WITTGENSTEIN'S CONCEPTION OF MEANING

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ABSTRACT

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In his later writings, Wittgenstein proposed a notion of meaning that accounts for the large variety of contexts in which we apply the term 'meaning.' This essay deals with the manner in which Wittgenstein developed his conception of meaning, emphasizing his methodology of observation and description of particular cases. Applying a reductio ad absurdum approach, Wittgenstein demonstrated that meanings of terms do not reside in physical or mental objects. As a consequence of eliminating correspondence theories of meaning, and recognizing the inadequacy of the account of meaning he had proposed earlier in his own Tractatus, Wittgenstein suggested that there remained only one conception of meaning which could not be invalidated, at least "for a large class of cases." This was the notion that meaning is a public phenomenon (in that it involves human behavior), and consequently, that the meaning of a term is its USE in the language.

ABSTRACT

WITTGENSTEIN: SA CONCEPTION DU SENS

Dans ses derniers écrits, Wittgenstein propose une notion du sens qui représente la grande variété de contextes dans lesquels nous appliquons le terme "sens". Cette étude, en soulignant la méthode d'observation de Wittgenstein et la description de cas particuliers, montrera comment il a dévelopé sa conception du sens. En appliquant une approche *reductio ad absurdum*, Wittgenstein démontre que la signification des mots ne réside pas dans le plan physique ou mental des objets. Par Conséquent, en éliminant les théories du sens dans les rapports, et en reconnaissant l'insuffisance de la valeur du sens, qu'il avait soulevé auparavant dans son propre *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein suggère qu'il ne reste qu'une seule conception du sens qui ne peut pas etre invalidée, tout au moins "dans un grand nombre de cas". C'est la notion que le sens est un phenomène social (en ce qui concerne le comportement humain), et par conséquent, que le sens d'un terme existe dans son *utilisation* dans le langage.

PREFACE

Although the objective of this thesis has not been primarily that of providing an "original" analysis of Wittgenstein's notion of meaning, the author has endeavored to contribute a new perspective regarding this highly important topic. Many of the themes I have attempted to develop, are ones which have been implied or explicated partially in the commentaries which have been credited in the text of this essay. My objective has been to provide a new perspective by combining ideas put forth by other commentators, and to thereby "weave a new fabric out of old threads."

The observation of the foreshadowing in the Tractatus, of the notion of "meaning as use," which became clearly explicated only in Wittgenstein's later writings, has been touched upon in a few other commentaries, notably in Garth Hallett's Wittgenstein's Definition of Meaning as Use. I have attempted to give new life to Hallett's observation, by exploring implications that had not been dealt with directly in Hallett's commentary, and by forming conclusions on the basis of a comparison of Hallett's interpretation with interpretations of many others.

Professor James McGilvray, who has acted as supervisor of this thesis project, suggested that I emphasize as a principal theme, the extent to which the Tractatus actually foreshadowed Wittgenstein's observation of "meaning as use." I especially wish to express my gratitude to Professor McGilvray for his guidance, and the great generosity he has displayed in providing comments and suggestions throughout the entire thesis project.

I also wish to express appreciation to my relatives and friends for their encouragement and support.

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INTRODUCTION

WITTGENSTEIN'S CONCEPTION OF LANGUAGE AND ITS ROLE IN PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY

For Wittgenstein, philosophy represents an activity whereby one struggles against the "bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language." The philosopher therefore has his essential task in arriving at an understanding of the logic of our language. From this standpoint it follows that philosophy does not represent the process of formulating "theories," but is instead an activity whereby the meanings of propositions are clarified.

Wittgenstein had perceived that the prevailing questions and propositions found in philosophical works of the past are neither true nor false, but are instead "nonsensical" in that they arose out of an essential misunderstanding of the complexities of the language. Philosophical inquiry, for Wittgenstein, was not so much a matter of doing away with this "nonsense," as the effort to recognize the nonsense in all instances. He considered the traditional propositions of metaphysics to be mere idle nonsense, despite the aura of profundity in which they were cast. In contrast, he sought to present in his own works a form of "indispensable nonsense," proposing that the propositions appearing in them could serve as "ladders" enabling those who understood them as nonsense to climb beyond them. In this way, Wittgenstein sought to facilitate the transition from the "disguised nonsense" of philosophy as it was done in the past, to the "patent nonsense" which he proposed as a corrective in his own works.

The essential objective of Wittgenstein's writings was that of providing a therapeutic measure for those who, like himself, had become engulfed by what he termed the "sickness of language." Not only did Wittgenstein recognize various sicknesses of the language itself, he also perceived sicknesses in the methods whereby philosophers of the past had attempted to explain the nature of language. Many of these sicknesses of interpretation were ones from which Wittgenstein himself had recovered. This is evident in the fact that much of the content of the later works such as the Philosophical Investigations, represented his attempts to draw attention to the misleading nature of some of the very notions he had put forth in his own early works. In his later writings, Wittgenstein confronted the errors and inadequacies of his earlier works in such a way that others might learn from his examples, and thereby avoid the pitfalls into which he had fallen.

One notion Wittgenstein continually reevaluated was his conception of meaning. It would be misleading to say that any of his writings convey an explicitly formulated "theory" of meaning. Wittgenstein did not attempt to formulate "theories," nor did he attempt to construct systematic arguments. Yet he was fascinated by our ability to use the language, and sought a means of explaining the manner in which we acquire linguistic skills. It is therefore natural that Wittgenstein became deeply concerned with the search for an explanation of meaning.

Considerable controversy has been waged as to whether Wittgenstein's writings present a consistent notion of meaning, or whether the later writings present an entirely different conception from that which was put forth in the earlier writings. The central objectives of the present essay will be to expound upon the development of Wittgenstein's conception of meaning, and to explore the extent to which the so-called "theory" of "meaning as use," a theme characteristic of his later writings, was actually foreshadowed in the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, written many years earlier. In addition, an attempt will be made to explore the implications of Wittgenstein's conception of meaning, along with an effort to evaluate the notion's applicability.

CHAPTER I

WITTGENSTEIN'S NOTION OF MEANING AS CONVEYED IN THE TRACTATUS

In the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, one of his early writings, Wittgenstein asserted that "A name means an object," [1] pointing out further that "only in the nexus of a proposition does a name have meaning." [2] In addition, he proposed that if a sign is "useless," then we must consider it meaningless.

> 3.326 In order to recognize a symbol by its sign we must observe how it is used with a sense.
>
> 3.327 A sign does not determine a logical form unless it is taken together with its logico-syntactical employment.
>
> 3.328 If a sign is useless, it is meaningless. That is the point of Occam's maxim.
> (If everything behaves as if a sign had meaning, then it does have meaning.) [3]

The above passage from Tractatus proposed an essentially operationalistic notion of meaning. The fact that Wittgenstein drew the connection between meaning and use, in this passage of the earlier work, makes it evident that the conception of "meaning as use," which was explored in great detail in Wittgenstein's later writings, was foreshadowed in the earlier Tractatus.

At the time he wrote the Tractatus, Wittgenstein formulated his conception of meaning in a manner that has become known as the "picture theory of meaning."

According to that theory, language serves as a kind of mirror reflecting the world. Propositions serve as "pictures" or models of reality. We form a picture of facts to ourselves, and apply it as a kind of "ruler" which we hold up to reality. [4] In logical space, a situation (which can be either the existence or non-existence of certain states of affairs) can be represented by a picture. The elements of a picture correspond to, or are representatives of, objects related to one another in a determinate way. Because the picture represents a model of reality, the elements of the picture (which correspond to existing objects) must also be related to one another in a determinate way. Wittgenstein referred to the connection of the elements of a picture as its "structure," and to the possibility of this structure as "the pictorial form of the picture." [5] Pictorial form thus represents the possibility that things in the world (i.e., the counterparts of elements of the picture) are arranged in the same way as the elements of the picture. Moreover, the possibility that the elements of reality are arranged according to the same configuration as that of the elements of the picture, is entailed by the pictorial form. Thus the possibility of the situation represented by the picture is contained in the picture, despite the fact that there might be no existing situation corresponding to it.

Because a picture represents only the possibility of the configuration of facts corresponding to it, it can be said to be either in agreement with reality or not in agreement, correct or incorrect, true or false. In order for a picture to be representative, its logical form must be the same as that of reality. This is true regardless of whether it represents "rightly or falsely," in that the picture represents a possible state of affairs in logical space. Truth is not an intrinsic element of the picture; there is no way of ascertaining from the picture itself whether an actual situation corresponding to it exists.

Propositions represent such pictures of reality, and as such they can be either true or false, accurate or inaccurate. A proposition is true if it represents an existing state of affairs. A proposition is false if it asserts the existence of a situation in the absence of a corresponding situation in the world. Moreover, a proposition is false if it pictures the relation between existing objects in a manner incongruous to the actual relation. Yet regardless of whether a proposition is true or false, it refers to a possible relation between existing objects, and its perceptible sign therefore constitutes "a projection of a possible situation." As Wittgenstein stated in the Tractatus,

> 3.11 We use the perceptible sign of a proposition (spoken or written, etc.) as a projection of a possible situation.
> The method of projection is to think out the sense of the proposition.
>
> 3.12 I call the sign with which we express a thought a propositional sign.--And a proposition is a propositional sign in its projective relation to the world.[6]

A highly important aspect of the picture theory of meaning is the distinction between Sinn and Bedeutung. Sinn refers to the sense of a proposition. As such, Sinn represents that which is a possibility, and not necessarily a reality. The sense of a proposition is the same regardless of the proposition's truth value, and is therefore independent of whether there corresponds to it an actual state of affairs. Bedeutung, in contrast, refers to something actual or real. This term, which is usually translated in the English text as 'meaning,' was used by Wittgenstein to designate the referent of a name. At the time he wrote the Tractatus, Wittgenstein maintained that the meanings of names are existing objects, further designating that whereas a name has Bedeutung, it does not have Sinn. In the case of propositions, the reverse is true; propositions can have Sinn, but not Bedeutung. Names are "primitive," in that they are signs which cannot be dissected any further by means of a definition. A proposition, in contrast, is construed as being essentially "a function of the expressions contained in it." [7] Names, Wittgenstein indicated, are like "points," whereas propositions are like "arrows." [8]

According to the Tractatus, a proposition is characterized by "essential and accidental features." [9] The former are those features which are indispensable in order for the proposition to express its sense (Sinn). The latter are those which merely result from the particular manner in which the propositional sign is produced. In the same way that a musical theme is no mere "medley of notes," a propositional sign is no mere "medley of words." A propositional sign represents instead "a fact," in that it has the capacity to express a sense. As Wittgenstein declared, "Only facts can express a sense, a set of names cannot." [10] In this way, the author of the Tractatus argued that the perceptible sign of a proposition serves as a projection of a possible situation.

The method of projection consists in the thinking out of a proposition's sense. This process is what constitutes the propositional sign as "a thought"; propositional signs, when applied and considered carefully, became "thoughts." Conversely, "a thought is a proposition with a sense." [11] Yet from another standpoint, a proposition can be said to "express a thought," in that the elements of its propositional sign correspond to the objects of thought. Wittgenstein referred to the elements of such propositional signs as "simple signs," designating them as "completely analyzed." [12] Later, he stipulated that there can be one and only one complete analysis for a proposition.

Names, in contrast, cannot be analysed or dissected even by means of a definition. They represent primitive signs, and as such they can be utilized as the elements of the propositional sign. Names, when appearing in propositions, have meaning (Bedeutung), because, when appearing in the context of a proposition, they represent objects. Yet the names do not put the objects into words; they merely make possible the construction of propositions which say "how things are," without telling "what they are." To the question as to whether it is possible for us to understand two names in the absence of the knowledge as to whether they signify the same or different things, Wittgenstein's reply is negative. Wittgenstein indicated that in the case of someone who knows the meaning of an English word and a German word having the same meaning, it would not be possible for that individual to be unaware that their meanings are the same. In such a case, the individual would be capable of translating each as the other. According to Wittgenstein's explanation, the individual recognizes that the meanings of the two terms are equivalent, as a consequence of his observation that they are used in the same way.

Of considerable importance is the question as to whether the Tractatus concept of Bedeutung (according to which names refer to fixed objects) does not rest implicitly on a "theory" about the use of words as names for objects. The very possibility of propositions derives from the fact that signs can serve as representations of objects. An essential feature of propositions is that they communicate a new sense to us; yet they must do so by means of "old words." Only to the extent that a proposition serves as a picture, can the proposition be said to assert something, and only to the extent that it is logically articulated, can the proposition be regarded as a picture of a state of affairs. Instead of saying, "This proposition has such and such a sense," one can just as well say, "This proposition represents such and such state of affairs." [13] A proposition thus serves as a representation of a state of affairs, by combining old words to form a new sense, so that

> 4.0311 One name stands for one thing, another for another thing, and they are combined with one another. In this way the whole group—like a tableau vivant—presents a state of affairs.[14]

As an illustration of the manner in which language serves the purpose of projection, Wittgenstein drew an interesting analogy between language and music. In the same way that the musical idea, the written notation, and the sound waves produced in accord with the designated pattern, all stand in correlation to one another, there is an internal relation of depicting, that is characteristic of language and its ties with the world. This internal relation is referred to in the Tractatus as a "common logical plan." As Wittgenstein illustrated,

> 4.014 A gramophone record, the musical idea, the written notes, and the sound-waves, all stand to one another in the same internal relation of depicting that holds between language and the world.
>
> They are all constructed according to a common logical plan.
>
> (Like the two youths in the fairy-tale, their two horses, and their lilies. They are all in a certain sense one.)
>
> 4.0141 There is a general rule by means of which the musician can obtain the symphony from the score, and which makes it possible to derive the symphony from the groove on the gramophone record, and, using the first rule, to derive the score again. That is what constitutes the inner similarity between these things which seem to be constructed in such entirely different ways. And that rule is the law of projection which projects the symphony into the language of musical notation. It is the rule for translating this language into the language of gramophone records.[15]

Understanding a proposition entails knowing the situation it represents. Further, in order for someone to understand a proposition, it is not necessary for that individual to have had its sense explained. A world is constructed by the proposition with the help of a "logical scaffolding." Because of this, the author of the Tractatus asserted that in the true proposition one can actually see all the features of the world. In the case that the proposition is false, one can draw conclusions from it. In attempting to comprehend the manner in which propositions communicate, Wittgenstein suggested a consideration of hieroglyphic writing, which explicitly pictures the facts it describes. Understanding a proposition entails knowing what is the case, if the proposition is true; the proposition is understood if all its constituent parts are understood.

The constituent parts of a proposition are the words (names) of which it is composed. The objects which are the meanings of the names are themselves fixed or static, whereas the configuration in which they are arranged is variable and changing. An "atomic fact" is formed by a configuration wherein objects are connected to each other as are links of a chain; objects are combined in a definite way. The manner in which they are combined is the structure of the atomic fact. The possibility of the structure is its form. In this way, the picture is linked to reality. Indeed, Wittgenstein considered such "pictures" as being like a scale applied to reality.

Although propositions serve as representations of reality, they cannot represent that which they must have in common with reality in order to serve as its representations: logical form. The depiction of logical form presupposes our ability to place ourselves and the propositions outside the realm of logic, a requirement that makes evident the impossibility of such a depiction. To quote Wittgenstein:

> 4.0312 The possibility of propositions is based on the principle that objects have signs as their representatives.
>
> My fundamental idea is that the 'logical constants' are not representatives; that there can be no representatives of the logic of facts.[16]

The fact that propositions cannot represent logical form is mirrored in the propositions themselves. That which is mirrored in language cannot itself be represented by the language, nor can it be expressed by us in language, even though it expresses itself in language. For purposes of the present discussion, it will be helpful to think of the act of expressing, as similar to that of conveying. Furthermore, the distinction between what is involved in expression or conveyance on the one hand, and "representation" on the other, should be kept in mind. Taking this into account, it can be seen that the logical form of reality is shown or exhibited by the proposition, but it is not represented by the proposition.

The relation of the logical form of propositions to reality, can be better understood in light of Wittgenstein's treatment of formal concepts. Every variable is considered in the Tractatus as the sign of a formal concept. This is because the form of every variable is the same regardless of the variable's value. Formal concepts are presented in logical symbolism by variables rather than by functions of classes. The word 'object,' for example, when rightly used, is "expressed in conceptual notation by a variable name." [17] This is also true of words such as 'Complex,' 'Fact,' 'Function,' 'Number,' and so on. They cannot be considered as "primitive ideas" because to consider them as such would be to imply that they could be introduced alongside the objects which fall under them. Instead, the formal concept is already given with an object falling under it. [18] A large variety of senseless "pseudo-propositions" can result from the attempt to apply formal concepts, as if they serve the same function as those objects which fall under them. For example, one cannot say, "There are objects," in the same way one says, "There are books," or "There are 100 books." In order for us to use language at all, elementary propositions must be possible. In order for a sentence which is not an elementary proposition to have a sense, it must be a collection of elementary propositions. Compound propositions contain nothing more than the content of their elements. Their meaning and truth value is derived from that of the constituent elementary propositions. Moreover, the assertion of a compound proposition is nothing more than the assertion of the elementary propositions of which it is composed.

Elementary propositions derive their meaning and truth from their relation to the world, rather than from their relationship to other propositions. They represent simple, unanalyzable propositions, and can best be described as an arrangement of names presenting a picture of a state of affairs or arrangement of objects. The logical combination of signs corresponds to a definite logical combination of meanings of those signs.

The names themselves, like the objects, are in a sense "incomplete," in that they can only be arranged in a limited number of ways. Furthermore, names have meaning only within the context of a proposition. Only by means of observing the manner in which they are used are we able to discern meanings of terms.

The question arises as to whether a conception of meaning as "the act of meaning" is antagonistic to that of "meaning as use," or whether the former conception is merely a variation of the latter. It seems that the tendency to consider the two notions as polarized, has led to a large number of confusions regarding the transition from Wittgenstein's earlier conception of language, to that of his later writings. Hidé Ishiguro, in an article entitled "Use and Reference of Names," [19] draws attention to the fact that many of the ideas revolving around such a contrast actually arise from a misunderstanding of the

Tractatus conception of the nature of the act whereby a name refers to an object. As Ishiguro declares,

> People have often contrasted the picture theory of meaning of the Tractatus with the use theory of meaning of the Philosophical Investigations. Many have also argued that the picture theory of meaning is based on the concept of 'naming', since in the picture theory language catches on to reality through names which stand for objects. This has led people to talk as if the use theory of meaning was an expression of Wittgenstein's later rejection of his Tractatus theory. I believe that talk of such contrast is highly misleading, and that it arises out of a misunderstanding of the Tractatus view of what it is for a name to refer to (bedeuten) an object. . . . It seems to me to be a truism that a word or a symbol cannot have the role of referring to a fixed object without having a fixed use. How could there be a philosophical doctrine of expressions and the objects to which they referred which was not at the same time a theory about the use of those expressions? No interesting philosophical question about the meaning of such expressions can be based on a contrast between 'naming' and 'use'. The interesting question, I think is whether the meaning of a name can be secured independently of its use in propositions by some method which links it to an object, as many, including Russell, have thought, or whether the identity of the object referred to is only settled by the use of the name in a set of propositions. If the latter holds, then the problem of the object a name denotes *is* the problem of the use of the name. 20

Although Wittgenstein maintained that an expression has no meaning when appearing outside the context of a proposition, he did *not* say that the meaning of an expression is "determined" by the proposition in which it appears. The only signs which might possibly have meaning outside use are "genuine proper names" designating objects whose existence is assured. This problem had been dealt with earlier by Russell in his theory of definite descriptions. Because that theory was in some respects similar to the Tractatus concept of "Names," it seems germane at this point to provide a brief description of Russell's theory.

