rise of consumer culture – including in education – making deep

thought less and less widespread or attainable. It is unlikely that we will achieve much in the way of large-scale philosophical transformation until we are somehow able to effect some very deep cultural and social change which counters these factors. The capacity to effect such change is hard in the hands of academics, still less in the hands of those (e.g. Wittgensteinian) academics already marginalised by scientism, etc.:

The sickness of a time is cured by an alteration in the mode of life of human beings, and it is possible for the sickness of philosophical problems to get cured only through a changed mode of thought and of life, not through a medicine invented by an individual. // Think of the use of the motor-car producing or encouraging certain sicknesses, and mankind being plagued by such sickness until, from some cause or other, as the result of some development or other, we abandon the habit of driving.

(*RFM*, 132; translation emended.)⁶⁴

The example is extremely telling, perhaps even prescient. It certainly is not in the hands of philosophers, let alone individual philosophers, to rein in the social and ecological catastrophe that is contained in the fantasy of worldwide individual motor-vehicular ‘freedom’; the question becomes how we can act so as to help make *possible* such a changed mode of thought and of life. And one necessary way is: by facilitating intellectual freedom, an ability to break out of the chains that bind us to the contemporary, spiralling-unsustainable status quo.

Perhaps there is hope in the endemic crisis (especially, ecological; also political-democratic, inegalitarian, and financial) that techno-capitalism has (through such fantasies as that of car-based freedom for all⁶⁵) now created, in the slow (but, sadly, too slow) death of economic-growthism (visible in the 2020 coronavirus crisis), in the self-consuming of crude aspirations for ‘freedom’ which amount to aspirations for stuff. Perhaps Wittgenstein, as Nietzsche hoped for himself, will at least be born posthumously. Perhaps a time is coming when broadly Wittgensteinian (also perhaps broadly Tolstoyan, Tagorean, Gandhian, Illichian, Arendtian) post-technophilic, human-scaled, authentically-freeing culture may become a more natural idea and even a reality.

Perhaps. Or perhaps that time will still be a while a-coming. If so, then we can at least keep hope and thought alive, in the meantime, as philosophers and monastics did during the Dark Ages... And, in taking heart in and for doing so, we ought to consider Wittgenstein’s ‘version’ of Gramsci’s famous dictum: “If someone says: “By the look of them, things are getting worse, and I can find no evidence that they will improve. And yet, in *spite* of this, I believe things will get better!” – I can admire that” (Rhees 1981, 223).⁶⁶ For such belief is not ‘belief-that’. It is more like ‘belief-in’. It is faith, and a willing. It may be all that stands

between us and the perhaps-unending Dark Age that would follow, if we were simply to give up.

Freedom: Including from the Hegemony of ‘Freedom’

An old, close object of comparison may help, both in shedding light on this and in the actual pursuit of this task of keeping, of willing. In Buddhism (and Stoicism), one seeks freedom from suffering; through one’s teachers, through the active seeking after truth and wisdom, through community. One seeks to address and root out the causes of suffering.

In Wittgensteinian liberatory philosophy, one seeks freedom from (intellectual) suffering (i.e. from suffering from suffering; the Buddha’s ‘second arrow’, the one that one metaphorically fires at oneself after having been transfixed by an actual arrow, is an intellectual phenomenon). One seeks to address and root out the causes of the suffering.⁶⁷ One takes up a meditative attitude towards the thoughts that torment one. These thoughts then become one’s topic, *not* (as they typically are in philosophy), one’s would-be resource.

Wittgenstein’s own focal moment for this was his project of achieving greater freedom, from the fetters that he hadn’t acknowledged still held him when he wrote the *Tractatus*. This was the point of my discussion of 113–115, in Chapter 4. The *project* of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy is quite largely: pursuing such a liberatory aim.

Our aim in philosophy is liberation. We soteriologically seek salvational or redeeming words. But *without* being captured by the abstract fantasy of liberation/of liberty. (This is why, in discussing 95–115, I emphasised how subtle Wittgenstein’s actual engagement with the *TLP* often is, how delicate the project of liberation with regard to it is, how designed for freeing us the *Tractatus* already was; *and* how, even so, Wittgenstein himself still occasionally fell short, and gave an undue simplistic impression of: *TLP*=captive, *PI*=freedom.)

