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Gordon Baker,
Wittgensteinian Philosophical Conceptions
and Perspicuous Representation:
the Possibility of Multidimensional Logical
Descriptions

Abstract

This paper discusses Gordon Baker's interpretation of the later Wittgenstein, in particular his interpretation of the notion of Wittgensteinian philosophical conceptions (*Auffassungen*) and the notions of non-exclusivity, local incompatibility, non-additivity and global pluralism which Baker uses to characterize Wittgensteinian conceptions. On the basis of this discussion, and a critique of certain features of Baker's interpretation of Wittgensteinian conceptions, I introduce the notion of a multidimensional logical description of language use, explaining how this notion, which Baker's interpretation excludes, constitutes an important element of the later Wittgenstein's philosophical method of clarification and perspicuous representation. I conclude by explaining how Baker's problematic notions of local incompatibility and non-additivity, if they are seen in the light of Wittgenstein's criticisms of certain views of the completeness of philosophical or logical accounts, nevertheless point in the right direction.

Introduction

Many regard Gordon Baker as one of the most important contemporary Wittgenstein scholars. In the course of his career from the late 1970s until his untimely death in 2002, Baker first established his name by collaborating with Peter Hacker on their highly influential multi-volume *Analytic Commentary*. But in the late 1980s, he came to question certain tenets of the Baker-Hacker interpretation, and moved on in new directions. His new thoughts on Wittgenstein found their first expression in his *Wittgenstein, Frege and the Vienna Circle* (1988), and in a number of subsequent articles in the 1990s, collected in the posthumous *Wittgenstein's Method: Neglected Aspects* (2004, edited by Katherine Morris). Proceeding partly by way of a critique of the Baker-Hacker interpretation, in his later work, Baker developed a novel interpretation of the later Wittgenstein that now seems to have become, especially among a younger generation of Wittgenstein scholars, equally influential as the Baker-Hacker interpretation.¹ While I am broadly sympathetic to Baker's later reading of Wittgenstein, I will here present a critique of some aspects of his later account of Wittgensteinian philosophical conceptions. My critique serves the purpose of explaining the possibility of what I call "multidimensional logical descriptions" which is arguably a very important element of the later Wittgenstein's philosophical method and his philosophy of logic, but which Baker's later interpretation does not recognize, and whose possibility it seems to exclude. More specifically, the aims of this article can be explained as follows.

In his paper "Grammar of Aspects and Aspects of Grammar", completed posthumously by Katherine Morris, Baker discusses the concepts of aspect and conception (*Auffassung*) in Wittgenstein. By

¹ For a brief account of their collaboration and a critique of Baker's later views by his former co-author, who continues to defend and develop the Baker-Hacker interpretation, see Hacker 2007. Given the focus of this article on Baker's later Wittgenstein-interpretation, it is beyond its scope to discuss the relation between Baker's later interpretation and that of Baker and Hacker or other similar readings, and the reasons for Baker's rejection of the Baker-Hacker interpretation. For a detailed discussion and critique of the Baker-Hacker interpretation from a point of view largely in agreement with the later Baker, see Kuusela 2008.

a “conception” Baker means Wittgensteinian philosophical conceptions (such as his conception of meaning as use), and by an “aspect”, visual aspects in the sense discussed by Wittgenstein, for example, in the so-called second part of the *Philosophical Investigations*.² Baker makes related points about Wittgenstein’s notion of picture in another late paper, “Wittgenstein: Concepts or Conceptions”, the central claim of which is that the grammar of “conception” is analogous in certain ways with the grammar of “aspect”, i.e. that the uses of these words have important analogies. Baker then uses this analogy to characterize the notion of Wittgensteinian philosophical conceptions, how they differ from more traditional philosophical claims or theses, and how the analogy forms the basis of the description of certain difficulties of philosophizing, the understanding of which Wittgenstein’s notion of conception can further. For example, Baker makes a comparison between the way in which an entrenched philosophical conception may block other ways of thinking about an issue and how a person’s focus on one visual aspect may make her blind to other aspects (Baker 2004: 284). Overall, the notions of conception and aspect are of the highest importance for Baker’s interpretation of Wittgenstein’s method. As he writes: “Revealing new aspects of what is perfectly familiar, developing new *Auffassungen*, is *the* general method of Wittgenstein’s philosophical investigations.” (Baker 2004: 290; cf. 33)

I agree in many respects with Baker’s view of Wittgensteinian philosophical conceptions. In particular, I agree that it is part of the notion of such conceptions as well as Wittgensteinian philosophical pictures that they are non-exclusionary. That is, as Baker emphasizes, and as I will explain shortly in more detail, unlike traditional philosophical theses or claims understood as true/false statements, Wittgensteinian conceptions and pictures do not – automatically at least – exclude alternative conceptions. In this sense they exhibit a particular kind of plurality, as Baker explains. Nevertheless, Baker’s characterizations of certain features of the grammar of Wittgensteinian conceptions strike me as highly

² Also known as *Philosophy of Psychology – A Fragment* (see revised fourth edition).

problematic. My purpose here is to discuss those problems, and to bring out what seems correct and incorrect in Baker's account of Wittgensteinian conceptions. Given the significance of the notion of conception for Baker's Wittgenstein-interpretation, and the influence of his interpretation, this seems a worthwhile task already for these reasons. The examination of the notion of a conception is also, as Baker would be the first to emphasize, a task he did not himself complete. This is evident from one of his suggestions for topics deserving further investigation in the coda to "Concepts or Conceptions", namely: "[...] the logic of pictures, especially their being heterogeneous, strictly purpose relative, and non-additive." (Baker 2004, 277) Provided that Wittgenstein's notions of picture and conception are interchangeable in most contexts – or so I maintain though I cannot argue it here – this article is a contribution to such a further investigation. It is in this capacity that I introduce the notion of multidimensional logical descriptions. This notion may be considered important for comprehending Wittgenstein's notions of perspicuous representation and grammatical description.³ Let me begin with the points of agreement and by explaining Baker's view of the non-exclusiveness of Wittgensteinian conceptions.

