Knowledge and Acknowledgment: Ludwig Wittgenstein's Therapy of Acceptance

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ABSTRACT

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Ludwig Wittgenstein's later-period work is concerned with developing a new direction

for philosophy as conceptual and linguistic analysis. This philosophical practice depends

for its success on changes in the individual will of the philosopher who is pursuing

philosophical questions. These changes primarily involve recognition of the extent to

which certain pictures or conceptions shape our norms of description by way of the

descriptive metaphors and analogies that become embedded in our language. This

acknowledgment of the degree to which these pictures guide our philosophical

conceptualizations takes the form of beginning to see the phenomena and practical

actions of everyday life through finer linguistic and contextual differentiations. This

seeing requires a reorientation of something like one's intellectual sensibilities and

ethical expectations concerning what one is likely to accomplish when pursuing

philosophical questions. In line with this reorientation, Wittgenstein's end in view for

philosophical knowledge becomes acknowledgment of the parameters and limits of

intelligible language and intelligible thought.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DEDICATION

This Thesis is dedicated to my grandmother Antose Kunceviciene, a proud and caring Lithuanian woman who could live forever.

May nobody ever again break-up families and ruin a country because of their fevered brains thinking Marxist thoughts. There is no brotherhood of man in collectivized farms, secret-police, mass deportations, compulsory reeducation, and book burning --only shame.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Ludwig Wittgenstein's later-period work, specifically the posthumously published works

Philosophical Investigations (1953 German-English translation)[1] and On Certainty (1969

German-English translation)[2], are concerned with working out a new conception of

philosophy as conceptual and linguistic analysis. This philosophical practice depends for

its success on changes in the individual will of the philosopher who is pursuing

philosophical questions. These changes primarily involve the recognition of the extent to

which certain pictures or conceptions shape our norms of description by way of the

descriptive metaphors and analogies which become embedded in our language: e.g. that

time is like a river that flows from the past through the present to the future; or that

thoughts are like individual objects, bits of rock perhaps, which are separable one from

the other. Recognition of the extent to which these pictures guide our philosophical

conceptualizations, about the nature of time or the plausibility of the theory of logical-

atomism, takes the form of beginning to see the phenomena and practical actions of

everyday life through finer linguistic and contextual differentiations. (For example, this

can be accomplished through analyzing a concept, or idea, like time through

Wittgenstein's notions of the plurality of "language-games" and "forms of life". Notions

which emphasize the constitutive differences between the "games" and "forms" which

only contain in common what Wittgenstein calls "family resemblances".)

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[1] Hereafter PI.
[2] Hereafter OC.

This seeing requires a reorientation of something like one's intellectual sensibilities and expectations concerning what one is likely to accomplish when pursuing philosophical questions. In line with this reorientation, Wittgenstein's end in view for philosophical knowledge becomes acknowledgment of the parameters and limits of intelligible language and intelligible thought. This is a very novel goal for philosophy and as such requires explication as to: 1. What is its positive project? 2. What is its critical stance vis-à-vis traditional ideas of philosophical activity? And, 3. What are the ethical consequences of its radical rethinking of the relations between human agents and their knowledge? Following this tripartite division:

In the First Chapter we present Wittgenstein's therapeutic conception of philosophy.

In the Second Chapter we contrast Wittgenstein's view of language as contained within a plurality of language-games with Jürgen Habermas's idea that language, as communicatively employed by human agents, holds within its substance a *telos*. [This contrast explores the differences between Wittgenstein's view of language and one example of a notion of language, and its fit within human activity, prosecuted along traditional, and rationalistic, philosophical lines.]

In the Third Chapter we connect up our presentation of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy with his conceptualization of understanding as embodied in practices. In the process surveying some of the epistemological investigations found in OC, to the point of arguing that Wittgenstein's end in view for philosophical knowledge: "acknowledgment of the limits of intelligible language and intelligible thought", has merit as an existential project.

CHAPTER ONE: WITTGENSTEIN'S THERAPEUTIC CONCEPTION OF PHILOSOPHY

> In philosophizing we may not *terminate* a disease of thought. It must run its natural course, and *slow* cure is all important. (That is why mathematicians are such bad philosophers.)[3]

In examining Ludwig Wittgenstein's later-work it is difficult to establish a precise definition of exactly the nature of philosophy, and the corresponding therapeutic work, that his practice of philosophy can have on the philosopher considered as patient. Much of the perceived murkiness in Wittgenstein's view of philosophy stems from his explicit problematization of the connection of theory and practice. To force and explore this problematization requires a kind of thinking, speaking, and acting, which in PI, is known as thinking and speaking about language unlike those who have "become calloused by doing philosophy"[4]. This figurative language suggests Wittgenstein's intentionally non-programmatic articulation of his philosophy; its emphatic status as neither meta-philosophy, nor second-order philosophy, and its lack of concern in positing a purely procedural conception of philosophy. Instead, Wittgenstein articulates a vision of philosophy as entwined with a *practice* of philosophizing which answers to specific philosophical perplexities. Seeing this vision to its application entails getting to the roots of those perplexities, digging into the myriad ways that the language of our philosophical and theoretical outlooks determine our approaches to conceptual (philosophical) investigations. This burrowing down to the roots of our problems is activity, mostly in the form of discussion, that is, according to Wittgenstein in PI, not itself directed by "a second-order philosophy"[5].

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[3] Wittgenstein, Zettel, p.69.
[4] Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, §348.
[5] Wittgenstein, §121.

> One might think: if philosophy speaks of the use of the word "philosophy"
> There must be a second-order philosophy. But it is not so: it is, rather like
> the case of orthography, which deals with the word "orthography" among
> others without then being second-order.[6]

Upon a cursory glance at a natural language it can be observed that the word philosophy

is in fact one word among the others in the language. Though mention of this fact is

seemingly insignificant outside of the context of Wittgenstein's broader practice, it is

paradigmatic of Wittgenstein's contention that philosophy is an activity, as this view is

expressed in PI, in terms of the "work of the philosopher" as consisting "in assembling

reminders for a particular purpose."[7] This work has to do with a type of trading in

commonplaces, such as the above reminder that philosophy is a word like any other in a

natural language, which we have created and defined, and that plays particular roles in

particular language-games; existing not above, nor below, nor beyond the daily details of

life and the social world. That said, there is a concept and practice of philosophy that is at

stake in Wittgenstein's later-work; and, this concept and practice is often articulated in

assertions resembling meta-philosophical statements. For example, from §133 of PI: "The

real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I

want to." While this claim is found within a paragraph dedicated to distilling an anti-

foundational method in philosophy (and can be taken in with the negative, or

deconstructive, tone of that aphorism, and thus be understood contextually), -the position

from which that phrase about "the real discovery" is spoken from, sounds distant (at-least

removed) from a practical problem area such as: Could there be a language which is a

private language?

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[6] Wittgenstein, §49.
[7] Wittgenstein, §127.

It appears that this statement expresses a desire that accords with a theoretical

perspective, as regards how the proper resolution of philosophical questions would affect

the philosopher proper, and as a result of this circle in interpretation, e.g. you need to

agree or accept Wittgenstein's claims (voiced in the assertive tone of voice) that return to

everyday language is essential for his particular rhetorical moves and skeptical questions

to become intelligible in terms of their intention.[8] The assertive tone of voice on the topic

of philosophy, as found mainly in PI numbered paragraphs §89-133, hints at the fact that

its utterer may be speaking at a certain distance from a practical question or problem of

philosophy, as the voice seems to rise above specific issues and dilemmas in philosophy

to speak more generally about things like our need for "friction" when looking into

language.[9]

By this I mean to suggest that we need not take it on authorial authority that philosophy is

not a second-order word within Wittgenstein's vision of the subject matter and method of

philosophy. This and other vexing interpretive questions such as the perceived quietism

in his later-works concerning ethical and aesthetic propositions, as well as a multifarious

view of the status of religious discourse[10], would do well to be examined in detail and in

the context of Wittgenstein's therapeutic conception of philosophy. The following two

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[8] To this particular dilemma Stanley Cavell, in his essay "Declining Decline" writes, "…You cannot understand what a Wittgensteinian criterion is without understanding the force of his appeal to the everyday (why or how it tells what kind of object anything is, for example); and you cannot understand what the force of Wittgenstein's appeal to the everyday is without understanding what his criteria are." (p.335)
[9] See PI §107: "Back to the rough ground!"
10 Janik and Toulmin in their 1973 book Wittgenstein's Vienna, discuss the later Wittgenstein's outlook vis-à-vis religious discourse: "In this final phase, Wittgenstein has no obvious defense against the argument that ethics and religion involves forms of life of their own or that, within these *Lebensformen*, ethical and religious language games become, in their own ways, as verbalizable and as meaningful (even as true and false) as any others. At the very least, he is no longer in a position to underpin his own individualistic view of ethics by appeal to a sharp dichotomy between the expressible and the transcendental. From his later conversations about religious beliefs, it is clear that he remained to the end as puzzled as he had ever been about the character of religious discourse." (p.234)

sections of Chapter One seek to address the question as to the status, or relation, between Wittgenstein's constructive and sometimes derisive remarks concerning the traditional practice of philosophy, and the idea that these constructive remarks taken systematically, or in spirit, could provide a therapeutic conception of philosophy; what we will refer to as a *therapy of acceptance*.

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THERAPY

We will start with a question that might arise when initially considering what a therapeutic conception of philosophy could mean in practice: What are the specific clinical dynamics of philosophy conceived in terms of a kind of cure or therapy? By clinical dynamics we raise the question as to how this aforementioned slow cure or therapy would work: What kind of procedures would be in place to ensure what type of outcomes? As in the above quotation from Wittgenstein's posthumously assembled work Zettel[11], the analogy presented between philosophy and psychiatry is not stated inside a finely arranged program for ridding people of psychological discomforts, as for instance psychoanalysis purports to offer its practitioners and clients. Nor is this link between philosophy and therapy bound within a program for addressing existential anxiety, for example, through something like Medard Boss's (Heidegger inspired) "Daseinanalysis,"[12] which sees its "eminent [therapeutic] importance...in the fact that it helps overcome...shortcomings of the basic anthropologic concepts of our psychological thinking."[13] Therapy for Wittgenstein is conceptual therapy. Many different *therapies* to work out kinks in our understanding of our concepts; for example our concept of what it

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[11] Hereafter ZT.
[12] Boss, Medard. ""Daseinanalysis" and Psychotherapy", p.303.
[13] Ibid.

is to mean something when we speak, or our concept of what we are actually doing in practice -not according to a theoretical explanation- when we are following a rule.

For Wittgenstein, the landscape of human understanding is a spare province bounded on all sides by the limits of language as it is used. This province is spare, intentionally left *spare*, because Wittgenstein refuses to elaborate a full-bodied theory of the relations of thought and language. Nor does he articulate a metaphysical account of the language of thought or the thinking of language; or attempt an enumeration of the transcendental features of human understanding as this understanding operates through language considered in terms of one of its functions, for example, expression. Wittgenstein's refusal to enter into philosophical, metaphysical, or speculative explanations is a result of his reluctance to theorize about the relations of language and thought, among other issues. His approach to these relations is through a careful examination of how human agents operate inside language practices as they employ a myriad of forms of language. And though there exists substantial overlap, in terms of the way that language is meaningfully employed between the many language-games, it would be a foolhardy attempt to generalize about language, to consider *language in general*, thereby determining, or setting, limits to how language is used in any final sense. We simply do not have a god's-eye view of the phenomenon of language. Instead, we might more profitably work at clearly understanding what we can about the ways that we do use language and forge meaning in our practices.

This clarification work produces treatments for disorders of our understanding. These disorders are not mental or psychological disturbances like neuroses or schizophrenia, rather they are philosophical misconceptions, misleading pictures that we consult when thinking about philosophical questions like personhood, what might be called "mental acts", or how children learn to use language. One example of such a philosophical misconception is the notion that the meaning of an utterance is a feature, or something

immaterial that adheres to the thought that we suppose accompanies the utterance. The misconception here is that we do not always need to suppose that when we utter a sentence there is an accompanying thought, with well-defined meaning, that is produced in our minds. Often, such as in the course of a conversation, we speak and use language in a collaborative process of *producing* meaning. Each party to the conversation talks and conveys ideas that spur the other to respond, to add to the conversation. Neither party comes to the conversation with a head full of fully formed sentences, which have clearly established meanings. Rather, the back and forth discussion, the linguistic exchange, is where meaning is made.

Clarification work of this kind looks for symptoms that point out where our mistaken thinking and speaking about language takes place. The treatment of these symptoms is a personal process where cures are individually administered. These treatments require less reliance than psychological therapies do, on a clinician, therapist, or initiate figure to guide and direct the therapy. Wittgensteinian conceptual therapies are processes, which are personal in the sense expressed in a marginal commentary of 1931, preserved in the collection of Wittgenstein's jottings and autobiographical fragments Culture and Value[14],

> Working in philosophy-like work in architecture in many respects-is really more a working on oneself. On one's own interpretation. On one's way of seeing things. (And what one expects of them.)[15]

This work does not necessarily require a clinic as setting, it may take place in solitude, or while reading a book, taking a walk, maybe spelling out on paper some philosophic qualms with another's thought. The idea of therapy is obviously used as an analogy that should not mislead one into thinking that the analogy suggests a faithfulness to the therapeutic goals and procedures of a talk therapy like psychoanalysis; the emotional resocializing purposes of group therapy; the individual empowering aspects of client-

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[14] Hereafter CV.
[15] Wittgenstein, Culture and Value, p.16.

centered therapy; or any of the other dominant treatment options in clinical psychology and psychiatry. Philosophical therapy, for Wittgenstein while teaching at Cambridge, took place during intense discussions with students, fellow professors, and other interlocutors. The absorption of the thrust of these discussions, or teachings, can be seen as producing changes in 'one's way of seeing things'. Something of the discursivity of these discussions is preserved in the dictation notes, The Blue and Brown Books [16], which provide a clipped, or Altman-esque[17], version of events and ideas within a Wittgenstein lecture/discussion course. For example, on page 30 of the Blue Book, Wittgenstein begins a discussion of the grammar of certain expressions from the premise that one's choice in form of expression "betray[s] different tendencies of the mind".[18]

> Let us revert to examining the grammar of the expressions "to wish", "to expect", "to long for", etc., and consider that most important case in which the expression, "I wish so and so to happen" is the direct description of a conscious process.[19]

We might call this an introductory sentence, a typical statement of theme. Moving on,

> That is to say, the case in which we should be inclined to answer the question "Are you sure that it is this you wish?" by saying: "Surely I must know what I wish."[20]

More preamble, setting the stage, laying the groundwork. Continuing,

> Now compare this answer to the one which most of us would give to the question: "Do you know the ABC?" Has the emphatic assertion that you

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[16] Hereafter BB.

[17] This is a reference to the films of American director Robert Altman, who uses "clipped" dialogue (dialogue that streams into the narrative action of the film from all directions and from many sources)--as a naturalistic device to bring out a certain element of inchoateness that pervades the workaday world around us. See especially "Nashville" (1975), and "The Long Goodbye" (1973). (See: Kroker 1988 pp. 303-382) Especially pp. 308, where Kroker claims that (concerning Altman's work in the 1970's), "Altman...develops...the opening of the aural-visual space of his narrative, diffusing its center by taking notice of the peripheries. The camera continually drifts away from the main action..." while "Dialogue shifts, too, away from the central speakers."

[18] Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books: Preliminary Investigations for the Philosophical Investigations, p.30.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

know it a sense analogous to that of the former assertion?[21]

Next, there enters a probing question which is designed to connect, for the listener, two different instances of using one related tone of emphatic assertion, *"Surely I must know"*, to express self-certainty.

> Both assertions in a way brush aside the question. But the former doesn't wish to say "Surely I know such a simple thing as this" but rather: "The Question which you asked me makes no sense".[22]

An important distinction between the different implications of the two different assertions is here used to the methodological end, as stated in PI, of "adduc[ing] only exterior facts about language."[23] In that, the use of these expressions has to be spoken or "acted out" so as to perceive the grammatical difference between these assertions. Wittgenstein's "adducing" of these "exterior facts about language" comes from his felt necessity to "use language full-blown"[24]: "When I talk about language (words, sentences, etc.) I must speak the language of everyday." [25] (Here *felt necessity* refers to Wittgenstein's commitment to the projected results of his project in bringing words "back from their metaphysical to their everyday use").[26] On this score, Wittgenstein characteristically expresses himself rhetorically, and perhaps melodramatically, in conveying his *need* to work and express himself as he does[27], as justification for working in the way that he does.)

Now, to finish off the close-reading of our paragraph from page thirty of BB,

> We might say: We adopt in this case a wrong method of brushing aside the question. "Of course I know" could here be replaced by "Of course, there is no doubt" and this interpreted to mean "It makes, in this case, no sense

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, §120.

[24] Wittgenstein, §120.

[25] Wittgenstein, §120.

[26] Wittgenstein, §116.

[27] See the Preface to PI: "The best that I could write would never be more than philosophical remarks; my thoughts were soon crippled if I tried to force them on in any single direction against their natural inclination." (v)

> of talk of a doubt". In this way the answer " Of course I know what I
> wish" can be interpreted to be a grammatical statement.[28]

Wittgenstein ends his example and critical exegesis of a possible everyday instance of the

temptation to utter certain expressions as verbal responses to another's questioning, with

a clarification of a grammatical statement "which tells us what something is"[29] by laying

out, in this case, how this sentence "Of course I know what I wish" fits within a language

practice through its rules for use. In the transcribed Cambridge lectures of 1932-1935,

Wittgenstein's Lectures 1932-1935[30] , Wittgenstein discusses his approach to delimiting

the grammar operative in a given language-game as follows,

> To say what rules of grammar make up a propositional game would
> require giving the characteristics of propositions, their grammar. We are
> thus led to the question, What is a proposition? I shall not try to give a
> general definition of "proposition", as it is impossible to do so. This is no
> more possible than it is to give a definition of the word "game". For any
> line we might draw would be arbitrary. Our way of talking about
> propositions is always in terms of specific examples, for we cannot
> talk about these more generally than about specific games.[31]

The salient feature of a Wittgensteinian grammatical investigation is to act as a

description of how sentences can be and are used by human agents in specific examples

of "operating with signs"[32]. The rules for use of a proposition are expressed as their

grammar and yet these rules are neither inflexible nor absolute. As in the above example

from BB[33], these rules for use can be seen to be situationally shifted, by an agent, in

response to an expression which is seen to demarcate one tendency of mind from another.

In this case from BB, the rules for use which demarcated the expressed certainty

concerning "knowing that I wish" come to be seen to differ from those which accord with

the response to the "Do you know your ABC?" question. The shift is not in the rules

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[28] Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books, p.30.
[29] See PI §373. "Grammar tells us what kind of object anything is. (Theology as grammar.)" (p. 116)
[30] Hereafter WLC.
[31] Wittgenstein, Wittgenstein's Lectures 1932-1935, p.20.
[32] Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books, p.6.
[33] Wittgenstein, p.30.

themselves which are determined in advance; the shift is in what the specificity, of the described situation of the use of certain words, shows us about our employment of those two expressions. That is, what is learned about our operating with these expressions in these particular contexts.

To return to the topic of therapeutic philosophy, we might ask: Where is the therapy located within this mass of words and this specifying of the details of language as it is used? Well, the therapy is to be found in the listener's/reader's recognition of their rule-governed language practices, which are pointed out to them through the description of the various grammars of their practices. Thereby getting clearer about when certain expressions are used, and correspondingly what the use of these expressions in these circumstances indicates about a person's comprehension of the sense of those expressions. The compound effect of stopping to perform these grammatical investigations time and again -so as to point out where the "confusions which occupy us arise when language is like an engine idling, not when doing work"[34]-is that the urge to philosophize in an over-general way begins to dissipate.

How so? From WLC, "...the rules do not *follow from* the idea. They are not got by analysis of the idea; *they constitute it*. They show the use of the word."[35] For example, in the above case from BB page thirty: "to wish", or the act of "wishing" generally, do not exist as something like a primordial human phenomenon that holds its meaning within itself. Nor is the meaning of "wishing" a state-of-mind that hovers inside a human's skull. "Wishing" as expressed in the words "to wish" does not exist outside the normative framework and language-game within which it is publicly taught and its meaning publicly defined. In other words, "I wish" is an expression without clear sense outside of its rule-governed spheres of use. The claim at work here is that when discerning whether the sentence "I wish that I my parents would get back together" makes sense, the most

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[34] Wittgenstein, §132.
[35] Wittgenstein, Wittgenstein's Lectures 1932-1935, p.86.

expedient way to figure this out is by looking at a sentence like "Of course I know what I wish" as a related grammatical statement; "grammatical" because this second sentence *permits* the first sentence to make sense because it provides the grounds for the statement's validity as a sensible utterance.

For example, on page 30 of BB, Wittgenstein uses a similar pair of sentences to make the same point: "The room is twelve feet long" as akin to the first sentence about wishing one's parents would reunite, and the grammatical statement "The room has length" as akin in function to the grammatical statement "Of course I know..."[36] In each case the first sentence accords with the rules that establish how the sentence is to be used and whether it can be used, and likewise in each case, the second statement is the operative rule. Because we can act as if we know that we can know what we wish, we can use this sentence. And because 'the room has a length' we can use the sentence which gives the length of the room. By themselves the words/concepts of wishing and length have no intrinsic meaning, yet when they are defined or *constituted* by the rules (the grammatical statements) they have *roles* in particular language-games.

This approach to determining the grammar of the expression "to wish" and the concept of "length" by separating out a pair of sentences which rest on each other in a language-game, is one specific kind of linguistic analysis that Wittgenstein includes in his therapeutic method for philosophy. Another potent though less laborious tactic is to unearth philosophical questions, or those of a philosopher's utterances, which gain their purchase on their readers' imaginations because they contain within them, or point toward, a metaphysical dimension of human experience or epistemological processes, (e.g. intuition). For example, as regards the issue of this type of philosopher's question which requires therapeutic redress, Wittgenstein offers a "beautiful example of a philosophical question"[37]: "How can one think what is not the case?".[38] This is potential

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[36] Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books, p.30.
[37] Ibid.

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bafflei and a pure question that is not likely to be satisfied by a simple answer. For example, (using this sentence): A friend and I are standing in front of my parked car and I turn to my friend and say with a look of alarm: "The car is missing!" He corrects me by saying: "No, it is right there, are you okay? Maybe I should drive." I thought that the car was missing.

I communicated this thought to my friend and he corrected me. We could have gone on talking and speculating about such things as the psychological root of my confusion, or momentary lapse in thinking, *or* we could just do what we usually do, i.e. what we customarily do, and act as if that statement in these circumstances has no valid sense. That the philosophical skeptic in me might here require an infallible answer to the skeptical question of how can one *really* know whether that physical object (my car) is there, and whether correspondingly this knowledge sanctions belief in the existence of the external world, is a philosophical demand. It is not a practical demand and is not a question that our practice usually responds to and acts in accordance with. Wittgenstein so asserts: "...while this [question] puzzles us we must admit that nothing is easier than to think what is not the case."[39] Granted we can think this 'what is not the case' through, we can imagine that the car is missing, or that my sense of sight is deceived by a car similar to mine. But, when I utter 'what is not the case', and it is proves contextually ridiculous, my friend corrects me and most likely takes my car-keys away from me. That is to say, here the practical action outweighs the contemplative possibilities available because the contemplative possibilities are unnecessary diversions, as they simply serve to complicate something that is not in practice complicated. Much in the way that a young child will ask endless "why" questions of their parents out of some fascination with speech and the discovery of new things, the philosopher -if left with mouth agape staring off and thinking about the car and 'what is not the case'- will never find satisfaction with the

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[38] Ibid.
[39] Wittgenstein, p.30.

depth of the answers they are given to their skeptical queries, and will likely soon become

frustrated with the perceived limitation of these answers. Wittgenstein summarizes this

philosophical attitude in the following way,

> I mean, this shows us again that the difficulty which we are in does not
> arise through our inability to imagine how thinking something is done...it
> almost seems as though our difficulty were one of remembering exactly
> what happened when we thought something, a difficulty of introspection,
> or something of the sort; whereas in fact it arises when we look at the facts
> through the medium of a misleading form of expression.[40]

Looking at the facts in this way could be compared to standing there in the street in front

of one's car staring off into the distance, mouthing the words: "*What is* it like to think

what is not the case?" The words "*what is*" mystically inflected and pregnant with a just

beyond your grasp tip of the tongue significance, while the various contextual meanings

of the word "exist" and the question of what it is like for an object not to exist yet to be

visible are floating somewhere in one's thoughts. In other words, the desire or hope

entertained by someone while standing in front of their car is the possibility of a

philosophical answer to the this philosophical question, e.g. an answer that annihilates all

vagary in detail by hitting on the true description of 'what it is like to think what is not

the case.' This crude tableau is a cartoonish depiction of the philosopher who causes

problems for himself by staring too fixedly ("through the medium of a misleading form

of expression"[41]) into the abyss; an abyss that is projected into the language that is

employed in investigating thinking. A distressing result of this projection, as Wittgenstein

puts in <u>The Big Typescript; TS 213</u>[42], is that "an entire mythology is laid down in our

language."[43] This mythology creates "traps" into which we can fall when we fixate on

philosophically vetting the legitimacy of certain contradictory seeming propositions, such

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[40] Wittgenstein, pp.30-31.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Hereafter BT213.

