Vagueness:

Preliminary to a Wittgensteinian Solution to the Problems

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Dedicated to the memory of my mother

Abstract

The problems of vagueness, *e.g.* the Sorites paradox, are a significant concern of contemporary Anglo-American philosophy of language and philosophy of logic. And the vagueness of language that gives rise to these problems was itself a significant concern of Ludwig Wittgenstein's in his later writings. It is therefore surprising that no-one has really brought Wittgenstein's ideas on vagueness to bear on those problems in the current debate. The following study is my attempt to do this. There is, I believe, in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, the groundwork for an eventual blanket solution to the problems of vagueness and I have tried to write an exposition of the relevant sections of the book and to indicate how the account contained therein relates to the problems. The solution to the problems of vagueness is, as I understand it, a corollary to Wittgenstein's conception of the nature of logic in *Philosophical Investigations*, and this conception forms the core of my study.

I begin, though, with an account of some of the problems themselves, and my account is in the form of an exposition of several arguments contained in the writings of Gottlob Frege. With these arguments Frege presents a case for the thesis that logic cannot hold for a language, like ours, that contains vague predicates: in such a language, he argues, one cannot make inferences, one cannot even say anything true. The moral of Frege's arguments is that logic requires *sharp* concepts.

Wittgenstein's response to the problems of vagueness is to call into question the requirement of sharp concepts. That requirement is one of a number of requirements—none of which language actually satisfies—that appear to need to be satisfied by language if it is to serve us as a vehicle for truth. And Wittgenstein thinks that all of these requirements stem from a common aetiology which is: our attempts to understand how language works as

a vehicle for the expression and conduction of truth. He thinks that they all form part of a mythology of truth generated by those attempts; and sets about trying to expose and understand this mythology. His understanding turns out to be twofold: on the one hand, it accounts for the psychological origin of the mythology; and on the other, it explains how the mythology has managed to survive the rigorous demands for a *genuine* understanding of truth in language from a serious scientific discipline like logic. It is a characteristic of the picture of language painted by the mythology that, despite appearances, language is an absolutely precise and rigidly articulated instrument: in an important sense *ideal*. And it is the way in which language has come to be thought to be ideal in this way that constitutes Wittgenstein's account of the psychological origin of the mythology. The story is a history of the mythology, which sees it as the working out of an idealization of a primal, primitive, approach to understanding language by way of defending that approach against the relentless clamour, all through the progression of the history, for justification of it as *the* approach towards a genuine understanding. The account is psychoanalytical: logic, as we understand it, is the product of a process of sublimation in the psychoanalytical sense. But accounting for the psychology by itself it is not enough to explain how the mythology has managed to survive into our current thinking about the workings of language. What is required in addition is an account of the contribution that the mythology makes to our genuine understanding of those workings. And this comes, according to Wittgenstein, as an account of the *utility* of thinking of language as conforming to the ideal blueprint of the mythology; in essence, thinking of language in this way provides us with a very useful *model* for the use of language as a vehicle for truth: by thinking of language as the ideal we are, in effect, comparing and contrasting the use of language with this model.

That is, very briefly, Wittgenstein's thesis. And, as I say, I think that it contains the fundamentals of a solution to the problems of vagueness: the problems arise because of a mismatch between the way that we think language is, under the influence of the mythology—we think that it must have sharply defined concepts—, and the way that it actually is.

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Contents

Abbreviations

I have used the following abbreviations in my dissertation:

CWF	*The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Sigmund Freud
FA	*Foundations of Arithmetic*, Gottlob Frege
GA	*Grundgesetze der Arithmetik*, Gottlob Frege
LC	*Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, Ludwig Wittgenstein
PI	*Philosophical Investigations*, Ludwig Wittgenstein
PO	*Philosophical Occasions*, Ludwig Wittgenstein
PW	*The Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, Gottlob Frege
TLP	*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Ludwig Wittgenstein
UM	*Wittgenstein—Understanding and Meaning*, G.P.Baker and P.M.S.Hacker

Preface

This thesis began life in 1994 as an attempt to understand §§81-133 of *Philosophical Investigations* and to relate what Wittgenstein said there to the problems of vagueness in language. And that is how I still think of it.

It begins with a chapter on Frege, to give a sense of how *he* conceived of and dealt with the problems of vagueness. In it I simply take three of the half-dozen or so arguments from his writings arguing that vagueness is incompatible with logic in a language and give my own account of what I think the arguments are. These arguments show well, I think, how he was thinking of vagueness generally. (And one of them, incidentally, suggests what I think is a promising approach to the Sorites paradox which, as far as I am aware, has never been followed up.)

I think Frege is a good place to start because on the one hand he talks about vagueness and its related problems in terms that are very closely consonant with those of contemporary discussions of vagueness—I wanted what I had to say to relate to the current debate on vagueness—and because on the other hand there is a close relationship between his and Wittgenstein's later views. As regards this latter point: it is well known that Wittgenstein was profoundly influenced in his philosophy by Frege, and, as I have come to understand what each of them had to say on the specific issues with which I have been concerned, I have come to see, in this area, the closeness of their thinking in the ideas themselves; Wittgenstein's later views on vagueness can, I think, be taken to be a direct response to Frege's and I believe that I have made this apparent in my thesis.

Following Chapter 1 on Frege, the bulk of my thesis is an account of what I take to be Wittgenstein's later understanding of the nature of logic as he presents it in *PI*. It is through this understanding that I think a Wittgensteinian solution to the problems of

vagueness beckons, and I had the possibility of such a solution constantly at the back of my mind as I composed my account of it.

Chapter 2 is an introduction to the core of my thesis in Chapters 3 & 4. It includes a critical, though on the whole favourable, look at G.P.Baker & P.M.S.Hacker's idea from Wittgenstein of the Augustinian picture of language, as well as an outline interpretation of *PI* §§1-88, and a detailed exposition of *PI* §81, which I use to introduce both of the themes that I take up, one in each of the two following chapters.

Chapter 3 is my attempt to understand the first of these themes which I present in the form of Wittgenstein's answer to the question that he poses himself at the beginning of §89: In what sense is logic something sublime? Essentially, the answer for him is, I think, that logic is something sublime in the *Freudian* sense of the word "sublime"; and I try to spell out what the consequences of this are for his conception of logic.

In Chapter 4, I explain how I think Wittgenstein conceives of the mechanism of logical analysis in the same way as he thinks of language-games as working in philosophy. He thinks that, effectively, logical analysis consists in the construction of, and comparison of language with, a model language that helps us in this way to see more clearly how to use language for the expression and conduction of truth.

Finally, Chapter 5 is a concluding chapter that explains how I see my account of Wittgenstein's later understanding of logic relating to the problems of vagueness. It begins with a detailed account of sections of *PI* relevant specifically to logic and vagueness, and finally turns to look at Frege's views as presented in Chapter 1.

Almost all of my thesis is expositional, of Wittgenstein or of Frege. In the case of Frege, the source texts are invariably highly compressed and my exposition has, consequently, involved me in a good deal of working out and elaboration of the arguments that they contain. Because of the extent to which I have involved myself in this business of detailed spelling out of arguments that are only very briefly expressed in the original text, it does sometimes worry me a little that I may have left myself somewhat open to the charge that these are not Frege's arguments, but my own; however, my guiding principles throughout have been: that my elaborations fit the text; that they are in keeping with the rest

of what Frege says; and that they are as good as I can make them. In the case of Wittgenstein, anyone who has tried to understand first hand what he is saying in the text of *PI* will know how demanding he is of his would-be interpreter. I have focused in my interpretation on about a dozen pages of the book—as I have said: §§81-133—and have to admit that, though I do feel I understand what Wittgenstein is saying there as a whole, there are still details in what he says that I do not understand. My interpretation is based originally on painstaking paraphrases that I made of all of §§81-131, and I found this an extremely productive exercise (the plan originally was to include these paraphrases as an appendix to my thesis, but my understanding has since moved on and I don't think that they would be useful now in support of my overall interpretation).

As regards the contribution that my thesis tries to make to the subject of philosophy, there are a number of things that I would say.

As far as I understand them, none of the currently available approaches to solving the problems of vagueness seems promising. All the proposals of formal solutions—fuzzy logic, supervaluationism, and so on—appear, along with other problems, to run into difficulty over the idea of higher-order vagueness (the idea of indeterminacy over the indeterminacy—and so on—of application of a vague expression); and the epistemic approach—according to which vagueness is entirely a matter of ignorance about the correct use of words in borderline situations—recently championed by Timothy Williamson, just *looks* so unlikely, though it is difficult to disprove. In this climate, I think that any new suggestions ought to be looked into.

The arguments from Frege that I look at at the beginning of my thesis, although referred to frequently in the literature, have never been explained fully in the way that I have tried to do.

And my attempt to work out what Wittgenstein would have thought about vagueness as it is conceived in the contemporary debate is worthwhile because no-one else, to my knowledge, has tried to do so. It seems surprising to me that such a influential philosopher elsewhere, should so clearly have something to say on a topic of current interest and yet have no overt representation in the debate.

Most of all, though, I think that I have produced a novel and interesting interpretation of Wittgenstein's considerations of logic in the first 50-or-so pages of *PI*. This interpretation promises to capture almost all of what Wittgenstein has to say in those pages, as well as to provide a way of solving a number of problems in the philosophy of logic in addition to those relating to vagueness.

my thesis. The project was originally his idea, and I would certainly not have been able to see it through without him.

I would also like to acknowledge the always gracious help that my mother-in-law Jean McInnes afforded me, through the many days that she spent looking after her grandchildren for me to get on with my work. And, most important of all, the loving support of my wife Alison, who still knows very little about academic philosophy itself, but a good deal about the effects that it can have on people involved with it.

Chapter 1

Frege and the Problems of Vagueness

§1.1 Introduction

In *The Interpretation of Frege's Philosophy* Michael Dummett writes the following about Frege's philosophy of language:

…a systematic account of, e.g., vagueness, or of the working of a language allowing truth-value gaps, would have called in question his stigmatization of these features as *defects* of natural language. They are defects because no fully coherent account of a language exhibiting such features is possible…

[*The Interpretation of Frege's Philosophy*, pp.32-33]

and then in the next paragraph:

…little weight is to be attached to the remarks Frege makes when attempting to characterize those features of natural language he regarded as defects; the observations are not meant to be fully coherent, and, if they were, Frege would have shown such features not to be defects, but, at worst inconveniences.   [*Ibid.*, p.33]

This suggests to me that Dummett thinks that Frege didn't understand the nature of the vagueness of natural language very well because he thought that it was impossible to give a coherent account of it and so was uninterested in trying to understand it. And if it is right to read Dummett in this way, then I disagree with him; I think weight *is* to be attached to the remarks that Frege makes when attempting to characterize vagueness, because I have found them formatively instructive both as to the philosophical significance of vagueness and, behind that, as to the nature of vagueness itself. I hope to show what I have learned in the present chapter as I look in detail at some of these things that Frege had to say about vagueness, specifically at a number of the arguments that he presented against vagueness in a language if the language is going to serve as a vehicle for truth and meaning.

One cannot be sure how much those views of Dummett's just referred to have shaped the subsequent philosophical discussion of Frege's views specifically on vagueness;

but, given the huge influence that Dummett has had on Anglo-American awareness of Frege's philosophy in general, I cannot help thinking that his influence is strong in this area as it is elsewhere. Anyway, whether or not under the influence of Dummett, and with the worthy exception of Jean Van Heijenoort's article "Frege and Vagueness", there has been very little worthwhile discussion in the literature of what Frege actually said about vagueness. And I think that this has been an oversight.

Not everything that Frege says that is relevant to vagueness, involves him talking specifically about vagueness; in fact, more often than not he talks instead about incompleteness of definition. I say "instead" here, because, although there is a difference between incompleteness of definition and vagueness, anything that Frege says against incompletely defined expressions *ipso facto* counts against vague ones too. Let me explain this—doing so will also give me the opportunity to give a preliminary characterization of what I take vagueness to be.

When philosophers concern themselves with vague expressions, typically what they are thinking of are vague predicates; and certainly the discussion of Frege's views that follows in this chapter is entirely concerned with his views on vague and incompletely defined predicates. So let me focus on what I think a vague predicate is. A vague predicate is one for which there are contexts in which the meaning of the predicate does not determine whether the predicate applies or not; in other words, vague predicates admit of borderline cases for which the question as to whether the predicate applies or not has no answer. But this isn't the whole story; what it leaves out of account is the phenomenon of higher-order vagueness. This is the characteristic of vague predicates that they don't just admit of borderline cases, but of borderline borderline cases, and indeed of borderline borderline borderline cases and so on *ad infinitum*. So, for example, there aren't just shades of red/orange where the meanings of "red" and "orange" leave it undetermined whether those shades are red or orange, but there are also shades of red/orange where the meanings don't determine whether it is undetermined or not whether those shades are red or orange, and so on and so on. That is the way I would initially characterize vagueness and higher-order

vagueness; and, in fact, I take this to be, more or less, the standard characterization of vagueness in contemporary discussion of the topic.

As far as incompleteness of definition is concerned, I think the following simple definition suffices: a predicate is incompletely defined if and only if its definition does not settle for every possible object whether the predicate applies to it or not; some possibilities are left out of account, not addressed at all by the definition.

And what this means is that vague predicates turn out to be all incompletely defined, but not *vice versa*. There is a mark of vagueness that isn't a mark of incompleteness of definition generally, that is higher-order vagueness; incompletely defined predicates admit of borderline cases, but they don't necessarily admit of borderline borderline cases *etc.*.[1]

As I have said, more often than not Frege concerns himself directly with incompletely defined predicates, but, as we can now see, in doing so he is *eo ipso* concerning himself with vague predicates as one subset of incompletely defined predicates. There is one place, in §56 of *GA* part II, where he does talk about vagueness and where the distinction with incompleteness matters; this is because, as we shall see in §1.2 immediately below, the argument there makes essential reference to the full-blown vagueness, with its accompanying higher-order indeterminacy, of the predicates that it criticises.

In all of Frege's treatment of vagueness, including not just the arguments, but also the numerous references to vagueness and incompleteness of definition in passing in the rest of his work, there is, it seems to me, one pervasive moral. This is the thought that *logic cannot hold in a vague language*. And it is this moral, more than anything else, that I would like to carry through from this chapter into the rest of my thesis, as it forms part of a wider view of natural language as an unsuitable vehicle for logic that, I think, Wittgenstein

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[1] There is also at least one important characteristic of some examples of incompleteness of definition that is not shared by examples of vagueness *per se*. The characteristic that I have in mind here is evidenced in Frege's thinking of *completeness* of definition as covering every object in the universe including those lying fully outside the natural field of application of the term in question—hence he thinks, for instance, that the definition of "…is greater than zero" ought strictly speaking to determine a truth-value for "The moon is greater than zero" [*PW*, p.144]—; the aspect of incompleteness of definition corresponding to this would, to the contemporary philosophical ear, sound like a problem for the notion of semantic categories or domains of discourse, and as separable from the incompleteness associated with vagueness.

is responding to in §§81ff. of *PI*, and *that* response—ultimately to be brought back to bear on vagueness specifically— is the central concern of my thesis.

§1.2 Argument 1: A Vague Area Isn't Really an Area So a Vague Concept Isn't Really a Concept

§1.2.1 The Source of the Argument

Probably the most famous passage by Frege on vagueness—and certainly in my experience the most frequently referred to in the literature—is §56 of Volume II of *GA*. The anti-vagueness argument that it contains is by analogy between concepts and areas: just as a vague area isn't really an area at all, the argument goes, a vague concept isn't really a concept at all. I will quote the section in full:

> A definition of a concept (of a possible predicate) must be complete; it must unambiguously determine, as regards any object, whether or not it falls under the concept (whether or not the predicate is truly ascribable to it). Thus there must not be any object as regards which the definition leaves in doubt whether it falls under the concept; though for us men, with our defective knowledge, the question may not always be decidable. We may express this metaphorically as follows: the concept must have a sharp boundary. If we represent concepts in extension by areas on a plane, this is admittedly a picture that may be used only with caution, but here it can do us good service. To a concept without sharp boundary there would correspond an area that had not a sharp boundary-line all round, but in places just vaguely faded away into the background. This would not really be an area at all; and likewise a concept that is not sharply defined is wrongly termed a concept. Such quasi-conceptual constructions cannot be recognized as concepts by logic; it is impossible to lay down precise laws for them. The law of excluded middle is really just another form of the requirement that the concept should have a sharp boundary. Any object Δ that you choose to take either falls under the concept Φ or does not fall under it; *tertium non datur*. E.g. would the sentence 'any square root of 9 is odd' have a comprehensible sense at all if *square root of 9* were not a concept with a sharp boundary? Has the question 'Are we still Christians?' really got a sense, if it is indeterminate whom the predicate 'Christian' can truly be ascribed to, and who must be refused it? [*PW*, p.139]

But the actual argument that concepts must be sharp is contained in the shorter passage in the middle of this larger one:

> If we represent concepts in extension by areas on a plane, this is admittedly a picture that may be used only with caution, but here it can do us good service. To a concept without sharp boundary there would correspond an area that had not a sharp boundary-line all round, but in places just vaguely faded away into the background. This would not really be an area at all; and likewise a concept that is not sharply defined is wrongly termed a concept. Such quasi-conceptual constructions cannot be recognized as concepts by logic; it is impossible to lay down precise laws for them. [*Ibid.*]

And, as I have just said, this is an argument by analogy between concepts and areas. And the argument begins with the thought that a vague area isn't really an area at all. Let me try to explain Frege's thought here.

In fact, this is one argument of Frege's that Wittgenstein comments upon in *Philosophical Investigations* where he says in §71:

> ...Frege compares a concept to an area and says that an area with vague boundaries cannot be called an area at all. This presumably means that we cannot do anything with it. ... [*PI*, §71]

And I would like to take the insight contained in this little extract as the starting point for my interpretation of Frege's argument. Wittgenstein suggests here that what Frege means when he says that a vague area wouldn't really be an area is that we couldn't do anything with such an area; and what I think he means by this is that Frege's thought is that the notion of a vague area couldn't do any work for us in our understanding of spatial relations. And what this means is that propositions about spatial relations that involve the notion of a vague area couldn't be informative about reality.

This thought is, I think, the central claim of the argument; and because of that it is one for which I think we need to fully understand Frege's justification. So now I will set about trying to explain this justification in detail.

§1.2.2 Frege and the Analytic/Synthetic Distinction

The way I would like to begin this explanation is with Frege's understanding of the analytic/synthetic distinction as he explains it in the *Foundations of Arithmetic*. This may seem to be a diversion from the immediate task, but I expect the reason for it to become clear when I get into §1.2.3. Baldly stated, the reason for the apparent diversion is that the informativeness about reality that propositions employing vague areas lack is the informativeness of *synthetic* propositions as understood by Frege in *FA*.

Frege adopted the analytic/synthetic distinction from Kant. And I think that this fact is important when it comes to understanding the philosophical significance of the distinction for Frege.[2] Of course, he disagreed with Kant over which propositions fall

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2 In this I am in disagreement with Michael Dummett. In *Frege: Philosophy of Mathematics*, at the beginning of Chapter 3, Dummett takes Frege's *disagreement* with Kant over the nature of the analytic/synthetic distinction to be the significant fact for understanding Frege, as if the important thing is to see Frege as reacting against Kant. But it seems to me to make better sense of the relevant passages of the *Grundlagen* to take Frege to be deeply in *agreement* with Kant about the point of the distinction and to see him as clarifying what Kant himself meant.

either side of the distinction—in particular, at least up until the discovery of Russell's paradox, he thought that the propositions of arithmetic were analytic and not synthetic—but throughout he saw himself as remaining true to the spirit of Kant's own distinction.[3] And the important point about this for us is that Kant's distinction between analytic and synthetic is a distinction between types of propositions that provide different kinds of knowledge. And the difference is that only synthetic propositions can genuinely extend our knowledge of reality. Analytic propositions don't tell us anything about reality that we didn't know already simply by virtue of our understanding the language in the first place.

Now, this latter thought is a troublesome one for Frege in *FA*. For Kant the thought apparently causes no problem, because when he thought of analytic truths, he was thinking

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[3] I take this to be the import of the footnote to §3 of *FA*, where Frege follows up his claim that the analytic/synthetic distinction is concerned not with the content of a judgement but with the justification for making the judgement by saying:

By this I do not, of course, mean to assign a new sense to these terms, but only to state accurately what earlier writers, KANT in particular, have meant by them.   [*FA*, p.3]

This is one of those passages from *FA* that I think Dummett misinterprets and that leads to the disagreement that I have with him that I referred to in the previous footnote. *He* thinks that this is a "somewhat disingenuous disclaimer" [*Frege: Philosophy of Mathematics*, p.23] because he cannot see how it fits in with the comments with which Frege begins §88, much later in the book:

KANT obviously—as a result, no doubt, of defining them too narrowly—underestimated the value of analytic judgements, though it seems that he did have some inkling of the wider sense in which I have used the term. On the basis of his definition, the division of judgements into analytic and synthetic is not exhaustive. What he is thinking of is the universal affirmative judgement; there, we can speak of a subject concept and ask—as his definition requires—whether the predicate concept is contained in it or not. But how can we do this, if the subject is an individual object? Or if the judgement is an existential one? In these cases there can simply be no question of a subject concept in KANT's sense.

[*FA*, pp.99-100]

but I don't think that there is any inconsistency here. Frege thinks that Kant was on to a very important distinction for philosophy and is trying to capture that distinction more accurately than Kant himself managed to do; §88 explains how Frege thinks that his understanding *is* more accurate than Kant's. In §89, he then goes on to emphasize his huge debt to Kant and also, I think, makes it clear that he does see the analytic/synthetic distinction as Kant's own distinction:

I have no wish to incur the reproach of picking petty quarrels with a genius to whom we must all look up with grateful awe: I feel bound, therefore, to call attention also to the extent of my agreement with him, which far exceeds any disagreement. To touch only upon what is immediately relevant, I consider KANT did great service in drawing the distinction between synthetic and analytic judgements. In calling the truths of geometry synthetic and a priori, he revealed their true nature. And this is still worth repeating, since even to-day it is often not recognized. If KANT was wrong about arithmetic, that does not seriously detract, in my opinion, from the value of his work. His point was, that there are such things as synthetic judgements a priori; whether they are to be found in geometry only, or in arithmetic as well, is of less importance.

[*FA*, p.102]

just of trivial truths, for example that all bodies are extended or that all bachelors are men; and for such examples it appears extremely plausible to say that they don't tell us anything that we didn't know already—if I understand "all bodies are extended" then I *ipso facto* know that it is true. But Frege wanted to say that the truths of *arithmetic* were analytic, and it is an extremely counter-intuitive thing to say that *such* truths—for example, that the square root of 24,649 is 157—don't extend our knowledge. And in fact Frege himself says in *FA* that they *do* extend our knowledge.[4] But this throws up an apparent contradiction: on the one hand Frege wants to say that analytic propositions tell us nothing about reality, but on the other that they do very often extend our knowledge (as is the case with the propositions of arithmetic).

What are we to make of this apparent contradiction? Well, what I think we are to make of it is that Kant's analytic/synthetic apparatus alone was inadequate for Frege's purpose, to capture the kind of informativeness of arithmetical propositions, but that Frege didn't realize this at the time of writing *FA*. In order to explain the informativeness of arithmetical propositions, Frege needed the notion of sense which he introduced some years later in "On Sense and Meaning". Indeed, I believe that it was the need to account for the informativeness of arithmetical propositions, whilst at the same time hanging on to the deep philosophical insight of Kant's analytic/synthetic distinction that was the principal motivation behind Frege's development of the notion of sense in the first place. This is why, I think, he begins "On Sense and Meaning" with an account of the informativeness of identity statements: he is concerned primarily with the problem posed by the

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[4] In fact, as far as I am aware, he makes the point on a couple of occasions. The first is in §88 where he is explaining how he thinks Kant underestimated the value of analytic judgements and in particular certain definitions:

...the more fruitful type of definition is a matter of drawing boundary lines that were not previously given at all. What we shall be able to infer from it, cannot be inspected in advance; here, we are not simply taking out of the box again what we have just put into it. The conclusions we draw from it extend our knowledge, and ought therefore, on KANT's view, to be regarded as synthetic; and yet they can be proved by purely logical means, and are thus analytic.   [*FA*, pp.100-101]

Then Frege makes the same point again in §91 where he says that

...propositions which extend our knowledge can have analytic judgements for their content.   [*Ibid.*, p.104]

informativeness of identity statements in arithmetic for his logistic project. And the upshot of that opening paragraph of "On Sense and Meaning" is that the identity statements of arithmetic (in contrast to the standard examples of analytic propositions) are informative in an essentially different way to synthetic statements (again, in contrast to the standard examples of analytic propositions). And the difference is that the propositions of arithmetic are informative without being informative about reality. They are, rather, informative about our *ways of knowing* reality.

Equality gives rise to challenging questions which are not altogether easy to answer. Is it a relation? A relation between objects, or between names or signs of objects? In my *Begriffsschrift* I assume the latter. The reasons which seem to favour this are the following: $a=a$ and $a=b$ are obviously statements of differing cognitive value; $a=a$ holds *a priori* and, according to Kant, is to be labelled analytic, while statements of the form $a=b$ often contain very valuable extensions of our knowledge and cannot always be established *a priori*. The discovery that the rising sun is not new every morning, but always the same, was one of the most fertile astronomical discoveries. Even to-day the reidentification of a small planet or a comet is not always a matter of course. Now if we were to regard equality as a relation between that which the names 'a' and 'b' designate, it would seem that $a=b$ could not differ from $a=a$ (i.e. provided $a=b$ is true). A relation would thereby be expressed of a thing to itself, and indeed one in which each thing stands to itself but to no other thing. What we apparently want to state by $a=b$ is that the signs or names 'a' and 'b' designate the same thing, so that those signs themselves would be under discussion; a relation would hold between the names or signs only in so far as they named or designated something. It would be mediated by the connexion of each of the two signs with the same designated thing. But this is arbitrary. Nobody can be forbidden to use any arbitrarily producible event or object as a sign for something. In that case the sentence $a=b$ would no longer refer to the subject matter, but only to its mode of designation; we would express no proper knowledge by its means. But in many cases this is just what we want to do. If the sign 'a' is distinguished from the sign 'b' only as an object (here, by means of its shape), not as a sign (i.e. not by the manner in which it designates something), the cognitive value of $a=a$ becomes essentially equal to that of $a=b$, provided $a=b$ is true. A difference can arise only if the difference between the signs corresponds to a difference in the mode of presentation of the thing designated. Let a, b, and c be the lines connecting the vertices of a triangle with the midpoints of the opposite sides. The point of intersection of a and b is then the same as the point of intersection of b and c. So we have different designations for the same point, and these names ('point of intersection of a and b,' 'point of intersection of b and c') likewise indicate the mode of presentation; and hence the statement contains actual knowledge. [*PW*, pp.56-7]

The way Frege explains the informativeness of identity statements here in the opening paragraph of "On Sense and Meaning" is to say that an informative sentence "$a = b$" does not "refer to the subject matter" but only to the "mode of designation" of that subject matter, and this means that

…we would express no proper knowledge by its means. [*PW*, p.57]

And what he means by this is that we would express no knowledge of the subject matter, of reality, by means of such a sentence, not that we would express no knowledge at all; because he goes on to say of an example of this form of proposition at the end of the paragraph that

...the statement contains actual knowledge. [*Ibid.*]

The statement "$a=b$" contains actual knowledge *that* the mode of designation of (the way of knowing) an object associated with the name "a" is a mode of designation of the same object as the mode of designation associated with the name "b"; in other words, a statement of such a form says that the object known in the "a"-way is identical to the object known in the "b"-way. In this way such a statement is uninformative about the way the world is—it is trivially true to say of an object that it is identical to itself—whilst at the same time being informative, indirectly, about our ways of knowing the world (and our ways of knowing the world are what Frege means by the senses of our expressions). So when we say, *e.g.*, "Cicero is the same person as Tully", this is a trivial thing to say about the world, that a man is identical to himself, and the person to whom we say the sentence recognizes it as a sentence that if true would be trivially true. But that person also knows that in order for the sentence to be able to express that trivial truth, the way of knowing the object named "Cicero" must be a way of knowing the same object as the way of knowing the object named "Tully"; and this is potentially informative.

And that, as I understand it, goes a long way towards explaining how Frege later resolved the confusion that he had been in in *FA* about the analytic/synthetic status of arithmetical propositions; at that stage he hadn't realized that the sense of expressions can be a part of what is communicated by a proposition. His problem was that he was thinking of what can be communicated by a proposition purely in terms of communicating the state or form of reality and yet he also recognized that the propositions of arithmetic did communicate something.

Having said all this about the notion of sense, however, the claim that I want to make that is most important for present concerns is that none of it does anything to shake Frege's conviction in the deep philosophical significance of Kant's analytic/synthetic distinction. It still remains his view, I believe, post-"On Sense and Meaning" that there is a fundamental distinction for philosophy within propositions, between those that extend our knowledge of reality (synthetic propositions) and those that don't (analytic propositions).

And this holds for *GA* too and is important when it comes to understanding our argument from §56 of Volume II.

§1.2.3 *Frege's Claim that a Vague Area Isn't Really an Area*

And now is the time for me to return to that argument and to explain head-on Frege's claim that a vague area isn't really an area. What I have said so far is that I agree with Wittgenstein that what this claim of Frege's amounts to is that the notion of a vague area couldn't do any work for us in our understanding of spatial relations and that this in turn amounts, for Frege, to the thought that propositions about spatial relations that involve the idea of a vague area cannot be genuinely informative about reality, cannot be synthetic propositions.

Now, the informativeness of if not all statements involving areas in geometry then a good number of such statements depends for its very possibility on its being informative about reality to talk about *location* on, or in relation to an area. So what is at least one facet of the service that areas do for us in geometry can be illustrated by, for instance, the fact that it is genuinely informative to say of a particular point that it is located on a particular area. And that is the kind of service that, Frege is arguing, vague areas could not perform for us.

In fact, this idea that it is genuinely informative to say of particular *points* that they are located on particular areas is of central concern for us here. This is because this is *the* part of the analogy between concepts and areas on which Frege's argument turns. The argument is that just as vague areas aren't really areas at all because there can be no content to talking about the location of particular points on such areas, so vague concepts aren't really concepts because there can be no content to talking about particular objects falling under such concepts. And from now on I would just like to focus on this part of the fuller answer to the question why vague areas aren't really areas, namely: that vague areas aren't really areas because such areas could not sustain the informativeness of statements locating points on areas. And the reason why statements locating points on vague areas are not

informative is that if they are in order at all, then they are *analytic* and not synthetic. I would like to go on to explain how this argument works.

But before I do, I think it is important to emphasize the fact that Frege is thinking here of areas, along with points and lines, as *geometrical* entities. That is to say, they are, for him, the very same entities whose properties are investigated in geometry; when children at school in maths lessons learn about the properties of points and lines and triangles and circles and so on, they are learning about the properties of points and lines and areas in the sense that Frege is thinking. The reason why I think this point is worth emphasizing is to try to avoid the confusion caused by the fact that in everyday discourse we *call* objects in the world "points", "straight lines" and "circles" which are only in fact near approximations to real geometrical points, straight lines and circles because they don't have zero extension or aren't perfectly straight or don't have fully determinate, continuous, perfectly smooth edges and so on. With this in mind let me return to explaining Frege's thought that statements locating points on vague areas are not informative.

The problem with a vague area is that it is fuzzy around the edge, and this is a problem because this is a characteristic that an area *cannot* have if it is going to support the informativeness of statements locating points on the area. Let me explain why.

There are, I suspect, countless ways in which an area can *legitimately* be located on a plane in space—two possibilities that occur to me are as the intersections of (several) other areas and as the surface formed by a plane cutting through a solid—, but the most obvious and straightforward is by specifying a continuous boundary-line on a plane (*i.e.* determinately locating the line on the plane) with the area then being that bit of the plane lying within the boundary-line—for a circle, for example, such a boundary-line might be specified as the line containing all the points on a given plane at a given distance from a given point. And what I propose to do, for simplicity's sake, is to take this most straightforward of the ways of defining an area as *the* (one and only) legitimate way of defining an area. I fully expect all the other ways of legitimately defining an area to support an analogous story to the one given below, and focusing on this one form of definition,

ignoring the rest, is, I think, the clearest way of demonstrating the principle that is involved.

Now, a "legitimately defined" area is one for which it *is* informative to locate points on planes relative to the area. And this is clearly the case for an area defined by specifying a continuous boundary-line on a plane, that it is informative to locate points relative to it. For example, once a boundary-line has been specified for such an area *A*, it is clearly informative to say, for example, that a point *p* is on area *A* because to say that is to say that point *p* is a point lying within the boundary-line of *A* which is something that we couldn't have known through locating the area on the plane in the first place. And what I think Frege wants to say is that the problem with areas that are fuzzy around the edge is that they cannot be located on a plane by specifying a boundary-line in this way.

The reason for this is that the mark of an area that is fuzzy around the edge is that of no specifiable point whatever can it be said that the point is on the edge of the area; the edge is indeterminately located and this means that of any point that is a candidate for being on the edge it is impossible to say for sure whether or not the point *is* on the edge.[5] But if it were possible to locate the area on a plane through specifying a boundary-line then there would *have to be* points on the edge of the area, namely: those points lying just inside the boundary-line. Hence it isn't possible to locate a vague area on a plane through specifying a boundary-line for the area. And neither is it possible to specify for a vague area a boundary-line for the extent of the fuzziness of the edge of the area, because if the vague area is to be analogous to a vague concept, then it needs to have a higher-order fuzzy edge so that there is no specifiable point on the edge of the area of fuzziness. And indeed, if the analogy is to hold true, then one cannot bound the area of extent of the fuzziness of the fuzziness of the area either, nor the extent of the fuzziness of the fuzziness of the fuzziness

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[5] Of course, in the text, Frege is thinking not of an area that has such a fuzzy edge all the way round but

...*in places* just vaguely faded away into the background. [Italics mine.]   [*Philosophical Writings*, p.139]

But what I say in the main text holds for such an area in those places where the area vaguely fades away, *i.e.* those places where the edge of the area *is* fuzzy.

of the area, and so on *ad infinitum* because a vague area would have to be infinitely-higher-order fuzzy.[6] Thus there is no way of locating a fuzzy area in space, in part or in whole, through specifying a boundary-line for that area. And this in turn means that it is not possible to talk about location relative to a vague area informatively. And *that* is to say that the notion of a vague area can play no role in our understanding of spatial relations and hence that a vague area isn't really an area.

Now, the obvious response to this argument against the impossibility of vague areas is to conceive of vague areas as located relative to *indeterminate* boundary-lines. And indeed, one would have to insist not simply on indeterminate boundary-lines, but on "radically indeterminate"—by which I mean infinitely-higher-order indeterminate—boundary-lines. A vague area couldn't be located relative to a boundary-line that was only *finitely* higher-order indeterminate because such a boundary-line would at some level of fuzziness in the hierarchy be determinately boundable—the extent of the fuzziness of the fuzziness of the fuzziness... of the location of the boundary-line would at some point be determinately boundable. But this would mean that at some level the fuzziness would come to an end such that there would be some specifiable point or other that lay immediately inside the region of fuzziness of fuzziness of fuzziness..., but that is ruled out for an *infinitely* higher-order vague area by definition—for an infinitely-higher-order vague area the hierarchy of fuzziness simply has no end. However, as I say, this still leaves us with the possibility of a vague area as located relative to a radically indeterminate boundary-line.

But, unfortunately, the idea of a vague area as located relative to a *radically* indeterminate boundary-line looks equally unpromising. And the reason is that this attempt to defend vague areas against Frege drags the problem back onto the notion of a radically

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[6] I said in my introduction to this chapter that this argument in §56 of *GA* is the one argument in which Frege is tackling vagueness full-blown as opposed to simple incompleteness of definition. And here we see why: Frege's argument here relies essentially on the phenomenon of higher-order vagueness.

Where this emerges in the text is in the same place pinpointed in the last footnote where Frege says a vague area would be such as:

... in places *just vaguely faded away into the background* [my emphasis].   [*Philosophical Writings*, p.139]

indeterminate boundary-line itself. For the notion of a radically indeterminate *line* begs the question of the informativeness of statements locating points on or relative to such lines. And one would, in fact, expect such statements to turn out to be *un*informative.

§1.2.4 *The Notion of Vague Space*

So the idea of a vague area as located relative to a vague boundary-line is unattractive. But that idea *does*, I think, gesture towards a far more radical response to Frege's argument which *is* attractive. This is the idea that we can provisionally express by saying that space itself is vague. And what I would like to look at in this subsection is what I think Frege's objection to the notion of vague space might be.

What does it mean to say that space is vague? Well, it means that space is vague *as opposed to being geometric*. The suggestion is that there are two competing ways of conceiving of space: as vague or as geometric. And the difference between the two is that to say that space is vague is to deny that there is such a thing as absolutely determinate location in space in the sense in which in geometric space a geometric point is absolutely determinately located in space. The believer in geometric space (Frege included) is wanting to say, for instance, that there are infinitely pin-point determinate locations in space and that these are the *real* points in space; the believer in vague space denies that such infinitely pin-point determinate locations in space are possible—and hence that geometric points are possible—in reality and insists instead that our ordinary everyday points on a line or on a surface are the *real* points. (Of course, in everyday life, as well as talking about abstract points, we refer to concrete marks on paper, for example, as points. But it is the former— our ordinary everyday abstract points—that I am concerned with here, that I am saying the advocate of vague space takes to be real.)

As I understand it, the form that Frege's objection to vague space would take is contained in his working out of the analogy between vague areas and vague concepts when he says towards the end of his presentation of our argument:

[S]uch quasi-conceptual constructions cannot be recognized as concepts by logic; it is impossible to lay down precise laws for them.   [*PW*, p.139]

Implicit here is the understanding that an analogous claim about quasi-areas (vague areas) is also true: that vague areas cannot be recognized as areas by geometry, and that that is to say that it is impossible to lay down precise laws for them. So, what Frege is thinking is that geometry cannot hold for vague areas; and, by extension, this means that geometry cannot hold for vague space in general either. And Frege explains this by saying that we cannot lay down precise laws for such vague areas (or vague space). And what I take him to mean by this is that we cannot provide an axiomatic system of proof for vague space.

Precisely why Frege then thinks that the non-provision of an axiomatic system of proof is grounds for rejecting the reality of vague space is something that I am not sure of. There are, it seems to me, two possibilities.

The first of these is that it straightforwardly contradicts our natural intuitions about space to say that geometry doesn't hold for it. It is simply self-evident, the argument would be, that the precise laws of geometry hold in space, and they must hold because they plainly do hold.[7]

Then the second possibility is one that, I think, is suggested more definitely by a different passage, from a letter to the Italian logician Giuseppe Peano dated 29/9/1896[8] (this is a letter also containing one of the explicit references to the Sorites paradox that I will look at in §1.4 below):

Just as it would be impossible for geometry to set up precise laws if it tried to recognize threads as lines and knots in threads as points, so logic must demand sharp limits of what it will recognize as a concept unless it wants to renounce all precision and certainty.   [*Philosophical and Mathematical Correspondence*, p.115]

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[7] This brute appeal to intuition—space clearly *must* conform to the laws of geometry—is, I think, precisely analogous to the way of thinking about the laws of logic that Wittgenstein is querying in the following passage from *PI*:

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.   [*PI*, §101]

Wittgenstein thinks that there is something dubious about this intuition, and in Chapter 3 I will try to show what he thinks this dubiousness amounts to.

[8] Philosophical and Mathematical Correspondence, pp.114-115.

What Frege says here, I think, helps to clarify what he is thinking about the relation between vague space and geometry generally. Because clearly if, as the passage here suggests, we set about trying to come up with a system for constructing proofs about spatial relations between lines, points, triangles, and so on, if those lines, points and triangles were straightforward abstractions of stretches of thread with knots in, then we would soon realize the hopelessness of succeeding in our task. The problem would be, as Frege points out, that we would not be able to come up with the precise laws governing such lines, points and so on required for the conduction of proofs. In geometry we *can* construct proofs about geometric lines, points, triangles, and so on as elaborate and as lengthy as we care to, but always with apodeictic certainty in the conclusion; we just couldn't have such a system of proof for vague lines, points, triangles and so on because such phenomena are too fuzzy and indeterminate to support precise laws.

And, at the end of this, the argument that is suggested for space as geometrical is, I think, a pragmatic one. Geometry, our system of proof for spatial relations, the argument goes, is such a useful thing for us that we must reject vague space in order to preserve it. To accept vague space, the passage says, would be "to renounce all precision and certainty" in our thinking about space. And I think this argument may also have been on Frege's mind in §56 of *GA* Vol.II.

§1.2.5 *The Confusion Inherent in our Imagining Vague Areas*

And that is the end of my explanation of Frege's thought that a vague area isn't really an area. However, what I *haven't* explained so far is why, from Frege's point of view, the notion of a vague area *seems* so plausible. What I mean by this is that it seems so natural and unproblematic to us to think of a vague area as, in Frege's words:

...an area that had not a sharp boundary-line all round, but in places just vaguely faded away into the background.   [*PW*, p.139]

And so what I haven't explained is what is wrong with this idea.

To understand what is wrong with the idea, we need to return to something that I said towards the beginning of this whole section, when I said that when he says that vague

areas aren't really areas, what Frege means is that if statements locating points on vague areas are in order at all, then they are analytic. My explanation of Frege's thought from saying that up until now has been concerned with showing how Frege thinks that vague areas aren't in order at all; and clearly, if his thesis is that statements of location relative to a vague area are uninformative, then there is no point for him in worrying about the possibility of such statements being analytic because analytic statements are by definition uninformative. But such a possibility *does* become important now when we turn to digging out the confusion inherent in our imagining vague areas.

The way of conceiving of vague areas that leads to statements locating points on vague areas being analytic is as aggregations of points. Accordingly a vague area would be defined by stipulating all of those points that are definitely on the area, then all those that are definitely *not* on the area, then those that are indefinitely on the area, then those that are indefinitely indefinitely on the area and so on. If we take vague areas as these aggregations of points then it is analytic to say of one of those points (definitely) located on the area that it is (definitely) located on the area because in that case "area A" would just be an abbreviation for "definitely point p_1 and definitely point p_2 and … indefinitely point p_n …".

This provides, for Frege, one of two mutually exclusive possibilities for vague areas. One is the one just described, of vague areas as aggregations of points. The other is the one that we looked at before, that they are ghostly entities located relative to ghostly vague boundary-lines, not in real space but in a parallel shadow-space which admits of these ghostly vague entities. And the confusion inherent in our idea of a vague area would be, I think, for Frege, a confusion generated by these two possibilities. The reason why it *seems* so natural to us to think of vague areas as in order and statements locating points on such areas as informative, on Frege's account, would be that in our idea of a vague area we manage to conflate the two mutually exclusive conceptions just referred to, taking them to be a single coherent conception. This conflation allows us *first* to recognize the truth or falsity of a statement locating a point on a vague area by conceiving the area as an aggregation of points according to the former conception and *then* to mistake this analytic

truth for a synthetic truth by conceiving the area as located on a plane inside a vague boundary, switching inadvertently to the former conception.

§1.2.6 The Analogy between Vague Areas and Vague Concepts

So all that is, as I understand it, Frege's understanding of the idea of a vague area and his argument that such "areas" aren't really areas at all. All that remains to be said for this section is that he thinks that a strictly analogous account and argument holds for the idea of a vague concept, with the vague concept corresponding to the vague area, the definition of the concept to the boundary of the area, an object falling under the concept to a point falling on the area, the laws of logic to the laws of geometry, and so on.

§1.3 Argument 2: Vague Predicates are Meaningless just as are Fictional Predicates

§1.3.1 The Argument

The second argument that I would like to look into is one from "Comments on Sense and Meaning"; it is an argument in which Frege draws an analogy between vague predicates and fictional predicates to show how vague predicates, because of their incompleteness of definition, are meaningless. Let me quote the relevant passage:

> It must be determinate for every object whether it falls under a concept or not; a concept word which does not meet this requirement on its meaning is meaningless. E.g. the word '$\mu\varpi\lambda\upsilon$' (Homer, *Odyssey* X, 305) belongs to this class, although it is true that certain characteristic marks are supplied. For this reason the context cited need not lack a sense, any more than other contexts in which the name 'Nausicaa', which probably does not mean or name anything, occurs. But it behaves as if it names a girl, and it is thus assured of a sense. And for fiction the sense is enough. The thought, though it is devoid of meaning, of truth-value, is enough, but not for science. [*Posthumous Writings*, p.122]

This passage begins with the thesis that it must be determinate for every object (*i.e.* every possible object in the universe) whether it falls under a concept or not because otherwise there would be no concept and the relevant concept word would be meaningless. Then Frege presents his argument for this thesis. Roughly, the argument is that vague predicates are meaningless due to their incompleteness of definition just as fictional predicates are meaningless because of *their* incompleteness of definition. Let me look at it in detail.

The opening claim of the argument is that fictional predicates all belong within the class of quasi-concept words referred to in that opening thesis that are meaningless because

incompletely defined. And I think it is important to emphasize that when Frege says here that fictional predicates are meaningless, he is thinking not just that they happen to have no meaning, but that they *could not have* a meaning. Fictional terms are by nature incompletely defined and as a necessary consequence of that they are meaningless. His example of a fictional predicate is "μωλυ" or, transcribed into the Latin alphabet, "*moly*". (This was the name that Homer gave to the fictional plant that Hermes gave to Odysseus to protect him against the potion of the sorceress Circe, a potion which turned the rest of Odysseus' men into pigs.) And, as I say, Frege's starting point for this argument is with the claim that there is no *moly*, nor could there be any because "*moly*" is incompletely defined.

"*Moly*" is incompletely defined for Frege in that, as he explains, "certain characteristic marks are supplied" for being *moly*. In other words, Homer incompletely defines "*moly*" in *The Odyssey* by providing a list of *some* properties that *moly* is supposed to have, but not enough for a definition that would decide for every object whether it was *moly* or not. The relevant passage in *The Odyssey*—which, for the sake of argument, I will take both to contain the only references to *moly* in Homer's works and to be the point at which Homer himself introduced the word into the Greek language—is narrated by Odysseus himself who recalls that Hermes described the plant to him as "a drug of real virtue" and an "antidote" to Circe's poison and then recalls that

...the Giant-killer handed me a herb he had plucked from the ground, and showed me what it was like. It had a black root and a milk-white flower. The gods call it Moly, and it is an awkward plant to dig up, at any rate for a mere man.   [*The Odyssey*, p.163]

And that, I am taking it, is all anyone knows about *moly* or could know about it. And, as a consequence, I also take it to contain everything there is to the incomplete definition of "*moly*".

Frege thinks that the incompleteness of the definition of "*moly*", however it is to be disentangled from the information just given, means that in fact there could be no such thing as *moly*. This is the ground of his argument; let me explain why he takes it to be the case.

To understand the point it is, I think, best to begin by trying to imagine candidates for *moly* in reality and to think of the infinite variety of different imaginary plants that would fit the definition given by Homer; we could imagine *moly* to have one of an infinite

variety of shapes, sizes and structures, to have one of countless different kinds of fruit and of leaves, of colours and fragrances and so on and so on. And because of this infinite supply of different candidates for *moly* that all fit Homer's description, for any given individual such candidate, there would simply be no answer to the question whether it was *moly*. In other words, because it is incomplete Homer's definition doesn't provide us with criteria of identity for *moly*. And, given that Homer's definition is all that there is to *moly*, this in turn means that there could be no such thing as *moly* in reality.

Now, of course, Frege isn't simply wanting to say that fictional predicates as or about as incompletely defined as "*moly*" are necessarily meaningless, but that any fictional predicate with any degree of incompleteness of definition whatever is so. And this, for him, is, I think, a straightforward and natural extension of the argument that we have just looked at; if "*moly*" is meaningless because no decision could have been made between one candidate for *moly* and another different one, then any fictional predicate, however incompletely defined, would also be meaningless because as long as such a predicate was incompletely defined to *some* degree, there would be room for more than one different candidate for the kind of thing falling under the predicate.

§1.3.2 *The Response Through Natural Kinds*

This extension of the argument for the case of *moly* to the extreme case of minimum incompleteness of definition doesn't sound quite so natural to the modern philosophical ear. And the reason is that nowadays we are far more inclined to trust our intuition that there are *natural kinds*, naturally occurring kinds of things (plants included), with naturally occurring distinctions between them. For example, we are inclined to think that cabbages form a natural kind such that there *just is* a distinction between cabbages and, for instance, lettuces (whether we know precisely what it is or not). Because of this intuition, we are inclined to think of definitions of natural kind terms as requiring *a degree* of precision, but not absolute precision. Only a degree of precision is required because we need our terms to be precisely *enough* defined to ensure that they latch on to the naturally occurring kind—latch on to one

kind amongst others. So, we think, completeness of definition is required only up to a certain degree to ensure meaningfulness.

But this talk of natural kinds, of distinctions in nature, would, I think, be anathema to Frege. For him, *sense determines meaning* and nothing else does. In other words, *we* the users of the language bestow meaning on our words by giving definitions—implicitly or explicitly—for them and that is *the* (one and only) source of meaning. And that means that, for Frege, the idea that there are natural kinds amounts to the belief that our ordinary incomplete definitions of our natural kind predicates *could* be infinitely sharpened up to generate genuine concepts and, what is more, that there is *one right way* to sharpen each of them. In this way, the idea that there are natural kinds would, in Frege's eyes, be an extremely strong thesis and one that it would be extremely difficult to justify. He would, I think, want to consign the idea to the *psychology* of definition, by which I mean that from his perspective it would be easy to see why people would *want* to believe in natural kinds even though there are none—and the reason would be to avoid having to face up to the fact that our ordinary incompletely defined predicates turn out to be meaningless; natural kinds would not render ordinary predicates meaning*ful*, but would render the idea that they are meaningless harmless by making them out to be imperfect approximations to genuine meaningful predicates.

§1.3.3 The Final Step in the Argument

In this last paragraph I have, in fact, pre-empted the final move of Frege's overall argument here, although the move is obvious. What I have given of the argument so far is Frege's understanding of the meaninglessness of fictional terms; such terms, he argues, are meaningless because they are incompletely defined. The final step of the argument is simply to draw the analogy between fictional terms and vague terms and say that vague terms too are meaningless because they too are incompletely defined.

§1.3.3.1 *The Problem of our Perceiving Vague Predicates to be Meaningful*

And that *is* Frege's argument for the meaninglessness of vague predicates by analogy with fictional predicates. As it stands, though, that argument requires support from an account of how it is that we ordinarily think of our vague terms as meaningful in contrast to our fictional terms which we ordinarily consider to be meaningless. And, in fact, it is this problem with which most of what Frege says in the passage quoted is concerned:

...the word '*μῶλυ*' (Homer, *Odyssey* X, 305) belongs to this class, although it is true that certain characteristic marks are supplied. For this reason the context cited need not lack a sense, any more than other contexts in which the name 'Nausicaa', which probably does not mean or name anything, occurs. But it behaves as if it names a girl, and it is thus assured of a sense. And for fiction the sense is enough. The thought, though it is devoid of meaning, of truth-value, is enough, but not for science.

There is a problem that raises its head here that has worried commentators on Frege and that is: how can fictional terms have a sense, for Frege, but no meaning? I think that, in fact, the answer to this question is straightforward and I think that seeing what it is provides the key to understanding this larger part of our quotation and thence the answer to the problem how it is that we ordinarily think of our vague predicates as meaning*ful* yet think of our fictional predicates as meaning*less*. So I will explain what this answer is.

The reason that the *question* is troubling is that Frege explains what the sense of an expression is by saying that it is the "mode of presentation of the meaning" of the expression or the "mode of designation of the meaning", and yet for a fictional term *there is no meaning* so there couldn't be any mode of presentation of that meaning.

The first point to make in answer to this question is one that I have already relied on in my exposition in this section before now. This is that Frege means very much the same thing by the "sense" of an expression as he does by the "definition" of an expression. I said in the last section, in §1.2.2, that, as I understand him, what Frege means by the "sense" of an expression, is a *way of knowing* the object or kind of thing meant by the expression (and here too the worry behind the question bites, because there could be no way of knowing the object meant if no object were meant) and this is precisely what the definition of an expression is meant to provide, the way to determine whether or not an object is of the kind to which the expression applies. And this understanding of the relation between definition and sense seems to me to be implicit in the remarks: "it is true that

certain characteristic marks are supplied. For this reason the context cited need not lack a sense".

The reason for making the point of the previous paragraph is that it reveals the problem of fictional terms having a sense but no meaning to be the same as the problem of their having a definition but no meaning. And this in turn shows how the idea of terms with sense but no meaning is straightforward. Because terms that are *incompletely defined* are going to have a sense but no meaning. They are going to have no meaning for the reasons that I have outlined in this section up to now; and they are going to have a sense because "certain characteristic marks are supplied" for them. Having said this, I do think that the question as to whether incompletely defined terms have a sense is a matter of some indifference to Frege. *Strictly speaking* I suppose he should say that such terms do not have a sense (and for that matter that they do not have a definition) because no meaning is determined for them—and this, as I understand it, is the position by the time Frege reaches *GA*.[9] However, if we think of senses and definitions, as Frege roughly does, as lists of marks (or criteria) for an object or a kind of object, then it is very natural to think of some such lists as not going far enough as to generate an object or kind yet, even so, to consider them as senses or definitions too. And this latter is, I think, the position that Frege adopts in "Comments on Sense and Meaning": vague and fictional terms have senses, but senses that are defective in that they fall short of determining a meaning.

And as I say, this understanding of how incompletely defined terms can have senses without having meanings provides the key to the latter part of our passage and this in turn leads us to an understanding of how Frege would want to explain the fact that we take our

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[9] This I take to be implicit in the remarks with which Frege ends §56 of *GA*, the section which I looked at in the last section of this chapter:

…would the sentence 'any square root of 9 is odd' have a comprehensible sense at all if *square root of 9* were not a concept with a sharp boundary? Has the question 'Are we still Christians?' really got a sense, if it is indeterminate whom the predicate 'Christian' can truly be ascribed to, and who must be refused it?

He asks here whether the word "Christian" has really got a sense, given that it is incompletely defined, and whereas in earlier passages, including the one that I have been looking at in this section, he wants to say that it has, here in *GA* he seems to want to say that it hasn't.

vague terms to be meaningful even though we take our fictional terms to be meaningless, when it turns out that both vague and fictional terms are meaningless because they are incompletely defined. And Frege makes the important point from this point of view when, having introduced the further example from Homer of the name "Nausicaa" which he says: "probably does not mean or name anything", he then says that it nevertheless: "*behaves as if it names a girl*" [my emphasis], which is what assures it of having a sense.

What does Frege mean when he says this, that the name "Nausicaa" behaves as if it names a girl? Well, given what I have just been saying about his understanding of the failure of fictional terms to name anything, I take it that what he means is that "Nausicaa" behaves as if it were completely defined. And what I take it he means by this is that *we treat* a fictional name as if its definition were complete (when of course it is not), that we use the name and take the name *under the pretence* that it is sharply defined and meaningful. And an important part of this picture would be that we are self-consciously aware that we are doing this and that the fictional name isn't really sharply defined.

It is this latter point, that we are self-consciously aware of treating our fictional terms as if they were sharply defined, that explains the difference between our ordinary understanding of fictional terms as meaningless and vague terms as meaningful. Because, as we shall see in §1.4, Frege suggests elsewhere in his writings that in our everyday discourse we treat our ordinary vague terms as if they were sharply defined in just the same way that I am saying he thinks that we treat our fictional terms as if they were sharply defined, but the difference is that in the case of vague terms we are *not* conscious of doing so. So, if I am right, Frege's analysis of our ordinary understanding of the semantics of vague terms is that it is a *mis*understanding, indeed the misunderstanding is to think that they have a semantics at all; we think of vague terms as meaningful when in fact they are not. I will explain this phenomenon of our treating vague terms as if they were sharp when in fact they are not more fully in the next section, §1.4, where it will provide Frege with his understanding of the Sorites paradox. Suffice it to say for now that the explanation is again going to be psychological as I suggested earlier it would have been of the belief in natural kinds: there is good (psychological) reason for us *wanting* to believe that our vague terms are meaningful.

§1.4 Argument 3: Vagueness Leads to the Sorites Paradox

§1.4.1 Introduction

In this section I turn to the last of my arguments from Frege against vague language as a vehicle for truth and meaning. This argument arises from his understanding of the relation between logic and our vague language as we have seen emerging in this chapter so far and it is that if we understand this relation correctly then we can see our way out of the problem of the Sorites paradox, where understanding the relation correctly involves understanding ordinary language *as* incapable of performing the role of vehicle for truth and meaning.

We have seen already how Frege believes that logic demands sharp concepts and that because our ordinary concepts are *not* sharp, ordinary language cannot really function as a vehicle for truth and meaning; we cannot make inferences using vague language, we cannot even really say anything meaningful or true in it. But this troubling conclusion bluntly contradicts our ordinary understanding of the matter: we would, of course, want to insist that we *can* make inferences using our ordinary language and we can say things in it that are true or false. So one thing that we want from Frege is an account of what it is that we *are* doing when—mistakenly, according to him—we take ourselves to be reasoning and using our ordinary language meaningfully, an account that takes all the mystery out of the claim that under such circumstances we aren't in fact doing what we think we are. Frege, I believe, does offer such an account; and it is this account that, as I understand him, he thinks explains the Sorites paradox.

The argument for discussion in this section is contained in two passages, the first is from the letter to Peano of 29.9.1896:

...logic can only recognize sharply delimited concepts. Only under this presupposition can it set up precise laws. The logical law that there is no third case besides

> *a* is *b*

and

> *a* is not *b*

is really only another way of expressing our requirement that a concept (*b*) must be sharply delimited. The fallacy known by the name of 'Acervus' rests on this, that words like 'heap' are treated as if they designated a sharply delimited concept whereas this is not the case.[10]

[*Philosophical and Mathematical Correspondence*, p.114]

And the second is from "The Argument for my Stricter Canons of Definition":

We can also argue for this requirement on the ground that the law of excluded middle must hold. For that implies that every concept must have sharp boundaries, so that it is determined for every object whether it falls under the concept or not. Were this not so, there would be a third case besides just the two cases '*a* falls under the concept *F* and '*a* does not fall under the concept *F*—namely, the case where this is undecided. The fallacy known as the 'Sorites' depends on something (e.g. a heap) being treated as a concept which cannot be acknowledged as such by logic because it is not properly circumscribed. [*Posthumous Writings*, p.155]

And I will begin my explanation of the argument in §1.4.3 by looking at what Frege has to say in these passages. First, though, I think it would be useful, to pave the way, to give a brief account of the Sorites paradox itself to bring the character of the problem that it poses into focus, and to indicate the possible avenues of response to that problem.