1. Baker on the grammar of "aspect" and "conception"

The non-exclusionary character of Wittgensteinian philosophical conceptions can be explained as follows. A philosophical claim or thesis in a traditional sense purports to state something true about the identity or essence of the object of study. In so doing, the claim excludes other incompatible claims or theses as false. This is a basic point: two truth-claims that stand in conflict cannot both be accepted at the same time. In this way, theses about the identity or

³ There is an intimate connection between Wittgensteinian conceptions and his notion of perspicuous representation, if conceptions are understood as instruments whose purpose is the perspicuous representation of the uses of language. It is beyond the scope of this article to argue for this interpretation of Wittgenstein's notion of perspicuous representation, but such an argument, consistent with and informed by Baker's work, is given in Kuusela 2008, Ch. 6.2. For Wittgenstein's notion of picture, see Kuusela 2008: 35-38, 41-43.

essence of something will exclude each other. By contrast, a Wittgensteinian picture or conception is meant to articulate a way of seeing or looking at reality (including language use); it constitutes a mode or form of representing or conceiving the object of investigation (*Darstellungsweise* or *Betrachtungsweise*). Importantly, because it is possible to see or look at something, to represent or conceive it in more than one way, Wittgensteinian conceptions are non-exclusionary: they do not exclude other conceptions in the way in which truth claims or theses do. Another way of putting this point is this: because a mode of representation is not true or false, it does not behave in the manner of true/false claims or of theses in relevant respects either, i.e. exclude other claims or theses. (Cf. Baker 2004: 266-268; Baker speaks of the non-facticity of pictures; 266.) Wittgensteinian conceptions therefore differ importantly from philosophical theses understood as true/false claims.⁴

Accordingly, a philosophical examination in Wittgenstein's style, insofar as it consists in spelling out, scrutinizing, and employing conceptions and pictures for clarificatory purposes, differs from more traditional modes of philosophizing. At any rate, this is so to the extent that philosophizing traditionally consists in putting forward arguments in order to establish exclusionary theses and to refute competing theses. In this regard Baker describes traditional philosophical discourse as exemplified by analytic philosophy to be animated by an "ideal of philosophical argument as case building" and "the adversarial model of argument", and philosophers as relishing "the clash of steel on steel" (Baker 2004: 269).⁵ However, even though philosophy in Wittgenstein's mode does not aim to establish exclusionary philosophical truths, this does not mean that the tasks it sets itself are less important. As Baker puts it: "Choice

⁴ The notion of a conception is fluid, of course. Philosophers who understand their statements as claims or theses may speak of them as conceptions, and they have every right to do so. But it is important how we construe the notion of a conception or how we use it, i.e. whether we understand by it an articulation of a mode of representation or a true/false thesis or claim.

⁵ Alternatively, in Wittgenstein's case, one might speak of the clarificatory use of arguments, where the purpose is not to establish or reject theses but to elucidate conceptual connections and what the adherence to particular conceptions, pictures or accounts involves. For discussion, see Kuusela 2008: 244-247.

of a form of representation is answerable to no facts, but it is of decisive importance. It determines a whole intellectual orientation” (Baker 2004: 268; cf. PI §§569-570).⁶

Baker’s view of the non-exclusionary character of Wittgensteinian conceptions is summarized in his notion of global pluralism:

Global pluralism. [...] no conception has exclusionary claim-rights; no-one can claim *his* conception to be the only possibility. We *can* look at meaning in terms of the Augustinian picture; this does **not exclude** the possibility of our also looking at meaning as *use* (on another occasion) – or vice versa. To acknowledge one conception of meaning does not render illegitimate a different conception of it. Indeed, just as to speak of one visual aspect *presupposes* that there are others, so too, to speak of one conception presupposes that there are others. Conceptions, like aspects, are *essentially plural*. (Baker 2004: 283-284; my square brackets; original italics and bold.)

In accordance with this characterization, Baker maintains (contrary to the Baker-Hacker interpretation) that the purpose of Wittgenstein’s discussion of, for example, the so-called Augustinian picture of language is not to refute Augustine’s view or to show that Augustine has misdescribed the use of the word “meaning” or “language” when suggesting that word-meaning is a matter of reference to objects. (According to Baker, pictures cannot be misdescriptions of grammar; Baker 2004: 267.) Rather, Wittgenstein is trying to do something more radical. Baker writes:

[...] Augustine’s picture is primarily a form of representation, a way of seeing things, an intellectual orientation. [...] Wittgenstein aims at nothing less than transforming an entrenched way of thinking, habits of thought [...]. This is much more ambitious and radical than correcting a misdescription of the uses of words. (Baker 2004, 276)

Consequently, we should expect Wittgenstein to

⁶ Arguably, it is an exaggeration to say that the choice of a form of representation is answerable to *no* facts (at all), but this issue cannot be discussed here and is not important for the present argument. See Kuusela 2013: 60-62 for discussion and example 1) in section 2 below.

[...] juxtapose against Augustine's picture another picture, not a compendium for using 'meaning' or 'language' or an alternative 'theory'. (Baker 2004: 269)

Wittgenstein's conception of meaning as use, according to Baker, is therefore to be understood as a "counter-picture", not as a more correct description of grammar that shows Augustine to be wrong, and excludes the Augustinian picture of meaning as reference.

