

should say of the past, 'it was long,' and of the future 'it will be long.' ... That past time which was so long, was it long when it was already past, or before that, when it was still present? It could be long at the time when that existed which could be long. Once past, it did not exist, hence it could not be long, since it in no wise existed. ... See how the present time, which alone we found worthy to be called long, is contracted to hardly the space of a single day ... one hour itself goes on in fleeting moments; whatever part of it has flown away is past, whatever remains is future. If any point of time is conceived that can no longer be divided into even the most minute parts of a moment, that alone it is which may be called the present. It flies with such speed from the future into the past that it cannot be extended by even a trifling amount. For if it is extended, it is divided into past and future. The present has no space. Where then is the time that we may call long? Is it to come? We do not say of it that it is long, because it does not yet exist, so as to be long. We say that it will be long. When, therefore, will it be? Even then, if it will be to come, it will not be long, since that which will be long does not yet be. ... Still, O Lord, we perceive intervals of time. We compare them to one another and say that some are longer and some shorter. But it is passing times that we measure, and we make these measurements in perceiving them. Therefore, as long as time is passing by, it can be perceived and measured, but when it has passed by, it cannot be measured since it does not exist.

Is there some fact or set of facts about the nature of time that Augustine, as an ordinary person, lacks? Wittgenstein would say 'no.' Augustine concedes that he is not at a loss when it comes to the use of temporal terms in his everyday life. It is when he theorizes about the nature of time that it seems incredibly puzzling to him. But why should this be so? Wittgenstein's diagnosis in the *Brown Book* (pp. 107-109) is that a philosopher like Augustine is importing a certain conception or 'picture' of time in trying to understand what it is. That 'picture' seems to be that time is a kind of river, flowing by a fixed observer ('as long as time is passing by, it can be perceived and measured' Augustine says). In the following passage, which I shall quote in its entirety, Wittgenstein gives a brilliant diagnosis of how the Augustinian conception leads to intellectual puzzlement. He writes:

'Where does the present go when it becomes past, and where is the past?' - Under what circumstances has this question an allurements for us? For under certain circumstances it hasn't, and we should wave it away as nonsense.

X It is clear that this question most easily arises if we are preoccupied with cases in which there are things flowing by us, - as logs of wood float down a river. In such a case we can say the logs which have passed us are all down towards the left and the logs which will pass us are up towards the right. We then use this situation as a simile for all happening in time and even embody the simile in our language, as when we say that 'the present event passes by' (a log passes by), 'the future event is to come' (a log is to come). We talk about the flow of events; but also about the flow of time - the river on which the logs travel.

Here is one of the most fertile sources of philosophic puzzlement: we talk of the future event of something coming into my room and also of the future coming of this event.

We say, 'Something will happen', and also, 'Something comes towards me'; we refer to the log as 'something', but also the log's coming towards me.

Thus it can come about that we aren't able to rid ourselves of the implications of our symbolism, which seems to admit of a question like 'Where does the flame of a candle go when it's blown out?', 'Where does the light go to?', 'Where does the past go to?' We have become obsessed with our symbolism - We may say that we are led into puzzlement by an analogy which irresistibly drags us on. - And this also happens when the meaning of the word 'now' appears to us in mysterious light. In our example 55) it appears that the function of 'now' is in no way comparable to the function of an expression like 'five o'clock', 'midday', 'the time when the sun sets', etc. This latter group of expressions I might call 'specifications of times'. But our ordinary language uses the word 'now' and specifications of times in similar contexts. Thus we say

'The sun sets at six o'clock.'

'The sun is setting now.'

X We are inclined to say that both 'now' and 'six o'clock' refer to points of time. This use of words produces a puzzlement which one might express in the question: 'What is the 'now'? - for it is a moment of time and yet it can't be said to be either 'the moment at which I speak'

or 'the moment at which the clock strikes', etc., etc.' – Our answer is: The function of the word 'now' is entirely different from that of a specification of time – This can easily be seen if we look at the role this word really plays in our usage of language, but it is obscured when instead of looking at the *whole language game*, we only look at the contexts, the phrases of language in which the word is used. (The word 'today' is not a date, but it isn't anything like it either. It doesn't differ from a date as a hammer differs from a mallet, but as a hammer differs from a nail; and surely we may say there is both a connection between a hammer and a mallet and between a hammer and a nail.)

One has been tempted to say that 'now' is the name of an instant of time, and this, of course, would be like saying that 'here' is the name of a place, 'this' the name of a thing, and 'I' the name of a man.

As Wittgenstein points out, this vision of time as a flowing river carries with it certain implications: just as the river is extended in space, so time, it would seem, is extended in space, having forward and backward parts. This 'picture' seems intuitively plausible and moreover to fit the facts, for it does seem as if time flows, moving as it were past a motionless percipient.

Yet for Augustine this picture gives rise to deep perplexities: if the past and future do not exist and the present – the so-called 'now' – has no space, then what has happened to the river of time? A river always remains extended, having parts that have not yet reached an observer, parts that an observer can now see, and parts that have passed the observer. We can speak of the reach of the river that has not yet arrived as being of a certain length and similarly of the part that has passed and is on its way to the sea. But if one holds that neither the past nor the future now exists, the river model of time does not help us explain what we ordinarily mean when we speak of the distant past or of a long prospective future. And even worse, if the present 'now' is instantaneously disappearing into the past and being replaced by an ever intruding future, at what time has the river passed our 'fixed observer'? And does 'fixed' mean that the observer is somehow not in time? But surely that is impossible. Yet what other conception of time might one have, except as something that flows? The picture seems unavoidable to the reflective person.

Wittgenstein generalizes from the case of Augustine. All powerful philosophical insights will issue in pictures or conceptual models of this sort, models that are unremitting in their hold on the reflective individual. We say of the world 'this is how it has to be.' As Wittgenstein puts it, 'a picture held us captive. And we could not get outside of it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably.' These pictures force themselves upon us; they seem unavoidable and to be great philosophical discoveries. They help make sense of our ambience by illuminating it like flashlights that cast spears of light into the dark. Another example of such a model would be the notion that human beings are nothing but machines: the kind of model we find in Hobbes, who asks: 'What is the heart but a spring; what are the nerves but so many strings?' This is a picture that is today accepted by many eliminative materialists. Such a picture does provide an ordering scheme for comprehending the world. But just as Augustine's conception of time leads to paradox so does this conception. It does so by obliterating the differences between such things as computers and human beings, subsuming both under the category of machine. It is this obliteration of distinctions we make in everyday life – in 'the language game' – that is a mark of paradox; traditional philosophy in its quest to order reality via some simple but powerful conceptual model will inevitably issue in paradox, i.e., in a constricted and distorted picture of the world. One cannot therefore do philosophy in that way; some alternative to it is thus needed. But what could it be? This is what Wittgenstein's new method is designed to provide.

There is thus a second conception of philosophy referred to in Wittgenstein's later works, one designed to give us a better understanding of the world than traditional philosophy and, in particular, one designed to avoid paradox. The two conceptions are contrasted in this passage:

The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to. The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring itself in question.

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The first occurrence of 'philosophy' in this passage refers to the traditional way of doing philosophy, one that issues in paradox and in self-torment. But, as the second occurrence indicates, this older way can be avoided or suppressed and can be replaced by a new way of doing philosophy – one that 'gives philosophy peace' – which Wittgenstein describes in a series of striking apothegms:

The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose. (127)

Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything ... One might also give the name 'philosophy' to what is possible before all new discoveries and inventions. (126)

We must do away with all explanation, and description alone must take its place. (109)

If it is asked: 'How do sentences manage to represent?' – the answer might be: 'Don't you know? You certainly see it, when you use them.' For nothing is concealed. How do sentences do it? – Don't you know? For nothing is hidden. (435)

These comments about reminders, the hidden, and description are crucial to understanding the new way of doing philosophy. Wittgenstein agrees with the traditional philosopher that the facts are complex. Our ordinary ways of characterizing time are enormously complicated: these characterizations are embedded in a multiplicity of idioms in which the notion of time plays a role. The philosopher, looking carefully at this multifarious array of idioms, wishes to discover a comprehensible order in it, and does so by trying to look deeper – to find the essence or real meaning of time itself.

What Wittgenstein says in opposition to this highly intuitive philosophical move is: Don't do it! Do not attempt to look more deeply! Instead, he urges, look more closely at how these expressions are used in the language game – the whole language game. And then you will understand what time is – for nothing in the language game is hidden. He is stressing that your everyday practice reveals that you know what time is, that you have a mastery of the concept. This is, in part, what Wittgenstein means by saying that the purpose of

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descriptive philosophy is 'to leave everything as it is.' One who looks closely at how temporal expressions are employed in daily life will realize that this is what 'time' means. By describing such uses, he will not impose a factitious conceptual model on actual practice, but will 'leave everything as it is.' He will thus eventually 'see the world rightly.'

Augustine has admitted that he has no problems in everyday life in employing the notion of time. What he fails to understand is that his everyday employment of the concept is a mastery. And he also fails to understand that because that is so there are no residual problems about time to be solved. Thus, Wittgenstein emphasizes that Augustine's problems are of his own making. He wishes to impose a model that will simplify and order a seemingly chaotic set of uses of the concept of time. But this is both unnecessary and confusing. As Bishop Berkeley was later to say, 'We first cast up a dust and then complain we cannot see.'

So Wittgenstein's first step in developing an alternative philosophy to this older way is to say that no real facts about time are at issue. No facts are missing and there is nothing left to be explained. Virtually everyone knows how to use the concept in his or her daily life and so everyone knows what time is. What Wittgenstein is urging us to see is that there is no theoretically adequate description of time because 'time' is used in many ad hoc ways. What is true of the concept of time is true of all the concepts philosophers have traditionally analyzed: knowledge, truth, certainty, name, object, etc. It will be a function of the new philosophy to remind traditional philosophers that in every case they possess such knowledge. As he writes:

When philosophers use a word – 'knowledge,' 'being,' 'object,' 'I,' 'proposition,' 'name' – and try to grasp the essence of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language-game which is its original home?

What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use. (*Philosophical Investigations*, 116)

It is difficult to overestimate the originality and historical importance of Wittgenstein's assessment of traditional philosophy and the alternative he is proposing to it. In effect, he is standing the received view about the nature of philosophy on its head. Since the time of

the Greeks the commonly accepted view draws a contrast between the philosopher and the ordinary person. It is the latter who is not reflective, who lives the unexamined life, who blindly follows conventions and authority (especially political authority), who lives in the world of appearance, to use Plato's phrase, and is cut off from reality. By contrast, it is the philosopher probing beneath the surface who discovers (or at least tries to discover) reality. It is the philosopher who exposes the shallowness of the everyday conventions we all follow and who, by such probing, discovers the true nature of things. Socrates is the model of the exemplary philosopher, ultimately condemned to death by plain men, terrified by his obsessive search for truth. That the philosopher holds the key to wisdom, knowledge and truth has been the accepted picture since time immemorial – accepted by nearly all intellectuals as well as by most common persons – and it is part and parcel of this view to denigrate the proverbial 'plain man.'

But Wittgenstein's originality consists in turning this picture on its head. It is the plain man who is all right, who is not troubled by mental cramps, and who does not cast up a dust that prevents him from seeing things as they are. It is rather the traditional philosopher who does these things, who cannot see what is in front of his face, and who in looking for the hidden is only chasing chimeras. In Wittgenstein we thus find the deepest challenge to the widely espoused picture of traditional philosophy. But that does not mean that Wittgenstein rejects philosophy entirely; instead he wishes to replace the older conception, with its vision of the invidious relationship between the philosopher and the ordinary person, with an entirely different one.

When he says: 'what we do is to bring words back,' the 'we' is referring to himself and to a new way of doing philosophy: a way that will give us an accurate picture of the world, i.e., of the features we encounter in everyday life. It will be non-distorting because it will flatly describe what is there 'on the surface.' It will not attempt to explain the world's surface features by looking for what lies beneath them, for such an explanation is at least redundant and at worst misleading. This careful description will thus function as a set of reminders of what each of us has always

known, including those who do traditional philosophy. But unlike the ordinary person, traditional philosophers set aside what they have always known because they are in the grip of a powerful conceptual model. In their search for a deeper explanation (normally a theory) they suppress the facts (say about time) that are available to everyone. Nothing beyond those facts is needed to understand the temporal aspects of the world. To remind oneself of those facts is to 'leave everything as it is.' One who can do this will thus 'see the world rightly.'

I will say more below about Wittgenstein's new way of doing philosophy; but now let us turn to his use of the 'broken text' as a seminal element in the method that the new philosophy should employ.

✶ The broken text

By 'broken text,' I mean a style of writing that is non-systematic, rambling, digressive, discontinuous, interrupted thematically and marked by rapid transitions from one subject to another. A broken text typically takes the form of pithy remarks, such as maxims, apothegms, aphorisms, short paragraphs or other sorts of scattered fragments. These short sayings function as the basic units by which the author wishes to communicate his thoughts. It is also generally characterized by a lack of explicit argumentation. One is moved conceptually and presumably will eventually come to possess a point of view one did not hold before; but it is not arrived at through tight argumentation. In that sense, the broken text is to be distinguished from more standard, discursive forms of writing in which ideas are coherently organized and disseminated in larger units: sections, chapters, or even whole books. One might briefly characterize any such broken text as a collection of snippets. No wonder that Wittgenstein called one of his bundles of notes, mostly composed between 1945–1948, *Zettel* (*Scraps*). This literary style has ancient antecedents, in Hippocrates and Heraclitus, for example; it is also found in such later authors as Leonardo, Bacon, Pascal, Vico, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Karl Kraus, Gramsci, Heidegger, N. O. Brown, Barthes, and Derrida; and as this list

indicates, it can be used for both philosophical and non-philosophical purposes. Wittgenstein is, of course, the consummate master of this mode of writing in philosophy.