According to Russell's theory of definite descriptions, the meaning of a name is the object it denotes. That is, if a word or a phrase does name something, then its meaning is that which it names. His theory takes into account that certain kinds of words are used in ways other than as names. Moreover, Russell's theory does not presuppose that every word or phrase names an object, but that in the case of those that do serve as "names," we are justified in saying that their meanings are the objects which they name. In applying his theory to nouns, Russell maintained that the meaning of a noun is the object it names, and that its meaning is the same regardless of the context in which it appears. According to Russell's theory, it does not matter whether the noun appears in isolation or in a sentence. Its meaning remains unaltered.

Russell's theory made it evident that the tendency to consider definite descriptions as proper nouns leads to error. To insist that definite descriptions name objects, and that those objects are their meanings, leads into problems such as those exemplified in encounters with phrases such as 'the present King of France.' Russell's theory asserted that no definite descriptive phrase can be a proper noun, regardless of what the world contains. The assumption that definite descriptions are proper names must, according to Russell, be abandoned. Definite descriptions appearing in isolation (not in the context of a proposition) are thus to be regarded as meaningless, yet sentences containing them can still be meaningful. An example of such a proposition would be 'The present King of France is bald.' This proposition would be an example of one which, according to Russell's view, is meaningful, but false (because part of its analysis is false).

In working out his theory of definite descriptions, Russell noted the important contrast between real and apparent logical form of propositions, a contrast which was later to be highly influential in Wittgenstein's conception of language. This contrast is evident in the analysis of 'The author of Waverly was Scotch.' It is evident that in the analysis, the definite descriptive phrase, ' the author of Waverly,' disappears. As George Pitcher described Russell's standpoint regarding this process,

> Russell thought that when such a correct analysis of a proposition is given, it tells you what the proposition really says, what it is really about. Notice that in the analysis, the definite descriptive phrase 'the author of Waverly' which occurs in the original analyzed proposition, entirely disappears. Therefore, since the analysis specifies what the proposition really says, "'the author of Waverly' is not a constituent of the proposition at all. There is no constituent really there corresponding to the descriptive phrase." [*] The original proposition appears to refer directly to (i.e., to name) something called 'the author of Waverly,' but the analysis shows, according to Russell, that this appearance is deceptive.[21]

One highly important feature of the picture theory of meaning, is the fact that Wittgenstein accepted the theory of definite descriptions, and applied it to the picture theory. If one fails to take this into account, one might infer from some statements in the Tractatus, that for each word appearing in a proposition, there must correspond to it a specific object in the situation "pictured" by the proposition. Strictly speaking, only elementary propositions are at once pictures of the situations they describe. Complex propositions are revealed to be "pictures" only upon analysis into the elementary propositions of which they are composed. As Pitcher declares,

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* For this and all subsequent asterisks appearing in brackets within quotations, please refer to the Author's Note on p. 118.

> One important feature of Wittgenstein's picture theory of propositions should be borne in mind, if we are to realize that certain apparent objections to it are not really damaging. It might be objected, for example, that the theory is incompatible with other things Wittgenstein has said. If a proposition is a picture of a fact, then every word or phrase in it must directly stand for something, as every note in the musical score directly stands for a particular sound; and so in the proposition "The author of *Waverly* is Scotch," the phrase 'the author of *Waverly*' must directly represent some object. But according to the theory of definite descriptions, accepted by Wittgenstein, this is not the case. Furthermore, it is absurd to suggest that in the proposition "The average American male likes baseball," the subject phrase directly names an object, as the picture theory would require it to. These and other objections to the picture theory are at once swept away by Wittgenstein's insistence that propositions *as ordinarily expressed* are not, in that form, pictures of the situations they describe. [*] In the strictest sense, it is only elementary propositions, those consisting entirely of names, that are pictures of situations. But when any other kind of proposition is completely analyzed into elementary propositions--i.e., when its true nature as a truth-function of elementary propositions is fully exhibited--then it, too, is a picture of the situation it describes. And even then, the non-elementary proposition depicts something only in virtue of the fact that its component elementary propositions do so.[22]

Wittgenstein argued in the *Tractatus* that the fact that there are elementary propositions necessitates that there must be objects which serve as the bearers of the names of which the elementary propositions are composed. If there were no such objects, Wittgenstein argued, elementary propositions would consist of terms which are meaningless and would thus be meaningless themselves. Because any meaningful language must have its foundation in names, and because the meaningsof all propositions depend on elementary propositions, it would then follow that there could be no meaningful propositions. As Wittgenstein stated in the *Tractatus*,

> 4.2211 Even if the world is infinitely complex, so that every fact consists of infinitely many states

> of affairs and every state of affairs is composed of infinitely many objects, there would still have to be objects and states of affairs.[23]

Wittgenstein followed Russell's lead in maintaining that a name must denote something simple. A term which qualifies as a name, is one which is unanalyzable, and not verbally definable. Yet it could be a term which is defined ostensively, by pointing, saying, "This is a ______." This type of definition applies when the term denotes something observable. For Wittgenstein, as for Russell, a name must denote something simple, that is, something without components of any kind. When Wittgenstein used the term 'object,' he used it to draw attention to the fact that the denotation of a name is something simple.

At the time he wrote the Tractatus, Wittgenstein maintained that in order for any term which is not a logical constant to have meaning, the term must refer to an existent object. The term must either directly or indirectly designate a thing or a group of things which actually exist. Further, in order for a proposition to be considered meaningful, its constituents must be terms that have meaning. According to this view, a proposition is meaningful only if its constituents refer to existing objects. But this account raises serious problems. Take, for example, the proposition, 'Horatio is Hamlet's best friend.' Does the Tractatus imply that we must regard such a proposition as "meaningless" because we are unable to establish the existence of an object which corresponds to the proper name 'Horatio'? It seems that the Tractatus account of language does not avoid this problem.

Whereas a name must have an object corresponding to it in order for it to have meaning, a proposition need not have a corresponding "fact" or arrangement of objects, in order for it to have a sense. Propositions are not names designating facts or existing states of affairs. Yet the sense of a proposition can be regarded as the situation it describes.

> 4.031 In a proposition a situation is, as it were, constructed by way of experiment.
> Instead of, 'This proposition has such and such a sense', we can simply say, 'This proposition represents such and such a situation'.[24]

One might wish to interject that the above passage negates the possibility of false propositions. Although it might appear that it does, this passage can be reconciled with the existence of false propositions by the fact that when Wittgenstein referred to a "situation," he was referring to a mere possible state of affairs, that is, one that is not necessarily actual. As Wittgenstein stated,

> 2.06 The existence and non-existence of states of affairs is reality.
> (We also call the existence of states of affairs a positive fact, and their non-existence a negative fact.)[25]

Reality includes not only "positive facts," but "negative facts" as well. Positive facts represent existing states of affairs, while negative facts designate nonactual states. George Pitcher asserts that Wittgenstein's view attributed to nonactual states of being, "a shadowy kind of being."[26] Although full existence is not attributed to nonexistent situations, some form of "subsistence in a strange realm of nonexistence" is considered or predicated of them.[27]

According to the Tractatus view, the "world" is composed exclusively of all positive atomic facts, whereas "reality" is inclusive of all facts, whether positive or negative. From a superficial standpoint, it might appear that there is some inconsistency in Wittgenstein's account of the contrast between "the world" and "reality." The following statement might be regarded as confusing, when evaluated in light of other statements appearing in the Tractatus:

> 2.063 The sum-total of reality is the world. [28]

The above passage would seem to imply that the world, too, consists of both positive and negative facts. One possible way of interpreting this statement, however, is that which is suggested by James Griffin, namely that if all positive facts are given, the totality of negative facts are also given, in that the latter is entailed by the former. It could be that positive and negative facts are, at least in one sense, inseparable. This could be maintained in conjunction with the premise that only positive atomic facts comprise parts of the world. [29]

Positive and negative facts can be represented by propositions. Propositions, according to the Tractatus view, represent not mere spatial pictures, but "logical pictures" of reality as we imagine reality. Further, in a picture there must be as many parts as there are in that which is represented by the picture. This holds also of propositions. Propositions, like spatial pictures, show us what they represent. In a manner similar to that in which a picture shows what it represents, so

> 4.022 A proposition shows its sense. [30]

Yet it should be pointed out that the proposition does not "represent" its sense. With this in mind, it seems reasonable to describe the similarities of pictures and propositions as George Pitcher does in the following passage:

> A picture has just the features which we noted a proposition has. It represents some situation beyond itself, and I can tell which situation it is merely by looking at the picture. No one need explain to me what situation it depicts; I can "read it off" from the picture itself. [31]

According to the picture theory of meaning, non-elementary propositions picture a state of affairs only upon analysis. Only by virtue of the fact that their component elementary propositions depict states of affairs, can the non-elementary complex propositions be said to serve as pictures. In order to gain a clear understanding of the manner in which propositions serve as pictures, it is necessary to clarify the nature of elementary propositions.

The concept of an elementary proposition put forth in the Tractatus maintains that an elementary proposition is more than a mere series of names. An elementary proposition can more appropriately be thought of as a "nexus" or concatenation of names arranged in a significant manner. As Wittgenstein said of a propositional sign:

> 3.14 What constitutes a propositional sign is that in it its elements (the words) stand in a determinate relation to one another.
>
> A propositional sign is a fact.[32]

This should make it clear that an elementary proposition is no mere "list" of names nor is the sign of an elementary proposition. Take, for example the proposition "aRb." According to this proposition, object "a" stands in "R" relation to object "b." Because the propositional sign has ink marks and/or sounds as its components, it is much more like an ordinary picture than the proposition itself. An even more accurate way of stating the case was provided in the Tractatus:

> 3.1432 Instead of, 'The complex sign "aRb" says that a stands to b in the relation R', we ought to put, 'That "a" stands to "b" in a certain relation says that aRb'.[33]

Convention dictates that the signs which together compose the sign of the proposition must be placed in an order which correlates with the order of their counterparts in the proposition itself. A mere group of marks on paper does not in itself constitute a picture. A picture of a possible situation is constituted by such an arrangement only if the elements of the arrangement correspond to certain actual objects. As Wittgenstein stated,

> 2.1514 The pictorial relationship consists of the correlations of the picture's elements with things.[34]

Furthermore, the marks which taken together form the visible sign of the proposition must be placed intentionally in that manner by some conscious agent. The group of marks is not, in itself, a picture of any kind. Indeed, the very concept of a "picture" entails a set of marks which have been arranged in a determinate manner for a specific reason, namely that of representing a possible situation.

It should be kept in mind that a proposition constitutes more than a mere picture; it constitutes what Pitcher refers to as "a definite representational picture."[35] Every proposition is, according to the Tractatus view, a definite representational picture of a specific determinate situation. The proposition is constituted in the projective relationship of the propositional sign to the situation described. The propositional sign takes on the projective relationship to the world when its sense becomes thought out. As Wittgenstein described our use of the perceptible sign of a proposition:

> 3.11 We use the perceptible sign of a proposition (spoken or written, etc.) as a projection of a possible situation.
>
> The method of projection is to think out the sense of the proposition.[36]

In this way, the process whereby the sense of the proposition becomes thought out actually constitutes the use of the propositional sign to represent a definite situation. In the case that the proposition is an elementary one (one having an "atomic fact" as its corresponding situation), thinking out the sense of the proposition will involve the following: (1) using each component of the propositional sign as designating one specific object; and (2) intending to convey that the arrangement of those objects has the same structure as that of the proposition. As George Pitcher illustrates,

> So when I write down or utter an elementary propositional sign, and at the same time mean by it that certain definite objects are arranged in a certain definite way, I am thereby thinking the sense of the proposition, and using the propositional sign to express the proposition. It is only in this way that it is a picture of one specific state of affairs and no other. 37

Only in so far as a proposition is a picture can it be regarded as "stating" something. As the author of the Tractatus declared,

> A proposition states something only in so far as it is a picture. 38

A difficulty arises here. If a proposition is by definition a picture, it would seem redundant for Wittgenstein to make the above statement. There is, however, another manner in which the above passage could be interpreted. George Pitcher suggests that the above statement be interpreted as if it were as follows: "A proposition states something definite only in so far as it is a picture." 39 Because Wittgenstein held that propositions have the objective of pointing beyond themselves by describing definite situations, he considered propositions as "having content," or saying something definite, only by virtue of their capacity to provide a picture of a possible situation.

According to Wittgenstein, if a sign does not behave as if it had meaning, it is meaningless. Take for example, the phrase 'Socrates is identical.' It is evident that the word 'identical' as it appears in the above passage is meaningless, because the phrase in which it appears does not qualify as a proposition. It does not qualify as a proposition, because it does not allow a manner of determining the meaning of 'identical' in some particular combination. The Tractatus view of meaning makes it evident that, ultimately, it is not from the sign itself that we infer its meaning, but instead, it is from its application.

> 3.262 What signs fail to express, their application shows. What signs slur over, their application says clearly. 40

Even more explicit is his statement that "In order to recognize a symbol by its sign, we must observe how it is used with a sense." 41 The above passages make it evident that the "meaning as use" criterion, which was not explicitly conveyed until Wittgenstein's later works, was worked out in a somewhat embryonic form in the earlier Tractatus.

This foreshadowing of the later conception is further manifested in the fact that the Tractatus provides an explanation for the possibility of applying one and the same sign for two different symbols. In the same way that a proposition, in its projective relation to a state of affairs, becomes a propositional sign, so a name, in its projective relation to a specific object, becomes "an elementary sign"—that is, one that stands for an object. The distinction between symbol and sign consists in the fact that whereas we can perceive the sign, we cannot perceive symbols. One and the same sign can be utilized to designate two different symbols. As Wittgenstein stated,

> 3.321 So one and the same sign (written or spoken, etc.) can be common to two different symbols—in which case they will signify in different ways. 42

The above passage definitely represents a foreshadowing of the "meaning as use" approach, more clearly formulated in Wittgenstein's later writings. It and many other passages in the Tractatus make it evident that a name has meaning only in the nexus of a proposition. If a sign can be common to two or more symbols, then the manner in which the sign is being used must be designated by the entire context. This includes not only the linguistic setting in which the sign occurs, but also the extra-linguistic, social context in which the sign is used. The emphasis on the use of a term and on the context in which its use occurs was to become one of the watchwords of the later writings.

Although Wittgenstein continued to pursue the exploration of the application of terms in searching for their meanings, the process whereby he proceeded toward his later conception of language involved considerable analysis and criticism on his part, of some of the very notions he had put forth in the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. In addition, his later writings were concerned with the criticism of several theories of meaning which had been previously proposed by other philosophers. It will be the purpose of the next chapter to expound upon some of those theories, and to evaluate Wittgenstein's criticisms of them.

FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER I

[1] Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (New York: Humanities Press, 1961), Sec. 3.203.

[2] Ibid., Sec. 3.3.

[3] Ibid., Secs. 3.326, 3.327, 3.328.

[4] Ibid., Sec. 2.1512.

[5] Ibid., Sec. 2.15.

[6] Ibid., Secs. 3.11, 3.12.

[7] Ibid., Sec. 3.318.

[8] Ibid., Sec. 3.144.

[9] Ibid., Sec. 3.34.

[10] Ibid., Sec. 3.142.

[11] Ibid., Sec. 4.

[12] Ibid., Sec. 3.201.

[13] Ibid., Sec. 4.031.

[14] Ibid., Sec. 4.0311.

[15] Ibid., Secs. 4.014, 4.0141.

[16] Ibid., Sec. 4.0312.

[17] Ibid., Sec. 4.1272.

[18] Ibid., Sec. 4.12721.

[19] Hide Ishiguro, "Use and Reference of Names," Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein, ed. by Peter Winch (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969) pp. 20-50.

[20] Ibid., pp. 20, 21.

[21] George Pitcher, The Philosophy of Wittgenstein (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1964) p. 26.

[22] Ibid., Pitcher, pp. 80, 81.

[23] Wittgenstein, Tractatus, Sec. 4.2211.

[24] Ibid., Sec. 4.031.

[25] Ibid., Sec. 2.06.

[26] Pitcher, *The Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, p. 47.

[27] Ibid., p. 48.

[28] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, Sec. 2.063.

[29] Pitcher, p. 48.

[30] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, Sec. 4.022.

[31] Pitcher, p. 77.

[32] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, Sec. 3.14.

[33] Ibid., Sec. 3.1432.

[34] Ibid., Sec. 2.1514.

[35] Pitcher, p. 91.

[36] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, Sec. 3.11.

[37] Pitcher, p. 94.

[38] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, Sec. 4.03.

[39] Pitcher, p. 98.

[40] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, Sec. 3.262.

[41] Ibid., Sec. 3.326.

[42] Ibid., Sec. 3.321.

CHAPTER II

WITTGENSTEIN'S OPPOSITION TO MENTALISTIC CONCEPTIONS OF MEANING

In evaluating Wittgenstein's reasons for rejecting mentalistic accounts of the nature of meaning, it is important to note the extent to which Wittgenstein was influenced by Frege's concept of language. One aspect of his approach, which seems to have arisen directly from Frege's influence, was the attempt to draw the distinction between the psychological and the logical, the subjective and the objective. Of relevance to the present topic is the following passage from Frege's The Foundations of Arithmetic:

> In the enquiry that follows, I have kept to three fundamental principles:
>
> always to separate sharply the psychological from the logical, the subjective from the objective;
>
> never to ask for the meaning of a word in isolation, but only in the context of a proposition;
>
> never to lose sight of the distinction between concept and object.
>
> In compliance with the first rule, I have used the word "idea" always in the psychological sense, and have distinguished ideas from concepts and from objects. If the second rule is not observed, one is almost forced to take as the meanings of words mental pictures or acts of the individual mind, and so to offend against the first rule as well.[1]

This anti-psychological bias, which seems to have permeated Frege's writings, appears to have been highly influential in Wittgenstein's philosophy of language. Wittgenstein reiterated what Frege, before him, had stressed, namely the distinction between concept and idea, interpreting the latter as some kind of image or psychological phenomena.

Throughout his writings (even in the earlier Tractatus), Wittgenstein rejected all arguments that posit meaning as a mentalistic event or process accompanying the utterance of a word. In his later works, his opposition to mentalistic arguments becomes more explicit. In the Blue Book, Wittgenstein drew attention to the error involved in the argument that the mind is like a reservoir in which the meanings of words are collected. To quote an illustrative metaphor which appears in that work:

> The fault which in all our reasoning about these matters we are inclined to make is to think that images and experiences of all sorts, which are in some sense closely connected with each other, must be present in our mind at the same time. If we sing a tune we know by heart, or say the alphabet, the notes or letters seem to hang together, and each seems to draw the next after it, as though they were a string of pearls in a box, and by pulling out one pearl I pulled out the one following it.
>
> Now there is no doubt that, having the visual image of a string of beads being pulled out of a box through a hole in the lid, we should be inclined to say: "These beads must all have been together in the box before". But it is easy to see that this is making a hypothesis. I should have had the same image if the beads had gradually come into existence in the hole of the lid. We easily overlook the distinction between stating a conscious mental event, and making a hypothesis about what one might call the mechanism of the mind. All the more as such hypotheses or pictures of the working of our mind are embodied in many of the forms of expression of our everyday language. [2]

In the Blue Book, Wittgenstein made it evident that in assuming the existence of some mental pattern or set of patterns as being prior to the linguistic utterance, or singing of a tune, we are confusing the utterance or performance with a kind of recorded form of the pattern, such as that of a gramophone record.

> Ask yourself such a question as: "How long does it take to know how to go on?" Or is it an instantaneous process? Aren't we making a mistake like mixing up the existence of a gramophone record of a tune with the existence of the tune? And aren't we assuming that whenever a tune passes through existence there must be some sort of gramophone record of it from which it is played? 3

We are frequently misled by the commonly asserted phrase 'to express an idea before one's mind.' This phrase seems to presuppose that the "idea before one's mind," is there prior to its being acknowledged and expressed. Furthermore, the phrase seems to involve the presumption that the idea is formulated in some kind of "mental language," and that the task at hand is that of translating the idea from the mental language into verbal language, as if the idea were already expressed but in a different language.