§1.4.2 A Brief Outline of the Problem of the Sorites Paradox

The form of the problem posed by the Sorites is captured, of course, by calling the Sorites a paradox. The mark of a paradox is that there are two conflicting ways of looking at a situation. We think through the situation in one way and it turns out that things *must be* thus and so but then when we think through the situation in another way it turns out that things *can't possibly be* thus and so, and the problem arises because we don't want to give up either way of thinking through the situation. This is the form of the problem of the Sorites; let me sketch it out in such a way as to make this clear and obvious.

Let us imagine a heap of sand on the floor in front of us. Then let us imagine starting to take small pinches of sand away from the heap one at a time. As we are doing this we can reflect that at no stage in what we are doing can taking one pinch of sand away turn what is a heap into what is not a heap; if at any stage in the proceedings we have a heap of sand in front of us, then taking a small amount of sand away from it can't take away the fact that we still have a heap of sand. So it seems that however long we might continue with this process of taking away sand from our heap, we would still have a heap of sand left. So,

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[10] In this passage Frege uses "Acervus", the Latin name for a heap, instead of "Sorites", the Greek name.

thinking one way through the situation, we are led to say that the process of removing little bits of sand, however long it goes on for, always leaves a heap. But, of course, if we start with a heap of sand and keep on taking bits of sand away from it then eventually we are going to end up with just a few grains, and then no sand at all. And that is the other way of thinking through the situation, according to which we want to say that the process *must* lead to there being *no* heap of sand in the end.

In this way the Sorites has at least a strong appearance of being a genuine paradox, that is: we appear to have two contradictory, yet true, descriptions of the Sorites scenario. And this is a problem, because such a genuine paradox would be rationally intolerable.

The obvious responses to the problem are to reject one or other of the two aspects of the paradox; and the usual (though not universal) choice is the argument that leads to the conclusion that no grains of sand is a heap—this form of arguing I will call "Sorites reasoning". As we shall see, Frege himself rejects this latter aspect of the putative paradox, and I would like to pursue my account of the Sorites a little further here to try to close more specifically in on what I think he finds faulty about Sorites reasoning. I think a simple outline of the representation of Sorites reasoning standardly adopted in the literature can help with this.

According to the standard way of thinking of Sorites reasoning, such reasoning begins with two premises. Sticking with the example of the heap of sand, the first premise would state that, for instance, an unproblematically large number of grains of sand is a heap, say:

(P1)   10,000 grains of sand is a heap;

and the second premise would be a statement of what Crispin Wright has called a *Tolerance Principle*,[11] which would capture the intuition that small enough changes in number of grains can't make the difference between a heap and no heap:

(P2)   For any number of grains n, if n grains of sand is a heap, then $n-1$ grains is a heap.

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[11] See "On the Coherence of Vague Predicates".

Then, in addition to these two premises, we need two rules of inference. The first is an instantiation rule which gives us any proposition of the form:

If k grains of sand is a heap then k-1 grains is a heap,

for some determinate "k", from the tolerance principle (P2). The second is *Modus Ponens*.

And with these four pieces of apparatus in place, our Sorites reasoning proceeds by repeated application of our instantiation rule followed by *Modus Ponens*:

1.   10,000 grains of sand is a heap.   (Assumption.)

2.   For any number of grains n, if n grains of sand is a heap, then n-1 grains is a heap.
                             (Assumption.)

3.   If 10,000 grains of sand is a heap, then 9,999 grains is a heap.
                             (From 2 by instantiation rule.)

4.   9,999 grains is a heap.   (From 1 and 3 by *Modus Ponens*.)

5.   If 9,999 grains of sand is a heap, then 9,998 grains is a heap.
                             (From 2 by instantiation rule.)

...

20,001. If 1 grain of sand is a heap then 0 grains is a heap.   (From 2 by instantiation rule.)

20,002. 0 grains of sand is a heap.   (From 20,000 and 20,001 by *Modus Ponens*.)

That is the orthodox way of representing the Sorites argument. And I think that it shows very clearly the points at which, on its terms, the reasoning could break down: any one of the four bits of machinery—the two opening premises or the two rules of inference—could be faulty. *Prima facie* they all seem to be in order, but the most suspect looking one is (P2), the Tolerance Principle. As we shall eventually see, it is with the Tolerance Principle that Frege's approach locates the problem.

§1.4.3 *Frege's Approach to the Sorites*

Let me return now specifically to Frege's thinking, to the anti-vagueness argument involving the Sorites as contained in the excerpts quoted above.

Each of the passages quoted begins with the claim that the law of excluded middle—that is, as Frege thinks of it, the law that concepts be sharply and completely defined—must hold as a requirement for logic. This claim is then in each passage supported by a thought about the Sorites. In the letter to Peano, Frege says:

The fallacy known as the 'Sorites' depends on something (e.g. a heap) being treated as a concept which cannot be acknowledged as such by logic because it is not properly circumscribed.

And in "The Argument for my Stricter Canons of Definition", he expresses the same thought:

The fallacy known by the name of 'Acervus' rests on this, that words like 'heap' are treated as if they designated a sharply delimited concept whereas this is not the case.

This thought is centrally important for us: it explains what, for Frege, goes wrong in Sorites reasoning, and in so doing it exposes a fundamental misunderstanding of "reasoning" in our vague language that we are all constantly under the influence of; understanding this supposed misunderstanding will goes a long way to explaining Frege's conception of the relation between logic and our vague language.

It is with this misunderstanding and the account of logic and language that emerges from it that I want to begin, approaching it all to begin with through these two shorter quotations of Frege on the Sorites. In the next subsection, I will go on to look in more detail at that account of "reasoning" with ordinary (vague) language; then finally I will return to the problem of the Sorites and to Frege's proposed solution.

So let me begin with a preliminary exposition of the two remarks quoted above. Frege begins by calling the Sorites a *fallacy* rather than a paradox. And in fact his understanding of the Sorites just is how he thinks that it can be a fallacy and yet have the appearance of a paradox. A fallacy is a mistake in reasoning, and one that people are apt to make but also apt not to notice. And Frege's explanation of the Sorites appearing to be a paradox when really a fallacy is going to be that the Sorites appears to us to be a paradox because we don't notice the mistake that we are making in our reasoning.

What is the mistake? Well, the mistake, in Frege's words, is treating words like "heap" as if they designated a sharply delimited concept whereas this is not the case. And I will argue in the next subsection that this isn't, on Frege's view, simply a characterization of what we are doing in the case of Sorites reasoning, but of what we are doing in our everyday use of concepts generally; the idea, as I understand it, is that in our everyday linguistic interactions we treat our vague predicates *as if* they were sharply defined, so *simulating* meaningful discourse using our vague language. For now, though, let me just

take what Frege says here at face value; there is an important point that I want to raise which will lead naturally in to that next subsection.

The point arises in the following way. It seems, *prima facie*, an odd thing for Frege to say that the problem of the Sorites arises because we treat words like "heap" as if they were sharply defined; because when we are proceeding according to Sorites reasoning we take ourselves to be *constantly acknowledging* the vagueness of the central term. One of the principles employed in Sorites reasoning is the Tolerance Principle—that, e.g., for any number of grains n, if n grains of sand is a heap, so is n-1 grains—, and we employ this principle as a self-conscious concession to the vagueness of that central term; every time we employ the principle in Sorites reasoning with heaps we are acknowledging the vagueness of "heap". This leads us to ask: "What *is* Frege suggesting here when he says that in the Sorites we treat a vague term like "heap" as if it were sharp?". Timothy Williamson thinks that he is just mistaken

> Frege sometimes speaks [*i.e.* in our two passages] of sorites paradoxes as the result of treating a vague predicate as though it stood for a sharp concept. His description is not quite right, for someone who does think that 'heap' stands for a concept with a sharp cut-off point should not agree that one bean never makes the difference between a heap and a non-heap. The paradox arises just because we do try to acknowledge the vagueness of 'heap', by saying that one bean could never make the difference, but then find that our concession leads us into absurdities. Frege's point should be that, if we make this concession to vagueness, we cannot also expect to get away with using rigorous logic, which is designed only for referring and therefore precise expressions.   [*Vagueness*, p.43]

But I think Williamson is wrong to object to Frege here. Frege says:

> The fallacy known by the name of 'Acervus' rests on this, that words like 'heap' are treated as if they designated a sharply delimited concept whereas this is not the case.

And Williamson objects:

> His description is not quite right, for someone who does think that 'heap' stands for a concept with a sharp cut-off point should not agree that one bean never makes the difference between a heap and a non-heap.

But I don't think that the fact that if someone thinks that "heap" is sharp then they should not agree that "heap" is tolerant to small changes in number of beans, is at all incompatible with what Frege says. Indeed, I think Frege would have agreed with this, but would have continued to say the same thing.

The tone of Williamson's comments in the passage quoted is almost that of correcting a slip of the pen of Frege—he says: "His description is not quite right..." and

"Frege's point should be that...". But Frege did make the same point, differently expressed, in two separate pieces of work; and this makes it quite likely that Frege had given the idea some serious thought. Anyway, I do think that taking Frege at his word here does lead to a philosophically interesting thesis.

Where I think Williamson goes wrong is in misunderstanding Frege's phrase:

...words like 'heap' are treated as if they designated a sharply delimited concept... .

Because he is taking this phrase to rule out the very possibility of "heap" being treated as tolerant to small changes of numbers of beans; saying that, because Frege says that "heap" is being treated as sharp, he thereby rules out the possibility that "heap" is being treated as vague, but that the paradox is generated by our somehow treating confusedly "heap" as both vague *and* sharp, and so what Frege says is strictly speaking false. But I think that this confusion is precisely Frege's concern, and in saying that in Sorites reasoning words like "heap" are treated as if they designated a sharply delimited concept, I think that Frege is characterizing the confusion. As I understand it, what Frege is suggesting is—as I argued also to be his thinking in the passage from "Comments on Sense and Meaning" discussed in the previous section—that we treat our vague concepts as if they were sharp *without realizing that this is what we are doing*; what we take ourselves to be doing, on reflection, is using our vague concepts as vague—hence the unproblematic appearance of the Tolerance Principle—, whereas, in fact, it is necessary for our using them in the way that we want to in practice that they be sharp. I hope that this central idea will become clearer through the next subsection.

§1.4.4 Frege's Understanding of Our "Reasoning" using Vague Predicates

In his article "Frege and Vagueness", Jean Van Heijenoort has the following to say about Frege's understanding of the relation between logic and our vague language:

logical inference puts more severe constraints on language than does the mere impartment of information; it tolerates less wobbling in the senses of words, perhaps no wobbling at all. The Greeks began to worry about the Heap and the Bald when their language became an instrument of argumentation, whether mathematical or philosophical. Since the best we can do, in ordinary language, is to locally reduce vagueness, but not eliminate it, and since logic has been built on the same lines as mathematics, that is, with initial bivalent predicates plus rules that maintain bivalence (set-theoretic semantics), what is the status of logical arguments conducted in ordinary language, with vague words? Shady, some would say. Behind a vague word we

perceive (imagine? assume?) a bivalent predicate, and the argument is actually conducted with that predicate in mind; when the words are again taken as belonging to ordinary language, the conclusion, it is to be hoped, will remain valid. The enterprise has an 'as if' character. In the syllogism

> All Athenians are men,
> All men are mortal,
> _____
>
> Therefore, all Athenians are mortal,

the predicates '…is an Athenian', '…is a man', '..is mortal' are vague; but nobody would question the validity of the argument. On the other hand, when we try to apply mathematical induction to the predicate '…is a heap', we reach an absurd conclusion, and precisely because of the vagueness of the predicate. Here, if we would simply argue *as if* the predicate '…is a heap' were exact, our convention would seem glaringly artificial and leave us with a feeling of dissatisfaction. The first Greek who drew our attention to the Heap wanted us to reflect on how logical arguments can at all be conducted with vague words. ["Frege and Vagueness", pp.40-41]

I think that this is excellent, and very close to what I myself have come to think of as Frege's understanding of the relation between logic and language. But there is a difference between us which I consider to be very important. This difference is that I believe that Frege thought that nothing that we could say in our vague language could be, strictly speaking, either meaningful or true, whereas Van Heijenoort doesn't. We can see that Van Heijenoort doesn't think this from his saying that for logical arguments conducted in vague language

…when the words are again taken as belonging to ordinary language, the conclusion, it is to be hoped, will remain valid.

Here, he is clearly thinking that the notion of validity, and hence also the notion of truth, applies to (non-logical) arguments in ordinary language—how else could the conclusion with its words again taken as belonging to ordinary language be thought to *remain* valid?

This difference that I have with Van Heijenoort on this point I think is important for philosophical reasons—because I think it gets closer to the truth about the relation between logic and ordinary language—, and that is my main reason for ascribing it to Frege.[12] In

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12 One consequence of Van Heijenoort's misunderstanding of Frege here is that when he says:

when we try to apply mathematical induction to the predicate '…is a heap', we reach an absurd conclusion, and precisely because of the vagueness of the predicate. Here, if we would simply argue *as if* the predicate '…is a heap' were exact, our convention would seem glaringly artificial and leave us with a feeling of dissatisfaction. The first Greek who drew our attention to the Heap wanted us to reflect on how logical arguments can at all be conducted with vague words.

addition to this reason, however, I *do* think that the texts themselves support my interpretation more favourably than they do Van Heijenoort's.

I hope that to a large extent this latter point is clear from the interpretations of the texts that I have given up to now in this chapter. Van Heijenoort takes *his* interpretation from the following passage from the letter to Peano, situated just after the remark on the Sorites:

> The task of our vernacular languages is essentially fulfilled if the persons having verbal intercourse with one another connect, with one sentence, the same thought, or approximately the same thought. For this it is not at all necessary that the individual words should have a *Sinn* and a *Bedeutung* of their own, provided only that the whole sentence has a *Sinn*.
> [*Philosophical and Mathematical Correspondence*, pp.114-115; Van Heijenoort's own modified translation]

At first glance it does look as if Frege in this passage is supporting the view that ordinary language *can* function for the expression of truth. He says that when people communicate successfully they attach the same thought or approximately the same thought as each other to a sentence. But, at least by itself, this *doesn't* mean that he is committing himself to such sentences having a truth value; because there is a precedent elsewhere where Frege is happy to talk about sentences that express thoughts without having truth values, and this, as we just saw in §1.3, is in fiction, with fictional sentences. And in the latter sentence of the passage just quoted, although Frege says that sentences adequate for communication do not need to contain words with a sense *and a meaning* of their own, he only says that the whole sentence needs a sense (not a meaning as well). That is, he doesn't say that such sentences need (or have) a truth value and indeed seems to actually *refrain* from saying that they have one.

Anyway, I will say no more than that about my differences with Van Heijenoort and will move on to look instead at what it is in his account that I really like. He says:

He misses what I take to be the important point for Frege's understanding of the Sorites, and one that I will get on to again shortly in the main text, that when we argue as if a predicate were exact, we do so without realizing that this is what we are doing. It is this that explains why Sorites reasoning *doesn't* seem glaringly artificial and why such reasoning *doesn't* leave us with a feeling of dissatisfaction, but with a feeling of puzzlement or paradox.

Behind a vague word we perceive (imagine? assume?) a bivalent predicate, and the argument is actually conducted with that predicate in mind; when the words are again taken as belonging to ordinary language, the conclusion, it is to be hoped, will remain valid. The enterprise has an 'as if' character. In the syllogism

> All Athenians are men,
> All men are mortal,
> _____
>
> Therefore, all Athenians are mortal,

the predicates '...is an Athenian', '...is a man', '...is mortal' are vague; but nobody would question the validity of the argument.

And what I really like in this passage is the account that he offers of what we are doing when we take ourselves to be arguing logically using vague terms, the idea that when we take ourselves to be arguing logically using our vague language what we are in fact doing is treating our vague terms as if they were sharply defined. Let me now get down to explaining this idea, with Van Heijenoort's help.

First, let me address the question as to *when* in our linguistic practices Frege would have us following this procedure of treating our vague predicates as if they were sharp. And I think that Van Heijenoort is right about logical arguments, at least those like his syllogism which involve inferences at the level of predicates.[13] And it doesn't matter from

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[13] In fact, on two occasions, Frege argues directly against incompletely defined concepts on the ground that they cannot support deductive inferences at the level of names and predicates. And one each of these occasions follows straight after each of the two references to the Sorites being discussed in this section of my thesis. In the letter to Peano, the whole passage reads:

...logic can only recognize sharply delimited concepts. Only under this presupposition can it set up precise laws. The logical law that there is no third case besides

$$a \text{ is } b$$

and

$$a \text{ is not } b$$

is really only another way of expressing our requirement that a concept (b) must be sharply delimited. The fallacy known by the name of 'Acervus' rests on this, that words like 'heap' are treated as if they designated a sharply delimited concept whereas this is not the case. Just as it would be impossible for geometry to set up precise laws if it tried to recognize threads as lines and knots in threads as points, so logic must demand sharp limits of what it will recognize as a concept unless it wants to renounce all precision and certainty. Thus a sign for a concept whose content does not satisfy this requirement is to be regarded as meaningless from the logical point of view. It can be objected that such words are used thousands of times in the language of life. Yes; but our vernacular languages are also not made for conducting proofs. And it is precisely the defects that spring from this that have been my main reason for setting up a conceptual notation. *The task of our vernacular languages is essentially fulfilled if people engaged in communication with one another connect the same thought, or approximately the same thought, with the same proposition. For this it is not at all necessary that the individual words should have a sense and meaning of their own, provided only that the whole proposition has a sense. Where inferences are to be drawn the case is different: for this it is essential that the same expression should occur in two propositions and should*

the point of view of Frege's understanding of the Sorites paradox if we leave it at that, because, as we shall see, it is the procedure as employed in a logical argument that leads to the problem of the Sorites. However, if we want the full picture then I think we ought to take the argument from "Comments on Sense and Meaning" seriously, and if we do so—and I think it is also in keeping with the general spirit of Frege's remarks on vagueness, those discussed in this chapter up to now and elsewhere, to take this as the full picture—then it is not just in making inferences that we treat vague predicates as sharp, but every time we use a predicate (we think) meaningfully; that is, at least every time we use a predicate in a sentence that is (taken to be) true or false. (The glosses in parentheses here are needed because, of course, it is an upshot of the argument associating vague terms with fictional ones that the vague predicates of our ordinary language *cannot* be used to produce sentences that are meaningful or true.) And the thesis is that *by the very act of* making inferences—that is, by taking the conclusion of an inference to be *a priori* and with certainty true given the truth of the premises—involving vague predicates (or, accepting the more general position as I am wanting to, by the very act of using vague predicates taking them to be meaningful) we are, we have to be, treating such predicates as sharp—because, for Frege, inferences (and meaningful sentences) are not possible using vague predicates.

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have exactly the same meaning in both cases. It must therefore have a meaning of its own, independent of the other parts of the proposition. In the case of incompletely defined concept words there is no such independence: what matters in such a case is whether the case at hand is the one to which the definition refers, and that depends on the other parts of the proposition. Such words cannot therefore be acknowledged to have an independent meaning at all. This is why I reject conditional definitions of signs for concepts.

[*Philosophical and Mathematical Correspondence*, pp.114-5; I have emphasized, with italics, the argument that is the main concern of this footnote]

And in "The Argument for my Stricter Canons of Definition", the whole passage is:

We can also argue for this requirement on the ground that the law of excluded middle must hold. For that implies that every concept must have sharp boundaries, so that it is determined for every object whether it falls under the concept or not. Were this not so, there would be a third case besides just the two cases '*a* falls under the concept *F* and '*a* does not fall under the concept *F*—namely, the case where this is undecided. The fallacy known as the 'Sorites' depends on something (e.g. a heap) being treated as a concept which cannot be acknowledged as such by logic because it is not properly circumscribed.

The following consideration also gives the same result. Inference from two premises very often, if not always, depends on a concept being common to both of them. If a fallacy is to be avoided, not only must the sign for the concept be the same, it must also mean the same. It must have a meaning independent of the context and not first come to acquire one in context, which is no doubt what very often happens in speech.

[*Posthumous Writings*, p.155; again I have emphasized the argument of central concern.]

But what does it *mean* to treat our vague predicates as if they were sharp, what does this amount to in practice? Well, I think, here we can make good use of the notion used in supervaluationist theories of truth for vague languages, the notion of a *precisification* of a vague predicate.[14] A precisification of a vague predicate is a sharp predicate—that is, a predicate whose application is determined, yes or no, for every possible object in the universe—produced by infinitely tightening up in one way or another the criteria for application of the vague predicate—for the standard example of a heap of sand as a collection of grains of sand above a certain number, a precisification might be a collection of ≥ 1000 grains of sand. With the help of this notion we can address our current question straightforwardly as follows: when we treat a vague predicate as if it were sharp, we treat it as *some precisification of itself or other*, that is, we *use* the predicate as if it were a precisification of itself.

And the reason why I take it that the process that we are looking at here leaves it undetermined which precisification we are treating a vague predicate as, on a particular occasion, is that some precisification or other is all that is required by the (psychological) explanation of why the process is there in the first place. This is the explanation that I introduced in §1.3.3.1 and is one that we shall see moving into the fore when it comes to Wittgenstein's response to these Fregean themes—Wittgenstein is to criticize Frege's position on the ground that this psychology of the situation is wrong. For now, let me simply reiterate what I take to be the view that Frege is committed to. Frege thinks that our language is vague, and that because of this nothing that we can say with it is meaningful or true. In our philosophical investigations into the workings of language we come face to face with this disturbing truth; but, because we find it so unacceptable, we insist that it must be wrong and that our language *must* satisfy the conditions required of it by logic, hence we treat our vague predicates as if they satisfied the demands of logic and were in fact sharp.

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14 The *locus classicus* for supervaluationist theories of truth is Kit Fine's article "Vagueness, Truth and Logic".

In fact the whole account that we are involved in now, of "reasoning" with vague predicates, is a psychological account. And I think it helps to bear this in mind when tackling the next aspect of the account which is the idea that when we treat our vague predicates as if they were sharp we do so without realizing that this is what we are doing. I have just said that in using language as a vehicle for truth, treating our vague sentences as meaningful or true, we are *eo ipso* treating the vague predicates occurring in those sentences as sharp. And how we manage this without realizing is that when we follow the rules for use of our vague predicates in everyday discourse we do so *blindly*. That is to say, all we do is to use language in a way appropriate to the circumstances—in the case of drawing inferences the rule would be: if this sentence is true then this (appropriately chopped up and rearranged one) will be true too. And the appropriateness of using language in this particular way in these particular circumstances isn't something that is left for us to decide ourselves, but is something that is decided for us by linguistic convention. So, in fact, what we are doing in our everyday reasoning is proceeding according to convention without ever questioning that convention; our attitude is: this is the way one uses language meaningfully and that's that. This is what I have been meaning when I have been saying that when, in our everyday reasoning and so on, we treat vague predicates as if they were sharp we do so "unconsciously" or "without realizing that that is what we are doing", that we follow the convention blindly and don't question it.

In everyday life we don't question such conventions, but in *philosophy* we do. And this makes it look as if the idea that in everyday life we follow the rules blindly can't be all that there is to our not noticing that this is what we are doing, because in philosophy we open our eyes to the rules and question them and philosophy is one of our linguistic activities, so we can't always be blind to the rules that we follow. And this is true: in philosophy we *aren't* blind to the rules that we follow; we aren't blind, but we might not like what we see so much that we deny it to ourselves. And this latter is, I think, the state of affairs that we have in the case of vagueness. And Frege's understanding of this state of affairs, it seems to me, is that we don't like the fact that the rules of our language are vague because that means that our language is incapable of bearing truth so we deny that the rules

are vague *in our philosophy*. And in this way our philosophy becomes incriminated in the establishment in our everyday linguistic interactions of the blind treatment of vague predicates as sharp; the philosophical fiction that the rules of our language are sharp and not vague, generated in philosophy by worries about vagueness, eventually filters down into the vernacular, forming the ordinary understanding of truth, meaning and so on.

And that, I think, gives an adequate account, for present purposes, of the idea that in using our language we treat our vague terms as if they were sharp *without realizing* that we are doing so. There is an issue that it raises, however, that needs to be addressed, and I would like to round off my explanation of the whole general process of treating vague predicates as sharp here through addressing this issue. The issue is: what is the point, in the light of what Frege has to say about it, of our continuing to use our everyday language at all? if language is simply a heap of junk when considered as a vehicle for truth, what is the point of persevering with it? Now, of course, language *isn't* just a heap of junk, and I am sure that, in fact, Frege was very well aware of this. And how, on my interpretation of him, ordinary language can be legitimized from the logical point of view is, I think, through this possibility of simulating reasoning in the use of that ordinary language; because the possibility of such a simulation itself raises the possibility of ordinary language as a whole simulating some logically correct language. Let me explain.

Let me begin by returning to the actual mechanics of the process of treating vague concepts as sharp as manifest in our everyday use of language, and to Van Heijenoort who describes the process as manifest in our everyday inferences in the following way:

Behind a vague word we perceive (imagine? assume?) a bivalent predicate, and the argument is actually conducted with that predicate in mind; when the words are again taken as belonging to ordinary language, the conclusion, it is to be hoped, will remain valid.

I have already pointed out the way that I disagree with Van Heijenoort here that the conclusion of an argument in ordinary language *cannot*, for Frege, be valid. But, ignoring this, I think that Van Heijenoort has got the process essentially right. We begin with sentences in ordinary language which we take to be true. We then assume their predicates to be sharpenings of themselves and, under this assumption, draw inferences from them according to the laws of logic. This process then leaves us again with a sentence composed

of words from our ordinary language which we take to be, necessarily and *a priori*, true.

And I think that this basic description of the process of simulating reasoning in vague language does suggest the possibility of our simulating the use of a *whole language* capable of bearing truth and meaning, using our own vague language. Such a logically acceptable language would be a language whose predicates were all some precisification or other of predicates in ordinary language. And it is the *possibility* of such a viable language on the Fregean conception that, I think, gives a point to our using our vague language as if it were a vehicle for truth and meaning: our vague language might be incapable of the expression and conduction of truth of itself, but through it we can have access to a language resembling it that is so capable.

§1.4.5 Frege's Understanding of the Sorites Paradox

With that, I would like to return to the Sorites paradox and to give an account of what I take to be Frege's understanding of it.

Let me recall first what Frege said about the Sorites:

The fallacy known by the name of 'Acervus' rests on this, that words like 'heap' are treated as if they designated a sharply delimited concept whereas this is not the case.

And we have just seen what I think Frege means when he says that in the Sorites words like "heap" are treated as if they designated a sharply delimited concept whereas this is not the case: that by the very act of employing rules of inference at the sub-sentential level we are, without being conscious of it, treating vague predicates as if they were sharp (or even by the very act of treating vague predicates as meaningful, we are treating them as if sharp) in the way, and for the reasons, described above. This is, in fact, on Frege's analysis, what is going on all the time in our use of language as if it were a vehicle for truth; and, under normal circumstances, this procedure never leads us into trouble. But it does lead us into trouble in the Sorites. And the reason why is that in the Sorites we have as one our premises the Tolerance Principle which says that one grain of sand can't make the difference between a heap and a non-heap and with which we acknowledge explicitly *in the argument* that "heap" is a vague predicate. But of course we go on to treat the predicate "heap" as if

it were sharply defined by employing our instantiation rule, a rule of inference at the level of names and predicates, to produce instantiations from the Tolerance principle (or simply by treating the Tolerance Principle as true in the first place). So, on the one hand in the Sorites argument we *say* with the Tolerance Principle that "heap" is vague, whilst at the same time we use the word in a way—either by making instantiations from the Principle or simply by treating the Principle as true—only suitable for precise predicates.

And this way of locating the problem with the Tolerance Principle brings us into a position to see why I said that Frege thinks of the Sorites as having the appearance of a paradox when really it is a fallacy, because this illusion of paradox is going to turn on the fact that although the Tolerance Principle is a proposition for which there appears to be no problem about taking it to be true, there *is* in fact such a problem. And what we need to understand if we are to understand the Sorites as Frege does is precisely how this appearance of the unproblematic truth of the Tolerance Principle is illusory.

Let me recall the Principle as formulated above:

For any number of grains *n*, if *n* grains of sand is a heap, then *n-1* grains is a heap.

If we try to treat this sentence as true, or as a source of inferences at the sub-propositional level as we are doing in the Sorites argument, then, on Frege's understanding of it, we are *ipso facto* treating the predicate "…is a heap" as sharply defined, that is, as some sharpening or other of "…is a heap". But doing this renders the sentence false—for any sharpening of "…is a heap", say "…is a heap*", there *is* some number of grains that makes a heap*, where one less grain would be a heap* no longer—indeed, such a substitution would render the sentence false *by definition*. And this means that it is, in fact, not possible to treat the Tolerance Principle as if true, nor to simulate sound inferences making instantiations of it.

That is why the apparent soundness of the Sorites must be illusory. But how might it be that we are fooled by it? Well, the important point would seem to be that the sentence looks to us like one that is true, under our general misapprehension, that is, that the sentences of our language *can* be true when really the best that we can manage is a simulation of truth with them. Accordingly, in reality what is going on is that we recognize

the Tolerance Principle, according to our customary ways of doing so, as a sentence of our language that does simulate truth when, in fact, it can't do so. How might this happen? Well, I think the problem is going to arise because in the sentence we try to say something using the word "heap" about the use of the word "heap" as vague. In other words, there is a kind of self-reference going on in the sentence: we use the word "heap" to refer to the use of the word "heap". And it is with this self-reference, I think, that we inadvertently throw a spanner in the works of the simulation process. Such self-reference is, it seems to me, commonplace elsewhere in our use of language without there causing any problem for the simulation of truth and reasoning; the examples that spring to mind are whenever we employ implicit definitions such as in

A bachelor is an unmarried man

where we use the word "bachelor" self-referentially about the use of the word "bachelor". And the significant difference is that in such other cases we are not concerned with the use of language *qua* vague language; that is why there is no problem with the simulation in those cases. In the case of the Tolerance Principle, however, the principle looks to us like it contains a perfectly legitimate self-referential use of the word "heap", but it does not do so. Because one cannot take some precisification or other of "heap", say "heap*", and use it self-referentially to say something true about the use of "heap/heap*" as vague; "heap*" could only say something self-referentially about "heap*" as sharp. We are under the delusion that there is nothing logically defective about our ordinary vague language as it stands and consequently are blind to the simulation that, in reality, is going on in it; and that means that we are also blind to this problem with using a vague predicate self-referentially of itself as vague. Hence we see no problem with treating the Tolerance Principle as (if) true.

§1.4.6 *The Conclusion of the Argument*

That is, as I understand it, Frege's understanding of the Sorites paradox. And all that remains to be said for this section is that, in so far as this understanding of the Sorites does genuinely solve the problem, it also gives us a telling argument against vague language as a

vehicle for truth. Because the solution suggested by Frege's account is simply to insist on a language free of vagueness as a medium for the communication of truth—as Frege's own *Begriffsschrift* was intended to be. Only such a perfectly sharp language would contain no room for the Sorites paradox.

Chapter 2

Vagueness, the Demands of Logic, and *Philosophical Investigations*

§2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I gave my account of Frege's case against vagueness as being a defect of natural language. In fact, it would make the philosophical significance of Frege's case more perspicuous to call it a case against natural language as defective because of vagueness. And putting the matter in this other way also presents Frege's position in a way that seems to me to be important when it comes to understanding his influence on the development of Wittgenstein's own position. It is an important theme in Michael Dummett's interpretation of Frege's philosophy of language, and one that I wholly agree with, that Frege thought of ordinary language as logically defective in a number of ways, one of which was, as evidenced in my previous chapter, because of its vagueness. And I think it is a very useful interpretative principle to help one orientate oneself within Wittgenstein's own philosophy of language to see him as coming to the defence of ordinary language in reaction against this attitude of Frege's. In *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* his position was conciliatory: he accepted Frege's criticism generally as a legitimate complaint, but sought to show that ordinary language *did* satisfy the demands expected of it in spite of appearances to the contrary. In *Philosophical Investigations*, however, he turned on to the offensive, arguing that the demands of logic, as Frege was thinking of them, were themselves the cause of the problem; they were bogus in the sense that they represented a misunderstanding of the logic of language. It is to this, Wittgenstein's refutation of Frege's views on vagueness as a strand of his (that is, Wittgenstein's) general refutation of all of the demands made of language, supposedly on behalf of logic that I now turn.

In fact, a part of this chapter and all of the two following will be my attempt at exposition of sections of *PI* around §81 and following (up to §133). These sections, on my understanding of them, are concerned specifically with this general refutation of the "demands of logic" and then with the moral that can be drawn for philosophical problems and their solution generally. My exposition is going to be directed towards the specific problem of those perceived demands of logic and its solution, but I will need to say a fair bit about Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy in general on the way.

I will begin this chapter proper by explaining how I see the problems of vagueness fitting into the general discussion in *PI* and then I will turn to the details of the text themselves and to §81 itself by way of introducing the part of that discussion which is my principal concern.

§2.2 *Vagueness and a Core Concern of* Philosophical Investigations

As far as I understand *PI*, the problems of vagueness are one symptom of a general malaise of philosophical thinking which undergoes Wittgenstein's treatment in at least the first fifty pages of the book (and, I suspect, a good deal more of the book too). According to my interpretation, Wittgenstein thinks of this malaise as exerting a deep and pervasive influence on philosophy in the Analytic Tradition, and in at least those early parts of *PI* he sets about exposing this influence in the hope of rectifying its deleterious effect. §§89-133 suggest how this potent source of philosophical problems can be seen to have produced, amongst others, the problems of vagueness, and suggest what the appropriate response to such problems arising in such a way ought to be. This means that it is important in understanding §§89-133 to have a background familiarity with the wider context of the remarks, in particular with this central concern about this major source of philosophical misunderstanding.

§2.2.1 *The Augustinian Picture of Language*

Wittgenstein begins *PI*, famously, with the following quotation from Augustine's *Confessions* I, 8 (here, of course, in English translation):

"When they (my elders) named some object, and accordingly moved towards something, I saw this and I 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." [*PI*, §1]

He clearly thinks that there is something significant in this quotation, and he goes on immediately afterwards to explain what this is:

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. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands. [*Ibid.*]

And I believe that the idea introduced here—"Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands"—is of fundamental significance to Wittgenstein in the pages following on from its expression here in *PI* §1. It is an idea that G.P.Baker and P.M.S.Hacker have called the "Augustinian picture" of language, and I will refer to it in such terms in the discussion that follows.[15]

Wittgenstein begins his introduction of the idea, in the passage just quoted, by extracting a harmless-looking presupposition about the way that language works from Augustine's thoughts on language-learning:

...the individual words in language name objects—sentences are combinations of such names.

But, in this he then sees the roots of a further, much more militant-looking, idea:

Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands.

This latter is what Baker and Hacker call the "Augustinian picture" of language; it is, as I interpret Wittgenstein, a skeleton understanding of the way that language works that he thinks insidiously infects our indigenous philosophy of language, leading us astray of a genuine understanding of language's function; and it seems to me to be the objective of most of *PI* into at least the §130s, to expose this picture, and its ramifications, to philosophical consciousness, with the intention of overturning the hold it has on us.

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[15] The place where Baker and Hacker look at the idea of the Augustinian picture of language directly is in Chapter 1 of *UM*, which is, in fact, entitled "The Augustinian picture". I will examine their understanding of the idea, as presented in that opening chapter of *UM* in the main text shortly.

Wittgenstein says that in that first vague idea, drawn straight from the Augustine passage, "we find the roots of" the second sharper idea. And I think I understand what he means by this. The relation, as I see it, is very much like that between a witness' initial statement in court and the much sharper and more robust shape that the lawyer presses it into with his artful questioning. Thus, the way in which Wittgenstein's latter idea has its roots in the former is, I think, as the result of a rational defence of the former, as if the initial statement is of a *hunch* about the way language works and the latter is the product of subjecting that rough intuition to critical scrutiny and the need for justification.

Anyway, the main point here is simply to raise the idea of an Augustinian picture of language that Wittgenstein is presenting to us when he says:

Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands.

And, as I have suggested, it is my view that Wittgenstein sees this as the core structure of a false philosophy of language that is embedded in our natural understanding of the way language works, giving support and shape to that understanding.

§2.2.1.1 *Baker and Hacker on the Augustinian Picture*

Baker and Hacker talk about the Augustinian picture as a "proto-picture" of language, and I think that careful criticism of what they say in that way [see especially *UM* pp.33-36 & 45-47] would be a good way of introducing my own understanding. Indeed, I think it is fair to say that my thesis as a whole can be viewed as, essentially, a correction and extension of this idea of Baker and Hacker's in an interpretation of the early parts of *PI*.

They begin by explaining how the picture, as presented in *PI* §1, is to be considered an initial bare sketch of an understanding of language, one that is to be subsequently filled in with details that are natural extensions of it—"natural extensions", they explain, in the sense of ones that we are inclined to acknowledge as what is really meant by thinking of words as names and of statements as combinations of names. And they are thinking of this "initial sketch" as one that the philosophical community—including Frege, Russell and the Wittgenstein of *TLP*—has already set about elaborating and developing.

I agree with them about this. But I don't agree with their subsequent account of how this development of the picture by philosophers was motivated. Let me explain how they see it.

Initially, they think, at least partly the pursuit of the primitive Augustinian picture as an understanding of language was driven by an attraction to its simplicity and naïvety. And that initial charm of it then was powerful enough to explain how, when the application of the picture in detail to the phenomena of language first ran into difficulties, the response was not to scrap the picture and start again, but to introduce refinements and qualifications to meet those difficulties face to face. Such a line of response then in turn led to the development of a more and more complex and sophisticated picture, the sheer ingenuity of which began to exert its own fascination. Finally, the developing picture began to exhibit a degree of elegance. This elegance was interpreted as approximation to an ideal picture, an ideal that itself then became an object of the enterprise.

This question of the motivation behind development of the Augustinian picture is, I believe, a very important one for Wittgenstein, and it will be a major theme of my next chapter. Essentially, judging from my understanding, given above, of what they say, the difference between Baker's and Hacker's position on this point and my own is that they see the working-out of the Augustinian picture as driven, at root, by a form of vanity— explaining language is thought of, at the outset, as something simple and easy to do; then there is a kind of blindness to the possibility of having made a mistake, followed later by a self-admiration for ingenuity and art in having attained such a sophisticated and elegant understanding—, whereas I see it as all driven ultimately by anxiety—in the pages to come, I will present my interpretation of Wittgenstein in *PI* as proposing a *deconstruction* of analytic philosophical logic, the end-product of the development of the Augustinian picture, into a mythology of truth in language ultimately fuelled by an anxiety that there is no truth in language. And this difference between us is most important, I think, in the way in which it carries over into an understanding of Wittgenstein's therapeutic response to the problems generated by the Augustinian picture, and indeed to Wittgenstein's approach to trying to solve philosophical problems generally.

Elsewhere [*UM* p.45] Baker and Hacker refer to the Augustinian picture as a "weed" that, in *PI*, Wittgenstein is at great pains to "eradicate". And this is a further sign for me of their misunderstanding of Wittgenstein's method of philosophy. Because their image here is one of contempt and confrontation: the kind of natural reaction that one might expect to a show of vanity. And this, I believe, represents a misunderstanding of the spirit of Wittgenstein's criticisms of false philosophy, because his approach is essentially *sympathetic*. To solve a philosophical problem, one needs to understand it from the inside; that is, one needs to experience the problem as problematic; and this means *sharing* the experience of someone who is in the grip of the false philosophy that leads to the problem. This is, I think, one important point of the analogy that Wittgenstein draws between philosophy and psychoanalysis (an analogy that I will look into in some detail in the next chapter). The philosopher, as Wittgenstein thinks of him is like the psychoanalytic therapist attempting to draw out an understanding of the emotive profile of the subject in order to help him see his way out of his emotional problems; in a parallel way, the philosopher attempts to draw out an understanding of the cognitive profile of the person under the influence of a false philosophy in order to help him see his way out of his philosophical problems. Both "therapies" demand of the therapist an acute sensitivity to the perspective of the subject and also a will to see the subject free of their problems. It is these two aspects of the relationship between "therapist" and "subject" in the philosophical context that leads me to characterize the relationship as one essentially involving sympathy.

I *do* think, alongside this disagreement, that Baker and Hacker offer the right kind of account in another, different, important respect. They do not use the word "delusional" to describe the Augustinian picture as they see it; but, effectively, their understanding of it *is* as a delusional, systematic misrepresentation of meaning in language. This is a corollary of their describing its motivation in the way that they do: under the misapprehension that they have been truthfully explaining meaning in language, philosophers have, in fact, been *trying to make themselves look good*; philosophers have come to believe a false system of beliefs, for purposes of their own, of which they are self-consciously unaware. This kind of lack of consciousness of one's own motives for holding the beliefs that one does is

characteristic of a delusional state; and one way that such lack of awareness manifests itself in felt experience is as thoughts that run out of one's control, that have a life of their own. And this latter phenomenon is one, I think, that is picked out by Baker and Hacker later in their explanation of the Augustinian picture when they describe it as:

...like an invisible force, evident only in its visible effects; like a prevailing wind that affects the growth of a tree, it might show itself only in the asymmetric shape that it gives to explicit theorizing.   [*UM*, p.46]

Our mark of a delusion crops up here, I think, as this idea of the Augustinian conception as an invisible force shaping our thoughts about language. Thinking of language as conforming to the Augustinian conception, they seem to be saying, is something that we appear to be made to do by some agency outside our conscious control.

Baker and Hacker end their characterization of the Augustinian picture of language by comparing it, fruitfully in my view, with Thomas Kuhn's idea of a scientific paradigm.[16]

Through this comparison, they promote the picture as a cultural phenomenon, as a *zeitgeist* of the philosophical community, which establishes the intellectual climate under which philosophical enquiry into meaning is carried out, thus helping to determine how philosophy is done. "[It] motivates and directs inquiry," they say, "influencing what are perceived to be the problems requiring explanations and what would count as satisfying solutions to them" [*Ibid.*]. And to support their view, they go on to offer an analysis of ingenuity and sophistication in philosophical work as, under the influence of the Augustinian picture, in fact a matter of success in assimilating reality to the pre-established, adamantine, tenets of the paradigm. As an example, they cite Russell's theory of definite descriptions as perceived to be an intellectual triumph because of the way in which it succeeds in reconciling some notoriously recalcitrant phenomena—namely, definite

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16 See *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. In fact, Kuhn himself changes his mind about the notion of a scientific paradigm in the postscript added in the second edition of the book. He ends up rejecting it in favour of the idea of a *disciplinary matrix*, rejecting the idea of an organic unity of elements associated with the notion of a paradigm.

[T]hey are...no longer to be discussed as though they were all of a piece
[*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (2nd Edition)*, "Postscript", p.18],

he says of what he originally called "paradigms". Baker and Hacker are interested in the original idea of a scientific paradigm with its organic unity of elements.

descriptions, or names, without objects—with that paradigm, with the Augustinian picture. Finally, they observe that it is a major project of Wittgenstein's in *PI* to try to effect a "scientific revolution" in philosophy; through sustained and wide-ranging criticism, he sets about trying to break the hold of the Augustinian paradigm that "bedevils our reflections on meaning" [*Ibid.*].

I am in very close agreement with all the points that Baker and Hacker make here, in this part of their discussion of the Augustinian picture. They all apply equally to the Augustinian picture as a systematic delusion about meaning, as a mythology, built into the common language of philosophy. And that is how I want to see Augustine's conception.

That leaves one further strand of Baker's and Hacker's treatment of the Augustinian picture remaining for me to discuss. This is a major strand of their treatment which, for me, seems to signify a misunderstanding of Wittgenstein.

Just under two thirds of Baker's and Hacker's direct discussion of the Augustinian picture of language [*UM*, pp.36-45 out of pp.33-47] involves them in working out the Augustinian picture into something that "looks like a widely ramifying philosophical theory centred on a comprehensive theory of meaning" [*Ibid.*, p.45]; they think out the consequences of those original three theses of *PI* §1 into something much closer to a full-blown theory of meaning, guided at every step by the principle that all new theses should be "directly related to arguments in Wittgenstein's writings" [*Ibid.*, p.36]. And, as I understand them, they then take this "normal form of the Augustinian picture" [*Ibid.*, p.34] to be an object of Wittgenstein's criticism throughout his work, but especially in *PI*. Towards the beginning of their discussion they say:

Wittgenstein mentions many theses that seem natural ingredients of any more fully worked-out version of the initial bare sketch, and he examines and criticizes these in different writings.   [*UM*, p.74]

And then later, of their fully worked-out version, they say:

Wittgenstein did not admire this plant, though he thought it to be of colossal importance. He saw it as a weed, so important a weed that much of the *Investigations* constitutes an elaborate campaign to eradicate it.
[*Ibid.*, p.45]

The normal form, I take it from this, is, for Baker and Hacker, the explicit object of criticism in *PI*. But they do not think that it is Wittgenstein's principal target; what he is

really after, they think, is the theories of meaning of Frege, Russell, and *TLP*. This is why, I think, they introduce their full-blown normal form by saying:

A prerequisite to an examination of Augustine's picture of language is to elaborate the idea that all words are names, all sentences combinations of names. This is necessary to assess the extent to which this picture informs theories of meaning which Wittgenstein was criticizing, and hence to judge the consequences of his criticisms of its fundamental aspects. [*Ibid.*, pp.35-36]

The significance of Wittgenstein's criticisms of Augustine's picture is to be judged in terms of the extent to which they can be made to count against Frege, Russell, and *TLP*.

And the explanation of how this significance is to be assessed is then, finally, given in the following passage:

The worth of the Augustinian picture is its power to illuminate the theories of meaning of which Wittgenstein apparently intended it to give an *Übersicht* [*sc.* an overall view], viz. the theories of Frege, Russell, and the *Tractatus*. Hence this is what we have to investigate in order to clear the ground of houses of cards.
[*UM*, p.47]

I am afraid that I have been unable to understand precisely what their thinking is here; but, judging by the way in which, in the next three sections of their chapter, they take each of Frege, Russell, and *TLP* in turn and argue that all hold deep affinities to the Augustinian position, I take it that *comparison* of the target theories with the Augustinian picture has a major role to play in revealing the faults in them. First the false Augustinian picture of language is worked out in detail; then, through the resemblance that it bears to the target theories, it is used to expose parallel flaws in them.

Anyway, however they mean to account for the utility of the worked-out Augustinian picture, I cannot see Baker and Hacker avoiding the problem that I see them as having. It is this.

Both in taking Wittgenstein's real targets in *PI* to be Frege, Russell, and *TLP*, *and* in taking him to be criticizing an Augustinian picture worked-out prior to critical consideration, Baker and Hacker are, it seems to me, avoiding taking the problems arising from the Augustinian mythology *personally* enough.[17] They seem set on packaging them

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17 The theories of truth and meaning of Frege, Russell, and *TLP are*, as I understand it, targets for Wittgenstein in *PI*, but not, as Baker and Hacker seem to think, as distinct, *sui generis*, theories; rather, Wittgenstein is taking them to be all variants of the Augustinian picture worked out in detail. And Wittgenstein isn't squaring his analysis up to any one particular version of the picture in *PI*; he is trying to get to grips with the mythology generally, in any of its manifestations.

away as not their problem, and as not Wittgenstein's problem in *PI* either. And this, I think, is wrong, because all users of the language, especially philosophers, bear a responsibility for keeping the mythology alive by using language in the way that they do. As I understand Wittgenstein, the Augustinian misunderstanding of the way language works is one that is manifest in the thinking of us all—in a worked-out, though perhaps disordered form—, and one that is kept in currency by our using language in ways for which we are not consciously aware of our real motives. This means that, for Wittgenstein, we are, each of us, responsible for promoting the Augustinian mythology and thus are each also responsible for any problems that come with it. The mythology is present in our natural thoughts relating to the functioning of language, and we, together with our predecessors, from whom we inherited our ways of talking about language, are responsible for it being there.

In *PI*, Wittgenstein is calling those natural thoughts of ours, of his own, into question. And at the back of his mind when he is doing this is, I believe, the conviction that the motivation behind those thoughts, a motivation which he himself feels, is not entirely what it appears to be. Our true desire to understand the functioning of language, he thinks, is sullied by deep-rooted anxieties that we have about that functioning. And this—which is a theme that I will work out in detail in the next chapter—makes challenging the Augustinian picture a form of self-analysis for all of us.

§2.2.1.2 *Manifestations of the Augustinian Mythology*

Towards the beginning of their account of the Augustinian picture of language, Baker and Hacker say:

Just what belongs to an Augustinian picture of language? What are its limits? These questions have no precise answers. None are needed, and none would be appropriate. [*UM*, p.34]

And I am in very close agreement with their thinking here. As I understand him, Wittgenstein is thinking of the Augustinian picture as a mythology of the way language works, as a shared delusional system which, though delusional, does to a limited extent provide an understanding of the phenomena to which it relates. And this means, both to the

extent that the mythology is manifest as distinct delusional systems of individuals and to the extent that the genuine understanding of language that it provides is limited, that there is considerable room for disagreement over the actual, concrete, details of the picture. To put it simply: different philosophers' workings-out of the picture achieve roughly the same degree of understanding but in different ways. And, if the level of genuine understanding reached is the same, beyond the brute requirement of intersubjective agreement—everyone is trying to understand the same thing, *the* workings of *the* language—there is no further incentive to resolve differences.

I hope that this latter point is clear here, at this early point in my account, but if it isn't, then I am confident that it will become so as my exposition of *PI* pans out over the following two chapters; I will spell out, over the course of them, precisely what it means to think of the Augustinian picture as a systematic delusion and also the way in which, in that form, it can still engender real understanding of the workings of language.

In those early sections of *PI*—up to §89, where, I think, Wittgenstein begins to consider the mythology in more or less exclusively general terms—almost the entire discussion is, it seems to me, directed in turn at individual manifestations or series of related manifestations of the Augustinian mythology. In accordance with what I have just been saying, these particular misunderstandings do not constitute *the* Augustinian picture, because there is no such definitive picture; rather, they are manifestations of the mythology as Wittgenstein feels it in his own thinking. Nevertheless, *PI* §§1-88 do, I think, give a singularly important idea of the kind of reality that Wittgenstein is thinking of Augustine's mythology as having come to have; and for this reason I would like to offer my own understanding of the content of those sections, in the form of an outline interpretation, paying special attention to the ways in which the sections do, or may, relate to this mythology of meaning and truth. (I also hope that this interpretation will stand in support of my much more in-depth interpretation of §§89ff., which forms the heart of my thesis, and comes in the next chapter.)

§2.2.1.2.1 *The Mythology in* PI *§§1-88*

§2.2.1.2.1.1 *§§1-37*

With Augustine's conception of language having been introduced in *PI* §1, the rest of §§1-7, as I see it, is predominantly concerned with defining the notion of a language-game, with the immediate concern being to set up the language-game of §2 as an object of comparison for ordinary language that can be developed to use to expose misunderstandings stemming from that Augustinian conception.[18],[19]

In §6, though, first reference is made to "ostensive" teaching of words—directing the child learner's attention to an object, by pointing it out in some way, and at the same time saying the word for that object—, and this putative way of being brought to understand words, along with the closely associated idea of ostensively defining words, provides Wittgenstein with one important focus for his analysis of the Augustinian mythology. As a way of explaining the acquisition and development of language, Wittgenstein thinks, this complex of ideas inappropriately dominates our natural understanding; and he sets about demonstrating this inappropriacy through a series of remarks spread through §§1-88. In §6, the target is the idea that ostensive teaching by itself "establish[es] an association between the word and the thing", grasp of which then constitutes understanding the word. Wittgenstein's response to this idea is that ostensive teaching *can* help to bring about understanding, but only in conjunction with a specific training in the use of the word— "[w]ith different training," he says, "the same ostensive teaching of these words would have effected a quite different understanding".

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[18] The language-game of §2 is the famous "builders'" language-game, described by Wittgenstein as follows:

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

[19] I will look in some detail at the §§ 1-7 and their main theme in Chapter 4 below—please see especially §4.3.2.1.

§8 introduces an expansion of language-game (2) to include correlates of the numerals, of the words "this" and "that", and also colour samples to be used to match and select stones of a given colour. Then §9 tries out the idea that words are taught ostensively, on the different kinds of word in this new language-game. The story fits the words of the original language—"slab", "block", and so on—, it suggests, but not the numerals now used in counting them, nor the demonstratives used to indicate where they are to be moved to.

§§10-15 subsequently turn to look at the misleading influence of the idea that, in meaning, words *signify* objects. When, with Augustinian thinking, we intuitively look, for meaningful words in a linguistic practice, for the objects that the words each signify, we are, Wittgenstein points out, in fact assimilating descriptions of uses of words under descriptions of the form: "The word ... signifies ...", thus representing them to ourselves as alike, when in reality they are "absolutely unlike" [§10].

§16 suggests that the colour samples of language-game (8) ought to be considered, with the words, as instruments of the language; §17 points out that classification of words in language into different kinds with the same function, varies according to both the aim of the classification, and how we are naturally inclined to group the words together; then §18 challenges the feeling that languages (2) and (8) are both incomplete because they consist only of orders. All three of these sections, it seems to me, are intended to call into doubt different (Augustinian) natural-feeling intuitions that we have about the functioning of language.

And a further Augustinian intuition is, I think, targeted in §§19 and 20. Wittgenstein there uses the language-game of §2 to deconstruct the intuition that we have that a one word command like "Slab!" in our ordinary language is really just a shorthand way of saying a complete sentence, "Bring me a slab!"—that the latter reveals what the former really means, but doesn't say. "Slab!" in language (2) is perfectly in order as it is; there, the idea of *the thought that is really behind the command* doesn't enter at all into a consideration of the use of the expression. And that suggests, about our own language, that our feeling that one kind of form of expression has primacy over another as a true

expression of meaning, amounts to nothing more in reality than there being "a particular paradigm of our grammar"[*PI*, §20]—a model for *the* way of representing meaning—that we ourselves have insisted upon.

I cannot work out for sure what the point of §21 is. It makes the observation that the *same* effect can be accomplished in language use using sentences of *different* grammatical forms, what look like questions can be used to make statements—*e.g.* "Don't you look nice?"—and so on; and it also suggests that the important thing determining what kind a sentence in use really is is the effect that it has, not its grammatical form. But I don't understand how this fits in to the context of the book at this point.

I take §22 to be an *aside*, exposing the mistake in Frege's thinking of assertions as always containing assumptions, the things that are asserted.

Then §23 makes an important appeal to the patently enormous and fluctuating variety of uses of language in our lives—with a long list of examples cited—as a contrast to the kind of impoverished picture of use proposed by logicians (including Wittgenstein himself in *TLP*). And, following it, §24 suggests how the possibility of losing sight of the actual multiplicity of linguistic practices leaves us vulnerable to the desire, that we are all prone to in philosophy, for simple and reductive explanations of the use of words. Both of these comments, I think, are relevant (though not uniquely) to the Augustinian mythology; as I understand it, Augustine's picture is meant to be an impoverished picture of the use of language proposed by logicians, and also a picture driven by the desire for a simple and reductive explanation of the phenomena.

§25 seems to me to be addressing an intuition that, Wittgenstein thinks, informs our natural approach to thinking about animal understanding, that animals do not talk because they are incapable of thinking. The point seems to be that we are inclined, under the influence of the Augustinian mythology, to make thinking a prerequisite of being able to use language, but that that is a mistake. This would make the thinking in §25 closely related to that in §32, which introduces the idea of the Augustinian picture as describing the learning of human language "as if the child could already *think*, only not yet speak" [*PI*, §32, italics in original]. Wittgenstein seems to be thinking that we bring an analogous (Augustinian) *a*

priori prejudice to our thoughts about language in animals to that which distorts our thoughts about language in children.

With **§26**, Wittgenstein returns to the starting point of his discussion of our Augustinian mythology and the idea that we share with Augustine "that learning language consists in giving names to objects". Then §§27-31 together take on one strand of this way of thinking, one previously raised in §6: that for all kinds of words a mere act of naming establishes the meaning of the word in the language.

§27 deals with the idea that naming an object sets up a word for use by opening the possibility of then talking about the object, referring to it, using the word/name. Wittgenstein first bluntly challenges this with a list of examples—single word exclamations: "Water!", "Away!", "Ow!", and so on—whose use *prima facie* defies characterization as naming an object. Then he appeals to languages (2) and (8) to show how simply naming objects does not, of itself, allow those objects to then be referred to in talk. Both (2) and (8) do involve naming, but neither has available either the apparatus for asking the name of something or the closely similar apparatus for ostensively defining a name, and these latter two are prerequisites of being fully able to talk about things.

Then **§28**, it seems to me, tackles a problem that arises because, under Augustinian influence, we think that it is an act of naming, taken independent of the context within which it is carried out, that gives a word its meaning. Thinking this way makes actual ostensive definitions—*e.g.* "That is called 'two'", pointing to two nuts—look defective, because they look incapable, of themselves, because of their being open to numerous alternative interpretations—what determines, in the example just given, that "two" refers to two (the number) rather than to, *e.g.*, the pair of nuts together?—, of setting up a relation between the word and the right object.

§29 then points out that attempting to rescue the false way of thinking by making definitions more specific—*e.g.* with "This *number* is called 'two'", or "This *colour* is called 'blue'"—cannot solve the problem, but only push it a step further back—the qualifying terms, "number" and "colour" in the examples, themselves then still require (ostensive) definition.

Finally, §§**30** and **31** explain how we *ought*, alternatively, to see explanations of meaning with ostensive definition. They propose that we see successful ostensive definitions as picking out locations for words in our pre-existent organization of linguistic interactions generally. This explains the analogy with chess in §31; ostensively defining the meaning, the use, of a word is like explaining the use of a piece in chess simply by giving its name; success in each rests on having a prior understanding of how the game/language-game is played.

In §**32**, Wittgenstein observes that Augustine's description of language acquisition, based on ostensive definition, is one that, he thinks, is appropriate to someone, already with a language of their own, learning a new language in a foreign country. The Augustinian response, that to understand ostensive definitions one doesn't need already mastery of a language but simply "to know or guess what the person giving the explanation is pointing to", is then the subject of §§**33-5**. Essentially, as I see it, Wittgenstein's counter-response therein is two-pronged: it aims on the one hand, to undermine the tacit assumption, in the Augustinian thinking, that there is some one characteristic process—always, and definitively, present—of pointing an object out, by looking at a series of very different examples; and on the other hand, to object that even such a characteristic process of pointing things out could not uniquely determine a meaning for a word, because any such process would still leave the intended meaning open to differing interpretations dependent on the context of the act of definition.