I think the preceding Bakerian points about Wittgenstein's approach are both correct and very important. A reader familiar with the Baker-Hacker interpretation should easily be able to see how they constitute a departure from this interpretation: Rather than collecting "grammatical facts" or stating exclusionary "grammatical truths", a Wittgensteinian grammatical investigation spells out conceptions (pictures, modes of representation, ways of looking or conceiving of things) that are employed to render facts about language use perspicuous, or "to establish an order in our knowledge of the use of language" (PI §132). But this order, as Wittgenstein emphasizes, is "an order with a particular end in view; one out of many possible orders; not *the* order" (PI §132), i.e. it serves the solution of particular philosophical problems, without assuming that there should be anything like *the* right grammatical/logical order that contains in itself the solution to all philosophical problems.⁷ However, my agreement with Baker does not extend to certain further characteristics that he also ascribes to

⁷ See Kuusela 2008 for the justification of this interpretation of PI §132, and section 3 below for further discussion. "Particular problems" here refers to actual philosophical problems which individuals or groups are concerned with in historical circumstances. Consequently, various psychological and/or sociological questions may also be raised about what it is to deal with the kind of problems to which Wittgenstein and Baker pay attention. As Baker observes, the resolution of such problems may require one to give up previously held conceptions or to change one's "habits of thought" and "intellectual orientation". Accordingly, as Wittgenstein puts it, not merely intellectual difficulties, but difficulties of the will may arise in dealing with philosophical problems (see, Ts213, 406-407/PO, 161). Without wishing to pretend that the distinction between psychological and logical or grammatical considerations is easy to draw from the later Wittgenstein's perspective (cf. PI §242 and Kuusela 2013a for discussion), my focus in the following is the logic or grammar of conceptions, not psychological issues. This corresponds to Baker's aim to clarify the *grammar* of Wittgensteinian conceptions and pictures (see introduction and Baker 2004: 261, 266). Accordingly, the question whether Wittgensteinian conceptions are non-additive concerns the grammar of conceptions.

conceptions, namely what he calls their “local incompatibility” and “non-additivity”. Let us begin the discussion of these notions with how Baker explains them. He explains them first in relation to visual aspects:

Local incompatibility [of visual aspects]. Aspects are transiently exclusionary; it is impossible to see a picture *simultaneously* as a duck and as a rabbit. Visual aspects are essentially non-additive: i.e. there is no such thing as combining two ways of seeing something to produce a single more comprehensive way of seeing it. Consequently, seeing something in one way *interferes* with seeing it differently. And an *entrenched* way of seeing may make it extremely difficult or practically impossible to see an unfamiliar aspect at all. (Baker 2004: 280-281; my square brackets.)

This seems more or less acceptable, with certain reservations relating to the duck-rabbit example. Perhaps this example is not, due to its simplicity, quite as representative of the relevant sort of cases as one might think at first. Simple *Gestalt*-switch pictures, such as the duck-rabbit, are indeed normally seen in one way or the other, and in such a case the two ways of seeing cannot be combined into a *single* more comprehensive way of seeing the figure. In short, what the figure represents is identified as either a duck or a rabbit, and these visual identifications exclude each other.⁸ It is notable, however, that in the case of the duck-rabbit both ways of seeing neatly accommodate all (or almost all) features of the figure, because of its simplicity. My reservation against Baker’s example then is that it may not be so representative after all. It might be possible in the case of more complex visual objects, especially if all their features are not perfectly accommodated by the different ways of seeing them, to see the object simultaneously in different ways. If neither of the two ways of seeing such an object neatly accommodates all the object’s features, this may weaken the tendency to settle on one of the ways of seeing it. Thus,

⁸ This exclusion is not merely psychological but logical or grammatical in that there is no creature that the duck-rabbit picture represents of which we would have a more comprehensive view, if we combine its characteristic of duckness with its rabbitness, so to speak. One can of course also see the figure as a *Gestalt*-switch picture of a duck-rabbit, but then it is not seen as either simply a duck or a rabbit, and this way of looking is not more comprehensive in that sense, but a third different way of seeing the picture.

it is not unproblematic to compare philosophical clarification with looking at simple Gestalt-switch pictures. In the case of a philosophical attempt to comprehend a highly complex phenomenon, it may well be that none of the ways of seeing or conceiving available perfectly accommodates all the features of the case. (See examples in section 3.)

Regardless of how things are with visual aspects (a case which is not particularly important for my discussion), arguably, Baker is wrong to take the grammars of “aspect” and “conception” to be analogous with respect to local incompatibility. Instead, there is an extremely important disanalogy between the grammars of the two notions, and in fact the claim that conceptions are locally incompatible fits very poorly with what Wittgenstein says, for example, about the concepts of language, meaning and mathematics.⁹ Here is how Baker characterizes the local incompatibility of conceptions:

Local incompatibility [of conceptions]. Like visual aspects, conceptions are transiently exclusionary; it is impossible to see thinking *simultaneously* as an inner accompaniment to speaking *and* as operating with signs (cf. BB, 7ff.). Conceptions too are essentially non-additive: attempting to combine them produces, not a more comprehensive way of looking at a concept, but muddle. (Baker 2004: 284)¹⁰

Exactly how we should understand what Baker says about local incompatibility depends, naturally, on what he means by “non-additive” and “comprehensive”. Given that he does not explain these notions, I take them in what I understand to be their usual meaning: an account is comprehensive when it does not leave out something relevant. On that reading they strike me as highly problematic. As I will explain, it is not the case that conceptions are

⁹ I will shortly discuss these examples in more detail. But to emphasize, this is a general problem with Baker’s interpretational claim about local incompatibility, not specific to the examples to be discussed. I have chosen these examples because of their importance for Wittgenstein. If Baker’s interpretation cannot accommodate them, it may be regarded as generally problematic as an interpretation of Wittgenstein’s method.

¹⁰ Baker continues by saying: the interference of conceptions has “enormously important consequences in philosophy.” “[...] when a philosophical conception becomes entrenched it affects the whole conduct of one’s philosophical investigation.” (Baker 2004: 284) This again seems to be perfectly in order.

“essentially non-additive” and that “attempting to combine them produces, not a more comprehensive way of looking at a concept, but muddle”, contrary to what Baker says. Non-additivity and impossibility to combine, in other words, are not part of the grammar or logic of Wittgensteinian conceptions. Rather, it may be crucial for our philosophical understanding of a concept or for the grammatical description or perspicuous representation of uses of language to employ different conceptions to capture different aspects of the use of expressions *simultaneously*. Wittgensteinian conceptions allow us to do just this.¹¹ In such a case it is then perfectly unobjectionable to say that we have a more comprehensive conception, account or understanding than we would have on the basis of a single conception. Combining Wittgensteinian conceptions, in other words, need not create any muddles. Instead, if one holds on to a simplistic account that does not capture all aspects of the object of investigation that are relevant for dealing with the philosophical problems at hand, one risks getting stuck in muddles and with philosophical problems thus generated. (In Wittgenstein interpretation a typical way of ending up holding such a simplistic view is to assume that Wittgensteinian philosophical conceptions play the role of philosophical theses or claims, i.e. to take them to be exclusionary and therefore not possible to combine. See notes 13 and 14.) The best way to explain this is by means of examples from Wittgenstein.

