On Wittgenstein, Meaning, and Methodology

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis is a description, and assimilation, of the ideas in the works of the later Wittgenstein. Specifically, it deals with the link between Wittgenstein's conception of meaning and his methodologies for philosophy. In order to highlight the crucial points in the later Wittgenstein's work, I have contrasted it with his work from the *Tractatus* and the works of other Early Analytic thinkers. The primary goal of this thesis is to demonstrate that changes in Wittgenstein's understanding of meaning are closely linked to his changes in his approach to philosophy. The rigidity and obsession with form that present themselves in the *Tractatus* can be seen as an excellent contrast to the loose and amorphous concepts that are found in the *Philosophical Investigations* or *On Certainty*.

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Introduction

"The right method in philosophy would be to say nothing except what can be said using sentences such as those of natural sciences" (TLP 6.53). I believe that this was at the core of Wittgenstein's early philosophical method; he believed that the world was made of facts and our representations of those facts, which are true or false (TLP 1.1,1.13 & 2.21). From this all questions could be answered through either logical analysis or an examination of the facts. In other words, the task of the philosopher is like that of the engineer who is given a project and is expected to apply their mathematical and scientific skills to perform the project. The philosopher is given a problem of the discipline and they are expected to use language and its logic to understand how the problem should be solved. Once solved, these "problems" can be added to the list of things we know and then used to solve other "problems" similar to the way that an engineer might build a machine to build other machines or that a scientist might use a newly discovered theory to solve old problems.

Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* laid out the foundations in philosophy of language for later analytic philosophers like Schlick and Carnap who would entrench themselves even further into science and analyticity. Yet Wittgenstein protested vehemently against the readings and interpretations of the Vienna Circle and those like them (Monk, p.243-4, 250, 283-286). It must have been frustrating to lay down what he thought was the last work of philosophy only to have it consistently misinterpreted (one could say that the kernel of his new method can be found in this frustration of pronouncing the Truth and not being understood). Wittgenstein felt misunderstood and he later came to renounce his methods in the *Tractatus* in favour of a new approach to the philosophy of language. The

Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* was concerned with logic and analytic reasoning in order to explain how language works. His later approach to philosophy was drastically different in its rejection of the staples of analytic philosophy (i.e. logic, systemization, and verification) as essential elements of genuine philosophical work. My proposal is that this shift in philosophical methodology can be attributed to Wittgenstein's shift in his understanding of language and his dissolution of traditional theories of meaning. The later Wittgenstein came to see philosophical problems as confusions regarding the meanings of words. The problems of philosophy are not a matter of figuring out our questions, as a scientist discovers a law of physics but in the way that a writer might go to a dictionary to find out how to spell a word; once the question is answered they can then go back to writing properly but we would not say that they have made an advancement. We are trying to rid ourselves of confusion not build up a body of knowledge.

The idea of philosophy as problem solving seems to be what Wittgenstein's later work is trying to reject. He wanted to show that the problems of philosophy are in our understanding of language. Saying that philosophy is just about relieving certain mental cramps may be extreme but it does emphasize that our confusion is internal to our use of language rather then a being a paradox in the world. Wittgenstein rejected his earlier model of the world where philosophy could be understood as the manipulations of one set of consistent rules to obtain clarity; instead he wanted to introduce the idea that our problems arise when we have many different sets of rules for language and they become confusing when we decide to find one overarching principle. That is to say that the rules of language do not necessarily match up one-to-one with the world or science.

Wittgenstein's idea is that our philosophical problems are mostly a result of our misuse of language rather than in deep mysteries about the world.

I think that this change of view is related to Wittgenstein's rejection of theories of meaning. If we think that the words we use map onto the world in the way of the Platonic forms then it is easy to see the challenge of philosophy as a logical endeavour. We are examiners of language who obtain knowledge of the world by understanding how language works. What the later Wittgenstein would say is that language has no set place in the world and that for every word there is no one-to-one correlation to something in the world. Without a denotative theory of meaning it is impossible to think of language as a source of knowledge about the world in itself. There are no a priori statements about language that can help us explain the world. By this I mean that we cannot simply analyze our language (in parts or as a whole) to discover how the world *must* logically be.

If we are to follow Wittgenstein in believing that language is not intrinsically hooked up to the world then how are we to understand it at all? At this point we can think of language as a practice. We understand language in virtue of how we are taught to use it and later in our application of it. Wittgenstein refers to language as a toolbox, in which there are many different types of tools (PI 11). There are many different types of language-games the same way that there are many different types of tools and similarly we use each of them in different situations often for different purposes. The tools that we put in our toolbox do not need a common feature to share that space and the same is true of language games in a language, each has a purpose but not all of the purposes are necessarily connected. We do not worry about finding a common element in all our tools

before we put them in the toolbox, and so is it in language as well; the rules that we use have developed over time to fit different situations, but are not all necessarily connected.

A brief example of what I am talking about: early Wittgenstein would say that the word 'horse' is related, by virtue of shared form, to horses in the world so that when we say the word we invoke a true picture or representation of the object. There is a form that is shared by both the word 'horse' and actual horses. This procedure can be performed on all other words as well; in order to understand or define a word we must understand the form of the object that it represents. Later Wittgenstein would have thought that the word "horse" is used in situations that we have learned are appropriate. When there are four-legged riding animals around we often describe them as horses but we also do the same thing when we see four-legged work animals as well. But by the same token sometimes we do not call four legged riding animals "horses", especially when they are camels. However, if we see a picture of a horse then we might also say that that is a "horse" in the picture even though there is no actual horse. Later Wittgenstein does not think that the conveyance of meaning can generally be found in the objects that words refer to or in the words themselves. We say the word "horse" and we are invoking our shared linguistic training to understand the word. An ostensive understanding can work for a noun, like 'horse' (though not always or necessarily), but we may need an entirely different approach to a pronoun like 'this'. In the current case there is no natural kind for horses that allows us to identify horses; what allows us to identify them is our training in the use of the term (the instances in which the word has been used).

This has applications to the way we look at philosophical questions like, "What is time? What is the meaning of life? How do we know things?" I think that Wittgenstein is

saying that some of these questions are applications of language that do not make sense if they are examined carefully. We can utter these questions and it is not immediately clear what the answer is or even if there is one but the sentence is well constructed so we assume that there is an answer and that it is important. Other questions only have answers in a certain context and cannot be answered solely through reflection. Still others are confusions that we generate through jargon that we come to adopt as philosophers. We have developed language to a point where it is difficult to notice when we have overlapped two different language games or when we are using the wrong rules to frame or answer our questions. Language is still the key to understanding our philosophical quandaries but we are not going to find the answers that our questions imply.

I am proposing to explain how this works through an examination of Wittgenstein's description of meaning. My thesis, in a nutshell, is that Wittgenstein's change from a theory of meaning to meaning as use is connected to his conception of how we should be doing philosophy and philosophy of language in particular.

Chapter 1: Meaning, methodology, and the *Tractatus*

Part 1:

Wittgenstein held several beliefs and claims throughout his life but I believe that two aspects of his philosophy changed significantly and they changed together for a reason. First, in his later works there is clearly a shift away from the traditional methods of analytic philosophy. Second there is also dissolution of his earlier fundamental concepts of facts and objects, and a shift in his understanding of meaning. In this section I would like to show a *general* connection between the two concepts of meaning and method. My primary concern for this section is to show that our understanding of meaning, whether it is in a theory or not, and method or methods are connected in philosophy in a significant way. To prove this I am going to offer two arguments and a description of how this applies to Wittgenstein. The first argument I call the Epistemological argument because it deals with how we know what we know and the rules and conventions we use to make such determinations. Naturally any approach to philosophy must take into account how we are going to say something meaningful about it. Meaning in this case is linked to method because we have to know what will count as a meaningful statement if we are to communicate our ideas about method clearly. The second argument, the Metaphysical argument, is similar to the first in that it deals with what we count as meaningful in philosophy. In other words, the beliefs that we hold most dear at any given time affect how we go about doing philosophy and our understanding of meaning. Our *beliefs* about what is meaningful naturally limit our topics and our goals for philosophy. The last argument is more of an example of how Wittgenstein's changes

in meaning and methodology have striking similarities that have led me to investigate this topic further. Obviously these arguments will be explained further in the section to come.

My first argument about the connection between meaning and method is simple. In order to do philosophy of any kind we must first have at least a vague conception of what the words we are using mean. No matter what philosophers disagree upon, I think that all of them, at least tacitly, must believe that communication is an integral part of philosophy. It is conceivable for people to tackle all of these questions in their own minds and to come to some kind of peace but ultimately if *we* are to do philosophy as an activity *we* must communicate about it.

Our criteria for epistemology are going to be linked to our understanding of meaning in the following way: how we know something is linked to the way that we communicate this knowledge. These epistemological criteria are going to have an impact on the way that we do philosophy in general. The way that we think that we gain knowledge or justification or just information in general is going to affect the way that we do philosophy because it will delineate the kinds of arguments, evidence, opinions, etc… that we will accept. You will rarely hear of a philosopher who believes that we acquire knowledge in one way but does philosophy in an antithetical manner so as to convey nothing at all. I do not think that this argument is a very contentious one in that it is pointing out a connection between meaning and method through our epistemological beliefs. All philosophers have to have epistemological beliefs or theories even if they are tacitly held.

One may very well be able to become wise, justified, ethical, or any number of philosophical goals, completely by oneself, but even if that is the case then philosophy

must be something else entirely. Philosophy involves language and the communication of ideas. No philosopher believes that we attain philosophical goals without any communication even if it is to point to the goal without speaking of it explicitly. I mean this in the least contentious sense possible, in that philosophy is a communal activity and we use language to convey our ideas and theories about philosophy. In other words, we would probably not even need a word for philosophy if we could do it by ourselves. Saying that we use language to do philosophy may be a virtually empty truism but there is a hook in this statement. When we use language we expect to be understood and we expect to be understood when we are doing philosophy. Most people who engage in philosophy are trying to say something to others and they do so by saying what they deem to be meaningful things. Your approach to philosophy is going to be influenced by your ideas about meaning because that is, in some sense, the vehicle for your message. Wittgenstein has an argument against private languages but we do not need to accept it to believe that philosophy is ultimately a social activity.

Let us use an oversimplified example; a rationalist like Rene Descartes. Descartes, like any good rationalist, believed that we must base our knowledge in pure thought. So in the beginning, for Descartes, the only things that we know are the conclusions that we draw through rational deliberation. Let us say that after reading his *Meditations on First Philosophy* I am convinced that he has the correct method but I decide to talk to him about a few empirical problems that I have with his philosophy (e.g. I say that I *know* that air exists even without the reasoning of the cogito because I feel it in my lungs). He is going to think that I am crazy or that I have grossly misunderstood his book if I claim to be a rationalist who is making such empirical claims about knowledge.

The point is that Descartes has a method for determining what he knows and this method thought must come first. That is to say, meaning is going to be determined and constrained by the rationalist method. There is a link between the way that a rationalist does philosophy and the kinds of arguments and statements that he will find meaningful. Neither Descartes nor anyone else for that matter will ever admit to my being a rationalist as long as I make empirical statements that are not preceded by rational thought.

The idea behind this argument is simple; our understanding or theory of meaning is an integral part of any epistemology and our approach to philosophy is going to be influenced by our ideas about how we know what we know. Once we decide what counts as a meaningful statement we are obliged to use those types of statements to convey our philosophical ideas. By the same token we might say that we have decided on a method for philosophy and from that we will be obliged to craft an understanding of meaning that validates the articulation of that method. There is an infinite regression in asking whether our method shapes our epistemology or vice versa. It is clear that we cannot obtain knowledge in one manner and then not use that manner in obtaining our goals in philosophy. This is a situation where both factors (meaning and method) clearly affect each other but I think that it would be a mistake to say that one necessarily affects the other in a causal manner and the core of my thesis is that they change symbiotically at least in the later Wittgenstein's case.