Throughout §§33-5, this characteristic process of pointing something out, that is being considered, is conceived of as one that the proponent of Augustinian thinking is looking for in his own *experience*. And §**36**, I think, picks up on a type of *dodge* that Wittgenstein thinks the Augustinian thinker is unwittingly performing with this focus on the experience of meaning. As a consequence of being unable to find some concrete, bodily, act of pointing suitable for promoting his position, the Augustinian has retreated into the ethereal, mental realm, wanting to find what he is looking for there. §**37** then bids us look at language *in use*, at occurrent linguistic practice—including that in language-games like that of §2—, if we want to see how names really relate to their bearers.

§2.2.1.2.1.2 §§38-64

§38 addresses Russell's idea that the words "this" and "that" are the only genuine names in ordinary language.[20] Wittgenstein considers this thesis to be a patently absurd philosophical fabrication; but he uses it as a way in to a discussion of real names as names for simples that then becomes the theme of the following ten or so pages of *PI*.

§39 begins by explaining the motivation behind Russell's idea; Wittgenstein thinks that, unhappy with what we ordinarily call names because they do not signify simple objects, we cast around for alternatives that do; "this" and "that" are the most likely-looking candidates. And the reason that he gives for the conviction that "a name ought really to signify a simple" is one that, it seems to me, shows it as deriving fully from a prior commitment to the core Augustinian thesis that the meaning of a name is the object for which it stands. Wittgenstein's example, clearly intended to illustrate the circumstances of all ordinary names, is the use of the name "Excalibur" in the sentence "Excalibur has a sharp blade". If the sword were broken into pieces, our Augustinian intuitions tell us, "Excalibur" would be rendered meaningless because there would no longer be any object corresponding to it. But the sentence "Excalibur has a sharp blade" would clearly still make sense, and therefore remain meaning*ful*, with Excalibur broken up. Which means that "Excalibur has a sharp blade" cannot really contain a meaningless name when Excalibur is destroyed—otherwise it would be about nothing, and make *no* sense. Hence the word "Excalibur"—along with, by extension, all words purporting to name complex, destructible, objects—isn't a real name and must disappear under the analysis of meaning of any sentences in which it occurs, to be replaced by names for simple, indestructible, objects.

§40 then gets straight at the heart of the misunderstanding of names being discussed, by pointing out that the Augustinian idea, on which it all rests, that the meaning of a

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[20] In "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism", Russell writes:

[It is] very difficult to get any instance of a name at all in the proper strict logical sense of the word. The only words one does use as names in the logical sense are words like 'this' or 'that'   ["The Philosophy of Logical Atomism", p.201].

word/name is the thing that the word stands for, confuses the meaning of a name with the bearer of that name.

Then §§41 and 42 use language-game (15)—an extension of language (8) to include names for tools[21]—to experiment with the idea of names without bearers, in a language. Effectively, they offer a model simulation of the introduction of bearerless names into a language, to show how such words *can* play a meaningful role in linguistic practice. §43 proposes a slogan for Wittgenstein's alternative to an Augustinian understanding: "the meaning of a word is its use in the language".

In §§44 and 45, I think, Wittgenstein concludes his case against the thesis that "this" and "that" are the only real names. Having accounted for its motivation in §39, here he explains how one could fool oneself into believing it to be true. In §44 he explains how it is possible to imagine a language-game in which the names are used only in the presence of their bearers and so could always be replaced by "this" or "that" and pointing. And his point, I think, is that, because of our extremely limited capacity to represent to ourselves at any one time the use of our language as a whole, it is quite possible for us to take language as a whole to be a language-game of the kind imagined without seeing our mistake. Then, in §45, Wittgenstein indicates how taking language to be such a language-game opens up a possible solution to the problem of simples raised in §39 through replacement of names, in analysis, by the demonstratives.[22]

§46 suggests that Wittgenstein is thinking of the idea of names as really signifying simples as having a very long history, having been in currency at least as far back as Plato's

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[21] Wittgenstein makes this extension to language (8), simply, in the following way:

Suppose that the tools A uses in building bear certain marks. When A shews his assistant such a mark, he brings the tool that has that mark on it.   [*PI*, §15].

[22] If I am right in my interpretations, Wittgenstein's argument against Russell's thesis that "this" and "that" are the only genuine names, here in *PI*, has the same form as an argument from the *Brown Book*, against Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence, that I will look at in some detail later (see §4.3.2.2 below). First he explains the psychological motivation for believing the doctrine, then how it is that we can deceive ourselves as to its truth. This, indeed, as I see it, is the general form of Wittgenstein's argument in *PI* against the Augustinian picture as a whole.

Greece. Wittgenstein quotes from the *Theaetetus*[23] a description of all reality as composed ultimately of primary elements which can only be named, not defined or described in any other way, and of language as, essentially, reflecting reality with compounds of these names. This form of thinking, the suggestion seems to be, led Russell to his "individuals" and Wittgenstein, in *TLP*, to "simple objects".

It seems to me that §46 must be an important section of *PI*, because of the way almost all of §§47-64 tackle the thinking that it introduces. These sections following it, as I understand them, attempt a deconstruction of the position described in the passage from the *Theaetetus*, dismantling it into a series of ideas and questioning the truthfulness of each of these in turn.

For **§47**, the essentially unqualified and acontextual notion of absolute simplicity inherent in the notion of primary elements of reality described by Plato appears, when one *looks* at reality in the form of examples, to have no purchase at all in that reality; there, simplicity takes a huge variety of different, and differently related, forms in different places. Then **§48** proposes a language-game for which Plato's account seems really to work: four letters, each standing for a different colour of square, are used freely to produce strings of up to nine letters each string of nine uniquely "meaning" a 3x3 grid of the coloured squares. From the inside point of view, of someone involved in playing this language-game, it would seem natural to think of these squares as absolutely "simple" objects in Plato's sense. But that would be wrong because of the possibility of other, different, language-games in which the same squares would have to be considered complex.

§49 picks apart the idea in the Plato that one can only say what the primary elements of reality are, describe them, to the extent that one can name them. Wittgenstein, as I understand him, is thinking of this as a reductive thesis: that, through analysis, descriptions of the world are ultimately to be explained in terms of naming. And, using language (48) as his model, he objects to this on the grounds that describing and naming are two entirely distinct kinds of practice that the position described by Plato is conflating. **§50** tries to set

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[23] Note: the position described in the passage quoted is not Plato's own; rather it is a position that Socrates describes in the *Theaetetus* dialogue as one that came to him in a dream.

the idea of primary elements as necessarily existent straight. Effectively, Wittgenstein thinks, thinking this way misrepresents objects that would be integral parts of the machinery of language as objects not involved directly in its functioning at all. What generates meaning in the use of language, on the model from the *Theaetetus*, is the combination of names for primary elements of reality; and it is a condition for this to be possible that there already be primary elements with names. Thus, the elements are not necessary *qua* constituents of reality, but *qua* constituents of the adopted means of representing reality.[24] Then **§51** subjects to scrutiny the idea in language (48)—and, by analogy, in ordinary language as the Plato passage conceives it—of the words "corresponding to" elements of reality. Wittgenstein's moral is that it is far from clear what this "correspondence" consists in.

§52 and **§§53-4** are, I think, best seen as digressions from the theme of §§47-64 generally. **§52** draws a general moral for philosophy from the specific *overlooking* of the details of the putative correspondence relation in §51: such overlooking of details is commonplace in philosophy, and it is of fundamental importance in such cases to understand why it happens. (And I take this to allude to some aberrant form of psychological motivation in the case of the *Theaetetus* conception, working against a genuine desire to understand.) And then **§53**, it seems to me, returns to the question of the relation between name and object in language (48), and observes that there are a variety of ways in which the connection might be made. One of these would be via a table representing the correspondences between name and colour. Such a table, Wittgenstein suggests, might be

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24 Just in case the reader is beginning to wonder at this point how I think what Wittgenstein is saying here relates to my general interpretation of him in these sections as criticizing the Augustinian conception of language, let me explain how.

   As I understand it, the model presented by Plato is one version of the Augustinian conception of language. As such, for reasons that I will try to explain in the next chapter, it is a model that its proponents very much want language to conform to. And this, I think, explains why it is tempting to misrepresent primary elements as necessary constituents of reality in the way described in §50. Essentially, if there *were* simple, necessarily existent, elements of reality, then Plato's model would be vindicated as *the* way language works. But Wittgenstein argues in §50 that what the idea of the necessary existence of simples really shows is that, *assuming* Plato's model, language couldn't work without simples.

thought of as the expression of a rule in the language-game. §54 then takes on the theme, against an assumed background of the tendency to expect a simple and universally applicable conception of rules of language use, of there being a variety of ways in which clear cases of rules are manifest in language use, and it offers a number of different forms of example.[25]

In §§55-8 Wittgenstein returns to consider a further strand of the *Theaetetus* thinking, that "[w]hat the names in language signify must be indestructible"[*PI*, §55]. This, Wittgenstein thinks, is part of our adopted model for the way names/words work in language; and our commitment to it has the potential to influence our philosophical reflections in different ways.

For instance [§56], we may be led to deny the role played by concrete samples in our practices of ascribing, say, colour-words to objects, to claim instead that it is memory that does the job, reminding us what the word is used for. This would be a way for us to bypass the possibility of samples being destroyed and rendering words meaningless.

Alternatively, in the same vein, we might want to say: "Something red can be destroyed, but red cannot be destroyed, and that is why the meaning of the word 'red' is independent of the existence of a red thing" [*PI*, §57]. Or, again, [§58] that the statement "Red exists" really says nothing because it presupposes its own truth; if there were *no* red, then nothing at all could be said about it, even whether it existed or not.

§§59-64 then turn to the idea of real names as referring only to what are elements, most basic component parts, of reality. Wittgenstein sees this idea [§59] as expressing a way which we want reality to be. Everywhere, we see objects that are analysable into parts and, ultimately, into elements; and that is because that is the form that we *want* reality to take. Our prospective attempts at "analyses" of language into names for elements of reality are, in fact, misguided [§63]; the idea that they give us a more fundamental form of, or that they begin to show us what is really meant by, some natural linguistic performance or other

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[25] §§53-4 together, with their idea of rules as mediating the correspondence between words and their meanings, are, it seems to me, one of those bits of *PI*, that one finds from time to time through the book, that seem intended to prefigure more detailed discussion on a topic yet to come.

is mistaken. What they really amount to [§§60-62] is artificial alternatives to ordinary linguistic practice, mechanistic constructions that are, effectively, variant forms of our natural language-games.

§2.2.1.2.1.3 §65

§65 represents, it seems to me, a significant milestone in the discussion of *PI*. That discussion up to this point, and beyond, can, as I understand it, be seen as a unique form of dialectic between the old Augustinian and the new Wittgensteinian philosophies. With deeply incisive questioning of its tenets, tellingly accurate descriptions of relevant actual use of language, and pointedly revelatory models of relevant usage, Wittgenstein has pursued the Augustinian philosophy along one natural, and influential, line of development. This is the *Theaetetus* version of the Augustinian mythology, favoured by Russell and by Wittgenstein in *TLP*, which ends up in the kind of picture described in the Plato quotation of *PI* §46 with names correlated with simple objects. This line of development fizzles out, under analysis, for Wittgenstein in *PI*, ending with §64. And this forces his Augustinian interlocutor simultaneously both to come out with what is really bothering him, by asking what the essence of language is, *and* to concede substantial ground to Wittgenstein, by asking for that essence in terms of *what is common* to all language-games, to all linguistic practices.

When he first introduced the Augustinian perspective on language in §1, Wittgenstein referred to it as "a particular picture of the essence of human language", and here again, in §65, the idea of the Augustinian as concerned fundamentally with capturing the essence of language recurs. And, on my interpretation of *PI*, the approach to this goal for the Augustinian remains essentially the same post-§65 as it was before; the Augustinian understanding continues to be, in broad outline, that:

Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands [*PI*, §1].

However, one important change is made to that basic picture when, at §65, the idea of criteria of application for words is suddenly introduced into it.

Up to this point, the Augustinian understanding has been one of words as, in reality, all names for objects, each correlated directly with the object that it means, Kripke-style, through a simple naming relation.[26] But in §65, Wittgenstein's Augustinian admits into his thinking the idea of a word that applies to a number of different objects on the basis

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[26] In *Naming and Necessity*, Saul Kripke outlines his view of proper names as working as what he calls "rigid designators". Basically, his thinking is that a relation between a name and the object it is to stand for is set up by "baptizing", as he puts it, the object with the name; in the simplest case, such a baptism would be an ostensive definition of the name; and this initial baptism is how the name is introduced into the language, for use in the language; subsequently, and for ever more, the word is to mean *that* object.

Kripke opposes his view of proper names to what he calls the "description theory" of them. This is the view, which comes from Frege and Russell—in the latter case, with the qualification that we are concerned with ordinary proper names, not "logically proper names"—, that names are, effectively, abbreviated or disguised *definite descriptions*, that they mean what they do always through a description of the object.

This distinction between Kripke's view and the description theory of names is, it seems to me, very close indeed to the essential distinction between versions of the Augustinian picture of language presented by Wittgenstein pre- and post- *PI* §65. Kripke's understanding is very much in keeping with the Augustinian perspective before §65, and the description theory after §65.

Something very like Kripke's view is being criticized by Wittgenstein in §38, where he refers to "the conception of naming as, so to speak, an occult process". Wittgenstein describes this conception as follows:

Naming appears as a *queer* connexion of a word with an object.—And you really get such a queer connexion when the philosopher tries to bring out *the* relation between name and thing by staring at an object in front of him and repeating a name or even the word "this" innumerable times. ... [*H*]*ere* we may indeed fancy naming to be some remarkable act of mind, as it were a baptism of an object   [*PI*, §38].

Then a version of the description theory is clearly the view that Wittgenstein is trying to undermine—with a very different form of criticism to that employed by Kripke—in this passage from §79:

We may say, following Russell: the name "Moses" can be defined by means of various descriptions. For example, as "the man who led the Israelites through the wilderness", "the man who lived at that time and place and was then called 'Moses'", "the man who as a child was taken out of the Nile by Pharoah's daughter" and so on. And according as we assume one definition or another the proposition "Moses did not exist" acquires a different sense, and so does every other proposition about Moses.—And if we are told "N did not exist", we do ask: "What do you mean? Do you want to say..... or...... etc.?"

But when I make a statement about Moses,—am I always ready to substitute some *one* of these descriptions for "Moses"? I shall perhaps say: By "Moses" I understand the man who did what the Bible relates of Moses, or at any rate a good deal of it. But how much? Have I decided how much must be proved false for me to give up my proposition as false? Has the name "Moses" got a fixed and unequivocal use for me in all possible cases?—Is it not the case that I have, so to speak, a whole series of props in readiness, and am ready to lean on one if another should be taken from under me and vice versa?   [*PI*, §79.]

The *difference* between Kripke's distinction, and the one raised in *PI*, it seems to me, is Kripke's background of "possible world" semantics to his distinction. For Kripke, as I understand him, it is not a prerequisite for logic, as it was for Wittgenstein in *TLP*, that the object of reference of a name exists "in this world", as he would put it, but that it exists in some possible world or other. This machinery of possible worlds, it seems to me, is what allows Kripke to defend logic for ordinary language using essentially the same notion of meaning as brute reference as Wittgenstein does in *TLP*, but without having to go down the implausible "simples" route.

of characteristics that those objects all have in common. And in such a case, the reference of the word would have to be mediated through criteria of application for the word, which is a very significant departure for the Augustinian from his previous stance. And this shift in thinking also involves starting to talk about *predicates* in the way that has common currency in contemporary philosophy—at least in discussions of vagueness—as terms applying to all and only objects with certain given characteristics.

So, on my interpretation of *PI* §§1-88, at §65 Wittgenstein's Augustinian interlocutor makes two big moves.

Firstly, in raising "the great question that lies behind all these considerations" [*PI*, §65], that is: "What is the essence of language?", the interlocutor makes explicit what it is he feels to be so important about his picture of language, that it promises to yield the essence of language to him. And this is also what concerns him about the alternative picture that seems to be emerging from Wittgenstein: that it does not look like Wittgenstein's view will lead to the essence of language.

Secondly, in asking for the essence of language from Wittgenstein in terms of:

what is common to all these activities [that Wittgenstein is calling language], and what makes them into language or parts of language   [*PI*, §65],

the Augustinian is admitting that the word "language" does not function in the way that he has, up to this point, been thinking of words as functioning. "Language" is not a kind of name brutely referring to an object; it is, rather, a predicate that has defining characteristics determining its application. And in allowing "language" as a word working in this way, the Augustinian is *eo ipso* allowing such kinds of words generally into his picture.

§2.2.1.2.1.4 §§66-88

§§66 and **67** are a response to the Augustinian's demand for the essence of language in §65. By analogy with, predominantly, the example of what counts as a *game*, Wittgenstein calls into doubt the motivation behind that demand for the essence of language. By listing a wide variety of examples of games, and sketching out the different relations between them *qua* games, he *shows up* the belief in an essence, that accompanies the demand for one, as false;

the demand—and the full expectation that comes with it—is for something that isn't really there.

In §68, the Augustinian interlocutor shifts the idiom of the discussion into one about concepts. His concern, at least in part, expressed in this new way, is that concepts should have pre-established boundaries, that it needs to be determined, in advance of use of a given concept, what falls within its extension and what falls without. Wittgenstein's response is simply that it *patently isn't the case* for, e.g., our concept of a game that it has such pre-determined boundaries.

In §69, Wittgenstein describes how we would explain to someone what a game is: we would describe different examples of games to him and explain that things like those are called "games". Augustinian intuitions tell us that this is inadequate to explain how someone comes to be taught exactly what a game is; but Wittgenstein's response is that, in that case, an *inexact* understanding is enough to make the concept usable, although he is also dubious of the kind of exactness that the Augustinian is wanting. §70 then calls this notion of exactness further into question by confronting it with an example of how we might ordinarily explain exactly what we meant by something; it appears from this that the Augustinian is appealing to some unrealistic ideal of exactness.

I explained in my opening chapter [§1.2] how I understand Wittgenstein's interpretation, in *PI* §71, of what Frege had to say about vague areas in *GA*, Vol.II, §56. Wittgenstein's response to Frege is not to get involved in Frege's geometrical way of thinking about areas at all, but to juxtapose his own understanding of a relevant example with it. In ordinary life, the example shows, we quite happily indicate locations in space by, say, pointing with a finger. And, Wittgenstein seems to be suggesting, that kind of thing is what does determine spatial relations between things in the practices of ordinary life. And that makes the idea of a precisely determinate spatial reality, into which our vague approximations to spatial location would need to be somehow accommodated, and in which Frege believes, appear to be metaphysically surplus to requirements. Space, for Wittgenstein, I think, is ordinary rough and ready space.

And concepts, by analogy, are ordinary rough and ready concepts. Such concepts are acquired in the kind of way already described, by taking given examples in the right way; that is, essentially, all there is to it; certainly it isn't all necessarily a matter of seeing the common thing in the examples given.

§§72-4 then examine in more depth that Augustinian tenet that learning a concept from examples involves seeing what is common to those examples. §72 describes a series of examples of seeing the colour common to a number of objects. And together these examples suggest a surprisingly rich variety and complexity to seeing what is common when learning a concept. This implies that that process of seeing what is common isn't simple and straightforward in the way the Augustinian conception makes it out to be. §73 suggests that the idea that seeing what is common to examples is what gives us a concept, at least one form of that idea, involves a perverted understanding of the role of samples in learning concepts. The possibility of using samples to define concept-words tempts the Augustinian into the thought that understanding a concept-word means having a definitive sample in one's mind, a sample of what is common to all shades of green for example. And this appears to promise an account that is both plausible and, in addition, has a great deal of explanatory power. However, the idea of a sample of what is common to all instances of F, which is what gives us the concept *F* on this account, turns out to be absurd. Consider, for example, the possibility of a sample of what is common to all instances of green; such a sample as a *sample* of green, would need to have its own specific shade of green yet, at the same time, as a sample of green *in general*, it could not have any specific shade of green; thus such a sample is impossible. §74, it seems to me, is like a footnote to §73, suggesting that the phenomenon of *seeing* something *as* a construct with a specific role or function has a role to play in making the idea of a sample of what is common to all instances of F seem plausible. This phenomenon makes it possible to conceive seeing, *e.g.*, a given colour sample as a sample of what is common to all shades of that colour and to misunderstand what would thus be experienced, as a sample with something unique inherent in its peculiar shade of colour—"A sample of purest green!" we might think—rather than as a sample with an ordinary shade of colour, but with a unique role. The former putative kind of

sample is the kind that was rejected in §73, and the latter is a genuine possibility—a coloured sample used as a standard to determine, by degree of appropriate resemblance, what counts as being that colour and what doesn't—, though not one that exists in our actual practice.

In §75, Wittgenstein expounds on the idea that, in spite of Augustinian intuitions that something more or different is required, what my knowing what a game is amounts to, completely, is the explanations that I can give describing examples of various games and kinds of game, showing how other games and kinds of game can be made up through resemblance to these, discussing difficult, problem, cases as to whether or not they count as games, and so on.

§§76 and 77, I think, oppose the Augustinian feeling that our ordinary concepts are approximations to, or rough drafts of, real sharply bounded concepts. Their thesis is that ordinary concepts *are* the genuine article, fully realised just as they stand; and that, although related sharp concepts can be created from such ordinary concepts by sharpening up definitions of them, it is erroneous to think of any such sharpenings as *the* sharp concept to which the ordinary concept *corresponds*; in some cases, e.g. of our concepts in ethics or aesthetics, the very idea of there being sharp concepts to which ordinary concepts correspond looks extremely dubious.

Then §78 suggests that the idea that we get that if we know what a word means, then we should be able to *say* what it means might derive from the model for the use of a word that we adopt—we are perhaps thinking of "how the word "game" is used" as more like "how many feet high Mount Blanc is" than "how a clarinet sounds"—; if we were to adopt a different model, then we may not feel the same way.

§79, as I already indicated in footnote 26 above, addresses a sophistication, stemming from Russell, of the Augustinian idea that words need to have fixed and precise definitions of use. In the face of the kind of examples used by Wittgenstein—"game", and so on—where the same word cannot be said to be used with the same definition on different occasions, Russell's proposal is that we think of there as being a bundle of descriptions that can be drawn from to define the word on any particular occasion of use. Wittgenstein's

response is, by means of an example, to show that we are not always prepared to commit ourselves to some one description or another as defining our (legitimate) use of a word on a particular occasion. And then he raises the problem of what, on an account like Russell's, the meaning of a word generally, not on any particular use, is. Typically, he suggests, it is going to be a conjunction of all the descriptions associated with the use of the word—e.g. "Moses" means the man who led the Israelites through the wilderness, and who lived at that time and place and was then called "Moses", and who as a child was taken out of the Nile by Pharaoh's daughter, and so on. But then the problem arises for the account that, for a particular word, a good number of the descriptions associated with the use of the word might well turn out to be false without the word consequently losing or changing its meaning.

In §§80-86, the idiom of the general discussion shifts again, this time into one about rules. **§80** describes an imaginary example which brings in the notion of the *open texture* of concepts[27] as a further challenge to the Augustinian obsession with fixing and sharpening boundaries to concepts. The kind of example described reveals how it is not simply the case, with ordinary concepts, that boundaries are fluctuant and vague, but that there is, in addition, a radical indeterminacy as to where the boundaries of a concept lie: all sorts of unforseeable circumstances—e.g. the periodically disappearing chair—could throw up entirely new boundaries where it would need to be worked out as a fresh problem what, under those circumstances, counted under the concept and what not.

§81, I think, as I will explain in some detail later in this chapter, provides a compressed introductory summary of the central concern of my thesis, which is Wittgenstein's analysis of (Augustinian) analytic philosophical logic in general, and which is given in detail later in *PI* §§89ff.. The two core theses are: (i), that the logic that is produced by logicians works in helping to see how language should be used if it is to generate true propositions and sound inferences by way of *comparing* ordinary language use

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[27] The term "open texture" comes from Friedrich Waismann's article "Verifiability", where Waismann introduces the phenomenon with just the kind of example employed by Wittgenstein in *PI* §80.

with the artificial vision that the logic represents; and (ii), that the logicians' vision is one that we are tempted to accept, because of its apparent ideality, as the true representation of the way that a language should actually function as a vehicle for truth.

§82 calls into doubt the assumption that accompanies our logical/philosophical reflections on language, that whenever anyone uses a word meaningfully they *eo ipso* follow a rule. And **§83** draws an analogy between using language and people playing and messing about with a ball in a park; in neither case, the moral is, is it at all appropriate to think of the participants as following definite rules at every turn.

In **§84**, Wittgenstein indicates that he is thinking of the Augustinian requirement that the use of a word be everywhere bounded by rules as driven by a desire to remove all doubt, in all possible circumstances, about the use of the word. But, he thinks, the strategy of piling rules upon rules could never remove *all* doubt in such cases, because of the ever-recurrent possibility of doubt over the application of the rule just laid down. Rather, he seems to think, the right response to the kinds of doubts about the uses of words troubling the Augustinian is to appeal to what it is reasonable to doubt under what circumstances—rather in the way that a conviction in law is made on grounds "beyond *reasonable doubt*".

§85 compares the interpretation of a rule to walking in the direction indicated by a sign-post. The idea, driven by the kinds of philosophical insecurities motivating the Augustinian, of fixing an interpretation by adding explanations to the original rule or sign-post, to further and further determine how one is to follow it in practice, is argued to in fact add nothing to the certainty of the original interpretation. No matter how much reinforcement—by adding further sign-posts, or marks on the ground, and so on—one tries to add to a sign-post that *this* is the way one ought to go, the construction remains equally open to alternative interpretations dependent on the empirical context that is assumed for it—perhaps, in this case the convention has been adopted that one follows a sign-post in the opposite direction to the arrow. In other words, the point is that no matter how hard one tries one cannot have sign-posts, or rules, with *internally* fixed interpretations.

§86 introduces explicit rules into the practice of language (2). A and B are now to use written signs for communication, read off a table, containing the signs and pictures of the building stones, according to a schema of arrows, the rule, *e.g.*,

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or,

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                                        >
                           -------------------------->
--------------------------------------------->
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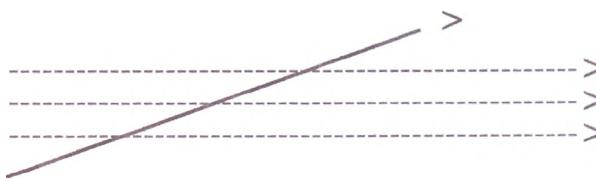
Wittgenstein then makes his point—and he clearly intends it to count, by analogy, against our Augustinian mythos of rules—that one can easily imagine further, higher-order, rules for interpreting these schemata of arrows, and also that there was, in fact, no incompleteness subsequently addressed by the rules, in the original table in the language-game. Again, the Augustinian insistence on rules that together, and in and of themselves, fully justify using language in one way rather than any other is exposed to be inappropriately motivated.

§87 returns to the "Moses" example of §79, this time tapping in to the Augustinian intuition that we have about any putative explanation of the meaning of such a term— "Moses" means the man, if there was such a man, who led the Israelites out of Egypt..., and so on—that, if the explanation is to communicate a fully satisfactory understanding of what is being meant, then *its* terms—"Israelites", "Egypt", etc.—are themselves going to need further explanation, followed by the terms of *that* explanation, and so on, *ad infinitum.* But, Wittgenstein points out, this search for foundational terms, not themselves in need of any further explanation, with which to secure an explanation of the meaning of a word is quite clearly going to prove to be, in the end, fruitless; what explanations of meaning are

really about, he suggests, is correcting or preventing misunderstandings of a word that might, realistically, occur in the, in practice, use of it.

Finally, §88 recalls the example of "Stand roughly there", used in §71 to counter the Fregean insistence on absolutely precisely defined areas. Here, in close contrast, the target is the tenet that only absolutely exact explanations of spatio-temporal states of affairs are philosophically acceptable. This manifests itself in our intuition that any specification of a location in space or in time in reality that is not absolutely exact is not really a genuine proposition about reality at all; such statements are, rather, the crude approximations employed in practical life. But Wittgenstein argues, with a series of examples, for the contrary position to this; the general ideal of exactness sought for under Augustinian intuitions, Wittgenstein's point is, is completely out of touch with considerations of exactness in the reality of everyday life; the exactness that actually does work for us in our lives is far more complex and adaptable, in its appropriacy to different contexts, than the Augustinian vision of it suggests.

§2.2.1.2.2 Conclusion Regarding the Exposition of §§89ff.

That, then, is my understanding of *PI* §§1-88. I feel that there is still very much more work for me to do if I am to get close to the bottom of them all, in the way that I feel I have for §§89ff. However, I feel confident, and this is really the important point, that there is nothing in §§1-88 to seriously challenge and upset my interpretation of §§89-133, on which my essential thesis is founded.

§2.2.1.3 The Augustinian Picture, Logic and Vagueness

I also hope that, with the outline interpretation of §§1-88, I have succeeded in communicating a good feel for the kind of presence, and the extent of that presence, that Wittgenstein sees the Augustinian picture as having in our overall understanding of truth

and meaning in language.[28] If my interpretation is right, Wittgenstein is thinking of the idea:

Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands,

as very deeply embedded and pervasively ramifying throughout our indigenous philosophies of language and logic, from the domination of the idea of ostensive definition over our understanding of language acquisition, to the conviction that words mean objects, to the insistence on fixed and precise rules for the application of words, and so on and so on.

Now, my reason for raising the topic of the Augustinian picture of language in the first place was to indicate how I see the problems of vagueness fitting in to Wittgenstein's general concern in the first 50 pages or so of *PI*. And I think that the way to appreciate this at this point in my thesis is to consider the phenomenon of vagueness in the context of the relation between logic, as we typically understand it, and the Augustinian picture of language for Wittgenstein in *PI*. Quite simply, for Wittgenstein as I understand him, logic—*our* logic, as authoritatively encapsulated by Frege, Russell, and Wittgenstein himself in *TLP*—*is* the Augustinian conception of language, squared as far as possible with the actual use of language in practice as a vehicle for truth; it is the end product of trying to impress the Augustinian conception on to language in the face of linguistic phenomena that do not, in reality, conform to it. And the problems of vagueness have as their origin this process of pressing the Augustinian conception onto language, to produce logic.

It will be the central concern of the whole of my next two chapters to explain this process in detail, but for now I will just point out that, as I understand him, Wittgenstein is thinking of this effort to make the Augustinian picture fit ordinary language as, in the end, leading to an *idealization* of language as apparently conforming to the Augustinian understanding of the way it works. The Augustinian conception does *not*, in truth, fit ordinary language; and so language under the Augustinian conception is idealized to protect

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[28] A further important point arises from this idea that the interpretation of *PI* §§1-88 help us see both the kind, and the extent, of presence, for Wittgenstein, that the Augustinian picture has in our understanding of truth, and this is that both the character and extent of the presence are revealed through the analysis; before the analysis we are not consciously aware of the influence that the mythology is having in our use of language, it takes the analysis for us to see it.

that conception of it from criticism. Thus we get logic: the description of what appears to be an idealization of our language, but what is, in fact, an idealization of our language falsely conceived along Augustinian lines. And thus, it seems, we also get the problems of vagueness, relating to one facet of the idealization of language as Augustinian, the idea of genuine concepts as having absolutely sharp boundaries. Genuine concepts do not, at least as a rule, have sharp boundaries; perhaps it is even best to think of concepts generally as not having boundaries at all.[29]

Anyway, whatever one makes of that last thought, it rounds off what, in essence, is the way I see the problems of vagueness fitting in with the overall discussion in the early parts of *PI*. I hope that my interpretation will all become clearer and more plausible as I work out the details over the chapters to come. In the next two chapters I will look at the relationship, as I see it in *PI*, generally between our Augustinian logic and language; and then in Chapter 5 I will turn specifically to vagueness, and how the problems with *it* might be seen to arise out of that general relation.

§2.3 "[T]he logic of our language" [PI, §38]

In the next section I will take a look in some detail at *PI* §81, to explain how I see it as introducing the two central themes of Wittgenstein's analysis of logic in §§89ff.. But before I do that I would like to say something in preliminary explanation of the idea, or the complex of related ideas, of logic itself, as it features in Wittgenstein's discussion, in *PI* §81 and §§89ff. My hope is that this will help get my interpretation of Wittgenstein off to a good start by nipping a number of important sources of potential confusion in the bud.

In this discussion of logic, I interpret Wittgenstein as trying to expose the deep-rooted, common misunderstanding of the nature of logic—as concerning the workings of language idealized under the Augustinian misconception of it—described in the previous subsection. This involves him in, on the one hand, explaining what is really going on in

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[29] The idea that ordinary concepts ought to be conceived as boundary*less* is one that has been proposed by Mark Sainsbury in his *Concepts Without Boundaries*.

our supposed use of language for truth under the influence of this misunderstanding, and on the other hand, indicating what using language for truth really does consist in. And this means that there are two ways of using the word "logic" at play in Wittgenstein's thoughts, the one that is a misunderstanding, and the one that is correct.

Now, both of these uses of "logic" are ways of talking about the same thing, which is our understanding of the way that language works as a vehicle for truth, that is: of the way language use generates truth in the first place, and then preserves it through inferential relations. Of course, Frege and Russell were led to believe that the ordinary language that we speak cannot function as a vehicle for truth, because of various defects, such as vagueness, and that logic is really the understanding of languages that could so function. But this view, if *PI* is right, is a by-product of the misunderstanding of the logic of *our* language with which it, *PI*, in its early parts at least, is concerned; it is an artefact of their particular versions of the misunderstanding.

This overarching sense of "logic", the study of what makes for truth and valid inference in a language, which is the one that is of concern to my thesis, is, I take it, what is ordinarily called "philosophical" logic to distinguish it from "formal" logic, the latter being the study of formal languages, including the propositional and predicate calculi and so on. Of course, the study of truth and inference in philosophical logic was the original source of the formal languages studied in formal logic; those formal languages were originally coined to represent inferential relations as understood through studying actual inferences as they occur in our actual linguistic practices. But *my thesis* is that, for Wittgenstein in *PI*, the original understanding of logic—what we did, and still do, call "philosophical logic"—, eventually formalized in the calculi, was a misunderstanding, and that makes me very much concerned with philosophical, as opposed to formal, logic.[30]

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30 In *The Interpretation of Frege's Philosophy*, Michael Dummett writes:

Throughout his life, Frege attempted to write a comprehensive treatise setting out his views on that branch of philosophy which he called simply 'logic', by which he meant something much wider than formal logic or the theory of deductive reasoning, and which covered all the notions listed above, with their elucidation and justification

[*The Interpretation of Frege's Philosophy*, p.14].

And the "notions listed above" that he refers to are:

In *PI* §38, Wittgenstein writes:

...strange to say, the word "this" has been called the only *genuine* name; so that anything else we call a name was one only in an inexact, approximate sense.

This queer conception springs from a tendency to sublime the logic of our language—as we might put it.

And in this passage, I understand him to be referring to the genuine logic of *our* language in direct contrast to the kind of logic proposed by, in this case, as I indicated in my earlier exposition, Russell. Russell's understanding, of "this" as the nearest thing in ordinary language to a genuine, logically acceptable, proper name, Wittgenstein is saying arises as part of a "sublimation" of the logic of our language, of the way our language works as a vehicle for truth. And I am convinced that Wittgenstein is thinking here of logic for Russell as sublimated in the *Freudian* sense of sublimation. This explains how Russell could have a misunderstanding of the logic of our language, whilst at the same time believing it *not* to be the logic of our language, but to be a logic that our language fails to live up to. Freudian sublimation invariably involves misunderstanding, or misrepresentation of the subject that is being considered. In this instance, the misunderstanding is the Augustinian mythology, and the subject is the functioning of language. Language conceptualized under a form of the mythology is sublimated, idealized, in Russell's logic to defend it against possible criticism and rejection—something that is ideal or perfect is beyond criticism. But this idealization then makes it look as if logic is not the logic of our language, as if ordinary language falls short of its perfection.

This form of analysis, applied here to Russell's logic, is, as I interpret *PI*, Wittgenstein's analysis of logic generally—in the Frege-Russell sense that still dominates our thinking about logic—: logic is a sublimation of the Augustinian conception of our

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...sense and reference, thoughts, truth-values, judgments, assertions, objects as opposed to concepts, relations and functions of one or two arguments, of first, second or third level, value-ranges, classes, double value-ranges, extensions of relations
[*Ibid.*, p.13].

This "logic", that, I take it, would ordinarily be referred to as Frege's "philosophical logic", is precisely what I am thinking of as Frege's version of the Augustinian mythology.

language. And that characterizes the misunderstanding of logic that Wittgenstein, in *PI*, is trying to help us see our way through.

That characterizes the misunderstanding; but what of Wittgenstein's alternative, positive, account of the true nature of the logic of our language, the one he opposes to the misunderstanding, what is that? Well, Wittgenstein does not provide anything approaching anywhere near a comprehensive account in *PI*. Partly this is because he simply *does not have* anything approaching such an account—the sheer, enormous, variety and complexity of the use of language as a vehicle for truth would have to be mirrored in any comprehensive account of it, which would be an absolutely huge task—; but partly it is because it is not his aim in *PI* to produce such an account. The aim in *PI* is to talk us (and Wittgenstein himself!) out of our delusional misunderstanding of truth in language, our Augustinian mythology; and this involves much more describing the use of language under the influence of the mythology, to show us how we go wrong, than describing the use of it genuinely for truth, to show us what we really mean to be doing.

In conclusion, then, if I am right, the situation in *PI* is as follows. Wittgenstein, as he sees it, is trying to put us back on the right track in our understanding of the logic of our language. And this involves him in, to use his own words, "...a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of..." [*PI*, §109] a vocabulary for discussing logic, the common usage of which is under the influence of a delusional misunderstanding, the sublimated Augustinian mythology. This means that there are established ways of using the words "logic", "proposition", "word", "proof", "truth", "experience", and so on [*cf. PI*, §97] against the tide of which Wittgenstein is trying to swim, to assert his own usage of those words. And this is a battle that he is fighting within himself, against the mythology as he has it in his own inherited ways of using those words, as he writes *PI*. Thus, the use of language relating to logic in *PI* is open to potential misunderstanding, to the extent both that Wittgenstein fails to free what he has to say from the pattern of the mythology and that we, his readers, fail to tune in to the disparity that really is there in the text.

It is the point of this subsection as a whole to warn, in advance, that the same potential for ambiguously misrepresenting logic as is present in *PI*, is inevitably also going to be present in what follows below, imported from *PI* into my interpretation in my thesis.

§2.4 Philosophical Investigations §81

The task that I have set myself for the next two chapters of my thesis is to explain and support my interpretation of Wittgenstein's general analysis, for the most part given in §§89-133 of *PI*, of the Frege-Russell logic. This analysis, as I understand it, falls into two parts, and I will take each of these parts in turn, one in Chapter 3 and the other in Chapter 4. First (Chapter 3), there is the psychoanalytical explanation of the state of the logic; essentially, Wittgenstein thinks that the logic satisfies a deep need that we feel for a certain kind of explanation of the way that language works as a vehicle for truth. Then (Chapter 4), there is the explanation of the utility of thinking of logic along Frege-Russell lines; thinking of the logic of language in that way effectively provides us with a very fruitful *model* for the use of language for truth.

In *PI* §81, Wittgenstein introduces into the book the general form of his analysis of the Augustinian logic. And the need for the two strands of the analysis that are going to become my concern in the chapters to come is, as I understand it, apparent from this general form of the analysis; further working-out of the picture from §81 is going to need to be along those two lines. I would, therefore, like to conclude this chapter by looking at the general picture of §81 as a way of introducing my two themes into my thesis.

Let me quote §81 in full:

F.P. Ramsey once emphasized in conversation with me that logic was a 'normative science'. I do not know exactly what he had in mind, but it was doubtless closely related to what only dawned on me later: namely, that in 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.——But if you say that our languages only *approximate* to such calculi you are standing on the brink of a misunderstanding. For then it may look as if what we were talking about were an *ideal* language. As if our logic were, so to speak, a logic for a vacuum. —Whereas logic does not treat of language—or of thought—in the sense in which a natural science treats of a natural phenomenon, and the most that can be said is that we *construct* ideal languages. But here the word "ideal" is liable to mislead, for it sounds as if these languages were better, more perfect, than our everyday language; and as if it took the logician to shew people at last what a proper sentence looked like.

All this, however, can only appear in the right light when one has attained greater clarity about the concepts of understanding, meaning, and thinking. For it will then also become clear what can lead us (and did

lead me) to think that if anyone utters a sentence and *means* or *understands* it he is operating a calculus according to definite rules.

<div align="right">[<i>PI</i>, §81]</div>

§2.4.1 *Logic is a Normative Science*

To begin with, I would like to focus on just the first couple of sentences of this section:

> F.P. Ramsey once emphasized in conversation with me that logic was a 'normative science'. I do not know exactly what he had in mind, but it was doubtless closely related to what only dawned on me later: namely, that in 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.

And the first thing that I would like to say in interpretation of this passage is that the reference to F.P.Ramsey with which it begins strongly suggests that Wittgenstein considered what the passage contains to be especially important. Ramsey was, of course, Wittgenstein's close friend and colleague who died tragically young of a terminal disease. He is one of two people whom Wittgenstein acknowledges as an influence on his thinking in the preface to *PI*, and here in §81 is the only point in the main text where he mentions him. Add to this the singularly—no other figure gets this kind of treatment in *PI*—personal and extensive—which is all the more striking because of the strict economy of expression in *PI*—reference to Ramsey here, and one has to wonder whether that reference might not be intended as a *tribute* to Ramsey.

And that is my own conclusion, given my understanding of what Wittgenstein goes on to say in §81; he is acknowledging that when Ramsey emphasized that logic was a "normative science" to Wittgenstein he was, for Wittgenstein, right on the brink of something very important. Immediately following this acknowledgement, however, comes the suggestion—"I do not know exactly what he had in mind, but it was doubtless closely related to what only dawned on me later..."—that Wittgenstein—as well as, presumably, Ramsey himself—was unable to see Ramsey's true thought very clearly. So what Ramsey was after when he called logic a "normative science", Wittgenstein thinks is better expressed by saying that "in 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". And, I will argue, this interpretation of the idea that logic is a normative science opens up the motivation for both of our two strands of Wittgenstein's

in-depth analysis of the Augustinian logic; it leads us to want, on the one hand, an account of the *utility* for us of understanding logic as the Augustinian logic, and, on the other, an explanation why we would *want* to believe in it as our logic.

Let me, then, proceed by explaining what I take Wittgenstein to be thinking at the beginning of §81; how, that is, he thinks that the idea that logic is a normative science is better expressed by saying that in 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.

I will begin with the idea of logic as a normative science. The rough idea is one that is very familiar in the philosophy of logic. It is the idea that the discipline of (philosophical) logic is concerned to discover not how we do actually reason, but how we ought to reason; logic is concerned with coming up with canons of *correct* reasoning; not with the rules that we do actually follow in our reasoning, but with the rules that we *ought* to be following if we are to reason correctly. It is a version of this idea that, I think, Ramsey emphasized in conversation with Wittgenstein.

It is, it seems to me, helpful to note, in trying to work out specifically what version of the idea Ramsey emphasized to Wittgenstein, that the expression "logic is a normative science" is ambiguous. The ambiguity that I am thinking of turns on whether we take the word "science" to mean a body of knowledge about the world—*i.e.* knowledge of the canons of correct reasoning themselves—or as a mode of investigation of the world—the discipline of discovering the canons of correct reasoning. And to see that it is the latter of these two senses that Wittgenstein is concerned with is, I think, the key to understanding the opening of §81. It seems to me it must be the latter sense of "science" that he has in mind, because of the way he goes on to replace the idea that logic is a normative science with the idea that in philosophy we often *compare* language with games and calculi; this alternative way of thinking of logic as a normative science is clearly as an *activity*, hence I take him to be thinking of science as what scientists *do* to find out about the world as opposed to science as what scientists *know* about the world.

The thought that Wittgenstein—following Ramsey—is taking "science" in this sense turns out, in fact, to be very surprising. Because taking "science" that way renders the idea of logic as a normative science, strangely, *paradoxical*. But I do, nevertheless, believe that this is the right way to interpret what Wittgenstein is thinking; and I interpret the subsequent comment about philosophy involving comparison of the use of language with games and calculi and so on as part of a *deconstruction* of that apparent paradox. It is this deconstructive account of the idea of logic as a normative science that, I think, in the end explains Wittgenstein's analysis of the Augustinian logic in *PI*.

The idea of logic as a normative science as Wittgenstein is thinking of it is paradoxical in the following way. On the one hand we want to say that it is a contradiction in terms to call a science normative. In science we go out into the world to investigate the phenomena; we are concerned to acquire knowledge about how the world *is* not how it ought to be. On the other hand, however, we want to say that logic *is* both normative and a science. Logic is normative, we think, in the sense that it is the logician's job to correct misuses of language; logic points out those rules, fallacies, that lead us astray in our reasoning and tells us what rules we ought to follow instead. And logic is a science, we want to say, in the sense that the phenomena that it is interested in—logically correct uses of language—are out there in the world for it to describe; we want to view the logician as a kind of natural historian, describing standards of reasoning that are already present in our daily language use. And that is how the idea of logic as a normative science seems paradoxical. Logic is, but at the same time cannot be, a normative science.

And, as I understand him, Wittgenstein is attempting to explain this apparent paradox in §81 when he says:

in 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.

I will try to briefly sketch out here what I think this explanation is; with the now customary caveat that things will become much more fully worked-out over the chapters to come.

First let me indicate what I think those "games" and "calculi" with fixed rules are that are to be compared in philosophy with the use of words. In fact, I think this is very

straightforward: the "calculi" are formal systems like the first-order predicate calculus; and the "games" are language-games in all the related senses introduced in §7 of *PI*:

> ...We can also think of the whole process of using words in (2) [*sc*. the "builders'" language of *PI* §2] as one of those games by means of which children learn their native language. I will call these games "language-games" and will sometimes speak of a primitive language as a language-game.
>
> And the process of naming the stones and of repeating words after someone might also be called language-games. Think of much of the use of words in games like ring-a-ring-a-roses.
>
> I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the "language-game". [*PI*, §7]

So when Wittgenstein says that in philosophy we compare the use of words with games and calculi that have fixed rules he is, I take it, referring to making acts of comparison between uses of words in ordinary language and uses of words or symbols in language-games or formal calculi. And how I think this helps to explain the idea of logic as a normative science, is through the possibility of such comparisons revealing to us something about the way the words of ordinary language *ought* to be used in the particular circumstance of use that interests us. We compare a confusing use of words in ordinary language with a clear and unproblematic use in a game or calculus, and the right comparison of this kind can help us to see our way out of our confusion.

In *logic* we are interested in the way words ought to be used in circumstances where the concern is with the discovery or expression of truth. And to see how words ought to be used in this capacity we compare, for example, a problem argument, where we feel unsure whether the conclusion follows, with, for example, an analogous argument of the first-order predicate calculus. Such a comparison can reveal to us certain characteristics of our argument that are relevant from the point of view of its validity, and in so doing the comparison can lead us to see how we ought to have structured the argument if we were to have constructed a valid argument.

It is in this way that I understand Wittgenstein to be thinking of the comparative method that he describes as informing thought of logic as a normative science; how logic *works* is through comparison with activities resembling language to clarify how words ought to be used for truth.

Now, *prima facie*, the account just given seems little help in explaining the idea of logic as a normative science as paradoxical; but the point, as I understand it, is that in logic

we are somehow making such comparisons without being conscious of ourselves as doing so. The "logic" that Ramsey was thinking of as a normative science would most certainly have been the Frege-Russell—"Augustinian", as I have been describing it—logic for which Ramsey was, in his time, one of the principal authorities. And, if Wittgenstein's analysis, as I am interpreting it, of this Augustinian logic is correct, then this logic is a systematic, delusional, misconception of how language works as a vehicle for truth, which means that we *see* language as a whole in this false way. It is this misconception of language in analytical philosophical logic that, I believe, is meant to explain how it comes about that we can be making comparisons with language of the kinds described without at the same time thinking of ourselves as doing so. We are under the delusion that language as a vehicle for truth conforms to some version of the Augustinian conception of it. And this means that in developing our Augustinian account of logic, of language use for truth, in philosophical logic, we take ourselves to be straightforwardly extending our *description* of language as a vehicle for truth.

But that is a misrepresentation of what we are really up to. What we are really doing, is building up a false picture of language along Augustinian lines which has the appearance of truth because of the way in which it compares with the actual use of language in such a way as to generate ideas about how language ought to be used for truth.

And the success of the picture to generate such ideas about how language should be used, effectively through comparison, is what it is that determines what we will count as correct developments of the picture. The real mark of whether a putative extension of the picture is successful is not whether it is a true description, but is the extent to which, in competition with alternatives, the extension makes the picture more revealing, through the potential comparisons that it opens up, about the use generally of ordinary language for truth.

And this is where we finally arrive at how this approach explains the paradox of logic as a normative science. Because the ultimately comparative nature of the way in which Augustinian logic informs us about language as a vehicle for truth means that the information it gives is prescriptive in form, *i.e.*, it tells us about how language ought to be

to serve such an end. Thus in logic, trying to understand language as a vehicle for truth from within the Augustinian mythology, we seem to be, paradoxically, describing language use as it is in such a way that our descriptions come out as how it ought to be.

This outline account of logic as a normative science is, it seems to me, excepting any explicit reference to the Augustinian mythology *per se*, all contained in that opening couple of sentences of *PI* §81. When Wittgenstein says that: "...in philosophy we often *compare* the use of words with games and calculi which have fixed rules...", this, I think, is an explanation of logic as a normative science because philosophical logic is to be thought of as a branch of philosophy; hence, the idea is that in that branch of philosophy we compare the use of words with games or calculi with fixed rules specific to the subject matter of that branch; and such comparisons, the implication is, are what produces results in the Frege-Russell philosophical logic, the "logic" that is perceived as a normative science. (In that, in Wittgenstein's view, perverted form of philosophical logic, the object of comparison is, he in fact thinks, an Augustinian system of rules for language use.) Then, when Wittgenstein goes on to say: "...but [we] cannot say that someone who is using language *must* be playing such a game", he is again relating the analytical philosophical logic to the nature of philosophy, as he sees it, generally. It is a very general characteristic of, for example, Frege's discussions of logic that he thinks that a language *must* be a certain kind of rule-governed system if it is to work as a vehicle for truth. But Wittgenstein is disagreeing with this, and also is suggesting that his disagreement is implicit in the perception of logic as a normative science; we try, in Frege-Russell philosophical logic, the suggestion is, to say how language must be, but we keep coming out with how we think it ought to be.

The rest of that first, main, paragraph of §81 is then, as I interpret it, concerned with the familiar characteristic of the Frege-Russell logic that it is not seen as the logic of our, ordinary, language but of an ideal language to which our language only approximates. Wittgenstein, in §81, is taking Ramsey's comment about logic being a normative science as a very significant philosophical insight into the nature of the Frege-Russell logic; and in the second half of that first paragraph I understand him to be explaining the Frege-Russell view

of logic as not of our own but of an ideal language as a reaction to the apparent paradox of logic as a normative science, as an attempt to neutralize the paradox. As I see it, according to Wittgenstein Frege and Russell make sense of the way in which in logic we seem to be describing something that isn't how our language is but how it ought to be by taking what we are describing to be not our language, but an ideal of our language; we describe the ideal and in so doing we also set the standard for ordinary language.

Wittgenstein disagrees with this approach to a solution of the problem of logic as a normative science. He says:

> ...logic does not treat of language—or of thought—in the sense in which a natural science treats of a natural phenomenon, and the most that can be said is that we *construct* ideal languages.

And with this he draws on his observation made earlier in §81 that philosophy involves the comparison of ordinary language with games and calculi that have fixed rules. (Augustinian) philosophical logic, he is saying, in so far as it is a means of genuinely understanding language use for truth, does not, like a natural science, aim at correct descriptions of its subject phenomena, but works, rather, through the construction of, and comparison of its subject linguistic phenomena with, such games and calculi, "ideal languages" as he (reservedly) refers to them here.

§2.4.2 The Two Essential Strands of Wittgenstein's Analysis of the Augustinian Logic

That, as I understand it, is Wittgenstein's outline analysis of the Augustinian, Frege-Russell logic. And as I suggested at the beginning of this subsection, §2.4, this outline leaves two big questions requiring answers.

The first of these is how the constructive-comparative method works in logic, how it helps us to understand language as a vehicle for truth. And this will be the theme of my Chapter 4.

The second is how the misconception of logic as a normative science, and the concomitant Frege-Russell misunderstanding of logic as the account of truth in an ideal language, have come to have such a hold over our thinking about logic, in the first place. The answer to this question will be the theme of my next chapter, Chapter 3.

Chapter 3

In what Sense is Logic something Sublime?

§3.1 Introduction

§3.1.1 The Story so far

I would like to begin this chapter with a brief resumé of the argument of my thesis so far. I began in Chapter 1 with arguments of Frege's intended to show that, from a logical point of view, there ought to be no vagueness in language—if there is to be truth and valid inference in language, then language cannot be vague. Frege's answer to the problems of vagueness then turned out to be simply to eradicate vagueness from language—no vagueness, no problem! Then in the last chapter I introduced Wittgenstein's response in *Philosophical Investigations* to these Fregean considerations.

Frege, as Wittgenstein sees it, is, in fact, firmly under the control, in his thinking, of the misleading idea that logic demands (amongst other things) sharp concepts of language. That is to say that Frege strongly believes that if a language is to function at all as a vehicle for the expression and inferential conduction of truth then it must satisfy certain conditions, including that its concepts be sharply defined.

In *PI*, Wittgenstein sets about showing how this idea that has a hold over Frege—and, indeed, to an extent, over all of us—is a misunderstanding of the nature of logic and its relation to ordinary language. His argument comes in two parts: the first is an explanation of the psychological genesis of the idea that logic demands (amongst other things) sharp concepts of language; the second is an explanation of the utility of allowing ourselves to be guided by that idea. Together these two explanations show why the idea of the demands of logic is there in our understanding in the first place and also the extent to which we manage

to satisfy—and the extent to which we fail to satisfy—our "real need" [*PI*, §108] by following that idea, where our real need is to understand how to use language as a vehicle for truth.

The reason why both of the explanations are required by Wittgenstein is that the psychological explanation shows the mistake in our thinking when we believe that logic makes the relevant demands on language but the explanation of utility explains how the idea—and the accompanying philosophical misunderstanding of the whole enterprise of logic—can *persist* in a serious scientific discipline like logic.

§3.1.2 *The Psychological Origin of the Demands of Logic*

The topic for this chapter is the first half of Wittgenstein's argument against the Fregean conception of logic: the psychological explanation of the idea that logic demands sharp concepts, *etc.* of language. In explaining this I am going to be picking up the thread that I left towards the very end of Chapter 1 in §1.4.4 where I said that Wittgenstein criticises Frege's position on vagueness on the ground that he (Frege) misunderstands the psychology of the situation. Frege's understanding of the psychology here *begins* with the recognition of the fact that vague language does not satisfy the demands of logic and then continues to say that this unacceptable realization leads us to delude ourselves into believing that language does in fact satisfy those demands. In contrast, Wittgenstein's account of the psychology begins with the thought that *ordinary language is all right* [*Blue and Brown Books*, p.28]—*i.e.*, that it is perfectly acceptable as, amongst other things, a vehicle for truth—and sees Frege's demands of logic as the product of a deep-rooted yet unfounded worry about ordinary language not being all right as a vehicle for truth. It is this account that I want to explain in detail in this chapter.

As I suggested in §2.3 of the last chapter, the way that Wittgenstein approaches the investigation of the psychology of the Frege-Russell logic is through the tendency that we have in our philosophical reflections on the semantic machinery of language to see that machinery as idealized machinery. Indeed, as I already remarked in the last chapter, the latter tendency is driven by the demands of logic, the demands of logic *are* demands for

idealized workings of language. And where Wittgenstein's account of the psychological origin of these demands begins is in §89 of *Philosophical Investigations* where he begins his explanation of the sense in which he thinks that logic is something sublime. And, as I also suggested in §2.3, the key to understanding this explanation is to see the influence of Freud at work in what Wittgenstein has to say in it—logic is sublime, for Wittgenstein, as the result of a process of sublimation in something like the Freudian sense. Let me give a brief statement of what I take Wittgenstein's story as a whole to be.

The idea, as I understand it, is that our understanding of logic began life in the dim and distant past as a primitive, extremely over-simple account of the way that language works (and Wittgenstein seems to see Augustine's over-simple conception of language [*PI*, §4] as a direct descendant of this primitive account). Now, presumably even at that primal stage, the point of the account would have been twofold (as it has turned out to be in the final development of the account): on the one hand to be a kind of mythological vindication of language, and on the other to be a model of language with genuine utility in helping see how to use language correctly, perhaps, for example, through helping to determine ambiguities in what people were saying. But, anyway, as pressure rose for a more and more in-depth scientific understanding of nature, the inadequacy of this primitive understanding of language would have become more and more exposed. The account would have been elaborated to deal with the increasing demand for truth to a degree, made more sophisticated to deal with troublesome counter-examples, but such concealment of its inadequacy could only be limited. And, at some point, a different kind of reaction would have been called for; and the reaction that followed was, according to my understanding of Wittgenstein, to purify and elevate the elaborated picture of the workings of language to perfection, thus placing those workings once and for all in our eyes beyond criticism. This is the sense in which, as I understand him, Wittgenstein thinks the logic of our language is sublime: our conception of it is the product of this process of sublimation, a process driven by our extreme reluctance to give up our primitive inadequate way of understanding language in the face of severe and mounting pressure *to* (genuinely) understand language. And this process explains both the origin of the demands of logic—language must satisfy the

demands of logic because our primitive approach to understanding language must be correct—, and the fact that these are demands for *idealized* workings of language—our primitive approach must be correct because the workings of language that it leads to are ideal (perfect) and therefore immune to criticism. In this way we manage to have our cake and eat it: we manage to satisfy our need for our primitive approach *by* our need for our primitive approach: it is the need for our primitive approach that generates logic as sublime and it is logic as sublime that satisfies the need for our primitive approach. And this need for our primitive approach to understanding language, though it is shaped by pressure to maximize the utility of the object of comparison that it leads to, ultimately comes from this desire to vindicate language: if we understand *how* language works then we know *that* language works. In the end, I don't think that there is anything special about the primitive/Augustinian conception *per se*—except perhaps the utility of the objects of comparison for the way that language really is, that it happens to generate—it is just the one that we happened to adopt in the first place.[31]

That, as I understand it, is Wittgenstein's thesis and that is the story that I want to substantiate and elaborate in this chapter and the next one. I will begin by looking at the influence of Freud in it.

§3.2 Freud's influence in §§89ff.

