Wittgenstein's Late Account of Meaning

A Non-Normative Point of View

University of East Anglia

Marco Marchesin

School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies

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Supervisor: Dr. Oskari Kuusela

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, or substantial proportions of material which have been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at UEA or any other educational institution. I also declare that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work.

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Abstract

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The thesis investigates Wittgenstein's conception of meaning in the light of his late philosophical methodology. Against views which focus mainly – if not exclusively – on the claim that in the *Philosophical Investigations* meaning is generally conceived in terms of use, this thesis develops an alternative account of Wittgenstein's conception of meaning that is consistent with Wittgenstein's broader rejection of *metalogical* thinking. Metalogic is a recurrent concept in the writings of the early '30s and figures as a model of a philosophical methodology – ascribable mainly, but not only, to the *Tractatus* - that Wittgenstein wants resolutely to avoid in his late investigations of language. Among other concepts, meaning is denied being metalogical. In a nutshell, as metalogic consists in an attempt to *ground* any possible philosophical clarification in a set of definitions of privileged concepts able to outline the essence of language once and for all, it follows that it was not Wittgenstein's aim to formulate a universal account of meaning to put as a foundation of any philosophical clarification of language. The thesis shows that the metalogical tendency to conceive Wittgenstein's late philosophy in the light of such a universal account of what meaning must be in essential is a common feature of many influential interpretations of Wittgenstein, especially those that find Wittgenstein advancing a claim about meaning as *rule-governed use*. Gordon Baker and Peter Hacker's commentary to the *Investigations* is a paradigmatic example of such a tendency. The thesis further argues that the rejection of metalogic works not only as an invitation to refuse to ascribe to Wittgenstein any claim about the rule-governed nature of meaning, but also consists of an opportunity to develop a *pluralistic account* of understanding and meaning, beyond and apart from the one based only and reductively on linguistic rules. As a consequence, the thesis shows that many themes in Wittgenstein's late philosophy – such as the case of experience of meaning, understanding music and secondary uses of words, among many others – can be interpreted as an articulated and systematic attempt to substantiate such a pluralistic account of the grammar of our concept of meaning.

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Abbreviations

Works by Wittgenstein

The following abbreviations are used to refer to Wittgenstein's published works.

BB   *Preliminary Studies for the "Philosophical Investigations," Generally Known as the Blue and Brown Books,* ed. R. Rhees (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958).

BT   *Big Typescript,* ed. and trans. G. Luckhart and M. A. E. Aue (Oxford: Blackwell, 2013).

CV   *Culture and Value,* rev. ed., ed. G. H. von Wright in collaboration with H. Nyman, rev. ed. A. Pichler, trans. P. Winch (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

LW I   *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology: Preliminary Studies for Part II of Philosophical Investigations,* ed. G. H. von Wright and H. Nyman, trans. C. G. I-Juckhardt and M. A. E. Aue (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982).

LW II   *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology: Preliminary Studies for Part II of Philosophical Investigations,* ed. G. H. von Wright and H. Nyman, trans. C. G. I-Juckhardt and M. A. E. Aue (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

NB   *Notebooks,* 1914-1916, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979).

OC   *On Certainty,* ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe and D. Paul (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

PG   *Philosophical Grammar,* ed. R. Rhees, trans. A. Kenny (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974).

PI   *Philosophical Investigations,* 4th ed., ed. P. M. S. Hacker and J. Schulte, Anscombe, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker and J. Schulte (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009).

PPF   *Second Part of Philosophical Investigations,* 4th ed., ed. P. M. S. Hacker and J. Schulte, Anscombe, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker and J. Schulte (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009).

PR   *Philosophical Remarks,* ed. R. Rhees, trans. R. Hargreaves and R. White (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975).

RLF   *Some Remarks on Logical Form*, Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes, Vol. 9, Knowledge, Experience and Realism (1929), pp. 162-171.

RFM   *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics,* rev. ed., ed. G. E. M. Anscombe, R. Rhees, and G. H. von Wright, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978).

RPP I   *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology,* vol. 1., ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980).

RPP II *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology,* vol. 2., ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

TLP   *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* trans. C. K. Ogden (London: Routledge, 1981).

Z   *Zettel,* ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967).

Wittgenstein's *Nachlass*

Wittgenstein's Nachlass: The Bergen Electronic Edition, ed. The Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

References to the *Nachlass* are by manuscript (MS) or typescript number (TS) followed by page number (as cited in the von Wright catalogue).

Lecture Notes by Others, Conversations, and Correspondence

AWL   Alice Ambrose, ed., *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge, 1932-35* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982).

CL   *Ludwig Wittgenstein, Cambridge Letters: Correspondence with Russell, Keynes, Moore, Ramsey and Sraffa,* ed. B. McGuiness and G. H. von Wright (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

DC   M. O. C. Drury, "Conversations with Wittgenstein," in *The Danger of Words and Writings on Wittgenstein,* ed. D. Berman, M. Fitzgerald, and J. Hayes (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996).

LWL   Desmond Lee, ed., *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge, 1930-1932* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980).

MWL   David G. Stern, Brian Rogers, Gabriel Citron, eds., *Wittgenstein Lectures, Cambridge 1930 – 1933, from the Notes of G. E. Moore* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

VOW   Ludwig Wittgenstein and Friedrich Waismann, *The Voices of Wittgenstein: The Vienna Circle,* ed. G. Baker (London: Routledge, 2003).

FW   Brian McGuinness, ed., *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle: Conversations Recorded by Friedrich Waismann,* trans. Joachim Schulte and Brian McGuinness (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979).

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Introduction

This thesis aims to elaborate an account of the role the concept of *linguistic meaning* plays in Wittgenstein's philosophy. Its main source of originality lies in the perspective through which it looks at the concept of meaning. The thesis is an attempt to consider what theoretical implications Wittgenstein's innovative *methodology* brings about for the investigation and clarification of meaning and language in general.

'Wittgenstein on meaning' is a theme that has been frequently addressed in the literature, insofar as Wittgenstein's declared focus on language and his ambition to dissolve the problems of philosophy by clarifying the meaning of the expressions and words we use while doing philosophy– an approach we find both in the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* - made somewhat obvious to assume that meaning had to play a privileged role in his thought. Concretely, this led scholars to investigate whether there is a theory of meaning in Wittgenstein's *Investigations* – or a *thesis*, a *claim* whose aim was ideally to grasp the nature of meaning, so that we can clarify language on the basis of such an insight.

Wittgenstein's writings are not clear in this regard. Among the myriad remarks of his 'philosophical album' (PI: p. 3), Wittgenstein in the *Investigations* never states or unambiguously formulates a definition of how meaning is to be conceived. The only remark that seemingly addresses the nature of meaning is PI 43, where Wittgenstein famously pointed out that meaning can be defined in terms of the use of our words in language. If we look at Wittgenstein's philosophy with the intention to find a claim about meaning of sort, PI 43 intuitively looks like a good candidate. Usually, insofar as a strong identity between meaning and the use of words is too vague and strictly speaking untenable – the ways we use words is not coextensive with their meaning, otherwise any distinction between pragmatics and semantics is arguably thwarted – scholars tried to reformulate Wittgenstein's supposed claim in terms of an equation between meaning and a specific *kind* of use. This kind of use is the one prescribed by a *rule* of sort governing the employment of our words and expressions. Accordingly, in the *Investigations* we may find sketched a *normative* account of meaning, according to which meaning is ultimately *rule-governed use.*

The very idea that meaning is substantially a normative phenomenon and that Wittgenstein, in the *Investigations*, was advancing a normative account of language became predominant especially after Gordon Baker and Peter Hacker published their monumental commentary to the

Investigations, back in the '80s.[1] Though repeatedly criticized through the decades from different angles, the commentary contributed to cement what in this thesis I will call *a normative conception of philosophy and meaning,* according to which meaning is mainly rule-governed use and philosophy an instrument of description of such rules to avoid nonsense. Such a conception is a common presupposition of many scholars and still exerts a powerful influence in the way we approach Wittgenstein's thought. Severin Schroeder, for instance, develops an account along the same lines (Schroeder 2006), same did Hans Johann Glock (Glock 1998); Daniel Whiting wrote a defence of the idea - that he believes to be found in Wittgenstein - that meaning is a normative phenomenon (Whiting 2008), and Paul Horwich based his interpretation of Wittgenstein's metaphilosophy on a normative interpretation of PI 43 too (Horwich 2012). The normativity of meaning is a presupposition of Saul Kripke's famous – yet controversial - interpretation too, insofar as the refusal of dispositions as a plausible solution for meaning scepticism is indeed formulated as a consequence of the fact that they cannot explain the normative character of meaning (Kripke 1982).

Notably, the idea that Wittgenstein's conception of meaning was normative has been a mainstream view for a long time also because it had the undeniable appeal to *normalize* Wittgenstein's philosophy, well beyond the limited constraints of Wittgensteinian scholarship. In fact, Wittgenstein could be ultimately seen as a philosopher, among many others, that advanced a particular theory or claim on meaning - and thus language - that we can argue in favour or against, as any other philosophical claim. Despite Wittgenstein's insistence that there are no theses in philosophy (PI 128) and his stylistic uniqueness, he could be interpreted, after all, as a philosopher engaged in the same activity as any other thinker advancing a theory of meaning with the aim to describe the constitutive features of language in general. This process of normalization is patent if we look, for example, at William Lycan important manual of philosophy of language, where Wittgenstein is mentioned among those theorists – such as Robert Brandom or Wilfrid Sellars - that advanced a thesis of meaning as use (Lycan 1999). More recently, an attempt to read Wittgenstein as if he were a contemporary philosopher of language was advanced by Hans Julius Schneider, that in his *Wittgenstein's Later Theory of Meaning* elaborated a detailed account of the *Investigations* through the lens of Dummett's philosophy of language (Schneider 2013). A specific exegetical issue – Wittgenstein's opinions on meaning – is thus inevitably intertwined with the general question about how to *evaluate* Wittgenstein's contribution to philosophy in the broader context of contemporary philosophy of language.

Now, through its focus on the methodological context of Wittgenstein's philosophy as whole as a way to introduce Wittgenstein's account of meaning, this thesis *systematically* follows a different

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[1] The first edition of the commentary dates 1980. The first two volumes were republished and revised in the early 2000s.

path. It is in fact my conviction that we cannot fully understand Wittgenstein's philosophy without being thoroughly *consistent* with his own comprehension of philosophy as an activity of clarification of language. Accordingly, whatever Wittgenstein writes about meaning, as much as any other concept, needs to be understood in the broader frame of such an activity. As a consequence, the thesis will not skim through Wittgenstein's writings with the aim to unveil a theory of sort and argue for or against it, and this because the very idea that there is any *theory* of meaning to be found is questioned. The very definition of meaning as rule-governed use in this sense is not the natural presupposition of my investigation, it rather constitutes a *problem*, insofar as it is not *prima facie* clear how to interpret the logical function of such a definition in the first place.

In this respect, my thesis follows the trails set by some influential scholars, among which I am obliged to mention the works of Gordon Baker, Katherine Morris, Cora Diamond, James Conant and Oskari Kuusela (I will make explicit my references later throughout the thesis). All these authors substantially agree with the suggestion that if we want to remain faithful to Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy we should avoid attributing to him any theory or claim about language and meaning. Theories can be neither the result of his investigation, nor its philosophical premise, a sort of conceptual requirement that needs to be laid down first and then applied to investigate language and solve philosophical problems. My original contribution is to ground such a view within the domain of Wittgenstein's writings, and I will do so through a detailed analysis of the concept of *metalogic*. This is suggested by a crucial passage – significantly overlooked in the literature – where it is said that meaning is *not* to be 'the subject matter of philosophy' and together *not* a 'metalogical concept' (AWL: 31). Metalogic, for Wittgenstein, is to be defined, in a nutshell, as a kind of philosophical methodology – fully active in the *Tractatus* but not in the *Investigations* - whose aim is to *ground* any possible clarification onto a universal account of language and meaning. As such, any theory of meaning that is supposed to offer such a universal basis for philosophical clarification is strictly metalogical and should be discarded, as Wittgenstein himself does, if we want to remain faithful to the spirit of his philosophy.

Crucially, the entirely negative claim that there is no theory of meaning in Wittgenstein's thought should not be interpreted as if there is no *insight* whatsoever in Wittgenstein concerning the logic of our concept of meaning. In fact, it might seem that we are forced towards a deadly dilemma: either we 'normalize' Wittgenstein by attributing to him a theory of meaning as rule-governed use, or we do not, with the risk however of losing track of the philosophical relevance of his thought. The focus on metalogic is, - as I will show – crucial, insofar as it helps understand how a positive account of meaning that is not a theory or a claim might take form and thus offers a way out of the said dilemma. This leads to the main contention of the thesis, that is the following: instead of a univocal

theory of what meaning ultimately must be, Wittgenstein offers us a *pluralistic account* where different models are put forward to capture different aspects of our concept of meaning. Such models are not antagonistic but rather contribute *together* to the clarification of the concept of meaning, without being *theories*, insofar as they do not demand to grasp the essence of meaning once and for all. In this way, we can both remain faithful to Wittgenstein's original intentions and together better evaluate the contribution his thought might bring about in the broader context of contemporary discussions of meaning and language.

As a consequence, the normative conception becomes a model among others to describe and clarify our concept of meaning. As such, Wittgenstein's positive investigation on the nature of meaning acquires together the form of a dismissal of the philosophical *primacy* attributed to rules in understanding meaning. Such a dismissal can only be proven by showing actual cases of language use where meaning cannot really be explained in terms of rules or conventions: this will be the case of Wittgenstein's lengthy discussion about *experiencing* meaning, understanding *music* and *secondary senses*, themes of Wittgenstein's thought that are here interpreted as contributions to the description of the complex grammar of the meaning of 'meaning', beyond any normative constraints. This ultimately explains the subtitle of the present thesis: this account is non-normative, insofar as it assumes that rules are not the only thing that matters to understand the logic of meaning, if we want to remain steadily on Wittgensteinian grounds. Crucially, it is important to stress that the thesis does not deny that rules constitute the meaning of most of the words we use in language – it is not in this sense *anti-normative*. Rather, it emphasises the actual complexity of the concept of meaning, that cannot be explained *fully* by rules alone. The difference is substantial, and indeed essential to understand the thesis' whole point.