Looking back over this book from the vantage point of this c/Conclusion, we can re-see the point of each of its chapters: as a means to liberation *while guarding simultaneously* against re-entrapment by that same project:

- In Chapter 1, I set this out preliminarily by way of a prolepsis to 43: suggesting how 1 pre-emptively undermines both the ‘Augustinian picture’ *and* the picture (of language-use) often ascribed to Wittgenstein as its alleged antidote.
- Chapter 2 is an extended meditation on the unavoidability and yet simultaneously, ‘paradoxically’, non-compulsoriness of liberation, as midwifed to us by *PI* 16.
- In Chapter 3, the very idea of a Wittgensteinian account of meaning was subjected to question. And in relation to ‘what’ was offered the reader *in Chapter 3 itself*, I made, at its close, the same point.

- Chapter 4 culminated in a detailed thinking through 122. I argued that reading 122 aright can help show us how we do not get a totalising ‘worldview’ from *PI*, and a good thing too. The idea of total, permanent freedom from any and all present or future entrapment is not a meaningful aim. The image of a complete attained freedom seemingly offered by the concept of “perspicuous (re-)presentation”, I undermined further moreover by suggesting (following, I suggested, Wittgenstein) an enduring freedom on whether to embrace that very concept.
- In Chapter 5, the image of a complete attained freedom coming from the ‘end of philosophy’ was dispelled by my re-reading of 133: as not buying into such a fantasy.
- In Chapter 6, I suggested how Wittgenstein at 138–155 could be read as pre-emptively ‘dissolving’ the knowledge-that vs know-how debate (rather than, as is often supposed, taking up a version of the latter ‘position’ in the debate), leaving the reader without answers, and needing to find their own way about the concept of knowing. Chapter 6, one might venture to say, ends in silence.⁶⁸
- Chapter 7 sought to set out a proper, significant, variegated space of agency while avoiding revisionism about logic/rules; one ought not to end up attaching to a revisionist ‘logical existentialism’, for that would end up confining one in a *fantasy* of freedom, and yet, one is no more compelled to reject that notion completely than one is to reject (or accept!) completely the notion of ‘internal relation’.
- In Chapter 8, I dispelled the *faux* freedom of Kripkensteinianism, as precisely an instance of pseudo-liberatory philosophy: philosophy where a tacit desire for ‘complete’ ‘liberation’ has run amuck.
- In Chapter 9, I suggested a more humble role in the concept of ‘bedrock’ than is usual. I suggested that it can help liberate us from fantasies of ‘complete’ explanation. But that expecting any more from it than that would re-entrap.
- And finally in Chapter 10, I brought to a climax a crucial emphasis that has characterised a central thrust of the book: upon autonomy not being opposed to dependence on others but (on the contrary) being *expressed* by such relationality. We inter-depend; that is how we *are*. If we *attach* (in the Buddhist sense) to liberation and repudiate a deeper-than-deep inter-action, then we miss the point of the *PI* in general and the anti-‘private’-language considerations in particular.

I hope that this summary-list makes sense to you, and holds some power. Elaborating on what I just said about Chapter 6: There is a sense in which we could say that my way of reading many of the sections from *PI* on which I have focussed *throughout* this book leaves those sections silent. I hope it may be clear to the reader how in this sense I have offered a resolute reading of sections such as 1, 16, 43, 122, 131, 186, 201, 217,

and 293. (Insofar as the point of this book has been ethical, then perhaps we should point out here too a sense in which the reading offered here of sections such as 284–286 and many others that I’ve given does *not* end in silence, that is, not in quietism.)

In any case, the project of liberation without re-captivity by the phantom of (total and final) liberty is the just and delicate balance that we seek.

Our time is one that, much more than Wittgenstein’s (though he was already well-aware of this cultural trend, and sought serious self-awareness in relation to it), fetishises freedom. The idea of ‘liberatory philosophy’ may appear to risk falling right into the mouth of that fetish. The risk is present. But I hope that this book has shown, walked, an alternative path. What in our time we need liberation from more than anything else is the dogmatic veneration of (what our civilisation calls) ‘freedom’, a veneration that not only imprisons us: it is killing us. As the ongoing record of the almost relentless rise of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere and the almost relentless destruction of natural habitats grimly records.