[43] Wittgenstein, <u>The Big Typescript; TS 213</u>, p.317.

as 'whether we can think what is not the case.' These traps make our lives difficult because we are constantly under the impression that we are, and *ought to be*, doing philosophy as if we were digging out of one rut after the other, trying to respond to these demands of logical ideality that we project into our language. In PI §437, Wittgenstein states it thus,

> A wish seems already to know what will or would satisfy it; a proposition, a thought, what makes it true--even when that thing is not there at all! Whence this *determining* of what is not yet there? This despotic demand? ("The hardness of the logical must").[44]

To this question 'whence this urge, to preemptively determine in all cases, comes' could be answered *ourselves*; we develop requirements for certain varieties of intellectual satisfaction. For instance, a need for "crystalline purity" in our notations, a need for our language to be formalized so as "to describe phenomena that are hard to get hold of, the present experience that slips quickly by."[45] The satisfaction of these needs gradually appear to outweigh other motives for doing philosophy such as the search for an practical understanding of the workings of thought, the body, and our human ability to operate with a language within a language community. Though this reading of Wittgenstein's therapeutic project emphasizes an "ethical" or "existential"[46] dimension to his grammatical and conceptual investigations of "looking into the workings of language"[47], which the text of PI only partially bears it out, it is important to note the suggestiveness of Wittgenstein's later-period corpus as regards how to approach the problems of life.

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[44] Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, §437.

[45] Wittgenstein, §437.

[46] Here "ethical" is to be understood as an activity of conceiving or expressing a way of living that follows from a prescriptive code of moral conduct. Here "existential" is understood as referring to what have been traditionally called a person's "spiritual" needs, for example, a desire for sense of security in the face of desperate thoughts, or a need for a feeling of safety, or a conception of fate and order to events in the universe, etc., in the face of the appearance of major uncertainty, life altering fear, or a dire perception of meaninglessness in one's life. Wittgenstein in his "A Lecture on Ethics" describes this mystical or existential experience by saying that: "the experience of absolute safety has been described by saying that we feel safe in the hands of God." (42) to be found in: Philosophical Occasions: 1912-1951, (pp. 37-44) Hereafter PO.

[47] Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, §109.

> The *preconceived idea* of crystalline purity can only be removed by turning our whole examination round. (One might say: the axis of reference of our examination must be rotated, but about the fixed point of our real need).[48]

In passages like this Wittgenstein is running together the aesthetic or hygienic desire, masquerading as philosophical preference or rigor, to pare down language to its purported essence or core propositions, with what he considers people's "real needs" vis-à-vis the results of philosophical (conceptual) investigations. Given that Wittgenstein's audience consists of mostly professional and semi-professional (students) philosophers, the subject "our" corresponds primarily to those who reflect on their experience of the world in terms of concept thinking. And though Wittgenstein is addressing something like a "real need" interpreted as an intellectual need, stemming perhaps from a intention to have done with philosophical thinking that obfuscates rather than clarifies our understanding of language; there is here expressed at-least a dim sense of existential frustration[49] with the absurd lengths philosophers will go to, maybe incidentally, maybe deliberately, to help a question remain impermeable to argument.

Wittgenstein's ethical outlook is a complicated story, but for our purposes we will fixate on the upshot of comments like the following from OC: "pretensions are a mortgage which burdens a philosopher's capacity to think"[50]; and, "any logic good enough for a primitive means of communication needs no apology from us. (Language did not emerge from some kind of ratiocination)"[51], as offering insight into the ethical ramifications of a philosophical practice that reorients philosophers, and laypersons alike, to an acceptance of the contextual boundedness of their speaking and acting. (This practice will later be

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[48] Wittgenstein, §107.
[49] By "existential frustration" we refer a frustration that goes beyond a purely intellectual frustration, for example a frustration stemming from a chronic philosophical mistake that is being committed. Rather, we are thinking here of a frustration with an element of a greater form-of-life. In this case frustration at the way that dogmatic rationalistic, scientistic, or logistic thinking confuses, or runs together, intellectual standards with clear thinking about a particular philosophical issue.
[50] Wittgenstein, On Certainty, §549.
[51] Wittgenstein, §475.

called Wittgenstein's therapy of acceptance.) What is ethical in these two remarks is to be gleaned from their deflationary tone; they deflate the philosopher's dismissive or pretentious attitude towards the everyday world, whether as regards the words one uses to describe it, or the individual notion of self-importance one possesses in regards to the significance of its humdrum details. For example, an ability to speculate broadly as to possible cases, probable scenarios, and possible worlds is considered a virtue of a polished philosopher. This skill is generally thought to represent the ability to think simultaneously on many planes, or to think about a given topic in a careful and thorough manner. And though it would be rude to suggest in polite company that such ability shares a family-resemblance with the imaginative abilities of young children, psychiatric patients, and people experimenting with psychoactive drugs, this suggestion has some *prima facie* legitimacy. It is precisely this kind of uncomfortable critical acumen that can be said to partake of an ethical outlook, an outlook that places little value in cultivating elitism and aloofness from the workaday world as philosophical masks for knowledge. Wittgenstein boils down his approach to overcoming these pretensions by claiming that,

> [i]t's only by thinking even more crazily than philosophers do that you can solve their problems.[52]

To shepherd these philosophers back onto the straight and narrow, Wittgenstein suggests that philosophers have to be shown the concordance of their proclivities to demand, for example, that the logic of their language possess standards of crystalline logical purity, with the particularly natural *seeming* mistakes they make in working on a philosophical problem. This is a clear method or therapeutic dynamic at play in the BB example[53], examined above. This is therapy that delimits the area around a chronic tendency in

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[52] Wittgenstein, Culture and Value, p.75.
[53] Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books, p.30.

philosophical thinking by "substitut[ing] for the thought the expression of the thought."[54]

The greater reason for this move from trying to explain, for instance, the idea of belief, to

trying to describe the *language used* when speaking of belief is, (from BT213), done

because,

> ...we can only prove that someone made a mistake if he (really)
> acknowledges this expression as the correct expression of his feeling.[55]

If we can show sentences where belief is expressed in cases where belief behavior is at-

issue, say in religious discourse where a believer in a dark moment tells a loved one, "I

believe with all my heart in God's love, but I can't understand why He makes me suffer";

then we can see that "the expression of belief, thought, etc., is just a sentence; -and the

sentence has sense only as a member of a system of language; as one expression within a

calculus."[56] At bottom the idea here is that there are everyday contexts (language-games)

in which sentences, and speaking about belief more generally, inhere; and it is important

to describe these cases, and places, where linguistic signs live.

> Every sign *by itself* seems dead. *What* gives it life?--In use it is *alive*. Is life
> breathed into it there?--Or is the *use* its life? ?[57]

This idea of aiming to cause a philosopher to notice the concord between their expression

and a mistake in philosophical approach is here therapeutically beneficial in the teaching

of coping strategies. In that, there is a change that takes place in the philosopher if she

acknowledges the mistake she makes through the misleading expression that comes to

mind. This acknowledgment consists of causing her to see how her language idles when

she becomes unsatisfied with her "notation" and wishes "for a notation which stresses a

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[54] Wittgenstein, p.32.
[55] Wittgenstein, The Big Typescript, p.303.
[56] Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books, p.42. Keeping in mind that Wittgenstein later, 1945, backs away from this image of "a calculus" in PI, by claiming that it is a logical ideal that leads a person to conceive of language-use, meaning, and understanding on the model of an operation using "a calculus according to definite rules." (§81) Here we employ the calculus analogy but without implying the definiteness of calculi as they are found in mathematics.
[57] Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, §432.

difference more strongly, makes it more obvious, than ordinary language does"[58] This

wish often manifests itself in navel-gazing in earnest, as directed by the resolution that all

that entertaining and accommodating of contradictory examples and logical possibilities

can lead one to a better understanding of certain philosophical questions like: What is

time?; What am "I"?; Am I my "I"; What is the essence of language? etc. Wittgenstein

sees these sorts of questions as overly general and counterproductive if we aim to get

clear about how language works and what our language can tell us about how we think.

For Wittgenstein, investigating the situations in which philosophical questions arise at

certain flash points in philosophical discourse, such as, where abstraction, over

generalization, disanalogy, and basic confusions arising from "our preoccupation with the

method of science"[59], helps one see the unfortunate pretensions and self-deceptions that

plague philosophers. These situations suggest where philosophers attempt to overreach

the limits of language so as to utter seemingly metaphysical phrases, or covertly

metaphysical sounding claims: i.e. "Time flows from the past towards the future as the

current of the river drives the water along." Wittgensteinian therapy is occupied with

learning from the conceptual mistakes and metaphysical phraseology that philosophers

employ *because* these mistakes and metaphysical phrasing provide evidence of the

occurrence and localization of transgressions of sense and sensible utterance within

language. From BT213,

> Just as laws become interesting when there is an inclination to transgress them,
> certain grammatical rules only get interesting when philosophers want to
> transgress them.[60]

As an analogous example of this therapeutic procedure of treating these inclinations, we

might consider the process of teaching non-philosophers the ropes in a course in

philosophical ethics. In this learning environment, the non-philosopher's unreflective

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[58] Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books, p.59.
[59] Wittgenstein, p.18.
[60] Wittgenstein, The Big Typescript: TS 213, p.313.

opinions (and ways of speaking), have to be broken down by a professor before they can be rebuilt anew; rebuilt along new rails, new lines of thought. This tearing down work is done by teaching the students how to form arguments following from course-materials; how to argue logically (conclusion must derivable from premises, premises must be clearly expressed and non-contradictory); how to pay attention to certain technical vocabulary used by philosophers when doing philosophical ethics as an academic subject (e.g. the "harm principle", a case-studies approach, a deontological framework etc.); as well as how to absorb some ideological information: ex. why it is important to articulate abstract theories as answers to ethical and moral conundrums: for example, something like John Rawls' hypothetical decision making mechanism of the "original position" behind the "veil of ignorance".

A learning process is intended to bring on a major change of will in the student/philosopher; their outlook has to be broken down and rebuilt anew through apparatus of persuasion. This learning process, learning of a new conceptual vocabulary, and how to employ it, is very much like one which Wittgenstein imagines for the traditional philosopher. The traditional philosopher whose will has to be *broken* (changed) before she can begin to see things differently; before she learns to perceive that she has certain tendencies and habits of thought which chronically obscure her recognition and acceptance of the natural, and taken-for-granted, *ease* with which she uses language, as she moves within the language that surrounds her and constitutes the intelligibility (for herself) of her practices.[61] This process of breaking the will of a philosopher is characterized by Wittgenstein, in BT213, as "an unlocking" that "must be done in you by a difficult process of synoptizing certain facts."[62] This "unlocking" is not

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[61] Consider in this connection Wittgenstein's gnomic saying in OC that "knowledge is in the end based on acknowledgment" (§378); here Wittgenstein is putting forward the idea that a decision, and not a purely intellectual conviction, rests behind one's perception of certain portions of the experiential and social world.

[62] These words are found printed at the bottom of page 200 in BT213. They are a variation on remarks presented in the main text of the Big-Typescript proper which were written in English by Wittgenstein.

necessarily accomplished on the strength of right reasons or best arguments, and it is not

primarily an intellectual change. Rather, as Wittgenstein has it in BT213, "What has to be

overcome is not a difficulty of the intellect, but of the will"[63]:

> What makes a subject difficult to understand--if it is significant,
> important--is not that it would take some special instruction about abstruse
> things to understand it. Rather it is the antithesis between understanding
> the subject and what most people *want* to see. Because of this the very
> things that are most obvious can become the most difficult to understand.[64]

Continuing with our example of teaching a course in philosophical ethics, what often

makes the game of philosophical ethics initially difficult to understand for the non-

philosopher, the beginner student, is that the loosely worded expression of opinions and

feelings is not tolerated, or very useful, when working through the subject matter. There

is a certain decorum and a certain argumentative procedure, there is a given technique to

be mastered. Good arguments in philosophical ethics are logically sound, sound good,

have an air of high-mindedness or acuity of vision about them. Prior to training in the

form and content of philosophical ethics, many students may have had unreflective or gut

feelings about ethical issues, yet they lacked the means of properly expressing those

feelings in the quasi-objective and rigorous manner that is a stock-in-trade of

philosophical ethics. After this training, if the training takes, students may find it

agreeable that their world of action, their politics, and their society can be discussed in

terms of rationality, or competing rationalities, differences in members within the body-

politic, and logical procedures of parsing arguments. That conversion to a new way of

thinking about ethics, politics, and the social world, does not necessarily legitimate the

concerns of philosophical ethics through acknowledgment of their factual correspondence

to one's everyday world. Rather, it is learning to look at that world from a point-of-view

informed, or challenged, by philosophical ethics. If accomplished, the change in thinking

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[63]Wittgenstein, The Big Typescrript TS 213, p.300.
[64] Ibid.

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that the professor of ethics and the Wittgensteinian therapist aim to bring about is a change that modifies the way things are seen, the broader point-of-view from which problems in ethics and philosophy generally are viewed.

The substantial force of this change will be discussed in the following two sections which, firstly: deals with §133 from PI which nicely frames this conjunction of thinking and seeing in philosophical activity, and secondly: with the role of pictures and dogma in Wittgenstein's later thought.

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EXEGESIS OF §133

Paragraph §133 is a key paragraph in PI as regards Wittgenstein spelling out the links between methods of describing portions of language, as language is practically employed, and the ramification of these descriptions on the prosecution of philosophical issues. Specifically how these philosophical issues are seen by philosophers after these descriptions have been accepted; after these descriptions have sunk into the framework of one's understanding. Therefore, this section provides an exegesis of this paragraph in parts, with the aim of isolating and explaining each of these parts in terms of their rhetorical function. [The parts of paragraph §133 under examination will be italicized and Wittgenstein's italics rendered in **bold print**.]

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> 133. *It is not our aim to refine or complete the system of rules for the use of our words in unheard-of ways.*[65]

The thrust of Wittgenstein's later period conception of philosophy is not metaphysical or traditionally "philosophical" in terms of providing ideal, religion replacing, or theoretical elucidations of something like rules for thought, definitions of human nature, or, more specific to Wittgenstein's own project, a deep structure or essence to language which

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[65] Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, §133.

obtains in all possible natural languages. Rather, Wittgenstein's approach in trying to

command "a clear view of the use of our words"[66] is bound to the description of the

terrain of a specific region or section of language-use (context); the description of which

(this region of language) is diachronic. That is, the description takes historical time into

consideration as a structuring factor of language.

> For the clarity that we are aiming is indeed **complete** clarity. But this
> simply means that the philosophical problems should **completely**
> disappear.[67]

As for "clarity", the idea is that when the workings of language, as localized in a

particular area, are seen in their interconnectedness within a given context of use

(language-game), this "seeing connexions"[68] is to take the place of the endless process of

posing philosophical question after philosophical question about, for example, what

language is in its being. This replacement for philosophy need leave behind no remainder

or repertoire of questions of its own, because its questions are intentionally non open-

ended, ex. this question of the being of language; but concerned with what can be

considered an art of description. As David Pears puts it in his essay "Wittgenstein and

Austin", (in making reference to the connection between Wittgenstein's form of writing

and the effects of this form on one's understanding):

> Understanding will come not through the discovery of new facts but
> through seeing the significance of familiar facts. This is the kind of work
> that has the profundity of art rather than of science.[69]

This art has to do with working out from plausible descriptions of language as it used by

human agents in certain contexts. The clearer the descriptions seem to line up with the

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[66] Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, §49.
[67] Wittgenstein, §133.
[68] Wittgenstein, §49.
[69] Pears, "Wittgenstein and Austin", p.38.

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exigencies and demands of practices, the clearer that the understanding of the workings of language is in its specifics. This is quite unlike the classical manner of posing philosophical questions which is often done in a very general way, while overstepping issues of contextuality and particularity, and due respect for, what Charles Taylor, in his essay "Lichtung or Lebensform: Parallels Between Heidegger and Wittgenstein", calls an "engaged" picture of human agency. This picture of human agency has the human being as settled into a world, and a community of practices (form-of-life), which has a taken-for-granted lifeworld background to it which provides the conditions of intelligibility for understanding those practices. It is a unknowing forgetfulness of these contexts and background to our everyday activities and language-use that leads philosophers to yearn to pull up the fabric of the world, to dig underneath the visible in search of deeper meaning. For example, after reading a newspaper and learning about a suicide bomber blowing himself up in a crowded subway station and killing innocent bystanders, a philosopher, or anyone so characterologically disposed, might be tempted to wonder: "What is the nature of evil?", in expectation, or habituation, that one could answer this question just by thinking about it. Sitting there paper in hand in one's living room one might cast around in their memory for examples of evil, maybe evil figures from history (Hitler, Stalin, etc.) or evil world-historical events (the Holocaust, the mass-deportations and summary killings of Baltic peoples in Siberia, Armenian genocide, etc.). One may be thinking that a careful analysis of these examples of evil could produce a theory of the roots of evil by using generalizations which link together certain traits that all these examples of evil share. For example, the fact that political leaders justify evil acts with reference to race hatred and race differences (Stalin, Hitler); or, the idea that evil acts are often the product of a dangerous concentration of power and military force in the hands of a few people.

The downside to the use of these kinds of generalizations is that they are so all encompassing as to ignore the key differences between various historical manifestations of evil, what a Wittgensteinian might call "the grammatical structures" of, totalitarian, language-games. The philosopher's error in trying to find the general answer to his general question, what Wittgenstein in BB calls "the craving for generality"[70], is that the philosopher is overproducing philosophy, over generating explanations tied together by devices like auxiliary hypotheses, so as to encompass philosophical problems. Bluntly put, Wittgenstein is asserting that philosophy makes more philosophy and that the problems we find as philosophical problems actually need *less* production of philosophical explanations so as to be solved. Rather, our thinking about these problems requires something like a good cleaning to remove the layers of talk (graffiti) that have accumulated (been sprayed on the wall) over time (overnight).

> *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.*[71]

At issue here is a kind of inadvertently propagated skepticism as to the possibility of understanding the meaning of philosophical questions. This meaning skepticism is a disease of the understanding that philosophers, unintentionally perhaps, cultivate when they push questions toward what they consider the "foundations", often logical foundations, of these questions. In our example: How *can* we know the nature of evil?, this bent of meaning skepticism is exerted via a nonsensical demand for certain knowledge regarding this most human and ever reproducible of social phenomenon. To answer this question, to solve this puzzle, we would have to overcome this posited possible impossibility ("how could we *ever* know why evil lurks...?") of establishing once for all the nature of evil by arriving at a proposition, or a set of propositions that might

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[70] Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books, p.17.
[71] Wittgenstein, The Philosophical Investigations, §133.

claim an intercultural validity. The validity sought for these propositions is of the same kind as positive knowledge (scientific truth) which is created as a result of the corroboration of many processes of independent experimental verification. Yet, since philosophy does not operate according to the same verification principles and procedures of producing positive knowledge, this questing for foundational knowledge and absolute certainty, i.e. boldly venturing into the possible impossibility of the nature of evil, appears to ultimately promise to usher in more vacuous histrionics and epic jousting against unflappable windmills. For philosophy to avoid these vain efforts is for philosophers (as for others likewise disposed to wonder), to learn to accept certain practices as resting on nothing deeper nor more existentially satisfying than habit and custom; rules and common judgments. From PI, "that is not agreement in opinions but in form of life."[72] Further,

> If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: "That is simply what I do." (Remember that we sometimes demand definitions for the sake not of their content, but of their form. Our requirement is an architectural one; the definition a kind of ornamental coping that supports nothing.)[73]

Accepting this lack of ultimately secure foundations as something like the depth of the common lifeworld (that world that is the common property of humans yet which resists extensive thematization), might just prove a way to find 'peace in philosophy'-in the sense expressed above in §133-because this peace would be a species of tolerance, acknowledgment of, and respect for the limits of language and thought, as these limits come to be felt when we strike bedrock in our practices or when we localize a tendency to obfuscate in certain region of our speech. As Wittgenstein describes the coming into awareness of these limits in a conversation with Fredrich Waismann from 1929 ,

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[72] Wittgenstein, §241

> Man has the impulse to run up against the limits of language. Think, for example, of the astonishment that anything exists. This astonishment cannot be expressed in the form of a question, and there is also no answer to it. Everything which we feel like saying can, a priori, only be nonsense. Nevertheless, we do run up against the limits of language.[74]

Though these two examples are different in kind, the existence of the world on the one hand and the conventional basis upon which our practices rest on the other, they both represent clear cases in which we become all the more perplexed when we spin webs of language, and philosophical explanations, so as to try to deal with (so as to surround), these potentially intractable problems. This "demand[ing] of definitions...for their form", this "ornamental coping...which supports nothing", is a symptom of the lengths that philosophers will go to avoid staying silent about such important foundational issues. In the same way that metaphysical claims are thought to offer absolute sanction to merely physical claims, so certain foundations in philosophy are thought to afford indubitable validity to philosophical arguments. For example: The Tibetan Buddhists believe that the body of their present spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, *contains* the reincarnated spirit of the original, and in the Tibetan Buddhist cosmology, *only*, Dalai Lama. This metaphysical claim, (i.e. claims that cannot be empirically verified because uttered under no possible corresponding truth-conditions), offers a higher justification of the Dalai Lama's claim to be the leader of the Tibetan Buddhists than, for example, a purely political claim of his right to the leadership. This urge for ornament is a desire to transcend the merely local, customary, or habitual, through an aspiration to discover natural laws, metaphysical truths, and a god's-eye-view from which to survey human existence.

To finish with our exegesis of §133,

> *-Instead, we now demonstrate a method, by examples; and the series of examples can be broken off.-Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated),*

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[73] Wittgenstein, §217.

[74] Murray, "Heidegger and Modern Philosophy", p.80.

> *not a **single** problem. There is not **a** philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies.*[75]

This statement represents the crux of Wittgenstein's project of linguistic descriptivism. Local problems are treated and specific kinks of the understanding are worked out. This is accomplished by the application of the appropriate methods, i.e. creating fictional, or intermediate, cases to offer alternative points of view/ fictional and primitive language-games as objects of comparison, so as to defuse tensions created by inflating the significance of a philosophical question by proliferating discourses around the site of perceived problem.

In the next section we will round out the first chapter with a brief discussion of Wittgenstein's discussion of dogmatic thinking as *dogma* that is though to reside (show itself) in operating using one particular notation.

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NOTATION, PICTURES, DOGMA

> One thinks that one is tracing the outline of the thing's nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it.[76]

As example of what this remark suggests, consider the following claims: 1. The essence of language is communication; language is a tool which facilitates communication. 2. Language is a gift from God that helps us to remember Him, to record His history, and to keep alive the memory of our dead. 3. The essence of language is to serve as a receptacle for (to hold) meaning(s), as a cup holds water. All three of these sentences express theories that trace "round the frame through which we look". In the process, they each assert an essence (1 and 3), or metaphysical purpose (2), to language. They are each part of what we might call a different narrative explanation of language which can be

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[75] Wittgenstein, The Philosophical Investigations, §133.

supported by different types of evidence. The first sentence could be supported by scientific studies in comparative linguistics. These studies might organize linguistic data by way of the hypothesis that a group of speakers exist as bound together in community, with a shared history and culture, because they share a common system of linguistic communication. The evidence for this claim would be garnered from appropriate ethnographical researches, i.e. "appropriate" in that they fit within the parameters of the hypothesis put forward. The second sentence could be propped up by the discernible historical fact that we, living in the present, have knowledge of dead cultures, and our dead, not to mention dead languages, which are to be found in old texts, (e.g. the Bible, which also offers a creation story, revelations about the Light of the World, the Word made Flesh etc.) These illuminating works, whether they are a gift of God or the product of his earthly scribes, maintain a link with the past and keep the memory of the dead alive. And lastly, the third claim might be buttressed by semantic theories which see the function of language in the way that language can hold meaningful empirical information about objects; the way that words can refer to objects; and, the way that words taken together appear to possess, or *hold*, a definite sense inside their syllables, sentences, and syntactic structure.