The use of the broken text is generally not accidental but purposive and it is commonly used in adversarial or even subversive ways. In such cases it is used to challenge standard or received ways of representing various features of the world, such as those expressed in the 'sparse, pure, transparent language' of traditional philosophy. Wittgenstein's use of it is characteristic. He is reacting against any attempt by philosophers to understand the world in neat and sharp categories. His invocation of the method thus rests on a number of presuppositions: first, that the world is complex; second, that no simple conceptual model of the sort traditional philosophy imposes on those facts will accommodate their variety, and accordingly that all forms of reductionism will eventually fail; third, that a discursive, organized, argumentative literary style is part and parcel of reductionist model building; and fourth, that the new mode of doing philosophy, in which description replaces explanation, requires a different literary style. As he puts it succinctly in the Preface to the *Investigations*, his use of that style is 'connected with the very nature of the investigation. For this compels us to travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction.'

Three further comments should be made in discussing this topic. First, the frequent appearance of aphorisms and apothegms does not entail that a text is broken. Historically, there have been many documents replete with aphorisms, among them the *Tractatus*, that lack the characteristic features of broken texts. Even in works like the *Investigations* and *On Certainty*, in which aphorisms and a broken text are present, and closely intertwined, it is important that this discrimination be made. Second, the notion of the broken text should not itself be identified with any particular method, though once again in the case of Wittgenstein his method and the use of a broken text are intimately laced together. In this instance one might think of the broken text as a special device or technique used to enhance the effectiveness of a certain method. Third, Wittgenstein's method, using the technique of the broken text, is designed for certain specific purposes, mainly to break the

hold which conceptual models exercise on philosophers. I will now speak briefly on each of these points.

As I mentioned above, Wittgenstein uses apothegms and aphorisms in the *Tractatus*, but it would be a mistake to infer from this practice that we are dealing with an exemplar of the broken text. *The broken text, as defined above, is non-systematic, digressive and not marked by a tight logical structure. The text of the *Tractatus*, in contrast, exhibits just such features. It is highly organized, with major sections being defined by single natural numbers from 1 through 7. Subsections are organized in progressively narrowing numbers, according to topic and to the thrust of the argument. We thus have a schema which, say, starts with a major section, such as 3, moves to subordinate sections such as 3.01, 3.03, 3.031, 3.1432, and so on. As distinct from the use of aphorisms in the later writings, there is a coherent, tightly knit pattern of ratiocination in the *Tractatus*. The aphorism is used there as a summary of lengthy reflections engaged in elsewhere and not recorded in the text. Rather than trying to accommodate all the complexities that those reflections uncovered, Wittgenstein's method in the *Tractatus* was to extract an essential point from them and to incorporate it into a maxim (e.g., 'Roughly speaking, objects are colorless.'). As he was to say later (and in a different context) he was condensing a 'whole cloud of philosophy into a drop of grammar.' The effort to distill philosophical reflection into such a small compass is precisely the opposite technique exhibited by the diffuse ramification of X apothegms in his later work.

Further, it is necessary to distinguish the broken text as a literary style from its philosophical purpose. A new philosophical method, such as Wittgenstein developed, is connected with its aim; what it hopes to achieve in the understanding or resolution of philosophical problems. It is thus possible for a philosopher to use the technique of the broken text but to use it for familiar or conventional philosophical purposes. We can illustrate the point with reference to Pascal's *Pensées*. Pascal's purpose in using a broken text was completely different from Wittgenstein's. His aim was to convert free thinkers (libertins) to Christianity. His literary style took the form of fragments, often aphoristic in nature, describing in

multifarious idioms what is wrong with those whose lives are devoted to the pursuit of pleasure and the gratification of their egos, and whose intellectual stance is an agnosticism derived from Montaigne. But that technique was put to a well-known philosophical use: to defend a traditional religious point of view. The broken text of the *Pensées* was thus mustered not in the service of a special method for rethinking the nature of the problems its author wished to grapple with so much as to defend a familiar solution to them.

This brings us then to Wittgenstein's method per se; what he was trying to achieve by using the various literary devices he employs. As we have seen, Wittgenstein believes that traditional philosophers are gripped by pictures that 'bewitch the intelligence.' These pictures are designed to give human beings a deeper, more penetrating understanding of the world and certain of its features. But the application of these pictures gives rise to perplexity, puzzlement, and anomaly. These difficulties, he contends, are not empirical and therefore cannot be solved by an appeal to the facts. As he says: 'The problems are solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have always known' (*Philosophical Investigations*, 109). The new method is devoted to helping philosophers rearrange what they have always known.

In one of his books, Wittgenstein gives an example of how a certain problem is solved by 'arranging what we have always known.' He says: suppose you have a bookcase whose books are arranged in a certain fashion – say, alphabetically by title. But the arrangement puts books of quite different sizes and heights cheek by jowl. The arrangement does not appeal to you. So you rearrange them according to height. Now they look OK. No new fact (book) has been introduced; it is the same collection you started with. But in their new grouping the collection somehow looks different and indeed better. The analogy explains what he thinks the purpose of philosophy is. By helping you rearrange what you have always known philosophy can help you see the world in a different way. In doing this it does not discover anything new about the world; but it makes you look at it differently. That is what his new method is designed to do. It changes your picture of things. I shall illustrate this point on page 100 with a detailed example.

I pointed out at the beginning of this chapter that Wittgenstein never explicitly describes what his method is and what it is supposed to achieve. One must put together a range of more or less exiguous hints in arriving at an interpretation of what he believes he is doing. With respect to what the method is supposed to accomplish, I submit that it is designed to do two things: first, to loosen or eliminate the grip that certain conceptual models exercise on philosophers, and second, to make explicit, via a set of reminders, the actual roles that various concepts play in our everyday lives.

With respect to the first point, we can say that the Wittgensteinian diagnosis of what is wrong with traditional philosophy resembles (as has been emphasized by John Wisdom) the diagnosis that a psychoanalyst might make of a neurotic patient. Let us say that the patient is suffering from a form of paranoia. He believes that someone (some unknown person) is trying to poison him. Suppose the analyst tries to explain to his client that there is no evidential basis for his belief. As the history of psychoanalysis makes abundantly clear, that approach would be unsuccessful. An appeal to the facts will not ultimately influence the patient; on the contrary he will absorb them into his model and thus neutralize their impact. The patient's problem is thus not resolvable by bringing more information to his attention. The analyst must instead somehow develop a method that will alter the patient's conceptual set. In effect, the analyst is trying to replace one (a misleading) world view with another (the view that the analyst represents, and that most normal persons hold). The latter is the 'correct' view; it is in opposition to the one that the patient holds. The change would consist in bringing the patient back to 'normality,' to possessing an outlook that will allow the facts to play their normal roles in his life.

There is a wonderful example in *On Certainty* that illustrates these points. I will quote the whole passage, which stresses that when differing conceptual models are in opposition an appeal to the facts will not typically resolve the conflict between them. Some rearrangement is required. Here is the passage:

However, we can ask: May someone have telling grounds for believing that the earth has only existed for a short time, say since his own

birth? – Suppose he had always been told that, – would he have any good reason to doubt it? Men have believed that they could make rain; why should not a king be brought up in the belief that the world began with him? And if Moore and this king were to meet and discuss, could Moore really prove his belief to be the right one? I do not say that Moore could not convert the king to his view, but it would be a conversion of a special kind; the king would be brought to look at the world in a different way.

Remember that one is sometimes convinced of the correctness of a view by its simplicity or symmetry, i.e., these are what induce one to go over to this point of view. One then simply says something like: 'That's how it must be.' (*On Certainty*, 92)

When Wittgenstein says that if Moore could convert the king to his point of view it would be a conversion of a special kind, he is emphasizing that an appeal to the facts will not in general change one's deepest picture of the world; that picture is too firmly embedded for the facts to do their normal work. Some other way needs to be pursued to effect such a conversion.

I am not here asserting that Wittgenstein was intentionally aping the methods of psychoanalysis, but merely that there are striking similarities. But there is at least one important difference, and this is to be found in the second point I mentioned above. Wittgenstein wishes the philosopher to learn something by reading books like *Philosophical Investigations* or *On Certainty*. He does not merely wish to dissolve the hold that a certain picture exercises, but to give the philosopher an appreciation for a set of facts that person has overlooked or minimized. This will consist in a detailed and positive account of the roles played in 'the language game' (i.e., in everyday life) by certain important notions: knowledge, certainty, doubt, proof, evidence, and so forth. I take it that the psychoanalytic process does not issue in positive learning of this sort. Wittgenstein's main problem, which the methodology is dedicated to resolving, is how to bring about the kind of attitude in a philosopher which will allow him to learn positive things of this sort. In facing this kind of difficulty, he is confronting a problem not unlike that which the analyst faces and that is why he feels it important to weaken the hold that a picture exercises.

Unless one starts in this way the philosopher will be resistant to Wittgenstein's reminders. As we have seen, Augustine knows all the facts there are to know about time and yet remains puzzled. Therefore, he must somehow be maneuvered or manipulated into the position of giving up the model that time is a river. When that has been achieved, he can attain a state of mind in which he will recognize and acknowledge his actual command of the ordinary temporal idioms. But before one can cross that bridge there is a first step to take: how can one get a philosopher to abandon a picture whose hold seems inexorable? Wittgenstein's method is designed to meet that challenge.

In explaining this first step, this first element in Wittgenstein's method, one finds the psychoanalytic analogy helpful to some extent. The basic technique of Freudian analysis is the method of free association. The patient's associations, embedded in talk, gradually reveal to the analyst where a particular model is exercising its grip. But more important, of course, those associations freely expressed will begin to reveal this to the patient himself. That person will eventually come to understand that his neurosis is based upon an incorrect assessment of certain aspects of reality; that his behavior and attitudes are driven by a false picture. In those cases where a cure is effected the patient will come to an assessment of his situation in the way that any non-neurotic person would. He will then be free of an incubus, of the picture that held him captive. A philosopher reading the later Wittgenstein will find in the broken text something like free association. That play of aphorisms, apparently unstructured, will do for the philosopher who is willing to tolerate this 'criss-cross' movement of ideas something comparable to what free association will do for the neurotic patient. It should liberate him from the conceptual set in which he is embedded and which forces a certain way of looking at the world upon him.

I said that something like free association is going on here. But we must not exaggerate the psychoanalytic analogy. Wittgenstein is not a psychoanalyst. There is no particular patient he is trying to treat, and there is no one in his 'office' who is freely associating. Nor is Wittgenstein freely associating in his notebooks. He may not know in advance what the best formulation of a point is; but his

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approach is not random. He has a definite purpose in mind. Rather than freely associating, he is in control.

Examples and cases

The aphoristic style Wittgenstein uses in the *Investigations* has one further and important advantage. It allows him to depict features of the language game more easily than a discursive, argumentative style would. All of his later philosophy is replete with detailed examples, including what he calls *zwischengliedern* (intermediate cases). The point of this welter of examples, analogies, metaphors and cases is to induce the reader to see that no general theory will accommodate the complexity of the real world.

The method of cases often relies on appeals to ordinary language, but such appeals should be distinguished from the method itself. For example, the language games that begin the *Investigations* describe a number of different situations (cases) involving a pair of builders, but the points Wittgenstein wishes to make in describing those situations do not depend on distinctions drawn from ordinary language. However, let's look at an example which exhibits Wittgenstein's typical use of the method in which infusions from ordinary language do play important roles:

Compare *knowing* and *saying*:
how many feet high Mont Blanc is –
how the word 'game' is used –
how a clarinet sounds

If you are surprised that one can know something and not be able to say it, you are perhaps thinking of a case like the first. Certainly not of one like the third. (*Philosophical Investigations*, 78)

In this passage Wittgenstein is describing the difference in everyday use between the concepts of knowing and saying. If Augustine had 'looked more closely' at the temporal idioms used in ordinary discourse his puzzles about time might never have arisen. In the above example, Wittgenstein is doing two things: he is first of all depicting a difference in use between such concepts as knowing and

saying, but he is also calling attention to a conceptual model that tends illicitly to assimilate these to one another. He is urging the reader to see for himself that a model that applies to the question 'How many feet high is Mont Blanc?' does not apply to the question 'How does a clarinet sound?' His point is that it is not surprising if a person were to state that he knows how a clarinet sounds but can't say how it sounds; but that it would be surprising if that person were to aver that he knows how high Mont Blanc is but can't say how high it is. It is part of everyday living to expect that if someone knows the height of something he should be able to say what it is; hence, the surprise if this relationship fails. In contrast, many persons know how a clarinet sounds but practically nobody can say what the sound is. We simply do not have the vocabulary to do so. Therefore, the contrast between knowing and saying is not surprising in this case.