Wittgenstein remarks on “The way whole periods are incapable of freeing themselves from the grip of certain concepts—e.g. the concept ‘beautiful’ and ‘beauty’” (*C&V*, 91; taken from *MS* 138 3a). *For our time*, I would substitute ‘free’ and ‘liberty’, respectively.⁶⁹ My task has been to seek to start to free one from the *grip* of these concepts – while being very clear about how the task of truly *freeing* ourselves remains of paramount import, or even of greater import than ever. Thus our paradoxical task: being freed from compulsion by ‘free’, ‘liberty’ etc., while remaining (indeed, *becoming*) clearer than ever about the centrality of the aim of freedom. For freedom needs rescuing, freeing from its captive audiences – from its *captors*. And only *the uncaptive eye* will pull off this task of a lifetime. We’re possessed by the idea of possession (cf. *PI* 294), by possessive individualism. But we can, with determination, dispossess ourselves of it. Or at least: of *possession* by it.

The idea of freedom, as it is expressed for instance in neoliberalism and in libertarianism, in the ‘populism’ that pushes back against projects for the common good, *and* in contemporary ‘Identity politics’, is a clear and present danger, in our age, an age of (denied) limits to growth and of (breached) planetary boundaries. Who better-placed to be the grandfather of the clear-and-present task of combatting that danger than Wittgenstein, who struggled to free himself and us precisely of the most subterranean of hazards: such as that of the over-valuation of the very thing he was struggling for (‘freedom’). In Madhyamaka Buddhism, one is encouraged to see everything as ‘empty’, and one is encouraged to start (and can take *encouragement* from) seeing such emptiness as “the exhaustion of all theories and views” (Loy 2010, 39)⁷⁰; but one is warned that the greatest danger of all is to see emptiness itself as the one

‘full’ thing. For the very instrument of the quest risks then being privileged, reified. But; we are perfectly capable of turning our critical gaze onto it, and precisely that is what philosophers, after all, are supposed to be good at. And, like Nagarjuna, Wittgenstein surely is.

His practice of a liberating philosophy is one that will trap philosophy itself and (in a similar vein) society at large *if* the ideal of liberation is itself presupposed, immunised against critique. We liberate philosophy and ourselves alike by being consistent: by not allowing liberation or freedom itself to masquerade as the one ‘full’ thing.

The price of freedom is eternal vigilance: in particular, vigilance such that one does not (we do not) become dominated by the concept of freedom and have it hanging before our eyes constantly. Actually, the situation is worse than that: it already does; we already are. We need to make the way that ideas of freedom structure our thought and being (as well as our institutions) visible, perspicuous. That, Wittgenstein has taught us, is how we open up a space of freedom with regard to anything. By achieving consciousness about it.

There is a pressing need now – at time when humanity will be lost unless it finds itself in the 1st-person *plural*, in the 2nd-person (including the 2nd person plural), and in a humbler and more caring relation to other beings – to investigate the hegemony of (fantasies of) freedom.

And to end, even now, on a note of hope: my experience is that, out there in (defence of) the real (living) world, where I seek to function as what Gramsci called an organic intellectual, an idea is being born which sums up perfectly the ambition of this book, and leaves behind the failings not only of standard political liberalism but also of its bastard child, the dead-end of *resentiment*-based identity politics. The idea is *co-liberation*. Co-liberation is an idea (and a practice) rising for instance in Extinction Rebellion, and it expresses the loving understanding – prefigured in Paolo Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed – that one cannot make sense of liberation for some without liberation for all (including, I would argue, non-human beings). That we achieve this liberation together – and that it has to include those in the oppressor-role too.

Perhaps then what I’ve called Wittgenstein’s liberatory philosophy is even an idea whose time has come.⁷¹

Notes

- 1 Expressed clearly in this execrable sentence of John Rawls’s: “Now obviously no one can obtain everything he wants; the mere existence of other people prevents this” (1971, 119). Wittgenstein, Merleau-Ponty et al. bring to light this kind of appalling individualist prejudice, and turn it inside out.
- 2 See below for development of this point.
- 3 On this point, compare this pointed remark from *C&V*: “The less somebody knows & understands himself, the less great he is, however great his talent. For this reason our scientists are not great. For this reason Freud, Spengler,