My next argument, which I have dubbed the 'Metaphysical argument', has to do with our basic assumptions about philosophy. The crux of this argument is that our basic beliefs about philosophy and its goals are going to change with our beliefs about what counts as a meaningful statement. I am not talking about fundamental beliefs or beliefs

that do not change but simply the ideas to which we have our firmest attachments. Obviously this can be a spectrum, from those who have fundamental unchanging beliefs to those who simply believe that a certain idea or concept makes sense to them at the time. By beliefs I mean ideas or concepts that we put philosophical currency into, not just articles of faith or reason. The fact is that we cannot work as complete sceptics who do not believe anything; we must have some basic beliefs that we hold onto in order to create any kind of coherent concept.

Let us use Rudolf Carnap as an example. He believed that the philosopher has two tools: empirical data and logical reasoning. He believed that questions of philosophical concern can be examined logically to produce a positive and negative option and we then use experience to determine which one is the case (Carnap, 1932, p.106). In Carnap's view, science is the study of what we experience and it is bound by logical analysis; if language is to be understood then it must also comply with logic. The result of this is that if we are to say something meaningful then a statement must comply with the following criteria: A sentence must make syntactical and grammatical sense and a sentence must have conditions under which it is verifiable (Carnap, 1932, p.107). These two conditions must be met in order for us to understand what is meant by a sentence and if we want to know what a word means we must know what kind of sentences it is used in and what makes those sentences true or false. In order for language to be understandable it must produce truth-values that are attainable. This commitment to logic and empiricism creates a standard for determining meaning (by limiting it to statements that can be logically analysed and empirically tested) and shows a deep commitment to a particular method (the analysis of statements and their empirical ratification). Obviously this is an

abbreviated reading of Carnap but the point is that core beliefs (like logicism and empiricism) generate an understanding of meaning and a method for philosophy that are related.

Perhaps the term 'metaphysical' is misleading but I can think of no better word for our deepest philosophical commitments. Obviously in the case of logical positivists their commitments run fairly deep and it would be difficult to extract either a method for philosophy or an understanding of meaning that does not take these commitments into account. These beliefs do not have to be so rigid as say, faith in a God, which sometimes tells us to believe and not to question. In fact these beliefs can be quite transient and we can certainly have reasons for believing in them. I am not trying to establish that there is philosophical dogma but that in order to do philosophy we must have some beliefs that are indispensable, at least for the moment. These strong beliefs are going to affect meaning in that they give us a model of meaningful language. In other words, the things that we believe in make sense and must be meaningful if we want to be coherent. Similarly, our approach to philosophy will not make sense if it does not have a core of goals or philosophical ideals (even if they are transient).

The key to the last two arguments is that philosophical method and our understanding of meaning do not arise in a vacuum; we develop our method for philosophy as we develop our beliefs and epistemology. It would be difficult to create a method for philosophy without some idea of what one wanted to talk about. Similarly, it would be strange to say that we have answers to questions but no idea how we got those answers. The two concepts work symbiotically in that we cannot have one without the

other and to some extent they justify each other. This is not to say that our opinions may not change in light of our method or that our method may not change with revelation.

This leads into my description of the connection between meaning and method in Wittgenstein's works. The early Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* had a denotative theory of meaning and this lead to his belief that his method would put philosophy to bed. This sentiment is evident in his withdrawal from philosophy after publishing the *Tractatus* and his subsequent sojourn into teaching elementary school in rural Austria and later working briefly as an architect (Monk, p.192, 235). Wittgenstein believed and hoped that he had finished all the work that could be done in philosophy. Early Wittgenstein thought that it was his duty to create a method and finish philosophy, and his denotative theory of meaning allowed him to use language and logic as a handle on how we are ultimately related to the world. In his later works, it appears that Wittgenstein's goal of finishing philosophy is seen as a naïve project. Later his goal is to make language clearer in order to see how our problems work and indeed if they are problems that are answerable. This new method is to see all philosophical problems as legitimate, but it also looks at them to see if they have any grammatical value or mistakes and then dissolve the problems if possible. With this new method comes the idea of meaning as use, where the meaning of a word is not necessarily fixed and the only measure of meaning is in the various ways in which it is used by a group of language users.

In the *Tractatus* we have a theory of meaning that is completely comprehensive, where all statements follow certain rules (if they do not, then they are not meaningful). This, in conjunction with the picture theory of meaning, gives us a complete concept of language that is very rigid, the idea being that one method, one understanding, one set of

rules can define the way that we think, the way that we speak, and how language is connected to the world. Wittgenstein's goal was to finish doing philosophy and in order to do that he needed a rigid monolithic understanding of meaning so that it could encompass all of his problems and illegitimate any others. The idea is that if you are to create a system for answering all of our philosophical problems then your theory of meaning must incorporate that by making sense of those questions that need to be answered.

I will be explaining Wittgenstein's theory of meaning and the methodology of the *Tractatus* in the next section but for now it is enough that we see that an all-encompassing approach to philosophy requires an all-encompassing theory of meaning so that our problems or questions all make sense and can be dealt with in a specific way.

In Wittgenstein's later writings he still sees his work in philosophy to be therapeutic but he no longer believes that it is a project, per se, that can be solved or completed. In a way his life was a testament to the fact that philosophical conundrums can haunt one's thoughts indefinitely. Even though he left Cambridge to become a schoolteacher he always found himself returning, not always to Cambridge, but to philosophical "work." This penchant for returning to philosophical rumination was eventually sparked by Ramsey in his communications and his visit to the Austrian countryside (Monk, p.216-32). In this later work though, there is a significant change in Wittgenstein's understanding of meaning: "One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to *look at* its use and learn from that" (PI 340). In brief: the idea is that we give a sentence meaning in virtue of how we use it. A community will use words that have a greater context (are part of a language game) and the only arbiter for meaning is in the

use and acceptance of phrases, words, and actions in that language game. I do not think that this can or should be classified as a *theory* of meaning for two reasons. First, a theory can often be tested, whereas Wittgenstein's understanding of meaning demands that we remain constantly open to change and adaptation to suit a given situation and would itself (probably) defy verification or falsification. Second, a theory generally advances one coherent thought and the principle behind meaning as use is not to restrict us to one conception of meaning or even one method of dissolving problems. So Wittgenstein's more diffuse method is at the very least correlated to a change in meaning but there is also the fact that both the method and the concept of meaning have become less rigid for Wittgenstein. Meaning is no longer clearly defined by logic and form while Wittgenstein's methodology has become less concerned with trying to delineate and solve all of philosophy's problems but rather he concentrates on clearing up confusions that have arisen and he is trying to make the whole process (literally) less methodical and more context-oriented: "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," (P.I. ss111).

As we can see, Wittgenstein's change in method is at the very least correlated with his change in his understanding of meaning (it is the job of the coming sections to show this bond more clearly). The goal of this section was to show a link between meaning and method in general; the rest of my thesis will be dealing with early and later Wittgenstein and how the connection between meaning and method affected his philosophy with particular emphasis on the later works.

Part 2:

My goals in this section of the thesis are to show that, despite protest on his own part, the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* has a theory of meaning and that this theory is denotative. Furthermore, once this theory of meaning is added to his logical commitments Wittgenstein shows us a method for philosophy in which the goal is to end the endeavour once and for all. In my examination of the *Tractatus* I will show the connection between the world, thought, and language that underpins Wittgenstein's unprofessed theory of meaning. Coupling this theory of meaning with the harsh binary aspect of logic leaves philosophers with only one thing left to do: read and understand the *Tractatus* and you will be able to work out whatever problems you may have with language and, by extension, philosophy. At the end of this section I will try to reconcile my reading of Wittgenstein with his last two enigmatic passages by showing how they, too, could point to an end to philosophy.

The early Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* shows us a perfect example of a denotative theory of meaning. In the *Tractatus* we find that language mimics thoughts, which are pictures of facts, which are made in the likeness of the forms of objects. Wittgenstein's objects seem to have blueprints that can be passed on to language through thought and logic. This is a perfect example of a denotative theory of meaning that Wittgenstein will reject later on in his life. The purpose of this section is to highlight the important aspects of the *Tractatus* as they pertain to Wittgenstein's early theory of meaning.

In the *Tractatus* the meaning of language is tied up in the connection between sentences and facts. "The world is the totality of facts, not of things," is the first phrase of

the book and it sets the guidelines for understanding the world (TLP 1.1). Facts are made up of the forms of objects, which are simple items (TLP 2.01, 2.02). All the ways that objects might fit together produce all of the elementary facts that the objects make. An object always remains the same; what changes is its relation to other objects through their forms (TLP 2.0271). The forms of objects are their potential for combination with other objects (TLP 2.033). We can see that this is what we might call the early Wittgenstein's metaphysics or, if we do not like that term, his description of the fundamental parts of the world. There are things, but they are not the whole story; the world is made up of all the possible ways that these objects can be combined.

How we connect to the world of facts is through pictures. "We make pictures of facts to ourselves," and, "[s]uch a picture is a model of reality." (TLP 2.1, 2.12). These pictures have the same form as the objects they are trying to depict. If the picture is assembled as the objects are (i.e. has the same structure) then it is a true picture. However, if the picture is not assembled as the objects are assembled then it is a false picture (TLP, 2.202, 2.223). There are two important things about pictures. First, they are recognised in our minds. They are mental phenomena that we are aware of in virtue of their representing the facts. The second thing we must notice is that pictures may be true or false but they must represent the form of objects in order to be pictures at all. "A proposition is held together, not by any additional "tie" or "glue" but by the forms of its constituents," (Hintikka, p.19). The objects' relations to each other are what make up the facts and a similar form is given to pictures.

"A thought is a logical picture of a fact," "We use a sentence (spoken or written, etc.) as a projection of a possible fact," (TLP 3, 3.11). Our thoughts are pictures of facts

and we then put these representations into sentences. The mind is responsible for conjuring pictures that point to the form of a group of objects that make a fact. We put these pictures into words by having the words have the same form as the facts. It is important to note that the objects, the thought, and the fact all have a form in common. It is also important to note that the only way for this theory to work is through the mind and the presence of forms in the facts.

Sentences are made up of simple signs that Wittgenstein calls names (TLP 3.202). Names are simples just like objects, and what is more, each simple name corresponds to an object. The arrangement that we give to the names mimics the organization that objects might have. The names do not mean anything until they are put together into a sentence where they have relations to each other as objects do in a fact. We can show these relations through the following chart:

	Language	**World**
Simples:	**names**	**objects**
Smallest meaningful Unit:	**sentence**	**elementary fact**

The connection between these two sides is in their forms. In the way that the world builds facts out of the forms of objects, we build sentences from names that correspond to those objects.[1]

The glue that holds all of these ideas together is logic and form. For Wittgenstein all language must follow logic, "[t]hought cannot be of anything illogical, else we would have to think illogically," (TLP 3.03) Objects have lots of possibilities in their

[1] This diagram was taken from my class notes from Professor French's class on Early Analytic Philosophy in Fall Semester 2001.

configurations but the ones that they are in are the basis for true facts. The configurations that objects do not occupy are the basis for false facts. Objects have many different possible configurations; this makes up the world of facts. Since objects are actual things they must occupy one of their possible configurations according to their forms; this makes up the things that exist. If we make a statement about the world then we must check that it exists. If it does, then we have said something true; and if it does not, then we have said something false. We make statements about possible states of the world and then we can look at the world to see if they are true or not.

The building blocks for all of these logical statements are facts, objects and thoughts and these three things are tied together by a common form. The idea of form in the *Tractatus* is not a Platonic form that exists in another realm. Wittgenstein was a mystic, but in a very specific sense. He believed that there are things that cannot be said only shown. These things that can be shown cannot be expressed or even thought but they can be "apprehended, *inter alia* by a grasp of the *forms* of what can be expressed," (Hacker, 2000, p.381-2). In other words the form of an elementary fact or sentence is senseless but is the source of our understanding of these logical constructs.

"A picture depicts reality by representing the possible existence and nonexistence of elementary facts," (TLP 2.201). In other words, facts are more then just what is the case but they are all possible cases. Any given fact represents a state of affairs in the world and it either is or is not the case. "What is asserted by a true proposition is exactly the same as what is denied by the assertion of its negation," (Hacker, 2003, p.321). Wittgenstein believes that all statements are governed by logic and this is true whether we are *talking* about thoughts, facts, or elementary statements.