By means of this example, Wittgenstein is saying something that every ordinary person would agree with. He is doing philosophy in the new way. He is using the example to remind persons of things they in fact know, but strangely enough are unaware that they know. This is because, as he writes, they are 'captured by a picture,' i.e., a conceptual model which impels them to think that if you know something you should in every case be able to say what it is that you know. The model does work for a restricted range of cases. If I know how far it is from Los Angeles to San Francisco I can say what the distance is. But the model has a limited application. It does not apply to all cases where knowing and saying are compared and contrasted. And that is what his descriptive method is designed to bring out. It distinguishes between cases. The case of Mont Blanc and of the clarinet are different in important respects. But that is just the way life is. There is no one theory or general philosophical account that will fit the whole range of different situations, cases, and activities we find in everyday existence. So a new method of doing philosophy is needed to bring out just how complex the world is. Wittgenstein's technique does not depend on any theory. He is rejecting what he calls 'an explanation.' He is just describing the facts. But these descriptions are more than merely semantic in their import. They are descriptions of everyday life.

They are reminders for his readers of what ordinary, everyday life is like. And in that sense they are informative. We have learned something by 'looking more closely' at our ongoing activities. But in doing so, we have not changed anything in our lives; instead, we have left 'everything as it is.' And this is the positive outcome of his new method.

The use of the broken text in Wittgenstein's later writings is intimately connected with the method of cases. It allows him great flexibility in describing and then discussing a wide variety of cases, without being tied to a conventional organizational schema. It is the perfect literary mechanism for the use of the criss-cross technique. And in aphorism after aphorism, building upon example piled upon example, it allows the method to have its maximum effect.

The point of the method should now be apparent. It is designed to sensitize the philosopher to the complex ways in which various cases resemble and differ from one another. The message Wittgenstein wishes to communicate is that how we speak about, understand, and assess various features of the world and its inhabitants will depend on the subtle discriminations we make between resembling and yet differing cases. The philosophical significance of the method is that no overarching, synoptic theory or conceptual model will do justice to this variety of cases. The import of this method is thus two-fold: to assist the philosopher in freeing himself from the compulsion to make such generalizations; and secondly to make him realize that there is much to be learned about the world and its diverse features by comparing and discriminating these cases from one another.

Language games

A third feature of the new method is its description and use of what Wittgenstein calls 'language games.' This concept was first expounded in the *Brown Book* of 1934. This is a work that he himself did not write but dictated to two of his students, Francis Skinner and Alice Ambrose. People who borrowed these notes made their own copies, and, as Rush Rhees states, 'there was a trade in them.' The *Blue Book* was based on lectures he had given a year

earlier. The *Brown Book* contains seventy-three 'language games.' Each is said to be fully complete in itself and each describes a possible situation, for example in which a builder is speaking to an assistant. The concept of a language game became one of the key devices of the later philosophy and is found extensively in such works as *Philosophical Investigations* and *On Certainty*. Curiously enough, a 'language game' is neither simply a game nor simply a use of certain linguistic expressions, though both of these features are frequently present in language games. Rather, a language game is a slice of everyday human activity; each slice is different; some may include the activities of builders, others of lawyers, and some may focus on such practices as affirming, doubting, believing, and following rules. Language games not only refer to individual human activities but to those that are common to the whole community. Their scope thus also comprises the happenings in such institutions as governments, universities, banks, the military, and so forth.

By appealing to language games, Wittgenstein is urging the traditional philosopher not to think but to look and see what persons actually do and say in the course of their daily lives. The description of such activities and utterances rather than a synoptic philosophical theory about them will provide an accurate picture of reality. Both the *Brown Book* and *Philosophical Investigations* open with a quotation from Augustine's *Confessions*. Augustine is giving an account of how children learn language. He says: 'When they (my elders) named some object and accordingly moved towards something, I saw this and I grasped that the thing was called by the sound they uttered when they meant to point it out.' Wittgenstein says that Augustine is trying to present 'a particular picture of the essence of human language. It is this: the individual words in language name objects – sentences are combinations of such names. ... In this picture of language we find the roots of the following idea: Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands' (*Philosophical Investigations*, 1). Augustine's picture of language is also Russell's in *Logical Atomism* and Wittgenstein's in the *Tractatus*. Recall *Tractatus* 3.203, 'The name means the object. The object is its meaning.'

Wittgenstein's point here is not that this picture is absolutely wrong, but rather that it is a restricted picture of how language functions in real life. As the collection of language games builds up in *Philosophical Investigations*, one can see that language has many other uses. This is what Wittgenstein means when he says that a picture held us captive and when he advises philosophers not to think but to look closely. To urge philosophers to look is to ask them to expand their conceptual categories, to see how words function in the stream of life. As Wittgenstein puts it in a brilliant metaphor:

Think of the tools in a tool-box; there is a hammer, pliers, a saw, a screwdriver, a rule, a glue-pot, glue, nails and screws. The functions of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects. (*Philosophical Investigations*, 11)

By producing a vast array of differing language games, Wittgenstein is reminding theorists that they are also ordinary human beings who use language according to the rules of the community they are reared in. The parade of language games will induce them to recall how in daily life they use such concepts as believing, doubting, proving, and justifying. These reminders call to their attention something they would recognize as correct if they reflected on what they say. Wittgenstein is thus helping them to attain this kind of self-awareness. This is different from what any philosopher has attempted to do. Consider knowing, for example. Wittgenstein produces dozens of examples in which 'I know' is used in ordinary discourse. These can be contrasted with the philosopher's use. G. E. Moore, for instance, claimed to know with certainty such propositions as 'The earth is very old,' or 'Other persons have existed and many now exist.' He also claimed that he knew that virtually every adult also knew these propositions to be true. Moore differs from Wittgenstein. He is not reminding persons of things they have always known but are not conscious of. He is telling them things that they are already fully aware of; so reminders are otiose. According to Wittgenstein, Moore's procedure is without grip. In linguistic terms it involves a misuse of 'I know.'

Suppose you are asked, 'Are you sure that Smith was really there for the opening?' and you respond by saying 'I know he was.' In that

case, your intention is to give the interrogator information he did not previously possess. Had he possessed that information he would not have asked the question. Generally speaking, the use of 'I know' is *pointless* when you mention things that you know that everyone knows. Moore's use of it to inform others of what he knows they already know is thus a special kind of nonsense. This is the point Wittgenstein is making when he writes: 'But Moore chooses precisely a case in which we all seem to know the same as he ... (*On Certainty*, 84). Or again, 'The truths which Moore says he knows are such as, roughly speaking, all of us know, if he knows them' (*On Certainty*, 100). 'Thus, it seems to me that I have known something the whole time and yet there is no meaning in saying so, in uttering this truth' (*On Certainty*, 466). Moore has imposed a conceptual model on the language game that distorts its nature. Such impositions of models are characteristic of traditional philosophizing. They should be replaced by looking closely at actual specimens of communication.

In the published materials we now have, Wittgenstein's writings range over a vast assortment of subjects, from the foundations of mathematics to discussions of Freud, Frazer, Mahler, Mendelssohn, the human mind, psychology, ethics, aesthetics, and the nature of color. Many of his comments are narrowly directed, e.g., to misuses and proper uses of the concept of justification, for example. It is thus impossible to describe in a limited space all the topics he examined and his various approaches to them. But in his most important later works, *Philosophical Investigations* and *On Certainty*, he has two targets in mind: Platonism and Cartesianism. It is clear that he regards these as central themes in the history of Western philosophy. From his perspective they provide virtually irresistible conceptual models, and indeed in certain ways overlap and intertwine. Nearly all the major problems of traditional philosophy – change, universals, abstract ideas, skepticism, meaning, reference, and mind – derive from the thought of Plato and Descartes. We shall conclude this discussion with a brief account of his objections to their views. We shall find that misconceptions of how language functions play essential roles in their conceptual schemes.

Platonism

In order to explain Wittgenstein's treatment of Platonism we have first to understand Plato's theory of knowledge, and to understand that we must make a brief excursion into the historical background that Plato inherited. As I mentioned earlier, the ancient Greeks were obsessively speculative thinkers. Perhaps the most challenging problem they addressed was: 'What is the world really like?' Or in an alternative formulation, they sometimes put the question this way: 'Is the world made of some fundamental stuff, and if so, what is it?'

Two incompatible answers were given to these questions. One of them, advanced by Heraclitus (540?-475 B.C.) was that there was no fundamental stuff, i.e., nothing that was wholly immune to change. For him the only reality was the process of change itself. Everything is in flux, so that, as he remarks, 'You cannot step into the same river twice.' Every feature of the world comes into being and passes away. The only thing that does not change is a cosmic balance maintained by the continuous alteration of everything. There is no underlying 'stuff,' like water, as Thales believed, that remains invariant through all temporal processes. Though he himself apparently did not draw explicit skeptical implications from this view, some of his followers did. One of them, Cratylus (after whom Plato named a dialogue), held that reality is unintelligible. Since it does not stand still long enough to be described, our words and their meanings are constantly changing, as is each speaker. Thus human language is simply gibberish, having no fixed meanings; and accordingly discourse about the world is impossible. The Cratylean idea that change affects meaning was important for Plato, and then, as we shall see, for Wittgenstein as well.

An opposite point of view was espoused by Parmenides. His theory starts from the common sense observation that if something, say a leaf, changes, then to speak of it as a 'leaf' is to imply that some essential feature of it remains constant. Change is thus different from a sequence of different appearances. If change were total, there would be no cohesive thing that changed. In that case, a so-called 'leaf' would consist of a number of unconnected states that appear successively in one's visual field. Thus, a leaf must, as a

matter of logic, have an essence, i.e., some 'stuff' that remains constant, and this, as distinct from its color, size, and shape, cannot be anything accessible to the senses. The Parmenidean thesis that the immutability of the world entails the existence of essences influenced both Plato and Wittgenstein, but in entirely different ways.

Given this intuition, Parmenides produced a set of arguments to show that reality is unchanging and cannot be accessed via sense experience. His name for reality is 'Being.' Being is the fundamental stuff of which the world is made. It cannot come into existence or pass away and that means it is permanent. Parmenides invented a series of clever arguments in support of this position. Suppose one believes that Being must have come from something. If true, that belief would imply that there was a time at which Being did not exist. But then what could it have come from? It could not come from itself, so it must have come from something other than Being. But anything other than Being is Non-Being, and by definition Non-Being does not exist. Accordingly, Non-Being (the Non-Existent) cannot produce anything, since it is nothing. Therefore, Being cannot come into existence at all, and this means that it has always existed. Another version of the argument proves that Being is a single fundamental stuff. Suppose one assumes that Being is composed of parts. Then these parts would be either real or not real. If they are not real, they do not exist and cannot be part of anything, let alone Being. If they are real, then they are not different from Being. Being is therefore one indissoluble stuff. By a similar argument Parmenides concluded that Being cannot move. To move to a place means to move to something that either exists or does not exist. But nothing can move to what does not exist, since it is not a place. Therefore, every existing place is occupied by Being. It follows that Being cannot move at all, and therefore that it cannot pass away. So it cannot cease to exist. Accordingly, these arguments show that Being is neither created nor destroyed, namely that it is unchanging and permanent.

The outcome of this train of reasoning was the rejection of the information derived from sense experience. According to the senses, things are seen, felt, and heard to shift position. But as the Parmenidean arguments show, reality cannot move; therefore

motion is illusory. Since knowledge must be of that which is real, then if we are to have knowledge, it cannot be derived from sense experience. His view is thus a radical form of rationalism.

Plato's theory of knowledge is a tilted compromise between these two positions. It agrees with Heraclitus that sense experience reveals only change and nothing permanent. But it tilts toward the Parmenidean theses that one cannot know that which is in flux and that there exists an unchanging, knowable reality. It also concurs that to access the real world one must transcend sense experience. But it denies that the objects revealed by the senses are *wholly* unreal. Sense experience gives us some information but it falls short of knowledge. It thus rejects the Parmenidean notion that motion is entirely illusory. What is being affirmed instead is that perception can never result in knowledge. On the whole, then, the Platonic view emphasizes the role of reason, while it does not totally denigrate sense experience.

Let us now briefly examine what Plato says about sense experience. In Book VII of *The Republic*, in "The Doctrine of the Divided Line," we find an extensive treatment of this topic. In that passage, Plato distinguishes between the World of Appearance and the World of Reality. The World of Appearance is the world revealed to the senses. It consists of different sorts of objects. Each type of object is apprehended by a different mode of sensing. There are images, for instance, captured by the imagination; there are visible objects, such as tables and rocks, which are apprehended by sight and touch. Plato suggests that these objects can be arrayed in a spectrum of increasing stability. Images are more fleeting than rocks, for example. So the information we acquire about rocks is better than that about transient images. But such information never reaches certitude. For that we must access unchanging objects in the World of Reality. These he calls 'forms' or 'ideas' and we shall speak about them in a moment.

Plato says two things about sense experience that explain why it cannot produce knowledge. First, he states that the various objects one apprehends through the senses bear incompatible predicates. Thus, the same rock can be said to be light or heavy. Second, he points out that all such objects are subject to ceaseless change,

though of course, some alter more rapidly than others. Therefore, because these objects change and have incompatible features, they *cannot be known*. Though he does not expand on these arguments, he seems to be suggesting that knowing is a kind of intellectual grasping. If an object changes, then one cannot really grasp it; it is like trying to pick up quicksilver. Moreover, if it has incompatible features, it has no consistent, and therefore no real, nature. It is merely a collection of appearances. Therefore, to acquire knowledge, one must leave the world of appearance and access those eternal and self-consistent objects that belong to the world of reality.