2. Combining conceptions: examples from Wittgenstein

In this section I discuss three examples from Wittgenstein in order to show that it is indeed part of his method to combine different

¹¹ I will assume (in accordance with what I take to be Baker’s view) that the criterion of correctness for a philosophical account is its ability to solve particular philosophical problems. The criterion is not, so to speak, correspondence with “grammatical facts”. A natural way to read the point of PI §132 about there being many possible ways to order our knowledge of language is to take it as rejecting the notion of “grammatical facts”. (There are only empirical facts to be found out about language, and their relevance to philosophy is less direct than the relevance of any putative “grammatical facts” would be.)

conceptions with the purpose of clarifying or perspicuously representing complex concepts or uses of language.

1) *The arbitrariness and non-arbitrariness of grammar.* Wittgenstein makes the following remark about the grammar of the word “language” in the Investigations:

To invent a language could mean to invent an instrument for a particular purpose on the basis of the laws of nature (or consistently with them); but it also has the other sense, analogous to that in which we speak of the invention of a game.

Here I am stating something about the grammar of the word “language”, by connecting it with the grammar of the word “invent”. (PI §492)

This remark compares the invention of a language with the invention of an instrument on the one hand, and with the invention of a game on the other hand. Its point can be explained as follows. To invent an instrument is to invent something that enables one to achieve some pre-existing goal. For example, a spade makes digging holes more effective than doing it with bare hands, and a digger makes digging holes even more effective. Here the goal that these instruments enable us to reach more effectively is comprehensible quite independently of our familiarity with the instruments. In this sense it is usually not the case that the purpose that the instrument serves becomes comprehensible only through the design or construction of the instrument itself. Here lies an important difference to the design of concepts. For in the case of a concept we typically are not familiar with the classification that the concept makes, i.e. the purpose it serves, independently of our familiarity with the concept itself.¹² In the latter kind of case there is then no pre-existing goal which the concept serves, a goal given independently of the design of the concept, and a concept is not an instrument for achieving a pre-existing goal. Similarly, when one invents a game, what the rules of the game should be is not determined by any pre-existing goals in the same way as the design of an instrument for a particular purpose. Of course the invention of a game may serve some pre-existing goals, for example, of

¹² This is a basic anti-empiricist point.

making the inventor rich and/or being entertaining. Such goals, however, do not yet suffice to fix the rules of the game. Many different kinds of games can be entertaining and make their inventor rich. Thus, the rules of a game are in a certain sense arbitrary, unlike the principles by which the design of an instrument for digging should be governed. As is well known, Wittgenstein speaks of the rules of language as arbitrary in a sense comparable to the rules of a game. The design of language is not answerable to or justifiable with reference to external goals such as, for example, communication or true representation of reality, as if we had a criterion for the correct representation of reality independently of the concepts by means of which we represent it. But Wittgenstein also acknowledges that the invention of a language can be similar to the invention of an instrument. Here the rules of a language are not arbitrary, but serve some pre-existing goal. (PG, 184-188, 192; see Kuusela 2008: 163ff for discussion.)

What the comparison of the invention of a language with the invention of instruments and games brings to view, therefore, is two different aspects of the concept of language: a sense in which its rules may be arbitrary and a sense in which they may be non-arbitrary. Both these aspects may be important for a clear philosophical understanding of the concept of language in that envisaging language under one aspect only may lead to forcing particular cases of language use into a mould in which they do not fit, and overall constitutes a simplistic conception of language. Equipped with such a simplistic conception one may then remain unable to resolve philosophical problems whose resolution requires the recognition of other aspects too.

Notably, although there may be cases that exhibit one or the other feature in something like a pure form – for example, stipulative definitions exhibit the feature of arbitrariness – there are cases that exhibit both features, according to Wittgenstein. An example of the latter is our system of colour-concepts of which he says: “[...] is there something arbitrary about this system? Yes and no. It is akin both to what is arbitrary and to what is non-arbitrary.” (Z §358) In such a case it would not be correct to say either that the use of language *is* or *is not* governed by arbitrary rules (as if

stating a truth). Both claims alone state something false or constitute a simplistic way of understanding this case. For example, it would be incorrect to say that the exclusion of reddish green is a matter of arbitrary convention or a matter of our habituation to a certain arbitrary conceptual system. At any rate, Wittgenstein is explicit that this is not a view he wishes to hold (Z §355). Rather, to account for such a case we need to see the ways in which it exhibits both the feature of arbitrariness, i.e. exemplifies exceptionless conceptual necessity which is not merely a matter of factual generality, as well as exhibiting the feature of non-arbitrariness, i.e. reflects empirical facts and is conditioned by them.¹³

The case of the arbitrariness and non-arbitrariness of grammar provides us with an example in which the simultaneous use of different conceptions or pictures may be required for a perspicuous view or representation of the concept (i.e. that of language), and where a one-sided conception may give rise to philosophical problems. (Taking both aspects into account might not be important in the case of every philosophical problem about the concept of language, but as Wittgenstein's view of colour concepts exemplifies, it is in some cases.) Such simultaneous use of conceptions, however, is excluded by Baker's view of the non-additivity of philosophical conceptions. In denying the possibility of combining conceptions, Baker's interpretation of Wittgensteinian conceptions as non-additive is in conflict with what Wittgenstein says about the arbitrariness and non-arbitrariness of the grammar of language. In cases such as colour concepts it may be necessary to combine the conception of the arbitrariness and non-arbitrariness of grammar in order to describe or achieve a perspicuous view of their function. Rather than being bound to result in a muddle, such a combination gives us a more

¹³ By contrast, in volume 2 of their *Analytic Commentary* Baker and Hacker defend a conventionalist interpretation of Wittgenstein, maintaining that the essence of colours is a grammatical construction. They write: "[...] it is our rules for the use of colour-words which create what we call 'the nature (the essence) of colour.'" (Baker and Hacker 1985: 331) Arguably, however, this view is both philosophically and interpretationally problematic. For critique and an alternative interpretation, see Kuusela 2008, Ch. 5.

comprehensive view of the concepts than either conception alone could do, contrary to what Baker holds.