One surprising corollary of Wittgenstein's account of the psychological origin of the demands of the Augustinian logic as just described, is that in his philosophy of logic Wittgenstein is in part doing *psychoanalysis* as he thought it ought to be done. I say "in

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[31] The account that I give here of the historical development of analytical philosophical logic that I see as implicit in Wittgenstein's understanding of it is not one that is based on historical evidence; rather, it is one that is dictated by the psychological analysis that Wittgenstein gives of that logic as sublime. The real, evidentially based, history is bound to be much more complicated than the one given here, but, if Wittgenstein is right, that real history, if recoverable at all, must support the essential story that I have given.

Wittgenstein himself, of course, does not make this historical commitment of his analysis explicit, except perhaps in his references to Augustine and to Plato in the *Theaetetus*. The latter of these, because of the way in which Wittgenstein sees Plato as criticizing what is essentially the *TLP* philosophical logic—and what, presumably, was the position of one of Plato's philosophical contemporaries or predecessors—, suggests Wittgenstein may have thought of the real history as lost to us in the mists of pre-history.

part" here because, as I have been claiming, I think that there are two strands to Wittgenstein's critique of our logic. It is the first of these, the psychology of the demands of that logic, that involves the psychoanalysis. The second, the account of the utility of complying with those demands and the topic of the next chapter *doesn't* involve psychoanalysis—*it* involves saying how complying with the dictates of logic leads to construction of, and comparison of language with, very useful models for the use of words. And I say Wittgenstein is doing psychoanalysis "as he thought it ought to be done" both because I think that he had some disagreements (some serious and some not) with how psychoanalysis (under the influence of Freud) was being done, and because Wittgenstein moved Freud's ideas on, developed them further, in his own application of psychoanalysis. And Wittgenstein's understanding of logic as sublime is in line with these disagreements and developments. The point of this chapter is to explain Wittgenstein's understanding of logic as sublime in §§89ff. of *PI*. And the main contribution of this section is going to be to try to explain the way in which Wittgenstein was doing psychoanalysis in §§89ff. I will begin it by taking a detailed look at some of the things that Wittgenstein actually had to say about Freud, about what he liked and what he disliked about Freud's psychoanalysis. And from this I will try to show what I think are the important points of influence of Freud and psychoanalysis on Wittgenstein's understanding of philosophy and of logic. Then, after a brief look round the core sections §§94-97 of *PI* where Wittgenstein describes the process of sublimation of logic, I will try to pick out the relevant facets of Freud's conception of sublimation, relevant for my subsequent critical development of Wittgenstein's own conception.

§3.2.1 Wittgenstein and Freud

So before I go on to examine §§89ff. of *PI*, and the signs of Freud's influence therein, directly, I would like to take a look at what Wittgenstein had to say elsewhere in his writings *about* Freud's thought to see what can be gleaned from there about Freud's influence on him.

These remarks of Wittgenstein's on Freud and psychoanalysis are scattered throughout his writings, but by far the most extensive treatment is contained in *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief.* And I will concentrate on that work in what follows. There is the odd remark elsewhere that I know of and that I think adds to the picture given in *LC*, but apart from these minor contributions it seems to me that *LC* contains the fullest picture possible from Wittgenstein's published writings of his view of Freud.

LC contains, along with several shorter remarks dotted about, two extended discussions of Freud, one in Smythies' notes from the "Lectures on Aesthetics"—summer, 1938—of five pages and the other in the "Conversations on Freud" with Rush Rhees—one in summer 1942, two in 1943 and one in 1946—of nine pages. And these remarks contain the bulk of Wittgenstein's ideas on Freud as far as they are recorded in his published work.

They are also of significance from the point of view of interpreting §§89ff.—which is the ultimate goal of all this—for at least two further reasons. The first of these is in their date with respect to the date of composition of those sections of *PI*. As far as I have been able to ascertain, most of §§81-133 were most likely conceived in the winter of 1936, but certainly by the end of 1938[32]; and this locates the content of §§89ff. very close indeed in the history of Wittgenstein's thought to the "Lectures on Aesthetics" and within six years of the first conversation on Freud. This clearly means that the thoughts of §§89ff. would have been fresh in Wittgenstein's mind at the time of the 1938 lectures. And given that the

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[32] Von Wright, in "The Origin and Composition of the *Philosophical Investigations*", suggests that the majority of the remarks were present in a large manuscript, unfortunately now missing, that Wittgenstein wrote in Norway late in 1936.

    Baker and Hacker, in the introduction to *UM*, make the point that the typescript TS.220, from either 1937 or 1938 is "the immediate source of most of the material in the *Investigations* §§1-189" [*UM*, p.xvi]. I have checked TS.220, and can verify that almost all of the material forming *PI* §§81-133 can be found word for word in this typescript—apart from minor alterations, what is missing is: most of §105, the last three paragraphs of §108, §117, the first and the last paragraphs of §120, §123, §125 and the last paragraph of §133. The relevant section of the typescript includes the material from *PI* interspersed with other material that did not find its way into the polished version. Its general plan is: *PI* §§81-112 almost uninterrupted followed by §§122-129, again almost uninterrupted, followed by the rest, more disorganized, but with §§113-116 clustered together and §§118-121 in sequence.

material polished up into §§89ff. turned out to be Wittgenstein's final word on the subject, even the (?)six years between their conception and the conversations on Freud seems short enough for them to be still alive in Wittgenstein's thinking.

The second reason why I think the lectures and conversations are particularly relevant when interpreting §§89ff. is because of their theme. Throughout both the relevant portion of the lectures and the conversations, Wittgenstein's concern is always with the assessment of Freud's *interpretations* of psychological phenomena—including jokes, emotions and above all dreams. And this theme helps to understand §§89ff. because of the analogy between Freud's interpretations of dreams *etc.* and Wittgenstein's own interpretation of the language of logic in §§89ff. of *PI*. And the analogy lies in the fact that both Freud and Wittgenstein think that psychoanalysis is the correct approach to interpretation. Freud's question is: "What is the psychological significance of a dream?", and Wittgenstein's analogous question is: "What is the psychological significance of the logician's talk of language as having to accord with the requirements of logic?". And both think that psychoanalysis is going to lead to the correct account of the significance. *LC* provides Wittgenstein's criticism of Freud's interpretations, for the most part of dreams, showing how Freud goes wrong in his interpretations. But, ironically, although most of what is said there is negative criticism of Freud, what is most important about them is what they show about the extent to which Wittgenstein was influenced positively by Freud.

§3.2.1.1 *Wittgenstein as a Disciple of Freud*

Perhaps the single most striking statement in *LC* in regard to Freud's influence on Wittgenstein's thinking comes in Rhees' introduction to his resumé of the conversations where he says:

> He [Wittgenstein] would speak of himself—at the period of these discussions [1942-46]—as "a disciple of Freud" and "a follower of Freud". [*LC*, p.41]

I find this remark highly significant. For Wittgenstein to call himself a disciple of Freud's, two things, it seems to me, must be true: firstly, Freud's influence on Wittgenstein must

have been profound; and secondly, Freud must have had a profound influence on Wittgenstein's *work*.

I am inclined to interpret this influence on Wittgenstein's work, in line with what I have just been saying, as manifest in the close analogy between philosophy as Wittgenstein conceived it and psychoanalysis. As I say, where he is involved with the source of philosophical problems which concerns me, Wittgenstein is partly doing psychoanalysis; but he isn't everywhere doing psychoanalysis. Indeed with my case he partly does psychoanalysis and partly doesn't—he doesn't where he is accounting for the *utility* of treating language as sublime-logical. And one reason why philosophy doesn't always involve psychoanalysis, I think, is that human psychology is an important source of philosophical problems—and for philosophical problems thus motivated, psychoanalysis is the treatment of choice—but isn't the only such source. In the case of philosophical problems *not* psychologically motivated, Wittgenstein would still, I suspect, want to say that the analogy with psychoanalysis is fruitful, and this would make his story: philosophy and psychoanalysis are, as a rule, analogous, and sometimes they are the same thing. And this, I am saying, is what I take Wittgenstein's discipleship of Freud to consist in.

§3.2.1.1.1 *Wittgenstein's Discipleship of Freud in the Secondary Literature*

I can find little support for my view in the secondary literature. Mainly, I think, this is because the positive influence of Freud on Wittgenstein is poorly represented in the literature on Wittgenstein and Freud. I don't find this surprising: the Wittgenstein texts lend themselves far more to an appraisal of Wittgenstein's negative criticisms of Freud;[33] and also, I suspect, commentators are understandably wary of the kinds of *prima facie* bizarre analyses offered by Morris Lazerowitz who thinks, for example, that Wittgenstein would have considered Heraclitus' view that everything is in flux or everything constantly changes to be

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[33] And a number of commentators take this line including: Brian McGuiness in "Freud and Wittgenstein", Frank Cioffi in "Wittgenstein's Freud" and "Freud's Abominable Mess", and Jacques Bouveresse in *Wittgenstein Reads Freud: The Myth of the Unconscious*.

...the concealed expression of an anal fantasy projected on to things   [*The Language of Philosophy*, p.32];

and, again, that with a solipsistic sentence like "Only I feel pain. ...",

[t]he solipsist unconsciously uses his sentence to bolster his ego   [*Ibid.*, p.35].

Such analyses, though they look "typically" Freudian, look very unlikely. For one thing there is the way they seem to demean what is ordinarily seen as an important, serious-minded, scientific discipline. For another, any connection that the analyses might have to the philosophical activities, as we ordinarily understand what is going on in them, that they are analyses of seems very superficial. One reason for this latter factor seems to be the difficulty of seeing what kind of explanation of the homogeneity of the philosophical enterprise as a whole there might be; the analyses themselves just don't seem to hang together in a way that could explain how doing philosophy is all doing the same thing.

Lazerowitz is the only commentator known to me who agrees with me unreservedly that Wittgenstein is (*I* want to say: sometimes) doing psychoanalysis. However, because of the kinds of reasons just suggested, I have found him little help in understanding how Wittgenstein actually employs psychoanalysis in his work, especially in those sections of *PI* that are of interest to me.

One commentator who I think appreciates the influence of psychoanalysis in Wittgenstein's philosophy correctly, at least: as far as he takes it, is Anthony Kenny in "Wittgenstein on the Nature of Philosophy". This is, I think, an excellent article, and one that has had a significant formative effect on my general understanding of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy. Kenny has the following to say about the relation between psychoanalysis and philosophy for Wittgenstein:

It is especially to psychoanalysis—and to psychotherapy in general—that Wittgenstein compares his philosophy. Wittgenstein was impressed by, and critical of, the work of Freud: he thought that his own method was a method of analysis.   ["Wittgenstein on the Nature of Philosophy", pp.2-3]

But Kenny seems unwilling here—one sign being, for example, his choice of the word "analysis" instead of "psychoanalysis" at the end—to commit himself to Wittgenstein's philosophical method at all actually involving psychoanalysis. And, although he goes on to point out what he thinks are two important points of the analogy between philosophy and

psychoanalysis for Wittgenstein,[34] and to say that the analogy between philosophy and psychoanalysis is an important and fruitful one, he then moves off the subject after just a couple of pages of his article. Which further suggests to me a kind of wariness on Kenny's part about pursuing the analogy further. Anyway, the upshot is that Kenny is some help, but not much, in understanding the influence of psychoanalysis in Wittgenstein's philosophy.

And that is all that I want to say about Freud's positive influence on Wittgenstein, about Wittgenstein as a disciple of Freud, in the literature: there is, to my knowledge some limited help to be found towards understanding the analogy between psychoanalysis and philosophy as conceived by Wittgenstein, and much less help with the idea of Wittgenstein sometimes doing psychoanalysis. To reiterate my own view: I think that Wittgenstein's discipleship of Freud was evidenced above all in the analogy between philosophy as Wittgenstein did it and psychoanalysis, and in his following the analogy some of the time into areas where it involved him in actually doing his own brand of psychoanalysis. This view is what I take him to be referring to in *PI* §109, when he explains the procedure of solving philosophical problems as: "looking into the workings of our language, and that in such a way as to make us recognize those workings: *in despite of* an urge to misunderstand them". When he says this I take him to be drawing directly on the analogy between philosophy and psychoanalysis—the latter, analogously, could be described as: looking into the workings of our *minds*, and that in such a way as to make us recognize those workings: *in despite of* an urge to misunderstand them.

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34 These two points of analogy are: first, that in a way analogous to the way in which the psychoanalyst aims to make explicit the repressed emotions of the patient, the philosopher aims to make explicit the repressed philosophical nonsense in the philosophically puzzled person; and second that the correct expression of the latent philosophical nonsense in the process just described is to be the interpretation acceptable to the patient (this is a point that will figure prominently in my interpretation later of the main text of *LC* as it relates to Freud). And Kenny recognises that there are other points of analogy too—one that I would add, and one that I will draw on in the final section of this chapter is the idea that "Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language" [*PI*, §124] which I take to be analogous to the rule in psychoanalytic therapy that the therapist oughtn't to propose his own analyses of, and responses for, the patient to their problems, only facilitate the patient's own analyses and responses.

§3.2.1.1.2 Freud's Use of Language

Before I leave the general question of Freud's impact on Wittgenstein and the analogy between philosophy and psychoanalysis, and move on to the details of *LC*, there is a further matter that I would like to raise that Rhees' introduction to the conversations on Freud leads me into. It may initially appear to be something of a digression from the theme here of Freud's positive influence on Wittgenstein but I hope its significance from this perspective will become clear soon enough. In the end I think it gets right to the heart of philosophy as Wittgenstein thought of it and psychoanalysis and the relation between the two.

What makes me think of it is Rhees' saying that from soon after around 1919:

...for the rest of his [*sc.* Wittgenstein's] life Freud was one of the few authors he thought worth *reading*.
[*LC*, p.41, emphasis mine]

We know, from the conversations and elsewhere, that Wittgenstein himself read Freud—particularly the early works, and particularly *The Interpretation of Dreams*—carefully and on a number of occasions. And this reinforces the point that interests me about what Rhees says, which is the suggestion that Wittgenstein was interested in the Freud *texts* and, by extension, in *precisely* what Freud had to say. I feel sure that this is right, and also that this aspect of his interest turns out to be very important from the point of view of understanding both Wittgenstein's general method of philosophy *and* his efforts towards resolving the problems of vagueness. I will explain why shortly. But first, I would like to take a look at the kind of use of language by Freud that I think Wittgenstein was specifically interested in.

§3.2.1.1.2.1 Bettelheim on Freud's Use of Language

How I would like to approach this is through what Bruno Bettelheim has to say in his book *Freud and Man's Soul* because I think that Bettelheim's concern there with Freud's writing is very close to Wittgenstein's own. According to Bettelheim, Freud had a great reputation for his mastery of German:

Language is all-important in Freud's work; it is the supreme instrument of his craft. His use of the German language was not only masterly but often poetic—he nearly always expressed himself with true eloquence. This is well known and widely recognized among those familiar with German writings. It has been remarked frequently that Freud's case histories read as well as the best novels written in his time. Many German writers recognized Freud as a great stylist: Thomas Mann, referring to one of Freud's books, wrote that "in structure and form it is related to all great German essay writing, of which it is a masterpiece." Herman Hesse praised

Freud because his work "convinces both through its very high human and very high literary qualities," and added that his language, while "completely intellectual, is beautifully concise and exact in its definitions." Albert Einstein said that he admired Freud particularly for his achievement as a writer, and that he did not know any other contemporary who could present his subject with such mastery of the German language. Indeed, Freud modelled his style on the German classics—most of all on Goethe, whom he read closely as a student and who influenced him profoundly. [*Freud and Man's Soul*, pp.8-9][35]

This passage contains compelling praise for Freud as a writer in general, painting a picture of him as perhaps one of *the* great writers in German. But this, by itself, obviously isn't enough to account for any peculiar interest that Wittgenstein might have had in Freud's writings, and the moral that Wittgenstein might have drawn from them for philosophy. What accounts for that, what I take Wittgenstein to have seen as special in Freud's writing, was what Freud was trying to *do* with his masterly use of words. In fact, I think this *was*, in essence, what it was that Wittgenstein learned from Freud.

Bettelheim himself, I think, recognizes this most important point about Freud's use of language, but I don't think he sees it clearly, and he doesn't explain it, at least not in *Freud and Man's Soul*. In the paragraph immediately following the one quoted he writes:

Because Freud attached so much importance to finding the *mot juste*, his translators' clumsy substitutions and inexact use of language are all the more damaging to his ideas. Deprived of the right word or the appropriate phrasing, Freud's thoughts become not merely coarse or oversimplified but seriously distorted. Slipshod translations deprive his words of some or most of the subtle sensory tones and allusions that he deliberately evoked to permit the reader to understand what he had in mind, and to respond not only on an intellectual level but also on an emotional one—not merely with the conscious mind but also with the unconscious mind. Only by comprehending his writings on both levels is it possible to grasp Freud's full meaning, in all its subtlety and richness, and this is crucial for a correct understanding of psychoanalysis. [*Ibid.*, p.9]

His theme here—and in *Freud and Man's Soul* generally—is criticism of the translations of Freud into English, specifically the *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, and in this passage I take him to be pinpointing what he takes to be the fundamental problem with them: that they

...deprive his words of some or most of the subtle sensory tones and allusions that he deliberately evoked to permit the reader to understand what he had in mind, and to respond not only on an intellectual level but also on an emotional one—not merely with the conscious mind but also with the unconscious mind.

And this point, what Bettelheim thinks Freud's translators miss about his writings, is, I think, precisely what Wittgenstein considers to be so important about those writings.

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[35] Bettelheim cites a book by one Walter Schönau—*Sigmund Freuds Prosa*, Germanistische Abhandlungen 25, Stuttgart, Metzlerische Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1968—as the source of these and many more expressions of admiration of Freud's literary mastership.

Another way of putting Bettelheim's objection to the translations is that they rob Freud's words of the power that they have to get their message through to people and to hit home, where the message is the nature of human psychology, a message that most of us find very hard to take. This is the way of using words that Bettelheim thinks is "crucial for a correct understanding of psychoanalysis" [*Ibid.*] and the reason, I think, is that this way of using words is what counts as "looking into the workings of our ...[minds], and that in such a way as to make us recognize those workings: *in despite of* an urge to misunderstand them"[*cf. PI*, §109].

Let me take a closer look at what Bettelheim has to say in *Freud and Man's Soul*, primarily at his treatment of one of his examples of misrepresentations of Freud in translation. Afterwards I will return to Wittgenstein to try to explain how I think the kind of use of words of Freud's discussed by Bettelheim was so significant for Wittgenstein.

As I say, Bettelheim's theme is criticism of the standard English translations of Freud; and his general strategy is to show how the translations fail to capture the deep appropriateness of Freud's language by analysing actual examples of Freud's use of language. In places he focuses on key concepts in Freud's work, showing how the translation crudely misrepresents those concepts; elsewhere he addresses the misrepresentation of ideas that don't easily find focus in the use of a single word or expression; and still elsewhere he points out specific mistranslations which he thinks are important. This difficult task, given the artistry in Freud's use of words, that Bettelheim sets himself wasn't perhaps one of a kind which he was well-practised at. Nevertheless, it seems to me that he has an excellent eye for what is important and although his expositions are at times less choate than one would perhaps like them to be, he does almost always show genuine and intelligent insight.

A great deal of what Bettelheim has to say in *Freud and Man's Soul* is, I think, relevant to an appreciation of what Freud is doing with words. But I don't have the space here available to look at the whole book, nor even at any significantly sized portion of it. So I will have to content myself with looking at just *one* of Bettelheim's examples as one small part of his overall treatment.

The example that I would like to look at is Freud's concept of *das Ich* which is misrepresented in the English as *the ego*. "*Das Ich*" is a term that Freud used for one of the three—as he saw it—aspects of the personality, the other two aspects being termed "*das Es*"—translated as "the *id*"—and "*das Über-Ich*"—translated as "the *superego*". All of these terms, Bettelheim argues, have been mistranslated in the English; they should, he claims, have been translated instead into their obvious and natural counterparts in English: "the I", "the it" and "the over-I" (or "the super-I", as I prefer) respectively. And he criticises the translations into Latin words as motivated by a general desire to make psychoanalysis scientifically respectable: on the one hand by presenting it as a medical discipline and on the other as a behaviouristic, not an introspective, psychology. This story need not worry us, however; we are interested in what the mistranslation obscures, that is: in what Freud *achieves* in talking about *das Ich*.

How the mistranslation obscures Freud's linguistic achievement is as follows: translating "*das Ich*" as "the *ego*" renders what for Freud is the figurative extension of the use of a familiar everyday word, into the coining of a technical neologism in the English representation of Freud; at the same time, such a translation severs the relation between Freud's use of "*das Ich*" and the established use of "*Ich*" in the language. It is Bettelheim's account of Freud's expert handling of this latter relation that is of interest to us.

So, what does Freud's figurative use of the word "Ich" amount to? Well, Freud takes the personal pronoun—"Ich"—and uses it as a substantive—"*das* Ich"—for one aspect of the personality. The aspect of the personality that he uses it to refer to is the rational, conscious aspect; and Bettelheim thinks that this is appropriate for two related reasons. Firstly, the assertiveness and personal commitment that we involve ourselves in when we say "I..." carries over into Freud's conception of the personality as the requirement on *das Ich* to take responsibility and assert its voice over those of the other (irrational, censorious and unconscious) aspects of the personality. Secondly, when we say "I..." in everyday parlance we mean our whole selves. And we are well aware that our

whole selves include those aspects of ourselves that we do not like so much, as well as those that we do. So,

> ...when Freud names the reasonable, conscious aspects of our mind the I, we feel subtly flattered that our *real* I is what we value most highly in ourselves. It gives us the intuitive feeling that Freud is right to name the I what we feel to be our true self, even though we know that we do not always act in line with that self.
>
> [*Freud and Man's Soul*, p.55]

And here I think Bettelheim rightly catches Freud tuning in to an important normative influence propagated by our ordinary use of the word "I", that is: the idea that I *ought to be* both reasonable and open in my thoughts and actions. And when this influence is carried through with the word "Ich" into Freud's conception of *das Ich*, it "strengthens our determination to win the battle against the chaos caused by the irrational in us" [*Ibid.*, p.56]. And this determination—the siding of the patient's I with the efforts of the therapist—, Bettelheim says [*Ibid.*] is what alone can lead to success in psychoanalytic treatment in dealing with the dark forces within us.

Now, that, I think, is one half of Bettelheim's account of Freud's use of "Ich" in "das Ich". The other half of the story is that the use of "Ich" compels us to approach what Freud has to say *from our own point of view*; it makes what he has to say both personally and immediately relevant for us—Freud is wanting to tell us about ourselves! And what it is about the word "Ich" that imbues *das Ich* with this strong personal immediacy according to Bettelheim is: firstly, the *familiarity* of the word "Ich"—it is one of the first words learned and one of the most commonly used [*Ibid.*, p.53]—; secondly, the great and intimate connotations that it has for us [*Ibid.*]—my own use of the word "I" is associated with and shaped by a vast personal experience and understanding; and thirdly, the extent to which we are personally involved with and committed to ourselves and our own personal nature. All this makes us sit up and take notice of what Freud is saying about *das Ich* and makes us think of him as trying to tell us something about ourselves from the first-person point of view.

And that is about all that Bettelheim has to say about *das Ich*; it is also where I will leave my account of what he has to say.

§3.2.1.1.2.2 *The Essence of Freud's Influence on Wittgenstein*

Bettelheim's example is, as I have suggested, of the kind of use of language that I think would above all else have attracted Wittgenstein to the Freud texts themselves.[36] But, more importantly, this is closely related to the kind of use of language that Wittgenstein saw as the key to a great proportion of the problems of philosophy, including the problems of vagueness. Why do I think that this is so? Well, amongst other things because of the following passage which was lifted from the Big Typescript, adapted slightly and then included in the original 1937 version of §§81ff. of *PI*, in TS.220:

106.   The philosopher strives to find the liberating word, that is, the word that finally permits us to grasp what up until then has intangibly weighed down our consciousness. (It is as if we had a hair on our tongue; one feels it, but cannot grasp it, and therefore cannot get rid of it.)

    One of our most important tasks is to express all false thought processes so characteristically that the other person says, "Yes, that's exactly the way I meant it". To make a tracing of the physiognomy of every error. Indeed, we cannot convict someone else of a mistake unless he acknowledges this expression as the precise expression of his feeling.- For only if he acknowledges it as such, *is* it the correct expression. (Psychoanalysis.) What the other person acknowledges is the analogy I am proposing to him as the source of his thought.

107.   In this way do we free ourselves from the spell of the ideal, as we recognize it as a picture and specify its origin. …

[TS.220, p.83; the translation is an adaptation of the translation of near identical paragraphs of the Big Typescript [*PO*, p.165], except for the last sentence, opening §107, which is new to TS.220[37].]

The passage follows a couple of pages consisting mainly of the series of *PI* §§124, 126, 127, 128 and 129 in that order; in other words: at the end of a series of sections about how philosophy concerns describing the use of language without altering it in any way, or explaining it, or drawing any conclusions from the way it is, ending with *PI* §129. And the

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[36] I must qualify my putting forward the specific example here as warranting Wittgenstein's approval. In fact, there may well be fault to find with Freud's use of "*das Ich*", as described, from Wittgenstein's point of view. As we shall see in the discussion of *LC* that follows this subsection, Wittgenstein was highly critical of Freud's interpretations of psychological phenomena generally. One pernicious influence, for example—and one that may well be relevant in the present case—, that Wittgenstein saw as misleading Freud widely in his interpretations was his desire for a theoretical, in the sense of "all-encompassing", explanation of the phenomena. My point in the main text, though, is that, whether and to whatever extent Wittgenstein would have deemed Freud's use of "*das Ich*" successful, he would have approved of what Freud was trying to do with it—that is: establish the appropriate concepts for discussion of psychological problems generally—, and would have found much to admire in that use of language for that purpose, irrespective of its success.

[37] In the German, this opening sentence of §107 reads as follows:

107.   So befreien wir auch vom Bann des Ideals, indem wir es als Bild anerkennen und seinen *Ursprung* angeben. …

passage quoted follows immediately after §129 which I think is significant. §129 is concerned with the difficulty of solving philosophical problems. It suggests that the difficulty of solving philosophical problems lies not in the kind of solution required—such solutions are going straightforwardly to be descriptions of the way language is used—, but in the difficulty of seeing and accepting them as solutions. This difficulty is there, §129 suggests, because the uses of language which philosophy is concerned to describe, and which are to solve philosophical problems—descriptions of uses of the words "proposition", "word", "proof", "truth", "experience" and so on [*PI*, §97], for example—are so familiar to us and so basic to our understanding of the world that we are oblivious to the possibility of their being called into question in the first place. That, as I understand it, is the message of §129. And I think that the passage quoted above continues in the same vein; the point being that the difficulty of appreciating the account of the way that language is used in the solution of a philosophical problem *as* the solution to the problem can only be overcome by describing the problematic use of language absolutely accurately. By revealing, in this way, the unavoidable naked truth about the way of using language that leads to the philosophical problem one can at the same time expose the problematic use as the source of the problem *and* render that use one that no longer has any power to perplex. In the same act of description one can unearth the linguistic confusion that leads to a philosophical problem *and* show how it is a confusion, revealing the trickery behind it and thus removing its power to deceive.

This is what I think Wittgenstein has in mind when he opens the quoted passage by saying:

The philosopher strives to find the liberating word, that is, the word that finally permits us to grasp what up until then had intangibly weighed down our consciousness. [*Ibid.*]

The description that the philosopher is after will liberate him from whatever it is that is troubling him through revealing precisely what it is that is causing him the trouble. In other words, the philosopher in the grip of a problem is under the influence of a way of misusing language where he doesn't see clearly how the language is being misused; the precise description of the misuse then reveals to him fully what he was only dimly aware of and

releases him from the grip of the problem. The rest of the passage is an elaboration of this opening remark.

And when Wittgenstein goes on to say:

...we can only convict someone else of a mistake if he acknowledges this expression as the precise expression of his feeling.- For only if he acknowledges it as such, *is* it the correct expression. (Psychoanalysis.)   [*Ibid.*]

I take him to be acknowledging the fact that he derives this technique from psychoanalysis. What he thinks about philosophy is the way that he thinks psychoanalysis works too; psychoanalysis is about striving to achieve a precise account of problematic aspects of a person's psychological make-up—problematic ways of thinking and feeling—in order to free that person's intellect from the bafflement of his or her problems. Again, a precise statement of the misuse of language (mistaken way of thinking) that leads to the confusion lays the problem to rest. And this, I take it, is the kind of thing that Freud is trying to promote (whether he turns out to be successful, or not) in the accounts of psychology that Bettelheim is interested in. (Of course, in those accounts, Freud isn't targeting specific psychological problems for resolution, but he is doing groundwork for the resolution of such problems in the way being discussed. What Freud is trying to do in his writings— including those where he uses "*das Ich*" in the way described by Bettelheim—is to develop a vocabulary, a way of talking, for the characterization of psychological problems generally in order to facilitate the kinds of precise description of problematic ways of thinking and feeling in individual cases required to resolve those problems of those individuals.)

This approach to psychoanalysis and philosophy has the (for me, at least) surprising consequence that they are both *confessional* pursuits; that is to say, the point of both psychoanalysis and philosophy is to elicit difficult-to-make confessions about misusing language from people in the grip of problems arising due to the particular misuse of language and that are solved through making the confessions. (Of course, making such a confession once off isn't in itself going to guarantee a permanent freedom from the allure of the mistaken way of thinking involved; for that one needs to take the confession on board, adjusting one's linguistic practice accordingly, and for that one needs to be able to keep reminding oneself of precisely what the confession was.)

Anyway, in the way described, Freud's use of language proves, I think, in Wittgenstein's eyes, to be the key to psychoanalysis, to the psychoanalytic method for solving the deep psychological problems that lead to mental illness. And it also proves to be the progenitor of the use of language at the heart of Wittgenstein's own philosophical method.

It is tempting to explain the efficacy of such uses of language in terms of expertise in *rhetoric*, or of *eloquence*, or even of the *poetical* use of language—and indeed both Bettelheim and Wittgenstein have a tendency to talk of it in these ways[38]. But we can see now that it is none of these exactly. It resembles them all in its richness and subtlety of form, but is distinguishable from them in that it has its own distinct purpose or point. And its point is to solve philosophical or big psychological problems by providing a true account of the problematic phenomenon. And this latter is the point that I take Wittgenstein to be making in §109 of *PI* when he says:

...this description [*sc.* of the uses of language that lead to philosophical problems] gets its light, that is to say its purpose, from the philosophical problems. ...

His thinking is that the whole point of describing a way of using language that leads to a philosophical problem is going to be to contribute towards the resolution of that problem. This is what drives philosophy (and psychoanalysis) and distinguishes it from rhetoric and poetry.

Clearly, from the passage from TS.220, Wittgenstein also thinks of this kind of use of language as the *modus operandi* for resolving the problems of vagueness *et al.*, from his saying:

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[38] Thus Bettelheim writes (as quoted above):

His [*sc.* Freud's] use of the German language was not only masterly but often poetic—he nearly always expressed himself with true eloquence   [*Freud and Man's Soul*, p.8],

and Wittgenstein himself writes in *LC*:

One thinks of certain results of psycho-analysis as a discovery Freud made, as apart from something persuaded to you by a psycho-analyst, and I wish to say this is not the case.   [*LC*, p.27].

And here I understand Wittgenstein, with his talk of "persuasion", to be thinking of the Freudian use of language as *rhetorical*.

In this way do we free ourselves from the spell of the ideal, as we recognize it as a picture and specify its origin. ...

By using language in the way discussed, we can, Wittgenstein thinks, see our way clear of the false picture of the workings of language that distorts our understanding of them, the picture which involves us in seeing the workings of language as "the ideal". And I am sure that this moral isn't one that comes or goes with the passage from TS.220, it is one that lives on in the finished version of *PI* §§81ff.[39]; showing us the way to free ourselves from the insidious influence of the ideal, is, I believe, Wittgenstein's major concern in §§81ff. of the finished version of *PI*, and indeed, if I am correct, in all the sections leading up to §81 as well, and perhaps even much of the rest of the book too.

§3.2.1.2 Wittgenstein on Freud

§3.2.1.2.1 Freudian Explanations of Psychological Phenomena

The first mention of Freud in *LC* comes in a short passage right at the end of the second of the lectures on aesthetics, some way before the much more extended discussion in the third lecture. And what Wittgenstein says in this short passage raises a further point of analogy between philosophy and psychoanalysis already remarked upon in the passage from TS.220. This is the idea that explanations of ways of thinking are correct or incorrect depending on whether they are accepted as correct or not by the person employing those ways of thinking. In *LC* Wittgenstein raises the point as a comment on Freud's explanations of jokes:

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[39] The emphasis in the passage from TS.220 on the accurate description of the use of language to help resolve philosophical problems in a way analogous to the way language is used in psychoanalysis finds its way, as an aside, into *Philosophical Investigations* in §254:

The substitution of "identical" for "the same" (for instance) is another typical expedient in philosophy. As if we were talking about shades of meaning and all that were in question were to find words to hit on the correct nuance. That is in question in philosophy only where we have to get a psychologically exact account of the temptation to use a particular kind of expression. What we 'are tempted to say' in such a case is, of course, not philosophy; but its raw material. Thus, for example, what a mathematician is inclined to say about the objectivity and reality of mathematical facts, is not a philosophy of mathematics, but something for philosophical *treatment*.

Here Wittgenstein begins by criticizing as inappropriate a case of attention to the differences in nuance of different expressions in philosophy; and this leads him on to point out where in philosophy such attention to nuance *is* appropriate. And, as I understand him, it is in precisely the kind of circumstances and in precisely the kind of way which he is concerned with in TS.220 that he points out.

39. Cf. Freud: *Wit and the Unconscious*. Freud wrote about jokes. You might call the explanation Freud gives a causal explanation. "If it is not causal, how do you know it's correct?" You say: "Yes, that's right." Freud transforms the joke into a different form which is recognized by us as an expression of the chain of ideas which led us from one end to another of a joke. An entirely new account of a correct explanation. Not one agreeing with experience, but one accepted. You have to give the explanation that is accepted. This is the whole point of the explanation.   [*LC*, p.18]

What is of interest to us in this passage is the way that Wittgenstein speaks approvingly of the form of Freud's explanations of jokes. And the form that they have that he approves of is this way in which the correct explanation is the one that is acceptable to the person who gets the joke. Wittgenstein thinks that this kind of explanation is in order. (And he also thinks, as is suggested in the passage from TS.220 and more clearly elsewhere, that Freud applies this form of explanation correctly to other kinds of psychological phenomena—for example, to dreams; but also to more standard psychological phenomena: emotions and so on.) And, as is clear from the TS.220 passage, Wittgenstein also thinks that explanations in philosophy too are correct or incorrect in an analogous way, on the grounds of acceptance by anyone in the grip of the problem:

...we cannot convict someone else of a mistake unless he acknowledges this expression [*sc.* our therapeutic expression of his false thought] as the precise expression of his feeling.- For only if he acknowledges it as such, *is* it the correct expression.

And this again sheds light on *PI* §109 where Wittgenstein says:

...we may not advance any kind of theory. There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. We must do away with all *explanation*, and description alone must take its place.

As we have deduced already from TS.220, the "description" that Wittgenstein refers to here is a precise description of the misleading use of words *à la* Freud. But it is also true to say, I think, in line with TS.220 again, that this "description" is also an explanation of the form being discussed in *LC*, one that stands or falls on the acceptance of a person in the grip of the problem concerned. And this link is corroborated by the fact that the form of explanation with which the correct form of explanation is being contrasted in both §109 and in the passage from *LC* is "one agreeing with experience"[*LC*, p.18, quoted above]; this is how Wittgenstein specifically refers to the alternative in *LC*, and in §109 he is clearly thinking of the alternative there—"There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations"—as one that involves testing a hypothesis against experience.

Now, this idea that the form of explanation in philosophy is one where the correct explanation is the one acceptable to the person puzzled by the problem in fact completes a picture for us of Wittgenstein's strategy for dealing with the problems that arise through the supposed demands of logic, including the problems of vagueness. As we shall see, Wittgenstein thinks of those dictates of logic as the driving force behind something very much akin, in a way that we will look into soon, to a *systematic delusion* about the way that language works. And the way to solve the problems arising through those requirements of logic is to free ourselves from the influence of this false belief-system by looking very carefully and closely at particular uses of words that are a manifestation of the system in order to adjudge them misuses of the words involved. And this is where the idea that the correct explanation/description is the one acceptable to the person under the influence of the problems enters the picture. Because the grounds for judging the problematic uses to be misuses are that they are describable in such a way that *we* can see how they lead to the philosophical problems (and *eo ipso* how to steer clear of those problems in using those words). And the way to prise ourselves away from the influence of the false belief-system that leads to, amongst other problems, the problems of vagueness is to assemble a collection of these descriptions of the use of language under the influence of the system that expose the misuses of language generated by the system and to keep on adding to the collection until the system is over-turned. Such a collection of descriptions of philosophical misuses of language is, I think, what Wittgenstein is referring to when he says:

The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose. [*PI*, §127]

The descriptions are the "reminders" and the "particular purpose" is to undermine mistaken ways of thinking, of using language, that lead to philosophical problems. He calls the descriptions "reminders" because once they have been established, they can always be referred back to to reinforce our resolve against the temptation of the mistaken way of thinking.

And that is all that I want to say explicitly here about Wittgenstein's strategy for tackling the problems of vagueness and the rest. I hope it will become clearer over the

remainder of my thesis that what I have said *is* what Wittgenstein is up to in *PI* as regards those problems thrown up by the sublimation of logic.

§3.2.1.2.2 *Freud's Idea of Dreams and Sublimations as Wish-Fulfilments*

Now, though, I would like to return to *LC* to see what light it can throw specifically on Wittgenstein's understanding of the sublimation of logic. As I have suggested, the central theme of the discussions of Freud in *LC* is to subject Freud's interpretations of psychological phenomena to critical scrutiny, and that most of the time the criticism is negative. I have also tried to show how Wittgenstein was profoundly positively influenced by Freud and one important aspect of this profound positive influence as I have described it is that Wittgenstein was very much in favour of the spirit of Freud's explanations and interpretations of psychological phenomena. And so, as I understand it, the way to view the discussions in *LC* is as Wittgenstein's attempts to show ways in which Freud deviated from the spirit of his own enterprise. These ways in which, according to Wittgenstein, Freud misinterpreted phenomena turn out to be informative in various ways about how Wittgenstein was thinking about logic as sublime and that information is what I would like to get on to now.

Let me begin by looking at the point with which Wittgenstein opens the extended discussion in the lectures. This is his criticism of one of Freud's interpretations of dreams in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. A patient of Freud's described what she thought of as a beautiful dream she had had. And Freud gave a coarse sexual interpretation of the dream, an interpretation suggesting that the dream wasn't really beautiful, but "bawdy" as Wittgenstein puts it. And Wittgenstein's criticism is that the dream *was* genuinely beautiful and not full of sexual allusion or innuendo in the way that Freud wanted to say it was. Wittgenstein explains that we are tempted to accept Freud's sexual interpretation of the dream because of the *charm* that thinking of the dream as really bawdy has for us. "It is charming to destroy prejudice..." [*LC*, p.24] he says, and I think he means that thinking of the dream as really bawdy makes it look as if the patient were thinking of the dream as

beautiful, prejudiced in her judgement because she wants to hide the dream's embarrassing true nature.

Now, this criticism of Freud is closely related to another that Wittgenstein raises in the conversations on Freud:

...[T]he majority of dreams Freud considers have to be regarded as *camouflaged* wish fulfilments; and in this case they simply don't fulfil the wish. Ex hypothesi the wish is not allowed to be fulfilled, and something else is hallucinated instead. If the wish is cheated in this way, then the dream can hardly be called a fulfilment of it. Also it becomes impossible to say whether it is the wish or the censor that is cheated. Apparently both are, and the result is that neither is satisfied. So that the dream is not an hallucinated satisfaction of anything.

[*Ibid.*, p.47]

It seems to me that this story would have added to Wittgenstein's earlier account of Freud's misinterpretation of the beautiful dream, giving the further reason for Freud wanting the beautiful dream to be bawdy to conform with his *ideé fixe* that all dreams function as wish-fulfilments—only *real* sexual content to the dream could afford *real* satisfaction of sexual desires, and thinking of the dream as bawdy not beautiful is thinking sexual content into it.

And this story about Freud on dreams suggests to me a parallel story about Freud on sublimations, because for Freud sublimations too are a kind of disguised wish-fulfilments. In the case of sublimations, the disguise is of a peculiar form, the object of desire is disguised by idealizing it; nevertheless, Freud's thinking is that we manage to achieve some degree of genuine satisfaction of our desires through attaining these idealizations of their goals. And he says this on a number of occasions, most clearly in an encyclopaedia article of 1923:

The most important vicissitude which an instinct can undergo seems to be *sublimation*; here both object and aim are changed, so that what was originally a sexual instinct finds satisfaction in some achievement which is no longer sexual but has a higher social or ethical valuation. [*CWF*, vol.18, p.256]

I think Wittgenstein would have objected to this, along the lines of his objection to Freud on dreams as wish-fulfilments. The gist of the passage from the conversations just quoted is that Wittgenstein objects to Freud's interpretations of dreams as camouflaged wish-fulfilments on the grounds that if Freud's interpretations are correct then the supposed wish-fulfilments are *so* well camouflaged that they couldn't possibly be recognized by the dreamer as satisfying the wish, and hence could not satisfy it. What this suggests to me about what Wittgenstein would make of Freud on sublimations as wish-fulfilments is that he

is going to disagree with Freud about sublimations functioning as disguised wish-fulfilments because they too are in a way too well disguised. And the story is going to be: the fully sublimated object of desire—sublimated to *perfection*, that is—becomes, as a result of the process, essentially unattainable, and this renders it incapable of satisfying the desire.

And this idea, I think, helps to understand Wittgenstein on the nature of logic in *PI*. In particular, I think it helps to understand *PI* §107 in a way that I will explain later once I have looked at Freud's own account of sublimation.

§3.2.1.2.3 *Wittgenstein's Analyses of Examples from Freud*

Now, however, let me return to the examples of Freud's psychological interpretations that Wittgenstein subjects to criticism in the lectures and conversations. A good number of different examples are discussed in the lectures, but I will not look at them all, just a select few of them. It seems to me that there is a subclass of the examples that share a common aetiology, and that are particularly informative when it comes to understanding Wittgenstein on the sublimity of logic. These are misleading interpretations that are all driven by the need for a *theory* of interpretation. And what makes them especially helpful in understanding Wittgenstein on logic is the illuminating comparison between the insistence on a theory of psychoanalysis implicit in Freud's interpretations and the insistence on a theory of *truth* that ultimately necessitates the sublimation of logic. I will come to this group of examples and the fruitful comparison that they support in a little while, but first I would like to look briefly at a couple of the non-theoretically-driven examples.

§3.2.1.2.3.1 *Two Non-Theoretically-Driven Misinterpretations*

All the examples are lines of interpretation that have an immediate appeal for us, not, it turns out, because they are true, but because for one reason or another we would like them to be true. Let me show what I mean with a couple of these non-theoretically-driven examples. The first comes from the lectures on aesthetics; it is Wittgenstein's account of why we like the idea of people having subconscious thoughts of the kind that Freud thinks we have. And why, he thinks, we like the idea of people having these subconscious

thoughts is because of the fascination that we have with things that are mysterious and uncanny. Let me quote what he has to say:

The picture of people having subconscious thoughts has a charm. The idea of an underworld, a secret cellar. Something hidden, uncanny. Cf. Keller's two children putting a live fly in the head of a doll, burying the doll and then running away. (Why do we do this sort of thing? This is the sort of thing we do do.) A lot of things one is ready to believe because they are uncanny. [*LC*, p.25]

Freud's subconscious thoughts, the ones that he typically offers as interpretations of the more bizarre and seemingly inexplicable episodes in people's behaviour, and which act seemingly as evidence as to what we might really, in our deeper, hidden and mysterious natures, be about.

Of course, a great deal more could be said along Wittgenstein's line of criticism here; but the point is: this is a charge that Freud has got to take seriously—are there really subconscious thoughts of the kind that he thinks there are? or do we just think so because of our fascination with the idea of our being motivated by secret, mysterious agencies within us?

Another example of this kind of mistake is picked out in the conversations on Freud. The target this time is Freud's notion of the *primal scene*. This is typically thought—though Wittgenstein seems to think that there is going to be considerable variation from individual to individual—to be the scene of a child's parents having sexual intercourse, seen from the child's perspective on first becoming emotionally aware of what is happening. It is a situation which Freud thinks has a profound psychological effect on the child, an effect which reverberates throughout the child's later emotional life. What Wittgenstein has to say about it is as follows:

This often has the attractiveness of giving a sort of tragic pattern to one's life. It is all the repetition of the same pattern which was settled long ago. Like a tragic figure carrying out the decrees under which the fates had placed him at birth. Many people have, at some period, serious trouble in their lives—so serious as to lead to thoughts of suicide. This is likely to appear to one as something nasty, as a situation which is too foul to be a subject of a tragedy. And it may then be an immense relief if it can be shown that one's life has the pattern rather of a tragedy—the tragic working out and repetition of a pattern which was determined by the primal scene. [*Ibid.*, p.51]

In this way he accounts for the appeal of the idea of a primal scene in someone's life, an early powerful formative experience that lays down a deep-rooted pattern of recurrent

behaviour in the person's emotional make-up, as giving that person's life the appearance of tragedy, and thus giving what at first sight looks like a nasty mess a tolerable form.

One way in which this kind of example can help us understand Wittgenstein, is in the kind of analysis that it suggests for Freud's interpretations of sublimations. Each individual case ought to be considered *sui generis*, but the kind of treatment of examples discussed above is bound to make us wary of a good many of Freud's accounts of sublimations because of the shocking sexual or aggressive motivations that Freud sees behind the most mundane and civilized of activities. Are such of his accounts really correct, or do we take them to be so for the wrong reasons? Take, for instance, the explanation of pottery as a sublimated desire to play with one's faeces. For all I know, this description might well turn out to be correct, but it would take a great deal of detailed and careful scrutiny and interpretation of people's behaviour to prove the case, and throughout such investigation the interpreter would need to be mindful of not misinterpreting the data because of the perverse fascination that such a story might hold for us. Another example, one that appears to be at the back of Wittgenstein's own mind as comparable to the sublimation of logic is that of religious iconism and the idealization of religious figures, for example of the saints, of Mary, and of Jesus Himself.[40] In this case the process of sublimation could, in a Freudian vein, be put down to, for example, an institutionalized mechanism for resolution of psychosexual conflicts generated in early childhood which would work through the possibility of identifying these figures with our parents.[41] And

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[40] The evidence that Wittgenstein has considered this example is that he says:

Thought is surrounded by a *halo*   [*PI*, §97, emphasis mine]

and, perhaps, that he says:

...we are *dazzled* by the ideal...   [*Ibid.*, §100, emphasis again mine].

[41] As far as I know, the nearest that Freud himself comes to discussing this example is in the following passage from *Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*:

...we recognize that the roots of the need for religion are in the parental complex; the almighty and just God, and kindly Nature, appear to us as grand sublimations of father and mother, or rather as revivals and restorations of the young child's ideas of them. Biologically speaking, religiousness is to be traced to the small human child's long-drawn-out helplessness and need of help; and when at a later date he perceives how truly forlorn and weak he is when confronted with the great forces of life, he feels his condition as he did in childhood, and attempts to deny his own despondency by a regressive revival

again, for all I know this kind of story *might* be right, dependent for confirmation on close scrutiny of the evidence. However, I strongly doubt it. My own feeling is that the sublimation in this case is going to be predominantly driven by much closer to the surface adult concerns, specifically, I think, concerns for an objective morality. And I would expect something *like* this view to have been Wittgenstein's feeling too. My idea would be that the need for an objective morality has been satisfied in the eyes of some religious practitioners by their identifying figures such as saints as paragons of moral virtue and has been impregnably fortified against worries that there may not be such an objective morality by making these figures absolutely *morally perfect*, and thus from a moral point of view impossible to criticize. (And, as we shall see, this interpretation brings the example into a close analogy with Wittgenstein's understanding of the sublimation of logic as I understand it.)

In this kind of way Wittgenstein's treatment of the examples of alleged misinterpretation by Freud in *LC* do help to give an idea as to what Wittgenstein's approach to Freud's accounts of sublimations is going to be, and this is a moral that I want to take with me into my attempts to understand how Wittgenstein himself went on to understand logic as sublime.

A further point arises out of this little discussion too, from when I said that, for all I know of the subject matter, Freud's suspect-looking interpretations may turn out to be right but that it would take a good deal of open-minded critical investigation of the phenomena to convince me either way. The point is that *my* ignorance is no reflection on the extent of *Wittgenstein's* understanding of the evidential background to the theses of Freud's that he criticizes; Wittgenstein might well both be drawing on adequate empirical evidence and weighing up that evidence in a thorough and fair-minded enough way when he makes his

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of the forces which protected his infancy. The protection against neurotic illness, which religion vouchsafes to those who believe in it, is easily explained; it removes their parental complex, on which the sense of guilt in individuals as well as in the whole human race depends, and disposes of it, while the unbeliever has to grapple with the problem on his own.

[*CWF*, Vol.11, p.123]

Here, clearly there is no mention of real historical figures as idealized and identified with father and mother, but much of the rest is consonant with my proposed line of "Freudian" interpretation.

criticisms of Freud and makes his own interpretations. Of course, Wittgenstein wasn't a practising psychotherapist and so neither gathered his data nor practised his interpretations in that particular field; but for a topic such as the interpretation of psychological phenomena the raw material is all around us and someone, like Wittgenstein, who was tremendously interested in that kind of thing would have a wealth of detailed experience and considered understanding to draw on. Anyway, whether Wittgenstein's interpretations in *LC* are right or not isn't important to us, what is important to us is his interpretation of the logician's talk of logic as sublime and in that case, I think that there is good reason to believe that Wittgenstein *was* drawing on a wealth of evidence and understanding. There is, throughout Wittgenstein's published work, a very strong emphasis on the detailed investigation in philosophy of the actual use of language in all its richness and variety, in both what Wittgenstein says about philosophy and much more importantly in the philosophy that he actually practices—indeed, one sometimes gets the impression that he is more interested in linguistic phenomena themselves than in solving philosophical problems that such phenomena may or may not give rise to. And a large proportion of the sections in *PI* leading up to §81 and between §81 and §89 is concerned with linguistic phenomena relating to the sublimation of logic (of the Augustinian picture). Similar phenomena are investigated in detail elsewhere too, particularly in *The Blue Book* and *Philosophical Grammar*. And these reasons, I think, make it reasonable to assume that Wittgenstein had done a great deal of archaeology of the relevant linguistic phenomena to arrive at the analysis that we will discuss in this chapter, of logic as sublime.

§3.2.1.2.3.2 *The Misleading Influence of the Desire for a Theoretical Explanation of the Phenomena*

Having said all that about those first two examples from *LC*, let me now turn to that group of examples, that I singled out for special attention, of misleading interpretations that are driven by the implicit desire for a theoretical explanation of the phenomena of psychology. These examples, I said, promote an illuminating comparison between Freud's psychoanalysis under the influence of the desire for a theory of psychology and logical

analysis under the influence of the desire for a theory of truth, and I will have something to say about this comparison in my discussion of them.

This kind of misleading influence is, I think, first touched on by Wittgenstein in the lectures on aesthetics where he says:

> 30. Suppose someone like Freud stresses enormously the importance of sexual motives:
>   (1) Sexual motives are immensely important.
>   (2) Often people have good reason to hide a sexual motive as a motive.
> 31. Isn't this also a good reason for *admitting* sex as a motive for everything, for saying: "This is really at the bottom of everything?" Isn't it clear that a particular way of explaining can bring you to admit another thing. Suppose I show Redpath fifty cases where he admits a certain motive, twenty cases where this motive is an important link. I could make him admit it as a motive in all cases.   [*Ibid.*, p.26]

Here Wittgenstein indicates how easy it is for Freud to promote the idea that behind human behaviour, there is always, at bottom, sexual motivation. To begin with, such an account *looks plausible* for the reasons that Wittgenstein gives—that sexual motives are immensely important and that often people have good reason to hide a sexual motive as a motive—, and then we are positively attracted to the idea because of its explanatory power—to say that all human motives are ultimately sexual, is to take a huge step in understanding why people behave the way they do. This latter point about explanatory power isn't obvious in the passage quoted, but comes out in retrospect from what Wittgenstein goes on to say in §32. There he draws a comparison between the attractiveness of the idea of sex as behind everything and the attractiveness of Darwin's theory of natural selection driven by the struggle for life. The theory of evolution wasn't originally accepted, as it should have been, on the grounds of accountability to the evidence, rather, Wittgenstein argues, because

> ...people were immensely attracted by the unity of the theory, by the single principle—which was taken to be the obvious solution. The certainty ('of course') was created by the enormous charm of this unity. People could have said: '...Perhaps sometime we shall find grounds.' But hardly anyone said this; they were either sure that it was so, or sure that it was not so.—R   [*Ibid.*]

And this attraction to the unity of a theory irrespective of its truth is an example of being misled by the contribution that such unity makes to the possibility of a theoretical explanation of the phenomena. Although one can think of numerous other possible reasons for our attraction to the unity of a scientific theory—because of its neatness, its simplicity, its internal coherence, its beauty and so on—, the one likeliest most forceful attractive influence is the explanatory power of such a unitary theory. And, in fact, the explanatory

power of a unitary theory is absolute: a unitary explanation provides a *complete* explanation of a class of phenomena; with a single principle we can, at one fell swoop, bring every one of a type of phenomena (in Darwin's case, biological species) under our understanding. And it is, I think, this way in which the theory pacifies our desire for an understanding of the phenomena that, above all other considerations, overrides our desire for a genuine true account. That, as I understand him, is what Wittgenstein is thinking in the passage just quoted, and similarly for the attraction of Freud's thesis of sexuality as the driving force for human behaviour. Moreover, I think that in *PI* he sees this kind of misunderstanding as at work in our logical investigations and that he is responding to precisely this kind of misunderstanding in logical investigation when he says:

We see that what we call "sentence" and "language" has not the *formal unity* that I imagined, but is the family of structures more or less related to one another. ... [*PI*, §108, emphasis mine]

Behind his saying this is, I think, the thought that the reason why we were attracted to our understanding of truth in the first place was its promise of a complete theoretical explanation of truth in our language. This was the reason, ultimately, why Wittgenstein himself in *TLP* had imagined what we call "sentence" and "language" to have a formal unity.

In the conversations on Freud, further attention is paid to these ways in which Freud's interpretations are distorted by the want of a theoretical explanation.

Wittgenstein's first concern in the conversations is over Freud's approach to interpreting the symbolism of dreams. Freud has the idea of objects in dreams playing the role of symbols for objects in reality, and Wittgenstein seems to think that this is a fruitful way to think of dreams, but he raises objections to the way that Freud sets about interpreting this symbolism. I am thinking of two objections in particular here. The first of these is that there is no *a priori* reason to expect there to be, as Freud does, a single coherent interpretation of every dream. Wittgenstein compares a dream with an cartoon picture:

Suppose there were a picture in a comic paper, dated shortly after the last war. It might contain one figure of which you would say it was obviously a caricature of Churchill, another figure marked somehow with a hammer and sickle so that you would say it was obviously supposed to be Russia. Suppose the title of the

picture was lacking. Still you might be sure that, in view of [the] two figures mentioned, the whole picture was trying to make some point about the political situation at that time.

The question is whether you would always be justified in assuming that there is some joke or some one point which is *the* point which the cartoon is making. Perhaps even the picture as a whole has no "right interpretation" at all. You might say: "There are indications—such as the two figures mentioned—which suggest that it has." And I might answer that perhaps these indications are all that there is. Once you have got an interpretation of these two figures, there may be no ground for saying that there *must* be an interpretation of the whole thing or of every detail of it on similar lines.

The situation may be similar in dreams.   [*LC*, pp.48-49]

And here I think we have Wittgenstein again picking out a way in which Freud is misled by his desire for a full theoretical explanation of the phenomena—a theory that did the required job would be one that picked out a single interpretation for every dream. The second objection is that Freud always wants to include *all* objects in the dream as part of the symbolism to be interpreted; Wittgenstein objects that we have no *a priori* reason again to expect everything in the dream to contribute to the point of it:

Suppose you recognized certain things in the dream which can be interpreted in the Freudian manner. Is there any ground at all for assuming that there must be an interpretation for everything else in the dream as well? that it makes any sense to ask what is the right interpretation of the other things there?   [*Ibid.*, p.49]

And Wittgenstein's answer to this question with which my quotation ends is clearly "no": it might turn out that the right interpretation of a particular dream involves leaving out certain elements from the content of the dream as irrelevant. And it seems to me that here again Wittgenstein is thinking of Freud as led to a misunderstanding of dreams by the need he feels for a complete theoretical explanation, one, as is this time evident, that leaves no room for doubt about what it is that is being interpreted.

Both of these points of criticism of Freud amplify the feeling given off by Wittgenstein's treatment of the earlier example of sexual motives as the all-pervasive source of human behaviour, that there is more to Freud's craving for a theoretical understanding of the phenomena of psychology than a straightforward desire to understand. It isn't simply that Freud is over-eager to understand psychology and so postulates principles with inappropriate degrees of explanatory power. Rather, the feeling is that from the outset Freud is after a complete and all-inclusive understanding of psychology, one that leaves no psychological phenomenon only partially understood and that allows no uncertainty as to which the psychological phenomena are. And here again the analogy with logic, as Wittgenstein understands it, holds. He sees our understanding of logic as shaped by the

same requirements as Freud's understanding of psychology. He describes our perception of logic through these requirements in *PI* §97 as follows:

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. ...   [*PI*, §97]

The part of this of interest to us here begins: "But this order..."; and in it Wittgenstein talks about the felt need for logic, the system of truth-relevant relations in language and in the world, to be utterly simple, to run through *all* experience and to be unaffected by *any* empirical cloudiness or uncertainty. As I have suggested, and as we shall see, Wittgenstein is thinking of us as deluded in our perception of logic and this delusion is going to turn out to be driven by the kinds of influence on our understanding of logic as are influencing Freud in his understanding of psychology.

