WITTGENSTEIN AND THE PROBLEM OF PHENOMENOLOGY

Mihai Ometita

PhD Thesis for Doctorate of Philosophy

University of East Anglia

School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies

September 2015

Abstract

Wittgenstein's mention of the term "phenomenology" in his writings from the middle period has long been regarded as puzzling by interpreters. It is striking to see him concerned with this philosophical approach, generally regarded as being foreign to the tradition of Russell and Frege, in which Wittgenstein's thought is taken to have primarily developed. On the basis of partially unpublished material from Wittgenstein's *Nachlass*, this thesis provides a reconstruction of the rationale and fate of his peculiar notion of phenomenology, which he developed after his return to Cambridge in 1929.

On the one hand, this notion is tributary to Wittgenstein's longstanding task of the philosophical clarification of language. On the other hand, Wittgenstein's concern with phenomenology develops against the background of his reconsideration of the resources for clarification provided by his early philosophy. His 1929 paper "Some Remarks on Logical Form" is elucidatory in this respect. The paper expresses a dissatisfaction with the Tractarian account of logical grammar and pleas for a "logical investigation of the phenomena themselves". This plea echoes Wittgenstein's conception of a "phenomenological language" in the manuscripts from the same period.

The thesis discusses the intricacies of this conception and the reasons for Wittgenstein's criticisms of it. By contrast to the prevalent view in the secondary literature, the discussion shows that he did not fully endorse for a definite period, and then suddenly abandoned, the idea of phenomenological language. Wittgenstein rather attempts to develop a viable means of clarification and philosophical expression through phenomenological language, while critically exploring the implications and consequences of this attempt at the very same time.

Table of Contents

Abbreviations of primary references

References to the *Nachlass*:

Ms   Manuscript

Nb   Notebook

Ts   Typescript

The *Nachlass* sources which do not have an entry date are dated according to the chronology provided by Alois Pichler's *Untersuchungen zu Wittgensteins Nachlass*.

Translations from the German original are mine unless otherwise stated.

References to published works:

NB   *Notebooks 1914-1916*

PG   *Philosophical Grammar*

PR   *Philosophical Remarks*

TLP   *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (The Ogden edition)

SRLF   "Some Remarks on Logical Form" (the pagination of the reprint in *Philosophical Occasions*)

WWK   *Wittgenstein und der Wiener Kreis*

WVC   *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*

INTRODUCTION

The theme of this thesis is Wittgenstein's concern with phenomenology in the writings of his middle period. The aim of the present work is twofold. On the one hand, the aim is to provide a detailed account of phenomenology as Wittgenstein's conceives of it. On the other hand, the aim is to explore his reflections on phenomenology as part of his reconsideration of his early philosophy. In this light, Wittgenstein's engagement with the problem of phenomenology turns out to be faithful to his longstanding conception of philosophy as an activity of clarifying language and thought. At the same time, his concern with phenomenology is motivated by a recognition of some difficulties with the clarificatory resources available in the Tractarian philosophy.

A qualification of the phrase "middle Wittgenstein" is first in order. According to the classical view, the period designated by this phrase is circumscribed mostly negatively. Wittgenstein's philosophy is read as consisting mainly in two phases. The first or the early phase would be marked by the *Tractatus* and pre-Tractarian works that led to its publication.[1] The second or the late phase would be most notably marked by the *Philosophical Investigations*. Against this background, the middle period appears as a merely transitional period. It would be a transition from a first philosophy meant as definitive, to a collection of investigations, which, though not meant by Wittgenstein as definitive, are considered by readers to be quite sedimented.

The present work aims at providing a more positive account of Wittgenstein's middle period. This can be achieved by way of a focus on his explicit reflections on phenomenology, lasting from early 1929 until the *Big Typescript*, put together between 1932 and 1933. The task of exploring the middle period of Wittgenstein in this way is not without difficulties. At first sight, the interval between 1929 and 1933 appears to be one of the most experimental in his corpus of writings. One constantly encounters therein not only revisionary

---

[1] These works comprise the "Notes on Logic" written in 1913 for Russell, the "Notes Dictated to G. E. Moore in Norway" in 1914, the wartime Notebooks written between 1914 and 1916 and the preliminary version of the *Tractatus*, known as the *Prototractatus*.

concerns with the *Tractatus*, but also constant revisions of these revisions. In this period, Wittgenstein does not only recognize limitations of his early philosophy. He also attempts at times to salvage bits and pieces of the Tractarian approach to the task of philosophical clarification. At other times, however, he tries out novel approaches to the same or similar problems previously addressed. The most striking novel approach considered thereby is phenomenology. While admitting the arguably unstable character of the reflections on phenomenology between 1929 and 1933, I explore them as constituting a period of Wittgenstein's development in its own right.

Among the highlights of the writings from the middle period that are crucial to Wittgenstein's concern with phenomenology, one should count the paper "Some Remarks on Logical Form". It was written in early 1929, after Wittgenstein returned to Cambridge. This piece was to be presented at a meeting of the Aristotelian Society. Although the paper was not presented there in the end, it was published, not without Wittgenstein's reservations, in the proceedings of the event. Other, better known and more explored sources that are significant to Wittgenstein's concern with phenomenology are *Philosophical Remarks* and *Philosophical Grammar*.

There is, however, a problem with relying primarily on the latter two sources. In *Philosophical Remarks* and *Philosophical Grammar*, the highly selective and non-chronological presentation of middle Wittgenstein's development makes the understanding of his conception of phenomenology particularly difficult. It is not only the understanding of the steps of this development that is made difficult. Rather, important aspects of Wittgenstein's reflections on phenomenology, like his idea of phenomenological language, are not readily available through these writings.

I will thus address the question of Wittgenstein's phenomenology by giving priority to his reflections as they appear and as they are reconsidered in the context of his *Nachlass*. The *Nachlass* provides raw remarks contained in pocket Notebooks that Wittgenstein used to carry with him and which served primarily as material he wanted to expand upon. More refined and extended remarks are found in Manuscripts, written on the basis of the Notebooks. When the remarks

were considered to reach a more consolidated form, they were selected and reorganized in Typescripts, which Wittgenstein typed himself or dictated to someone else. Among the notable Dictations are the ones typed by Moritz Schlick.

Wittgenstein's interactions with Schlick are significant sources for the exploration of the conception of phenomenology in the former's middle period. Some of the actual discussions they engaged in are recorded by Waismann and these recordings have been published in the volume *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*. Other discussions, with Waismann himself and with other members of the Vienna Circle found in this publication provide valuable points of comparison with the material in the *Nachlass*.

The present work is guided by three main questions. The first question is that of the rationale of Wittgenstein's reflections on phenomenology. Wittgenstein's very mention of phenomenology has been long regarded as puzzling and unexpected in his writings.[2] Various attempts have been made to compare Wittgenstein's understanding of phenomenology with phenomenological approaches in the continental tradition. But the rationale of his own concern with phenomenology in light of his development remained a problem in need of further elucidation.

The second question addressed here is that of the specificity of phenomenology in Wittgenstein's conception. A central aspect of this conception is the idea of phenomenological language. This is a medium that Wittgenstein envisages for philosophical expression and for the fulfillment of the task of philosophical clarification. My view in this respect is that understanding Wittgenstein's view on phenomenology requires a detailed scrutiny of the development of the idea of phenomenological language.

The third question that guides the present study is that of Wittgenstein's commitment to his conception of phenomenology. The unstable terrain of his middle period affects his view on phenomenology as well. One must thus ask whether Wittgenstein had a coherent view in this respect from 1929 to 1933. And

---

[2] One of the first interpreters to draw attention to Wittgenstein's concern with phenomenology was Herbert Spiegelberg in his paper "The Puzzle of Wittgenstein's Phänomenologie (1929-?)", initially published in 1968.

especially whether he fully endorses a notion of phenomenological language for a definite period of time.

By way of addressing these leading questions, I aim to shed light on some main concerns raised in the exegetic landscape.

An influential view in studies of Wittgenstein's phenomenology has been that this approach is found already in his early philosophy. A prominent proponent of this view is Jaakko Hintikka. A landmark study in this respect is the book he co-wrote in 1986, *Investigating Wittgenstein*. Hintikka defended his interpretation also in a series of articles collected in 1996 in the volume *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Half-Truths and One-and-a-Half-Truths*. A leitmotif of the interpretation is that phenomenology is at work not only in the writings around 1929 but already in the *Tractatus*. Hintikka understands phenomenology rather loosely, as an investigation of immediate experience. He takes the task of accounting for immediate experience to be a constant aim of Wittgenstein's philosophy. Accordingly, the Tractatus would employ a phenomenology in an implicit way, which would be made explicit and would come to be ultimately discarded only after Wittgenstein's return to Cambridge. The leitmotif of this reading was followed by B.-C. Park in his 1997 book *Phenomenological Aspects of Wittgenstein's Philosophy*.

My discussion of the rationale of Wittgenstein's conception of phenomenology challenges the view that this conception is at work already in the *Tractatus*. My claim is that he first envisages a phenomenology precisely while becoming dissatisfied with the Tractarian resources for philosophical clarification. The paper "Some Remarks on Logical Form" is pivotal in this regard. In the paper Wittgenstein recognizes some difficulties with the applicability of the Tractarian account of the syntax for connectives. As a remedy, he envisages a logical investigation of the phenomena themselves. This appeal informs the development in manuscripts of his idea of phenomenological language.

Another longstanding attempt in the literature has been to understand Wittgenstein's conception of phenomenology as akin to that of Husserl's. This line of inquiry started before Wittgenstein's *Nachlass* was widely available. Interpreters have thus tried to pinpoint various points of convergence between

the *Tractatus* or the *Philosophical Investigations* on the one hand and Husserl's philosophy on the other hand.[3] This line of inquiry was continued after the publication of *Philosophical Remarks* and *Philosophical Grammar* and after interpreters had more access to Wittgenstein's manuscripts. An influential comparison between Wittgenstein's idea of phenomenology and continental phenomenology starting from Husserl was carried by Nicholas Gier in his 1981 volume *Wittgenstein and Phenomenology: a Comparative Study of the Later Wittgenstein, Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty*. One leading thread of Gier's reading is that the development of Wittgenstein's phenomenology follows the development of continental phenomenology, from a Husserlian position towards existential approaches. A key point in this comparison with Husserl is that Wittgenstein endorsed unconditionally the notion of synthetic a priori. Another leading thread of Gier's reading, occurring in his 1990 paper "Wittgenstein's Phenomenology Revisited", is the attempt to trace in Wittgenstein's writings a method of reduction that has an affinity to the phenomenological reduction. A similar attempt was made by Don Ihde in his 1975 "Wittgenstein's Phenomenological Reduction".

My reconstruction of Wittgenstein's conception of phenomenology shows that this conception does not rely on a notion of synthetic a priori. As I will point out, Wittgenstein suggests in a conversation with Schlick that he shares his view that the notion of synthetic a priori is not viable.[4] At the same time, I attempt to make a contribution to the investigation of the question whether Wittgenstein's conception of phenomenology involves a method of reduction. I will address this question, however, internally to Wittgenstein's writings. In this respect, my reconstruction of his conception of phenomenological language provides a discussion of what he calls the "isolation" of sensory fields and of the multiple

---

[3] Among the earliest attempts of this kind is that of Van Peursen in his 1959 paper "Edmund Husserl and Ludwig Wittgenstein".

[4] This conversation is central also to Ray Monk's recent critique of Gier's claim that Wittgenstein endorsed unconditionally the notion of synthetic a priori. The critique is exposed in Monk's paper "The Temptations of Phenomenology: Wittgenstein, the Synthetic a Priori and the 'Analytic a Posteriori'" from 2014.

facets of propositions and phenomena regarded as multidimensional grammatical structures.

A further longstanding focus in studies of Wittgenstein's phenomenology has been his notion of phenomenological language. The discussion of this notion is central to a significant study of Wittgenstein's middle period: Wolfgang Kienzler's volume from 1997 entitled *Wittgensteins Wende zu seiner Spätphilosophie 1930-1932: eine historische und systematische Darstellung*. According to this reading, Wittgenstein fully endorses for a period in 1929 the notion of phenomenological language, and then comes to suddenly abandon it. All his concerns with phenomenology are taken to cease at the same time.

By way of a detailed examination of the conception of phenomenological language, I intend to show that Wittgenstein's position in this respect is more complex than it was previously taken to be. This conception involves some crucial notions that have not received much attention so far. These are primarily the notions of verification and hypothesis. I will present Wittgenstein's idea of phenomenological language as marked by various attempts to develop these notions and by various difficulties he faces at the very same time. In the *Nachlass*, Wittgenstein's positive remarks on phenomenological language are mingled with related critical remarks that reveal a series of problems with this conception. This fact already challenges the view that he is fully endorsing the conception for a definite period of time. The view that Wittgenstein suddenly abandons phenomenological language is equally questioned by my discussion of the relevant remarks as they occur in their original context of the *Nachlass*.

The present thesis will proceed as follows. The first chapter addresses the question of the rationale of Wittgenstein's explicit interest in phenomenology from 1929 onwards. The chapter discusses this rationale in light of the approach to the so-called colour-exclusion issue provided in his 1929 paper "Some Remarks on Logical Form". The issue is the impossibility of a fleck being of two colours simultaneously all over. The task is to account for the workings of simultaneous colour ascriptions. The paper in fact re-addresses this problem in light of the account of it already provided in the *Tractatus*. By comparing the Tractarian and the 1929 accounts of colour-exclusion, I will show that the paper ultimately

formulates a dissatisfaction with early Wittgenstein's account of logical grammar. The incipient solution to the colour-exclusion problem in the 1929 paper involves a plea for a logical investigation of phenomena. This plea informs the idea of phenomenological language in manuscripts from the same period.

The second chapter starts by discussing the view expressed in "Some Remarks on Logical Form" that ordinary language disguises logical structure. I then present a more robust version of this view on the basis of Wittgenstein's manuscript remarks pertaining to the conception of phenomenological language. According to this conception, ordinary statements disguise their logical structure due to what Wittgenstein regards as their hypothetical character. Ordinary statements regarded as hypotheses are multifaceted grammatical structures that account for ordinary objects of experience, regarded in their turn as multifaceted phenomena. Wittgenstein regards, by contrast, phenomenological statements as single facetted grammatical structures that are directly verifiable by correlation to facets of phenomena isolated from one another. The idea of phenomenological language thus comes with a conception of verification as a universal method of clarification.

The third chapter reconstructs Wittgenstein's critique of the idea of phenomenological language. Some of the remarks that lead to this ultimate critique are mingled with those that support his attempts at positively developing the idea of phenomenological language. The chapter first discusses Wittgenstein's consideration of a resort to ordinary language in the search for resources of clarification alternative to phenomenological language. This resort questions the privilege granted to phenomenological language as the adequate means of philosophical expression and clarification. I will then show that a major line of critique of phenomenological language is traced by Wittgenstein's realization of a series of difficulties to carry out the method of verification in some particular cases. This realization points to a tension between the rigidity of the method of verification and the diversity of the functions and roles that ordinary propositions can have. I will also discuss a further problem with the idea of phenomenological language as pointed out by Wittgenstein's reconsideration of its task. In order to provide a clarification of the workings of ordinary language, phenomenological

language is supposed to provide an immediate description of immediate experience. The task of providing such a description turns out to be ultimately unfulfillable.

The fourth chapter discusses an application of the methodological reflections on phenomenological language. The application is to the clarification of the workings of propositions about pain. The idea of phenomenological language informs a uniform account of the workings of pain expressions. According to this account, the workings of all discourse about pain is reducible to the workings of pain expressions used in the first person. Pain expressions in the first person would be verifiable by comparison to immediate experience, or to what Wittgenstein calls in this context "mental states" of pain. The chapter then formulates a critique of this uniform account of the workings of pain expressions. The critique is based on Wittgenstein's further investigations of the asymmetry between the workings of pain expressions in the first person as opposed to the second/third person. This asymmetry challenges the methodological requirement that a verification is possible and needed when attempting to understand and clarify every proposition whatsoever. I will finally draw some connections between the critique of the uniform account of pain expressions and the methodological critique of phenomenological language exposed in the third chapter.

CHAPTER 1

THE RATIONALE OF WITTGENSTEIN'S CONCERN WITH PHENOMENOLOGY

It has been repeatedly suggested that a key to Wittgenstein's puzzling remarks on phenomenology in manuscripts from 1929 and early 1930s may be found in his early 1929 paper "Some Remarks on Logical Form"[5], despite his dissatisfaction with it[6]. The minimal agreement that Wittgenstein's remarks on phenomenology are to be understood against the background of "Some Remarks on Logical Form" relies on a plea the paper makes for "the logical investigation of the phenomena themselves".

This plea and such readings of it raise the question: Why would a resort to a logical investigation of phenomena be required in the first place and what would its difficulties be, by contrast to a logic taken to be immune to vicissitudes of experience?

An answer can be provided by reassessing the significance of the 1929 paper to remarks on phenomenology, considering that the rationale of these remarks reaches further back, to a Tractarian view. It is an ultimately problematic view, it will be maintained here, that the content neutral account for the syntax of connectives provided in the *Tractatus* is universal and applicable to any domain of discourse. Some problems that this view runs into are recognized precisely by

---

[5] E.g. in the 1960s, Spiegelberg was drawing attention to the paper, noticing that it contains "some very telling anticipations" of Wittgenstein's development, and was asking: "What else is missing here but the actual name 'phenomenology'?" (Spiegelberg 1981 [1968]: pp. 207, 208 respectively); in the 1970s, Rhees was conjecturing: "Some remarks about 'phenomenological language' may refer to the earlier view in that paper." (Rhees 1975: p. 349); in the 1980s, Gier was regarding the paper as the point where Wittgenstein "indirectly introduces the phenomenological programme of his middle period." (Gier 1981: p. 106.)

[6] See his letter to Russell from July 1929 (Wittgenstein 1974: p. 99) and reprints of the paper in Copy & Beard (1966) and Wittgenstein (1993). The reassessment of the paper herein will suggest, however, that one is to take with a grain of salt Anscombe's surmise that "little value can be set upon it as information about Wittgenstein's ideas" (Copi & Beard 1966: p. 31, footnote).

"Some Remarks on Logical Form", which focuses on the so called colour-exclusion case, to which a Tractarian approach turns out to be inconclusive, even for Wittgenstein himself by 1929.

While not subscribing to a reading that may end up being itself exclusive, such as one that "Wittgenstein's first philosophy collapsed over its inability to solve one problem – color exclusion"[7], it will be observed that his approaches to this problem present far-reaching methodological aspects of his development. The 1929 paper pleas for an approach that will scrutinize domains of discourse – later arguably qualified as propositional systems [Satzsysteme] – and will survey logico-grammatical rules particular to each such domain, rules that ought not be taken, not without further investigation, to hold across domains. The survey of such rules, eventually carried out by a phenomenology, which Wittgenstein will characterize as the logic of content [der Logik des Inhalts], would be domain-specific and content-sensitive, at odds with a Tractarian account of logical grammar.[8]

The following discussion thus ultimately questions the view, defended by Hintikka, that a continuity between Wittgenstein's philosophy amounts to an implicit employment of phenomenology already in the *Tractatus*.[9] Wittgenstein's concern with phenomenology is rather motivated by his dissatisfaction in the middle period with the Tractarian resources for philosophical clarification. The focus on the colour-exclusion case is particularly revealing in this respect.

This first chapter proceeds as follows. *Section 1.1* exposes a doubt about the Tractarian account of logical grammar. The doubt, gathered from Ramsey's review of the *Tractatus*, is whether any proposition taken to express logical impossibility – like the impossibility of one visual fleck of two colours simultaneously all over – involves, or is analyzable into, contradiction. *Section 1.2* makes a case that Ramsey's doubt is taken on board by "Some Remarks on Logical

---

[7] Hacker (1972: p. 86).

[8] According to the *Tractatus*, such an account would have essential [wesentlich] or logical general validity [logische Allgemeingültigkeit] as opposed to the accidental general validity [zufällige Allgemeingültigkeit], e.g. of the proposition "all men are mortal" (cf. TLP: 6.1232).

[9] Cf. Hintikka & Hintikka (1986), Hintikka (1996).

Form", while it turns out that a proposition asserting that something is of two colours simultaneously all over expresses "exclusion", yet cannot be analyzed into contradiction. *Section 1.3* reconstructs a mirror-image of early Wittgenstein's approach to the colour-exclusion case, found in Schlick's approach to a proposition asserting that something *cannot* be of two colours simultaneously all over, as expressing necessity and as amounting to tautology. *Section 1.4* formulates two replies to Schlick's approach: a mid-Wittgensteinian reply, informed by the 1929 paper, and middle Wittgenstein's own reply, recorded by Waismann. *Section 1.5* addresses the question whether a logical investigation of the phenomena themselves and the phenomenology it turns into – whether both or one of these, amount to a logic or to an application of logic. This distinction is generally overlooked in literature on Wittgenstein's phenomenology and on colour-exclusion in particular.[10]

1.1 Colour-exclusion and Ramsey's review of the *Tractatus*

A doubt about the *Tractatus*'s account of logical grammar can be gathered from the following passage in Ramsey's review of the book:

> [T]he only necessity is that of tautology, the only impossibility that of contradiction. There is great difficulty in holding this; for Mr. Wittgenstein admits that a point in the visual field *cannot* be both red and blue; and, indeed, otherwise, since he thinks induction has no logical basis, we should have no reason for thinking that we may not come upon a visual point which is both red and blue. Hence he says that 'This is both red and blue' is a contradiction. This implies that the apparently simple concepts red, blue (supposing us to mean by those words absolutely specific shades) are really complex and formally incompatible. He tries to show how this may be, by analysing them in terms of vibrations. But even supposing that the physicist thus provides an analysis of what we mean by

---

[10] The distinction is not overlooked by Silva (2012), who provides the most extensive treatment of colour-exclusion in Wittgenstein. This treatment is, however, questioned here in some respects.

'red' Mr. Wittgenstein is only reducing the difficulty to that of the *necessary* properties of space, time, and matter, or the ether. He explicitly makes it depend on the *impossibility* of a particle being in two places at the same time. These necessary properties of space and time are hardly capable of a further reduction of this kind.[11]

I will first discuss the Tractarian background of Ramsey's reading according to which, for early Wittgenstein, the only necessity is that of tautology and the only impossibility is that of contradiction (subsection 1.1.1). I will then explore an attempt at relying on induction while accounting for the issue that a visual fleck cannot be both red and blue. As Ramsey observes, the *Tractatus* rejects such an attempt (1.1.2). Finally, I will question Ramsey's charge that the *Tractatus* ends up relying on physical laws while attempting to account for the impossibility of a visual fleck being of two colours simultaneously (subsection 1.1.3).

1.1.1 A Tractarian background

The first sentence of the quote draws primarily upon two Tractarian remarks. One is that: "[Just] as there is only a *logical* necessity, so there is only a *logical* impossibility."[12] What is involved here is uniqueness: the only necessity is logical, the only impossibility is logical. The other remark is: "The truth of tautology is certain, of propositions possible, of contradiction impossible. | (Certain, possible, impossible: here we have an indication of that gradation which we need in the theory of probability.)"[13] What is involved here is an incipient concern with modality: certainty, possibility, and impossibility mark the gradations of modality; certainty is exhibited by tautology, possibility by propositions, impossibility by contradiction.

---

[11] Ramsey (1923: p. 473).

[12] TLP: 6.375. The German "wie" is not a conditional equivalent to the English "since"; the phrase "there is only a *logical* necessity" is not a condition of the phrase "there is only a *logical* impossibility".

[13] TLP: 4.464; cf. Nb 102: p. 29r [dated 12 November 1914] / N: p. 29.

Two observations are in order. On one side, tautology and contradiction are characterized in terms of truth. On the other, they are not propositions proper. They are limit cases [*Grenzfälle*] of signs combination, namely, their dissolution, or extreme cases [*extreme Fälle*] of truth-conditions[14], the only cases where truth-operations yield throughout respectively truth and falsity. Some combinations of propositions amount to tautology or contradiction in virtue of their logical forms exhibited by truth-operations.

What such propositions say, their content, is not the primary focus of analysis. If form is all-pervasive of content, then form can be exhibited through analysis without troubling ourselves, as the *Tractatus* puts it, with a sense of such propositions or a meaning of their words.[15] This is a corollary of the truth of tautology being certain and that of contradiction being impossible – a corollary of tautology having no truth-conditions, being unconditionally true, and of contradiction being on no condition true; tautology and contradiction say nothing, are senseless, nonetheless not nonsensical: they belong to the symbolism of logic like "0" belongs to the symbolism of arithmetic[16].

This is a background of Ramsey's drawing on the remark involving uniqueness and on the one concerning modality to the effect that the only necessity would be that of tautology and the only impossibility that of contradiction.

1.1.2 Induction and forecast

Ramsey observes that early Wittgenstein admits that a visual fleck cannot be red and blue – red and blue simultaneously all over – and that "cannot" expresses impossibility.

What is in question here? It is not that a fleck *is* not red and blue or that it *has not been* so. Rather it *cannot* be so. This is not established by way of induction, which, in line with Ramsey's reminder, does not have a logical basis in

---

[14] TLP: 4.446d, 4.46a respectively.

[15] Cf. TLP: 6.126b; 3.33.

[16] TLP: 4.461b, 4.461a, 4.461c, 4.4611.

the *Tractatus*[17]. Induction could not establish necessity, though it may be employed as an aspiration to this, in light of tendencies or constancies of pertinent factual cases.

Induction would rely here upon much less, upon a lack of pertinent factual cases. Forecasting that a fleck cannot be red and blue in virtue of induction would rely on factual cases of a fleck being so, not being or having been recorded. That would not dismiss the possibility that such factual cases could be or could have been recorded. "A fleck cannot be red and blue" would be tantamount to "A fleck is not (recorded to be) red and blue" or to "A fleck has not been (recorded to be) red and blue". Such propositions would be of the form of "Swans are not (recorded to be) black" or "Swans have not been (recorded to be) black". A proposition denying the possibility of a fleck being red and blue would be a negation of a proposition affirming the possibility of a fleck being so, just as a proposition denying the possibility of swans being black would be a negation of a proposition affirming the possibility of swans being black. Both affirmative propositions together with their negations would be propositions proper, sensical propositions, expressing neither necessity nor impossibility, but possibility throughout. A fleck being red and blue would be a possibility – logically – no less tenable than a fleck not being so, just as swans being black is a possibility – logically – no less tenable than swans not being black. In the end it would be as if philosophers, contrarily to their forecast, could in fact witness a fleck being red and blue simultaneously all over, just as explorers, contrarily to their forecast, have in fact witnessed swans being black more or less all over.

Ramsey yet appeals to Wittgenstein's insistence that a visual fleck red and blue simultaneously all over is an impossibility. This insistence, coupled with the view that the only impossibility is that of contradiction, involves that "This is red and blue simultaneously all over" amounts to contradiction. The *Tractatus* pleas for this: "The assertion that a point in the visual field has two different colours at the same time, is a contradiction."[18] Nevertheless, that the proposition amounts to contradiction is far from obvious. "This is red and blue" is not of the form of *p &*

---

[17] Cf. TLP: 6.3631; 6.31.

[18] TLP: 6.3751c.

not-p, like "This is red and (this is) not red". "This is blue" is not substitutable with "This is not red": if a visual fleck is blue, then it is not red, but if it is not red it need not be blue.[19] Then, if "This is red and blue" boiled down to contradiction, it would be a contradiction to be unveiled by analysis. That would involve that colour concepts like "red" and "blue", while apparently simple, were complex, amenable to a further analysis which would reveal that and where contradiction actually occurs.

1.1.3 Analysis: logical and physical

On the task of revealing a contradiction in this respect, Ramsey charges Wittgenstein to not have gone far enough, or to have taken too easy a way out. Instead of carrying out a logical analysis of colour-exclusion or pointing a way therein, the *Tractatus* would analyze colour concepts in terms of vibrations, thus seeking shelter in physics. The difficulty with the impossibility of one fleck of two colours simultaneously, would be made, in Ramsey's words, to "depend" on the impossibility of one particle in two places at one time. Conversely, the necessity that one fleck be of no more than one colour at a given time would boil down to necessary properties like those of space and time. Ramsey doubts that such a resort leads anywhere as far as a logical account of colour-exclusion is concerned.

Established thereby would be only physical impossibility or physical necessity, if anything at all. In the best scenario, a logical analysis of colour-exclusion would have to be carried out *via* a logical analysis of propositions expressing physical laws, while the unavoidability or even viability of such a detour would be far from obvious. If started in this way, logical analysis would have to go on, insofar as saying that a particle cannot be in two places at one time is not closer, than saying that one fleck cannot be of two colours simultaneously, to the point where a contradiction is exhibited. A proposition saying that a

---

[19] Nor is "This is red and blue" mutually substitutable with "This is red and [this is] not red". For, if "This is not red" is taken to say something substantial, that this is of another colour than red, then the proposition has a greater logical multiplicity than "This is blue", as the former allows and the latter does not, for something being e.g. green; if "This is not red" is taken to not say anything substantial, then it cannot substitute "This is blue", which does say that something is blue.

particle is in the places P_1 and P_2 at one time is not of the form of *p & not-p*, like a proposition saying that a particle is in the place P_1 and not in the place P_1.

In the worst scenario, the detour through physics could lead to a dead-end, especially if Ramsey is right that necessary properties of space and time are not amenable to a further analysis of the kind needed in the first place.

The following may not dispel Ramsey's dissatisfaction, but it may be observed that the Tractarian remark in question does not exactly make the difficulty "depend" on physical matters. The remark insists that "two colours, e.g. to be at one place in the visual field, is impossible, logically impossible" and then suggests: "Let us consider how this contradiction presents itself in physics. Somewhat as follows: That a particle cannot at the same time have two velocities, i.e. that at the same time it cannot be in two places, i.e. that particles in two places at the same time cannot be identical."[20] The insight from physics is thus not meant to substantiate either a view that one fleck of two colours is an impossibility, or a view that saying so is a contradiction or analyzable into one. It is rather a reminder of "how this contradiction presents itself [sich… darstellt] in physics", providing an alternative presentation or description of the difficulty. However, it is true that a manuscript version of this remark reads: "That a particle cannot be at the same time in two places looks more like a *logical* impossibility."[21] This may justify Ramsey's understanding of early Wittgenstein's approach to colour-exclusion as involving, in one way or another, a resort to physics. Then at least a pre-Tractarian surmise that a particle in two places at one time amounts to logical impossibility, would simply compete with Ramsey's surmise that necessary properties of space and time are not amenable to a logical analysis that could solve the colour-exclusion case. Neither a pre-Tractarian Wittgenstein nor Ramsey yet give further clues of how their surmises would turn out to be conclusive.

There remains the question whether even the only *logical* impossibility is that of contradiction, and in particular whether the logical impossibility of one

---

[20] TLP: 6.3751b.

[21] Nb 103: pp. 46r-47r [dated 16 August 1916] / N: p. 81 tr. mod.

fleck of two colours simultaneously all over is analyzable into contradiction.[22] If the answer turned out to be negative, then the colour-exclusion case would cast doubt about a reducibility or analyzability of any proposition expressing logical impossibility to or into a contradiction.

1.2 Contradiction and exclusion in "Some Remarks on Logical Form"

Given the exchanges between Wittgenstein and Ramsey after the publication of the *Tractatus* and their conversations after the former's return to Cambridge, it may be expected that Wittgenstein gave some thought to Ramsey's doubt. It may be particularly expected that Wittgenstein attempted to carry out a logical analysis of colour ascriptions.[23]

This is precisely what "Some Remarks on Logical Form" evinces. Accordingly, an ascription of colour, say, red at a time T in a place P can be symbolized as "$R\ P\ T$". Already before analyzing the proposition further, it would be "clear to most of us here, and to all of us in ordinary life" that the proposition stands in "some sort of contradiction" with "$B\ P\ T$", an ascription of another colour, say, blue at the same time T in the same place B. Wittgenstein adds:

> Now, if statements of degree were analyzable – as I used to think – we could explain this contradiction by saying that the colour R contains all degrees of R and none of B and that the colour B contains all degrees of B and none of R.[24]

---

[22] This account of necessity and impossibility concerns what and how truth-operations with propositions exhibit. An eventual necessity of conditions for propositions to make sense does not immediately fall within this scope, something Ramsey is aware of: "But not all apparently necessary truths can be supposed, or are by Mr. Wittgenstein supposed, to be tautologies. There are also the internal properties of which it is unthinkable that their objects do not possess them." (Ramsey 1923: pp. 473-474.)

[23] This attempt to find an expected hidden contradiction is paralleled by – and perhaps triggered – middle Wittgenstein's further concerns with the question of encountering an unexpected hidden contradiction (cf. WWK: pp. 120, 127, 174, 208.)

[24] SRLF: p. 33.

I will first explain the claim in Wittgenstein's paper that ascriptions of colour degree cannot be further analyzed (subsection 1.2.1). Then I will explore the problem posed for the Tractarian approach by the issue that the logical product does not handle truth-values of simultaneous colour ascriptions in the way foreseeable through truth-tables (subsection 1.2.2). I will end this section by pointing out that the problem is aggravated by the fact that other, though not all, truth-operations handle truth-values of simultaneous colour ascriptions in similarly unforeseeable ways (subsection 1.2.3).