- Kraus, Einstein are not great” (C&V, 53). (I offer more detail to fill out this suggestion of reading philosophical knowledge as self-knowledge in the section on “The Ancient roots of Wittgenstein’s liberatory philosophy” in “Placing Kripkenstein in the history of philosophy” (Read, forthcoming)).
- 4 This is brilliantly argued in Norris’s book on Cavell and political philosophy, *Becoming Who We Are* (Norris 2017). The voice of the Wittgensteinian or Austinian ordinary language philosopher, like that of the political actor, is in the 1st-person plural. It envisages a community always in the process of formation.
 - 5 And following part of the stratagem of Chapter 6 (cf. especially n.20, n.21, n.22 and n.25 in that chapter): in which I suggested that we are not compelled to regard “know-how” as a subset of a superior category, knowledge; and in which I implicitly followed Michael Kremer’s suggestion (occasioned by Wittgenstein’s ‘Tractarian’ thinking: that philosophical knowledge *is* a kind of self-knowledge (Kremer 1997)).
 - 6 We might now connect that freedom from the tyranny of compulsive thinking with a widespread theme of spiritual teaching, as found for instance in Eckhart Tolle.
 - 7 And which functions as a kind of unhealthy ‘mirror’ to the spirit of know-nothing-ness that saturates much of our non-intellectual/anti-intellectual culture.
 - 8 So, my thinking here is close to a few existing authors on family-resemblance (Al-Zoubi 2016; Gert 1995; Sluga 2006), though I emphasise more than them the *modal* quality of Wittgenstein’s framing.
 - 9 And here, I am disagreeing with the ‘seminal’ treatment by Bambrough (1960).
 - 10 And thus the title of this Conclusion: for liberatory philosophy, I suggest, is by definition a (would-be) liberating philosophy. It also makes possible a liberating of philosophy itself (cf. *PI* 133, on giving philosophy peace by no longer having philosophy itself be only ever put in question). Practicing liberatory philosophy, freeing oneself and others, is part of the process of liberating philosophy itself, and thus with full justice we could equally call the kind of philosophising that we are recommending, *liberatory philosophy*, by the name of *liberating philosophy*. (My wording here is deeply indebted to Phil Hutchinson.)
 - 11 Understood of course in a suitably broad and yet relevant sense. Cf. for instance these remarks of Adrian Kuzminski: “Like Wittgenstein and Berkeley, Buddhists emphasised *not knowledge but liberation from suffering*” (Kuzminski 2010, x).
 - 12 He goes on: “[W]e are called upon to increase our freedom through exercising our freedom”.
 - 13 I have suggested in course of this book, often drawing directly on later Baker, various ways in which actually those texts have been pre-judged by them, including in their very translation.
 - 14 From *HISP*, quoted in *BWM*.
 - 15 Of course, for me, Husserl’s vision of freedom is too in hoc to Cartesian quasi-individualist prejudices. See below.
 - 16 For Wittgenstein himself, as I’ve noted on occasion in this book, has some residual attraction to a problematic individualism, based I suspect upon the depth of his loneliness in his time.
 - 17 I have criticised that fetish in politics at some length elsewhere (Read 2011b).
 - 18 Moreover there is a *reason* why sections 16, 95–121 and 130–133 occur where they do, a reason that may be more visible to the reader now if it wasn’t before: essentially, that, once you have been plunged into philosophy

in media res in the way that (as I discuss in Chapter 1) occurs in section 1 of *PI*, and is then elaborated on in 2, 4, 8 (and 16 and 32 and 64–67 and 128–133), you *need* progressively and periodically, as you proceed, just as you plunge, to *reflect* on what kind of activity (liberatory) philosophy is. This is what Wittgenstein undertakes especially in the sections which are the focus of Chapters 2–5 of this book. Those sections are themselves liberatory, profoundly so. (This is obvious in relation to 16 and to some of 95–133.) But they are of course liberatory in part by way of liberating one from pictures of philosophical method that hold one captive. (Including the very image of there being such a thing as ‘metaphilosophy’.)