Perhaps it would be useful to put this theory next to Frege's in order to understand what Wittgenstein is doing in the *Tractatus*. Frege believes that language is a collection of signs; these signs have both a sense and a reference (Frege p.22). The reference of a sign is the object in the world that the sign is about (Frege, p.22). If one were to say the phrase "my mother's dog is black" then the reference of that phrase is the big hairy animal that sleeps at the foot of my mother's bed. The references in language are the bits of our world that we want to talk about. The reference is the truth-value of a sentence (Frege, p.24). In other words, whether a sentence is true or false depends on what it is referring to.

The sense is, essentially, the meaning or meanings of the sign that are shared by all the people who use the language (Frege p.22). The sense is the core of what is shared between people using language. Frege denies that what is shared is an idea because it is impossible for two people to have the same thought about any object or event: "[t]he idea is subjective" (Frege, p.22). So what is the sense of a sign? Frege says that the sense is that "wherein the mode of presentation is contained" (Frege, p.21). Multiple senses can have the same reference (Frege, p.22-23). For example, when talking about my mother's dog one could also talk about the big hairy beast that sleeps at the foot of my mother's bed, a Bernese mountain dog named Wilson, or the only member of my family that is bigger than I am.

This is obviously a brief synopsis of Frege's theory of meaning but it is sufficient for the purpose of comparison. They seem to have similar topics in mind in their theories of language (as well they should, given Wittgenstein's interest in Frege's work). They both talk about the world, Frege through reference and Wittgenstein through objects. So

they both have denotative theories of meaing. They also both have an abstract concept that seems to do all the work in explaining meaning, Frege's sense and Wittgenstein's form.

Frege does not believe that ideas are an important part of meaning because they are subjective and impossible to duplicate across people (or to verify even if they could be so duplicated). He does believe that "[hu]mankind has a common store of thoughts which is transmitted from one generation to the next," and this is through sense (Frege, p.22). Reference has the simple job of confirming our statements (or not) in the world and acting as the truth-value indicator for statements. The problem is that meaning has these two facets, sense and reference. Each facet deals with a different part of language. Sense somehow deals with the common store of thoughts while reference deals with the relations to the world. Frege tries to bridge the gap between thoughts and the world through two linguistic concepts but he is constantly frustrated by the "ambiguity of language". It is interesting to note that Frege, in some sense, foresaw the problems that the later Wittgenstein would have with thoughts and their connection to language. He saw that our thoughts could not be an integral part of meaning because we cannot know what others are thinking. On the other hand he and the early Wittgenstein are both trying to figure out how logic can connect the world and language.

Wittgenstein is working with three components in his theory of meaning. There is the mind, language, and the world. Frege links language to the other two by separating language into two more components, sense and reference. Wittgenstein links all three through their common form. It would be clearer to think of these components as gears. There are three separate gears and each of them has teeth. When one gear moves the

others move with it in virtue of their physical shape. We have to think of the mind, language, and the world in the same way. When any part is moving the others are moving along with it in virtue of their forms. The common form that runs through these three objects is logic. Wittgenstein's world is bound by logic. We might say something illogical but will it mean anything? We have already mentioned that Wittgenstein does not believe that we can think illogically. Logic and form appear to be the teeth that allow the parts to move together. So Wittgenstein's theory of meaning is trying to link up to the world, not through an agent, but through the make-up of its parts.

This leads to interesting ideas about how we might go about answering our philosophical questions. If the world acts like these gears then understanding one gear can lead to the understanding of others. Wittgenstein's language maps very neatly onto the world in that sentences express possible facts. "A thought is a logical picture of a fact, … in a sentence thought expresses itself perceptibly … we use a sentence (spoken or written, etc.) as a projection of a possible fact" (TLP 3, 3.1, 3.11). Thoughts are pictures of facts and sentences are expressions of thoughts so the logical rules that bind facts should also bind language. This is made explicit by the comment that "[a] sentence is in itself neither probable nor improbable. An event occurs or does not occur, there is no middle course" (TLP 5.153). Wittgenstein's view of what exists can be summarized in the phrase "the world is the totality of facts," and, facts either are the case or are not the case, so determining what exists is simply of matter of determining which facts are the case and anything that tries to say something outside of the facts is meaningless (TLP 1.1).

This interpretation of the world is, if anything, unambiguous. Form and picture theory connect the world, our thoughts, and language; their forms are limited to the possible configurations of objects; and any given configuration is either true (is the case in the world) or false (is not the case in the world). Once one has acquired this model working out the rest is just busy work. "What can be said can be said clearly," is in the penultimate statement of the book and it sums up Wittgenstein's method for philosophy quite clearly (TLP 6.54). We work through language determining which statements are meaningful (could be true or false) and those that have no truth value, and are hence meaningless. Many traditional philosophical problems will simply disappear under this model of reasoning by virtue of not having a clearly attainable answer through logic and examination of the facts. For example, traditional philosophical problems like the problem of the one and the many, or of other minds, become non-issues simply because the questions contain no logical conclusion and there is no way to scientifically discover the answer. Hence many of our philosophical difficulties are either answerable via this method and are taken care of or they are confusions that have no answer and should not be considered important in philosophy or any place else.

How does all of this tie together with the last two statements of the book? This is an important question in some ways and in other ways almost a non-issue. The later Wittgenstein will contend that any sentence can be variously interpreted and so it seems with the famous last section of the *Tractatus* and its various interpretations. There are many theories and it may very well be that there is no one correct interpretation. However, given the nature of Wittgenstein's project with the *Tractatus* (to clear up philosophy for all time) it would seem silly not to say something about the last word in

philosophy. What is this business of climbing up a ladder only to throw it away (TLP 6.54)? Here is my theory about these sections: the final section ("Of what we cannot speak we must be silent," (TLP 7)) is slightly easier so I will begin with it: we have been given a method for determining what is meaningful and what is not (through logic and picture theory) and deviating from this method will take us straight back to philosophical confusion. In other words we may be tempted to worry about unanswerable questions but Wittgenstein is assuring us that we are better off without them.

The penultimate section is much more confusing:

> My sentences are illuminating in the following way: to understand me you must recognise my sentences – once you have climbed out through them, on them, over them – as senseless. (You must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after you have climbed up on it.) You must climb out through my sentences; then you will see the world correctly. (TLP 6.54)

My thought on interpreting this section is to say that Wittgenstein's sentences may be senseless but they are trying to show us something. Wittgenstein stresses the idea that there is something to a picture that is understood but cannot be explained, only shown. This part of a picture that is shown is not really a part at all but the form of the picture. What the picture shows is not a quality of the picture; it is the picture, so in the same way, the sentences of the *Tractatus* are trying to show us something about philosophy and the world. In other words, Wittgenstein can talk about form and picture theory until he is blue in the face but in order to understand it we simply have to see the connection.[2]

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[2] It has been argued by Conant and others that the last two statements of the *Tractatus* are a wholesale repudiation of all that went before them. This theory would effectively destroy the difference between early and later Wittgenstein by assuming that the point of the *Tractatus* was to get us to stop trying to look at the world and language in such an analytic and logic-laden manner. Effectively they are saying that we are to read the *Tractatus* and if we understand it then we realise its absurdity. I could write a whole other thesis on the subject but for brevity's sake I offer two arguments as to why I have decided to opt for the more traditional reading (one of which is from Hacker). 1) I appeal to Hacker's plea that such a reading would be identifiable in Wittgenstein's notes and correspondences where it clearly is not (Hacker, 2000, p.371-80).

To recap, Wittgenstein would not want me to call it this but he has a theory of meaning that states that objects, thoughts, and language all share a common form, all statements in language correspond to thoughts and possible states of the world, all meaningful statements are either true or false, and finally we can investigate the truth or falsity of language to find out about the world. The idea is that once we are shown this model of thinking we will no longer need to answer problematic questions about the one and the many, or the problem of other minds but that the dissolution of these questions will be apparent. However, there still remains the inherently mystical notion of form, which binds the *Tractatus* together and sets it apart from the work of Wittgenstein's contemporaries like Carnap and Schlick. This comprehensive all-encompassing denotative theory of meaning attempts to explain everything to do with philosophy of language and philosophy in general. The idea is that once you master the content of the *Tractatus* the rest of our philosophical problems will disappear. Basically, the theory of meaning lays a foundation for a method that is all encompassing. This rigid conception of meaning should ideally allow us to solve all of our problems but in reality it seems to simply sweep them under the rug. If a problem is not solvable through logical analysis or an examination of the world then it is no problem at all. In the next chapter Wittgenstein will introduce a different theory of meaning that can accommodate a broader spectrum of problems and will no longer try to present a template for solving all of our questions about philosophy.

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2) My second argument is to ask why Wittgenstein would comment on the main text of the *Tractatus* in the *Philosophical Investigations* if he assumes that those who read it know it as mere nonsense? (see P.I. ss46, 114, 115). There seems to be no reason to address the ideas from the *Tractatus* if they are just nonsense.

Chapter 2: Connections Between Meaning and Method

Part 1:

If we suppose that denotative theories of meaning will not work, then what are we to replace them with? Wittgenstein's answer is to say that we do not need a *theory* of meaning at all. He contends that meaning should be understood in terms of its use or purpose. The words we use and the way that we have learned, or been trained, to use them is what gives them their meaning. There is no overarching principle that regulates all language but there is a way to figure out what each different language-game is about. There are two clear goals in Wittgenstein's explanation of meaning. First, meaning may be amorphous but it is still a useful notion. Meaning is not an all-encompassing principle of language to be discovered and Wittgenstein believes that his job is to describe meaning rather then to give a testable account of it. Second, tying our concept of meaning into objects or thoughts is to be rejected as the common thread that runs throughout all language.

Wittgenstein's understanding of meaning is fairly simple: words, phrases, sentences etc. only make sense within a language-game and the meanings of these linguistic tools are found in the way that we use them. The way that we use language must be learned by, or trained into, us in order for us to share a meaningful conversation with others. "'So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?'—It is what human beings *say* that is true and false; and they agree in the language they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life" (PI 241). Language-games are sets of rules that we use in context-dependant situations. We must all be playing roughly the same language game in order to be understood. For example, if you were to

begin talking to me about the finer points of musical composition I would be at a loss because of my lack of knowledge. But were I to take a course on the subject perhaps I would be able to play that language game as well.

We say things in order to make other things happen. Most of the time, in order to show that we understand what someone says we must perform some action in response. For example, if someone tells me to get him or her a glass of water, one way that I show that I understand their request is to go to the kitchen and get a glass of water. Obviously, language is not always so simple that requests are uniformly met with compliance. When someone asks me for a glass of water I may say, "I cannot get you your water because my leg is broken, get it yourself". Now, just because I did not go get the glass of water does not mean that I did not understand what they meant. However, if, when I was given this request, I went to get a glass of milk, then I have not performed the appropriate actions to show understanding of the meaning of the request.

We have developed language games for many different purposes beyond getting others to fetch things or even beyond making requests and the responses that will qualify as meaningful or appropriate. We speak in many different ways and for disparate purposes. We give commands, make judgements, ask questions, exhibit emotions, etc… But what counts as a meaningful response to a command can be completely different from the response to a question.

Meaning, for Wittgenstein, is a very amorphous concept that is not just hard to define but better off if it is not. There are so many disparate instances of meaningful language that we will understand it better if we keep it vague. I think that Wittgenstein sees this as a strength in his argument rather than a weakness. "Is an indistinct

photograph a picture of a person at all? Is it even always an advantage to replace an indistinct picture with a sharp one? Isn't the indistinct one exactly what we need?" (PI 71). It is when we try to narrowly define meaning that we run into problems and paradoxes in language, such as being committed to reducing all intelligible utterances to truth-values. Wittgenstein is saying that we should look at what it is to mean something and if what we find is a vague or loose group of cases then we should describe it as such rather then attempt to cram everything into one type of meaning. For example, when the police are gathering people for a line-up they are trying to find people who look like the suspect but are not identical to the suspect. They may use a picture of their suspect as a guide but they are not following it too carefully. If the police were to pick exact replicas of the suspect then there would be no point to the line-up. So it stands to reason that the police choose the other members of the line-up according to a vague balance between similarity and difference to their suspect and in this case exact criteria for picking individuals would do more harm than good.