Wittgenstein sought to show that it is unnecessary to assume the occurence of mentalistic events preceding or accompanying the utterance of words. Nothing is gained by presuming the intervention of a shadow between the expression of a thought and the reality with which it is concerned. The sentence itself is the picture of reality. As Wittgenstein asserted in the Blue Book,

> Let us now revert to the point where we said that we gained nothing by assuming that a shadow must intervene between the expression of our thought and the reality with which our thought is concerned. We said that if we wanted a picture of reality the sentence itself is such a picture (though not a picture by similarity). 4

Some of the suggestions presented in the Blue Book seem to indicate the possibility or probability that the processes involved in "speaking and simultaneously meaning what one speaks" and "speaking thoughtlessly," might not be distinguished by something which accompanies the utterance at the time it is spoken. Rather, the distinction may very well reside in what happens either before or after the utterance of the expression. In response to the question as to whether we can speak a sentence in the absence of the mental process ordinarily assumed as accompanying the utterance of the sentence, Wittgenstein replied,

> Speaking a sentence without thinking consists in switching on speech and switching off certain accompaniments of speech. 5

The experience of thinking out the content of a proposition may be one and the same as the experience of asserting the expression. It might also consist of this experience in addition to others. If we look carefully at the use of such expressions as 'thinking,' 'meaning,' and 'wishing,' we discover that there is nothing about the use of such expressions that necessitates our assuming a "peculiar act of thinking," which is independent of the act of expressing our thought. There is no reason to suppose the existence of an independent act of thinking "stowed away in some peculiar medium." 6

One reason for Wittgenstein's opposition to mentalistic conceptions of meaning, was his recognition that it would be entirely possible for us to respond to linguistic utterances in the appropriate manner without having recourse to mental images. Wittgenstein perceptively drew attention to the possibility that what we consider appropriate responses to the utterance of certain types of phrases, could occur in the absence of mental images usually associated with the utterances. This indicates that it is unnecessary to assume the occurrence of a mentalistic activity within the mind of the person hearing the utterance of the phrase. In the Brown Book, Wittgenstein suggested that

> If the training could bring it about that the idea or

> image—automatically—arose in B's mind, why shouldn't it bring about B's actions without the intervention of an image? . . . Bear in mind that the image which is brought up by the word is not arrived at by a rational process . . . but that this case is strictly comparable with that of a mechanism in which a button is pressed and an indicator plate appears. In fact this sort of mechanism can be used instead of that of association. Mental images of colours, shapes, sounds, etc., etc., which play a role in communication by means of language we put in the same category with patches of colour actually seen, sounds heard. 7

Wittgenstein thus recognized that the mere discovery of an image does not suffice as the end of the search for meaning. The image needs something beside it. This is because the image is susceptible to variability of interpretation. One example of the discrepancy between the image and the expected response would be the following: Suppose someone says to another, "Point to a cube," thereby applying the word 'cube' as part of a sentence. Suppose, further, that a composite picture of a cube arises in the mind of the person to whom the command is directed, yet the person, instead of pointing to a cube (as we might expect him to), points to a triangular prism, instead. We tend to think of this response as inappropriate to the image. Yet, it becomes evident that the response which is "inappropriate" is the response to the command, and not to the mental image. Although the picture of the cube suggests a particular use to us, it would nevertheless be possible to use the picture differently. The important point is that the same image could elicit two different responses, one in accord with the conventional expectations, the other differing from them. The fact that images are susceptible to variability of interpretation makes it evident that "thinking" does not necessarily consist in the presence of mental images.

In The Blue and Brown Books, Wittgenstein suggested that perhaps speaking is itself a form of thinking. We are misled by such phrases as 'I spoke without thinking,' and 'I didn't mean a word of what I said.' For Wittgenstein, to imagine such a process as "thinking the thoughts of the actual words that are spoken" represents a needless duplication. If the activity of using the language is itself a kind of "thinking," as Wittgenstein seems to have thought it to be, then it makes no difference whether the use of the language is a vocal communication, or whether it involves the use of signs, either written or imagined. In the latter case, that is, when the signs are merely imagined, mental images of the linguistic signs can also be regarded as signs themselves, in that they function in much the same way as do sensible signs. These imagined signs, however, need not accompany the utterance or writing of sensible signs, and, further, we cannot think of the mind which is operating merely with "mental signs" as being an active agent in the same way that we can of the mind that is engaged in the act of writing. If we think of the former as an "agent" at all, it is only in the sense of being metaphorically so. As Wittgenstein declared,

> It is misleading then to talk of thinking as of a 'mental activity'. We may say that thinking is essentially the activity of operating with signs. This activity is performed by the hand, when we think by writing; by the mouth and larnyx, when we think by speaking; and if we think by imagining signs or pictures, I can give you no agent that thinks. If then you say that in such cases the mind thinks, I would only draw your attention to the fact that you are using a metaphor, that here the mind is an agent in a different sense from that in which the hand can be said to be the agent in writing. [8]

In this way, Wittgenstein demonstrated how misleading it is to consider "thinking" as essentially a "mental activity." For one thing, to construe 'thinking' in this manner tends to provoke the question, 'Where does thinking take place?', as if there were a particular "locality" in which thinking takes place. Wittgenstein described some obscurities of this question as follows:

> The question what kind of an activity thinking is is analogous to this: "Where does thinking take place?" We can answer: on paper, in our head, in the mind. None of these statements of locality gives the locality of thinking. The use of all these specifications is correct, but we must not be misled by the similarity of their linguistic form into a false conception of their grammar. As e.g., when you say: "Surely, the real place of thought is in our head". The same applies to the idea of thinking as an activity. It is correct to say that thinking is an activity of our writing hand, of our larnyx, of our head, and of our mind, so long as we understand the grammar of these statements. And it is furthermore, extremely important to realize how, by misunderstanding the grammar of our expressions, we are led to think of one in particular of these statements as giving the real seat of the activity of thinking.[9]

In relation to Wittgenstein's use of the term 'grammar' in the above quoted passage, it should be pointed out that Wittgenstein and his followers used the terms 'logic' and 'grammar' in a manner which is more broad than the general use of the terms. Rulon Wells, in his essay entitled "Meaning and Use," affirms that in Wittgenstein's approach to language, the meanings of these two terms converge.[10] Thus, the term 'grammar' encompasses "meaning" and 'semantics' in the ordinary sense.

Wittgenstein pointed out that in maintaining that thinking consists essentially in the activity of operating with signs, we are tempted to ask, "What are signs?" Rather than attempting to give a general answer to this question, Wittgenstein suggested that we observe particular cases of activities we would describe as "operating with signs." This suggestion he proposed as a corrective for what he termed, "our craving for generality," a tendency giving rise to numerous philosophical confusions. One such confusion is represented by our tendency to infer from the fact that an individual has learned to understand and apply a general term, that he must therefore have acquired a kind of conceptual picture or image corresponding to the term, as e.g., that of a leaf. In actuality, it would be just as logical to assume that he has retained images of numerous particular leaves. We tend to think that the subject has seen something which is common to all leaves, and we tend to suppose that the commonality has been formulated into something akin to a visual image, as if it were a Galtonian composite photograph. This interpretation arises from maintaining that the meaning of a word is a (mental) visual image of a thing correlating to the word.

According to Garth Hallett, in his commentary, Wittgenstein's Definition of Meaning as Use, Wittgenstein, like William James, considered the image theory of meaning as arising from the misleading influence of language. [11] Both Wittgenstein and James were willing to recognize that such images can, and in many cases actually do, come to mind as we utter corresponding words; yet both denied that images must necessarily accompany the utterance of a word. If such images do not necessarily accompany the use of words, it would be absurd to postulate that the meaning of a word must reside in an image.

Not only did Wittgenstein deny that the meaning of a word is a composite image subsuming all particulars of the word's application, but also he denied the theory that meaning resides in a particular "feeling" or experience accompanying the use of the word. In one of his later writings, the Philosophical Investigations, Wittgenstein stated explicitly, "the meaning of a word is not the experience one has in hearing or saying it, . . ." [12] This obviously does not deny that the hearing or utterance of a word can be accompanied by a particular type of "feeling" response, but the so-called "inner experiences," which can and often do occur as concomitants of the word's utterance, should not mislead us into construing them as the meanings themselves. Wittgenstein made it abundantly clear that the effective employment of words does not necessitate the experience of particular feelings, in addition to pointing out the pitfalls in attempting to define meaning in this manner. To do so would be to trap ourselves in an outlook wherein the language-game itself would appear useless, in that such defining would commit us to maintaining that without the occurrence of these special feelings and experiences, the utterance of linguistic expressions does not serve the purpose of communication.

Still another temptation which comes to mind in the attempt to discover the nature of "meaning," is the idea that meaning is some particular way in which a word "comes" to us. In the Brown Book, Wittgenstein illustrated this temptation by providing an example in which someone asks, "What color is the book over there?" In the case that the respondent answers, "Red," we tend to assume that the word 'Red' has come into his mind in a particular way, which is characteristic of the manner in which he had named objects of that color in the past. Yet on the other hand, suppose the subject is requested to describe the precise manner in which he names the color. Doesn't this call for a different kind of activity, as compared to the previous one? On an introspective basis, we can easily observe that we cannot immediately account for what constitutes the particular way in which the word comes to mind. And it is frequently the case that in observing that various words come to mind in a certain way, we still tend NOT to think of the large variety of cases and ways in which such a word comes to mind. The central issue here concerns whether using a word (e.g., naming a color) involves more than the mere utterance of the word. In order to substantiate the claim that meaning resides in some kind of experience accompanying the utterance of a response to a particular sentence or question, the experience itself would have to be verified as something occurring in all cases in which the word is uttered. Because we cannot determine whether such an experience occurs as concomitant with all attributions of meaning (in all cases in which we ascribe meaning to an utterance), we must assume that meaning does not reside in some kind of experience or process accompanying the utterance of the word.

Wittgenstein cited several factors in the temptation to describe meaning as something intangible. One of the greatest factors seems to be the process represented by the distinction previously drawn by William James, namely that when we use the expressions, 'to say something,' on the one hand, and 'to mean something,' on the other hand, we are referring to two different types of activities. One example of the manner in which we apply this distinction is the phrase, 'he said it and meant it.' The confusion brought about by this type of distinction is best dealt with in light of the recognition that the features which are characteristic of meaning an expression are not always mental. In the Blue Book, Wittgenstein compared the phrases, 'I shall be delighted to see you,' with, 'The train leaves at 3:30.' Whereas, in the case of the former, it might be appropriate to question whether the person uttering the sentence, actually "meant" (was sincere in uttering) the sentence, it would seem inappropriate to question the person's sincerity in the case of the latter. Although it could conceivably be the case that a person would assert the latter in an attempt to deceive another, we would not, under ordinary circumstances, have reason to suspect such insincerity, as we would in the former case. A comparison of the two sentences seems to indicate that when we apply the "to say it and mean it" distinction to one and then to the other, we conceive the "distinction" differently in each case. From this qualification it could be inferred that, although the concurrence of feelings in the mind of the speaker is characteristic of the utterance of certain types of sentences, it is by no means true that all sentences, in order to be considered as having meaning, must be uttered in conjunction with the occurrence of feelings. Wittgenstein did not deny that some expressions exhibit the characteristic of concomitance with particular feelings in the mind of the speaker, but he did deny the commonly accepted generalization asserting the necessity of their occurrence. In this way, he rejected any manner of defining "meaning" in terms of the occurrence of feelings, while at the same time allowing the possibility that some expressions are usually accompanied by such developments.

Although the utterance of expressions belonging to the emotive category appear to us in such a way that we tend to think of them as lending support to the definition of meaning as some kind of "feeling," in actuality, they fail to do so. Although a feeling or feelings might elicit or be elicited by an arrangement of words, the emotive response, or feeling, can be accounted for only in terms of a combination of words, and provides no explanation as to how (or whether) the individual words which together form the sentence can be ascribed their own particular meanings. The question thus arises as to whether in the case that only one feeling is evoked by the entire series of words, we would be justified, according to this account, in declaring the individual words to have meaning.

Garth Hallett, in his work, Wittgenstein's Definition of Meaning as Use, declares that there are two principle categories into which the feelings and experiences considered by Wittgenstein, can be broken. The first includes those feelings which could accurately be said to accompany the experience of seeing the printed word or hearing it spoken, in most instances in which the word is encountered. Moreover, the first category incorporates those feelings which often accompany the words we tend to associate with them, yet do not do so necessarily. The second category includes those feelings that appear inseparable from the experience of encountering the word.

The criteria which we apply in discerning cases wherein the speaker "means" or believes the content of his utterance vary according to the kind of sentence and the circumstances in which the utterance is asserted. There are some instances in which we would consider a particular type of facial expression, tone of voice, etc., as sufficient evidence for maintaining that the speaker does in fact believe what he is saying. Yet it is not always the case that we regard such mannerisms as indicative of conviction or sincerity. Wittgenstein perceptively declared that the criterion we apply in such cases is frequently not something happening while the person is speaking, but is instead something which happens either before or after the sentence is spoken. As Wittgenstein suggested,

> Let us then consider the proposition "Believing something cannot merely consist in saying that you believe it, you must say it with a particular facial expression, gesture, and tone of voice". Now it cannot be doubted that we regard certain facial expressions, gestures, etc. as characteristic for the expression of belief. We speak of a 'tone of conviction'. And yet it is clear that this tone of conviction isn't always present whenever we rightly speak of conviction. "Just so", you might say, "this shows that there is something else, something behind these gestures, etc. which is the real belief as opposed to mere expressions of belief".—"Not at all", I should say, "many different criteria distinguish, under different circumstances, cases of believing what you say from those of not believing what you say". There may be cases where the presence of a sensation other than those bound up with

> gestures, tone of voice, etc. distinguishes meaning what you say from not meaning it. But sometimes what distinguishes these two is nothing that happens while we speak, but a variety of actions and experiences of different kinds before and after.[13]

Thus, the difference between 'saying something and meaning it' and 'saying it and not meaning it' might not consist in anything that occurs during the expression of the proposition. Even in the case that the difference does consist in something occurring during the utterance of the proposition, we are not justified in concluding, "Because such a difference is apparent in case 'X,' this difference must be characteristic of all other cases as well." In considering the complexities of what is involved in asserting something and meaning or believing its content, Wittgenstein again warned that we must avoid generalities and concern ourselves primarily with observing particular cases. As Hallett described Wittgenstein's opposition to the generalization, according to which the characteristic features of meaning an expression are "inner experiences,"

> Wittgenstein's varied criticisms of such a view can be summed up by saying that he was opposed to its generalities. The characteristic features of meaning an expression are not *always* mental. Inner experiences which are characteristic of a certain expression are not *always* present when it is uttered and meant, nor always absent when it is not meant; there is no constant correlation. And the characteristic features of meaning an expression are not *always* simultaneous with speaking the words. In fact, Wittgenstein put his objections more strongly than this. [*] But he did not defend the opposite generalities. He did not deny that inner feelings are characteristic of meaning some expressions, or that these expressions are sometimes accompanied by these characteristic feelings, or that features typical of meaning an expression are sometimes simultaneous with its utterance. He was opposed to the generalities as generalities.[14]

Concerning the problem as to what is entailed in the "understanding of a sentence," Wittgenstein applied the same yardstick, drawing an interesting analogy between the understanding of a sentence and the understanding of a musical theme. It is frequently assumed that music conveys to us various feelings such as joyfulness, melancholy, triumph, etc. Yet this type of account implies that music serves as the medium for producing in us the sequence of these feelings, and therefore, that any other means of eliciting a similar response would adequately serve as its replacement. In opposition to this account, Wittgenstein emphasized and supported the great temptation to say that music conveys to us itself.

"Understanding a sentence" appears to represent a process whose characteristics are similar to the understanding of a composition of music. Arguing against the general inclination to posit the meaning of a sentence in something outside the sentence (something to which the sentence points or refers), Wittgenstein proposed, instead, the possibility that the understanding of a sentence consists in grasping its content, pointing out that the content of the sentence subsists *within* the sentence, rather than representing something external to it.

In much the same manner as that in which he opposed the tendency to generalize as to how we interpret what is involved in understanding or meaning the content of a sentence, Wittgenstein warned against allowing this tendency to dominate our attempts to understand the nature of word meanings (*bedeuten*). Although we sometimes speak about "experiencing the meaning of a word," we should be careful not to assume that feelings and inner experiences are necessarily the "meanings" of the words with which they are associated. There are several "games" that involve the application of a word in different ways in order to experience the difference between various "meanings" which we attribute to the word. There are also games which draw attention to the contrast between "saying the word and experiencing its meaning," and "saying the word without experiencing its meaning." One example of the latter type of game would be the activity of successively repeating a word enough times, that it becomes to us a mere sound. [15] An example of the former would be that in which the word 'train' is uttered, each time thinking of a different "meaning," while simultaneously observing the kinds of experiences accompanying each repetition. Yet the fact that we can enter into such games should not mislead us.

> If a sensitive ear shews me, when I am playing this game, that I have now this now that experience of the word—doesn't it also shew me that I often do not have any experience of it in the course of talking? [16]

An important question which Wittgenstein dealt with, is related to whether there is a certain class of words for which feelings, or at least the prior experience of certain feelings, take on a unique importance. The class of words which immediately comes to mind as perhaps exhibiting this characteristic, is the class of words which name sensations. One example of such a word is the word 'pain.' By means of his analysis of the manner in which we are able to use this word, Wittgenstein demonstrated that our use of words falling in this category (i.e., the class of words naming sensations) does not necessitate the occurrence of the presupposed "inner experience," even though the latter might happen to occur or to have occurred. The inner experience, regardless of whether it occurs, plays no role in the use of language. Wittgenstein's illustrative analogy makes the point:

> Suppose everyone had a box with something in it: we call it a "beetle". No one can look into anyone else's box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle is only by looking at his beetle.—Here it would be quite possible for everyone to have something different in his box. One might even imagine such a thing constantly changing.—But

> suppose the word "beetle" had a use in these people's language?—If so it would not be used as the name of a thing. The thing in the box has no place in the language-game at all; not even as a something: for the box might even be empty.—No, one can 'divide through' by the thing in the box; it cancels out, whatever it is. [17]

The fact that the "box" represented in Wittgenstein's analogy could conceivably be empty, illustrates the relative unimportance of the universality of the sensation of "pain," as far as its role in the language game is concerned. Our ability to use the word 'pain' correctly does not presuppose the calling to mind of the sensation itself or even the memory of the sensation. Even allowing that an inner feeling or memory of such a feeling might usually be associated with speaking the word or hearing it spoken, the use of the word itself is independent of such associations. Moreover, even if it were the case that we exhibit a particular capacity only while experiencing a certain inner state of feeling, the capacity does not consist in the feeling. This discrepancy is well illustrated by the fact that in attempting to discover whether someone can play chess, we are not interested in his "inner state" during his participation in the chess game.

> How should we counter someone who told us that with him understanding was an inner process?——How should we counter him if he said that with him knowing how to play chess was an inner process?—We should say that when we want to know if he can play chess we aren't interested in anything that goes on inside him.—And if he replies that this is in fact just what we are interested in, that is, we are interested in whether he can play chess—then we shall have to draw his attention to the criteria which would demonstrate his capacity, and on the other hand to the criteria for the 'inner states'.
>
> Even if someone had a particular capacity only when, and only as long as, he had a particular feeling, the feeling would not be the capacity. [18]

At this point, one wishes to ask, "But what about "psychological terms" such as 'understand,' 'expect,' 'hope,' 'believe,' etc.? Superficially, it seems that the meanings of these terms do consist in the inner experiences occurring simultaneously with their use. To this objection, Wittgenstein replied by pointing out the necessity for observable criteria in attempting to establish the presence of an "inner process" in the mind of the speaker. "An 'inner process,'" he declared, "stands in need of outward criteria." 19 Wittgenstein made it clear that the ability to use a word is not a "process occurring behind or side by side" the activity of saying the word. Rather, the ability seems to be more similar to the activity involved in the application of a particular formula. In learning to use the word correctly in the language-game, what must be acquired is not a particular feeling, but is, instead, the ability to use the word in a particular set of circumstances. The games in which many of these "psychological terms" are used, are found by Wittgenstein to be much more complicated than what our ordinary conception of language leads us to believe.