The quoted passage also suggests a further point of analogy with Freud's psychology which isn't so immediately obvious from what Wittgenstein says about Freud. This is that the theoretical explanation that Freud is aiming for is one that conforms to an *ideal* blueprint. All three of the misleading influences on Freud that we have just looked at have the mark of a theory constructed according to such a blueprint: unity, simplicity and all-inclusiveness of theory all appear to be at work on Freud's thesis that human behaviour is driven by sexual motives; and the two comments on dream interpretation add coherence and determinateness of object to this list. And, as in the case of logic as Wittgenstein describes it, there is something absolute about these characteristics of the desired theory; they are theoretical *ideals* to which Freud wants the phenomena to conform. As we shall see later, in the case of logic, the desire for the phenomena of logic themselves to conform to theoretical ideals derives from the need for a masterable true theory of logic, and, by analogy, what Freud is after is a masterable true theory of psychology. But this takes the analogy further than the text of *LC* suggests and so I will say no more about it here.

There is one more point of criticism of Freud along these lines in the conversations that I would like to look at though. This is Wittgenstein's criticism of Freud for claiming that *all* dreams are wish-fulfilments [*LC*, p.47]. I have already touched on one reason above

[§3.2.1.2.2] for Wittgenstein objecting to this claim: namely, that most dreams have to be considered to be camouflaged wish-fulfilments, so heavily camouflaged as to make it impossible for them to fulfil the wish. His other reason for objecting is that thinking of all dreams as wish-fulfilments simply does not do justice to the phenomena themselves—for instance, with some dreams it is much more natural to take them as springing "from fear rather than longing" [*LC*, p.47], as he puts it. What looking at the phenomena themselves suggests is that there are many different kinds of dreams and that there is no single line of explanation for all of them.

Wittgenstein then locates Freud's motivation for thinking that all dreams are wish-fulfilments in a desire to find the *essence* of dreaming, and sees him, in this, as influenced by the 19th century idea of dynamics:

Freud was influenced by the 19th century idea of dynamics—an idea that has influenced the whole treatment of psychology. He wanted to find some one explanation which would show what dreaming is. He wanted to find the *essence* of dreaming. And he would have rejected any suggestion that he might be partly right but not altogether so. If he was partly wrong, that would have meant for him that he was wrong altogether—and that he had not really found the essence of dreaming. [*Ibid.*, p.48].

Freud's idea that dreams are all wish-fulfilments is not a hypothesis that he has, that he is willing to give up if things turn out differently. It is rather an *a priori* commitment that he brings to his investigation from the outset. And I think Wittgenstein sees a parallel problem in Newtonian mechanics. The disease infecting both is the *a priori* insistence on there being essences (of force or dreams or whatever). That there are such essences is something that it may be possible for us to discover through philosophical investigation—though, in fact, in the case of dreams at least this seems not to turn out to be so—, but not something that we can presuppose prior to such investigation.

Now, again with this criticism Wittgenstein is picking up on Freud under the influence of a theoretical ideal, that there is a single line of interpretation for all dreams. This time, however, in criticizing the *a priori* insistence on there being an essence of dreams, Wittgenstein gets, I think, one step closer to the source of the problem. The problem stems from this *a priori* presupposition of there being an essence to the object of investigation; and it is understanding where this presupposition comes from in the first place that provides the key to solving the problem. And again this renders Freud's investigation

of psychological phenomena as analogous to the picture of logical investigation that Wittgenstein paints in *PI*:

> ...logical investigation explores the nature of all things. It seeks to see to the bottom of things and is not meant to concern itself whether what actually happens is this or that.——It takes its rise, not from an interest in the facts of nature, nor from a need to grasp causal connexions: but from an urge to understand the basis, or essence, of everything empirical. ...   [*PI*, §89]

The fact that it takes its rise from an urge to understand the essence of everything empirical means that logic too presupposes *a priori* that there *is* an essence to empirical phenomena. And for logic too, understanding the origin of this *a priori* presupposition is going to provide the key to the problems that it leads to. But once again that is future business because it takes us beyond the analogy between Freud's theoretically driven mistaken interpretations as far as they are worked out in *LC* and the philosophical logician's theoretically driven mistaken interpretations that are our main concern. And with that I will leave Wittgenstein's writings as they explicitly concern Freud and move on, first to say something about the implicit influence of Freud in §§89ff. and then to take a look at Freud's own understanding of the process of sublimation by way of introducing Wittgenstein's development and application of the notion to the commonly presumed nature of logic.

§3.2.2 *Freud in §§89ff.*

So what is there to see of the influence of Freud in §§89ff. of *PI*? Well, Wittgenstein opens §89 asking himself the question: "In what sense is logic something sublime?", and answers it subsequently by saying: in something very close to the Freudian sense of "sublime". And that, I think, *is* the influence of Freud in §§89ff.. So, what I would like to do in this subsection is to take a preliminary look at §§89ff., to show how this idea about logic is manifest in them.

In fact, I think, the core sections from this point of view are §§94-97; these sections contain the kernel of Wittgenstein's account of the subliming of logic. So I will focus on these sections and try to bring out the main points of influence of Freud. Let me begin with §94:

> 94. 'A proposition is a queer thing!' Here we have in germ the subliming of our whole account of logic. The tendency to assume a pure intermediary between the propositional *signs* and the facts. Or even to try to purify,

to sublime, the signs themselves.—For our forms of expression prevent us in all sorts of ways from seeing that nothing out of the ordinary is involved, by sending us in pursuit of chimeras.

Here Wittgenstein begins his account proper of the subliming of logic. In the German here he uses the expressions "*die Sublimerung*"—translated "the subliming"—and "*sublimieren*"—"to sublime"; and these provide the first clue that Freud is at the back of his mind, because "*die Sublimerung*" and "*sublimieren*" are precisely the German expressions used by Freud—and typically translated into English as "the sublimation" and "to sublimate"—to give us his concept of sublimation. What we also get in this section is the claim that the whole process of subliming of logic begins with a worry about the nature of a proposition—"'A proposition is a queer thing!' Here we have in germ the subliming of our whole account of logic"—and then Wittgenstein finishes the section with the idea that there really is nothing to worry about—"nothing out of the ordinary is involved".

§95 moves on to how the process progresses from the thought that "[a] proposition is a queer thing!". We are anxious about the viability of language as a vehicle for truth, the thesis goes, and we react defensively by coming to think of language (and propositions, and thought) as something unique: if language (considered as the bearer of truth) is something unique, then there cannot be anything wrong with it. Hence the thought that

"Thought must be something unique"   [*PI*, §95]

fends off the anxiety that we feel about language. And, as I understand it, §95 continues with the way in which we give substance to the uniqueness of thought and language:

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*.   [*Ibid.*]

This explains the way in which thought, and language are unique for us. And it is the core thesis to the whole misunderstanding of logic that we subsequently develop.

And the evidence that §95 provides for Wittgenstein as thinking of logic as the product of a process of sublimation *à la* Freud stems from the form that this subsequent process of development of the whole misunderstanding takes. In §96, Wittgenstein goes on to say:

Other illusions come from various quarters to attach themselves to the special one spoken of here [*PI*, §96].

And this suggests the form of the process, which turns out, rather surprisingly, to be one that it shares with the construction of what psychologists call a delusional system.[42]

Now, I will look at the analogy between the subliming of logic and the construction of a paranoid delusional system below. Suffice it to say for now that I take Wittgenstein to be implying that the system of logic has been generated by this psychological defence reaction that is analogous to the process by which a person in the grip of extreme anxiety gathers together an often quite *ad hoc* system of secondary delusions around a primary delusion. Hence: "Other illusions come from various quarters to attach themselves to..."— disparate secondary delusions are gathered together around—"...the special one spoken of here"—the primary delusion. And this is where §95 derives its significance from, because §95—"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*"—describes the analogue of the primary delusion in the process of sublimation of logic.

In fact, on its own this particular step in Wittgenstein's account of the subliming of logic is not particularly reminiscent of Freud on sublimation; but it is, when considered in conjunction with §97. In fact §96 links §94 and §95 to §97. The second paragraph of §97 is the important bit in this regard:

We are under the illusion that what is peculiar, profound, essential, in our investigation, resides in its trying to grasp the incomparable essence of language. That is, the order existing between the concepts of proposition, word, proof, truth, experience, and so on. This order is a *super*-order between—so to speak—*super*-concepts. Whereas, of course, if the words "language", "experience", "world", have a use, it must be as humble a one as that of the words "table", "lamp", "door".

Here the expressions "*super*-order" and "*super*-concepts" are translations of the German "*Über*-Ordnung" and "*Über*-Begriffen". And it seems to me that both of these constructions of Wittgenstein's are meant by him to draw an analogy with Freud's notion of the *Über-Ich*, the *superego*, or as it should be known the super-I.

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42 The German word "*Täuschung*", which is translated in §96 and elsewhere as "illusion", I think would add to the naturalness of making this comparison. "*Täuschung*" has listed as its primary sense in the German-English dictionary "deception"; and, as well as being the word for "illusion" is also the word for "delusion".

And the link made by §96 from §94 to §97 is that there is at least one area of Freud's work where his understanding of the process of sublimation is closely analogous to the process of construction of a delusional system by a person overwhelmed by extreme and intractable anxiety and this is in his understanding of the formation of the super-I as a way out of the extreme anxiety generated in a child by the Oedipus complex. This is a special case of the process of sublimation for Freud, and one that I will now go on to look at along with Freud's understanding of sublimation in general in the next section.

§ 3.2.3 Freudian Sublimation

§3.2.3.1 The Process of Sublimation in General

According to Freud's editors: "it seems possible that it [*sc. Sublimation*] formed the subject of one of the lost metapsychological papers" [*CWF*, vol.14, p.126, footnote 4]. This may well be so, though I have my doubts, but otherwise comments on the subject are scattered throughout his work. The most extended treatment is in *The Ego and the Id*, where it comes into his account of the formation of the super-I as a way out of the Oedipus Complex situation. I will look at that account in the next subsection, §3.2.3.2; but apart from that there are numerous bulletins on sublimation released intermittently as Freud's ideas in general develop; it is the content of these remarks on sublimation that I would like to look at first. They provide, it seems to me, an almost complete outline of the process of sublimation as Freud was thinking of it, and I will begin with a brief précis of this outline. After this, there is one key characteristic of the process that Freud admits to not having worked out that is of peculiar interest to us, and I would like to suggest a way in which this characteristic might be accounted for. Finally, I would like to relate what I have been saying back to the Wittgenstein texts and the Wittgenstein story.

Freud's idea of sublimation is that societally unacceptable tendencies that we all have—most often, in Freud's estimation, of a sexual or aggressive nature—are played out in our lives together, in disguised ways that, because of the disguise, render their expression acceptable. Freud thinks that the aim of the sublimated tendency, or "drive" (*trieb*) as he calls it, is distinct from the aim of the original drive, though it is related. And it is this

relatedness that he sees as allowing for a degree of satisfaction of the original drive through satisfaction of the sublimated one; it allows us to transfer our real need onto the sublimated one. And the reason for Freud using the term "sublimation" for all this is that the sublimated tendency is arrived at by a process of purification and transformation of the original into a different one that has a higher social/cultural value—like psychological alchemy, purifying and transforming base metals into the sublimate gold. Crude examples of the kind to be found in the introductory literature on Freud are: the participation in competitive games as a way of sublimating aggressive tendencies and dancing as a way of sublimating sexual ones.

In *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930) [*CWF*, vol.21, pp.57-147], Freud writes the following:

Another technique for fending off suffering is the employment of the displacements of libido which our mental apparatus permits of and through which its function gains so much in flexibility. The task here is that of shifting the instinctual aims in such a way that they cannot come up against frustration from the external world. In this, sublimation of the instincts lends its assistance. One gains the most if one can sufficiently heighten the yield of pleasure from the sources of psychical and intellectual work. When that is so, fate can do little against one. A satisfaction of this kind, such as an artist's joy in creating, in giving his phantasies body, or a scientist's in solving problems or discovering truths, has a special quality which we shall certainly one day be able to characterize in metapsychological terms. At present we can only say figuratively that such satisfactions seem 'finer and higher'. ...   [*CWF*, vol.21, pp.79-80]

And in this passage, though he is concerned centrally with sublimations issuing in "psychical and intellectual work", I take Freud to be pointing out a gap at the centre of his understanding of sublimation in general, namely: that sublimations have "a special quality which we shall certainly one day be able to characterize in metapsychological terms", though "[a]t present we can only say figuratively that such satisfactions seem 'finer and higher'". And what, I take it from this, Freud hasn't worked out is the psychological significance of the fact that the activities that are the products of the process of sublimation have this quality of seeming "'finer and higher'". He says that he lacks a characterization of the quality in metapsychological terms, and what he means by this is that he doesn't yet see *how* this quality is the product of a psychological process. This is a gap in his account for which I would like to suggest a way that it might be filled in.

Melanie Klein, it seems to me, comes near to doing this when she says:

The attempts to save the loved object, to repair and restore it, attempts which in the state of depression are coupled with despair, since the ego doubts its capacity to achieve this restoration, are determining factors for all sublimations and the whole of ego-development. In this connection I shall only mention the specific importance for sublimation of the bits to which the loved object has been reduced and the effort to put them together. It is a 'perfect' object which is in pieces; thus the effort to undo the state of disintegration to which it has been reduced presupposes the necessity to make it beautiful and 'perfect'. The idea of perfection is, moreover, so compelling because it disproves the idea of disintegration. [*Contributions to Psychoanalysis 1921-1945*, p.290]

She is talking here about the baby's very early experiences within its relationship with its mother. The mother, or more precisely the mother-breast, is the "loved object" referred to in the opening sentence. And Klein's thesis is that powerful, consuming, destructive impulses towards the mother-breast are generated within the baby through extreme frustration at the breast and that these destructive impulses lead the baby to tear its experience of the breast to bits, to experience the mother-breast as destroyed, in bits. But doing this, smashing the source of love in the world into pieces, leaves the baby alone in an intolerable situation, yearning for a restoration of that loved object. It is this situation that leads the baby to think of the mother-breast as "perfect". By thinking of it in this way, the baby at once both restores the disintegrated mother-breast *and* renders it impossible for the disintegration to happen again—a perfect object is by definition unified, not fragmentary.

We needn't buy into the whole of Klein's story here, just this idea of idealizing an object in order to defend it from the possibility of disintegration. Something like this process is, I think, happening in sublimation. In the case of sublimation, though, the worry driving the process of idealization isn't typically so much the fear of disintegration of the sublimated activity as the recognition of it as an activity other than the one it is taken to be. Let me explain this.

As I understand it, Freud is thinking of sublimation as closely related to *transference*. Transference is the process whereby, from an emotional point of view, a person treats one object as another—so, for example, one takes out one's frustration at one's boss at work on a member of one's family when one gets home. And sublimation is a kind of transference, where one takes one socially acceptable activity to be another socially *un*acceptable one, which is what one really wants to do. And both transference and sublimation are related to *identification*: both crucially involve taking one object to *be* another; in the case of sublimation, one takes the sublimate activity to be the sublimated

one. And it is the fact that one can think of the acceptable *as* the unacceptable that allows one to achieve satisfaction of the unacceptable through the acceptable—so, for example, the artist can achieve expression of his dark personal fantasies through his painting. But, of course, taking one thing to be another, different, thing in this way involves an element of self-deception—the two things aren't *really* the same, so to think that they are involves obscuring the fact that they aren't. And this is where the process of idealization of the substitute activity comes into the story of sublimation, and where, as I understand it, Freud had got up to in working sublimation out. What Freud didn't see clearly through to was the fact that it is through idealization that we obscure the distinction between the substitute activity and the real thing. The activity masquerading as the one that we really want to participate in comes to be conceived as ideal, as perfect, in order to prevent its being looked at critically—what is perfect is beyond criticism—and being exposed for what it is.

Now, it is part of this story as I have been telling it that the substitute activity is hijacked and turned away from its original purpose to serve towards the hidden iniquitous end. And this means that one corollary of the account is likely to be that the original aberrant desire is influential on the form that the idealization of the substitute takes—the substitute is to some extent *idealized as* the original; and perhaps this helps to explain why art does not concern itself with producing precise representations of its objects, or why the fun drops out of competitive sport at higher levels of performance. And it also means that one factor influencing the degree to which the actual practice of sublimate activities approximates to the ideal is the extent to which there is pressure to practice those activities in pursuit of their original aims. The stronger the impetus to pursue the original aim, the greater the threat of exposure of the distinction between the sublimate activity and the activity that we are taking it to be, so the greater the idealization required to obscure the distinction.

And there are going to be a number of other reasons for the variation in extent to which the ideal is present in sublimate activities. For one, the proposed candidates for sublimate activities are invariably going to have a (far) more complex role in human life than as simple sublimations of animalistic passions; if we consider competitive team sports,

for instance, along with an important element of competitiveness between individuals participants are going to be attracted also to the opportunity to work as a member of a team towards a shared objective, to the camaraderie, to the work, or to the chance simply to chase about in the open air and so on, and a good deal of what is involved has nothing to do with the sublimation of aggression. And another reason is going to be that the extent to which the ideal is manifest in the sublimate activity will depend on the pressure that is brought to bear on that substitute activity to satisfy the sublimated need. The greater the pressure for the substitute to satisfy the original intolerable requirement, the greater the pressure for the substitute to *be* the original, the greater the need for idealization to obscure the distinction between substitute and original.

Anyway, *all that* is the account of the psychological generation of the ideal in sublimation that I am suggesting might fill the gap in Freud's account. And if I am right, and it does fill that gap, then it does so in such a way as to produce a fuller picture that is very much of a piece with Wittgenstein's own account of logic as sublime in *PI* as I understand it.

In Wittgenstein's story, the sublimated activity is the vindication of language as a vehicle for truth and meaning and the sublimate activity is the understanding of language as such a vehicle. The idea is that we have made our understanding of truth and meaning in language into a guarantee that there *is* truth and meaning in language. And the sublimation of our understanding of truth and meaning was a by-product of this identification, and was driven, in line with what I have just been saying, by both the need for it to provide us with a vindication of language and the need for it to provide a genuine understanding. Both of these requirements put a strain on the identification, pulling in opposite directions. And the tension thus created was concealed behind the front of the ideal.

At this point, Wittgenstein's account of the sublimation of logic extends beyond what would be necessary to explain the kinds of examples of sublimation typically addressed by Freud. In other words, logic, on Wittgenstein's account of it, is involved in a special case of sublimation. Let me explain.

In the process of the sublimation of logic as understood by Wittgenstein, logic, the discipline, was the executive of the need to understand the workings of language as a vehicle for truth. And as logic pressed and pressed for an understanding of the way that language works adequate to accommodate the complex variety of linguistic phenomena involved in the expression and conduction of truth, the recalcitrant need for that understanding to underwrite language as a vehicle for truth dug its heals in; and dug its heels in so hard, in fact, that the account actually came completely adrift of the phenomena that it was intended to address. The accompanying process of idealization had become so extreme as to *realize* logic as the ideal. And in that way logic finally lost all touch with the way language actually is. This was the state that Wittgenstein found logic in in his later writings after it had sheared off from ordinary language in the hands of Frege and Russell, and after Wittgenstein himself in *TLP* had attempted to weld it back on. It is also the state that he is concerned with in §107 of *PI*:

> The more narrowly we examine actual language, the sharper 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.) The conflict becomes intolerable; the requirement is now in danger of becoming empty.—We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need *friction*. Back to the rough ground!
>
> [*PI*, §107]

Here I take him to be concerned with precisely the process that I have just been outlining: "The more narrowly we examine actual language, ..."—as we pursue a closer and closer understanding of the way language actually is—"...the sharper becomes the conflict between it and our requirement. ..."—the more difficult it becomes to reconcile the real thing with our idealized naïve model—"...(For the crystalline purity of logic was, of course, not a *result of investigation*: it was a requirement.)..."—for the simple geometry of structure that we take language considered as a vehicle for truth to have is not something that we discovered through examination of language, but a form that we thought into it— "...The conflict becomes intolerable; ..."—it becomes inviable to maintain that the way language is is the way we understand it to be—"...the requirement is now in danger of becoming empty. ..."—and it looks as though we are no longer going to be able to understand language in the way that we want to—"...—We have got on to slippery ice

where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. …"—the understanding of language that we have arrived at floats adrift of the phenomena that it is meant to explain; this means that we have in a way achieved precisely what we wanted (that is: an account of language that is absolutely secure), though in doing so we have abandoned the possibility of any genuine understanding—"…We want to walk: so we need *friction*. …"—we want a genuine understanding of the way that language works, so we need our account to engage the phenomena—"…Back to the rough ground!"—so we need to get back to a situation where our account *does* engage the phenomena. (In this way, I think, §107 captures in a nutshell the whole theme of the present chapter: both Wittgenstein's diagnosis of, and proposed response to, logic as sublime.)

That is the extension of the process of sublimation that makes logic a special case: the idea that under the increasing pressure of logical investigation into language our understanding of logic in the end disengages and floats free of the actual linguistic phenomena. In the remainder of this subsection I would like to try to explain this metaphor.

To do this, I first need to go back to the process of idealization at work in the sublimation of logic, and to a point that I didn't get into above, which is: the *emergence*, in our perception of things, of our understanding of language as ideal as the process of sublimation proceeds. To begin with, I expect there to have been a fair amount of slack, perhaps a great deal of slack, in which we could successfully maintain to ourselves that our understanding of language did vindicate language without needing to revert to idealization. However, at some ill-defined point or other, the tension between the conflicting demands on logic to be pursued for its own sake—to understand the workings of language—and to provide a vindication of the workings of language, that tension will have become so strong as to initiate in us thoughts of logic as we understand it as ideal. Initially, when the tension was not so great, we will have only been slightly committed to the sublime being ideal and the notion will have had but little influence on the form of our account of language. But as the demand for a genuine understanding of all the phenomena of logic—propositions, names, proofs, truth, meaning, language, experience, and so on—in all their rich diversity

increased, the pressure on the form of our account (which was, in fact, inadequate to the task) to accommodate this rich diversity will have in tandem increased and the idealization of this form of account will have become more strongly apparent by way of defending it against the possibility of attack: whatever is manifestly ideal is unimpeachable. So, what we have ended up with is an account of the logic of language that professes (falsely) to accommodate the relevant phenomena and that we have been overawed into stopping our questioning of by its ideal appearance. And the point about this that I want to raise here is that Wittgenstein is thinking of us as having pressed our form of account of logic *to the extreme*, as having critically pursued it to such an extent—with Frege and Russell, and Wittgenstein himself in *TLP*—that our approach to understanding logic has finally become, in our eyes, fully justified. In other words, we have come to idealize our understanding of logic to such an extent and, as a result, are so in awe of it that *all* our questioning of its legitimacy has ceased.

In this way we have arrived at an understanding of logic that we take to be one that can be fully worked out; we are sure that it can account for all the relevant phenomena, the truth-relevant phenomena of language. But, Wittgenstein thinks, this "understanding" that we have arrived at doesn't, in fact, account for *any* of the relevant phenomena. And this is what I take him to be saying in §96, when he says:

...These concepts: proposition, language, thought, world, stand in line one behind the other, each equivalent to each. (*But what are these words to be used for now? The language-game in which they are to be applied is missing.*) [*PI*, §96, emphasis mine].

His point here, I take it, is that the sublimation of logic involves taking the use of the words "proposition", "language", "thought", "world" *etc.*, so far away from the role that they ordinarily and effectively play in our linguistic interactions as to totally lose any connection with that effective use—"The language-game in which they are to be applied is missing". And one can substantiate this point simply, I think, in the following way: our understanding is an understanding of ideal phenomena, and none of the actual phenomena of language *is* ideal, so our understanding is not an understanding of any actual phenomena.

Our understanding of logic as ideal pushes the way to use language as a vehicle for truth beyond the reach of our faculty for criticizing ways of using language. Such a way of

using language must be right because it cannot be faulted. So, for instance, we cannot criticize our prescriptions for use of language as a truth-bearer on the grounds of their leading to vague or imprecise uses of language, because logic prescribes absolutely precise uses of language; neither can we object on grounds of the possibility of meaninglessness, because all logically sanctioned uses are absolutely guaranteed meaning*ful*; and so on.

And all that, I think, gives a complete account of the idea of logic as disengaged and floating free of the linguistic phenomena—"a logic for a vacuum", as Wittgenstein puts it in *PI* §81. And with it, I would like to leave matters arising from Freud on sublimation in general and turn to look at the special case of the account that he gives of the formation of the super-I (or "I ideal", as he sometimes refers to it) by the young child as a release from the overwhelming pressure of anxiety that the child comes to feel in the Oedipal situation.

§3.2.3.2 *The formation of the Super-I*

Freud's account of the formation of the super-I sheds light, I think, on what Wittgenstein is thinking when he refers to "the order existing between the concepts of proposition, word, proof, truth, experience, and so on" [*PI*, §97] as "a *super*-order between—so to speak— *super*-concepts" [*Ibid.*]. And my aim in this subsection is to try to understand the analogy that Wittgenstein is drawing on here.

The key text is *The Ego and the Id* [*CWF*, vol.19, pp.1-67]. And the story that it contains concerns the dynamics of the early formative experiences of a little boy dominated as they are by his relations to his mother and father; it is then adapted for the case of little girls. I am just going to be concerned with the original, basic account of the little boy, ignoring the case of a little girl and ignoring also the complications that Freud adds to the picture to cope with father-apt feelings towards the mother and mother-apt feelings towards the father.

As with the case of sublimation in general, Freud's account of the special case of the formation of the super-I is, as I understand it, lacking a clear understanding of the role of idealization in the process. So what I would like to do is to work through Freud's account as contained in *The Ego and the Id* adapting it as I go along for what I take to be the role of

idealization in the process. And afterwards I will relate the adapted account back to Wittgenstein on the sublimation of logic.

Freud begins the basic story of the formation of the I ideal in the following way:

> In its simplified form the case of a male child may be described as follows. At a very early age the little boy develops an object-cathexis for his mother, which originally related to the mother's breast ... ; the boy deals with his father by identifying himself with him. For a time these two relationships proceed side by side, until the boy's sexual wishes in regard to his mother become more intense and his father is perceived as an obstacle to them; from this the Oedipus complex originates. His identification with his father then takes on a hostile colouring and changes into a wish to get rid of his father in order to take his place with his mother. Henceforward his relation to his father is ambivalent; it seems as if the ambivalence inherent in the identification from the beginning had become manifest. An ambivalent attitude to his father and an object-relation of a solely affectionate kind to his mother make up the content of the simple positive Oedipus complex in a boy.
>
> Along with the demolition of the Oedipus complex, the boy's object-cathexis of his mother must be given up. Its place may be filled by one of two things: either an identification with his mother or an intensification of his identification with his father. We are accustomed to regard the latter outcome as the more normal...
> [*CWF*, pp.31-32]

So the story begins with the infant boy in the throes of an intense, jealous love for his mother, in the shadow of rivalry for her affections from the (in the boy's eyes) supremely powerful father. And this is a situation of both extreme frustration and extreme anxiety for the boy—frustration because he is unable to satisfy his Oedipal desires and rid himself of his father to get the mother all to himself; and anxiety because there is no way that he could win in a confrontation with the father and, indeed, he would lose everything. His way out is to identify himself with his father; if he can in some way *be* his father, then he can, in the same move, free himself of the rivalry *and* have his mother to himself. This identification with the father is the origin of the I ideal. But before I get on to that specifically, I would like to just emphasize a couple of things that Freud says in the passage quoted. The first is his observation that there is ambivalence inherent in the boy's identification with his father. This is ambivalence, I take it, over wanting to be the father. On the one hand, for the reasons just given, the child wants to be the father, but on the other he wants it to be him *not* the father who ends up with the mother. This tension, as we shall see, is what drives the process of idealization behind the formation of the super-I. And the second point that I would like to emphasize from the passage quoted is that in the end, the boy, through identifying with his father, does *not* manage to achieve possession of his mother and so resolution of the problem of the complex also requires in some way or other an appeasement of the boy's ardent feelings towards the mother. And Freud's suggestion is that the more

normal way out involves intensification of the identification with the father. In other words, the boy comes to believe that it is *entirely* through being the father that he is going to achieve his designs on the mother and so he invests all the energy of his desire for the mother into his attempts to make himself into the father. And then, of course, those attempts to make himself into his father run right up against, and become gridlocked with, reality.

Now, I don't think that this latter point of Freud's is quite right. And this is because I don't think that it is *just* through identification with the father that the boy manages to appease his feelings towards his mother; he also, I think, manages to make himself in his own eyes superior to his father. And he manages this through idealizing himself as his father.

Part of the story consonant with what Freud says is the following: reality tells the boy that he is not his father; but he wants to insist in the face of this that he *is* his father and so he opts for a process of idealization of himself as his father, analogous to the process that occurs in sublimation; by building himself up in his own mind into a paragon of virtue on the model of his father (or, perhaps more likely, on the model of his father as seen through the loving eyes of his mother) he manages to defend his contention to be his father against the demands of reality: in a way familiar from the discussion of sublimation above, the idealization of himself as his father places the thesis that he *is* that idealization beyond possible refutation. But as I say, this is only part of the story. What it leaves out is the fact that by making himself into an idealization of his father, the boy is *eo ipso* making himself better than his father is—and indeed, better than his father could ever be. Thus, in forming the I ideal, the idea of himself as ideal on the model of the father, the boy manages in a single stroke to think of himself as himself, as his father and as better than his father. And in this way, he generates the possibility for himself—by living up to the standards of his I ideal, by *being* that I ideal—of being an ideal father to his mother and of thus gratifying his Oedipal desires.

I must stress here that the account just given is my own and not Freud's. It rests fairly easy with Freud's account as far as it is contained in the passage quoted above; but is very clearly at odds with Freud's continuation of his account:

> The super-ego is ... not simply a residue of the earliest object choices of the id; it also represents an energetic reaction-formation against those choices. Its relation to the ego is not exhausted by the precept: 'You *ought* to be like this (like your father).' It also comprises the prohibition: 'You *may not* be like this (like your father)—that is, you may not do all that he does; some things are his prerogative.' This double aspect of the ego ideal derives from the fact that the ego ideal had the task of repressing the Oedipus complex; indeed, it is to that revolutionary event that it owes its existence. Clearly the repression of the Oedipus complex was no easy task. The child's parents, and especially his father, were perceived as the obstacle to a realization of his Oedipal wishes; so his infantile ego fortified itself for the carrying out of the repression by erecting the same obstacle within itself. It borrowed strength to do this, so to speak, from the father, and this loan was an extraordinarily momentous act. The super-ego retains the character of the father, while the more powerful the Oedipus complex was and the more rapidly it succumbed to repression (under the influence of authority, religious teaching, schooling and reading), the stricter will be the domination of the super-ego over the ego later on—in the form of conscience or perhaps of an unconscious sense of guilt. I shall presently bring forward a suggestion about the source of its power to dominate in this way—the source, that is, of its compulsive character which manifests itself in the form of a categorical imperative.   [*CWF*, pp.34-35]

I don't want to dwell on the details of my disagreement with Freud in this passage though. Suffice it to point out that he is thinking of the reaction to the Oedipus complex as a process of repression, where I am thinking of identification and sublimation. And I think that he is wrong on the grounds of not understanding the significance of the idealization inherent in the I ideal in accounting for its formation. But I will leave it at that.

The passage just quoted ends, though, with a reference to a future discussion of the source of the compulsive power of the super-I. And such a discussion is, I think, relevant to my own account. The editors cite "p.48" as containing the discussion referred to, but I am more inclined to think that it is the following passage:

> The ego ideal is ... the heir of the Oedipus complex, and thus it is also the expression of the most powerful impulses and most important libidinal vicissitudes of the id. By setting up this ego ideal, the ego has mastered the Oedipus complex and at the same time placed itself in subjection to the id. Whereas the ego is essentially the representative of the external world, of reality, the super-ego stands in contrast to it as the representative of the internal world, of the id. Conflicts between the ego and the ideal will, as we are now prepared to find, ultimately reflect the contrast between what is real and what is psychical, between the external world and the internal world.   [*CWF*, p.36]

At least, this passage suggests a very likely-looking candidate for the source of the power of the super-I to dominate the I, which is the subjection of the I to the it in its act of formation of the super-I. Anyway, this is the idea that I would like to draw on for my account above. And how it fits in there is in how the boy is driven to live up to the standards of his super-I—an enterprise in which he is bound to be at most only partially successful—with the latent

fervour of his Oedipal desires. It is the pressure of those desires that forces him into being his I ideal; and any resistance to, or falling short of, this state re-exposes him to a degree of the original anxiety associated with the incapacity to realize the Oedipal desires in their original form.

My reason for raising this latter point is that it is a point of the analogy with Wittgenstein's understanding of the sublimation of logic; and this analogy is what I want to get on to now. Let me begin with the point just raised. In Wittgenstein's story, the analogous point is that any resistance to the mythology of sublime logic threatens to re-expose us to the anxiety that led to the sublimation of logic in the first place. This I take to be the point in *PI* §103 where he says:

The ideal, as we think of it, is unshakeable. You can never get outside it; you must always turn back. There is no outside; outside you cannot breathe. ...   [*PI*, §103]

The vehicle for the metaphor here is of someone suffering from agoraphobia, someone who cannot leave the house for fear of what lies outside. And in the same way Wittgenstein is thinking of how one cannot leave the way of thinking of logic as sublime through fear of what one might find. And this is analogous too to the situation with the super-I: one feels one must live up to the super-I or else jeopardize one's love and security in the world just as one feels one must use language up to the standards of the ideal, of logic, to safeguard truth and meaningfulness in what one says.

My major reason, though, for raising the issue of the formation of the super-I is to help with understanding Wittgenstein when he says in *PI* §97 that the order between the concepts of proposition, word, proof, truth, experience, and so on is a "*super*-order" between "*super*-concepts". In particular, it sheds light on one crucial aspect of this idea which isn't apparent through the comparison with sublimation in general. This is the idea of their being an *order* in language, reflected in an order between the concepts through which we understand it. As we shall see, in the end it turns out that the felt need for this kind of order in language has had a central role to play in driving the process of sublimation of logic; we very much want language to be *patent*, that is: to be a legitimate, organized whole. And this feeling is closely analogous to one that is attached to the I, to a person's

self, in the process of formation of the super-I. In the Oedipal situation, the infant boy's I is under a looming threat of extinction; the boy's all-consuming preoccupation, his *raison d'être*, is the realization of his Oedipal desires, but the road to realization of those desires is a road to self-destruction—the craved-for outcome is one that is utterly intolerable to both of the boy's parents. And, as we have seen, the formation of the super-I is the boy's way out of this *impasse*. Moreover, looking at the process from this angle reveals a further aspect to those mentioned above of the role played by the idealization of the I; this is that it fortifies the I against the potential threat of destruction from the parents, especially the father. And the mechanism here is analogous to the one addressed by Melanie Klein in the passage quoted above, in the previous subsection. The operative idea is that whatever is ideal, or perfect, is *necessarily* a coherent whole and, because of that, indestructible. So, by idealizing himself as the super-I, the little boy is defending his personal integrity against the threat of destruction by his father. That much accounts for the organizational unity implicit in the patency of the super-I; and a straightforwardly parallel story can be told about the organizational unity of logic: idealization of the workings of language defends them as a coherent, functional system against claims to the contrary.

As for that additional element of *legitimacy* to the notion of patency involved here— we want the I as we understand it (*i.e.* as the super-I) to be in some sense a "legitimate" organization; and we want logic too to be a "legitimate" functional whole—, in each case the idealization involved promotes the respective form of legitimacy[43], the straightforward

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43 The form of legitimacy involved is different in the two cases. In the case of the formation of the super-I, it is, I think, essentially a *moral* legitimacy that is sought: the little boy in the Oedipal situation is *wicked* because he wants to commit both murder and incest—and ultimately the sanction against his realization of his Oedipal desires is a sanction against murder and incest, that is what is at the back of his parents' blocking his Oedipal behaviour. (This, I think, explains the special prominence of moral concerns in the executive of the super-I: the axis of conflict between the little boy and his parents is drawn up by the parents along predominantly moral lines which means that the boy's idealization of himself as the father is heavily biased towards the morally significant traits as the important ones, thus he transforms himself from someone wicked into someone good.)

The situation is of a different kind in the case of the sublimation of logic. In that case, the sought for legitimacy of logic is not a moral legitimacy, but a philosophical one. In its official capacity, the role of logic is to provide us with a genuine understanding of the way our language is to be used as a vehicle for truth; and the legitimacy of logic that we are concerned with here just is this genuineness of the understanding of the correct use of language that logic provides. This genuineness or otherwise of our understanding of truth in language is the responsibility of philosophy, any problems with it are philosophical problems.

point being that if something is perceived to be perfect, then it is, *eo ipso*, perceived to be unquestionably valid or legitimate.

And that is where I will leave off consideration of the analogy between Wittgenstein's concern in *PI* §§89ff. and Freud's super-I. Indeed, I will make that an end to what I have to say about Wittgenstein and Freud generally. In the next section I will turn to Wittgenstein's account of the sublimation of logic itself.

§3.3 The Sublimity of Logic

§3.3.1 The Analogy Between Logic as the Sublime Logic and a Delusional System[44]

I will get on to the account proper of the sublimity of our Augustinian logic in the subsection following this one, but here I would like to draw one final analogy which is the one promised earlier, in §3.2.2, with the delusional system of a person who is severely mentally ill. This analogy, I think, helps to understand a number of aspects of the sublimation of logic: the form that the development of the sublimation has taken—in particular, the way in which it ramifies throughout all our dealings that have anything to do with considerations of language as a vehicle for truth—; the way in which it presents itself to us in our understanding and experience; and why it is so firmly embedded in our understanding.

When I first mentioned this analogy with delusional systems, I did so in reference to §95 of *PI* which, I claimed, was the section in which Wittgenstein "describes the analogue of the primary delusion in the process of sublimation of logic"[§3.2.2 above]. And the term "primary delusion" here is one that comes from the language of delusional systems. The primary delusion of a delusional system is the original falsehood around which the system is constructed, and the system is constructed in order to integrate the primary delusion into reality. And the kind of thing that the primary delusion of a delusional system might be in practice is, for example, the idea that there is, though no-one acknowledges the fact, a war

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44 I am indebted to an extent in my understanding of delusional systems in this section to Karl Jaspers in his book *General Psychopathology*, especially pp.93ff.

going on, or that the wife of the subject of the delusion is being unfaithful to him, or that the subject is really the rightful ruler of the country.

Those three examples just cited are, as far as I know, fairly representative of delusional systems as a whole in their diversity of content. And, in fact, on inspection of further examples this turns out to be more than a diversity; primary delusions as a group turn out to be a real hotchpotch of different ideas. And the reason why I mention this point is that it suggests a point of analogy with the sublimation of logic that may be important. This is that typically, in the particular case there appears to be little reason to suppose that the actual content, as opposed to the form, of the primary delusion has any great significance in the genesis of the delusional system; there seems usually to be little or nothing about that particular concrete primary delusion, as opposed to some other of the same form, to help explain why the subject believes it; that was just the one that happened to occur to the subject at the time, that he seized upon in his need. And the sublimation of logic may be analogous on this point: it may be that what I identified in the sublimation as the counterpart of the primary delusion is, as far as its content is concerned, there only accidentally. And, indeed, this appears to be Wittgenstein's own view when he says that the mythology is

...like a pair of glasses on our nose through which we see whatever we look at. It never occurs to us to take them off.   [*PI*, §103]

and so on. He appears to see nothing very significant from the point of view of directly understanding truth, in the story itself that we assume about it. (That doesn't mean, of course, that the story that we have ended up with doesn't have *anything* to recommend it above other possible candidates. For instance, I have already suggested that it may happen to produce a particularly useful model for the use of language as a vehicle for truth, for helping *indirectly* to understand truth; and then there is the possibility that it had a special potential to stand up as a convincing lie about the way language really is—perhaps because the story "...is appropriate, but only for...[a] narrowly circumscribed region, not for the whole of what...[we] were claiming to describe" [*PI*, §3], in other words that it is convincing because it does from the outset fit with *part* of our language.)

Anyway, the delusional system is constructed as a way of defending the primary delusion against the threat of reality. The subject begins, say, with the idea that he is the rightful ruler of the country but then problems soon arise: what about the Queen?—she is an impostor—; and what about the subject's parents, they are not royalty?—they are not his real parents—; and so on. In this kind of way a systematic justification of the primary delusion is thought out; and Wittgenstein is thinking of a parallel story for the sublimation of logic. "Other illusions [*Täuschung*] come from various quarters to attach themselves to the special one spoken of here" is the way that he explains the process [*PI*, §96].[45]

And in making that point in that way in §96, Wittgenstein also suggests another point of analogy with the construction of a delusional system, which is the idea that the construction of the system is in an important sense out of the subject's control—"Other illusions *come* from various quarters", he says—, the construction is something that *happens* to the subject as his thoughts and beliefs take on a life of their own. And this loss of control over thoughts and beliefs adds, it seems to me, to the case already suggested by the analogy between the formation of logic as sublime and that of the super-I, that Wittgenstein is thinking there are very strong feelings at work in the sublimation of logic,

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[45] I feel the need to say something at this point about the relation between the "primary delusion" of §95:

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*,

and the core thesis of the Augustinian picture of language given in §1:

Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands.

On my interpretation of *PI*, these two theses are related in something like the following way. §95, in the form of the passage quoted, gives voice to what Wittgenstein thinks is the idea that was, right at the beginning, seized upon in denial of the fear that there is no truth or meaning in language. (Another way of expressing this idea might, I think, be: meaning, the potential of a proposition for truth, is the potential of the proposition to reach out and actually touch some existent state of affairs in reality—I try to explain this in §5.3.2 below.) This is the idea, motivated by the original anxiety, that led to the formation of the whole Augustinian logical mythology. And that is where the thesis from §1 comes in; because the idea expressed in §1 is to then be the vehicle through which the primary delusion of §95 is to be squared with our natural understanding of meaning and truth that has evolved, over the aeons, hand in hand with our linguistic practices; our understanding of meaning and truth in language has been reconstituted in an unnatural form, producing the Augustinian mythology, to preserve the delusion of §95.

that in the sublimation our feelings get the better of us. And this is also very much in keeping with something that Wittgenstein says in the "Philosophy" chapter of the Big Typescript that didn't find its way in the end into *PI*:

> ...philosophy requires a resignation, but one of feeling and not of intellect. And maybe that is what makes it so difficult for many. It can be difficult not to use an expression, just as it is difficult to hold back tears, or an outburst of anger. [*PO*, p.161]

I am sure that the misuses of language associated with the sublimation of logic are precisely the kind of thing that Wittgenstein is thinking of here. And there are a number of further indications in the text that Wittgenstein is thinking there are strong feelings behind the sublimation of logic, for instance, when he says:

> The problems arising through a misinterpretation of our forms of language have the character of *depth*. They are deep disquietudes; their roots are as deep in us as the forms of our language and their significance is as great as the importance of our language. [*PI*, §111]

Again, I am sure that Wittgenstein would want this to apply to the problems arising through the misinterpretation of the forms of our language relevant to its functioning as a vehicle for truth that we get into with the sublimation of logic, these are precisely the kind of deep disquietudes that he is thinking of. And in §110, Wittgenstein actually refers to the counterpart in the sublimation of logic of the initiating impetus for the primary delusion in the formation of a delusional system: the idea that

> "Language (or thought) is something unique" [*PI*, §110],[46]

as a superstition.

So, on the basis of all this, I will take it to be the case that Wittgenstein is thinking there are strong feelings behind the sublimation of logic. And I will also take it to be the case that these strong feelings are feelings of fear or anxiety—this is also suggested by the analogy with the formation of the super-I and by the passages referred to above; and these

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[46] I am sure that:

"Language (or thought) is something unique",

which opens §110, is a reference back to:

"Thought must be something unique",

which opens §95, especially given that that opening of §110 clearly does not refer back to §109.

kinds of feelings are typically also behind the construction of delusional systems. In perhaps the commonest story behind a delusional system, the subject of the delusion is someone who is extremely anxious of his right to a place in society, in the world, and the delusional system is a form of defence of that right. In parallel to the idea of the sublimation of logic springing from the idea that thought must be something unique [*PI*, §95], the delusional system in this kind of case springs from the idea that *the subject* must be someone unique; this is the subject's way of asserting his right to a place in the world— he is unique, so must rightfully belong. And the primary delusion is then the concrete form of uniqueness that the subject comes up with—often, it seems, right off the top of his head. And the system of secondary delusions that are developed in consequence of this are part of an attempt to reconcile the primary delusion with reality; the subject reworks the world into one in which he has a legitimate place.

This idea of reworking the world to make room for the primary delusion as it applies in the case of the sublimation of logic explains the way in which the misunderstanding involved ramifies throughout language as it relates to truth and meaning: the delusional logic has had to rebut strikes from all corners of language on its precious delusional heart, elaborating its story to cope with the diverse and persistent demands of the reality of the use of language as a vehicle for truth. And it also explains the way in which the sublimation of logic presents itself in our understanding and experience: we understand the world and experience it as conforming to the picture of logic as sublime—indeed, as *having to* conform to the picture: "[a] picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably" [*PI*, §115]— the world takes on the aspect for us of logic as sublime. For someone in the grip of a delusional system the world *does*, in their very experience of it, conform to the system, and this is analogous to the situation with the sublimation of logic as Wittgenstein has it.

As I mentioned at the head of this subsection, the analogy with a delusional system also helps to shed light on the incorrigibility of logic as sublime. As Wittgenstein puts it:

The ideal, as we think of it, is unshakeable   [*PI*, §103];

and he even refers to the crystalline purity of logic as

...as it were the *hardest* thing there is...   [*PI*, §97],

by which I think he means to imply that our belief in the crystalline purity of logic is, in fact, the least corrigible belief that we have.

Perhaps I ought to have raised this issue in connection with the formation of the super-I, because clearly the belief in the super-I displays the same kind of incorrigibility as that that is at issue here. Moreover, the incorrigibility of belief in the super-I has associated with it the idea of the super-I being perfect and therefore necessary, which is an idea that is also going to be associated with the incorrigibility of logic as sublime. However, in all three cases, and most obviously in that of the delusional system, the incorrigibility of the delusion is ultimately driven by the fact that the delusion banishes from the world some deeply distressing state of affairs or other—in the case of logic, the distressing state of affairs that is covered up is the perceived lack of patency of language—, and this is the important point here, because it explains how the incorrigibility of the delusion is fuelled by the unbearable distress associated with giving up the delusion and having to face up to the dreaded state of affairs; the reluctance that we feel towards giving up the delusion is going to be proportional to the reluctance that we feel towards confronting that dreadful scenario.

And that is all that I want to say about the analogy between logic and a delusional system. Finally, I think, the time has come to turn to face Wittgenstein's account of the sublimation of logic—and, with it, the psychological origin of the demands of logic—full on.

§3.3.2 *Wittgenstein's Understanding of Logic as Something Sublime*

In fact, the first part of my account here is going to involve pretty much drawing together in an organized resumé the story that has evolved piecemeal through this chapter so far; then, however, there will be something more to say about the way in which Wittgenstein is thinking of our logic as a *vindication* of language as a vehicle for truth.

§3.3.2.1 Resumé

So let me begin with the story as it has emerged so far. Logic is something sublime, according to Wittgenstein, in that it is the product of a psychological process of sublimation. This is a process that is ultimately driven by extreme anxiety about the capability of our language to serve us as a vehicle for truth. (And I have suggested that this becomes manifest as anxiety about the patency of language considered as a vehicle for truth, though I want to leave discussion of the details of this part of the story until the next subsection.) The process begins with a response to this anxiety that Wittgenstein tries to capture with the idea that:

"Thought must be something unique"   [*PI*, §95]

Thinking of thought and language as unique offers us a way out of the anxiety that we feel about their viability; because if they are unique, then they must be worthy of the role assigned to them.

But thinking of thought and language as unique in this way sets up a kind of feedback loop which rapidly escalates the strength of feeling with which we hold thought and language to be unique into a panic. This is something that I haven't discussed up to now, so let me briefly relate it to the *PI* text and explain it.

In §94, Wittgenstein says that with the idea "[a] proposition is a queer thing!" we have in germ the subliming of our whole account of logic. And I take it that through this idea he is referring to the disquietude that we feel towards language considered as a vehicle for truth—propositions being the units of bearance of truth in language—that I have been suggesting he thinks lies behind the whole process of sublimation of logic. And, as I have just said, it is this disturbing thought that leads in the end to our thinking of language as something unique. So the idea of a proposition being a queer thing leads us to the idea of thought as something unique. But taking thought to be something unique is a distorting influence on our understanding of thought (and propositions) which in turn makes propositions appear *more* queer; but propositions appearing more queer makes us more convinced that thought must be something unique; and so on. (In this way, the idea of a proposition being a queer thing begins life as an initial anxiety about the viability of

propositions as bearers of truth, but is transformed into the confused perception of a mismatch between the way we take propositions to be and the way they really are.) Of course, this all happens with our having in mind *a way in which* thought is something unique; once we have a way in which thought is unique, there is then a sense in which the uniqueness can come more and more into focus as our story about its uniqueness becomes more and more worked out. And it is the fact of this story's becoming more and more worked out that, *in concreto*, makes the idea of a proposition being a queer thing more and more compelling. And that is the feedback loop which, on Wittgenstein's account as I understand it, figures in the form which the sublimation of logic takes.

One important step in the development of this feedback loop is the move to relate the idea of language as unique in the abstract to language itself in concrete. In other words, once we have resolved to think of thought and language as unique, we cast around for a way in which they *are* unique; and what we come up with is:

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.* ... [*PI*, §95]

This is the conception of meaning that relieves our anxiety about truth in language, that reassures us that language is all right really: language *does* work as a vehicle for truth, according to this conception, because truth in language is underwritten by reality: propositions in language are true, in virtue of both their meaning that such and such is the case in the world and such and such being the case. This is the conception of meaning that Wittgenstein thinks has become sublimated in our language. (And it is also, I think, the progenitor of the "philosophical concept of meaning" [*PI*, §2] that lies behind "Augustine's conception of language" [*PI*, §4].) And the working out of this conception of meaning is driven, through the feedback loop just described, by the escalation of disquietude over the nature of a proposition, itself a product of the *starkening* gulf between what propositions really are and what we come to see them to be as the conception of meaning is worked out.

That much of the story does not involve idealization (nor, as a consequence, full-blooded sublimation) at all. Where idealization of logic as we understand it enters the story is at some vaguely-defined point or other when we begin to worry about the capability of

logic as we understand it to be the real thing; our understanding of the workings of language *is* inadequate and at some point in our working out of that understanding—from the origins, and in the way, just described—that inadequacy threatens to dawn upon us. And our idealization of logic as we understand it is then a defensive reaction to this threat: it is a denial that our logic is inadequate to the reality. It works by guaranteeing the reality of logic as we understand it: whatever is ideal and perfect necessarily exists. And this means that our idealization of logic as we understand it is also a product of the starkening gulf between what language really is and what we come to see it to be as our conception of it is worked out. The increasingly evident mismatch between our understanding and reality just *is* the threat that faces us, of our understanding as inadequate.

On a number of occasions in this chapter up to now—*cf.* especially §3.2.3.1—I have suggested that the whole process of sublimation of logic as Wittgenstein understands it has been driven by a conflict between two distinct agendas being pursued through our attempts at understanding the way that language works. One of these agendas is legitimate: the pursuit of a genuine understanding of the workings of language. The other, however, is perverse: the pursuit of a vindication of language as working at all. And this conflict is evident in the story just told in that the idea of thought being something unique, that I indicated above to be an idea that Wittgenstein sees as employed in defence of truth in language, is an idea that appeals for a vindication of language in the way being talked about here. And the escalating ping-pong that is set up between the idea of thought being something unique and the idea of it being queer *just is* a vacillation between the two requirements on our understanding of thought to provide a vindication of thought and to provide a genuine understanding of it.

So the sublimation of logic begins as the piecemeal construction of a systematic defence of a primary idea—"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*": the idea of propositions in language reaching right out to actually make contact with states of affairs in the world might be another way of putting this—against the demands of reality, and then at some stage the object of the account thus constructed begins to be considered to

be ideal adding a new dimension to the defence of the account against reality. And the scope and depth of this defensive response are a sign that we have a very great deal invested, emotionally speaking, in that initial idea; indeed, they are a sign that the significance of that initial idea to us is "as great as the importance of our language" [*PI*, §111]. (But it isn't that there is anything peculiarly significant about that particular idea *per se*, its significance comes from the role that we, fairly arbitrarily, cast it in as our negation of what it is that worries us.)

Clearly, this account of the sublimation of logic paints a picture of it as an idea with a history, and a significant point in that history was reached in the work of Frege and Russell and the early work of Wittgenstein himself where, in variations on Frege's original theme, more or less fully-worked-out accounts of logic as ideal were finally realized. At that point our understanding of logic became in one way utterly impregnable—the ideal, unimpeachable, nature of logic had been, in our eyes, fully realized—, yet at the same time it became fully exposed as inapplicable to our language, which made it far more dramatically susceptible to the kind of sideways critique offered by Wittgenstein in *PI*.

Anyway, let that stand as my resumé of Wittgenstein's account of the sublimation of logic as I have interpreted it through this chapter up to now. As I suggested at the head of §3.3.2, I think that there is one important piece of the story that this interpretation up to now has failed to address; this is the nature of the supposed vindication of language as a vehicle for truth that the sublimation of logic provided us with; I would like to finish this chapter off by saying something about this.

§3.3.2.2 Our Logic as an Übersicht of Grammar

So far, I have referred to the worry at the bottom of the sublimation of logic both as a worry about the viability of language as a vehicle for truth and as a worry about the patency of language considered as such a vehicle. And both of these ways of expressing the worry give some indication of the kind of vindication of truth in language that we were looking for from logic. Both suggest a picture of the discovery and communication of truth as an

essential *function* of language; and so they suggest that the sought-after vindication is going to be a demonstration that language is capable of performing that function.

And earlier on, in connection with the motivation behind Freud's psychoanalytic theory of psychology, I had also suggested that the whole process leading to the sublimation of logic was driven by the felt need for a masterable true theory of logic. And I think that, in fact, this thought captures, in a nutshell, the form that the pseudo-vindication takes. If we could have a *theory* of truth in language that we could get to know inside and out and thus come to see that it was all in order, then we would know that there *was* truth in language. Let me try to explain this in some detail and relate it to the *PI* text.

The key bit of the *PI* text in this regard is, I think, §122 where Wittgenstein addresses the notions of an *Übersicht* and an *übersichtliche Darstellung* of the use of language and the light that together they shed on the nature of philosophy. And I would like to try to explain what he is thinking in this passage and then go on to show in what way the passage suggests we understand the process of pseudo-vindication of language that the generation of the delusional logic brings. §122 reads as follows:

A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not *command a clear view* [*übersehen*] of the use of our words.—Our grammar is lacking in this sort of perspicuity [*Übersichtlichkeit*]. A perspicuous representation [*übersichtliche Darstellung*] produces just that understanding which consists in 'seeing connexions'. Hence the importance of finding and inventing *intermediate cases*.

The concept of a perspicuous representation [*übersichtlichen Darstellung*] is of fundamental significance for us. It earmarks the form of account [*Darstellungsform*] we give, the way we look at things. (Is this a 'Weltanschauung'?)   [*PI*, §122]

This is a peculiarly awkward passage to understand because there are several important connections between the ideas as expressed in the German that cannot be fully satisfactorily captured in the English. I have represented these connections in the quotation by indicating what the German is at the relevant points. The main source of the problems is the fact that there is no direct translation into English of the German word "*übersehen*" and related words (including "*Übersicht*" and "*übersichtliche*"). Hargreaves and White, in translating *Philosophical Remarks*, talk about an *Übersicht* as a "bird's eye view" of grammar [*Philosophical Remarks*, §1], and it seems to me that that goes a good way towards capturing Wittgenstein's thinking here in *PI*: he is concerned about our having a sense of the whole picture of, or the whole pattern to, the use of our words from context to context. It is

the fact that our grammar doesn't allow for this kind of perspective on it that Wittgenstein is picking out, in the opening sentences of §122, as a main source of our failure to spot the kinds of misunderstandings, misuses of language, that lead to philosophical problems. And I think that, in fact, this idea of facilitating recognition of these kinds of misunderstandings is built in to the notion of an *Übersicht* in a way that strictly isn't apparent from thinking of it simply as a bird's eye view; let me explain. What I am thinking is that there is an idea of *governance* that is introduced into the compound word "*übersehen*" with the component word "*über*" and that is alluded to by Anscombe with her use of the word "command" in the opening sentence of her translation of §122—"A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not *command a clear view* of the use of our words".[47] And a fruitful way to try to appreciate this aspect of the idea of an *Übersicht* is, I think, to think of Wittgenstein as concerned about our having a *managerial* perspective on language; in other words, it is useful to compare the perspective on language that Wittgenstein is concerned with in §122 with the perspective that a manager is concerned with achieving for himself on the organization that he is manager of.[48] Those people in an organization whose role involves them directly in the functioning of the organization cannot, through their role alone, achieve much of an appreciation of the overall progress of the organization and, without such an understanding, also are poor judges of the effectiveness of their contribution to that overall progress. It is the job of the manager of the organization—the business, team, or whatever—to feed back to those individuals involved in the running of it precisely about this effectiveness of their contribution overall in such a way as to make it possible for all the individuals involved to mould their roles to maximize the overall

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47 *Langenscheidt's Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the English and German Languages* has "oversee", "survey" and "estimate" as possibilities for "*übersehen*"; and elsewhere "assess" is a suggestion.

48 When I mentioned this way of thinking about the notion of an *Übersicht* to Roger White, he pointed out the following passage to me from *Philosophical Grammar* which employs the same analogy:

> The philosopher easily gets into the position of a ham-fisted director, who, instead of doing his own work and merely supervising his employees to see they do their work well, takes over their jobs until one day he finds himself overburdened with other people's work while his employees watch and criticize him. He is particularly inclined to saddle himself with the work of the mathematician.   [*Philosophical Grammar*, p.369]

performance of the organization. And I think that it is an element in Wittgenstein's use of the words "*übersehen*" and so on in §122 that he is thinking about the possibility of a parallel role to the manager's for the use of our language, for our linguistic practice. He sees the importance of a bird's eye view of our linguistic practices, as I understand him, as deriving from the possibility of being able to manage those practices effectively. And he sees this managerial role to be the role of philosophers—presumably with full-blown philosophers as in charge of the important, pervasively influential, linguistic practices and members of other disciplines with their philosophy hats on in more minor supporting roles. In this way, I see the picture of language lying behind Wittgenstein's talk of an *Übersicht* of the use of words as one in which involvement in the detailed, concrete linguistic interactions of daily life doesn't in itself give users of the language enough of a sense of the grammar of our language, the overall pattern in the use of words, to ensure in the users the capability of managing language effectively—including dealing with the kinds of misuse of language that lead to philosophical problems.