2) *Meaning*. To regard word-meaning as constituted by rules for the use of a word, as Wittgenstein proposes to do, is to regard the sound of a word as irrelevant to its meaning. According to this account, only the rules by which the sign is governed are relevant for the determination of meaning, and signs themselves – their sound and shape – are entirely arbitrary. From the point of view of this conception, to regard sound as relevant for meaning would be – as Wittgenstein jokes – like painting terrifying eyes on the chess queen in order to win a match (cf. AWL, 104). This conception, however, gives a simplistic picture of the concept of meaning overall, in that it cannot account, for example, for onomatopoeic words, where sound *is* relevant to meaning. As Wittgenstein notes elsewhere: “In the case of an onomatopoeic word the sound belongs to the symbol” (Ms109, 109; Ts211, 388). Sound, and likewise orthographic appearance and layout, can be relevant for example for meaning in the case of poetry (cf. PI §§528-532).

Consequently, in order to avoid unjustly excluding sound-based cases from the class of the phenomena of linguistic meaning, to achieve a perspicuous view of the concept of meaning, and to resolve philosophical problems arising from a simplistic account of linguistic meaning, we may again need to employ more than one philosophical conception simultaneously in order to capture the different aspects of the concept. In the case of onomatopoeic words Wittgenstein suggests this kind of an alternative and complementary conception of meaning by proposing a comparison of onomatopoeic words with colour samples. (Ms141, 3; cf. BB, 84-85) Onomatopoeic words are similar to colour samples, and differ from words whose meaning is conventional, in that samples and onomatopoeic words are compared with reality for similarity. By contrast, in the case of words whose meaning is determined by conventions, such comparisons make no sense. The Finnish word “tuoli” is neither more nor less similar to chairs than the Italian word “sedia”.

Moreover, as in the preceding example of colour concepts, here too it may be important for understanding a particular case that we

see it simultaneously under both aspects, i.e. as exhibiting features captured by the different conceptions of meaning, or explain its meaning as constituted simultaneously in different ways. This is exemplified by the word “pipsqueak” (informal, “an insignificant or contemptible person”, OED), which has a certain iconic dimension, so to speak, that indicates a reference to a small-sized creature that makes peep-squeak noises. The word could not be replaced by some other arbitrary sign used according to the same rules without a loss in meaning. Its meaning seems to be determined by *both* rules and sound. And again, it would seem wholly fitting and correct to characterize an account of meaning that combines more than one conception as being more comprehensive than can be given in terms of a single conception. If so, conceptions can here be used in an additive way without this resulting in a muddle, *pace* Baker. Hence, Baker’s interpretation of the grammar of “conception” also turns out to be problematic in the light of Wittgenstein’s remarks on meaning.

3) *Mathematics*. My final example pertains to Wittgenstein’s philosophy of mathematics. On the one hand, Wittgenstein characterizes mathematical propositions as rules of grammar that are arbitrary in that they are not derivable from empirical reality and do not correspond to or describe any mathematical reality either, such as the Platonists postulate. On the other hand, he also maintains that it is essential for mathematics to have an application to reality. As Wittgenstein explains the point by means of a comparison with the dual role of a king:

A rule qua rule is detached, it stands as it were alone in its glory; although what gives it importance is the facts of daily experience.

What I have to do is something like describing the office of a king;—in doing which I must never fall into the error of explaining the kingly dignity by the king’s usefulness, but I must leave neither his usefulness nor his dignity out of account. (Ms124, 13, 14/RFM, 357)

The remark distinguishes between two aspects of the role or use of a mathematical rule or principle. On the one hand, Wittgenstein compares the non-derivability of a mathematical principle from empirical reality with the dignity of a king. Like a king, such a principle stands “alone in its glory”. It is detached from contingent

reality in the sense of being untouched by how things happen to be in the empirical world, as if above all happenstance. On the other hand, he compares the practical applications of mathematical principles to represent empirical reality with the usefulness of a king. As Wittgenstein notes, it is such applications that give mathematics its importance, i.e., they make mathematics more than a mere game with signs. Significantly, as the remark shows, Wittgenstein sees it as crucial to his task of clarification or perspicuous representation to avoid any reduction of either of the aspects of mathematics to the other. The error he must not fall into, he says, is trying to explain one aspect in terms of the other. Instead, these different aspects are to be accounted for and characterized in their own right so as to avoid giving a misleadingly simple account of mathematics. This brings clearly into view the non-reductive character of Wittgensteinian conceptions.

Evidently, Wittgenstein would regard his account of mathematics as incomplete and potentially misleading, if it left out either one of the two aspects of mathematics. Again it might not always be necessary to take into account both aspects when discussing philosophical problems relating to mathematics. But both the conception of mathematical rules as arbitrary and of mathematics as having an application to reality are potentially relevant for the resolution of philosophical problems relating to mathematics, and accordingly, the possibility of employing these conceptions simultaneously is crucial for Wittgenstein's method. *Pace* Baker, it is therefore not only *possible* to combine the two Wittgensteinian conceptions. Combining them may be *necessary* in the context of the discussion of certain philosophical problems relating to the concept of mathematics, and for the perspicuous representation of the concept of mathematics. Thus, Baker is wrong to claim that combining the two conceptions inevitably creates a muddle. Instead, philosophical problems may result from a failure to combine them.