- 19 He continues: “[This loss of freedom] is real enough, even though we ourselves may be quite unconscious of it.”
- 20 Though many of those ‘proof-texts’ look a LOT less like proofs, when we take careful note of their diacritics, or query their translation, etc. . I have done some of this work in the present work; much remains to be done. The allegedly-authoritative translation of the *Investigations* itself that is now most widely-read unfortunately at certain points biases readers against later Baker and against resolution.
- 21 I make the case against any such worship or even assumption of interpretive charity, wherever it comes into conflict with the aim of being resolute, at the close of my and Rob Deans’ paper, ““Nothing is Shown”: A ‘Resolute’ Response to Mounce, Emiliani, Koethe and Vilhauer” (Read & Deans 2003). One does no favours to Wittgenstein’s legacy by deliberately remaining forever in his shadow. As he remarked towards the close of the Preface of *TLP*: “May others come and do...better”.
- 22 Cf. my discussion in Chapter 2 of this conception of philosophical argumentation, which I draw from Waismann. Cf. also *HISP* (22–29 & 34–35). (See also Chapter 10.)
- 23 Thus Baker, drawing on Waismann: “There is nothing in any philosophical remark that anybody *must* accept” (*BWM*, 149). (Though, as I have mentioned at various points, it would be a serious and mythicalistic mistake to see in this any kind of irrationalism or celebration of inconsistency. If one accepts some things, then one must accept others. But: There is nothing in any individual philosophical remark considered in isolation that anybody *must* accept.)
- 24 Also, Katherine Morris’s Bakerian work in recent years, which I see as highly-like-minded to my own.
- 25 It is also of course partly anticipated by Cornelius Castoriadis. Take his remark that autonomy “can only be conceived as a social problem and a social relation” in which “others are always present as the otherness and as the self-ness of the subject”. And his ethico-political conclusion — which I have tacitly vibed with at various points in the present work, especially concerning how it is natural to care for others, including in desiring them to be free of torments of whatever kind — that autonomy cannot be desired “without also wanting it for everyone and its realisation cannot be conceived of in its full scope except as a collective enterprise” (Castoriadis 1987, 107–108).
- 26 As mentioned in the Introduction, Hutchinson will I think (hope) in future years produce a ‘definitive’ (sic) ethical reading of Wittgenstein’s *PI*. His focus is especially on the intellectual virtues, especially as they are inflected in Wittgenstein. I touch lightly on these, below.
- 27 Cf. also: “[Our method] is essentially open-ended and co-operative, even empathetic” (*BWM*, 192–193).
- 28 Such talk problematizes the at-times excessive individualism that I have noted elsewhere in Baker. An individualism that I surmise is partly inherited

from Waismann...and partly from Baker-and-Hacker, who were well known for their fierce (dogmatic? – see Chapter 7) opposition to ‘social’ or ‘community’ aspects of others’ interpretations of Wittgenstein.

- 29 Thus by my lights later Baker is at times too content with a tacitly liberal individualist philosophy, in both political and constitutive terms; he is victim to a prejudice according to which my freedom is simply my freedom from constraint, and has no internal relation to your freedom, because the nature of our freedom is our separateness.
- 30 See e.g.

Ethics then emerges [in Wittgenstein’s work] not as a branch of philosophy but as a dimension that pervades it in its entirety. Not only is the goal of philosophy ethical, but philosophy also places ethical demands on those who practice it. In describing the relation of Wittgenstein’s philosophy to the tradition of philosophy, one might, therefore, speak of a switch from metaphysical demands to ethical ones. Corresponding to Wittgenstein’s redescription of the goal of philosophy as not truth but justice (although conceptual bounds are not clear-cut here), his philosophy turns from the imposition of metaphysical demands (what things *must* be) onto reality to the acknowledgment of the ethical demands that philosophy places on its practitioners.

(Kuusela 2008b, 286)

There is already an ethical aspect to *all* of Wittgenstein’s philosophising, in its call to truth and honesty and clarity. So in Chapter 10, I described the more specific call that as I see it emerges in passages such as PI 284–315, the call to acknowledge the other, as a *doubling* of the ethics of Wittgenstein’s philosophy.

- 31 Wittgenstein thought courage hugely important. This is the courage (for instance) to be willing to re-assess beliefs that one has ‘invested’ in considerably, not the courage (for instance) to be willing to be tortured. What is at stake here is the intellectual virtues, which saturate a practice such as philosophy. (This note owes much to Phil Hutchinson, who will be developing these kinds of ideas much further in his forthcoming book on ethically reading Wittgenstein.)
- 32 In *this* invocation of democracy, I concur with Wallgren’s approach in his *Transformative Philosophy* (2006).
- 33 See Georg Henrik von Wright’s *Wittgenstein* (1982a, 207), for a useful summary insight into this aspect of Wittgenstein’s thinking.
- 34 Cf. the opening sentence of Nussbaum’s *The Therapy of Desire* (1996):

The idea of a practical and compassionate philosophy -- a philosophy that exists for the sake of human beings, in order to address their deepest needs, confront their most urgent perplexities, and bring them from misery to some greater measure of flourishing -- this idea makes the study of Hellenistic ethics riveting for a philosopher who wonders what philosophy has to do with the world.