This view runs directly counter to any form of skepticism. Many forms of skepticism depend on showing that sense experience is fallible, and therefore that knowledge is impossible. Plato agrees with the skeptic that sense experience is fallible but denies that knowledge is impossible. His point is that in order to acquire knowledge one must leave the world of appearance, and in its place use reason. Plato's theory thus undercuts skepticism by co-opting one of its main principles, namely the unreliability of the senses, while attempting to show that the truth of this principle does not entail that knowledge is impossible. So how does Plato show that the use of reason will lead to the acquisition of knowledge? We turn to this complicated issue now: to his theory of forms.

Like the World of Appearance, the World of Reality is divided into objects and the capacities (Plato's word is 'faculties') humans can exercise to apprehend such objects. Plato also discriminates between lower and higher objects. The lowest of these are mathematical objects, such as numbers. Above them are the forms or ideas, and finally at the highest level there is one form which he calls The Good. There are then three levels of human faculties, each of which can be used to access these different types of objects. The lowest faculty is thinking, above it is dialectic, and still higher there is intuition, which can grasp The Good. The important points to remember about these objects are that they never change and that they are apprehensible only by the use of reason. In such works as *The Republic*, *Phaedo*, and *Timaeus*, Plato offers a plethora of arguments in defense of these theses. Given space limitations, it is impossible to reproduce any one of these arguments here in its

actual detail. I will construct a simpler version of one such argument. Let us begin with the lowest sort of objects, numbers.

Suppose one were to write the following three inscriptions on a blackboard:

I, I, -

Each of these is a way of writing the number one (the first two belong to English, the third to Japanese). Now, as Plato says, reality cannot bear inconsistent predicates. That is why a rock, which can be light or heavy, cannot be real. Yet, the inscriptions we have just written do bear incompatible predicates. The second of these is to the left of '-' and to the right of 'I'. So it seems that numbers cannot belong to the World of Reality after all. But, wait, Plato would say. Suppose one were to erase the Japanese inscription. Would that mean that the number one no longer exists? Of course not. Suppose we erased all of these inscriptions; would that entail that the number one had been eliminated? Surely not! What Plato would say, and here he is supported by common sense, is that none of those inscriptions is the number one. Each is a symbolic *representation* of that number. Any attempt to write down or draw the number one will simply be a representation of it. It follows that there is no way of introducing the number one *itself* into the world of appearance. One can only produce representations of it. It follows that the number one does not exist in space or time at all. It cannot be written down, drawn, or pictured. If not, it cannot be erased either. Therefore, it cannot be brought into existence or be caused not to exist. This means that it is permanent. So there are objects, numbers being an example, that exist and yet do not change. Plato calls a subset of such objects 'forms' or 'ideas,' and asserts that they are constituents of the World of Reality. They are apprehended by a rational process called 'Dialectic.' This is a method of question and answer, designed to arrive at a so-called 'real definition.' A real definition will uncover the true meaning of a concept. Thus, the real definition of 'brother' is 'male sibling.' This process was invented and used by Socrates in questioning Athenians about the meaning of various terms, such as 'justice,' and 'piety.'

By 'idea' Plato does not mean anything psychological, such as my idea that it is now raining in San Diego. Ideas or forms are objective features of the world whose existence does not depend on their being thought of or perceived. The fact that they do not change and are internally consistent means that their existence in no way depends on human psychology. To understand what Plato means by 'forms' or 'ideas' we must note another distinction he draws, between particulars and non-particulars.

The idiograms we presented above of the number one each occupied a specific place in the space-time order. For example, 'I' was closer to the left edge of a page of this book than '1' was, and so forth. Anything that exists in the world of appearance can be localized in that way. This rock is exactly at this point in the garden, that chair is at a specific place in this room, and so forth. There was a time when the chair did not exist and there will be a time in the future when it does not exist. Its temporal career is thus localizable in much the same way that its spatial position is. Anything thus localizable in space and time is what Plato calls a *particular*. The theory of forms states that there are entities that are not so localizable. So a main characteristic of the forms is that they are non-particulars. Later, in the medieval period, they will be called 'universals.' Because they are not localizable, they do not exist in space and time. Since they are not exposed to the ravages of time, that means they are eternal. These are then the objects one must apprehend in order to acquire knowledge. Because they do not exist in space or time they cannot be seen, touched, tasted or heard. To apprehend them one must go beyond sense experience, and this consists in the use of reason.

What could such entities be? The explanation is difficult, but a common way of approaching the matter is by noting certain features of everyday language. Let us begin by distinguishing proper names from common names. Thus, I can use the proper name 'Citation' to *mean* a specific horse. That name picks out a specific animal, existing in a particular time and place. The author of the *Tractatus* would have said that the actual animal, Citation, is the *meaning* of the word 'Citation.' But then what does the term 'horse' refer to or pick out? Clearly it picks out anything that is a horse,

Citation, Secretariat, Seabiscuit, and so on. But it is not a proper name in the way that 'Citation' is. It does not pick out a particular horse. So it must mean something other than any particular horse. What it seems to mean is that feature or set of features that is essential to anything's being a horse. But what is that feature? It is not being a specific color or specific height or weight, because horses generally differ in such respects from one another. Let us call this feature a 'common element' or 'essence.' We can also say that it is the meaning of the word 'horse.'

Such general terms as *horse*, *brown*, *good*, *being to the right of* are indelible elements of our language. If we did not employ such terms it would be impossible to communicate or express any beliefs or thoughts. Any such thought will embed one of these general terms. But now observe that though we can point to Citation, we cannot in the same way point to *horse*. Anything we point to will be a specific horse. In Plato's parlance, it will be an example, representation, or instance of a horse, i.e., a 'particular.' Yet there must be something we mean when we use this term, and it cannot be a particular. It must thus be something that is non-particular. It is this meaning or essence that Plato is referring to when he speaks of 'forms' or 'ideas.'

We can now see the deep intuition that motivates Plato's theory of forms. First, he recognizes that in order to have knowledge one must use propositional language, i.e., form declarative sentences such as 'Citation is a horse.' In doing so, one is doing more than pointing to Citation. Pointing by itself does not give knowledge; one must go beyond pointing to speak assertorically and this requires a reference to the forms, i.e., to a common feature that all horses share in order to be a horse at all. Moreover, this feature is not itself something that exists in space and time. That is why we cannot see, point to, scratch or wash it. Even if Citation were to die, the form *horse* would still exist. If no horses were now alive, then *horse* would not be exemplified or represented in space and time. But that would not mean it would not exist. If all symbolic representations of the number one were to disappear, the number one would still exist. Forms are thus those entities denoted by common nouns and adjectives, words like 'red,' 'horse,' 'beauty,' and so forth.

Second, such essences are non-particular objects. As with a proper name, whose meaning is a particular object, the meaning of any common name is an object, but a non-particular one. Plato's theory thus thinks of meanings as objects. On such a view, to understand the meaning of a word is to grasp a particular kind of object. One of Wittgenstein's main objections to Platonism turns on this point. His view is that instead of thinking of meanings as objects we should emphasize the use that certain terms have in the language-game. To speak of 'use' in this way is to talk about the purposes to which language is being put. This new view of Wittgenstein's thus not only rejects Platonism but his own, earlier view in the *Tractatus*. Plato's theory of knowledge not only represents a compromise between the world of flux described by Heraclitus and the eternal, immobile world depicted by Parmenides, but it does so on the basis of a particular theory of meaning. That theory maintains that meanings (essences) are different from the symbols that humans use in everyday language. This is why in order to understand any statement one must go deeper than surface language to a world of hidden objects. This for Plato is a special function that the philosopher alone can exercise.

Wittgenstein begins his analysis of this model via its double conception of meaning as essence and meaning as an object underlying various linguistic expressions. The *Blue Book*, for instance, begins with the question, 'What is the meaning of a word?' The *Brown Book* and the *Investigations*, as I previously mentioned, begin with a discussion of a view about meaning that Augustine holds. What Wittgenstein shows in a brilliant, extended analysis is that the Platonic conception breaks down in a variety of ways. It fails, for example, to comprehend that one who knows the meaning of a common noun or adjective is not grasping an abstract entity but is able to use the word in various contexts for particular purposes. Instead of the Platonic model, with its emphasis upon the differing kinds of objects that words denote, Wittgenstein points out that the same linguistic expression may have a diversity of uses. In a striking metaphor he writes:

Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions

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from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses. (*Philosophical Investigations*, 18)

The word 'game,' for instance, applies to many different kinds of activities: some have explicit rules, such as chess; some involve winning, some do not; some may be played by oneself, such as throwing a ball against a wall. Therefore, to be a game is not necessarily to possess a feature it shares with all other games. For Wittgenstein, the diversity of such linguistic uses reflects the diversity of the real world. Here in a famous passage is what he writes about the many uses to which language is put:

But how many kinds of sentence are there? Say assertion, question, and command? – There are countless kinds: countless different kinds of use of what we call 'symbols', 'words', 'sentences'. And this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten. (We can get a rough picture of this from the changes in mathematics.)

Here the term 'language-game' is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or a form of life.

Review the multiplicity of language-games in the following examples, and in others:

- Giving orders, and obeying them –
- Describing the appearance of an object, or giving its measurements –
- Constructing an object from a description (a drawing) –
- Reporting an event –
- Speculating about an event –
- Forming and testing a hypothesis –
- Presenting the result of an experiment in tables and diagrams –
- Making up a story; and reading it –
- Play-acting –
- Singing catches –
- Guessing riddles –
- Making a joke; telling it –
- Solving a problem in practical arithmetic –
- Translating from one language into another –
- Asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying –

Philosophical Investigations

It is interesting to compare the multiplicity of the tools in language and of the ways they are used, the multiplicity of the kinds of words and sentence, with what logicians have said about the structure of language. (Including the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.) (*Philosophical Investigations*, 23)

In place of the Platonic view about essences, Wittgenstein suggests a new way of depicting how common nouns and adjectives work in everyday discourse. His name for this conception is 'family resemblance.' Consider how the members of a family resemble one another in certain ways and yet differ in certain ways. There is no essence they all share; but there are heaps of overlapping features. Think of their hair color. A and B may be blond, and blondness may take many forms. C and D, other members of the family, may not be blond, yet the texture and thickness of their hair may resemble those of A and B, and so forth. As Wittgenstein says:

I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than 'family resemblances'; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way. – And I shall say: 'games' form a family.

And for instance the kinds of number form a family in the same way. Why do we call something a 'number'? Well, perhaps because it has a – direct – relationship with several things that have hitherto been called number; and this can be said to give it an indirect relationship to other things we call the same name. And we extend our concept of number as in spinning a thread we twist fibre on fibre. And the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres.

But if someone wishes to say: 'There is something common to all these constructions – namely the disjunction of all their common properties' – I should reply: Now you are only playing with words. One might as well say: 'Something runs through the whole thread – namely the continuous overlapping of those fibres.' (*Philosophical Investigations*, 67)

Note his reference to the concept of number, and how it differs from Plato's view. There is no single 'fibre' that runs through all uses of

this notion; instead the concept is a 'thread'... [consisting of] the overlapping of many fibres'. The notion of 'family resemblance' is thus a descriptive term. It describes how concepts are actually employed in daily life. As such it is an antidote to the Platonic view about essences and objects. In this conception we see the method of cases at work. Wittgenstein is urging that one compare and contrast cases in order to see how words like 'number,' 'game,' and 'tool' are used in ordinary life. The method is applicable to all the concepts traditional philosophers have explored. It replaces the search for the essence of things and the need to 'penetrate phenomena' by an example-oriented, case by case description of the uses of words. This is how one arrives at a true understanding of reality.

Cartesianism

The other target of Wittgenstein's new method is the Cartesian model, which turns critically on an inner-outer distinction, involving a two-substance theory of reality. Mind and matter are two substances. Mind is an immaterial substance, lacking extension, mass, and locus. Matter is just the opposite: It has extension (length), bulk, and every material object has a specific location. According to Descartes, the distinction is both exhaustive and exclusive. In saying this, he means that everything that exists is either matter or mind, and that nothing is both. They are thus completely distinct from one another. As with all two-substance models, the Cartesian vision generates a problem about how the two substances can interact if they are so different. In this respect it is similar to Plato's quandary about how particulars can participate in the forms, since the former are in space and time and the latter are not. The Cartesian model raises a host of similar difficulties, for example how mental substance, which is immaterial, can interact with physical substance, which has mass and weight. How can something immaterial (mind) affect or cause something material (like an arm) to move when one decides to pick up a book? The model gives rise to two of the most forbidding perplexities in the philosophical lexicon: the External World and Other Minds problems. They are direct consequences of the model because the model

identifies the mental with what is inner, the inner with what is private (with what is directly accessible to one only, i.e., to the proprietor of a particular mind), and the private with that which is hidden from others. The model thus suggests that each human being is encapsulated within the circle of his or her own ideas.

The difficulty is then how to emerge from this 'egocentric predicament.' According to the model, one has direct access to his or her own ideas, feelings and sensations, but no direct access to anything external, i.e., to the material world or to the minds of others. Such access, if possible at all, is at best inferential and at most probable. In one's own case certainty about one's ideas and feelings is possible because no inference is required. But this is a very restricted kind of certainty. It is limited to one's own sensations. So two perplexities immediately arise. First, the external world problem. It can be stated as follows: If the only evidence one has for anything are one's own subjective ideas, feelings, and sensations, what reason does anyone have to suppose that there is a reality external to those ideas and sensations? And even if there is such a reality, what reason does one have for supposing that one has accurate information (knowledge) about it? Second, there is the Other Minds difficulty. Since the internal sensations of others are hidden from any observer how can we ever know what another is thinking or whether another is in pain? In both cases, the threats of solipsism and skepticism are immediately entailed by the Cartesian conception.