Overall, the preceding examples leave little doubt that, contrary to Baker's account of the grammar of Wittgensteinian conceptions, it is possible to combine different conceptions into more comprehensive accounts. This possibility of combining

conceptions constitutes a very important feature of Wittgenstein's method of grammatical description and perspicuous representation. We may speak of this possibility of characterizing concepts or modes of language use simultaneously in terms of different conceptions as *the possibility of multidimensional descriptions of language use*. Insofar as it is the business of grammar or logic to describe the uses of language in order to clarify them, as Wittgenstein maintains (cf. PI §§108-109, OC §§56, 82, 628), we may speak of *multidimensional logical or grammatical descriptions*. Such a description represents a concept or a mode of language use at the same time under different aspects by means of different Wittgensteinian conceptions, as illustrated by Wittgenstein's characterization of language by means of the conceptions of the arbitrariness and non-arbitrariness of grammar. Here it is important to note that were these conceptions put forward as philosophical theses about the nature of language, i.e., that it is of the nature of language that its grammar is either arbitrary or non-arbitrary, they would exclude one another, and could not be combined into a multidimensional description.¹⁴ In this sense the non-exclusivity of Wittgensteinian conceptions is crucial for multidimensional descriptions. (I will return to this point shortly.) Although Baker is therefore correct to emphasize the non-exclusivity of conceptions, he falls into error in maintaining that Wittgensteinian conceptions are non-additive.

In effect, one might say, Baker's conception of the non-additivity of conceptions constitutes a relapse into the traditional view of philosophy as putting forward exclusionary theses. Just like traditional true/false philosophical theses, so too non-additive conceptions are mutually exclusive and cannot be combined into more comprehensive accounts when used to discuss particular philosophical problems. But if resolving particular philosophical problems or the perspicuous representation of language use may sometimes require the simultaneous employment of different Wittgensteinian conceptions, Baker's interpretation fails to account for a crucial feature of Wittgenstein's method. Importantly, as

¹⁴ For a discussion of difficulties that arise for such reasons for Hacker's interpretation of Wittgenstein's view of meaning and language, see Kuusela 2008: 168ff.

explained in section 1 and quotes therein, Baker does allow for the non-exclusionary use of conceptions “globally”, i.e. when different conceptions are used on different occasions to address different philosophical problems. However, global plurality in this sense cannot solve the problem with Baker’s Wittgenstein-interpretation. This is my theme for the following section.

3. How Baker’s notions of locality and non-additivity still point in the right direction

As noted, the possibility of combining philosophical conceptions into multidimensional descriptions assumes their non-exclusivity. By contrast, philosophical conceptions understood as true/false claims (theses or theories) cannot be combined in this way, and in this sense the method of the employment of Wittgensteinian philosophical conceptions opens up new – as far as I am aware, unprecedented – possibilities for philosophy. A way to describe this is to say that Wittgenstein’s account of the role of philosophical conceptions makes possible an increase in the flexibility of philosophical thought, but without a loss in its rigour. Flexibility is increased because there is now no need to try to explain all cases that fall under a particular concept in terms of one overarching definition, or to explain them in terms of a single exclusive philosophical theory or conception. Instead, as the examples in section 2 illustrate, Wittgensteinian conceptions enable us to give more complex accounts of complex concepts or phenomena. Nevertheless, rigour in the sense of the employment of clear and precise characterizations or definitions of concepts or phenomena – or of their specific aspects, or of sub-classes of cases falling under concepts – is retained in that such characterizations, understood as playing the role of Wittgensteinian conceptions, enable us to be clear about what exactly we are saying in the context of particular philosophical discussions. Crucially, rigour only requires that we stick to clear and precise characterizations, definitions or conceptions of concepts in the context of particular discussions. This puts us in a position to know at any point what is meant by particular concepts in that discussion, and we can avoid switching unnoticed between different meanings of our terms, keep track of

our inferences, and so on. By contrast, rigour does not require that we use a term according to one and the same definition in every philosophical discussion, or that there should be one exclusively correct philosophical definition of a concept.¹⁵

As for understanding what misled Baker to make the problematic claim that conceptions are non-additive, a possible explanation would be to say that he was misled by a partial analogy between the grammar of the words “aspect” and “conception” to maintain that the analogy holds even where it no longer holds. For both visual aspects and conceptions are non-exclusive in the sense that seeing something under one aspect does not exclude the possibility of seeing it under another, and in this same way one way of looking does not exclude the possibility of another way. However, although it may be true that visual aspects are non-additive, at least in the case of simple Gestalt-switch pictures (see section 1), this is not true of Wittgensteinian philosophical conceptions, as I have argued. It could, therefore, have been the visual terms of “looking at something”, “seeing something as something”, and “seeing something under an aspect”, which also have an application in non-visual cases, that misled Baker. However, this explanation is ultimately philosophically uninteresting in that it merely describes Baker as having fallen into confusion, rather than helping us to understand his thinking and what he was trying to get at in his Wittgenstein-interpretation. I will next outline a philosophically more interesting explanation of Baker’s mistake that aims to clarify how his notions of the non-additivity of conceptions and, as one might call it, “the locus-specificity of philosophical clarifications”, which the notions of local incompatibility and global pluralism assume, point in the right direction. Perhaps this is what Baker had in view.

Let us start by examining more closely Baker’s contrast between local and global philosophical considerations or the locality vs. globality of such considerations. As I understand it, the contrast can be outlined as follows. A local consideration is relative to some particular philosophical problem that an individual or individuals

¹⁵ For a discussion of the notion of rigour, see Kuusela 2013a.

have. In line with Baker's notion of global pluralism, we might then use a particular philosophical conception locally in dealing with such a particular philosophical problem, while at another occasion or locus, i.e. when dealing with a different problem relating to the same concept or concepts, we might use a different conception. Here different loci refer to different contexts of philosophical discussion, specified with reference to particular individual problems. On this reading, Baker's notion of global plurality of conceptions refers to the possibility of employing different conceptions locally in the context of discussions of different philosophical problems. Here is one more quote from Baker that explains his distinction with reference both to the notions of picture and conception:

[...] pictures are globally complementary, not exclusionary. One way of seeing things (*Auffassung*) does not exclude the possibility of others. It is rational to make use of different pictures of a single phenomenon for the purpose of bringing out different patterns or aspects of what is investigated *for the purpose of treating different conceptual confusions* (compare §132). (Baker 2004: 268; second italics mine.)