The thesis is primarily a contribution to Wittgenstein studies, but beyond that I hope to open up perspectives for an application of its results. As Wittgenstein is widely considered one of the most important philosophers of our age, a clearer understanding of his philosophy should have implications beyond the merely exegetical discussion. Directions in which such applications could drive to are indicated in the conclusion.

Structure of the Thesis

The deep interwovenness of Wittgenstein's treatment of the concept of meaning and his philosophical methodology, on one hand, and his explorations of alternatives to rules to understand meaning and language, on the other, are respectively mirrored in the structure of the present thesis. Its first part offers mainly a general discussion of Wittgenstein's late methodology through the lens of metalogic. Its conclusions are fundamental as they lay down almost a *program* to investigate

meaning that, I believe, is a good compass to orient ourselves through the 'forest dark' of Wittgenstein's late writings. Once I have clarified what to expect from Wittgenstein's discussion of meaning in language, I move forward in the second part to actually give substance to a conception of meaning that involves more than one conceptual tool *beyond rules* to clarify our concept of meaning. As such, the first part works as a methodological premise, as it sets up the context to rightfully interpret my arguments in the second part.

More specifically, in the first chapter I develop an account of Wittgenstein's concept of metalogic and its consequent rejection once he came back to philosophy in the early '30s. It is my contention that a correct interpretation of his discussion on metalogic gives us the key to fully understand the transition from the philosophical methodology of the *Tractatus* to that of the *Investigations*, whose methodological remarks will be interpreted in the light of the rejection of metalogic. In a nutshell, there is metalogic every time we are persuaded that philosophy requires a *foundation*. As a consequence, to reject metalogic implies that we need to reject foundationalism in the investigation of language. Such a foundationalism is rooted onto the idea that some concepts or words – including meaning – are somehow privileged and it is the aim of philosophy to grasp their essence in advance as the basis of a universal account of language. As meaning is said not to be a metalogical concept, it follows that there is no attempt in the *Investigations* to ground philosophy onto a claim about meaning as rule-governed use. Notably, I argue that to reject foundationalism ultimately means to embrace pluralism of models to understand language, and this is essential to frame the terms of my discussion about meaning in the rest of the thesis.

In the second chapter, I discuss Baker and Hacker's interpretation of Wittgenstein on meaning and show how and in which sense their account is still substantially metalogical. In an important sense, metalogic frames both a way to conceive philosophy and a possible way to interpret Wittgenstein's thought. As Baker and Hacker's reading is based on the concept of rules, the chapter also offers a discussion about the role of rules in the *Investigations*. Against Baker and Hacker's tendency to consider rules as the *object* of philosophical description, I rather propose – along the lines of Martin Gustafsson and Oskari Kuusela – to consider rules as *means of description* of language. If we do so, no thesis or claim about meaning can be attributed to Wittgenstein and we are thus free to explore alternatives to rules to describe its grammar.

Such alternatives are sketched in the third chapter, where I argue that there are at least two kinds of use of meaningful words that cannot be explained in terms of rules. The first kind is connected to our natural reactions and our *expressive* vocabulary, whereas the latter emphasises a connection between words use and their instrumental *purpose*. The chapter mainly focuses on some primitive examples of language use that can be however employed to highlight some aspects of the complexity

of our language, where meaning can be often not merely determined by the rules we lay down and govern their employment. As such, the third chapter works as a *trait d'union* between the general discussion about Wittgenstein's method and philosophy and the actual exploration of alternatives to rules for a thoroughly not metalogical and pluralistic account of meaning and language.

The second part of the thesis has in fact the scope to anchor such an account to Wittgenstein's remarks on the experience of meaning, music, and secondary sense. In the fourth chapter I argue that Wittgenstein's anti-mentalism – that is, the philosophical idea that meaning is not an independent mental thing accompanying the words we use - is nowhere incompatible with the attribution of a role to *experience* for understanding linguistic meaning, as there is indeed a positive account of experience disseminated throughout his writings. According to Wittgenstein, familiar words can acquire an aura – an a*tmosphere* – without which a considerable numbers of language games, such as poetry or puns, cannot be played. Experience thus plays an undeniable role to understand the way we use words and what we do with them.

In the fifth chapter I push the discussion further to question whether this kind experience can be considered as a kind of understanding – and complementarily, of meaning. The answer is affirmative: through a detailed examination of Wittgenstein's discussion of music, I argue that there is a kind of understanding involved in language that is rooted precisely in the way we experience words and sounds, without this making us relapse necessarily into mentalism. What is more, this kind of understanding cannot be reduced to rules in any way of form. The result of this discussion is a pluralistic account of meaning and understanding where experience and rules are complementary tools to highlight or capture different aspect of the very same concept, whose logic is thus more complex than it might seem.

Finally, I conclude, in the sixth chapter, by examining Wittgenstein's seemingly obscure discussion about the secondary sense of words, that I here interpret as a case of language use that is not conventional, that is, it is not based on any rule set in advance. I will show that Wittgenstein's discussion on secondary sense is deeply intertwined with that about the experience of meaning and argue for what I call the *layered conception of language* and meaning that is generated by such a pluralistic account. According to this view, language acquires the status of a living organism where new forms of expression are non-normatively introduced to outgrow others, in a process of ever-shifting extension of our expressive capacities.

Part One

Meaning and Metalogic

A main cause of philosophical disease—a one-sided diet:
one nourishes one's thinking with only one kind of example.

PI 593

1. A Non-Metalogical Method

Introduction

In an often overlooked passage in the notes from the lectures of the early '30s, Wittgenstein says that meaning is not 'the subject matter of philosophy' and that is not a *metalogical* idea. This passage works as the starting point of the investigation of Wittgenstein's concept of meaning I present in this thesis:

> There is a problem connected with our talk of meaning: Does such talk indicate that I think meaning to be the subject matter of philosophy? Are we talking about something of more general importance than chairs, etc., so that we can take it that questions of meaning are the central questions of philosophy? Is meaning a metalogical idea? No. For there are problems in philosophy that are not concerned with the meaning of "meaning", though perhaps with the meaning of other words, e.g., "time". The word "meaning" has no higher place than these. What gives it a different place is that our investigations are about language and about puzzles arising from the use of language. "Grammar", "proposition", "meaning" thus figure more often than other words, though investigation concerning the word "meaning" is on the same level as a grammatical investigation of the word 'time".

> (AWL: 31)

Meaning is said to be no subject matter for philosophy, it is denied that it is metalogical and that it has a 'higher place' than other words. It is no privileged concept: only, it happens that we are more interested in meaning because of the nature of philosophy, that is principally about 'puzzles' rooted in the way we use language.

In order to fully understand the meaning of this remark, it is first essential to understand what Wittgenstein meant with 'metalogic'. This chapter thus aims to give an exhaustive account of Wittgenstein's concept of metalogic as it figures in the writings of the early '30s. My contention is that Wittgenstein's dismissal of metalogic is a pivotal move in the process of methodological revision of the *Tractatus* philosophical framework that led him finally to the *Investigations*. As meaning is said to be not metalogical, it follows that a Wittgensteinian investigation of the concept of meaning cannot be separated from a general comprehension of Wittgenstein's own methodology. As such,

this chapter will lay down the logical framework presupposed by the analysis of the concept of meaning developed in the rest of the thesis.

The chapter is structured as follows: after a quick overview of the occurrences of the term 'metalogic' throughout Wittgenstein's texts, I will first describe the substantial methodological shift the *Investigations* set against the *Tractatus* – the refusal to look for the *essence* of our concepts. The quest for the essence is in fact an important implicit target in Wittgenstein's discussion of the term 'metalogic'. Second, I will characterize metalogic primarily as a method of clarification of language that assumes a *foundation* for any clarification of language to be required. The essence of language is indeed thought to be grasped as a necessary condition for any clarification to get started. Third, I will analyse how the need for metalogical foundation is intertwined with another typical tendency of philosophical discourse: the tendency to take certain principles and concepts as *privileged* and more important than others. I will also incidentally show that this feature of metalogic helps clarify Wittgenstein's appeal to the controversial notion of the *every-day*. Fourth, I will compare the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* and show how and in which terms the *Tractatus* is a metalogical work. Finally, I will first outline the theoretical reason why a non-metalogical method is preferable, and second, I will outline the features required for a non-metalogical understanding of meaning.

1. Metalogic: An Overview

In the writings of the early '30s Wittgenstein repeatedly engages with the concept of *metalogic*. There are in total 34 entries of the term in the *Nachlass*, mostly included in the typescripts constituting the collections *Philosophical Grammar* and *Big Typescript*, even though the number of references we can analyse shortens and makes direct sources considerably scarce, as several remarks are repeated and reported in different notebooks. The concept figures as well in the students' notes of Wittgenstein's lectures. It is also worth mentioning the transcriptions of the conversations with Waismann, edited by Gordon Baker, and published in 2003 as *The Voices of Wittgenstein* (from now on, VoW). This book collects the notes from typescripts assembled by Waismann from 1929 to 1936 and contains the most explicit references to metalogic we refer to. A whole chapter, for instance, is titled *metalogical concepts*.[2] Relevantly, all these entries were written between 1930 and 1933. There is no occurrence of the term 'metalogic' in the *Investigations*. More generally, it is hard to find it in the writings after the mid '30s. The only exception is *Zettel* (Z 284), where, however, the remark in question was already formulated in earlier writings and just pasted in that collection in a second moment.

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[2] Even though Peter Hacker explicitly contested the importance of this work as it is hard to tell what is Waismann's and what is Wittgenstein's in it (Hacker 2007: 6), I consider this text reliable, insofar as it can be shown that its contents are consistent with other materials from the *Nachlass*.

Even though Wittgenstein's use of the term 'metalogic' is confined in the early'30s, yet he employs the concept pervasively to talk about a great number of different concepts. To offer a quick overview, he uses the term 'metalogic' to talk about *depiction* (MWL: 141-142, BT: 223), *rules* and *games* (MS 153a: 159, PG: 115 - 116, BT: 54), the word *fundamental* (BT: 305, MS 110: 194), *agreement with reality* (BT: 158), *meaning* (as *Bedeutung*), *proposition* and *world* (MWL: 316-318, AWL: 31), *calculus* (PG: 115 - 116, LWL: 92), *meaning* (as *meinen*), *understanding* (BT: 2-3, Z 284, MS 114: 44), *sense* and *nonsense* (AWL: 21) . All these concepts are resolutely said to be *non*-metalogical. Stephen Hilmy argues that Wittgenstein's rejection of metalogic is relative only to psychological concepts, such as meaning and understanding (Hilmy 1987: 43), but this clearly does not seem to exhaust all the recurrence of the term in the *Nachlass*.[3] Apart from psychological concepts, we find linguistic notions (*proposition*), traditional philosophical formulas (*agreement with reality, fundamental*), *Tractarian* concepts (*proposition, depiction, world*) and, crucially, the very words that seem to constitute the foundations of Wittgenstein's conception of language in the *Investigations*, such as *calculus, game,* and *rules*. The rejection of metalogic seems then to involve a number of different concepts that *prima facie* do not seem to have anything in common with each other.

Arguably, it is far way easier to understand what metalogic is *not* in Wittgenstein's thought. Nowadays, metalogic is a well-established branch of contemporary logic. It can be viewed as a 'second-order' reflection about any system of logical rules, aiming to prove some general logical properties of such systems, such as completeness or consistency.[4] Historically, metalogic is to be traced back to Hilbert's formalist approach to mathematics, as well as into the works of Warsaw logicians on metalanguage and truth, and both these traditions are mentioned by Rudolf Carnap in his *Logical Syntax of Language*, where they contribute to his attempt to develop a fully operative metalanguage (what Carnap calls indeed 'syntax of language') for the language of science (Carnap 2000: 9). It is reasonable to argue Wittgenstein's interest in metalogic grew in the context of the conversations he entertained with the members of the Vienna Circle in the early '30. As a proof, the word appears several times in *VoW*. However, metalogic for Wittgenstein had a rather *idiosyncratic* meaning, significantly different from its established contemporary use. As I will now show, Wittgenstein's metalogic is to be thought more as a kind of *method* to deal with the clarification of language.

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[3] I am surely not the first to state the obvious here. Hans Johann Glock, for instance, pointed out the same in his *Dictionary* (Glock 1996: 245), as well as Kuusela (Kuusela 2008: 334n).
[4] For an introduction to the modern notions of metalogic and metatheory, see Hunter 1971.

2. Wittgenstein's Philosophical Target: The Quest for Essences

We have shown that Wittgenstein repeatedly addressed the concept of metalogic during the early '30s. As such, in the period in between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*, while working on a new method to do philosophy, Wittgenstein firmly and repeatedly rejected metalogic and metalogical concepts. We have also noticed that Wittgenstein's use of the notion is rather idiosyncratic. As such, in order to make sense of this particular idiosyncrasy, it is preferable to start our discussion by putting Wittgenstein's treatment of metalogic in the proper context of his criticism and subsequent dismissal of the *Tractatus* 'grave mistakes' (PI: 4) in favour of a new way to approach philosophical problems. In this way, we can also flesh out Wittgenstein's conviction about the aim of his own philosophy. Once we clarify Wittgenstein's goal, it becomes easier to understand correctly what metalogic ultimately is.

In PI 65 - a remark introducing the discussion on family-resemblance concepts (PI 65 - PI 80) - Wittgenstein clearly formulates the main distinction between the *Tractatus* and the methodology of the *Investigations*. His new method is described through contrast with the *Tractatus*:

> Here we come up against the great question that lies behind all these considerations.—For someone might object against me: "You take the easy way out! You talk about all sorts of language games, but have nowhere said what the essence of a language-game, and hence of language, is: what is common to all these activities, and what makes them into language or parts of language. So you let yourself off the very part of the investigation that once gave you yourself most headache, the part about the *general form of propositions* and of language."
> And this is true.—Instead of producing something common to all that we call language, I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all,— but that they are *related* to one another in many different ways. And it is because of this relationship, or these relationships, that we call them all "language".
>
> (PI 65)

This paragraph presents an objection from Wittgenstein's imaginary interlocutor, which complains that Wittgenstein substantially gave up 'a part of the investigation' of language that was concerned with finding out the *essence* of our concepts, like 'language' or 'game', a part that he previously deemed to be fundamental for investigating language.[5] The concept of essence has here a rather

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[5] There are other entries in the *Investigations* where the quest for the essence of our concepts is mentioned by Wittgenstein as a quick way to define a specific approach to language that we should be careful to avoid: it is the case of PI 97, where the aim to grasp 'the incomparable essence of language' is deemed to be the result of an illusion (the same is also stated in Z 444), and of PI 116, where the dismissal of metaphysics is here defined as a reaction to the quest for essences by philosophers. We will be back later on both these important remarks.

intuitive meaning: essence is defined in terms of the *commonality* things share as instances of the same concept. The *Investigations* thus started describing in detail specific cases of language games without bothering to stop and spell out their essence – whatever all these cases of language might have in common. As a reply, Wittgenstein simply *admits* ('this is true') that he is not concerned with that quest anymore: in its stead, he suggests approaching to language as a collection of different inter-related phenomena, whose similarities can well be described without spelling out the ever-encompassing essence of language.