The idea here is that simultaneously with our employment of a "particular notation" we evoke a particular set of commonly held presuppositions that undergird this notation and which correspondingly constitute its viability as an outlook. In the passage about the "frame through which we see" quoted above, Wittgenstein is drawing our attention to the way that we laden our seeing with theory. (Wittgenstein does not discuss the genesis of

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[76] Wittgenstein, §144.

this theory-laden seeing, he simply asserts it as, observes it to be, a fact.) A standard expression of Wittgenstein's point is found in the BB,

> Every particular notation stresses some particular point of view. If, e.g., we call our investigations "philosophy", this title, on the one hand, seems appropriate, on the other hand it certainly has misled people.[77]

For example, in the present era, when our contemporaries read our North-American English free-verse poetry, our poems are seen, or interpreted, as part of a tradition of North-American free verse that may be *thematized* by those interpreters, e.g. people recognize touches of William Carlos Williams' use of this poetic form in our free verse poetry; or, it may be *unthematized*, e.g. people may recognize a modernist element to our poetry, such as the poem's lack of rhyming couplets, but are not sure what exactly this modern formal element is, nor to what poetic tradition can it be traced back to. That our artistic and scientific notations contain these historical echoes, which are not reducible to the functional meanings of component parts of these notations, is partly because these notations envelope their proponents in a shared history. They are a kind of property in common of a people, a culture, whose details, including these less than fully tangible echoes, form a part of that people's form-of-life and that culture's natural-history.[78] These notations are used to investigate and see the world, language, and oneself as living inside these customs and practices; they serve to orient us in the world.

Wittgenstein's purpose in describing the hold that notations have on those who use them, is that there persists in people another type forgetfulness; a common tendency to neglect, to take for granted, the significance and the influence which the notation they are using has, in reaching into and arranging (preforming) our way of seeing and thinking. When we are uncritically using a particularly illuminating notation we are often operating without a sense of proportion. The significance of a particular notation-evaluated in terms

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[77] Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books, p.28.
[78] See PI §25. "Commanding, questioning, recounting, chatting, are as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing."

of utility in performing cognitive, artistic, or scientific activities-often encourages us to suppose that we have hit on the one true notation, or symbolism, to be used when undertaking these particular tasks. This true notation or symbolism seems to allow us something like unmediated access, (i.e. access that is considered not to be itself filtered through a notation.) For example, something like what Edmund Husserl in his work Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology calls "primordial dator intuition" (83)[79] is purported to disclose to us unimpeachable knowledge as to what we can know. Or, as seen with Chomskyan linguistics, this true symbolism may take the form of a descriptive schema ("Chomskyan Trees") that maps the innate structure of our language capacity[80]. In time, the sense of assurance that one is using *the* notation, for this particular task, can come to breed overly general claims to systematic knowledge of, for example, the primacy of the self-evidence afforded by primordial dator intuition (Husserl); or, the innateness of human language capacity (Chomsky).

The institutional corollary of this assurance of security in theoretical foundation, is to be observed in the dominance that these grand claims, and their equally grand research-programs, enjoy as influential, and curricular setting, schools of thought in universities. Professional trends develop out of these programs founded on assurances as to theoretical foundations; and, it is these trends that simultaneously promote their own ideas and

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[79] See: "No theory we can conceive can mislead in regard to the principle of all principles: that very primordial dator Intuition is a source of authority (Rechtsquelle) for knowledge, that whatever presents itself in "intuition" in primordial form (as it were in its bodily reality), is simply to be accepted as it gives itself out to be, though only within the limits in which it then presents itself. Let our insight grasp this fact that the theory itself in its turn could not derive its truth except from primordial data." (p.83)

[80] See Chomsky's Language and Mind: "By investigating sentences and their structural descriptions, speech signals and the percepts to which they give rise, we can arrive at detailed conclusions regarding the generative grammar that is one fundamental element in linguistic performance, in speech and understanding of speech. Turning then to the next higher level of abstraction, we raise the question of how this generative grammar is acquired. From a formal point of view, the grammar that is internalized by every normal human can be described as a theory of his language, a theory of highly intricate and abstract form that determines, ultimately, a connection between sound and meanings by generating structural descriptions of sentences...From this point of view, one can describe the child's acquisition of knowledge of language as a kind of theory construction." (pp.170-171)

selectively stifle certain mundane and skeptical questions concerning their assured

enterprise. For example, in the case of Husserlian phenomenology, epistemological

questions as to how intuition and phenomenological self-evidence comes to present itself

as self-evident, to a cogitating subject, are all but exempted from the discussion of

Husserlian phenomenology. At bottom, this exempting, or preempting, of problematic

skeptical questions is, following John Rawls' terminology, a "method of avoidance,"[81]

which could be defined in this manner: to a non-phenomenologist, i.e. a person not

committed to, or learned in a particular method of descriptive phenomenology (system of

thought), there are truths which are not accessible without, and questions which deserve

to be ignored, when using a phenomenological method. To comprehend dator or

categorial intuition, one needs to *understand* the point, and system pivots, of Husserlian

phenomenology. Wittgenstein describes this kind of case, where one is holding tightly to

a particular notation, committed to its tenets, and unaware or unconcerned as to possible

deep criticisms of its program, as a case where one is in thrall to, what Wittgenstein in

CV, calls "certain graphic propositions",

> The effect of making men think accordance with dogmas, perhaps in the
> form of certain graphic propositions, will be very peculiar: I am not
> thinking of these dogmas as determining men's opinions but rather as
> completely controlling the *expression* of all opinions. People will live
> under an absolute, palpable tyranny, though without being able to say they
> are not free. I think the Catholic Church does something rather like this.
> For dogma is expressed in the form of an assertion, and is unshakable, but
> at the same time any practical opinion *can* be made to harmonize with it;
> admittedly more easily in some cases that in others. It is not a *wall* setting
> limits to what can be believed, but more like a *brake* which, however,
> practically serves the same purpose; it's almost as though someone were
> to attach a weight to your foot to restrict your freedom of movement. This
> is how dogma becomes irrefutable and beyond the reach of attack.[82]

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[81] Rawls, Collected Papers, p.395.
[82] Wittgenstein, Culture and Value, p.28.

This "wall" of dogma is subtle in its functioning as "a brake" on thought, as it applies a drag effect to thinking; slowing down the production of criticisms, preempting objections. In moving from the realm of theoretical frameworks in phenomenology and Chomskyan linguistics to that of divinely commanded Christian ethics, we can observe the continuity established, in Wittgenstein's thinking, between the issue of "tracing the frame" round/ theory-laden seeing, and dogma. For example, it is clear that the idea that a Christian ought to strive to "Do unto others as they would have others do unto them" can be harmonized with the practical, everyday observance of charity toward others. By coordinating this ought (divine command) with a lifestyle that provides evidence of prior reflection on the possible consequences of one's actions on others, the bigger overarching idea (dogma) can come to fit together with practical action. In pointing out this fit Wittgenstein is not engaging in derisive or atheistic critique of the moral and ethical thinking that Christianity expounds. Rather, the observation is as to the technique of dogmatics, in that dogma works through particularly absorbing pictures which take hold of a thinking person; pictures that bound the mind and constrict expression. What could be called the "parameters" of this hold is not privately accessible to a human agent through a human agent's self-consciousness, because the picture goes into, *flows into*, the making of one's frame, the way that one sees the world.

Relatedly, the extent and definiteness of the hold of these pictures can be assessed by examining the language which we deploy in our descriptions of language, the world, the ideal of knowledge, or whatever else is currently under description. The way we speak about language serves to indicate the *way* we are seeing language, the world, or the idea of knowledge etc. This way we are seeing is in terms of certain pictures that hold our attention without distance. These pictures might be imagined as fleshed out in the words and propositions we utilize. These speech-acts providing indices of how our minds are wrapped around certain notations. These pictures depict processes, and ostensibly

determine how we interpret certain regularities in our world. We hold these "world-pictures" as maps which put own perception of our world, and the aforementioned regularities encountered therein, under a grid that is, what Wittgenstein in OC, calls "the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false."[83] These pictures are conceptions of the world which, though not ideological, have a structuring relationship to our concepts whereby these concepts, as employed in thinking and acting, can be seen to earmark "the form of account we give, the way we look at things."[84], when laid out within the "concept of a perspicuous representation" of the language we use. In the same numbered paragraph §122, Wittgenstein asks rhetorically: "(Is this a 'Weltanschauung'?)."[85]

These pictures, and the hold that they have on the mind of an agent, should not be considered the outcome of ideological conditioning, nor to function akin to the way that ideological conditioning does, in surreptitiously distorting, or warping, a person's thinking in a manner that politically benefits a particular group: e.g. many Lithuanian people, in communist times, were conditioned to suspect and fear anyone taking their pictures because they were constantly being reminded, through their newspapers and other forms of mass-communication, that their actions were being monitored and interpreted by the Russian state, and its secret-service, the K.G.B. In this example there developed paranoia and suspicion in the minds of Lithuanians which had the wider impact of dividing Lithuanian nationals from each other, and stifling free-association and the Lithuanian independence movement. Though this paranoia and suspicion came to occupy the imagination of Lithuanians in a pictorial fashion that has some family-resemblance to the hold that a certain notation has on the mind of a philosopher, there is a big difference between these types of hold.

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[83] Wittgenstein, On Certainty, §94.
[84] Wittgenstein, The Philosophical Investigations, §122.
[85] Wittgenstein, §122.

In the case of the philosopher, the hold is primarily what Wittgenstein in BB calls a "cramp of philosophical puzzlement".[86] This cramp holds, or bounds, the range of a philosopher's thoughts within a particularly pattern of codification that preempts alternative points of view and skeptical questions. While in the case of the Lithuanian people under Soviet rule, considerations of survival are more at the front of people's minds and as a result the conditions for thinking are particularly more strategic and less favorably disposed to passive contemplation.

An example of a picture that Wittgensteinian is referring to when he uses the expression "cramp" to describe the product of stunted thinking, is the way we hold the picture that thinking takes place in the head. This picture of thinking is as a mental process which goes on in the space between our ears. This picture holds our attention; it has a distinct influence on our ways of conceptualizing our talk about thinking. We assimilate it to our descriptions of thinking activities: e.g. in the above descriptions of Lithuanians, I suggest that "considerations of survival are *more at the front of people's minds*", as if this figurative, or metaphorical expression, had more than a hypothetical, or quasi-mythological, claim to specify where thinking is actually taking place. And we come to accept the plausibility of a picture of thinking as taking place in the head and let it guide our thought and talk about cognitive processes. This feature may have something to do with the kind of cognitive capacities we are born with, or perhaps the training and education which we received. Whatever the root, Wittgenstein's claim is that certain directing and world delineating pictures take root in our thought. From CV,

> It is true that we can compare a picture that is firmly rooted in us to a superstition; but it is equally true that we *always* eventually have to reach some firm ground, either a picture or something else, so that a picture which is at the root of all our thinking is to be respected and not treated as a superstition.[87]

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[86] Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books, p.61.
[87] Wittgenstein, Culture and Value, p.83.

As to this idea that we have to eventually make peace with our disposition, tendency, or inborn capacity to use pictures to guide our actions, Wittgenstein sketches a brute, perhaps animalistic, outlook on human existence and social coexistence. This existence, per Wittgenstein, is one where our lives (as seen from a perspective that may be called "social-naturalism") are underwritten by nothing more secure than conventions scaffolded by "agreement in judgments"[88] between us and our fellows. Within these networks of conventions and agreement(s) in judgments, *we just do* accept theories based on our needs and *we just do* utilize a given theory's notation, or symbolism, so as to explain a segment of our practices, experience, language, or thought. This acceptance of certain theories is not arbitrary, and neither is our ability to act as if the nagging doubts of the skeptic, concerning epistemological questions, did not concern us within the daily current of life. Roughly, and perhaps loosely put, Wittgenstein states a truism on this topic of accepting the conventional nature of action, when, trading in another commonplace remark, he writes in OC: "My life consists in my being content to accept many things."[89] This acceptance does not come about because we have actually arrived at the "true" notation, or magical symbolism that exactly maps on to the shape of the world, but because our vision is guided or "corrected by,"[90] from PI, "an ideal" that as it were seals our thinking under glass which, to mix metaphors, "is like a pair of glasses on our nose through which we see whatever we look at. It never occurs to us to take them off."[91]

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[88] This point applies both to agreement in judgments/conventions which underpin our language, PI §242, but also agreement in (our) form of life: PI §241. PI §242: "If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgments. " PI §241: ""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."

[89] Wittgenstein, On Certainty, §344.

[90] As Robert J. Fogelin has it in his essay "Wittgenstein's Critique of Philosophy" (p34)

[91] Fogelin, p.45.

Wittgenstein's therapeutic conception of philosophy is extended to philosophers

and lay-people alike, as a mode of activity which prescribes through examples and

assertions, what philosophers need do and keep in mind so as not to fall prey to the

philosophical "tendency to sublime the logic of our language".[92] Acting on this tendency

causes one to posit, well nigh insist on the existence of very subtle logical architecture, or

architectonic, which underlies our language. We think that all words must somehow have

an exact, or exactly delimitable, fit or kind of place (home) within the grand structure of a

natural language. This tendency works against Wittgenstein's description of a natural

language as "an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new

houses".[93] In other words, Wittgenstein describes language as an imperfect product[94] of

human culture with a history; a history that is never fully open to view and available for

facsimile in a synchronic slice, but which nonetheless has some features which are

characteristic in given contexts.

In sum, this 'tendency to sublime' on the part of a philosopher is the result of a certain

education, immersion within a philosophical tradition, and most likely a host of other

psychological and social factors. To Wittgenstein, the philosopher is a curious breed of

inquiring, and rational, animal. From BB,

> A philosopher is not a man out of his senses, a man who doesn't see what
> everybody else sees; nor on the other hand is his disagreeing with the
> coarse views of the man in the street. That is, his disagreement is not
> founded on a more subtle knowledge of fact. We therefore has to look
> round for the *source* of the puzzlement.[95]

And from Sections 86-93 of the "Big Typescript 213" as reproduced in PO,

> The philosopher exaggerates, shouts, as it were, in his helplessness, so

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[92] Wittgenstein, The Philosophical Investigations, §38.
[93] Wittgenstein, §18.
[94] Here "imperfect product" does not suggest the yearning for a philosophical outlook that posits language as a perfectible product. The idea here is that Wittgenstein acknowledges that language, as it is used in specific cultures and forms of life, possesses a historical dimension in which forms of language (language-games) can be seen as mutable and amenable to change over time.
[95] Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books, p.59.

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long as he hasn't yet discovered the core of his confusion.[96]

And it is the work of therapeutic philosophy to dissuade the philosopher from shouting, exaggerating, and subliming the workings of language. This work requires a form or writing that incises into these habituations by reorienting the attention of the reader. The second chapter of this Thesis will firstly delve into the stylistics of Wittgenstein's later work, so as to make it clearer how Wittgenstein's aphoristic style jars its readers, through certain rhetorical techniques, from their rituals of intellectual masochism. And secondly, we will contrast Wittgenstein's philosophy of language with that of Jürgen Habermas to argue the position that Habermasian communicative action theory creates a distorted and philosophical conception of language, and the agent-lifeworld relation.

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CHAPTER TWO: WITTGENSTEIN'S APPROACH TO LANGUAGE AND AGENCY

> There are few vocations (like the practice of poetry or the profession of philosophy) that are so uncalled for by the world, so unremunerative by any ordinary standards, so inherently difficult, so undefined, that to choose them suggests that more lies behind the choice than a little encouraging talent and a few romantic ideals.[97]

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[96] Wittgenstein, Philosophical Occasions, p.181.
[97] Gass, Finding a Form, p.158.

In his essay on Ludwig Wittgenstein, "At Death's Door: Wittgenstein", William H. Gass suggests that a complete disclosure of pertinent biographical details, from Wittgenstein's Estate, friends, and former students, will lead to a better understanding of the genesis of his philosophy. This suggestion is rather optimistic. In particular, the optimism here has to do with the implicit claim that a good biography, rich in suggestive details of its subject's psychic and sexual life, can produce an adequate rendering of the relation between moments in a philosopher's life, and moments in a philosopher's thinking. This is especially optimistic if the moments in life and thought partake of the solitary, contradictory, and iconoclastic spirit that is "Wittgenstein." Behind the public conceptions of Wittgenstein the philosopher are many layers of simulation and dissimulation that need to be pulled back when trying to assess the character and thought of this philosopher. Ludwig Wittgenstein was many things: born into Austrian aristocracy; a one time student of Aeronautics, then of Logic and Philosophy under Bertrand Russell; a medic's assistant, and behavior researcher in London during W.W.II; a fervid reader and patron of European Modernist poets (Rilke and Trakl); admirer of Russian novels and philosophy of existential pathos[98]; a private and solitary man who, at least once, felt the overwhelming need to confess his sins a friend. In CV he writes,

> No greater torment can be experienced than One human being can experience. For if a man feels lost, that is the ultimate torment.[99]

There are many tantalizing quotations and snippets of thought to be found, and psychologized, in CV. Many of these quotations offer *some* insight into *some* facets of Wittgenstein's personality and philosophy. Since it is difficult to definitively square these occasional marginal comments with the more traditionally philosophical contents of a

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[98] Wittgenstein was a great admirer of certain of Soren Kierkegaard's works. As well, Wittgenstein became interested in Russian literature and culture, especially Dostoyevsky, going so far as to study the Russian language under Fania Pascal and then traveling to Russia. It is also clear, from CV that Wittgenstein was deeply influenced by the work of Schopenhauer, knew of Nietzsche's work; and read the work of Otto Weninger and Oswald Spengler. [See Ray Monk's biography The Duty of Genius.]

[99] Wittgenstein, Culture and Value, p.46.

text like PI part I, these marginalia are often regarded as irrelevant to serious readers of Wittgenstein's philosophical ideas. Yet, it pays to attend to these details for the light they shed on the question of Wittgenstein's drive to work as he did obsessively laboring over philosophical questions and the language-games in which these questions, and life generally, is lived. Furthermore, a purpose of this Thesis is to establish what it is to be an attentive reader of both the content and rhetoric of the later-works of Wittgenstein, what it is to understand the import of his new way of doing philosophy; these marginalia are significant, despite their lack of polish.

"Significant" here implies considering these marginal remarks as support for the idea that: 1. The later-work of Wittgenstein needs to be read with a certain sensitivity to his running commentary (metaphilosophical remarks) on philosophy as a practice that should be undertaken therapeutically; and: 2. That his way of writing has to be seized on as providing indications of his rhetorical strategies, i.e. a kind of literary "evidence"[100]. These rhetorical strategies are the sites from which the effects, which Wittgenstein sought to have on his readers, can be thematized and described through careful interpretation of the way that his thoughts, and style(s) of thinking, were expressed.

In this first section of the chapter we will look into the formal features and rhetorical strategies of what we will call "Wittgenstein's text."[101] Our main interpretive claim in this chapter is that the formal features of Wittgenstein's aphoristic style are in place by the time he lays to rest PI part I in 1945, and that there takes place *refinement* in means of expression, but no substantial innovations in his style up until his death in 1951. This is

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[100] "Literary evidence" understood as evidence that is to be found through an analysis, or interpretation, of the expressive/rhetorical figures to be found in Wittgenstein's work. For example, the formal elements of the "conversations" and the various voices and imaginary interlocutors which Wittgenstein engages with in the course of PI, can be described using figures from literary or rhetorical analysis. We can isolate certain voices in the text and interpret their pattern, determine why and how they are used, etc., therefore this analysis need stay at the performative and linguistic level, e.g. the level of the form of the text, the designative level of language.

[101] This text is larger than one give text, and includes primarily: the Philosophical Investigations, Culture and Value, The Blue and Brown Books, On Certainty; and secondarily: the Big-Typescript 213, Zettel, Remarks on Colour, Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics, Tractatus-Logico Philosophicus.

not to say that Wittgenstein's first work <u>Tractatus Logico Philosophicus</u> (1923), does not

show stylistic affinities with his later manner of writing. Just that for our purposes, which

consist of producing plausible inferences from the form of the later works to the *effects*

sought on the readers' of these works, (particularly the readers of PI part I which

Wittgenstein had prepared for publication)-there is no great shift in style.

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<u>WITTGENSTEIN'S TEXT</u>

In this section we examine the aphoristic style with which Wittgenstein wrote, to inquire

as to how his way of writing, his way of articulating his vision of language, ties in with

his therapeutic aims. Stanley Cavell was one of the first philosophers to characterize

Wittgenstein's distinctive way of writing. In his 1964 essay, "Existentialism and Analytic

Philosophy", Cavell describes Wittgenstein approach to the writing of philosophy as,

> Wittgenstein's writing...is writing in continuous confrontation of
> philosophy, not of other *philosophers*...but of that dimension of the mind
> which insists on philosophizing no matter how often the arguments of
> philosophy have been refuted. Part I of the *Investigations* (which is some
> four-fifths of the book, and just over 170 pages) consists of 690 numbered
> sections, most of which are miniature dialogues between himself-or that
> part of himself which maintains a firm grip on the world all men share-and
> nameless interlocutors who manifest over and over, from every direction
> and in all moods, those temptations or dissatisfactions or compulsions
> which drive ordinary men away from the everyday world and out to
> philosophy.[102]

Wittgenstein's confrontation with that stubborn dimension of mind "which insists on

philosophizing", is the therapeutic drive of his work incarnate. This is where the self-

work of the philosopher on herself takes places. Whichever direction a thinker chooses or

is impelled to go when "working on oneself" is not at issue in this section. What we are

interested in is the question of how Wittgenstein writes and explores concepts

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[102] Cavell, "Existentialism and Analytic Philosophy", p.957.

(undertakes his conceptual analyses) so as to convey, or *embed*, the necessity of this self-work into the experience of another as a felt need, as something requiring of attention, as something worthwhile in the doing of philosophy, in life. That is Wittgenstein's formal and rhetorical problem. As Stephen Toulmin glosses the point in "Wittgenstein's Vienna",

> A man could obey the Socratic injunction, *Know thyself,* only if he came to understand the scope and limits of his own understanding; and this meant, first and foremost, recognizing the precise scope and limits of language, which is the prime instrument of human understanding.[103]

The issue of how to convey the need for this self-work that consists of acquiring a sense of the "precise scope and limits of language", lies behind Wittgenstein's choice of an aphoristic style. Aphorisms have a special form, which produces unique effects on the reader; even though these often terse and sharp paragraphs may seem implacable and quasi-mystical when first encountering Wittgenstein's work. Yet, there is flexibility to the mind's reception of these mock proverbs which is evidenced upon repeated readings; much in the way that repeating lines of poetry aloud to oneself can have an incantatory quality. Wittgenstein claims that this mode of expression, the use of aphorisms and short paragraphs, is employed because of the versatility afforded by these forms to the presentation of his thinking. As stated in the 1945 preface to PI,

> The philosophical remarks in this book are, a number of sketches of landscapes...The same or almost the same points were always being approached afresh from different directions, and new sketches made...Thus this book is really only an album.[104]

Within these "sketches of landscapes" there are aphorisms organized within definite content regularities. Remarks dealing consistently with themes treated from different directions. Jerry Gill in his article "Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*", has even gone far enough in the direction of seeing implicit content regularities in PI, to offer

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[103] Toulmin, Wittgenstien's Vienna, p.224.
[104] Wittgenstein, The Philosophical Investigations, p.v.

what he calls "an annotated table of contents" to PI, which is divided in sections according to numbered paragraphs. For example, Gill labels numbered paragraphs §198-§242 "On Rules" dividing these paragraphs into two further subsections: "1. The use of rules (§198-§216)" and "2. Justification of rules (§217-§242)", and then dividing that first subsection into four more subsections, repeating that procedure by dividing the second major subsection into five other subsections; ending up with a explicit ordering of what is most likely intentionally unordered by Wittgenstein, (judging from the above quoted preface to PI). Despite the help that Gill's ordering work offers a reader looking for a foothold in Wittgenstein's text, it is not very faithful to the spirit of a work that utilizes the uncommon form of the aphorism and short paragraphs, against the traditional philosophical models of the long essay, the argument or single topic driven short-essay, and the various forms of book, manuscript, monograph, etc. Wittgenstein is rather consciously renovating an old form, the aphorism, as did Pascal, Nietzsche, and Lichtenberg before him. He is filling an old cask with new wine. In a discussion of his architectural work in building his sister's home, Wittgenstein broaches the topic of old and new forms. From CV, an entry from 1947,

> You don't take the old forms and fix them up to suit the latest taste. No, you are really speaking the old language, perhaps without realizing it, but you are speaking it in a way that is appropriate to the modern world, without on that account necessarily being in accordance with its taste.[105]

In "speaking the old language" Wittgenstein can be seen to be asking of his readers much patience in accepting the rigors of his style for the benefits of his teaching. In a like interpretive manner, Toulmin focuses more on Wittgenstein's use of examples in PI, what Toulmin calls "parables or fables" and their effect on the listener, in Wittgenstein's lectures, or the reader of his written work.

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[105] Wittgenstein, Culture and Value, p.60.