Many of us tend to see language as one whole project that is totally interconnected. Early analytic philosophers believed that what ran through all language was logic. By that view every statement has a truth-value and, therefore, we know something when we know its truth-value. In his later works Wittgenstein is not just rejecting the idea that the key to language is logic, he is rejecting the idea that there is any one key at all. We should look at language as a toolbox in which we put many disparate objects like hammers, glue pots, nails, chisels etc...(PI, 11). In language we have language-games that are like the tools: we ask questions, makes statements, give commands, make exclamations etc... The only similarity between tools is often that they

are all in the same toolbox and this is what Wittgenstein believes of language-games in a language. We have many different goals for using language and as such trying to reduce it to a single unified project may not be an accurate explanation of what is really going on. The purposes of language change and that is where we should look for clarification of meaning.

Sometimes we are tempted to say that there are some language games that are more exact (like those of science or logic) and from that we assume that all language can be derived from these exact language-games. Let us look at Wittgenstein's analogy of language as a city. He likens our common way of speaking to the muddled streets at the inner core of the city. Now, if we are to go out towards the city limits things get more organized, as more planning goes into the expansion of the city than the circumstantial creation of the city's main district. These suburbs of language can be likened to our formal and well-defined linguistic games like physics, chemistry, mathematics or formal logic (PI, 18). The point is that the suburbs of language are all well planned and can give us the illusion that we might be able to find a unifying theory to the construction of the whole city. There is a problem with assimilating the city's inner core because it is not made up from a well-planned grid and so the basic components of language are not as well planned either. Chemistry and mathematics may have similarities that allow us to plot them on the same chart but it would be a mistake to assume that we can do the same thing with chemistry and, for example, humour. Language is a complex and layered entity and to try to unify its many purposes would be to impose a quality upon it that it simply does not have.

Meaning is created by being part of a form of life, or on a more practical level, it is understanding and being a part of a game. Kenny writes:

> What is it that gives significance to the sounds and marks on paper which make up sentences in language? By themselves the symbols seem inert and dead: what is it that gives them life (PG 40, 107; PI 1, 430)? The obvious answer is that they become alive by being meant by speakers and writers and understood by hearers and readers. (Kenny p.140)

Kenny rather poetically points out that meaning is not something which occurs internally in the mind, but is in front of our faces appearing in our actions. In order to figure out the meaning of a language game we must understand the space that surrounds it. For example take the act of lying. I am a notoriously horrible liar. I have lots of tells that tip people off to the fact that I am not being genuine: I get nervous, I cannot make eye-contact, and I wait a long time before I speak. When I lie, I am playing a language-game in which I am trying to deceive; but the trained observer will realise that I am doing so every time and discount whatever I have said. A good liar, however, will tell me something false and show all the signs of someone who is being genuine. In both cases (myself versus the expert liar) the same words can be uttered but the context (i.e. credibility and body language) is what determines whether the person is a good liar or not. However, part of the game of lying is in knowing when others are lying, so my efforts may be transparent but they still fit into the language game. The project of simply telling an un-truth is laden with criteria and counter-criteria for what counts as a lie and how others can react to it. When lying one can have a perfectly calm demeanour, or one may twitch, or give oneself away by babbling; and in response to being lied to one may realise what is going on and call the other person out for lying, act as if fooled, or genuinely be fooled by another's deception. All of these criteria are actions (verbal and otherwise) that we go through to be a part of the game.

One may be tempted to say that I have not really offered a definition of meaning as use in the preceding paragraphs but only a string of metaphors and examples with diverse goals and tenuous relations. The problem is that the concept of meaning as use strongly resists clear cut definitions (even of itself) and in fact the string of metaphors is more likely to show you what Wittgenstein was getting at. To give a definition of meaning would be to straighten the city streets, give a toolbox a theme, or put together a line-up of clones. The point is not to have overarching principles or theories, so giving a rigid definition of 'meaning' would be counter-productive to the project. We are best to leave it as an investigation into our words and actions that accompany a given language game.[3]

The rejection of denotative theory is crucial if we are to understand meaning as Wittgenstein intends us to. His purpose in his rejection of denotative theories of meaning is two-fold. First, he wants to dissolve the idea that our thoughts have a direct link to meaning. Second, he wants to broaden our concept of meaning so that we do not create unnecessary problems.

Our thoughts can be about anything. Frege's theory of meaning was a precursor to Wittgenstein's approach in that he, too, rejected a direct link between thought and meaning. Frege writes:

> If the reference of a sign is an object perceivable by the senses, my idea of it is an internal image, arising from memories of sense impressions which I have performed. Such an idea is often saturated with feeling; the clarity of its separate parts varies and oscillates. The same sense is not always connected, even in the same man, with the same idea. The idea is

[3] Wittgenstein writes: "[I believe it might interest a philosopher, one who can think himself, to read my notes. For even if I have hit the mark only rarely, he would recognise what targets I had been ceaselessly aiming at.]" OC 387.

> subjective: one man's idea is not that of another. Their result, as a matter of course, a variety of differences in the idea associated with the same sense. (Frege, p.22)

Frege points out that our thoughts are often different from case to case even though we may be saying the same thing over and over. What goes on in even one person's head can change and therefore we do not determine meaning amongst each other according to what each of us is thinking. Wittgenstein's dialectical approach highlights the many thoughts that reportedly enter our heads when we mean something. For example, while counting I may be thinking, "1,2,3,4,5…" or, "one apple, two apples, three apples…" or, "I wish I were somewhere else right now" or, I could be thinking nothing at all. The problem is that even if there were one monolithic account of everyone's thoughts while counting we do not have access to it except on a personal basis. So I may know what goes on in my head to determine the meaning of my words but that is clearly not how I determine the meaning of what other people are saying. We may not know what someone is thinking but we do know what they are saying so long as we play the same language-games.

It is more important that we *act like* we understand than that we *think* that we understand. It is common for someone to say that they knew the answer to a question on a test but could not produce the answer. Whether we believe them or not is a question of trust but for the examiner's purposes our friend does not know the answer. So too with meaning. There may be quite a few things going on in our heads but what matters is what we say and do. The practices and conventions that act as a context for language are almost as important as the words themselves. If I say, "I am going for a long walk," while standing on a small boat, then the meaning of my statement will not be clear to my shipmates. However, if I say the same thing while standing in a cabin in the woods then it will probably sound perfectly normal.

It is important to note that Wittgenstein is not denying the fact that we have thoughts or even that these thoughts affect our behaviour but that when we are trying to determine the meaning of a word we do not try to divine what is in the user's head. When someone uses a word that we do not understand we ask them for a definition or a demonstration of what they are talking about; we do not ask to see what they are thinking.

The binary nature of denotative theories of meaning can also lead to some queer consequences in terms of how we use language. When we ask a question, even if the answer will be a "yes or no" or a "true or false," can we really say that the question itself is either true or false? We do not try to decide whether a question is true before we answer it. Again with commands, when I order someone to do something does that statement have a truth-value? "Get me a glass of water," is not a statement that we would say is true or false. There are many examples of statements that do not fit well with truth-functional analysis. Such as: questions, commands, exclamations, preferences, or even greetings. We may understand what it is to have a false belief or a bad theory in that they do not correspond with what seems to be the case, but what would it mean to ask a false question? Is the question badly thought out? Is there no answer to the question? Should we not ask that question? We could arbitrarily pick one of these meanings for falsity but that would stretch its meaning beyond logical analysis of "what is the case." It seems that there are times when we use truth functionality to great effect (i.e. when we are arguing or trying to prove something) but to apply it to everything we say would seem to be stretching our concept of truth and falsity beyond their logical uses. Therefore, even if we could apply truth-values to questions, commands, greetings, etc… it does not appear

that we would still be talking about what is the case but something else like the proper formation of a question or the right to have an opinion.

Even if we use denotative theories only when talking about objects and relations there can still be complications. Denotative theory can be problematic in its association of names to objects or even sentences to elementary facts because the relationship of words to their corresponding objects can change drastically while our use remains fairly constant. For example, proper names can be unique and applied only to one object like the "Mona Lisa." So when we use the name we can only be talking about one thing, the picture of a smiling woman by Leonardo Da Vinci that hangs in the Louvre. This is a case where the name is clearly connected to the object. If the Mona Lisa were to be destroyed in a fire tomorrow then the word/object connection would become slightly strained even though we would continue to use the name. We would still talk about the Mona Lisa but the relationship of that name has changed from referring to a picture of a smiling woman to a pile of ash and dust. Yet even though the Mona Lisa was destroyed would we not still talk about the Mona Lisa as if it were a painting? If asked to draw the "Mona Lisa" would we not draw a picture of a smiling woman and not a pile of dust? We use the same name before and after even though the object has changed. Wittgenstein brings up a similar example about Excalibur in the *Philosophical Investigations* (PI 39-41,45). The point is that the relation of names to objects can be twisted and changed but the words sometimes come out one way and sometimes the other. Even though we might talk about the Mona Lisa in terms of its pictorial qualities an insurance company would surely still be interested in talking about the pile of dust when calculating the damages.

Wittgenstein's later thoughts on meaning and how it should be understood are a major departure from traditional early analytic views. He has rejected a logical foundation of language, he has severed ties between thoughts and the world, and lastly he has given up on a word-world relation. Most importantly, though, he believes that we should not look at meaning and language in general as one project with the same qualities running all the way through. Language can be separated into many different activities that may or may not have similar qualities. In the last chapter I will tackle family resemblances and how they can be used to tie language together in a bundle without there being any essential or necessary attributes. However, the next section will focus on Wittgenstein's later method or methods for doing philosophy and how it changed from the determinate attitude of the *Tractatus*.

Part 2:

"There is not *a* philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies," (PI 133). This section is an outline of Wittgenstein's methodology for philosophy. Wittgenstein himself never wrote an explicit account of his approach to philosophy but indications can be found throughout the *Philosophical Investigations* and *On Certainty* along with the numerous examples of how he actually dealt with philosophical problems as he saw them. When we ask, "What is Wittgenstein's methodology for philosophy?" we must be careful to explain what is meant by 'methodology'. In areas like the sciences the methodology is the set of theories, rules, and procedures that are used to obtain new knowledge. However, Wittgenstein wants to

challenge the idea that this apparatus should be applied to philosophy as well. Wittgenstein is concerned with how we approach philosophy but giving a definite or essential set of procedures would be a contradiction of the messages of his works. To say that language is made up of many different, sometimes unrelated, language-games and then turn around to give a set of strict rules for their understanding would be ridiculous. For Wittgenstein, philosophical problems occur when we misuse words and do not have a clear command of their use. Many of our language games are built one upon the other and individual words occur across the board so it is easy to see how we can become mired in confusing phrases that have the appearance of sound grammatical form. Wittgenstein's approach to solving these quandaries is a nuanced approach that demands that we solve our problems according to the situation. If we look at our philosophical problems as confusions then our method for approaching these problems will not be to build up a body of knowledge but to train ourselves to uncover misuses of words and language.

What this philosophical methodology encompasses should be outlined from the start. Wittgenstein's methodology can be applied in many different areas of philosophy; however, I will be concentrating on the following: metaphysics, epistemology, ontology, and philosophy of language. Since this is a methodology we would presume that it would apply to all kinds of philosophy but considering that Wittgenstein separates language into different language-games, for the purpose of this thesis I propose that we can do something similar with philosophy and the methodologies we use. For example, there is very little written by Wittgenstein himself on ethics or political philosophy and I think that absorbing these two areas of study under his methodology *may* be a mistake. I will

limit my investigations to the areas mentioned since it is clear that Wittgenstein explicitly addresses the issues of these areas of philosophy.

Wittgenstein's approach to philosophy was to look at philosophical problems as confusions in our misuse of language and in our own minds. These confusions are not trivial, they are genuine causes for concern. But perhaps we should not see them as problems to be discovered and then solved. The concept of philosophy as therapy remains constant for Wittgenstein but there is a definite parting of ways between the author of the *Tractatus* and the author of *Philosophical Investigations* or *On Certainty*. In his earlier work there is a final goal in mind and once we reach this goal the early Wittgenstein believes that we will have a complete understanding of philosophy and how to make it all clear. We use the scaffolding of the *Tractatus* (objects, facts, sentences, thoughts and their relations through form) and we apply it to any given utterance and we shall know the answer or realize that the question is meaningless and should ultimately be ignored. The later Wittgenstein believes that we need clarity and that there is no one set of rules that can be delineated to bring this clarity to all of language and, by extension, philosophy[4].