1.2.1 Ascriptions of colour degree are un-analyzabile

What is questioned in the last quote is whether an expected contradiction between ascriptions of colour appears as a contradiction between ascriptions of colour degrees across a colour spectrum. Ascribing red would boil down to ascribing some colour degree or some interval of colour degrees as opposed to ascribing blue, namely, another degree or interval. Colour-exclusion would be a matter of contradiction between simultaneous ascriptions of colour degrees to one and the same visual fleck.

However, this approach would not lead far enough: two simultaneous ascriptions of colour degrees, just as two simultaneous ascriptions of colour, are not of the form of *p & not-p*. Just as "This is red and blue" is not of the form of "This is red and (this is) not red", "This is of *n* and *n+1* colour degrees" is not of the form of "This is of *n* colour degrees and (this is) not of *n* colour degrees". Just as "This is blue" is not substitutable with "This is not red", "This is of *n+1* colour degrees" is not substitutable with "This is not of *n* colour degrees". If something is of *n+1* colour degrees, then it may be taken to be of *n* colour degrees too, but if something is of *n* colour degrees, then it is not of *n+1* colour degrees.

What if contradiction is established by analyzing simultaneous ascriptions of colour into simultaneous ascriptions of colour degrees, without analysis ending there? This is what Wittgenstein admits to have thought "not long" before the 1929 paper: ascriptions of degree of quality, like degree of colour, may be taken to be analyzable into a logical product of single ascriptions of quantity and a

24

completing statement: "As I could describe the contents of my pocket by saying 'It contains a penny, a shilling, two keys, and nothing else.'"[25] However, this route would not lead far enough either: an ascription of a unit of colour brightness b to an entity E, symbolized as $E(b)$, would involve that an ascription of a double unit of brightness to the same entity be symbolized as $E(2b)$, and then $E(2b)$ should be analyzable into the logical product $E(b)$ & $E(b)$. But this product yields $E(b)$ instead. Another route would be to distinguish between units of brightness and thus take $E(2b)$ as the logical product $E(b')$ & $E(b'')$. But this would symbolize units of brightness as different such that an entity having some unit would raise the question which of the two units it actually has; which unit it has would be lost on the way of analysis. If an attempt to analyze ascriptions of degree into a logical product leads to a dead-end, then Wittgenstein must deviate from a Tractarian approach to colour-exclusion:

> I maintain that the statement which attributes a degree to a quality cannot further be analyzed […] The mutual exclusion of unanalyzable statements of degree contradicts an opinion which was published by me several years ago and which necessitated that atomic propositions could not exclude one another. I here deliberately say 'exclude' and not 'contradict', for there is a difference between these two notions and atomic propositions, although they cannot contradict, may exclude one another.[26]

1.2.2 The logical product of colour ascriptions is logically un-foreseeable

If a further analysis of ascriptions of degree leads to a dead-end, then such ascriptions are unanalyzable, amounting to atomic propositions. How does this "contradict" an opinion published in the *Tractatus*? While seeing contradiction as capturing impossibility expressed by combinations of propositions, early Wittgenstein regarded impossibility as an extreme or limit case of truth-functional combination, to the effect that the only impossibility would boil down to

---

[25] SRLF: p. 32.

[26] SRLF: p. 33.

contradiction, that impossibility would be traceable only when contradiction were revealed thereby.

Tractarian logic would not foresee that some truth-operations with propositions – be they atomic or not – are to yield falsity throughout without these operations reaching a contradiction. This is precisely what one sees through an analysis of colour-exclusion, starting from simultaneous ascriptions of either colour or colour degree. On one side, that a mutual exclusion, a "collision"[27] is involved between simultaneous ascriptions of colour and that it persists between simultaneous ascriptions of colour degree cannot be overlooked; different ascriptions either of colour or colour degree cannot be simultaneously true. On the other side, simultaneous ascriptions neither of colour nor of colour degree can be analyzed into contradiction.[28] This is seen through a truth-table of logical product of colour ascriptions. Their logical product reached a contradiction, if it yielded falsity throughout, in the four possible truth-combinations of two ascriptions: $T \cdot T$, $T \cdot F$, $F \cdot T$, $F \cdot F$. But this logical product yields T, F, F, F, thus not F throughout, as in contradiction. Which requires that:

> In this case the top line 'T T T' must disappear, as it represents an impossible combination. […T]here *is* no logical product of R P T and B P T in the first sense, and herein lies the exclusion as opposed to a contradiction. The contradiction, if it existed, would have to be written [as allowing $T \cdot T = F$] but this is nonsense, as the top line, 'T T F', gives the

---

[27] Cf. SRLF: p. 34. As this exclusion or collision would be accounted for by a non-truth-functional logic, one may envisage here an "extra-logical system of implications and exclusions" (Silva 2012: p. 13), if "extra-" meant "non-truth-functional". Then exclusion "would not be formal, if we think of formality collapsing with truth-functionality" (Ibid.: p. 54) and if a logic – which Wittgenstein will qualify as "of content" as opposed to "of form" – would be what accounts for exclusion. This leaves it yet questionable in what sense "*logic* in this period begins to *depend* on a great number of *non-logical facts*" (Ibid.: p. 13, italics added), in what sense "we are dealing with a kind of exclusion *more empirical – or less logical –* than the contradiction" (Ibid.: p. 84, italics added).

[28] Even Von Wright's analysis, through *integral* Tractarian truth-tables, of ascriptions of colour within an alternative colour system of an imagined tribe – does not work when it comes to ascriptions of colour degrees, as he himself admits (Von Wright 1996: p. 14).

proposition a greater logical multiplicity than that of the actual possibilities.[29]

There is no logical product of simultaneous colour ascriptions in the first sense, as yielding truth, given the very impossibility of building a true proposition by ascribing different colours or colour degrees to one and the same fleck simultaneously all over. Stipulating that $T \cdot T$ yields F insofar as simultaneous colour ascriptions are concerned may indeed forge the truth-table into one of contradiction. This would be done, however, at the expense of ending up with a nonsensical notation. The amendment that here $T \cdot T$ yields F "gives the proposition a greater logical multiplicity than that of the actual possibilities", it allows possible ways for logical product to handle truth-values that mismatch possible ways thereof foreseeable through truth-tables. In the manuscripts Wittgenstein is puzzled by this:

> It seems yet obvious that it has sense to say 'a is either green or red' [...] But if 'p⩒q' is not nonsensical, then 'p·q' can also be not nonsensical.
>
> The proposition p·q is not nonsense because indeed it does not abolish all truth-possibilities, although it turns down all of them. One can say that here the 'and' has a different meaning, for, in general it means [$T \cdot T = T$, $T \cdot F = F$, $F \cdot T = F$, $F \cdot F = F$], whereas here: [$T \cdot F = F$, $F \cdot T = F$, $F \cdot F = F$].[30]

This differs from the approach in Wittgenstein's paper insofar as the amendment of the way in which a truth-operation handles truth-values of simultaneous colour ascriptions is said there to involve a nonsensical notation. By contrast, it now appears to be significant that the logical product of simultaneous colour ascriptions does not abolish [wegfallen] all their truth-possibilities, indeed, it handles in a foreseeable way their truth-values when at least one of them is F. Yet

---

[29] SRLF: pp. 34-35.

[30] Ms 106: pp. 89-91 [Pichler (1994): ≈ March-April 1929] / PR: § 79. I use "⩒" instead of Wittgenstein's "v" in order to distinguish the concern here with exclusive disjunction from the concern so far with inclusive disjunction.

logical product is to turn down [abgewiesen] all of these truth-values, that is, any combination of them is to yield falsity. In this light, the difference between a truth-table of logical product in the case of two simultaneous colour ascriptions ($T \cdot F = F$, $F \cdot T = F$, $F \cdot F = F$) and one of logical product in general ($T \cdot T = T$, $T \cdot F = F$, $F \cdot T = F$, $F \cdot F = F$), is not a mark of the nonsensicality of the analyzed simultaneous colour ascriptions, but a mark of the alternative meaning of the connective "and" in its unanalyzed employment: "This is red *and* this is blue". But even if "and" had a different meaning when connecting simultaneous colour ascriptions, this difference of meaning would be exhibited precisely in or as a difference between the foreseeable way of handling truth-values ($T \cdot T = T$, $T \cdot F = F$, $F \cdot T = F$, $F \cdot F = F$) and the hitherto unforeseeable way ($T \cdot F = F$, $F \cdot T = F$, $F \cdot F = F$).

In the end, irrespective of whether the amended truth-table of logical product of simultaneous colour ascriptions involved nonsense, or whether "and" had a different meaning in such ascriptions, there remains a tension between two features of contradiction the *Tractatus* regards as mutually substitutable: contradiction traced by falsity throughout in a truth-table and contradiction filling the whole spectrum of pertinent possibilities.[31] In the following case, the latter feature is satisfied, the former not. For a 2-tone, e.g. black and white – not grayscale – photograph, any fleck is either black or white and "This is white" may be taken to be substitutable with "This is not black". Then "This is black and white" may be taken to be logically of the form of *p and not-p*, like "This is black and (this is) not black" and, in this sense, a contradiction. Yet still not a contradiction in the sense in which one is exhibited through a truth table for the logical product of "This is black" and "This is white", which, when both propositions are true, yields truth, rather than falsity as in a truth-table for contradiction.

---

[31] Cf. TLP: 4.463c.

1.2.3 Further logical operations with colour ascriptions are logically un-foreseeable

Also involved would be that what holds for logical product, holds for further truth-operations.

It turns out that neither inclusive disjunction handles truth-values of simultaneous colour ascriptions as it is foreseeable through truth-tables. While in general, inclusive disjunction $T \lor T$, $T \lor F$, $F \lor T$, $F \lor F$ yields T, T, T, F, the inclusive disjunction of two simultaneous colour ascriptions is to yield F, T, T, F. This would require that the first operation $T \lor T = T$ must disappear, or be substituted by $T \lor T = F$, considering that there is no inclusive disjunction of simultaneous colour ascriptions in the first sense, namely, when both ascriptions are true. Again, it cannot be true that a fleck is red *or*, in an inclusive sense, blue; just as it cannot be generally true that it is of n colour degress *or*, in an inclusive sense, of $n+1$ colour degrees.[32]

Central to a Tractarian account of logical grammar is that the handling of truth-values by truth-operations is foreseeable throughout, that once an operation is introduced, its handling of truth-values in any possible case is thereby introduced. Conversely, one ought not witness a case where an operation handles truth-values in logically unforeseeable ways.[33] Now, such a case is precisely one of colour-exclusion, where it turns out that neither logical product nor inclusive disjunction handles truth-values of simultaneous colour ascriptions in ways foreseeable through truth-tables.

May foreseeability be maintained once the unforeseen has been witnessed? Is it at least *foreseeable* that any truth-operation handles truth-values of simultaneous colour ascriptions in an *unforeseeable* way, given that some operations turn out to do so? This is what the interchangeability of certain operations with certain others may seem to involve. For, no less central to the

---

[32] It may be taken to be true that a fleck is of n colour degrees or, in an inclusive sense, of $n+1$ colour degrees – if the fleck is actually of $n+1$ colour degrees, but not if it is actually of n colour degrees.

[33] Cf. TLP: 5.451. Wittgenstein has been entertaining this idea since as early as his 1913 "Notes on Logic" written for Russell: see p. 105 in the version from the *Notebooks 1914-1916* and p. 242 in the reorganized, so-called Costello, version, from *The Journal of Philosophy*.

Tractatus is the substitutability of any operation, for instance, with negation together with logical product.[34] Given that logical product handles truth-values of simultaneous colour ascriptions in an unforeseeable way, then is it at least foreseeable that any other operation – in virtue of its substitutability – handles truth-values of simultaneous colour ascriptions in an unforeseeable way? That is not foreseeable throughout. Though exclusive disjunction is substitutable with negation together with logical product – it does not handle truth-values of simultaneous colour ascriptions in any alternative way: *T⋁T, T⋁F, F⋁T, F⋁F* yields *F, T, T, F* both in general and in the colour-exclusion case.

1.3 Schlick on colour-exclusion and phenomenology

That colour-exclusion is a matter neither of physical impossibility, nor of logical impossibility in the sense of boiling down to contradiction, already involves a reconsideration of a Tractarian account of logical grammar. Yet, that colour-exclusion is a matter of mutual exclusion does not lead far enough. The question persists: Why is it then that a visual fleck cannot be of two colours simultaneously all over? Conversely, what kind of necessity, if any, is expressed by a proposition like "This *cannot be* of two colours simultaneously all over"? This line of questioning the colour-exclusion case, taken by Schlick to be decisive for the viability of phenomenology, is a mirror image of early Wittgenstein's.

The present section will first present the motivation of Schlick's interest in the case of colour ascriptions. He sees this case as calling into question the viability of classical phenomenology, particularly of Husserlian inspiration (subsection 1.3.1). Then I will discuss Schlick's dismissal of the idea that propositions like "This *cannot be* of two colours simultaneously all over" amount

---

[34] The *Tractatus* makes explicit substitutability with negation and inclusive disjunction: "We can, for example, express what is common to all notations for the truth-functions as follows: It is common to them that they all, for example, *can be replaced* by the notations of '~p' ('not p') and 'p∨q' ('p or q')" (TLP: 3.3441a). The use of the phrase "for example" is crucial here: negation together with inclusive disjunction is only *one* example of a functionally complete set, other examples being: negation together with logical product; NAND (later known as the Sheffer stroke); NOR (later known as the Pierce arrow or the Quine dagger).

to synthetic or material a priori truths, as phenomenologists would assume. This dismissal leads to Schlick's doubt that such propositions can function as groundings of phenomenology (subsection 1.3.2).

1.3.1 Schlick's forecast on philosophy to come

The end of Schlick's 1930 paper "Is There A Factual A Priori?" gives an indication of the background of his approach:

> The first who, to my knowledge, has given the correct solution of the difficulty is Ludwig Wittgenstein (see his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and a paper in the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*), to whom we owe fundamental logical clarifications, simply decisive for all future philosophy.[35]

Schlick's invocation of Wittgenstein as the first who solved the difficulty of the colour-exclusion may be puzzling, if only because, as seen, the 1929 paper, on the one hand, admits that the *Tractatus* did not solve the difficulty, and on the other hand, does not go as far as solving the difficulty either. Therein would yet be found logical clarifications decisive for all future philosophy, by contrast to concerns – Schelerian and Husserlian – with a type of knowledge whose viability would co-depend with the viability of methods of the approach that employed them: phenomenology. Questioning this approach would be questioning this type of knowledge and vice versa. Schlick questions directly not the viability of the approach[36], but the viability of what it would establish, that is, rigorous knowledge decisive for all philosophy to come:

> Which, then, are the propositions which the phenomenologist brings forward as proof of his view, and which he believes, as Husserl expressed himself, to ground a science [eine Wissenschaft begründen] which 'gains

---

[35] Schlick (1930: pp. 29-30 / Eng.: p. 169 tr. mod.)

[36] Except by charging Husserl of obscurantism as to how the *Wesensschau* would deliver universally valid knowledge (cf. Schlick 1930: p. 23 / Eng.: p. 163-164).

an abundance of knowledge most rigorous and decisive for all philosophy to come'? It is famously judgments as these, that every tone has one intensity and one pitch, that one and the same surface could not be simultaneously green and red [...].[37]

Such knowledge is meant to consist in what Husserl would count as material *a priori* truths, a type of synthetic *a priori* truths. Schlick's strategy is to dismiss the very *possibility* of the synthetic *a priori* – and together with it the possibility of the material *a priori* – meant to constitute groundworks of phenomenological science.

In another paper from the same period, "The Future of Philosophy", Schlick opposes again the aspiration of philosophy to become a science as "a theory, i.e. a set or system of true propositions" – which he regards as a hopeless desideratum – and regards philosophy instead as an ongoing activity of clarification[38], which is precisely the task he embraces. The future of philosophy would belong not to phenomenology, but to a descendant of Wittgenstein's philosophical logic: logical empiricism.

"Is There A Factual A Priori?" reads:

The empiricism which I represent believes itself to be clear on that, all assertions, principally speaking, are either synthetic *a posteriori* or tautological; synthetic propositions *a priori* seem to it to be a logical impossibility. Must it give up this standpoint, which it has been able to defend with ease against the Kantian philosophy, in the face of the propositions which Husserl and his school have apparently made the groundworks of a new philosophy?

---

[37] Schlick (1930: p. 24 / Eng.: p. 165 tr. mod.)

[38] Schlick (1930b: p. 173). The Wittgensteinian resonance of this qualification is echoed in this paper by the positive reference to Wittgenstein. The 1932 extensive version of the paper suggests further that "Science should be defined as the 'pursuit of truth' and Philosophy as the 'pursuit of meaning'" (Schlick 1932: p. 126), while "[t]here can be no science of meaning, because there cannot be any set of true propositions about meaning" (Ibid.: p. 128).

Is it some synthetic assertion *a priori* that every tone has a determinate pitch, that a green spot is not also simultaneously red?[39]

1.3.2 The dismissal of the possibility of the material a priori

Schlick's attempt to undermine the alleged groundworks of phenomenology involves questioning *whether* there could be propositions both synthetic and *a priori* and *why* some of these propositions have come to be counted as material?

This interrogation proceeds by claiming that "[a]ccording to [the logical-empiricist] programme, we ask how such propositions are factually used, in what circumstances they occur in general. Here we establish in a remarkable way that neither in science nor in life are they utilized, if we overlook a purely rhetorical use (an orator might perhaps exclaim: 'What is black, is however not white!'); only in the phenomenological philosophy do they play a role. This must already make us suspicious."[40] The suspicion is whether such propositions – in lack of an actual use either scientific or common – are sensical in the first place. Their alleged use as groundworks of phenomenology would not suffice to establish that such propositions actually have a sense.

If someone told me a lady wore a green dress, it would be odd to ask: "Can I take it the dress was not red?"; the interlocutor would insist: "I have already told you it was green." If an explorer told us that lions of normal yellow were encountered, which were also blue from tip to toe, we should immediately point out that this is impossible; if the interlocutor replied that our disbelief was due to our not having encountered a colour entirely yellow that was also entirely blue, this would not make us change our standpoint.

While it is by experience that we can come to know that a certain dress was uniformly green or that lions are of a certain yellow (case 1), once we know that, it could not be denied that we need no further experience to know that the dress was not uniformly red too, that lions entirely yellow are not entirely blue too (case 2). "These two cases stand on completely different levels [völlig

---

[39] Schlick (1930: p. 25 / Eng: p. 166 tr. mod.)

[40] Schlick (1930: p. 25 / Eng: p. 166 tr. mod.)

verschiedener Stufe]."[41] Which is to say that "to know" in the two cases does not mean one and the same thing:

> We must admit that an unbridgeable difference, of principle, subsists: it lies simply in that we only *a posteriori* know [wissen] what clothes this or that person wears, or how people in general dress up; that we however *a priori* know [wissen] that a green dress is not a red dress, and a yellow skin, not a blue one.[42]

Thus, insofar as phenomenologists would contend that propositions like "A dress green all over is not red all over" or "A skin entirely yellow is not entirely blue" are not ordinary judgments of experience, Schlick would agree with them. Where they would diverge was at the point where phenomenologists would contend further that at the same time "these propositions really convey a knowledge [Erkenntniss], that they were contentful [sachhaltig], that they had a material [material], not merely formal character"[43].

What speaks for this contention? That the propositions in question "appear [schein] to be factually [tatsächlich] about colours, about sounds, so about the content [dem Inhalte], the material [Material] of sensations". What speaks against this contention? The very "triviality [Trivialität] of the propositions in question, which we find elsewhere only in tautological, nothing-saying [nichtssagenden] propositions, which alone in virtue of their form are true and convey nothing upon reality."[44]

Schlick regards the triviality, tautological character, of these propositions as given proof, and thus more reliable than an appearance of their conveying a content or material of sensations of colour or sound. His preliminary verdict is:

---

[41] Schlick (1930: p. 26 / Eng: p. 166 tr. mod.)

[42] Schlick (1930: p. 27 / Eng: p. 167 tr. mod.)

[43] Schlick (1930: p. 27 / Eng: p. 167 tr. mod.)

[44] Schlick (1930: p. 27 / Eng: p. 167 tr. mod.)

> Our 'material' *a priori* propositions are in truth of purely conceptual nature, their validity is a logical one, they have tautological, formal character.[45]

In the final analysis, propositions taken to be material a priori and groundworks of phenomenology do not convey substantial knowledge [Erkenntnis], but boil down to tautological knowing [Wissen]; and express not factual or material necessity, but conceptual or logical necessity, showing nothing more than "only the content of our concepts [Inhalt unserer Begriffe], i.e. the way we utilize our words"[46]. The final verdict on alleged material a priori propositions would be:

> As nothing-saying formulae, they contain no knowledge and cannot serve as the groundworks of a special science. Such a science as the phenomenologists have promised us does not even exist in fact.[47]

Schlick's strategy is reminiscent of the interrogation in the *Prolegomena* of Kant, to whom he refers positively several times. Phenomenologists would claim that their science is a reality and grounded on material *a priori* propositions. By stressing that propositions like "A surface cannot be simultaneously green and red all over" are *a priori* yet simply analytic, rather than *a priori* and at the same time synthetic, Schlick insinuates that the very groundings of phenomenology are either void of sense (if they recognized as tautologies) or logically impossible (if taken as synthetic a priori or material a priori). Either what phenomenology takes itself to be grounded on would be a vacuum or phenomenology would not be grounded at all. Either way, phenomenology would not be a given science after all, it would be *not real* and perhaps even *not possible*.

---

[45] Schlick (1930: p. 28 / Eng: p. 168 tr. mod.)

[46] Schlick (1930: p. 30 / Eng: p. 170 tr. mod.). Cf.: "im ersten Falle würde die Notwendigkeit der Geltung jener Wahrheiten eine sachliche […], im zweiten Falle aber ein rein logische" (Schlick 1930: p. 27).

[47] Schlick (1930: p. 30 / Eng: p. 170 tr. mod.)

What would a mid-Wittgensteinian, or indeed middle Wittgenstein's own, take on this mirror-image of his early approach to colour-exclusion be?

1.4 Two replies to Schlick

A case can be made for two replies to Schlick's critique of phenomenology and of synthetic/material *a* priori. I will first formulate what I take to be a mid-Wittgensteinian reply to Schlick on the basis of the above discussion of the paper "Some Remarks on Logical Form" (subsection 1.4.1). Then I will discuss middle Wittgenstein's own reply to Schlick from a conversation recorded by Waismann. This reply shows Wittgenstein sharing Schlick's reluctance regarding the notion of synthetic a priori. But Wittgenstein's mentioned reluctance is independent from his positive conception of phenomenology (subsection 1.4.2.).

1.4.1 A Mid-Wittgensteinian reply

If Schlick's approach to colour-exclusion is a mirror image of early Wittgenstein's, this, if one was to use Schlick's own phrasing against him, may already make us suspicious. What would arouse suspicion? The very approach to colour-exclusion in "Is There A Factual A Priori", as inheriting a Tractarian approach in a way not fully unacknowledged by Schlick. What would suspicion involve? That Schlick's attempt to account for propositions like "This *cannot* be of two colours simultaneously all over" in terms of tautology is not more viable than early Wittgenstein's attempt to account for propositions like "This *is* of two colours simultaneously all over" in terms of contradiction.

What Schlick takes to be the strength of his approach may in fact turn out to be its weakness, namely, a co-extensiveness or mutual substitution between the notions of necessity and tautology. He writes:

Our empiricism establishes the claim that in general there are no other *a priori* judgments than the analytic or, as we like to say today, that only tautological propositions are *a priori*.[48]

A tautological proposition may express a triviality, but it is true in virtue of its form[49]. Schlick takes both the triviality and the tautological character of alleged material *a priori* propositions as given proof, as obvious. Now, whether they express trivialities or not, may not be decidable as easily as whether they have a tautological character or not.

Just as propositions like "This is red and blue" turned out to not be analyzable into *p and not-p*, so that analysis would end up with a form of contradiction, propositions like "This cannot be green and red" are not analyzable into *p and p*, so that analysis would end up with a form of tautology.

Schlick himself makes it clear that "[a]n analytic proposition [...], or – as we more clearly say – a tautology, [...] presents only a purely formal transformation of equivalent expressions and serves therefore only as a technical means within a proof, a deduction, a calculus."[50] While this may fit early Wittgenstein's conception of tautology, it is not obvious how it would accommodate propositions inquired into by Schlick. Indeed, it may not. On the one side, "This is green" and "This is red" are not equivalent expressions, namely, mutually substitutable, anymore than "This is green" and "This is red" are contradictory expressions, or than "This is red" is mutually substitutable with "This is not green". On the other side, while an analysis of propositions like "This is red and blue simultaneously all over" in terms of logical product did not end up with falsity throughout, an attempt at analysing propositions like "This cannot be green and red simultaneously all over" would not end up with truth throughout.

Either Schlick's propositions in question are denials of early Wittgenstein's propositions in question, in which case the negation of the last

---

[48] Schlick (1930: p. 23 / Eng: p. 164 tr. mod.)

[49] Cf. "die Trivialität der fraglichen Sätze […], die wir sonst nur bei tautologischen, nichtssagenden Sätzen finden, welche allein vermöge ihrer Form wahr sind" (Schlick 1930: p. 23).

[50] Schlick (1930: p. 23 / Eng: p. 164 tr. mod.)

column of the logical product of simultaneous colour ascriptions, *T, F, F, F,* yields *F, T, T, T* – thus not truth throughout like in tautology. *Or* Schlick's propositions are not denials of Wittgenstein's, in which case it is not clear how they may be analysed in terms of any other Tractarian operation so as to end up with tautology. The difficulty with them is that *cannot* – when taken to express logical impossibility – is not reducible to *not*; if that was so, logical impossibility would be no more than physical impossibility.

Then propositions like "This cannot be green and red simultaneously all over" would express logical necessity on the one hand, and on the other hand, would not be analyzable into tautology. This irreducibility of some propositions taken to express logical necessity to tautologies is the mirror image of the irreducibility of some propositions taken to express logical impossibility to contradictions, which comes to one and the same difficulty that Wittgenstein's paper recognized in the *Tractatus* and admitted to not having solved either. The two faces of the difficulty are in fact alluded to in the paper, where propositions like "One colour cannot have two degrees of brightness simultaneously all over" are regarded – not as tautologies – but as being "in some sense tautologies", just as simultaneous colour ascriptions are considered to involve – not a contradiction – but "some sort of contradiction"[51].

Schlick may be right in invoking early Wittgenstein as an influence to his conduct of the colour-exclusion case, yet he is not closer than middle Wittgenstein in the 1929 paper to a solution to the difficulty.

1.4.2 Middle Wittgenstein's reply

The above is not what middle Wittgenstein actually replied, at least on one particular occasion, to Schlick's reservation to phenomenology and to the synthetic/material a priori. In a late 1929 conversation Waismann recorded and entitled "Anti-Husserl" Schlick asks Wittgenstein:

---

[51] SRLF: pp. 32, 33 respectively.

What can one reply to a philosopher who means that the assertions of phenomenology are synthetic judgments *a priori*?[52]

Wittgenstein replies by first noting that propositions like "I have no stomach ache" or "I have no money" have a denial which they presuppose and viceversa [setzt ... voraus und umgekehrt], meaning that they are sensical propositions, propositions with sense. Now, by a proposition like "An object is not red and green simultaneously" do I merely want to say that I have not so far seen such an object? Obviously not. (And thus not that such an object is unlikely to be seen, which would amount simply to a forecast from induction). Rather I want to say: "I *cannot* see such an object", "Red and green *cannot* be in the same place". What does the word "can" mean here? It is "obviously [offenbar] a grammatical (logical) concept, not a factual [sachlicher] one"[53]. By contrast to the former propositions about pain and money, the latter proposition is not sensical, it does not have sense, it lacks a denial which it would presuppose and viceversa.

Wittgenstein further employs a *reductio ad absurdum*. Suppose that propositions in question were synthetic judgments and the word "cannot" meant logical impossibility. Since a proposition is the negation of its negation [die Negation seiner Negation], there should be also propositions like "An object can be red and green", which would be in their turn synthetic. As synthetic propositions, they would be sensical, namely, the situation they present can subsist, is possible. However, since "cannot" meant logical impossibility, one would come to a conclusion that the impossible is possible. As this is absurd, propositions like "An object cannot be red and green" cannot be both synthetic (in which case they would express possibility) and a priori (in which case they would express impossibility or, in another case, necessity). Wittgenstein adds:

[52] WWK/WVC: p. 67 tr. mod.

[53] WWK/WVC: p. 67 tr. mod.

Here there remained for Husserl only the way out that he clarified there is yet a third possibility. Thereto I would reply: one can find words; but I can think beneath of nothing.[54]

Insofar as this dismisses a third possibility – of the synthetic *a priori* – Wittgenstein would follow Schlick to an extent. At this stage in his development, he would perhaps go as far as Schlick agreeing that there is an unbridgeable difference, of principle, between sensical propositions, expressing possibility, and those propositions lacking sense, expressing logical impossibility.

Wittgenstein does not yet say with Schlick that propositions like "An object cannot be red and green" are either analytic or tautologies, not even that they are trivial or that they boil down to trivialities. Wittgenstein's approach here is purely negative, simply dismissing the possibility of the synthetic or material *a priori*. The approach diverges from Schlick's insofar as it points to a difference between propositions employing "cannot" and propositions employing "not". This questions the reducibility of *cannot* – when taken to express logical impossibility – to *not*, thus casting doubt on the eventual way above to analyze what Schlick takes as the groundworks of phenomenology into tautologies.

Wittgenstein's approach diverges further from Schick's, insofar as it dismisses the possibility of the synthetic or material a priori, without dismissing either the reality or the possibility of phenomenology however conceived of. In fact, someone else close to Wittgenstein, Drury, recollects:

Professor Schlick from Vienna was due to read a paper to the Moral Science Club entitled 'Phenomenology'.

WITTGENSTEIN: You ought to make a point of going to hear this paper, but I shan't be there. You could say of my work that it is 'phenomenology'.[55]

---

[54] WWK/WVC: p. 68 tr. mod.

[55] Drury (1984: p. 116).

Middle Wittgenstein's replies to Schlick leaves open not only the eventuality of phenomenology not being or not even needing to be grounded on the synthetic or material *a priori*, but also the eventuality of phenomenology being possible after all. Wittgenstein's solitary remarks on phenomenology in manuscripts from the same period even consider phenomenology to be real, real at least to the extent of something worth being given a chance. Without, or at least apart from, giving a further chance to the synthetic or material a priori.[56]

1.5 Phenomenology: a logic or a logic's application?

In order to do justice to cases like colour-exclusion, "Some Remarks on Logical Form" pleas for "the logical investigation of the phenomena themselves"[57]. This plea involves the reconsideration of a Tractarian account of logical grammar, an account criticized by Ramsey for its construal of impossibility as inescapably involving contradiction and further criticized by middle Wittgenstein for a reliance, to too great an extent, on logical foreseeability.

The present section will first discuss a Tractarian appeal that can be made against the charge of the problematic reliance on logical foreseeability. The appeal, relying on early Wittgenstein's distinction between logic and its application, turns out to be unsuccessful (subsection 1.5.1). Then I will discuss middle Wittgenstein's dissatisfaction with the *Tractatus* as touching a more central view expressed in it. It is that the rules for the coupling of propositions exhibited by truth-tables can provide an exhaustive account of logical syntax (subsection 1.5.2). This dissatisfaction leads to his conception of phenomenology

---

[56] Thus, it should be expected that a claim that Wittgenstein embraced the synthetic or material a priori makes not more compelling (as assumed e.g. by Gier 1986: pp. 155-183) but more vulnerable a claim that Wittgenstein embraced a phenomenology (as seen e.g. in a reply to Gier by Monk 2014). Cf. "it stands open if some – or, indeed, any – grammatical propositions could be held in any sense as synthetic *a priori*, insofar as it seems to be, at least in this context, an undesired hybrid between logic and *empiria*. As we have discussed, this represents a phenomenological temptation against which Wittgenstein always tried to protect himself." (Silva 2012: p. 265)

[57] SRLF: p. 35.

as a logic of propositional content as opposed to the Tractarian logic of propositional form (subsection 1.5.3).

1.5.1 A Tractarian appeal

A Tractarian appeal may yet be made: "Not only must a proposition of logic be capable of being refuted by no possible experience, but it must also not be capable of being confirmed by any such. | Now it becomes clear why one often feels as though 'logical truths' are to be '*postulated*' by us. We can in fact postulate them in so far as we can postulate an adequate notation."[58] Accordingly, insofar as a truth-table was a proposition of logic and part of an adequate notation, it would not be confirmable or disconfirmable by any possible experience. In particular, a Tractarian truth-table exhibiting syntax for logical product would be immune in the colour-exclusion case, whether the latter is approached as involving any actual or possible experience, phenomena, or talk thereof.[59]

The *Tractatus* has more to say in its defence: "The *application* of logic decides what elementary propositions there are. | What lies in the application logic cannot foresee [vorausnehmen]."[60] Accordingly, insofar as the logical investigation of the phenomena themselves is employed by "Some Remarks on Logical Form", while introducing ascriptions of degree as atomic or elementary propositions, this approach would amount, from a Tractarian vantage point, not to logic, but to its application [Anwendung]. Tractarian logic may not foresee that among atomic propositions there are ascriptions of degree, yet again, from a Tractarian vantage point, foreseeing this was not a job of logic in the first place. In

---

[58] TLP: 6.1222-6.1223, Ogden tr. mod.