Now, there is an immediate problem with this approach to understanding the significance of §122 in that Wittgenstein opens the section by seemingly denying the possibility of an *Übersicht* of the use of language—"Our grammar is lacking in *Übersichtlichkeit*", he says. However, he goes on immediately to talk about an *übersichtliche Darstellung*, an *Übersicht*-ious *representation* in such a way as to suggest that such a thing could stand in to do the job for us of commanding a clear view itself, that it could, on the current interpretation, somehow get us into the position to be able to manage language effectively.

How might this line of interpretation pan out further? Well, I think it helps to consider first why it is that Wittgenstein thinks that an *Übersicht* of grammar, of the principle of usage of language, is not possible. And I think that the simple answer to this is that the grammar of our language is just too vast and changeable for us ever to achieve an *Übersicht* on it. In *PI* §23, Wittgenstein offers the following description of language:

There are *countless* kinds [*sc.* of sentence]: countless different kinds of use of what we call "symbols", "words", "sentences". And this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types of

language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten. [*PI*, §23]

And this is a picture of language that I think rules out the possibility of our having a bird's eye view of the use of our words; the use of language is just too big and complicated and shifting for us to ever hope to attain that kind of overall understanding of it. And this way of ruling out an *Übersicht* of grammar suggests to me that what Wittgenstein goes on to mean by an *übersichtliche Darstellung* in §122 is a way of representing the use of language that provides us with a *partial Übersicht* of that use; he is raising the possibility of our setting about the construction of an *Übersicht* of language for ourselves, in the knowledge that we will never be able to fully realize that goal and a partial *Übersicht* is the best that we can hope for. The idea might be expressed in the following way: *God* would be capable of achieving an *Übersicht* of the whole of our linguistic practice as manifest in all the concrete linguistic interactions that speakers of the language are engaged in and hence He would be able to put Himself in the position to manage language perfectly; *we* are not God and so cannot hope to manage language perfectly, but we *can* hope to manage language *imperfectly* under the belief that we are capable of something that approximates, however crudely, to a God's eye view.

On this interpretation, what Wittgenstein means by an "*übersichtliche Darstellung*" is an effort of the speakers of the language at an *Übersicht* of the use of the language; and the reason for talking about an *übersichtliche* "*Darstellung*", an *Übersicht*-ious "representation", would be, I think, simply to emphasize the fact that to achieve the partial *Übersicht* we have to work at it, we have to represent the use of language to ourselves in such a way as to give us the *Übersicht*—philosophy proceeds by "looking into the workings of our language, and that in such a way as to make us recognize those workings: *in despite of* an urge to misunderstand them" [*PI*, §109], it is something that we have to work at.

What would such an *übersichtliche Darstellung* be, and how would it be achieved, in practice? Well, as I understand it, such a representation would be in large part constituted by the kind of precise description of the use of language that I discussed in §3.2.1.1 above in connection with Freud's influence on Wittgenstein's approach to philosophy, the kind of precise description of the uses of language leading to philosophical

problems that releases us from those problems; and describing language in that way would be an important route to achieving the required representation. But it wouldn't be the only route—indeed, I suspect that it wouldn't by itself be up to the job—; it would, if I understand what Wittgenstein is up to correctly, be joined in its objective by the technique of comparison of the use of words with games and calculi that have fixed rules which, as we saw, Wittgenstein referred to in *PI* §81, and which will be of central concern to us in the next chapter—the "games" and "calculi" that were referred to in §81, I shall claim, are the same thing as the "clear and simple language-games" referred to later in §130 that are "set up as *objects of comparison* which are meant to throw light on the facts of our language by way not only of similarities, but also of dissimilarities". As I understand it, Wittgenstein intends this technique of construction of and comparison of language with models for the use of words to work co-operatively with the technique of description towards the construction of our *Übersicht*. Such a constructive-comparative technique would facilitate the process of description by revealing aspects to the use of words that we would otherwise not see, and may even plug gaps in the *Übersicht* that we have difficulty finding the words to describe. But as I say, this is the business of the next chapter.

In §122, Wittgenstein in fact *offers* a characterization of what he takes an *Übersicht* of the use of words to be: he says it would be an understanding of the use of words that would consist in: "'seeing connexions'"; and then he adds that, because an *Übersicht* is how he says it is, to assist us in seeing these connections it is important to find and invent *intermediate cases*. And I would like to say how I think this account can be construed to be in keeping with what I have just been saying that I think that the concept of an *Übersicht* amounts to. The first thing to say is that I understand the "connexions" that Wittgenstein refers to to be simply similarities and differences between uses (functioning) of words in different contexts—the same word or words in different contexts of use or different words in the same or different contexts. These are the kinds of connections that Wittgenstein himself is constantly drawing our attention to in his writings. For instance—choosing two pages from *Philosophical Investigations* almost at random—we get:

While we sometimes call it "thinking" to accompany a sentence by a mental process, that accompaniment is not what we mean by a "thought".——Say a sentence and think it; say it with understanding.—And now do not say it, and just do what you accompanied it with when you said it with understanding! ... [*PI*, p.107]

where Wittgenstein is pointing out a connection between the functioning of the word "thinking" and that of the word "thought", and:

"For a second he felt violent pain."—Why does it sound queer to say: "For a second he felt deep grief"? Only because it so seldom happens? [*PI*, p.174]

where he employs a contrast between the function of the expressions "violent pain" and "deep grief" in similar contexts. And I think that understanding Wittgenstein in this way makes sense of the importance to philosophy of an *Übersicht* of these kinds of connections between the uses of words. Philosophy is interested in the kind of lore about the use of words that an overall appreciation of these kinds of connections in grammar promotes because such wisdom is the way to see how we end up in the confusion of philosophical problems, what the misunderstanding of the use of words, and consequent misuse of those words, causing specific problems are.

The suggested reading of "connexions" also suggests a complementary reading of "intermediate cases". These would be uses of expressions that bridged the gap between uses where the connection was difficult to see, revealing the connection in stages. And the way that I envisage this is, at bottom, in terms of family resemblances—of the sort first referred to, of course, in *PI* §67—between uses of expressions, of different uses of the same expression as members of a family of usage. Thinking along these lines, the problems of misunderstanding the uses of words addressed in §122 can be seen as arising due to a lack of familiarity with families of usage and the complex resemblances, criss-crossing and overlapping between members, that determine membership of those families. And the finding and inventing of intermediate cases would be the production of examples to show how more distant relatives from a family are related to the rest of the family *qua* members of the family. Thus such intermediate cases could help us to establish the correct use of words in areas of life outside the ordinary, familiar, well-charted home ground where we are accustomed to using those words. That is the way that I am thinking of the intermediate cases referred to in §122. And the *Übersicht* of the use of our words on these lines would be something like a bird's eye view of the interconnected network of these families of usage,

which would mean that the finding and inventing of intermediate cases would be a further way of filling in that *Übersicht* and through that of enhancing our active sense of what uses are appropriate in what circumstances.

That, as I understand it, is the characterization of the notion of an *Übersicht*—and with it the closely related notion of an *übersichtliche Darstellung*—that Wittgenstein gives in §122; I don't think that it poses any significant problems for my interpretation as a whole.

There is one strand to the notion of an *Übersicht* that I haven't really addressed in my account so far and that I feel it is important to emphasize. This is the fact that it is essential to our having any form of *Übersicht* of the use of our words at all that we be *human participants* in the practices of our language. Our language is a human creation, made to further the interests and concerns of the human beings that use it; we *are* those human beings and in our use of the language are privy to those interests and concerns that are behind that use. And that acquaintance with the point of using words in practice, from the inside so to speak, is something that we have to have if we are going to be in any position to manage language at all, to organize the whole thing to serve its concerted purpose or purposes. This is a very different picture of an *Übersicht* of the use of language to the picture painted by logic as we understand it; here we are concerned with a living, breathing language woven into the communal lives of human beings, whereas logic is concerned with an austere, rigidly articulated structure *prima facie* far remote from the reality of lived human life.

Let me leave my account specifically of the notion of an *Übersicht* at that, and turn to consider how such a notion might help to understand the sublimation of logic and the pseudo-vindication of language that it provides.

Wittgenstein's overall picture, as I see it, is of human linguistic practice as everywhere purposive, and as more or less totally holistic with individual practices having contributory roles to play towards more general and complex purposes. And whatever those wider purposes turn out to be in detail, the expression, communication and discovery of

truth has a massively important role to play amongst them, perhaps as the most general and important purpose of all.

In §93 of *PI*, Wittgenstein introduces the process leading to the sublimation of logic in terms of a problem that we feel about the nature of a proposition:

> ...Why do we say a proposition is something remarkable? On the one hand, because of the enormous importance attaching to it. (And that is correct). On the other hand this, together with a misunderstanding of the logic of language, seduces us into thinking that something extraordinary, something unique, must be achieved by propositions. ... [*PI*, §93],

and when he refers to "the enormous importance" of a proposition at the beginning of this passage I take him to mean not just importance to our understanding of language and the way that it works, but importance to language itself. The philosophical problem about the nature of a proposition that is being addressed here is, I take it, one of the "deep disquietudes" referred to later in §111 whose "significance is as great as the importance of our language" [*PI*, §111]. Propositions are so important that without them language would be worthless and this is because propositions are those structures in language through which we express truth. And this enormous importance of truth for language is ultimately what accounts for the strength of feeling required to drive so extreme a psychological reaction as I have been suggesting the sublimation of logic to be.

Understanding how to further the purpose or purposes of language as a whole, with the key role for truth, through the use of language is what an *Übersicht*, or our efforts at one, can give us. That is how we *do* arrive at our understanding of how language is to be used: through our distorted and incomplete approximation to an *Übersicht* of the use of our words. And this whole picture of Wittgenstein's of language and the role of an *Übersicht* in it helps, I think, to understand what he thinks is the nature of the pseudo-vindication of language that the mythology of logic offers in a way that I will now try to explain.

The trigger for the whole process of the generation and sublimation of logic can, as I understand it, be seen as a loss of faith in the *possibility* of philosophy. What we need from philosophy is, in the terms of the current account, a workable *Übersicht* of the use of language, one that would give us an understanding of the forms of linguistic practice good enough to keep language and life more or less on the rails, to allow us to at least *get by* in

our shared lives in the world together. That is what effective philosophy would give us: effective management of language. But this effort of philosophy is exerted against the constant opposition of irrational tendencies within us, tendencies to want to mismanage language—in precisely the kind of way, discussed earlier, in which Wittgenstein argues in *LC* that Freud mismanaged language. And I think that the story of the sublimation of logic begins with philosophy conceding defeat in a battle against these irrational tendencies.

The way that I see it is this: at some period in the history of the subject, the belief of philosophy in its capability to produce a genuine and workable *Übersicht* of language was shaken by severe and mounting pressure from irrational influences on the use of language. Thus philosophy lost confidence in its ability to secure the management of language—most significantly: as a vehicle for truth—in the *right* way, that is: through the development and consolidation of an *Übersicht*. And instead it hooked on to a primitive, and, in fact, hugely over-simple, account of truth in language which, through expansion and sublimation, it used to transform language in its eyes into one for which it could have a fully worked out and masterable *Übersicht*, a God's eye view. That is how language looks under the delusion of sublime logic: as something which we could know our way around perfectly, at least as far as what we feel to be its essential function—that is: its bearance of truth—is concerned. And a language that we could know our way around perfectly is one that we could *prove* to be all right; if we were to have a God's eye view of the use of the language, then we would *ipso facto* know if there were any problem anywhere with it.

Here the account hits a snag, because this latter remark makes it look as if it were equally possible, within the mythology of logic, to prove that language were *not* all right— that is, if we could see from our *Übersicht* that in some way or other there *were* a problem with language—which means that the *possibility* of an *Übersicht* alone isn't enough to vindicate language, what is required in addition is for that *Übersicht* to be one that is going to reveal there to be no problem with language. But this snag, I think, turns out to be easily overcome. The way to get past it is to recall the form of the process of sublimation in the case of the sublimation of logic. In that process, the sublimate activity, the practice of understanding language as a vehicle for truth, is hijacked to provide us with a vindication of

truth in language. This means that the idea of logic as a vindication of language as a vehicle for truth is there in the generation of logic from the outset; from the outset the idea is for logic to *be* a vindication; that is settled in advance prior to our working out in any detail the form that logic takes. So it is an illusion that the *Übersichtlichkeit* of language considered as a vehicle for truth from the mythological logical point of view can genuinely vindicate language as such a vehicle because that *Übersichtlichkeit* was originally worked into language to *make* it vindicated.

It is in this way, as I understand it, that Wittgenstein is thinking of logic as providing a pseudo-vindication of language.

§3.4 A Final Note on Wittgenstein's Approach to Philosophy

I would like to round off this chapter by turning briefly to an issue that has been dogging me on and off throughout my interpretation of Wittgenstein up to this point. This is the issue of the apparent revisionist/non-revisionist tension in Wittgenstein's later philosophy. In *PI* §124 Wittgenstein writes:

> Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it
> [*PI*, §124];

and, in doing so, he commits himself, as I understand him, to an uncompromising form of non-revisionism in philosophy of our ways of using language. In fact, I do not think it is too strongly stating his position to take him here to be saying that philosophy is *forbidden* from meddling with the way language is used. But this commitment, as Crispin Wright pointed out, is *prima facie* at odds with Wittgenstein's actual practice:

> ...it is doubtful how anyone who read only a bowdlerised edition of the *Investigations*, from which all reference to philosophical method and the nature and place of philosophy had been removed, would be able to arrive at the conclusion that the author viewed those matters in just the way in which Wittgenstein professes to do
> [*Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics*, p.262].

In other words, what Wittgenstein *does* appears to be revisionist at the same time as he is *saying* that what he is doing is non-revisionist. This apparent tension casts a shadow over a good deal of what I have said up to now about Wittgenstein's thinking, and so I would like to explain what is going on with it, to clear it up.

How the apparent discrepancy between theory and practice arises in the case of the sublimation of logic is in Wittgenstein's response to the discovery of logic as the result of a process of sublimation in the way that I have been explaining. He apparently thinks that it is *wrong* to continue thinking of logic as sublime logic and recommends dropping that way of thinking in favour of a new approach to understanding the way that language works; thus he appears to want to revise our use of language. But this appearance is, I think, false. And how I think it is false is as follows. Wittgenstein does *want* a change in our use of language—to "free ourselves from the spell of the ideal" [TS.220, p.83]—, but doesn't want to push for it off his own bat. In fact, as I have just suggested, he sees it as outside his mandate as a philosopher to in any way press for such a change; rather he sees himself as required to leave it to the truth (if it is true) of what he says to authorize the change.—If what Wittgenstein is saying is true, then anyone who understands him *will* set about changing their practice.

In this way it seems to me that the main point about Wittgenstein's attitude to uses of language under the influence of the mythology of logic is that he absolutely doesn't want to censure them and that, anyway, once we fully take on board that using language according to a mythology *is* what is going on, we won't use language in that way any more.

And this case of the use of language under influence of the mythology of sublime logic exemplifies, I think, the non-revisionist spirit of Wittgenstein's philosophy in general: the only legitimate force for change in the use of language, Wittgenstein thinks, is understanding.

Another way of formulating Wittgenstein's point here is in terms of *normativity*. In the last chapter I looked at Wittgenstein's analysis of Ramsey's idea that logic is a normative science. This was the idea that logic is concerned not with the standards of use of language that we actually follow in our reasoning, but with what those standards *ought* to be. And this is a normativity that we feel is appropriate in logic, and also in grammar, and also in philosophy. It is the role of philosophy to show us how we *ought* to use language. And the perception of a problem for Wittgenstein's philosophy over whether it is revisionist or non-revisionist can be seen, I think, as stemming from a misunderstanding of the way in which

he thinks that philosophy is normative. A problem *seems* to arise if one thinks that for philosophy to be normative it must also be prescriptive. And it is natural to think that way: if philosophy is going to effect a correction in our norms of use of language then it seems as if it is going to have to *tell us* how to use language in the right way. But this is wrong. Because philosophy can exert such an influence instead by *showing us* how to use language; and this is, I think, Wittgenstein's view. Philosophy describes the use of language in accordance with the norms that we usually follow; it says: "This is what you are doing...". And that is all it does. But doing that is enough to exert a normative influence on our linguistic practice.

And the easiest way to appreciate this is, I think, to recall the analogy discussed earlier in this chapter between philosophy and psychoanalysis. Because all that psychoanalysis says to someone with an emotional problem is: "This is what you are doing..."—you are identifying your partner with your parent, or whatever; and in this case it is easy to see the normative influence that this would have on the person's behaviour; what powers the normative influence is the person's natural disposition towards a problem-free emotional life. And, analogously, what powers the normative influence of philosophy is a person's natural disposition towards a (philosophical) problem-free linguistic practice.

And this way of understanding the normativity of philosophy on Wittgenstein's conception of it contributes to my interpretation of philosophy for Wittgenstein as the striving towards an *Übersicht* of language. In the last section I explained how I understood Wittgenstein as thinking of philosophy as the attempt by human beings at the construction of a God's eye view of the use of language, that we were in fact incapable of ever fully realizing such an *Übersicht*, but that nevertheless this was the only way for us to improve our understanding of the way to use language in successful pursuit of our interests and concerns. And the way that *this* view of philosophy dovetails with the view of philosophy as therapy, as analogous to psychoanalysis, is, as I also suggested above, simply that our efforts to develop an *Übersicht* of language constantly come up against tendencies within us to want to misrepresent what we are doing with language, or to use language in a way at odds with the *Übersicht* that we are developing; and the therapeutic aspect of philosophy is:

promoting following whatever inclinations that we have as to how to use words and that derive from our *Übersicht*, our understanding. I say here that the communion of the two aspects of philosophy is simple, but there is one complication to the story that I didn't broach above, and this is where the present understanding of the normativity of philosophy helps to understand. This is the way in which philosophy does promote sticking to the inspiration of our understanding in our use of words. As I have been explaining, philosophy just describes our use of words thus presenting us with the material for an *Übersicht* of that use, it tells us what we are doing. But, in so doing, it exposes aspects to our use of words that we were not aware, or were aware but did not want to admit to ourselves, were there and that once exposed we feel obliged to atone for. And this in turn effects an alteration in our patterns of usage of words, which, itself in turn, feeds back into the descriptions of the use of language that philosophy produces. It is, in part, in this cyclical way that our efforts towards an *Übersicht* move us towards that goal; our *Übersicht* evolves in our use of language under the influence of our natural affinity for truthfulness through the promptings of philosophy.

And that is all that I want to say about the nature and ramifications of Wittgenstein's non-revisionism. I would like to make one final comment, though, as regards a possible line of justification for this strict non-revisionism specifically as regards those linguistic practices that are a consequence of the sublimation of logic and any other practices shaped in a similar way. Censuring people's use of words that are in accordance with a mythology like the mythology of sublime logic would, psychoanalysis would say, be a form of *repression* (or re-repression) of very strong feelings, feelings that motivated construction of the mythology in the first place. And repressing such feelings, psychoanalysis would also say, is no way of ridding oneself of them with any degree of finality. Repressed feelings always come back to haunt you in some way or other; and a particular likelihood in this case, I suspect, would be of the relevant repressed feelings leading us into the construction of alternative mythologies of truth in language—as, I might add, ironically seems to have been done to a certain extent using Wittgenstein's own later ideas about the workings of language. What, again according to psychoanalysis, is required for a healthy resolution of

this kind of trouble is facing up to and working through the feelings involved, not denying them.

And that is all for this chapter. In the next chapter we move on to the second half of Wittgenstein's critique of logic: the utility of our thinking of logic in the way that we do.

Chapter 4

"The Ideal" as a Model of Language[49]

§4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I turn to the second strand of Wittgenstein's critique of the idea that logic demands the kinds of idealized workings of language discussed previously, which is his explanation of the utility of thinking of language in that way. In a nutshell, his explanation is as follows: the idealizations of language that the demands of logic lead us to construct effectively function for us, although we don't see it this way, as very useful objects of comparison for the use of language as a vehicle for truth. This is the story that I want to flesh out in the sections that follow.

§4.2 Logics as Language-Games

One way of understanding what Wittgenstein is up to when he accounts for the utility of our mythology of logic in this way as the construction of objects of comparison for language is, I think, to see him as assimilating the logics and formal systems constructed by logicians, to language-games as he himself conceives them up to and in §7 of *PI* [*cf.* §2.4.1 above].

Now, I think it is clear that Wittgenstein is thinking of *language-games* as deriving their utility as objects of comparison for language; §130 says so:

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[49] I have benefited in developing the theme of this chapter from reading both §3.3 of Roger M. White's *The Structure of Metaphor* and Gordon Baker's article "Philosophical *Investigations §122: neglected aspects*"—the latter being Baker's corrective on his views as expressed in the collaboration with P.M.S.Hacker: *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning* (*cf.* footnote 56 below).

Our clear and simple language-games are not preparatory studies for a future regularization of language—as it were first approximations, ignoring friction and air resistance. The language-games are rather set up as *objects of comparison* which are meant to throw light on the facts of our language by way not only of similarities, but also of dissimilarities.   [*PI*, §130][50]

I will return later to the suggestion in §130 here as to *how* Wittgenstein is thinking of language-games as functioning as objects of comparison for language. But what I want to do now, is to look at §130 (and §131) to support this interpretation of mine of Wittgenstein as assimilating logics and formal systems to language-games as objects of comparison for language.

§130 is clearly advocating the construction of language-games to compare with actual language to help us understand what is going on with it.[51] And it suggests this comparative role in opposition to the view that language-games are preliminary attempts at "regularization" of language. The German here is "*Reglementierung*" for which *Langenscheidt's* suggests "regulation" or "regimentation". But I think Anscombe's equally acceptable "regularization" is just right, because it suggests in what way language-games might be thought to regulate language. On the one hand a "regularization" of language can be taken to be a tabulation of the rules of language, but on the other hand it can be taken as a making of the use of language more regular—*i.e.*, regulating it—*by* tabulating its rules; making explicit those rules for use of language that we are implicitly trying to follow would both make it easier to follow them accurately and would to an extent fix them in our minds as *the* rules for language use. From this I take it that what Wittgenstein is saying in that opening sentence of §130 is that it is philosophically misguided to think of language-games as bits of language proper that we can isolate and describe according to their rules as a contribution to a philosophical programme of clarifying and fixing the rules for use of actual language; that misrepresents the way that language-games work. That is the negative thesis

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50 Of course, the reference here is to "clear and simple" language-games as objects of comparison; but, as I shall argue below, language-games are always clear and simple—and, anyway, it is to clear and simple language-games only that logic is being assimilated.

51 For the German word "*Verhältnisse*" here, translated officially as "the facts" of our language, *Langenscheidt's* has "the conditions" or "the circumstances". Given this, I think "what is going on with our language" captures Wittgenstein's sense nicely.

of §130; and it is, I think, closely related to the negative thesis of §131. §131 runs as follows:

131. For we can avoid ineptness or emptiness in our assertions only by presenting the model as what it is, as an object of comparison—as, so to speak, a measuring-rod; not as a preconceived idea to which reality *must* correspond. (The dogmatism into which we fall so easily in doing philosophy.)

And in the negative thesis here Wittgenstein warns against the possibility of mistaking language-games as objects of comparison, for "preconceived idea[s] to which reality *must* correspond". What I take him to mean by "reality" here is, at least in part, the real use of language as compared with the constructed use of language in a language-game. And from this it follows that what Wittgenstein is warning against is thinking of language-games as ways that language proper must be. He gives his reason for this right at the beginning of §131: so "we can avoid ineptness or emptiness in our assertions"; in other words: thinking of language-games as the way language must be will lead us to half-truths and even meaninglessness in our accounts of the way that language works.

Now, I have suggested that the negative theses of §130 and of §131 as just described are closely related, and I would like now to show how this is so; in so doing, I hope to show too that Wittgenstein *is* thinking of logics and formal systems as objects of comparison for language.

The first thing that I would say is that it seems odd to warn, as Wittgenstein does in §131, against the possibility of thinking of language as *having to* conform to a language-game, given, that is, the kind of thing that one tends to think of as a language-game from Wittgenstein's own examples.[52] But I am convinced that the examples that Wittgenstein has uppermost in his mind here are the logics and formal systems of logicians; and in that case, what Wittgenstein says isn't so odd. And what convinces me that he is thinking of logics and formal systems here is the way in which §§130-131 echo back to the thoughts of those

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52 The kind of example of "clear and simple" language-games that I am thinking of here—and indeed that I take to be paradigmatic for his notion of a language-game—are the little language-games like that described in §2 of *PI* (a particularly concentrated source of this kind of example is Part I of *The Brown Book*).

earlier sections where he is discussing the relation between logic and language.[53] In particular, I think that §§101-104 are relevant to understanding what is going on:

101. 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.

102. The strict and clear rules of the logical structure of propositions appear to us as something in the background—hidden in the medium of the understanding. I already see them (even though through a medium): for I understand the propositional sign. I use it to say something.

103. The ideal, as we think of it, is unshakable. You can never get outside it; you must always turn back. There is no outside; outside you cannot breathe.—Where does this idea come from? It is like a pair of glasses on our nose through which we see whatever we look at. It never occurs to us to take them off.

104. We predicate of the thing what lies in the method of representing it. Impressed by the possibility of a comparison, we think we are perceiving a state of affairs of the highest generality.

The background to these sections is that Wittgenstein is thinking of the logics and formal systems of logicians as idealized over-simplifications of the workings of language generated through logical investigation into the way that language works, in the way that I described in the previous chapter. And in these sections themselves, Wittgenstein is addressing the fact that the idea of the workings of language being the ideal comes to us prior to our understanding quite what those ideal workings are like.

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53 In §4.3.1 (pp.153ff.) below, I offer my understanding of the overall composition of §§89-133 of *PI*. Essentially, according to that understanding, §§89-108 present Wittgenstein's analysis of the big problem with Analytic Philosophy that it proceeds unknowingly under the influence of the mythology of logic in the way that I have outlined, then §§109-133 take up the theme, *in response to* that criticism of the way philosophy is done, of what philosophy really is about, what the real point of philosophical investigation is. §§130 & 131 come towards the end, but still very clearly within, this declaration of Wittgenstein's of the true nature of philosophy. And this location of §130 (with §131) within such a response to the misleading influence of the mythology of logic in philosophy is, I take it, one source of exegetical support for relating the reference to "clear and simple language-games" there back to the, as Wittgenstein puts it, utterly simple order to thought presented by logic first picked out in §97 and subsequently referred to as "the ideal".

A further such source of support comes from TS.220, the original 1937 version of *PI* that I have referred to more than once already. There it is the location of *PI* §131 that is significant. In TS.220, *PI* §§122-129 can be found in order, almost complete, and almost uninterrupted. They are immediately followed TS.220 §106, which begins: "The philosopher strives to find the liberating word, that is, the word that finally permits us to grasp what up until then has intangibly weighed down our consciousness...", and which contains the reference to psychoanalysis that I discussed in §3.2.1.1.2.2 above. That §106 is then followed immediately by §107 which begins: "In this way do we free ourselves from the spell of the ideal, as we recognize it as a picture and specify its origin". Then, at the beginning of the very next section, §108, comes *PI* §131. Exegetically, this maintains the link between *PI* §131 and the preceding sections in *PI*, §§122-129, but also relates §131 in its origin in Wittgenstein's thinking directly to thought of "the ideal".

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.

What we have here, as I explained in detail in the last chapter, is a kind of necessity born out of wishful thinking; we desperately want ordinary language to be all right as a vehicle for truth, so we desperately want the workings of language as such a vehicle not to fall beyond our understanding because only if we can understand language can we be sure that it *is* all right, so we desperately want language to be *understandable* along the lines already more or less laid down in our practice of trying to understand it, and it is this desperate wish for language to be understandable along these lines in face of a realization that this is not really possible, that leads us to idealize the workings of language so that we can at the same time think of the workings as comprehensible *and* yet respect the way that they really are. Thus we are able to lose the conflict between the way that we want the workings of language to be and the way that they actually are in the dazzle of the ideal [*PI*, §100].

And, as I say, §§101-104 are concerned with the fact that the idea that the workings of language are the ideal, predates in our thinking any clear understanding that we might come to have about what those ideal workings, as we begin to see them, are like. For the reasons just summarized, we falsely come to believe that the workings of language are, and indeed must be, ideal (and in keeping with our established, Augustinian, understanding of them); then we, confused, set about investigating those ideal workings. And so, under the misapprehension that we are *describing* the machinery of language we turn out to be, in fact, constructing false idealizations of that machinery. And the different attempts that we make to make explicit the perceived ideal in language are our logics and formal systems. In this way our logics and formal systems come to be a "preconceived idea to which reality *must* correspond" in the sense of §131; they are systems of rules for the use of words to which, we think, the use of words in our language *must* correspond. And hand in hand with the idea that these *must be* the rules for our use of words comes, of course, the idea that these *are* the rules; in other words, logics and formal systems turn out to be attempts at "regularizations" of language in the sense of §130. And in §§101-104 we find Wittgenstein criticizing these two facets of logical investigation in much the same way that he criticises

the two corresponding facets of philosophical investigation in general in §§130-131. Logics and formal systems as a special case of language-games ought not to be seen as descriptions to which language does and must correspond but rather as objects of comparison for language. This I take to be the diagnosis given in §104:

We predicate of the thing what lies in the method of representing it. Impressed by the possibility of a comparison, we think we are perceiving a state of affairs of the highest generality.[54]

All this shows, I believe, how the negative theses of §130 and §131 are related. §131 claims that it is wrong to think of language as *having to conform* to some language-game or other whereas §130 objects to thinking of language *as (actually, not necessarily) conforming* to some language-game. And it also suggests that Wittgenstein is thinking of logics and formal systems as special cases of clear and simple language-games useful as objects of comparison for language in the way indicated in §130.

§4.3 Language-Games as Models of Language

The suggestion just made of language-games, logics and formal systems functioning as objects of comparison for language is of a piece with my earlier account, in Chapter 2, of §81 of *PI*, specifically of the opening of it, where Wittgenstein says:

...in 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.

I take it that the "games and calculi which have fixed rules" referred to here include language-games, logics and formal systems; and that Wittgenstein approves of employing

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54 The point being made here in *PI* §104, I take it, is that we are confused about the way in which thinking about ordinary language as "the ideal" helps us to understand the workings of that ordinary language. What we are productively *doing* when we think of ordinary language as the ideal is clarifying the use of that ordinary language through comparison with that ideal. However, what we see ourselves as doing is straightforwardly *describing* the use of ordinary language—we take our thinking of language *as* the ideal to be simply thinking of language. And this leads us to "predicate of the thing..."—to ascribe properties to ordinary language...—"...what lies in the method of representing it"—...what are properties of a fictional, idealized over-simplification of language at work in our efforts at setting the truth-relevant workings of full-blown language proper into profitable relief through comparison with that ideal over-simplification. Hence, "[i]mpressed by the possibility of a comparison, ..."—impressed by the way in which the logical model is, as an object of comparison, able to illuminate the use of language as a vehicle for truth *all over language*, ...—"...we think we are perceiving a state of affairs of the highest generality"—...we come to think that language *accords*, all over, with that logical model.

such games and calculi in philosophy as objects of comparison; and that in saying we "cannot say that someone who is using language *must* be playing such a game" he is making the same point as when he says in §131 that we ought not to think of language-games as "preconceived idea[s] to which reality *must* correspond".

It is Wittgenstein's understanding of the utility of language-games, logics and formal systems as objects of comparison in philosophy, though, that is the topic of the present chapter. And what I am going to do in what follows is: begin with an account of this utility for language-games in general; and then go on to consider logics and formal systems as a special case. When I was discussing §122 at the end of the last chapter, I said that I thought that the constructive-comparative method was useful insofar as it helped achieve an *übersichtliche Darstellung* of language, and this is the utility that I mean to look at here. Before I do so, however, I would like to make a slight diversion: there is one point in justification of my interpretation of §122 that I didn't make in the last chapter that I would like to take the opportunity of making now.

§4.3.1 The Significance of PI §122 in §§81-133

In the last chapter I cited §122 of *PI* as the key to understanding the ultimate driving force behind the process of the subliming of logic as Wittgenstein understands it. What I left unaddressed there was the apparent isolation of this section ahead of other sections discussed in the last chapter in which the notion of the sublimity of logic is clearly being addressed. In other words, I left my interpretation with the unsolved problem: if §122 *does*, as I am claiming, provide the key to the motivation behind the subliming of logic then why is it located a dozen sections or so adrift of the series of sections from §89 onwards that do address the problem of the sublimity of logic?—§122 is in the midst of a number of (*prima facie* fairly loosely) interconnected sections on the nature of philosophy.[55] I think that the

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55 In the original edition of his book *Wittgenstein*, Robert J. Fogelin was led by the apparent disconnectedness of these sections on philosophy to describe them as "a series of aphorisms concerning philosophy" [p.125] and "perhaps, only after-the-fact musings" [p.127]. It also helps to lead him to his conclusion: "I really do not think that there is much use in attempting to evaluate Wittgenstein's general remarks about philosophizing" [*Ibid.*].

solution to this problem arises naturally from a consideration of a different problem which is: how these later sections on the nature of philosophy in general are related in thought to those earlier ones on the nature of logic.

This latter problem is one that puzzled me from very early on in my efforts to understand §§89ff. and for a long time afterwards. I soon came to realize that §§89-108 are a continuous train of thought about the nature of logic; and that then §109 moves on to consider philosophy and how Wittgenstein thinks it ought to be done; that §110 briefly returns to consider the idea of thought being something unique—the germ at the heart of the subliming of logic [§§94-5]—, as an example of the kind of thing that we can be tricked into thinking by language; but that then §§111-121 all carry on the theme—and I was in fact unsure whether it was a *theme*—of the nature of philosophy. The problem was that I could not be sure whether §§109ff. represented a continuation from §§89ff. of "a fairly long chain about the same subject" [*PI, Preface,* p.vii], or "a sudden change, jumping from one topic to another"[*Ibid.*]. I have since convinced myself of the former: I believe that §§89-133 form a single continuous train of thought on the nature of philosophy. Let me briefly say why.

§§89ff., as I hope is clear from the previous chapter, are concerned with the nature of logic; but in being so concerned, these sections are *eo ipso* concerned with the nature of philosophy, as it was being done at the time Wittgenstein was writing *PI and* as it is currently being done in the Anglo-American mainstream, that is: with *analytic philosophy.* Because analytic philosophy *is* essentially philosophical logic (what Wittgenstein means throughout §§81ff. by "logic" as a practice—in "logic was a 'normative science'", for

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Since *Wittgenstein* was first published, however, Fogelin's views have moved on. In a recent contribution to *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein* entitled "Wittgenstein's Critique of Philosophy", he does attempt an evaluation of Wittgenstein's general remarks about philosophizing. And in that article he sees Wittgenstein as having two broad targets of attack. The first of these he calls "referentialism" and is the idea that it is the role of words in language to refer to things and of sentences to represent how things stand in relation to one another; and the second is "logical perfectionism", the idea that the rules ultimately behind the use of language have an ideal structure. These, he thinks are two ways of thinking about language that lead us astray in our attempts to understand it. I agree with him about this, and see them as two aspects of the Augustinian mythology of logic. He, however, does not see a clear relation between the two of them.

example). And in §§89-108, Wittgenstein is, as I understand him, exposing what he thinks is a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of philosophy inherent in the practice of analytic philosophical logic. After this comes §109 which continues the train of thought into a discussion of the true nature of philosophy as Wittgenstein understands it. And this continuity, I think, gives §§109-133 a far more cohesive appearance than the impression that they give when considered on their own. Because they can be considered to be comments on the nature of philosophy in general *given* the specific criticism levelled at analytic philosophy in the preceding sections. It is in the midst of this discussion of the nature of philosophy in general, and against this background, that §122 occurs.

The significance of §122 in this discussion of the nature of philosophy is that it pinpoints the source of a great many philosophical problems, which is: our craving for a perspicuous grammar, an *Übersicht*, of our language. And this is a source of philosophical problems because it leads us to fabricate perspicuous pseudo-grammars for our language, in whole or in part. And it is these perspicuous pseudo-grammars that throw up philosophical problems when, as they inevitably must, they prescribe a use of words that is in conflict with the correct use of words. And the way that this relates §122 to the earlier discussion of the nature of our Augustinian logic in §§89ff. is, as we saw, that the ultimate motivation behind the subliming of that logic is this craving for a perspicuous grammar and in the end the logic turns out to *be* one of these perspicuous pseudo-grammars.

§4.3.2 *The Utility of Language-Games*

Having completed that short diversion, I would like to return to the theme proper of this chapter and to the philosophical utility of language-games as objects of comparison for actual language. As I have suggested already, this utility of language-games is that they help philosophy in its efforts towards an *Übersicht* of the use of language. And this is what I want to explain in this subsection.[56]

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[56] On reading their essay "Language-Games" [*UM*, pp.89-98], I am struck by how much my understanding of language-games resembles Baker and Hacker's. They talk, as I do, about language-games heralding

which they call "the language-game method". And they explain how this method works in the following passage:

The purpose of this technique is succinctly stated (PI §§5, 130). The difficulty in philosophy stems in part from our lack of a surview [*Übersicht*] of language... . Invented language-games are useful in so far as they are surveyable [*übersichtlich*] (PI §5(a)). Since we are not concerned with completeness or exactness (Z §§464f.), we can ignore the objections that invented language-games are not exactly like ours and that calling fragments of our language 'language-games' is misleading since they are incomplete. Our whole interest lies in seeing connections, analogies, and disanalogies that will display the articulations of our language which give rise to, and resolve, philosophical problems. Such problems do not arise through imprecision and insufficient detail, and are not resolved by accumulation of exhaustive detail and 'scientifically' precise statements. Detail and precision are, tautologically, only necessary where needed, and that is not everywhere. Invented games need not be isomorphic with corresponding parts of our language. They illuminate both by similarity and difference, by showing, in a simple context, some feature which is analogous to a characteristic of our language, but which is there isolated from the confusing surroundings of its ordinary use. It also shows thereby, e.g., what complex concepts have a place in the *description* of our language, but not in the primitive context, and why. By setting up different grammatical structures from ours, we can soften our prejudices and dogmatism (that our grammar is correct, or the best), lay bare philosophical myths (that our grammar is justified by reference to reality), and undermine facile generalizations. [*UM*, p.95]

And, although I find this passage in a number of respects unclear or confused, there are several points of contact between its account and mine (following in the main text below). For one thing, the utility of language-game analysis is linked directly to the enterprise of constructing an *Übersicht* of language. And then there is the emphasis (reinforced elsewhere in the essay) on invented language-games, with their completeness and *Übersichtlichkeit*, as the principal vehicle in employment of the technique, with natural language, or fragments of it, as "language-games" relegated to a subsidiary role. And finally there is the idea of language-games targeting, and clarifying by analogy, specific fragments of our linguistic practice to relieve philosophical confusion.

The big *criticism* that I have of Baker and Hacker's account, in the passage quoted and in the essay as a whole, is that they seem to me to be confused about precisely *how* language-games effect a clarification of our use of language through comparison with it. This confusion, in the passage quoted finds focus in the following sentence:

They [*sc.* invented language-games] illuminate both by similarity and difference, by showing, in a simple context, some feature which is analogous to a characteristic of our language, but which is there isolated from the confusing surroundings of its ordinary use.

Here the feature of the language-game that is said, in the first half of the sentence, to be analogous to a characteristic of our language is then referred to, in the second half, as if it were the characteristic itself, without any sign of consciousness of the switch. And talking in this way half makes it look as if understanding the way around the simple language-game is *ipso facto* understanding the way around the comparable fragment of language proper; but this is wrong, because the language-game is an entity in its own right independent of language proper and hence any light that understanding it can shed on language proper must come *indirectly* through comparison.

The confusion is again evident, I think, two pages later, in Baker and Hacker's characterization of what they call a "natural language-game". In *PI*, Wittgenstein often applies the expression "language-game" to fragments of our actual language—he talks about the language-game with the word "pain", of the language-game of giving orders and obeying them, of that of forming and testing hypotheses, and so on; and this worries Baker and Hacker because they are unsure what the relation is between such fragments of actual language and (standard) invented language-games that warrants Wittgenstein's use of the expression "language-game" in the case of the fragments. The problem is that they want to do justice *both* to the *fragmentary* nature of the fragments—"when we teach a child a fragment of our language we conceive of what it [he or she] learns as a part of a greater, integrated whole, and hence as fragmentary"[*Ibid.*]—*and* to the recognition (rightly, in my view) of the importance of completeness—"The important feature of these primitive languages is that they are complete in themselves"[*Ibid.*]—and surveyability—"Invented language-games are useful in

§4.3.2.1 Wittgenstein's Notion of a Language-Game

I would like to begin by looking at the introduction of the notion of a language-game into *PI*, and the explicit characterization of language-games which comes hand in hand with that introduction.

The expression "language-game" first appears in §7 of *PI* where it is defined explicitly, but the whole development of the notion on which the definition of §7 draws, begins right at the beginning, in §1.

§1 of *PI* contains the first description of a language-game in the book. It is presented in response to that opening statement of the Augustinian conception of language which I have claimed to be the introduction into *PI* of the idea of what I have been calling the Augustinian mythology of logic. Wittgenstein describes the language-game in the following terms:

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 the 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. [*PI*, §1]

And I believe that, in doing so, he is using the language-game in precisely the way described in §130, as an object of comparison to throw light on the facts of our language by way of similarities or dissimilarities. Let me briefly indicate how.

The description just quoted is the description of an imaginary linguistic practice for which the Augustinian picture of language—"Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands"[*Ibid.*]—clearly has no explanatory significance. The account given *is* the explanation of the way the words in the practice function—"It is in this and similar ways that one operates with words"[*Ibid.*]—;

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so far as they are surveyable"[*Ibid.*]—to the effectiveness of language-games as objects of comparison for language proper and hence to the concept of a language-game itself. They want to marry these two requirements—that the language-game be a part of language, and that it be complete and surveyable—in the one concept of a natural language-game, but they cannot do this, because the requirements are frankly inconsistent.

My own interpretation of Wittgenstein's application in *PI* of "language-game" to language proper, and fragments of it, is that it is *metaphorical*: there are no such things as natural language-games that are both language-games and part of language; what there are are fragments of language investigated *as if* they were language-games. And I hope that this will become clear as the main text proceeds below.

and any additional recourse to the meanings of the words involved—by asking, for example, "what is the meaning of the word "five"?"[*Ibid.*]—is superfluous—"No such thing was in question here, only how the word "five" is used"[*Ibid.*]—, not to say misleading. Having said this, however, I don't think that the practice described is intended *simply* to present a direct challenge to the Augustinian account, to say: "Look, this language-game is language, and Augustine's conception does not apply to *it*"; Wittgenstein's employment of it is more subtle than that.

On my preferred interpretation, this idea that language-games work as objects of comparison for ordinary language takes centre stage. Accordingly, the language-game of §1 has been carefully chosen for the way in which it *resembles* one of our own actual linguistic practices. And the way that the language of the description of the language-game works towards achieving Wittgenstein's aim for it is through getting us to make a comparison between the language-game and ordinary language. In other words, I think that the description works *allegorically*; it encourages us at each step of it, and as a whole, to compare the use of words in the language-game with the use of words in our linguistic practice of going to a shop to get five red apples. In this way the description sets up an analogy between the use of words in one and the use in the other; this analogy is then the basis of any potential that the language-game has, to do what Wittgenstein wants it to do and help undermine the applicability of the Augustinian conception to language; Wittgenstein's *argument* is by analogy: Augustine's picture is not a picture of this little language, and this little language is analogous to this one of our actual linguistic practices, hence the picture does not hold there either.[57]

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[57] Perhaps I should say a word more here about the mechanics of the language, as I see it, of the kind of "description" of a language-game as is given in §1. Of course, that kind of "description" isn't a straightforward (literal) description at all. I have said that the presentation in §1 works through "getting us to make a comparison between the language-game and ordinary language", and that directive to compare is both motivated in the first place, and then given shape, by the language of the presentation, of the "description", itself. Effectively, as I understand it, what Wittgenstein does is to mix up vocabulary describing the language-game with vocabulary describing our practice of going to the shops, and the form that that mixture takes then determines the character that our approach to the comparison is to have; Wittgenstein superimposes the words of one description on top of the words of another, and, in doing so, he emphasizes points of analogy between the two practices described; and drawing attention to those specific points of analogy ahead of others is his way of suggesting the way to take the comparison if we are to see his point.

I hope that suffices to give an idea of the way in which I understand Wittgenstein to be exploiting the modelling of language with a language-game in *PI* §1. The process generally of modelling language with language-games in the way, if my account is correct, instanced there in §1 is the theme of this whole section of my thesis; and I want to try to develop this general picture from here on.

Let me begin by looking at *PI* §5 as a way in to that explicit, general, characterization of the notion of a language-game worked out in §§2-7.

In §5, Wittgenstein, as I understand him, is thinking of language-games as tools specifically to aid in our disillusionment from the Augustinian mythology of the way language works:

> If we look at the example in §1, we may perhaps get an inkling how much this general notion of the meaning of a word surrounds the working of language with a haze which makes clear vision impossible. It disperses the fog to study the phenomena of language in primitive kinds of application in which one can command a clear view [*übersehen*] of the aim and functioning of the words.
>
> A child uses such primitive forms of language when it learns to talk. Here the teaching of language is not explanation, but training. [*PI*, §5]

In the opening sentence here, he seems to me to be suggesting that he has intended the language-game—"the example"—in §1 to challenge a commitment that we, the readers, ourselves have to the Augustinian conception, "this general notion of the meaning of a word" as he calls it here in §5. And when he refers to the "haze" that surrounds the working of language, I understand him to be thinking of the way in which the complex and varied reality of the workings of words appears to confront us as a haze, from our perspective of trying to impress our delusional misunderstanding on to those workings.[58] Such haze is the "fog" that he then goes on to say can be dispersed by studying the phenomena of language in: "primitive kinds of application in which one can command a clear view [*übersehen*] of the aim and functioning of the words". And in that statement, in

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[58] Incidentally, this talk, in §5, of a "haze" or of a "fog", generated by the Augustinian picture, and obscuring the true workings of words from us, closely resembles the talk later, in §97, of thought as "surrounded by a halo" and, in §100, of us as "dazzled by the ideal", in our misunderstanding of logic. This, I think, helps to support my interpretation, given in the previous chapter, that logic is to be seen as a sublimation of the Augustinian picture of language.

the second sentence, I think that Wittgenstein gives us, in embryo, pretty much the whole process of language-game analysis as he conceives it.

To see our way out of our philosophical misrepresentations of the ways in which language works—*e.g.* the Augustinian mythology—, Wittgenstein is suggesting we fix on to the use of words in primitive contexts in which we can have an *Übersicht* of the way that the words work. And why, I think, he is suggesting this is that he is thinking of the use of language in such primitive contexts as providing us with *solid ground* in our attempts to understand the way that language works. "We can't be in any confusion about, or be in any way misrepresenting, the use of words here", we want to be able to say in our investigations; and Wittgenstein is pointing out the contexts of use for which we would most confidently be able to say this. This explains his description of the sought-after contexts as "primitive", because what we want are *simple* modes of application of language with *straightforward* objectives. And it also explains why he is thinking of them as *übersichtlich*, because we want a complete understanding of our modes of application such that no detail essential to the procedure is left unaccounted for, we want to see all the parts of the machinery and how each contributes to the functioning of the whole towards the aim of the whole.

Now, of course, I want to say that the primitive contexts of use discussed here are precisely what Wittgenstein calls "language-games", in §7. Language-games are these clear and simple practices with language for which we know every possible significant move in them and precisely what the significance of each move is in the context of the point of the practice as a whole.

In §7, Wittgenstein refers to language-games as: "games by means of which children learn their native language", and also as "primitive language[s]"—by which I take him to be meaning the type of "language of a tribe" referred to in §6 and of which he gives numerous imaginary examples in Part 1 of *The Brown Book*—; and these indicate two different sources of language-games, of the kind of clear and simple linguistic practice that I have been talking about. Both of these sources are alluded to in §5—we have already observed how Wittgenstein refers to: "the phenomena of language in *primitive* kinds of

application"[my italics], but he also then says: "A child uses such primitive forms of language when it learns to talk". And the main reason, I think, that Wittgenstein has for emphasizing these two sources of language-games is that he sees it as a necessary condition of language-games that they be forms of language. He requires it to be conceivable for a language-game that it be a linguistic practice of human beings. Because of this, thinking, when coining language-games, of the kind of language that children or primitive tribes might use is a way of trying to ensure that we come up with activities of the required type, genuine linguistic practices.

Language-games need to be genuine language because studying them and the way that they work is meant to shed light on our own language and the way that it works. Specifically, they are meant to shed light on our use of language in those regions about which we are unclear or confused. And the way that they are to do this is through comparison between our problematic use of our language and the unproblematic use of the language of the language-game. "This *use of language* [*sc.* in the language-game]...", we need to be able to say, "...is completely open and clear, so what is the problem with our own, analogous, use?".

Another characteristic of language-games, one that isn't obvious from §5 considered on its own, but which, I think, is essential to Wittgenstein's conception because of the role that it plays in the process of language-game analysis, and which is clearly part of his thinking by the end of §7, is that language-games are meant to be entities in their own right, independent of our own language proper. This characteristic is, in fact, prefigured in §2 in Wittgenstein's instruction to conceive the language-game "as a complete primitive language"; then it is suggested again in §6 when he says: "We could imagine that the language of §2 was the *whole* language of A and B; even the whole language of a tribe"; and in the end, in §7, when Wittgenstein talks about various language-games as "processes resembling language", as "games", and as "primitive language[s]" all of it suggests that he is thinking of language-games as ontologically independent of language proper; and that settles the matter for me. In §5 considered in context, this criterion of ontological independence is, in fact, I think, evidenced when Wittgenstein says: "A child uses such

primitive forms of language when it learns to talk", because it is later clear from §7 that he is thinking of such forms of language as "processes resembling language", not as a part of our language itself.

Why, I think, ontological independence is necessary for language-game analysis is because the process works through comparison of our use of words in our language with a use of words in a language that *isn't* our own. Philosophical problems are confusions inherent in our use of our language, and language-game analysis attempts to resolve confusions of that kind through comparison with a use of language—in a language distinct from our own—that isn't confused. Hence, strict independence of the use of words in language-games from the use of words in our language is needed to protect against the possibility of importing the confusions of our language, the target language, into the language-game, the object of comparison.

In §5 of *PI*, Wittgenstein makes no direct reference to comparison of language with language-games as the way to disperse the fog created by the Augustinian conception. However, studying language, as §5 suggests, in the kinds of primitive applications that children use when learning to talk isn't of itself going to help us to a genuine understanding of full-blown language without in some way relating the primitive forms to the full thing. And if, as seems highly plausible from §5, Wittgenstein is thinking there of the kind of *made up* practice as in §1 as one kind of primitive form, the envisaged relation between primitive form and full thing cannot be any kind of real developmental or historical relation. This means—I cannot think of any alternative—that the study of language in primitive kinds of application referred to in §5 helps us to see through to the real workings of language, (strictly) through comparison between the language-games and language proper. The form of the language-game, through similarities and dissimilarities of the kind, I think, referred to in §130, helps to show the true form of the target problematic region of our language in its true relief.

One last piece of the definition of language-games remains. This is a characteristic again suggested by the appeal in §2 to conceive the language-game "as a complete primitive language", *and* again by §6: "We could imagine that the language of §2 was the *whole*

language of A and B", and also by §7 with its talk of language-games as "the *whole* process of using words in (2)"[italics mine], as "games", and as "primitive language[s]". And what the thinking here is, it seems to me, is that language-games need to be whole little languages; we require language-games to be conceivable to be the whole linguistic practice of their practitioners, of them to be the only language of these people.

Again, what I think Wittgenstein is concerned about with this proposed stricture on language-games, that they be complete or whole linguistic practices in their own right, is the possibility of hidden confusion in the language of the language-game; unless the language is all there in the language-game, we cannot be sure that there isn't a problem with it by considering just the language-game alone.

All that is Wittgenstein's vision, as I understand it, of language-games; they are to be free-standing linguistic practices that are clear, and simple enough, for us to have a full-bloodied *Übersicht* of how they work. And what I would like to do from here is to take this understanding of what language-games are, into an account of the utility, as I understand Wittgenstein to see it, of language-games to philosophy.

§4.3.2.2 *How Language-Games* Work *as Models*

Although I am very sensitive to the possibility of misrepresenting Wittgenstein that inevitably accompanies any attempt to give a *general* account of anything like his conception of language-games and of their utility to philosophy, because of the potential ease with which one can gloss over differences between individual cases in order to get one's account to work, I do feel confident that there *is* a more or less general story to be told both about the nature of language-games—*sc.* the account given in the previous subsection—and about their profitable employment in philosophy. This latter, as I have already suggested more than once, is that they are to function as objects of comparison for our language to further the aim of philosophy, to develop an *Übersicht* of the use of language, to help us find our way about [*cf. PI* §123] in the confusing complexity of the use of words in our lives, against the distorting, misleading, influence of philosophical misunderstandings. And this is the story that I want to try to explain now.

I will begin by looking at a strategy that Wittgenstein seems to me to adopt a number of times in his employment of language-games, to show how I think, in these cases, he wants the language-games to work for him. This is a strategy that seems *prima facie* at odds with my view of language-games as intended to help develop an *Übersicht* of language proper for philosophy, and I will end this subsection by indicating why I think that there is no real discrepancy involved; that will then lead me on into the rest of my account.

The strategy that I would like to begin with is one which, I think, Wittgenstein adopts, for example, in his use of that language-game described in *PI* §2, the "builders" language. The language-game is introduced by Wittgenstein's saying: "Let us imagine a language for which the description given by Augustine is right"; and this, I think, gives some indication of the role that the language-game, and the numerous subsequent developments of it in the early sections of *PI*, are to play in Wittgenstein's argumentation. Because I think that he uses the language-game of §2 with its developments as a means of rooting out the Augustinian conception of language and its ramifications, and exposing it as misguided. The strategy, as I understand it is as follows: the language-games are constructed in such a way that, as closely as possible, our prejudicial ways of understanding our own language, stemming from the Augustinian mythology, actually fit *them*, so we can say: "Look, the way we are thinking of language as working here is (roughly, perhaps) the way that this little language works", and then in one way or another showing how language proper doesn't really work like that—perhaps by showing how language is more complicated than the little language-game or how it differs from the little language in respects *x*, *y* and *z* to which the philosophical misunderstanding doesn't pay due respect. This is the strategy generally with language (2) and all its variants.

Unfortunately, neither language (2), nor any of its spin-offs, offers a simple, straightforward illustration of the strategy employed so that we can see in more detail how it actually works. However, I think that there is an example from *The Brown Book* that does this job quite nicely; so I would like to turn here to look at that. The language-game is presented as follows:

49)   Imagine a tribe in whose language there is an expression corresponding to our "He has done so and so", and another expression corresponding to our "He can do so and so", this latter expression, however, being only used where its use is justified by the same fact which would also justify the former expression. Now what can make me say this? They have a form of communication which we should call narration of past events because of the circumstances under which it is employed. There are also circumstances under which we should ask and answer such questions as "Can so and so do this?" Such circumstances can be described, e.g., by saying that a chief picks men suitable for certain action, say crossing a river, climbing a mountain, etc. As the defining criteria of "the chief picking men suitable for this action", I will not take what he says but only the other features of the situation. The chief under these circumstances asks a question which, as far as its practical consequences go, would have to be translated by our "Can so and so swim across this river?" This question however, is only answered affirmatively by those who actually have swum across this river. This answer is not given in the same words in which under the circumstances characterizing narration he would say that he has swum across the river, but it is given in the terms of the question asked by the chief. On the other hand, this answer is not given in cases in which we should certainly give the answer, "I can swim across this river", if, e.g., I had performed more difficult feats of swimming though not just that of swimming across this particular river.   [*The Blue and Brown Books*, pp.103-4][59]

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59 Incidentally, I think it is worth noting, in connection with the suggestion made above (in §4.3.2.1) that Wittgenstein is thinking of language-games essentially as *übersichtlich*, the pains to which he goes to to flesh out his account here adequately enough to show the language-game to be *übersichtlich*.

In the context here, of 49) of *The Brown Book*, this attention to *Übersichtlichkeit* relates to a further point that has arisen previously in 48). This is a point that I think is also worth noting.

In 48) of *The Brown Book* Wittgenstein says of a language-game like the one just given in the main text:

It is an important remark concerning this example and others which we give that one may object to the description which we give of the language of a tribe, that in the specimens we give of their language we let them speak English, thereby already presupposing the whole background of the English language, that is, our usual meanings of the words.   [*Ibid.*, p.102]

But then, in what he goes on to say, he doesn't elaborate explicitly on *why* he thinks that this remark is important. However, I think I understand what he has in mind. And this is that the apparent reliance in the formulation of the language-game on the apparatus of the English language appears as if it might jeopardise the *Übersichtlichkeit* of the language-game; if one is going to have to bring in the whole background of the English language to give a complete account of the language-game, then one cannot have a language-game that is *übersichtlich* because the English language itself isn't *übersichtlich*. Wittgenstein's response to this problem is to say:

To this we must answer that we have only given a very sketchy description of the practices of our fictitious languages, in some cases only hints, but that one can easily make these descriptions more complete.   [*Ibid.*, p.102]

In other words, he wants to insist that his language-games do not presuppose the whole background of the English language, and that the descriptions of them *can* be completed to show them to be *übersichtlich*. His point is that we ought not to confuse the *sketchiness* of formulation of some of the language-games that he gives us—which, presumably, he would put down to a concern on his part with just the *relevant* details of the language-game and which is meant to be simply and straightforwardly remediable—with an essential incompleteness of formulation of the kind that we would have to settle for if the language of the language-game were anything like as complex as English. Language-games are nothing like as complex as English and, indeed, are meant to be simple enough to be *übersichtlich*.

Language-games are to be considered as *analogous* to English. And this means that the use of English words and phrases in the formulation of a language-game is simply a technique for marking out the points of analogy between language-game and language, making them obvious; if we wanted, we could treat an English expression in a formulation as a short-hand for: "the expression in the language of the tribe corresponding in use to this expression in English"; and Wittgenstein himself goes on to express himself in this way in his description of the language-game quoted above: "Imagine a tribe in whose language there is an expression corresponding to our "He has done so and so", and another expression corresponding to our "He can do so and so"", and so on.

And the target for this example is, I think, revealed a few lines further on in the section:

...The use which is made of the word "can"—the expression of possibility in 49)—can throw a light upon the idea that what can happen must have happened before (Nietzsche). ...   [*Ibid.*, p.104].

As I understand it from this, Wittgenstein's target philosophical misunderstanding is Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence: the idea that whatever happens in the world, must have happened before, and must have happened before that, and before that, *ad infinitum*. Wittgenstein appears to be putting up the language-game in 49) as an object of comparison for language to help us understand Nietzsche's proposal. And I think that what Wittgenstein is concerned with is the *credibility* of Nietzsche's idea, with understanding just *how* Nietzsche's idea could be believable.