> The criteria which we accept for 'fitting', 'being able to', 'understanding', are much more complicated than might appear at first sight. That is, the game with these words, their employment in the linguistic intercourse that is carried on by their means, is more involved––the role of these words in our language other––than we are tempted to think. 20

Wittgenstein did not deny that certain mental processes can and do occur in relation to our use of a word, but he cautioned against generalizing or maintaining that something which is characteristic of some cases is characteristic of all.

> There is a kind of general disease of thinking which always looks for (and finds) what would be called a mental state from which all our acts spring as from a reservoir. 21

Thus, we must avoid looking for one characteristic common to all instances, and we must keep in mind the role we are assigning to circumstances as we evaluate an example. The importance we attach to circumstances as criteria for evaluating someone's "sincerity" (i.e., whether the speaker "means" what he says) is well illustrated by the following example provided by George Pitcher:

> For example, suppose Professor Smith says that Jones is not going to receive a passing grade for the course, and that as he says it he performs no special mental act, has no special inner experience, and that he says it in no special tone of voice, and so on. He just says it—in a perfectly ordinary way, in the course of an ordinary conversation. It might nevertheless be true that he means what he says. For example, suppose one of his hearers had thought that Jones was a brilliant student; he might well ask Professor Smith "But do you really propose to flunk Jones?" If Smith honestly replies "Yes, I'm afraid so; I have no other choice," he clearly meant what he said; and if he proceeds to give Jones a failing grade, or to call Jones in and tell him he has failed the course, then in the absence of extraordinary circumstances, there can be no doubt that he meant what he said. If Professor Smith acts in these or similar ways, one can correctly assert that he meant what he said—even though nothing special, either physical or mental, occurred while he was speaking. And if we will still insist that there must have been some special act at the time he spoke, we are being misled by grammatical similarities. We are supposing, in short, that "He said it and meant what he said" is just like "He said it and smiled" or "He saw it and touched what he saw." 22

According to Pitcher, Wittgenstein admitted that there can be special circumstances in which the two sentences, 'P meant it,' and, 'P said it in a certain tone of voice,' could be considered as meaning the same thing. It must be remembered, however, that "in general," they do not mean the same thing. 23 The effort to discover something common to all cases of "meaning what one says" is simply another instantiation of our craving for generality. In pursuing Wittgenstein's advice, according to which we should not theorize or hypothesize, but should look, instead, at particular cases, we find that no such commonality seems to be present. But does this mean that it is "meaningless" to say that someone "means what he says"; are we to assume that the absence of something common to all instances in which the expression is used, is an indication that "there is no point in using it"? Wittgenstein's answer to those questions is negative. He simply opposed the two extreme positions regarding what is involved in the application of the expression. The first extreme position maintains that "meaning what one says," must refer to one thing, and that differences in particular cases (e.g., tone of voice, inner experience, etc.) are mere symptoms or indicators of something unobservable, positing the "something unobservable" as "the real act of meaning."

The second extreme position represents the polar opposite of the first. According to it, the expression 'meaning what one says,' is used in so many different ways, that it is of no use in the language-game at all. Wittgenstein's reply to this position consists in the reminder that the fact that there is a wide range of cases in which the expression is applied, is no indication that we cannot know "what it means" in particular cases. As George Pitcher declares,

> . . . it is just another example of Wittgenstein's by now familiar doctrine that general terms or phrases usually, and perhaps always, refer to a range of different cases which have a family resemblance.[24]

In emphasizing that we should take into consideration the context of the particular application of the expression, Wittgenstein thus avoided the conclusion that a "mental act can never constitute the act of meaning." His position allows that this happens in some cases, and not in others.

"But in the absence of a mental object or image," one might interject, "isn't a word in itself lifeless?" There is a great temptation to think of "mental objects" as mediating factors, which make the connection between the word and the world. Yet it should be pointed out that if this were invariably what the "act of meaning" consisted in, it would not function according to the diverse roles that we require of it in the language-game. Furthermore, this proposal would leave unexplained its manner of establishing the connection between the "picture" and what the picture represents. Pitcher points out that a visual image or picture on a piece of paper would serve as adequately as the alleged mental image or object. In his later writings, Wittgenstein realized that an image or picture is not, in itself, a picture of anything specific, but its role depends on how the picture is used. Wittgenstein illustrated the point as follows:

> Imagine a picture representing a boxer in a particular stance. Now, this picture can be used to tell someone how he should stand, should hold himself; or how he should not hold himself; or how a particular man did stand in such-and-such a place; and so on. . . .[25]

That the meaning of an expression or word cannot be a mental object or image in the mind of the speaker, is implied by Wittgenstein in the following passage:

> If God had looked into our minds he would not have been able to see there whom we were speaking of.[26]

To call meaning a "mental activity" focuses our attention on criteria which are not necessarily concerned with meaning at all. The importance of the details of the situation, and the confusion that results from not taking such details into account, is well illustrated by the difficulties which arise if one thinks of a rise in the price of butter as "an activity of the butter itself," rather than a change in the situation.

> And nothing is more wrong-headed than calling meaning a mental activity! Unless, that is, one is setting out to produce confusion. (It would also be possible to speak of an activity of butter when it rises in price, and if no problems are produced by this it is harmless.) [27]

Pitcher notes that in Wittgenstein's later writings, it becomes clear that even some of the most familiar and ordinary words frequently have much more "packed into them" than ordinarily meets the eye. Wittgenstein's remarks about "psychological words" contain some important insights about language itself, including the perception that many words and expressions which superficially appear to do nothing more than refer to one specific condition, thing, or action, actually imply something about other aspects of the situation. For example, we tend to think the phrase 'He is asleep,' describes nothing more than the present condition of someone, whereas, in actuality, it implies many other things (e.g., that the individual went to sleep in one of the usual ways.) As Wittgenstein declared,

> What is happening now has significance—in these surroundings. The surroundings give it its importance. [28]

Thus, Wittgenstein's opposition to mentalistic conceptions of meaning is implicit throughout the earlier and later writings. His opposition is, however, not primarily directed toward the idea that the meaning of a particular word or expression can consist in a mental object or image. He allowed for the validity of this type of explanation in particular cases, while rejecting the tendency to generalize that this type of explanation applies to all cases. Recognizing the fact that many words, perhaps even most words, are used in more than one way, Wittgenstein drew attention to the diversity of our use of the term 'meaning' itself. As Garth Hallett indicates,

> . . . if he [Wittgenstein] showed interest in how the word meaning is actually employed, if he meant his discussions

> of meaning to throw light on the "grammar" of the word "meaning," mere description of language was not enough. Besides describing the way words are used, he needed to describe the way this word, "meaning," is used. 29

In accord with his opposition to "our craving for generality," and with his desire to overcome the "contemptuous attitude toward the particular case," Wittgenstein promoted no generalizations or "theories" as to what constitutes the nature of meaning, but, instead, observed and described particular cases, noting the manner in which we have been misled by the tendency to assume the presence of a commonality. As Hallett describes Wittgenstein's refusal to formulate a general "theory,"

> Wittgenstein did not merely describe what happens or needs to happen when words are used; he used these facts to eliminate various definitions of meaning. He went beyond the facts to something else. To what? To a conclusion?
> According to Moore (M317) Wittgenstein said of the word "good" that "each different way in which one person, A, can convince another person, B, that so-and-so is 'good' fixes the meaning in which 'good' is used in that discussion." If this was Wittgenstein's attitude in his discussions of meaning, there was no place in them for a major premise. 30

Wittgenstein adhered to one of his central ideas as to the nature of philosophy as essentially a descriptive activity, and thereby demonstrated the inadequacies and pitfalls encountered in arguments which posit "meaning" as an inner process, mental object or image. "But," one might interject, "if meaning is not some kind of inner, unobservable object or process, then perhaps meaning can be generally defined as the object (either conceptual or physical) to which the word refers or corresponds." Wittgenstein's view of language as presented in his later writings makes it evident that his reply to such a suggestion is negative. It will be the purpose of the next chapter to explicate Wittgenstein's opposition to this theory, frequently referred to as the correspondence or relational theory of meaning.

FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER II

[1] Gottlob Frege, The Foundations of Arithmetic, trans. J. L. Austin (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1950) P. x^e.

[2] Ludwig Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books. (1958; rpt. New York: Harper & Row, 1965) pp. 39, 40.

[3] Ibid., p. 40.

[4] Ibid., p. 41.

[5] Ibid., p. 43.

[6] Ibid., p. 43.

[7] Ibid., p. 89.

[8] Ibid., pp. 6, 7.

[9] Ibid., p. 16.

[10] Rulon Wells, "Meaning and Use," Theory of Meaning, edd. Adrienne and Keith Lehrer (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1970) p. 129.

[11] Hallett, p. 49.

[12] Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958; rpt. New York: Macmillan, 1970) p. 181.

[13] Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books, pp. 144, 145.

[14] Hallett, p. 52.

[15] Wittgenstein, Investigations, p. 214.

[16] Ibid., pp. 215, 216.

[17] Ibid., Sec. 293.

[18] Ibid., p. 181.

[19] Ibid., Sec. 580.

[20] Ibid., Sec. 182.

[21] Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books, p. 143.

[22] George Pitcher, The Philosophy of Wittgenstein (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1964) p. 260.

23 Ibid., p. 261.

24 Ibid.

25 Wittgenstein, Investigations, p. 11.

26 Ibid., p. 217.

27 Ibid., Sec. 693.

28 Ibid., Sec. 583.

29 Hallett, p. 74.

30 Ibid.

Author's note—In all references to Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations, section numbers appear in Part I.

CHAPTER III

WITTGENSTEIN'S OPPOSITION TO THE RELATIONAL THEORY OF MEANING

We have seen, in the previous chapter, that the public nature of language systems as a whole, coupled with the fact that the elements of those systems derive significance from their application, make it evident that meaning cannot be a mental event occurring simultaneously with the utterance of linguistic expressions. Likewise, meaning cannot be defined as an object or a relation to an object. Although the Tractatus view of language (which included the picture theory of meaning) had been, in many respects, in accord with the relational theory, Wittgenstein's later writings have one of their objectives in identifying as illicit, any application of the word 'meaning' as if it were something signifying a "thing," or external object corresponding to the word. Rejecting the notion that meaning resides in the "bearer of the name," Wittgenstein cited, as Russell had at one time, the perishability of ordinary objects, as providing one ground for making the distinction between simple objects and the name for those objects. In addition, perishability provides grounds for considering as nonsensical any attempt to posit meaning either in a name for an existing object, or in the bearer of the name. The following passage from the Investigations makes the point clear:

> 40. Let us first discuss this point of the argument: that a word has no meaning if nothing corresponds to it.--It is important to note that the word "meaning" is being used illicitly if it is used to signify the thing that 'corresponds' to the word. That is to confound the meaning of a name with the bearer of the name. When Mr. N. N. dies one says that the bearer of the name dies, not that the meaning dies. And it would be nonsensical to say that, for if the name ceased to have meaning it would make no sense to say "Mr. N. N. is dead." [1]

Wittgenstein's opposition to the relational theory of meaning is further illustrated as follows:

> 55. "What the names in language signify must be indestructible; for it must be possible to describe the state of affairs in which everything destructible is destroyed. And this description will contain words; and what corresponds to these cannot then be destroyed, for otherwise the words would have no meaning." I must not saw off the branch on which I am sitting.
>
> One might, of course, object at once that this description would have to except itself from the destruction.--But what corresponds to the separate words of the description and so cannot be destroyed if it is true, is what gives the words their meaning--is that without which they would have no meaning.----In a sense, however, this man is surely what corresponds to his name. But he is destructible, and his name does not lose its meaning when the bearer is destroyed.--An example of something corresponding to the name, and without which it would have no meaning, is a paradigm that is used in connexion with the name in the language-game. [2]

The question arises as to whether the above passage and others like it appearing in the Investigations, were intended by Wittgenstein as negations of his earlier Tractatus view of language. There is considerable difference between objects (or "Atomic objects" as they were called in the Tractatus) and a mere "bearer of a name." We might regard Mr. N. N., for example, as the "bearer" of the name 'Mr. N. N.' But, one must ask, is Mr. N. N. an example of "an atomic object," such as what the author of the Tractatus had in mind?

The answer to this question is negative. At the time he wrote the Tractatus, Wittgenstein was very much aware of the distinction between the "simples" he discussed in that work, and accidental complexes such as "Mr. N. N." The following passage from the Tractatus makes this evident:

> 2.02 Objects are simple.
>
> 2.0201 Every statement about complexes can be resolved into a statement about their consituents and into the propositions that describe the complexes completely.
>
> 2.021 Objects make up the substance of the world. That is why they cannot be composite.
>
> 2.0211 If the world had no substance, then whether a proposition had sense would depend on whether another proposition was true.
>
> 2.0212 In that case we could not sketch out any picture of the world (true or false).
>
> 2.022 It is obvious that an imagined world, however different it may be from the real one, must have something--a form--in common with it.
>
> 2.023 Objects are just what constitute this unalterable form.[3]

At the time he wrote the Tractatus, Wittgenstein maintained that complex things were ultimately composed of simples, and referred to these irreducible entities as "atomic objects." It was these atomic objects which constituted the meanings of words. Although atomic objects were not of the same nature as a complex, such as "Mr. N. N.," Wittgenstein did later recognize the misleading nature of his concept that atomic objects constitute the meanings of names. As Wittgenstein summed up the implications of the notion he had promoted in his earlier work,

> 46. What lies behind the idea that names really signify simples?--Socrates says in the Theatetus: "If I make no mistake, I have heard some people say this: there is no

> definition of the primary elements--so to speak--out of which we and everything else are composed; for everything that exists [*] in its own right can only be named, no other determination is possible, neither that it is nor that it is not . . . . . But what exists [*] in its own right has to be . . . . . named without any other determination. In consequence it is impossible to give an account of any primary element; for it, nothing is possible but the bare name; its name is all it has. But just as what consists of these primary elements is itself complex, so the names of the elements become descriptive language by being compounded together. For the essence of speech is the composition of names."
>
> Both Russell's 'individuals' and my 'objects' (Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus) were such primary elements.[4]

According to the earlier Tractatus view of language, the identity of the object derives from the use of the name, rather than the other way around. A name was considered in that work to acquire meaning and use, by being correlated with a definite description, rather than with the "object described." Understanding the use of a name consisted in grasping the identity of the name's referent. But, according to that account, the identity of an object could be ascertained only by becoming clear about the sense of the propositions in which the name occurs. It thus seems unclear as to what the "objects," referred to in the Tractatus, represent. That the effort to postulate the nature of these "objects" is likely to be unfruitful, is recognized by Hidé Ishiguro in [illegible] "Use and Reference of Names." As Ishiguro declares,

> I have already given reasons why predicate expressions are not considered as Names in the Tractatus, and thus why the properties or relations (that are true of objects) to which predicate expressions refer when they occur in propositions or which are expressed by a structure of the concatenation of the Names of objects are not to be treated as objects. Sense data theory will not by itself provide us with objects which are common to all worlds either. Each token sense datum is not only bound to this world but also to the person who has the experience. If we are referring not to token sense data but to types of sense data, then we are considering properties which are true of certain areas of our

> visual field, which again are not objects. To suppose either that objects of the Tractatus are spatio-temporal things, or that they are sense data, lands us in similar difficulties. To ask what kind of familiar entities correspond to the objects of the Tractatus seems to lead us nowhere.[5]

Ishiguro claims that the Tractatus view, according to which objects "exist," should be interpreted as meaning that objects are "instantiations" of specific unanalyzable properties differing from material properties. According to Ishiguro, the Tractatus view does not maintain that there exist properties or relations, yet it represents a hypothesis about properties and relations, in that it claims that objects "exist" as instantiations of "simple irreducible properties."[6]

Ishiguro states that according to the Tractatus view, the only way of determining the objects referred to by a name is by settling the use of the name.[7] This indicates that the later conception of "meaning as use," was foreshadowed in that earlier work. Ishiguro argues that in the Tractatus, Names are like "dummy Names" in that Wittgenstein would not have been able, strictly speaking, to have required that names "exist," but only that they be "possible," in that we must be able to apply them. Ishiguro argues further that if the latter is the case (i.e., that the Tractatus names are like "dummy Names"), then the relationship of bedeuten (i.e., referring) between names and objects is of a "very special kind." Likewise, the nature of the objects themselves is also in a special category. As Ishiguro proposes,

> If, as I have argued, Names in the Tractatus are like dummy Names, the relationship of bedeuten or referring which holds between Names and objects is also of a very special kind, as also is the nature of objects themselves. We have already seen that the identity of an object can be determined only by settling the sense of the propositions in which the Names occur. But the sense of an elementary proposition of the form 'fa' is exactly the same as the

> sense of a proposition of the form 'fb' where 'f(x)' expresses the same property, and 'a' and 'b' are different Names. Just as in the geometrical proof mentioned earlier, saying 'Let a be the centre of the Circle C,' is exactly the same as saying 'Let b be the centre of circle C', if 'a' and 'b' are dummy names. What the dummy names are used to identify are nothing more nor less than an instantiation of the description or predicate which follows. If the conditions of using a dummy name are the conditions of saying 'there is a so and so which . . .', then dummy names cannot fail to refer to an object so long as the set of propositions in which they occur makes sense. Referring to an object here means that the dummy names have use. When we identify two human beings by their proper names and predicate something of them--as when we say 'Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde are Irish', we identify the two men not merely as different Irishmen, and so naturally their names are not interchangeable. Dummy names are interchangeable so long as we interchange them consistently, and so I believe are Names in the Tractatus.[8]

Ishiguro's claim is not that Wittgenstein himself conceived the Tractatus names as essentially "dummy Names," but merely that the manner in which names are dealt with, in that work, is such that they function as "dummy Names." Ishiguro's article emphasizes that the "objects," to which the names in the Tractatus refer, are identified according to a set of criteria differing from what is ordinarily applied in identifying spatio-temporal objects. The objects described in the Tractatus, belong to all possible imaginary worlds and not merely to "this" world. In contrast to the Tractatus objects, the identity of actual spatio-temporal objects is not determined by the "possibilities" of those objects.

Although many philosophers have been tempted to consider the "objects" of the Tractatus, as being either properties or sense data, Ishiguro proposes that because predicate expressions are not considered as names, the properties and relations ascribed to objects in such expressions, cannot be treated as objects. Likewise, sense data theory does not, in itself, provide us with objects common to all worlds as are the Tractatus objects. As Ishiguro sums up,

> The Tractatus does not, as has sometimes been thought, offer an extensional foundation of semantic analysis. The objects of the Tractatus are not like things (however simple) in the empirical world which can be individuated extensionally. The concept of a simple object is more like that of an instantiation of an irreducible property. This concept was a logical requisite for the Tractatus theory, and followed from the combination of a basically correct theory about names, of a mistaken assimilation of complex things and facts, and of a wrong and unnecessary claim about the independence of elementary propositions. The Tractatus theory of Names, which claims that the problem of the identity of the reference of names and the problem of the use of Names in propositions are inseparable, is closely connected with the picture theory of meaning and contains much that is right and illuminating even for those who reject talk about simple objects and mutually independent elementary propositions—as Wittgenstein himself did in his later years.[9]

Ishiguro points out that in the Tractatus, Wittgenstein had already provided the foundation for the refutation of the assumption that in our use of names, it is as if we were attaching a "piece of label" to an object that we can identify.