Wittgenstein was obsessed with these two problems, and much of his later philosophy is devoted to analysing their sources in the Cartesian model and then showing how they can be neutralized. Because of the complexities both problems engender, we shall restrict our comments to one of them: the External World conundrum. In *Philosophical Investigations* and in *On Certainty* (written some fifteen years apart) Wittgenstein offers two radically different ways of resolving this problem. Both solutions are inventive and original. We shall speak about his views in *On Certainty* in the next chapter.

In the *Investigations* his discussion is ingenious; there is nothing like it in the previous literature. In effect, he argues that the

Cartesian model can be reinterpreted in a linguistic form. As such it gives rise to the notion of a wholly private language. Such a 'language' would be analogous to the 'egocentric predicament' that the Cartesian picture engenders. This is a language which presumably only one person could understand. That person would employ words in a singular way. Each word would stand for a particular object and only the user of the language would understand which object a particular word meant. (Compare such a model with Augustine's limited conception of the essence of language, or with Wittgenstein's in the *Tractatus*.) He would thus be using a system of private rules for designating the references of his words.

Nearly half of Part I of the *Investigations* (especially the segment 143–250) is dedicated to showing that no such conception of language is possible. For something to be a language it must be rule-governed. A linguistic rule is a piece of instruction about how various elements of the language are to be used. Wittgenstein points out that such rules must satisfy certain criteria: it must be possible to follow or violate a rule; rules are standards of correctness or guides to action; rules must be more or less transparent to participants in a rule-governed practice such as a language; the existence of rules presupposes their use in a human community; and finally the meanings of the words in a rule-governed language are independent of any particular person. This last criterion is critical. Its point is that each of us inherits a language. We inherit the rules for the standard use or uses of words, and we learn how to use such rules and the linguistic expressions they govern. So a language is something objective, not something subjective as the Cartesian outlook would imply. The late, distinguished American philosopher Norman Malcolm has given the clearest and most succinct interpretation of Wittgenstein's point of view about why a private language is not possible. He states:

To speak a language is to participate in a way of living in which many people are engaged. The language I speak gets its meaning from the common ways of acting and responding to many people. I take part in a language in the sense in which I take part in a game – which is surely one reason why Wittgenstein compares languages to games. Another reason for this comparison is that in both languages

and games there are rules. To follow the rules for the use of an expression is nothing other than to use the expression as it is ordinarily used – which is to say, as it is used by those many people who take part in the activities in which the expression is embedded. Thus the meaning of the expression is independent of me, or of any particular person; and this is why I can use the expression correctly or incorrectly. It has a meaning independent of my use of it. And this is why there is no sense in the supposition that a forever-solitary person could know a language any more than he could buy and sell. (*Inquiry*, 1989, p. 22)

Wittgenstein's point is that any rule can be understood by anyone, and therefore is public. So no linguistic system can be private in the Cartesian sense, i.e., private in principle. Moreover, because every language is rule-governed, mistakes in the application of its rules are always possible. If there were a 'private language' the distinction between correctly and incorrectly following a rule would make no sense. There would be no objective way of determining, for example, when a mistake in usage had been made. Hence the Cartesian conception is not a language at all. It follows, more generally from this linguistic analogy, that the Cartesian model does not generate a sensible picture of the relationship of the human mind to the external world. One lives in a public world where one learns to use language in accordance with the prevailing social uses of words. These practices instruct us in how to use terms applying to such things as tables, other persons, astral bodies, and various institutions. If the Cartesian model were correct we could never acquire knowledge of such external objects. But since we do have such knowledge it is drastically mistaken. In effect, Wittgenstein is reiterating his great new idea: to understand what the world is like we must scrutinize it. The Cartesian theory rejects such advice. It is an example of a theorist's thinking about but not looking closely at what goes on.

On Certainty

Wittgenstein and Moore

In *On Certainty* we find a new stage in Wittgenstein's philosophical growth. This development is not a change in his descriptive method, with its emphasis on ordinary language. On the contrary. For the rest of his career he remained committed to the method, i.e., to the notion that in order to resolve philosophical problems one must 'look closely at what goes on.' The method is used, almost without variation, in the *Blue and Brown Books* (1933–1935); *Philosophical Investigations*, the longest portion of which (Part I) was completed in 1936; *Zettel*, a collection of clippings, most of them written between 1945 and 1948; and *Remarks on Colour*; *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*; and *On Certainty*, all produced in the last two years of his life. *On Certainty* contains his final thoughts. The last seven entries were inserted in the text only two days before his death on 29 April 1951.

In fact, it was Wittgenstein's emphasis upon description that led him to his third great idea, a remarkable discovery connected with the concept of a language-game. As we noted in the previous chapter, by a language-game Wittgenstein means a slice of human activity, such as giving orders, reporting an event, forming and testing a hypothesis, play-acting, making and telling a joke, solving

a problem in practical arithmetic, and so forth. But in *On Certainty* his descriptive focus results in a new insight: that every such game rests on a foundation (or ground) that is certain. His book is thus a new and original account of the nature of certainty. Its main idea is that certainty is to be identified with what is foundational, i.e., with the ground or grounds (he uses both the singular and plural in this connection) that underlie and support a language-game. A corollary of this point is that certain epistemic concepts, such as knowing, doubting, believing, justifying, adducing evidence for or against a claim, truth, falsity, and being mistaken, have their use or uses within language-games but are inapplicable to what is foundational. Instead, they 'come to an end' in the language-game:

Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end – but the end is not certain propositions striking us immediately as true, i.e., it is not a kind of seeing on our part; it is our acting which lies at the bottom of the language-game. (*On Certainty*, 204)

If the true is what is grounded, then the ground is not true, nor yet false. (*On Certainty*, 205)

But if the ground or foundation is 'not true nor yet false,' neither known nor not known, neither justifiable nor unjustifiable, neither confirmable nor infirmable, then it is beyond revision; and that is simply another way of saying that it is certain. What he is getting at is captured in the following passage:

Isn't the question this: 'What if you had to change your opinion even on these most fundamental things?' And to that the answer seems to me to be: 'You don't have to change it. That is just what their being "fundamental" is.' (*On Certainty*, 512)

The twin discoveries that such certain foundations exist and that no epistemic notions apply to them constitute Wittgenstein's new great idea. These findings are without parallel in previous philosophy, including his own. This is an enormous achievement. Whether certainty is attainable is a problem that has bedevilled thinkers from the time of the Greeks to the present. Nearly every great philosopher – Plato, Descartes, and Kant, just to mention a few – has grappled

with the issue. But nobody was able to come up with Wittgenstein's solution. It is not only original, but complicated and the rest of the chapter will be devoted to it.

The story of how Wittgenstein came to write *On Certainty* is both fascinating in itself and highly relevant in understanding the development of this new idea. In 1949, shortly before he was diagnosed with cancer of the prostate, Wittgenstein visited his former student Norman Malcolm in Cornell. Some years earlier Malcolm had written an article, 'Moore and Ordinary Language,' for an anthology entitled *The Philosophy of G. E. Moore* (1942). In that essay, Malcolm argued that Moore's famous defense of the common sense view of the world was really a defense of ordinary language against the extended and paradoxical uses of its locutions by philosophers. As Malcolm wrote:

Moore's great historical role consists in the fact that he has been perhaps the first philosopher to sense that any philosophical statement which violates ordinary language is false, and consistently to defend ordinary language against its philosophical violators. (368)

But in the intervening seven-year period Malcolm had changed his mind. He now believed that in 'A Defense of Common Sense,' 'Proof of an External World,' and 'Certainty,' Moore had also misused the idioms 'I know,' 'I know with certainty,' 'It is certain,' and 'I have conclusive evidence.' In a paper, 'Defending Common Sense,' that was soon to be published in *The Philosophical Review* he gave a number of powerful arguments in support of this interpretation. Here, in part, is what he said:

The first respect, therefore, in which Moore's usage of the expression 'I know' in the philosophical contexts we are considering, departs from ordinary usage is that Moore says: 'I know that so and so is true' in circumstances where no one doubts that so and so is true and where there is not even any question as to whether so and so is true. It will be objected: 'His opponent has a philosophical doubt as to whether so and so is true, and there is a philosophical question as to whether so and so is true.' That is indeed the case. What I am saying is that the philosophical doubt and the philosophical question are raised in circumstances in which there isn't any doubt and isn't any

question as to whether so and so is true. Moore's opponent would not raise a philosophical question as to whether it is certain that an object before them is a tree if the object were largely obscured or too distant to be easily seen. If he said 'I wish to argue that it isn't certain that that object is a tree' and Moore replied 'I can't tell at this distance whether it is a tree or a bush,' then Moore's opponent would change the example. He would not want to use as an example for his philosophical argument an object with regard to which there was some doubt as to whether it was a tree. The use of an object as an example for presenting his philosophical doubt is spoiled for him if there is any doubt as to what the object is. It must be the case that there is no doubt that the given object is a tree before he can even raise a philosophical question as to whether it is certain that it is a tree. (204–205)

When Wittgenstein arrived in Cornell, Malcolm read him this paper. Wittgenstein had long been interested in Moore's defense of the common sense view of the world, and had even told Moore that 'A Defense of Common Sense' was his best paper. Wittgenstein was thus impressed by Malcolm's claim that Moore was misusing such expressions as 'I know that,' 'I know that with certainty,' etc. When he returned to England, he decided to look into the matter himself, and began to write in his characteristically diffuse style about the correct use of these expressions and then more extensively about the topic of certainty itself. The material we have that his editors subsequently entitled *On Certainty* is in first draft form and unpolished, with all of the later entries dated by groups. It thus allows one to follow the progress of Wittgenstein's thought on this topic in the last two years of his life. The progression shows a deepening sensitivity to its complexities. This work begins with the sort of issues about Moore's use of 'I know' that Malcolm had raised; the influence of Malcolm's paper on Wittgenstein is patent. For instance, in the sixth entry, Wittgenstein writes:

Now, can one enumerate what one knows (like Moore)? Straight off like that, I believe not – For otherwise the expression 'I know' gets misused. And through this misuse a queer and extremely important mental state seems to be revealed.

But Wittgenstein was to carry the issues surrounding the notion of certainty much farther than either Malcolm or Moore, and it is in

the depth and originality of his inquiry that the importance of *On Certainty* lies. The outcome of that inquiry was a philosophical masterpiece comparable to the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*.

In particular, what did he find so provocative and challenging in Moore's essays? I think there are two things, each of which will take some time to relate.

First: In contrast to the rampant scientism, relativism, and pragmatism in twentieth-century philosophy, typified by W. V. O. Quine's naturalized epistemology which holds that philosophy is just an extension of science, or even more radical variants that deny it any descriptive validity whatever, Moore presents a powerful defense of its autonomy. In his view it is capable of providing a true and unique description of the world. This account, which he calls *The Common Sense View of the World*, is not only different from anything that science informs us about reality, but moreover, is not revisable by the findings of any discipline, whether scientific or otherwise. Indeed, Moore's position is that this pre-technical, pre-scientific outlook that all of us share is deeper, more primitive, and conceptually prior to the refined descriptions of reality that science provides; and accordingly, that any scientific discovery must be compatible with the Common Sense View. Moore's papers thus give us a different picture of the world: one that is both familiar and compelling. A simple example of a proposition that is part of the Common Sense View: *the earth now exists and has existed for a long time*. This is a proposition that virtually every adult knows to be true, but it is not a proposition belonging to science or to any of the humanistic disciplines. There is no department in any university whose inquiries are directed to finding out whether the earth exists. Nor is it an assumption that might turn out to be wrong. It is not something scientists merely assume as a hypothesis; rather, they like everybody else know it to be true. No theory, scientific or otherwise, that denied such a proposition would be rationally defensible; and that in effect is what it means to say that the view is not open to revision. A larger, indefinite list of such propositions is what Moore meant by the common sense view of the world. To some extent Wittgenstein agreed, though with important qualifications, that some 'propositions' – which he named 'hinge propositions' – are not

open to doubt and hence are not revisable. So though neither thinker denigrated science, each was asserting that philosophy can provide an alternative to the strictly scientific picture of the world. This is one reason why Wittgenstein thought Moore's epistemological writings were worthy serious study. But in stressing their concurrence one must add that their accounts of certainty were to differ radically.

Second: In Moore's writings on certainty, we find one of the two major contemporary alternatives to what is today the most commonly received theory of knowledge: a theory that received an explicit formulation in Hume (1711-1776) and has been widely accepted since. It amounts to a mitigated form of skepticism, and it is this view that Moore challenged. In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein was to join forces with Moore, but in a more original and more profound way.

According to this 'official theory' all knowledge claims are expressible as propositions that fall into two categories that are *exclusive* and *exhaustive*. To say that the categories are exclusive means that no proposition can be a member of both, and to say they are exhaustive means that they include all instances of knowledge claims. We thus have a synoptic theory covering all possible cases. One of the complications in describing the theory is exactly how these contrasting categories are to be defined or characterized.