[59] This, however, leaves it still questionable whether in the *Tractatus* there is a "normative appeal of Logic [that later] has to be mitigated, [t]he current language before being regimented by the authoritative tractarian thread to avoid philosophical nonsense" (Silva 2013: p. 155), even if a pre-Tractarian Wittgenstein may have considered a view that truth-tables are "criteria" rather than "results" of analysis (cf. Silva 2012: pp. 109-112). Still, something postulated – be it as adequate notation – need not be normative.

[60] TLP: 5.557a-b, Ogden tr. mod.

this sense it may seem that the *Tractatus* has been charged for not doing something that it was anyway not meant to do.[61]

The remark yet goes on: "This is clear: logic may not collide with its application. | But logic must have contact with its application. | Therefore logic and its application may not infringe one another."[62] Now this reinforces the charge against the *Tractatus*, insofar as its logic proves itself precisely to collide [collidieren] with, or to infringe [übergreifen] upon, the logical investigation of the phenomena themselves. Indeed, the latter witnesses that a Tractarian account of syntax for truth-operations is not applicable without amendments in the colour-exclusion case. What Wittgenstein's 1929 paper questions then is whether or to what extent one may rely on logical foreseeability while "postulating" a logic without carrying out its application, such that not only a contact between logic and its application be maintained, but further a contact between logic and experience.[63]

1.5.2 Logical syntax reconsidered

An early middle Wittgenstein, one of early 1929, would maintain his trust in the Tractarian syntax for connectives, which may be amended here and there – like in the colour-exclusion case – by way of introducing further rules and eventually mending the problem of a nonsensical or not non-sensical notation thus reached. In this scenario, the logical investigation of the phenomena themselves would

---

[61] Then, at least in this sense, there would be no "curse of the tractarian project [as] always having to indefinitely postpone its end", no "collision of two central tractarian theses: the logical independence of elementary propositions and the demand for complete analysis" – as charged by Silva (2013: pp. 162, 154 respectively; cf. 2012: p. 53). What early Wittgenstein would demand is an end or completeness of analysis by *logic* and what he would intend to – not postpone – but leave aside is an end or completeness of analysis by *application of logic*. The problem though is that the application of logic was expected to remain faithful to the syntax for connectives exhibited by Tractarian truth-tables.

[62] TLP: 5.557c-e, Ogden tr. mod.

[63] Friedlander notes in this respect: "It is Wittgenstein's distinction between the completion of the task of logic and the later appropriation of the form of experience […] that needs to be reassessed." (Friedlander 2001: p. 216)

amount not to a logic, but to an application of Tractarian syntax for connectives. Yet, cases like colour-exclusion bring into question not only a matter of notation amendment and one of logical foreseeability, but also further and further interconnected matters, like inference or negation.

A late middle Wittgenstein, one of late 1929 and beginning of 1930s', encountering such proliferating problems, finds himself pressed to reconsider the contact between logic and a logical investigation of phenomena. Even while skipping episodes, outcomes of this development can be observed.

In a 1930 conversation with Schlick recorded by Waismann, Wittgenstein remarks:

> As a summary one can say: the coupling of propositions of a truth-function builds/pictures [bildet] only one part of a syntax. The rules I laid down at that time [i.e. the time of the *Tractatus*] are now constrained by the rules that stem from the inner syntax of propositions and which prohibit that two propositions ascribe to reality different co-ordinates. All truth-functions are allowed that are not prohibited by these rules.[64]

Rules exhibited by truth-tables turn out to be, instead of a whole, only one part of a syntax.[65] One fleck of two colours simultaneously all over can be counted as a logical impossibility without simultaneous colour ascriptions having to be analyzable into contradiction. The logical impossibility in question then boils down to "rules that stem from the inner syntax of propositions", not rules for

---

[64] WWK: p. 80 [dated 2 January 1930] / WVC: p. 80 tr. mod.; cf. Ms 108: p. 52 [dated 1 January 1930] / PR: § 83.

[65] By opposition, in line with the *Tractatus*, one may say that "there would be nothing logically relevant inside the elementary propositions" (Silva 2012: p. 140) or rather: nothing truth-functionally relevant; and that the "the rules for the connectives given in the *Tractatus* were incomplete" (cf. Hacker 1973: p. 110) or that "Wittgenstein had already given up or was about to give up one of the central claims of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, that of the completeness of its truth-functional logic, which is expressed in proposition 6." (Marion 1998: p. 110.) If Tractarian logical syntax falls short of completeness, it is a completeness not of the extended truth-table for all logical connectives itself, but the completeness of this table to be maintained in its application.

coupling of propositions. On the one side, the former rules constrain [eingeengen] those of truth-functional coupling, a constraint which solves the puzzle of why some lines are to disappear from some truth-tables when analyzing simultaneous colour ascriptions. On the other side, rules that stem from the inner syntax of propositions would prohibit [verbieten] that two propositions (e.g. simultaneous colour ascriptions) ascribe to reality (e.g. a fleck) different coordinates (e.g. "red" and "blue") and would allow [erlauben] only certain truth-functions in certain cases.[66] Thus, while according to the *Tractatus*, in Ramsey's words, the only impossibility is that of contradiction, middle Wittgenstein's approach to the colour-exclusion case calls for a conception of impossibility as involving logico-grammatical prohibition without contradiction, and a conception of necessity as involving logico-grammatical demand without tautology.

1.5.3 The logic of form and the logic of content

"Some Remarks on Logical Form" pleas for a logical investigation of the phenomena themselves as application of logic, allowing for eventual amendments to truth-functional syntax. In subsequent manuscripts, Wittgenstein is puzzled whether that which this investigation and analysis will turn into – phenomenology – is a logic in its own right, along with truth-functional logic:

> The distinction between the logic of content [Inhalt] and the logic of propositional form [Satzform] in general. The former seems, as it were, multicoloured, the other faint; one seems to handle that which the picture presents, the other is like the frame of the picture, a characteristic of the pictorial form.[67]

---

[66] In manuscript Wittgenstein admits: "In my old conception of an elementary proposition there was no determination of the value of a co-ordinate; although my remark that a coloured body is in a colour-space, etc., should have put me straight on to this." (Ms 108: p. 53 [dated 1 January 1930] / PR: § 83.)

[67] Ms 109: p. 130 [dated 12 September 1930] / PG: 217 tr. mod.

The question of phenomenology as logic, immediately becomes the question of the relation between such a logic of content to a logic of form, like a truth-functional logic:

> And how does what we feel express itself, that namely the truth-functions are more fundamental that the phenomenological? For, I believe, only in the grammar must that also express itself.
>
> And in these one must – if I am right – see also the distinction between the phenomenological and the non-phenomenological. There would be there a chapter on colours where the use of the colour-words was regulated; but that would not be comparable to what was said in the grammar on the words not, or, etc. (the 'logical constants').
>
> It would e.g. follow from the rules that the latter words were to be applied to every proposition (but not the colour-words).[68]

One may have a feeling that truth-functions are more fundamental than the phenomenological, in that their ways to exhibit logical grammar are immune to any possible experience, phenomena, or talk thereof. This feeling may be reinforced by a view that truth-functional account of the syntax of words for logical constants was logically general, applicable to every proposition, while a syntax of words for colours was not. In short, it may appear that truth-functional logic as logic of form is a fundamental logic, at least more fundamental than phenomenology as logic of content, an allegedly regional logic (e.g. for a domain of discourse or propositional system devoted to colours). The manuscript yet questions this appearance:

> But it is strange that *in the grammar* there must be given an essential and an unessential generality.
>
> A logical and a phenomenological one. But wherein they differentiate themselves from one another?[69]

---

[68] Ms 109: p. 120 [dated 9 September 1930].

[69] Ms 109: p. 121.

That twofold kind of generality would be so odd as if of two rules of a game both holding equally invariably, one was talked about as being the more fundamental.

As one could thus decide if the king or the chessboard was essential to the game. Which of the two was more essential, which more accidental.[70]

If it is strange [merkwürdig] or odd [seltsam] that there be a twofold kind of generality, it is not because what is established is that there is one – essential, fundamental, truth-functional generality – and what is questionable is whether there is, besides or along with it, another – unessential, regional, phenomenological generality. It is the very status of truth-functional generality as fundamental that becomes questionable, once a Tractarian account of logical grammar has been questioned by Ramsey for its construal of impossibility as inescapably involving contradiction and by Wittgenstein for its construal of logical foreseeability. Logical generality is solicited in a Tractarian account of logical grammar, as truth-functional analysis is taken to exhibit, from a vantage point of a general propositional form, a syntax for all propositional combination. Insofar as truth-functional analysis decomposes compound or complex propositions, yet not atomic or elementary ones, it yet has a blind-spot: rules that stem from the inner syntax of propositions.[71] These rules will turn out to constrain truth-functional rules, whose logical generality was taken to be intimately related to a general form of the proposition.[72]

Then if talking about a collapse of Wittgenstein's first philosophy be justified or useful, it would be a collapse of the general form of the proposition,

[70] Ms 109: pp. 129-130.

[71] Cf. Early "Wittgenstein was able to get his truth-functional apparatus going, without having to know in advance whether elementary propositions consist of dyadic or 27-termed relations!" (Marion 1998: p. 115.)

[72] In 1929 Wittgenstein makes this relation explicit: "The general form of the proposition can be nothing else than the general form of truth-functions." (Ms 106: p. 59 [Pichler (1994): ≈ March – April 1929].)

accompanied by a reconsideration of logical generality involved in a Tractarian account of logical grammar.

As a logic of content, phenomenology would involve a point of departure from ordinary propositions, heading towards a point of exhibiting a syntax of their use and ultimately inner rules. The point of departure of phenomenological analysis would be within such and such a space of intelligibility or conceivability, like colour-space or tone-space – spaces devoted to domains of discourse or propositional systems of colour and tone respectively. The point of arrival of phenomenological analysis would yet be within such spaces, not within an all-pervasive space of intelligibility or conceivability. Such a space, a Tractarian logical space, would become questionable. Indeed, immediately after considering the unforeseeable way of handling truth-values of simultaneous colour-ascriptions by logical product and the eventual alternative meaning of "and" thereof, middle Wittgenstein raises the following question in manuscript:

> Is there given for all propositions which I can connect logically one *space* in which they 'go together, or not'? If I e.g. say, I see red and hear a sound, these go both in *time* with one another. They order themselves in time, I mean, they lay themselves in time one next to the other. I.e. they lie both in time and do not disturb one another.
>
> It is then as though the sense of more propositions lied spread in logical space so far as they could not disturb one another, while others may rise a claim for the same place.[73]

A further discussion of the question of the unicity of an all-pervasive logical space falls outside our scope. It may however be observed that, if there was no all-pervasive logical space, neither would colour-space, tone-space etc. be *regional* fields of investigation, nor would phenomenology be a *regional* investigation. At least not regional as opposed respectively to one fundamental logical space and to a fundamental truth-functional logical investigation.

---

[73] Ms 106: p. 93 [Pichler (1994): ≈ March – April 1929].

CHAPTER 2

THE CONCEPTION OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL LANGUAGE

This chapter will explore Wittgenstein's methodological reflections pertaining to his conception of phenomenology. How is phenomenology supposed to be actually carried out according to these reflections? And what does this conception involve in terms of philosophical tools and devices?

An incipient answer to these questions, provided by secondary literature, is that his concerns with phenomenology are co-extensive thematically and chronologically with his concerns with what he calls "phenomenological language". The difficulty is that the remarks on phenomenological language are not less puzzling than the ones on phenomenology. It is generally agreed that Wittgenstein's conception of phenomenology involves – at least for a while – a so-called phenomenological language. But it is not clear what a phenomenological language involves or amounts to. In the literature one can find very diverse accounts of phenomenological language, which can be categorized as ranging from robust to deflationary readings. According to robust receptions, phenomenological language is a full-blown means of expression, a language in its own right, meant to replace ordinary language for philosophical purposes of clarification. Some of such readings find a kinship between Wittgenstein's consideration of phenomenological language and conceptions of phenomenological reduction in continental philosophy.[74] According to readings that can be qualified as deflationary, phenomenological language is merely a means of identification of objects of experience in terms of demonstratives such as "this" or "that".[75] Perhaps the most striking view put forward more recently is that phenomenological language "is not a language at all, but a technical apparatus for the production of pictures"[76].

---

[74] Cf. Gier (1981), Morgan (2003).

[75] Cf. Hintikka (1996: pp. 75-76).

[76] Kienzler (1997: p. 119).

In what follows, I will formulate a relatively new reading of the conception of phenomenological language, while closely attending to Wittgenstein's notions of "hypothesis" and "verification". These notions have not received much attention so far. My claim, however, is that they are precisely the kernel of the conception of phenomenological language. In this light, the rationale of Wittgenstein's consideration of phenomenology and in particular of phenomenological language appears as being faithful to his longstanding aim of philosophical clarification. Taken in this way, these considerations become less puzzling than they may seem at first sight. Indeed, from 1929 onwards Wittgenstein does not develop an entirely new programme in his philosophical writings. His early 1929 paper "Some Remarks on Logical Form" is still concerned with central Tractarian tenets. Above all it is concerned with the task of elaborating philosophical tools and devices for clarifying language and thought. The reflections on phenomenology are motivated by the same task. Significantly in this respect, the *Tractatus*, the 1929 paper, and subsequent manuscripts all regard ordinary language as logically in order. Namely, ordinary language is in order as it is, in everyday uses, for daily purposes. Problems arise when ordinary language is employed philosophically, as a means for philosophical expression. According to the 1929 paper, ordinary language disguises logical structure and thus does not prevent the formation of pseudo-propositions like "Red is higher than green". Manuscripts from the same period provide a more fleshed-out account of the inadequacy of ordinary language as means for philosophical expression. Attending to the account of ordinary language in terms of "hypothesis" will be particularly revealing in this respect.

Thus, on the one hand, ordinary language is prone to confusions. On the other hand, it cannot be employed philosophically in order to clear away confusion. In this sense, ordinary language does not suffice for, or is not amenable to, a philosophical clarification of itself. Clarification then calls for an alternative medium of expression. The conception of phenomenological language explicates the workings of language and its formal relation to reality, a relation which is not readily available in ordinary use. To the purpose of clarification the *Tractatus* puts forward a logical notation, inheriting Frege's *Begriffschrift*, as a method of

elucidation or dissolution of philosophical problems. "Some Remarks on Logical Form" points out some difficulties with the Tractarian approach, while still envisaging ways in which a truth-functional notation can be amended in order to do justice to logical grammar. The notion of phenomenological language is a subsequent tool for clarification. Like the Tractarian *Begriffschrift* and the logical symbolism that the 1929 paper discusses, the phenomenological language is meant to be devised in order to handle ordinary language, or rather dimensions of it, in logically clear ways.

The method of clarification which comes with the notion of phenomenological language is the method of verification. How a proposition is meant or taken on a particular occasion can be elucidated in terms of what counts as its agreement or disagreement with reality on that particular occasion. Now, one and the same proposition used on a particular occasion can be taken to agree or disagree with one and the same situation in multiple ways. Saying that "Somebody is playing the piano in the other room" can account for a sound of piano coming from somewhere else than the present room. Or it can account for the available fact of someone being seen through a door as sitting in front of a piano. Or it can account for something that happens regularly, perhaps according to the schedule of a neighbor who repeatedly plays the piano. Clarifying the workings of ordinary language requires, initially for middle Wittgenstein, a more generic inquiry into the availability of a proposition of ordinary language to be meant or taken in multiple ways. It is essentially an inquiry into the formal relation of language with reality through the method of verification. This relation is veiled by the multitude of ways in which one and the same proposition can be used in order to account for one and the same situation. The notion of hypothesis will shed light on this multitude of ways in which a proposition can be meant or taken. Against this background, an ordinary-language proposition can be characterized as being multivocal and as having a multifaceted grammatical structure.

The characterization of ordinary propositions as hypotheses is reminiscent of a Tractarian view that "In the language of everyday life it very often happens that the same word signifies in two different ways – and therefore belongs to two

different symbols – or that two words, which signify in different ways, are apparently applied in the same way in the proposition."[77] However, from 1929 onwards, a clarification of this multivocality of ordinary language by way of a purely truth-functional account of logical grammar is considered to be insufficient and to a certain extent misleading. This is because the *Tractatus* turns out to have envisaged a method of clearing away the multivocality of ordinary language for philosophical purposes by relying on the view that logical constants are nevertheless univocal. This view involved the fact that even in the colour-exclusion case the meaning of the connective "and" is exhibited by the syntax of the truth-table for logical product in general. From 1929 Wittgenstein's considers the view that the meaning of the connectives between propositions is not univocal. However, he envisages a way to analyze the subject-matter of propositions such that the analysis ends up with univocal propositions.

Phenomenological language consists in propositions that are univocal and have a single-facetted grammatical structure. Unlike ordinary language, phenomenological language is not readily available. It is rather a means of expression to be achieved or constructed. This construction involves an isolation of the multiple facets of a proposition of ordinary language, of the multiple ways in which such propositions can be meant or taken to agree or disagree with reality. The aim is to reach propositions like "This sound is a C major" – arguably involved in propositions like the one above about the piano. Propositions of the former kind are taken to agree or disagree with reality in no more than one way. Whence the envisaged univocality of a proposition of phenomenological language or its single-faceted grammatical structure.

The following discussion touches upon a debate in the literature about whether Wittgenstein endorsed a notion of reduction akin to the notion of reduction in the phenomenological tradition. Previous studies suggest that the transition from ordinary to phenomenological language calls for or amounts to a genuine phenomenological reduction[78]; others admit no more than a linguistic

---

[77] TLP: 3.323.

[78] Peursen (1959: p. 181), Gier (1981: pp. 104, 106f, 210), Morgan (2003: p. 246).

reduction, namely, a reduction carried out merely within or on the side of language[79]; some authors, insofar as middle Wittgenstein or Wittgenstein in general is concerned, dismiss the very idea of reduction – phenomenological[80] or linguistic[81] – being ever at work in his works. My discussion reveals an element in middle Wittgenstein's writings that has not received attention by authors discussing the question of whether he endorsed a method of reduction. This element is his conception of the isolation of different sensory fields and of different facets of ordinary propositions and phenomena – an isolation required by the construction of a phenomenological language.

This second chapter will proceed as follows. *Section 2.1* focuses on the approach in "Some Remarks on Logical Form" which claims that ordinary language is inadequate for philosophical expression and clarification. While ordinary language disguises logical structure, Wittgenstein calls for an alternative symbolism which would exhibit this structure in particular domains of discourse. The call for such a symbolism echoes the call for a phenomenological language in the manuscripts, as alternative means of expression and clarification. *Section 2.2* adds more flesh to the view on ordinary language formulated in the paper. The section discusses Wittgenstein's approach to ordinary propositions as hypotheses in manuscripts and recorded conversations. The conception of hypothesis provides a richer account of the way in which ordinary language disguises logical structure. *Section 2.3* explores the idea of phenomenological language by contrast to ordinary language, which disguises logical structure due to its hypothetical character. Phenomenological language is meant to exhibit the formal connection with reality of particular ordinary propositions at a given moment. Unlike ordinary propositions, phenomenological statements can be verified by comparison to immediate experience. While being univocal, each phenomenological statement provides one of the many senses that a single ordinary proposition can have.

---

[79] Ihde (1975: pp. 48, 49, 54), Hintikka (1996: pp. 70-71, cf. 65).

[80] Ricoeur (1967: pp. 210-211), Reeder (1979: p. 44), Park (1998: pp. 2, 46f, 55, 189-191, 194).

[81] Arrington (1978: p. 299).

2.1 Ordinary language disguises logical structure

Wittgenstein's idea of phenomenological language is motivated by the concerns with ordinary language which he summarized in "Some Remarks on Logical Form". Another look at this paper, focusing on aspects that I have not discussed so far, is in order here. The conception of phenomenological language as a means for philosophical clarification springs from some insights into the ways in which ordinary language disguises logical structure and the philosophical remedy for this envisaged by the paper.

I will first explore the general view of the paper on the syntax of ordinary language and I will suggest that at stake here is a distinction between a surface, apparent syntax and a deep, logical syntax (subsection 2.1.1). Then I will discuss Wittgenstein's two-plane analogy, which throws light on this distinction (subsection 2.1.2). This gives the background for an exploration of his call for a precise symbolism or a clarificatory notation (subsection 2.1.3). I will then point out that this notation differs from the Tractarian one insofar as it employs numbers in some cases of analysis (subsection 2.1.4). I will finally turn to the notion of logical multiplicity, which Wittgenstein inherits in the 1929 paper from the *Tractatus*. In the paper this notion involves a correspondence between the new symbolism and actual phenomena scrutinized by a logical investigation envisaged there (subsection 2.1.5).

2.1.1 Ordinary syntax and philosophical nonsense

Wittgenstein's paper conceives of syntax first in a "general sense of the word", meaning, "the rules which tell us in which connections only a word gives sense, thus excluding nonsensical structures."[82] According to this conception:

---

[82] SRLF: p. 29.

> The syntax of ordinary language, as is well known, is not quite adequate for this purpose. It does not in all cases prevent the construction of nonsensical pseudo-propositions.[83]

The syntax of ordinary language may not prevent the formation of pseudo-propositions. To take an example from the paper: "The Real, though it is an *in itself*, must also be able to become a *for myself*". Uttered in a common situation, it may not be clear how this construction may be meant or taken at all. The use of some of its individual words may make sense in ordinary utterances, however. For instance, it makes sense to qualify a certain gain as "real" in a situation when it is doubtable that something has or has not been achieved. It may make sense to distinguish between regarding a gain "in itself" and "for myself", as a distinction between what a certain salary amounts to and what it allows me to do with it. The individual words in the above proposition can be employed on innumerable occasions to construct sensical utterances.

The above proposition, however, as it appears is an alleged philosophical statement. What is questionable is whether in this particular connection the words have been assigned any meaning at all. That is, whether the proposition conveys any sense, while its formulation is not motivated by any practical concerns. The syntax of language does not prevent such departure, from a practically motivated use to an intended philosophical use. In a way, the proposition can be regarded as being grammatically in order. That is, if what is at stake is to tell whether its particular concatenation of words fits certain syntactical patterns involving a subject and predicate or such morphological patterns involving a noun and a verb. But a scrutiny of the proposition as scrutiny of its syntax in such senses, however, does not suffice to establish its sensicality or nonsensicality. Syntax as syntactical or morphological structure allows for certain propositional constructions, which at a closer scrutiny may turn to not actually convey any sense.

---

[83] Ibid.

This suggests that a distinction is already at work in the way Wittgenstein is dealing with the example above. It is a distinction between a surface, apparent syntax of language and its deep, logical syntax. The surface syntax is what one may regard as grammatical in a text-book sense of the word. "The Real, though it is an *in itself*, must also be able to become a *for myself*" seems to have the structure of a subject and predicate proposition. Accordingly, "the real" can be taken to be a subject or noun and what is predicated upon it may be taken to be that it is "in itself". According to this surface syntax, regarded in this case as involving a subject-predicate or noun-verb pattern, the proposition appears as being in order. But this pattern is not to be immediately taken as exhibiting the actual, logical structure of every proposition. It is precisely "where ordinary language disguises logical structure"[84], presenting it in terms of a subject-predicate pattern, that it allows for the formation of pseudo-propositions. The apparent subject-predicate pattern is one of the features of ordinary language that disguises its actual, logical structure. Yet, how is it that logical structure may be actually hidden? How does language actually disguise it?

2.1.2 The two-plane analogy

In the paper, Wittgenstein talks not only of a logical structure of language, but also of a structure of phenomena. The thought is that language shares its actual, logical structure with the structure of phenomena or facts. At this point, there is no categorical distinction between phenomena and facts, both notions being used interchangeably throughout the paper with such notions as "reality" or "entities". From the very beginning of the paper Wittgenstein's call for clarification thus involves a turn to phenomena and he regards it as "surprising if the actual phenomena had nothing more to teach us about their structure".[85] Thus, on the one hand ordinary language disguises logical structure. On the other hand, ordinary language shares logical structure with phenomena or reality. He

---

[84] SRLF: p. 29.

[85] SRLF: p. 30.

thematizes the way in which logical structure is disguised by language by way of an analogy of two planes.[86]

Given two parallels planes, on the first one figures are drawn such as ellipses and rectangles. Wittgenstein specifies that these figures are of different sizes and shapes. Thus the first plane may contain rectangles of various sizes, that is, not merely regular but also irregular rectangles. The task is to provide an image of these figures on a second plane, parallel with the first one. There are multiple ways of achieving this, for instance, devising various methods of projection according to different rules or norms. Essentially, however, on the second plane the figures will not be the exact figures of the first plane. Corresponding to ellipses on the first plane there would be circles on the second one. Corresponding to rectangles on the first plane there would be squares on the second one.

Conversely, and this is a main point of the analogy, there would be no way to infer exactly from the figures of the second plane the corresponding figures on the first plane. One could tell only loosely that to a certain square on the second plane there corresponds a rectangle on the first plane, but the exact size and shape of the rectangle could not be inferred. Wittgenstein explains:

> The case of ordinary language is quite analogous. If the facts of reality are the ellipses and rectangles on plane I the subject-predicate and relational forms correspond to the circles and squares in plane II. These forms are the norms of our particular language into which we project in *ever so many different* ways *ever so many different* logical forms. And for this very reason we can draw no conclusions – except very vague ones – from

---

[86] This analogy questions aspects of two traditions. On the one hand, it questions an inclination to take forms like subject-predicate as basic or ultimate logical forms, as commonly done in Aristotelian logic. On the other hand, it questions the assumption that basic logical forms are necessarily relational, something Wittgenstein finds questionable in Carnap (cf. "we cannot proceed by assuming from the very beginning, as Carnap does, that the elementary propositions consist of two-place relations" (WWK / WVC: p. 182 [dated 9 December 1931]).

the use of these norms as to the actual logical form of the phenomena described.[87]

The specification that on the first plane figures have different sizes and shapes is essential in the analogy. So is the fact that these specific sizes and shapes are not conserved in the second plane of the analogy. Conversely, in order "to get in a single instance at the determinate shape of the original we would have to know the individual method by which, e.g. a particular ellipse is projected into the circle before me". The mention of "method" is crucial here. A method of projection would allow for a systematic way of rendering not just any square, but a square of a specific size on the first plane, starting from not just any rectangle, but a specific rectangle on the second plane. Such a systematic method of projection cannot be assumed in the relation between the two kinds of syntax of ordinary language. There is no reliable criterion according to which one could render deep, logical syntax from surface, apparent syntax. Instead, what the surface syntax of ordinary language presents is forms of the subject-predicate kind and relational forms. The variation of actual logical forms is forced into, and veiled by, surface forms.

One could not get at the actual logical structure of language and phenomena, by loosely or vaguely inferring it from the surface syntax of language. Such an approach would in fact disguise logical structure no less than the surface syntax of language does. Wittgenstein considers propositions like "This paper is boring" or "The weather is fine". According to their surface syntax, these propositions seem to be of a subject-predicate kind. Yet, he makes it explicit at the same time that such propositions have nothing in common with one another. That is, they may have nothing in common insofar as their actual logical syntax is concerned.

The two-plane analogy is not meant to suggest though that the only means of access to the figures on the first plane is via the figures on the second plane. The point of the analogy is rather the need to look elsewhere than on the second

---

[87] SRLF: pp. 30-31.

plane. Clarification of the workings of ordinary language is not to be achieved by way of ordinary language itself. On the one hand, clarification cannot be achieved by focusing solely on ordinary language, especially as its surface syntax turns out to be misleading. On the other hand, and for the same motives, the means or medium of expression cannot be ordinary language itself. Ordinary language cannot be, according to the 1929 paper, either the sole focus or the expressive means of clarification. Wittgenstein envisages a way to scrutinize logical structure, on the first plane in the analogy, by devising a distinct logical symbolism in order to account for facts of reality or phenomena:

> The idea is to express in an appropriate symbolism what in ordinary language leads to endless misunderstandings.[88]

What would an appropriate symbolism look like and what would it involve?

2.1.3 The need of a symbolism for deep syntax

If ordinary language cannot serve as the means to clarification, how can an appropriate symbolism be devised? And what would the relation of this symbolism be to ordinary language? According to the 1929 paper:

> [W]e can only substitute a clear symbolism for the unprecise one by inspecting the phenomena which we want to describe, thus trying to understand their logical multiplicity. That is to say, we can only arrive at a correct analysis by, what might be called, the logical investigation of the phenomena themselves, *i.e.*, in a certain sense *a posteriori*, and not by conjecturing about *a priori* possibilities.[89]

An imprecise symbolism would be an account of the workings of language immediately derived from surface syntax. Such a symbolism would be imprecise in that the forms presented by the surface syntax would not exactly match the

---

[88] SRLF: p. 29.

[89] SRLF: p. 29.

actual forms of logical syntax. An imprecise symbolism would be one exhibiting logical syntax as consisting, for example, in subject-predicate patterns or relational forms.

Wittgenstein argued already in his early writings that it would be misleading to try to derive logical syntax directly from the surface syntax of language. And that such an attempt would end up with an imprecise symbolism. According to the *Tractatus*:

> From [ordinary language, *Umgangssprache*] it is humanly impossible to gather immediately the logic of language.
> Language disguises the thought; so that from the external form of the clothes one cannot infer the form of the thought they clothe, because the external form of the clothes is constructed with quite another object than to let the form of the body be recognized.[90]

The solution to the task of revealing the logic of language involves in the *Tractatus* the employment of a truth-functional symbolism. This symbolism is meant to be applicable not only to the surface syntax of language. Indeed, the syntax of truth-functions is envisaged there as exhibiting combinations of propositions of whatever kind, including of atomic propositions. As such, the Tractarian approach is able to, as it were, by-pass the surface syntax of language. But the focus of this approach remains language, or rather its own structure.

The Tractarian truth-functional approach is meant to by-pass not only the surface syntax of language, but also any inquiry into experience as a correlate of language use. For early Wittgenstein's purely logical account of the workings of language, any resort to experience or phenomena would be a mark that clarificatory activity has already taken a wrong track.[91] The present call for an inspection of phenomena seems to be at odds with a Tractarian approach. There is

---

[90] TLP: 4.002.

[91] Cf. "Our fundamental principle is that every question which can be decided at all by logic can be decided off-hand. | (And if we get into a situation where we need to answer such a problem by looking at the world, this shows that we are fundamentally on a wrong track.) (TLP: 5.551)

indeed at stake a reconsideration of the viability of Tractarian account of logical syntax. This reconsideration amounts to Wittgenstein's paper admitting that the *Tractatus* did not give an entirely satisfactory account of logical grammar in the particular case of colour-exclusion. The syntax of Tractarian logical product is meant to exhibit the syntax of any use of the connective "and" irrespective of the subject-matter of propositions. But the sensitivity of the meanings of connectives to the subject-matter of propositions turned out to be precisely a blind-spot of the Tractarian approach.

By contrast, the investigation called for by Wittgenstein's paper is a posteriori in the sense of being sensitive to the subject-matter of the propositions in the domain of discourse to be clarified. Propositions that account for certain properties of phenomena, properties that admit gradations, turn out to have a particular form, that a purely truth-functional account of their workings does not capture. Along with a scrutiny of phenomena, which are the subject-matter of propositions, the *Tractatus* also by-passed the question of the particular forms of atomic or elementary propositions. While Wittgenstein's paper maintains that the structure of any proposition can be accounted for in terms of truth-functional logic, it also contends that once we are dealing with atomic propositions, the investigation of their forms reveals, at least in certain cases, numbers as part of them.

So a clear symbolism that would avoid misunderstandings turns out to involve not only a truth-functional notation for the combination of propositions but also an appeal to numbers, possibly to equations, to ultimately spell out the forms of atomic propositions.

2.1.4 When does symbolism involve numbers?

The view put forward in the beginning of Wittgenstein's paper is still faithful to the general spirit of the *Tractatus*:

If we try to analyze any given propositions we shall find in general that they are logical sums, products or other truth-functions of simpler propositions.[92]

In early 1929 Wittgenstein still thinks that any language can be scrutinized in terms of truth-functional notation. Any proposition can be regarded as a truth-function of simpler propositions, except for propositions that cannot be further analyzed. Such propositions, atomic propositions, mark the end-point of truth-functional analysis. A truth-functional account of logical grammar provides rules for the combination of propositions, both atomic and complex. Yet, it leaves the question of the inner forms of the simplest propositions, of atomic propositions, aside.