The point of the whole paragraph is then specifically *methodological*. Wittgenstein implicitly says that, compared to the way he conceived philosophy at the time of the *Tractatus*, his new method *lacks* a part that was considered to play a crucial role before: the one where essences are grasped and spelled out, *before* any actual description of particular instances of language use takes place. That the *Tractatus* here is the main target is revealed by the reference to the general form of the propositions. The general form is indeed said to be 'the essence of proposition' (TLP 5.471), that is, 'the one logical constant that *all* propositions, according to their nature, have *in common* with one another' (TLP 5.47, my italics). As such, the very same words framing PI 65 are found in the *Tractatus* discussion of essence too.[6] Furthermore, in the preparatory notebooks for the composition of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein reveals what he believed to be the 'whole task' of his investigation, that is, 'explaining the nature of the proposition' (NB: 39). The *Tractatus* can be thus read as the result of an effort to spell out the essence of the proposition, a concept that is deemed to be fundamental for the clarification of the logic of language. This essence is admittedly spelled out in TLP 4.5 – 'such and such is the case' – where it is explained that *every* possible sense or proposition can be expressed in these terms, and then translated in logical symbolism in TLP 6. In the *Investigations,* on the other hand, Wittgenstein firmly claims that the 'part of the investigation' concerned with the essence of concepts is no longer required and thus it is dropped out of consideration. We can go along without being compelled by that.

To sum up, Wittgenstein in the *Investigations* tells us that he willingly dismissed a part of language investigation that was primarily concerned with grasping the essence of concepts like language, proposition and so forth. By doing so, Wittgenstein stresses a remarkable point of *discontinuity* with the *Tractatus*, insofar as his first work is dominated by the obsession of spelling out the essence of the proposition. In PI 65, Wittgenstein admits that this preliminary move is no longer required to achieve clarification. The *Investigations* are thus moving in a domain that is free from a quite venerable and prestigious theoretical notion, almost coextensive to our philosophical

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[6] Another enlightening remark to understand the notion of *essence* in the *Tractatus* is the following: 'The essential in a proposition is that which is in common to all propositions' (TLP 3.341).

tradition: essences and their demands.[7] At this point enters Wittgenstein's discussion and rejection of metalogic in the writings of the early '30s. As I will show in the following sections, metalogic is the name of a philosophical method of clarification of language that is still under the influence of the need to find and grasp what is common – the essence – of our most prestigious concepts. As such, we have to preliminarily assume that Wittgenstein – while rejecting metalogic – is implicitly working his way out of a picture of philosophy that clings onto the need of grounding any investigation over a set of principles able to fully capture the essence of language in its entirety, a picture that is fully embodied by the *Tractatus* logical framework. In the next section, I will illustrate how, and in which sense, the quest for the essence takes the shape of metalogic, understood as a method of clarification of language that looks for a *foundation*.

3. Metalogic: The Need for a Foundation

Notably, the first occurrence of the notion of metalogic in Wittgenstein's corpus - a not precisely dated[8] entry in the lectures' notes edited by John King and Desmond Lee – figures in a methodological remark that mirrors the discussion on the role of essence in the investigation of language:

> What we investigate is one particular game or another, not games in general or something metalogical. We need not recapitulate the rule as we play – we use words without looking them up. If you give the rule you are doing all you can.
>
> (LWL: 84)

In a context where languages are compared to games, Wittgenstein says that we should investigate only *particular* instances of what we call 'game'. The opposite would be to investigate 'something metalogical', that is, the general concept of game. It is important to stress that Wittgenstein does not *claim* that there is *no* general concept of game, that such a concept does not *exist*: only, he says that the object of his investigation, what we *start* our investigation with, are *concrete* examples of games. In this sense, the remark is purely methodological. Furthermore, to investigate a particular game might consist of tabulating – or recapitulating, if we know the game already – its rules (if any: not every game is normative, as the example of a child playing alone by throwing a ball against the wall

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[7] A representative of this tradition we find mentioned in Wittgenstein's writings is *Socrates*. In the *Brown Book*, Wittgenstein writes the following: 'The idea that in order to get clear about the meaning of a general term one had to find the *common element* in all its applications has shackled philosophical investigation; for it has not only led to no result, but also made the philosopher dismiss as irrelevant the concrete cases, which alone could have helped him to understand the usage of the general term. When Socrates asks the question, "what is knowledge?" he does not even regard it as a *preliminary* answer to enumerate cases of knowledge.' (BB: 20, my italics).

[8] The notes report a vague 'academic year 1931 – 1932'.

reveals), something that is not necessarily required while playing it. However, Wittgenstein points out, to formulate rules is all that is required if we want to describe or investigate the functioning of a particular game: 'we do all we can'.

The strictly methodological dimension of this remark should help us dismiss an easy misinterpretation of this (and many more) entries of Wittgenstein's *Nachlass*. In fact, Wittgenstein is not here denying that there are no general concepts, or that we should not employ general concepts – that is, spelling out neat definitions – in our investigation of language. The generality Wittgenstein refers to here is rather the one that is granted by the *common elements* - that is, the *essence* – every instance of that concept is supposed to share. As such, we should not dismiss generality, rather the temptation to *start* our investigation from a neatly and precisely defined definition of what a concept is in general, that is, of what every instance of that concept under investigation has *in common* with each other. Metalogic thus compels us to *start* our investigation of language from the individuation of the common elements of those concepts we deem essential, *before* any actual description of particular cases of language use could take place.

The structural ambiguity of the employment of the term 'concept in general' or 'general concepts' in the remarks of the early '30s – they all can be misleadingly read as if Wittgenstein invites us to renounce to generality in philosophy – is perhaps the reason why in the *Investigations* Wittgenstein prefers to frame the discussion in terms of essence, as PI 65 shows. The following remark, however, demonstrates that the discussion over the essence in the *Investigations* and on general concepts in the early '30s are substantially consistent and, in addition, shows that for Wittgenstein the abandonment of metalogic as a method does not bring any negative consequences to his own conception of philosophy:

> But if the general concept of language dissolves this way, doesn't philosophy dissolve as well?
> No, for the task of philosophy is not to create a new, ideal language, but to clarify the use of
> our language, the existing one. Its aim is to remove particular misunderstandings.
>
> (PG: 115)[9]

Arguably, 'the general concept of language' exerts here the role of the essence of the concept of language in our discussion, insofar as the general concept should be defined through the *common elements* that every single language should share as a language. If it dissolves, Wittgenstein points out, philosophy however remains and does not sink with it, as it is defined by its aim, that is, 'to remove particular misunderstanding', and this can be pursued even though we dismiss any attempt

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[9] The same point comes back in the *Investigations*, among the general discussion of the sublime character of logic (PI 108).

to spell out the essence of our concepts.[10] As such, there is – so to speak - a *pragmatic reason* behind Wittgenstein's methodological shift: the quest for essence is disposable within a conception of philosophy defined through its aim, that is, solving philosophical confusions through clarification of language. Furthermore, the quest for the essence is also misleading, insofar as it loses sight of philosophy's main goal and get obsessed with the construction of an ideal language, that thus becomes an end in itself, rather than a means of clarification of actual misunderstandings (we will be back later on this important point).

At this point, we can already draw the following conclusion. Metalogic is the name Wittgenstein forges to identify a specific kind of investigation of language, a specific *conception* of philosophical methodology. We do metalogic every time we *first* (strive to) grasp the essence of concepts in general – language, proposition, game and so forth – and only *then* we feel allowed to proceed to describe those particular instances of language games whose logic is unclear. Consequently, the rejection of metalogic takes the shape of an abandonment of this *two-step* structure: we *can* well clarify language without relying on a preliminary 'part of the investigation' (PI 65) whose aim is to grasp the essence of language. Thus, conversely, metalogic acquires the status of a *foundationalist* method for the clarification of language in this precise sense: it does not allow any actual clarification to take place before such an essence is spelled out.

3.1 Wittgenstein's Leading Principle

Now, the idea that metalogic is primarily a foundationalist method is further confirmed by the following – crucial – remark:

> If a man [...] sets out (tabulates) rules according to which certain words are used, he hasn't committed himself to giving an explanation (definition) of the word 'rule', 'proposition' , 'word', etc. I am allowed to use the word 'rule' without first tabulating the rules for the use of the word. And those rules are not super-rules. Philosophy is concerned with calculi in the same sense as it is concerned with thoughts, sentences and languages. But if it was really concerned with the concept of calculus, and thus with the concept of the calculus of all calculi, there

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[10] That philosophy is defined by its problems is a recurrent theme in Wittgenstein. In the *Philosophical Grammar,* for instance, Wittgenstein defines philosophy as 'anything except philosophical problems' (PG: 193), that is, what defines philosophy in a certain epoch is the problems we are obsessed with. Wittgenstein's philosophy is an attempt to dissolve these 'individual worries' that are ultimately rooted in a misunderstanding of the grammar of language. In the early lectures, Wittgenstein already defines his philosophy as 'an activity of clearing up our concepts' (LWL: 22). In the *Nachlass*, we find an even clearer remark, as Wittgenstein defines his own philosophical activity in these terms: "we describe [the role of words in language] only as far as is necessary for solving philosophical problems." (MS 121: 59v). As such, any description of language has always clarification as its aim, where clarification is to be understood as equivalent to the dissolution of a particular misunderstanding or confusion.

would be such a thing as metaphilosophy. (But there is not. We might so present all that we have to say that this would appear as a leading principle).

(MS 114: 104/PG: 115 - 16/BT: 54)

Here we have, in a nutshell, Wittgenstein own understanding of metalogic and metaphilosophy. Metaphilosophy, that is said not to exist, would be that part of philosophy – 'the part of the investigation', to say it with PI 65 – that is *preliminarily* and *primarily* concerned with the general concepts of calculi, thought, language. If we look for the essence of our general and abstract concept of calculus, for instance, we are led to strive for an outline of the concept of the 'calculus of all calculi', that is, we look for a definition of calculus that is able to encompass every instance of what we ordinarily call 'calculus'.

Notably, this reference to the concept of *calculus* is meant to target Frege and Russel's attempt to ground mathematics on logic, as the following quotation shows:

We mean all sorts of things by 'proposition', and it is wrong to start with a definition of proposition and build up logic from that. If 'proposition' is defined by reference to the notion of a truth-function, then arithmetic equations are also propositions – which does not make them the same as such a proposition as 'He ran out of the building'. When Frege tried to develop mathematics from logic he thought the calculus of logic was *the* calculus [. . .]. Mathematics and logic were one building with logic the foundation. This I deny; Russell's calculus is one calculus among others.

(AWL: 13)

Here Wittgenstein explicitly targets Frege and Russell foundationalist attempt to ground mathematics over logic. Notably, this critical reference to logicism comes here as a corollary of a general discussion on the lack of essential unity of what we call 'proposition'. As such, Wittgenstein is here saying that there is no calculus of al calculi – *the* calculi of logic able to ground mathematics – insofar as there is no essence of the proposition to be grasped. That is, a calculus that demands to be the foundation of language and mathematics has to be based onto an overarching definition of the concept of proposition that is supposed to capture its essence once and for all, otherwise it is not the *real* calculus we are looking after. The acceptance to dismiss any quest for the essence of the proposition (PI 65) – what we have deemed to be the methodological turning point of the *Investigations* – is thus together an awareness to renounce to any foundationalist attempt in the philosophy of logic. What is more, the discussion on metaphilosophy is revealed to be implicitly connected with the dismissal of the quest for essences: metaphilosophy would be that discipline that

strives to single out the calculus of all calculi able to work as a solid foundation of language in its entirety, a task that can be accomplished only insofar as we preliminarily formulate the essence of the proposition, the very element that every proposition has in common with all the others. Once we accept that this essence is of no interest for us, metaphilosophy crumbles down together with the strive for the 'calculus of all calculi'.

At the same time, the quotation on metaphilosophy has more generality than this discussion on the concept of calculus may lead us to think. In fact, Wittgenstein mentions other important words, such as 'rules' and 'word'. In the case of rules, he says we can well tabulate rules to clarify the use of a certain word, without however the need to ground this activity on a preliminarily already defined concept of rule. We can well look and see which rules govern the use of the word 'rule' itself, yet these rules do not play any privileged, essential, or grounding role in our activity of clarification, as we can well proceed without the need for such a foundation – they are not 'super-rules', Wittgenstein says. As such, it is not a matter of substituting a concept with another – calculus with rules – to ground our investigation: the matter is, rather, to leave aside any need for a foundation whatsoever. Blinded by our need to look for the essence of language and thought, we shape our investigation as if it really *needed* a foundation of that sort. However, this is nothing more than an illusion: there is no need for that, we can clarify – and clarify better, we shall see – without any metaphilosophical grounding.

To reject metalogic thus ultimately means to avoid any foundation in our activity of clarification of language. Notably, Wittgenstein frames his anti-foundationalism by saying that the dismissal of metaphilosophy works as a *leading principle* of his own philosophy. The only leading principle of Wittgenstein late method of clarification states then that we should substantially avoid any leading principle aiming at grasping the essence of language before any clarification can start. In a quasi-paradoxical way, we can conclude that the only allowed principle of philosophy as an activity of clarification is that there is no grounding principle leading our investigation. The rejection of metalogic ultimately comes out to be the rejection of foundationalism in philosophical clarification.

3.2 Not What You Say, but How You Use it

We have argued so far that Wittgenstein's rejection of metalogic is related to its attempt to reconceive his method of clarification of language in non-foundationalist terms. To refuse the two-step structure of metalogic and metaphilosophy – first laying down a set of principles and then moving to any actual clarification of particular areas of language and philosophical confusions – is substantially a way out to the illusion that our primarily goal in philosophy is to grasp the essence of language. We have already seen that the whole discussion is spoiled by an ambiguity concerning the

use of the term 'generality': Wittgenstein's emphasis to start our investigation from particular cases of language use and the insistence that general concepts – of language, proposition and so on – 'dissolve' (PG: 115) may be interpreted as an invitation to reject any attempt to formulate any general principle whatsoever in clarifying language. If we refuse to engage in the first segment of the foundationalist strategy – the one aiming to lay down some principles capturing the essence of language – it might be argued that what remains to do is merely the actual description of particular bits of language and their logic, avoiding any abstract generalization in favour of an *empirical* description whose scope is limited to the particular language-game under analysis.