Historically, there have been different names and frequently different conceptions associated with each. For instance, Hume himself distinguished between propositions expressing a relationship of ideas to one another and propositions about matters of fact. In Leibniz there is a related, though different, distinction: that between necessary and contingent propositions. Kant discriminated between analytic and synthetic propositions. Both Kant and Hume distinguished a priori from a posteriori propositions. In the twentieth century, we find philosophers employing all of the above plus other discriminations: L-determinate versus F-determinate propositions, tautologies versus significant propositions, empirical versus logical propositions, and so on. In a longer essay, each of these different pairs would have to be distinguished from one another. For instance, to say that a proposition is necessary is not identical with saying that it is analytic. To say the former is to say

that the proposition holds (is true) in all possible worlds; to say the latter is to say that the predicate term is part of the meaning of the subject term and in that sense gives us a (partial) analysis of the meaning of the subject term. Some philosophers have maintained that 'Every event has a cause' is necessary because it holds in all possible worlds, but that it is not analytic because 'being caused' is not part of the meaning of 'event.' Some propositions, however, are both analytic and necessary, for instance 'All husbands are married.' It is necessary because it is true in all possible worlds, and it is analytic because 'being married' is part of the meaning of 'being a husband.' Similar differences hold between the other pairs of notions I have mentioned.

But historically, all of the propositions belonging to the a priori (necessary, analytical, L-determinate, tautological) side of the distinction have been thought to possess an important epistemological characteristic that marks them off from those belonging to the a posteriori (synthetic, empirical, contingent) side of the distinction. The characteristic is that they can be determined to be true without any reference to experience. The operative point can be brought out by considering how we come to establish the truth of the following propositions:

- (i) All husbands are married.
- (ii) All present-day laptop computers weigh less than 20 pounds.

It is clear that at some relevant time in the past we could only have determined whether (ii) is true by an appeal to experience, i.e., by investigating the weights of laptop computers, or by checking the production records of manufacturers, say. The point is that in order to determine the truth of (ii) some research would be requisite. It is not enough merely to have understood the proposition. This is what it means to say that (ii) is a posteriori; namely, that its truth can be ascertained only after some resort to experience. This proposition also has the feature that it might have been false: one can imagine that a certain firm made some heavy, experimental laptops it did not sell to the public. So to say that (ii) might have been false is equivalent to saying that it is not a necessary truth, since there are imaginable circumstances in which it might not have been true. But

now let us contrast (ii) with (i). We can tell without any research that (i) is true. We know this prior to any sort of investigation of the facts of the matter. All we have to do is to understand the proposition and we can see that it is true. Moreover, it is not merely true; it is necessarily true. For it is impossible to imagine or describe any circumstances in which, as those terms are customarily used, someone could be a husband without being married. So (i) is both a priori and necessary.

Now Hume and many subsequent philosophers saw this exclusive-exhaustive division, however it was expressed, as having important and highly paradoxical implications for the theory of knowledge. They contended that propositions belonging to the category of the a posteriori (synthetic, contingent, etc.) were never certain and they bolstered this inference with the argument that all such propositions could be determined to be true only on the basis of past experience; and since past experience, being only a sample of all experience, might turn out in the light of future happenings to have been unreliable, such propositions could never be certain. At most they could be known to be true with some degree of probability. In contrast, a priori (analytic, necessary, tautological) propositions are certain. To say that they are 'certain' entails that they hold in all possible circumstances, so that no future experience can run counter to them, and in this in turn entails that a person asserting them cannot be mistaken. But such certitude produced no information about the world; it was a product of the special, usually definitional, relationships holding between the terms in a proposition. From the truth of the sentence 'All giants are tall,' it does not follow that there are giants. Or as Wittgenstein pointed out, one who knows that it will either rain or not rain knows nothing about the weather. Such propositions thus provide information about conceptual relationships, not about matters of fact. Accordingly, this Humean analysis issued in a paradox about knowledge, namely that insofar as propositions are descriptive of the world they can never be certain; and insofar as they are certain they are devoid of information about the world. The theory thus supported a kind of skepticism since it maintained that one could never have information about the world that was certain.

In the twentieth century, this Humean theory has had two major challenges, one from Moore, the other from Quine, both having important implications for epistemology. In 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism' (1950), Quine argued that the difference between so-called 'synthetic propositions' and so-called 'analytic propositions' is a difference of degree, not of kind. According to him all propositions are in principle susceptible to modification or even rejection in the light of new discoveries; they merely differ in the degree of their susceptibility to such changes. For example, the basic laws of logic and physics are less vulnerable to revision than scientific conjectures, but in principle any proposition, even a law of logic, may be abandoned or altered depending on how it fares in confrontation with experience. It seems a straight implication from such an analysis that there is no such thing as absolute certainty, since any proposition that is certain will hold come what may.

But Moore's challenge was of a completely different order. He thought, unlike Quine, that the traditional distinction in kind between contingent and necessary propositions was defensible. What he denied in 'A Defense of Common Sense,' 'Proof of an External World,' and 'Certainty,' was that contingent propositions could not be known to be true with absolute certainty. Indeed, he asserted the exact opposite: for instance, that he knew such empirical propositions as 'I am a human being' (said about himself) and 'The earth has existed for many years past,' to be true with certainty. Though Moore does not explicitly mention that Hume is his target, in effect he was issuing a profound challenge to the official theory deriving from his eighteenth-century predecessor, and of course to its skeptical underpinnings. It was his contention that contingent propositions can be certain that Wittgenstein found attractive. But to find a thesis attractive is not to find it right. Wittgenstein's account of the nature of certainty was to differ substantially from Moore's. And why it did is the key to understanding *On Certainty*. To make this possible, I will divide my discussion into five parts: (1) Foundationalism and certitude, (2) The 'propositional' and 'non-propositional' accounts of certainty, (3) Why doubting must come to an end, (4) The Cartesian Dream Hypothesis, and (5) Skepticism.

Foundationalism and certitude

What is foundationalism? This is a question that needs to be addressed before we discuss Wittgenstein's views. All proponents of the doctrine identify the foundational with certainty. There are many different versions of the position. Wittgenstein's in particular differs from any other in the history of philosophy and also has the merit of avoiding many of its traditional liabilities. His description of the foundational is usually couched in metaphorical language. He speaks of the 'scaffolding of our thoughts,' 'bedrock,' 'the substratum of all my inquiring and asserting,' 'hard rock,' 'being anchored,' and 'hinges.' He says with respect to hinges, 'If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stand fast.' Wittgenstein uses a range of German expressions for certainty, among them 'feststehen,' 'festhalten,' and 'festlegen,' which are usually translated into English as 'standing fast.' Thus when he states that something 'stands fast for us,' he means that it is certain. To bring out how his foundationalism differs from all other versions, I shall start with a simple conceptual model that every foundationalist accepts, including Wittgenstein. The model is so simple and so general that it will lack the cognitive substance that has distinguished traditional foundationalists from one another. But it does capture certain formal features that can be used as the basis for such discriminations.

From at least the time of Aristotle many philosophers have asserted that some of the knowledge human beings possess is more fundamental or basic than the rest. If we call such primordial knowledge 'F' and the remainder 'R,' we can roughly express their intuition by saying that R depends on F but not conversely and that F depends on nothing. What is driving this intuition can be indicated with a brief example. Suppose one were to ask a philosopher: 'What holds up the world?' and the response was 'an elephant.' One might then ask: 'Well, what holds up the elephant?' Suppose the philosopher answers: 'Another elephant.' If such questions and answers were to go on indefinitely nothing would have been explained. Indeed, the philosopher's statements amount to a kind of absurdity. Unless there is something solid that ultimately holds up

an elephant it cannot hold up anything. An infinite regress thus turns out to be no explanation at all. So we need a solid foundation (i.e., certitude) that is unsupported by anything else if we are to explain how we come to have knowledge. This is the kind of intuition that has motivated classical forms of foundationalism.

Historically there have been many forms of foundationalism: in epistemology, in ethics, and in logic, for example. What each of these differing forms of foundationalism takes to be fundamental will depend on the particular discipline: in epistemology, for example, it will be a special piece of propositional knowledge, something 'seen' immediately to be true. Descartes thought that the proposition 'cogito ergo sum' (I think, therefore I am) – the so-called 'cogito' – was a piece of such knowledge. One can 'see' clearly and distinctly that if one is thinking then one exists. Starting from such a palpable truth he then showed how the remaining edifice of knowledge could be constructed from it as a base. In ethics, J. S. Mill's *Principle of Utility* is such a fundamental principle. In mathematical logic the axioms play comparable roles. In order to understand what foundationalism is, however, we should move away from any particular theory and uncover its basic conceptual structure. This is something that all forms of foundationalism share.

Let us therefore leave F and R uninterpreted and not take them to be instances of knowledge, morality, or logic. What remains is just a formal structure. It holds that there is some asymmetrical relationship of dependence between F and R, whatever these are taken to be, and that F is not dependent on anything else. So given some unanalyzed notion of 'dependence' and some unanalyzed conception of what F and R may be, we can say that this skeleton gives us the basic foundationalist conception. The main thrust of the model is that F somehow supports R and is itself not supported by anything else. The idea that F is unsupported is generally taken to be another way of saying that it is both basic and certain.

Still, if we want the model, even in this skeletal form, to be adequate to the historical tradition that begins with the Greeks we shall have to add another element to it. It is difficult to state this without giving specific examples, so some examples will follow. The idea is that F will be either a single thing or a very limited number of

things if there is more than one F, whereas R will be complex, possessing scope and amplitude. The foundationalist picture thus depicts a particular discipline as having topologically the shape of an inverted pyramid. The main body of this top-heavy structure will rest on a simple base. Its apex will be broader than its base. We can call the base the foundation and what rests on it the mansion. In the realm of philosophy there are many mansions that conform to this model. A typical example would be an axiomatic logical system, such as that developed by Whitehead and Russell in *Principia Mathematica*. As is well known, the system rests on a set of primitives, five axioms that define them, and a principle of inference. This is the base of the system that expands upward and outward, forming a logical mansion that eventually allowed Russell and Whitehead to derive Peano's Postulates from a set of ascending calculi. Some years later, H. M. Sheffer showed that the five axioms could be reduced to one, thus simplifying the base. The resulting picture was that of an inverted pyramid, with the sentential calculus being derived from the axioms, the predicate calculus later, and so on. One can think of the Cartesian philosophy as giving rise to a parallel image, whose elements are not logical theorems but ordinary epistemic propositions. Their base is the cogito – the F or foundation. The totality of propositions forming the mansion is R; these are propositions that Descartes claimed could be derived from F.

Now a final example from ethics. Suppose one holds that cheating is always wrong, and suppose that a moral skeptic challenges this claim. One may defend his position in one of two ways. He may argue that the prohibition against cheating is a basic principle of morality, and that nothing further can be said in its behalf. Or if he holds that it is not basic, he will claim that it can be derived from a deeper principle. Suppose the deeper principle in this case is the Principle of Utility. This principle entails that cheating is wrong because in the long run it will lead to a preponderance of unhappiness over happiness. If the skeptic now challenges the Principle of Utility, a proponent of the thesis again has two options. He can claim that it is basic or that it rests upon a still deeper principle. The eventual outcome of the process of responding to obsessive challenge is a form of foundationalism that asserts that all moral

reasoning ultimately rests on a principle that lies beyond justification or evidential support.

Even in this skeletal form, the model needs some further explanation. For example, what does it mean to say that F depends on nothing whatever? Consider the cogito for a moment. It is the foundation of an epistemic superstructure. The items belonging to the superstructure are said to depend on the foundational item. Let us agree that the dependence runs in the way that Descartes indicates. The important point to notice is that the cogito itself is a piece of knowledge. Descartes is saying, in effect, that the notion of 'dependence' applies to and is limited to putative pieces of knowledge. So F and R must be instances of knowledge before the notion of dependence can be sensibly applied to their relationship. Given this condition, his thesis would be that F does not depend on any piece of knowledge in order to be a piece of knowledge. That is what it means to say it is fundamental. Again, in a different domain of philosophy, Mill might have responded in the same way. Like such moral principles as equal crimes deserve equal punishment, the Principle of Utility is itself a moral principle. Nearly all classical forms of foundationalism thus assume that F is a specimen exactly like those that belong to R. The main difference is that it is fundamental and they are not.

This line of reasoning brings us to Wittgenstein, and to the major respect in which he differs from the Western tradition. As we have seen, he rejects the idea that what is foundational is susceptible to doubt, proof, confirmation, truth, falsity, or justification. These attributes apply to putative cases of knowledge but not to what is certain. Whatever is so susceptible belongs to the language-game and differs in kind from the ground that underlies it. As he says: "Knowledge" and "certainty" belong to different categories. They are not two "mental states" like, say, "surmising" and "being sure." (On Certainty, 308). The base and the mansion resting on it are thus logically divergent. In saying this he realized that he was saying something philosophically insightful about the entire epistemological tradition. It is Wittgenstein's rejection of the notion of categorial similarity between base and mansion that, to a great extent, separates him from that tradition and from Moore.

As I mentioned above, Wittgenstein's form of foundationalism is not only unique but it enables him to avoid a set of obdurate problems that have perplexed nearly all varieties of foundationalism.

What are these problems? They arise from a set of questions that are meat for the skeptic. According to the tradition, foundational F is said to be more fundamental than any R. But the skeptic will ask: How do you know that? How can you be sure that there isn't something more fundamental than F upon which it depends?

A variety of answers have historically been given to this question. Descartes stated that he could 'see clearly and distinctly' that the cogito was true. Others have answered that unless some F were known to be true we would be committed to an infinite regress like that of insisting that an elephant holds up the world.