In the *Tractatus*, the question of the forms of atomic propositions is regarded as irrelevant to its task. The forms of atomic propositions are taken to have nothing to do with the ways in which propositions combine with one another. Neither would truth-functional combination have any bearing on the inner forms of atomic propositions, nor would atomic forms influence or restrict at any point or in any case the ways in which propositions combine with one another.[93]

Yet, unlike the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein's paper regards a scrutiny of atomic forms as urgent. This is to be understood not merely as a search for a solution to the colour-exclusion case, now given Wittgenstein's acknowledgment that the *Tractatus* did not succeed in providing a satisfactory account in this respect. Rather, the case of colour-exclusion casts doubt more generally on the tenet that the inner structure of atomic propositions is independent from the ways in which more complex propositions combine with one another. As soon as an account of the forms of atomic propositions turns out to be vital for a viable clarification of the workings of language, an investigation of phenomena is not something that can be by-passed anymore. Clarifying language in cases such as colour-exclusion calls for an attendance to atomic forms, whose finding in its turn

---

[92] SRLF: p. 29.

[93] Cf. WWK / WVC: p. 80.

calls for a consideration of the kinds of phenomena that colour ascriptions are about.[94]

In this respect, Wittgenstein's paper contains not only programmatic and methodological points, but also thematic commitments concerning atomic forms. The incipient logical investigation of phenomena carried out there provides a clue as to what forms atomic propositions involve. Wittgenstein writes:

> And here I wish to make my first definite remark on the logical analysis of the actual phenomena: it is this, that for their representation numbers (rational and irrational) must enter into the structure of the atomic propositions themselves. It is a characteristic of these properties that one degree of them excludes any other.[95]

And a few lines below:

> And numbers will have to enter these forms when – as we should say in ordinary language – we are dealing with properties which admit of gradation, *i.e.*, properties as the length of an interval, the pitch of a tone, the brightness or redness of a shade of colour, etc.[96]

The requirement that numbers must enter the forms of atomic propositions may be puzzling to say the least.[97] Before going into the details of this requirement, it should be observed though, that it is introduced by way of a conditional. It is not

---

[94] In a later conversation recorded by Waismann, Wittgenstein is still convinced that a logical account of phenomena is the only means by which one can reveal the forms of elementary or atomic propositions: "Only when we analyze phenomena logically do we know what form elementary propositions have." (WWK / WVC: p. 42 tr. mod. [dated 22 December 1929].

[95] SRLF: p. 31.

[96] SRLF: p. 32.

[97] However, Wittgenstein's seems to have entertained this view at least until the end of 1929. Cf. "The real number or something similar to the real number can appear in the elementary proposition, and this fact alone proves how completely different the elementary proposition can be from all other propositions." (WWK / WVC: p. 42 [dated 22 December 1929]).

that the form of every atomic proposition must contain numbers, but that it does so only *when* we are dealing with properties which admit of gradation, such as the brightness of a shade of colour.

The specificity of this remark about constituents of atomic forms as concerning solely propositions ascribing degrees may be easily overlooked. Indeed, Hintikka seems to draw a general conclusion that, at this point in his development, "what Wittgenstein has in mind is precisely the invasion of numbers and equations into language-world relations"[98]. Hintikka in fact argues that Wittgenstein at this stage "replaced the truth-function theory by an arithmetic calculus as the mediator between elementary and complex propositions." [99] However, Wittgenstein's remarks above about numbers as constituents of atomic forms are neither that general nor that radical. Again, the view that numbers must enter the forms of atomic propositions is meant for cases that involve the ascription of degrees of a property, such as colour or sound. Further, Wittgenstein does not regard numbers as mediating between elementary, or atomic, propositions and complex, or molecular, propositions. The concern here is only with the question of the forms of atomic propositions. In addition, the beginning of the paper is explicit, as pointed out above, in that the analysis of any proposition ends up with simpler propositions combined in terms of truth-functional logic.

So the requirement that numbers must enter logical forms does not concern atomic propositions in general, but is confined to the domain of atomic propositions which ascribe a degree to a property. Making an unbounded claim even about the forms of atomic propositions in general would go against precisely Wittgenstein's warning. Atomic forms cannot be given a priori. Atomic forms cannot be given otherwise than on the basis of attending to particular domains of discourse and for those particular domains of discourse actually investigated, such as propositions about colours or sounds. These propositions may be quite different in terms of logical forms, from propositions about, say, weather. This particular view does not mark a discontinuity with the *Tractatus*. Yet, the *Tractatus* regards

---

[98] Hintikka (1996 [1988]: p. 86).

[99] *Ibid.*

the investigation of particular atomic forms as amounting not to logic, but to an application of logic. As such, the *Tractatus* does not need to say something definite about the inner structure of atomic propositions, except that they consist of names. How particular names are concatenated within particular atomic propositions is something that an application of logic, falling outside the scope of the *Tractatus*, is to establish.

If the 1929 paper calls for a resort to an inspection of phenomena, it is not a resort to be carried out once and for all, such that atomic forms can be given straightaway, for any domain of discourse. In this sense, Hintikka's view that Wittgenstein replaces a logic of truth-functions with a logic of equations is, from a certain point onwards, misleading. A logic of equations is not put forward as an exclusive approach that would solve the problem of the inner structure of atomic propositions in general. Furthermore, the relations between propositions are still regarded as truth-functional or amenable to a truth-functional account. The requirement that numbers enter atomic forms, if it can be said to involve a logic at all, concerns merely specific atomic propositions ascribing degrees of quality.

The requirement that numbers must enter atomic forms in specific cases is a requirement that specific descriptions of specific phenomena have the right or correct logical multiplicity. A closer look at Wittgenstein's notion of logical multiplicity will shed more light on his call for a clearer symbolism.

2.1.5 Completeness and logical multiplicity

The notion of logical multiplicity, which the *Tractatus* equates with "mathematical multiplicity"[100], involves a correspondence between a description and that which it describes. The 1929 paper characterises as "logical" not only the investigation, but also the very structure of phenomena. Just as it employs the phrase "logical multiplicity" to qualify phenomena too [101] and not only their

---

[100] The Tractarian remark 4.04 mentions Herz as the source of these equivalent notions. The German for "multiplicity" is in the *Tractatus* "Manigfaltigkeit" and in writings around 1929 both "Man(n)igfaltigkeit" and "Multiplizität".

[101] SRLF: p. 30.

description [102] . The logical multiplicity of the phenomenon stands for the multitude of a phenomenon's properties and of their gradations. The logical multiplicity of the description of a phenomenon stands for the reflection of these properties and gradations in the formal construction of the proposition that account for the phenomenon in question.[103]

Already according to the *Tractatus*, any fleck has around it a "colour-space"[104] and, by the same token, any tone has around it a pitch-space, any tactile object a hardness-space etc. That is, any fleck has to have some colour, any tone some pitch, any tactile object some hardness. Any phenomenon lies in a spectrum of pertinent possibilities, it has a range of possible properties. These properties in their turn have a range of possible configurations or, in some cases, possible gradations. Now, the paper calls for an investigation of the gradations, transitions, and combinations of phenomena and their properties. Accordingly, a precise symbolism involves one's giving atomic propositions that have the correct multiplicity. An atomic proposition has the correct multiplicity if it is able to account in principle not only for the *actual* properties (e.g. redness or round shape) of a phenomenon (e.g. a visual fleck), but also for its *possible* pertinent properties (i.e. its possible greenness or its possible square shape). Moreover, the proposition has to be capable to account in principle not only for these properties' *actual* gradations (e.g. a particular brightness of red), but also for their other *possible* pertinent gradations (i.e. other possible brightness of red). In the case of atomic propositions ascribing degrees, their having the right multiplicity requires that numbers are part of their logical construction. This is because the relation between numbers, unlike truth-functional relations, is able to reflect in the symbolism the exclusion between degrees. If a phenomenon is of a certain colour of a certain degree, that already excludes that its colour is of any other degree. Just

---

[102] SRLF: p. 31.

[103] Cf. "The multiplicity of spatial description is intrinsically given by the fact that the description has the right multiplicity when it is capable to describe all conceivable configurations." (Ms 106: p. 69 [Pichler (1994): ≈ March – April 1929].)

[104] TLP: 2.0131.

as, if a person is of a certain height, that already excludes that the same person is of any other height.

It is not only a symbolism accounting for colours that involves numbers, but also a symbolism accounting for the position and shape of a fleck. An account of the position and shape of a fleck can be given by way of the atomic proposition "[6-9, 3-8] R", where "R" stands for "red" and "6-9" and "3-8" are the abscissa and ordinate intervals of the fleck in a coordinate system. Wittgenstein admits that this description is "not complete" because it does not take into account time, among other possible aspects of the phenomenon. Furthermore, the employment of two-dimensional space by this account may not be viable to every clarificatory purpose. This description of the position and shape of a phenomenon is an overly simplified one. Its rationale is, however, to point in the direction of the kind of symbolism required. Above all, the description exemplifies how numbers, given that they must enter atomic forms, are to actually appear in the symbolism to be devised.

Despite its not being complete, Wittgenstein finds it "clear that this description will have the right logical multiplicity, and that a description which has a smaller multiplicity will not do".[105] So in order to be complete, a description must have the right multiplicity, but it need not be complete in order to have the right multiplicity. The criterion for a description having the right multiplicity is set by the particular purpose of devising a symbolism on a particular occasion. If the purpose is to account for the shape and position of the phenomenon, then a description such as the one above involving numbers already has the right multiplicity. Such a description accounts for the minimal features of the phenomenon which are relevant to its shape and position. The description yet falls short of completeness. But it is not clear how completeness may be achieved at least in the context of the paper. Wittgenstein does not give further indications as to what may be decisive in regarding a description as complete or not. If a complete description requires an account of each and every possible feature of a phenomenon, and not only of those that are relevant to a particular clarificatory

---

[105] SRLF: p. 31.

aim, it is difficult to see how or indeed whether a description can ever be regarded as complete in this sense. This notion of completeness may be one of the reasons why Wittgenstein was in the end dissatisfied with the paper. What remains clear in his example is that some descriptions may be at least dismissed on the basis of their having a smaller multiplicity than the one required by their purpose. For instance, trying to describe the position and shape of a fleck by accounting merely for its coordinates on the abscissa in the system will obviously not suffice.

A description with a greater or higher multiplicity is also to be regarded as inadequate. This is the diagnosis of the attempt to account for colour-exclusion in terms of a modified truth-table for logical product. In that case, the first line, namely *T T F*, is characterized as giving "a greater multiplicity than that of the actual possibilities"[106]. That is, such a modified table mismatches the possible ways in which Tractarian logical product handles truth-values.

In this respect, the paper has an open end, calling for further inquiry in order to arrive at an appropriate symbolism, with the correct logical multiplicity. The emphasis is on the need for an "analysis of the phenomena in question [which], as we all know, has not yet been achieved"[107]. The trajectory and at least incipient achievements of such an analysis are yet envisaged in the paper:

> If, now, we try to get an actual analysis, we find logical forms which have very little similarity with the norms of ordinary language. We meet with the forms of space and time with the whole manifold of spatial and temporal objects, as colours, sounds, etc., etc., with their gradations, continuous transitions, and combinations in various proportions, all of which we cannot seize by our ordinary means of expression.[108]

This emphasis on the need for an actual analysis goes hand in hand with the previous view that ordinary language is not a viable means of philosophical expression or a viable tool for clarification. While logical forms have little

---

[106] SRLF: p. 35.

[107] SRLF: p. 35.

[108] SRLF: p. 31.

similarity with the norms of ordinary language, Wittgenstein's paper, envisages, as it were, a deep account of the structure of language. This account would be sensitive to the inner forms of atomic propositions. According to the incipient inquiry of the paper, the forms of atomic propositions ascribing degrees contain numbers. What the forms of other atomic propositions are remains an open question at this stage.

What is, however, established is that an account of atomic forms is inseparable from a consideration of kinds of phenomena that analyzed propositions describe. Insofar as phenomena are the subject-matter of analyzed propositions, they share their logical forms with the latter. The connection between a scrutiny of the structure of phenomena as clarificatory means and the finding of atomic forms as clarificatory end is maintained by Wittgenstein in other sources from the same period as well. A remark of Wittgenstein recorded by Waismann later in 1929 reads:

> Only when we analyze phenomena logically shall we know what form elementary propositions have. Here is an area where there is no hypothesis.[109]

This remark supports the requirement of a logical analysis of phenomena while introducing a further element: the notion of hypothesis. In what follows, I will discuss Wittgenstein's conception of hypothesis as central to his view on ordinary language in his manuscripts from 1929 onwards and further sources. The notion of hypothesis will prove itself to be decisive in understanding the relation between his approach to ordinary language and his idea of phenomenological language in this period.

---

[109] WWK / WVC: p. 42 tr. mod. [dated 22 December 1929].

2.2 Ordinary propositions as hypothesis-laden descriptions

Manuscripts from roughly the same period as Wittgenstein's paper present a distrust, similar to the one above, with ordinary language. Not only does he insist that a clarification of the workings of language cannot focus solely on this form of expression, which cannot serve as a means for philosophical expression. The manuscripts emphasize that philosophical clarification involves a systematic account of the structure of reality or phenomena. The unreliability of ordinary language as the sole focus or means of analysis was thematized in the paper in that ordinary language was said to disguise logical structure. The manuscripts make the same point by readdressing the relation between ordinary language on the one hand and reality or phenomena on the other hand. Ordinary language is seen as shedding a distorting light on objects:

> All our forms of speech are taken from normal physicalist [normalen physikalischen] language and are not to be used in theory of knowledge or phenomenology without casting a distorting light on the object.[110]

This section will proceed as follows. First, I will present an interpretative puzzle posed by Wittgenstein's twofold characterization of ordinary language as "physikalische" and as "hypothetical" (subsection 2.2.1). Then I will argue that part of this difficulty is already removed if one takes "hypothesis" as a technical notion. I will discuss two models of hypothesis, one as informing a conception that Wittgenstein opposes, the other as informing a conception that he endorses. The latter conception accounts for ordinary propositions as multifaceted grammatical structures (subsection 2.2.2). Then I will explore the account that the conception of hypothesis provides for the sense and truth of ordinary propositions (subsection 2.2.3.). This account will turn out to be complicated by Wittgenstein's regarding phenomena and situations in their turn as having a multifaceted structure (subsection 2.2.4).

---

[110] Ms 107: p. 160 [dated 11 October 1929] / PR: § 57 tr. mod.

2.2.1 Physikalische Sprache and its characterization as hypothetical

The terms "physicalist" in the previous quote may strike one as unusual in conjunction with the notion of language. In the manuscripts the term "physikalisch" often qualifies not only the notion of "language", but also notions, which will be discussed later on, such as "space". In connection to the notion of "language", the word "physikalisch" has been often translated as "physical", both in translations of manuscripts from this period[111] and in secondary literature[112]. This translation may invite a misunderstanding of the status of "physikalische Sprache". "Physikalische Sprache" is not strictly meant by Wittgenstein as the discourse of physics. "Physikalische Sprache" is further qualified above as normal. "Physikalische Sprache" is normal in that it has a colloquial, everyday, or ordinary use. But "physikalische Sprache" is not confined to ordinary uses. Wittgenstein's conception not only allows for, but considers, an overlap between language in ordinary use and the discourse of the sciences, particularly that of physics.[113] Yet he is concerned not with the question of which words or sentences may be used in one as well as in other forms of discourse. What is at stake here is an objectifying function of language, whether used ordinarily or within the sciences. The question of this commonality between ordinary discourse and the discourse of physics is touched upon by Wittgenstein's conception of hypothesis.

Surprisingly, this conception has not received much attention in the literature. Even among readings which do give some attention to the notion of hypothesis, there is a wide disagreement as to what it amounts to. One view is that Wittgenstein is concerned with scientific hypotheses, that is, "hypotheses

---

[111] See, for instance, the original translation of the above quote in the *Philosophical Remarks* § 57.

[112] See, for instance, the recurrent translation of "physikalisch" as "physical" in Hintikka (1996).

[113] According to Noë, the discourse of physics *includes* language in ordinary use: "It is plausible to suppose that under the rubric 'physics' Wittgenstein included ordinary talk about physical objects." (Noë 1997: p. 10.) But the opposite would be a better way to put it, given that Wittgenstein's remarks on ordinary language by far outnumber the ones concerned with physics. Or perhaps talking in terms of inclusion is itself misleading here, while seeing the relation at stake in terms of an overlap does most justice to Wittgenstein's view.

from physics, physiology, and empirical psychology"[114]. Another view is that for Wittgenstein hypotheses are to be understood as prejudices[115]. What is generally agreed upon is that, at this point in his development, Wittgenstein aims at providing a philosophical method in order to avoid hypotheses, whatever they may amount to. As suggested by the above two readings, the oscillation in the interpretation of the conception of hypotheses is closely tied to an oscillation in the interpretation of "physikalische Sprache", as either a medium for expression in science or an ordinary means of expression.

In what follows, I attempt to provide an account of Wittgenstein's conception of hypothesis by focusing primarily on two sources, where this conception is unfolded at length. One source is constituted by parts of the manuscripts 105, 107, and 108 which contain relevant remarks written at various points mostly during 1929 and early 1930. The other source is constituted by a series of conversations of Wittgenstein recorded by Waismann from late 1929 onwards. My claim is that the notion of hypothesis is a technical term for Wittgenstein. Indeed, it has recently been argued that a historical source of Wittgenstein's concern with hypotheses is a lecture of Brower, arguably attended by Wittgenstein in 1928.[116] Furthermore, Wittgenstein was explicitly concerned with the way in which his own conception of hypothesis differs from one developed by Poincaré.[117]

One can start by observing that the notion of hypothesis is not confined by Wittgenstein to the discourse of the sciences but rather qualifies ordinary language:

Every proposition that we express in ordinary life seems to have the character of a hypothesis.[118]

---

[114] Spiegelberg ([1968] 1981: p. 216).

[115] Kienzler argues that Wittgenstein's phenomenology seeks a prejudice-free description [vorurteilsfreie Beschreibung] (Kienzler 1997: p. 106).

[116] Cf. Marion (2008).

[117] Cf. WWK / WVC: p. 211.

[118] Ms 107: p. 249 [dated 20 January 1930].

This remark already questions a reading of the notion of hypothesis as concerning strictly or solely a domain of discourse of a particular science. On the other hand, hypotheses do not simply amount to prejudices. While such and such a proposition can be regarded on a particular occasion to be a prejudice, Wittgenstein is qualifying every ordinary proposition as a hypothesis.

While characterizing ordinary propositions in terms of hypotheses, Wittgenstein is in fact putting forward a grammatical account, meant to spell out their objectifying tendency along with their complex structure. The conversations recorded by Waismann provide two models of hypothesis that will be explored here.

2.2.2 Hypothesis as multifaceted grammatical structure

The models of hypothesis that the Waismann conversations provide seem quite similar at first sight. However, they inform divergent conceptions. One of these models informs a conception which Wittgenstein opposes. The other informs a conception which he endorses. The first model is the following:

> On a field of ruins fragments of columns, capitals, pediments are dug up and it is said: That was a temple. The fragments are completed, gaps are filled up in the imagination, lines are traced. This is a likeness for a hypothesis.[119]

In the recorded conversation there follows a drawing of a column, several parts of which are missing and are only sketched. According to this model, a hypothesis seems to be an incomplete construction. Some of its fragments have been lost or at least have not been conserved in the original form.

This likeness informs the following conception of hypothesis, which Wittgenstein does not endorse. According to this conception, an ordinary statement is a hypothesis in that its truth is not firmly established. It may be that

---

[119] WWK / WVC: p. 210 [dated 1 July 1932].

one may have not checked all pertinent situations which may help in firmly establishing the truth of the statement in the first place. Or perhaps some situations, although considered to be crucial to such an establishment, have not been accessible somehow. It may seem that the criterion for the establishment of truth of an ordinary proposition is, as Wittgenstein puts it, a historical one[120]. In this light the truth of an ordinary proposition as a hypothesis may be regarded as more or less firmly established, according to how much evidence is available or has been gathered for or against it.

Wittgenstein is reluctant to endorse such a notion of hypothesis because he is reluctant to endorse a notion of truth coming in degrees. Thus he states: "according to my conception, however, a hypothesis is from the outset a completely different grammatical structure"[121].

The other model of hypothesis, which informs a conception that Wittgenstein endorses, is the following:

A hypothesis always has different sides [Seiten] or different sections [Schnitte], like a three-dimensional body, which can be projected in different ways.[122]

According to this model, the hypothesis is not incomplete. As a three-dimensional body, it has different sides or different sections. The multitude of sides or sections of a hypothesis, may yet invite a misunderstanding as to its relation to reality. The many ways in which a hypothesis can be projected against reality may be taken as many ways in which it can be verified. But this would still involve an assumption of the questioned conception of hypothesis, according to which there may be alternative and possibly conflicting situations that are relevant for the establishment of the truth or falsity of one and the same proposition. Wittgenstein regards this as a mere appearance: "in cases where we appear to have verified the

---

[120] Ibid.

[121] Ibid.

[122] WWK / WVC: p. 159.

same proposition in different ways, we have in reality verified different cross-sections of the same hypothesis"[123].

Wittgenstein does not deny that a hypothesis can be said to agree or disagree with reality. Nor does he deny that in ordinary life propositions can be rightly said to be true or false. What he wants to keep apart is an ordinary sense of truth and falsehood from a technical sense which involves verification. As seen in a moment, to apply the method of verification to a hypothesis is misleading. Only the facets of a hypothesis can be verified. Verification involves the isolation of these facets from one another and their comparison with immediate experience.

2.2.3 The sense and the truth of a hypothesis

The notion of hypothesis as a multifaceted grammatical structure is tied to Wittgenstein's conception of the sense of ordinary propositions as their agreement and disagreement with reality or experience. What an ordinary proposition means cannot be decided off-hand, apart from the way in which it is actually used on particular situations. If there is something necessary in order for a proposition to have sense, it is that it agrees or disagrees with reality somehow. The particular way in which it does agree or disagree settles the question of what sense it actually has:

> All that is necessary [nötig] for our propositions (about reality) to have sense, is that our experience *in some sense or other* agrees with them or does not agree with them. That is, immediate experience must confirm only something about them, *some* facet [Facette] of them. And in fact this picture is immediately taken from reality, since we say 'There is a chair here', when we only see *one* side of it.[124]

In order for a proposition like "There is a chair here" to have sense, what is necessary is that this proposition have some contact with experience. This contact need not amount strictly to an agreement with experience, in which case the

---

[123] Ibid.

[124] Ms 107: p. 205 [dated 25 November 1929] / PR: § 225 tr. mod.

proposition would count as a true one. The proposition may also make contact with experience by disagreeing with it. In this case, the proposition would be false, yet it would still have sense. Both the truth/falsity and the sense of the proposition are settled by the particular way in which it is meant or taken.

The contact established between the proposition "There is a chair here" and the situation satisfies the minimal requirement that the proposition has sense. The proposition may be meant as part of an inventory of the furniture in a room. Or it may be meant as an answer to a request to point out objects of a certain colour. Or indicate obstacles of considerable size that are in the way. What counts as the proposition having any one of these particular senses is given by what is pertinent for its counting as a true or false proposition. The chair in the particular situation may well be counted as part of the furniture in the room. This can be done without indicating its being of a particular colour. Or the chair may be of the colour invoked by the request without its counting as an obstacle of considerable size and thus in need of being removed out of the way. The proposition "There is a chair here" may have different senses and it may be true or false in different ways according to how it is actually meant or taken. That a situation makes available a side of the chair only satisfies the requirement that the proposition has some contact with experience. That is, that among the possible uses of the proposition there are pertinent ones on a certain occasion.

These different ways of meaning or taking the proposition count as different facets of the hypothesis as a grammatical construction. Pushing Wittgenstein's model further, one could say that a survey of the pertinent senses of a proposition in a given situation would involve a rotation of the hypothesis as a multifaceted structure in three-dimensional space. When the proposition counts as true, one particular facet depicts what a particular situation makes available. The question of the contact between a proposition and a situation is more complicated, since Wittgenstein conceives also of phenomena and situations as multi-facetted grammatical structures.

2.2.4 Multifaceted phenomena unified by a hypothesis

On the one hand, Wittgenstein regards a hypothesis as a multi-dimensional grammatical structure. On the other hand, he regards phenomena and situations accounted for by hypotheses as having multi-dimensional structures. For example, a conversation recorded by Waismann reads:

> Phenomena are simply different facets [Facetten], which are unified [verbunden] by a hypothesis.[125]

The view can be spelled out against the background of the same example of the chair he gives in manuscript. A chair is not ordinarily seen from several angles at the same time. This may be thought to be achieved perhaps, by way of a system of mirrors. But this would still not make available every angle from which the chair can be seen. For example, certain sides of the seat and of the legs would still remain unseen. Above all, the notion of "facets" does not simply stand for visual sides of the chair, for what one may see when looking at a chair. There are also facets which may not immediately come to one's mind, yet which may well be the subject-matter of discourse about a chair. For instance, its volume. Or its weight. Other features count as facets of the chair as phenomenon and each of these may be the subject-matter of discourse on various occasions.

What is at stake here is not a metaphysical claim that the chair itself somehow consists of all facets that may be the subject-matter of discourse. That is, that the chair has inherent features, each of which may be accounted for sooner or later on a pertinent occasion. Nor is this a claim that the facets of the chair could turn out to be infinite. That is, that the chair would be made up of an infinite number of features, lying inherently in or as a chair.

This view of phenomena as multitude of facets is rather a grammatical device meant to account for the fact that one and the same content of experience makes available a multitude of ordinary descriptions. Just as the view of hypothesis as a multidimensional grammatical structure is meant to account for

---

[125] WWK / WVC: p. 161 tr. mod. [dated 4 January 1931].

the fact that one and the same ordinary proposition can be meant or taken in a multitude of ways. Wittgenstein makes this point not only with regard to particular phenomena, but also with regard to more complex situations. Like phenomena, situations provide a multitude of features that make them describable in a multitude of ways. Like the facets of a phenomenon, the features or "symptoms" of a situation make available alternative descriptions by way of one and the same hypothesis. The talk of symptoms is occasioned, in Waismann's recordings, by a question Schlick poses to Wittgenstein. Schlick first mentions propositions of physics and the fact that they can be verified in different ways. He asks: "How can one in general say that *one* proposition is verified in different ways?"[126] Then he suggests that it is the laws of nature that connect the different kinds of verification. Wittgenstein's answer immediately moves the question into the field of ordinary life:

> Just a minute! That does not occur only in science, does it?, but also in everyday life. For instance, I hear piano-playing in the next room and say, 'My brother is in that room'. If I were now asked how I knew, I would answer, 'He told me that he would be in the next room at that time'. Or, 'I heard the piano being played and I recognize his way of playing'. Or 'Just now I heard steps that sounded just like his' etc. Now it seems as if I verified the same sentence in ways that were different every time. But this is not so. What I have verified are different symptoms of something else. (I have called them 'symptoms' in my manuscript). The playing of the piano, the steps, etc. are symptoms of my brother's presence.[127]

The hypothesis as grammatical structure unifies not only multiple facets of one and the same phenomenon, but also multiple features of one and the same situation. The question is not how many features a certain situation affords or offers. Nor is it that one situation may afford or offer an infinity of features.

---

[126] WWK / WVC: p. 158 tr. mod. [dated 4 January 1931].

[127] WWK / WVC: pp. 158-159. For a further use of the notion of "symptom" in relation to the one of hypothesis in the manuscript, cf. e.g. Ms 108: p. 141 [dated 1 May 1930].

Features rather count as contents of experience made available by particular occasions. Such contents may be the visual image of a person in front of a piano, sounds of the piano, or sounds of steps. Now it may seem that one and the same proposition, "My brother is in that room", can be verified in different ways, according to which features of the presence of the piano-player are made available by the situation. But Wittgenstein replies that it is not the proposition itself that is verified in different ways. What is verified is each time a different symptom of the situation. The aim of Wittgenstein's answer is twofold. On the one hand, it counteracts Schlick's suggestion that each time it is one and the same proposition that is verified in different ways. On the other hand, it counteracts Schlick's surmise that the unity of these different ways of verification is given by a physical law.

The latter concern is not only with the unity of ordinary propositions, but, as the beginning of Wittgenstein's answer suggests, also with propositions of science. Indeed, his conception of hypothesis informs a way to account for a certain commonality or overlap between the use of propositions both in ordinary life and in science. However, in neither of the two cases does his account of this commonality appeal to scientific insights or laws. It may be tempting – as evinced by Schlick's question – to take the unity of multiple ways to verify a proposition as given by laws of nature or laws expressed by physics. This may suggest that the unity of the chair as phenomenon is due to laws such as that of gravity, according to which the chair will remain on the floor provided nobody lifts it. Or due to laws concerning the continuity of matter, according to which, the physical constitution of the chair will remain unchanged, provided nobody tears it apart or sets it on fire. Wittgenstein does not deny that such accounts of the unity of phenomena can be given. His account of the unity at stake is, however, grammatical. The notion of hypothesis as grammatical structure is meant to make intelligible how different verifications can be carried out by comparison with reality, while none of these is a verification of the hypothesis, but each time of a different facet of it. If a hypothesis can be explicated in different ways, that does not mean that the hypothesis does not account for one and the same phenomenon. If different grounds can be given for asserting that someone is

playing the piano in another room, that does not mean that each time it is a different person that is talked about, or that each time it is another room that is invoked.

So far we have seen that, while the 1929 paper regards ordinary language as disguising logical structure, subsequent sources put forward an account of ordinary propositions as having a hypothetical grammatical structure, which sheds further light on the mode of this disguise. The paper approaches ordinary language in terms of a difference between surface, apparent syntax and actual, logical syntax. Subsequent sources approach ordinary propositions in terms of multifaceted grammatical structures, each of these facets amounting to a mode of projection of an ordinary proposition on to reality. From both the paper and subsequent sources explored so far, a grammatical account of ordinary language transpires, according to which ordinary propositions have a certain depth or multidimensionality. It is this depth or multidimensionality that makes ordinary language, at this point in Wittgenstein's development, unreliable as a means of philosophical expression or as the sole focus of the activity of clarification.

Wittgenstein's qualification of ordinary propositions as hypotheses shows that the latter notion does not stand for hypothetical entities or approaches from physics, physiology, and empirical psychology, as previously suggested in the literature. Hypotheses in his use of the term are not mere prejudices either. Wittgenstein's characterization of both ordinary propositions and propositions from physics as hypotheses, nonetheless, points to a certain commonality between such diverse uses of language. Both ordinary uses of language and the discourse of physics account for the content of experience in terms of physical objects. In ordinary language, this objectifying tendency is the corollary of its surface grammar presenting subject-predicate forms. Ascribing a predicate to a subject, or a property to an object seems to be a basic form of utterance. Likewise physics – or perhaps rather mechanics, which Wittgenstein seems to have in mind primarily when referring to physics – accounts for relations between physical objects, their behaviour under certain circumstances, and laws governing such relations and behaviours.

This conception of hypothesis involves an attempt to account for the structure of language and its workings. This conception, however, amounts only to one half of the account. The other half is given by the notion of phenomenological language. The next section will discuss this notion against the background of the conception of hypothesis introduced above.

2.3 Phenomenological statements as hypothesis-free descriptions

Elucidating the notion of phenomenological language boils down, in the end, to an elucidation of its relation to ordinary language. This is indeed an interpretive tenet at work also in the extensive writings of Hintikka on the subject. Hintikka suggests that the distinction between physicalist and phenomenological language is in fact a distinction between an object-oriented, public identification of persons, events, places etc. and an ostensive identification in terms of demonstratives such as "this" or "that"[128]. He insists that "we are not dealing with two different classes of objects in the usual sense of the word but with two modes of identification".[129] Hintikka's focus on the idea of phenomenological language is motivated, however, by an attempt to trace a strong continuity between Wittgenstein's early writings and the works around 1929. The main claim meant to substantiate this continuity is that phenomenological language is not a new concern for Wittgenstein from 1929 onwards. Rather, it is a concern implicitly present in the *Tractatus*, where phenomenological language constitutes the bottom end of logical analysis.[130]

According to the first chapter above, Wittgenstein's conception of phenomenology is, in contrast to Hintikka's interpretation, motivated by his dissatisfaction with the Tractarian account of logical grammar. The present reconstruction of his conception of phenomenology, however, is consistent with the idea of a minimal continuity between various stages of his development. This minimal continuity amounts to the fact that the aim of both early Wittgenstein's method of analysis and the explicit conception of phenomenological language is

---

[128] Hintikka (1996: pp. 75-76).

[129] Hintikka (1996: pp. 219-220).

[130] This is a recurrent claim in Hintikka & Hintikka (1986).

philosophical clarification. The means of the two approaches are, nonetheless, quite different from one another. The Tractarian logical analysis is meant to be carried out, as it were, vertically throughout language. This analysis accounts for the composition of molecular propositions from simpler and simpler propositions, until atomic propositions are thus reached. The idea of phenomenological language involves an analysis of ordinary language in a novel way. This analysis amounts to an isolation of facets of ordinary propositions which have a multidimensional grammatical structure. Essentially, these facets are not bound together in ways to be expressed by rules of syntax provided by Tractarian truth-tables. At the same time, Wittgenstein does not account for a unity of ordinary language as the unity of hypotheses by way of a Tractarian general form of the proposition.