> As Wittgenstein was to realize later, even if a complex could only be given by its description, it does not of course follow that one cannot refer to the complex by a name. The Tractatus theory of names is basically correct, however, in so far as it is a refutation of views which assume that a name is like a piece of label which we tag on to an object which we can already identify. A label serves a purpose because we usually write names—which already have a use—on the label. The labelling by itself does not establish the use of the label. If a label is pasted on a bottle, one does not even know whether the label is correlated with the owner of the bottle, the contents of the bottle, the bottle itself, or a particular property, e.g., poisonous, of the contents.[10]

In his later writings, Wittgenstein sought to demonstrate the misleading nature of his earlier Tractatus view, according to which "atomic objects" constitute the meanings of words. In the Philosophical Investigations, the notion that names signify simples, comes under attack. The following section, which appears in that work, demonstrates the inadequacy of this notion by drawing attention to the absence of a clear-cut distinction between "simple" and composite":

> 47. But what are the simple constituent parts of which reality is composed?--What are the simple constituent parts of a chair?--The bits of wood of which it is made? Or the molecules, or the atoms?--"Simple" means: not composite. And here the point is: in what sense 'composite'? It makes no sense at all to speak absolutely of the 'simple parts of a chair'.
>
> Again: Does my visual image of this tree, of this chair, consist of parts? And what are its simple component parts? Multi-colouredness is one kind of complexity; another is, for example, that of a broken outline composed of straight bits. And a curve can be said to be composed of an ascending and a descending segment.
>
> If I tell someone without any further explanation: "What I see before me now is composite", he will have the right to ask: "What do you mean by 'composite'? For there are all sorts of things that that can mean!"--The question "Is what you see composite?" makes good sense if it is already established what kind of complexity--that is, which particular use of the word--is in question. If it had been laid down that the visual image of a tree was to be called "composite" if one saw not just a single trunk, but also branches, then the question "Is the visual image of this tree simple or composite?", and the question "What are its simple component parts?", would have a clear sense--a clear use. And of course the answer to the second question is not "The branches" (that would be an answer to the grammatical question: "What are here called 'simple component parts'?") but rather a description of the individual branches.
>
> But isn't a chessboard, for instance, obviously, and absolutely composite?--You are probably thinking of the composition out of thirty-two white and thirty-two black squares. But could we not also say, for instance, that it was composed of the colours black and white and the schema of squares? And if there are quite different ways of looking at it, do you still want to say that the chessboard is absolutely 'composite'?--Asking "Is this object composite?" outside a particular language-game is like what a boy once did, who had to say whether the verbs in certain sentences were in the active or passive voice, and who racked his brains over the question

> whether the verb "to sleep" meant something active or passive.
>
> We use the word "composite" (and therefore the word "simple") in an enormous number of different and differently related ways. (Is the colour of a square on a chessboard simple, or does it consist of pure white and pure yellow? And is white simple, or does it consist of the colours of the rainbow?--Is this length of 2 cm. simple, or does it consist of two parts, each 1 cm. long? But why not of one bit 3 cm. long, and one bit 1 cm. long measured in the opposite direction?)
>
> To the philosophical question: "Is the visual image of this tree composite, and what are its component parts?" the correct answer is: "That depends on what you understand by 'composite'." (And that is of course not an answer but a rejection of the question.)[11]

The distinction between simple and composite can be better understood in light of the comparison between naming and describing. Wittgenstein asserted that naming and describing should not be considered as if they were on the same level. Naming, in itself, does not constitute a "move" in the language-game. To consider it as "a move in the language-game" would be somewhat like maintaining that placing a chess piece on the board represents a move in that game. To say that something has been named, is not to affirm that anything has been done. According to Wittgenstein, the thing named "has not even 'got' a name, except in the language-game."[12] Wittgenstein, like Frege, maintained that a word has meaning only as a part of a sentence which constitutes a "move" in the language-game.

All of the foregoing should make it evident that throughout his writings (including even the Tractatus), Wittgenstein rejected the notion that "meaning" consists of empirical (spatio-temporal) objects or "things," existing in the empirical realm. Although it is frequently thought that the Tractatus objects are of such a nature, a more careful evaluation of Wittgenstein's descriptions of them and the role they serve in the language as a system, yields the conclusion that this cannot be the case. The emphasis on the function or role of the *Tractatus* names substantiates the claim that the concept of "meaning as use" was not entirely alien to Wittgenstein at the time he wrote the earlier work, although it was far from being clearly explicated. In the next chapter, we shall discuss the manner in which that notion (as it appeared in the later writings) emerged from Wittgenstein's earlier view of language.

FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER III

[1] Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958; rpt. New York: Macmillan, 1970) Sec. 40.

[2] Ibid., Sec. 55.

[3] Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, trans., D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (New York: Humanities Press, 1961) Secs. 2.02-2.023.

[4] Wittgenstein, Investigations, Sec. 46.

[5] Hidé Ishiguro, "Use and Reference of Names," Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein, ed: Peter Winch (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969) p. 47.

[6] Ibid., p. 48.

[7] Ibid., p. 49.

[8] Ibid., p. 46.

[9] Ibid., p. 50.

[10] Ibid., p. 35.

[11] Wittgenstein, Investigations, Sec. 47.

[12] Ibid., Sec. 49.

CHAPTER IV

WITTGENSTEIN'S FORMULATION OF "MEANING AS USE"

In the preceding chapters, we have seen that Wittgenstein demonstrated that meanings are not objects, images, feelings, or psychological associations, by applying a reductio ad absurdum approach to various possible definitions which posit meaning as something simple and unitary. But if none of these possible definitions of meaning suffice to explain our usage of the term 'meaning,' how is it that we do use the term? After exhausting many other possibilities, Wittgenstein concluded that there remained one characteristic of words, which is not only apparent in most instances of their utterance, but also, is in accord with the essentially social nature of the language as a system: the fact that words are USED, and furthermore, that they are used in certain ways within the language-game.

In the Blue Book, Wittgenstein's clarification of meaning, as consisting in the use or practice of a word's application, becomes apparent. In this work, he declared that "the use of the word in practice is its meaning." [1] Later, in the Philosophical Investigations, he asserted the so-called "definition," qualifying it by pointing out that the notion of "meaning as use" is applicable in a large class of cases. As Wittgenstein declared in that later work,

> 43. For a large class of cases--though not for all--in which we employ the word "meaning" it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language.[2]

The question arises as to whether Wittgenstein's acknowledgement that the use of a word constitutes its meaning, should be construed as if its meaning resides in "a use" of the word, or in a set of grammatical rules concerning its various usages. The issue as to whether meaning is constituted in the mere use of a word or in the rule applying to its application is highly important. Rules can be likened to sign-posts deriving their significance from the fact that they are in regular use as customs. As such, rules can function in a "prescriptive" and/or "descriptive" manner. Although Wittgenstein acknowledged that rules play a crucial role in the use of language, he warned, in his later writings, that we must not be misled into concluding that the meaning of a term is the rule regulating its application.

Garth Hallett points out a transition evident in the comparison of Wittgenstein's treatment of this topic in the earlier works and those of his later years. In some of the earlier writings such as the Tractatus, Wittgenstein seemed to have been proposing that the rules, in which the meaning is construed, are "prescriptive," rather than "descriptive." As a consequence of the repeated usage of a word according to a specific pattern, the rule characterizing that usage becomes incorporated into the word. Thereafter, the rule must be "obeyed" in the sense that the further use of the term must conform to the rule. If the rules regarding the use of terms are "prescriptive," it would be tempting to think of "meaning" as actually consisting in the rule according to which the word is applied. In the Blue

Book, however, Wittgenstein argued emphatically that meaning resides in the actual use of the word, and NOT in the rule applying to, or arising from its use.

There are several reasons for Wittgenstein's reluctance to consider meaning as residing in the rule according to which a word is used. One reason is the fact that the word 'rule' might tend to suggest the very sort of rule Wittgenstein was arguing against. Hallett said of Wittgenstein's refusal to define meaning as the rule pertaining to a word's usage,

> Might we define meaning, then, as the rules of a word's use? Why did Wittgenstein say simply that meaning is use, never that it is the rules of use? For one thing the word "rule" would naturally suggest the wrong sort of rule, the sort he was arguing against. And even if it didn't, it might seem to indicate that ordinary usage is both simple and perfectly regular, whereas Wittgenstein had concluded that it is neither. [3]

Wittgenstein cited the multiplicity of ways in which we use certain words, as underlying our inability to tabulate strict rules for their use. Citing the contrast between such words, and those with "clearly defined meanings," Wittgenstein observed,

> There are words with several clearly defined meanings. It is easy to tabulate these meanings. And there are words which one might say: They are used in a thousand different ways which gradually merge into one another. No wonder that we can't tabulate strict rules for their use. [4]

Hallett points out that by the time Wittgenstein delivered the Blue Book lectures, he had abandoned his old conception of "rules." To quote Hallett:

> Not only was usage independent of rules, but in most cases there simply were no rules of the sort he had supposed. Use was the all-important thing. [5]

The transition in Wittgenstein's conception of meaning ran parallel to a general transition in Wittgenstein's overall view of the nature of language.

The latter was characteristic at two levels, namely "surface grammar" and "depth grammar." Surface grammar refers to words in relation to other words (as e.g., in propositions), whereas depth grammar refers to the relation of words not merely to other words and to the language system itself, but also to extra-linguistic institutions or "ways of life" of society and the world. The distinction between "surface" and "depth grammar" plays a crucial role in many confusions regarding the nature of meaning. Many of the ambiguities apparent in our use of the term 'meaning' can be traced to the fact that observation of the surface grammar of this term leads to different conclusions than does the observation of its depth grammar. The importance of this distinction is well stated in the following passage from the Investigations:

> 664. In the use of words one might distinguish 'surface grammar' from 'depth grammar'. What immediately impresses itself upon us about the use of a word is the way it is used in the construction of the sentence, the part of its use--one might say--that can be taken in by the ear.----And now compare the depth grammar, say of the word "to mean", with what its surface grammar would lead us to suspect. No wonder we find it difficult to know our way about. [6]

A careful analysis of the transition undergone by Wittgenstein's conception of language makes it evident that not only was a change brought about at both levels of grammar (i.e., surface and depth grammar), but also that, in the later writings, stress was laid upon broader and more diverse depth grammar. In contrast with his earlier conception of language, which emphasized the place occupied by a word, within a specific system or "language-game," the later formulation emphasized the life of a word, within the whole of life. In his later writings, much of Wittgenstein's effort was directed at overcoming inadequacies of the very conception of language he had asserted in his earlier works. He had come to regard the picture theory of meaning as, at best, providing only a partial account of the nature of language. In his later writings, Wittgenstein attempted to demonstrate that the picture theory was applicable in some cases but not in others.

Another important objective of his later writings was that of opposing the conception of language as a kind of "calculus." According to that notion, in order for an individual to utter a sentence and simultaneously mean or understand it, he must be operating a calculus according to a definitive set of rules. In his later writings, it becomes evident that Wittgenstein had come to regard the concept of "thinking out" within a calculus as highly misleading. Yet he concluded this only after putting forth a thorough search to substantiate or verify whether such a mental process (i.e., thinking within a calculus) actually does parallel linguistic utterances. In the *Blue Book*, he referred to the calculus view as being applicable only to certain rare instances in the use of language.

> For remember that in general we don't use language according to strict rules—it hasn't been taught us by means of strict rules, either. *We*, in our discussions constantly compare language with a calculus proceeding according to exact rules.
>
> This is a very one-sided way of looking at language. In practice we very rarely use language as such a calculus. For not only do we not think of the rules of usage—of definitions, etc.—while using language, but when we are asked to give such rules, in most cases we aren't able to do so. We are unable clearly to circumscribe the concepts we use; not because we don't know their real definition, but because there is no real 'definition' to them. To suppose that there *must* be would be like supposing that whenever children play with a ball they play according to strict rules.
>
> When we talk of language as a symbolism used in an exact calculus, that which is in our mind can be found in the sciences and in mathematics. Our ordinary use of language conforms to this standard of exactness only in rare cases. Why then do we in philosophizing constantly compare our use of words with one following exact rules? The answer is that the puzzles which we try to remove always spring from just this attitude towards language.[7]

The above passage holds that some of the very philosophical "puzzles" we attempt to solve actually arise from the calculus view of language. One example of a problem arising from this view is the question 'What is time?' Wittgenstein pointed out the erroneous nature of attempts to solve philosophical problems of this nature, by means of a definition. Imagine a perplexed individual who attempts to answer the question 'What is time?,' by asserting, "Time is the motion of celestial bodies." Then, upon observing that this definition fails to correspond with (or is not inclusive of) all instances of the application of the word 'time,' he decides merely that this definition is unsatisfactory, concluding that it will be necessary for him to search for a more satisfactory one. Admittedly, the establishing of a concrete definition often does clarify the grammar of a term. Yet it is misleading to ask questions such as 'What is ____________?' of a substantive such as 'time,' because it seems to ask for an answer given in terms of a set of strict rules. The puzzle concerns rules, a specific set of rules which have been presupposed.

The misleading nature of our tendency to compare our use of words with the participation in games and calculi having fixed rules, was again recognized by Wittgenstein in the Investigations. The following passage makes evident the manner in which this tendency can lead us into postulating or constructing an "ideal language":

> . . . in philosophy we often compare the use of words with games and calculi which have fixed rules, but cannot say that someone who is using language must be playing such a game.---But if you say that our languages only approximate to such calculi you are standing on the very brink of a misunderstanding. For then it may look as if what we were talking about were an ideal language. As if our logic were, so to speak, a logic for a vacuum.--Whereas logic does not treat of language--or of thought--in

> the sense in which a natural science treats of a natural phenomenon, and the most that can be said is that we construct ideal languages. But here the word "ideal" is liable to mislead, for it sounds as if these languages were better, more perfect, than our everyday language; and as if it took the logician to show people at last what a proper sentence looked like.
>
> All this, however, can only appear in the right light when one has attained greater clarity about the concepts of understanding, meaning, and thinking. For it will then also become clear what can lead us (and did lead me) to think that if anyone utters a sentence and means or understands it he is operating a calculus according to definite rules.[8]

The opposition to the tendency to "construct an ideal language" represents a contrast in the comparison of Wittgenstein's conception of language and that of Russell. Although both Russell and Wittgenstein noted the contrast between apparent and real logical form, Russell and the logical positivists interpreted the significance of this contrast in a manner different from Wittgenstein's. To them, the contrast seemed to suggest two programs: one analytic, the other constructive. As a means of pursuing the first, these theorists proposed that every expression wherein apparent and real logical form do not coincide, be replaced by another expression, namely one having real and apparent logical forms that are the same, and being, at the same time, synonymous with the original expression. The other program, which was proposed as a constructive measure, represented an attempt to build an ideal language in which the discrepancy between apparent and real logical form would not occur.

Rulon Wells draws attention to the fact that whereas Russell and the positivists launched both programs, emphasizing the second, Wittgenstein and his followers accepted the first, yet rejected the second. Wittgenstein's rejection of the second program was due to his belief that the purpose of philosophical endeavor is not to construct an ideal language or even to change our everyday use of language. Instead, Wittgenstein proposed that philosophical inquiry has its central objective in the effort to "show the fly a way out of the fly bottle" in such a manner that he is enabled to "buz freely" out of the bottle, rather than being its captive.

In order to clarify the manner in which Wittgenstein's later conception of language differed from that of Russell, it might be helpful to provide a brief comment on Russell's perception of the relationship of meaning and use. Russell's formula had arisen from a converging of two ideas. One is that "singular descriptions have no meaning but do have use," in that they contribute to meaning. The other idea is that the use of an expression is exhibited by the manner in which it can be paraphrased, in what forms of reasoning it can occur, and under what circumstances it is used. Russell's formula indicated that every expression has use, even if it has no meaning.

In contrast to Russell's formula, which claims that not all "uses" can be worked into the framework of meaning, and in opposition to Russell's tendency to compare the expression with reality, Wittgenstein's later writings indicate a withdrawal from metaphysics, and a proclivity to regarding meaning as being nearly (although with qualifications) definable as use. Consequently, Wittgenstein tended to treat "metaphysical problems" as essentially grammatical problems. Indeed, the philosophical investigation itself was primarily a grammatical one, and had its purpose in providing a "clearing ground" for misunderstanding.

> 90. We feel as if we had to penetrate phenomena: our investigation, however, is directed not towards phenomena, but, as one might say, towards the possibilities of phenomena. We remind ourselves, that is to say, of the kind of statement that we make about phenomena. Thus Augustine recalls to mind the different

> statements that are made about duration, past present or future, of events. (These are, of course, not philosophical statements about time, the past, the present and the future.)
>
> Our investigation is therefore a grammatical one. Such an investigation sheds light on our problem by clearing misunderstandings away. Misunderstandings concerning the use of words, caused, among other things, by certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of language.--Some of them can be removed by substituting one form of expression for another; this may be called an "analysis" of our forms of expression, for the process is sometimes like one of taking a thing apart. 9

Wittgenstein acknowledged that many misunderstandings can be resolved by "making our expressions more exact," but warned against the striving after a "final resolution," a completely resolved form of every expression. Keeping in mind the essentially descriptive nature of philosophy, Wittgenstein avoided the activity of "prescribing" the manner in which the language should be applied. In the Investigations, the emphasis is constantly on observation.

In the Philosophical Investigations, Wittgenstein's central objective was not that of setting forth new "theories" or hypotheses, but was instead, that of providing an accurate description of particular cases. The transition from the earlier view and methodology to that of the later works, and the increasing emphasis on observation and description, is described appropriately by Garth Hallett:

> Reliance on the description of many and varied concrete cases not only distinguishes the Investigations, say from the Tractatus; it also, though less obviously, connects the two works. The importance of the "say"--"show" distinction in the Tractatus has been stressed. Practically the same distinction dominates the later philosophy of Wittgenstein, quite as much as it did the Tractatus. According to the Tractatus, words are used for the humble statement of facts and accomplish this task quite satisfactorily without any help from philosophers, even linguistic ones; we all understand what words say. But we do not all see how or why they

> say what they say; we do not all see what the statements only show, namely their grammar. [*] Close observation of their use is required to discover this, and so to avoid philosophical problems, which arise from blindness to the true grammar of words. Close inspection of cases awakened Wittgenstein later to the fact that *the* grammar of the *Tractatus* is only one possible grammar. But on all the other points just mentioned, his views remained basically unchanged. Understanding what words say is usually no problem;(*) but grasping their grammar requires reflection and close observation.[*] That is why there are philosophical problems; philosophical puzzles arise from misunderstanding the way our language works and the way individual expressions are used.[10]

Applying the procedure described above (i.e., observing and reflecting upon the *grammar* of expressions), in his later writings, Wittgenstein recognized that the search for an explanation of meaning must take precedence over the attempt merely to answer the question 'What is meaning?' The activity of looking for an explanation of meaning brings the question 'What is meaning?', itself, "down to earth." A careful study of the grammar of the expression 'explanation of meaning,' he pointed out in the *Blue Book*, teaches something about the word 'meaning,' in addition to circumventing the tendency to look about oneself for some object to call "the meaning." Wittgenstein divided what are generally called "explanations of meaning" into verbal and ostensive definitions, adding that this differentiation "is only rough and provisional."[11]

According to Wittgenstein, the search for an explanation of meaning must involve observation and description of concrete cases. The primary emphasis in the later works centers on the idea that philosophy is "purely descriptive," and that the concrete cases, rather than vague and presumptuous generalities, are to be the objects of inquiry. Wittgenstein sought not to impose his own "views" upon his listeners and readers, but instead, to provide guideposts which could be applied by others in the course of their own philosophical inquiry. But there are many pitfalls which can lead the inquirer away from the activity of observing and describing concrete cases. One such pitfall is the tendency to suppose that there must be some common element in all applications of a "general term." As Wittgenstein declared,

> The idea that in order to get clear about the meaning of a general term one had to find the common element in all its applications has shackled philosophical investigation; for it has not only led to no result, but also made the philosopher dismiss as irrelevant the concrete cases, which alone could have helped him to understand the usage of the general term. When Socrates asks the question, "what is knowledge?" he does not even regard it as a preliminary answer to enumerate cases of knowledge.[12]

As a consequence of his observation of the errors committed by other philosophers, Wittgenstein recognized the importance of what they had overlooked, namely that when we examine particular cases of our application of a general term, we do not necessarily discover any such common element as what we had presupposed.