Wittgenstein, as a foundationalist, also asserts that nothing could be more certain than that which stands fast for us, but given his form of foundationalism the regress problem does not arise. It arises for traditional epistemologists because they assume that the question 'How do you know that F is true?' is always applicable. And they assume that because they think that the foundation and what rests on it belong to the same category, i.e., that both are pieces of knowledge. But for Wittgenstein's form of foundationalism, the question is not applicable and in fact embodies a category mistake. One cannot sensibly ask of that which is certain whether it is known (or not known) or true (or false); for what is meant by certitude is not susceptible to such ascriptions. As we noted earlier, he says: 'If the true is what is grounded, then the ground is not true, nor yet false.' The skeptical question thus need not be answered. This shows again how radically his view differs from any conventional form of foundationalism.

Propositional and non-propositional accounts of certainty

There are two different accounts of F in *On Certainty*. One of these – the earlier – is propositional in character. It derives from Wittgenstein's response to Moore, who thinks of certainty as applying to a set of empirical propositions that he knows to be true. In

contrast, Wittgenstein says that so-called 'hinge propositions' appear to be ordinary empirical propositions but are not. Straightforward empirical propositions, by definition, are either true or false, confirmable or infirmable, etc., but so-called 'hinge propositions' are immune to such ascriptions. He discriminates them from standard empirical propositions in various ways:

That is to say, the *questions* that we raise and our *doubts* depend on the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt, as it were like hinges on which those turn. (*On Certainty*, 341)

When Moore says he *knows* such and such, he is really enumerating a lot of empirical propositions which we affirm without special testing; propositions, that is, which have a peculiar logical role in the system of our empirical propositions. (*On Certainty*, 136)

Thus, what Wittgenstein is calling 'hinge propositions' are not really propositions at all. This is because of the 'peculiar logical role' they play. Later he will try to describe their role or roles. He will call them 'grammatical rules,' 'rules of instruction,' or 'rules of testing.' His so-called 'propositional view' is thus only nominally 'propositional.' It is better described as an account of locutions that look like propositions but function as kinds of rules.

The second, later account is palpably non-propositional. It is also overtly non-Cartesian. As we recall from an earlier quotation, it denies that certitude consists in propositions at all, let alone propositions that we can see to be true.

Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end; – but the end is not certain propositions striking us immediately as true, i.e., it is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is our *acting* which lies at the bottom of the language game. (*On Certainty*, 204)

Let us now look at both accounts to see how they resemble and differ. I shall begin with the 'propositional' version. It is marked by two characteristics: (i) that foundational propositions form a system, and (ii) that such foundations do not stand absolutely but only relatively fast. In both respects, Wittgenstein differs from Descartes who thinks of the cogito as the *sole* foundational item and from Moore whose common sense propositions do not form a

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system; and from both Descartes and Moore who think that their foundational propositions stand fast independently of any circumstances in which they are asserted. The notion that hinge propositions form a system is to be found in the following quotations (which are only a subset of a larger number making the same point).

What I hold fast to is not *one* proposition but a nest of propositions. (On Certainty, 225)

When we first begin to believe anything, what we believe is not a single proposition, it is a whole system of propositions. (Light dawns gradually over the whole.) (On Certainty, 141)

It is not single axioms that strike me as obvious, it is a system in which consequences and premises give one another *mutual* support. (On Certainty, 142)

The child learns to believe a host of things, i.e. it learns to act according to these beliefs. Bit by bit there forms a system of what is believed, and in that system some things stand unshakably fast and some are more or less liable to shift. What stands fast does so, not because it is intrinsically obvious or convincing; it is rather held fast by what lies around it. (On Certainty, 144)

This last quotation denies that what stands fast does so because it is 'intrinsically obvious.' This is Wittgenstein's way of disassociating himself from Cartesian foundationalism. Here are two quotations that evince his relativism:

It might be imagined that some propositions, of the form of empirical propositions, were hardened and functioned as channels for such empirical propositions as were not hardened but fluid; and that this relation altered with time, in that fluid propositions hardened, and hard ones became fluid. (On Certainty, 96)

But if someone were to say 'So logic too is an empirical science,' he would be wrong. Yet this is right: the same proposition may get treated at one time as something to test by experience, at another as a rule of testing. (On Certainty, 98)

Thus, a proposition that stands fast at a given time may not stand fast at another. When it stands fast it is a 'hinge proposition,' and when it no longer stands fast it ceases to be one. Wittgenstein compares

propositions to pieces of apparatus. When we are surveying the night sky with a telescope, the instrument does not come under scrutiny; it stands fast in those circumstances. In that context it is like a hinge proposition. But if something goes awry, we may wish to examine the optical device itself. In that case it no longer stands fast but instead has become an object of inquiry. In such a case something else must stand fast if one is to make a proper examination of the telescope. Standing fast is thus relativized to context: a proposition is not intrinsically certain, but it is held fast by what surrounds it.

His later non-propositional view, by way of contrast, is both absolutistic and non-systematic. Wittgenstein did not have this idea in mind when he began to write the notes that comprise *On Certainty*, probably because his focus was on Moore's texts, with their propositional emphasis. It is also probable that he was influenced by Malcolm's paper 'Defending Common Sense,' which attacks Moore's use of 'I know' and which Malcolm read to him in 1949. But as the work proceeds, the second view begins to emerge. The first slowly recedes and is then replaced. Like many views that are developed in opposition to another, his second account of certainty takes different forms, depending on the particular contrast Wittgenstein wishes to highlight. There are three main forms: (i) that certainty is something primitive, instinctual, or animal, (ii) that it is acting, and (iii) that it derives from rote training in communal practices. In all of these the major contrast with the propositional view is his denial that what stands fast is the product of reasoning or intellection. Here are some citations that mention these three strands:

I want to regard man here as an animal; as a primitive being to which one grants instinct but not ratiocination. As a creature in a primitive state ... Language did not emerge from some kind of ratiocination. (On Certainty, 475)

... it is our acting which lies at the bottom of the language-game. (On Certainty, 204)

The child, I should like to say, learns to react in such-and-such a way; and in so reacting it doesn't so far know anything. Knowing only begins at a later level. (On Certainty, 538)

From a child up I learnt to judge like this. This is judging. (*On Certainty*, 128)

'We are quite sure of it' does not mean just that every single person is certain of it, but that we belong to a community which is bound together by science and education. (*On Certainty*, 298)

These three strands – instinct, acting, training – are different. If they were to be analysed further, which Wittgenstein of course never had time to do, they might well turn out (as I believe) to be in tension with one another. But I think that Wittgenstein meant them to be part of a single complex idea that he wishes to contrast with the propositional account. It is thus possible to find an interpretation that welds them into a single (admittedly complex) conception of that which stands fast. On this interpretation, what Wittgenstein takes to be foundational is a picture of the world we all inherit as members of a human community. We have been trained from birth in ways of acting that are non-reflective to accept a picture of the world that is ruthlessly realistic: that there is an earth, persons on it, objects in our environment, and so forth. This picture is manifested in action. When we open a door our lives show that we are certain. Certainty is thus not a matter of theorizing about opening the door but an unreflective, instinctive way of acting with respect to it.

All animals, including humans, inherit their picture of the world and like other animals much of our inheritance derives from early training – 'something must be taught us as a foundation' (*On Certainty*, 449). It is no accident that the reference to children plays such a prominent role in the later sections of the text. 'For how can a child immediately doubt what it is taught? That could mean only that he was incapable of learning certain language-games' (*On Certainty*, 283). 'We teach a child "that is your hand", not "that is perhaps (or 'probably') your hand". That is how a child learns the innumerable language-games that are concerned with his hand ... Nor, on the other hand, does he learn that he *knows* this is a hand' (*On Certainty*, 374). 'Children do not learn that books exist, that armchairs exist, etc., etc., – they learn to fetch books, sit in armchairs, etc. etc.' (*On Certainty*, 476). 'So is this it: I must recognize certain authorities in order to make judgments at all?' (*On Certainty*, 493).

In these passages we see an explicit rejection of the notion that what stands fast for us is the product of reason and ratiocination. The foundations are neither known nor unknown, neither reasonable nor unreasonable. They are there, just like our lives. But in the preceding passages the examples he gives make it clear that his foundationalism is non-relative. The existence of the earth and the communities which nurture us are not like pieces of apparatus that can be discarded or repaired if they do not work correctly. The notion of 'working correctly' has no application to these cases. We cannot revise, alter, or question the existence of the earth. It and the communities that live on it stand absolutely fast. In both the propositional and non-propositional accounts the method of 'looking closely at what goes on' is followed rigorously. 'At some point,' he writes in *On Certainty*, 189, 'one has to pass from explanation to mere description.' 'Somewhere we must be finished with justification, and then there remains the proposition that this is how we calculate' (*On Certainty*, 212). It is this powerful descriptive account that tells us why in principle doubting must terminate, and, accordingly, why the Cartesian Dream Hypothesis and its resulting skepticism are both nonsensical.

Why doubting must come to an end

From the *Tractatus* on, Wittgenstein held that philosophical perplexity arises because we do not understand the 'logic of our language.' Of course, in that early work he meant by 'logic' the formal language that Whitehead and Russell had developed in *Principia Mathematica*. But in his later philosophy this conception was abandoned. Now not understanding the logic of our language means not understanding a kind of informal logic to be found in everyday discourse. These remarks embed at least four different, but increasingly sophisticated, conceptions. First, there is the explicit notion that such a lack of understanding will give rise to conceptual puzzles and perplexities. Second, this notion implies that if we *do* understand the logic of our language such perplexities will not arise. This second position has textual support in such remarks as:

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And this description gets its light, that is to say its purpose, from the philosophical problems. These are, of course, not empirical problems; they are solved, rather, by looking into the workings of our language, and that in such a way as to make us recognize those workings: *in despite of an urge to misunderstand them*. The problems are solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have always known. Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language. (*Philosophical Investigations*, 109)

Third, this quotation and others like it indicate that Wittgenstein is operating at two levels: describing how language actually works and describing, via language, how the world is. If we get clear about language we can then 'see the world rightly.' In other words, Wittgenstein is not merely speaking about the differences in the uses of such terms as 'believe,' 'know,' 'certain,' 'evidence,' 'justification,' and 'doubt' (though he is certainly doing that as well) but also about that which those words normally denote or pick out, that is, about belief, knowledge, certainty and doubt. These are features we find in everyday human life; that is, people believe, doubt, justify and provide evidence for or against various claims. It is these features of human activity that primarily interest Wittgenstein. Language is important because it is *the* medium for giving us an accurate picture of 'what goes on.' But it can do this only if we *command a clear view* of the use of our words, as he puts it.

This brings us to our fourth point, namely that in his later philosophy he is using 'logic' in a new, non-traditional way. He now means that each word in everyday language has a restricted range of application. But it follows from his two-level approach that this entails that the activities themselves are circumscribed by rule-governed boundaries. It is these boundaries that determine when an activity makes sense. There is a parallel at the linguistic level. If words are stretched beyond their normal limits they cease to make sense. Thus one can use words correctly and one can use them incorrectly. To say that they are used correctly means that they conform to the way that native speakers use them in the language-game. Philosophers tend to use these words incorrectly and when they do bewilderment is the consequence. Wittgenstein's dual approach arrives at profound insights both about language and

human activity. Consider doubting, for instance. This is an everyday practice that has its limits. These limits are defined by *de facto* rules that govern what actually takes place in the language-game. As Wittgenstein puts it, 'these rules ... only make sense if they come to an end somewhere.' There are many passages in *On Certainty* to the same effect:

If you tried to doubt everything you would not get as far as doubting anything. (*On Certainty*, 115)

A doubt without an end is not even a doubt. (*On Certainty*, 625)

Doubting has certain characteristic manifestations, but they are only characteristic of it in particular circumstances. If someone said that he doubted the existence of his hands, kept looking at them from all sides, tried to make sure it wasn't 'all done by mirrors', etc. we should not be sure whether we ought to call that doubting. We might describe his way of behaving as like the behavior of doubt, but his game would not be ours. (*On Certainty*, 255)

This last quotation is especially important. In saying that doubting has characteristic manifestations but *only in particular circumstances*, Wittgenstein is calling attention to the limited nature of such a practice. In giving the example of one who claims to doubt the existence of his hands, he is making an additional point, namely that such extreme behavior is not a case of doubt. Whatever 'game' that person is playing it is not the game of doubting. His point is that philosophers, like Descartes and Moore, are playing a similar game and thus misdescribing the nature of doubt. In fact, the game they are playing is senseless. He describes why this is so by means of a wonderful example:

It would be as if someone were looking for some object in a room; he opens a drawer and (doesn't see it there, then he closes it again, waits, and opens it once more to see if perhaps it isn't there now, and keeps on like that. He has not learned to look for things ... He has not learned *the game* we are trying to teach him. (*On Certainty*, 315)

The person who keeps looking in a drawer, opening and closing it again and again, searching for a missing object, say a cuff link, has

not learned how to look for things. He has not learned the game of searching. How could one be taught that game? Roughly speaking, the answer is by early training, by living in a family as part of a community in which people search for lost objects. One comes to learn as a result of such training that it is *senseless* to continue to open and close a drawer obsessively; nothing can be gained after the first few tries. It is like checking the date by looking at hundreds of copies of the same newspaper. Such an obsessive process lacks a procedure for closure. It is senseless because doubt must come to an end.