(Nussbaum 1996, 3)

- 35 On a closely-related note: I believe that Hacker et al. get the worst of both worlds. By insisting on ‘the arbitrariness of grammar’ as a thesis, they play into relativism and conventionalism. But by insisting that, once you HAVE a grammar then it rules, they end up as authoritarian word-policemen. They fail to see the possibility of a genuine ‘middle way’, that neither makes grammar arbitrary nor polices the grammar you DO have in an ‘Orwellian’ fashion. Cf. Kuusela (2008b, 187) for relevant discussion.

- 36 Thanks to Katherine Morris for discussion of this point.
- 37 Here, I have been influenced by Oskari Kuusela's paper "Domination by reason" (2019).
- 38 For my money, too many Wittgensteinians, *especially* some of my New Wittgensteinian colleagues, have been way too soft on such liberal political philosophy. (I enlarge on this point somewhat in the text below.) I note for instance the final sentence of Crary's essay thereon in *The New Wittgenstein* (Crary & Read 2000), which seems to me a somewhat dogmatic addendum to an otherwise brilliantly thought-through piece of work.
- 39 I have in mind here Gramsci's great observations on this theme; I accept Terry Eagleton's recent critique of most 'actually-existing' optimism, *Hope without optimism* (2015). I shall discuss below reasons for going along with much of Wittgenstein's realistic cultural pessimism – and Wittgenstein's own 'version' of Gramsci's dictum.
- 40 E.g. Civil and political liberties, which are, among other things, important for the flourishing of the intellect.
- 41 On which, see again Chapter 2.
- 42 Phil Hutchinson's 'world-taking cognitivism' should be a key guide here (Hutchinson 2015).
- 43 See for instance my argument in "Wittgenstein's *PI* as a war book" in *A Wittgensteinian Way with Paradoxes* (Read 2012b), an argument elaborated upon by Chapter 10, on the ethics of the 'anti-private-language' considerations. My view is that we are self-evidently in such a context today. That ecosophy leads directly into non-violent direct action for the sake of nature (for the sake of ourselves and our children)..
- 44 My example of the latter would be 'ecologism', at the present time (Read 2013b, 2016).
- 45 (Again, note the encouraging willingness here of Baker to consider what he unfortunately sounds as if he is ruling out, elsewhere: truly collective *Auffassungen*, and thus presumably also collective philosophy and collective freedom). Just before this, Baker elaborates:

That conceptions interfere with one another has enormously important consequences in philosophy. While it is imaginable that someone could get so 'hooked' on one visual aspect that he was unable in practice to see any other, the consequences would, it seems, be minimal. But when a philosophical *Auffassung* becomes entrenched, it affects the whole conduct of one's philosophical investigations. Entrenched conceptions can act as brakes to intellectual movement, or restrictions on freedom of enquiry.

(BWM, 284)

- 46 This is a difference between liberatory philosophy and Pyrrhonism (and from a lot of so-called 'therapeutic' Wittgensteinianism). The liberator is not, unlike the Pyrrhonist, content to use considerations that may be in themselves very weak. Wittgenstein aims rather to birth an autonomy in his listener (and himself); an ability not to be *caught* by any argument, while giving every argument a just hearing and its just deserts, be those many or few.
- 47 Wittgenstein explicitly remarks on how hard it is to shift (oneself or) another from their prejudices: "People are deeply embedded in philosophical, i.e., grammatical confusions. And to free them from these would presuppose pulling them out of the immensely manifold connections they are caught up in. One must so to speak regroup their entire language" (*BT*, 185; emphasis added). Under these circumstances, it would be delusive to pose philosophy