> These little stories, with the sting in the final question, all had the same general effect. They forced the hearer [reader] into a corner from which he could escape in only one way: by conceding that the applicability or inapplicability of some category or content depends, in practice, always on previous human decisions, and that these decisions have become "second nature" to us...[106]

Keeping in mind that an aphorism is often bottom loaded, e.g. consists of a punch-line with a "sting in the final question", it may be plausible inferred that Wittgenstein used the aphoristic form and the jarring examples to elicit reactions, responses, receptions, and recognitions from his readers which are commensurate with his stated goal, in PI, of setting up "our clear and simple language-games" as,

> ...objects of comparison which are meant to throw light on the facts of our language by way not only of similarities, but also dissimilarities.[107]

In 'throwing light' or "presenting the model as what it is, as an object of comparison...a measuring-rod"[108], Wittgenstein wants his readers to perceive, with full attention, what fits and what does not fit between our language-games and those examples of language-games he puts on display in, for example, the form of language-game used by his "builders".[109] These perceived similarities and dissimilarities may therapeutically aid a philosopher (a reader) in combating tendencies and temptations to want to purify their language, and their thinking concerning language, of all the tacit acceptance of loose ends and practical shortcuts which facilitate action-coordination, practical efficacy in communication, and the like.

> I wanted to put that picture before him, and his *acceptance* of the picture consists in his now being inclined to regard a given case differently: that is, to compare it with *this* rather than *that* set of pictures. I have changed his *way of looking at things*, (Indian mathematicians: "Look at this.")[110]

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[106] Toulmin, p.228.
[107] Wittgenstein, The Philosophical Investigations, §130.
[108] Wittgenstein, §151.
[109] Wittgenstein, §8-§10.
[110] Wittgenstein, §144.

One idea that Wittgenstein returns to time and again in what we might call his work of "reorienting" his reader's pictorial imagination, is the notion that there is a linkage, (through the above mentioned self-work course of treatment), between the practice of philosophy and the human subject's self-relation to their thought or self-consciousness. The upshot of Wittgenstein's perception of a linkage between philosophy as a practice and certain features of subjectivity, is that recognition of this linkage does not provide us with privileged insights concerning the functioning of consciousness per se, but does afford us insight into what we are *tempted* to say in certain cases, and what we have a *tendency* to assume is the case in other situations. These temptations and tendencies, when first localized in a certain region of language, a certain language-game (e.g. a certain language-use context), can be analyzed *backwards* to tell us something about how we think and act. Here "backwards" refers to "back to" a rule-governed or conditioned source of our behavior, be it linguistic, instinctive, socially habitual etc.; and not "back" as in return to explanation in terms of hidden factors like unconscious motives, deep desires, and other buried psychological treasures. For Wittgenstein, the description of language does not take the shape of a quest for an essence which rests deep inside us, in something like the being of language, or in our seemingly innate human language capacity. What is sought as a result of these descriptions, of our temptations and tendencies to apply language in certain ways, is, as stated in BB, specific remedies to "the mystifying use of our language."[111]

> This kind of mistake recurs again and again in philosophy; e.g. when we are puzzled about the nature of time, when time seems to us a *queer thing*. We are most strongly tempted to think that here are things hidden, something we can see from the outside but which we can't look into.[112]

To play on words for a moment, one could say that the seeking of this sought, this particular outcome of reorienting a reader to external language and criteria for describing

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[111] Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books, p.6.
[112] Ibid.

their self-relation, depends on whether Wittgenstein's descriptions of tendencies and

temptations of thought and language do actually hold within a broad community of

people. Cavell on this point, from his essay on existentialism and analytic philosophy,

> The force of this mode of composition depends upon whether the
> interlocutors voice questions and comments which come from conviction,
> which are made with passion and attention, and which, as one reads, seem
> always something one wants oneself to say, or feel the power of. If they
> do, then their voices cannot, in any *obvious* way, be criticized and
> dismissed. If these voices were to be described in one word, the one that
> for me best captures the experiences they suggest is the existentialist's
> term "inauthentic," that new term of philosophical criticism directed
> against our lives.[113]

For some it is no struggle to close off this facet of Wittgenstein's work PI and leave it

alone; they don't feel or need bother with "the power of" the descriptions of language-use

found therein. The text does not appeal to their sense of self nor to their sense of what a

philosophical problem sounds like, looks like, or what a philosophical problem tells us

about ourselves as beings that think and act; beings whose lives and customary practices

can evince what Wittgenstein, in PI, calls "remarks on the natural history of human

beings."[114] People approaching Wittgenstein's work as a philosophical text chock-a-block

with philosophical problems and philosophical theses are not mistaken, they are just

oblivious to the significance of what might be called Wittgenstein's "literary

contribution" as demonstrated in his nontraditional, though not without stylistic

predecessors, manner of proceeding. In rough outline the philosophical import of

Wittgenstein's "literary contribution", following Cavell, can be glimpsed in,

> ... the implication is that the problems of life and the problems of
> philosophy have the same form--Wittgenstein would say they have the
> same "grammar": they are solved only when they disappear; answers are
> arrived at only when there are no longer questions.[115]

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[113] Cavell, "Existentialism and Analytic Philosophy", p.957.
[114] Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, §415.
[115] Cavell, p.964.

Since there is, Cavell argues, this similar form to the problems of life and the problems of philosophy, i.e. they both can be seen, retrospectively, to have been solved when they no longer cause a person to fret or wonder at the possible cause or remedy for them; Wittgenstein sees the philosopher who is trading in commonplaces or "assembling reminders for particular purposes" as someone who is suggesting a way out, when we learn to, as Cavell puts it,

> ...arrange the facts we already know or can come to realize merely by *calling to mind* something we know.[116]

This "calling to mind" is no conjuring trick of the psychotherapist who is sorting the psychic experience of their client into a dramatic form or narrative complete with explanatory complexes and hidden portions of the mind full to capacity with repressed desires and memories. Nor is this "calling to mind" some sort of communing with deeper truths about the facts that we empirically establish or logically construct. There is here no suggestion as to a special communication between writer and reader, nor no promised access to a world of pure Forms. Rather, through this arrangements of facts we know into the form of a perspicuous representation we can come to see our world differently, which is paradoxically, seeing it as it can be seen, as a world which is easily obscured by being guided in thought by universals contemporaneously while being guided in our language by urges to utter/discover seeming universal truths through our verbal or written posits. Cavell goes on to compare the formal elements of Kierkegaard's and Wittgenstein's respective texts by stating,

> I think of Kierkegaard's description in *Fear and Trembling* of the man who can, as he puts it, "express the sublime in the pedestrian," something he takes as possible only through the possession of faith. I would certainly sympathize with the feeling that *this* connection between Wittgenstein and Kierkegaard is fanciful; and yet it seems to me to throw into relief the *kind* of writing in which they both engage. For not just any mode of composition will tell us something we cannot fail to know and yet remain

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[116] Ibid.

> enlightening; not just any way of arguing will try to prevent us from
> taking what is said as a thesis or a result.[117]

To briefly digress, this description of the *fanciful* connection, between the style of

composition found in the work of these two thinkers, sounds very much like the praise

that is often lauded on high-quality works of realist art. Be it in a film, a novel, or through

the lyrics of a popular song, the ability of the artist to hit upon the sublime in the

mundane, or the everyday, is a key criteria for the success of that realist film, novel, or

popular song measured in its ability to authentically communicate to an audience-(for the

moment disregarding the economic-commercial machinery that insure the success of a

cultural product through campaigns of mass-advertising). What Cavell is pointing out is

that the measure of the success of the rhetoric, figures, and modes of communication

utilized by Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein respectively, is in the outcome and effects on

the reader of these unique forms of writing.

> Theses and results are things that can be believed and accepted; but
> Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein do not want to be believed and accepted,
> and therewith, of course, dismissed. And not just any way of addressing an
> audience will leave them as they are, leave them alone, but transformed.
> These are effects we have come to expect of art...Wittgenstein says that
> his *Philosophical Investigations* is a work of "grammar," and Kierkegaard
> calls his *Postscript* a "Mimic-Pathetic-Dialectic Composition"...To
> understand these descriptions would be to understand the works in
> question.[118]

In Wittgenstein's case this desired transformation should not be understood through an

analogy with a religious conversion; nor as the effect of some kind of spiritual irradiation

caused by contact with revealed truth. This is rather a transformation in one's

understanding, a transformation that highlights, to oneself/ for oneself, the importance of

accepting what human needs have to be accepted, what Wittgenstein calls our acceptance

of the exigencies and practical intricacies of our "forms-of-life". (The necessity, the have

to be mentioned here has to do with the antifoundationalism of Wittgenstein's view of

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[117] Cavell, pp. 264-265.
[118] Cavell, p.965.

practice. Many practices, types of practice and language-games have no more solid ground that the customs which the members of a society have become adjusted and enculturated into.)

Cavell deals with this aspect of Wittgenstein's thinking,

> This is not the same as saying that our lives as we lead them--in particular for Wittgenstein, our lives of theory--must be accepted. What it says, or suggests, is that criticism of our lives is not to be prosecuted in philosophical theory, but continued in the confrontation of our lives with their own necessities.[119]

On my reading of this passage Cavell is not suggesting that we cannot criticize our lives and the beliefs in which the warp and woof of our modes of living find expression. Instead, Cavell is saying that philosophy, per Wittgenstein, is *not* something like a purer language replete with sharply defined concepts bereft of empirical specifics, which we can use, can turn on, our everyday language and modes of living, so as to criticize relevant aspects thereof. Events, words, and whole ways of living possess differing criteria in philosophy and life; different grammars that can be gleaned from a summary glance at typical responses to, for example, uses of the word, *necessity*.

In philosophical discourse necessity is akin to a word or concept artifact left over from early and more confident periods of philosophizing. It expresses an understanding of what has to happen for something to be, as in a mathematization or logicizing of a natural process; or on the other hand what has to show itself for a valuation to hold, as in the case of a system of ethical precepts. Conjuring necessity as an artifact is a rhetorical move in relation to the theoretical enterprise or question under consideration: ex. I consider myself to be responding to the necessity of refuting dualism because I consider this refutation to be a necessary, and prior, part of a new philosophical formulation of the modalities of human existence. On the other hand, in life -which may or may not prove to be as easily separable from philosophical discourse as I am here suggesting- the word

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[119] Cavell, p.963.

necessity refers likewise to what is required for something to be, to happen, or to hold, *but* in everyday life the reference range of the word extends to actual necessities, e.g. the satisfaction of a human being's basic survival needs such as nourishment and shelter. My tangential point is that Cavell is reading Wittgenstein as emphasizing the radical dissimilarity between philosophy and life as has to do with trying to repair segments of either one of these by using the other. The gist is that we will not *necessarily* act better because we are more secure in our choice of ethical system. Though it is possible that greater understanding of scripture, secular or religious, will aid us in our quest for right conduct toward our neighbors, this outcome is not assured. The result of this position is to see that unencumbring life from philosophy is a patient process of showing limits the one to the other, a showing that is accomplished by indicating the links in the chain of language which obfuscate or cause errors and confusions in recognizing that, for example, the deciphering of a 'road veering leftwards' sign is not done anew in every different context but has somehow been absorbed by the driver in their prior learning process and consequently extended beyond that learning process into new contexts. The view that this deciphering takes place each time a sign is understood and obeyed is, perhaps, a philosophical outlook, which takes its impetus from the findings of computer-science and computer modeling of human cognition. These models use logic to map both the logical and the nonlogical parts of human understanding; for example, deciphering the road sign can be interpreted mechanically by breaking the process down into discrete units of absorbed information, i.e. left is opposed to right; the pointing tip of the arrow means direction; the position of the sign is taken in psychologically in a certain way, etc. The error here is that thinking about thinking using computer models of the mind is a view of thought as what can be codified in a logical script corresponding to a particular view of the salient features of cognition and rationality as this is exhibited in innerwordly activities. Cavell's, following Wittgenstein's, critique of this brand of philosophical

intellectualism claims that we are mistakenly regarding life, innerworldly activities, philosophical activity -and correspondingly are muddying the water in each of these streams- if we suppose that this logical script has an exact analogue in the push and pull of agent behavior, and in the details of how agents actually do what they do in their practices, in the world.

Alice Crary in the anthology of neo-Wittgensteinian essays The New Wittgenstein, summarizes the root of Cavell's and Wittgenstein's critique of philosophical intellectualism.

> A recurring theme in Cavell's writing about Wittgenstein's is that, for Wittgenstein, our tendency to become entangled in philosophical confusion is the product of a natural disappointment with the conditions of human knowledge. Cavell sounds this theme here when he suggests that, confronted with Wittgenstein's "vision of language," we will be inclined to think that we are being, are asked to believe, our language "rests on very shaky foundations" and to go in search, once again, of explanations which somehow reach beyond -or outside-our ordinary forms of thought and speech and which can (we imagine) therefore furnish them with "solid foundations". What Wittgenstein wishes to get us to see, according to Cavell, is that the demand for such a foundations is inherently confused and will inevitably lead to frustration.[120]

This "natural disappointment" forms the basis for much human ingenuity in creating elaborate explanatory models to discipline and control the dispersion of elements of human experience into a rational understanding of that experience. Perhaps disappointment is the motor that drives creative scientific thinking. Wittgenstein's negative thought is that an overly precise delimitation of rationality is not productive of clear philosophy because its language is colored and directed by the allure of a certainty that only metaphysics can offer philosophy. Against this self-appointed role of philosopher as creator thinker tapping into the codes of the universe and the logic of rationality, time, language, geometry, music, art, etc., is the rather dull view of

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[120] Crary, Introduction to The New Wittgenstein, p.8.

philosophy as producing , what Wittgenstein in PI calls, "remarks on the natural history

of human beings",

> ...we are not contributing curiosities however, but observations which no
> one has doubted, but which have escaped remark only because they are
> always before our eyes.[121]

To pick up the strand of our discussion of Cavell's metaphilosophical essay on the

cultural styles of postwar existentialism and analytic philosophy, we can interpret

Wittgenstein's self-consciously modest view of philosophy as the stoic and quietistic

observance of the way of the world exhibited in the conventions of agents living in the

world,

> [Wittgenstein] also says that language, and life, rests on conventions.
> What he means is, I suppose, that they have no necessity beyond what
> human beings do. He does not mean, for example, that we might all
> convene and decide and vote on what our human forms of life shall be,
> choose what we shall find funny or whether we will continue finding loss
> and comfort where we do. If we call these arrangements conventional, we
> must then also call them natural.[122]

Cavell sees Wittgenstein as cautioning us that we go wrong when, in providing

explanations and explanatory models, we project a distinct course of nature into specific

human actions or specific human capacities for speech, thought, creative expression, tool

making, shot-put tossing or what have you. The "natural" for human agents is visible in

the drift of their language-games and practices which is writ into the conventions and

broader forms-of-life in which these games inhere. Cavell continues this line of thinking,

> The thought was perhaps expressed best by Pascal when he said of human
> beings, "Custom is our nature". It is from such an insight that Wittgenstein
> and Kierkegaard explicitly avoid explanations of our lives and concentrate
> on descriptions of them as they are, together with the alternatives which
> present themselves at given moments. Or perhaps we should say: for them
> a philosophical explanation takes the form of a description, unlike
> explanations in science.[123]

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[121] Wittgenstein, The Philosophical Investigations, §415.
[122] Cavell, p.963.
[123] Cavell, p.964.

This view of what can be described as the "natural" in human forms-of-life is an external and contextual way of philosophically approaching understanding of the vicissitudes of human action and thought. It is a anti-essentialist and anti-metaphysical turn of thought whose task is, Cavell asserts, "to discover what we need"[124]; because: "Wittgenstein puts it this way: we impose a requirement (for example, of perfection, or certainty, or finality) which fails to satisfy our real need."[125] Discovering what we need is the philosophical activity of asking questions and trying to answer them without appeal to sacred-cows, transhistorical entities or transcendental immaterial components of human cognition. *That* philosophical activity should proceed so as to discover what we need, is what we might call the vaguely programmatic and "social" thrust of Wittgenstein's later-work. "Social" in that it is concerned with reacquainting philosophers and lay-people with their shared social world and the descriptive languages they hold in common. In communicating the force of this need, conveying it to his readers as *a felt need*, Wittgenstein used a vigorous and many-voiced style of expression. From our discussion of some of Wittgenstein's rhetorical figures and the stylistic components of his work, we will move on to examine Wittgenstein's description of the natural in human forms-of-life as indicating the embodiment of understanding in social practices and the intelligibility of these practices as coming out against a background which is partly inarticulate and taken-for-granted. This examination will proceed out from a consideration of Jürgen Habermas's notion of communicative rationality and the rational agent's relationship with its lifeworld.

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COMMUNICATIVE RATIONALITY AND EMBODIED UNDERSTANDING; HABERMAS AND WITTGENSTEIN ON THE SOCIAL CHARACTER OF LANGUAGE

In the second section of this chapter we will contrast the larger framework of Wittgenstein's formulation of philosophy of language with Jürgen Habermas's critique of

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[124] Cavell, p.970.
[125] Ibid.

his therapeutic project as an example of modern irrationalism. This examination will enter into a discussion of embodied understanding which, we will argue, Wittgenstein acknowledges as operative in, and constitutive of, human affairs. This notion will be put forward as an alternative approach, in sociologically characterizing agent-rationality, to the Habermasian project of reconstructing the intersubjective transcendental structures of communicative rationality, which has the philosophical end-in-view of indicating the structural and pragmatic conditions under which agents can conjointly formulate the appropriate conditions in which those agents can agree to be bound by certain collectively generated and jointly validated norms. The viability of this project is disputed on the anti-transcendental grounds that for a Wittgensteinian outlook rationalities are plural, historically and culturally bounded, in addition to being interwoven into the fabric of practices and specific forms-of-life. This is an interweaving, which Wittgenstein sees as potentially, though not necessarily or even fruitfully, delimitable in a contextualist manner through the use of a historicist method. This historicist method is not explicitly expressed by Wittgenstein inside a program for scholarship in the human sciences, it is rather an acknowledgment of the centrality of being guided, in one's philosophical and sociological thinking, by indices of the conventionality of human activity which provide sightlines into human understanding (agent rationality) as a manifold of competencies, learned habituations, and residua of social structures which are embodied in the "doing" of practices/ exercised in practical activity. This doing or practical action, we will argue in chapter three, is intricately connected to a sustaining lifeworld background which, though largely unthematizable, has been conceptualized in rough outline by Wittgenstein in metaphorical notions like those discussed in OC. These metaphors are, for example, the metaphor of the river bank which slowly erodes into the river water[126]; as well the image of the "hinge propositions"

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[126] See OC §96-99, especially §96 and §97:"§96. It might be imagined that some propositions, of the form

which express the contra-skepticism idea that epistemic and philosophical doubts do end somewhere in contexts of practical action, and that these doubts end with propositions which, for conventional, practical, or sophisticated reasons, we choose, or our elders/teachers/tribal authorities choose, to "exempt from doubt", propositions which act as "hinges" on which or normal procedures of questioning and doubting turn.[127]

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In his essay "Themes in Postmetaphysical Thinking", Jürgen Habermas depicts certain manifestations of the modern, or postmodern, "irrational" which masquerade as legitimate philosophical outlooks on the modern disenchanted world. His views on the matter are interesting for us as a place to begin our consideration of Ludwig Wittgenstein's efforts to philosophically articulate the human agent's rather seamless relationship with its "lifeworld"; a lifeworld that remains partially unthematized as a *background* that lies behind everyday actions. Habermas describes the urge to propound the philosophical irrational thus,

> The turn to the irrational remained as a final way out. In this guise philosophy was supposed to secure its possessions and its relation to totality at the price of renouncing contestable knowledge. Philosophy has appeared in this form as existential illumination and philosophical faith (Jaspers), as a mythology that complements science (Kolakowski), as the mythical thinking of Being (Heidegger), as the therapeutic treatment of language (Wittgenstein), as deconstructive activity (Derrida), or as negative dialectics (Adorno). The antiscientism of these delimitations permits them only to say what philosophy is not and does not want to be;

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of empirical propositions, were hardened and functioned as channels for such empirical propositions as were not hardened but fluid; and that this relation altered with time, in that fluid propositions hardened, and hard ones became fluid."; "§97. The mythology may change back into a state of flux, the river-bed of my thoughts may shift. But I distinguish between the movement of the waters on the river-bed and the shift of the bed itself; though there is no sharp division of the one from the other."

[127] See OC §341-§344, especially §341 and §343: §341. That is to say, the *questions* that we raise and our *doubts* depend on the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt, are as it were like hinges on which those turn."; §343. But it isn't that the situation is like this: We just *can't* investigate everything, and for that reason we are forced to rest content with assumption. If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put."

as a nonscience, however, philosophy must leave its own status undetermined.[128]

The exposition of Wittgenstein's antiscientistic views on this relation between agent and lifeworld, as partially unthematized background to innerwordly activities, will be laid out in the third chapter of this Thesis as concerns embodied understanding. In this section, we will move from our survey of the formal elements of Wittgenstein's text to a substantiation of Wittgenstein's notion of form-of-life, by engaging Habermas's characterization of Wittgenstein's therapeutic conception of philosophy as a manifestation of the philosophical irrational. My argument is that this characterization misunderstands Wittgenstein's project insofar as Habermas's critique proceeds from the assumption, dear to his own project, that what is transcendentally rational can be inferred or read off from the way that agents interact with, and come to reach agreement, when using language.[129] The specific claim is that Wittgenstein's notions of form-of-life and "world-picture" preclude the specification of what elements of language-use and components of human communicativity, may be deemed "transcendentally rational"[130] in situations/ interaction between agents using language. This specification of what is cross-culturally rational (e.g. rational across differing "forms-of-life"), is precluded from the outset because Wittgenstein's two concepts are empty of essential features, so as to accommodate cultural variations in addition to avoiding normative delimitation of the *nature*, the *essence*, or the *transcendental elements* of human capacities, human nature, and human projects -if in fact these ideas have any concrete being in any case. We will

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[128] Habermas, "Themes in Postmetaphysical Thinking", pp.37-38.

[129] From Between Facts and Norms, (p.11): "Thoughts are propositionally structured. One can get a clear sense of what this means by considering the grammatical form of simple assertoric sentences...The important point is that we can read the structure of thoughts from the structure of sentences; sentences are those elementary components of a grammatical language that can be true or false."

[130] By "transcendentally rational" I am referring to the positing of cognitive elements and structures of human understanding, ratiocination and language that maintain those qualities or components, which constitute their rational structure, across historical time, social setting, and linguistic context.

argue that these two notions are through and through acknowledgments of the historically situated character of the language practices of particular cultures, their forms-of-life, and world-pictures.

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The difference which I am emphasizing is between, on the one hand Wittgenstein's hesitation in declaiming as to the existence of a transcendental conception of rationality-a rationality of human agents which exceeds the reasoning capabilities on display and required for particular situations and particular contexts; and, on the other, Habermas's project of determining conditions/procedures for universalizing validity claims which come to the surface via the process of communicative exchanges between agents. It is important to briefly note how Wittgenstein and Habermas, respectively, see the agent-lifeworld relation; here we can perceive in outline the major dissimilarities in their thinking about the data of communication and embodied agency. The Wittgensteinian contextualist/ anthropological argument against Habermas's transcendental philosophy, is that it obfuscates the necessary challenges in returning to the "natural" and the contextual, in our human forms-of-life because it doggedly, and rationalistically, assumes that, as Habermas puts it in his essay "Realism after the Linguistic Turn"' we can aim "to discover deep-seated structures of the background of the lifeworld."[131]

> These structures are embodied in the practices and activities of subjects capable of speech and action. Transcendental philosophy seeks to discover the invariant features recurring in the historical manifold of sociocultural forms of life.[132]

The necessary challenges in trying to thematize the structures of the lifeworld ties into what is a veritable leitmotif in Wittgenstein's later-work, namely the importance of recognizing the contextual particularity and nuance (grammars) operative in the multitude

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[131] Habermas, "Realism After the Linguistic Turn", p.11.
[132] Habermas, p.12.

of human language-games (uses) -considering as well the thorough linguistification of

activities, practices and behaviors. This consideration of particularity and nuance,

(*various* language-games and *many* forms of life), is at variance with the creation of

philosophical theories and explanations which process and render these particularities

into components of an encompassing architectonic or infrastructure of rationality. This

work of obfuscation has to do with positing the methodological requirement that the

"background of the lifeworld" have such "deep-seated structures" to be "discovered" in

the first place. This is an intellectual requirement the satisfaction of which rests on the

view that, as Habermas has it in a later section of the same essay,

> ...analyzing language use oriented toward reaching mutual understanding
> from then participant perspective provides the key to the entire web of
> lifeworld practices because all symbolic structures of the lifeworld are
> differentiated through the medium of language.[133]

Wittgenstein conceives of the relations between the human agent's cognitive capacities,

situatedness (existentiality), and lifeworld as connections that precede reflection and

reflexive understanding of these relations. The apparent seamlessness of these relations

provide a controversial yet undeniable evidence for the idea that human reason is

embodied in, rather than directing, various routines and practices. For example, as

discussed above, we unthinkingly follow an arrow by following, (perhaps as a result of

training or "obedience"), the direction towards which the tip of the arrow points.[134] Only

in an exception case, (i.e. following foreign signs in a foreign country which has a set of

foreign uses of arrows), do we have to perhaps pause and reflect about what it is to

"follow" an arrow on a street-sign, and correct our behavior accordingly. For the most

part we can safely take the rules, for following street-signs that employ arrows, for

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[133] Habermas, p.17.