We have however seen that Wittgenstein's point is different. The generality involved here is the one conceived through the lenses of the essence of our concept, the common elements things are supposed to share. Generality is thus saved and does not sink together with essentialism. However, the belief that a certain definition grasps the essence of a certain concept can only be shown by the fact that we are willing to put it as a *foundation* of philosophical enquiry. This means that the rejection of metalogic does not lead us to a full rejection of everything any metalogical investigation of language has said so far: only, those definitions and principles that before were supposed to lay down the foundations and grasp the essence of language now are *relocated* and employed in clarification without any foundationalist aim. Principles are formulated and preserved; only, they are employed differently.

To substantiate further this crucial issue, let us focus on this important entry in Moore's notes:

> Suppose we say: 'A proposition is a picture'. What sort of statement is this?
>
> Is it metalogical?
>
> No. What's the good of making it?
>
> We're saying: the word 'picture' follows similar rules with word 'proposition'.
>
> I'd much rather say that "A proposition is a picture" is misleading.
>
> It just stresses a *certain aspect* of grammar of word "proposition".

<div align="right">(MWL: 141-142, my italics)</div>

Here, the statement 'a proposition is a picture' is said *not* to be metalogical. This point is addressed in the *Big Typescript* as well, when Wittgenstein claims that the concept of depiction is not metalogical (BT: 223). Although it does not constitute a metalogical principle – that is, it does not demand to capture the essence of proposition – such a statement can be well employed to highlight some aspects of the grammar – the logic – of what we call 'proposition'. The statement might of course be misleading, but only insofar as we use it metalogically, that is, only insofar as we consider it as a principle capturing the essence of what a proposition always is and put it as a foundation to

our investigation. On the other hand, if we resist such a temptation, a definition of this sort comes out to be a useful tool of clarification, as it advocates for a comparison between pictures and propositions that helps describe a certain aspect of their use. All in all, this remark from Moore is pivotal insofar as it perfectly clarifies an important aspect of Wittgenstein's anti-foundationalist method: it is all a matter of *how* we employ definitions, of how we use such principles in the wider context of logical clarification. In order to avoid foundationalism and metalogic, all that matters is that we look at what we say 'in the proper spirit', to say it with Wittgenstein (BT: 204): that is, *not* as if we are really capturing the essence of the concepts under investigation.

The example Wittgenstein chose here is not accidental. In fact, the idea that propositions are pictures is pivotal for the *Tractatus*. In a series of important entries in the middle of the book, the proposition is defined as 'a picture of reality' (TLP 4.01) insofar as it is understood as a 'description of a fact' (TLP 4.023). To establish this connection between propositions and pictures is useful to figure out why we can understand the sense of a proposition without knowing whether it is true: propositions and pictures are representations of possible states of affairs that are not required to be true representations in order to be understood. It follows that understanding a proposition can be defined as 'knowing what is the case, if it is true' (TLP 4.024). More generally, the idea that propositions are pictures that stand in a particular representational relationship with the world is placed at the very *core* of the *Tractatus* understanding of language as a truth-functional system.

On the basis of this observation, we can conclude that Wittgenstein - already in the early '30s - started questioning the methodological flaws of his first masterpiece in the context of a more general criticism of metalogical methodology. If we however remain faithful to the kind of reading proposed here, it follows that Wittgenstein did not want to get rid of the *Tractatus* set of clarificatory principles *tout court*: what he rather suggests is to employ those principles in a non-metalogical way, that is, without assuming that they capture the essence of language and are a necessary condition for every clarification to get started. Foundationalism thus lies in the way we use such principles, not in the mere fact that we employ abstract principles and definitions to clarify language. Accordingly, we are then allowed to build up artificial or ideal languages and calculi starting from some core principles, as the *Tractatus* does: only, we should not assume that this exhausts the aim of philosophical investigation and that the essence of language is ultimately spelled out once this ideal language is finally constructed. We have seen above already that our aim is not to build up ideal languages (PG: 115). Now, we fully understand why: not because it is constitutively wrong to build them and we should avoid them; rather, because our aim is the dissolution of actual misunderstandings of the logic of language. An ideal language might help us to achieve this goal, yet we should not assume that it captures the essence of our language, as the *Tractatus* believed. Once

the 'general concept of language dissolves' (PG: 115), what is left are only our attempts to solve confusions without the need to rely on a set of principles that are taken to be always valid in every circumstance we deal with an actual philosophical problem whose roots lie in language.[11]

3.3 Style Matters

If the *Investigations* are to be read as an attempt to articulate a philosophical investigation of language without any foundationalist and metalogical presuppositions, this might explain its peculiar – and often disorienting – *stylistic* features. In its preface, Wittgenstein reveals that the style of his work stems from 'the very nature of the investigation' (PI: 3). This means that the method of investigating language Wittgenstein elaborates in his work is co-substantial to a certain style of thought and writing. In other words, the apparently scattered and disordered stylistic layout of the *Investigations* – far from being an inessential and tedious by-product of a quirky mind or a symptom of philosophical lousiness - is rather better understood as a consequence of Wittgenstein's new method that starts from the urgency of specific philosophical problems and move from there to find a solution. The *Investigations* are a consistent application of a non-metalogical method, insofar as they look like a collection of autonomous sketches and methods to tackle often unrelated philosophical problems that do not proceed coherently and systematically from a univocal metalogical framework, as in the case of the *Tractatus*. In other words, there is no attempt of any metalogical foundation in the *Investigations*.

Perhaps, the remark that best represents Wittgenstein's style and philosophy is an entry in Lee's notes,[12] where it is claimed that 'in philosophy we are not laying foundations but tidying up a room', and in order to do that, 'we have to touch everything a dozen times' (LWL: 24). The almost obsessive necessity to go back to 'touch' the same things to reposition them in a new order not only works as an intriguing reference to Wittgenstein own complex method of dealing with his own writings – it is a well-known fact that he was used to cut and paste in different orders the same remarks in different collections; it is also and primarily a faithful description of Wittgenstein's own method, a method that looks for an order in language that is not the one granted by a solid foundations over essential principles able to capture language in its entirety. Metaphorically, the order in question is not the one an *engineer* is interested into when designing a building – we need to build first the foundations and then move to the higher floors, as there is no higher floor built before the foundations are laid down – rather, the order is those of the *librarian*, whose aim is to arrange books in a way helpful to

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[11] For a more extensive and complete examination of the role of ideal languages in Wittgenstein's later thought, see Kuusela 2019a, especially chapter 4. My discussion is substantially consistent with his.
[12] As Lee's notes are dated 1930, we can see that Wittgenstein's anti-foundationalism was present already in the early years of Wittgenstein's return to philosophy.

easily access books and pick them. There are different criteria ordering books in a library – genre, author, history, publishing company – and all of them are valid, *insofar as* they are effective in granting the access to the books we want. Intriguingly, to shelve books we need to touch them 'dozens of times', put them in different orders, change along the way if we are not satisfied, and so forth. We stop only when we are satisfied, there is no other reason more than that. In the *Investigations*, we find an analogous procedure: philosophical problems are tackled without relying on any previous foundation; principles and definitions are arranged in an order – one of many (as underlined in PI 132)[13] - helpful enough to loosen the grip of our confusions.[14]

Furthermore, anti-foundationalism is mirrored in another important stylistic aspect of the *Investigations* that makes explicit its non-metalogical nature. As aforementioned, a metalogical philosophy would be a discipline that presents a two steps nature: *first* it lays down the theoretical grounds of its own method, and *then* the investigation starts on the basis of such grounds. The two step nature of such a discipline would require then a book where *first* metalogical concepts are outlined and clearly defined and then applied to specific philosophical problems. On the contrary, there is no trace of this two-step strategy in the *Investigations*. The book in fact starts *in medias res*, by introducing a conception of meaning Wittgenstein envisages in Augustine's *Confessions* and, from then on, by working his way out through the composition of what he calls 'a philosophical *album*' (PI: 3). What looks like a sort of meta-philosophical chapter in the *Investigations* (PI 89 - 133) – those remarks where Wittgenstein explicitly describes his own method - *follows*, does not *precede*, whatever happens in the first one hundred or more remarks, that evidently are supposed to be completely intelligible on their own. The very same occasion to talk about method - and philosophy more generally - is completely *internal* to the discussion Wittgenstein entertains in the preceding remarks, focused on the concepts of rules (PI 81 - 86) and exactness (PI 88). It is this very discussion that brings the occasion to talk about logic and philosophy more extensively, as we can read in the very first line of PI 89, where Wittgenstein introduces his general reflection on the sublime character of logic on the basis of his conclusions about the concepts of rules and exactness. What is certain is

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[13] This plurality of possible orders is implicitly stated in a famous remark where, again, Wittgenstein uses the metaphor of construction and buildings to reject foundationalism: 'I am not interested in erecting a building but in having the foundations of possible buildings transparently before me' (CV: 9). The aim is clearly *not* to lay down *the* foundations and thus *the* order of language: rather, the task is to perspicuously describe possible orders to tackle different and sometimes unrelated philosophical problems.

[14] Notably, the comparison between philosophers and librarians is quickly sketched in the *Blue Book*. There Wittgenstein says that 'some of the greatest achievements in philosophy could only be compared with taking up some books which seemed to belong together and putting them on different shelves; nothing more being final about their positions than that they no longer lie side by side. The onlooker who doesn't know the difficulty of the task might well think in such a case that nothing at all had been achieved' (BB: 44-45). This passage emphasises the problem-relative nature of any order a philosopher can possibly make up in his attempt to tackle specific issues. The order is ungrounded, and it is not *per se* clarificatory if we do not know or understand already the difficulty such an order is meant to clear away.

that the content of the 'meta-philosophical chapter' is in this respect not methodologically distinct from its surroundings. It is not on a different level, it is not more important, it does not lay down the principles we need to grasp in advance if we want to investigate language. At least, nothing in the style and in the order of discussion of the book seems to suggest otherwise.[15]

It has been argued that the first 88 remarks of the *Investigations* are mainly a thorough criticism of the *Tractatus* view of language represented by the so-called Augustinian picture of language, from whose ruins the later conception of philosophy could rise. Baker and Hacker tend to read the *Investigations* in this way in their commentary (Baker Hacker, Chapter 1). This suggests that the meta-philosophical chapter works as a *pars construens* for Wittgenstein's new methodology after the entirely *negative* sections aimed to demolish the *Tractatus* view on language. it can still be rightfully argued that the first part of the book makes the *Tractatus* logical framework crumble, not necessarily in the sense that some pivotal Tractarian theories are criticized, rather that Wittgenstein's new investigation makes (indirectly) the metalogical nature of the *Tractatus* evident and shows how much it is inadequate. The 'meta-philosophical chapter' is thus justified as it addresses the implicit consequences the discussions drew at that point for the concept of philosophy, and it has the role *not* to ground the investigation but rather to dissolve some philosophical confusions concerning the concept of philosophy itself.

4. Metalogic: Philosophical Privilege

Once we have established that metalogic is a kind of foundationalist method of clarification of language, we can further delve into Wittgenstein's texts to find other interesting and related characterizations. Behind metalogic there is a hidden ambition, that is, to grasp or capture the essence of those concepts that we find somehow *important* – indeed, essential – for our investigation. If we look at the *Tractatus* as an example of a metalogical work, the concepts in question are language, thought, proposition, world, picture, logical space, representation, and so forth. The *Tractatus* aims at capturing the essence of these important concepts as a necessary condition for the subsequent clarification of language confusions. We might however wonder *why* we should consider those very concepts as a privileged object of investigation. Why should be they deemed crucial for philosophy? Metalogic thus assumes the character of a *tendency* to consider certain specific concepts as *privileged* objects of philosophical investigation. It is hard to see whether the quest for essences comes before and causes this tendency, or if it is rather the other way around

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[15] This stylistic argument is of course far from being conclusive in denying that philosophy in the *Investigations* is still metalogical when it comes to particular concepts, like rules or games. In the next chapter, we will see that there is indeed a tendency in the literature to construct metalogical interpretations of Wittgenstein's own words and move some substantial criticisms to it.

– we look for the essence because we are convinced of their incontrovertible importance for philosophy. What is certain is that a foundationalist and metalogical philosophy requires that we consider certain specific concepts and words as indeed *fundamental* for philosophical clarification. Accordingly, the dismissal of metalogic can be thus seen also as a *refusal* to consider some words and concepts as fundamental, unique, or privileged.

Wittgenstein addresses this important point several times. Perhaps the most perspicuous passage we can quote about is the following note from the lectures of the early '30s, where we read that it was *Frege*[16] to introduce the idea that some words, such as 'word' or 'proposition', are *unique*, an attitude that Wittgenstein attributes to his past self too:

> It was Frege's notion that certain words are unique, on a different level from others, e.g., "word", "proposition", "world". And I once thought that certain words could be distinguished according to their philosophical importance: "grammar", "logic", "mathematics". I should like to destroy this appearance of importance. How is it then that in my investigations certain words come up again and again? It is because I am concerned with language, with troubles arising from a particular use of language.

> (AWL: 13)

There are recurrent words in philosophy that *appear* to be more important and thus distinguishable from the others, such as 'grammar', 'world', 'logic' and so forth. It is important to stress however that this is only an appearance of importance, mainly generated by the fact that these words come up again and again while investigating language. Notably, we found the very same argument in the remark on meaning too (AWL: 31). The distinction between words is thus motivated only as a result of the particular linguistic dimension of philosophy as a logical investigation, certainly not because they are *per se* privileged and more prestigious items whose essence is our duty to grasp.

The difference is here, once again, subtle. That certain words come up often in philosophy and are undoubtedly useful as tools of clarification is a fact that is hard to deny. Yet Wittgenstein believes that it is important we do not get led astray by this methodological relevance and interpret it as symptom of the unique and fundamental nature of the concepts they express. If we believe that

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[16] The tendency to consider certain words as privileged goes well beyond Wittgenstein's own historical references. An example is offered by Peter Strawson. In an attempt to give a coherent account of the historical developments of analytic philosophy and evaluate the main differences between the method of the Positivists of building ideal languages and that of the ordinary language philosophers – more focused on describing the different shades of use of our ordinary words - Strawson believes that the pivotal notions unifying these approaches are the concept of *analysis* and its object, *propositions*. In this way, Strawson emphasizes the linguistic nature of these kinds of philosophy and their 'preoccupation with meaning' (Strawson 1956: 98). Wittgenstein discussion on metalogic can be thus applicable to a constitutive and ever-present tendency of approaching language. I will address this point more extensively in the conclusions of the present thesis.

those concepts are unique, we tend to make them metalogical, that is, we charge them with a foundationalist role that they are not required to assume.