As I read 49) of *The Brown Book*, Wittgenstein is thinking of Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence as the same kind of idea as those of Freud's that Wittgenstein criticizes in *LC*. An example of the kind of thing that I am thinking of is Freud's idea of a primal scene, a deeply disturbing experience of early childhood which we spend the rest of our lives coming to terms with; Wittgenstein, as we saw in §3.2.1.2 above, thought this idea was attractive to us because it gave a kind of tragic look to even the most seemingly ugly messes that we might make of our lives—all the most desperately embarrassing things we do in life are a playing out of themes originating in the momentous events of our childhoods. Nietzsche's doctrine is, I think, thought by Wittgenstein to be this kind of idea.

It *is* fascinating to think that everything that can happen must already have happened countless times before. On the one hand, the idea gives everything that happens in our lives a profound significance, because events ramify backwards and forwards throughout this eternally recurrent history. And on the other hand, the idea gives life a fatalistic aspect, with every occurrence having a preordained place in this scheme of things that is already there and beyond our influence. More, of course, can be said than this; but, however one proposes to characterize the attraction of Nietzsche's idea, that attraction is going to be such a kind as might draw us in towards believing something that isn't true; and this, I think, is how Wittgenstein is thinking of the idea.

So, with Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence, we have an idea that is appealing to us for reasons independent of the question of its truth. But that appeal isn't by itself sufficient to explain the credibility of the idea; what is required in addition is an account of how the idea manages to satisfy our understanding, of its truth. And this latter account is where, I think, Wittgenstein intends the language-game of *The Brown Book* 49) to come in. That language-game explains how Nietzsche's idea is able, in addition to attracting us in the kind of way suggested, also to *dupe our understanding* on the way our language works. It does so by showing that when we take Nietzsche's doctrine to be true, we are, in fact, thinking of our language as working on the model of the language-game, of our use of the word "can" as strictly analogous to the use it has in the little language. For the members of the imagined tribe, it would be unthinkable, because of the way their language is set up—the expression for "He can do so and so" is only to be used where its use is justified by the same fact which would also justify using the expression for "He has done so and so"—, that something *can* happen—*e.g.* that a given man can swim across the river—when it hasn't already happened before; and Nietzsche is proposing this as a model for the relation between our own uses of our own "...can happen" and "...has happened". The language-game shows us this; and it also reveals how we are vulnerable to believing Nietzsche: on the one hand, because we do not have ready to hand a reflective appreciation of the multifarious uses to which we put the word "can" in our practice of our language; and on the other hand, because we can see that the account of our language as (analogous to) the language-game *is* the account of a language (only, it turns out, an account, not of our language, but of a language more primitive than ours [*cf.* the opening of *PI* §2]).

That is how I understand what is going on in *The Brown Book* section 49). And as far as I understand it, that is very like the kind of use that language-games are being put to in the early part of *PI*: there is a philosophical misunderstanding of language that we are prone to adopt and the language-games are brought in to *ape* that misunderstanding and expose it as false.

Now, I said when introducing the account just given, of the strategy with the kind of example presented in 49) of *The Brown Book*, that the strategy *seems* at odds with the

view of language-games as helping philosophy with the development of an *Übersicht* of language, although there really isn't any disagreement; and this is the point that I would like to end this subsection by addressing.

The apparent problem is that, in the account of examples just presented, the comparisons of language-game with language are targeted at specific philosophical *misuses* of language, with the language-game brought in to caricature the philosophical malpractice, to expose and discredit it; and this concern with exposing *mis*uses of language makes it look as if the act of comparison in these cases *isn't* part of the project of forming an *Übersicht* of the use of language, because of the way, as I explained towards the end of the previous chapter, that it is the role of an *Übersicht* to show us how to use language, as opposed to misusing it. However, as I explained right at the end of the last chapter, accounting for misuses of language is going to be part of what a *developing Übersicht* is going to be about; once a misuse of language has been exposed as such to the users of the language through the development of the *Übersicht*, as it then falls out of favour with the users it will naturally drop out of currency, which in turn will lead to a revised *Übersicht* describing the (now) correct use of language. In this way the aim of developing an *Übersicht*, to achieve an account of the correct use of language simply through representing, through description and comparison, the use of language as it stands, moves towards fruition; and it is an important part of the process to accurately represent, indiscrimately, both uses *and misuses* of language.

Thus the strategy of exposing false ideas, like that implicit in Nietzsche's "eternal recurrence" or like Augustine's conception of language, in the way explained does seem to be intended as a direct contribution to our *Übersicht* of the use of language.

§4.3.2.2.1 *The* Witz *of a Linguistic Practice*[60]

It was one aspect of the philosophical notion of an *Übersicht* of our use of language as outlined towards the end of the last chapter that it was concerned with the *functioning* of language *in our lives*. This characterized the sense in which it was to be an *Übersicht* of our "use" of language; "use" was to be understood, in functional terms, as the contribution of linguistic practice toward the fulfilment of the multifarious ends in our lives, of we the human speakers of the language. And it also made "use"—and, with it, an "*Übersicht*" of "use"—something accessible only to human (potential or actual) participants in the linguistic practices concerned; only human beings could see the *point* of a particular use of language in the lives of the language-users, because only human beings could be party to the peculiarly human interests and concerns motivating that point.

It is this idea of the *point* of a use of language, which gives such uses their life-functional aspect for Wittgenstein, that I would like to make the topic of this subsection. And the reason is that I think it is an important idea for Wittgenstein's conception of language-game analysis. Indeed, I think that language-game analysis is best seen as a method of representing the point that the uses of expressions have in our lives. Language-games themselves are to have points, for the imagined people playing them; and, from the way that they are presented to us, we are to be able to see what their points would be—and, in fact, for them to have points is the main reason for insisting that language-games *be* language, in the way pointed out in my earlier characterization [in §4.3.2.1 above]. And these two facts, that language-games have points and that we can see what those points are, are, I think, essential to the process of language-game analysis to help solve philosophical problems; comparing the use of language implicated in a philosophical problem with the use of language in an appropriate language-game can, because of the clarity of the point of the language-game in all the details of the use of language in it, help us to clarify for ourselves

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60 The importance of the notion of the *Witz* of a use of language in Wittgenstein was pointed out to me be Roger White; and I have benefited a great deal from hearing his thoughts on the subject.

what the point of the problematic use of language proper really is and thence solve the problem.

Let me take a closer look at this notion of the point—or "*Witz*" as Wittgenstein puts it in the German—of a use of language as it appears in *Philosophical Investigations*. Let me begin with the introduction of the notion into *PI* in §62.

In §60, Wittgenstein introduces a language-game as follows:

Imagine a language-game in which someone is ordered to bring certain objects which are composed of several parts, to move them about, or something else of the kind. And two ways of playing it: in one (a) the composite objects (brooms, chairs, tables, etc.) have names ... ; in the other (b) only the parts are given names and the wholes are described by means of them.

and §62 relates to this language-game:

62. Suppose for instance that the person who is given the orders in (a) and (b) has to look up a table co-ordinating names and pictures before bringing what is required. Does he do *the same* when he carries out an order in (a) and the corresponding one in (b)?—Yes and no. You may say: "The *point* [*Witz*] of the two orders is the same". I should say so too.—But it is not everywhere clear what should be called the 'point' [*Witz*]' of an order. (Similarly one may say of certain objects that they have this or that purpose. The essential thing is that this is a *lamp*, that it serves to give light;——that it is an ornament to the room, fills an empty space, etc., is not essential. But there is not always a sharp distinction between essential and inessential.)

And the thing that I want to focus on here is what Wittgenstein means by:

The *Witz* of the two orders is the same.

An initial reaction, from the use of "point" in the English, is that he must mean something like that the two orders amount to the same thing, or that they have the same intended effect or goal, or that they have the same purpose. And if we look at Garth Hallett's index to *PI*, it bids us compare Wittgenstein's use of the word "*Witz*" with his use of the words for "aim", "goal", "purpose" and "service" elsewhere in *PI*. And all of these are along the right lines because the notion of the *Witz* of the use of an expression is set up in such a way as to capture any of these nuances that are appropriate to the particular case at issue. "*Witz*" is the German word for "joke", and its use is metaphorical in §62.

The *joke* of the two orders is the same.

And to understand this metaphor we need to see the analogy between the two orders that Wittgenstein is talking about here and two different ways of telling the same joke. What is important about a joke isn't the actual *wording* of the joke, but the *point* of it. Of course, the wording *is* important in so far as it is responsible for communicating the point of the

joke, but in most cases we would say that the same joke can be told in many different ways. And what identifies the joke, what these different wordings of the joke have in common, is what it is about them all that makes us laugh, what is translated as the *point* of the joke.

So what we have in §62 is Wittgenstein setting up an analogy. Something is to the use of an expression, he is saying, as the point is to the joke; and it is this something, the *Witz* of the use of an expression, that we are concerned with. All we have, to begin with, is the analogy which the metaphor invites us to explore and make of it what we will. And the story is going to vary from case to case along the sorts of lines suggested by Hallett in the *PI* index—the rough story being that the *Witz* of a use is the role that the use has in the language of the user.

Let me take up the invitation to explore the analogy briefly, beginning with a few examples of jokes:

1. Old George: This big, beautiful, blonde came up to me the other day and said: "Hiya Handsome! ...can you tell me the way to the Optician's?"

2. An eminent psychiatrist was introduced to Queen Marie of Romania when she made an official visit to his hospital. He gazed at her attentively, ignored all the questions she addressed to him, then turning to a nearby colleague he remarked: "Interesting, so the old dear thinks she's a Queen, eh?"

3. Jo Brand: "I only realized how little my boyfriend understood the situation when he turned up at the [abortion] clinic, the day after, with a bag of Jelly Babies for me."

4. There are two sausages in a pan, and one says to the other: "It's hot in here isn't it?", and the other one says: "Flipping heck, a talking sausage!"

5. When offered the choice of a penny and a shilling, the village idiot always chose the penny. People were so amused by this stupidity, that they repeatedly tested it. But the idiot was never tempted to pick the shilling, for he reckoned that if he did people might stop offering him anything.

6. —Mummy mummy, can I go and play with Grandma?
   —No you can't, you've already dug her up three times this week.

7. Junior woman, holding the door: "Age before beauty!"
   Dorothy Parker, passing through the door: "Pearls before swine!"

And simply by considering these examples in the context of a comparison with the use of words generally in our day to day lives to consolidate this notion of the *Witz* of a use of language, we can instantly come up with several interesting and illuminating points of analogy; let me indicate what I think they are.

The first is the variety of different points that jokes have; what it is about the joke that makes one laugh in each of the examples varies greatly in character from one example to the next. And this immediately raises a second point: the potential for this variety is down to the *complexity* of character in the individual case. This complexity of character is a product of the sheer quantity of background experience and understanding that we have to bring to a joke in order to get the point of it; to borrow a form of metaphor that Wittgenstein uses in another context [*PI*, p.122], we might say that a whole cloud of life is condensed into a single drop of joke.

In addition to these two, there is the point that, at least partly because of the complexity just mentioned, although it tends to be very easy for us to understand jokes, it is notoriously difficult to explain what the point of one is. Then, finally, there is the point that understanding jokes like the ones given requires adoption of a particular culturally-informed viewpoint on the world; only those who can, to a greater or lesser extent, get inside the way of life of the speakers of the language of the joke can hope to get the joke.

All of these characteristics of jokes, I think, find analogues in Wittgenstein's proto-notion of the *Witz* of a use of language. Consider in this regard the examples that he gives in the following passage which is taken from the context of a discussion of the point of an imagined linguistic practice:

...What is the point of our brushing our hair in the way we do? Or when watching the coronation of a king, one might ask, "What is the point of all this?" If you wish to give the point, you might tell the history of it.
What was the point of imitating gothic? It isn't clear in all that we do what the point is. ...
[*Wittgenstein's Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics, Cambridge 1939*, p.204]

These examples suggest a parallel variety, complexity, ineffability and embedment in a way of life to that evident in jokes. And thus they suggest that our previous points of analogy were along the right lines for a preliminary characterization of the *Witz* of a use of language as Wittgenstein was thinking of it.

But I don't want to pursue the notion any further here. That preliminary bare sketch I think suffices to make it highly plausible that there is a potential concept—*sc.* of the *Witz* of a use of words—there, and hence to make adequate sense of my claim that language-

game analysis is a technique that Wittgenstein invented for us to help ourselves to see the *Witzes* of our uses of language more clearly.

§4.3.2.2.2 Modelling Language

So, what I think is the basic role envisaged for language-games in philosophy is that they are to be perspicuous, free-standing, linguistic practices that are to act as objects of comparison for our own (real) linguistic practices, to shed light on the point, the *Witz*, of our pursuing those practices in our lives.

The problem is that the point of our pursuing our ordinary linguistic practices is typically so very intricate, and so deeply involved in our whole way of life, that it is difficult for us to comprehend; and this is especially so in those areas of language that have traditionally been the concern of philosophy: the practice of expressing or justifying beliefs; of speaking the truth or speaking meaningfully; of reasoning correctly; of doing the right thing; of thinking; and so on, and so on. And then this problem is compounded by the fact that we are, for a multitude of different reasons, misled, or tempted, into misrepresenting in a multitude of different ways the real point of our using language in the way that we do—*all* language is open to being misused, including that language that is concerned with representing, talking about, the use of language. This is the fog, some of which is generated by the Augustinian mythology, that language-games are to help us disperse.

And it is as *models* for the use of language proper that they are to do this. And in this subsection and the next, I want to try to explain the mechanism of the modelling process involved.

I said above of the early instances of employment of language-games in *PI* that they were *targeted* at ways in which we use our ordinary language that are implicated in the genesis of philosophical problems. And this, I think, is a general principle in the technique of language-game analysis, applying to all language-games. They are selected or constructed to order, to meet the specific requirements of a targeted situation, to sort out our understanding of the way that language is being used in that problem-generating situation. And they do this by modelling the troublesome use of words.

In *PI* §130, Wittgenstein refers to language-games as objects of comparison "meant to throw light on the facts of our language by way not only of similarities, but also of dissimilarities". And it is a characteristic of the enormously widespread and multifarious use of models in our thought generally that they shed light on whatever it is that they are modelling not just in virtue of the ways that they resemble it, but also in virtue of the ways that they differ from it. So, for instance, it is just as important for an Ordnance Survey map from the point of view of its helping us to find our way about in a place that it is massively scaled down or that it excludes a great deal of obscuring detail of the landscape as it is that the distances and orientations on the map are all in correct proportion and correspondence to the distances and orientations in reality. And then the profile of similarities and dissimilarities contributing to the effectiveness of the modelling process is going to vary widely from particular case to particular case; and this is going to be so even when we are concerned solely with cases of modelling language with language-games. And we can instantly get a sense of this variety by just roughly comparing the analogy between the language-game in *PI* §1 and its target in language—going to the shop to get five red apples, and related practices—and that in 49) of *The Brown Book* and *its* target—practices of expressing possibility—: the analogies in the two cases have such very different forms to them. And this variety in the form of analogy entering into the modelling process with language-games is going to arise both because of the variety of linguistic phenomena that are under investigation and because of the variety of ways in which those phenomena are related to their respective philosophical problems.

In spite of this wide variety in form of analogy from case to case in the employment of language-games, I would still say that there is a basic common process of comparison in which the analogy has a role; in other words, I still want to insist that language-games always work in basically the same way.

And I think that it helps with understanding the way in which language-games work to think, in the light of what I have said already about the kinds of things that I think language-games are, of the way in which Wittgenstein also talks in *PI* about our own, real, linguistic practices and even "the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it

is woven" [*PI*, §7] as "language-games". And what I would claim about this other way in which Wittgenstein uses the term "language-game" is that it is a metaphorical use of the term [*cf.* footnote 56 above];[61] it is a use of the term that draws on the analogy between the kinds of simple artificial languages that we have been looking at under the title "language-games" in this chapter up to now and certain of *our* uses of *our* language. The point is that it turns out to be very useful in sorting out problems arising because of our lack of clarity about the use of our language to think of that language, or, much more typically, of specific from amongst our linguistic practices, as if it, or they, were language-games: the same kind

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61   On many occasions, in *PI* and elsewhere in his writings, Wittgenstein does apply the term "language-game" to ordinary language, to all of it, or some part of it. For example, on *PI* p.200 he writes: "what we have ... to do is to *accept* the everyday language-game, and to note *false* accounts of the matter *as* false. The primitive language-game which children are taught needs no justification; attempts at justification need to be rejected". And in *PI* §23, he says: "new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten. ... Here the term 'language-*game*' is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life. [Followed by a long list of different language-games.]" And then, throughout the course of *PI*, Wittgenstein refers to the language-game of "I dreamt...", "I mean...", "I thought...", lying, reporting, telling, describing, etc. And, in all these example contexts, because, I think, Wittgenstein's use of "language-game" comes across as so natural, absolutely unheralded and seamlessly integrated into the straightforward, literal, prose surrounding it, the claim that this use is metaphorical begins to look somewhat doubtful. However, I do think that this appearance is deceptive.

    Why I think the term, in the kind of contexts cited, appears to be being used as a straightforward concept-word is that it is being used there to express ideas that are already available to us through the established expressive resources of our language; it seems to me that to all intents and purposes—except in §23, where Wittgenstein is not *using* the term directly, but is reflecting upon one aspect of the way he sees it to be working—the expression "linguistic practice" could capture adequately-well whatever literal reference "language-game" has in the example contexts. And this then leaves it difficult to explain why Wittgenstein should use a *neologism* when existing words would do, especially given the persistent advocacy of respect for the ordinary use of ordinary language, as it stands, that runs through *PI*, and indeed throughout his later work.

    As I understand it—and as I am in the process of explaining in the main text—,"language-game" is a technical term for Wittgenstein, one that he coined to refer to the kind of little language of which I have discussed a number of his examples in the main text of this chapter up to now. Those little invented languages aren't, as I understand it, meant to be different *in kind* from the ordinary language that we speak naturally, rather the difference is one of scale. The linguistic practice of the English language is unfathomably great; it is impossible for us, because of the limitations of our experience and understanding, to get our heads round the whole of it; in other words, we are utterly incapable of achieving a full-blooded *Übersicht* of our natural language of the kind that we *can* have of Wittgenstein's little examples. Hence, to get anywhere with natural language philosophically, we need to try to break it up into fragments, to focus on our usage of the expression "I dreamt", or of "I mean", and so on. But such fragments are *not* language-games, because they are not self-contained languages, they are broken-off pieces of a much larger holistic whole language. And that is why I want to take "language-game" applied to such fragments as metaphorical. The fragments aren't language-games, but they can be fruitfully compared with language-games, in the way that I am in the process of explaining in the main text. And it is precisely the function of *metaphor* to encourage and shape comparisons of such kind.

of thing as those simple artificial languages. And the "language-game" metaphor for ordinary language invites us to explore the possibility of thinking of our linguistic practices as if they were perspicuous, free-standing, linguistic practices like the artificial languages.

And this way of construing Wittgenstein's talk of ordinary linguistic practice as the "language-game", or as composed of "language-games", suggests a particular line of interpretation for the process of modelling language with clear and simple language-games. The idea is that we conduct the comparison *under the pretence* that we are comparing like with like, that we are comparing one perspicuous, free-standing, linguistic practice with another. We set the measuring-rod [*cf. PI*, §131], the simple little invented language-game, up alongside ordinary linguistic practice as an object of comparison. And this initiation of the comparison, this invitation to explore the analogy between language and the language-game, has the effect—perhaps in addition to some explicit prompting [*cf.* the interpretation of *PI* §293 below]—of naturally drawing our attention to some *theme* or other in our use of our language which we make-believe is a language-game too, analogous to the object of comparison. And then the comparison proceeds with the model invented language-game, through similarities and dissimilarities, helping us to see the structure within which possible moves must be made towards fulfilment of the *Witz* of the make-believe language-game. And then, when we drop the pretence of language as language-game, we are left with an understanding of the way around that target theme in language itself.

It is, as I understand it, this idea of a make-believe language-game that Baker and Hacker [*cf.* footnote 56 above] don't manage to put their finger on in their account of the method of language-game analysis. Such a "language-game" isn't really a language-game at all, but some fragment of our own linguistic practice *imaginatively conceived as* a free-standing, perspicuous, linguistic practice with its own *Witz* independent of the language of which it is really an integral part.

Anyway, to recap, the employment of language-games as objects of comparison for language in philosophy envisaged by Wittgenstein is, as I understand it, a technique for clarification of targeted areas of our linguistic practice through a process of modelling. Comparison of language with an invented language-game marks out some region within our

use of language for consideration as if it itself were a language-game. But then, once the language-as-language-game has been thoroughly anatomized through comparison with the invented language-game, the pretence is waived and we are left with an understanding of the target fragment of language itself. Effectively, the whole process consists in isolating some one of our linguistic practices from the confusing background noise of the rest of language to explore thoroughly through the structural similarities and dissimilarities that it shows to our model language-game and then assimilating the knowledge gained of the linguistic practice considered in isolation back into our overall picture, our *Übersicht*, of our use of language as a whole.

Let me try now to give some substance to this account by looking at another example from *Philosophical Investigations*.

§4.3.2.2.3 *The "Beetle in a Box" Comparison*

The example that I would like to look at is the well-known "Beetle in a Box" comparison introduced in *PI* §293 in the following way:

> If I say of myself that it is only from my own case that I know what the word "pain" means—must I not say the same of other people too? And how can I generalize the *one* case so irresponsibly?——Suppose everyone had a box with something in it: we call it a "beetle". No one can look into anyone else's box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle is only by looking at *his* beetle.—Here it would be quite possible for everyone to have something different in his box. One might even imagine such a thing constantly changing.—But suppose the word "beetle" had a use in these people's language?—If so it would not be used as the name of a thing. The thing in the box has no place in the language-game at all; not even as a *something*: for the box might even be empty.—No, one can 'divide through' by the thing in the box; it cancels out, whatever it is.
>
> That is to say: if we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of 'object and designation' the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant. [*PI*, §293]

§293 opens here with a confused way of thinking about pain that is raw material for philosophy [*cf. PI*, §254]. The thinking is that how I know what pain *is* is through reference to my own private experience of pain; it is only through feeling pain myself that I am acquainted with pain and it is only through this, my acquaintance with pain, that I know what pain is. And the presentation of this misleading way of thinking at the beginning of the passage here also indicates the philosophical confusion that it leads us into. This is the problem that I do not know whether other people really have what I call "pain" when they say that they are in pain, not that they might be lying about it, but that what they call

"pain" in their own case might well be different from what I call "pain" in mine. And it is this idea of us all going about claiming only to know what pain is from what we feel in our own case that the "Beetle in a Box" language-game is intended to address.

Let me offer my own brief formulation of the language-game. The idea, as I understand it, is of a tribe of people who, in their linguistic practice, each have a box with something in it which they call a "beetle". It is a part of this practice that everyone is strictly restricted to only looking at their own beetle—perhaps there is a taboo prohibiting looking into anyone else's box—, and also the practice is such that it would, in fact make no difference if everyone had something different in their box or even if some or all of the boxes were empty—perhaps there is a further taboo prohibiting anyone from describing in any way what they have in their box. But, in spite of these constraints, the word "beetle" does have a use in the tribe's language—we might imagine it, for example, having a role to play in some kind of ritual in the life of the tribe. And also, everyone in the tribe says that they know what a beetle is only by looking at *their* own beetle.

That, I think, adequately describes the language-game with which Wittgenstein wants to model our misleading use of the word "pain"; it isn't a complete description in itself, but I think that it *could be* completed [*cf.* footnote 59 above] to give us a possible, perspicuous, free-standing, linguistic practice. And the important fact about the language-game for it to shed light by analogy on our "language-game" with the word "pain" is that whatever it is that the people of the imagined tribe each have in their boxes turns out to be irrelevant to the use of the word "beetle" in their language. This is the observation with which Wittgenstein ends his discussion of the "Beetle in a Box" language-game and which leads him into his conclusion about our use of the word "pain" in the final short paragraph of §293.

This conclusion is that it is the fact that we try to think of the word "pain" as the name of a kind of thing that leads us into philosophical confusion. We try to think of pains as objects, but then it turns out that there are no such objects: this is the source of our confusion. And this conclusion is a re-casting of that original expression of the target theme in our use of the word "pain" with which §293 began.

If I say of myself that it is only from my own case that I know what the word "pain" means—must I not say the same of other people too? And how can I generalize the *one* case so irresponsibly?

is re-cast as:

...if we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of 'object and designation' the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant.

And this re-casting is achieved, as I understand it, through precisely the kind of modelling process described in the last subsection above. The target problem-theme in our use of language is initially picked out with that initial expression of the confusion in the opening short paragraph of §293. And then this theme is subjected to comparison with the "Beetle in a Box" language-game.

In the language-game, the people of the tribe are led into the confusion of saying that they each know what a beetle is from their own case. The word "beetle" in their language *looks* so much like the name of a kind of thing: the kind of thing that everyone each has in their box. In their use of the word "beetle" they would seem to be referring to this kind of thing—for instance, we can imagine one of them looking into his box and saying: "This beetle is *so* important to me", or one of them asking another whether he had left his beetle at home, and so on. But we can see clearly in this language-game that there is no kind of thing that a beetle is. Even if everyone in fact had the same kind of thing in their box, the language-game would have worked just as well if one person had had a beetle in their box, another a ten pence piece, another nothing at all, and so on, and hence *within the language* there is no kind of thing that a beetle is. And this means that the word "beetle", whatever use it has in the language of the tribe, isn't the name of a kind of thing.

And the comparison of the target theme in our thinking about pain with this language-game prompts us into the imaginative conception of that target theme as its own language-game on the model of the one described. We make-believe that we ourselves play a language-game with the word "pain" that is closely analogous to that of the tribe with the boxes. This "language-game" might be captured in the following terms, closely similar to the terms in which Wittgenstein describes the "Beetle in a Box" language:

Everyone has their own private sensations of pain. These sensations are "private" in the sense that everyone feels their own pain, but no one can feel another person's, and everyone says that he knows what pain is only by directly feeling *his* pain.—Here it would be quite possible for everyone to be feeling something

different. One might even imagine such a thing constantly changing.—But suppose the word "pain" had a use in this language-game?—If so it would not be used as the name of a thing. The thing felt has no place in the language-game at all; not even as a *something*: for it might even be the case that nothing is felt.—No, one can divide through by the thing felt; it cancels out, whatever it is.

Here we have a description of the target practice in the use of the word "pain" in the form of a language-game analogous to the "Beetle in a Box" language. And it gives us a kind of *hybrid* of, on the one hand, our ordinary linguistic practice and, on the other, a language-game. And this hybrid has a *disturbing* quality for us. On the one hand, it has the aspect of a perfectly respectable language-game with a perfectly respectable form, analogous to the "Beetle in a Box" language. But on the other hand, because the description of it uses our ordinary words for talking about pain, and because the use of those words in the hybrid also closely resembles a theme in our ordinary use, the description thus captures the confusion that is inherent in that ordinary talk of pain. It is this confusion that makes us feel uncomfortable with the hybrid; it makes it feel as if the hybrid threatens our ordinary understanding of what it is to feel pain; the pain that I feel can't be nothing, we react by wanting to say, it must be something. But all that shows is how strongly committed we are to (mis)construing the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of "object and designation"[*PI*, §293]. That is our ordinary understanding, and it is that ordinary understanding that is the source of the confusion in our ordinary thinking. There is a strictly analogous confusion open to the speakers of the "Beetle in a Box" language—which they are tempted to fall into with their talk of knowing what a beetle is only by looking at one's own beetle—but, in that context we don't feel any resistance to the form of account given, and that is because we don't feel that anything is at stake for us in the issue as to whether the "Beetle in a Box" scenario is genuine language or not.

The truth is that the "Beetle in a Box" language *is* genuine language, all plainly in perfect working order, and that the hybrid, with its analogous form does pose a genuine threat to our ordinary understanding of what pain is: "If we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of 'object and designation' [which we *do* do] the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant"[*PI*, §293]. And this in turn means that, on our

(mis)conception of pain, pains both are and are not objects (which is what exposes us to the paradox that we both cannot and can know whether someone else is in pain).[62]

And that is all that I want to say in interpretation of §293. I hope that, as it stands, that interpretation does help, by illustration, to support and clarify the account of the general process of language-game analysis given in the previous subsection. And I also want, with that, to leave off discussing language-games in general and how they work for philosophy. In the next section I want to try to give substance to the idea of logics, the products of the process of sublimation described in the last chapter, as a special case of language-games, working in the same way.

§4.4 Logics[63] as Models of Language

I said, in my characterization of language-games a few pages ago that, on my interpretation of Wittgenstein, language-games were objects of comparison for language that were "constructed to order" and "targeted" at specific problem-areas of our use of words. And it strikes me that these are two characteristics of language-games that pose telling *prima facie* problems for the thesis that our Augustinian logic works as a variety of language-game

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62 I would like to make an observation here, in support of my interpretation, in §3.2.1.2.1 above, of *PI* §127—:"The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose". My interpretation was that Wittgenstein was thinking of philosophical problems as delusional misunderstandings of the way that ordinary language functions, and that the philosopher's job was to set up a battery of "reminders", of clear representations of aspects of the true function of the problematic uses of language, to try to overthrow the delusion. As I understand it, if the above account is correct, Wittgenstein uses the "Beetle in a Box" language-game to set up precisely such a "reminder". This, I think, explains the way in which *PI* §293, when one considers it in the way that I have been suggesting, seems momentarily to solve the problem, before doubts flood back in and the philosophical problem re-establishes itself in our understanding. Considered alone, *PI* §293 does not solve the problem that it addresses; that problem, if my impression is correct, is going to turn out to be a big problem with a great many ramifications in our thinking, and the "Beetle in a Box" language to address just one, albeit significant, such ramification.

63 I use the plural "logics" in the section title here to emphasize the fact that although from within the Augustinian delusion there is only one true logic which everyone is aiming at—such that all disagreements, say between Russell and Frege, over what precisely that logic is are taken to be in principle resolvable—in reality, according to the *PI* position, different versions of the Augustinian logic, *qua* means of genuinely helping to understand truth in language proper, present distinct models of natural language, distinct through each having their own characteristic profiles as objects of comparison, each with different strengths and weaknesses in different areas of language use, for helping to bring out the true use of language in places where we have difficulty seeing it.

analysis. On the one hand, logic appears simply not to involve *construction* at all; rather, we want to say, logic *describes* the use of language as a vehicle for truth. And on the other hand, logic doesn't appear to be concerned with any specific area of language ahead of any other; unlike language-game analysis, logic doesn't appear to have any philosophical agenda of its own at all. And I would like to structure my account in this section of the idea of our Augustinian logic as a form of language-game analysis around a response to these two *prima facie* problems: how might it be that our logic involves the construction of a language-game to work as an object of comparison for language? and, how might it be that that logic is targeted at specific, philosophically problematic, uses of language?

I think that both of these problems can be solved through recourse to the account of the genesis of Augustinian logic outlined in the previous chapter, and this is the way I would like to begin.

In that previous chapter, we saw how, on my interpretation of Wittgenstein, logic was a mythology of truth in language constructed in a way analogous to the construction of a delusional system; it was a systematic attempted justification of the idea of truth as where language *makes contact* with reality, with *that* initial thought as the primary delusion around which a story of logic was built up. And that story was built up in response to pressure from the need for it to serve us as a *genuine understanding* of truth in language. And an important point about the process of construction relevant to current concerns is that it would have developed *piecemeal* in response to problems with the story as it currently stood; the story would be worked out to a certain point and then the next problem would be put to it which would require further elaboration, and then the next problem would arise, and so on—this, as I indicated in the last chapter, is part of what Wittgenstein, I think, meant when he said: "Other illusions come from various quarters to attach themselves to the special one spoken of here"[*PI*, §96]. And this piecemeal development of our logical account of language in reaction to a stream of problems, I think, helps to see how Augustinian logic might, despite appearances, target sources of philosophical problems in the use of language. Let me explain.

Remember that the mythology of logic is meant to be a mythology about the way language is to be used as a vehicle for truth. And this means that those formative problems, in reaction to which it is to be thought out, are going to be problems that arise for it *qua* explanation of the use of language for truth. Some of these are going to be problems specific to the line of explanation that is being taken, problems generated by trying to explain truth in that particular way—for instance, many of the problems that Frege, Russell and the early Wittgenstein worried about are, I think, of this kind: the paradox of "the concept *horse* is not a concept"; the problem that the definition of, say, number must determine whether Julius Caesar is a number or not; Russell's paradox; the problem of the meaningfulness of names that lose their referent; and so on—, others, though, are going to be problems that *any* candidate explanation of truth is going to have to deal with—and particularly salient examples here would, I think, be many of the different forms of fallacy. And, of course, all of these problems are *philosophical* problems—and, indeed, many, if not even all, philosophical problems would, I think, find a place on one of these two lists. And what this means is that, for Wittgenstein, the Augustinian account of truth has been developed to cope with problems of philosophy; in other words, in a sense it *is* "targeted" at specific philosophical problems.

So, here we have the rudiments of an account of the way in which logic *is* constructed, and *is* targeted at philosophical problems. However, it remains to be seen whether this construction and targeting is the same form of construction and targeting characteristic of language-game analysis. And I would like to show now why I think it *is* the same form.

I just said that our Augustinian logical account of language has, according to Wittgenstein, been developed to cope with the philosophical problems that are *the* obstacle to its credibility as an account of language. And I think that understanding the way in which the account so copes is the way to see how it is essentially the account of a language-game, because I think that it copes with the problems in part *as* the account of a language-game. *In part*, our logical account of truth has been developed into the account of a perspicuous, free-standing, linguistic practice which is multilaterally comparable with

language proper in helping us to deal with philosophical problems by showing us our way clear of them; but then the account also involves the idealization of the linguistic practice that it describes to overawe us into accepting it as the language of truth without plugging the problems too hard. However, I would like to ignore, in my account that follows, that complicating factor of the defensive idealization of logic, driven by the felt need for our account of logic to provide us with a vindication of language in the way discussed in the previous chapter. It seems to me justified to do so, as that sublimation has no effective role to play in the utility of the mythology, which it gets through the comparisons that it leads us to make, when it comes to genuinely understanding the way in which language functions. So, let me try to show why I think logic, ignoring the sublimation involved in it, works as a form of construction of, and comparison of language with, a language-game to help us see our way through philosophical problems.

As we saw in the last chapter, the Augustinian logical picture is meant to be a view of our language as *übersichtlich*, as a language the use of which we *can* have a bird's eye view of. This means that the picture, in so far as it manages to achieve being what it sets out to be, is a picture of a perspicuous, free-standing, linguistic practice (indeed, of a perspicuous, free-standing, *language*). However, as we also saw in the last chapter, that picture of language *isn't*, in fact, a picture of our language: for one thing, our language is far more complicated than the picture suggests. And this, in turn, means that the picture is the picture of a language different from our own, but that resembles it closely enough to masquerade as it in front of our understanding without detection (aided, of course, by the haze of idealization surrounding it). Hence logic turns out to be the account of a clear and simple language with all the hallmarks of a language-game. In that way logic *looks like* a language-game.

And logic also, of course, *works* for us very well in practice. And what I mean by this is that logic helps us in our actual daily linguistic interactions to use language as a vehicle for truth; it is clearly of enormous help to us in achieving truthfulness in what we say to allow ourselves to be guided by the logical account of truth. *All the time*, it seems, we use language in accordance with the laws of logic and the rules of logical grammar, and

doing so is hugely beneficial to us in avoiding meaninglessness, avoiding fallacies, and so on.

But has this beneficence of logic got anything to do with the fact that logic looks like the account of a language-game? This is the important thing; to show how it has.

The major obstacle, it seems to me, in the way of explaining the effectiveness of logic as a guide for truth in terms of the comparison of language with a language-game is that there appears to be no *comparison* actually going on when we use language in accordance with the rules of logic. The rules of logic, it seems, simply *are* the rules for use of our language in reasoning correctly. And, although logic is at work at least a good deal of the time in our everyday reasoning, there appears to be no evidence whatever in our ordinary experience of reasoning to suggest that a process of comparison is what is going on. This major obstacle is what I want to tackle now.

A first reaction to this problem from the viewpoint of the account developed in the last chapter would be to say that of course, it is bound to look as if the rules of logic are the rules of our language *from within the delusional system of the mythology*, because the delusion, that we are all susceptible to, just *is* that our language is as logic says it is. As a consequence of our insistence on the *Übersichtlichkeit* of language we have concealed from ourselves the true nature of what is going on in logical analysis—"we misunderstand the role of the ideal in our language"[*PI*, §100]—, what is really going on is comparison. However, although what this initial response says is, I think, correct, what I am trying to do in this chapter is to provide the groundwork for an account of the way that the language of logic works to *provide independent support* for the analysis given in Chapter 3. And for this reason I think it is important for me to try to show how, despite appearances to the contrary, comparison of language with a language-game might well *be* going on in logic. So let me pursue the matter further.

To begin with, let me say one or two things that, I think, soften the blow of the objection that there is no evidence of comparison in our experience of reasoning. Firstly: I would say that the comparisons involved in logic are never *explicitly* made. Either whenever we are following the dictates of logic in our reasoning *or* whenever we are

engaged in logical analysis, working out what those dictates are, we never make explicit to ourselves this language-game that logic in fact describes; and *ipso facto* we never make our comparison of language with that language-game explicit either. Frege's *Begriffsschrift* is an important attempt to make the language-game described by logic explicit, but nothing like that plays an overt role as an object of comparison either in our everyday linguistic interactions or, typically, in philosophy. No, the comparison of language with the language-game of logic is something that is *implicit* in reasoning and in philosophy.

And the second thing that I would say to try to take some of the heat out of the objection that there is no evidence of comparison in reasoning or analysis is that it seems to me that a great deal of the time in our ordinary everyday—*i.e.*, non-philosophical—use of language as a vehicle for truth we are working within the rules of the Augustinian logical model without any comparison, explicit *or* implicit, actually going on. And this is because the use of language on that logical model has become the tried and tested standard for expression and conduction of truth, and as such has been fully taken on board into our established linguistic practice. Partly what this means is that we have, in our use of language as a vehicle for truth, *learned the lesson* of comparison with the language of logic, that we no longer fall into the kind of traps that logic was developed to help us to see our way out of, indeed, that we automatically steer clear of them. But it also means that when we appeal to the rules of logic to settle a dispute about truth in a use of language, the appeal to the rules is often enough just by itself to resolve the matter, that it is enough just to remind ourselves what the object of comparison, what the standard, is.

Another way of putting the point of the previous paragraph is to say that it very often seems that we *blindly* follow the dictates of logic in our use of language; all we do is to use language in the way that custom tells us is appropriate in a particular context without any sense of *why* it is appropriate to use language in that way there; even when we involve the rules of logic themselves in our linguistic practice, we often automatically and unquestioningly take them to be authoritative. And, incidentally, I think that this blindness in our use of language in accordance with logic can help explain how we are capable at one and the same time of, on the one hand, believing that logic gives us an account of the

workings of the whole of language, and on the other, employing logic (which in fact does no such thing) in such a way that it always does work for us. The point would be that custom in fact only dictates that we use language on the model of logic in contexts where it does in fact work, and not elsewhere. So we just unconsciously either fall in with logic or drop it in our linguistic practice appropriately to the context, following the custom. And when it comes to the question of the possibility of logic as *the* account of language as a whole, custom dictates that we approach language in such a way that it does look as if logic holds sway universally, perhaps by biasing the natural choice of representative samples of the use of language to test out the theory. And the reason why this all works for us in practice, is simply, I think, because what it is that drives the establishment of linguistic custom in the first place is always, at bottom, that it *does* work in practice for the speakers of the language to use language in that way in pursuit of their ends.

Anyway, that point is something of a diversion. What is still waiting to be addressed is the question as to when and how we implicitly involve ourselves in comparing language with the language of logic. This is the key question facing the credibility of the account of logic as language-game analysis.

And the answer to it, in a nutshell, is, I think, that we are involved in such comparisons of language with the language described by logic whenever we use the Augustinian logical model to help us to *see* how language proper is to be used as a vehicle for truth. Let me explain.

It seems to me that one area of our use of language in which we clearly are involved in using the Augustinian logical model to help us to see how to use language for truth is in the development of that logical account of language through logical analysis. That process of development is, I think, despite appearances, closely analogous to the process of development of our *Übersicht* of the use of language through language-game analysis in philosophy as outlined in the previous sections of this chapter. In short, I think that that process of development of the logical account *is* a process of development of a logical model for language; it is the selection of facets to a logical model that are the most useful in helping us to see generally, in whatever area of language might interest us, how to use

language as a vehicle for truth. In effect what we are doing when we puzzle over, for instance, the logic of proper names is imaginatively casting about for a body of rules "for the use of proper names" that can be incorporated into our extant logical model of language and that are helpful in comparison with our actual use of actual proper names in actual language to use those actual proper names in ways that are truth apt. The process is, in part, one of trial and error; though we are, of course, guided in our choice of candidate proper name facets to our logical model by our natural understanding of our use of proper names and the first-hand experience that we have of the problems that arise with it.

But, of course, this isn't how we think of what we are doing. We think of ourselves, rather, as investigating the rules for the correct use of actual language directly, as *describing* the way that language ought to be used as a vehicle for truth. So what *is* going on?

Well, I think that the way to understand what is going on is to recall the mechanism of language-game analysis as explained in §4.3.2.2.2 above. How it worked was, essentially, through the construction of perspicuous, free-standing, linguistic practices for comparison with analogous fragments of our ordinary linguistic practice as a way of illuminating the function-relevant structure of those fragments. The trick was to use the model to help us to imaginatively conceive of the target linguistic fragment as a free-standing language in its own right, thus isolating it and its role in life from the confusing background noise of life and linguistic practice as a whole with which it itself, in the field, would be integrally entangled.

And this is the mechanism that I think Wittgenstein is thinking of as working logical analysis. And how I think the idea of this comparative mechanism as behind logical analysis can be reconciled with our impression of what we are doing in such analysis as descriptive of language is through that part of the mechanism involving the imaginative conception of (part of) actual linguistic practice as itself a language-game analogous to the object of comparison. I think we can take this imaginative construction in the case of logical analysis as the object that is being described; we describe a hybrid use of language *on the model of* logic. In other words, what we describe is using language as if it were all

part of a language-game analogous to the clear and simple language of logic. And thinking of the use of language in the way thus described is effectively anatomizing that use of language through comparison of it with the use of the language of logic. We think of the specimen of language as working in a way analogous to a language conceived on Augustinian lines, and this sheds light for us on the way that specimen is articulated in its commitment to communication of the truth back in linguistic practice itself.

The source of confusion for us in this is, I think, the way in which the language of these "descriptions" of our use of language on the model of logic works. Such descriptions look like straightforward literal descriptions of the use of language, but they cannot be such. And why they cannot be such is because what they are trying to describe is this hybrid use of language on the model of logic, the use of language *as under the pretence* that it is the use of a language analogous to the language of logic. But such a use of language cannot be captured using our standard semantic vocabulary in the standard way. Because that standard use of our standard semantic vocabulary is earmarked for the description of the use of language in the standard literal way, not in such an act of make-believe.

So how *does* the language of describing the logic of our language work? Well, my suggestion, that seems to me consonant with Wittgenstein's position, is that it works through a queer double-use of our semantic vocabulary. The idea would be that the sentences involved in describing the logic of language employ terms from our semantic vocabulary in two different ways at once, one in the standard literal way of some element in our actual use of language, but another pertaining to our understanding of the workings of the Augustinian language, the language of logic. In this way those "descriptions" of the logic of language would communicate two descriptions in the same sentence: one of the theme in the use of ordinary language that was under scrutiny and one of an analogous theme in the use of the logical model language. And in this way they would capture the thinking of the use of language on the model of the ideal in the way that we want.

This is only the very barest suggestion as to how the language of logical description might work, but I think that it is promising. The important thing about it here is that it suggests how the kind of process of comparison that motors language-game analysis in

philosophy as Wittgenstein was thinking of it might be active in logical analysis in spite of appearances to the contrary. It offers the chance of an explanation of the way in which the language used to account for the logic of our language can so easily be mistaken for straightforward literal description of the way to use language, because it says that in part such descriptions of logic *are* straight descriptions of the use of our language, the point being, though, that that isn't all they are.

§4.5 Conclusion

And that ends my attempt to substantiate the thesis that our Augustinian logic is a form of language-game analysis, and, with it, my account of Wittgenstein's later conception of that logic as a whole. In the next, final chapter I will bring my whole thesis to a close by relating my discussion of Wittgenstein on the nature of logic back to the problems of vagueness specifically.

Chapter 5

Conclusion: Towards a Solution to the Problems of Vagueness

§5.1 Introduction

In the three previous chapters, in my discussion of *PI*, I said very little specifically about either the phenomenon or the problems of *vagueness*. And in this chapter I would like to make up that deficit, concluding my thesis by relating my interpretation of the early parts of *PI* to vagueness itself.

Essentially, the relation, as I see it, is very simple: the phenomenon and problems of vagueness are to be considered one part of the Augustinian mythological misunderstanding of language and truth which is embedded in our indigenous philosophy of them.

And in the preceding chapters I tried to work out from *PI* the general form and aetiology of the mythology—the defensive elaboration and subsequent idealization of a false *Übersicht* of the workings of language, driven by a desire to genuinely understand—and Wittgenstein's proposed method for dealing with, for disintegrating and dissolving, this mythology. The method is to be one of "assembling reminders" [*PI*, §127], that is, of building up a body of tellingly accurate representations—either directly, through description, or indirectly, through comparison with carefully constructed-to-order language-games—of the use of language under the influence of the mythology. This body of genuine understanding of our ways of using language that keep the Augustinian mythology alive in our thinking is then eventually, as it is built up and filled in in detail, to become the means by which we can confront ourselves with what we are really doing with those ways of using language, in such a way that we must fully face up to the problem, the anxiety—an anxiety,

as I characterized it in Chapter 3, arising from our perceived inability to manage language as a vehicle for truth—, ultimately motivating the mythology and its influence on us.

The general story, as Wittgenstein is thinking of it, of the Augustinian mythology as it is manifest in our use of language, is what I have tried to give in the previous chapters, with, apart from the outline interpretation of *PI* §§1-88 in Chapter 2, very little attention to what any details of that picture might be. And it is in those details, it seems to me, that the proof both of the validity itself of the project of dissolving the mythology of logic and, if valid, of the effectiveness of attempts to bring that project to fruition, are to be found. And it is also amongst those details, I think, that a correct understanding of, and a solution to the problems of, vagueness should be sought.

There is, as I understand it, a wealth of putative detail of the type at issue, in *PI*. Indeed, I take most of §§1-88 to be made up of such detail—and I also suspect that there is more of the same post-§133—, in a way that I tried to map out in the outline interpretation in Chapter 2. Only a bit of this detail—some five sections—relates specifically to the phenomenon of vagueness in the strictly limited sense—*i.e.*, what is standardly meant by "vagueness" in contemporary philosophy: the vagueness of predicates that is contrasted with the sharpness of sharply defined predicates and that is associated conceptually with the phenomenon of infinitely-higher-order vagueness—under scrutiny in this chapter. I will take a closer look at some of this material in the section following this one, to see, as far as can be, how Wittgenstein was thinking of his overall analysis of the Augustinian mythology as extending into the area of the problems of vagueness, of how those problems are the product of Augustinian thinking.

I do not believe Wittgenstein had an anywhere near *full* solution to the problems of vagueness, and nor do I believe that I can provide one here myself. If there is going to be such a full solution to those problems along Wittgensteinian lines in the end, my understanding is that it will take an as yet inestimable amount of work to get there. And my reasons for thinking this are first that, if Wittgenstein on my interpretation of him is right, then the problems of vagueness are integrally involved in a larger body of problems all stemming from the same systematic misunderstanding of truth in language, and their

dissolution is essentially bound up with that of the rest of the whole together. Second, that the systematic misunderstanding, the Augustinian mythology, is going to turn out to be, to a presently unforeseeable extent, widely and deeply ramifying throughout our use of language for truth. And, third, that the form of the mythology manifest in reality is going to be neither fixed—individual versions of it are going to be more or less fluid—nor unitary— there are going to be numerous different versions; and these latter considerations, the ramifying, fluid and multiplicitous nature of the mythology in general in actual language use, are all also going to apply to that part of the general mythology directly responsible for the problems of vagueness.

All those reasons make a Wittgensteinian solution to the problems of vagueness, if possible at all, appear a long way off, with a great deal of work to do to achieve one. However, the discouraging impression that this gives is, I think, compensated for a little by the possibility, in addressing the problems, of *targeting* representations of the use of language under the influence of the mythology in such a way as to maximize efficacy in challenging that mythology. Such targeting could work, it seems to me, in a number of different ways: perhaps one could come up with representations where the import of them is very clearly, and therefore very easily, transferable to count against further uses of language under the influence of the mythology; perhaps one could discover and home in on weak links in the mythological chain, where the mythology is least plausible given the actual linguistic phenomena; or perhaps one might benefit from locating and taking on uses of words in which commitment to the mythology is most powerfully, unshakeably, present, getting right at the root of the problem, so to speak.

Vagueness and its problems are themselves, as I see it, one weak link in the mythology; they stand out from reflections on the relation between logic, under the Augustinian conception of it, and natural language, as the product of a distinct *prima facie* mismatch between the two. And that gap between conception and reality at the point of the phenomenon of vagueness was one that neither Frege, nor Russell, nor the Wittgenstein of *TLP* was able to close; it was one of the reasons for the former two denying that ordinary language could support the mythology at all, and it was the reason for Wittgenstein, it

seems to me, completely writing *concepts*—as most naturally understood as rules for mapping objects into classes—out of his own version of the mythology.[64]

From the point of view of trying to exploit this problem, associated with vagueness, that the mythology has, as part of the later Wittgensteinian project of deconstructing the mythology, I think that a careful look at *Frege's* thinking about vagueness will turn out to be beneficial. As I tried to show in the opening chapter of my thesis, Frege's comments suggest a highly plausible characterization of the phenomenon of vagueness, one which is intended to give, in various ways, strong support to Frege's own account of logic in the face of apparent opposition from an incompatible reality of phenomena of ordinary language. Moreover, Frege's logic, it seems to me, and as I have suggested already on a number of occasions in my thesis up to now, is an "Augustinian logic" in Wittgenstein's sense. Perhaps I am wrong about this latter point; but Frege's logic *is* at least a strong candidate for such a "logic", and there is a stronger case still for Wittgenstein having thought of it in that way. So what I would say is that, *to the best of my current understanding*, what I think we have in Frege's thinking about vagueness is a highly plausible characterization of vagueness as part of, and in part-defence of, an Augustinian mythology of truth, a version (of the mythology generally) that was a potent influence on the content of Wittgenstein's analysis in *PI*. Such a strongly persuasive view of vagueness, and one with which we can expect more direct help from Wittgenstein than with any other, is one, as I say, worth careful consideration.

In fact, as far as I understand it, the Wittgensteinian analysis of Frege's view of vagueness is going to be precisely that suggested by *PI* and already mentioned as the subject of my next section. In the light of this, in the final section of this chapter when I turn to re-consider Frege's view of vagueness and his problems with it I will add nothing further to the core account of the analysis already given in the exposition of Wittgenstein in the section

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64 As I understand *TLP*, the role of (Fregean) predicates is taken over by potential "picturings" of reality, consisting of strings of simple names in order, with one or more name place left open for substitution. This does away with the notion of a class of objects sharing common characteristics that plays such a central role in Frege's understanding of concepts, as well as in our own naïve understanding.

before it. What I will do instead is try to show how a Wittgensteinian analysis might be begun to be brought to bear first on Frege's view of logic generally and then on his view of vagueness specifically as they are actually represented in his writings, how in practice one might begin to approach such an analysis of Frege.

First, though, vagueness in *PI*.

§5.2 *Vagueness in* Philosophical Investigations

There are five sections of *PI* that deal specifically with either vagueness, or its opposite, absolute sharpness, and the problems associated with them. These are: §69, §71, §76, §77, and §88. And, of these, it is just §69, with some support from §88, that gives an idea of the way in which Wittgenstein is thinking of the phenomenon of vagueness as a product of the Augustinian mythology, of how it fits in with the aetiology and formation of that conception as a whole. The remaining three sections—§71, §76 and §77—do not relate explicitly to that—all are part of the analysis, but none is self-conscious about it—, and I will therefore not look at them in any detail here.

§5.2.1 *Exactly Defined Concepts:* PI *§69*

So, having said that, let me give my exposition of *PI* §69. In §69, Wittgenstein first says something about the *exactness of definition* of a concept; and what he says, I think, turns out to be of fundamental significance to working out his thinking about vagueness. To understand this, I think it is necessary to appreciate what is said in §69 in the context of what is going on in those sections, §§65-8, leading up to it. Therefore, let me first have a look at those sections.

§5.2.1.1 PI *§§65-8, the Context of §69*

In my outline interpretation of *PI* §§65ff., in Chapter 2, I explained how I understand them to be the beginning of a new phase in Wittgenstein's discussion. Up to §65, his principal concern has been with that version of the Augustinian mythology which tries to treat all meaningful words as names brutely referring to objects, the version which he himself

developed in detail in *TLP*. Then, in §65, he effects a substantial shift in the Augustinian position that he is analysing, to allow in the more complex view of reference of words as determined by the satisfaction of certain defining requirements by an object; post-§65, the object picked out, meant, by a word, is the object in possession of the necessary and sufficient characteristics for application of the word.

And the significance of this shift in the Augustinian position that Wittgenstein is addressing in *PI* for the problems of vagueness, is that the notion of a predicate that is presupposed in formulating the problems of vagueness is one that essentially involves precisely the kind of application determined by the presence or absence of characteristic marks in play in *PI* post-§65. For example, it is an essential part of the Sorites scenario, that the predicate "…is a heap" applies to collections of grains of sand on the basis of them containing roughly more than some requisite number. This is a notion of a predicate that cannot be sustained by the understanding of meaning as brute reference that underpins that version of the Augustinian mythology in play pre- *PI* §65.

§§66-8 are, as I understand them, a direct reply to the Augustinian interlocutor's demand, at §65, of "…what the essence of a language-game, and hence of language, is: what is common to all these activities, and what makes them into language or parts of language" from Wittgenstein. Under Wittgenstein's persistent and telling analysis of his thinking, the interlocutor, in §65, has been forced to admit that his fundamental concern is that there should be an essence of language. In doing this, the interlocutor turns his concerns on Wittgenstein: if he's so sure of his views, the thought seems to be, then how does *he* propose to account for the necessary essence of language?

Wittgenstein's response is, through the description of examples of the actual use of words—centrally, the use of the word "game" for calling things games—, to begin to talk the Augustinian out of his absolute commitment to there being an essence of language—a commitment at this point expressed in the form of there being some one thing common to all that we call language.

The choice of the nominative use[65] of the word *"game"* specifically, for the description with which to open this response to the Augustinian's concerns, in §66, on my interpretation, draws directly on the analogy between games and language that can be seen as one of Wittgenstein's principal sources of ideas for his philosophy of language up to this point in *PI*. It is that analogy that enables a description of the use of the word "game" to count against a misunderstanding—the Augustinian's misunderstanding—of the use of the word "language". "Game" functions, nominatively, on the basis of family resemblances in the way described, and similarly for "language". Thus the specific point that Wittgenstein makes first in §§66 and 67 and then proceeds to develop in §68, in response to the demand for an essence of language as arose in §65, is, it seems to me, quite obvious and straightforward: there is no one thing common to all that we call language, because linguistic practices are related to each other *qua* language by family resemblances, without a common thread running through them all.

Now, none of that interpretation of §§65-8 relates directly to the phenomenon of vagueness, as I am thinking of it in my thesis, at all; the demand for something common to all objects falling under a given concept rebutted in §§66 and 67 is subsequently characterized in §68 as the drawing of a boundary to a concept; and that shows the issue throughout to be one not concerned with drawing a sharp boundary to a concept—*i.e.*, eliminating vagueness—, but with drawing a boundary at all. However, as I said at the outset of it, the interpretation does help to understand what happens in §69. And §69 is, I

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65 It is important to note here, I think, that Wittgenstein cites as his example the use of "game" for *calling* things games. Because that nominative form of use is the one that the Augustinian has taken up as *the*, one and only, form of use of all words. And it thus makes the objection that Wittgenstein is raising, with his description of the example, against the Augustinian tenet that there be some one defining characteristic of every object falling under a given concept appear, *prima facie*, far less important than it, in fact, is. All of the other elements of the Augustinian picture, other than that one specifically targeted and challenged with the example, rest quite happily, undisturbed by the description given, of the use of the general term "game" as the name for things of a particular kind; but that has the effect of camouflaging the radicalism of the opposition generally that Wittgenstein is making in *PI* to the whole Augustinian mythological way of thinking, to which the description of the example in §§66 and 67 belongs. In our own unconscious commitment to the Augustinian perspective, it is easy for us to overlook the fact that for Wittgenstein in *PI*, the nominalist use of a word is just one of "countless different kinds of use" [*PI*, §23]; and the possibility of such different kinds of use ought not to be simply ruled out without consideration for the use of "game" (or of "language"), just as it oughtn't to be in the case of the use of any other word.

believe, absolutely key to understanding what Wittgenstein is thinking of for the analysis of vagueness, in *PI*.

§5.2.2 Interpretation of §69

Let me quote §69 in full:

How should we explain to someone what a game is? I imagine that we should describe *games* to him, and we might add: "This *and similar things* are called 'games'". And do we not know any more about it ourselves? Is it only other people whom we cannot tell exactly what a game is?—But this is not ignorance. We do not know the boundaries because none have been drawn. To repeat, we can draw a boundary—for a special purpose. Does it take that to make the concept usable? Not at all! (Except for that special purpose.) No more than it took the definition: 1pace = 75 cm. to make the measure of length 'one pace' usable. And if you want to say "But still, before that it wasn't an exact measure", then I reply: very well, it was an inexact one.—Though you still owe me a definition of exactness.

[*PI*, §69]

Wittgenstein begins here by pursuing the Augustinian requirement, of §65, of an essence to language, still using the vehicle of the example of the workings of the word "game", into its consequences for what is to count as a philosophically satisfactory explanation of what a game—and, by analogy, what language—is. Under the influence of that Augustinian requirement, our everyday explanations of what something like a game is—perhaps through describing various games, and saying: "things like that"—look quite inadequate from the point of view of a general philosophical understanding of how the world is. (Augustinian) metaphysics seems to require from us a more *definite* understanding of what any given kind of thing—a game, or whatever—is than that evidenced in those everyday explanations that we give. The explanations make it look as if we don't *really* know what we are talking about. And Wittgenstein's response to this apparent inadequacy on our part is to argue that the perceived requirement of a definite conception of a kind of thing is not, in fact, indicative of genuine ignorance at all; we do not know the boundaries of concepts like that of a game, simply because none have been drawn, no definition has been determined. And in that way Wittgenstein tries to expose one further piece of Augustinian mythology to be meaningless fantasy.