[134] PI §454: "How does it come about that this arrow [picture of arrow pointing right reproduced in text] *points*? Doesn't it seem to carry in it something besides itself? -- "No, not the dead line on paper; only the psychical thing, the meaning can do that." --That is both true and false. The arrow points only in the application that a living being makes of it. This pointing is *not* a hocus-pocus which can be performed only by the soul."

granted and just unthinkingly (without conscious real time interpretation) perform the action, in this case, for example, going west when the arrow directs us westward. Wittgenstein understands this embodiment of human intelligence in a practice to indicate the way that humans learn to operate in one context of practical activity and then smoothly adjust this learning into many other contexts of practical activity, without having to each time take pause and summon to mind the rule for, in this example, following arrows so as to perform an action.

Wittgenstein's suggestions concerning embodied reason are not to be understood as simplistically echoing a ontology such as Martin Heidegger's in Being and Time which binds the human agent ("Dasein") who partakes of Being in the ontological domain, to objects/things in the ontic world (beings) which do not have access to Being, through relations of command ("readiness-to-hand"). Rather, Wittgenstein is suggesting that there is a learned, partly conditioned, "unconsciousness" or latency (or metaphorically speaking "second nature") that pervades the prosecution of many types of activities after those activities have entered what we may call the mode of customary behavior. The observable fact of this "unconsciousness", or latency, of embodied reason speaks to a conception of agent-lifeworld relation which does not necessitate the description of "deep-seated structures", or the positing of the existence of "invariant features" to the lifeworld, in order to explain this taken-for-grantedness of the component movements involved in routinized actions in terms of a thick conception of agent rationality. This "thick conception" is a conception whose heuristic approach privileges rational reconstruction of agent behavior and its antecedents, idealizing presuppositions, and schematization by way rational decision matrices, over a therapeutic articulation of the practical and existentially situated consequences of this "second-nature" embodiment of agency in practices.

Wittgenstein's therapeutic project provides treatment by asserting the need for vigilance against these kinds of urge to deploy grand-theory, be it sociological or philosophical, in seeking to wholly describe or explain agent behavior in terms of agent rationality; the intersubjective conditions and social setting of this behavior/rationality; and the unthematized lifeworld background/ inherent conceptuality to be gleaned/read back into from a thick conception of rationality. These exercises in grand-theorizing work by granting explanatory primacy to a conception of agency, society, the ends of man, and linguistic communication reconstructed from, for example, a particular selection of sociological data of agent behavior, consistencies in speech-acts, or a *telos* inhering in communicative exchanges between agents, etc. These urges are not to be overcome by more and clearer thinking (nor by proliferating interdisciplinary research), but by changes in the demands one places on the philosophical clarification of human reality. This is, against Habermas's summation of Wittgensteinian therapy, not a plea for the saving grace of the irrational in fatalistically pushing an intellectual understanding of agent-rationality beyond what can be known. Instead, it is a plea for a gradual end to the over-inflation of social hope and philosophical ambitions which stem from the equation of solving a philosophical problem with creating an orderly theoretical system to explain it *in toto*, as theoretical preamble to the incision of this solution into the issues of the greater world.

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Now, we will begin a closer reading of certain controversial pillars of Habermas's project. To better follow Habermas's thinking in respect to coming to understand, (e.g. theoretically encompass), the lifeworld-agent relation --by examining the manner is which "all symbolic structures of the lifeworld are differentiated through the medium of language" --we will sketch out an important part of Habermas's broader philosophy of language and human communication which grounds this view of the "medium of

language". In his pathbreaking works of social-theory published in the 1970's and the 1980's, Habermas develops intricate theories of communicative action and communicative rationality that are, as it were, "read off" from the structure of language as it is used in communicative interaction between agents. Ostensibly, for Habermas, there are rules, or procedures, encoded into what may be called the "linguistic substance of speech"[135], for the correct intersubjective discursive redemption of (in its original formulation), three kinds of criticizable claims of validity: 1. a claim that a speech-act is *right*; 2. a claim that the propositional content of a speech-act is *true*; and, 3. a claim as to the sincerity or truthfulness of the speaker undertaking the speech-act. This view is modified somewhat in the late-1980's and comes to be supplemented with a theory of discourse ethics; to be modified again in the early-1990's with the stipulation of a procedural conception of law and democracy known as deliberative democracy. For our purposes we will focus on what remains the same throughout these shifts in thinking about the medium of language and communicative interactions. As Maeve Cooke puts it in his 1998 introduction to a collection of Habermas's essays On the Pragmatics of Communication,

> ...Habermas no longer conceives truth as idealized rational consensus. He now focuses on the idealizing suppositions guiding the *process* of rational argumentation rather than on the idealizing suppositions marking its *outcome*. The former idealizations pertain to the conduct of discourse rather than to the agreement to which participants in discourse aspire.[136]

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[135] See: Pierre Bourdieu's Language and Symbolic Power. (pp.107-109)
"The power of words is nothing other than the *delegated power* of the spokesperson, and his speech - that is, the substance of his discourse and, inseparably, his way of speaking - is no more than a testimony, and one among others, of the *guarantee of delegation* which is vested in him. This is the essence of the error which is expressed in its most accomplished form by Austin (and after him, Habermas) when he thinks that he has found in discourse itself - in the specifically linguistic substance of speech, as it were the key to the efficacy of speech. By trying to understand the power of linguistic manifestation linguistically, by looking in language for the principle underlying the logic and effectiveness of the language of institution, one forgets that authority comes to language from outside..."
[136] Cooke, Introduction to On the Pragmatics of Communication, p.14.

In moving from "rational consensus" as the model derived from the "outcome" of an ideal speech situation, to "the idealizing suppositions guiding the process of rational argumentation", Habermas now places emphasis on procedural rationality as providing the transcendental framework for communicative interaction. This latest stress on procedural rationality obviously still partakes of idealizations but in this case what is ideal is not the outcome of reaching agreement between participants, but the route or *method* through which that collective outcome is to be attained. Though this move tempers his previous position, (in terms of its requirement that truth be the result of argumentation sincerely conducted among participants); so that now it is the sincerity of the participants vis-à-vis the orderliness of *the process* which is foremost in determining the rightness, truth, or truthfulness of the outcome -there is still a residue of ideality to this formulation. The root of this persistent ideality, in the theoretical conceptualization of the way that human agents use language to get things done in the world, is to be found in one specific ground for Habermas's theory of communicative action and communicative rationality. This ground can be seen in Habermas's linkage of the goal of reaching understanding, as a *telos* that is shared by agents when they communicate, and the structure of a natural language itself. As Habermas puts it in his essay "Actions, Speech Acts, Linguistically Mediated Interactions, and Lifeworld"[137],

> Grammatical utterances do not constitute instruments for reaching understanding in the same way as, for example, the operations carried out by a cook constitute means for producing enjoyable meals. Rather, the medium of natural language and the telos of reaching understanding interpret one another reciprocally: the one cannot be explained without recourse to another.[138]

This claim is a little hard to digest on a first reading; this business of reciprocal interpretation between the "medium of natural language" and the "telos of reaching

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[137] Hereafter ASLL.
[138] Habermas, "Actions, Speech Acts, Linguistically Mediated Interactions, and Lifeworld", p.218.

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understanding" needs some supporting argumentation. The relevant supports for this position in turn can be inferred from the original wording of this particular claim, as it is put forward in Habermas's work The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and Rationalization Volume I[139],

> Reaching understanding is the inherent telos of human speech. Naturally, speech and understanding are not related to one another as means to end. But we can explain the concept of reaching understanding only if we specify what it means to use sentences with a communicative intent.[140]

By the by, the phrasing of the claim sounds very much like it employs a classic philosopher's maneuver which is by itself nothing more than a tendency to think and speak in certain ways. Wittgenstein's from PI §372, comments about the strength of the "logical must" emphasizes this kind of move:

> Consider: "The only correlate in language to an intrinsic necessity is an arbitrary rule. It is the only thing which one can milk out of this intrinsic necessity into a proposition."[141]

Where Habermas uses the word "naturally" to describe the way that speech and understanding are not "related to one another as means to end", he is setting up the use of the word "only" as the way necessitated by this purported impasse in mapping (explaining) the relation of speech and understanding without reference to a means-end construal of this relation. He is beginning with the claim that "reaching understanding is the inherent telos of human speech" then asserting that a means-end relationship between speech and understanding is too crude a position, and lastly bringing considerations of the necessary connection between speaker intention and addressee receptivity into the picture to thicken our conceptualization of the speech situation. One might ask: Why does our unreflective conceptualization of the speech situation require the careful elaboration that

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[139] Hereafter TCA.I
[140] Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and Rationalization Volume I, p.287.
[141] Wittgenstein, The Philosophical Investigations, §372.

Habermas's theory of communicative action brings to bear on it? Is there a serious problem in the way that human agents communicate that necessitates ironing out the process of reaching mutual understanding; an ironing out that, as we will see, takes the form of examining the "binding and boding forces" present in speech-acts of certain kinds? Further: What level of explanation is this claim dependent on? -Is this claim firmly founded on social facts; or is it simply a construal of those facts, which coordinate well with the Habermasian paradigm shift of communicative action? -Is this an ontological claim about the "being of speech"? or -Is this likewise a metaphysical claim which transcends all language-games in telling us something about language *sub specie aeternitatis*?

Looking out onto the larger vista of Habermas's social-theory, this claim follows from a sociological theory of communicative action which feeds into a conception of communicative rationality that is predicated on a philosophy of language, and theory of meaning, which selectively borrows from the research-programme of speech-act theory. In the above-mentioned essay ASLL, Habermas addresses these questions:

> The concept of communicative action provisionally introduced here is based on a particular conception of language and reaching understanding; it has to be developed in the context of theories of meaning...I wish at least to introduce and explicate the basic assumption of the formal-pragmatic theory of meaning, which refers to the internal connection between meaning and validity...The concept of communicative action must prove its worth within the sociological theory of action. The latter is supposed to explain how social order is possible. In this respect, the analysis of the presuppositions of communicative action may be helpful. It opens up the dimension of the background of the lifeworld, which enmeshes and stabilizes interactions to form higher-level aggregates.[142]

This normative and explanatory goal of showing "how social order is possible" places Habermas's project securely within the tradition of social-philosophy and critical-theory. And, if we follow this mode of expression, what he is doing when he is elucidating "the

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[142] Habermas, "Actions, Speech Acts, Linguistically Mediated Interactions, and Lifeworld", p.227.

binding and bonding energies of language itself" is analyzing "the presuppositions of communicative action". To bring this out we need to recognize the extent of this selective borrowing from speech-act theory; appreciating the extent to which Habermas sees a great advancement in the understanding of linguistically mediated social-action to be found in J.L. Austin's tripartite division of speech acts. In TCA.I, Habermas explains what he considers the main insights of Austin's theory of speech acts,

> ...Austin distinguishes locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts...the three acts that Austin distinguishes can be characterized in the following catch-phrases: to say *something*, to act *in* saying something, to bring about something *through* acting in saying something.[143]

This distinction between types of speech act affords Habermas the possibility of formulating how language possesses, so to speak, *within* its substance the above-mentioned "binding and bonding energies" that connect agents to each other through commitments (which their linguistic communication implies) that suggest they will "redeem" their claims, if required, by providing good reasons for justifying those claims. When agents communicate with each other certain of their words and arguments have the character of "acts", these are illocutionary acts like promising: "I promise to house-sit for you, for the next three weeks while you're in Tahiti"; the binding and bonding force of these words constituting the speech-act (action) of promising. This promise has a perlocutionary "effect" on the person listening in that he/she is now relieved and assured that his/her home will be watched over while they are vacationing in Tahiti. Here we have in rough the linking character of speech-acts which Habermas fixes on as providing pragmatic evidence that language, in its communicative action, connects agents to each other through the implication that they will redeem their claim –to truth, rightness, or sincerity/truthfulness- if so compelled, for the right reasons. In his essay ASLL, Habermas clearly delineates the significance, for social theory, of his concept of

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[143] Habermas, , The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and Rationalization Volume I, p.289.

communicative action and the intersubjectively fused goals of human agents in reaching

understanding through the medium of language:

> Because communicative action is dependent on the use of language
> oriented toward reaching understanding, it has to fulfill more stringent
> conditions. The participating actors attempt to attune their respective plans
> *cooperatively* within the horizon of a shared lifeworld and on the basis of
> common interpretations of the situation. Furthermore, they are prepared to
> achieve these indirect goals of defining the situation and harmonizing their
> aims in the role of speakers and hearers *via processes of reaching*
> *understanding*--that is, by pursuing illocutionary aims without
> reservation. Reaching understanding linguistically functions in such a
> way that the participants in interaction come to an agreement with one
> another about the validity claimed for their speech acts or, as appropriate,
> take into consideration disagreements that have been ascertained. With
> speech acts, criticizable validity claims are raised that have a built-in
> orientation toward intersubjective recognition. A speech act gains a
> binding and bonding force in that the speaker, in raising a validity claim,
> issues a credible warranty that he would be able to redeem this claim with
> the right sort of reason, if required. Communicative action can thus be
> distinguished from strategic action in the following respect: the successful
> coordination of action does not rely on the purposive rationality of the
> respective individual plans of action but rather on the rationally motivating
> power of feats of reaching understanding, that is, on a rationality that
> manifests itself in the conditions for a rationally motivated agreement.[144]

This Habermaisian percept of a "rationality that manifests itself in the conditions for a

rationally motivated agreement" is unlike anything found in Wittgenstein's later-writings;

writings which Wittgenstein, perhaps a touch misleadingly, claims lack "theses" because,

as he asserts in PI §127, "the work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders

for a particular purpose."[145] At first glance this methodological difference might appear

trivial, and can perhaps be attributed to the fact that both thinkers describe language, and

conceive the issue of agent rationality, in terms of differing philosophical aims. Yet, from

another perspective this detail is significant because it provides a place to begin

questioning the viability of Habermas's postmetaphysical formal theory of language

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[144] Habermas, "Actions, Speech Acts, Linguistically Mediated Interactions, and Lifeworld", p.222.
[145] From PI: §128. "If one tried to advance *theses* in philosophy, it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree to them."

pragmatics. The "viability" at issue here concerns the question as to whether Habermas's inferences from his communication centered theory -of how agents employ language towards the goal of reaching mutual understanding -does indeed follow from a *telos* that is inherent to the medium of language; or, thinking through this project from a critical perspective, is it perhaps more likely the case that this *telos* flows from the philosopher's hypostatization of one function of language, e.g. the communicative component of language, as *the* essence of language? We might think about Habermas's project in contradistinction to the multiplicity of uses of language which Wittgenstein draws our attention to with his concept of language-game, e.g. language is used to sing a song, to order pizza, to offer prayer to one's deity, etc.[146] In his later period writings, Wittgenstein overturns his earlier "Tractatus-era" claim to have uncovered the general propositional form by recognizing the different, and often mutually exclusive ways that language is used in the stream of life.

Now, we can step back for a moment to observe that both of these thinkers are working out their projects in terms of the pragmatics of language and language-use. And while we can agree that they each place stress on the pragmatics of language, they both make different inferences *from* the way language is used by agents in common (in the commons), *to* what this may tell us about agent rationality. By this I mean to suggest that both of these philosophers are interested in what language can tell us about how agents think and can arrive at communicating/expressing their thoughts within intelligible utterances. Yet, despite this commonality there exists a major divergence in approach to the study of language as it is used in society: Habermas wants to place language in a

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[146] From PI §23: "Here the term "language-*game*" is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life. Review the multiplicity of language-games in the following examples, and in others: Giving orders, and obeying them-; Describing the appearance of an object, or giving its measurements-; Constructing an object from a description (a drawing)-; Reporting an event-; Speculating about an event-; Forming and testing a hypothesis-; Presenting the results of an experiment in tables and diagrams-; Making up a story; and reading-; Play-acting-; Singing catches-; Guessing riddles-; Making a joke; telling it-; Solving a problem in practical arithmetic-; Translating from one language into another-; Asking, thanking, cursing, greeting praying."

communicative setting where agents interact using language aimed at mutual agreement, agreement which is dependent on the normative background of right reasons which provides justification for their communicative, and otherwise conducted, social practices. While Wittgenstein, from his contextualist perspective, aims to describe the "natural history" of our customary language practices and language-games through a philosophy that negates much of the traditional philosophical and scientific nomenclature and approaches to understanding human agency and social interaction which are intertwined with language. Wittgenstein's project initiates a return to accepting and narrating the customary in our human forms-of-life, which is not to be confused with the Romantic, or irrationalist, return toward a lost innocence, or a lost way of life, which can be glimpsed in the anti-intellectualism of a Romanticist return to nature that would have us all, for example, living oblivious to and unhindered by the modes of living brought about by industrialization and urbanization. Rather, Wittgensteinian acceptance of the customary *basis* of much of our collective practical action-not foundation and not rock-solid ground-is re-acquaintance with the role and hold of custom in our practices; a re-acquaintance with the, at-bottom, "groundlessness" of our beliefs and actions. Here "groundlessness" does not refer to a philosophical position that skeptically corrodes the possible objective legitimacy of our beliefs and patterns of action, simply to drive home the point that these beliefs and activities are not rational, or intelligible to philosophical reflection, all the way down. *Groundlessness* does not suggest a wild arbitrariness conceived pejoratively. It is not a choice or a decision that we can legislate as to how our patterns of beliefs and actions should take shape in our form-of-life.[147] Rather, the grounds of our collective

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[147] This does not mean to suggest that forms-of-life do not change through the reorganization of beliefs and the falsification of previous useful laws and practical maxims, which are to be replaced with fresh laws and new maxims. The point is that the model we should be using to conceptualize these changes in discursively sophisticated realms, such as the beliefs and rules of conduct, is not the model through which we can understand every kind of practical or customary development. [Ex. An ideal-speech situation applies well to an understanding of a situation where delegates argue with each other in the course of Union-Employer labor negotiations, here the strength of right and sincere reasons bode well for an understanding of the dynamics of the situation. On the other hand, an ideal-speech situation is a unsatisfactory model to employ

modes of human conduct and forms-of-life develop over time, and the (to a large part) exteriority of the processes of development of those grounds (vis-a-vis our agents' volitions/desires/arguments pro or con), is that which we need to come to accept as what is natural, and retrospectively observe to have taken place, when we understand the extent to which we are beings that act, and interact, in the world using language and other tools *just because* we are beings that act, and interact, in the world using language and other tools.

The idea here, and perhaps the impetus for Habermas's aforementioned hasty critique of Wittgenstein project as a return to the irrational, is that Wittgenstein is claiming that we do not at-bottom have –or have the capacity to produce in a majority of cases/ practices - intersubjectively acceptable, and universally valid, justifications and causal explanations for our collectively undertaken traditionally, institutionally, and habitually encoded social practices. Against such a position critical questions may arise: Why do we have to come to *accept* the naturalness of this seeming arbitrariness in our practices? Should we try to rationally understand and thematize these practices so as to reduce the internal effects of contingency and the external effects of political power? To which the answer may be given: We need to come to accept this "naturalness" because it is part of our patterns of conduct and behavior, part of the natural history of our forms-of-life, in short, it is because we are not thoroughly rational beings. It is not that naturally human beings act irrationally, lawlessly, or live without statistically demonstrable consistencies in their behavior, or make decisions out of sheer caprice, (this is not a Hobbesian state-of-nature

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when describing stable and traditional practices like the culinary custom of drinking coffee or having desert after dinner. This customary practice is "groundless" in that it does not admit of satisfactory breaking down (explication) within a rational explanation. Certainly, we can provide a historical reconstruction of how the meal-time was divided in Western-European cultures; localize where this tradition of taking coffee and desert after dinner took hold, etc. Yet, there is no agreement and discourse in culinary colleges and kitchens that by decree ordered that this division of the meal is to be the ordering of *the* dinner-hour for all of time. And even if such a decree could be unearthed by historians it would not by itself speak to, substantiate, the developmental history of this practice because it is not clear, perhaps could not be clear, how this practice wended its way into through time and into the present.]

construal of human nature as animalistic politics). *Acceptance* in this stress is a stance

that arises partially as the result of moral or ethical evaluation –not so as to rhetorically

bolster the case for a social covenant. Rather, it is as James Tully in his article

"Wittgenstein and Political Philosophy: Understanding Practices of Critical Reflection"

puts it when he claims that Wittgenstein in PI,

> ...is at pains to show that the exhaustion of reasons --the inability of
> reasons to underpin the grounds-- is not in any way irrational or
> epistemologically defective; not in any way an opening for the traditional
> skeptic...The spatial and temporal phenomenon of using signs rationally,
> reflectively, and critically is not ultimately based on, and thus cannot be
> equated with, the giving of validational reasons.[148]

This is so because "reasons come to an end"; we are only able to produce a finite amount

of communally acceptable reasons for our practices, for acting as we do, and eventually

these reasons break off. Yet, for Tully, cribbing from Wittgenstein, it is essential to

remember that it does not follow that because reasons break off agent rationality breaks

down. Tully, on this point of difference between Habermas and Wittgenstein, states that

for Wittgenstein,

> ...it is reasonable in some circumstances to take something for granted,
> take it as a matter of course without justification. According to Habermas,
> on the other hand, we are rational only insofar as we could give reasons
> for what we take for granted. This is a mistaken view of rationality that
> identifies "reasonable" with "giving reasons"...it is perfectly reasonable
> not to ask for reasons in some circumstances; and it would be
> unreasonable to do so.[149]

An example where it is perfectly reasonable not to ask for reasons, and would be

unreasonable to do so, would be a situation where the visual perception of gender is at

issue. In our culture we on the one hand customarily attribute certain physical features

such as: width of hips, lack of thick facial hair, and presence of lactose producing breasts

(as well as first-names like Christine, Asja, and Diana) to women. Whereas, on the other

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[148] Tully, "Wittgenstein and Political Philosophy: Understanding Practices of Critical Reflection", p.181.
[149] Tully, p.180.

hand, we customarily attribute physical features like broadness of shoulders and torso, prominent facial hair, and lack of lactose producing breasts (as well as first names like Danny, John, and Peter) to men. These attributions have come to work their way into how we conceive, literally speaking *see*, the two genders, and though the content of these attributions may speak to our culture's reigning prejudices, preconceptions about body types, modes of socialization, and gender stereotypes -there is here an element of taken-for-grantedness that flows from these attributions which facilitate our processing of gender information by forming a stock of knowledge, which impede possible distrust of ourselves on this issue and doubts as to whether we are in fact seeing a man or a woman in normal circumstances. Now, the assertion that there are normal circumstances can quite easily be overtaken by objections that the force of the norm is here unduly so and thereby works to collapse all the middle positions, and radical otherness, of people who have undergone sex-reassignment surgery, self-identify as drag kings/queens, hermaphrodites, or who occupy any number of other minority gender roles -but this is another discussion entirely. The point of the example is to indicate that in normal cases one human being sees another person as a man or as a woman; this is a social-fact about our culture, and it operates as something like our default setting in the visual perception of gender. Though people could condition themselves to see other people as simultaneously occupying both male and female gender roles in one and the same body in one and the same place, this is a decision that rebels against the customary modes of gender perception. In this example (this practice of seeing gender differences), we note a practice that is not governed by a list of reasons but by a partly inchoate set of truisms about what physical characteristics constitutes a female on the one hand and what constitutes a male on the other. As proof of this tacit understanding we need produce no reasons beyond our conventions as to what physical features make a man a man and a woman a woman to explain our decision to call Bob a man, and Danni a woman.