This example in effect distinguishes cases of doubting from cases of *philosophical doubt*. The word 'doubt' is used both in ordinary speech and in philosophy, but it is essentially a homonym describing two entirely different activities, one of them sensible, the other not. The skeptic who doubts obsessively is like the person who endlessly opens and closes a drawer, or like one who invokes an endless supply of elephants to explain what holds the world up. The skeptic does not understand that the rules of the language-game require that doubting must come to an end. Real doubting, in contrast, is not open-ended. After some tries to find the missing cuff link one is either successful or abandons the task. This is something that Moore failed to understand and it helps explain why his attempt to rebut skepticism failed.

The Dream Hypothesis

In its simplest form the Cartesian Dream Hypothesis is the claim that one cannot distinguish dream episodes from veridical ones and accordingly that for any moment, *T*, one can never know with certainty that one is not dreaming. From this it follows that there is no moment, *T*, when one can be certain that one is apprehending real events and not dream events. If this argument were correct no human being could ever attain certitude about the world. Descartes proposed this hypothesis as a challenge to determine whether there is anything he could know with absolute certainty. His answer was the *cogito*. It assured him that he could not be mistaken about his own existence. Moore had a different way of dealing with the Dream Scenario. For example, in his famous paper

'Certainty,' he states that while he is speaking he knows many things with certainty: that he is standing up, that he has clothes on, that there is a door in that wall, and so forth. But he admits that he cannot *prove* what he *knows*, i.e., that he cannot prove that he is standing up or that he has clothes on. He said that in order to prove he was standing up he would have to prove he was not dreaming and this he admitted he could not do. Yet he went on to assert that since he knew on that occasion that he was standing up, he knew then that he was not dreaming. He claimed that this argument was at least as good as the skeptic's: if you are dreaming then you cannot know you are standing up.

His rebuttal of the Dream Hypothesis thus turned on the distinction between knowing that proposition and proving that proposition. What is important here is to recognize that Moore assumed that it was a *sensible* demand on the part of the skeptic to prove that one was not dreaming, and therefore his response to this challenge was also sensible. These are just the assumptions that Wittgenstein challenged in his later writings, and especially in *On Certainty*. His overall strategy is to show that both the skeptical position and Moore's response are senseless. Since Moore and his skeptical opponents are both representative of philosophical practice from the time of the Greeks to the present, Wittgenstein's objections go to the very heart of the tradition. He is essentially showing that the standard treatments of dreaming, knowing, and doubting in that tradition are completely *skewed*. As he says: 'The argument "I may be dreaming" is senseless for this reason: if I am dreaming this remark is being dreamed as well – and indeed it is also being dreamed that these words have any meaning' (*On Certainty*, 383).

I said above that the Dream Hypothesis can be formulated in a brief sentence. Wittgenstein does exactly this in the passage just quoted. He says the hypothesis is expressed in the words 'I may be dreaming.' What he will show is that if these words are taken literally they are senseless. His conclusion is that one does not have to meet the Cartesian conjecture by proving there is an external world as Moore tried to do. All one has to do is to show that the hypothesis cannot be sensibly stated and therefore that there is nothing to rebut. His approach is found in *Zettel* and in *On Certainty*.

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What would it be like for someone to tell me with complete seriousness that he (really) did not know whether he was dreaming or awake? –

Is the following situation possible: Someone says 'I believe I am now dreaming'; he actually wakes up soon afterwards, remembers that utterance in his dream and says 'So I was right!' This narrative can surely only signify: Someone dreamt that he had said he was dreaming.

Imagine an unconscious man (anaesthetized, say) were to say 'I am conscious' – should we say 'He ought to know'?

And if someone talked in his sleep and said 'I am asleep' – should we say 'He's quite right'?

Is someone speaking untruth if he says to me 'I am not conscious'? (And truth if he says it while unconscious? And suppose a parrot says: 'I don't understand a word,' or a gramophone: 'I am only a machine!') (Zettel, 396)

I cannot seriously suppose that I am at this moment dreaming. Someone, who dreaming, says: 'I am dreaming' even if he speaks audibly in doing so, is no more right than if he said in his dream 'it is raining' while it was in fact raining. Even if his dream were actually connected with the noise of the rain. (On Certainty, 676)

These passages constitute a *reductio ad absurdum* of the Dream Hypothesis. They show that a person who is sound asleep cannot make sensible assertions about his mental state in such a circumstance. Wittgenstein's line of reasoning rests on an idea that is basic to his later philosophy: that what counts as a significant utterance depends on the context in which it is made. In a brilliant metaphor he asks us to consider the following scenario:

I might make with my hand the movement I should make if I were holding a hand-saw and sawing through a plank; but would one have any right to call this movement *sawing* out of all context? (It might be something quite different!) (On Certainty, 350)

In this last passage, Wittgenstein is, in effect, comparing a person who says 'I may be dreaming,' when normal background conditions are not satisfied, with a man who is making movements one would normally make if one were holding a saw and sawing through a

plank, but who at that particular moment is holding no saw and has before him no plank. Wittgenstein asks: 'Would one have any right to call this sawing out of all context?' The answer is obviously no. Whatever the man is doing it is not sawing. The background conditions for sawing – having a saw, a plank, and trying to cut the plank – have not been satisfied. And a man who utters certain words out of all context is making no statement. The background conditions for sensible assertion are, among other things, that a person be fully aware of what his words mean and intend them to make a statement. Accordingly, we can reconstruct Wittgenstein's objection to the Dream Hypothesis as follows:

Insofar as the S, the skeptic, wishes to make a certain kind of conceptual point – for example, that the attainment of certainty is never possible – the utterance S uses must be a genuine statement. Suppose S utters the words, 'I may be dreaming.' If S is dreaming when he utters these words, the requirement of statement-making is violated. For if S is asleep, S is not aware of what he is saying and accordingly is not intending to say anything. It follows that the Dream Hypothesis can only be expressed if S is fully aware of what he wishes to say and that is possible only if S is awake and knows he is. But if S is awake and knows he is, then his remark 'I may be dreaming,' does not make sense if taken literally. The same objection applies to any generalization of this remark, such as 'It is possible that at any given time no person can be sure that he or she is not dreaming.' Clearly one who says this cannot be asleep at the time he utters this sentence; hence there is at least one time when the speaker will know that he or she is awake. Hence, the Dream Hypothesis cannot be sensibly formulated and accordingly the skeptical challenge cannot get off the ground.

The relevance of this argument to Moore's rebuttal of skepticism, and his famous attempt to prove the existence of the external world, is immediate. If the skeptic's position cannot be coherently stated there is no stain that needs to be wiped off the conceptual table. So to offer a so-called proof by way of refutation, or to assert that one knows that one is standing up as a way of undermining the skeptical hypothesis, is simply to multiply confusion. Moore's response to the skeptic is therefore to be rejected because it rests on the mistaken assumption that the skeptical position is sensible.

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Skepticism

In the preceding section we concentrated on the Cartesian Dream Hypothesis and its presupposition that endless doubt is perfectly sensible, and then on Wittgenstein's rejoinder that obsessive doubt is senseless. There are of course many other powerful arguments favoring skepticism and to examine each of these in detail would clearly be impossible here. My own view is that practically all of these arguments turn on the principle that since one might be mistaken in any given case it follows that one might be mistaken in every case. If so, nothing can be certain since every case is subject to doubt. The conclusion reached is radical; it makes no difference what the case is: whether it is the existence of the external world or of other minds or of the veracity of memory – it is subject to doubt.

Wittgenstein's treatment of skepticism as a total doctrine is very subtle in *On Certainty*. One can discriminate at least five different objections he makes to this outlook.

The first is the application of his idea that to see the world rightly we must look closely 'at what goes on.' Following his own maxim, Wittgenstein contests the supposed facts that lead to skepticism. He denies that in fact human beings doubt obsessively. As he says, 'The reasonable man does not have certain doubts' (*On Certainty*, 220); 'a doubt is not necessary even when it is possible' (392), and 'One doubts on specific grounds' (458). Wittgenstein is saying in fact we do not invariably doubt this or that proposition. Wittgenstein is asking the philosopher not to theorize but to look and see what human beings actually do or do not doubt. That they do not doubt some things is significant; it suggests that even within the language-game some things are exempt from doubt.

A second objection is expressed in a variety of ways. It is the notion that what the skeptic is calling doubt is not really a case of doubt. What determines something to be such a case is its conformity to community practice. The skeptic does not engage in any such practice and hence his supposititious worries are not really doubts. The point Wittgenstein is making is here is a practical one: such 'worries' do not apply to and therefore do not affect human life. They do not raise real questions and therefore do not require real answers. One might call them 'spurious doubts,' counterfeit

bills that cannot be used to buy real goods. Recall some of the ways he expresses this thought: 'A doubt that doubted everything would not be a doubt' (450), and 'A doubt without an end is not even a doubt' (625). The idea that the skeptic's game is not 'our game' is a way of saying that such doubts make no difference to everyday human life. In Wittgensteinian language, 'they lie apart from the route travelled by human inquiry.' They are thus impotent with respect to any significant investigation carried out by persons playing the language-game, including the scientist.

Third, Wittgenstein explicitly rejects the skeptical leap from any case to every case. He states: 'Our not doubting them all is simply our manner of judging, and therefore of acting' (232). The argument Wittgenstein uses against the move from any case to every case is that it would be equivalent to saying that we have always played a certain game (chess, say) incorrectly. From the fact that one might play a single game incorrectly it does not follow that one might play every game incorrectly. The idea that we might always be mistaken, that we could always be adding incorrectly or playing a familiar game incorrectly, is a special form of nonsense in which the wheels of language spin idly and do no work. Once again, his comment 'our not doubting them all is simply our manner of judging,' takes us back to his basic idea that description should replace explanation. We could not be said to be engaging in the community practice called 'judging' if we were always mistaken. And judging exists. A description of that practice includes, as an essential part, that most judgments are correct. Skepticism thus does not provide an accurate account of human behavior.

Fourth, one of Wittgenstein's deepest criticisms of skepticism stems from the notion that all of us are reared in a community. In this ambience we learn to recognize certain persons, our parents and others, learn to speak a language, and eventually come to participate unselfconsciously in a wide range of human interactions, practices and institutions. Wittgenstein says that such an immersion in the community forms our world picture. This picture is inherited and deeply ingrained: so deeply as to be inexpugnable. There is no possible way that one can reject or revise it. Yet the skeptic wishes to question its existence. But even the form the skeptic's challenge takes – the

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry should be supported by a valid receipt or invoice. This not only helps in tracking expenses but also ensures compliance with tax regulations.

In the second section, the author provides a detailed breakdown of the monthly budget. It includes categories such as housing, utilities, food, and transportation. Each category is further divided into sub-items, allowing for a granular view of where the money is being spent.

The third section focuses on investment strategies. It suggests diversifying the portfolio to include both stocks and bonds, which can help in balancing risk and maximizing returns over the long term. The author also mentions the importance of regular contributions to retirement funds.

Finally, the document concludes with a summary of key financial goals and a commitment to reviewing the budget and investment performance regularly. It encourages a proactive approach to personal finance management.

linguistic format to which it must conform so that another can understand it – presupposes the existence of the community and its linguistic practices. The skeptic's doubts are thus self-defeating. They presuppose the very existence of that which he wishes to challenge as possibly non-existent, namely the inherited societal background which stands fast for all of us. They thus serve only to remind us of that which Wittgenstein has stressed: that there is an unrevisable ground that makes the language-game possible.

Finally, Wittgenstein wishes to emphasize that it is the existence of the earth that is the starting point of belief for every human being. There are thus two different components to our inherited world picture. There is the community, as described above, but there is also what epistemologists, like Moore, would call the material (non-organic) world. It represents the deepest level of certitude, having a kind of priority with respect to the community. For unless the material world existed there would be no human communities. Wittgenstein's foundationalism thus differs from those of the tradition in being striated: there are at least two things that stand absolutely fast for all of us: the material world and the community. Both exhibit a kind of objectivity – an intruding presence – which impinges upon human beings and to which in diverse ways they must conform. Neither aspect is open to obsessive doubt or revision. Wittgenstein's 'solution' to the famous problem concerning the existence of the external world is that no sensible question can be raised with respect to either of these aspects. Their existence is presupposed in any formulation of the problem. Therefore to question their existence, as the skeptic presumably wishes to do, is self-defeating. In even trying to formulate its challenge skepticism initiates the process of its own destruction.

Skepticism is thus not a possible position, resting on or embedding a set of consistent beliefs. Accordingly, no counter-argument to it need be mounted, as Moore thought. If there is a philosophical task it is to show why skepticism is plausible and yet why it is impossible. But the task is not wholly negative. It faces two positive challenges: first, to delineate how the language-game is played; how such terms as 'knowledge,' 'belief,' 'doubt,' 'judgment,' and so forth are actually used, an effort that will include an account of the rules that

govern such uses; and second, to describe the ground or grounds that make the language-game possible at all. In *On Certainty* Wittgenstein has done both of these things.

I said at the beginning of this book that a compelling case can be made that Wittgenstein is the greatest modern philosopher. There is no question but that his achievements are of the highest order. One of these is to have demonstrated the self-defeating nature of skepticism. He has shown that what the skeptic wishes to say cannot be said without violating the conversational implicatures that would make the challenge sensible. It follows that there is no position that has to be rebutted – as most of the Western tradition has supposed.

When to this achievement is added the development of three great ideas, a new method, the descriptions of the ways that conceptual models exercise their ineluctable grips upon thinkers, and numerous, accurate characterizations of our everyday linguistic and non-linguistic practices, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that Wittgenstein stands alone in the world of contemporary philosophy.