The view in *On Certainty* is an excellent example of what Wittgenstein meant by clarification. Here we have a response to Moore's essay, *"A Defence of Common Sense."* Moore makes a group of claims, which he says are indubitable, like his famous reference to the existence of his hand. Moore makes a string of ontological claims that he takes as a foundation for knowledge. Wittgenstein's response is not to deny the existence of his

[4] In the remainder of this chapter and for the rest of my thesis I may refer to Wittgenstein's "method" or "methodology" but this is simply a shorthand for the flexible and multifaceted approach that Wittgenstein is recommending here. For Wittgenstein is not proposing any one method but a fluid approach that adapts to the circumstances and language-games being played.

hands or to deny that the earth has existed a long time before he was born. Instead, he asks what would we say to the person who does deny these things (Moore, p.176)? Could we have a conversation at all? These types of statements are not really up for debate, there is no cogent rebuttal to Moore's claims. Wittgenstein is proposing that we at least implicitly believed Moore's statements before he ever made them. In this case Moore's discussion of ontology is not a presentation of the facts but a recital of what we must accept if we are going to be talking to Moore in the first place. We can argue about the existence of black holes or faeries or my uncle Alec but if someone came up to us, showed us their hands and then said, "I have no hands," there is no case we could make against them but to refute it and perhaps question that person's sanity.

Moore's attempt to make knowledge claims about the ontological status of his hands is superfluous to our understanding each other. Wittgenstein is trying to undercut a deep philosophical problem by pointing out that such debates are about things that we already must accept under most circumstances. There is nothing to "know" in this case, we simply have hands. Someone who looks at their hands and tries to divine whether they exist or not will be considered crazy, or confused, or trying to do philosophy and I believe that Wittgenstein is trying to close the gap between those states. This is not to say that philosophy is not a legitimate pursuit but that we should be trying to clarify our situation so that there is no problem rather than trying to solve the alleged problem as it is. This is often easier said than done because when someone makes the claim, "I know that these hands exist," we are very likely to say "how do you know?" rather than, "that is not something one knows in that sense."

Our philosophical questions are confusions. In other words, we sometimes get stuck thinking about the same statement or question looking for an answer or explanation that may not be there at all. Let us say we have an epistemological problem like, "How do I know that 2+2=4?" The approach used by early analytic philosophers was to try to deduce a proof that 2+2=4 (Russell's *Principia Mathematica* was expressly written for this purpose). This attempt to deductively think one's way through to the answer is what I believe Wittgenstein sees as the problem. Logical analysis and deduction in formal symbolic logic (of the kind pioneered and used by Russell and others) are based on tautologies so that as big and complex as you make these tautologies one must always recognize that one never says anything beyond the initial statements or premises. There are no synthetic analytic statements in logical proof. So one may give a proof that 2+2=4 but the proof does not really say anything beyond 2+2=4 in a more or less convoluted way. Deduction by itself will be consistent but only because deduction as a function of logic, if done properly, leads to consistent results. In other words, the results that we gain from logic and deduction are gained because of the setup of those practices. Anyone who learns how to add will know that 2+2=4 and any deductive proof that we get for that kind of statement is just a reiteration of how we have been trained or taught to do mathematics. Proofs and analysis do not give us answers to questions such as, "how do I know that 2+2=4?" not because they are deficient but because they are questions that are not going to be answered, given the way that we use language. The question is not answerable in a deductive sense. Nor do we want an empirical answer in the form of taking out apples in two sets of two to show that they make four. In fact when posing that sort of question in an overarching sense, I am not sure that anyone has a sense of what

kind of answer will qualify as such. This is, I believe, what Wittgenstein is getting at; that sometimes we ask questions for which not only do we not have the answer but we cannot even figure out what an answer to the question would look like.

"The propositions which one comes back to again and again as if bewitched – these I should like to expunge from philosophical language," "Thus we expunge the sentences that do not get us any further," (OC 31, 33). These passages are clearly pointing out that part of our method for philosophy should be to identify confusions (propositions that we keep coming back to) and removing them from our concerns. However, it would be an injustice to assume that Wittgenstein is advocating that we sweep our troublesome problems under the rug. Simply ignoring philosophical questions and concerns would be naïve, but it also would not clarify the problem or erase it from our memories and concerns. Wittgenstein is proposing that we see our philosophical problems as confusions and as such that we understand the linguistic practices that lead us to ask such faulty questions.

"We must do away with all explanation, and description alone must take its place," (PI 109). We can dissolve our questions by examining how we use language, not by trying to devise answers and testing them against our world. By 'dissolve' I mean that we figure out why these questions should not bother us. We perform this dissolution by carefully evaluating the language-games that are a part of the question or concern. The breakdown of language (or its meaning) is an integral part of dissolving the problem because that will not only uncover why we ask the question but also why it is not playing by the rules. Where this differs from the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* is in what we hope to find by performing this breakdown of language. The early Wittgenstein expected to

find answers or nonsense while the later Wittgenstein does not *expect* anything and is looking to bring clarity in whichever form it happens to take. We have philosophical problems and concerns and we are inclined to think that we can solve them if we think about them in the right way; but Wittgenstein is suggesting that we take a step back and try to unearth why we have these questions or concerns and come to see their roots in language. We create (or at least air) philosophical problems through our language but it would be a mistake to assume (as early analytic philosophers did) that we can solve these problems and create a solution set. There are no guarantees that our questions have answers but they have to have a grounding in our language in order for us to express them and therein will we understand them. This expression of our philosophical problems may in fact be a pseudo-expression in that we understand the words and how they are used normally but these same words are being used differently when we use them in a philosophical context.

> What I am aiming at is also found in the difference between the casual observation "I know that that's a…", as it might be used in ordinary life, and the same utterance when a philosopher makes it. (OC 406).

'What is time?' this would appear to be a valid question that has plagued metaphysicians. It seems to be a well-formed sentence like 'What is that on your back?' or 'What is your name?' but it does not seem to have an obvious answer like 'a tattoo of a hawk' or 'Timothy John Bronstetter'. We ask questions of the form 'What is ____?' all the time but do we always expect a response? 'What is a googlefrat?' would appear to have no answer either and that does not keep us up at night. 'Time' is a word that we understand whereas 'googlefrat' is not so perhaps we cannot dismiss this question so easily? Let us go out to the suburbs of language: for a scientist time can be a variable, or a means of measurement, or relative, or any other number of well defined functions. Does

this answer the question 'What is time'? Our definition should probably stay within the well-ordered streets of the suburbs, rather than wend its way into *all* talk of time. When a child asks us what 'time' is we may say that it is the position of the hands on a clock. If we are asked 'What is time?' while we are in a rush we may be tempted to simply say, "precious". 'What is time?' has answers that we accept in certain situations but what about when a philosopher asks, what are we to say? All of the above? Nothing at all? What we need to know is what the philosopher thinks will answer this question that is not outlined in a reiteration of the ways that we use the word. Wittgenstein is inclined to say that there is no such thing and that an understanding of the situations in which we rightfully use the word is the best that we can do and all that we should need.

Another example, which can be taken directly from Wittgenstein, is the main theme of *On Certainty*. One of the major goals in *On Certainty* is to deal with Moore's essay on epistemology, *"A Defense of Common Sense,"* and particularly his list of things that he "knows" for sure. He knows that he has a body and that it has existed for a given amount of time and that it has experienced various sensations and that it has never traveled very far above the earth's surface, etc... (Moore, p.176). He also states that all humans have a roughly similar view of themselves and that these statements at one time or another have all been accepted by most people. The key to understanding Wittgenstein's critique of Moore rests in the fact that Moore is making knowledge claims so Wittgenstein agrees with Moore's statements but not that they should be considered something that we know. When we claim to know something we assume that the phrase or statement concerned can be either true or false, and that we can know it or not know it. Wittgenstein asks, "What would it be like to not know that one has a body?" If someone

said that would we understand what that person meant? Most people would say that such a person is demented or confused. That one has a body is not something that we learn or come to know but something which we must already be aware of if we are going to be able to communicate. The items that Moore claims to know with certainty can be said (i.e. one can say, "I have a body"), but it means nothing more to tack on 'I know' to the beginnings of these phrases (i.e. "I know I have a body" says nothing more). In fact, to negate these statements or express doubt about them means nothing at all[5]. So Moore's claims about knowledge are not really knowledge claims since one does not know them or not, they simply are there.

We are looking for peace of mind rather than to build a body of knowledge. The things that we learn from philosophy are not that our concerns are not valid, but which of our concerns are not valid and why. The temptation when reading Wittgenstein is to assume that he is saying that we should ignore our philosophical problems but in reality it is the exact opposite; our philosophical problems cannot be passed over or ignored and the only way to deal with them is to understand that which plagues our thoughts. What is more is that we are not trying to solve these problems or build up a collection of truths. The early analytic project claimed that all meaningful phrases were either true or false and early analytic philosophers could clearly be seen to be tackling problems in order to use what they found out as foundations for further solutions. However even if we were solving philosophical problems (in a true or false sense) would we be satisfied to hear the

[5] This briefly touches on Moore's paradox, where he believed that one can say something and yet refuse to believe what one is saying to the effect of, "these are my hands but I do not believe them to be". Moore actually thought that one can state a fact while denying belief in said fact and although it may sound crazy the statement is a logically sound statement (Malcolm, 1995, p.195-196). I believe Wittgenstein's response is to make the common sense claim that this statement may follow the strict rules of formal logic but the actual sentence makes no sense to us and furthermore we cannot imagine the context for its is use in a formal sense.

answers and then pass on to something else? This is done all the time in mathematics, I, for example, know how to employ the number π but I have very little conception of how one acquires that number. Someone else divined the formula for π and I can go on to use it to determine the surface of round objects but is it the same in philosophy? Philosophical *knowledge* is a myth according to Wittgenstein; we do philosophy in order to work out our own demons. "The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to. --The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring itself in question," (PI 133).

What can we learn from Wittgenstein's methodology for philosophy in subjects like metaphysics, epistemology, ontology etc…? First, there are no *solutions* to our problems, mostly there are *dissolutions*. Second, we know that an understanding of language is key to dissolving our problems and coming to grips with questions that only confuse us when we do philosophy. Finally, there is no build up of truths that can then be built upon; this is a logical conclusion of the rejection of fundamental philosophy and an expression of philosophy as therapy.

Part 3:

The later works of Wittgenstein diverge from his earlier work in several significant ways. Wittgenstein loses interest in the project of swallowing philosophy whole and spitting out the answer and comes to appreciate the complexity of our problems and their disparate resolutions. Wittgenstein no longer believes that philosophy is either finite or methodical. In other words, one can continue to encounter new and interesting philosophical conundrums and one will probably be forced to continually generate creative ways of understanding and dissolving them. Philosophy is transformed from a compartmentalized aspect of our life to an entity that pervades it. Similarly, the early Wittgenstein's denotative theory of meaning is abandoned, and not just his interpretation of meaning, but also the entire project of delineating meaning at all. One often reads about Wittgenstein's "meaning as use" as if it were a single clear-cut idea but the reality is that "meaning as use" is shorthand for Wittgenstein's project of eliminating all encompassing theories of meaning. As one can see there have been some drastic changes that occurred in Wittgenstein's thought between the publishing of the *Tractatus* and his death in the early 1950's. At this point I am faced with a very difficult decision in light of this reversal of thought and method: Do I take the first chapter and try to reconcile it with the antithetical one that has followed or do I throw out my arguments and aspirations from the previous chapter in order to lend authenticity to the theories of what is to come? Part of me craves to imitate the man by throwing away the ladder and denying all connections between Wittgenstein's meaning as use and denotative theories of meaning as well as his different methods for philosophy. I could claim that there is no

connection but you still needed what preceded in order to understand the point of what would follow.

That is not my intention at all. Even though both these sets of meaning and method are quite different they do have some points of contact and, more importantly, they change together for reasons that are linked. This is the last topic I will broach in this chapter. However, I believe that it is probably the most important for the thesis overall. My goals are threefold; one, I would like to propose that no matter how different early and later Wittgenstein views are there is a nexus of belief in language as the key to our understanding of philosophy. Two, there are difficulties in Wittgenstein's early work that can only be resolved by a change in how we view language (meaning) and philosophy in general (method). Three, this change is not *ad hoc*; the two concepts are linked in their metamorphosis.