Furthermore, Wittgenstein's methodology enabled him to recognize the manner in which the "craving for generality" had been responsible for some of the errors and inadequacies of the conception of language he had presented in the Tractatus. The tendency to regard linguistic utterances as, invariably having a descriptive function, was one such error. In the Investigations, however, Wittgenstein not only recognized that description might be merely one function of language, among many others, but also the possibility that "descriptions" themselves might represent instruments for several particular purposes.

> 291. What we call descriptions are instruments for particular uses. Think of a machine-drawing, a cross-section, an elevation with measurements, which an engineer has before him. Thinking of a description as a word-picture of the facts has something misleading about it: one tends

> to think only of such pictures as hang on our walls which seem simply to portray how a thing looks, what it is like. (These pictures are as it were idle.) [13]

In the same way that the descriptions serve as "instruments for particular uses," words are, in many ways, like tools in a toolbox. In his later works, Wittgenstein repeatedly drew the analogy between words (as elements of a language-system), and tools in a toolbox. In this way, Wittgenstein proposed that we should think of words as "tools," which serve not merely one general function, but a wide variety of functions:

> 11. Think of the tools in a tool-box: there is a hammer, pliers, a saw, a screw-driver, a rule, a glue-pot, glue, nails and screw.--The functions of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects. (And in both cases there are similarities.)
>
> Of course, what confuses us is the uniform appearance of words when we hear them spoken or meet them in script and print. For their application is not presented to us so clearly. Especially when we are doing philosophy! [14]

It is a difficult and misleading to form generalizations about words, as it is to generalize about tools.

> 13. When we say: "Every word in language signifies something" we have so far said nothing whatever; unless we have explained exactly what distinction we wish to make. (It might be, of course, that we wanted to distinguish the words of language (8) from words 'without meaning' such as occur in Lewis Caroll's poems, or words like 'Lilliburlero' in songs.)
>
> 14. Imagine someone's saying: "All tools serve to modify something. Thus the hammer modifies the position of the nail, the saw the shape of the board, and so on."--And what is modified by the rule, the glue-pot, the nails?--"Our knowledge of a thing's length, the temperature of the glue, and the solidity of the box."---Would anything be gained by this assimilation of expressions?-- [15]

Wittgenstein's opposition to the tendency to generalize is again evident in his reluctance to consider the "application of a rule," as being essential to the "meaning of a term" in all cases. Although it might be that in many cases, this characteristic is inseparable from the meaning of a term, there is no reason to suppose that it is a necessary characteristic of all terms. The difficulty here arises from the fact that in order to communicate, we must apply a certain amount of regularity in our use of words. This could be regarded as an indication that rules regulating application underly all our use of words. Yet in order to ascertain whether a rule belongs to the meaning of a word, we must first investigate whether the "rule" in question contributes to the usefulness of the term itself. Garth Hallett seemed to have this in mind when he stated,

> Usefulness, in fact, is the criterion for whether a rule belongs to the meaning of a word. "The game," Wittgenstein suggests, using his favorite analog of language, "has not only rules but a point." And one is tempted to say that some rules are essential, some inessential, in so far as they are relevant to the "point" of the game. If we say that the game is defined by rules and leave it at that, then any rule will seem to be an essential part of the game, for instance a rule which prescribes that kings be used for drawing lots before the game begins.[16]

To say that the meaning of a word is its "use," is not merely to say the word's meaning is exclusively delineated by its use in a particular proposition. A word's meaning can be "general," in the sense that it represents all usages of the word in the language. Consequently, many words have only vaguely defined boundaries, and indeed, some words appear to have no boundaries at all.[17] Does the fact that we are able to use words and expressions, as vehicles of communication, indicate that they must have "fixed boundaries" (whether we are consciously aware of those boundaries or not)? Wittgenstein's reply to this question is negative. The following passage illustrates his reply:

> 68. "All right: the concept of number is defined for you as the logical sum of these individual interrelated

> concepts: cardinal numbers, rational numbers, real numbers, etc.; and in the same way the concept of a game as the logical sum of a corresponding set of sub-concepts."----It need not be so. For I can give the concept 'number' rigid limits in this way, that is, use the word "number" for a rigidly limited concept, but I can also use it so that the extension of the concept is not closed by a frontier. And this is how we do use the word "game". For how is the concept of a game bounded? What still counts as a game and what no longer does? Can you give the boundary? No. You can draw one; for none has so far been drawn. (But that never troubled you before when you used the word "game".)
>
> "But then the use of the word is unregulated, the 'game' we play with it is unregulated."----It is not everywhere circumscribed by rules; but no more are there any rules for how high one throws the ball in tennis, or how hard; yet tennis is a game for all that and has rules too.[18]

Wittgenstein's acknowledgement that there are words whose use appears to have no sharply defined boundaries, should NOT be construed as indicating that he considered no words to be sharply defined. Here again, Wittgenstein's opposition to generalities comes into focus. Although the use of some words might be sharply defined (as e.g., words deriving their meaning from the fact that there are some particulars which represent instantiations of them, whereas other particulars do not), there are other words for which we might even consider it advantageous that they are not sharply defined. It is often thought that the characteristic of ambiguity or vagueness is a "fault" which should be overcome, and that a "blurred concept" is not, properly speaking, a concept at all. Wittgenstein, however, pointed out that in some cases, the blurred concept might be exactly what we are looking for.

> 71. One might say that the concept 'game' is a concept with blurred edges.--"But is a blurred concept a concept at all?"--Is an indistinct photograph a picture of a person at all? Is it even always an advantage to replace an indistinct picture by a sharp one? Isn't the indistinct one often exactly what we need?
>
> Frege compares a concept to an area and says that an area with vague boundaries cannot be called an area at all. This presumably means that we cannot do anything with it.--But is

> it senseless to say: "Stand roughly there"? Suppose that I were standing with someone in a city square and said that. As I say it I do not draw any kind of boundary, but perhaps point with my hand--as if I were indicating a particular spot. And this is just how one might explain to someone what a game is. One gives examples and intends them to be taken in a particular way.--I do not, however, mean by this that he is supposed to see in those examples that common thing which I--for some reason--was unable to express; but that he is now to employ those examples in a particular way. Here giving examples is not an indirect means of explaining in default of a better. For any general definition can be misunderstood too. The point is that this is how we play the game. (I mean the language-game with the word "game".) [19]

In Zettel, Wittgenstein denied the effort to discover real, exact meanings of terms, admitting that in the course of investigation, we often do, for practical reasons, give certain words "exact meanings."

> 467. Our investigation does not try to find the real, exact meaning of words; though we do often give words exact meanings in the course of our investigations. [20]

Wittgenstein sought to demonstrate that the fact that a word can be used in a large variety of ways, does not indicate that the word is "meaningless," or of no value. His recognition of the varieties of uses we make of many words, led Wittgenstein to the observation of what he termed "family resemblances." In opposition to traditional conceptions of "universals," Wittgenstein suggested that when we observe the varied uses that are made of certain terms, we do not find something common to all, but instead, we find a complicated network of resemblances which seem to overlap and criss-cross.

> Instead of producing something common to all that we call language, I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same words for all,--but that they are related to one another in many different ways. And it is because of this relationship, or these relationships, that we call them all "language". [21]

The above passage makes it evident that what appears true in the case of one word or one kind of word cannot be generalized, and considered as a characteristic of all words. In opposition to the tendency to form a generalization, after observing only one or two concrete cases, Wittgenstein suggested that we continue observing and describing particular concrete cases. After having done so himself, he was unable to cite any single characteristic common to all words, other than the facts applying to their use. It is true that some words, when uttered, are accompanied by mental images and associations, but this characteristic is not true of all words. It is also true that some words serve to name a particular object, but this is not true of all words. Some words are used according to one distinct rule, but here again, this is not true of all words. To say that "the meaning of a word" is any of the characteristics mentioned above, would be to classify all words, which do not display the particular characteristic, as "meaningless." But this seems to be a conclusion we would like to avoid. Wittgenstein's manner of conceiving meaning, offers the very means for avoiding this predicament, by positing the meaning of a term as its use within not only the context of a particular application of the term, but within the wider, more general context (i.e., language-game) wherein the word has its place.

It is important always to keep in mind that language is essentially a social activity, a game wherein the uses of words have their place. But is the grammar of a word its use? It seems crucial that we emphasize the games played with the various words under analysis, rather than merely emphasizing the phrases in which they occur. In the Brown Book, Wittgenstein asserted that the meanings of words can be grasped only if we look at the entire language-game, instead of merely looking at the contexts and phrases, within which the words are uttered. The meaning of a word is not the word in itself, but instead involves the entire context or language-game. The word's significance, thus, includes what precedes and follows it. In the Investigations, Wittgenstein declared that a word "happens" in certain surroundings, and that its occurrence within these surroundings gives it significance, much in the same way that a "smiling mouth" smiles only in the context of a smiling face. [22] The importance of taking into account the context in which a word or phrase is uttered, is well illustrated by the following passage:

> 117. You say to me: "You understand this expression, don't you? Well then--I am using it in the sense you are familiar with."--As if the sense were an atmosphere accompanying the word, which it carried with it into every kind of application.
> If, for example, someone says that the sentence "This is here" (saying which he points to an object in front of him) makes sense to him, then he should ask himself in what special circumstances this sentence is actually used. There it does make sense. [23]

The emphasis on the importance of the context in which words are applied, makes it evident that the meaning of a term must be more than a mere rule applying to its use. Although Wittgenstein held that the utility of words depends on rules, and that rules themselves must belong to the meaning of a word, the rules do not, according to his view, constitute the meanings of the term. From a Wittgensteinian standpoint, utility is more essential to a word's meaning, than uniformity. We obviously apply certain words according to different rules in different contexts. A careful reading of the Investigations forces the reader into greater awareness of the absence of a strict uniformity in our use of the language. Because Wittgenstein's objective was therapeutic, in that he was attempting to draw attention to the errors of his own earlier writings, and to those of others before him, he proposed numerous examples to demonstrate that the language-game is not played according to strictly uniform rules. Furthermore, he proposed that there occur a large number of applications of a term, that are not fully in accord with its commonly accepted usage(s) within the language system. Can there be a distinction between normal and abnormal cases? To quote Wittgenstein:

> 142. It is only in normal cases that the use of a word is clearly prescribed; we know, are in doubt, what to say in this or that case. The more abnormal the case, the more doubtful it becomes what we are to say. And if things were quite different from what they actually are--if there were for instance no characteristic expression of pain, of fear, of joy; if rule became exception and exception rule; or if both became phenomena of roughly equal frequency--this would make our normal language-games lose their point.--The procedure of putting a lump of cheese on a balance and fixing the price by the turn of the scale would lose its point if it frequently happened for such lumps to suddenly grow or shrink for no obvious reason. [24]

Difficulties arise whenever we attempt to conceive a system of language or even a language-game as a mere set of clearly defined rules. Because of the tendency to view language in this way, one might be tempted to say that language is not a game, if there is any vagueness in the rules. Wittgenstein warned that we are frequently so "dazzled" by the ideal of the game, that we fail to recognize the actual use of the word 'game.' [25] The more narrow a method we apply in investigating the nature of language, the more liable "the requirement of language," we have set before us, is to disintegrate. In the process of "smoothing out all the edges," we put ourselves on slippery ice.

> 107. The more narrowly we examine actual language, the sharper becomes the conflict between it and our requirement. (For the crystalline purity of logic was, of course, not a result of investigation: it was a requirement.) The conflict becomes intolerable; the requirement is now in danger of becoming empty.--We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need friction. Back to the rough ground! [26]

Wittgenstein sought to demonstrate that we must not attempt to simplify our notion of the nature of language. In order to view the language objectively, we must take into consideration its highly complex nature. Accordingly, the nature of "meaning" cannot be simplified.

Although Wittgenstein respected the idea that words can, for practical purposes be "defined," he opposed the general tendency to declare that we are able to use a term, simply because it "radiates" from a single source. In opposition to the depiction of the process involved in a definition as that of "radiation," Wittgenstein proposed his notion of "family resemblances," according to which the various usages of certain terms, form together in a concatenated network. According to the approach elaborated in Wittgenstein's later writings, different things can be called by the same term, not necessarily because there is an element common to all of them, but because of the similarities that link them together in the network which they form. In the same way that a thread is held together not by one fiber, which runs throughout, but by the interlocking of multifarious fibers, the various ways in which we are able to use words, are held together by a network of similarities and family resemblances.

In Zettel, another of Wittgenstein's later writings, the fact that our use of language is, to a certain extent, autonomous, is illustrated in a comparison of the rules of language with the rules of cookery. Wittgenstein pointed out the mistake involved in thinking of the rules of one activity, as constituting a counterpart of the rules of another activity. Whereas the activity involved in cookery is defined by its end, the activity involved in "speaking" is not.[27] We say that one "cooks badly," if he fails to follow rules which are conducive to the achievement of excellence in that activity. In contrast, if one fails to apply rules of a game, we can, in many instances, say that one is simply playing another game. This is true in the case of a language-game, as it is in the case of a chess game. Moreover, we can call the rules of language and other types of games "arbitrary," whereas we cannot call rules of cookery "arbitrary."

We could even imagine a language involving the following practice: at regular intervals of time, the meanings of various expressions are altered according to definite rules. This alteration could occur at specific intervals during each day, or it could occur every day. The emphasis on the application of rules in a particular game is evident in the passage: "Do not say 'one cannot', but say instead: 'it doesn't exist in this game'." [28] This again stresses the importance of the context in which the rules are applied.

In order to understand the nature of "rules," one must investigate not merely the rules in themselves, but the entire institution of following rules. Does the significance of a rule reside in the manner in which the rule is interpreted? Wittgenstein indicated that interpretations do not, in themselves, constitute meaning.

> 198. "But how can a rule shew me what I have to do at this point? Whatever I do is, on some interpretation, in accord with the rule."—That is not what we ought to say, but rather: any interpretation still hangs in the air along with what it interprets, and cannot give it any support. Interpretations by themselves do not determine meaning. [29]

K. T. Fann, in his work, Wittgenstein's Conception of Philosophy, draws attention to the essentially public nature of the application of rules. Because of the fact that rules are essentially public, it is not possible, from the logical standpoint, for there to be rules that are private. Furthermore, the public nature of rules makes it necessary that more than one person must be able to follow a rule. Still another essential characteristic of "rule following behavior," is the possibility of making a mistake. This possibility constitutes the distinction between merely behaving in a manner which manifests regularity, and actually following a rule. In the former case, it makes no sense to ask whether one is performing the activity correctly, whereas in the latter case, it does make sense. Participation in a rule governed activity involves the acknowledgement that there is a correct and an incorrect way of carrying out the specific tasks involved; it requires that the individual enter into established conventions. A mistake can therefore be seen as a contravention of what has been established as correct, and can be recognizable as such. In the instance that a mistake is made, there must be some manner of calling attention to it. If an individual behaves according to the rule, we should be able to say not only that he is doing the correct thing, but also that he is doing the "same" thing as before. Knowing how to follow a set of rules, involves the acquisition of a skill, the mastery of a technique. So it is, in the case of language, which is, itself, a rule governed activity. As Fann suggests,

> Learning how to follow rules is gaining mastery of a technique; it is acquiring a skill. Teaching someone how to follow rules is training him in a technique; it is developing in him a skill. Knowing how to follow rules is having a skill; it is being able to engage in a practice. All of this is true of learning, teaching, or knowing a language, according to Wittgenstein. 'To understand a sentence means to understand a language. To understand a language means to be master of a technique' (P.I. s. 199). When we learn a language, however, we learn not only one technique but a whole complex set of techniques. To speak a language is not just to engage in one practice, but to engage in many different practices. One might say that a language is a composite practice made up of a number of practices. The multiplicity and variety of the practices which constitute our language are emphasized by Wittgenstein

> in the series of 'language-games' which he constructs in his later writings.[20]

The implications of the notion of language as an essentially rule governed activity are highly complex and can be understood only as a consequence of a more detailed study of our ability to function within such a system. The next chapter will involve an investigation of our manner of participating in such language-games.

FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER IV

[1] Ludwig Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books. (1958; rpt. New York: Harper & Row, 1965) p. 69.

[2] Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958; rpt. New York: Macmillan, 1970) Sec. 43.

[3] Garth Hallett, Wittgenstein's Definition of Meaning as Use (New York: Fordham University Press, 1967) p. 79.

[4] Wittgenstein, Blue and Brown Books, p. 28.

[5] Hallett, p. 80.

[6] Wittgenstein, Investigations, Sec. 664.

[7] Wittgenstein, Blue and Brown Books, pp. 25, 26.

[8] Wittgenstein, Investigations, Sec. 81.

[9] Ibid., Sec. 90.

[10] Hallett, p. 87.

[11] Wittgenstein, Blue and Brown Books, p. 1.

[12] Ibid., pp. 19, 20.

[13] Wittgenstein, Investigations, Sec. 291.

[14] Ibid., Sec. 11.

[15] Ibid., Secs. 13, 14.

[16] Hallett, p. 106.

[17] Wittgenstein, Investigations, Secs. 68-77.

[18] Ibid., Sec. 68.

[19] Ibid., Sec. 71.

[20] Ludwig Wittgenstein, Zettel, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, edd. G. E. M. Anscombe & G. H. von Wright. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967; rpt. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1970) Sec. 467.

[21] Wittgenstein, Investigations, Sec. 65.

[22] Ibid., Secs. 539, 540.

[23] Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, Sec. 117.

[24] Ibid., Sec. 142.

[25] Ibid., Sec. 100.

[26] Ibid., Sec. 107.

[27] Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, Sec. 320.

[28] Ibid., Sec. 134.

[29] Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, Sec. 198.

[30] K. T. Fann, *Wittgenstein's Conception of Philosophy.* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969; rpt. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1971) pp. 78, 79.

CHAPTER V

LANGUAGE-GAMES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE IN WITTGENSTEIN'S CONCEPTION OF MEANING

The construction of language-games played an important role in Wittgenstein's methodology. In his later writings, Wittgenstein presented a wide variety of language-games, as a means of illustrating the manner in which we are able to make use of certain words and expressions to carry out arbitrarily selected objectives. Language-games represented for Wittgenstein, not preparatory exercises for the future improvement and regulation of language, but instead, they represented "objects of comparison," which, when carefully analyzed, serve the purpose of yielding insight as to the complexities of our own language. In comparing our language system with language-games, we find that dissimilarities, as well as similarities, provide a fruitful object of study.

> 130. Our clear and simple language-games are not preparatory studies for a future regularization of language—as it were first approximations, ignoring friction and air-resistence. The language-games are rather set up as objects of comparison which are meant to throw light on the facts of our language by way not only of similarities, but also of dissimilarities.[1]

Wittgenstein's manner of setting up these "objects of comparison" (i.e., language-games), raises some puzzling questions. Supposedly, he sought, in his later works, to observe and describe rather than to assert and explain. If this was the central objective of Wittgenstein's later writings, it seems puzzling that he was so concerned with the construction of such "mini-theories" as language games. Curiously enough, he even goes as far as to claim that

> . . . we can avoid ineptness or emptiness in our assertions only by presenting the model [i.e., language-game] as what it is, as an object of comparison--as, so to speak, a measuring-rod; not as a preconceived idea to which reality must correspond.[2]

Perhaps the value of constructing language-games derives partly from the parallel frequently drawn by Wittgenstein, namely the comparison of words with the pieces of a chess game. To ask, "What is a word really?" is, in many respects, like asking "What is a piece in chess (the game of chess)?"[3] The attempt to understand the nature of one element of a particular game such as chess, necessitates that one investigate the nature of the game itself, and the rules which define it. Likewise, the attempt to understand the nature of a word necessitates that one take into account its role in the entire language system. Language can thus be seen as an activity, or set of activities, structured by a set of rules. Yet the important aspect of language is not the rules, in themselves, but the practice of applying the rules.