The conception of hypothesis as central to the relation between phenomenological and ordinary language is virtually missing from Hintikka's reading of this relation. However, according to one of Wittgenstein's most straightforward remarks on phenomenological language, the notion of hypothesis is clearly central in this respect:

> Phenomenological language: the description of the immediate sense-perception without hypothetical addition [hypothetische Zutat].[131]

The term "hypothesis" appears here in an attributive form, qualifying a possible addition. An addition to what? From the angle of phenomenological language, its relation to ordinary language appears as involving an addition: the addition of a hypothetical element to a description of immediate perception. From the angle of ordinary language, its relation to phenomenological language appears as involving a subtraction or, as Wittgenstein will put it, an "isolation". That is, a subtraction or an isolation of facets of an ordinary proposition.

The present section will proceed as follows. First I will revisit the view that hypotheses are not themselves verifiable. Wittgenstein reserves the notion of

---

[131] Ms 113: p. 123r [dated 19 May 1932].

verification for phenomenological statements, namely, for the facets of hypotheses. The category of verification is tied to a particular notion of truth and falsity (subsection 2.3.1). Then I will suggest that, while phenomenological language is restricted to what is verifiable, this requires that such a language needs to be richer than a form of expression consisting purely in demonstratives, as Hintikka characterizes it (subsection 2.3.2). Indeed, in order that a phenomenological statement be verifiable, it needs to consist in a facet of an ordinary proposition, which is a description of the actual data of experience. Verification requires not only an isolation of facets of hypotheses, but also a twofold isolation on the side of experience. This is the isolation of sensory fields from one another and the isolation of actually available facets of phenomena from the ones that are not actually available at a given moment (subsection 2.3.3).

2.3.1 The verification of phenomenological statements

The concern with the isolation of the facets of a hypothesis is tied with Wittgenstein's specific use of the category of verification. His account of ordinary language turned out at several points above to oppose the application of the category of verification to ordinary propositions or hypotheses. The hypothesis is not itself verified in different ways by comparison with different aspects of experience. What is actually verified is each time a different facet of a hypothesis. The first model of hypothesis in terms of a fragmentary column was one which informed a conception of hypothesis as incomplete, whose truth would come in degrees and would be established more or less firmly, according to the amount of relevant evidence. The second model of hypothesis, that of a three-dimensional object, opposed this view of truth coming in degrees. This latter model of hypothesis in the Waismann conversations finds further substantiation in the manuscripts, where Wittgenstein writes:

> If I say that a hypothesis is not definitively verifiable, by that it is *not* meant that there is a verification for it which one may approach ever more nearly, without ever reaching it. That is nonsense and one into which one often lapses. Rather a hypothesis has with reality simply

another formal relation than that of verification. Hence, of course, here the words 'true' and 'false' are also not to be applied, or have a different meaning.[132]

Verification does not admit degrees, as the wrong application of this category to a hypothesis would suggest. The clarification of the workings of a hypothesis as a multidimensional grammatical structure does not need a complete inventory of the ways in which a hypothesis can agree or disagree with reality. What is needed is to account for particular ways in which a hypothesis can be projected against reality. According to a manner of projection, one specific facet of the hypothesis – namely, a way in which the hypothesis may be meant or taken – is considered and compared with pertinent features of the phenomenon.

If the hypothesis has with reality a different formal relation from that of verification, then the categories of truth and falsity established by verification are not be to applied to the hypothesis either. Or, if these categories are applied to the hypothesis, then they must have a quite different meaning from the case when they are applied to a proposition that can itself be verified. Which are the propositions that are true or false in the sense of verification?

True and false are only the findings through verification, i.e. the phenomenological statements.[133]

Phenomenological statements are true and false in the sense of verifiable, but they are not readily available, in the sense in which ordinary propositions are. It is through an analysis of ordinary propositions that phenomenological statements are given. How can phenomenological statements be given?

The finding of phenomenological statements involves an isolation of the facets of an ordinary proposition. The ordinary proposition "There is a chair here" can be explicated in terms of diverse descriptions of the content of experience. As Wittgenstein puts it, one may say "There is a chair here" when one may see only a

---

[132] Ms 107: p. 254 [dated 23 January 1930] / PR: § 228 tr. mod.

[133] WWK/WVC: p. 101 [dated 22 April 1930].

side of the chair. This side, however, has certain features that enables the recognition of the content of experience as a chair. The ordinary proposition in question, according to how it is used on the particular occasion, may account for some of these features considered relevant at a given moment. For example, that the chair has a certain hardness and that one can sit on it. Or, that the chair has a certain colour and that it can be arranged so that it matches other pieces of furniture of a similar palette. Phenomenological statements, amounting to such different facets of the hypothesis, pinpoint these particular accounts of the content of experience and exhibit their immediate correlation with it. A proposition meant to account for the red colour of a chair, purified of hypothetical addition, yields a phenomenological statement about a fleck of red colour. This fleck has a certain shape and size and a certain place in the visual field. The finding of phenomenological statements involves not only an isolation of facets of hypothesis. It involves also a restriction to what is verifiable by comparison to experience.

2.3.2 The restriction to what is verifiable

The motivation for the isolation of facets of ordinary propositions so that one reaches phenomenological propositions also leads to a concern of Wittgenstein's with the status of hypotheses as presentations or descriptions of the world:

> The hypothesis is only an assumption upon the [~~practical~~ | correct ?] mode of presentation.
>> Is now this hypothetical [element] essential to every description of the world?[134]

According to the initial version of this remark, a hypothesis is an assumption upon a practical mode of presenting a phenomenon or a situation. According to Wittgenstein's subsequent correction of the remark, the hypothesis is an assumption upon the correct mode of presentation. However, this does not seem

---

[134] Ms 105: p. 108 [Pichler (1994): ≈ August 1929].

to be a satisfactory formulation either: the question mark added with the correction is indicative in this respect. But the crucial question is not whether the assumption is upon a practical or correct mode of presentation in everyday life. The main question is whether the assumptions involved by hypotheses in general are essential to every description or presentation of the world, or, in particular cases, of a given phenomenon.

The clarification of language involves a separation of what is essential and what is not essential to describing or presenting a phenomenon. Phenomenological language is meant to capture what is essential to a description or presentation. As such, it leaves any addition or assumption aside. This is envisaged as being achieved by way of a restriction to describing or presenting only what can be verified:

> The phenomenological language describes the very same [thing] as the ordinary, physicalist one. It must only restrict itself [*sich beschränken*] to what is verifiable.[135]

In what sense does phenomenological language describe what ordinary language describes? Phenomenological and ordinary language account for the same "thing" in that, say, coloured flecks isolated by the former are nothing else than facets of a phenomenon described by the later. While it is yielded by an analysis of a discourse about physical objects into a discourse about flecks, shapes, or colours, phenomenological language does not account for a different world than the one that ordinary language describes. However, phenomenological language restricts itself to that which is verifiable, namely, the availability of such flecks, shapes, or colours.

Let us consider in this respect Hintikka's view on the relation between ordinary and phenomenological language. In his view, ordinary language identifies phenomena in terms of an object-oriented, public identification of phenomena or events, such as chairs and situations of someone playing a piano.

---

[135] Ms 105: p. 108 [Pichler (1994): ≈ August 1929].

Phenomenological language identifies the same phenomena or events along the lines of demonstratives.

Now, if that meant that phenomenological statements consisted of mere indications such as "this" or "that", it would still be unclear how or why phenomenological language is meant to restrict itself to what it verifiable. For, identifying a chair while uttering "This" or "That" does not provide enough propositional content to make what is actually meant readily available. In ordinary use, the wider linguistic context and the particular occasion of uttering a proposition may indeed provide enough indication as to what "This" or "That" is meant to identify. But if phenomenological statements were meant to restrict themselves to demonstratives like "this" or "that", then this restriction would at the same time involve their losing the grip upon reality. In order that phenomenological statements be qualifiable as true or false and that phenomenological language be a verifiable discourse, these statements and this language need to involve more than just a use of demonstratives. The scope of phenomenological language needs, in the end, to be richer than the scope of demonstratives while that which phenomenological language is verified against needs to be poorer than the content of ordinary experience. I will try to clarify this by arguing that the construction of phenomenological language involves not only an analysis of ordinary propositions, but also an analysis or an isolation on the side of experience.

2.3.3 Verification and isolation

Wittgenstein conceives of phenomenological language by contrast to ordinary language not only with respect to the hypothetical addition of the latter, but also with regard to their ways of accounting for the content of different fields of perception:

> Our ordinary language is also phenomenological, only that it does not allow apprehensibly to isolate [*trennen*] the sensory fields [...].

Its space is the combined visual-, tactile-, and muscular-feeling-space, whence I can in this space 'turn around' and look at 'what goes on behind me' etc.[136]

Phenomenological language is a description of phenomena or situations that does isolate sensory fields from one another. This isolation goes hand in hand with the isolation of the facets of hypotheses. By contrast, an ordinary proposition about a chair draws not merely on a visual perception of the chair, but also on tactile perception and even motor perception insofar as the chair is an object that affords one's sitting on it. Here we have an indication of the source or nature of the hypothetical addition that Wittgenstein finds at play in ordinary language. There are two correlative ways of understanding this addition. On the one hand, much of what ordinary propositions say about physical objects cannot be immediately verified against the content of perception. What can be said without being verifiable is the addition to what is verifiable here and now, to phenomenological statements about flecks and colours and sounds. On the other hand, the hypothetical addition contained by ordinary language as opposed to phenomenological language is due to the former's not allowing for an isolation of sensory fields.

The isolation of sensory fields from one another is an approach Wittgenstein envisages to get to the actual data of perception. It is a description of the data of perception that would be void of hypotheses. This would be a description confined to, say, the data of visual perception, isolated from the data of, say, aural perception. If the hypothetical structure of ordinary language is due to the combination of sensory fields, then the hypothetical addition can be eliminated by isolating data provided by one sensory field from data provided by other sensory fields.

The hypothetical character of ordinary language is due not only to the addition of data from different sensory fields to one another. There is also an addition of different kinds of data from within one and the same sensory field.

---

[136] Ms 107: p. 3 [Pichler (1994): September – December 1929].

This is why the isolation to be performed in order to get to a phenomenological language is twofold: inter-sensorial and intra-sensorial. Wittgenstein refers more explicitly to the inter-sensorial isolation involved by phenomenological language:

> [P]henomenological language isolates [*trennt* | *isoliert*] visual space and what goes on in it from everything else.[137]

This is not to say that phenomenological language is to provide an exclusive account of visual space. It can just as well provide an account of tactile-space, that is, of tactile sensations, while isolating it from other sensory fields. However, it is true that Wittgenstein's reflections on phenomenology and phenomenological language pay most attention to vision among perceptual modalities. In this case, the isolation of visual-space from tactile-space is just one of the prerequisites of analysis. In this respect, the visual data of a phenomenon would have to be accounted for apart from its tactile data, olfactory data and other data provided by further sensory modalities.

The other moment of the analysis required by phenomenological language is the intra-sensorial isolation. This involves a distinction between what ordinary language invokes with regard to the visual perception of a phenomenon and what the immediate visual experience actually provides. In the example of the chair, Wittgenstein considers that what immediate visual experience makes available is in fact just one side of the chair. Other sides, such as the back side, are not readily available at a given moment in immediate experience. However, in ordinary propositions, the chair is accounted for as three-dimensional physical object, as if the unseen sides of such the phenomenon are yet there, part and parcel of them. The requirement that phenomenological language is to restrict itself to what is verifiable is a requirement of describing the phenomenon by attending solely to what immediate experience makes readily available at a given moment. Now, what is it that immediate experience provides as opposed to the ordinary experience of phenomena?

---

[137] Ms 107: p. 4 [Pichler (1994): September – December 1929].

The reconstruction of the idea of phenomenological language starting from the hypothetical character of ordinary language brings us to Wittgenstein's concern with sense-data. Conversely, he makes explicit that this concern with sense-data is tied with, and motivated by, the initial account of hypothesis:

> The talk of sense-data [Sinnesdaten] and of immediate experience has the sense that we are searching a non-hypothetical presentation.[138]

The hypothetical character of ordinary language goes hand in hand with its objectifying tendency. Removing the hypothetical addition involves doing away with this objectifying tendency. While ordinary language describes experience in terms of physical objects, phenomenological language is meant to account for the same objects by restricting itself to actually available facets of a phenomenon. These facets consist in the sense-data that immediate experience provides at a given moment.

---

[138] Ms 107: p. 249 [dated 20 January 1930] / PR: § 226 tr. mod.

CHAPTER 3

THE ABANDONMENT OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL LANGUAGE

The present chapter addresses the question of Wittgenstein's abandonment of phenomenological language. According to the dominant view among interpreters, Wittgenstein endorses the idea of a phenomenological language for a definite period of time, generally taken to cover most of the year 1929. Then he is taken to suddenly become critical of this idea, for motives that, however, are often regarded to be not entirely clear. According to this reading, the emergence of Wittgenstein's conception of phenomenology is just as puzzling as his alleged sudden critique of it. In my view, most of these puzzles are due to the fact that interpreters tend to put most weight on the explicit remarks, be they positive or negative, on phenomenological language.[139] This chapter will provide a detailed discussion of the assumptions and implications of Wittgenstein's abandonment of phenomenological language. The discussion will show that both Wittgenstein's positive and negative attitude to phenomenological language as less puzzling than it appears at first sight.[140]

In what follows, I argue that his critique of the idea of phenomenological language does not amount to a sudden turn, but rather involves a gradual scrutiny and questioning from a diversity of angles. A close reading of the manuscripts around 1929 reveals the fact that this scrutiny and questioning emerges roughly at the same time as the positive remarks on the idea of phenomenological language.

My view is thus that in his middle period Wittgenstein did not fully endorse for a definite period of time the notion of a phenomenological language

---

[139] But even a chronological consideration of some of the explicit remarks on phenomenological language already questions the view of its full endorsement followed by its sudden abandonment. For instance, after Wittgenstein seems to acknowledge in manuscript an abandonment of phenomenological language in October 1929 (cf. Ms 107: p. 176), he invokes it positively in March 1930 (cf. WWK/WVC: p. 101).

[140] Spiegelberg was the first to regard as a puzzle Wittgenstein's allegedly inexplicable concern with phenomenological language and phenomenology more generally in Spiegelberg ([1968] 1981).

and then suddenly abandoned it. [141] Wittgenstein's positive remarks on phenomenological language in their original context are rather mingled with reflections on the difficulty of the task of constructing this medium of expression. The latter reflections will indeed turn out to be decisive and the abundance of difficulties and problems emerging thereby will lead to a gradual dissolution of the conception of phenomenological language. This reading of the fate of phenomenological language converges in its general outline in a reading advanced by Noë. Noë questions the earlier influential interpretation defended by Hintikka & Hintikka (1986), according to which the phenomenological language is suddenly abandoned:

> [In his middle period] Wittgenstein's position early on was very unstable and full of conflict [...]. Indeed, one difference between the account offered here and that of the Hintikkas [...] is that I see the transition in Wittgenstein's thinking as a gradual process, with some ideas falling into place early on, only later to acquire deeper significance, other ideas being tentatively embraced, only to be rejected again before their final acceptance.[142]

Or before their final dissolution, we may add. Wittgenstein's critique of phenomenological language is to be reconstructed from his scrutiny of several notions closely connected to it. One such notion is that of verification, namely, the method required by a clarification of the sense of ordinary statements and the means to construct phenomenological language by way of an analysis of ordinary language. The conception of verification turns out to be developed in light of a particular kind of proposition to be clarified. These are propositions in the present tense and which were taken to be expositions or reports of experience (e.g. "The frame of the bed is brown."). Thus, one of Wittgenstein's doubts about the viability of phenomenological language is informed by his coming to realize that

---

[141] This idea of a full endorsement followed by a sudden abandonment is a central assumption also in Kienzler's reconstruction of Wittgenstein's transition to his late philosophy (cf. Kienzler 1997).

[142] Noë (1997: p. 18).

verification is very difficult to achieve in cases not initially considered. One such case is that of propositions about more complex situations and events and also propositions about the past (e.g. "My neighbour has been elected mayor").

A second trajectory of Wittgenstein's critique of phenomenological language can be gathered from his remarks on the notion of hypothesis, which is no less central than the notion of verification to the conception of phenomenological language. So far we have discussed Wittgenstein's reflections on hypothesis only insofar as they favoured the construction of a phenomenological language. Wittgenstein, however, develops the notion of hypothesis not merely under the tutelage of his conception of phenomenological language, but also in connection with what he calls the value or aim of ordinary propositions. While some of his remarks envisage a hypothesis-free phenomenological language, other remarks come to consider the hypothetical element as important to the sense of ordinary propositions. The aim in the use of ordinary propositions that goes hand in hand with their hypothetical character also comes to be considered as being an essential aspect of their sense. On the other hand, the aim to which an ordinary proposition can be used is a blind spot of the analysis by phenomenological language.

A third line of critical inquiry into phenomenological language is constituted by Wittgenstein's reflections on the relation of language with time. Phenomenological statements were meant to achieve their hypothesis-free character by being verifiable in the present. The notion of the present involved thereby is not that of the ordinary conception of time. Wittgenstein refers to the latter conception as that of physical time or historical time. In line with this conception, we ordinarily build statements about the past, present or future and order events or situations according to certain temporal categories, such as days or weeks, years or centuries. But in order that a phenomenological statement be hypothesis-free, it is required to be verifiable in the present of immediate experience. This notion of the present is categorically different from the notion of physical time. It is rather a notion of the present in ongoing flux, which Wittgenstein calls memory time or primary time. Many *positive* remarks on phenomenological language occur in contexts where Wittgenstein is trying to

develop a notion of flowing present as the source of the concept of time in the physical or historical sense. Many of the *critical* remarks touching upon phenomenological language are in fact critical remarks on the notion of memory time, which call into question the verifiability of such a language and ultimately its very intelligibility. The attempt to describe what occurs in the memory time of immediate experience, as opposed to the physical time of ordinary experience, will turn out to be just as misleading as the attempt to construct a phenomenological language by purifying ordinary language of its hypothetical element.

This third chapter proceeds as follows. *Section 3.1* discusses Wittgenstein's remarks on the replacement of phenomenological language by means of analysis allowing for a reliance on ordinary language. The remarks do not provide clear motives for his dissatisfaction with phenomenological language. They rather expose alternatives for clarifying ordinary language by comparing different descriptions of one and the same phenomenon. These remarks, however, amount to an incipient critique of the idea a single mode of analysis unjustifiably privileged by the notion of phenomenological language. *Section 3.2* reinforces the critique of this unjustified privilege by exposing the difficulty of achieving a verification by phenomenological language in cases not previously considered. I will focus there on the case of propositions about past situations or events. In light of this focus I will explore a tension Wittgenstein comes to consider. This is the tension between the rigidity of the notion of verification and the diversity of the functions and roles that ordinary propositions can have. *Section 3.3* scrutinizes the requirement for phenomenological language to provide an immediate description of immediate experience. On the one hand, one's providing an *immediate description* turns out to be problematic even in the most charitable conditions Wittgenstein imagines for it. On the other hand, the concern with *immediate experience* is questionable insofar as it involves a confused notion of a flowing present removed from physical time.

<center>**3.1 The replacement of phenomenological language**</center>

This section will start by focusing on Wittgenstein's dismissal of the distinction between a primary and a secondary language (subsection 3.1.1). I will then discuss alternative means of clarification relying on ordinary language that he comes to consider. This consideration is part of Wittgenstein's gradual rejection of the privilege he gave to phenomenological language as the single, ultimate method of clarification (subsection 3.1.2). I will finally argue that the rejection of the privileged mode of analysis through phenomenological language is in fact a rejection of an inclination to explain rather than describe experience. This inclination is informed by a misleading ideal of clarity foreign to ordinary language (subsection 3.1.3).

3.1.1 A turn to ordinary language

One of clearest examples of Wittgenstein's replacement of the analysis by phenomenological language is provided by the following remark recorded by Waismann:

> I used to believe that there was the everyday language that we all usually spoke and a primary language that expressed what we really knew, namely phenomena. I also spoke of a first system and a second system. Now I wish to explain why I do not adhere to that conception any more.
>
> I think that essentially we have only one language, and that is our everyday language. We need not invent a new language or construct a new symbolism, but our everyday language already is *the* language, provided we rid it of the obscurities that lie hidden in it.[143]

This remark opposes the very dissatisfaction with ordinary language as a means for philosophical expression, a dissatisfaction formulated already at the beginning of "Some Remarks on Logical Form". It was this dissatisfaction that informed the

---

[143] WVC/WWK: p. 45 [dated 22 December 1929].

<center>95</center>

subsequent need for a primary, phenomenological, language. Ordinary language was regarded as a description of ordinary experience, of the so-called secondary system. It was taken to be an expression in terms of physical objects and events, involving hypotheses about those objects and events. Clarification was meant to be achieved by phenomenological language by way of a strict account of phenomena of the so-called first system. Phenomena in the first system were conceived of in terms of sense-data, or various facets such as patches of colour or sounds of different qualities. So the need for a phenomenological language in the first place was informed by the idea that ordinary language expresses much more than experience actually provides. Phenomenological language was needed as a means of expressing what we really know [was wir wirklich wissen], namely, what we actually experience in the first system.

At this point Wittgenstein dismisses the very need to invent or construct a new language, namely, a phenomenological language. That ordinary language is "the language" means not only that it remains the ultimate object of clarification, but also that it can be used as a means for clarification.[144] Thus, the idea transpiring from "Some Remarks on Logical Form" that ordinary language does not suffice for a clarification of itself is implicitly dismissed. Yet, it is not that ordinary language can be used as a means for philosophical expression as it stands. Wittgenstein still thinks that in order to tackle philosophical puzzles by way of ordinary language, one must trace obscurities that may not lie at its surface, but need to be revealed.

The rejection of phenomenological language is not only a rejection of a constructed means for philosophical expression. It is also the rejection of the idea of an alleged real knowledge, underlying or paralleling what ordinary statements already express. This idea of a knowledge to be first revealed by phenomenological language is informed by the conception of ordinary statements

---

[144] Some manuscript remarks are more explicit in this respect. Cf. "The assumption that a phenomenological language was possible and that it would adequately first say what we in philosophy want to say is – I believe – absurd. We must manage with our ordinary language and only understand it correctly. I.e. we may not let ourselves be tempted by it to speak nonsense." (Ms 107: p. 176 [dated 22 November 1929].)

as saying on given occasions much more than that which experience on those occasions actually substantiates. By contrast, the sense-data or facets provided by immediate experience would be the real knowledge in light of which ordinary statements can be analyzed, by isolating their strict descriptive content from their hypothetical addition. Now the notion of a real knowledge, allegedly underlying what ordinary propositions convey, is shown to be as illusory as the need for a phenomenological language that would first convey that knowledge.

3.1.2 Alternatives to phenomenological language

If the above remark recorded by Waismann dismisses the distinction between a primary, phenomenological discourse and a secondary, ordinary discourse, does Wittgenstein provide any alternative to analysis by means of a primary language? In the following manuscript remark he reflects further on the relation between the clarificatory means provided by ordinary and phenomenological language:

> Phenomenological language, or 'primary language' as I called it, does not strike me now as a goal [Ziel], I hold it no longer to be possible. All that is possible and necessary is to separate what is essential to *our* language from what is inessential [das Wesentliche *unserer* Sprache von ihrem Unwesentlichen zu sondern].
>
> I.e. if one as it were describes the class of languages which fulfil their purpose [Zweck], then one has thereby shown what is essential to them and has thereby immediately presented immediate experience.
>
> Each time I say that such and such a presentation could be replaced by this other one, we take a further step towards the goal [zu dem Ziele] of grasping the essence of what is presented.
>
> A recognition of that which is essential to our language and that which in it is inessential to the presentation, a recognition of which parts of our language are wheels turning idly, amounts to the construction of a phenomenological language.[145]

---

[145] Ms 107: pp. 205-206 [dated 25 November 1929].

Despite Wittgenstein's referring to phenomenological language as a past goal [Ziel], this language was never a goal in itself or for its own sake. As a method of clarification of ordinary language and of describing immediate experience, phenomenological language was in fact envisaged as a means to dispel philosophical puzzles by grasping the logical structure of language and its relation to reality.

In this first version of the remark, phenomenological language is held as no longer possible [nicht mehr für möglich]. The revised version of this remark, occurring in later typescripts and which opens the *Philosophical Remarks*, contains a slight change of phrase. There Wittgenstein writes that he takes phenomenological language to be, instead of no longer possible, rather no longer necessary [nicht mehr für nötig]. [146] It has been suggested that this revision indicates Wittgenstein's subsequent acknowledgment (presumably by May 1930) that his initial dismissal of the possibility of phenomenological language (in November 1929) was too hasty. Wittgenstein would thus admit that his critique of phenomenological language does not manage to dismiss more than its necessity or unavoidability as a method. [147]

I take, however, Wittgenstein's oscillation between regarding phenomenological language as not possible and not necessary as indicative less of the chronological development of a critique of this conception. The oscillation indicates first of all that Wittgenstein's abandonment of phenomenological language was not as radical or sudden as it has been taken to be by some commentators.

The alternative clarificatory approach sketched in the previous quote does not by itself altogether dismiss the idea of phenomenological language. The new approach aims at separating what is essential from what is inessential to our language. Yet, the further methodological details provided make it clear that what is at stake here is not to provide the essence of language as a whole, or what is essential to each and every proposition, or what makes a proposition a genuine

---

[146] Cf. Ts 209: p. 1 [Pichler (1994): May 1930] / PR: § 1.

[147] Cf. Hintikka & Hintikka (1986: pp. 137-139, 172).

one.[148] The alternative method Wittgenstein now envisages instead involves the comparison of different descriptions of one and the same phenomenon. According to the method of phenomenological language, a particular expression was to be regarded as a hypothesis amenable to an analysis into various facets. These facets, namely, phenomenological statements, were then to be verified by isolating the corresponding phenomenon or situation in their turn into its facets, or sense-data of immediate experience. Once the analysis ends up with phenomenological statements verified in this way, the analysis is considered to be complete.

The alternative approach to clarification does not involve this ideal of completeness. One is rather to consider different expressions that can do the job of the initial expression to be clarified. If the initial expression can be replaced by other presentations, then its clarification would amount to several reformulations of what was initially conveyed.

In the remark Wittgenstein uses variations of the term essential [wesentlich], qualifying both language and experience. The aim of the new approach is to reveal the actual structure of language and phenomena described, which was indeed the aim tied to the conception of phenomenological language. But the new conception of clarification is informed by a notion of clarity much closer to ordinary understandings of this notion. According to the final part of the remark, a recognition of what is essential and what is inessential to the presentation is really a recognition of which parts of our language are wheels turning idly [welche Teile unserer Sprache leerlaufende Räder sind]. In the last section of this chapter, it will be seen that Wittgenstein is ready to qualify even some of his own expressions as wheels turning idly. For example, the need for a verification by way of phenomenological language was underlined by the view that "only the experience of the present instant has reality". According to Wittgenstein's ultimate critique of the alleged field of description of phenomenological language as the present immediate experience, this field will

---

[148] The view that Wittgenstein aims at accounting for the essence of language in this sense may do more justice to the project of the *Tractatus*, rather than to the new clarificatory approach sketched here.

turn out to be ill outlined. His critique will boil down to acknowledging the notion of a flowing present of immediate experience as a wheel turning idly.

Wittgenstein's way of introducing at this point the method of comparison of alternative presentations is to an extent misleading. Here it seems that the comparison of alternative presentations that can be mutually substituted achieves *exactly* the same goal as the phenomenological language. Namely, the goal of an immediate presentation of immediate experience or grasping the essence of what is presented *by one privileged means*. Yet, if the task of clarification can be achieved by way of alternative presentations of one and the same phenomenon or situation, this already makes it doubtful whether a privileged presentation can be regarded as immediately conveying the content of experience. Insofar as the expression to be clarified can be reformulated by way of alternative expressions, its meaning is scrutinized already in the transition from one expression to another. This becomes clearer against the background of Wittgenstein's further reflections that question the idea of a privileged description.

3.1.3 Against a privileged description and its ideal of clarity

In the beginning of the section entitled "Phenomenology" in the *Big Typescript*, Wittgenstein questions the need to privilege a single description and to regard it as the ultimate clarification of a proposition or the ultimate account of a particular experience. After rephrasing one of the paragraphs of the previous quote[149], he raises the issue: "Given that my visual image was two red circles of equal size on a blue background: what does occur here in two's and what once?". A candidate answer would be: one colour occurs in two locations. Another candidate answer would be: red, like circular, is one property of two distinct objects, namely two spots, that are spatially related to each other.

The need to choose between these alternative answers involves a final decision as to whether colour is ultimately an object or merely the property of an

---

[149] Compare "Jedesmal, wenn wir erkennen, daß die und die Darstellungsweise auch durch eine andre ersetzt werden kann, machen wir einen Schritt zu diesem Ziel." (Ts 213: p. 437) and "Jedesmal wenn ich sage die und die Darstellung könnte man auch durch diese andere ersetzen machen wir einen Schritt weiter zu dem Ziele." (Ms 107: p. 206.)

object. But Wittgenstein immediately notes that a decision of this kind would be specific to an approach from physics. The case would be handled similarly with the case when one asks "What sorts of red circles are those that I see over there?" and one answered "Those are two red lanterns". To pose the question and to answer in this way, Wittgenstein observes, amounts to giving a physical explanation. The answer would be an attempt at establishing what the red circles really are. If such a final decision was made in philosophy, that would amount, according to him, to a metaphysical mistake. He writes that "wanting to remove our dissatisfaction with an explanation is the mistake of metaphysics"[150]. To answer the initial question "what is there here in two's and what once?" by regarding colour as either ultimately an object or ultimately a property would be tantamount to attempting to give a philosophical explanation. Thus, by explanation Wittgenstein means in this context an account involving a decision made once and for all as to whether colour is either an object or the property of an object.

A philosophical explanation is considered to be already tantamount to a mistake of metaphysics, namely, a claim that x is y in virtue of the very nature of x and y. By contrast, the task of the clarifying activity would be to first point out that the grammar of both answers is in order, both of them being equally justified descriptions. According to Wittgenstein: "Of course instead of the first sentence I'm allowed to say: 'I see two spots with the properties of red and circular and in the spatial relationship of being next to each other' – and equally well: 'I see the colour red at two circular locations next to each other' – if I stipulate that these expressions are to mean the same thing as the sentence above."[151] Colour may well be regarded as either a property or an object. The question "what is there here in two's and what once?" is misleading in the first place, insofar as it requires privileging a description of the visual image in terms of colour as ultimately an object or as ultimately a property. To give privilege to one description over others would be to attempt at giving a philosophical explanation, thus ultimately making a metaphysical mistake.

---

[150] Ts 213: p. 438.

[151] Ibid.

The construction of phenomenological language would then involve a mistake of metaphysics, in that phenomenological statements would be privileged descriptions. They would be regarded as ultimate accounts of the actual structure of language and of the actual structure of experience. Indeed, as an envisaged immediate description of immediate experience, phenomenological language dismisses the eventuality of competing, ordinary descriptions. It dismisses the very idea that alternative descriptions can be given for one and the same phenomenon or situation.

Wittgenstein does not deny that for specific purposes, a certain description may be favoured in light of given philosophical problems. In particular, he does not forbid that colour be regarded as an object or as a property of an object according to the philosophical task at hand. For instance, if the aim is to give an account of the possible ways in which colours can combine with one another, then colour may well be regarded as an object.[152] But if the task is to account for the various differences between two patches on a surface, then colour, along with, say, shape, may be better regarded as a property of the patches, taken as objects. What Wittgenstein dismisses is a readymade preference that phenomenological language would give to one presentation over others. A readymade preference would be made in advance of considering any particular tasks that presentations may be given.[153]

Wittgenstein criticizes phenomenological language not only in that it involves a metaphysical mistake of unjustifiably privileging a single mode of description once and for all. What is equally questionable is an ideal of clarity that goes hand in hand with the privilege given to the description by

---

[152] In this respect, the paper "Some Remarks on Logical Form" referred to "the whole manifold of spatial and temporal objects, as colours, sounds, etc., etc." (SRLF: p. 31.)

[153] A preference is dismissed not only if it involves a ready-made decision that an entity is to always count as an object or a property. Wittgenstein is equally critical of the inclination to regard certain phenomena as more philosophically relevant than others. Cf. "There is not – as I used to believe – a primary language as opposed to our ordinary language, the 'secondary' one. But one could speak in opposition to our language of a primary one in so far as it would not permit the expression of a preference for certain phenomena over others; it would have to be, so to speak, absolutely *impartial*." (Ms 108: p. 29 [dated 21 December 1929] / PR: p. 54 tr. mod.)

phenomenological language. In a later notebook remark from the mid 1930's he reflects retrospectively upon this issue:

> "Phenomenological language". Think of its necessity. It seems our language were somehow raw, an incomplete presentation of the situation, and were to understand only as raw, incomplete picture. As if philosophy must improve, refine it in order to be able to understand the structure of the world. *Then* it would be obvious that [philosophy] must understand, i.e. recognize, language as it is, since the goal is not a new clarity that the old language does not provide, but the removal of philosophical labyrinths, bewilderment.[154]

The idea of the necessity or need of phenomenological language was thus informed by a conception of ordinary language as a raw means of expression of phenomena and situations. One may recall that, according to "Some Remarks on Logical Form", ordinary language was considered to not be able to capture the combinations and transitions between entities like colours or sounds. In order to understand the structure of the world and in the end the logical structure of language, a new mode of expression was envisaged. This mode of expression, to be achieved by improving and refining ordinary language, was the very phenomenological language. In the end, phenomenological language was taken to express the structure of the world and the structure of language with greater clarity than their expression by ordinary means.