Across both theories a belief in language as the key to philosophy is paramount. The early Wittgenstein sees it as a puzzle, which can be decoded and pieced together while the later Wittgenstein sees it as an ever-changing process which can be understood in order to dissolve our philosophical worries. His two approaches are quite different but they do revolve around language and its comprehension. In both outlooks we are bound by the idea that the expression of our philosophical problems holds the key to solving those problems. In one case we ask the question and then work towards the answer through analysis of language and in the other case the question itself is picked apart to show its infirmity. One is preoccupied with logic and the other with grammar, but both of these are areas of linguistic concern. Both of these outlooks have the belief that language

is the key to understanding philosophy and this helps to show the link between meaning and method. Meaning is obviously an integral part of language and at the same time both methods are concerned with the unravelling of language. This is perhaps one of those beliefs from my Metaphysical Argument that Wittgenstein keeps throughout his philosophical musings. Despite differences both of Wittgenstein's phases can be brought together by their common interest in language. So as I examine the differences it is fruitful to bear in mind that I am doing so through a medium that connects them.

The key point for us to consider in early analytic philosophy is that language fits into the world in a revelatory way. To some extent this should be the case in any language. If our language could not give us a means for finding out about or describing our world then it would be exceedingly difficult to communicate. Imagine if we tried to communicate exclusively through metaphor or parables and there was no ostension or ability to reference. However, early analytic philosophers were of the mind that systematic analysis would yield a *complete* account of language that in turn reveals an understanding of the world. Through logic we can determine what is true or false and, what is more, we can determine what makes sense (is logical, consistent, tautologous, etc…) and what does not (is illogical, inconsistent, contradictory, etc…). Once we know the truth values we know "what is the case." In other words, we know something about the world and if we put enough of these somethings together we will eventually have a complete understanding of the world.

The problem with this view can be expressed in terms of meaning and method. We can say that this approach to philosophy focuses on problems as pieces of a puzzle that we can then figure out and piece together. How do we know that this systemic approach

to philosophy might not be right? Here is where we can look to meaning for answers. For starters there is a comment in the *Philosophical Investigations* that is revisited again and again; namely, we use language for a plethora of different reasons and purposes: to inform, to entertain, to command, to intimidate, to ask a question, etc… (PI 23, 27, 33, 411). There is no one task that runs throughout language and when you try to simplify it down to one function (like truth values) it will create paradoxes. For example: is the story of Hamlet true or false? Is the story false while the moral of Hamlet is true? Is the story true while the characters and events are false? Is the whole story just false? If the whole story is false should we ignore it altogether?

Another example of a paradox that comes from trying to map logic onto the world can be found in Godel's theorem, in which Godel proves that mathematics cannot be reduced axiomatically. Godel's proof itself is a complex and specialized topic but for my purposes we can skip to his conclusions. Godel takes one branch of mathematics (arithmetic) and shows how there is no set of axioms (first principles) that can account for the entire system. He does this by creating a system of uniquely numbering everything that can be said in arithmetic via logic. He then goes on to show that these numbers can be used in a meta-mathematical sense, and by referring to themselves, they create a paradox (Nagel & Newman, p.76-82). In the end he proves that either arithmetic is consistent or[6] it is complete. This means that either the statements of arithmetic are true and cannot all be reduced to one set of rules (like symbolic logic) or they can produce contradictions (Nagel & Newman, p. 94-96). This proof is problematic in a more general sense because it shows that logic cannot be mapped onto even one branch of mathematics.

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[6] 'Or' in the exclusive sense.

The consequence of these paradoxes and the irreducibility of language to logical terms is that we must find a new approach to philosophy as well as a better understanding of meaning if we are to understand either of them at all. If language cannot be broken down into a logical system or any system at all, then how do we go about doing philosophy as problem solving if we have no model to work with? Wittgenstein's later approach to philosophy disperses the idea that language has fundamental principles to be discovered and applied. Instead he offers up the idea of meaning as use, where the understanding of meaning is based on the way that we use it. So language is no longer one monolithic entity but a group of different activities that we use to communicate. This allows the later Wittgenstein to say that answering our philosophical problems is not a matter of tracing our problem back through language and then to the world. The way to deal with philosophical problems is to examine the language-games that they are a part of and how we can disperse them as linguistic confusion.

The new method and understanding of meaning that Wittgenstein comes up with are both flexible, and as a consequence of that, they are slightly difficult to pin down exactly. However, Wittgenstein sees this as a strength rather than a weakness; our lives are full of vagaries and inconsistent messages so we need philosophy to reconcile that rather then eliminate it through deduction and precision. So long as our questions are based on the circumstances of our lives that means that there is no *one* way to do philosophy or to determine meaning; it is difficult, therefore to build up a body of knowledge. Rather, we can build a history of stories for dealing with philosophical problems. If we are constantly examining our language-games and the way that we use them then it becomes difficult to say that there is one way to look at language. If we want to remain flexible

enough to accommodate meaning as use then we cannot force systems and theories upon language for the purpose of solving philosophical dilemmas.

We have looked at the later Wittgenstein's method and his understanding of meaning and we can see how the two link together. First they both employ a flexible outlook that changes with circumstances and neither claims to be a definitive or all encompassing theory but rather guidelines to keep us from confusion. This amorphous state is a reaction to early analytic ideas that focused on systematizing language – treating it as a rigid system - so that it can reveal the answers to our questions about the world. The reason that meaning and method have been lumped together in this changing of the guard is because of their attachment to language. Meaning is explicitly attached to language, and while the methods of both schools of thought focused on language as a key to understanding our philosophical problems the later method involves working with language as the source of clarity rather then another cog in the machine.

With my thesis before you, I go on to the next chapter with a very specific goal in mind; to show an example. To show how this mingling of both a flexible method and meaning works I propose to ask a philosophical question and attempt to deal with said problem by dissolving it in two different manners. Thereby I will be showing the method in action and how the clarification of meaning can alleviate philosophical problems.

Chapter 3: Language games and Family resemblances

Part: 1

As mentioned at the end of the last chapter, this chapter is one giant example. I intend to show the flexibility of the later Wittgenstein's methods and his understanding of meaning by putting them to use. I have talked a lot about our metaphysical, ontological, and epistemological problems but I have thus far been very general in addressing these issues. My plan now is to present a philosophical problem that I have found within Wittgenstein's writings and to show how we can dissolve this problem by looking at it in two slightly different ways. This should showcase the versatility of Wittgenstein's philosophical methods and how we can constantly tie it back to his understanding of meaning. I will examine the difficulties involved in Wittgenstein's descriptions of philosophy and how they fit into those descriptions can account for themselves. In other words, Wittgenstein is commenting on philosophy, which seems to me to be a part of philosophy itself, and the trick is to see if this self-referencing is consistent.

Let us say that we have thus far swallowed most of what the later Wittgenstein has to feed us. Wittgenstein has proposed a very open ended and flexible doctrine for doing philosophy but it appears he has done so in a very authoritarian manner. He claims to have no theories and to only be describing how things are. Either you are a part of this life world and you understand his clarifications and descriptions or you do not and there is no meaningful discussion to be had. In other words, you either understand what Wittgenstein is saying or you are, at the very least, confused and there is little that any one else can do for you except to repeat what has already been said in a different manner. It is very much like Wittgenstein's duck-rabbit in the second half of the *Philosophical*

Investigations: one may see the duck or the rabbit or both but we are at a loss as to how to show someone an aspect that they do not see (PI 194). We may say, "Here are the ears and the eye of the rabbit," while the person to whom we are showing them only sees the duck's bill and eye. The question then becomes; how do we dissent? By this I mean the master has told us to be flexible so long as we follow his rules. So how do we remain flexible even in accepting his words?

I am reminded of the book called *Wittgenstein's Poker* in which there is an investigation into the one and only meeting between Karl Popper and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Popper was presenting a paper to the Cambridge Moral Science Club called *"Are There Philosophical Problems?"* (Edmonds & Eidinow, p.1). In light of Wittgenstein's view of philosophy as clarification rather then problem solving, I began to wonder how Wittgenstein could even allow for Popper to ask such a question seriously. It seems that Popper was asking a question about a subject and within the scope of that subject, which Wittgenstein thought had no questions. Karl Popper was a very intelligent man and it would seem uncharitable to relegate his point of view to that of simple confusion. The point here is not whether Popper or Wittgenstein was right about there being philosophical questions but if we are to take Wittgenstein's view how can we even listen to Popper's point of view (and as I understand it from *Wittgenstein's Poker,* a refusal to listen is precisely what happened)? The question is how can we have a meaningful debate about philosophy when questions about the ideas being *described* are just confusions themselves that are not really a part of philosophical understanding? This is just one paradox that can be created by using our language and the way it works against Wittgenstein's descriptions of philosophy. It appears that we cannot disagree with

him (within the framework of his own philosophy) or even express confusion about his descriptions and still be doing what he considers philosophy to be.

Another obvious paradox in Wittgenstein's later work, and the one that I wish to deal with primarily in this chapter, is to ask how we can follow him in saying that there is no essence to language when it sounds like in doing so we are pointing out an essential quality of language? In other words, how do we get around phrases like "there are no universal statements about language," or "there is no essence to language" without saying something universal or essential about language? It would appear that the very words we use sometimes resist Wittgenstein's attempt to disconnect them from the world in a denotative sense. It seems as if knowing how to use words such as 'universal' or 'essence' lends credence to their existence above and beyond any specialized task. That is, when I say that, "there are no universals," I am saying something about everything, which is a universal statement. This is certainly a problem but it can still be reconciled with Wittgenstein's theory of method for philosophy. In this chapter I will propose two possible solutions or clarifications of this paradox. One would probably suffice for the purpose of understanding but I believe that it is important to actually exhibit the flexibility of Wittgenstein's methods and their connection to meaning as use. To that end I have chosen the topic of language games and family resemblances as two possible tools for disassembling the paradox of all-inclusive words and phrases.

Part: 2

For this section I will be using the term 'universal' as my main example of a term that seems to be all-inclusive (in the sense of talking about all things linguistic and otherwise) and self-referential (in that it seems to justify its own existence). Terms like 'universal' are misused when they are taken out of their language-games and used to apply to literally everything. Those who would say that the denial of universals is a universal statement are using the word outside of its scope and are in fact manipulating the word in a sense that is trying to link our language back up with the world in a manner similar to denotative theory. If we allow words to justify their own existence (in an ontological sense) then we open the door to all kinds of absurdities. We can use an understanding of language games to show why terms like 'universal' are not as all encompassing or self-justifying as they may seem.

Language games are an idea that Wittgenstein introduces in order to break up the monolithic view of language taken by his earlier self and his predecessors. I will go into further detail about the nature or use of language games before I make my actual argument for how this concept can be used to dissolve the paradox. On language games Kenny writes:

> So it is clearly important to be able to know where one language-game ends and another begins. How does one do this? Wittgenstein gives us little help here. Consistently with his general position, he does not give any general account of what a language-game is, nor a criterion of individuation for language games. He merely makes some general remarks about language-games, and otherwise illuminates the concept principally by giving a fund of examples (p.164-165).

I will try to give a more general account of Wittgenstein's language games but one must always bear in mind this passage and realise that examples are probably more useful and more consistent with what Wittgenstein has to say.

Part of Wittgenstein's understanding of meaning is that we have many different language games and words have various meanings depending on what game we are playing. Different circumstances in our lives lead us to play different language games. Wittgenstein wanted to get rid of the link between the mind and the world in our understanding of meaning, so he proposed that meaning is about actions and the execution of rules. These actions become the foundations for meaning and the rules that guide action become what he calls language games. Language games can be seen as clusters of actions and words that make up a complete set of rules. Once we know or are trained in the rules we can then participate in the language game.