An illustration of the manner in which we apply rules was supplied by Wittgenstein in § 454 of the Investigations, wherein he inquired as to what characteristic of an arrow makes it possible for the arrow to "point." We are tempted to say that the arrow "carries something beside itself," as if the arrow communicates a mental image or message which is not part of the arrow, yet is something for which the arrow serves as a vehicle. We are tempted to think of the arrow as in itself a mere dead line, and that the process of "pointing" is something attributed to it by the mind of the perceiver, when confronted by the arrow. Yet Wittgenstein pointed out that it is misleading to say this. The significance of the arrow is not some psychical or mentalistic process provoked by the perception of the arrow, but is instead constituted in the application of the arrow.

The significance of a sign is not the sign itself, or even the mere use of it, on a particular occasion, but is instead, the fact that the sign is used in a certain way, and consequently serves a purpose. "But what is the connection between the use of a sign and its purpose?" To this question it can be replied that the use of signs represents a means of achieving communication. We know that the use of a sign has achieved its purpose in cases where we can observe that the application of the sign, by the perceiver, coincides with whatever was intended to be communicated by the sign. If the sign designated as an "arrow" is applied in a manner appropriate to it, then we say that communication has taken place. On the other hand, if the arrow is not applied as an arrow (and therefore does not serve the purpose appropriate to an arrow), we would have no reason to say that it "points."

That the sign itself does not constitute its own significance, and furthermore that a series of signs is not significant in itself, is well illustrated by an example mentioned in K. T. Fann's work, Wittgenstein's Conception of Philosophy. Fann suggests that we imagine a situation in which members of a primitive tribe decorate their caves with signs that have the same visual appearance as that of Arabic numerals. [4] Suppose further that the manner in which the members of the tribe arrange the numerals is such that the series, formed by them, is identical to a set of calculations produced by a mathematician. Each series of numerals produced by a member of the tribe would be considered "correct" by the mathematician. Yet suppose the primitive people depicted in the example do not use these series of numerals as calculations at all. They never use them, for example, in computing how much wood to gather as materials for building a hut, or how much food should be gathered for a feast. The question naturally arises as to whether the members of this primitive tribe are actually doing mathematics. It seems that we would not wish to assert any more than that they merely display an ability to repeat the series as it was originally arranged. Moreover, it seems no more justifiable to say that the members of the tribe are "doing mathematics," than for us to say the "utterances" of a parrot are demonstrations of "the use of language." This indicates that language as an activity involves much more than merely reiterating specific series of symbols. Language constitutes a system of communication, and provides a medium whereby we are enabled to influence one another in various ways. Mere copying of signs, even when done in a manner which might be said to be rule governed, could be regarded as a "game," but it is not a language-game. In order for us to become clear about the social nature of language, Wittgenstein suggested that we ask ourselves what actually is involved in the practice of following a rule. In § 199 of the Investigations, he observed that following a rule, like the practice of making a promise, or giving an order, represents a custom, or institution presupposing an entire society, or way of life as it background.

The inadequacies of the notion that language is a mere "system of expressions, the use of which is structured by a set of rules," are revealed by Wilfrid Sellars in the chapter entitled "Some Reflections on Language Games," appearing in his work, Science, Perception and Reality. Sellars asserts that although that notion might, upon superficial reflection, seem plausible, in actuality, taken as it stands, this thesis is "subject to an obvious and devastating refutation."[5] The plausibility of the notion Sellars attacks, namely that the process of learning to use a language (L) consists in learning to "obey the rules of L," can be seen as illusory, when one takes into account the fact that it ultimately commits one to "a vicious regress." Sellars defines a "rule which enjoins the doing of an action (A)," as "a sentence in a language which contains an expression for A." From this Sellars concludes that a rule serving to enjoin "the using of a linguistic expression (E)," must be a sentence in a language containing an expression for E, and must therefore be a sentence in a "metalanguage." Moreover, the ability to use a metalanguage (in which the rules of L are formulated), is presupposed by the process of learning to use the language (L). Sellars proposes further that according to this argument, learning to use a metalanguage presupposes having learned to use a meta-metalanguage (MML). But this, in turn, would presuppose having learned to use a MMML, and so on ad infinitum. Sellars declares that because of the vicious regress involved, this notion must be regarded as absurd, and be rejected.

Several revised ways of interpreting the thesis in question, could be proposed as a means of avoiding the devastating refutation to which this thesis is subject. In an attempt to preserve the essential claim contained in it, one might propose substituting the phrase 'learning to conform to the rules of L,' for 'learning to obey the rules of L,' in those cases wherein "conforming to a rule enjoining the doing of A in circumstances D," is equated with "doing A when the circumstances are C." Thus, the individual who consistently does A in circumstances C, would be regarded as "conforming to the above rule" regardless of whether he had consciously formulated the idea that he has to do A in C, or whether he was able to formulate a linguistic expression to refer to either A or C. According to this notion, the act of substituting the expression 'conforming to the rules of L,' for 'obeying the rules of L,' overcomes the problem of the development of an infinite regress. It describes the distinction between 'obeying the rule,' and 'conforming to the rule,' as residing in the fact that whereas 'obeying a rule' entails a conscious knowledge of a rule and its formulation in the language, mere 'conforming to a rule' does not. In this way, the proposed notion seeks to maintain that, in this revised form, the thesis no longer implies that learning a language entails or presupposes having learned a metalanguage (ML), nor that the latter entails having learnt to use a MML. In this revised form, the thesis in question asserts that the participation in a language-game does not, from a logical standpoint, necessitate the deliberate application of (or obedience to) the rules involved in the game. It does not deny that such knowledge could be acquired as a consequence of participation in the game. It merely denies that the knowledge of the precise manner in which the rules of the game are formulated, is a requirement for participation in the game itself.

Although in this revised form, we can say that the thesis now does not involve an infinite regress, it seems that it has acquired a new difficulty that might prove equally devastating to its validity, as was the former. Because it is now asserted that learning to use a language does not necessitate the deliberate (conscious) formulation and obeying of a set of rules, the question arises as to whether "language," as it is described in this revised notion, actually represents a "game" at all. To quote Sellars:

> What are we to make of this line of thought? The temptation is to say that while the proposed revision

> of the original thesis does, indeed, avoid the refutation, it does so at too great a cost. Is conforming to rules, in the sense defined, an adequate account of playing a game? Surely the rules of a game are not so 'externally related' to the game that it is logically possible to play the game without 'having the rules in mind'! Or, again, surely one is not making a move in a game (however uncritically and unselfconsciously) unless one is making it as a move in the game. And does this not involve that the game be somehow 'present to mind' in each move? And what is the game but the rules? So must not the rules be present to mind when we play the game? These questions are both searching and inevitable, and yet an affirmative answer would seem to put us back where we started.[6]

In order to arrive at a solution to the problem, Sellars proposes that we keep in mind the fact that learning to participate in a game, involves "learning to do what one does because doing these things is making moves in the game." To put it another way, we ought to bear in mind that the ability to make the appropriate moves in the game, does not necessarily entail the ability to formulate the rules of the game, in terms of a metalanguage. Sellars suggests that we call into question an idea we had previously taken for granted: the supposed dichotomy between 'merely conforming to the rules,' on the one hand, and 'obeying the rules,' on the other. He proposes that this is a "false dichotomy," on the grounds that it requires that we suppose that, in order for an explanation of a specific act to involve "a complex system of activity," the agent must simultaneously envisage the system, and intend its realization. To say this involves maintaining that unless the agent conceptualizes the system, while carrying out the specific act, the conformity of his behavior to the system can only be regarded as "accidental." If the term 'accidental' is taken here to mean "the opposite of necessary," we encounter conflicts with the fact that

> . . . there can surely be an unintended relation of an act to a system of acts, which is nevertheless a necessary

> relation—a relation of such a kind that it is appropriate to say that the act occurred because of the place of that kind of act in the system.[7]

Sellars constructs an illustrative analogy by pointing out the following: suppose we imagine a bee going through various motions, in a clover field. If we say that the bee is "performing" parts of a complex dance, we do not commit ourselves to maintaining that the bee "envisages the dance," and goes through its motions with the intention of realizing the dance. It is Sellars' contention that an organism might acquire the ability to participate in an activity such as the one described, without having to "obey rules." Likewise our ability to participate in a language-game, does not require either our obedience to rules, or our participation in a metalanguage game.

Sellars' contention offers some support for Wittgenstein's analysis of language-games. The opposition to the necessity of a metalanguage underlying all our use of language, was an implicit aspect of Wittgenstein's perception of language as an institution. Wittgenstein proclaimed that the point of reference by which we interpret a language not known to us, is NOT a metalanguage, but is instead "the common behavior of mankind."

> Suppose you came as an explorer into an unknown country with a language quite strange to you. In what circumstances would you say that the people there gave orders, understood them, obeyed them, rebelled against them, and so on?
> The common behavior of mankind is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language.[8]

It appears that Wittgenstein maintained that we initially learn to use language as a consequence of observing behavior. It is for this reason that he criticized Augustine's theory of language learning.

> Augustine describes the learning of human language as if the child came into a strange country and did not understand the language of the country; that is, as if it already had a language, only not this one.

> Or again: as if the child could already think, only not yet speak. And "think" would here mean something like "talk to itself".[9]

Wittgenstein's emphasis on observation of behavior involved in the language-game, as the primary means of learning a language, parallels his reluctance to consider the conscious intention of obeying rules, as essential to language learning. That Wittgenstein did not consider the conscious intention of obeying rules, as an essential aspect of playing a game, is indicated by the fact that he mentioned the possibility of imagining "someone's having learnt the game, without ever learning or formulating rules."[10] Such an individual might have learnt the game merely as a consequence of watching simple games, at first, and then progressing to the more complicated ones. The fact that such an individual is able to name different pieces in the game, is a consequence NOT necessarily of his knowledge of the rules of the game, but is, instead, a consequence of his having achieved "mastery of a game."

> One can also imagine someone's having learnt the game without ever learning or formulating rules. He might have learnt quite simple board-games first, by watching, and have progressed to more and more complicated ones. He too might be given the explanation "This is the king",--if, for instance, he were being shown chessmen of a shape he was not used to. This explanation again only tells him the use of the piece because, as we might say, the place for it was already prepared. Or even: we shall only say that it tells him the use, if the place is already prepared. And in this case it is so, not because the person to whom we give the explanation already knows rules, but because in another sense he is already master of a game.[11]

It seems that Wittgenstein was emphasizing that the ability to participate in the game, involves the knowledge as to how to play the game, rather than the knowledge that the game is played in this or that way. Moreover, language learning involves the acquiring of a particular skill, or technique to be applied within the appropriate context. This would indicate that the clear formulation of the rules of the game would be helpful but not necessary, in the act of participating in the game.

In Zettel, Wittgenstein asserted that the act of intuitively grasping the meaning of a rule can mean nothing other than "to guess its application." When we say that an individual grasps a rule, what we really want to say is that the individual grasps "how he is to continue," [12] Wittgenstein seemed to have this in mind, when he dictated the following two passages:

> 303. "He grasps the rule intuitively."---But why the rule? Why not how he is to continue?
>
> 304. "Once he has seen the right thing, seen the one of infinitely many references which I am trying to push him towards--once he has got hold of it, he will continue the series right without further ado. I grant that he can only guess (intuitively guess) the reference that I mean--but once he has managed that the game is won.". But this 'right thing' that I mean does not exist. The comparison is wrong. There is no such thing here as, so to say, a wheel that he is to catch hold of, the right machine which, once chosen, will carry him on automatically. It could be that something of the sort happens in our brain but that is not our concern. [13]

The importance of grasping the application, as something which precedes the grasping of a rule, was emphasized by Wittgenstein throughout his later writings. In the case that someone says to another "do the same," we are tempted to say he "must" be pointing to a rule. But this presupposes that its application has already been learnt. If this were not the case, the expression of the rule would have no meaning for him.

Could there be a game in which no rule is given? It seems that Wittgenstein's reply to this question is affirmative. He pointed out that there could exist a game which consisted in "continuing a series of digits," and that such a game would not necessarily require a rule, or the formulated expression of a rule. Learning to participate in such a game would represent a process involving observation of examples. To the group of individuals accustomed to playing this game, we should expect that the notion that "every step of the game must be justified by something," would seem quite alien. [14]

The very notion of "justifying" particular moves in a game, is closely connected with the effort to ascertain the nature of the game itself. Yet, as Wittgenstein pointed out, we sometimes demand definitions or explicitly formulated rules, more from the standpoint of "form," rather than utility.

> 217. "How am I able to obey a rule?"--if this is not a question about causes, then it is about the justification for my following the rule in the way I do.
>
> 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.'
>
> (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.) [15]

If the explicit formulations of rules represent devices which are, at best, helpful, but not necessary for deciding whether an action represents "rule obeying behavior," what criterion is there for differentiating behavior arising from following a rule, and behavior representing a violation of a rule? Here, it should be pointed out that to violate a rule involves much more than merely behaving in an unusual or irregular manner. On the contrary, "violating a rule" involves being at fault, and therefore, being subject to criticism. But then one might wish to ask what constitutes the criteria for criticizing an individual's behavior as being "in violation of the rule." To this question, it can be replied that a violation of a rule represents a contravention to what has already been established as correct. Moreover, as K. T. Fann suggests, "to participate in rule-governed activities is, in a certain way, to accept that there is a right and a wrong way of doing things." [16]

Whether the activity is carried out in the right or wrong way, is not a matter of individual caprice. On the contrary, as Wittgenstein illustrated,

> One would like to say: whatever is going to seem right to me is right. And that only means that here we can't talk about 'right'.[17]

An important characteristic of language is regularity of behavior. In the case that a certain activity is alleged to constitute a language, we are not justified in referring to it as such, unless, among other characteristics, we can observe a certain amount of regularity in its application. Wittgenstein illustrated this, by describing an activity alleged to represent a "language," but which displays so little regularity that it would be impossible for us to learn to apply it. If we imagine an unknown tribe practicing an activity which "seems" to be a language, we would expect that the "language" could be learned by someone outside the tribe. Yet suppose that in attempting to acquire knowledge of the language in order to communicate by means of it, we discover that such knowledge is impossible to acquire, because there is no regular connection between what the members of the tribe utter, and what they do. In such a case, it is evident that the activity under observation is not a language. As K. T. Fann asserts,

> The point here is that if it is impossible to train a person to use an alleged language we cannot say that it is a language. More generally, if there is to be a practice defined by rules, there must be some way of learning how to engage in the practice or follow the rules.[18]

The activity of learning how to follow rules represents the mastery of a technique, the acquiring of a skill. To teach someone how to follow rules, therefore, involves training the individual in the technique. Furthermore, when we learn a language, we learn not merely one skill but an entire complex of practices. As Wittgenstein declared, "To understand a sentence means to understand a language. To understand a language means to be master of a technique." 19

From this standpoint, the expression 'I mean something by those words' means 'I know that I can apply them.' The very fact that one "means" something by the words is what prevents the speaker from talking nonsense. Wittgenstein's explanation of our ability to use words correctly, runs as follows:

> 297. "How do I manage always to use a word correctly--i.e. significantly; do I keep on consulting a grammar? No; the fact that I mean something--the thing I mean, prevents me from talking nonsense."--"I mean something by the words" here means: I know that I can apply them. I may however believe I can apply them, when it turns out that I was wrong. 20

The use of linguistic expressions, is frequently likened, by Wittgenstein, to the act of moving a piece in a chess game. In some cases, we merely make a move in an existent game, whereas in others, we provide a paradigm for future moves in the game. Rules are helpful in providing guidance and maintaining order in the game, but Wittgenstein made it clear that they are not the only reliable form of guidance. We tend to think that rules, unlike physical, mechanical forms of guidance could not misfire and thereby provide the possibility of something unforeseen.

> 296. How queer: It looks as if a physical (mechanical) form of guidance could misfire and let in something unforseen, but not a rule! As if a rule were, so to speak, the only reliable form of guidance. But what does guidance not allowing a movement, and a rule's not allowing it, consist in?--How does one know the one and how the other? 21

Indeed, it would be quite possible to establish a set of rules for a game, in the anticipation that the outcome of obeying the rules would be of a specific nature, only to discover that the outcome is actually quite different from the expected one. In such a case, we tend to say that the formulation of the rules was inadequate, and add that the set of rules ought to be revised .

accordingly. We therefore must allow that language involves the capacity for change.

Another important characteristic of language is flexibility. As essentially a vehicle of communication, the use of language requires agreement not only in definitions, but also in judgments. It is agreement not merely of "opinions," but "in form of life." As a form of life, one would expect it to be flexible in nature, in that it would have the characteristic of change. This should make evident the reason for saying that it is a mistake to compare language with a calculus operated according to precise rules. In actuality, we rarely use language in such a limited manner. It is usually the case that as we make use of a term, we do not have a specific rule for its usage in mind, and in many cases, even if we are asked to explicitly formulate such a rule, we discover that we are unable to do so. As Wittgenstein stated,

> We are unable clearly to circumscribe the concepts we use; not because we don't know their real definition, but because there is no real 'definition' to them. To suppose that there must be would be like supposing that whenever children play with a ball they play a game according to strict rules.[22]

In the following passage, Wittgenstein made evident his opposition to the more rigid conceptions of language that have been proposed by logicians:

> Reflections such as the preceding will show us the infinite variety of the functions of words in propositions, and it is curious to compare what we see in our examples with the simple and rigid rules which logicians give for the construction of propositions. If we group words together according to the similarity of their functions, thus distinguishing parts of speech, it is easy to see that many different ways of classification can be adopted.[23]

One of the reasons we are sometimes led astray in our endeavor to evaluate the concept of meaning, is the fact that in examining the use of a particular word, we are tempted to look at specific contexts in which the word is used. In contrast, we should be looking at the entire language-game in which the word serves as a component. In observing only one type of application of a term, we fail to take account of the fact that within the language-game, the word can serve a large variety of roles, and can be manipulated in numerous ways. It is for this reason that Wittgenstein likened words to "tools," which can serve a variety of functions, and proposed that we can understand their "meaning," only as a consequence of evaluating the use of words against the background of the entire language-game.

FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER V

[1] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958; rpt. New York: Macmillan, 1970) Sec. 130.

[2] Ibid., Sec. 131.

[3] Ibid., Sec. 108.

[4] K. T. Fann, *Wittgenstein's Conception of Philosophy*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969; rpt. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1971) pp. 74, 75.

[5] Wilfrid Sellars, *Science, Perception and Reality* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963) p. 321.

[6] Ibid., p. 323.

[7] Ibid., p. 325.

[8] Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, Sec. 206.

[9] Ibid., Sec. 32.

[10] Ibid., Sec. 31.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, edd. G. E. M. Anscombe & G. H. von Wright. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967; rpt. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1970) Sec. 303.

[13] Ibid., Secs. 303, 304.

[14] Ibid., Sec. 295.

[15] Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, Sec. 217.

[16] Fann, pp. 76, 77.

[17] Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, Sec. 258.

[18] Fann, p. 77.

[19] Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, Sec. 199.

[20] Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, Sec. 297.

[21] Ibid., Sec. 296.

[22] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books*. (1958; rpt. New York: Harper & Row, 1965) p. 25.

[23] Ibid., p. 83.

CHAPTER VI

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF
WITTGENSTEIN'S CONCEPTION OF MEANING

In evaluating Wittgenstein's notion of "meaning as use," it must always be kept in mind that Wittgenstein intended his account of meaning as a therapeutic methodology, as a tool for facilitating our escape from the conceptual quagmires in which we have been held captive by the sickness of the language. However, Wittgenstein did not consider himself to be proposing a new theory of meaning. Rather, his central objective was simply to provide a means of clarifying the difficulties involved in some widely held conceptions of meaning. In reducing previously held conceptions of meaning to absurdity, Wittgenstein sought to liberate philosophy from the confusion into which it had fallen.