4.1 The Copernican Move

To fully understand the sense of Wittgenstein's denial of conceptual privilege, let us see how Wittgenstein develops further his discussion on uniqueness in a more perspicuous way through a comparison with the history of science. In an important passage in the notes from Ambrose, Wittgenstein points out the following:

> Something may play a *predominant* role in our language and be suddenly removed by science, e. g., the word "earth" lost its importance in the new Copernican notation. Where the old notation had given the earth a *unique* position, the new notation put lots of planet on the *same level*. Any obsession arising from the *unique* position of something in our language ceases as soon as another language appears which puts that thing on a level with other things.

> (AWL: 98, my italics)[17]

By mentioning the Copernican Revolution, Wittgenstein explains what he means when he advocates for a dissolution of the supposed uniqueness or privilege certain words and concepts have in our investigation. Within a geocentric model of the functioning of the solar system, the planet Earth is indeed a privileged object. Differently from the other planets, it is *uniquely* put at the centre of the Universe. From a theoretical point of view, the word 'Earth' in the geocentric account was loaded with importance and significance that the other astronomic objects did not have. The refusal – for cultural reasons – to dismiss this supposed privilege led to complications in our explanation of the Solar system – 'obsessions', Wittgenstein calls them – such as the convoluted models of the epicycles to account for any anomalous movement of the planets - that were hard to overcome if we were not ready to dismiss the conviction that Earth had to play a unique role within the model.[18] This is what Copernicus ultimately did: Earth was dismissed of its supposed theoretical privilege and put at the

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[17] Another important reference to Copernicus is found in the *Big Typescript* (BT: 307). It is consistent with the one above and probably even clearer, yet it does not put much emphasis on the role of uniqueness and privilege in the rise of philosophical problems, that is our aim to elucidate here.

[18] Suggestively, Wittgenstein's account of Copernicus looks similar to Kuhn's notion of paradigm shift. Historically, however, his philosophy of science derived from Hertz's principle of mechanics, the same work that shaped Wittgenstein's picture theory in the *Tractatus* (see Kjaergaard 2009 for an exhaustive account). In a nutshell, Hertz thought modern physics in terms of a representation, or a model, a self-contained account of the principles governing the movement of physical objects. Such a model is not the only one available: as a representation, it depicts a possibility of arranging physical facts among many, a possibility that is to be privileged the more it is consistent with nature. If facts cannot be accommodated anymore, we need to change picture.

same level of the other planets. Once Copernicus got free from this theoretical privilege, all those obsessions that were logically dependent on it simply vanished.[19]

Now, we can stretch Wittgenstein's example further and observe that the Copernican model of explanation, even though it put all the planets at the same level, yet it started treating another object as privileged and unique: the Sun. A conception where the Sun was put at its core was simply *more effective* in dissolving those obsessions rooted in a different model where different terms played a privileged role. This observation is crucial, insofar as it finally reveals the gist of Wittgenstein's dismissal of privileged words in philosophy. His point is not that we should always refuse to consider certain words as more important than others. We can do so, but only under an important condition: that is, only if this privilege becomes determinant in the dissolution of specific problems, as much as the unique nature of the Sun became crucial for Copernicus to dissolve the apparently unsolvable puzzles of the Ptolemaic system.

In other words, Wittgenstein only refuses to consider words and concepts as privileged, *if* this privilege is attributed *independently from the role* they prove to have in solving specific misunderstandings. As such, if we unbound the importance and privilege certain concepts manifest as tools of clarification from the effectiveness they manifest in tackling and dismissing specific misunderstandings, the risk is to project such a concept – so to speak - into 'a higher plan', as if their nature were substantially different from the others and required that we preliminarily grasp it to lay down the foundation of any possible activity of clarification. Once this projection is done, the privilege is no longer negotiable: we believe that the concepts in question are *always* needed to tackle any possible misunderstanding whose roots lie in language. The door for metalogic, metaphilosophy and its foundationalist efforts are thus lied open.

As metalogic contemplates levels between words, as it treats some concepts as unique and more important than others and attributes to them a grounding role for a philosophical investigation of language, we can also talk here of *fixed hierarchies*[20] among concepts. A non-metalogical method, on the contrary, does not reject every possible hierarchy among those concepts we may employ in clarification. Only, it avoids treating a certain hierarchical ordering of our concepts as something *fixed*, sempiternal and always valid no matter what kind of misunderstanding we are urged to solve. If a certain model for describing language generates more problems than it solves – if it no longer

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[19] The importance of the analogy with the Copernican model in elucidating Wittgenstein's method was already pointed out by Oskari Kuusela. He argues that the same approach to the dissolution of philosophical problems was already active in the *Tractatus*, whose targets were some difficulties in Russell's and Frege's logicism (see Kuusela 2019b). I here push the analogy a little further, as I believe that Wittgenstein's philosophical target is not conceptual privilege *per se*, but only those metalogical accounts that are not able or willing to swich a hierarchy between concepts with another, *if* needed. The analogy with the Copernican revolution can be in fact exploited, as we shall see, to highlight this point.

[20] I am here relying on Oskari Kuusela terminology to talk about the same issue (see Kuusela 2008: Chapter 6).

works to solve particular specific confusions – then we should stop giving importance to those very principles that made the problems arise in the first place. Another order – another hierarchy – might be legitimate insofar as it reveals itself to be *effective* in solving new specific issues.

4.2 Metalogic and the Every-Day

Once we have clarified in which sense metalogic is connected with foundations, fixed logical hierarchies, and the conviction that certain concepts are more relevant than others, in this section I shall illustrate how the rejection of metalogic and the consequent adherence to a non-metalogical method may offer us an interpretative key to correctly understand Wittgenstein's controversial appeal to *every-day* language in the *Investigations*.

The remark in the *Investigations* where Wittgenstein mentions the every-day within the context of a general discussion of his own method is PI 116:

> When philosophers use a word – 'knowledge', 'being', 'object', 'I', 'proposition', 'name' – and try to grasp the *essence* of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language in which it is at home? –
> What *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use.
>
> (PI 116)

Wittgenstein characterizes his own philosophy as an activity that drives back words from a *metaphysical* to an *every-day* use. He does so after he sketches what traditional philosophers are used to do: they focus on certain words and try to grasp their essence, their core meaning, and by so doing, they tend to use words – Wittgenstein says - *metaphysically*. We are already familiar with this characterization of traditional philosophy, as it sounds as a restatement of how metalogic tends to operate. This pushes Wittgenstein's notion of metaphysics close to that of metalogic. This is no surprise, as in the *Big Typescript,* he already claimed that 'just as there is no metaphysics there is no metalogic' (BT: 3), implying that the two terms are paired somehow. Arguably, the *trait d'union* between metalogic and metaphysics is the fact that they are both driven by the ambition to grasp the essence of their object of investigation: in the case of metalogic, this is revealed by the logical structure of the investigation of language, as it is supposed to rely on particular concepts whose essence is urged to be spelled in advance before any clarification can start, whereas metaphysics is historically bound to the notion of essence. Wittgenstein himself is reported to have defined metaphysics in rather classical terms as 'the science of pseudo-beings, ethereal essences' (VoW: 485). In order to clarify the relationship between metaphysics and metalogic, we could say that metalogic

is, all in all, the shape metaphysics acquires once the quest for the essence is put at the core of an investigation of language.

To the eyes of the scholars, the difficulty of this paragraph lies in the fact that the terms 'every-day' and metaphysical' are left undetermined. It is as if Wittgenstein draws a distinction where its contrastive terms are not adequately explained. In his influential interpretation of PI 116, Gordon Baker argues that it is metaphysics, not the everyday, that 'wears the trousers'[21] here (Baker 2004: 100), that is, it is metaphysics that had a determinate meaning in Wittgenstein's mind and played a dominant role within the conceptual distinction.[22] As a consequence, the everyday can be determined only *negatively*. If so, Wittgenstein did not have any positive conception of what an everyday use consists of. The every-day is simply determinable as the *non-metaphysical*, where metaphysics according to Baker, ultimately acquires a rather traditional meaning as 'the science of the *essences* or natures of things, a system of *necessary* truths' (Baker 2004: 97).[23]

Baker believes that it is important to mark this aspect to dismiss any temptation of interpreting PI 116 as advancing a thesis about the nature of the everyday as 'whatever conforms to the standard of speech-practice'. Accordingly, every time interpreters see Wittgenstein as formulating claims about the essence of things – such as 'meaning is use in language' or 'rule following must be a social practice' – they are misinterpreting Wittgenstein and his conception of conceptual clarification and rather doing metaphysics, as they look for the essence of the concepts they employ in the investigation of language (Baker 2004: 103).[24] As such, Baker's interpretation of metaphysics acquires an important *methodological* flavour: metaphysics, according to Baker, in an important sense lies in

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[21] As Joachim Schulte points out – this (unpleasantly sexist) metaphor is taken from Austin's discussion on the contrastive pair of terms *real-unreal*. According to Austin, it is the unreal 'to wear the trousers', that is, the notion of the real acquires a specific sense only *in the light* of what it means for a thing to be unreal (see Schulte 2007: 164n). Analogously, for Baker it is the 'metaphysical use' that has a determinate sense in Wittgenstein's remark.

[22] One reason that led Baker to this conclusion is that the original remark from which PI 116 is derived manifests a certain dissatisfaction for the correct word Wittgenstein thought to oppose to metaphysics. In fact, he originally wrote 'normal', only for barring it out and replacing it with 'correct' (BT: 304). Normality, correctness, every-day: all terms that refer to whatever is not-metaphysical. Joachim Schulte has objected that this feature is by no means conclusive to assume that the word 'metaphysics' wears the trousers, as it only proves that Wittgenstein were looking for a better way to express his view (Schulte 2007: 152). Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that Wittgenstein was at least *troubled* by the correct way to express whatever opposes metaphysics in his view, and this can be easily interpreted in Baker's favour.

[23] More specifically, Baker enlists four main features of metaphysical use: use of expression of necessity and possibility; use of words without antitheses; conflation between the scientific form of explanation and conceptual investigation; and finally, our talk about the essence of things (Baker 2004: 103). Schulte accepts this qualification and adds further features, such as the inconceivability of the opposites, non-temporality and strikingly, the striving for metalogical discourse (Schulte 2007: 160). In what follows, I will in a way develop fully this connection between metaphysics and metalogic that Schulte notices without expanding it further.

[24] Notably, here Baker is criticizing his past interpretation, elaborated together with Peter Hacker. In the second chapter, we will see that what we will call the normative conception of meaning (NCM) moves from a certain positive understanding of the concept of the every-day.

how you use words and principles, not in *what* you say, a feature that we have already encountered in our characterization of metalogical method.

However, a problem affects Baker's own account, as he does not manage to remain faithful to his claim that the every-day has no positive determination. As Hilary Putnam sharply pointed out in his reply to Baker, those interpreters that look for essences in language do not know that they are doing metaphysics: rather, they believe they - and Wittgenstein - truly describe the grammar of language and engage in conceptual investigation when saying that meaning is use and rule following is a social practice. To make them aware that they are not doing conceptual investigation, we should, according to Baker, thus point to the every-day use and remind them how words are ordinarily employed, but here lies the problem: as the every-day use has no independent meaning apart from being non-metaphysical, we could not be allowed to such a move. This is how Putnam frames the issue in his reply to Baker:

> To convict the "Wittgensteinian" philosophers he criticizes for not using words in their "everyday use," he would, then, have to argue that the "use theory of meaning" they attribute to Wittgenstein is metaphysical *where "metaphysical" bears a traditional meaning*. What is likely, I think, is that when Baker wrote "reminding them of their own everyday (non-philosophical) uses of words" he simply *ignored* the claim that *metaphysical* (in a "traditional" sense) "wears the trousers."

> (Putnam 2007: 172)

The every-day, that is the non-metaphysical, is hence still thought by Baker in positive terms as something distinguished from the metaphysical that we can still point at independently. If we however appeal to metalogic[25] and its rejection to interpret the meaning of PI 116, as hinted above, we can still preserve a negative understanding of the everyday. Metalogic too is rooted into an attempt to grasp the essence of those privileged concepts philosophers are so obsessed with. In this context, to bring back words from the metalogical-metaphysical use to the every-day would simply mean to *renounce* to foundationalism in philosophical investigations, and thus to employ principles and concepts as legitimate tools of clarification without assuming that they have the duty to capture the essence of language in order for our clarification to be legitimate. The distinction between metaphysics and every-day is not then a distinction between types of content – *per se* metaphysical concepts versus ordinary words - rather, the distinction is *methodological*: it involves more the way we use words and concepts in the broader context of clarification. If so, every concept might be

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[25] As noticed by Schulte himself in his reply to Baker, Wittgenstein sometimes employs the term 'metaphysics' in connection to metalogic, as in MS 148: 32. Here, I am substantially developing this suggestion.

metaphysical as well as every-day, insofar as it *could* be virtually employed as a grounding and fixed bedrock of philosophical investigation. If they are not, their use would be simply 'every-day'.

As a further evidence to prove of my point about the everyday, it might be useful to mention another important remark,[26] whose structure mirrors PI 116 and together reformulates in the *Investigations* the previous discussion on privileged concepts, levels, and hierarchies:

> We are under the illusion that what is peculiar, profound and essential to us in our investigation resides in its trying to grasp the incomparable essence of language. That is, the order existing between the concepts of proposition, word, inference, truth, experience, and so forth. This order is a *super*-order between – so to speak – *super*-concepts. Whereas, in fact, if the words 'language', 'experience', 'world' have a use, it must be as humble a one as that of the words 'table', 'lamp', 'door'.

> (PI 97)

Wittgenstein targets the distorted idea according to which the essential aim of conceptual investigation is to grasp the 'incomparable essence of language'. What is more, Wittgenstein here talks about 'super – order' and 'super – concepts', described as the aim of a philosophy obsessed by the essence of language. Crucially, we have seen that this form of expression is used already in the remark on metaphilosophy, where the rules for the use of the concept of rule are said *not* to be super-rules we are required to spell out in advance if we want to employ the concept of rule to tackle specific confusions. In both cases, Wittgenstein is telling us that we do not need – we are not required – to treat some concepts as more important and privileged.