Like the previous remarks discussed before, the last remark does not reach as far as questioning decisively the necessity or the possibility of phenomenological language. Wittgenstein's notes explored up to this point reconsider the expressive means of ordinary language and its viability as a means to clarification. The ideal of clarity of phenomenological language first appears here as problematic in that this clarity is not found in ordinary language, but is rather foreign to it. It is an ideal imposed by the philosophical task of clarification,

---

[154] Nb 152: p. 92 [Pichler (1994): 1936].

an ideal taken to be achieved by the method of verification.[155] The following section will explore some problems with the method of verification that Wittgenstein comes to consider.

3.2 Problems for verification

The present section will begin by exposing a requirement that verification be carried out strictly in the present. This leads to Wittgenstein's acknowledgment of the difficulty of achieving a verification in the case of propositions about the past (subsection 3.2.1). Then I will show that the confinement of verification to the present is tantamount to a rigidity of the method of verification that fails to do justice to the diversity of the functions and roles of language (subsection 3.2.2). I will finally maintain that the notion of hypothesis which informs the need for a phenomenological language develops also independently from the latter. It thus becomes questionable whether, while removing the hypothetical addition of ordinary statements, phenomenological language would manage to fully capture their sense (subsection 3.2.3).

3.2.1 Propositions about the past

One aspect of phenomenological language that raises questions springs from the very method of verification that this language was taken to involve. The verification of the facets of ordinary propositions, namely, of hypotheses, was required to be carried out in the very instant of the use of a proposition. This requirement motivates Wittgenstein's extensive concerns with the concept of time in 1929 and early 1930s. In particular, it motivates his concern with a peculiar notion of the present involved by the conception of phenomenological language:

> The verification of language – thus the act by way of which it maintains its sense – occurs in any case in the present before it.[156]

---

[155] Thomson observes in this respect that the dream of constructing a phenomenological language falls victim to its own uncritical pursuit of clarity (Thompson 2008: 73).

Wittgenstein refers here to verification not as a philosophical method, but as an act [Akt], through which language would maintain its sense. His twofold use of the term "verification", both as a method of clarification and as a qualification of the workings of language itself is indicative of the goal of phenomenological language. It is the goal of accounting for the actual logical structure of ordinary language and experience. The analysis involved by phenomenological language was taken to isolate the actual facets of ordinary propositions and verify them by comparison to facets of phenomena made available by immediate experience.

Yet, this conception of verification as both an act of language and a method of accounting for its relation to reality turns out to be problematic in light of some cases we have not discussed so far. In a conversation recorded by Waismann, Wittgenstein acknowledges the following:

> Sometimes verification is very difficult, for example 'Seitz has been elected mayor.' How should I set about verifying this proposition? Is the correct method to go and make inquiries about it? Or to ask the people who were present? But one was watching from the front and the other one from behind. Or should I read about it in the newspapers?[157]

This example raises the issue whether the conception of verification tied to the notion of phenomenological language was not misleadingly developed by focusing too closely on some cases and overlooking others. Wittgenstein's methodological remarks discussed in the previous chapter were informed by his consideration of cases when the propositions to be clarified were taken to be mostly declarative statements about the content of perception in a given situation. Propositions about pieces of furniture or about the sound of piano were taken to be analyzable into phenomenological statements to be verified by comparison with the content of immediate experience.

---

[156] Ms 105: p. 122 [Pichler (1994): ≈ August 1929].

[157] WWK/WVC: p. 48 [dated 29 December 1929].

But in more complex situations it is not altogether clear how verification is to be carried out. The proposition "Seitz has been elected mayor" accounts for such a complex situation. First of all, the situation accounted for by the proposition is not a situation happening at the moment when the proposition is uttered. The election referred to has already happened before the proposition about the election was formulated. Since the moment of the election is not readily available as a present moment, the clarification of the proposition could not be carried out in light of an available experience.

One may try, however, to get some access to the past situation. Different routes may be taken in this respect. One may try to make inquiries into the past election. Or one may try to ask people who were present at the event, perhaps asking them to describe their immediate experience of the election. But different people would provide different accounts of their experience insofar as they had different vantage points. Trying to get some access to the actual event of election by reading the newspapers will not lead very far either. The newspapers would account for the event from still other vantage points, as different and varied as the people who attended the election.

Thus if one tried to recover an account of the past situation, different sources would first present themselves as equally reliable or unreliable. If one wanted to sort out sources that are more reliable than others, the criterion for this selection could still not be their comparison with an actual experience of the election.

Now, can the difficulty with verifying propositions about the past be eased, by attempting to carry out the verification in more flexible ways? That is, by allowing various written and spoken sources as reliable backgrounds against which verification can be carried out? We can consider in this respect Wittgenstein's other remarks on propositions about the past, such as accounts of historical events:

The proposition about Caesar ["Julius Caesar crossed the Alps"] is simply a framework (like that about any other person), which allows most different

verifications, although not all that would be allowed in the case of other e.g. living persons.[158]

In order for a proposition about a past figure to allow for a method of verification, the very notion of verification has to be loosened. The clarification of the sense of such propositions obviously cannot be the method of analyzing them into facets and comparing the facets to present experience. Instead, says Wittgenstein, a proposition about historical events could count as a framework compatible with a variety of verifications. Such verifications could involve the consultation of books of history, of visual depictions of the event in question or even of archaeological relics considered to substantiate historical statements.

But this approach would again face a difficulty. Among the variety of these methods of verification allowed for historical events, there would be some that would not be viable in the case of propositions about living persons. So a single universal method of verification cannot be applied to the two cases. Above all, the very need of diverse methods of verification undermines the privilege of the one single method of verification – the one carried out in the present – tied to the conception of phenomenological language.

So even if the notion of verification can be loosened in order to allow for a variety of sources that can substantiate historical statements, this very move remains problematic in what phenomenological language is itself concerned. Insofar as this conception involves a very specific procedure for verification, one single method of clarification by phenomenological language would not be applicable throughout language.[159]

---

[158] Ms 108: p. 6 [Pichler (1994): January – February 1930] / PR: § 56 tr. mod.

[159] At one point, Wittgenstein suggests that the method of verification specific to phenomenological language may be in the end applicable only to propositions which have a *direct sense*, namely, which really account for the content of a present experience. The difficulty with verification arises in propositions which have a *more indirect sense*, such as the historical statement about Caesar. Cf. "If I utter the proposition: 'I see a red fleck crossing a green one', the possibilities provided for the case 'Julius Caesar crossed the Alps' are not given here, and that is what I mean when I say that the proposition about Caesar has its sense in a more indirect way than the first one." (Ms 107: pp. 6-7 [dated 13 December 1929] / PR: § 56 tr. mod.)

In the end, loosening the method of verification may accommodate an analysis of propositions about the past, but then the analysis would not be the one by phenomenological language. On the other hand, already the specific verification in the present by phenomenological language turns out to be at odds with what Wittgenstein calls the multiplicity of language, or the diversity of functions and roles that ordinary propositions can perform. Let us have a closer look at this issue.

3.2.2 The rigidity of verification and the multiplicity of language

So one problem with phenomenological language is that its conception does not allow for loosening the method of verification in the first place. The construction of a phenomenological language requires a strict analysis of ordinary propositions taken as hypotheses by isolating their facets and comparing them with present experience. Most importantly, this comparison is to be carried out in the present, involving that the proposition to be clarified is uttered at the same time as when the experience it accounts for occurs. This method of verification turns out to be too rigid to be applicable to the wide variety of propositions of ordinary language. Wittgenstein is troubled by this problematic contrast, between a very specific notion of verification and the considerable variety of ordinary propositions:

> In order to determine the sense of a proposition, I should have to know a very specific procedure for when to count the proposition as verified. In this respect everyday language oscillates very much, much more so than scientific language.[160]

Now, the conception of phenomenological language does prescribe a very specific procedure for verifying facets of any proposition. The problem is not the lack of a very specific procedure of verification, but the requirement of such procedure that

---

[160] WWK/WVC: p. 47 [dated 22 December 1929]. Wittgenstein's reference here to an ordinary proposition being itself verifiable is inexact. The previous chapter has discussed his emphasis at various points on the idea that what is verifiable is not the proposition or the hypothesis itself, but facets of the proposition conceived as a multi-dimensional hypothesis.

cannot be fulfilled in certain cases. The difference between statements about the past and statements about the present content of experience is just one instance of the oscillation of language between different functions or roles that its propositions can have. In ordinary language this oscillation is presumably much more considerable than in scientific discourse, by which Wittgenstein means mainly or primarily propositions of natural science.

Ordinary language contains propositions that pose further problems for the notion of verification. The propositions to be considered in this respect, along with statements about the past, are instructions or orders. This consideration informs Wittgenstein's analogy between language and a signal tower:

> Language must be of the multiplicity of a signal-tower, inducing actions which its propositions correspond to.
> To understand an instruction before one follows it has a relationship to wanting an action before one's carrying it out.
> The chemist who understands a receipt.[161]

The case of instructions expressed by ordinary propositions is a reminder of the wide variety of functions and roles of language. In the case of instructions, especially the ones about an action to be performed at once, the relevant experience of the situation or of the settings is not necessarily lacking, as in propositions about the past. But the sense of an instruction cannot simply be traced back to an account of the immediate experience of the situation or of the settings. Instructions rather convey something to be done, they instil an action to be performed upon the situation. To understand an instruction is not to simply attend to details of immediate experience in the situation in which the instruction is formulated. It is to get what is to be performed, to get how one is to act upon the situation.

The example of the chemist who understands a receipt and thus acts upon a written instruction is revealing in this respect. The receipt is obviously not

---

[161] Ms 107: p. 231 [dated 11 January 1930].

meant as a description of the medication available at the chemist's. Nor is it an account of what the chemist or indeed anyone else may perceive in the chemist's shop. The receipt rather prescribes certain actions that the chemist is to carry out once he or she understands the instruction.

Then one problem that the case of instructions poses for the method of verification is the irreducibility of action to the content of experience. The conception of phenomenological language does not provide any methodological resources to handle instructions, just as it is unable to analyze propositions about the past by way of verification in the strict sense.

What is equally problematic is the difficulty or indeed inability of the method of verification to handle what Wittgenstein will call the pointing of propositions to the future. Already instructions account for actions to be carried out, thus actions that are not performed at the moment when an instruction is formulated and not necessarily at the moment when an instruction is understood either. But in the end, the difficulty of the rigidity of the method of verification is encountered not merely in the case of propositions about the past and instructions. Wittgenstein inquires into the broader issue of the pointing of propositions to the future in terms of their aim. This line of inquiry elaborates upon his notion of hypothesis exposed in the previous chapter. In this respect, his conception of hypothesis will end up questioning the viability of phenomenological language as a means of clarification.

3.2.3 The aim of ordinary propositions

So far we have discussed two main problems for the method of verification and its implications. One problem is that the strict method of verification cannot be carried out in the case of propositions about the past. A further problem is that the rigidity of this method turns out to be at odds more generally with the variety of functions or roles that ordinary propositions can have. These discussions have strengthened the doubt about whether phenomenological language is a viable approach to clarifying language in its diversity. The discussion so far leaves room for an attempt at salvaging this method of analysis at least for a particular case,

namely, for propositions which have been taken to simply account for the content of experience.

Wittgenstein's continuing reflections on the notion of hypothesis also constituted a questioning of this attempt at salvaging phenomenological language. What is doubtful in the end is not only whether the method of verification can be carried out in any particular case of language use. It remains equally doubtful whether, in the process of the elimination of the hypothetical element of ordinary language, phenomenological language manages to do full justice to the sense of ordinary propositions, or as Wittgenstein puts it, to their value or aim.

Wittgenstein's conception of hypothesis develops in two interrelated directions. On the one hand, it informs the idea of verification as means of clarification and the need for the construction of a phenomenological language. On the other hand, it starts by accounting for the allegedly misleading workings of presentations through ordinary language but becomes the background against which Wittgenstein reflects on what is essential to presentations.

At one point Wittgenstein writes the following concerning the hypothetical character of presentations in general:

> Now it appears however that the presentation in general loses its value when one leaves the hypothetical element in it to fall apart, because then the proposition does not point to the future anymore but is, as it were, self-satisfied and thus valueless.[162]

This reflection questions both the view on ordinary language inherited from "Some Remarks on Logical Form" and the privileged status given to phenomenological language. The view developed in subsequent manuscripts from the 1929 paper was that the hypothetical character of ordinary language was precisely what made it unable to account accurately for experience. The hypothetical element was to be removed in order that the sense of ordinary propositions become transparent and their relation to reality become clear. But

---

[162] Ms 107: p. 249 [dated 20 January 1930].

this approach turns out to not be able to achieve its clarificatory goal. An analysis by phenomenological language would lose sight of a significant aspect of ordinary propositions. While analyzing them into descriptive accounts of the content of experience, phenomenological language would lose sight of ordinary propositions pointing to the future. A proposition analyzed in this way, however, now turns out to become inert. Wittgenstein reflects further on the way in which ordinary propositions point to the future in terms of their aim or the expectations they raise:

> The sense of a proposition is its aim [Zweck].
>
> If I say to someone "There is a chair here", then I want to evoke to him certain expectations and ways of acting.[163]

The expectations that an ordinary proposition raises are indicative of the aim of its use. In this light, an ordinary proposition like "There is a chair here" cannot be taken anymore to be merely a descriptive account of the content of experience in a particular situation. Its analysis by phenomenological language is thus not able to fully capture the sense of such a proposition, insofar as the use of the proposition evokes expectations and instils a way of acting upon a situation. So the method of verification turns out to be too rigid a method of analysis not only when it comes to propositions about the past, but even for propositions in the present.

The reflection feeds a further worry. The worry is whether this means of analysis of ordinary propositions does not result in its turn in inert statements. While the aim of ordinary propositions is recognized as an essential aspect of their sense, the question of the very importance of phenomenological language becomes pressing:

> But of what importance [Wichtigkeit] can then this description of the present phenomenon be? It seems as if the occupation with this question

---

[163] Ms 107: pp. 249-250 [dated 20 January 1930].

was directly childish and I got myself into a dead-end. And yet it is a meaningful dead-end, for it attracts everything to go in there, as if it was there to look for the ultimate solution of the philosophical problem.[164]

This diagnosis of the importance of the search for a phenomenological language is rather discouraging. If this search was meaningful at all, it would have in the end merely the broad meaning of a lesson to be learned or of an approach to be avoided. The motivation for the search is a misleading hope that a phenomenological language could serve as a universal method of clarification. As if the goal of shedding light on the workings of any description or presentation and of dissolving any philosophical confusion could be reached at once by way of an ultimate solution. But the search for such an ultimate means of analysis is recognized as leading to a dead-end. The idea of phenomenological language leads to a dead-end not simply because Wittgenstein would lose interest in pursuing its method. According to the final section of this chapter, Wittgenstein's search for a phenomenological language ultimately comes to a dead-end, as he becomes critical of the very project of providing an immediate description of immediate experience.

3.3 The critique of the immediate description of immediate experience

The present section starts by exposing the background of one of Wittgenstein's most powerful critiques of phenomenological language. This background amounts to the distinction between two notions of time, namely physical time and memory time (subsection 3.3.1). Then I will discuss Wittgenstein's concern that phenomenological language can ultimately be a hypothesis-free description only if it does *not* unfold by way of signs in physical time. But such an immediate description would in the end amount to an inarticulate expression (subsection 3.3.2). This critique of the notion of immediate description will be followed by a critique of the way in which the field of description is delimited for

---

[164] Ms 105: p. 118 [Pichler (1994): February – March 1929].

phenomenological language. The very notion of the flowing present of immediate experience removed from physical time is shown by a closer scrutiny to amount to a wheel turning idly (subsection 3.3.3).

3.3.1 Physical time and memory time

Some of Wittgenstein's most critical reflections on phenomenological language are motivated by a series of attempts to follow the implications of this notion to their end. In this respect he further inspects the requirement that phenomenological language is to provide an immediate description of immediate experience. In this way, phenomenological language would be the means of expression to achieve utmost clarity and directness. By way of a series of analogies Wittgenstein finally shows that this ideal of the immediacy of a presentation is unfulfillable.

On the other hand, he also scrutinizes further the idea that verification through phenomenological language occurs in the present of immediate experience. The time of immediate experience is conceived of as being an ongoing flux of memory, removed from what Wittgenstein regards as time in an ordinary historical sense. A series of remarks on the concept of time finally point out that this concern with an ever flowing present of memory is problematic.

But why should Wittgenstein be bothered with a notion of time of memory as ever flowing present in the first place? The aim of grasping what goes on in the flowing present of memory is informed by the initial need of removing the hypothetical element from ordinary language. Wittgenstein took the alleged fact that ordinary propositions fail to account for what we really know to be tied with the fact that some of those propositions recall past experiences and others anticipate future aspects of situations not yet experienced. One remark on the notion of hypothesis is revealing in this respect:

> What is essential to a hypothesis is, I believe, that it raises an expectation in that it allows for a future confirmation.[165]

---

[165] Ms 107: p. 253 [dated 22 January 1930].

When I say 'There is a chair over there', this proposition has a relation to a series of expectations. I believe I will be able to go there, to touch the chair and be able to sit on it, I believe it is of wood and I expect from it a certain hardness, inflammability etc. etc.[166]

Such expectations contribute to the hypothetical character of ordinary language.[167] Thus the hypothetical addition has a certain history, leading back to what was experienced in similar situations and what was learned or heard about similar situations. The hypothetical addition also points to the future, in that even a proposition taken to be about the content of experience on a certain occasion can raise various expectations about the phenomena given by that experience.

Wittgenstein took the envisaged hypothesis-free feature of phenomenological language to be given by the fact that the immediate experience it is meant to describe does not occur in time in an ordinary sense of the word. He thus distinguishes between ordinary, physical time [physikalischen Zeit] and memory time [Gedächniszeit]:

The data of our memory are ordered; we call this order memory time in opposition to the physical time of the order of events in the physical world.[168]

Physical time is the order of objects and events in physical experience, the experience that ordinary language accounts for. Thus physical time is tied to personal past experiences and expectations, but also to the narratives of other people, and social mechanisms for measuring time (e.g. clocks) or standards of reference to time (e.g. weeks.) By contrast, memory-time is the order of facets of

---

[166] Ms 107: p. 247 [dated 20 January 1930].

[167] Subsection 3.2.3 has already raised a doubt about whether expectations can be bracketed by an analysis aiming at doing justice to the workings of ordinary propositions. In what follows I will discuss whether the hypothetical addition in general can be bracketed at all, while reaching for a means of expression that is still intelligible.

[168] Ms 112: p. 131r [dated 27 November 1931].

phenomena or sense-data in immediate experience, the experience that phenomenological language is meant to describe.

If it is to provide a hypothesis-free account of immediate experience, the phenomenological language is to amount to an immediate description of immediate experience. This requirement is one major source of the problems with the conception of phenomenological language which are addressed by Wittgenstein's remarks on the ideal of the immediacy of description.

3.3.2 Critique of the notion of immediate description

Wittgenstein's critique of the capacity of phenomenological language to provide an immediate description of experience is ultimately a critique of the attempt at providing a verification by way of memory. The resort to memory is motivated by his coming to realize a tension. On the one hand, strict verification is to be fulfilled only at instants. On the other hand, ordinary propositions as used or usable propositions unwind in physical time.[169] A liaison would somehow have to be maintained between written or spoken propositions that unfold in time and immediate experience taken to be momentary.

Around 1929 and the early 1930's Wittgenstein uses the term memory in several senses, some of which are somewhat counterintuitive. By memory he sometimes means an act of recognition of what immediate experience provides. Memory in this sense is an awareness of what goes on in the fleeting instant, as opposed to the experience of ordinary objects that is unfolded in physical time. Connected to this notion, he also uses the term memory to designate the retention of that which goes on in immediate experience. By way of memory in this sense, the facets of phenomena gathered from the flowing present of immediate experience are ordered in physical time. The ordinary experience of objects thus gains its consistency and stability. However, to what we regard as physical objects in ordinary experience there would correspond a flux of sense-data or facets of phenomena in immediate experience. At one point Wittgenstein realizes that the immediate presentation requested from phenomenological language would have

---

[169] Cf. "The stream of life, or the stream of the world, flows on and our propositions are so to speak verified only at instants." (Ms 107: p. 222 [dated 1 December 1929] / PR: § 48.)

to be in fact a presentation that cannot rely on written or spoken signs. Could it then be a presentation of what memory recognizes in immediate experience, a presentation carried out by memory as retention of the immediately given?

Wittgenstein formulates a series of analogies in order to assess what an immediate presentation of immediate experience would involve. One such analogy is that of plaster-cast figures that would present what is immediately given. Another analogy is that of a mechanism that produces automatically descriptions or pictures of visual images. In his study of Wittgenstein's middle period, Kienzler takes these analogies to suggest that phenomenological language was never envisaged to be an actual language after all, but a technical means to produce pictures.[170] I suggest instead that these analogies are meant primarily to set the most charitable conditions for an immediate description. Read in this way, the analogies do follow the ultimate implication that a hypothesis-free, immediate description would have to be a means of expression that cannot rely on written or spoken signs. However, on this reading, the point of the analogies is not to make a substantial claim about the nature of phenomenological language. Their point is to show that even under the most favourable conditions, the aim to provide an immediate description of experience cannot be fulfilled.

One reflection that questions the ideal of the immediacy of presentation begins by imagining an ideal memory to which nothing given in immediate experience would ever escape:

> Suppose I had such a good memory that I could remember all my sense impressions. In that case, there would, prima facie, be nothing to prevent me from describing them. This would be a biography [Lebensbeschreibung]. And why should I not be able to leave everything hypothetical out of this description?[171]

---

[170] Kienzler regards phenomenological language as amounting to a "technische Erzeugung von Bildern" (1997: p. 119).

[171] Ms 105: pp. 108-110 [Pichler (1994): ≈ August 1929] / PR: § 67 tr. mod.

An ideal memory would thus recognize and retain each and every sense-impression ever provided by immediate experience. To account strictly for everything that immediate experience has ever provided would amount to a biography or a description of life in a non-hypothetical manner. It would seem that a presentation sticking exclusively to immediate experience would not allow for the intrusion of any hypothesis. Conversely, it would seem that a holistic account strictly confined to what immediate experience has provided would remove any hypothetical addition from the description given through ordinary propositions.

By contrast to a biography or a description of life in this sense, phenomenological language would not have to account for everything that was ever given to someone in immediate experience. But similarly to such a description, phenomenological language would need a way to exhaustively scrutinize what is immediately given at a certain moment in a situation. This scrutiny would be required by the need to separate what is essential from what is inessential to a presentation of immediate experience. It would be a way to distinguish what is not hypothetical from what is hypothetical in a presentation.

Yet the continuation of Wittgenstein's reflection raises the question of the substratum of such an immediate description. This is the question of the signs that may be employed by an account of immediate experience:

> I could, e.g., present the visual images plastically, perhaps with plaster-cast figures on a reduced scale which I would only finish as far as I had actually seen them, designating the rest as inessential by shading or a mode of design.
>
> So far everything would be fine. But what about the time I take to make this presentation? I am assuming I would be able to keep pace with my memory in 'writing' this language – producing this presentation. But if we suppose I then read the description through, is it now not yet hypothetical?[172]

---

[172] Ms 105: p. 110 / PR: § 67 tr. mod.

The production of plaster-cast figures is imagined as a way to present the content of immediate experience, or at least the content of immediate visual perception. But the material basis of the figures, their three-dimensionality, their reduced scale would first strike as elements quite difficult to correlate to the actual visual images they are meant to describe. The plaster-cast figures may also exhibit more or less detail than the visual images. So various means (e.g. shading, explicating the mode of design) would be required to distinguish what immediate experience actually provides from what is merely due to the chosen means of description.

Wittgenstein allows that up to this point the presentation by plaster-cast figures could be regarded as being in order. The problem arises when one raises the question of the time needed to produce the presentation. In this respect, he further grants the striking eventuality that the production of plaster-cast figures could be taken to keep pace with memory. Namely, that this presentation could be produced as fast as memory would recognize the ever new sense-data or facets of phenomena given in immediate experience.

But even under the most charitable conditions granted so far, it would still remain doubtful whether such a presentation of immediate experience could be considered to be hypothesis-free. Insofar as the presentation would be read or deciphered after its production, the time of its reading or deciphering would not be the time when the immediate experience was attended to. This would raise the question of whether the presentation can still be regarded to be hypothesis-free. Indeed the only criterion for regarding a presentation as hypothesis-free was its confinement to the immediate experience it accounts for. But insofar as immediate experience was taken to be in an ongoing flux, it would not be available anymore at the point when the presentation would be reconsidered.

The issue that the imagined description by plaster-cast figures poses for phenomenological language is in the end that of the reliability of this language as a hypothesis-free medium of expression. Even granted that phenomenological language was able to provide a complete analysis of experience at a given moment, its hypothesis-free character would have to be reassessed again and again. That is, each time the presentation of experience is deciphered again. It could be said that

all the resources of analysis would be invested in achieving a hypothesis-free means of presentation at a given moment. But then nothing would guarantee that the same means of presentation can still be regarded as hypothesis-free once the immediate experience it accounted for is not available anymore.

Wittgenstein provides a further analogy to assess the notion of an immediate presentation, this time, in terms of a mechanism for the production of descriptions:

> Let us imagine a presentation such as this: the bodies I seem to see are moved by a mechanism in such a way that they would give the visual images to be presented to two eyes fixed at a particular place in the model. The visual image described is then determined from the position of the eyes in the model and from the position and motion of the bodies.
>
> We could imagine that the mechanism could be driven by turning a crank and in that way the description 'read off'.
>
> Is it not clear that this would be the most immediate description that can be imagined? That is to say, that anything which tried to be more immediate still would inevitably cease to be a description?
>
> Instead of a description, what would then come out would be that inarticulate sound with which many writers would like to begin philosophy.[173]

The ultimate point of this analogy is that any language would have be understood in the end as a means of expression in physical time. A few pages after imagining the mechanism Wittgenstein writes: "What we understand by the word 'language' unwinds in physical time. (As is made perfectly clear by the comparison with a mechanism.)"[174] The comparison of language with the mechanism underlines that any intelligible mode of expression is an articulated one. A language has an articulation not only in that it has a logical structure. In order for a means of expression to count as a language, it has to employ signs, be they spoken or

---

[173] Ms 105: pp. 110-112 [Pichler (1994): ≈ August 1929] / PR: §§ 67-68 tr. mod.

[174] Ms 105: p. 114 / PR: § 69.

written signs. And in this way a language is articulated in physical time, in that the speaking, writing or reading of signs is itself a temporal process.[175]

Its unwinding in physical time is essential for any mechanism to count as a mechanism and for any means of expression to count as a language. Wittgenstein's reflection further responds to a dissatisfaction with a means of expression unwound in physical time to fulfil the aim of a phenomenological language. The dissatisfaction would be that a phenomenological language unwinding in physical time would not be a mode of description immediate enough. A mode of description unfolding in physical time, as the analogy of the plaster-cast figures suggests, would remain vulnerable to the doubt that it fails to remain a hypothesis-free account of immediate experience.

On the other hand, the insistence that phenomenological language did not unwind in physical time raises the question whether this mode of description would be intelligible at all. Wittgenstein notes that a description envisaged to be more immediate than an articulated mode of presentation would cease to be a description altogether. That is, any description envisaged to be produced as fast as the recognition of immediate experience and thus not employ written or spoken signs would not fit the very notion of a genuine description. The final remark on the analogy suggests a parallel between articulation as unwinding of a mode of presentation in physical time and articulation as the very intelligibility of a mode of presentation. A mode of presentation more immediate than one articulated in physical time by way of written or spoken signs would amount in the end to an inarticulate, unintelligible expression. Wittgenstein denounces the inarticulate sound with which many authors would like to begin philosophy. Yet, this ironic remark concerns his own philosophical project as well, insofar as an inarticulate sound would in the end be the phenomenological language itself.

So Wittgenstein's worry is that phenomenological language as the most immediate description of immediate experience would be lacking articulation as intelligibility. In the end, it would not be able to meaningfully convey the very

---

[175] Cf. "The use of the words conceived of as extended in time is easy to understand; by contrast, I find it infinitely difficult to understand the sense in the moment of use." (Ms 107: p. 233 [dated 13 January 1930].)

content of experience. The search for a phenomenological language would in the end lose sight of the very marks of a genuine language. Wittgenstein formulates the following remark somewhat as a self reminder of the misleading goal of providing an account of immediate experience in ongoing flux:

> If one yet says: the philosopher must however simply descend in this basin and grasp the pure reality itself and bring it to daylight, so comes the answer that he thereby must leave language behind and therefore return empty-handed.[176]

In the end, the analogy of the plaster-cast figures and the analogy of the mechanism show that, even granted the most charitable conditions, phenomenological language cannot be a viable means of expression. The first analogy raises the doubt that phenomenological language cannot achieve a hypothesis-free character, as its means of construction by verification would suggest. The second analogy raises the worry that a hypothesis-free means of expression, namely, an immediate presentation of immediate experience, is in the end a misleading goal. Such a presentation would be inarticulate, lacking the intelligibility of a genuine language.

3.3.3 Critique of the notion of immediate experience

Wittgenstein's critique of the notion of immediate experience in an ever flowing present is tied to the previous critique of a presentation that does not unwind in physical time. The connection between these two problems is addressed in the following remark:

> What we could call the time in phenomenon (specious present) lies not in the time (past, present and future) of history, is not a stretch of this time. While the process of 'language' unwinds in physical time. (Think of the mechanism for the description of immediate experience.)[177]

---

[176] Ms 107: p. 2 [Pichler (1994): September 1929].

[177] Ms 113: p. 123v [dated 19 May 1932].

While the two analogies discussed above question the idea of a phenomenological language as immediate description, a series of remarks on the notion of the time of immediate experience as a flowing present isolated from historical time question the envisaged field of description of phenomenological language. The search for a phenomenological language turned out to lose sight of the very notion of a language or of presentation that can be actually used and can be intelligible. In a similar fashion, the notion of flowing present qualifying immediate experience turns out to lose sight of what counts as correct uses of concepts of time:

> We guide the words from their metaphysical back to their correct use in the language.
>
> The man who says that one could not descend twice in the same flux, says something false; one can descend twice in the same flux.[178]

The aim at describing everything that occurs in a flowing stream of immediate experience turns out to be entangled in a metaphysics of presence. This metaphysical view is encapsulated by the saying that one cannot step twice in the same stream. The worry that this view informs is that immediate experience is fleeting and that ordinary experience has only an apparent stability or consistency. The further worry is that ordinary language describing experience in terms of past, present and future events does so only misleadingly. Ordinary presentations were taken to receive their very hypothetical addition by being reminiscent of past experiences and by pointing to the future. By contrast, the aim of phenomenological language was to grasp exclusively everything that the flowing flux of immediate experience gives.[179]

A first clue that something went wrong in this conception of immediate experience is that the image of an ongoing flux of experience so difficult to capture arises in the first place only when philosophizing:

---

[178] Ms 110: p. 34 [dated 4 February 1931].

[179] Cf. "The immediate is to be grasped in perpetual flux. (It has actually the form of a stream.)" (Ms 107: p. 159 [dated 11 October 1929].)

It is strange that in ordinary life we are not troubled by the feeling that the phenomenon is slipping away from us, the perpetual flux of appearance, but only when we philosophize. This indicates that what is in question here is a thought suggested by a misapplication of our (ordinary) language.[180]

This incipient critique of the alleged field of description of phenomenological language is tied to Wittgenstein's reconsideration of the clarificatory resources of ordinary language. The idea that ordinary experience has only an apparent stability did not first arise from ordinary descriptions. The further idea that immediate experience is in an ongoing flux is equally foreign to ordinary language. Such requirements and implications of analysis by phenomenological language imposed as a philosophical remedy for the unclarities and confusions springing from ordinary language. The development of these requirements and implications seemed to be well justified by the aim of clarification alone.

While phenomenological language was characterized as primary and a privileged means of expression, this characterization informed a further development of interconnected notions in light of the ideal of clarification alone. The abandonment of phenomenological language as a primary language brings to the foreground the question of the intelligibility of the clarificatory means themselves. Together with this move, Wittgenstein turns to ordinary language as a reliable resource to assess the intelligibility of these means. The strand of positive remarks on phenomenological language are motivated by the view that misapplications of ordinary language are to be signalled and clarified by way of phenomenological language. But now the very methodological reflections upon phenomenological language are rendered as involving misapplications of ordinary language.