Tully summarizes the benefits of homing in on the various ways in which the

"reasonable" and the "unreasonable" are better understood as contextually determined, by

arguing that Habermas sets up a "false dichotomy" between "the reflective grounding of

speech acts in justifications and the mere *de facto* acceptance of habitual practices".[150] He

has it that it is "this false dichotomy between the demands of autonomous reason and the

force of conditioning" which "keeps the radical and the conservative from understanding

each other."[151] Tully's intention is to apply to political theory Wittgenstein's innovative

approach to questions of interpretation, rule-following, and the conventions under girding

social-practices. He sees a redemptive value in Wittgenstein's investigation of the

interplay of custom and agent-rationality:

> For once we free ourselves from the convention that we are free and
> rational only if we can justify the grounds of any uses we follow, we can
> see that there is a multiplicity of ways of being rationally (and
> thoughtfully) guided by rules of use, short of self-grounding validation,
> that is not reducible to the behaviorist's causal compulsion of habit.[152]

This redemptive value also applies to sociological theories in that, under this new

missive, these theories become progressively more informed by the findings of social-

anthropology by bringing to cognizance the existence of a multitude of rationalities,

which in distinct ways bear on the respective forms-of-life in which these rationalities

inhere, whose practices create a multitude of social formations and social relations. This

redemption births a new acknowledgment of the place of agent situatedness in

philosophical considerations. Acknowledgment of situatedness takes the form of

accepting, at the personal and methodological levels, the individual, historical, and social

constitution of the qualitative structures of an agent's form-of-life. There is always a

context, a place in history (social and individual history), an event, and a society to

account for. Bringing about this acceptance as a reorientation is that which a therapeutic

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[150] Tully, p.183.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Tully, p.183.

conception of philosophy works to make natural again after the various versions of intellectualist bias have built over it. Wittgensteinian contextualism, as applied in proffering remarks on an agent's natural-history, deviates from, for example, historicist and genealogical historiographies in that it traces the interplay of the natural and the customary moments (as found in a given language-game), with the temptations and tendencies to use language in seemingly spontaneous and revealing ways as the expression of thought or the prosecution of actions. In drawing attention to this interplay between what are considered a culture's/ a people's/ a form-of-life's marks of the natural and the customary -in behavior and language-use-; and the temptations and tendencies to infer or, as it were, *speak over* and explain the natural and the customary in philosophical conceptualizations of thought and action, Wittgenstein has a therapeutic and not a historical- reconstructive end in mind. This end is in the dispelling of illusions; as Wittgenstein puts it in PI,

> My aim is: to teach you to pass from a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent nonsense.[153]

Accepting that there is at-bottom no single isolatable, or ultimate, foundation to our actions and beliefs is no small feat; it is akin to learning to think against domain specifying the "social", the "individual", the "intersubjective" as separable constructs. Charles Taylor in his essay "Overcoming Epistemology" discusses the consequences of this new trajectory for philosophy,

> For all its radical break with the tradition, this kind of philosophy would in one respect be in continuity with it. It would be carrying further the demand for self-clarity about our nature as knowing agents, by adopting a better and more critically defensible notion of what this entails. Instead of searching for an impossible foundational justification of knowledge or hoping to achieve total reflexive clarity about the bases of our beliefs, we would now conceive this self-understanding as awareness about the limits and conditions of our knowing, an awareness that would help us overcome the illusions of disengagement and atomic individuality that are constantly

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[153] Wittgenstein, The Philosophical Investigations, §464.

being generated by a civilization founded on mobility and instrumental reason.[154]

Not succumbing to these conceptual illusions of "disengagement" and "atomic individuality" may be added to the list of precautions to be taken alongside avoidance of attributing, to agents, airtight patterns of rationally motivated and conducted behavior; overarching means-ends thinking; or presupposing agent embodiment in completely linguistified surroundings, e.g. a social world where language reaches, or has the potential, to reach into all action-spheres and recesses of individual minds, and thought processes, to further understand and enable potentially unlimited production of psychological and intentional reasons for behavior, comportment, the use of a certain mode of expressions, etc. Accepting this view of action and belief as preponderantly anchored in custom, or customary behavior, requires no small shift from Enlightenment faith in Reason to recognition of a multiplicity of regional and contextual rationalities and know-how knowledges. The effect of this shift may engender frustration, as the result of the vanquishing of classical philosophical projects. And it is this deflation of overly inflated expectations concerning the possibility of human knowledge, that Wittgensteinian therapy of acceptance treats.

As mentioned above, two philosophical renditions of this over inflating of expectations can be gleaned in Habermas's transcendental project of determining the communicative-rationality of agents engaged in processes of argumentation, and his related efforts to find and dissipate the mist of taken-for-grantedness which envelopes the lifeworld by "discovering the invariant features recurring in the historical manifold of sociocultural forms of life."[155] Both of these efforts are earnest endeavors, providing examples of the gusto of scientifically styled philosophical activity, yet all told what are their transcendental and idealizing suppositions founded on if not more metaphysical, or

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[154] Taylor, "Overcoming Epistemology", p.14.
[155] Habermas, "Realism After the Linguistic Turn", p.12.

"quasi-transcendental", propositions? In the final chapter we will detail the positive formulation of Wittgenstein's position of embodied understanding, with special attention to the agent-lifeworld relation as this relation can be investigated in intelligible language and thought. Wittgenstein's position represents a further extension and clarification of his therapy of acceptance into discussion of epistemological concepts.

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CHAPTER THREE: EMBODIED UNDERSTANDING, AGENCY, AND EPISTEMIC ACCESS TO THE LIFEWORLD

> There are always in history vultures ready to swoop down when a form of thinking--reason, for instance--suffers a grave crisis that reveals it's irremediable insufficiency. But no sooner have they pecked the bones clean than those same vultures cannot help starting afresh to rehash their old vulture ideas and their scavenger "philosophies". As vultures and hyenas feed on carrion, so certain manners of thinking periodically befall the poor being called human.[156]

In this image of scavenging vultures and preying hyenas, Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset, in his work Concord and Liberty, aptly characterizes the messianic urge that drives philosophers to become propagandists in service of one or another creed, be it Humanist, Socialist, post-Humanist, post-Socialist; creeds intended to free thinking people of their fetters. In 'pecking the bones clean' the philosophers begin by criticizing the "irremediable insufficiency" of, in this example, "reason" and then move on to propound, "to rehash" their "old vulture ideas", so as to propose the path to take to move beyond this insufficiency. Ortega y Gasset's image can well be applied to Wittgenstein's

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[156] Gasset, Concord and Liberty, p.61.

later critical project where (though in a secular and apolitical fashion), he picked away at the problems and language of philosophy. Not satisfied to labor away at the production of humble arguments and local solutions, Wittgenstein in his turn took it upon himself to hash out his own conception of the role and activity that should define philosophy as a social practice. And though this conception of philosophy appeared to some as the end of philosophy because of its contemptuous regard for the philosophers' speculative elements, e.g. their often conspicuously undefined, or arbitrarily defined middle terms, in philosophical argumentation, as well as their occasionally transitory and intellectually shallow standards of professional and institutional rigor, not to mention the philosophers' labored and aristocratic forms of expression and rhetoric.

Wittgenstein's conception, his therapy of acceptance actually represented a new beginning for philosophy and philosophers through a therapeutic redress of urges, temptations, and tendencies to look beyond the everyday world and the reference range of everyday words, for some deeper source of significance and meaning. Wittgenstein's project --which partially developed out of a dissatisfaction with the limitations of logical formalism and philosophical logic in understanding and thematizing the world in which human agents act and speak --begins from delimitations of certain noncognitive, mundane, and customary sources of action, language, and thought in life-world and community (form-of-life). Moving toward the beginnings of an interpretation of the relations, and conditions of epistemic access, between agent and lifeworld. If Wittgenstein had lived longer and continued the work begun in OC, it may be conceivable that he would have kept working on this thoughtful interpretation of the relations, and conditions of epistemic access, existing between agent and lifeworld. That said, it is a complicated matter to work out a thinker's greater plan in creating ideas and concepts as they did (not to mention speculating on where their work would lead), when

the biographical materials pertaining to that thinker are slim to none. (This was an issue addressed in greater detail within the introduction to the second chapter.)

Much can be made of Wittgenstein the man, but in this Thesis we have chosen to analyze the *style and philosophical novelty* of his later line of thought as this thinking deviates from now traditional readings of Wittgenstein as a thinker participating, or deposing of, debates concerning, to name only a few: verificationism, intentionality, rule-following, the status of inner-experience, etc.

In this final chapter we will detail the positive formulation of Wittgenstein's position of embodied understanding, with special attention to the agent-lifeworld relation as this relation can be investigated in intelligible language and thought. Wittgenstein's position represents a further extension and clarification of his therapy of acceptance into discussion of epistemological concepts. And as such we will sketch out a tentative reading of the positive formulation of Wittgenstein's OC-era depiction of the agent-lifeworld relations, and an agent's conditions of epistemic access to their lifeworld, so as to define Wittgenstein's notion of "world-picture" as the final concept in his series of three key later period concepts: "language-game", "form-of-life", and "world-picture". These are three concepts which respectively describe the contextual, cultural, and historical character of knowledge, agency, and lifeworld. The philosophical significance of Wittgenstein's three concepts is deflationary: we have argued that they take the air out of rationalistic conceptualizations of agent-lifeworld relations, specifically as concerns the issue of how an agent acquires knowledge, and operates using language within their lifeworld horizon.

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> A philosophy cannot be sketched out in a few words. Let us say that it must necessarily be a philosophy of *brute being* and not one of docile being which would have us believe the world can be fully explained. It must also be an attentive study of *meaning*, a meaning wholly other than the meaning of ideas, a volatile and allusive meaning which lacks any

direct power over things—even though it may appear and proliferate in things, once certain obstacles have been cleared away.[157]

RECAPITULATION OF THE MAIN POINTS OF THE THESIS

Rationalistic construals of the agent's relation with their surrounding lifeworld depend on an overly narrow, and non-embodied, notion of rationality. A rationalistic conceptualization of the agent-lifeworld relation, such Habermas's as sketched in chapter two, is inherently reductive because these kinds of conceptualizations begin with an ideational framework and then filter (reduce) possible insights derived from, for example, taken-for-granted aspects of worldly agent behavior *through* something like a logical schema so as to render it intelligible, to render it philosophically or conceptually significant. At issue in our Wittgensteinian criticisms of these reductions are the dissimilarities between scientific and philosophic methods. For example, reducing the study of human behavior to the careful observance of external physical actions in the hopes of fixing specific behavioral consistencies as defined by particular and recurrent conditioned behaviors, e.g. Skinnerian behaviorism, starts from the idea, the prejudice, that the workings of the "mental" are best understood through this type of external observation of behavior than unearthed through the riddles and complexes of talk-therapy. Wittgenstein's later-work opens up the question of the distinction, and methods proper to, philosophy and science from the negative position that this kind of rationalistic quest after the "invariant structures/features" of the lifeworld, or of the concept of the "mental", goes a long way in constituting a limited view of the *human*, the metaphorical, the mythical, and the culturally and historically *natural* in our forms-of-life.

The consequence of these kinds of research-programmes is that limitations are imposed on our ability to think about human individual and social existence, action, and language-

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[157] Merleau-Ponty, "Texts and Documents", p.12

use without recourse to ideas of finding, and defining, definite rational structures that underlie, and social-systems that overarch these practices. The contrast established between Habermas's idea that the telos of language is oriented towards understanding and Wittgenstein's concept of language-game brings this limitation versus diversity argument into relief. Further, our skepticism about the possibility of a scientization of the lifeworld (scientific explanation of the structures of the lifeworld in terms, for example, deductive-nomological laws), flows from our Wittgensteinian contention, as detailed in the earlier chapters of this Thesis, that problems in philosophy and problems in life take different forms, and are correspondingly resolved in different ways. Roughly put: philosophers need to learn to observe life and practical activity as it takes place in the world, avoiding the positing of intellectual necessities by taking the available defined regularities of behavior and action along with the more inscrutable, and non rule-governed, shortcuts and habituations of practical reasoning as all part of the same natural history; that is, as all part of collective social life. This checking of the perfections of theory against the imperfections of practice may go some way to insuring that philosophers keep pace with the reality and the language of the everyday world. The Wittgensteinian point is that we will not gain a better understanding of our ways of living because we can better place these ways of living in an explanation that frames them in terms of their purported inexorable internal logics. Wittgenstein contends that philosophical problems are solved, for a particular philosopher, when they are dissolved. They are dissolved by confrontational recognition of how human agents in practice, and practical circumstances act, speak, or otherwise accomplish tasks; furthermore, they are dissolved by pointing out how human agents develop and come to hold false pictures of what they are actually doing, when they are acting and speaking. In sum, the outcome of this process of recognition is that philosopher and layperson alike have their *will* bent and

their mind changed as regards the way they approach and try to solve specific conceptual problems.

The substantive idea to be found in this therapeutic approach is that philosophy, for Wittgenstein, is a matter of rebalancing the understanding of the relationships between thinking, speaking, and acting. These relations are understood somewhat distortedly when thinking, and the thoughts of philosophers, arbitrate and define what "in essence" makes thinking, speaking, and acting what they are in the course of human forms-of-life, language-games, and world-pictures. The genesis, structure, and contents of forms-of-life, language-games, and world-pictures respectively, take shape organically, and for the most part, independently of the influence and direction of philosophical or intellectual criticism. To overcome this discomfiture as to the conditions of knowledge, philosophers instead seek out a metaphysical level of meaning (philosophical meaning). This is what is sought when "invariant structures of the lifeworld" or Habermaisian "binding and bonding energies" of speech-acts are posited as concepts by a philosopher to be later *discovered* and filled in as to empirical details by social scientists or linguists. For example, a supra-level of meaning is not accessed by philosophers when they grasp the conditions of intelligibility which make certain utterances in Joual understandable to both Acadian and Parisian French speakers. There are facts about the use of Joual which are unearthed when a list is drawn of common phrases and varieties of pronunciation commonalities between these three types of French, but these facts do not stand in need of a unifying, or edifying, explanation that will tie them together into a theoretical (philosophical) narrative about the, for example, unique life of French signs regardless of the community, geography, or historical circumstances in which they live. Philosophy in this case may offer a way of unifying these commonalities into a satisfactorily argued hypothesis, but these arguments do not *constitute* this positive knowledge, they simply contain its promissory note in words.

In this project of rebalancing the understanding of the relationships between thought, language, and action, Wittgenstein is set against privileging this supposed supra-level of meaning and its internal and often purportedly private mode of access to meaning. Rather, Wittgenstein's conception of meaning is meaning in the circumstances of the world, meaning in the surroundings of life, meaning as use. Look outward to the way that a sentence, a word, or an idea is used to understand what it means in its language-game; from the language-game we can draw certain inferences about the form-of-life that surrounds and colors in (stabilizes and renders consistent) particular moves in a given language-game; and in scrutinizing certain planks or "hinge-propositions" that support a given form of life we can learn about the parts of a community's world-picture. A typical expression of this use-theory of meaning as seen in an example contesting the coherence of a mentalist outlook on meaning, from OC,

> "I know that that's a tree." Why does it strike me as if I did not understand the sentence? though it is after all an extremely simple sentence of the most ordinary kind? It is as if I could not focus my mind on any meaning. Simply because I don't look for the focus where the meaning is. As soon as I think of an everyday use of the sentence instead of a philosophical one, its meaning becomes clear and ordinary.[158]

For Wittgenstein dissolving problems in philosophy has to do with recuperating the diversity of human experience and ways of living (forms-of-life), by dispelling the urge to understand purely intellectually; a tendency to desire self-evident knowledge akin in durability to Descartes' indubitable certainty about his own existence. Wittgenstein's radical break with traditional Cartesian epistemology, a break which parallels the line of thinking held by certain prominent phenomenologists like Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger, is to suggest that understanding is a multivalent concept. Understanding is differently embodied in differing contexts: e.g. respect for elders can be implicitly expressed in a person' bodily habituations to stand deferentially and not to interrupt the elder when the

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[158] Wittgenstein, On Certainty, §347.

elder is speaking. This understanding of custom is embodied in behavior to such an extent and difference than intellectual understanding that it can be taken as a very different conception of understanding, answerable to different criteria.

A further example of the contextually specificity of understanding can be seen in the type of projective or mimetic understanding that is required for an actor to put themselves int Falstaff's shoes and act as the character in a performance of Shakespeare's play King Henry VIII. This is an empathetic understanding of a character that is not solely the product of the rote learning and passive accumulation of the historical details of Elizabethan culture and social structure. This projection/mimesis requires a cultivated facility, an understanding, which exceeds intellectual knowing by venturing into bodily understanding of character habits and comportments. From the multitude of grammars of understanding it may be inferred that perhaps understanding does not name a natural kind, and following from this acknowledgment we might find it more useful to focus on elucidating understanding as it is can be rendered intelligible via the contextual, cultural, historical, and anthropological considerations which play major roles in defining what understanding is, when something is said to have been understood, and the significance of understanding as seen in specific cases.

Wittgenstein's project is one of recuperation which counteracts rationalistic conceptualizations of the lifeworld which, at least in effect, downgrade the lifeworld's (and that of human culture generally), diversity of language-games, forms-of-life, and world-pictures to scientific models of rationality, development, and value, constituted, at its endpoint, by expressly and transparently cognitive relations between an agent and their lifeworld. The aim of this project of recuperation is not to be taken on analogy with the religious believer's traditionalist knee-jerk response to warranted fear that the sacred will inevitably become profane in the process of secularization, as the cultural and natural historical, in Wittgenstein's sense, are threatened with extinction by the unending march

of scientific knowledge. Rather, the apprehension implied in this recuperation is the thought that we may be unduly privileging the intellectualist understanding and narration of our experiences of acting, speaking, existing, and thinking, if we are simply thinking about it in a philosophical mood, purely trying to understand it through, for example, a hardscrabble nomological-deductive approach. Along these lines, in his work Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, the father of the phenomenological method of reconciling intuitive awareness of/access to, one's lifeworld with reflective thematization of this intuitive bond, expressed similar apprehension "that a separate investigation under the title "life-world" is an intellectualistic enterprise born of a mania, peculiar to modern life, to theorize everything.".[159] Though in contradistinction to Wittgenstein's recuperative turn in his later period writings, Husserl's apprehension proved rhetorical, when a few paragraphs later Husserl obstinately puts forward the view that,

> ...all problems of truth and being, all methods, hypotheses, and results conceivable for these problems –whether for worlds of experience or for metaphysical higher worlds—can attain their ultimate clarity, their evident sense or the evidence of their nonsense, only through this supposed intellectualistic hypertrophy.[160]

In the following pages we will argue that Wittgenstein's therapeutic and recuperative method is an appropriate approach to thematizing this complex issue of an agent's relation with, and epistemic access to, their lifeworld. We contend that it is an appropriate approach because it respects a holistic and *basic* pretheoretical/prereflective relation between an agent's knowledge, actions, language, and their encompassing lifeworld environment that is brought out in the concept of embodied understanding. In other words, this approach does not seek to collapse all tacit knowledge(s) and multiple accents of understanding towards an intellectualist center. This lifeworld environment which

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[159] Husserl, Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology, p.370.
[160] Ibid.

Husserl claims is "the pregiven world in which science and every other life praxis is engaged"[161], is natural to lose sight of, and as a result presents special difficulties for its potential thematization. These are difficulties for thinking, which are among the densest in terms of their complexity, and therefore require the broadest and least presumptive methods of reflection. Access to and operation within this "pregiven world" will be the topic of this chapter, as this access and operation of the agent in their lifeworld is worked out by Wittgenstein in his path breaking later work.

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WITTGENSTEIN ON RULES AND EMBODIED UNDERSTANDING

Wittgenstein's emphasis on the conventional, customary, and natural aspects of acting, thinking, and using language may appear purely negative and a little empty over against the full-bodied conception of acting, thinking, and using language that founds Habermas's theory of communicative action with its collateral theory of communicative rationality. To redress the possible perception, this might be a good place to ask: Just what are the common terms of the debate between Habermas and Wittgenstein as to the status of language pragmatics and the accessibility, to philosophical or social scientific investigations, of our lifeworld background?

We could say that what follows from Wittgenstein's later line of thinking is an outlook on philosophical practice in which we need not specify what the medium of natural language is in its qualitative details, (e.g. flesh out the above-mentioned "linguistic substance of speech" as it manifests itself in inter-agent communication using speech-acts), so as to come to produce a representation or explanation of how agents reach agreements and understand each other using language. It is enough to look and see and to provide examples of how agents *do* reach understanding in various language-games; we do not require a metatheory of how language itself, "the medium of natural language",

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[161] Husserl, p.363.

encodes the details and procedures of intersubjective agreement; nor how speech-acts impose normative obligations on speaking agents that they be able to redeem their claims to truth, rightness, or truthfulness for the right reasons. Wittgenstein's view of language and society is a view of the development of and reliance on conventions among agents in their learned practices, which are in many cases in place as an agent's cultural inheritance and common stock of know-how or taken-for-granted knowledge. These conventions, though not static, begin all the way down at bedrock; what can be said to be the point where and when we can no longer talk intelligibly about, or describe, the grammar of how our practices function, and therewith need to accept, or contrariwise to evade accepting, this potentially disconcerting recognition of our lack of secure foundations. (This beginning at bedrock is where reasons can be said to paradoxically start and end. On the high side, from this conventional bedrock up we can start providing reasons for the practices and coordinated actions which supplement this basic conventional decision to act in a certain way. On the low side, bedrock is where we can glimpse the point, if in fact there is a point or a initial proposition to be interpreted, where a practice was initiated.)

In this section we return to the leitmotiv of this Thesis, which is that despite the urge to delude ourselves about the conditions of our knowledge by fulminating yet more philosophical theories to compensate for these limitations, Wittgenstein is coaxing us to existentially accept[162] that at-bottom our practices function in accord with those customs and dispositions which make up the weave of our culture's/society's form-of-life. Here we find the difference between a philosophical/intellectual need and an existential need. The tension between these needs is the point of tension in which Wittgenstein's text

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[162] By "existentially accept" I am suggesting a level of resolution, which is not (to speak dualistically) wholly intellectual and not wholly physical, but is motivated by an existential decision where practical action supervenes on intellectual understanding of that practical action.

therapeutically incises through to its readers, cutting away urges to negate their awareness of, what Wittgenstein, a touch grandiosely, in OC calls, "the groundlessness of all believing."[163] Wittgenstein's oft-quoted remark, §559 from OC, expresses the need to deal with, to accept, the customariness and contextual circumscription of given language practices,

> You must bear in mind that the language-game is so to say something unpredictable. I mean: it is not based on grounds. It is not reasonable (or unreasonable). It is there--like our life.

The existential idea here, if this can be called an idea, is that our language-games, associated social-practices and overarching forms-of-life exist, and are all right as they are, full stop. For example, to judge a language-game (language practice), like haggling over the price of fish at a fish-market as proceeding reasonably or unreasonably is to either measure that language-game by its in-group standards, i.e. accepting that the haggling is proceeding reasonably, if an albeit nervy exchange is taking place between customer and fish hawker without recourse to pistols, fish-bats, etc. Or, contrariwise, to externally judge as to its reasonableness or unreasonableness is to externally impose an intellectual demand for consistency that this language-game operate according to some, for example, rational rules of procedure, the imposition of which can be seen to objectively regularize haggling. This normative requirement does not sully our understanding of a language-game and social-practice like haggling over a price, but it does hypostatize this language-game following from a rational schema. The problem with this hypostatizing is that it is not necessary because the practice in question functions all right as it is. This means to suggest that developing a rational schema to conceptualize the practical exchange scenario to be observed in price haggling contributes nothing to our understanding of this practice, excepting that we learn that this practice admits of being described within a formalism which is as practically useful as, for example, a

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[163] Wittgenstein, On Certainty, §166.

reformulation of informal reasoning in formal logic. Price haggling is a haphazard human art and form of commerce which is practiced in many different forms and many different countries, whose standards and procedures its participants can well enough norm and regulate by themselves without input from outside observers who condense their actions of into a representation.

The point of this digression is to begin working out the Wittgensteinian approach to coping with the "groundlessness of all believing" by learning to accept and deal with our real needs as they arise. For Wittgenstein, the language-games of a given culture are there and all right as they are without reference to an explanatory hypothesis that determines or fixes the rational structure, of these language-games by representing those features of human rationality, which transcend the historical and contextual situatedness of particular language-games. The meaning of these language-practices can best be understood externally from a description of the particular context in which they take place, and the particular grammar of the practice in which that practice inheres.

For example, locker-room hijinks and horsing around can be understood as rational, or exhibiting a contextually reasonable grammatical structure, seen from within the boundaries of what is contextually reasonable for this type of practice in this type of circumstances and milieu. Ex. If the circumstances in question concern a minor-hockey team horsing around after practice and the milieu is twenty-first century Canadian society, it can be called contextually reasonable, that the players knock each other around a little, but *not* similarly contextually reasonable if these little sadists, in the process of horsing around, slash each other's faces open with their skate-blades. In this context and following the norms of this culture, appropriate behavior in such a context can be considered contextually reasonable whereas substantially deviant behavior can be considered contextually unreasonable. Same goes for conventional interactions using language. The language-game of talking with your barber/hairdresser while he/she, or

she/he, cuts your hair has certain parameters of what constitutes contextually reasonable conduct of the two parties. Depending on the level of familiarity between cutter and customer, there may take place banter about the weather, last night's game, or details of one's recent trysts. Yet, the language-game may veer into contextually unreasonable , or non-rational, spheres if the conversation unexpectedly transitions into a customer's rabidly expressed, (foaming at the mouth/ manic gibberish), paranoid monologue about one's desire to assassinate Stephen Harper before Mr. Harper has a chance to implement his socially "radical" and fiscally conservative agenda.

Here the paranoid monologue can be seen as offending against the mores and social decorum of the barber, or hairdresser, customer relation, yet not against all such variety of exchanges, and language-games, in which agents conduct informal, though partially rule-governed, discussions using language. In this context and following the prevalent norms of this culture it is seen that polite conversation exhibits reasonable conduct while manic ranting exhibits unreasonable conduct.