The problem with denotative theories of meaning, like those of the early Wittgenstein, is that they must connect what is going on in the mind with what is going on in the world. We want to be able to say what meaning is but if we try to construct it out of two disparate substances then the connection will never be clear. We can report what goes on in both the mind and the world but it is often the case that similar reports from one may be paired with dissimilar occurrences in the other. For example, a mother asks her two children to help their neighbour mow their neighbour's lawn as an apology for breaking the neighbour's window. One child does the work and is genuinely sorry for his or her actions. The other child does the work but all the while is cursing their neighbour in his or her head. Both children perform the same actions but we might say that one is sincere in their apology and the other is not. The problem is that an observer

would not be able to tell the differences between the two children's thoughts and so could not tell whether either child actually meant his or her efforts as an apology if meaning is in any way in our minds. Wittgenstein says that when we see certain actions we assume they match the person's intentions because that is what we have to work with but this does not mean that both apologies were necessarily equal (PI 680). To solve this problem of mental inconsistencies Wittgenstein introduced the idea that meaning is in the use of words and not in our mental activity. So if the unrepentant child gives some signs of disgust at the work or apologizes in an insincere tone of voice then we can differentiate the two apologies but it has nothing to do with what is in the children's thoughts (as far as meaning is concerned).

Strictly speaking our thoughts are meaningless. Wittgenstein wanted to discard the idea that meaning is denotative and so he had to take meaning out of our minds and put it into our actions. Malcolm says that for Wittgenstein, "our every day concepts require a base of *acting, doing* rather then reasoning or interpreting" (1994, p.90). This is shown in the way that Wittgenstein describes the difference in grammar of the verbs "to think" and "to mean" (PI 693). The example he gives is that when we show someone an equation we *mean* for him or her to produce a specific series of numbers and whether he or she has to think very hard or do it absentmindedly is of no consequence at all (PI 692-3). What we mean by telling someone about the equation (the sequence of numbers it produces) is not the same thing as what we think about the equation (whether it is simple or hard to grasp). In other words, our audience expresses understanding of our meaning by producing the sequence of numbers and what they think about it is not necessarily relevant to their understanding. The inner state is unimportant but what is important is

that the words have an effect on the person's actions. Meaning is to be understood in terms of the actions that accompany the words we communicate. The actions must match up with the words in some kind of consistent pattern because if the circumstances for the proper use of a word changed every time it was used it could never be understood (PI 142).

Language games are complete sets of rules of action that are shared by a group of people. In order to understand a language game one must be trained in the rules of that particular language game. The builders in the first few sections of *Philosophical Investigations* have a language game that is made up of commands and corresponding actions (PI 2). It is important to note that all the aspects of that language game are observable; there are no questions of motives, intentions, or internal processes. So long as the commands "block", "pillar", "slab" and "beam" are accompanied by the helper getting the appropriate stone then there is a language game being played and the meaning is being expressed in the commands. What is also meant by 'complete' is that the rules of a language-game come as a group of rules and they cannot be broken down to correspond with all of the individual words (Hintikka, 2000, p.39). If we were able to break down language-games in such a way they would become another form of representation.

There are no universal language-games that everyone must play due to any logical necessity. The language-games that we play depend on what we have been trained in and while it is possible that we can all be trained in the same language-games, there are no essentials.

Language-games can be complete sets of rules by themselves or they can be built upon other language games. For example, the primitive language game of the builders is

complete by itself so the participants need no other rules to make the game work (PI 2&6). Some language games may require that we know others in order to understand them but there are no basic requirements for all language games. Conversely, one can understand multiple language games in the way that one can learn the rules to many different sports or board games.

It is also important to note that a language game is not the same thing as a language (in the usual sense of the word). For example, a chemist and a psychologist may both speak English but when they are talking about their respective subjects they may hardly understand each other unless they have been trained in the other field as well.

Language games are rules for actions and those actions can be seen as the meaning of the words that are used. But where do we get these rules? Obviously we can learn some language games from the use of other language games (you *explain* to me how to play checkers by outlining the rules and objectives of the game) but how do we learn those language games that are not taught to us through other language games? Wittgenstein's answer to this question is both simple and frustrating. The simple part is that basic or primary language games just are and there are no explanations in an epistemological sense (Hintikka, 2000, p. 46). The frustration comes from the fact that primary language games are no longer subject to epistemological concerns like "truth, doubt, certainty, or justification" (Hintikka, 2000, p. 46). The fact is that we cannot subject our primary language games to the rigors of our other language games. We can still develop criteria for truth but we cannot step outside of our language games to apply those criteria to our primary language games. Language games can have rules for justification but they cannot justify themselves (Malcolm, 1994, p.78). Language games'

meanings are in the observable actions that they elicit and if we want to start questioning the origins of those actions we need to find a meta-observable fact. We simply cannot demand to know the justifications for using primary language games.

This may seem like a very unsatisfying account of language games but it does make a certain amount of sense. There comes a point in our language when we simply have to accept the rules as they are for no other reason than that we could not communicate without them. Moore famously asserted that he knows that his two hands exist but this is precisely where Wittgenstein would disagree. If someone were to exhibit the behaviour of looking directly at their own hands and saying, "there are no hands here," then we would not understand them at all (OC 155). Since we cannot doubt Moore's statement we cannot confirm it either in any meaningful way. The point here is that there are some things that we cannot afford to question if we are going to make sense. For me to ask you what it means for me to have two hands presumes that you can understand what it means to not understand that statement, you can train me into the language-game but you cannot sit there citing reasons why I should believe I have two hands.

How do we know if we are playing a language game correctly if we have no criteria for measuring its truth or falsity? The answer here is all in our training. If we have been trained in the same language game we will understand each other and if not then we will not be able to communicate. We can still play our language games that involve truth and falsity but at a certain point we have to ask ourselves if doubting a statement makes any sense. Given normal circumstances there are no actions that I could perform that would allow me to deny the existence of my hands and still be understood.

Wittgenstein wanted to find a theory of meaning that was not denotative and this meant that he had to get rid of the connection between meaning and the mind. Combining meaning in the mind and the world does not work because we are playing two different language games when we talk about the mind and the world. When we talk of the mind we are playing a language game that refers to private experiences and when we talk about the world we are speaking about public experiences. With mind so understood, out of the picture we can say that meaning is in the use of language and that our actions illustrate our understanding of meaning. These actions do not manifest themselves arbitrarily but are guided by rules that make up our language-games. Language games can be broken down into primary language games, which are primordial, and secondary language games, which rely on other language games in order to make sense. We cannot question these primary language games because they are what we use to ask questions and show understanding.

We find meaning in our actions and the actions of others. We regulate that meaning through language games, which are sets of rules that we share. Those language games that are primary exist not as an article of faith but as training that we must share in order to perform the actions that have meaning and will be understood.

To get back to our paradox of what I have called "all-inclusive" words let us take what has just been said and see if it is still truly a problem. The paradox arises from words like "universals" whose denial seems to reactively justify itself. Saying there are no universals seems to imply that we are making a statement about everything, which is the very definition of a universal statement. And there is the rub, the definition. We are

inclined to say that the if one understands the meaning of a "universal" then they must not say things like, "there are no universals" because it follows that such a statement is, itself, a universal statement. The problem is in our acceptance of the definition as sufficient cause to believe in the existence of the subject. We cannot simply use the definition of a word to make statements about the world (this is a symptom of denotative theories where language was a necessary connection to the world). We cannot do this because definitions are just rules that we have made up and their connection to the world is founded in practice, not in semantics.

We cannot use our definition of a word as a justification for how the world is because it will then give our definitions and rules qualities that they do not necessarily have. Here is an example of what I am talking about: when children play there is often one smart child who learns how to create rules for games such that they and only they can win the game that they have created (e.g. they get more points for having a name that starts with T or home base happens to be on their parent's lawn, etc…). When asked by the other children why they always win the child might reply, "I am just good at this game." The truth is that the rules are such that the child cannot lose; they are not good or bad at the game – they are simply predetermined to win. So too with universals in philosophy: the rules are organized in such a way that they cannot be denied. But does that really validate their existence? We have created the rules for using the word but that does not mean that we must accept the definition as if it were a synthetic *a priori* truth. No child likes to play these games after a while and so too with 'universals' in philosophy.

How do language games clear this up? In this case we have a word that, once adopted, justifies itself within language as a whole. The way that language games circumvent this problem is by their very nature. We play different language games for different purposes; we use certain language to do science, and another language to do creative writing, and still different language to tell our friend about our day. Sometimes we import words from other language games but there are no words that transcend these barriers. Words like 'universal' are useful when we are talking about power cables (i.e. a "universal" adapter) and in many other cases, but we must not allow ourselves to think that the word has meaning beyond the way that we use it. If we look at language as a collection of activities then words that transcend those activities become confusing because they cannot do what we think they can just because we have rules that say so. So in my example of, "How do we ask Wittgenstein philosophical questions about his work?" we have two options. One, if we sympathise with Wittgenstein's description but simply do not understand then we ask questions for the purpose of clarification. This can be seen as a different language game from asking a philosophical question like, "What is the relation of the body to the mind?" Many philosophers ask mind/body questions with the hope of genuinely finding an answer that they can then use to determine other things about the state of our souls or physical being or whatever. In this case we can ask questions that are for clarification rather than discovery. The second way to look at this is to say that Wittgenstein can tell us whatever he likes but everyone makes mistakes sometimes. An accountant may do calculations all day but sometimes they may not do their calculations properly and when this happens we can point this out to them. So too with Wittgenstein's story of philosophy: he may claim to be describing the world rather

than explaining it but he could make a mistake (as much as he might have loathed to admit it). One can genuinely believe most of what Wittgenstein says but still think that he is wrong about some area or areas of concern without simply being considered obtuse because he might be mistaken in his description.

Language games are rules that are founded in our practices and they make up the basis for language. We can use words that cross from one language game to another but we can never say something outside of, or antecedent to, our language games. In the next section I will try to solve this same problem of "all-inclusive" or "self-justifying" words but through a different route then the one just presented.

Part: 3

This chapter is about the problem of self-referential, all-inclusive words and their impact on Wittgenstein's method for philosophy.

In this next section I would like to talk about essences and the way that they can be used to refute Wittgenstein's diffusion of language and philosophical method. The denial of any essential quality to language is a major tenet of the later Wittgenstein's work but it also provokes us to ask, "How do we know what language is if we do not have any defining characteristics that can be found in all examples of language?" In other words, what holds language together if there is no essence? Furthermore, if we say that language has no essential quality is that not an essential statement? Wittgenstein writes:

> For someone might object against me: "You take the easy way out! You talk about all sorts of language-games, but have nowhere said what the essence of a language game, and hence of language, is: what is common to

> all of these activities, and what makes them into language or parts of language…" (PI 65)

The problem that I would like to deal with now is the all-encompassing, self-justifying word 'essence' because it would seem that the use of this word causes problems in understanding Wittgenstein. If he is to deny the essence of language then it would appear that there is no way to identify what he is talking about because it cannot be clearly defined our delineated. What is more is that it would appear that any attempt to explain language would ultimately provide an essence to language. So the challenge is to find a coherent way to describe language and language games in such a way that it does not have an essential character.

The understanding of family resemblances can help us to understand the meaning of words like 'essence' and how it can be misused to create problems. Family resemblances are what allow us to tie together the uses of words without having to give them essential qualities. Once we start using secondary language-games that rely on primary language games we have to be able to use words with more flexibility. Wittgenstein uses family resemblances to explain why things (be they objects, actions, phrases, etc…) can have connections without having to refer to their essential nature. This plays an even bigger role in Wittgenstein's claims about not having any theories because it allows him to make general statements about groups of epistemological or metaphysical questions without having to concede that they have an essential nature or foundation.

We are trained into our primary language-games and they are, for most purposes, non-negotiable (PI 9). When we train a child how to count to ten they must repeat the

sequence 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10 and nothing else will do. So in the same way that asking a child to count to ten only has one meaningful response, there is only one meaning of my mother's not-so-bright dog barking at the back door, namely that it wants to go outside. We do not always use language in this way, sometimes we talk about things that are not necessarily present to a situation, sometimes we talk about things that do not exist, sometimes we talk about subjective judgements and there are many other different kinds of language games that we can play where the script is not already written for us. Part of language is that we can use it in similar scenarios without having to use it in an exact duplicate scenario. We have this flexibility in our language but we want to know where it comes from. The short answer is that we know things are similar in virtue of how we use them.