- as purely a first-personal activity. It's hard; one needs all the help one can get, of every kind, with and from every one.
- 48 Compare here *BWM* (275), whereat Baker points out the way in which *PI* 27, for instance, is plainly directed to the reader's will, not to her intellect.
- 49 Overcoming the false antithesis between intellectual and non-intellectual work helps to overcome the impression that the reader might sometimes erroneously have garnered from this book that I myself am issuing from on high a dogmatic meta-philosophy that, ironically, would be merely/narrowly intellectual rather than organically transformative. (Cf. my discussion in Chapters 4 and 5 of the importance of 121. See e.g. n.24 in Chapter 5.)
- 50 For me, in the last couple of years, this effort has been found to a strong degree in Extinction Rebellion, a movement which is seeking to co-create a 'regenerative culture' beyond illusions of permanent economic expansion, of separation from the Earth and from each other, and of individual ego-charismatic leadership..
- 51 *BWM* 285–286. (On the latter point, see my paper, "Wittgenstein and the Illusion of 'Progress': On Real Politics and Real Philosophy in a World of Technocracy" (Read 2016).)
- 52 Clearly, this passage (which of course is close to *PI* 130–132) can be seen as one that connects my way of thinking to that of my UEA colleague, Oskari Kuusela. (In this quotation, I have changed Wittgenstein's underlinings to italics.)
- 53 James Tully briefly/partially anticipates my point here, in note 4 of his important essay, "Wittgenstein and political philosophy: Understanding practices of critical reflection" (1989).
- 54 As Schopenhauer, before Wittgenstein, remarked:
- [F]or the man who studies to gain *insight*, books and studies are merely rungs of the ladder on which he climbs to the summit of knowledge. As soon as a rung has raised him up one step, he leaves it behind.
- (2010)
- (From *The World as Will and Representation*, (Vol. II, 80) a work which of course signally influenced the *Tractatus*).
- 55 See the detailed 'political' argument for this point, in (the second half of) "Wittgenstein and Pragmatism" (Read & Hutchinson 2013). Cf. also the effort I have made already in this direction in previous books, perhaps most notably in *Applying Wittgenstein* (Read 2007a) and *Wittgenstein among the Sciences* (Read 2012a).
- 56 For amplification of this point, see (the section entitled "Cases" in) Chapter 7, wherein I argue that too many Wittgensteinian philosophers have fixated on what rules are and on how they allegedly determine their applications. Whereas the point is: to act *from* them; to leave them behind. 'The therapeutic *reading*' of old makes way for liberatory *philosophising*...
- 57 This is why my previous book, *A Film-Philosophy of Ecology and Enlightenment* (Read 2018a), offered a set of liberatory experiential/orientative *responses* to/dialogues with major philosophical films, rather than exactly *readings* of them. Invitations to respond 'dialectically' to the films (and to my text): in fact, such invitations is what I think these films (and my book) ARE. I offer there something somewhat akin to what Paul De Man called 'allegories of reading', rather than readings *per se*. I think that such 'allegorisation' is simultaneously the building of a new lived attitude, even of a politics.
- Somewhat similarly: The point I am making here is that *establishing* a *reading* of Wittgenstein is (in the end) beside the point. For Wittgenstein

does not aim to offer any view or opinion at all, no matter of what kind. Rather, he aims to help us (all) in changing our practice. A truly liberating response to Wittgenstein's texts, as to the cinematic works that I responded to in my previous book, is, I believe, little about establishing an interpretive stability, and instead much about the reader's/viewer's identifications and disidentifications with the voices and points of view (etc.) offered her, with a view to developing a (new) way of going on.