In both these cases we are bounded on all sides by the specificity of the context and culture in question when we are trying to understand the behavior of agents. This does not suggest that we cannot object to the social determinations of what is considered reasonable conduct in the case of the locker room hijinks. Rather, though we can object, as observers, to how the determination is made and enacted by the players and their coaches; what presuppositions this determination follows from; or, what narrow-mindedness is involved in this conception of what is reasonable; we are in no position, as observers, to interfere with the spontaneity and particularity of this practice by representationally formulating, or seemingly drawing out, strict objective rules from our observations, however diligent, of these practices. We can have no disinterested or "point-of-view-less" perspective on the practice we are positing as the "observed

situation". French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, in his work The Logic of Practice,

discusses this state of affairs,

> Knowledge does not only depend, as an elementary relativism would
> suggest, on the particular viewpoint that a 'situated and dated' observer
> takes up vis-à-vis the object. A much more fundamental alteration - and a
> much more pernicious one, because, being constitutive of the operation of
> knowing, it inevitably remains unnoticed- is performed on practice by the
> sheer fact of taking up a 'viewpoint' on it and so constituting it as an
> object (of observation and analysis.)[164]

The point here is that when examining many social practices and behavioral conventions,

it is a mistake to see them as the results or the endpoint of something like, for example, a

reasonably conducted consultation process taking place between participants or

delegates; a process that is modeled using a representation of, for example, free

disputation derived from an academic setting, such as a colloquium. This is an

intellectualist construal which betrays the bias of both a certain class position and the

fictional "god's eye point of view" on human individual and social practices. Moving

away from representing social practices and behavioral conventions according to rational

schemas, whose explanatory power hinges on an intellectualist conceptualization of

agent's activities as being hamstrung, directed, and determined by strict and distinct

rules, norms, and avoidance of pain stimuli/ negative consequences, requires renewed

focus on the natural embodiment of understanding in diverse social settings and regimes

of practice. Stanley Cavell, in his work The Claim to Reason addresses the complexity of

this relation as one between that which we call "reasonable" in human affairs and that we

which we label natural,

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[164] Bourdieu, The Logic of Practice, p.27.

In what sense is the child's ability to "follow" us, his caring what we do, and his knowing when we have and have not accepted the identity of his words and deeds, *learned?* If I say that all of this is natural, I mean it is nothing more than natural. Most people do descend from apes into authorities, but it is not inevitable. There is no reason why they don't continue crawling, or walk on all fours, or slide their feet instead of lifting them; no reason why they don't laugh where they (most) now cry; no reason why they make (or "try" to make) the sounds and gestures we make; no reason why they see, if they do, a curving lake as a carousel; no reason why, having learned to use the phrase "turn down the light" they will accept the phrase "turn down the phonograph" to mean what it means, recognizing that the factor "turn down" is the same, or almost the same, in both; and then accept the phrases "turn down the bed" and "turn down the awning" and "turn down the offer" to mean what they mean, while recognizing that the common factor has less, if any, relation to its former occurrences. If they couldn't do these things they would not grow into our world; but is the avoidance of that consequence the *reason* they do them?[165]

Cavell's point, following Wittgenstein, is that we as human beings, human agents, do not live out our childhoods ("grow into our world"), acting and learning to navigate the world solely according to the dictates of our budding reason. Rather than acting out the details of something akin to a early life socialization and acclimatization program, encoded somewhere in our genes or in the dark abyss of our minds, we can see that our understanding of ourselves and our behavior --and correspondingly others' understanding of themselves and their behavior-- are immediately bound up in the lifeworld surroundings of our culture's forms-of-life and language-games. Wittgenstein hints at this bind between culture and the individual inside his preoccupations with the description of how language is used, and contrariwise misused in misunderstandings, within various contexts and language-games. These descriptions presuppose prior agreement in judgments and in the meanings of words (in language) as what *constitutes* the intelligibility of my actions for you and the intelligibility of your words for me. These "prior agreements" evidence the shared natural-history of the language practices of a given culture, as expressed in that culture's forms-of-life. From PI, Wittgenstein's

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[165] Cavell, The Claim to Reason, p.178.

discussion of "obeying a rule" points to the collective, customary, and public basis of rules, and the prior agreement in judgment that the correct following of rules presupposes:

> Is what we call "obeying a rule" something that it would be possible for only *one* man to do, and to do only *once* in his life?--This is of course a note on the grammar of the expression "to obey a rule". It is not possible that there should have been only one occasion on which someone obeyed a rule. It is not possible that there should had been only one occasion on which a report was made, an order given or understood; and so on.--To obey a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess, are *customs* (uses, institutions.) ***To understand a sentence means to understand a language. To understand a language means to be master of a technique.***[166]

To reiterate, Wittgenstein in claiming that understanding is intermeshed with the practices and customs of one's culture/form-of-life, is arguing that there are no transcendental truths about thought or human communicativity (human capacities in employing sign-systems as proxies used for the purpose of facilitating communication), which are to be gleaned from observing, and delimiting regularities in, the intersubjective framework of communicative action/ human social practices. The Habermasian desire to see the data of linguistic-pragmatics stemming from this framework as affording a window into human rationality, and the possibility of stipulating the implicit rule structure governing this communicative-action indicates the extent to which Habermas is making the philosophically questionable move of thinking according to what he takes to be a particularly intellectually convincing picture. What is philosophically questionable is the idea that considerations of cultural background, form-of-life, and historical conditions can be seen to be *transcended* because communicative-rationality convincingly breaks down the speech-situation communicative prerequisites that need be followed if authentic communication and discourse is to be achieved, regardless of whether this speech has the slightest sense.

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[166] Wittgenstein, The Philosophical Investigations, §199. (Italicized bold emphasis mine).

The antithetical relation of Wittgenstein's thinking on rules to communicative rationality as conceived by Habermas, is to be found in the Wittgensteinian contextualist claim that to follow a rule is to already understand and already be woven into the social and customary background against which a rule governed practice becomes intelligible. This idea founds Wittgenstein's view of human understanding as embodied. This is an understanding that is part of the human agent's bodily know-how; an understanding that is related to, determined in consultation with, and shared by, others. And, this is an understanding that is not necessarily mediated through mental representations conceived as a list of rules or conditions of possibility which are reflexively represented to a subject within their consciousness. The embodiment thesis has in roots in anti-Cartesian views that seek to place the mind back into the body (or at-least to try to mitigate the distorting effects of the absolute separation of the mind from the body in Cartesian dualism), so that we may better evaluate the depth and complexity of the ordinary components of our actions which are commonly slighted in terms of their "noncognitivity": activities such as, for example, the retention of reflex memory in so-called "muscle memory"; habitual movements and activities such as coming to dwell in one's living quarters by learning to move around one's home with complete ease and familiarity; as well as, the trained verbal responses of formality and tone of voice that become essentially unconscious in their adjustment to certain social situations, social roles, and social positions: e.g. the teacher carries on differently with her current pupils that she does with her older former pupils, and vice versa.

As Charles Taylor in his essay "To Follow a Rule" argues, Wittgenstein "stresses the unarticulated-at some points even unarticulable-nature of this understanding" which situates "obeying a rule"[167] as inculcated customary behavior within the structure of a given social practice. This behavior is not that of an automaton, though Taylor places

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[167] Taylor, "To Follow a Rule", p.167.

much emphasis on the noncognitive (not completely or solely cognitive), relation of fit

between a person and the "unarticulated background" against which they operate. The

salient feature of Wittgenstein's assertion as to the existence of this background, is that

his view does not require that this background be explicitly thematizable in the

representations we present to ourselves-e.g. *thematizable*: made understandable by being

specifically and theoretically delimited in terms of positive knowledge or a clearly

defined schema, (a requirement perhaps meant to fulfill an purely philosophical need).

Rather, on Wittgenstein's view of human agents as engaged in social practices, and

whose understanding is embodied therein, agents often just do *act* even when

justifications for their actions come to an end.[168] Taylor deals with this point in his essay

on rule-following,

> To situate our understanding in practices is to see it as implicit in our
> activity, and hence as going well beyond what we manage to frame
> representations of. We do frame representations: we explicitly formulate
> what our world is like, what we aim at, what we are doing. But much of
> our intelligent action in the world, sensitive as it usually is to our situation
> and goal, is carried out unformulated. It flows from an understanding that
> is largely inarticulate.[169]

Taylor sees Wittgenstein's view of the background to our everyday practices, such as

following a rule, as fitting in with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological

explorations of the body and the conceptualizations of "being-in-the-world" found in the

early phenomenological-ontology of Martin Heidegger. These three Europeans thinkers,

argues Taylor, each individually arrived at a view of the human agent as *whole*,

figuratively speaking "body in mind/ mind in body" existing within a web of collective

practices and habituations; a view where the human agent is defined "as a being who acts

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[168] Recall especially, PI §85: "If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade
is turned. Then I am inclined to say: "This is simply what I do."
[169] Taylor, p.170.

in and on the world."[170] Merleau-Ponty describes the body, in his work <u>Phenomenology of Perception</u> thus,

> The body is our general medium for having a world. Sometimes it is restricted to the actions necessary for the conservation of life, and accordingly it posits around itself a biological world; at other times, elaborating upon these primary actions and moving from their literal to a figurative meaning, it manifests through them a core of significance: this is true of motor habits such as dancing. Sometimes, finally, the meaning aimed at cannot be achieved by the body's natural means; it must then build around itself an instrument, and it projects around itself a cultural world. At all levels it performs the same function which is to endow the instantaneous expressions of spontaneity with a 'little renewable action and independent existence.' Habit is merely a form of this fundamental power. We say that the body has understood and habit been cultivated when it has absorbed a new meaning, and assimilated a fresh core of significance.[171]

Merleau-Ponty sees our bodies are inhering in our experience of the biological and cultural worlds. This is not a subjectivistic subject-centered inherence of one hermetically sealed consciousness, (sealed tightly within a solipsistic outlook), *in* the lifeworld, as a fish is *in* a fishbowl full of water. Instead, it is a view of the human body as existing *in* social networks of signification without distance, the body existing without distance *in* the biological and cultural lifeworld. Here the existing *in* without distance implies that there is no space between the human subject and the lifeworld in which they exist, as there is a space, always at-least a separation, between my bag and the desk on top of which it is found. In the latter case, the bag and the desk are objects; the bag an object for holding papers, books, etc., while the desk is an object of made of wood. The bag rests on the desk, never mixing with (leeching into) the desk; they maintain a strict material separation that is characteristic of two objects. In the former case, the human subject is in the lifeworld as the milieu in which her existing take on the quality of existing or "existentiality". This is the locale where she is at home as a biological organism in a way

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[170] Ibid.
[171] Merleau-Ponty, <u>Phenomenology of Perception</u>, p.146.

that neither a bag nor a room are at home with, or in, each other. This characterization of

"being-in" is derived from Heidegger's idea of "being-in-the-world" in which

Heidegger's stipulates "Dasein", the human agent, as neither knowing subject nor brute

object. Heidegger theorizes that it is a nonsensical question whether an object can ever be

known by a subject, he rejects such dualistic thinking out of hand by providing examples

of cases where subject and object know each other, partake of each other, and maintain a

natural-seeming relation (for Heidegger this relation is "primordial"). Examples of such

a relation include the way that a tool like a hammer, a tennis-racket, or a guitar seem to fit

the human hand, and greater body, so perfectly that they act as conduits for human

activity, in that a person can become completely absorbed in the activity of hammering

nails, playing tennis, or using a guitar that they need no longer focus on the hammer,

racket, or guitar as implements that require conscious machination. In these cases the

objects become, *as it were* part, of the subject; an extension so to speak of the person's

body. Heidegger's discusses the subject-object relation in his lecture-course History of

the Concept of Time,

> ...now the question arises, how does knowing, which according to its being
> is inside, in the subject, come out of its 'inner sphere' into an 'other, outer
> sphere,' into the world? In such an approach to the question of knowing, a
> relation between two entities which are on hand is assumed beforehand,
> explicitly or otherwise...[In] the whole approach to this question, even
> when it is embedded in an epistemological problematic, one is blind to
> what is thus asserted about Dasein when knowing is taken as a mode of
> being attributed to it. This says nothing more and nothing less than:
> *knowing the world is a mode of being of Dasein such that this mode is
> ontically founded in its basic constitution, in being-in-the-world.*[172]

Heidegger's assertion that the subject-object problem dissolves when we accept knowing

as a mode of being of Dasein (human being), need not be swallowed whole if we are to

accept what it is that his ontology-heavy mode of expression is trying to convey. Mainly,

that there is something in the human agent's moving about in the world understandingly

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[172] Heidegger, History of the Concept of Time, pp.160-161.

that is not recorded by nor addressed in a dualistic theory. This "something" is not

mysterious, it is there if we draw attention to it, even though it resists complete

thematization because the "nature of this understanding" is, in Taylor's phrase "the

unarticulated-at some points even unarticulable".

To draw out this "unarticulated" in view, Taylor uses the example of conversational

etiquette. When we speak with an other we fall into an exchange where there are many

operative procedures, e.g. one person speaks, makes their point, then the other person

butts it or waits their turn -in short, the dialogue has this more or less determinate form of

call (speech) and response, response and (call) speech; the old back and forth. Yet, this

form is not explicitly taught to a person, and neither is a person given an all situation

encompassing description of how to hold a conversation. Much like following a rule, we

just seem to do it and when asked for an explanation of the rule and why and how we

follow it, we can only provide a partial explanation for the grounds and customary basis

of our actions, because, Wittgenstein argues, these actions are not rule-based (or

constituted) all the way down.

A good corollary example of the intersection of the background, the "unarticulated", of

rule-following behavior is learning to count. We are taught about numbers as little

children. We might sing them in a certain order 1,2,3, 4, 5 etc., in preschool and

Kindergarten. Then a few years down the road we learn to add and subtract these

numbers on paper. Next, we learn to multiply and divide these numbers. Then, a few

years later, in secondary school, we learn to do algebra and higher level mathematics, and

so on. This learning of rules in mathematics is not negotiated one human intelligence

(teacher) to the next human intelligence (student). Rather, the student learns to accept, on

faith or as a result of perhaps seeing the light, or merit, of a certain practice, what the

teacher teaches him. As Wittgenstein has it in PI, "when I obey a rule, I do not choose. I

obey the rule *blindly.* "[173] This is the process where a student, blindly learns to "continue

the series", as Stanley Cavell puts it in "The Claim to Reason",

> More specifically, he [Wittgenstein] uses the picture "of continuing a series" as a kind of figure of speech for an idea of the possession of a concept: to know the meaning of a word, to have the concept titled by the word, is to be able to go on with it in new contexts--ones we accept as correct for it; and you can do this without knowing, so to speak, the formula which determines the fresh occurrence i.e., without being able to articulate the criteria in terms of which it is applied.[174]

Being able to operate with a certain concept, i.e. apply it in new and perhaps unforeseen

contexts, is also an activity which is not wholly open to rigorous delimitation, or rational

reconstruction of the activity of using a concept in a new context. This is where we can

return to Habermas' work to see the ramification of this view of a person's "possession

of a concept" on philosophical discussions of higher-level normative matters. The

ramification of this view of how a person learns to apply a concept in different contexts,

together with the embodied understanding put forward by Taylor following from

Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, has to do with trying to map, or track, what constitutes

human rationality as it is operative in the lifeworld. The question merges with

considerations as to how we can come to encompass such a broad notion like rationality,

using the meager and mundane details of our lives. On this point, Wittgenstein seems to

argue, where he does argue and not merely describe or assert, that there are cultural limits

to one's understanding of a given culture's form-of-life, in which rationality is a word, or

a concept, in a language-game. A culture's form-of-life produces internal standards for

judging true and false, reasonable and unreasonable. These internal standards are

internally consistent or are internally inconsistent dependent on the system of beliefs to

which these standards appeal. So as to describe what interaction at the boundaries

between one form-of-life and another looks like, from PI, Part II, Wittgenstein

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[173] Wittgenstein, The Philosophical Investigations, §218.
[174] Cavell, p.122.

distinguishes an animal's expression of anger, fright, and happiness from our expressions of these feelings:

> One can imagine an animal angry, frightened, unhappy, happy, startled. But hope-ful? And why not?...A dog believes his master is at the door. But can he also believe his master will come the day after tomorrow?--And *what* can he not do here?--How do I do it?--How am I supposed to answer this?...Can only those hope who can talk? Only those who have mastered the use of a language. That is to say, the phenomena of hope are modes of this complicated form of life. (If a concept refers to a character of human handwriting, it has no application to beings that do not write.)[175]

Wittgenstein is here moving onto contested ground, sketching his so-called "quietist" position vis-a-vis the intersections of forms-of-life and criticism of elements in those forms-of-life. This position stays silent as to why it suggests that there appears to be no great arbiter between distinct forms-of-life other than the persuasiveness, or loquaciousness, of representatives of one or other form-of-life. From OC,

> Where two principles really do meet which cannot be reconciled with one another, then each man declares the other a fool and heretic.[176]
> I said I would 'combat' the other man, -but wouldn't I give him *reasons*? Certainly; but how far do they go? At the end of reasons comes *persuasion*. (Think what happens when missionaries convert natives.)[177]

In contradistinction to Wittgenstein's position on the all right as they are systems of thought, religious practices, and artistic endeavors of given forms-of-life, there is the external and transhistorical perspective of Habermas, who wants to present *a* rationality (a procedural view of rationality) not many rationalities, differently conditioned by forms-of-life, differing as to historical factors including geopolitical setting, historical epoch, conditions of existence, operative power-relations in dissemination and control of information, etc. Wittgenstein sees customs, rooted in imposed and shared norms which

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[175] Wittgenstein, The Philosophical Investigations, p.174
[176] Wittgenstein, On Certainty, §611.
[177] Wittgenstein, §612.

are agreements in judgments as what we stand on, customs with strong track records and intersubjective claims to temporary validity.

What I have been trying to convey throughout this chapter is that Wittgenstein, though not an yet an explicitly historicist thinker in PI, sees the relative uses of words like reason and rule in many cultures at many different times and infers from this, correctly I argue, that the employment of the words reason and rule change over time and across different contexts. This outlook has occasionally, and lazily, interpreted as relativistic, or as promoting a relativistic view of the basis of shared judgments in the social world. We will not here rehearse a response to the charge, except to quote from Stanley Cavell an eloquent passage, from his collection of essays <u>Must We Mean What We Say?</u>, which speaks to the contingency of human affairs.

> We learn and teach words in certain contexts, and then we are expected, and expect others, to be able to project them into further contexts. Nothing insures that this projection will take place (in particular, not the grasping of universals nor the grasping of books of rules), just as nothing insures that we will make, and understand, the same projections. That on the whole we do is a matter of our sharing routes of interest and feeling, modes of response, senses of humor and of significance and of fulfillment, of what is outrageous, of what is similar to what else, what a rebuke, what forgiveness, of when an utterance is an assertion, when an appeal, when an explanation--all the whirl of organism Wittgenstein calls "forms of life." Human speech and activity, sanity and community, rest upon nothing more, but nothing less, than this. It is a vision as simple as it is difficult, and as difficult as it is (because it is) terrifying. To attempt the work of *showing* its simplicity would be a real step in making available Wittgenstein's later philosophy.[178]

The final section of this Thesis will thicken this historicist appropriation of Wittgenstein as it is articulated in his key OC concept "world-picture". We will briefly survey Wittgenstein's unique and at-times profound construal of the agent-lifeworld relation to substantiate the earlier discussions of his therapeutic method, his manner of writing, and

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[178] Cavell, <u>Must We Mean What We Say?</u>, p.52.

his lack of sympathy for metaphysical delusions or transcendetalism (quasi or otherwise),
in philosophical thinking. We will bring the paper to a close with some terse remarks
about Wittgenstein and ethics, arguing that Wittgenstein's contributions to ethical
discourse is tied up in his conceptualization of language and thought containing limits
and parameters to intelligible and sensible utterance, limits which are ascertainable
through philosophical investigations.

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THE ROLE OF "WORLD-PICTURES" IN THE AGENT-LIFEWORLD RELATION

In this section we will sketch a reading of the positive formulation of
Wittgenstein's OC-era depiction of the agent-lifeworld relations, and an agent's
conditions of epistemic access to their lifeworld, so as to define Wittgenstein's notion of
"world-picture" as the final concept in his series of three key later period concepts:
"language-game", "form-of-life", and "world-picture". These are three concepts which
respectively describe the contextual, cultural, and historical character of knowledge,
agency, and lifeworld. The philosophical significance of Wittgenstein's three concepts is
deflationary: we have argued that they take the air out of rationalistic conceptualizations
of agent-lifeworld relations, specifically as concerns the issue of how an agent acquires
knowledge, and operates using language within their lifeworld horizon.

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"On Certainty" is a collection of notes on epistemological topics. It is a rough-
draft work that probes epistemological conundrums and data throughout different topics
and concerns. In these notes there are preoccupations and topics which are familiar from
PI, being re-circulated in the course of a very detailed investigation of knowledge and
certainty. There is extensive focus on language, specifically the surroundings (context
and practices) in which language is used and interpreted. Wittgenstein, in OC, famously

disputes idealist, and G.E. Moore's common-sense, explanations of the knowing relation between an agent and their surrounding environment as a largely atomistic and mind-mediated relation, by insisting on the public, social, and shared roles of custom, customary activity, bodily habituations, tradition, and routinized practical actions, in determining agent behavior. On this score, Wittgenstein is no behaviorist. He is not claiming that the greater part of human behavior can be understood solely by examining it externally, by breaking down the practical significance and meaning of what, for example, gestures accomplish rather than what an agent intends. Nor can Wittgenstein be seen as a behaviorist in bypassing what the agent says that she is doing when she is, for example, obeying a street-sign that *informs* her that the road veers left. Rather, in linking the conditions of intelligibility of agent behavior to the understanding of the language and practical action of collective habits and customs (which constitute given language-games and forms-of-life), Wittgenstein is deflating philosophical pretensions to *explain* agent behavior through philosophical means, for example, by constructing a plausible story of agent rationality which proves its worth depending on how closely it maps on to specific and hopefully recurrent empirical samples of agent behavior. This project of skewering philosophical pretension (which we've already discussed in chapter one), can be found in his later-writings; especially in Wittgenstein's three key concepts: "language-game", "form-of-life", and "world-picture" which describe, respectively, the contextual, cultural, and historical character of understanding, agency, and life-world.

Now might be a good place to remind ourselves of the definitions of these three terms so as to make clear their interconnections with each other in Wittgenstein's later-works: *Language-games* are plural, there are many of them, and they each have their proper grammars which function and are explicable with reference to their particular context of use. ex. We can follow the call and response form of worship found in a Southern Baptist church by looking at the interplay taking place between the Reverend, the choir and, the

flock. *A form-of-life* is the cultural framework which lies behind (temporally and historically provides the conditions of intelligibility for) particular language-games and customs, determining the way that agents act and see their world. ex. The Baptists' method of worshipping the Lord becomes intelligible in coming to understand the cultural significance and situatedness of the Baptist faith in the Southern United States or in the greater historical context of American Protestant Evangelicalism. Not to mention qualitative indices such as the way that song is felt to be a "voicing" of one's, and one's congregation's, love for God. *A world-picture* is to a large extent an attempt at conceptualizing this idea of a "way of seeing the world"; what Wittgenstein in OC calls "the substratum of all my enquiring and asserting"[179], as specifically evidenced by what, in this example of Baptists, the Baptists choose to doubt and what they choose not to doubt. Ex. Baptists believe, and thus do not doubt, that a fully grown person must testify to their Christian faith in being willingly held under the water. Correspondingly, they hold this positive belief while doubting that infants, who are not fully grown people, can be baptized because as infants they cannot verbally assent to this practice in asserting their Christian faith. For Baptists this belief is like a hinge on which their belief-system and world-picture turns. Wittgenstein employs this metaphor of a "hinge-proposition" because these major propositions "must stay put" if the "door"/ faith (belief-system) is to turn.[180] Further, "the propositions describing the world-picture are not all equally subject to testing"[181], and as a result it is extremely questionable whether the idea of indubitable foundations for knowledge is in the least coherent, because this relation between what one doubts and what one does not doubt is to be found in any belief or thought-system. The world-picture concept is not a fully determined concept with definite boundaries. A

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[179] Wittgenstein, On Certainty, §162.
[180] Wittgenstein, §343.
[181] Wittgenstein, §162.

world-picture is more of less discernible in the actions and speech of the person,

members of a particular form-of-life, who possess a world-picture.