Wittgenstein's turn to ordinary language as a reliable means to assess the intelligibility of notions involved by methods of philosophy was discussed in more

---

[180] Ms 108: p. 32 [dated 29 December 1929] / PR: § 52 tr. mod.

detail in the first section of the present chapter. At this point the notion of the perpetual flux of immediate experience is recognized as foreign to ordinary language and experience. But if this notion can be expressed at all, it should be expressed in ordinary language. And what can be expressed by ordinary language is now to be clarified by ordinary language:

> That everything flows must be expressed in the use of language, and in fact not in *one* kind of use as opposed to another but in *the* use. In that which we in general call the use of language.
>
> By use I understand what makes the combination of sounds or marks on paper in general into a language at all.[181]

If "everything flows", or the idea of a perpetual stream of experience, must be expressed in ordinary language, then it must mean a process that allows for past, present, and future qualifications. If the notion of flowing present attributed to immediate experience is to be expressed intelligibly at all, it must not be disconnected from notions of past and future. Then what was considered to be the present of immediate experience can only be part of physical time:

> The moment of time of which I say it is the present which contains everything that is given to me belongs itself to physical time.
>
> For how is otherwise such a moment determined? Somehow through a bell ring? And can I then really describe the whole experience that is simultaneous with this ring? If one thinks of trying it, one becomes straightaway aware that it is a fiction that we are talking about.[182]

Once the attempt is made to remove the present of immediate experience from physical time, one faces the problem of delimiting that very present moment. The possibility of delimiting it through a ring of a bell is not really an option, but rather an ironical way of emphasising the problem. The ring of a bell has a

---

[181] Ms 108: p. 1 [dated 13 February 1929] / PR: § 54 tr. mod.

[182] Ms 111: p. 8 [dated 7 July 1931].

duration in time, namely, in physical time, even if the duration is very short. Wittgenstein already refers to a present removed from physical time as a fiction, while the remark may be taken to not reveal more than a difficulty with delimiting a present in the intended sense. It may seem that this is merely an empirical difficulty of the task, which would not yet substantiate the claim for the fictitious character of the notion.

On other occasions, however, Wittgenstein suggests that the idea of a present removed from physical time is not only fictitious but rather unintelligible:

> We are in temptation to say: 'Only the experience of the present instant has reality'.
> And here the first answer must be: 'By opposition to what?'[183]

The questioned view was a central motivation for the construction of a phenomenological language. This language was meant to be constructed through the method of verification in the present, as it was considered that in this way the hypothetical addition of ordinary language could be left aside. We have seen that Wittgenstein comes to realize that the method of verification cannot be carried out in some cases, especially in the case of propositions about the past. But now it turns out that the very conception of verification is underlined by a spurious notion of the present in the first place.

The notion of the present removed from physical time is questionable not merely because of an empirical difficulty of delimiting such a present moment. The notion is conceptually problematic. It rather turns out to be an unintelligible notion insofar as it does not admit any opposite. The qualification of immediate experience as being in a flux removed from physical time, does not allow for the possibility of conceiving this very notion of the present by contrast to something that is not present in the same sense.

Unlike ordinary notions of time allowing for references to past and future events, this notion of the present of immediate experience involves an attempt at

---

[183] Ms 108: p. 1 [dated 13 December 1929].

making an absolute use of the word "present". In the end, the notion of the present used in such an absolute sense is rendered superfluous when trying to delimit the field of description of phenomenological language:

> When one says the *present* experience only has reality, then here the word 'present' must already be superfluous [...]. For it cannot mean *present* by opposition to past and future.[184]

The word "present" used in this absolute sense is superfluous or a wheel of language turning idly. The apparent substantial claim that only the present experience has reality does not gain or lose anything by the addition or subtraction of the word "present". The attempted claim could then be considered to have a tautological character, saying nothing more than that experience is reality, or that experience is real. Indeed, if the notion of the present does not admit opposites in its attempted absolute use, then it cannot delimit experience from something else either.

In the end the field of description for phenomenological language turns out to be ill defined. The notion of the present in the absolute sense was meant to delineate the flux of immediate experience from the historical or physical time of ordinary experience. But the attempt to remove the notion of the present from its interconnection with the notions of past and future is just as misguided as the previous attempt to find a description more immediate than a description carried out through ordinary language.

---

[184] Ms 108: pp. 2-3 [dated 13 December 1929].

CHAPTER 4

PHENOMENOLOGICAL LANGUAGE AND PAIN EXPRESSIONS

So far the question of Wittgenstein's concern with phenomenology has been discussed insofar as it involves a method of analysis and clarification. The focus has been on methodological reflections on the phenomenological language. Some of these reflections contribute to a positive conception of this means of expression. Other reflections, mingled in manuscripts with the former, address a series of difficulties with the attempt at developing a viable conception of phenomenological language. It was shown that Wittgenstein's notion of verification is central to both his positive conception and his critique of phenomenological language.

The present chapter discusses the ultimately problematic idea of phenomenological language from the angle of an attempt at applying the method of clarification that comes with it. To this purpose I will focus on Wittgenstein's incipient investigations of the intelligibility of pain expressions in 1929 and early 1930's. Like the methodological remarks, these investigations do not form a unitary corpus throughout the manuscripts of this period.

Some of these investigations have the notion of verification as their background and inform a view on the workings of pain expressions used in the first person. When this view in its turn is taken as a model of the intelligibility of all discourse about pain, this leads to a uniform account of the workings of pain expressions in general. The gist of the account relies on the positive conception of phenomenological language in the following way. According to this conception, ordinary propositions are analyzable into phenomenological statements directly verifiable in immediate experience. In line with this notion of analysis, the uniform account of pain expressions regards them as amounting to, or being analyzable into, phenomenological statements in the first person (e.g. I am in pain). Such statements are correlated to an experience of the presence or the absence of pain, which Wittgenstein explores in terms of mental states. An expression of one's being in pain is verifiable by comparison to a mental state of

painfulness. An expression of one's *not* being in pain is verifiable by comparison to a mental state of painlessness.

In the same period, however, Wittgenstein becomes aware of some crucial differences between the workings of pain expressions, according to whether they are formulated in the first person or the second/third person. A series of remarks on this asymmetry questions the viability of a uniform account of the intelligibility of pain expressions. The case of expressions about the pain of the other is central in this respect. The case challenges the assumption that understanding and clarifying a proposition about the other's pain requires a concern with the mental state of the other or with the other's pain sensations. Thus the methodological requirement to seek here a verification of such pain expressions by correlation to pain sensations is misleading.

This fourth chapter proceeds as follows. *Section 4.1* reconstructs the above mentioned view on the workings of pain expressions used in the first person, the view informed by the notion of verification. *Section 4.2* explores the uniform account of the intelligibility of the discourse about pain, the account which takes the above view as the general model of clarification. A critique of the uniform account will then be pursued.

4.1 Pain expressions in the first person

Some of Wittgenstein's remarks on pain expressions in the first person amount to a view according to which the intelligibility of these expressions involves their being correlated to an immediate experience, or to what Wittgenstein calls a mental state. I will first connect his concern with mental states in the case of pain expressions to his concern with immediate experience in his methodological remarks on phenomenological language (subsection 4.1.1). Against this background, the view on the workings of pain expressions in the first person will be exposed as involving a parallelism between relations of affirmative and negative expressions of pain on the one hand, with states of painfulness and of painlessness on the other hand (subsection 4.1.2). I will then focus more closely on the idea that the negative expression of pain designates a mental state of

painlessness. I will discuss this idea as indicating Wittgenstein's attempt to elucidate how negative expressions of pain invoke a particular absence, namely that of pain, as opposed to an indeterminate absence (subsection 4.1.3).

4.1.1 Mental states and immediate experience

Wittgenstein's notion of mental state in his reflections on the workings of pain expressions brings back into view his appeal for an attendance to experience. It is the appeal that was made already in his methodological remarks on phenomenological language. Wittgenstein remarks that

> in the sense in which one calls pains a mental state [o]ne wants thereby with the word 'mind process' to distinguish 'lived experience [Erlebnis]' from a 'physical process'.[185]

Lived experience is an instantiation of immediate experience in the case of phenomena commonly regarded as part of the inner life of the subject. Pain is among such phenomena. Like immediate experience in general, lived experience is contrasted to a physical process or a physical experience. In the case of pain one distinguishes the lived experience of pain in terms of pain sensations. The lived experience of pain is opposed to physical processes that may or may not accompany the pain sensations. Among such processes, which can be revealed by way of experiment, are physiological happenings, such as nerve impulses. Among these physical processes, one can also count facial signs of pain such as grimaces. Wittgenstein thus uses here the term physical in a broad sense. Physical processes are whatever is readily available to the person who is not in pain or whatever may be made accessible through experimental devices and technical means to assess the intensity of pain experienced by the subject in pain.

By approaching the phenomenon of pain in terms of mental states, Wittgenstein focuses on the first person perspective on the experience of pain. This approach will be central to his uniform account of the intelligibility of pain

---

[185] Ms 114: p. 189 [Pichler (1994): 1933].

expressions. The account gives a priority to the first person perspective, as the privileged one for clarifying the workings of pain expressions in general.

This prioritizing of one kind of pain expressions, namely, the ones in the first person, parallels the privilege that his methodological remarks give to phenomenological language as the adequate means of clarification of ordinary statements. The methodological remarks distinguish between a first system and a second system. The first system is the one of sense data or phenomenal facets made available by immediate experience at a given moment. In the case of pain, sensations correspond to the first system. The second system is the one of physical objects like chairs and tables. In the case of pain, among the relevant physical processes corresponding to the second system are the mentioned physiological happenings and facial signs of pain.

The gist of Wittgenstein's conception of phenomenological language is that, by confining itself to immediate experience, this means of expression is able to clarify the workings of ordinary language in general. The workings of ordinary discourse about pain would be clarified in a similar way. The ordinary discourse about pain includes a wide variety of propositions, dealing with issues as diverse as the localization of pains, their intensity, their occurring or reoccurring at given times, or their persistence throughout a certain period. The clarification of the workings of these propositions would then boil down to an elucidation of the way in which they are ultimately related to immediate experience, namely, to the mental states of pain.

4.1.2 Pain expressions and mental states

Wittgenstein's following view on the workings of pain expressions in the first person reflects the concern with verification within his methodological remarks on phenomenological language. This view involves also a reconsideration of the Tractarian account of the relation between affirmative and negative propositions in general.

The following remark from 1929 draws a parallel between the relation of affirmative and negative expressions of pain to experience:

If I say 'I have now no pains', I describe thereby obviously my present state. And thus 'no pains' designates this state, whereas 'pains' another state and the formal relation between both expressions signifies a formal relation between states.[186]

The designation relation between the affirmation "I have pains" and a state of pain on the one hand parallels the designation relation between the negation "I have no pains" and a state of painlessness on the other hand. One can trace here the conception of phenomenological language at work. According to this conception, each proposition can be analyzed into a phenomenological statement verifiable by comparison with the content of immediate experience. The same idea would hold in the case of pain expressions. The discourse about pain in the first person involves affirmative and negative expressions of pain. Insofar as these are simple expressions, allowing for no further analysis, they count as samples of phenomenological language. The intelligibility of ordinary propositions in general was taken to boil down to the correlation of phenomenological statements to immediate experience. By the same token, the intelligibility of the discourse about pain in the first person is now taken to boil down to the correlation of simple affirmative and negative expressions of pain to mental states of pain.

On this view, in order to understand and clarify an affirmative expression of pain, one would need to attend to a mental state of painfulness. And in order to understand and clarify a negative expression of pain, one would need to attend to a mental state of painlessness.

Wittgenstein mentions not only a relation of designation between propositions and mental states but also a formal relation between propositions. And a formal relation between states as well. A formal relation between the affirmative expression and the negative expression would parallel a formal relation between the state of pain and the state of painlessness. The question of the formal relation between the affirmative and the negative proposition in general was discussed in the *Tractatus*.

---

[186] Ms 107: p. 203 [dated 21 November 1929] / Ts 209: p. 24.

The gist of early Wittgenstein's view on the relation between an affirmative proposition and its negation is the following. According to the *Tractatus*, a proposition determines a place in logical space [Ort im logischen Raum] (3.4)[187]. Logical space is a space of intelligibility of phenomena and their expressions. The place in logical space is determined by the propositional sign (written or spoken) and its logical coordinates (3.41). A proposition determines only one place in logical space, but the whole logical space is already given by it (3.42a): the proposition reaches through [durchgreift] the whole logical space, determines the whole of it through the logical scaffolding round the proposition (3.42c). That is, the proposition determines the whole of logical space through the logical coordinates that connect the proposition with other propositions. [188] Among the logical coordinates is logical negation [Verneinung]. However, the negating [verneinend] proposition, namely the negative proposition, and the negated [verneint] proposition determine different logical places: the logical place of the negating proposition lies outside [liegt ausserhalb] the logical place of the negated proposition (4.0641b-c).

Wittgenstein's account of the workings of pain expressions in the first person resembles to an extent this Tractarian cartography of logical space:

'I have no pains' means: When I compare the proposition 'I have pains' with reality it turns out that it is false. – I must thus be able to compare it with that which is actually the case. And this possibility of comparison – even if it does not yield truth – is what we mean with the expression that what is the case must play itself out in the same space as that which is negated; things must *only* be *otherwise*.[189]

---

[187] It points to [deutet] that logical place (Nb 102: p. 36r [dated 23 November 1914] / N: p. 31).

[188] Wittgenstein's clarification for Ogden's translation reads: "the scaffolding is as big as the logical space. You could imagine a house with such a big scaffolding round it that by its length, breadth and width it filled the whole space. (Though 'filling' wouldn't be the right expression. I think to 'reach through space' is what I mean.)" (Wittgenstein 1973: p. 25.)

[189] Ms 107: pp. 203-204 [dated 21 November 1929] / Ts 209: p. 24.

Wittgenstein thus notes that what is the case (i.e. present pain) must play itself out in the same space as that which is not the case (i.e. possible pain). In this sense, the necessity, the *must*, of the state of pain playing itself out in the same space as the state of painlessness is required by one's being able to compare relevant affirmative and negative expressions with reality. But this space is not really the Tractarian logical space:

> I compare this state [of painlessness] with another [i.e. a state of pain], thus the former must be comparable with the latter. The former too must lie in pain-space [Schmerzraum] although in another place. – Otherwise my proposition ['I have no pains'] would somehow mean that my present state [of painlessness] has *nothing to do* with one of painfulness; somehow as if I said that the colour of this rose has nothing to do with the conquest of Gaul through Caesar. That is, there is no connection. But I mean precisely that between my present state [of painlessness] and one of painfulness there subsists a connection.[190]

The possibility to compare the expression "I have pains" with reality is here taken to exhibit a formal relation not only between this expression and its negation "I have no pains". It is taken to exhibit a formal relation also between the state of painfulness and the state of painlessness. These relations, however, do not determine places in a general logical space, but in pain-space.

Without thematizing it, the *Tractatus* anticipates the notion of pain-space. The underlying reasoning is that any phenomenon, insofar as it immediately admits certain properties and not others, lies in a space of its own possibilities: 'A speck in visual field need not be red, but it must have a colour; it has, so to speak, a colour-space round it [um sich]. A tone must have *a* pitch, the object of the sense of touch *a* hardness, etc.'[191] Thus early Wittgenstein envisages particular spaces of intelligibility for particular phenomena. Coloured flecks would lie in a

---

[190] Ms 108: p. 37 [dated 25 December 1929] / Ts 209: p. 35 / Ts 212: p. 347 / Ts 213: p. 102; cf. PR: § 82.

[191] TLP: 2.0131.

colour-space. Tones would lie in a sound-space. And in a similar fashion, phenomena of pain or mental states of pain would lie in a pain-space.

In the *Tractatus* general logical space is an all encompassing space of intelligibility. This conception is tied with the universal status conferred to account of the syntax for logical connectives that is meant to hold for any domain of discourse. However, Wittgenstein's 1929 paper has pointed out precisely the incapacity of the Tractarian logical notation to do justice to the workings of colour ascriptions. Once this point is taken on board, the idea of an all-encompassing logical space is already shaken. The moral of "Some Remarks on Logical Form" is precisely the problematic character of the attempt at giving a universal account of the syntax for connectives irrespective of the subject-matter of the propositions linked by them. Thus the call for a logical investigation of the phenomena themselves is not a call for an undiscriminating attendance to experience. It is rather a plea for attempting to clarify the workings of propositions while grouping them in different domains of discourse according to their subject-matter. The solution to the colour-exclusion case thus involved the initial recognition that colour ascriptions belong to a domain of discourse about phenomena that admit gradation. The investigation of the colour-exclusion case was to be carried out with regard to the particular colour-space and not in view of a general Tractarian logical space.

Wittgenstein's view on the workings of pain expressions similarly relies on the particular notion of pain-space, rather than on the notion of general Tractarian logical space. The view on the workings of *negative* expressions of pain also diverges from the Tractarian approach to negative expressions in general. Let us have a closer look at this divergence.

4.1.3 Specific absence and negative expressions

Wittgenstein's view on the workings of pain expressions in the first person points to a further issue with the Tractarian notion of logical space. The Tractarian conception of the relation between the affirmative and the negative proposition as a relation in general logical space does not reach as far as accounting for the difference of subject matter between various negative propositions. Again,

according to early Wittgenstein, the negating or the negative proposition determines a logical place outside the logical place determined by the affirmative or the negated proposition. This amounts to a somewhat deflationary approach to negation. According to this approach, the negative proposition does not add anything substantial to the discourse and it does not correspond to anything in reality either. Take the example of describing the content of a pocket. In the pocket there was, say, a pen and a rubber band, but not money. According to a Tractarian approach, the description of the content would amount to saying "In the pocket there is a pen and a rubber band and nothing else." The description would consist in a conjunction of affirmative propositions followed by an ending phrase. The ending phrase "and nothing else" would merely put an end to the enumeration of what is actually in the pocket. The problem is that a negative proposition like "In the pocket there is no money" is not substitutable with the phrase "and nothing else". This negative proposition does add something substantial to the description of the content of the pocket. Namely, that what is missing from the pocket is money as opposed to, say, feathers.

In the case of pain expressions, Wittgenstein is concerned with the fact that negative expressions of pain cannot be taken to be about just any absence. They are rather about a specific absence, namely that of pain. In 1929 he writes:

> 'I have no stomach ache' is comparable to the proposition 'These apples cost *nothing*'. They cost namely no *money*, but not no snow or no trouble. The null point is the null point on *one* scale. And no point on the yardstick can be given to me without the yardstick, so neither its null point. 'I have no pains' does not designate a state which is not about pains. Rather it is about pains. [...] I describe my present state [of painlessness] by way of the allusion to something that is not the case. If this attendance is required for the description (and is not merely an ornament) then in my present state something has to lie that requires that mention.[192]

---

[192] Ms 108: pp. 35-36 [dated 24 December 1929] / Ts 209: p. 35 / PR: § 82 tr. mod.

Thus, the negative expression "I have no stomach ache" accounts for a specific absence. Namely, it accounts for the absence of stomach ache. By comparison, the proposition "These apples cost nothing" accounts for the specific matter that one need not pay any money in order to get the apples. The proposition invokes the absence of the need to pay or the absence of money required in order for one to get in the possession of the apples.

Each of these propositions is conceived of as a point on a scale or on a yardstick. Wittgenstein's introduction of the model of the yardstick is indicative of the turn of his investigations from 1929 onwards to particular domains of discourse. Instead of attempting to account for the syntax of language in general, he now rather thinks that the activity of clarification is to attend to propositions considered as belonging to different domains of discourse according to their subject matter.

In our case, along with the first proposition about the absence of pain, other propositions on its scale would account for the eventual presence of more or less intense stomach aches. Along with the second proposition about the absence of money, other propositions on its scale would account for an eventual cost, which can be smaller or higher. The propositions considered correspond to the null point of a scale, namely, the absence of pain and the absence of an actual cost respectively. But the intelligibility of each of these propositions is not independent from the intelligibility of the other propositions on the same scale. This is what Wittgenstein means by saying that the null point cannot be given without the whole yardstick.

Conversely, this also involves that the yardstick cannot be given without its null-point. That is, that the intelligibility of pain expressions presupposes the intelligibility of the negative pain expression. And the latter in its turn is here accounted for in terms of the negative expression corresponding to a reality or experience, namely, a mental state of painlessness.

So the gist of the above view on the workings of pain expressions is that each such expression, either positive or negative, is verifiable by comparison to a distinct experience, or a mental state. The affirmative expression of pain is correlated to a mental state of painfulness. The negative expression of pain is

correlated to a mental state of painlessness. A series of further remarks to be discussed take the view on the workings of pain expressions in the first person as a general model for the intelligibility of all discourse about pain. This generalization will turn out to be, however, ultimately exposed to some objections.

4.2 Critique of the uniform account of pain expressions

The present section discuses the uniform account of the intelligibility of pain expressions which is modelled on the above view on the workings of pain expressions in the first person. Some questionable implications of the uniform account will be first exposed and discussed by further reference to the methodological conception of phenomenological language (subsection 4.2.1.) Then I will argue that the uniform account is ultimately undermined by Wittgenstein's consideration of the asymmetry between the workings of pain expressions in the first person as opposed to the second/third person (subsection 4.2.2). I will finish by drawing some connections between the critique of the uniform account of pain expressions and the critique of phenomenological language (subsection 4.2.3).

4.2.1 The uniform account and its implications

The core elements of the conception of phenomenological language that converge with the uniform account of pain expressions are the following. According to this conception, ordinary discourse consists in propositions that do not readily exhibit their logical syntax. At the same time, ordinary propositions do not provide an accurate account of the actual content of experience. This calls for a different means of philosophical expression, a different medium of clarificatory analysis. This medium is the phenomenological language. The removal of the hypothetical addition in ordinary statements involves their analysis into phenomenological statements. Such statements are directly verifiable by way of comparison to immediate experience.

Against this background, all discourse about pain appears as analyzable into pain expressions correlated to mental states of pain. In order to account for

the intelligibility of pain expressions one would thus have to verify them by comparison to the relevant immediate experience, namely, the experience of pain sensations.

Wittgenstein conceives of the statements directly verifiable by comparison to immediate experience as constituting a medium of expression, or a language, that has the first person as it centre. He writes:

> Now, among all the languages with different people as their centres, each of which I can understand, the one with me as its centre has a privileged status. This language is particularly adequate.[193]

This is a methodological first person, a stance which the one carrying out the activity of clarification is supposed to take. It is by verifying phenomenological statements from the methodological first person perspective that the hypothetical addition of ordinary propositions is removed. Indeed, in order that the method of verification be carried out, any reliance on reports of others would have to be reduced to propositions accounting for immediate experience. According to the uniform account of pain expressions, the analysis of all discourse about pain would be analyzable into affirmative and negative expressions of pain of the form "I am in pain" and "I am not in pain".

Expressions of this form would have, like phenomenological statements, a privileged status. Such pain expressions in the first person are considered to constitute a privileged medium of expression, in that they reveal the workings of all discourse about pain.

Now, of course, not all discourse about pain is uttered in the first person. Then the clarificatory privilege of pain expressions in the first person could be maintained only by attempting to give an account of the workings of the expressions about other persons' pain in terms of expressions of the kind "I am in pain". In line with the uniform account of pain expressions, Wittgenstein remarks:

---

[193] Ms 108: p. 9 [dated 14 December 1929] / PR: § 58.

We could adopt the following way of representing matters: if I, L. W.,
have toothache, then that is expressed by means of the proposition 'There
is toothache'. But if that is so, what we now express by the proposition 'A
has toothache', is put as follows: 'A is behaving as L. W. does when there
is toothache'.[194]

Expressions of pain in the first person are correlated to sensations of pain actually
experienced. According to the view exposed in the previous section, an expression
"I am in pain" designates a mental state of painfulness. The expressions about
other's pain would function in the same way. To say that the other is in pain
would be intelligible insofar as the other is actually having pain, that he or she is
actually experiencing pain sensations. The expressions about the other's pain
would have to be correlated to the other's pain sensations.

The privilege of the language of pain expressions with the first person as
its centre as clarificatory for the workings of all discourse about pain involves the
following assumption. In order to understand expressions about the other being in
pain from the first person stance, I would have to be concerned with the actual
pain sensations of the other. I would need to have some access to the pain
sensations of the other, or even somehow experience them. While drawing on this
assumption:

In explaining the proposition 'He has toothache', we even say something
like: 'Quite simple, I know what it means for *me* to have toothache, and
when I say he has toothache, I mean he now has what I once had.' But
what does 'he' mean and what does '*have* toothache' mean? Is this a
relation toothache once had to me and now has to him? So in that case I
would also be conscious of toothache now and of his having it now, just as
I can now see a wallet in his hand that I saw earlier in mine.[195]

---

[194] Ms 108: pp. 8-9 [dated 14 December 1929] / PR: § 58.

[195] Ms 107: pp. 200-201 [dated 20 November 1929] / PR: § 62.

The remark suggests two related ways to account for the understanding of expressions about the other's pain. Both ways involve an appeal to my own experience of pain. Both ways involve accounting for the intelligibility of expressions about the pain of the other upon the model of the intelligibility of expressions in the first person. In the first person, the expressions would refer to one's mental state of pain, or one's pain sensations. To account for the use of pain expressions in this case would be to provide a verification of them by comparison to the mental state of pain.

Then one way to account for understanding the expressions about the other's pain would be my correlating them, somehow indirectly, to pain sensations I actually had. This would amount to my drawing on past uses of pain expressions, when these expressions were correlated to my actual pain sensations. The understanding of the expression "He has pains" at a present moment thus involves a connection between the expression and my past experience. But this way of accounting for the intelligibility of expressions about the other's pain would not allow for verification. Verification involves a correlation between the use of the expression and an immediate experience occurring at the same moment when the expression is used. In order to avoid the difficulty of the attempt to verify the expression by correlating it to a past experience, a different way of accounting for its understanding may be provided.

The second way comes with the assumption that in order to understand the expression about the other's pain, I need to somehow have at the same time the pain sensations the other is having. Only in this way could one carry out a verification of the expression at the present moment. According to the end of the above remark, I would need to be conscious of the pain of the other and of the other's having the pain at the present moment. A comparison is thus drawn with the case of my seeing a wallet in the other's hand, a wallet seen earlier in my own hands. This points to a peculiar way in which I would have to be conscious of the pain of the other. It would be a form of being conscious of pain in a somewhat disengaged manner. Namely, without experiencing at the same time the unpleasantness that pain would give to the other.

The view that one can be conscious of pain without experiencing its unpleasantness draws on a parallel with my being conscious of the presence of somebody in another room:

> One constructs here on the schema: "How do you know that there is somebody in the other room?" – "I have heard him singing."[196]

According to the conception of phenomenological language, a proposition like "How do you know that there is somebody in the other room?" is analyzable into phenomenological statements directly verifiable by comparison to immediate experience. In the current example, it is an immediate experience of hearing the singing sounds coming from the other room. I am not actually in the other room, not actually attending the situation of someone being there. But I would have an access to the situation by hearing somebody singing there. If I was, however, in the other room, I could have a different experience of the situation. I would be able, for instance, to see the singing person. And thus immediate experience would provide also visual sense data of the situation.

It is by way of a parallel to this case, that one conceives of the eventuality of being conscious of the other's pain without perceiving the unpleasantness. There would be different kinds of perception of pain, according to the difference in the stances of the person in pain and of the one understanding expressions about that person being in pain. The person being in pain would have a full-blown experience. The person would not be merely conscious of pain but also perceive the unpleasantness. This would correspond by analogy to being in the other room where somebody is singing and having the full-blown experience of the situation. Whereas in order to understand the expression about the person being in pain I would only need to be conscious of pain. This would correspond to my being conscious of somebody being in the other room, while I am merely hearing the singing.

---

[196] Ms 113: p. 52v [dated 18 April 1932].

Wittgenstein's further scrutiny of the understanding of expressions about the other's pain call into question these implications of the uniform account of the workings of pain expressions and ultimately the viability of the account itself. What is particularly questioned is the idea that in order to understand and clarify expressions about the pain of the other one needs to have some access to the other's actual pain sensations. I will now proceed to a discussion of this issue.

4.2.2 The asymmetry of pain expressions

According to the uniform account of pain expressions, all discourse about pain is to be clarified in terms of a language with the first person as its centre. Then the workings of every expression of pain would follow the workings of pain expressions in the first person correlated to a mental state of pain. The expression "I am in pain" designates a state of painfulness and is ultimately verifiable by comparison to an immediate experience of pain.

On this account, my understanding and clarifying the expressions about the other's pain involves a verification by comparison with pain sensations. This is the source of the concern with a way of my somehow accessing the other's pain sensations. Such an access would be necessary for my understanding expressions about the other's pain.

The uniform account of pain expressions can be questioned starting from an example of comforting the other in pain:

> When I feel sorry for someone with toothache, I put myself in his place. But I put *myself* in his place.[197]

The uniform account of pain expressions assumes the possibility of a uniformity of my and the other's experience of painlessness and painfulness. Insofar as neither me nor the other would be in pain, we would share an experience of the absence of pain. Namely, we would both be in a mental state of painlessness.

---

[197] Ms 107: p. 271 [dated 31 January 1931] / PR: § 63.

The other's starting to feel pain would induce a divide in this shared experience. The presence of pain the other feels would put him or her in a state of painfulness. I would continue to be in a state of painlessness until the other would utter a pain expression. The expression would be correlated to the other's state of painfulness and would make known to me the presence of pain that he or she is experiencing.

My understanding of the other's expression would restore a uniformity in our experience. My understanding would involve the advent of a state of painfulness. And thus we would both come to experience the presence of pain. It would be a shared experience of pain expressed only by the other's uttering a phrase of the form "I am in pain".

But on the uniform account, more is required in order for me to understand the phrase of the other. What is required is that an identity be established between the particular pain sensations in my state of painfulness and in the other's state of painfulness.

The case of comforting the other provides a challenge for this requirement. My comforting the other does involve my understanding the other's expression of pain. But it does not necessitate that an identity be established between pain sensations I may come to have and the other's pain sensations. While comforting the other having a toothache, I put myself in the situation of the other. But I do this not by becoming conscious of the other's toothache itself. Nor by starting to experience the unpleasantness that the other is experiencing. By putting myself in the situation of the other I rather draw on relevant situations in which I have been myself. I draw on my past use of pain expressions. And I draw on my recollection of the comfort I may have received from other people when uttering such expressions.

To this purpose, while putting myself in the other's situation I may also draw on my past experience of toothaches. But my recollection of toothaches would not bring the actual sensations back to my experience in the present. My recollection of past experience of toothaches can even less provide me with some access to the other's toothache.

The idea that my understanding of the other's expression of pain and my comforting the other requires my access to the other's toothache goes hand in hand with a misleading attempt at extending the experience of the first person over the experience of the second/third person. The hope that such an attempt can be successful is the hope that a uniformity between my and the other's experience of the presence and the absence of pain can be established. The following remark points to this misleading attempt:

> Philosophers who believe you can, in a manner of speaking, extend experience by thinking, ought to remember that you can transmit speech over the telephone, but not measles.[198]

The remark refers to philosophers in the plural, but it works well as a reminder of the problematic assumption of the uniform account of pain expressions springing from Wittgenstein's own remarks. Indeed, at the heart of the uniform account of pain expressions lies precisely an attempt to extend experience. Namely, by providing a way in which one could become in the first person conscious of the pain sensations of the other.

The idea of the possibility of an extension of experience allows for a divide between the field of experience pertaining to the use of pain expressions in the first person as opposed to the second/third person. But the divide is regarded as contingent in the sense of its being relative to the occurrence of pain in the experience of the other, relative to the relation that pain happens to have to the other as opposed to me. The divide could then be bridged by my understanding of expressions about the other's pain, an understanding that would necessitate my sharing a mental state of painfulness with him or her.

The distinction between the fields of experience pertaining to the use of pain expressions is, however, not contingent. It is rather logical. The distinction is the corollary of the logical impossibility of my coming to experience the actual pain sensations of the other:

---

[198] Ms 107: p. 278 [dated 2 February 1930] / PR: § 66.

We say, 'I *cannot* feel your toothache'; when we say this, do we only mean that so far we have never as a matter of fact felt someone else's toothache? Is it not, rather, that it is logically impossible?[199]

The issue is not that merely so far I did not feel the other's toothache. It is not that in the past I was never conscious of the actual toothache of the other or that I have not experienced the unpleasantness that the other was experiencing. The divide between my stance and the other's stance is not a contingent but a logical divide. Then an attempt at verifying the pain expressions of the other by comparison to the other's pain sensation is by principle not achievable.

The fulfilment of the methodological requirement of verification for my understanding the pain expression of the other is indeed logically impossible. Wittgenstein's further example of the comfort provided to someone sad points out that the requirement is also superfluous in that it is not actually entertained in such a situation of everyday life:

It is not possible to believe something for which you cannot imagine some kind of verification.

If I say I believe that someone is sad, it is as though I am seeing his behaviour through the medium of sadness, from the viewpoint of sadness.[200]

The remark first exposes the requirement of verification as the general relation that any proposition, including one formulating a belief, would ultimately have with immediate experience. The example of sadness does not substantiate this requirement, but rather points out that one can precisely believe that someone is sad without entertaining the requirement to verify the belief by comparison to an immediate experience or with sensations corresponding to it.

---

[199] Ms 107: p. 216 [dated 29 November 1929] / PR: § 60.

[200] Ms 107: pp. 201-202 [dated 20 November 1929] / PR: § 59.

The focus on the case of sadness in this respect is particularly apt, as one does not generally say that being sad involves one's having sensations of sadness. Then someone uttering "I am sad" cannot be taken to account for the person having sensations of sadness in the first place. I can equally understand the other's expression before or without being concerned with any sensations that may correspond to the expression. That I believe that the other is sad means that I can already act upon my understanding the expression without attempting to verify it by comparison to sensations.