Most of the time, the way that we use family resemblances is by grouping certain things together that all share something with at least some of the other members of the group (PI 67). Like an actual family, one child may have their father's eyes and their mother's nose while another child gets the father's nose and the mother's eyes. If we look at the family photo we can tell that the children are related through the parents, but if we looked at each child separately we might not be able to tell that they are from the same family. All the members are part of the family but there is no one trait that they all must share to qualify as such.

One might be tempted to say that the one thing that all things in a family resemblance share is that they are part of the same family resemblance. Wittgenstein's response to this is to say that this assumes that the grouping exists before we ever make it: "Something runs through the whole thread – namely the continuous overlapping of

fibres" (PI 67). Yes, all things that have a family resemblance have their proverbial family tree in common, but that does not make any of the things in the tree any more alike. To say, "All things in a group have their group in common" is the same thing as saying, "These things are in a group." By doing so we have added no new information about the things. These kinds of statements may be true but they do not do anything for our understanding.

Family resemblances are circumstantial but not necessarily arbitrary. The groups that we choose to put things in often depend on how we use those things. For example, we have an orange that has a disease that has made it lumpy and green. If we were to ask a biologist whether this is still an orange they might look at its genetic structure and say, "yes, it is an orange." We might also ask a farmer if this thing is still an orange and he might find it inedible and say, "no, this is not an orange." Is this lumpy green thing an orange or not? The answer is that it is or is not depending on the language game you are playing. The important thing to notice here is that we can look at things while playing many different language games.

The most important thing about family resemblances is that they group things together while not appealing to or assuming any essential qualities. If we use certain names in similar situations then that is enough to group them together. There are no mystical ties between word and form or word and object so there are no bases for what phrases must mean. This goes back to Wittgenstein's toolbox; we may put a bunch of disparate tools in a toolbox and they will be considered as part of a group but there is nothing necessarily connecting them together except that they happen to be the tools required for the job (PI 11,14). If I go to fix a door and I have a hammer, a ruler, some

nails, a pencil, and a saw, I do not have to find a common theme in them in order to justify their inclusion into my toolbox. So, too, with family resemblances; things can be grouped together for a purpose (like fixing a door) but that does not mean that they share some particular quality like "door fixingness."

This is important for Wittgenstein's methodology because he can now say that he has no theories and really mean it (PI 109). He is grouping together the things that we call theories and denying that they have clarity in philosophy. This group that he is talking about has no essence and therefore he is not making an all-encompassing statement. In other words, Wittgenstein has cordoned off certain language-games (like epistemology), which are made up of certain actions, and says that they have no basis for regulating meaning. Epistemologists will retort that he is proposing a theory of theories (i.e. the theory that there are no theories) but their remark is not a fair one. They assume that epistemological questions have an essential quality that, in a certain way, oversees all language games. The idea that theories are at the root of any philosophical discussion prohibits Wittgenstein from denying the idea in a philosophical way. Wittgenstein is trying to play a different language game and in order to understand him we must give up the language games of epistemology and the training that goes with it.

The second big argument that Epistemologists will offer is that Wittgenstein's own description of meaning is (if not a theory) a statement that applies to all meanings and thus defines the concept. In other words, if Wittgenstein's method does not fall prey to the essential qualities of epistemological theories then it must have an essence of its own. This essence is to deny theories and essence, but it does so across the board and that can be seen as the essential quality of meaning. What Wittgenstein has actually done is

lump together what we thought were philosophical theories (but they are actually what he considers to be a collection of confusions) and said that they are not the same as "theories" in the sense of a scientific theory or literary theory. Sure, all meaning is determined by use but think of all the different types of uses we have for language: asking questions, making demands, descriptions, exclamations, giving directions, etc… And we are to say that all of these things are the same thing? The connection that language games and their meanings have toward each other is nothing more then their family resemblance.

This is the beauty of family resemblances. Wittgenstein can put anything into a group via family resemblances (be it theories, language games, or chairs) and talk about that group without having to involve anything but the appropriate language games and their accompanying rules and actions. He can talk about theories without having to worry about their intangible natures, which could refute his ideas. Epistemic concepts are secondary to the language-game, not vice versa (Hintikka, p.46-47). Epistemology can be set up to have rules for language games but they are still secondary to other, more basic language-games that we play in order to start doing epistemology in the first place.

We must bear in mind that Wittgenstein's goal for family resemblances and philosophy as a whole is not to obtain definitive, ultimate answers (Sass, p.116). Wittgenstein's view is that we are in an ongoing struggle to describe the world and remove confusions that we create through misuses of our language games. Family resemblances can be used to defend this idea from those who want to say that Wittgenstein has theories or that what he is saying is essential to the world.

Earlier I gave a quote from the *Philosophical Investigations*, which outlined Wittgenstein's problem, and now that we know a little more about family resemblances it would be fruitful to examine the passage that followed as his response:

> Instead of producing something common to all that we call language, I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all, -- but that they are *related* to one another in many different ways. And it is because of this relationship, or these relationships, that we call them all "language". (PI 65).

So language does not have an essence but a group of relations that hold them all together and one group of language games may be related to another group of language games only by a third set that has something in common with both. "Their [family resemblances'] extension is determined not by common properties, but by overlapping similarities," (Hacker, 2001, p.22). Thus we do not need to define language through its essence but the common links that exist between its many language games.

I hope that I have shown how we can clear up our understanding of self-justifying, all-encompassing words. Not only that, I hope that I have shown it twice in two slightly different ways in order to demonstrate how Wittgenstein's meaning and method are intimately connected. In order to understand how to do one we must understand the other. Family resemblances and language games are tools that can be used to understand meaning, but they are also extremely useful in clearing up our philosophical confusions. We can use language games to show that self-justifying words do not have to be accepted purely on the qualifications of their definitions. Family resemblances allow Wittgenstein to say that language does not have an essence without providing one himself. Both of

these problems show how we can get around simple word games that would otherwise be devastating to Wittgenstein's approach to philosophy and his understanding of meaning.

Conclusion

Looking back on what has been said one may be inclined to ask, "what is so original about this thesis?" I have outlined and described a good chunk of Wittgenstein's ideas about our philosophical methods and his understanding of meaning, I have even made a few interesting connections between the two (i.e. they bear the same flexibility and lack of essence) but is there anything new to this description? The short reply to this question is: "probably nothing and that is not a bad thing". I say probably not for two reasons one is practical and the other is theoretical. For my conclusion I would like to explain what I have been trying to do on a more self-conscious level and I would like to show how my work has attempted to stay true to Wittgenstein's ideas about philosophy. I believe that this summation could only come at the end of my project since it will focus not only on the content of my paper but I would like to evaluate the project in the terms of the ideas that it has described. I would like to make sure that my paper cannot be tried for its own crimes, so to speak, and that there is a consistency to the project.

Practically speaking there is a lot of scholarship that has been done on Wittgenstein's work and using his ideas. This quantity of work has also produced a wide variety of interpretations. I do not want to speculate on the quality of this variation but one can still say that there are certainly huge disparities between theories (think of the recent debates about interpreting the *Tractatus*). I have highlighted the fact that there is a lot of literature and one might think that I am going to make the tired old argument that, "it's all been done" but that is not my intention at all. In light of the occurrence that there is so much literature devoted to, or borrowing the ideas of, Wittgenstein and the variation of opinions therein, I believe that the best method is to simply read the work itself and

find one's own conclusions. This is not to say that one should not read secondary material on the subject but that one should try not to be too devoted to any one explanation before one has had a chance to digest the primary material. Given what Wittgenstein had to say about interpretations it would seem that interpretations of his work are simply adding another layer of complexity since we now have to interpret those interpretations as well (PI 28 & 34).

Where is the practical problem? It lies in the fact that in finding ones own voice on the topic one is very likely to sound like someone else. One can do one's best to read all relevant information on the topic and make sure that one is not plagiarizing but ultimately we must make our own decisions. We must decide what we want to take from the texts and what we do not and it is more important that we have informed opinions than original ones.

This leads me to my next problem with creating an original work. Wittgenstein says that our primary purpose in philosophy is to describe our situation and that the descriptions we come up with should be fairly obvious when we see them. So our goal is to create something that will be easily recognised once it is heard which leads to a problem when it comes to originality. If our philosophical concerns are basically confusions and the responses to those confusions are obvious when we see them then creating something entirely new will seem antithetical to the project at hand. There are some areas where we can certainly be more creative (there is always another way to interpret a passage and conversely there is always another way to say the same thing) but the actual kernel of information or enlightenment that we wish to pass on must always be familiar to us somehow. Our job as philosophers is not to say something new but

something that we already know and must be reminded of in order to see the world clearly.

It would be advantageous right now to explain a few things that this theory does not lead to. The first thing is that just because the answers or dissolutions to our philosophical problems should be familiar that does not mean that they are trivial. Wittgenstein was plagued throughout his life by philosophical problems and it would be a mistake to say that they are not important to his ideas. We run across philosophical problems in our lives and Wittgenstein is not saying that we should sweep them under the carpet; he is saying that we should look for a way to understand our questions so that they no longer seem so troubling. We must exert the effort to know why we should not worry about a philosophical problem and we cannot skip to the end because then we would not have dealt with the actual problem and it will still bother us. Philosophical problems are very real and they need to be dealt with to give us peace of mind. It is tempting to say that we know that the problems of philosophy are going to be solved so why bother with them? My response would be that philosophy has at various points in human history spawned other disciplines (like math, science, and psychology) that went on to have actual answers. The point is that sometimes the questions we ask while doing philosophy have answers and they diverge to become other subjects. The question at hand is: if all we are doing is dissolving our philosophical problems why not just pretend they don't exist? The problem with this view is that there is no clear delineation of what counts as a philosophical problem and we might dismiss something that would otherwise be important to look into.

The second thing we need to take note of is that mistakes are part of any language game and the ideas within this thesis and the ideas in their original texts are not infallible. When we speak there is almost always some means by which we can correct mistakes and philosophy should not be any different. Wittgenstein was a meticulous fellow and, from what I have read about him, he did not like to be questioned or criticized but if we are to take his message to heart then we must approach philosophy with a great deal of flexibility. Sometimes we make mistakes unintentionally: How often have you read an analogue clock while it was upside down or switched two numbers while telling someone a telephone number? These kinds of mistakes are obvious and once they are brought to our attention they are often undisputed but there is another kind of mistake that I think is more important. I am talking about mistakes that we are deeply committed to in a philosophical sense. If we are going to look at our philosophical problems as confusions then we must be humble enough to admit that we could have erred. The interesting part is that, if we wish to remain consistent then we must see that even Wittgenstein's descriptions can be confused or just plain wrong. I am not saying that they must be but they do have to remain open to questioning and criticism if they are to be used to best effect. There is a very real danger in working on Wittgenstein's ideas because there is always the temptation of claiming that those who do not understand one's descriptions are either wilfully blinding themselves to the truth or that they do not share the right life world and are not playing the same language games.

So far I have talked about the originality of my thesis and about what it is not and so perhaps it is time to try to encapsulate what I *have* tried to accomplish with this thesis. First and foremost I hope to have created a faithful, scholarly work, about Wittgenstein

and his ideas, which he himself might approve of. Even after his death Wittgenstein's personality and charm can draw new disciples, however I am fully aware of the dangers of becoming a sycophant and hope to enact his ideas of flexibility in my philosophical pursuits rather then become a mouthpiece for his work. It is easy to simply parrot another's ideas but it is an entirely different matter to try to put a methodology to work. In other words I have tried to show something that I believe people will recognise as a description that they already believed to be a part of their understanding of the world.

The last thing that I need to recount is what exactly I have been trying to describe. This is a difficult task because the more one understands the later Wittgenstein's method for philosophy the more one realises that there is no one method so talking about methodology becomes more and more diffuse and amorphous as one goes along. Perhaps the best way to give a voice to what I am trying to accomplish is to underline this progression: if we use the thoughts of early analytic philosophers (like Wittgenstein when he wrote the *Tractatus*) as a contrast we can see more clearly what the later Wittgenstein was getting at. Meaning has gone from a systematic, mental, datum to a living part of our world, and our methodology has gone from one doctrine of analysis to a plethora of changing methods to suit the circumstances we find ourselves in. It is easy to see the clearly delineated, well-defined origins of these concepts of method and meaning in early analytic philosophy but as we progress they become less visible in that sense and more poetic.

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