That is the main point that, as I understand it, *PI* §69 sets out to make. However, it is not what I think is of interest in the section from the point of view of trying to understand vagueness. That argument of §69, as I have just presented it, addresses the same

Augustinian requirement as concerned §§66-8, namely, the perceived need of defined boundaries to concepts, *simpliciter*. However, also at issue in §69 is the distinct requirement of *exact* boundaries to concepts. And it is the way in which §69 suggests these two requirements, of determined and of exact boundaries for concepts, as required by the Augustinian, are related that is of interest for vagueness.

In fact, I have been unable to come to any interpretation of §69 in which Wittgenstein is not guilty of *conflating* the notion of exact boundaries to concepts with that of boundaries, unqualified. As I see it, the error lies in the use of the word "exactly" ("*genau*") in:

Is it only other people whom we cannot tell *exactly* what a game is? [*PI*, §69, italics mine.]

In this sentence, I take Wittgenstein to be referring to the idea that he sees us as, under Augustinian preconceptions, having, that although we *do know* what qualifies something as a game, the explanations that we try to give seem to inevitably fall short of capturing that knowledge; we know it, but cannot communicate it to anyone else. And Wittgenstein is implying, in the sentence, that the issue is of our feeling that we cannot communicate "exactly" what a game is, whereas the context of the remark, with the immediately subsequent talk of "boundaries", clearly in the sense of §68—"...To repeat [that is, what was said in §68], we can draw a boundary..."—, dictates that the concern ought to be not with exact boundaries but with boundaries *per se*. It seems to me that the use of the word "just" ("*gerade*") instead of "exactly" would have avoided the equivocation.

The very fact of this simple conflation of Wittgenstein's adds support, I think, to my own understanding of what he is doing in *PI* §69 and the rest. What he is doing, I would claim, is actively engaging in a rolling form of analysis with a source of Augustinian thinking, as if what he were dealing with were an actual person responsively trying to defend the mythology by coming up with some form of it that is immune to Wittgenstein's suggestions to the contrary. That, it seems to me, explains how Wittgenstein could have made such a simple error of thinking; what he is deeply involved in, at §69, is the task of trying to get the Augustinian to face up to one strand of misunderstanding in his general systematic self-deception; and, as such, what he is fixedly focused on is the Augustinian's

position as confronted with the observations that Wittgenstein has in play, at that particular point in the analysis, and, in particular, with what credible moves the Augustinian might make in reactive defence of his position. Being so immersed in that kind of analysis then left him vulnerable to overlooking the kind of distinction that he did, at the point that he did; at that early point in §69 he seems to have been getting ahead of himself, already having an eye on what move the Augustinian might make next.

And Wittgenstein brings the predicted next move of the Augustinian's fully out into the open at the end of §69:

...we can draw a boundary—for a special purpose. Does it take that to make the concept usable? Not at all! (Except for that special purpose.) No more than it took the definition: 1pace = 75 cm. to make the measure of length 'one pace' usable. And if you want to say "But still, before that it wasn't an exact measure", then I reply: very well, it was an inexact one.—Though you still owe me a definition of exactness.   [*PI*, §69]

Here, as I understand it, the notion of *one pace* is introduced as a family resemblance concept which clearly has a use as a measure of length, independently of whether or not it is defined as, say, equal to 75cm. and thus given what the Augustinian would see as a determinate boundary. Thus the example again, as examples in the preceding sections have done, challenges the Augustinian's demand for boundaries to concepts with a case where they are patently unnecessary; what is different in this case, though, is that there is the indication of a possible escape route for the Augustinian, through appropriation of the notion of *exactness* for his purposes. What the Augustinian might try to say, the suggestion is, is that it isn't simply boundaries that are required for concepts, after all, but *exact* boundaries. And if he were able to say this, then Wittgenstein's proposed ordinary language counter-examples—"game", and so on—to the Augustinian's picture of the workings of concepts would, because of their own *in*exactness, be rendered ineffective against that picture.

Wittgenstein's response to this possible development in the Augustinian position is, as I interpret him in §69, simply to hold out against it and maintain that there is nothing wrong philosophically with an inexact concept (a measurement, or whatever):

...if you want to say "But still, before that [*sc.* before 1pace was defined, putatively, as 75cm.] it wasn't an exact measure", then I reply: very well, it was an inexact one.

Then he also adds:

Though you still owe me a definition of exactness.

And by this I take him to be calling the notion of exactness appealed to by the Augustinian into question.[66]

Now, it is this possible move for the Augustinian, raised at the end of §69, along with Wittgenstein's response to it, that is, I believe, *the* key to understanding what the analysis of vagueness in *PI*, as far as it goes, is. And to appreciate this, I think one needs to see just how the move, how the appeal to exactness as in §69, works, or appears to work, for the Augustinian. That appeal, as I understand it, is, for Wittgenstein, one of those uses of words referred to in TS.220—the 1937 first draft of *PI* §§1-189—, §106 [see the beginning of §3.2.1.1.2.2 above for a full quotation, in translation], that we need to understand absolutely precisely if we are to reveal the way out of a philosophical problem; it is, in the terms of TS.220, the fundamental "false thought process" that we need to be able to "trace the physiognomy of" if we are to talk the Augustinian out of the problems that he has with vagueness. That description of that process is what Wittgenstein is involved in, however tersely, in *PI* §69. And what he contributes towards it there is what we want to work out.

§5.2.3 "Exactness" in PI §88

In fact, it would be very difficult, I think, because what is said is so brief, to work out the full significance of that reference to the exactness of concepts in §69 just by considering it in its immediate context. However, looking at it in conjunction with the later section §88 where Wittgenstein again, and next, takes up discussion of exact definitions for concepts,

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[66] The help that *PI* §88 offers in understanding the appeal to exactness in *PI* §69 that I will draw on in the main text below extends also, I think, to an understanding of what Wittgenstein means by this final remark of §69. The Augustinian's appealed-to notion of exactness referred to at the end of §69 is, I think, precisely the supposed notion of exactness cast into doubt in the final paragraph of §88:

> No *single* ideal of exactness has been laid down; we do not know what we should be supposed to imagine under this head—unless you yourself lay down what is to be so called. But you will find it difficult to hit upon such a convention; at least any that satisfies you.   [*PI*, §88]

And I think too that this passage from §88 gives an idea of the kind of problems with Augustinian exactness of concepts that Wittgenstein was foreseeing back in §69.

gives one, I think, much more to work with; that later section sketches out a fuller picture of Wittgenstein's thinking as to how the analysis of the Augustinian appeal to exactness of concepts, as of §69, and the *demand* for sharp concepts that it subsequently turns into, might go.

The fuller picture is what we want; and to get it out, let us begin by looking at §88:

If I tell someone "Stand roughly here"—may not this explanation work perfectly? And cannot every other one fail too?

But isn't it an inexact explanation?—Yes; why shouldn't we call it "inexact"? Only let us understand what "inexact" means. For it does not mean "unusable". And let us consider what we call an "exact" explanation in contrast with this one. Perhaps something like drawing a chalk line round an area? Here it strikes us at once that the line has a breadth. So a colour-edge would be more exact. But has this exactness still got a function here: isn't the engine idling? And remember too that we have not yet defined what is to count as overstepping this exact boundary; how, with what instruments, it is to be established. And so on.

We understand what it means to set a pocket watch to the exact time or to regulate it to be exact. But what if it were asked: is this exactness ideal exactness, or how nearly does it approach the ideal?—Of course, we can speak of measurements of time in which there is a different, and as we should say a greater, exactness than in the measurement of time by a pocket-watch; in which the words "to set the clock to the exact time" have a different, thought related meaning, and 'to tell the time' is a different process and so on.—Now, if I tell someone: "You should come to dinner more punctually; you know it begins at one o'clock exactly"—is there really no question of exactness here? because it is possible to say: "Think of the determination of time in the laboratory or the observatory; there you see what 'exactness' means"?

"Inexact" is really a reproach, and "exact" is praise. And that is to say that what is inexact attains its goal less perfectly than what is more exact. Thus the point here is what we call "the goal". Am I inexact when I do not give our distance from the sun to the nearest foot, or tell a joiner the width of a table to the nearest thousandth of an inch?

No *single* ideal of exactness has been laid down; we do not know what we should be supposed to imagine under this head—unless you yourself lay down what is to be so called. But you will find it difficult to hit upon such a convention; at least any that satisfies you.   [*PI*, §88][67]

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[67] Before I get on, in the main text, to explaining what I think §88 actually says, I would just like to indicate what seems to me to be the textual evidence for taking §88 as harking back to that earlier discussion of Augustinian concerns with exactness of concepts in §69 through into §71. The first thing that I would say is that the way that the section begins, with:

If I tell someone "Stand roughly here"... ,

clearly relates what is being said back to *PI* §71, where Wittgenstein introduces his example with:

...is it senseless to say: "Stand roughly there"? Suppose that I were standing with someone in a city square and said that.

(The technique that Wittgenstein employs here, of recalling some previous remark through using a very close, but different, wording to the original, is one that Wittgenstein employs elsewhere. Another example is the one that I referred to in footnote 46 above, of the recollection of §95, with its:

"Thought must be something unique",

in §110, which begins:

"Language (or thought) is something unique".

If we consider that opening paragraph of §88 first, what, I think, we get in it is a very compressed introduction of the theme of the whole of the rest of the section.

If I tell someone "Stand roughly here"—may not this explanation work perfectly? And cannot every other one fail too?

This pithy paragraph begins by raising the issue of an inexact conception—with that opening recollection of the example of §71—in a questionable light—in just the questionable light, in fact, that the Augustinian thinks of, or wants to think of, such conceptions as questionable—, but responds to this feeling of something wrong with such conceptions, in the vein of §69—where Wittgenstein has insisted that there is nothing generally wrong, from the philosophical point of view, with inexact conceptions—, and also in the vein of §71—where, employing an analogy of pictures for concepts, he said: "Is it even always an advantage to replace an indistinct picture by a sharp one? Isn't the indistinct one often exactly what we need?"—, by saying that inexact explanations of meaning can be what is perfectly appropriate, impossible to improve upon, in certain circumstances. And the details of this response, of the two questions that Wittgenstein puts to the Augustinian discontent with the inexact explanation, begin to suggest a characterization of that discontent, of what the Augustinian feels is wrong with such explanations. What they suggest is that Augustinianism takes telling someone: "Stand roughly here", an inexact explanation of what is intended for the person being told, as both functionally imperfect—prompting Wittgenstein to ask: "may not this explanation work perfectly?"—and fallible in its objective—prompting: "And cannot every other one fail too?". And this characterization itself further suggests that what is behind the Augustinian's implicit desire, in this, for exactness in concepts, motivating that desire, is the greater operational

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In both this latter example, and in the former, reproduced in the main text, the technique employed has the effect of making one wary of jumping to conclusions about what the connection between the two thoughts related in the example might be; it makes one think carefully about just how §88 (or §110) might relate to §71 (or §95).) And then, as regards corroborating textual evidence that the thoughts of §69 are at work in the background in §88, above all, it seems to me, all the explicit talk of "exactness" and "inexactness" of definition brings that earlier discussion into consideration. Without any exceptions in between, §69 (rolling over into §70) was the last place in the text to contain actual reference to "exactness" and "inexactness"; moreover, §69 is concerned with "exactness" and "inexactness" *of boundaries to concepts* just as §88 is.

perfection and greater infallibility of purpose that exactness entails. And that, as I understand it, is, in embryo, precisely the line of analysis of the Augustinian commitment to exactness in meaning that we, in our efforts to understand vagueness, are interested in.

The second and third paragraphs of §88 both aim to debunk false conceptions of exactness that enter very naturally into our considerations of location in space (second paragraph) and location in time (third paragraph).

In that second paragraph, Wittgenstein takes up the Augustinian criticism of "Stand roughly here" as an inexact explanation, and, effectively, asks the question: "What kind of explanation *wouldn't* be inexact, in the sense of the criticism, in the context of the example?". And doing so reveals that the form of exactness that the Augustinian wants, that his "inexactness" falls short of, is, in this spatial case, some form of absolute, *geometric*, exactness; he wants there to be geometric precision in the specifications of where the person is to stand. But, Wittgenstein urges in response to this, in practice when it comes to actually making the specification of something like an area in which someone is to stand, that kind of geometric precision that is seemingly called for in the idea of an exact such specification is, in fact, aimlessly inappropriate. And, in addition, numerous possibilities present themselves as to how one might proceed in pursuit of that absolute precision—if achieving it is to be a matter of drawing a boundary round an area, questions arise as to: "...what is to count as overstepping this exact boundary; how, with what instruments, it is to be established. And so on."—; which latter observation exposes as questionable the thought, stemming from the Augustinian application of exactness here, that there is really just a single form of location in space—in the example, of locating a boundary for an area—that is independent of how such location is achieved in practice; what Wittgenstein is drawing attention to is the fact that location in space just *is* location according to our practices of locating things in space—location of the boundary is location in accordance with what we count as overstepping the boundary, what instruments we use to determine it, etc.; the Augustinian idea of exact location, the point seems to be, divorces the idea of location from that of locating in practice.

In the third paragraph of §88, Wittgenstein shifts to consider the example of exactness as we might want to apply it in the case of telling the time with a pocket-watch. Similarly again, in such a case, we are easily led to think that a watch is really incapable of telling and keeping the *exact* time. But again, in this we are being seduced by an Augustinian conception of exactness. The only real ideal standard of exactness that we might be appealing to, Wittgenstein thinks, in our dissatisfaction with what is called: "telling the exact time with a watch" is the determination of time in the laboratory or observatory; there there are a different kind of, we would say, "more exact" clocks; but even they would fall short of the Augustinian ideal.

Wittgenstein wants to say that in the laboratory: "…the words "to set the clock to the exact time" have a different, though related meaning [*i.e.* to when they are used about a pocket-watch], and 'to tell the time' is a different process and so on.". And what that means is that, for Wittgenstein, there are different forms of exactness that apply within the different practices of telling and keeping the time—telling someone: "You should come to dinner more punctually; you know it begins at one o'clock exactly" is a perfectly respectable use of "exactly" within, as it is, the practice of keeping time by watches. And this line of thought, generalized into a way of thinking about exactness in our determination of concepts generally, has a central role to play in the next paragraph of §88.

I will quote that next, fourth, paragraph of §88 again, because I think it turns out to be singularly important when it comes to working out the analysis of vagueness:

> "Inexact" is really a reproach, and "exact" is praise. And that is to say that what is inexact attains its goal less perfectly than what is more exact. Thus the point here is what we call "the goal". Am I inexact when I do not give our distance from the sun to the nearest foot, or tell a joiner the width of a table to the nearest thousandth of an inch?

Here, Wittgenstein offers an account of the use of "exact" in our practices of conceptualization generally; to call a concept "exact", he says, is to say that it achieves its end, whatever that might be, perfectly. And this thought, it seems to me, contains the makings of a response to vagueness.

Let me elaborate, beginning with one of the examples mentioned in the paragraph.

Within the working practices of the joiner, the world of joinery, the concept of the width of a table has a role to play. The joiner has a highly complicated and multi-faceted relation to widths of tables in his working life: he has to make tables using a variety of different tools and techniques, out of a variety of materials, to realize different requirements and fulfil different purposes; he has his idea of what counts as a good table—doesn't wobble, well-proportioned, well-finished, etc.—which informs what he does in complex ways; and so on. And some, or all, of this together, holistically, determines what the measurement of the width of a table means, what the goal of it is, and, therefore, what order of figure, in inches and fractions of an inch, is appropriate in giving an exact such measurement.

In the kind of way illustrated by this example, considerations of exactness tend to be embedded in a given specific linguistic practice; and this means that there are different forms of exactness that are *indexed to* (the goals of) different practices. In other words, Wittgenstein sees exactness as relativized to goals of specific linguistic practices with concepts; and that idea, along with the idea that exactness means attaining the goal perfectly, and where what counts as perfection is also relative to the linguistic practical context, is what, I think, promises to explain the Augustinian commitment to sharp concepts.

And by returning to *PI* §69 at this point, I think we can see how.

§5.2.4 §69 Again

In the way that I described earlier, the big shake-up, at *PI* §65, of the Augustinian conception opposing itself to Wittgenstein's reflections on the actual use of language, leaves the Augustinian defending his commitment to there being an essence of language through an insistence on there being a determinate defined boundary to the concept of language and hence, because of inevitable association, to concepts generally. It is this idea of a determinate boundary to concepts that is threatened by Wittgenstein's examples of family resemblance concepts, and it is that threat that prompts the Augustinian into further defence of his commitment, through the appeal for exactness of boundaries to concepts.

Now, the Augustinian commitment to an essence of language at issue here, as throughout *PI*, can be characterized, in the terms of my discussion in the chapters preceding this one, as a commitment to language having a graspable *Übersicht*; that, as I argued in §3.3.2.2 above, is *the* fundamental concern for the Augustinian: that language, at least in its principal and most important function, the expression and conduction of truth, is *übersichtlich*; and the Augustinian has an inherited framework, the general Augustinian perspective—with its central idea that the meanings of words are all references to objects in the world, but with the details of the picture of language that this entails left somewhat open to question—within which he is trying to make this fantasy of his into a manifest reality. That, of course, though, isn't the way the Augustinian sees what he is doing; he, consciously, thinks of himself as involved in a project purely of understanding language as a vehicle for truth; and in this he is, according to my interpretation of *PI* above, partly right because in reality what he is doing is constructing an imaginary Augustinian language of such a form that it, through comparison, illuminates the truth-relevant forms of our, real, language; through this process of construction and comparison, he does, genuinely, further his understanding.

That is the background to the insistence on defined boundaries for concepts in *PI* §§65ff.; that insistence on boundaries is one particular move in that overall Augustinian linguistic practice; and, as such, it shares the bipartite goal, *sc.* vindication and understanding of language, of that overall practice. Thus, when the Augustinian moves to say that language as a vehicle for truth has concepts with *exact* boundaries, as Wittgenstein suggests he might, in §69, what he is saying, according to the analysis of ascriptions of exactness given in §88, is that the boundaries of concepts attain their contribution to that bipartite goal perfectly; they contribute perfectly, on the one hand, to the defence of truth in language that the Augustinian transformation of it is meant to achieve, and on the other, to the understanding of language proper that comparison of it with the Augustinian conception as a whole is also meant to achieve.

§5.2.5 The Role of Exact Concepts in Augustinian Thinking

Let me take each of these part-goals in turn and try to see how concepts with exact boundaries might play their role perfectly in achieving them.

§5.2.5.1 Exact Concepts in Putatively Vindicating Language

First, vindicating language. To see the role of Augustinian exact concepts in pursuit of this goal, I think one needs to consider the form that the Augustinian is wanting to think of exact concepts as having and to see the way in which that form is a product of the overall process of sublimation of logic as I have described it generally in my thesis up to this chapter, specifically as a reaction to the ways in which our actual concepts do function.

Exact concepts for the Augustinian are to be, as Frege was thinking of them, and as contemporary philosophy of vagueness thinks of them, concepts for which it is determined, in advance of application, for every possible object in the universe without exception, whether or not the object falls under the concept.[68] And the natural thing to think—and the almost universal view in contemporary philosophy of vagueness—when one turns to look at the concepts of natural language, is that, with few if any exceptions, those actual concepts are vague. However, thinking about the concepts of natural language as "vague" in this way is not, despite how it appears, straightforwardly characterizing the way they do actually work in contrast to the way the Augustinian is wanting to think of exact concepts as working. This is because the notion of vagueness itself presupposes an Augustinian view of language; in other words, the very phenomenon of vagueness is a product of the Augustinian mythology. Let me just explain this.

In my thesis up to the present chapter, I described the form of generation of certain sublimated Augustinian conditions that language must satisfy if it is to perform its essential role for us, as the medium for expression and conduction of truth. Now I am wanting to say

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68 Strictly speaking the characterization of exact concepts given here is Frege's. As I have indicated previously (see footnote 1 above), contemporary thought tends to differ from Frege when it comes to the use of concepts on the issue of domains of discourse; in other words, whereas Frege would say that the range of application of an exact concept is always going to be all objects in the whole universe, contemporary philosophical logic would tend to want to limit application to all objects in a relevant domain of application.

that Frege's requirement of sharp concepts is just such a condition. As such, in keeping with that earlier account of mine, that requirement is an element in that philosophical misunderstanding of language into which we have all been, to a greater or lesser extent, culturally indoctrinated. It is part of our reflective, or theoretical, understanding of truth in language, whether we are fully conscious of it or not, that the concepts of language satisfy the law of excluded middle. And when we, from within this whole false perspective of ours, look at the actual concepts of our language, what we see is concepts for which the law of excluded middle does not hold, *i.e.* vague concepts. In that way we see the reality of the actual linguistic phenomena, that is, the use of words like "heap", but through blinkers imposed by the remainder of the sublimated Augustinian misunderstanding that is still active in, a presupposed background to, our overall understanding of meaning. Thus, what seeing the concepts of ordinary language as vague amounts to, is rejecting one element only of the idealized Augustinian picture, *sc.* the law of excluded middle, for those concepts. And what the vagueness of concepts itself consists in is the reality of the meaningful use of predicates seen through the distorting spectacles of the idealized Augustinian conception with the idealization associated with the law of excluded middle left out.

That real meaningful use of predicates that is seen, in the way just described, through Augustinian distortion, is the "family resemblance" use of predicates that is described in *PI* §§66 and 67. If we return to the narrative of *PI* §§65-69, as I have been interpreting it, the requirement of boundaries for concepts in §68 is portrayed by Wittgenstein as a defensive response, from the point of view of wanting essences to concepts (to the concept of language in particular), to the family resemblance reality of concepts. Concepts like that of a game exist, quite innocently, undefined in the way described in *PI* §§66-67; but the Augustinian is concerned about such lack of definition of the concept of language; and from *that* lack of definition it is a very short step to realization that the concept of language, because of the enormity, diversity and openness to new membership immanent in conceiving the family of linguistic practices, is *indefinable*. And, of course, a definition of the concept of language is the form in which the Augustinian is

thinking of the essence of language that is so important to him; such a definition is what he thinks would give him an *Übersicht* of language.

The putative Augustinian appeal for exactly defined concepts in §69 is a sublimation of that initial appeal for straight defined concepts mooted in §68, in an extension of the defensive reaction to family resemblance concepts. The Augustinian at heart recognizes the truth of the family resemblance view of concepts, and the whole approach to understanding language of which it is a part, but is in deep denial of it. That denial is motivated by fear; the Augustinian is frightened of the family resemblance view and therefore denies it. And the initial insistence on definitions and the subsequent insistence on exact definitions are forms of this denial, the latter more extreme than the former. What the Augustinian is frightened of in Wittgenstein's family resemblance view of concepts is, as I have said, that it rules out the possibility of an *Übersicht* of language. And what lies behind this fear, I think, is the fear that language might disintegrate into chaos without the Augustinian being able to do anything about it; the cohesion of language, on Wittgenstein's view, rests on the family resemblance between human linguistic practices; it depends on other human beings using language in such a way as to maintain that cohesion (through those resemblances); and the Augustinian wants complete mastery of language in its essentials, through having an *Übersicht* of it, so that other users can't spoil it for him. The basic problem with the Augustinian is that he doesn't trust other users of the language to use it truthfully. And, accordingly, what he is defensively reacting against, in his insistence on boundaries and, subsequently, exact boundaries for concepts is the picture of language that has use (for truth) generatively dependent on how human users of the language determine to use it in their practices. In the prior version of Augustinianism that insists on determinate, though not exact, definitions, a vestige of this dependence of correct usage on human disposition remains, in the way in which correct application of words still rests ultimately on human judgment as to whether application accords with definition. With the further insistence on exactness of concepts, however, the application of predicates becomes something that human beings can no longer make judgments on, because they are incapable of making the absolutely, infinitely, precise distinctions that determine use of such concepts. And what

this means is that no possible real disruption in life and linguistic practice that might in reality jeopardise the possibility of real concepts could touch these absolutely precisely defined counterparts.

§5.2.5.2 *Exact Concepts in Understanding Language*

The big problem with the use of concepts for truth, on the general family resemblance view of them suggested by Wittgenstein's discussion of examples in *PI* §§66 and 67, it seems to me, is coming up with reliable and balanced judgments as to whether the concept applies or not in difficult cases. This is a complicated problem, but the kind of difficulty of cases that I see it as involving is of predominantly two sorts. First there is the straight intellectual difficulty of assessing just how a given case fits into the "...complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail" [*PI*, §66] that determines membership of a concept. And then there is the difficulty of making judgments of conceptual applicability justly, free from any prejudice that one might have, of whatever kind and however conscious one might be of it, for a verdict one way or the other. Both of these sorts of difficulty can be alleviated to some extent by the use of a model of "sharp concepts" of the kind suggested by §69, and it is the objective of this subsection as a whole to try to explain how. I will take each type of difficulty in turn.

§5.2.5.2.1 *Against the Difficulty of* Seeing the Wood for the Trees

In the first kind of case Augustinian "definitions of concepts" seem to me to work in a way similar to the way in which actual definitions work. In the reality of language use, freed, that is, from any influence of Augustinian or any other misconceptions, a definition of a concept, it seems to me, derives an important element of its utility from the way in which it can help in problem cases to, so to speak, see the wood for the trees. Such a definition provides us with a clear and simple representation of the overall pattern of usage of a word which facilitates understanding the use of the word in occurrent, in-practice, problem

contexts through helping us get into correct proportion the various similarities and dissimilarities with other uses of the word closest to its use in the problem case.

An *exact* definition, on this understanding, is, if Wittgenstein is right in *PI* §88, one that ideally fulfils this purpose of helping us to sort out the use of a word in problem situations. And that means, given the definition is necessarily limited to being a simplified picture—typically, grossly simplified—of the actual general usage of the word, having maximal, though not total, efficacy in those kinds of cases that we find problematic.

For Augustinian "definitions" the mechanism of them is going to be similar, though with one substantial difference. They too are going to work through providing a representation of the actual general use of the concept-word causing the problem. In their case the representation is going to take the form of a counterpart to the concept putatively in a distinct Augustinian model language where such counterparts always take the form of clear and exceptionless rules for sorting objects into sets. I say "putatively" in such a language with such a form here, as opposed to "actually", because in fact there is no actual counterpart involved in the representation; rather, what there is is the problem concept of our actual language imaginatively conceived, as far as that is possible, as a concept in an Augustinian language. And thinking of our actual ordinary language concepts and their definitions as functioning along Augustinian lines in this way generates "definitions", formulas for the use of them generally, that are especially useful, in contrast to our ordinary straight definitions, in determining what the use of concept-words should be in hard cases.

This enhanced utility of such "definitions" stems from the way in which they are being conceived as part of a language, an Augustinian language, for which it promises to be, as long as the details of the functioning of the language can be worked out, clear, determinate and universal what the use of words for truth should be. As I explained in the previous chapter—*sc.* when I explained how Augustinian logics, the workings of Augustinian languages, are to be seen, for Wittgenstein, as the workings of language-games, of perspicuous, free-standing, linguistic practices—, Augustinian languages are languages distinct from our own but which have, because of the way in which they have been derived and developed, fruitfully analogous workings to those of our own language. And, in

addition, they have counterparts to all the semantic apparatus of our language—propositions, proofs, truth, meaning, concepts, definitions, etc.—but in them the employment of their semantic apparatus is everywhere simple and clear-cut. That Augustinian languages are like this means that insofar as we can at any point conceive our actual language as an Augustinian language we can know and be sure what the use of it for truth should be. And this is the source of the enhanced utility of "definitions" of our concepts on the Augustinian model; insofar as we can imaginatively conceive of Augustinian-type definitions for our concepts we can see, clearly and determinately, what the use of them, in whatever circumstances we might want to use them, should be to be truthful.

That explains how, and to what extent, the Augustinian appeal for definitions (of the form in which he conceives of them) for our concepts entertained in *PI* §§68ff. is in part an appeal for a better understanding of the workings of concepts than that given by Wittgenstein in *PI* §§66 and 67 in his family resemblance account. Augustinian "definitions" of our concepts further our understanding in the way just outlined, that is: by giving us an artificially enhanced orientation, from whatever point we might be looking, on the overall use of the concept-word and thus highlighting those factors most salient to the use of the word in the context which concerns us.

The appeal for *exact* definitions of concepts raised, in §69, as a possibility for the Augustinian, for strengthening his position against the reality that Wittgenstein persists in confronting him with, works by simply urging a perfect model, ideally useful in the way just described above, for helping us understand the use of our concepts; and the perfect model that the appeal is looking to for help, from the context in which it is made in *PI*, is going to be one in which concepts are precisely defined in such a way as to make their application absolutely clear and determinate in absolutely every possible context of use.

(Concepts conceived as absolutely clear and exceptionless rules for mapping any possible object in the universe whatever determinately either into or out of the concept set—which, of course, was how Frege was thinking of concepts acceptable to logic—seem to fit

the billing here perfectly, and are, I would argue [*cf.* §5.3.1 below], just what Wittgenstein was concerned about at this particular point in *PI.*)

§5.2.5.2.2 *Against the Difficulty of Impartial Judgment*

In the second kind of case, where one might be prone to misusing a concept-word because of one's vested interest, of whatever form it might take, in the specific case, Augustinian exact definitions can help for precisely the same reason, explained in §5.2.5.1 above, as that in which they help make it look as if our standard for use of our concepts for truth can be vindicated, can be demonstratively proved to be correct. This is the way in which they squeeze out of influence any connection between the correct use of concepts and actual human linguistic practice; the correct use of concept-words for the Augustinian becomes, by the end of the process of sublimation, in the way explained in §5.2.5.1, completely independent of human judgment. And this means that excluded too from any influence over the standard of correct usage are the human interests and concerns that in reality motivate the use of specific concepts, interests and concerns which we each have our own subjective view of which is our guide in determining for ourselves how the concept should be used in our practice.

That is how, on the Augustinian understanding of them, exactly defined concepts are guaranteed absolutely objective and impartial in their use for truth. And thinking of our concepts in that Augustinian way does promote genuine objectivity and impartiality in our real, effective, in-practice, use of them.

The mechanism for this real beneficial influence on our practice is the one just described in the subsection previous to this one, §5.2.5.2.1, of generating "exact definitions" for our concepts on the model of Augustinian exact definitions; insofar as a use of a concept can be modelled by that of an Augustinian exact concept we can rely on objectivity and impartiality in that use.[69]

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[69] The utility of sharply defined concepts as a model for concepts proper, helping us to see what the use of them should be, the two aspects of which I have just explained, is a utility that, I suspect, might well be exploited in the law. In law, what is required is sharp definitions for concepts, that determine

§5.2.6 *The Rational Appeal, from the Augustinian Perspective, of Exact Concepts*

And that explanation of the enhanced benefits to Augustinianism of *exact* concepts on the Augustinian model as opposed to (inexact) Augustinian concepts *per se* I think explains the attraction, referred to at the end of *PI* §69, that the Augustinian might feel in the face of the family resemblance reality of concepts, to think that it isn't simply boundaries that are required for concepts (as the Augustinian is thinking of them), after all, but *exact* boundaries. From the Augustinian perspective on concepts, for the reasons just given (in §§5.2.5ff.), the circumstances of concepts being exact *disproves* the family resemblance reality.

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a verdict for any possible relevant case; and such sharply defined concepts may very well work in the law in a way comparable to that described in which sharp concepts work in philosophical logic; certainly, legal judgments are typically very complicated and almost always concern situations that are apt to evoke strong feelings.

Incidentally, also on the general topic of sharp concepts in the law, Ronald Dworkin's essay "No Right Answer?", and the subsequent debate that it generated, is of potential interest from the point of view of my thesis. Dworkin seems to be opposed to something that looks like the Augustinian conception of truth, as the following passage, in which he replies to one of the critics of "No Right Answer?", A.D.Woozley, illustrates:

He has been misled by the mirage of a concept of truth that somehow escapes the fact that all our concepts, including our philosophical concepts, take the only meaning they have from the function they play in our reasoning, argument, and conviction. Much of the automatic, familiar skepticism of law students and academic lawyers is the upshot of exactly that mirage. They believe in a mysterious and highly blurred ideal of "real" truth, which they express only in metaphors, and which I doubt can be expressed in any other way. They can say that a proposition is "really" true only if it accurately describes facts that are "out there," or part of "the fabric of the universe," or "locked into" an "independent reality" or something of that sort. Then they announce that since moral claims, for example, or claims about what the law is in hard cases, describe nothing that is "out there," such claims cannot be "really" true.

[*Ronald Dworkin and Contemporary Jurisprudence*, p.277]

That much seems to me Wittgensteinian in spirit; however, Dworkin also wants to say that, to all intents and purposes, the concepts of the law *do* always determine a verdict, even in difficult cases; he says:

...the occasion in which a legal question has no right answer in our own legal system must be rarer than is generally supposed   ["No Right Answer?", p.59],

and:

...for all practical purposes there will always be a right answer in the seamless web of our law   [*Ibid.*, p.84];

and *these* thoughts look to me like they might well be influenced by the kind of *a priori* prejudice that Wittgenstein was at great pains *not* to succumb to.

§5.2.7 Conclusion

And that, I think, is what *PI* §§69 and 88 can tell us directly about how vagueness fits into Wittgenstein's more general analysis of the Augustinian conception of language that was my concern in the previous two chapters; in doing so, I think they give a good idea of the kind of form that a Wittgensteinian solution specifically to the problems associated with vagueness might take; what they begin to explain is what is really going on with the use of exact concepts on the Augustinian model; and the problems of vagueness arise because of the way, as I explained in Chapter 3 was the situation with the Augustinian conception generally, we cannot see, or, better, cannot admit to seeing, that that *is* what is really going on.

§5.3 Wittgenstein's Analysis and Frege's Thinking about Vagueness

Finally, in my thesis, I would like to return to Frege's thoughts about vagueness, as illustrated in my opening chapter, to try to show how Wittgenstein's analysis might be brought in to address them.

First I will say something about Frege's logic generally as a candidate for Wittgensteinian analysis partly to show that there are grounds for hope that such an analysis—and therefore also an analysis of vagueness as an integral part of that overall analysis—might, in the end, be successful, and partly to give some idea of where and how the analysis of vagueness itself might come in to that much wider analysis of which it would be a part. Then, at the end I will turn to Frege on vagueness specifically, and in particular to the problems of vagueness as Frege sees them and his solution and to what a Wittgensteinian analysis might make, in very general terms, of those apparent problems and that apparent solution.

§5.3.1 The Implication of Frege's Logic Generally in Wittgenstein's Analysis

As is obvious by now, I am convinced that Wittgenstein has Frege's views on the nature of language—as well as Russell's and *TLP*'s—in mind as he gives his analysis of the Augustinian conception of language in *PI*. Let me explain why.

That initial characterization of the essential Augustinian position—"Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands"—in *PI*, §1, seems, *prima facie*, equally fitting taken to capture the fundamentals of Frege's philosophy of language as to capture those of Russell's or *TLP*'s. Frege's basic story is that language consists of, on the one hand, names which stand for, have as their meanings, objects and, on the other hand, predicates which stand for concepts. And these kinds of meanings, as is also the case for Russell and *TLP*, have an absolutely central role to play in Frege's understanding of the functioning of language because of the way in which they are fully and uniquely responsible for, in combination, generating the truth conditions of propositions; and the construction and employment of propositions, in the light of their truth conditions, for the discovery, expression, and communication of truth *is*, for Frege, Russell and *TLP*, the essential function of language.

Then there is the fact that, subsequent to *PI* §1, in the analysis up to §89, although there is little direct consideration of the worked-out views of specific philosophers—Wittgenstein, as I understand him, is concerned more with the everyday philosophical intuitions that lie behind such polished construals of language on the Augustinian conception—, Frege *is* referred to by name in those sections more often than any other figure (and more often than *TLP* too), in direct criticism of his thinking. And the fact that very much of the rest of the content of Wittgenstein's analysis does seem, quite obviously, to relate tellingly to various aspects and corollaries of Frege's general conception of meaning as reference.

But it is the analysis of logic generally, in *PI* §§89ff., and the way in which that seems so compellingly a continuation of the prior analysis of the Augustinian conception of language that most persuades me of Frege's implication for Wittgenstein in the object of his analysis.

There is nothing, as far as I can see, in all that talk of "logic", in §§89ff., as concerned with an ideal language, that distinguishes between the logic of *TLP* and that of Frege; and how could there be any doubt that Wittgenstein is thinking of "logic" in the sense of *TLP*, in that talk? Which means that, if the story of *PI* is, as I think, and as I have

argued extensively through my thesis, a continuous analysis of the Augustinian mythology, leading right up to and culminating in that analysis of logic in §§89ff., because that story includes explicit consideration, in §§66ff., of problems relating to vagueness, which relate to Frege's position but *not* to *TLP*'s, I think we must take §§89ff. as meant to apply to Frege's logic as well as to that of *TLP*. The analysis of logic generally in *PI* §§89ff., Wittgenstein thinks, is the analysis appropriate for both the logic of *TLP and* Frege's logic, and both of these logics are, for Wittgenstein in *PI*, idealized versions of the Augustinian mythology of truth in language.

§5.3.2 Frege's Augustinian Conception of Logic

Those, I think, are (at least some of) the main reasons for thinking of Frege's logic as one that Wittgenstein would have considered susceptible to his analysis of Augustinian logic more generally in *PI*. And, against the background plausibility of that proposed project of Wittgenstein's, they are good enough reasons to warrant beginning to look at Frege's logic in the light they suggest, to see how far the idea of it as a sublimated Augustinian conception of truth in language can be taken.

In this subsection, I would like to try to give some idea of how one might begin to approach Frege's logic generally along *PI* lines, of some routes in to the possible analysis. I hope this might put in to some kind of perspective the comments that I will go on to make in the next subsection on the prospective analysis of Frege's problematic understanding of *vagueness* specifically; it should, if it is all right enough, give a sense of how this latter analysis is one part of the solution to a bigger problem arising from Frege's logic, from that systematic misunderstanding of truth, as a whole.

§5.3.2.1 The Augustinian "Primary Delusion" in Frege

For any Wittgensteinian analysis of (any version of the) Augustinian conception of language, the place of what I have called the "primary delusion"—as of *PI* §95—, and of the "core structure"—as of *PI* §1—, and of the relation between the two, all at the heart of the conception (see footnote 45, §3.3.1 above for a pointed characterization of this

complex), as what the advocate of the conception is most primally committed to, is going to be of central concern.

In my earlier discussion, I located Wittgenstein's presentation of the primary delusion—§§3.2.2 and 3.3.2.1 above give my reasons for doing so—in *PI* §95:

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.

And it seems to me that a look at this presentation of the primary delusional idea of Augustinianism in fact suggests a good place in Frege's own writings to begin looking for its overall influence in his thought. So let me first spell out what I think the primary delusion according to Wittgenstein is; then I will indicate where in Frege's writings I think this idea is most explicitly discussed.

The idea is that when we say and mean something in practice—*e.g.* when I tell someone: "The keys are on the desk", meaning to tell them, straight, where the keys are—what we are communicating is the very fact of the matter with which we are concerned: *that situation* being the case in the world is just what we mean.

And that general view of meaning, if one allows oneself to be naïvely open to it, does have considerable persuasive force; enough indeed, I think, to explain why Wittgenstein describes it as having "the form of a truism".

It also lends itself to a plausible interpretation of what Wittgenstein means by describing it as a "paradox". Let me explain this.

The paradoxicality of the primary delusion as Wittgenstein sees it can, I think, be brought out by recasting the expression of it in §95 in terms of *judgment* instead of meaning. Keeping everything else Wittgenstein says the same, we can replace "meaning" with "judgment" in the following way:

When we <judge> that such and such is the case, we—and our <judgement>—do not stop anywhere short of the fact; but we <judge>: *this—is—so*.

And I think this way of construing the idea shows the paradoxicality of it more obviously, in a way that can then be seen more clearly back in the original.

The paradox, in terms of judgment, is: that in making a judgment about the state of reality we are, in the very act of doing so, also *imposing* a state on reality; whenever we judge that such and such is the case, we *make* that such and such *be* the case, and because of that we cannot be wrong in our judgments, however, at the same time we clearly *can* be wrong in our judgments. And it helps, I think, to get still more of a grasp of the idea of the primary delusion to think of making judgments as involving us in conceptualizing the world; on the one hand in judgments we bring the world under our conceptualizations, thus bringing it into order and determining a coherent reality, yet, on the other, our conceptualizations are conceptualizations of the world and therefore are determined by the order in it.

That is the paradox of the primary Augustinian delusion as Wittgenstein sees it and, as I have said, looking at it in that way suggests one particular place in Frege's writings where Wittgenstein's thoughts on logic in *PI* can be brought in directly to engage with Frege's own, providing an opening for the Wittgensteinian analysis of Frege's logic generally. The place in Frege's work that I am thinking of is his essay "Negation" [*Collected Papers*, pp.373-89], one of the three later essays intended to contribute towards a book to be entitled *Logical Investigations*.

Frege begins "Negation" by introducing his theme for the essay with the following passage:

A propositional question contains a demand that we should either acknowledge the truth of a thought, or reject it as false. In order that we may meet this demand correctly, two things are requisite: first, the wording of the question must enable us to recognize without any doubt the thought that is referred to; secondly, this thought must not belong to fiction. I always assume in what follows that these conditions are fulfilled. The answer to a question [*sc.* a propositional question] is an assertion based upon a judgement; this is so equally whether the answer is affirmative or negative.

Here, however, a difficulty arises. If a thought has being by being true, then the expression 'false thought' is just as self-contradictory, as 'thought that has no being'. In that case the expression 'the thought: three is greater than five' is an empty one; and accordingly in science it must not be used at all—except between quotation-marks. In that case we may not say 'that three is greater than five is false'; for the grammatical subject is empty. [*Collected Papers*, p.373]

And the problem that he raises in the second paragraph here, which, along with its developments and corollaries, is *the* problem that Frege addresses in the essay, is, as I understand it, precisely the paradox that Wittgenstein is concerned with in *PI* §95. Frege expresses his problem by saying that:

'false thought' is ... self-contradictory,

and this is just what Wittgenstein means when he says in §95 that:

Thought can be of what is *not* the case

expresses a paradox.

Much of Frege's subsequent discussion, in keeping with the title of the essay, focuses on a conception of negation, arising as a consequence of the idea that:

a thought has being by being true,

as it develops through Frege's criticism of it, and consistent with that original idea, that the negation of a thought is the:

dissolution of the thought into its component parts.   [*Ibid.*, p.377]

And to this conception of negation Frege opposes a conception of judgment—the "polar opposite" of that conception of negation, as he puts it—in which:

the judging subject sets up a connection or order of the parts in the act of judging and thereby brings the judgment into existence   [*Ibid.*, p.381],

and which he argues against. Here again Frege's thinking, it seems to me, can be related directly to *PI* §95, because this conception of judgment that Frege is referring to is identical to one half of the paradoxical conception of judgment at work in Wittgenstein's characterization of the Augustinian primary delusion and discussed just above. Above I described judgment, as of a piece with Wittgenstein's account of meaning in the primary delusion, as involving conceptualizing the world; and one half of the description on these lines was that in judgment we organize the world into accordance with our conceptual understanding—the other half of the description being that the form of conceptual understanding that we employ in judgment, itself must defer to the organization of the world—, and this, I think, is the conception of judgment that Frege is interested in in the quotation just given.

In conclusion, the way that my preliminary understanding suggests the putative Wittgensteinian analysis of Frege's thinking in "Negation" might go overall is as follows. Frege recognizes, in the paradox, what, according to Wittgenstein, is an absolutely fundamental problem for his (Frege's) logic, but doesn't realize how deep the problem

really goes. And an indication of this lack of full insight is the way in which Frege sets about rejecting one half of the paradoxical conception of judgment causing the problem; because, in doing this, he then, as far as I can see, leaves himself without any conception of judgment at all. Frege seems not to have a problem with this, being content to say:

> ...we must not forget that not everything can be defined. If we insist at any price on defining what is essentially indefinable, we readily fasten upon inessential accessories, and thus start the inquiry on a wrong track at the very outset. And this is certainly what has happened to many people, who have tried to explain what a judgment is...   [*Ibid.*, p.381],

but this does not seem to me to be adequate.

If I do turn out to be right in my initial assessment, and Frege's "Negation" does prove to be an effective way in for an analysis of Frege's logic, as a partial admission from him of the problem that his logic has with the paradox that Wittgenstein claims is the primary Augustinian delusion, then pursuit of that analysis through that chink in Frege's armour might, for all I know, lead on to an understanding of how what I above called the "core structure" of the Augustinian conception—"Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands." [*PI*, §1]— is realized, what precise form it actually takes, in Frege's logic. This core form of the Augustinian conception, as I understand Wittgenstein, is supposed to be *the* basic integration of the primary delusion into reality, the fundamental putative proof of it in the face of the reality of the linguistic phenomena. And if "Negation" is the place at which to confront Frege with his primary delusion, then it may also be the place from which to begin to discover the core Augustinian structure in his thinking as appearing to justify his commitment to that primary delusion.

§5.3.2.2 *"The Ideal" in Frege*

A further possibility for a way of bringing Wittgenstein's analysis of Augustinian logic to bear on Frege's thinking is through the idea that the Augustinian understanding of truth in language, the Augustinian logic, on Wittgenstein's account, is sublimated, idealized, to defend it against the reality. Therefore, if Frege's logic is that kind of logic, at least some of the ideality in it is going to be hiding misrepresentations of the way that language actually

works for truth; and we can look for possible manifestations of the ideal in Frege's logic and try to see if they are concealing such misrepresentations. An example of the kind of misrepresentation and concealment that we are going to be looking for would be that misrepresentation that there seems to be associated with vagueness and concealed by the sharpness commanded by the law of excluded middle in the way, and for the reasons, if I am right in my interpretation in §§5.2ff. above, suggested by Wittgenstein in *PI* §§65-9.

The possibility of this example itself immediately suggests one source of further possibilities, which is in the other logical laws, and indeed also the rules of inference, in Frege's logic. All of these pieces of Frege's logical apparatus display the kind of absolute certainty, inviolability and universality, which prospectively marks them out as sublimations.

§5.3.2.3 Frege's "Demands of Logic"

The final possible "way in" to Frege's logic for a possible Wittgensteinian analysis that I would like to mention relates to the idea of the "demands of logic" that I first introduced into my discussion in Chapter 2. I began that chapter by introducing my interpretation of *PI* §§89ff., the general form of Wittgenstein's analysis of the Augustinian logic, by characterizing it as a response to those very demands of logic. And now, having had my full account of that general form of analysis, it is easy to see what I was meaning. Those "demands of logic" are prescriptions for the way it appears, seen from within the Augustinian logical delusion, natural language would have to be if it were to function as a means of expressing truth.

I also indicated in Chapter 2 how I think of this same idea of the demands of logic as an idea of Frege's as well. Certainly Frege very often in his work criticizes our actual linguistic practice in our ordinary language as, in one way or another, failing in its efforts at the truth through failing to satisfy some or other requirement of logic. Some of these shortcomings he would clearly want to put down as failings of users of the language to use it in accordance with logic, but others he would want to say—and quite often explicitly does—are failings of our language itself as an instrument for truth and sound reasoning. And it is

in response to this latter group that Frege talks in terms of the demands of logic in the relevant sense: logic, for Frege, demands that these deficiencies be eradicated from natural language; only a language free from such deficiencies would be suitable as an instrument for truth.

If we assume for a moment that my intuitions are right and that Frege's logic *is* a logic fully susceptible to the *PI* analysis, then Frege's "demands of logic" are seemingly inevitably going to turn out to be "demands of logic" in the sense described above, demands, that is, made on natural language to conform to the Augustinian conception of it if it wants actually to function for truth at all. And one consequence, in its turn, of this apparent inevitability, given in addition that Frege's demands of logic are typically targeted pointedly at specific features of natural language, is that those specific features targeted may well in fact be characteristics of natural language as a vehicle for truth that Frege has difficulty in assimilating into his own deviant (Augustinian) picture of language for truth. Thus, it is through the possibility of its putting us on to the scent of specific and uncomfortable misrepresentations in Frege's account that the idea of the demands of logic in his work provides a potentially fruitful way in to Frege for Wittgensteinian analysis.

Following Frege himself—*e.g.* in "My Basic Logical Insights" [*Posthumous Writings*, p.252]—Michael Dummett describes precisely the perceived shortcomings of natural language that we have just been considering as logical "defects" of language. And he lists a number of examples:

Among such defects are: ambiguity of construction; ambiguity of words, whether or not resolved, even systematically, by context; vagueness; the use of predicates and functors not everywhere defined; and the occurrence of empty proper names.   [*The Interpretation of Frege's Philosophy*, p.32]

This list seems to me an excellent place to start looking for leads to a Wittgensteinian analysis. Certainly, the passages in Frege that it relates to are filled with the language of the demands of logic as discussed above. For instance—picking an example almost at random—, take the following passage from "*On Schoenflies:* Die Logischen Paradoxien der Mengenlehre" on the subject of proper names needing bearers:

In logic it must be presupposed that every proper name is meaningful; that is, that it serves its purpose of designating an object. For a sentence containing a meaningless proper name either expresses no thought at all,

or it expresses a thought that belongs to myth or fiction. In either case it falls outside the domain governed by the laws of logic. [*Posthumous Writings*, p.180]

And elsewhere one gets passages containing real clues as to what it is about the "defective" feature of natural language at issue that might really be worrying Frege. An example of this is the following narrative from "Logic in Mathematics":

...a sign must not be ambiguous. Freedom from ambiguity is the most important requirement for a system of signs which is to be used for scientific purposes. ...

[Then later:]

...Of course I can use the words 'this man' to designate now this man, now that man. But still on each single occasion I mean to designate just *one* man. The sentences of our everyday language leave a good deal to guesswork. It is the surrounding circumstances that enable us to make the right guess. The sentence I utter does not always contain everything that is necessary; a great deal has to be supplied by the context, by the gestures I make and the direction of my eyes. But a language that is intended for scientific employment must not leave anything to guesswork. [*Ibid.*, p.213]

Frege's overt concern here with the "guesswork" that he sees as involved in disambiguating utterances in everyday discourse is that, in fact, much of what we say to each other is ambiguous, but we have a very complex and varied practice of giving contextual clues to each other that more or less effectively narrows the alternatives down to a choice of one, and Frege thinks that this practice of giving and guessing clues is just too unreliable for a language ideally suited to the communication of truth.

That is Frege's overt concern in the passage; but it seems to me that there is a deeper problem underneath, in such a way that it is reasonable to suggest this deeper problem to be what Frege is really worried about. This is the idea that those features of context that Frege is misleadingly thinking of as contextual clues auxiliary to the interpretative process proper are in reality internal to what is being interpreted. The situation isn't that there is some one objective fact from the set of objective facts (ambiguously) proposed by the speaker but with clues given as to which one of the set is really intended; rather, what the interpreter is trying to interpret, in a single interpretative act, is the point of that person using those words in that context; and Frege's "contextual clues" are an integral part of that interpretative process. They are an integral part of that process in that natural human reactions to features of context are constitutive of the interpretative response in linguistic communication.

And it is this latter fact, I suspect, that is really worrying Frege, that meaning itself could depend on the way in which human beings are biologically/psychologically disposed to react to features of the world in which they conduct their linguistic interactions.

§5.3.3 *Frege's Problems of Vagueness: the Wittgensteinian Perspective*

In the previous subsection, in my discussion of the idea of the demands of logic as used by Frege possibly to cover up specific features of everyday language in its use for truth that present a problem for his Augustinian conception, I did not say anything about how the discussion relates to vagueness itself. I would like to begin *this* subsection by doing so.

Frege's many statements of rejection of incompleteness of definition and vagueness throughout his writings are to my knowledge invariably accompanied by talk of logic demanding sharp definitions instead. Consider, by way of illustration, the following examples: In the letter to Peano of 29.9.1896 Frege says: "logic can only recognize sharply delimited concepts"[*Philosophical and Mathematical Correspondence*, p114] and in "On Schoenflies: *Die Logischen Paradoxien der Mengenlehre*": "only concepts with sharp boundaries are to be recognized as meaningful by logic"[*Posthumous Writings*, p.180] and again in §56 of *GA*: "Such quasi-conceptual constructions [*i.e.* vague concepts] cannot be recognized as concepts by logic"[*PW*, p.139] and again in "On The Law of Inertia": "If something fails to display a sharp boundary, it cannot be recognized in logic as a concept"[*Collected Papers*, p.133] and in "Function and Concept": "as regards concepts we have a requirement of sharp delimitation; if this were not satisfied it would be impossible to set forth logical laws about them"[*PW*, p.33].

On the line of approach suggested in the previous subsection, this involvement of the idea of the demands of logic with vagueness raises the possibility that the real problem for Frege is hidden in the background. And the prime candidate, it seems to me, for such an underlying problem in the case of vagueness is Wittgenstein's family resemblance reality of concepts in the way explained in §§5.2ff. above. Frege's understanding of vagueness, in as far as it is false, according to that account of §§5.2ff., would be driven by a denial of that family resemblance reality. Frege would be under the influence of a whole idealizing

systematic Augustinian delusion of which the law of excluded middle would be one element. And his "recognition" of the vagueness of the concepts of natural language would only be a partial recognition of the true nature of those concepts seen as it would be through the filter of the remainder of the sublimating Augustinian misconception.

And that, as far as I understand it, would be Wittgenstein's analysis of Frege's position on vagueness. I said that in my introduction to this chapter, at the end of §5.1, and I also said there that I would add nothing further here in this section to my account of that analysis beyond my exposition of Wittgenstein which I have now, in the previous section, given. What I do want to do here though is to show how that analysis might begin to explain what is really going on in those arguments of Frege's against vagueness that I looked at in Chapter 1 of my thesis.

In fact, one can only get a limited way in to an understanding of what is going on in any of those anti-vagueness arguments with Wittgenstein's analysis of vagueness as far as it is explained above. This is because that explanation given above restricts itself strictly to consideration of the analysis of vagueness specifically, in isolation from the analysis of language on the idealizing Augustinian conception generally; and that leaves the analysis of vagueness incomplete, indeed very substantially incomplete, because one could never be secure in one's understanding of vagueness without also understanding the whole view of language of which it would be part.

In *PI* on vagueness, on my account of it given above, this latter point is manifest in the way that, although the conception of concepts that emerges in *PI* §§65ff. is explicitly being thought of as the focus of a reformation of the whole Augustinian conception in response to the analysis up to §65, none of the details of the rest of that reformation outside those relating closely to vagueness are accounted for, neither the form of the Augustinian picture in play pre-§65, nor the changes to it post-§65 are explained in analysis. (I must stress that this limitation is *on my account* of *PI* on vagueness; certainly *PI* §§1-133 contain a substantial amount of material that would count towards construction of the rest of the analysis, and there is more of the same post-§133, but I just do not know this material well

enough to see, beyond the preliminary speculation given below, how and to what degree any of it could be brought in in direct support of the specific analysis of vagueness.)

And the incompleteness of the analysis of vagueness as far as I have it, is also, it seems to me, going to be a barrier to bringing that analysis to bear on, and developing it into a fuller analysis of, Frege's anti-vagueness arguments. The problem is that each of those arguments derives its persuasive force from Frege's logic in some way that is independent of the perceived need for the law of excluded middle—after all, Frege cannot argue *from* the logical requirement of the law of excluded middle *to* that requirement, because that would be circular. And that means that analysis of the arguments in each case is—because the aim of analysis is going to be to account for the persuasiveness of the argument, for what the argument is—going to need to get involved with areas of Frege's Augustinian mythology outside those implicated directly in the generation of the law of excluded middle.

Essentially, "Argument 1" from §56 of *GA*, Volume II [interpreted in §1.2 above] begins by assuming Frege's sublimating Augustinian delusional understanding of language for truth as a whole; then, the relaxation of the defensive idealization of one operative part of the delusional system, the law of excluded middle, is considered; but in the end, inevitably, from within the delusion, the conclusion is drawn that an integral part of the system cannot be jeopardized in that way, and the possibility of vagueness is rejected. This essential story of the argument is complicated by the way in which it is presented via an analogy with a rejection of vague areas from geometry. Geometry demands sharp areas and in a seemingly precisely parallel way logic demands sharp concepts. To an extent this analogy simply clarifies the situation with logic, but in so far as it is thoroughgoing it is an argument by analogy for the thesis that the law of excluded middle must hold. Either way, the point here is that understanding how the argument works, through analysis, is going to have to get involved in understanding how logic as a whole demands sharp concepts, understanding, that is, from the inside, how Frege's whole sublimating delusional system fully commits one to the law of excluded middle.

Frege's "Argument 2" from "Comments on Sense and Meaning" [in §1.3 above] that vague predicates, like fictional predicates, do not mean anything is in essence an application of his doctrine that sense determines meaning to fictional predicates, diagnosing their meaninglessness in terms of the incompleteness of their senses, of their definitions— their being incompletely defined appears to be the reason for their failing to refer to any determinate kind of thing in reality—, and then seeing that the same problem arises equally for other incompletely defined predicates, including the vague predicates of everyday language. The distinction between the sense and meaning of expressions and the concomitant idea that the sense determines the meaning are fundamental to Frege's whole picture of language for truth, and any attempt to understand Frege's commitment to them through a Wittgensteinian analysis is probably going to need to get involved in understanding the formation of that whole picture, but certainly in understanding the genesis of some part of that picture decidedly distant from the area superficially concerned with vagueness.

Finally, analysis of "Argument 3" from the 29.9.1896 letter to Peano and from "The Argument for my Stricter Canons of Definition" [see §1.4], that the fact that vague predicates are meaningless explains the Sorites paradox, is also, it seems to me, bound to involve analysis of Frege's logic outside consideration of the immediate motivation behind the law of excluded middle. The argument is that by the very act of trying to say something meaningful or make valid inferences using the concepts of everyday language we are having to treat those vague concepts as if they were sharply defined; and the fact that that is what we are doing is exposed by Sorites reasoning; thus the Sorites "paradox" shows us that logic demands sharp concepts. It is the fact in this, which is the fact that drives the argument, that bringing logic *per se* to bear in the use of language *eo ipso* imposes a requirement of sharp concepts on it that entails involvement of any Wittgensteinian analysis of the argument in analysis of the idea that logic generally demands sharp concepts.

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[*Note: some of the items included here are works which are not explicitly referred to in the text above, but which, nevertheless, I deem to have had a significant influence on the formation of the ideas of my thesis and/or to have something substantial to say in the area of my thesis*]

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