- 58 The quote continues: "What we do is much more akin to psychoanalysis than you might be aware of."
- 59 Thus, despite what I said earlier about Wittgenstein's rejecting the Kantian *version* of autonomy, there is a similarity between the liberatory Wittgenstein and Kant, at least, with his famous essay, "What is Enlightenment?" (which Foucault famously treated as a point of inheritance and departure), where he argues that no one will do the work for you, and that it is for everyone to see with his own reason and use it. The key differences are perhaps: a different (broader) conception of the methods of reason; Wittgenstein's finding it crucial moreover not to *restrict* our method(s) to a method of *reason*; an emphasis in Wittgenstein on an ineradicable 2nd person/1st person plural dimension of this work that you must do; and thus an overcoming of the liberal individualism of Kant.
- 60 These paragraphs are indebted to correspondence with Kevin Cahill.
- 61 As I've done previously, for instance in the culminating chapter of my *A Wittgensteinian Way with Paradoxes* (Read 2012b). See also the final section of this book, "Freedom", below.
- 62 Though I agree with Kevin Cahill, in drawing attention to the following hopeful moment in Wittgenstein's work: "[Wittgenstein's] philosophy does not rule out, and...he may himself have envisioned, the possibility and desirability of a radical break with the inheritance of Western metaphysics, a family line of problems of which modern naturalism and skepticism are two members" (Cahill 2011, 165). Wittgenstein's trouble with modernity, is a cultural, a moral, a philosophical, and a political trouble *all at once*. Or at least, that is what I am hoping this Conclusion adds up to suggesting.
- 63 The impetus given by the coronavirus pandemic towards a healthy (non-atavistic) relocalisation of the world may be at last undermining the cod globalisation that has dangerously monoculturised so much of our world. (I offer 24 reasons for hoping that that is the case in (Read 2020); but, at the time of writing (early summer 2020) it's too soon to say for sure. And there are certainly reasons for pessimism.
- 64 And "...I am by no means sure that I would prefer a continuation of my work by others, to a change in the way people live which would make all these questions superfluous" (C&V, 61).
- 65 And not just any car: to witness that I am not straw-manning here, consider this absurd, obscene, influential recent work by Daniel Ben-Ami, *Ferraris for All: In Defence of Economic Progress* (2012).
- 66 Rhees contextualises this by recalling first that "Wittgenstein remarked that when someone said he was optimistic *because* the law of historical development showed that things were bound to get better—this was nothing he could admire." Thus we see clearly the connection of Wittgenstein's scepticism as to 'progress' *with* his hope.
- 67 Thus von Wright's worry that Wittgenstein could only address the symptoms of philosophic maladies is exaggerated (1982b, 112). But of course von Wright is right insofar as he means that a lone iconoclastic philosopher-practitioner cannot hope to succeed in struggling against these deep-set

causes. That is a reason I bring in the closeness of Buddhism; for Buddhism shows inter alia how a lone practitioner can mushroom over time into something much much more than that.

68 Here I am once again following the beautiful line of resolute iconoclasm set out by Martin Stone (re 201) (Stone 2000, 103).

69 At *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology I*, 1124, Wittgenstein notes that “The egg-shell of its origin clings to any thinking, shewing one what you struggled with in growing up. What views are your circle’s testimony: from which ones you have had to break free.” Our hardest task, I am saying, is breaking free of domination by the concept of freedom itself. The persistence of liberalism and the rise of libertarianism at a time of rising climate chaos is a stark testament to how hard it is (going to prove).

70 Here is the full seminal passage: “The victorious ones have said, That emptiness is the relinquishing of all views, For whomever emptiness is a view, That one will accomplish nothing” (Nagarjuna 1995, 13.8). As we might put it: the relinquishment of views *is* liberation.

(As throughout this book, I would stress that I mean it when I say that Wittgenstein has no views, if by “views” is meant anything like positions. If by “views” one means something more like (non-compulsory) view-ing(s), then it’s a different matter.)

71 Thanks to an anonymous referee, Jim Tully and Joshua Smith for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this Conclusion. Thanks especially to Thomas Wallgren for very fruitful discussion. And big thanks to Skeena Rathor for introducing me to the emerging conception of ‘co-liberation’.



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Abbreviations

- AWL – *Wittgenstein's Lectures*, [Ambrose].
- BB – *Blue and Brown Books*, Wittgenstein.
- BT – *Big Typescript*, Wittgenstein.
- BWM – *Wittgenstein's method*, (Baker).
- C&V – *Culture & value*, Wittgenstein.
- HISP – *How I See Philosophy*, (Waismann).
- LFM – *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics*, Wittgenstein.
- LWPP – *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, Wittgenstein.
- Ms – manuscript.
- PG – *Philosophical Grammar*, Wittgenstein.
- PI – *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein.
- PLP – *Principles of Linguistic Philosophy*, (Waismann).
- PO – *Philosophical Occasions*, Wittgenstein.
- PoP – *Phenomenology of Perception*, (Merleau-Ponty).

- PPI – Proto-Philosophical-Investigations [aka TS 220].
PPF - *Philosophy of Psychology: A Fragment*.
PR – *Philosophical Remarks*, Wittgenstein.
RFM – *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, Wittgenstein.
RGN – *Rules, Grammar and Necessity* (Baker and Hacker).
RPP – *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, Wittgenstein.
SRL – *Scepticism, Rules and Language*, (Baker and Hacker).
TLP – *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein.
TNW – *The New Wittgenstein*, Crary & Read (eds).
TS – Typescript.
WOR&PL – *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, (Kripke).
WVC – *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*.
Z – *Zettel*, Wittgenstein.

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