Notably, what in PI 116 is an appeal to the everyday here is an invitation to *humbleness.*[27] According to the metalogical reading I propose here, the word 'table', 'lamp' and 'door' have an

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[26] Out of the *Investigations,* this metalogical reading is further proved by the original mentions of 'the metaphysical use' in Wittgenstein's notebooks. In 1937, he defines the metaphysical use as the expression of a confusion: 'we predicate of the thing what lies in our mode of presenting it. Impressed by the possibility of a comparison, we think we are perceiving a state of affairs of the highest generality' (TS 220: 110). Let us think of the example we have illustrated above concerning pictures and propositions from the Moore's notes: we can compare these concepts to highlight certain aspects of their use, we certainly cannot take the definition of proposition in terms of picture as if it were grasping the essence – 'a state of affair of the highest generality' – of the concept. Incidentally, this remark is also important insofar as it textually connects metalogic to Wittgenstein's discussion of *dogmatism.* While describing the employment of language games for clarification (PI 130), dogmatism is defined as the tendency to misconceive of a mere object of comparison as 'a *preconception* to which reality *must* correspond' (PI 131). From a comparison to the statement of a universal principle, a preconception of the essence of language: this shift is the *kernel* of metalogic and dogmatism in philosophy.

[27] In the early '30s, Wittgenstein employs other terms too instead of 'humble' and 'every-day', such as 'plain' or 'homespun' (*hausbacken,* literally 'home-baked). He mainly uses this term to highlight the flaws of the *Tractatus* model of language, that was not taken to be a term of comparison but rather the inner essential structure of language as such (see MS 109, 212, 213). The appeal to humbleness and the every-day as an appeal

humble use not because they cannot be used metaphysically, rather because no philosopher ever dreams of *grounding* his own philosophical system over such concepts, and this reveals, once again, that humbleness is not an intrinsic property of words and concepts, as much as being metaphysical is not a property of certain words either: in both cases, all comes down to how we employ words in clarification, whether we metalogically and metaphysically assume that our definitions grasp the essence of the objects of description or we employ definitions as tools for comparing and highlighting certain aspects of words use.

5. From the *Tractatus* to the *Investigations*

Since the beginning of our discussion, the *Tractatus* has been mentioned and referred to as an implicit target of Wittgenstein's rejection of metalogic. We have already pointed out how the book was the final result of a quest for the essence of the proposition and seen how the *Tractatus* truth-functional system is still valid within a non-metalogical framework as a tool of clarification, *if* we do not take it to grasp once and for all the essence of language. In a way, the very rejection of metalogic as Wittgenstein elaborates it often presupposes an implicit polemical reference to its old work. We can thus conclude that the *Tractatus* was the embodiment for Wittgenstein of a thoroughly metalogical piece of philosophy.

Let us show why the *Tractatus* can be deemed as metalogical. We have defined metalogic as a method of clarification of language that strives for a foundation. Concretely, this means that metalogic elaborates *in advance* a set of principles that are believed to capture the essence of language as a necessary basis for any possible clarification. This is the *two step structure* we have mentioned above: *first* foundation, *then* actual clarifications. Certain concepts are then deemed to be essential - more important and privileged – for clarification: they are thus considered at first and their definitions – their essence - spelled out.

Now, it is easy to notice that the *Tractatus* mainly consists in an effort to spell out rigorous definitions of certain privileged concepts. In this sense, the *Tractatus* lays the foundations for any clarification to come. The concept of *world* – not coincidentally, one of those concepts Wittgenstein swiftly mentions as being non-metalogical in the lectures of the '30s (MWL: 316-318) – is defined in the opening of the work as 'everything that is the case' (TLP 1) and then further analysed to lay down a general ontological account – the distinction between objects, facts, states of affairs, reality and logical space - that aims to furnish the scaffoldings of the *Tractatus* general picture of language. Pictures are introduced as 'models of reality' (TLP 2.12) and are said to be facts themselves (2.141),

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to avoid foundations and metalogic thus perfectly fits these early remarks too. For a more detail analysis about the same issues, see Kuusela 2011.

whereas thought is 'the logical picture of facts' (TLP 3). We can see how the *Tractatus* – with its system of consistent definitions – ends up describing, with Wittgenstein's words, 'a super-order between super-concepts' (PI 97). Crucially, this super-order has in the concept of *proposition* – its general form - its hierarchical kingpin,[28] a sort of centre around which the whole logical structure of the book spins, the core of the *Tractatus* metalogical structure.

Rather tellingly, according to the *Tractatus,* the form of the proposition can be said 'on *one occasion beforehand*' (TLP 5.47). That is, independently from the areas of language or the specific propositions we need to clarify to clear away philosophical misunderstandings, we can already assume that the propositions must have a form that we can spell out in advance – as Wittgenstein actually does, in TLP 4.5 – *before* any actual clarification of concrete cases takes place. This because the general form of proposition is a logical constant that *every* proposition has *in common*, that is, it can be spelled out in advance because it (supposedly) captures the *essence* of the proposition (TLP 5.47). Notably, to grasp the essence of the proposition – its logical form – is said to be the key to understand the essence of every description and thus of the object of every description, the world as the totality of facts (TLP 1.1) all descriptions are pictures of (TP 5.722). The super-order of concept of the *Tractatus* has thus the form of the proposition on its top: through the proposition we can disclose the essence of the world.

To conclude, the *Tractatus* is by and large a perfect exemplification of metalogic, both in its foundationalist ambition and in the fixed hierarchy it constructs between concepts. If so, the discussion of metalogic can be qualified as an attempt, by Wittgenstein, to overcome the *Tractatus* logical method in favour of a new one that dismisses any conceptual foundation and fixed hierarchies between concepts. According to the reading I propose here, the main line of discontinuity between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* is thus the abandonment of metalogic. However, as long as metalogic is a kind of clarificatory philosophy whose aim remains the clarification of language – an undoubtable line of continuity throughout Wittgenstein's philosophy - the main difference between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* can be reformulated as a difference between their respective conceptions of *clarification.*[29] Differently from the *Investigations*, the

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[28] As the concept of proposition had a pivotal importance in the *Tractatus*, it is no wonder that in the lectures of the early '30s Wittgenstein repeatedly addresses the concept to show how it is misleading to take it as a privileged notion. Sometimes, he describes propositions as a 'family of cases' concept, explainable through examples rather than definitions (AWL: 67-68). While targeting the philosophy of Frege and Russell - guilty of putting too much emphasis on the concept of proposition as much as the *Tractatus* – Wittgenstein notices that 'we mean all sort of things by 'proposition', and it is wrong to start with a definition of a proposition and build up logic from that' (AWL: 13). As we have seen above (section 3.1), this is the gist of PI 65 as we have interpreted it. To build up a logical system or a calculus from a single definition that is meant to capture the essence of a concept is exactly what Wittgenstein did in the *Tractatus* and what metalogic is said to do.

[29] Incidentally, the perspective on metalogic can significantly contribute to the thorny debate about how *many* Wittgenstein there are, whether his philosophy is one, with no significant discontinuity between the *Tractatus*

Tractatus firmly believed that 'the problems have *in essentials* been finally solved' (TLP: p.29), as it provided us with an account of language and proposition that was assumed to be *always* valid to tackle and solve *any* philosophical confusion we might encounter while doing philosophy. Every clarification was thought to be possible on the basis of the *Tractatus* account alone. The *Investigations*, on the contrary, does not endorse such an illusion.

In this sense, this discussion on metalogic is perfectly consistent with Cora Diamond's interpretation of the main difference between the two phases of Wittgenstein's work. According to Diamond, in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein's conception of clarification and method was distorted by the idea of fundamental problems that need to be solved first and before engaging in clarification – what Diamond calls the *Big Questions*:

> If, in the *Tractatus*, 'a picture held us captive', that captivity can be seen in the way the clarification of propositions proceeds in accordance with a model taken to have totally general applicability. The *Tractatus* treatment of the Big Question of the nature of language leaves behind (once the Question is supposedly shown to be not a question at all) a philosophical method that pays no attention to differences, to the complex reality of our propositions and our modes of inferring, or to the reality of our particular philosophical difficulties. [...] The Big Question does not disappear; the *Tractatus* had only seemed to provide a route to genuine clarity.
>
> (Diamond 2005: 208-209)

The idea that clarification in the *Tractatus* proceeds in accordance with a model taken to have general applicability is precisely the idea behind my claim that the *Tractatus* is a metalogical work. By so doing, the *Tractatus* – according to Diamond – is not able to account for the complexity of our language as it reduces it to a fixed structure and is ineffective to clarify actual cases of language use. The universal and metalogical applicability of the *Tractatus* logical framework is thus to be seen as

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and the *Investigations*, or whether his later philosophy is radically different from the early (for a full overview of the debate, see Stern 2006). It was even argued that there is a post-*Investigations* third Wittgenstein (see Moyal-Sharrock 2004), just to prove how many options are on the table. Implicitly, this thesis can be said to advance a kind of *mild-monowittgensteinianism*, to use a felicitous expression from James Conant. According to Conant, 'a full acknowledgment of the moment of continuity (between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*) requires a reasonably heterodox degree of mono-Wittgensteinianism, and that an equally full acknowledgement of the complementary moment of discontinuity requires that the degree of this heterodoxy remain reasonably mild' (Conant 2997: 32), and this is precisely what the rejection of metalogic provides: the continuity is granted by the goal of philosophy as an activity of clarification, whereas the discontinuity is provided by the refusal of the metalogical dimension of the *Tractatus*, whose logical calculus is not completely dismissed but only relocated as an order - among many - for clarification. The discontinuity is thus mild insofar as it does not break up with the *Tractatus* conception of philosophy, that remains consistent throughout Wittgenstein's career. Same kind of conclusion – with a particular accent on method – is advanced also in Kuusela 2011.

the ultimate vest the metaphysical quest of essence – the Big Question of metaphysics – takes *within* a conception of philosophy whose aim is to clarify the logic of language.

6. The Reasons Why We Should Reject Metalogic

At this point of our discussion, we have shown that Wittgenstein rejection of metalogic was a conceptual move to abandon the *Tractatus* framework, in order to achieve a philosophical method that refuses to rely on any foundation and complementary quest for the essence of language to clarify our concepts and solve our philosophical confusions. However, it may still be objected that we have not shown yet any plausible *philosophical* reason to accept such a rejection. To read the *Investigations* non-metalogically – as we shall do in what follows in this thesis – can be easily justified as an attempt to remain exegetically faithful to Wittgenstein's thought, yet this 'philological' reason – so to speak – is not enough to convince us that it is somehow *better* to be rigorously non-metalogical in our investigation of language. We have seen already that according to Wittgenstein metalogic is disposable, as we can go on in clarification without laying any foundation whatsoever (PG: 115). It seems then that metalogic is in a way *superfluous* if we want to clarify language. There are, however, more convincing reasons that motivated Wittgenstein in his very departure from the *Tractatus*, reasons that make metalogic not only superfluous but *detrimental* for clarification. These reasons are the following:

1. As already hinted at by Diamond in the quotation above, metalogic is not able to account for the *complexity* of language. As such, there might be philosophical problems that cannot be solved by the metalogical account we have adopted, as they may be rooted in areas of language that are not easily described on the basis of the metalogical principles we have applied. As a consequence, metalogic *itself* may turn out to be a source of philosophical puzzlement, as much as the Ptolemaic system for astronomy.

2. Metalogic makes every actual clarification of language *vulnerable*, insofar as each clarification can be put into question together with those metalogical principles they are dependent on. If the foundations crumble – because we are convinced that they do not *really* fully grasp the essence of language – so does any actual clarification so achieved, and philosophers are urged to start from scratch in their investigation of language.

6.1 Complexity

Let us focus on point 1. An easy way to understand the limits of metalogic is to focus on the *Tractatus*. We have seen that the *Tractatus* outlines an account of language as a truth-functional system of propositions, that are 'descriptions of facts' (TLP 4.03). Accordingly, as science – whose

aim is to describe the world - is defined as 'the totality of true propositions' (TLP 4.11), the *Tractatus* comes to conclude that 'the only strictly correct method' of philosophy is 'to say nothing except what can be said, the proposition of natural science' (TLP 6.53). As such, the *Tractatus* picture of language is reductively and substantially representational, as it conceives of every proposition mainly as a description. The *Investigations* opposes this picture of language to 'the *countless* kinds' of sentences we can find in language and its ' varieties of language games' – such as asserting, asking, cursing, telling jokes, describing, speculating, and so forth (PI 23). The *Tractatus*, thus, simply fails to account for this variety of language games, in the specific sense that its picture of language has a *limited* application: it does not cover what we call 'language' in its entirety.

More importantly, the *Investigations* adumbrates and rejects a possible move a supporter of the *Tractatus* picture of language might do to preserve its metalogical assumption. We can in fact always try to reformulate or *transform* a different kind of sentence that is not a description – such as a *question* – into a different one that present the *form* of a description, as 'I am in doubt whether...' In this way, the appearance of a descriptive statement is preserved and the *Tractatus* framework – it might be argued - remains untouched. However, Wittgenstein points out how this kind of move 'does not bring the different language games any closer together' (PI 24). That is, the kind of *actions we* do when we describe something or when we ask a question significantly diverges and will keep diverging even after we reformulate the question in assertive terms. The difference is not dissolved, only masqueraded. We have here in a nutshell the problems every metalogic has to face, sooner or later: it fails to represent the complexity of language and ends up generating new philosophical obsessions – in this case, how to reduce every kind of sentence to assertions and descriptions. An *acceptance* of the variety of language-games, on the contrary, would stop at the beginning these further problems.

A powerful example of the limit of metalogic is represented by the problems Wittgenstein encountered in the *application* of the *Tractatus* principles of clarification – problems that arguably constituted one of the causes that pushed Wittgenstein back to philosophy in 1929. These problems regard the logical status of *statements of degree*, that Wittgenstein addressed in his first and only academic paper, *Some Remarks on Logical Form*. Statements of degree are statements that 'expresses a degree of a quality', namely, 'properties such as the length of an interval, the pitch of a tone, the brightness or redness of a shade of a colour, etc.' (RLF 167). These statements have the characteristics to be mutually *exclusive*, that is, the truth of a certain assertion excludes the truth of many others. For example, the assertion that in a certain point of my visual field at the time *t* there is the colour 'red' automatically excludes every other assertion attributing a different colour to the same point at

the same time. Now, Wittgenstein realized that the logical property of exclusion is unexplainable in *Tractarian* terms. Let us see how.