I act upon my understanding of the other's expression by already comforting the other. Doing so requires attention to the circumstances of sadness. Namely, attention to the situation of the other and the factors related to the sadness the other is exhibiting by way of behaviour or propositions elaborating upon the sadness.

Wittgenstein's remark presents comforting the other as involving not my explicitly drawing on my past relevant experiences, but my seeing the other's behaviour through the medium of sadness. I thus understand also his expression "I am sad" in light of a whole discourse of sadness and actions pertaining to it. That is, in light of how people generally talk about sadness and in light of how people generally behave when they are sad and comfort others who are sad.

Thus in light of the way in which we generally provide comfort to others, the methodological requirement of achieving a verification of expressions turns out to be superfluous. Conversely, the presence or absence of corresponding sensations experienced by others when uttering expressions of pain is equally superfluous to my understanding of these expressions and providing comfort:

> The two hypotheses 1) that other people have toothache and 2) that they behave just as I do but do not have toothache, have identical senses. That is, if I had, for example, learnt the second form of expression, I would talk in a pitying tone of voice about people who do not have toothache, but are behaving as I do when I have.

A proposition so conceived that it is uncontrollably true or false is totally detached from reality and does not function anymore as a proposition.[201]

The use of the notion of hypothesis in this remark is not the technical use pertaining to the conception of phenomenological language. The mentioned hypotheses are not such that can be analyzed in phenomenological statements. While verifying such resulting statements by comparison to immediate experience, one could thus clarify the intelligibility of the initial hypotheses. And further, one could establish the truth or falsehood of either of them.

The two mentioned hypotheses are rather two forms of expression of the workings of the behaviour and use of pain expressions of other people in pain. According to the first form, the behaviour and use of pain expressions of others is accompanied by their having pain sensations. Their behaviour and their expressions would thus be correlated to their immediate experience of pain. In light of the second form of expression, the behaviour and use of pain expressions of others would not be accompanied by their experiencing any pain sensations.

The remark makes the assumption that the second form of expression would be somehow accepted. What is relevant for the assumption is not that this form of expression would be substantiated as viable. Rather, what is envisaged is merely that I learn it. According to the remark, this would not, however, make a change in my attitudes towards other people in pain. Guided by the behaviour and pain expressions of the other, I would still provide comfort to the other in relevant situations.

The idea that the behaviour and use of pain expressions of others is not accompanied by their having pain sensations would leave unchanged our ordinary ways of providing comfort. This idea may seem to be formulated against a behaviourist background in the following sense. It may seem to actually deny that the behaviour of others is accompanied by pain sensations. But the remark does

---

[201] Ms 107: pp. 270-271 [31 January 1930] / PR: § 64, tr. mod.

not deny this. The focus is rather on the intelligibility of the pain expressions of the others.

According to the uniform account, my understanding and clarifying the pain expressions of others requires my having some access to their pain sensations. But my actually having the pain sensations of others turned out to be a logical impossibility. Once this latter point is taken on board, the uniform account would end up rendering the pain expressions of the others as uncontrollably true or false. They would be uncontrollably true or false insofar I would not have any means to verify them by comparison to pain sensations.

By insisting on the requirement to access the pain sensations of others, the uniform account, contrary to its aim, renders the pain expressions of others as unintelligible when heard from a first person perspective. This is because the uniform account of pain expressions overlooks the essential asymmetry in the workings of these expressions. A significant element overlooked thereby is the function that the uttering mouth plays in my understanding of the other's pain expressions:

> 'I have a pain' is a sign of a completely different kind when I am using the proposition, from what it is to me on the lips of another; the reason being that it is senseless, as far as I am concerned, on the lips of another until I know through which mouth it was expressed. The propositional sign in this case does not consist in the sound alone, but in the fact that the sound came out of this mouth. Whereas in the case in which I say or think it, the sign is the sound itself.[202]

According to this remark, the expression "I have pain" does not work in the same manner throughout all discourse about pain. One and the same proposition amounts to different propositional signs according to the stance from which it is uttered. When I utter the proposition in the first person, I readily understand it. In this case, the propositional sign is the sound itself, or my actually uttering the

---

[202] Ms 107: pp. 274-275 [dated 1 February 1930] / PR: § 64.

proposition. When the same proposition is used by the other, my understanding it requires an attendance to a further element. This is the mouth through which the proposition is uttered. The fact that the sound comes out from the particular mouth of the other is essential to my understanding the proposition as a proposition about the pain of a specific other person.

Thus in order that pain expressions of others be understood and clarified from the first person stance, these expressions do need to be correlated to something in experience. But they need not be correlated to pain sensations of the others which I may try to somehow access. In order to understand the pain expression of the other and act upon this understanding I rather need to correlate it to the mouth through which it was uttered. The mouth of the other through which the expression was uttered reflects the asymmetry between the workings of pain expressions according to the person in which they are uttered.

The attendance to the uttering mouth of the other is one way to account for the asymmetry in the workings of pain expressions. Another way to account for this asymmetry is from the angle of the pronouns as used in pain expressions of ordinary language:

> The phenomenon of feeling toothache I am familiar with is represented in the idioms of ordinary language by '*I have* a pain in such-and-such a tooth'. Not by an expression of the kind 'In this place there is a feeling of pain'. The *whole* field of this experience is described in this language by expressions of the form 'I have...'. Propositions of the form 'N has toothache' are reserved for a totally different field. So we should not be surprised when for propositions of the form 'N has toothache', there is nothing left that links with experience in the same way as in the first case.[203]

Thus the use of pain expressions in ordinary discourse already points to an asymmetry of their workings. This asymmetry reflects a divide in the field of

---

[203] Ms 107: pp. 288-289 [dated 7 February 1930] / PR: § 66.

experience corresponding to the pain expressions in the first person as opposed to the second/third person. The first person pronoun "I" delineates a field of experience accounted for by the use of expressions "I have a toothache in such and such a tooth." Expressions of pain in the second/third person are reserved for a different field of experience. But this does not mean that in order to understand the latter expression I need to correlate it to that different field of experience. It rather means that I need not attempt to correlate the expression with an experience allegedly shared with the other. For the understanding of the expression in the second/third person, nothing would be left that connects the expression to such an experience.

4.2.3 Connections with the critique of phenomenological language

This critique of the uniform account of pain expressions converges in several points with Wittgenstein's critique of phenomenological language.

Let us first take the rejection of the idea that the intelligibility of expressions about the other's pain involves the model of the workings of expressions about pain in the first person. This rejection echoes Wittgenstein's ultimate abandonment of the general distinction between a primary, phenomenological language and the secondary, ordinary language. The critique of the uniform account of pain expressions reflects this abandonment, however, not by involving the collapse of two kinds of expression into one. The asymmetry of the workings of pain expressions in the first person and the second/third person rather maintains a distinction between two kinds of expression. What the critique yet questions is the primacy that the uniform account grants to pain expressions in the first person. According to the critique of the uniform account, such expressions cannot be given this clarificatory priority. They cannot be regarded as constituting a language of what we really know or are conscious of when understanding expressions about the other's pain.

The critique of the uniform account also questions the methodological privilege given to phenomenological language insofar as this is a language with the first person as its centre. Phenomenological language would have to be such a language insofar as its statements need to be verified by way of their comparison

to immediate experience. The rigidity of the method of verification led in the methodological critique to the difficulty of applying this method to the clarification of the workings of propositions about the past. In that case, verification could not be carried out, as it required the comparison of phenomenological statements to a present immediate experience. But an immediate experience is essentially lacking on the occasion of the use of propositions about the past. The grammar of the notions of past, present, and future involves that one's experiencing the past that a presently used expression is about amounts to a logical impossibility. In a similar way, an immediate experience of the other's pain is not available to the first person who understands the expression about the pain. The whole concern with ways of accessing or becoming conscious of the pain of the other is misleading insofar as it involves an attempt to cross a logical divide between different fields of experience.

The focus on the case of comforting the other in pain sheds further light on Wittgenstein's way of formulating the abandonment of phenomenological language in a central remark discussed above:

> Phenomenological language, or 'primary language' as I called it, does not strike me now as a goal, I hold it no longer to be possible.[204]

I have pointed out that the phrasing "no longer to be possible" [nicht mehr für möglich] in this remark is revised in further versions, occurring in later typescripts and finally in the *Philosophical Remarks*. According to the latter phrasing, phenomenological language is taken to be rather no longer necessary [nicht mehr für nötig].[205] Wittgenstein's approach to the case of comforting the other provides resources to elucidate both phrasings, insofar as the method of verification is central to the idea of phenomenological language. The approach questions both the necessity and the possibility of carrying out a verification in order to understand expressions about the other's pain.

---

[204] Ms 107: pp. 205-206 [dated 25 November 1929].

[205] Cf. Ts 209: p. 1 [Pichler (1994): May 1930] / PR: § 1.

Let us first take the issue of the necessity of verification in this case. The uniform account of the workings of pain expressions makes the methodological requirement that their understanding requires their verification in the first person. But Wittgenstein's attendance to the case of providing comfort to the other in pain points out that the fulfilment of this methodological requirement is not necessary. While providing comfort to the other in pain, I already understand expressions about the other's pain without actually entertaining any concern with verifying the expression by comparison to an immediate experience shared with the other.

The methodological requirement of a concern with the other's pain sensations in order to understand the expressions about the other's pain is equally rendered as superfluous. This is shown by Wittgenstein's consideration of our learning that the others may utter pain expressions without actually having pain sensations. Our learning this, however, would leave unchanged our ordinary ways of understanding the expressions and of providing comfort.

The possibility to carry out a verification in every case of clarification is also questioned by the critique of the uniform account of pain expressions. The uniform account involves an unfulfillable attempt at extending my field of experience over the other's field of experience in order that the expression about the other's pain be verifiable. This attempt involves my alleged concern with a way to access the actual pain sensations of the other. But the eventuality of my having an access to the actual pain sensation of the other is not a genuine possibility at all. It is rather tantamount to a logical impossibility.

CONCLUSIONS

The present thesis was guided by three leading questions. One question is that of the rationale of Wittgenstein's conception of phenomenology. Another question is that of the specificity of phenomenology as he conceived of it. A further question is that of Wittgenstein's commitment to phenomenology. I will now readdress these questions in light of the discussions provided in the previous chapters.

The rationale of Wittgenstein's conception of phenomenology

According to Hintikka's influential reading, phenomenology was implicitly at work already in Wittgenstein's early philosophy.[206] My account of the rationale of Wittgenstein's explicit concern with phenomenology challenged this reading. To this purpose I have focused on Wittgenstein's 1929 paper "Some Remarks on Logical Form", which calls for a logical investigation of phenomena as a remedy to what Wittgenstein comes to see as a problem with the project of the *Tractatus*. The problem is the applicability of the universal account of logical grammar that early Wittgenstein provided.

The paper approaches the so-called case of colour-exclusion, an issue raised already in the *Tractatus*. According to this work, a proposition like "This cannot be red and blue simultaneously all over" expresses a logical impossibility. On the other hand, every proposition expressing a logical impossibility is taken to boil down to a contradiction. Namely, a contradiction to be exhibited through truth-tables of the logical operations involved by the proposition. The proposition above should thus be shown to boil down to a contradiction exhibited by the Tractarian truth-table of logical product, or conjunction. However, as I pointed out in light of Ramsey's review of the *Tractatus*, early Wittgenstein does not go as far as providing an actual analysis of the proposition in question, leaving it open where and how a contradiction could be established in this case. The paper "Some Remarks on Logical Form" makes an attempt at carrying out the required analysis. This leads to Wittgenstein's acknowledgment that, in the case of simultaneous

---

[206] Cf. Hintikka & Hintikka (1986), Hintikka (1996).

colour ascriptions, one cannot in fact establish a contradiction to be exhibited by the Tractarian truth-table of logical product. According to the paper, such ascriptions are rather articulated by a relation of mutual exclusion. This relation has no correlate in the complete table of connectives provided by the *Tractatus*.

The paper thus suggests that logical grammar cannot be exhaustively accounted for by the combinations of propositions exhibited by Tractarian truth-tables. Wittgenstein calls for an attendance to the character of phenomena and of the qualities that the propositions to be clarified are about. It is when qualities admit gradation that the syntax of simultaneous ascriptions does not follow the logical syntax for operators exhibited by standard truth-tables. Against this background I discussed Wittgenstein's introduction of phenomenology as a logic of content by contrast to Tractarian logic of form. Unlike a logic of propositional form, a logic of propositional content would not involve a universal account of logical grammar in terms of combinations exhibited by truth-tables. Phenomenology would first scrutinize the kind of the subject matter of propositions to be clarified. But Wittgenstein will take this scrutiny to involve yet again a universal means of clarification, namely a specific method of verification. This method is central to his conception of phenomenological language.

The specificity of Wittgenstein's conception of phenomenology

The notion of phenomenological language was regarded as the core of Wittgenstein's conception of phenomenology. He envisages a phenomenological language as an adequate medium of philosophical expression and clarification. As such, this medium is opposed to ordinary language, which disguises its logical structure. Wittgenstein discusses the way in which ordinary language disguises logical structure by regarding ordinary statements as hypotheses. According to some readings, Wittgenstein uses the notion of hypothesis in the sense it is used in the sciences, namely, as a view to be confirmed or disconfirmed by way of experiment. The notion has also been taken to be used simply in the sense of prejudice. I have shown that hypothesis is rather a technical term in Wittgenstein's writings. In his conversations recorded by Waismann, the qualification of ordinary statements as hypotheses involves regarding them as

three-dimensional grammatical structures. As such, ordinary statements have different facets, like a three dimensional object. Each of these facets corresponds to a way in which one and the same ordinary statement can be meant or taken.

On the other hand, this three-dimensional model is applied to ordinary objects as well. Wittgenstein conceives of ordinary objects as multi-facetted phenomena. Among the facets of a chair as phenomenon are, for instance, its shape, colour, hardness. The unity of the facets is provided by a hypothesis about the chair, such as "There is a chair here". The clarification of the workings of ordinary statements thus calls for a means to establish the way in which a multifaceted hypothesis is connected to a multifaceted phenomenon on a particular occasion.

This means is given by phenomenological language. The construction of phenomenological language involves an isolation, both on the side of language and on the side of phenomena. A phenomenological statement amounts to one facet of a hypothesis isolated from the other facets. Such a statement is meant to be verifiable by correlation to one facet of the phenomenon, the facet intended by the initial proposition to be clarified. The initial proposition "There is a chair here" may draw attention to the red chair in a room. By doing so, the proposition may respond to the request of giving an inventory of red items in the room. The analysis of the proposition then involves the isolation of one facet of it, namely, a phenomenological statement such as "This patch is red". This statement would be correlated to an isolated facet of the chair insofar as its experience involves the perception of a patch of red colour.

By contrast to ordinary language, phenomenological language accounts for the content of immediate experience within particular sensory fields. The hypothetical character of ordinary language is also due to its not distinguishing between such fields. One and the same ordinary statement "There is a chair here" can be used to account for the presence of a hard item or for the presence of an item of a certain colour. According to its different senses, the proposition is analyzed into different phenomenological statements, for instance, "This item is hard" or "This patch is red". These statements are correlated to relevant contents of immediate experience provided in different sensory fields.

My reconstruction of this notion of isolation in Wittgenstein's writings provides resources for the further inquiry into the question of his endorsement of an idea of reduction akin to that of classical phenomenological reduction. Some commentators have discussed whether Wittgenstein's conception of phenomenology involves a method of reduction akin to that of Husserl.[207] This discussion can be readdressed by future research in light of the account I provided of the relation between phenomenological and ordinary language in middle Wittgenstein's work.

Wittgenstein's commitment to phenomenology

Wittgenstein has been taken to fully endorse a conception of phenomenology for a definite period of time and suddenly abandon it.[208] By considering the initial context of his remarks pertaining to phenomenology in the *Nachlass*, I have tried to formulate a more nuanced view on the fate of phenomenology in Wittgenstein's development. On this view, Wittgenstein develops his conception of phenomenology in different directions. Yet at the same time he comes to question the viability of various notions involved thereby, sometimes in the very context in which they are introduced.

In this respect I have discussed Wittgenstein's questioning at one point the general distinction between a primary and a secondary language. His rejection of the distinction involves the rejection of the privilege granted to one single mode of description, which would convey, as he puts it, what we really know when using ordinary propositions. This real knowledge would be confined to what we actually perceive in immediate experience, by contrast to a knowledge of physical objects conveyed by ordinary language.

One motive for the rejection of a primary, phenomenological language is the ultimately acknowledged difficulty of achieving a verification in the analysis of kinds of propositions not previously considered. Propositions of such a kind are those about the past. One may try to analyze such propositions into phenomenological statements. But these statements do not have as a correlate an

---

[207] Cf. Park (1998), Morgan (2003).

[208] Cf. Hintikka & Hintikka (1986), Kienzler (1997).

immediate experience by comparison with which they can be verified. A further set of propositions that pose a difficulty for the attempt at clarifying them through phenomenological language are orders and instructions. To understand an order or an instruction is thus to understand what one is supposed to do in a given situation. It is to get how one is expected to act upon the situation. This aspect of propositions expressing orders or instructions distinguishes them from simple reports of the content of experience. Their sense is thus not fully captured by an analysis into phenomenological statements verifiable by comparison to immediate experience.

Another strand of the critique of phenomenological language concerns its status as an immediate description of immediate experience. The requirement of this language to be a direct description confined to immediate experience is the requirement of its being a hypothesis-free medium of expression. Ordinary language statements have a hypothetical character also in virtue of their being recollecting past experiences. And further in virtue of their anticipating aspects of situations not yet experienced. The distinction between phenomenological language and ordinary language goes hand in hand with a distinction Wittgenstein makes between the flowing present of immediate experience and the physical time of ordinary experience. The notion of flowing present, or memory time, is taken to be categorically different from the ordinary notion of time involving references to past, present, and future.

The use of ordinary propositions, as written or spoken propositions, is unfolded in physical time. On the other hand, in order that a phenomenological language be usable, it should be expressed by written or spoken signs as well. But this requirement of the usability of phenomenological language ultimately infringes upon its envisaged character as hypothesis-free description. One could try to establish the hypothesis-free status of the description at the moment of its production, by correlation to immediate experience. But then each time the description were read again, it would remain doubtful whether it is still free of hypotheses or not. Conversely, insisting that phenomenological language is a hypothesis-free description in virtue of its not being, like ordinary statements, unfolded in physical time, ultimately casts doubt on its very intelligibility. A

158

description aiming at being more immediate than one employing written or spoken signs would cease to be a genuine description altogether. Phenomenological language would thus end up being, as Wittgenstein puts it, an inarticulate sound.

A further line of critical inquiry into the idea of phenomenological language is informed by Wittgenstein's remarks on the notion of flowing present qualifying immediate experience. The attempt to outline immediate experience as the field of description for phenomenological language assumed the categorical distinction between the notion of flowing present and that of physical time. Wittgenstein comes to dismiss this distinction insofar as in the end it renders unfulfillable the very delimitation of the flowing present. The delimitation does not involve merely an empirical difficulty but a conceptual fallacy. It is an attempt to use the notion of the present in an absolute sense, lacking the ordinary opposites of past and future. The gist of Wittgenstein's questioning the intelligibility of this absolute use of the notion of the present is the rhetorical question "Present as opposed to what?". Then the reliance on this notion in order to outline the field of immediate experience turns out to be unsuccessful. The requirement that phenomenological language be confined to immediate experience was tied to the assumption that only the present immediate experience is real. Namely, that the persistence of ordinary experience is nurtured by sense data occurring in a flux of immediate experience. But the absolute use of the notion of the present in the phrase "only the present experience has reality" does not achieve its intended aim at delimiting immediate experience from something else. Wittgenstein ultimately regards the occurrence of this notion of the present as superfluous, or a wheel turning idly in the phrase.

I have finally addressed the question of the internal consistency of Wittgenstein's conception of phenomenology in light of an application of the idea of phenomenological language. The application is to the case of the clarification of the discourse about pain. In this respect, the idea of phenomenological language informs a uniform account of pain expressions. According to this account, the clarification of all discourse about pain involves its reduction to pain expressions used in the first person. Such pain expressions are taken to be correlated with an

immediate experience of pain, or to what Wittgenstein calls mental states of pain. On this view, my understanding expressions about the other's pain requires my access to the other's experience of pain, or the other's pain sensations.

Wittgenstein's continuing remarks on the understanding and use of pain expressions ultimately question this uniform account. His focus on the ways we provide comfort to the others in pain renders superfluous and ultimately unfulfillable the methodological requirement of verification. In providing comfort to the others in pain we understand expressions about their pain and act upon them without being concerned with their actual pain sensations. Wittgenstein comes to regard a first person experience of the other's pain sensations as logically impossible. Thus an extension of the field of experience of the first person over that of the second/third person in order to carry out a verification of the expression about the other's pain is in its turn logically impossible.

Wittgenstein's approach to the workings of pain expressions in the middle period turns out to be constantly revised, just as his conception of phenomenological language. While the uniform account of pain expressions is informed by his positive remarks on phenomenological language, critical remarks of the uniform account are connected, as shown, to the methodological critique of this language.

From 1929 onwards Wittgenstein develops a longstanding interest in problems such as the perception and the expression of pain. He often returns to this issue not only in the period when he envisages a phenomenological method. The problem of pain will be a central concern of his later philosophy, when dealing also with broader issues in the philosophy of language or philosophy of psychology.

In a remark occurring much later in his *Nachlass*, namely in 1950, Wittgenstein reflects on the relation between a method of philosophy and the problems it addresses:

There is no phenomenology, but there are indeed phenomenological problems.[209]

This is an enlightening retrospective remark on the outcome of the critique of phenomenological language. Wittgenstein comes to ultimately reject the idea of phenomenology, insofar as it involves a privileged method of philosophy. While he conceived of phenomenological language as involving such a method, he finally realized that it was not a viable one. His critique of phenomenological language is followed by later critiques of the attempt to privilege any other single philosophical method, be it phenomenological or not. While ultimately abandoning phenomenological language and dismissing phenomenology in this sense, Wittgenstein would also be reluctant to endorse conceptions of phenomenology as a strong science, of Husserlian inspiration.

At the end of his career, however, we see Wittgenstein admitting that there are phenomenological problems. The issues addressed in the period when he envisages a phenomenological language remain for him genuine problems. By this point he has in mind also the problems addressed by other philosophers who invoked a phenomenological approach to them. Proto-phenomenologists such as Goethe and psychologists in the phenomenological tradition such as Koehler are often referred to in Wittgenstein's later writings. Wittgenstein will engage at length with the problems addressed by figures like Goethe and Koehler. While doing so, however, Wittgenstein will be reluctant to endorse the idea that one single philosophical method can solve every philosophical problem. He will rather call for methodological flexibility and the need to devise diverse and suitable approaches in light of the specific philosophical problems encountered.

---

[209] Ms 176: p. 13r [Pichler (1994): 1950] / *Remarks on Colour*. § 248.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary bibliography

Waismann, F. (1967). *Wittgenstein und der Wiener Kreis.* Ed. B. McGuinness. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Waismann, F. (1979). *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle.* Ed. B. McGuinness. Tr. J. McGuinness. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Waismann, F. (2003). *The Voices of Wittgenstein: The Vienna Circle.* Ed. G. Baker. London: Routledge.

Wittgenstein, L. (1957). "Notes on Logic". Ed. H. T. Costello, *The Journal of Philosophy 54:9*, pp. 230-245.

Wittgenstein, L. (1961). *Notebooks 1914-1916*. Ed. G. H. von Wright & G. E. M. Anscombe. Tr. G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Wittgenstein, L. (1964). *Philosophische Bemerkungen*. Ed. R. Rhees. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Wittgenstein, L. (1966). Some Remarks on Logical Form. In *Essays on Wittgenstein's Tractatus*. Ed. Copy & Beard. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Wittgenstein, L. (1969). *Philosophische Grammatik*. Ed. R. Rhees. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Wittgenstein, L. (1973). *Letters to C. K. Ogden with Comments on the English Translation of the* Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. Ed. G. H. von Wright. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Wittgenstein, L. (1974). *Letters to Russell, Keynes and Moore.* Ed. G. H. von Wright. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Wittgenstein, L. (1974). *Philosophical Grammar*. Ed. R. Rhees. Tr. A. Kenny. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Wittgenstein, L. (1974). *Letters to Russell, Keynes and Moore*. Ed. G. H. von Wright. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Wittgenstein, L. (1975). *Philosophical Remarks*. Ed. R. Rhees. Tr. R. Hargreaves & R. White. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Wittgenstein, L. (1993). Some Remarks on Logical Form. In *Philosophical Occasions 1912-1951.* Ed. A. Nordmann. Indianapolis: Hackett.

Wittgenstein, L. (2002 [1922]). *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Tr. C. K. Ogden. London: Routledge & K. Paul.

Wittgenstein, L. (2000). *Nachlass: The Bergen Electronic Edition.* Oxford: Oxford UP.

Secondary bibliography

Arrington, R. L. (1975). Can There be a Linguistic Phenomenology?. *The Philosophical Quarterly 25:101*, pp. 289-304.

Arrington, R. L. (1978). Wittgenstein and Phenomenology. *Philosophy Today 22:4*, pp. 287-300.

Austin, J. ([1980] 2000). Wittgenstein's Solutions to the Colour Exclusion Problem. In *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Critical Assessments vol. 1.* Ed. S. Shanker. Abingdon: Routledge.

Cerezo, M. (2012). Possibility and Logical Space in the Tractatus. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies 20:5*, pp. 645-659.

Drury, M. O. C. (1984). Conversations with Wittgenstein. In *Recollections of Wittgenstein*. Ed. R. Rhees. Oxford: Oxford UP.

Faulkner, N. (2010). Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Grammar*: A Neglected Discussion of Vagueness. *Philosophical Investigations 33:2*.

Fernández, J. R. (2009). Wittgenstein's Phenomenology and Wittgenstein's Phenomenological Relevance. *Polish Journal of Philosophy 3:2*, pp. 17-27.

Friedlander, E. (2001). *Tractatus Signs of Sense: Reading Wittgenstein's Tractatus.* Harvard: Harvard UP.

Gier, N. (1981). *Wittgenstein and Phenomenology: a Comparative Study of the Later Wittgenstein, Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty*. Albany: State Univ. of NY Press.

Gier, N. (1990). Wittgenstein's Phenomenology Revisited. *Philosophy Today 34:3*, pp. 273-288.

Hacker, P. M. S. (1972). *Insight and Illusion: Themes in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Heijenoort, J. van. (1967). Logic as Calculus and Logic as Language. *Synthese 17*, pp. 324-330.

Hintikka, J. (1996). *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Half-Truths and One-and-a-Half-Truths*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Hintikka, J. (2000). *On Wittgenstein*. Belmont: Wadsworth.

Hintikka, J. & Hintikka, M. (1986). *Investigating Wittgenstein*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Ihde, D. (1975). Wittgenstein's 'Phenomenological Reduction'. In P. Bossert (ed.) *Phenomenological Perspectives: Historical and Systematic Essays in Honor of Herbert Spiegelberg*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Kenny, A. ([1973] 2006). *Wittgenstein*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Kenny, A. ([1976] 1984). From the Big Typescript to the *Philosophical Grammar*. In *Idem. The Legacy of Wittgenstein*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, pp. 24-37.

Kuusela, O. (2008). *The Struggle Against Dogmatism: Wittgenstein and the Concept of Philosophy*, Cambridge MA: Harvard UP.

Kienzler, W. (1997). *Wittgensteins Wende zu seiner Spätphilosophie 1930-1932: eine historische und systematische Darstellung*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Marion, M. (1998). *Wittgenstein, Finitism, and the Foundations of Mathematics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Marion, M. (2008). Brower on 'Hypothesis' and the Middle Wittgenstein. In M. V. Atten et al. (eds.). *One Hundred Years of Intuitionism (1907-2007)*. Basel: Birkhäuser.

Marsh, J. (1975). The Triumph of Ambiguity: Merleau-Ponty and Wittgenstein. *Philosophy Today 19:3*.

McManus, D. (2009). The General Form of the Proposition: The Unity of Language and the Generality of Logic in the Early Wittgenstein. *Philosophical Investigations 32:4*, pp. 295-318.

Monk, R. (2014). The Temptations of Phenomenology: Wittgenstein, the Synthetic a Priori and the 'Analytic a Posteriori'. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies 22:3*, pp. 312-340.

Morgan, M. R. (2003). Husserlian Aspects of Wittgenstein's Middle Period. *Pre-proceedings of the 26ᵗʰ International Wittgenstein Symposium, Austrian Ludwig Wittgenstein Society, Kirchberg am Wechsel*, pp. 245-247.

Munz, V. (2004). Phenomenology and Language: Some Remarks on Wittgenstein's Middle Period. In J. Marek, & M. Reicher (Ed.). Kirchberg am Wechsel: Austrian L. Wittgenstein Society, pp. 255-257.

Noë, R. A. (1994). Wittgenstein, Phenomenology and What It Makes Sense to Say. *Philosophy and Phenomenological* Research 54:1, pp. 1-42.

Park, B.-C. (1998). *Phenomenological Aspects of Wittgenstein's Philosophy*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Pears, D. (1988). *The False Prison: a Study of the Development of Wittgenstein's Philosophy*, vol. 2. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Peursen, C. A. van. (1959). Edmund Husserl and Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 20:2*, pp. 181-197.

Pichler, A. (1994). *Untersuchungen zu Wittgensteins Nachlass*. Bergen: Wittgenstein Archives at the Univ. of Bergen.

Pinkerton, R. J., & Waldie, R. W. (1974). Logical Space in the Tractatus. *Indian Philosophical Quarterly 2*, pp. 9-31.

Pippin, R. B. (1979). Negation and Not-Being in Wittgenstein's Tractatus and Plato's Sophist. *Kant-Studien 70*, pp. 179-196.

Ramsey, F. P. (1923). Critical Notice [of *Tractatus* Logico-Philosophicus]. *Mind 32:128*, pp. 465-478.

Reeder, H. P. (1979). Language and the Phenomenological Reduction: a Reply to a Wittgensteinian Objection. *Man and World 12:1*, pp. 35-46.

Rhees, R. (1963). The Tractatus: Seeds of Some Misunderstandings. *The Philosophical Review* 72:2, pp. 213-220.

Rhees, R. (1975). Editor's Note. In *Philosophical Remarks*. Ed. R. Rhees. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Ricoeur, P. (1967). Husserl and Wittgenstein on Language. In E. Lee & M. Mandelbaum (eds.) *Phenomenology and Existentialism*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, pp. 207-217.

Rigal, E. (1992). The Duality of Wittgenstein's Phenomenological Actuality. In P. Henry & A. Utaker (eds.) *Wittgenstein and Contemporary Theories of Language*. Working Papers from the Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen, pp. 62-83.

Schlick, M. (1969). The Future of Philosophy. In *Gesammelte Aufsätze 1926-1936*. Hildesheim: Georg Olms.

Schlick, M. (1969). Gibt es ein materiales Apriori?. In *Gesammelte Aufsätze 1926-1936*. Hildesheim: Georg Olms.

Schlick, M. (1979). The Future of Philosophy. In *Philosophical Papers vol II (1925-1936)*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel.

Schlick, M. (1979). Is There A Factual A Priori?. In *Philosophical Papers vol II (1925-1936)*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel.

Sievert, D. (1989). Another Look at Wittgenstein on Colour Exclusion. *Synthese 78*, pp. 291-318.

Silva, M. (2012). *Muss Logik für sich selber sorgen? On the Color Exclusion Problem, the Truth Table as a Notation, the Bildkonzeption and the Neutrality of Logic in the Collapse and Abandomnent of the Tractatus.* (PhD). Rio de Janeiro: Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro.

Silva, M. (2013). On Degrees of Exclusion Within and Among Systems. *Argumentos 10*, pp. 151-166.

Silva, M. (2014). Two Forms of Exclusion Mean Two Different Negations. *Philosophical Investigations*, 1-22. doi: 10.1111/phin.12068.

Sinha, D. (1963). Phenomenology and Positivism. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 23:4*, pp. 562-577.

Spiegelberg, H. ([1968] 1981). The Puzzle of Wittgenstein's Phänomenologie (1929-?) (with Supplement 1979). In Idem. *The Context of the Phenomenological Movement*. The Hague: Nijhoff, pp. 202-228.

Stern, D. G. (1995). *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

Thompson, J. M. (2005). Wittgenstein's Phenomenology: Reconsidering the Relationship of Experience and Language. *Papers of the 28th International Wittgenstein Symposium*. Kirchberg am Wechsel: Austrian Ludwig Wittgenstein Society, pp. 300-302.

Thompson, J. M. (2008). The Origins of Wittgenstein's Phenomenology. *Papers of the 31st International Wittgenstein Symposium*. Kirchberg am Wechsel: Austrian Ludwig Wittgenstein Society, pp. 350-352.

Wright, G. H. Von. (1996). On Colour: A Logic-Philosophical Fantasy. In *Idem. Six Essays in Philosophical Logic* (Vol. 60). Helsinki: Acta Philosophica Fennica.