In putting forth the notion that the use of a word constitutes the word's meaning, Wittgenstein provided the philosophical milieu with an essentially operationalistic conception of meaning. If the meaning of a term is its use, then the meaning obviously cannot be an object to which we could point, nor could it be any mental, "shadowy" entity which is present in our minds whenever we utter the word. Wittgenstein thought of meaning as being closely related to, or dependent on, the functions which are served by a term. The emphasis on function is important because it suggests that the word is actually "doing" something. Despite marked differences in the comparison of the Tractatus view of language, and that which was conveyed in the later works of Wittgenstein, there is a continual emphasis throughout the writings of both periods, on the idea that if a word "does nothing," it is meaningless. This should make it evident that throughout his writings, Wittgenstein conceived meaning as essentially operative.

Garth Hallett, in his work, Wittgenstein's Conception of Meaning as Use, differentiates between formal aspects of use, on the one hand, and pragmatic aspects, on the other. Formal use may be likened to a regular pattern of usage which includes rules, criteria, standards, etc.; formal use might be considered as referring to the place in the game which is occupied by a term. The pragmatic aspect of a term's usage refers, more specifically, to the function of the term. The distinction resides essentially in the fact that whereas the formal aspect refers to the structure of the manner in which a word is used, the pragmatic aspect refers to how the term is used in particular instances, and more specifically to the purpose served by the term in the instances of its application.

Close observation of both the formal and pragmatic aspects of usage, reveals that the formal aspect is largely determined by the pragmatic. Although Wittgenstein respected that there are words for whose usage we can very easily state a set of rules, his emphasis, in the analysis of explanations of meaning, is always on the pragmatic level. This emphasis is in opposition to our tendency to maintain that if one is unable to provide an explicit definition for a term, one must be unable to use the term correctly. In many instances, we discover, in attempting to define a word, that there is no one synonym, or expression, that serves as an adequate definition. Moreover, we discover that there is no one characteristic which is common to all applications of the term. Our use of particular terms can be complex enough that even in the case of an extremely familiar word, it could easily be that

> . . . the part the word plays in our life, and therewith the language-game in which we employ it, would be difficult to describe even in rough outline. [1]

It is only as a consequence of using a term in numerous situations, that our understanding of the "life" of a word comes about, and not vice versa. As Wittgenstein declared, "We talk, we utter words and only later get a picture of their life." [2] This can be explained, in part, by the fact that the meaning of a word is not merely its use on one particular occasion, but is of a more general, less restricted nature. Meaning is the use of a term within the entire language system, and therefore is not restricted to particular instances, even though in some instances its use might be confined within sharply defined boundaries. The fact that the allowable usage of a word on certain occasions might be closely restricted, is thus irrelevant to the changing life of the word, within the language as a whole.

It should always be kept in mind that a characteristic feature of the use of words is variety. Wittgenstein had this in mind when, after advising that we think of words as "instruments characterized by their use," (as are "tools"), he added,

> Of course, what confuses us is the uniform appearance of words when we hear them spoken or meet them in script and print. For their application is not presented to us so clearly. Especially when we are doing philosophy! [3]

The marked variety which characterizes our use of words, seems much more understandable when one takes into account the variety of circumstances under which we use them. As Wittgenstein suggested,

> The word "I" does not mean the same as "L.W." even if I am L. W., nor does it mean the same as the expression "the person who is now speaking". But that doesn't mean: that "L.W." and "I" mean different things. All it means is that these words are different instruments in our language.
>
> Think of words as instruments characterized by their use, and then think of the use of a hammar, the use of a chisel, the use of a square, of a glue pot, and of the glue. (Also, all that we say here can be understood only if one understands that a great variety of games is played with the sentences of our language: Giving and obeying orders; asking questions and answering them; describing an event; telling a fictitious story; telling a joke; describing an immediate experience; making conjectures about events in the physical world; making scientific hypotheses and theories; greeting someone, etc., etc.)[4]

The multiplicity and availability of language was further acknowledged by Wittgenstein in the following passage of Zettel:

> 322. Language is not defined for us as an arrangement fulfilling a definite purpose. Rather "language" is for us a name for a collection, and I understand it as including German, English and so on, and further various systems of signs which have more or less affinity with these languages.[5]

The use of language under most circumstances has a purpose, but from this it does not follow that the purpose of the use of language must be the same in all situations. Because of the variability of purposes and objectives for which language may be used, we find that the meanings of expressions and words themselves are not static, but that they change in a manner parallel to the changes in the objectives of the language-game being pursued.

> 438. Nothing is commoner than for the meaning of an expression to oscillate, for a phenomenon to be regarded sometimes as a symptom, sometimes as a criterion, of a state of affairs. And mostly in such a case the shift of meaning is not noted. In science it is usual to make phenomena that allow of exact measurement into

> defining criteria for an expression; and then one is inclined to think that now the proper meaning has been found. Innumerable confusions have arisen this way.[6]

In considering words as "instruments characterized by their use," Wittgenstein put forth an essentially operationalistic notion of the meaning, at least for certain forms of predicates. In an article entitled "Operationalism and Ordinary Language," C. S. Chihara and J. A. Fodor had this to say of Wittgenstein's operationalism:

> It is clear that Wittgenstein thought that analyzing the meaning of a word involves exhibiting the role or use of the word in the various language-games in which it occurs. He even suggests that we "think of words as instruments characterized by their use . . ." (BB, p. 67). This notion of analysis leads rather naturally to an operationalistic view of the meaning of certain sorts of predicates. For, in those cases where it makes sense to say of a predicate that one has determined that it applies, one of the central language-games that the fluent speaker has learned to play is that of making and reporting such determinations. Consider, for example, one of the language-games that imparts meaning to such words as "length," i.e., that of reporting the dimensions of physical objects. To describe this game, one would have to include an account of the procedures involved in measuring lengths; indeed, mastering (at least some of) those procedures would be an essential part of learning this game. "The meaning of the word 'length' is learnt among other things, by learning what it is to determine length" (PI, p. 225). As Wittgenstein comments about an analogous case, "Here the teaching of language is not explanation, but training" (PI, § 5). For Wittgenstein, "To understand a sentence means to understand a language." "To understand a language means to be master of a technique" (PI, § 199).[7]

The question arises as to how the operationalistic conception of language accounts for the concepts of "meaning something" and "intending something." It seems that what is at stake here is the issue regarding whether "intending" and "meaning" involve something measurable in terms of mentalistic criteria, or whether they involve something explainable in terms of an operationalistic or behavioristic framework. If intention and meaning represent a process, the criteria for recognizing them would be of the nature of the former. If, on the other hand, intention and meaning involve observable actions, the criteria for recognizing them would be of the nature of the latter. We tend to think of "intention" as representing essentially an inner "process." In Zettel, Wittgenstein mentioned that in trying to describe this process, the first notion that comes to mind is that it can fulfill its objective "only by containing an extremely faithful picture of what it intends."[8] Yet even this does not provide an adequate description. Regardless of the nature of the subject of the "intended picture," the picture can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Any attempt to divorce the picture from interpretation, makes it into something lifeless.

> When one has the picture in view by itself it is suddenly dead, and it is as if something had been taken away from it, which had given it life before.[9]

No longer does it represent a thought nor an intention; no longer does it "point outside itself to a reality beyond."

Someone might object that it is not the picture that "intends," but that it is the person who uses the picture. To this objection, Wittgenstein replied that if "intending" simply refers to something done with the picture, there would be no reason to suppose that it must be a human (or rational creature) who is doing something with it. From this standpoint, it begins to appear that perhaps "intending" is not a process at all. This is due to the fact that when we study the grammar of the term, 'process,' it becomes evident that the term (i.e., 'process') is applied as something static, and lifeless, whereas the terms, 'intention,' and 'meaning' refer to something dynamic. As Wittgenstein asserted,

> 237. It might almost be said: "Meaning moves, whereas a process stands still."[10]

In analyzing the concepts of intention and meaning, it might seem that the role of the "picture" is the key, but is it in reality? What the question actually refers to is "to what extent are we justified in applying 'inconceivability' or 'unimaginability,' as a criterion for nonsensicality. [11] An example of something which might be regarded as logically inconceivable, or unimaginable, would be a "round square." It seems that we often do regard inconceivability, and/or unimaginability as an indication of nonsensicality, but from this it does not follow that we are justified in doing so. Here it might also be pointed out that although a proposition might be nonsensical, it nevertheless can be understood, even if it is simply "understood as nonsense." Wittgenstein himself seemed to have this in mind, when he observed that anyone who gains an understanding of the propositions in the Tractatus, would eventually recognize them as "nonsensical." [12]

It appears that our ability to continue a linguistic activity depends not so much on whether or not the subject matter of the discourse could be classified as "nonsense," as it does on whether the language is applied in consistent enough manner to facilitate a continuation of the language-game. Cases in which we say that a person "has learnt the meaning of an expression" are cases wherein the individual can be observed to have acquired the ability to continue participating in the language-game.

Learning to continue participating in the language-game involves knowing what can and what cannot be done with certain words. Gilbert Ryle, in an article entitled "Use and Usage," offers some comments which bear direct relevance to the problem at hand. Ryle observes that learning to use expressions, like learning to use coins and stamps involves "learning to do certain things with them and not others; when to do certain things with them, and when not to do them." 13

Ryle draws attention to the important distinction between 'use' and 'usage.' Although these two terms are often used by philosophers as if they are interchangeable, there are actually some important differences as to how they should be applied. According to Ryle, a "use" refers to a way of operating with something, whereas a "usage" refers to a "custom, practice, fashion, or vogue," which can be "local or widespread, obsolete or current, rural, or urban." 14 From this, Ryle concludes that it makes no more sense to speak of a "misusage," than it does to speak of a "miscustom," or "misvogue." Because of this distinction, it can be said that the mastery of use does not necessarily entail the awareness of "usage," even when "mastering that use does casually involve finding out a bit about a few other people's practices." 15 In early infancy, we learn how to use words, yet we are not taught at that age, anything about the sociological or historical significance of the words we make use of. Further, knowing how to operate correctly or make the right moves in the language-game does not entail the ability as to how to explain the rules of the game to another. The latter represents a separate skill.

Still another frequently overlooked distinction which is perceived by Ryle, is the fact that whereas it seems natural to inquire whether a person has learnt the proper use of a term, it seems odd to ask whether he has learnt the proper use of a sentence or sequence of words. Yet nevertheless, we often talk about the "meaning of a sentence," in much the same way that we talk about "the meaning of a word."

> For we talk about the meanings of sentences, seemingly just as we talk of the meanings of the words in it; so, if knowing the meaning of a word is knowing how to use it, we might have

> expected that knowing the meaning of a sentence was knowing how to use the sentence. Yet this glaringly does not go.[16]

Ryle provides an illustrative analogy that makes the point clear. In observing the actions of a cook who is going through the procedure of making a pie, we say that she uses (or even, as the case may be, "misuses") the ingredients. We could also say the same of the various utensils with which she makes the pie. Yet we wouldn't say that she "uses" or "misuses" the pie itself. In the same way, we say that a speaker (or writer) uses the words with which he forms a sentence, yet we do not say that he "uses the sentence." "Sentences are things that we say. Words and phrases are what we say things *with.*"[17]

Whereas we can find "definitions" of words and even some phrases in a dictionary, we can find nothing of the sort applicable to sentences. Ryle cites the fact that words and phrases can be misused, while sentences cannot, as being consistent with the fact that sentences can be well or ill constructed. A sentence might be awkwardly put and/or ungrammatically constructed and yet still make sense.

Ryle applys Wittgenstein's comparison of words with the different pieces that are used as components of a game of chess, and suggests that in learning to use a word under a variety of circumstances, one acquires knowledge of "something like a body of unwritten rules, or something like an unwritten code or general recipe." Learning to use a word or phrase is in many respects, similar to the procedure of learning to manipulate the knight or pawn in a game of chess. Just as there are numerous pieces which are utilized according to different sets of rules, and thereby serve different functions, so the different words that constitute "pieces" or components of the language-game are utilized according to different sets of rules. Applying this analogy, Ryle draws the important distinction between the meaning of a word and the meaning of a sentence.

In a manner highly reminiscent of that in which Wittgenstein had, in the _Tractatus_, differentiated between _Bedeutung_ (i.e., "meaning," as of a word) and _Sinn_ (i.e., the sense of a sentence), Ryle points out that whereas there are sets of rules concerning the application of words, there are no corresponding codes relating to the application of sentences. Yet, whereas sentences can either make sense or make no sense, words can only have meanings. As Ryle indicates,

> If I know the meaning of a word or phrase I know something like a body of unwritten rules, or something like an unwritten code or general recipe. I have learned to use the word correctly in an unlimited variety of different settings. What I know is, in this respect, somewhat like what I know when I know how to use a knight or pawn at chess. I have learned to put it to its work anywhen and anywhere, if there is work for it to do. But the idea of putting a sentence to its work anywhen and anywhere is fantastic. It has not got a role which it can perform again and again in different plays. It has not got a role at all, any more than a play has a role. Knowing what it means is not knowing anything like a code or a body or rules, though it requires knowing the codes or rules governing the use of words or phrases that make it up. There are general rules and recipes for constructing sentences of certain kinds; but not general rules or recipes for constructing the particular sentence 'Today is Monday'. Knowing the meaning of 'Today is Monday' is not knowing general rules, codes or recipes governing the use of this sentence, since there is no such thing as the utilisation or, therefore reutilisation of this sentence. I expect that this ties up with the fact that sentences and clauses make sense or make no sense, where words neither do nor do not make sense, but only have meanings; and that pretence-sentences can be absurd or nonsensical, where pretence-words are neither absurd nor nonsensical, but only meaningless. I can say stupid things, but words can be neither stupid nor not stupid.[18]

Although Ryle's conception of meaning owes much to Wittgenstein's, and serves to illustrate Wittgenstein's conception of meaning, the view of language conveyed in Wittgenstein's later writings comes closer to explicitly denying that "referents" are an essential aspect of meaning. According to the final view of language explicated by Wittgenstein, although it can be granted that some words do "refer," many words do not. Indeed, the very word 'meaning,' itself, does not have any referent. "But," one might wish to ask, "if Wittgenstein considered meaning as residing in the use of a word, couldn't we regard "use" as the referent of meaning?" According to Wittgenstein, however, even this would be too much of a generalization.

It must be kept in mind that his statement is that "for a large class of cases---though not for all," we can think of the meaning of a term, as its use in the language. It seems that throughout his writings, Wittgenstein remained faithful to his opposition to "our craving for generality." Not only did he resist the temptation to generalize about various applications of a particular word, he refused to generalize about meaning itself. "But," one might again ask, "does this mean that there are no boundaries to the types of circumstances in which we employ the term 'meaning'?" It seems that Wittgenstein did not actually define boundaries, and yet he did not deny that our use of the term might be bounded. Even if our application of the term does not appear to be, strictly speaking, "bounded," we still would not be justified in considering it as "without any valid use," any more than we would be justified in considering the light radiating from a lamp as "no light," simply because of an absence of clearly defined boundaries. As Wittgenstein stated in the Blue Book,

> Many words in this sense then don't have a strict meaning. But this is not a defect. To think it is would be like saying that the light of my reading lamp is no real light at all because it has no sharp boundary.[19]

This, however, raises the question as to whether "just any use" of a word can be considered justified or meaningful. Take, for example, the solipsistic conception of language, according to which the meaning of a term can be whatever the speaker wishes it to mean at the time he utters it. Does Wittgenstein's conception of meaning allow this as a valid use of words? Certainly not. Throughout his writings, and even more explicitly in the later writings, Wittgenstein was emphatic about the essentially public nature of language. We are able to use words meaningfully, not merely because of certain factors in the immediate circumstances in which their application occurs, but also because of the background of the entire society of which the language represents a part. Thus, a word can be said to have meaning, not by virtue of the mere fact that it is used by a particular individual in a particular way, but by the fact that it serves as a tool whereby one individual is able to communicate with, or influence another. Wittgenstein's idea that the meaning of a word is its use in the language, therefore, cannot be interpreted as, in any way, sanctioning the notion that "there could be a private language."

"But," the question arises, "what specifically is the purpose served by the use of a word?" As we have already seen, the Tractatus view of language had proposed that the symbol (word), and its sign (written or spoken word), serve as a means of naming an object, and that language serves as a means of representing facts (i.e., arrangements of objects). The picture theory of meaning had put forth the idea that language serves as a kind of picture of reality, as a mirror of the world. Sentences, according to that view, had represented composite pictures of reality. The words of which they were composed likewise represented individual objects arranged in a manner corresponding with that of the picture.

In the later writings, however, Wittgenstein indicated that meanings are not the necessarily "objects" which are described in the Tractatus. In works such as the Investigations, and Zettel, all discussion of objects such as those described in the Tractatus, was abandoned in favor of the search for the explanation of meaning. Yet the Tractatus view of language was not rejected in total. Wittgenstein had come to regard the picture theory of meaning as an inadequate means of explaining all cases in which we use the term 'meaning.' Yet, from the standpoint of the view of language conveyed in his later writings, the picture theory of meaning could still be regarded as a valid explanation of some classes of words and propositions. This is due to the fact that Wittgenstein's later notion of meaning did not establish clearly delineated boundaries.

In conclusion, Wittgenstein's conception of meaning, as conveyed in his later writings, offers an account which explains the varying manners in which we apply the term 'meaning.' Many of the conceptions of "meaning" that Wittgenstein criticized in his later works (such as e.g., the picture theory of meaning, which he himself had presented in the Tractatus) were considered by Wittgenstein as inadequate rather than incorrect. It is not that many of these theories didn't serve to explain certain cases in which we apply the word, 'meaning,' but rather the problem was that they were too narrow, in that they explained only one class of such instances. The account of meaning presented in the later writings, indicates that such explanations are not valid as generalizations, yet allows that they could be applicable to certain classes of words. All of the foregoing makes it evident that the conception of meaning presented in Wittgenstein's later writings was broad enough to incorporate many tenets of other theories which in themselves, did not adequately explain our use of the term 'meaning.' Because his methodology demanded that he strive to overcome "our craving for generality," Wittgenstein was able to perceive that there is not necessarily any common criteria for our application of the term 'meaning.'

FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER VI

[1] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958; rpt. New York: Macmillan, 1970) Sec. 156.

[2] Ibid., p. 209.

[3] Ibid., Sec. 11.

[4] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books.* (1958; rpt. New York: Harper & Row, 1965) pp. 67, 68.

[5] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel,* trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, edd. G. E. M. Anscombe & G. H. von Wright. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967; rpt. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1970) Sec. 322.

[6] Ibid., Sec. 438.

[7] Charles S. Chihara and J. A. Fodor, "Operationalism and Ordinary Language: A Critique of Wittgenstein," *Wittgenstein: The Philosophical Investigations,* ed.: George Pitcher (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1966) pp. 388, 389.

[8] Wittgenstein, *Zettel,* Sec. 236.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., Sec. 237.

[11] Ibid., Sec. 263.

[12] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (New York: Humanities Press, 1961) Sec. 6.54.

[13] Gilbert Ryle, "Use and Usage," *Philosophy and Linguistics,* ed.: Colin Lyas (London: Macmillan, 1971) p. 46.

[14] Ibid., p. 48.

[15] Ibid., p. 49.

[16] Ibid., p. 51.

[17] Ibid., p. 52.

[18] Ibid., pp. 52, 53.

[19] Wittgenstein, *Blue and Brown Books,* p. 27.

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* Asterisks (enclosed in Brackets) have been substituted for Arabic numeral footnotes appearing in the original text of quoted passages. This alternative was chosen in order to avoid confusion.

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