According to the *Tractatus* truth functional-account, a proposition is either a 'truth function of elementary propositions' (TLP 5), or an elementary proposition itself, the 'truth arguments of propositions' (TLP 5. 01). Furthermore, elementary propositions are said to be logically *independent* – we cannot infer any other proposition from an elementary one (TLP 5.134) – and cannot *contradict* each other (TLP 4.211). According to Wittgenstein, a statement of degree cannot be a truth function, as it cannot be analysed further.[30] It cannot then be but an elementary proposition, but here problems arise. In fact, from the truth of a statement of degree we can actually *infer* the falsity of any other mutually exclusive statement: as such, exclusivity is incompatible with logical independence, as Wittgenstein is forced to admit (RLF: 168). Furthermore, the conjunction between two mutually exclusive propositions should be *necessarily* false – there is no way we can admit the truth of *both* together - without being contradictory, and this distinction, Wittgenstein argues, cannot be represented through truth tables. It signals, then, 'a deficiency of notation' (RLF: 170-171). These considerations led Wittgenstein to the following conclusion: first, there is an '*internal* relation' – that is, independent from experience – of mutual exclusion between propositions that directly contradicts the *Tractatus* account of elementary propositions[31] (RLF: 168). Second, the *Tractarian* truth-functional account cannot explain some actual relations and inferences between propositions, such as exclusion.[32] In conclusion, the very application of the *Tractarian* metalogical framework to an actual case of language – statements of degree – showed to Wittgenstein himself that there were areas of language left uncovered by the *Tractatus* account. Contrary to his expectations, it was impossible for Wittgenstein to achieve an actual description of certain cases of propositions, *on the basis* of his metalogical framework alone. There were *exceptions* to his apparently essential and universal account of language.

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[30] A proposition can always be either analysed into its truth arguments, or it is an elementary proposition. A statement of degree should then be analysed into a 'logical product' – conjunction – of single statements of quantity and a supplement that is meant to prove that there are no further elements involved besides the conjuncts ('nothing else' is that kind of expression, RLF: 167). Now, this conjunction is not formulable, Wittgenstein argues: if we take the example of a statement of quantity E(2b) – where it is said that a point E has 2 units of brightness – either the conjunction is E(b) & E(b) – not a conjunction then, as it is the same as E(b) – or E(b1) & E(b2) – in this case, two different units of brightness are assumed, and this is nonsense (RLF: 167-168). The statements of quality and degree must thus be elementary.
[31] This awareness led then Wittgenstein to elaborate the idea that sometimes propositions face reality *together* as a *system* rather than individually, an issue that comes back in the conversations with the Vienna Circle. While discussing the logic of colour, for instance, Wittgenstein says: 'If I say that a certain point in the visual field is *blue*, I as well know that it is not green, red, yellow, etc. I have applied at once the whole scale of colours. This is also why a point cannot have different colours at the same time' (WWK: 51)
[32] Always in the conversations with Waismann, Wittgenstein points out that – at the time of the *Tractatus* – he did not have envisaged that 'an inference can also have this form: a man is two metres high, then he is not three metres high' (WWK: 51)

If we step out of Wittgenstein's own struggle against the *Tractatus*, a different concrete example of the kinds of trouble metalogic runs into is offered by Wittgenstein's discussion of the *context principle*. While discussing the logical role of the expression 'understanding begins with the sentence', nothing more than a reformulation of the context principle - according to which words have a meaning and can be really understood only in the context of a proposition, an idea shared by Frege and the early Wittgenstein alike[33] - Wittgenstein states that this expression defines the concept '*only in a particular area*' of language, and this is explained by reference to the fact that there is no metalogic (MS 114: 32r). So, far from being a metalogical principle that is supposed to cover language in its entirety, the context principle is better understood as a model capturing only certain *limited* cases of language games. As much as we can employ the *Tractatus* definition of propositions in terms of pictures to highlight certain aspects of their concept, so we can when it comes to employ the context principle to clarify certain features of the relation among understanding, words, and sentences, that however are not supposed to be applicable to every case of language we may encounter in our investigation.

Notably, the difference between a metalogical and a non-metalogical employment of the context principle lies in the respective ways we treat and interpret its *exceptions*, that is, those cases of language use that are not easily captured by its application. Exceptions to the context principle in this sense can be easily found. As Kathrine Morris pointed out (Morris 1994), there are perfectly meaningful *single* words we can use and fully understand without any propositional context to be found - as in the case of words used like *labels* - or cases where the distinction between words and sentences somehow blurs – as when we cry 'help!' to get assistance: in this case, it is hard to say whether 'help!' here means what it means as a word or as a certain kind of short sentence. Now, if we deny the metalogical nature of the context principle we can simply *accept* that there are cases of language that are simply not covered by it and move on in our investigation of language. On the contrary, if we really tend to think that the context principle is an *essential* feature of language – and thus that every case of meaningful use of words *must*[34] presuppose a propositional context of sort – exceptions inevitably become a source of philosophical puzzlement: we have to find a way to make exceptions fit within the scope of the context principle, in a way or the other. Concretely, the following solutions are offered to the metalogician: either he *downgrades* exceptions as lesser cases

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[33] Frege introduces the context principle in his *Foundations of Arithmetic* (Frege 1980: x), whereas the *Tractatus* reformulates it according to its conception of names and elementary propositions being 'connections of names' (TLP 4.22): 'Only proposition has sense; only in the context of a proposition has a name meaning' (TLP 3.3).

[34] The 'must' here is not accidental. It is important, insofar as it incidentally connects the discussion on metalogic with that of *dogmatism* in philosophy. In the *Nachlass*, in fact, Wittgenstein points out that the sentence 'it *must* be this way' is not a sentence of philosophy and labels the tendency to employ it with the term 'dogmatism' (MS 130: 53). Once we believe that a certain principle is metalogical, we believe that the essence it supposedly spells out *must* be present in every instance of the concept in question.

of language, or he tries to elaborate some solutions to apply the principle, nonetheless. In the former case, we simply renounce to clarify language as it is, whereas in the latter case we would behave as a geocentric scientist in need to find a solution to fit his preconception on how the Universe works: rather than stop considering the context principle as a metalogical and privilege rule governing the totality of our language, we would try and find a way to make it tenable. We could for instance interpret the sentence 'help!' as a shortened version of the complex sentence 'I need help! – a proposition that is somehow to be thought together with – as a mental accompaniment of - our utterance. By doing so, we may succeed in saving the context principle,[35] however we lose sight of the actual distinction between different cases of language use and inevitably distort the term of our discussion, as we project in the realm of the mind a distinction between words and sentences that was primarily grammatical (in the ordinary sense of the word). Metalogic ultimately leads to metaphysics - its complementary twin - at the expense of the very task our philosophical investigation of language was supposed to aim at in the first place, that is, to solve specific problems.

6.2 Vulnerability

To reject metalogic has thus the indubitable advantage to stop any further theorizing once we bump into actual exceptions to our clarificatory principles. The context principle might be good enough to capture the logic of certain articulated language – where the distinction between sentences and words is neat and easily drawable – less so if we want to describe our understanding of signals and labels. What is more, we are fine with that: the exceptions we may encounter, in this sense, do not *object* anything to the kind of clarification we have anyway achieved through the context principle. This radically different attitude towards exceptions links the present discussion to the second reason outlined above concerning the weakness of any metalogical attitude: its inherent *vulnerability*. In fact, metalogic, as aforementioned, is defined by its two step structure according to which we need to spell out first our metalogical principles and then move on to clarify language. This ultimately means that any actual clarification is logically *dependent* from the acceptance of a set of principles whose validity is supposed to be universal, that is, able to capture the essential features of anything we call 'language'. Metalogic lays in this sense the *foundations* of any clarification: if the foundations are put into question, every actual clarification depending on them will consequently altogether crumble. As such, if we become dissatisfied with our grounding principles – maybe precisely because we find exceptions, that is, recalcitrant cases of language use that we cannot satisfyingly describe through our set of principles – metalogic compels us to question *everything* achieved so far and start

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[35] And not necessarily: as Wittgenstein sharply points out in the *Investigations*, we can as well claim the opposite and say that the complex sentence is the *longer* version of the short one, in this way turning the context principle upside down (PI 24). We are thus led to see how *gratuitous* is to opt for a solution or the other.

from scratch, in the attempt to find a better set of ultimate principles on the basis of which any actual clarification is made possible. Any result is thus always vulnerable to be put into question every time we feel uncertain about our foundations.

On the contrary, a non-metalogical method does not rely on any unitary foundation and consists more in a plurality of alternative set of principles to tackle different – often unrelated – set of problems. Whatever obstacle we might encounter in our investigation, this by no means puts into question our previous results and our activity of clarification overall.[36] This gives us the key to interpret the following striking paragraph from the *Investigations*, whose analysis helps wrapping up all our discussion so far:

> The real discovery is the one that enables me to break off philosophizing when I want to. – The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which *bring* itself in question. – Instead, a method is now demonstrated by examples, and the series of examples can be broken off. – problems are solved, not a *single* problem.[37]

> (PI 133)

Wittgenstein has discovered a method that allows philosophy to be no longer obsessed by 'questions which bring itself into question'. That is, once we abandon metalogical thinking and its foundationalist demands, we can stop questioning the foundations of our discourse every time our principles feel inadequate to actually solve certain confusions. This leaves us with a variety of different instances of philosophical clarifications that however do not require a univocal common

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[36] In the literature, this peculiar feature of Wittgenstein's method is exhaustively addressed by Oskari Kuusela, which talks in this sense of a 'non-hierarchical organization' of Wittgenstein's philosophy', and claims that 'the arrangement of thoughts that enables the interruption of philosophical work without the danger of it being subsequently thrown into question is an arrangement where nothing figures as the theoretical presupposition on which other parts of philosophy rest' (Kuusela 2008: 221). In the context of Kuusela's discussion, the term 'theoretical presuppositions' refers to philosophical *theories* and *theses*, that is, assertions about the *essence* of things (Kuusela 2008: 97). Despite this terminological divergency, my reading is thus substantially consistent (and indebted) to his, as we both deal with a certain tendency to conduct logical clarification in connection to the notion of essence. I however deem the focus on metalogic more effective in backing up the same conclusions, for a basic reason: what a philosophical thesis is can be always debated and is not plain that to formulate a thesis is always to assert something about essences. On the contrary, metalogic has a rather specific meaning, as we have shown, that is harder to challenge, and such a meaning is *bound* to the quest for essences. The focus on metalogic has thus the advantage to avoid further complications concerning the debatable nature of theses in philosophy.

[37] As Kuusela points out (Kuusela 2008: 221), the same insight is found in the following remark in the *Nachlass*: 'thoughts are to be arranged in such a way that the investigation can be interrupted at any point without the sequel being able to put into question what was said up to that point. Here we come again to the thought that spelling the word 'spelling' is not higher order spelling'. (MS 163: 40v - 40r). This reference to spelling also connects it to PI 121, thus indicating that PI 121 and PI 133 are after the same point and are to be read together. In the context of this thesis, they both are to be read as expressions of Wittgenstein's core idea that we have to avoid metalogic in the clarification of language: the second-order philosophy mentioned here is a reference to metaphilosophy.

ground to be accepted: the examples can be 'broken off', with no need to reconduct them to a general overarching metalogical principle leading any possible clarification, as the *Tractatus* still believed. The *single* problem Wittgenstein refers to here – the Diamondian Big Question – might be the essence of the proposition, as well as any other essence of certain privileged concepts our philosophical tradition is ridden with that we from time to time believe to be essential for philosophy. Once foundationalism and essences are set aside, what remains is just a plurality of different problems whose solutions do not require a universal account of what language ultimately and essentially is, in every case we employ language in our life.

7. Consequences for Meaning

Now, we can finally go back to the quotation that inaugurates this chapter (AWL: 31). Meaning is said not to be the subject matter of philosophy because it is not more important than humble concepts; it is not a central question for philosophy, as 'proposition' was for the *Tractatus*. There is no metalogic, even in the case of meaning. It is a concept that comes out more often because we deal with language and the misunderstandings of its logic, not because it is the privileged object of philosophy. Accordingly, we do not require to grasp the 'imponderable essence' of the concept of meaning and put it as a foundation of our investigation, its rules are not 'super-rules' governing every aspect of our clarificatory activity.

If we read this remark with our lengthy discussion on metalogic in the background, we can draw some consequences that somehow lay down a *program* for a non-metalogical account of meaning - and together - of Wittgenstein's own conception of meaning in the *Investigations*:

1. We are *not* required to spell out *first* a definition of meaning and *then* engage in any philosophical clarification: meaning is not a privileged concept- a *super*-concept – its meaning is not to be fixed in advance.

2. We can formulate a definition of meaning that helps clarifying specific philosophical issues: however, we should not assume that any definition exhausts whatever we call 'meaning' in every circumstance. If so, we would be confusing a clarificatory tool for a metalogical grounding principle.

3. As long as Wittgenstein is consistently committed to a non-metalogical method, it follows that we should not interpret the *Investigations* as a metalogical work: that is, we should not consider, for instance, Wittgenstein's definition of meaning as rule governed use (PI 43) as a metalogical principle that is presupposed and assumed as an implicit commitment in *every* part of the *Investigations*.

4. As a univocal definition of what meaning ultimately comes to be is not required, there might be space in Wittgenstein's work to find *alternative conceptions of meaning* that are not reducible to a single metalogical principle - such as rules - *if* this helps dissolve particular confusions.