Let us call the view expressed here that different conceptions can be employed globally, but only for the purpose of treating *different conceptual confusions*, "strict locality". On this view, conceptions are globally complementary and pluralistic in that more than one conception can be used to characterize a concept when responding to different conceptual confusions or philosophical problems relating to a concept. I agree that Wittgensteinian philosophical conceptions and pictures are globally plural in Baker's sense. As I will explain, they are also locus-specific. Arguably, however, they are not locus-specific in the sense of strict locality that would imply and support Bakerian local incompatibility.

The problem with Baker's account, more specifically, is the following. In essence, his contrast between local and global considerations, insofar as it is to entail local incompatibility and global pluralism, is too simple in that it assumes an oversimplified conception of the clear identifiability of philosophical problems and their neat separability from one another. If philosophical problems were clearly identifiable and neatly separable from one

another, then Baker's local-global contrast might hold in a strict sense required for local incompatibility. There would then be, on the one hand, strictly locally employed conceptions whose purpose is to resolve specific problems. On the other hand, there would be a global level of philosophical considerations at which different conceptions could be employed in order to resolve different local problems relating to a concept, without assuming that these conceptions should fit together so as to constitute a systematic overall account of that concept. However, it does not seem true that philosophical problems are neatly identifiable and separable in a sense required for Baker's strict separation of local and global levels of philosophical examination. If this is correct, it has certain important consequences for Baker's account.¹⁶

That philosophical problems are not neatly separable certainly appears to be Wittgenstein's view. Rather than encountered one by one, philosophical problems come in groups of many interconnected problems. And just this is, Wittgenstein says, what makes them so very hard to resolve: solid ground is nowhere to be found but everywhere we look we encounter confusions. He comments on this issue in the context of a discussion of issues relating to the concept of pain:

It is a comparison that misleads us.

Or actually, a hundred misleading comparisons seem to meet here: one takes for an ostensive definition what is not one; & for a

¹⁶ A further problem with Baker's view is this: Even if we could maintain the neat separability and identifiability of philosophical problems, an additional argument would be needed to support Baker's claim that Wittgensteinian conceptions are generally or always locally incompatible. For insofar as combining different conceptions can only ever lead to a muddle in Baker's view, local incompatibility seems to assume that some single philosophical conception always suffices to resolve an individual philosophical problem (if there's to be a solution to it at all). But it is hard to see how an argument could run to establish this claim about the resolution of philosophical problems. Moreover, as I have argued, combining different Wittgensteinian conceptions may be necessary for avoiding simplistic accounts of concepts and consequent philosophical problems. Hence, it is questionable on these grounds too that we could assume strict local incompatibility. Notably, it is a different matter altogether that *sometimes in individual cases* different conceptions are not combinable or are non-additive. Arguably, whenever this occurs it has to do with the specific content of the relevant conceptions. For example, the conceptions of thinking as operating with signs and as an accompaniment to speaking mentioned by Baker seem incompatible in this sense.

description what is not a description; & for a name what is not a name; and for knowing something that is not knowing. [...]

A hundred misleading pictures meet here & *that* is what makes up the difficulty of the philosophical condition. [...] The “great” difficult problems of philosophy are not that because here we have an extraordinarily subtle and mysterious fact to investigate, but because a great many misleading forms of expression meet at *this* point. (Ms116, 216–218; see also Ms120, 39v)

Another remark on the same theme says:

In philosophy one question is solved by posing a hundred others//by connecting it with//adding a hundred others. (Ms121, 59v)

Now, if philosophical problems are constituted by interconnected confusions in the sense just outlined, it seems very difficult or impossible to separate such problems neatly from one another for local treatment individually or one by one in the sense of Bakerian strict locality. For example, if what we might abstractly think of as the philosophical problem about the nature of pain or sensations arises because we are confused about a variety of concepts connected with the concept of pain or sensations, then to deal with this problem is not to deal with a separable local problem about pain. Instead of having one problem in our hands, we have a hundred problems, as Wittgenstein says, or a network of interconnected problems, which make up the problem about pain or sensations. However, if this kind of connectedness is characteristic of philosophical problems more generally, as Wittgenstein suggests in the last paragraph of the longer quote, then there is no Bakerian strictly local level of philosophical considerations to begin with (that are relative to different individual problems), and it is unclear whether a situation could ever arise in which the principle of local incompatibility would apply.

Furthermore, it certainly seems possible that those one hundred confusions that according to Wittgenstein make up the problem about pain might be connected with different aspects of the concept of pain – for example, with different issues relating to how pain appears from the first and third person perspectives. If so, different conceptions may need to be employed simultaneously to resolve the problem about pain, and to achieve an overview of the

concept that renders it clear. What is needed, that is to say, may be multidimensional logical or grammatical descriptions in the sense introduced earlier. To put the point differently, Wittgenstein emphasizes that the difficulty of philosophical problems is due to their connectedness: solving one problem requires solving many. But if so, solving one problem may require the simultaneous use of many conceptions to characterize different aspects of the problematic concept. Or to explain the point in a yet different way, it might not always be clear whether we are speaking of one or many problems in a particular context, because problems might not be neatly separable and identifiable. But if this is not always clear, then strict locality cannot be required of Wittgensteinian conceptions either. The difference between local and global levels of philosophical considerations is not clear-cut enough to sustain the principle of local incompatibility.¹⁷

Nevertheless, even if Baker's view of local incompatibility as a general characteristic of Wittgensteinian conceptions dissolves in this way, there is still something correct in his notion of non-additivity, and his contrast between locally employed conceptions and philosophical accounts that aim at comprehensiveness. That is, although it is not true that combining philosophical conceptions must result in muddle, or that Wittgensteinian conceptions cannot be combined to create more comprehensive accounts, Wittgenstein is undoubtedly critical of *certain views* about what it is to strive for comprehensiveness or completeness in philosophy. To the extent that Baker's notion of non-additivity can be understood in the light of Wittgenstein's critical points about comprehensiveness and

¹⁷ There is a possible Bakerian response, connected with his emphasis of the conception of philosophy as therapy, to the problem about the identification and separation of philosophical problems, that is: could philosophical problems not be identified with reference to the person who is suffering from them? This does not work for two reasons. Firstly, even if we accept (as I think we should) that there can be (and often is) variation between persons with respect to what exactly they find problematic in some philosophical issue (so that there are not stock philosophical answers, clarifications or solutions that can be assumed to work for everyone), there seems to be no reason why the same philosophical problems could not be shared by more than one person. If so, identification of problems with reference to persons fails. Secondly, the problem regarding the neat identification and separability of philosophical problems that I have raised also arises at a personal level. Thus, moving to this level does not help.

completeness, it seems to be pointing in the right direction. I will conclude the article by explaining this.