The epistemological investigations in OC consider issues of epistemic access, or what we

can call the knower-known relation, from various vantage points that bring into focus the

outline of this concept of "world-picture". To accomplish this, Wittgenstein recurs time

and again to the Moorean-type example of a purported common-sense proposition, a type

of example that is dealt with in language-games where the words "I know this is my

hand" are used to the end of demonstrating whether of not, the speaking of these words

equals knowledge that "this is" one's hand. Wittgenstein synoptically surveys this

curiosity, i.e. that these words justify the subjective, though objective sounding, certainty

that "I know" that this is my hand, and in the process Wittgenstein develops a way of

thinking about a person's epistemic access to seemingly common-sense truths of this sort,

e.g. "I know that this is my hand"; "I know that water boils at 100 degrees Centigrade";

or, "I know that space-invaders do not live among us", which characterize these

"certainties" which gain their plausibility by being part of, by being embedded in a

broader, at the level of culture, and system of thought. G.H. von Wright in his lecture,

"Wittgenstein on Certainty", describes this implicit situational knowledge in the

following way,

> But perhaps one could call the 'common sense' things to which Moore
> was referring a pre-knowledge (*Vor-Wissen*). (Wittgenstein doesn't
> himself use this term.) It is better, however, to speak of *certainty*
> here...with the addition perhaps that it is a certainty in our *practice* of
> judging rather than our *intellection* of the content of our judgments.[182]

These "certainties" in "our practice of judging" might be called "lifeworld certainties" if

we were to use the idea of the agent-lifeworld relation that we have earlier argued is a

key component of the embodiment thesis, e.g. the idea that understanding and an agent's

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[182] Von Wright, "Wittgenstein on Certainty", p.172.

epistemic access to their surrounding lifeworld environment is embodied within their

practices. This embodiment of understanding in practices shares an intimate link to the

system of thought into which a person grows in; a growth which consists of mostly rote

assimilation which, later degrades or melds away into taken-for-granted background

knowledge. By this we are implying that an agent would find it difficult, maybe

impossible, to produce in the form of propositions, a list of exactly what they were

taught, when they were taught it, and how exactly the process of retaining this learning

transpired over time. Much of what a person learns, grows into is taken in or

absorbed"through a myriad of non-traditional and difficult to, rationally, account for

sources, such as the way that teenager may learn about human sexual behavior on

analogy from that of animal sexual behavior when studying the mating habits of Caribou.

An example of the difficulty in accounting for the rational sources (if in fact such sources

exist), of a child's learning process is found in OC's numbered paragraphs §535-539. We

will go through them in order so as to exegetically get at this difficulty as it presents itself

to reflection.

> But is it wrong to say: "A child that has mastered a language-game
> must *know* certain things" ? If instead of that one said "must be *able to do*
> certain things", that would be a pleonasm, yet this is just what I want to
> counter the first sentence with. –But: "a child acquires a knowledge of
> natural history". That presupposes that it can ask what such and such a
> plant is called.[183]
> The child knows what something is called if he can reply correctly to
> the question "what is that called?"[184]
> Naturally, the child who is just learning to speak has not yet got the
> concept *is called* at all.[185]

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[183]Wittgenstein, On Certainty, §534.
[184]Wittgenstein, §535.
[185] Wittgenstein, §536.

At issue here is the thought that a child has to be *fluent* in the concept of "what is that

called" if they are to be acknowledged as having acquired a knowledge of certain things.

This is a thought that establishes this way of knowing, this knowledge, as having this

particular grammar. We can observe that the child "knows what something is called"

when he replies to his teacher's questioning of "What is that bird on the window-sill

called?" in responding that "That bird sitting on the window-sill *is called* a canary." This

is a rather complex idea that the child has absorbed, or grown into. Not only has the child

learnt that objects, birds, airplanes, etc., have names which are used as descriptions of, or

titles for them, the child has also figured out, learned to operate, in the language-game of

"is called"; a language-game where certain things are addressed by or possess certain

titles that we customarily employ in their mention or description.

> Can one say of someone who hasn't this concept that he *knows* what
> such-and-such is called?[186]
> The child, I should like to say, learns to react in such-and-such a way; and in so reactin;
> at a later level.[187]
> Does it go for knowing as it does for collecting?[188]

The criterion for determining whether someone "knows what such-and-such is called" is

whether they react in the proper manner to this type of questioning; whether or not they

are able to correctly play this language-game. If the child is not able to play the game in

the right way, we can observe that it has not yet assimilated this component, this feature,

of knowing in a way that we are able to detect. Considered all together these growths in a

child-learner's education is growth into the constituent features, (patterns of speaking,

thinking, believing, and acting) of their form-of-life's "world-picture". This "world-

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[186] Wittgenstein, §537
[187] Wittgenstein, §538
[188] Wittgenstein, §539.

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picture" is held up by the aforementioned system of thought which is determinative of

things like: what is to be doubted and what is to be exempted from doubt; how one is to

decide what is an ordinary case and setting in which to ask whether, and conversely what

is an extraordinary case and setting where questioning is imbued with what Wittgenstein

in OC calls "a philosophical intention"[189]; as well as more technical and finely

differentially propositionally encoded details, such as how history is to be narrated, at

what temperature water freezes, and various other humanly *discovered* consistencies in

nature.

The concept of world-picture represents another major shift, or new topic of discussion,

from the Wittgenstein of the "Investigations"-era to that of OC. This shift in thinking can

detected where Wittgenstein writes that "a language-game does change with time."[190]
And that,

> When the language-games change, then there is a change in concepts, and
> with the concepts the meanings of words change.[191]

This "historicist" moment in his work opens up the possibility that what Wittgenstein is

describing with this epistemological concept of "world-picture", is something that can be

encompassed by historical inquiry. Theoretically, to name only one possible project, we

could inquire into and fruitfully delimit the world-pictures which lie behind what

Wittgenstein would call a culture's or a people's thought system. This shift in thinking

perhaps signals a recognition of the extent to which historical conditions and factors

would go a distance in qualitatively elaborating the contextual details of specific

language-games and forms of life. Perhaps this new direction in Wittgenstein's thought

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[189] Wittgenstein,§407.
[190] Wittgenstein, §256.

would have be worked out had he kept writing. We can't know. Yet, it would certainly

add a methodologically fruitful area for epistemological and historical (history of

thought) research into his three master concepts: language-game, form-of-life, and world-

picture, as they inhere in specific cultures and historical eras.

As we have said, the philosophical significance of Wittgenstein's three major later-period

concepts is deflationary: they take the air out of rationalistic conceptualizations of the

agent-life-world relation. These types of construal depend on an overly limited, and non-

embodied, notion of rationality thereby collecting and filtering all insights derived from

the, for example, taken-for-granted aspects of agent-hood *through* something like the

logic of a rational schema. This intention to deflated philosophical pretensions is well

expressed in his ambiguous OC aphorisms §378, "Knowledge is in the end based on

acknowledgement."; and §344, "My *life* consists in being content to accept many things."

The final section of this thesis will provide concluding remarks which briefly delve into

the relation of Wittgenstein's thought to ethical discourse.

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WITTGENSTEIN'S QUIETISM ON POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS, AND ETHICAL TOPICS

We will briefly digress on the question of the import of Wittgenstein's last-

writings for philosophical problems in politics and ethics. This digression will help

substantiate the idea that Wittgenstein, despite all appearances to the contrary, was deeply

committed to a world-view, and corresponding view of philosophical activity, which

engages in the "political" work of dispelling illusions of understanding propagated by an

ornate and overly philosophical understanding of the workings of language. This work of

dispelling and dissolving illusions is political because it radically intervenes in the

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[191] Wittgenstein, §65.

institutional debates about truth, reason, the function(s) of language, etc., and in the process chafes against prevailing institutional norms and conventions. Granted, this is an extension of the concept of the political into a realm where this expression political may seem at first glance a misfit, yet we have used this term with this connotation so as to make the case that the influence of Wittgenstein's later-period thinking is not so narrow in scope -e.g. philosophy as conceptual analysis- as he sometimes claims[192] , but has relevant methodological suggestions, concerning the limits of intelligible speech, to offer political and ethical thought.

What is political in Wittgenstein's work is not so much the content or the philosophical subject-matter which he inquires into, he is not *doing* political philosophy or philosophical ethics as traditionally understood: e.g. entering into dialogue with the tradition of European political thinking since Hobbes. Rather, it is his project's methodological will to truth and its corollary will to overcome tendencies and temptations to prattle on, in a philosophical tone of voice, well after anything that is spoken and proffered as definite and binding explanation for an activity/ process as multifaceted as for example cognition, makes any sense.[193] The drive to work through

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[192] See, ZT (p 82): "458. Philosophical investigations: conceptual investigations. The essential thing about metaphysics: it obliterates the distinction between factual and conceptual investigations."

[193] Relatedly, the problems of philosophy are rarely investigated *as* "the problems of life" or "the problems of politics", especially in political philosophy and political ethics as domains of intellectual inquiry.The urgency of the problems of life or of politics need be kept at a comfortable distance and reduced to case-studies, or broken into conceptual piece-work (analysis) which is to be done within a depoliticized realm. In the interests of intellectual rigor, this analysis need corrode, neglect, and reify the ethical engagements and moral deliberations which are prior to political action, and which constitute political thinking, so as to grasp, for example, the *modus vivendi* of a political community. Do we solve the Darfur crisis , i.e. effect the political situation, by doing research about the background of the various factions in Sudan? No. We might learn more about the roots and the history of that dispute by examining the religious affiliations operative in that country; yet, solving that problem, addressing that problem politically, as outsiders, occurs when the UN or NATO or the US/EU/African Union agree to take action, or not, fund the execution of that mandated action and negotiate with or depose, maybe neither, a government in Khartoum. Here philosophy can work to clarify the political unthought which is latent in a political situation (or it can describe surface level thinking/*realpolitik*), but it would be hocus-pocus to talk about that work of clarification as itself political because that work can at best be said to be potentially "applicable" to actual political situations, in this case we are thinking about geopolitics, as a parasite is applicable to a host. This relationship between philosophical reflection and political situations can be taken in much the way that the production of opinion in journalism reactively deploys and adheres itself onto world-events, gangland slayings, beauty-pageants,

blockages of the will and intellectual hindrances that present and mediate the world in certain obfuscatory ways, is political in the broad sense of that word which includes subjective decisionist categories like refusal (as in to refuse to *engage* in the creation of one or another political theory or moral psychology). Wittgenstein's few transcribed discussions of ethical and religious phenomenon are brief commentaries on the individual basis of ethical or religious belief, as these beliefs resist, or evade, intelligible and intersubjectively valid expression in language. The tone of these discussions is partly detached and analytical; the ethical and religious patterns of belief are surveyed respectfully, and idiosyncratically, though with faintly risible secular disdain for the flights of religious imagination (i.e. the looming specter of Judgment Day, wine and blessed host as the Body and Blood of Christ in the Catholic mass, etc).

To define more carefully, we have labeled Wittgenstein's later thinking as "secular and apolitical". By the word "secular" we mean that in Wittgenstein's philosophical oeuvre there are few traces of religion as a topic approached through admonitions or assertions of assent, or dissent, from one faith or another. And as such, keeping in mind Wittgenstein's tolerant attitude toward the diversity and intensity of belief and beliefs that people can choose to cling to, his corpus can be plausibly read as written in a secular spirit. From Wittgenstein's lectures notes, as transcribed by his students: Smythies, Rhees, and Taylor (notes which were reprinted as <u>Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief</u>), this tolerance for, or analytical detachment toward, religious language is detectable,

> Why shouldn't one form of life culminate in an utterance of belief in a Last Judgment? But I couldn't either say "Yes" or "No" to the statement that there will be such a thing. Nor "Perhaps," nor "I'm not sure." It is a statement which may not allow of any such answer.[194]

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and football games. Without these situations providing raw materials we wouldn't have political-philosophy and reportage journalism; in their absence we would, and do, have political ontology and advocacy journalism.

[194] Wittgenstein, <u>Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief</u>, p.58.

What Wittgenstein is getting at here, and throughout the "Lectures on Religious Beliefs" from which this quotation is taken, is that there are no clear-cut external points of reference (external to particular religious discourses), from which to demarcate utterances and beliefs which make sense from utterances and beliefs which lack sense. Normal sentences used in secular, non-miraculous contexts --e.g. contexts where the metaphysical powers of divinities or Ministers are not deemed operative-- link up with, or fail to link up with, conditions in which these sentences can be seen to be true (can be *verified* as true). For example, "Snow is white if and only if snow is (proves to be) white." The veracity of this sentence depends to a great extent on whether or not snow can be proven to be white; this suggests that to secure this sentence as true we would need empirical evidence. That said, the question of the definitive, or unassailable, truth of this sentence can be postponed until we can verify the color of snow and the color white, *or* we can practically act as if this warranted assertion that snow is white is reliable and move on. As well, there are obviously a variety of kinds and contexts of utterance of sentences; some sentences are spoken figuratively, and intended poetically: "Grass is the hair of the earth"; while other sentences are inflected ironically: "This is *the best* pie I have ever tasted!", as spoken by a spouse eating a burnt offering cooked up by their significant other. And though the truth-conditions of these sentences are at variance with a type of sentence like "Snow is white", a sentence purporting the existence and qualitative makeup of an object or thing, they do share a similar intelligible structure with the "snow is white" type of sentence. Quite simply, we understand the words of these types of non-literal sentences because they employ words that have use-meanings in the English language and contexts of practical action, while we struggle to understand the deviations from our customary use-meanings which the special verification exemption "status" of metaphysical statements rest upon. For example, how elements in the story of Christ's resurrection (for instance, the fact that he is purported to have come back from

the dead), offend against our scientific, and ingrained, definitions of birth and death: namely, that you live when your lungs breath, your blood flows, your brain has oxygen, when you are not put in a tomb, and so on. While at the other end of things, you are dead when you don't breathe, have no blood flow, nor oxygen getting to your brain, and so on. Jesus Christ evades these definitions as he came back from the dead as a ghost, a spirit, which was neither dead nor alive, or so they said.

Religious utterances and sentences often, and primarily, contain remarks which have no known nonmetaphysical conditions under which they can be verified. How would one verify if the Dalai Lama's being/body, as purported by Tibetan Buddhists, does actually contain the reincarnated spirit/immaterial soul substance of the One Lama, his Holiness, his thousand year oldness? And, how might we go about verifying whether the body and blood which is dispensed in a Catholic Mass is the body and blood of Christ? Perhaps we could repair to a lab with the consecrated host and the ceremonial wine in tow and chemically analyze the bread and wine. Yet, the outcome of this ridiculous experiment would only prove that the gulf between religious and atheistic world-views exists mainly in a person's capacity, or non-capacity, to correctly suspend disbelief for the sake of faith.

At issue is the unique way that metaphysical remarks seem to operate like figurative, ironical, or non-literal statements. These remarks have very different pretensions to truth, as far as "truth" is normally understood as, for example, whether a thing exists or does not exist. In religious language, and thinking, there are many possible permutations to existence (i.e. Christ as a spiritual being, Dalai Llama as a sacred being and envoy from the beyond), which ask of a believer that they open themselves to "revealed truth" which flows from the godhead or the sacred texts. For Wittgenstein, each religious discourse structures a form-of-life, be it Sunni-Muslim or Anglican-Christian; each religious discourse is self-validating and self-contained, "containing" its own *standards and*

criteria of what constitutes truth, revelation, and general discursive framework features like logical consistency, and inconsistency, error, and non-error, when to doubt and when not to doubt, etc. And, further, each religious discourse codifies itself through *practices* where, for example, papal authority in the Catholic Church determines the leadership hierarchy to whom sacred truths are revealed, and to whom is left God's political work on earth including the formulation of dogma, and rhetorical positions on worldly ethical issues and matters of core belief. From these types of facts about religious forms-of-life and language-games, Wittgenstein infers that religious discourse operates very differently from language-games which do not have metaphysical pretensions writ into their grammar. Certainly, scientific discourses are to some extent self-contained and self-validating, determine what is coherent and what not, as well as having regulatory bodies that determine leadership structures and regimes of truth. But with one big difference: claims in scientific discourses are open to the possibility of falsification. Science has procedures to change its parameters and supplement its host of facts with new experimentally verifiable positive knowledge, whereas religious discourses operate in terms of tradition and founding instances of revelation; be it the child Joseph Smith receiving divine insights while sitting in the trunk of a tree (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints), or Moses acting as an intermediary between God and the Israelites. It is clear that though there may be, as Thomas Kuhn has argued, in his book The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, a "normal science" that works out the details of a specific scientific paradigm, and a "revolutionary science" that threatens paradigm shift because it supercedes the normal science paradigm as model or explanation of natural processes, phenomenon, forces, etc, --there is no like stability in science and scientific orthodoxy that is akin to stability of religious dogma as it exists in religious discourses. This stability of dogma is couched in metaphysical phraseology and constitutes the difference between statements with sense and statements without sense. This difference

between kinds of statements is interpreted by Wittgenstein as indicative of something

akin to a section of language where linguistic sense breaks down; where language can

show us, for example, what is being said but does not allow us linguistically, or

otherwisely, mediated access to *the said*. This referent-less reference is a subject that

Wittgenstein broached in his first work the "Tractatus" where he initially discusses this

idea of there being detectable, but partially indemonstrable, limits to language; limits to

intelligible speech. The idea is that these limits to intelligible speech and language offer

the philosopher guidance as to where to language is in a sense "self-delimiting"; as

Wittgenstein writes in PI, (as rendered by Anthony Kenny in his anthology of

Wittgenstein's writings, The Wittgenstein Reader): "the goal of philosophy is to build a

wall where language comes to an end".[195]

Wittgenstein's claim is that philosophy should work to circumscribe the sayable, what

can be stated clearly. In his later period writing, post-Tractatus, this sayable is not be

found in a list of propositions, logical rules, or what he calls "logical syntax", it is to be

observed in various language-games and contexts of practical activities undertaken when

operating with linguistic signs. And though this goal of building "a wall where language

comes to an end" is reminiscent of Tractatus-era grandiose ambitions of isolating the

"general propositional form"[196], there is the key difference between generality and

specificity to keep in mind. Namely, that for the first period Wittgenstein there exists a

general propositional form, whereas for the later period Wittgenstein there are many uses

of propositions, and language broadly construed. This distinction is one where the

method or philosophical intent is similar, but the amount of humility that the philosopher

affords their observations and pronouncements differs greatly.

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[195] Kenney, The Wittgenstein Reader, p.250.

[196] "4.5. The existence of the general propositional form is proved by the fact that there cannot be a proposition whose form could not have been foreseen (i.e. constructed). The general form of a proposition is: This is how things stand." (p.43)

Wittgenstein's later period and early period agree as to the method of philosophy,

specifically that:

> The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science--i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy--and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions. Although it would not be satisfying to the other person--he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy--*this* method would be the only strictly correct one.[197]

Though the idea that the "propositions of natural science" are the only propositions

which say anything significant, or true, is finessed away in PI, OC and other later works,

Wittgenstein maintains the view that "failing to give meaning to certain signs" in one's

propositions, when doing philosophy, constitutes the utterance of metaphysical or

obfuscatory propositions. Exactly the kinds of propositions that can afford topographical

guidance as to where to locate the limits of language; where the ground is laid for

building the wall.

Throughout the various periods of his philosophical career, Wittgenstein maintains the

thesis that there are limits to language, limitations to what language can intelligibly

address; limits, which *as it were* internally circumscribe what a person can think. In the

"Tractatus" Wittgenstein puts it thus: "5.6. *The limits of my language* mean the limits of

my world" [198]; further, "What we cannot think, that we cannot think: we cannot therefore

say what we cannot think"[199]; therefore, "That the world is *my* world, shows itself in the

fact that the limits of that language (*the* language which I understand) mean the limits of

my world"[200]. This remains his view of religious discourse and various other discourses,

e.g. ethical, mystical, which purport to deal with questions pertaining to "ultimate" of

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[197] Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, p.89.
[198] Wittgenstein,p.23. Page numbers here refer to Kenny's selections from the "Tractatus" as they appear in "The Wittgenstein Reader".
[199] Ibid.
[200] Ibid.

metaphysical meaning. In the "Big Typescript" dictation notes[201] he speaks of a "feeling" of coming up against "the limits of language",

> ...among our questions there are some of a special kind which feel quite different. These questions seem to be more basic than the others. And I say: when we have this feeling, then we have come up against the limits of language.[202]

> Whenever I say: here we are at the limits of language, that sounds as if some kind of self-denial were necessary; but on the contrary, we have reached complete satisfaction, since there are *no* questions left over.[203]

This is a hard idea to swallow in one gulp. First, one needs to recall that Wittgenstein's "therapy of acceptance" relies on a notion that "knowledge is in the end based on acknowledgement". This means that we should take heed of what we can or cannot say out at the edges of intelligible speech and discourse. Out at these edges are questions of ultimate value, the right way to live one's life, the best political system for a community, and which God and theological description of the world to believe. Whatever historically emerges out of forms-of-life, language-games, and world-pictures cannot negate the importance of these three concepts as concepts. They may pose problems for ethical theories and political and religious thought, but by themselves they imply no single political system, no single religious world-view, or not single way of resolving claims to truth. They are loose-textured concepts that cultures and peoples need fill in.

Likewise, as relates the issue of Wittgenstein staying mum as to assent or dissent, there are few places in his work where Wittgenstein touches on his political or ethical views. And where he does, say in his "Lecture on Ethics" (1929) the gist of his thinking is

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[201] Page numbers here refer to Kenny's translations of selections from the "The Big Typescript" as these translations appear in "The Wittgenstein Reader".
[202] Wittgenstein, "Big Typescript", p.48.
[203] Wittgenstein, p.54.

difficult to reduce to yes or no propositions in regards to questions of belief. From the

1929 lecture (reprinted in "Philosophical Occasions"),

> My whole tendency and I believe the tendency of all men who ever tried
> To write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run up against the boundaries of
> language. This running up against the walls of our cage is perfectly,
> absolutely hopeless. Ethics so far as it springs from the desire to say
> something about the ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good, the
> absolute valuable, can be no science. What it says does not add to our
> knowledge in any sense. But it is a document of a tendency in the human
> mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for
> my life ridicule it.[204]

Though perhaps not the warmest possible acknowledgment of the intrinsic merits of the

"desire to say something about the meaning of life", Wittgenstein is definitely not boiling

religion and religious language down to nonsense and nonsensical statements. These

desires and "tendenc[ies] of the human mind" to strike up against the "boundaries of

language" are facts about the human animal irrespective of whether or not they have, or

can yield, cognitive content when their belief-statements are analyzed by scientifically

minded philosophers.

As for the question of politics, we should remember Wittgenstein's remark from CV

about, "working in philosophy-like work is architecture in many respects--is really more

a working on oneself. On one's own interpretation. On one's way of seeing things."[205]

The political component of Wittgenstein's thinking can be seen in the simultaneous

advance and withdrawal that his philosophical practice requires. While it on the one hand

sustains a restless existential project aimed at self-definition and self-understanding as the

dawning awareness of the limits of one's language as the limits of one's thought, its

stubborn honesty (manifest in, for example, the pertinacious destruction of philosophical

pretensions and idols of the mind), on the other hand precludes a more accepted idea of

the political which encompasses sociality, diplomacy and many other of the necessary

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[204] Wittgenstein, Philosophical Occasions, p.44.
[205] Wittgenstein, Culture and Value, p.16.

formalities of political behavior. This self-work requires peace and quiet for reflection
and conversation, the regal circumstances of a university perhaps, in addition this work
and its practitioners need start from a thoughtful user's familiarity with the everyday, the
ordinary, the natural, as these words have come to been defined throughout this paper:
namely, as evidenced by the *grammars* of customs, rules, and social practices of a given
form-of-life.

This is an urge to sidestep grand theorizing, system building, and the modern
philosopher's pride and secular faith in Reason, and as such may be considered a
response to the bankrupted ideologies and conditions of highly politicized, nationalized,
and racialized individual and collective existence that prevailed in the war-years of 20th
Europe. In this regard Wittgenstein's remaining mute, at least in his works, represents an
odd type of philosopher, a silent one, who can be seen to be a product of his time.
Though the style of his thinking had in roots in the prewar works and techniques of
Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell, Wittgenstein seems to have internalized the post-war
demand that thinking, the often highly abstract form of thinking that philosophy takes,
move beyond the coarse ideological irrationalism and "thinking with one's blood" that
eventuated in mass deaths and the destruction of Europe, Russia, and parts of Asia.
Though this shift in thinking may prove impossible for human beings who are so very
naturally interested in their own salvation and the destruction of their enemies and
threatening neighbors, it is a place to begin to think about how those with the leisure and
the time to reflect and write can contribute to society by providing reminders of what we
actual do and say when we speak and act. This at first glance *shallow* work is actually
among the most profound as what is right before our eyes is actually hardest to see. Hard
to see considering all the modern methods of education and conditioning that have gone

into convincing people that the only truth that is useful, that is practical, is the truth that is to be found in the methods of science and its regimes for producing truth.

In the unfinished project developed in his later-writings Wittgenstein sketches out a thoroughly realist philosophy; *realist* if this word is not taken as a position in a banal debate as to whether, and to what degree, the world exists and is accessible to human awareness, or whether it is only a figment of our imagination. Let's just accept that it does exist and deal with the consequences. For Wittgenstein the list of things and features of our experience and existence that we just accept is indefinitely long and infinitely suggestive of the network of linkages between an agent and their lifeworld. This network of linkages, as taken up in Wittgenstein's later work, affords valuable insight into human existentiality. The extent to which these insights are significant will be felt as the rapprochement between Wittgenstein and other European strains of thought is expanded, and as his therapy of acceptance takes hold.

> Pretensions are a mortgage which burdens a philosopher's capacity to think.[206]

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[206] Wittgenstein, On Certainty, §549.

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