What does Wittgenstein say about comprehensiveness and completeness? An aspect of what Wittgenstein critically characterizes as the sublimation of logic is the view that there should be something like a complete grammar for the use of an expression that would provide us with rules that cover *all* occasions of its use, and in this sense give us a complete description of the expression's possible uses. More specifically, because it is not possible to give such a complete description by enumeration due to the potentially infinite number of possible uses, it is part of this notion of a complete grammar that it should be possible to give it in advance of a word's employments in particular cases, and in this sense, as Wittgenstein puts it, independently of any future experience. (Ms142, 88, 100; Ms152, 95; Ts220, 75; cf. PI §92.) However, although Wittgenstein assumed the possibility of this kind of completeness in the *Tractatus*, where it informs the notion of complete analysis, he rejects it later (Ms116, 80-81/PG, 211). As he puts the point in his lectures: "We might feel that a complete logical analysis would give the complete grammar of a word. But there is no such thing as a completed grammar. However, giving a rule has a use if someone makes an opposite rule which we do not wish to follow." (AWL, 21) In the *Investigations* he writes: "We don't want to refine or complete the system of rules for our words in unheard-of ways. [...]" (PI §133)¹⁸

Wittgenstein's point can be explained as follows. The reason to reject the outlined notion of the completeness of analyses or philosophical accounts is that there is no criterion of completeness in the assumed *abstract sense*, whereby an analysis or account is complete insofar as it can resolve *any possible* unclarity whatsoever relating to a concept or a phenomenon, or any confusion that might arise or be imagined about the relevant issue. This, Wittgenstein explains, is an illusory ideal notion of completeness

¹⁸ A more precise reading/translation suggested by earlier drafts of this remark would be: "We don't want to refine in unheard-of ways or complete..." Here "complete" specifies what kind of refinement out of all possible kinds of refinements would be at stake, i.e. refinement as completion.

that cannot be met, because no determinate sense has been given to what we should understand by the totality of all possible unclarities. No determinate sense has been given to this notion, because it is not possible to determine in advance what kind of unclarities might arise or be imagined to arise about something. Rather, the class of all possible unclarities is open-ended and in this sense indeterminable in advance. However, this means that it is impossible in principle to say when an analysis, a philosophical account or a list of grammatical rules would satisfy the presumed abstract criterion of completeness. To satisfy a criterion that is in principle indeterminable is an impossible task.

Instead, Wittgenstein maintains, clarifications, philosophical accounts or explanations are to be understood as relative to particular problems. A clarification or an explanation is complete when it can clarify or explain some set of actual unclarities about an issue or a concept, whereby these actual unclarities provide a criterion for the completeness of a clarification or explanation. As Wittgenstein writes:

[...] How does one use the expressions ‘complete’ and ‘incomplete description’? [...] Whether this or that belongs for us to a complete description will depend on the purpose of the description, on what the recipient uses the description for [was der Empfänger mit der Beschreibung anfängt]. (Ts233a, 64-65)

And:

[...] One might say: an explanation serves to remove or prevent a misunderstanding — one, that is, that would arise if not for the explanation, but not every misunderstanding that I can imagine. (PI §87)

Let us return to Baker. If his notion of non-additivity, and his rejection of the possibility of achieving comprehensiveness by combining different philosophical conceptions are understood in the light of what Wittgenstein says about the notion of completeness, then Baker’s view does, in a certain sense, point in the right direction. Baker is right, insofar as his notion of the non-additivity of philosophical conceptions is meant to say that, from Wittgenstein’s point of view, there cannot be anything like a comprehensive philosophical account in an abstract sense, defined

independently of particular *actual* philosophical problems. As Wittgenstein's critique of the abstract notion of the completeness of an analysis implies, a clarification must always be understood as having specific clarificatory goals. Hence, clarifications, and philosophical conceptions presented as clarifications or with the purpose of perspicuous representation, are always relative to certain actual philosophical problems whose solution provides a criterion of correctness and completeness for clarifications. There are many Wittgensteinian orderings of our knowledge of the use of language in just this sense. There is not merely one such order, *the* order of completed grammar from which we could generate resolutions to all philosophical problems, because the totality of all philosophical problems is in principle open-ended (see, PI §132 and note 7).

Nevertheless, as I have explained, the locality of clarifications is not to be construed in a too simple way that assumes philosophical problems to be neatly separable and identifiable. Rather, as Wittgenstein says, philosophical problems come in groups of interconnected problems, and are to be addressed as such. This may then require the simultaneous clarification of different aspects of complicated concepts by means of different conceptions. In this sense the task of clarification and perspicuous representation may require the combination of different philosophical conceptions into more comprehensive multidimensional descriptions. This is comprehensiveness in a genuine sense, albeit, crucially, not in the sense to which philosophical theories traditionally lay claim. *Their* claim to comprehensiveness arises from a philosophical theory's exclusive claim to account for whatever it is meant to account for, which excludes any competing theories as false (see section 1). In such circumstances it is then left for the exclusively true theory alone to explain everything relevant about the issue at hand in its own terms. This is a very different notion of comprehensiveness from the Wittgensteinian notion of comprehensiveness, because Wittgenstein does not assume that a comprehensive account constitutes a simple coherent and systematic unity, as illustrated by the examples in section 2.

A final way to describe Baker's mistake then is this: His rejection of the complementariness and comprehensiveness of

philosophical accounts to be achieved by combining different Wittgensteinian philosophical conceptions assumes a notion of comprehensiveness, or the completeness of philosophical accounts, which the later Wittgenstein has already overcome and moved beyond. Although Wittgenstein does reject comprehensiveness in the traditional sense explained in the preceding, this does not mean that he is rejecting comprehensiveness in every sense.¹⁹

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