These points can be also seen as the *program* of this thesis too, as it offers a thorough non-metalogical account of the concept of meaning that aims at the same time to be *consistent* with Wittgenstein's own words. More precisely, point 4 will be mainly the object of the second part, where I will explore different cases of language use where the notion of meaning cannot be reduced to a single explanatory principle (we will see that a privileged role is often attributed to rules). Point 3 will be the object of the next chapter, where I will show how a famous interpretation of Wittgenstein – the one developed by Gordon Baker Peter Hacker - is still metalogical, and thus, inadequate to understand the whole spirit and aim of Wittgenstein's late philosophy.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed Wittgenstein's notion of metalogic and shown how much its understanding can contribute to interpret the nature of Wittgenstein's intellectual enterprise in the second phase of his thought. We have defined metalogic as a methodology of clarification of language that requires a *foundation* before any clarification can start. Metalogic shares with metaphysics the quest for the *essence* of certain concepts that are deemed to be particularly important and privileged to investigate language. Once the essence is (supposed to be) spelled out through a set of principles – in this sense, the foundations are laid down – we can proceed with actual clarifications. A model of metalogical thought is the *Tractatus*, as much as it lays down in advance a logical framework grounded on some metalogical principles that are thought to have universal applicability and determine the form any clarification *must* have. The rejection of metalogic that occupies Wittgenstein in the beginning of the '30s is thus to be interpreted as a way to escape the *Tractatus* 'grave mistakes' and accept a more effective methodology to tackle philosophical problems and thus clarify language. Finally, we have remarked that this general interpretation of Wittgenstein's philosophy in the light of a discussion of metalogic works as a general framework to interpret Wittgenstein's reflections on the concept of meaning throughout his late writings. As such, in what follows I will develop an investigation of the concept of meaning that is consistent with the refusal of any metalogical commitment.

2. Use and Rules in Wittgenstein's Late Philosophy

Introduction

In the previous chapter we have explored what it means to refuse a metalogical method in investigating language and solving philosophical problems. We have then seen that this refusal involves the concept of meaning too. Accordingly, a non-metalogical approach to language should primarily avoid taking meaning as a pivotal concept whose nature needs to be stated in advance and govern every further attempt of clarification of language. It is not sufficient to refuse the *Tractatus* conception of proposition to move really *beyond* the *Tractatus* metalogical method: we are further required to avoid *replacing* proposition with any other concept we deem -for some reasons - to be more fitting for our aim, may it be meaning or any other.

As such, metalogic and its opposite are not only general characterizations of philosophical method. They also shape the ways we *interpret* Wittgenstein's late philosophy, the things he writes in his remarks and the goal we assume he was pursuing: as such, there can well be metalogical *interpretations* of Wittgenstein's philosophy. Consistently with the general account we have outlined concerning what metalogic is, we can assume that any interpretation of Wittgenstein's philosophy is ultimately metalogical if:

1. It *de facto* takes some definitions as privileged.
2. This privilege is manifested in the implicit *assumption* that every clarification ultimately relies on at least one concept defined in a certain way.
3. these definitions are taken to shape a general account of language in which any clarification is ultimately possible.

The aim of this chapter is to show that a certain mainstream interpretation of Wittgenstein's late philosophy is metalogical in this precise sense. The interpretation in question is the one developed by Gordon Baker and Peter Hacker in their monumental commentary[38] to the *Investigations*. Baker and Hacker (from now on, BaH) have elaborated a powerful reading of Wittgenstein's late philosophy that ultimately comes down to the idea that meaning for Wittgenstein is *rule-governed*

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[38] It is known that Baker grew increasingly dissatisfied with the interpretation he developed throughout the years with Hacker. The result of him parting ways with Hacker is the posthumous collection *Wittgenstein. Neglected Aspects* (Baker 2004). The commentary was partly influenced by this intellectual quarrel, as the third and fourth volumes were written by Hacker alone.

use. Accordingly, the notion of rule is considered to be the lynchpin of Wittgenstein's philosophy. This idea is rather common in the literature (we find it for instance in Glock 1996, Schroeder 2006, Horwich 2012) and shapes what I will call the *normative conception of meaning* (from now on, NCM). I will mainly focus on BaH because they represent the best attempt to back up NCM with punctual references from Wittgenstein's texts.

I will proceed as follows. First, I will outline an overview of BaH interpretation and show how and in which sense it is still metalogical. Second, I will focus more closely on the reasons and textual evidence they provide to attribute NCM to Wittgenstein. I will show that the same textual evidence can as well be fully explained through a different account of the role of rules in Wittgenstein's thought, that has however the advantage to be compatible and entirely consistent with a non-metalogical method.

1. The Normative Conception of Meaning

The grounding assumption of NCM goes roughly as follows: language is a rule governed activity, rules determine what is correct and what is not in the use of words and philosophy is a normative investigation inasmuch as its main task is *to state* rules for the correct use of unclear words. The following quotation from BaH fully represents this normativist outlook:

> Describing the use of words, in the sense pertinent to Wittgenstein's investigations, is a matter of specifying or stating how words are used in the practice of speaking the language. Usage sets the standard of correct use; so the investigation is a *normative* one. We must remind ourselves how we use the problematic expressions — that is to say, what *counts* in the practice of speaking our language as a correct use. So we are, in effect, stating *rules* (or fragments of rules) for the use of the expression.

> (Baker Hacker 2005a: 291)

A description of language use, according to BaH, ultimately comes down to a statement of those rules that govern what counts as correct usage. Wittgenstein's investigation is thus normative insofar as its task is to state rules for the correct use of words. Philosophy's goal is to *report* them, to state them. What we need is 'a *normative description*' BaH say, 'like the description of a legal system. To be precise, grammar (in Wittgenstein's extended sense) *states*, rather than *describes* the rules of language' (Baker Hacker 2005a: 147). BaH often express this feature by saying that we only have to 'tabulate rules' (Baker Hacker 2005a: 298). This normative description – or tabulation – notably, presupposes that rules are a privileged *object* for philosophy to describe: they are – so to speal – '*out there*', shaping our life with language and constituting the meaning of what we say, we just need to

enlist them explicitly. If this is so, the tabulation of rules for the correct use is meant to be autonomous and *independent* from any negative aim of solving specific confusions. That is, there is a positive qualification of Wittgenstein's philosophy – offering an overview of the rules of use – that – despite being 'subservient to a negative aim' (Baker and Hacker 2005: 284) – that is, to solve confusion – yet is completely independent and theoretically autonomous from any actual clarification of language. This positive qualification of philosophy is arguably bound to a *positive* understanding of every-day language, as it is conceived in terms of the rules that implicitly govern our practice.

Notably, this normativist understanding of language and meaning also determines complementarily our understanding of what counts as a philosophical problem. Problems arise when philosophers transgress or violate the domain of correct use, that is, the rules of ordinary language. Curiously, BaH use an important metaphor to express this point: traditional philosophy, they argue, violates, or transgresses, the '*bounds of sense*' (Hacker 1996: 239, Baker Hacker 2005a: 285). Such bounds coincide with the system of rules governing the correct use of words: beyond those bounds or rules there is nothing but nonsense. Intuitively, for NCM sense and meaning are extensive to correct use whereas nonsense – so typical while doing traditional philosophy – is accordingly definable in terms of *illegitimacy*, that is, of violation of rules. That is, a normative conception of sense and meaning is automatically a normative conception of nonsense, understood negatively as whatever is beyond or transgresses the limits of sense, its rules. The following passage – from a Hacker's paper only - brilliantly sums up this point:

> Wittgenstein thought that logical syntax, as conceived in the Tractatus and later (until 1930-31), and grammar, as conceived after 1930-31, consist of general rules that lay down which combinations of words are licensed and which excluded. In so doing they determine the bounds of sense, fixing what makes sense and what is nonsense. Far from seeking to exorcise this view, Wittgenstein advanced and defended it. (As Baker and I wrote, [...] Wittgenstein's 'rules of grammar' patently serve to distinguish sense from nonsense, they settle what makes sense, and they determine what is a correct use of language).
>
> (Hacker 2003: 13)

BaH never explicitly specify where they took the metaphor of the bounds of sense from, what is sure is that Peter Strawson uses it to title his famous (and controversial) book on Kant's transcendental idealism.[39] Intriguingly, the metaphor of the bounds of sense seems to connect Wittgenstein directly

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[39] Peter Hacker studied under the supervision of H. L. A. Hart at Oxford in the mid '60s, at the time dominated by Strawson. Despite Hacker's criticisms of some major Strawsonian ideas, such as descriptive metaphysics

to *Kant,* or better, to a certain reception of Kant's philosophy. The Kantian inspiration of the normative conception is cemented by another roughly Kantian metaphor, that of the *tribunal of sense*: 'although philosophy – BaH argue - can no longer aspire to be the Queen of the Sciences, she remains the Tribunal of Sense — that is, the systematic critic of conceptual confusion' (Baker Hacker 2005a: 300). As long as we are dealing with a collection of rules informing what it makes sense to say and what does not, philosophy assumes the status of a judge that knows the rules and makes us recognize when we violate them. The very general notion of philosophy as *critique* has a Kantian flavour. Even though we should be cautious to draw any substantial conclusion about the relation the normative conception entertains with Kant - certainly, I do not want to say that they are enough to obliterate the obvious differences between Kant and this conception of Wittgenstein's philosophy[40] - yet what can be arguably pointed out is that these metaphors place Wittgenstein's later philosophy within the broader Kantian tradition, as Baker and Hacker seems eager to concede.[41] As a consequence, Wittgenstein's philosophical enterprise is thought as a reflexive activity aiming at drawing a boundary to thought and its expression, a critique of conceptual confusion aiming to offer a complete overview of the rules of language.[42]

The remark quoted above is also helpful to understand how BaH conceive the relation between the early and the later Wittgenstein. They in fact see Wittgenstein busy to draw the bounds of sense in both phases of his thought: only, what in the *Tractatus* was logical syntax in the *Investigations* becomes grammar. If so, the very idea of philosophy as a guardian of the limits of sense marks a strong continuity between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*:

(Hacker 2003), Strawson's influence in Hacker's interpretation is not to be completely excluded. If we read for instance *Construction and Analysis*, a paper where Strawson tries to give a general overview of analytic philosophy and its historical wavering between the construction of ideal languages and ordinary language analysis, we find a description of philosophy's task reminding us of Hacker's: 'the philosopher may undertake a more detailed examination, a more systematic ordering and description, of speech-forms, of types of discourse, of types of concept, than would be necessary simply to relieve the pressures of paradox' (Strawson 1956: 106). According to Strawson as well as to Hacker, it is unclarity concerning the logical *structure* of ordinary discourse that generates confusion.

[40] Kant was interested in the limits of knowledge, not of sense. As Mauro Engelmann points out, for Kant whatever lies beyond the limits of knowledge is by no means nonsensical; rather, it can be accessed through practical Reason (see Engelmann 2011: 94n) Furthermore, Kant's system is construed over the notion of a transcendental subject that is nowhere to be found in any normativist interpretation of Wittgenstein.

[41] BaH in fact write: 'It would be quite mistaken to think that he was the first philosopher to attack his predecessors as propounding nonsense — for this was a major plank in Kant's platform. Kant too argued that his antagonists transgressed the bounds of sense, attempted to apply concepts beyond the sphere of their intelligible application.' (Baker Hacker 2005a: 294).

[42] As the *Investigations* are put in the broader context of Kantianism in philosophy, so does NCM when it comes to conceive the *Tractatus* picture of language. The Kantian reading of the *Tractatus* belongs to a venerable tradition within Wittgensteinian scholarship. Erick Stenius in the '60s was one of the first to develop this line of reading (see Stenius 1960).

(In the *Tractatus*) he criticized past philosophical works as being not false but nonsense. They transgress the bounds of sense. 'Most of the propositions and questions of philosophers arise from our failure to understand the logic of our language' (TLP 4.003). *This* observation Wittgenstein could apply to past philosophers even after the transformation of his views in the 1930s — but with a crucial difference. His conception of 'the logic of our language' changes dramatically.

(Baker Hacker 2005a: 304).

The *Investigations* are thought to be a natural continuation of the *Tractatus's* philosophical enterprise, insofar as they are both trying to preserve the bounds of sense from any daring violation committed by philosophers. Only, the *Tractatus*' mistake lied mainly in its conception of the logic of language. As specified in another passage of the commentary, this conception consisted of thinking that there is a common logical syntax encompassing language as a whole, a 'depth grammar' it was supposed to be philosophy's task to unveil through logical analysis (Hacker 1996: 239). Accordingly, in the *Tractatus* nonsense is univocally determined as a violation of such a depth grammar. On the contrary, in the *Investigations* we find a *pluralistic account* of language: any attempt to find a general grammar valid for every language game is dismissed and replaced by a plurality of descriptions of the rules governing specific language uses.[43] This is because a general description of what counts as breaking the rules of games cannot in principle be accomplished, as sense and nonsense are notions that can be determined only *relatively* to the particular language under investigation:

> The conception of nonsense that dominates Wittgenstein's later critical philosophy is more flexible than that of the *Tractatus*. [...] There is no general account of nonsense, for what makes sense and what does not make sense varies from case to case and from one language game to another.

(Hacker 1996: 240)

The difference here outlined, however, is less substantial than it might seem: only, in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein is taken to unveil the *global* structure of language in its entirety, whereas in the *Investigations* the aim is humbler and relegated to particular or local language games. The shift is mainly from globality to locality, yet philosophy is always thought as a struggle against any attempt to trespass the bounds of sense and fall into nonsense. Rather effectively, BaH describe the transition from the *Tractatus* to the *Investigations* as a replacement of a *geological* connotation of philosophy - bound to the idea that the logical form is buried beneath the surface of propositions and should be

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[43] This kind of pluralism was already endorsed by Anthony Kenny in the '70s (see Kenny 2006, Chapter 9). His reading somewhat played, at least for this specific aspect, a grounding role for NCM.

dug up trough logical analysis - with a *topographical* one[44] (Baker Hacker 2005a: 309). Geology and globality are intertwined, insofar as the universal logical structure that the *Tractatus* envisages in language – according to BaH reading – is not directly visible as encompassing every possible language game. As a consequence, this structure is projected *beneath* ordinary language, visible only through a process of philosophical clarification.

All in all, NCM is structured around the concept of *rule* as a theoretical kingpin for the understanding of meaning, language, and philosophy. Language is seen as a rule governed activity, meaning is given to signs by rules for their correct use and philosophy eventually ends up being the activity of *tabulating* rules of language games, through which it can fulfil its role as the guardian of sense. Furthermore, the predominance of the concept of rule in the normative conception shapes our understanding of the kind of continuity subsisting between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*, as both books, despite obvious differences in details, are seen as an attempt to describe the logic of language and its limits through rules.

1.1 Metalogic and Normativity

At this point of our overview, we can see how much NCM relies on the concept of rule. In BaH account, rules determine, first, a particular understanding of meaning and nonsense; second, a certain interpretation about how and what philosophical clarification *must* be; third, what is the task of Wittgenstein's philosophy. These three aspects are all connected and intertwined: as much as a certain definition of what meaning is – rule-governed usage – implies a certain conception of nonsense as violation of rules, philosophy assumes the role of the warden of sense and the clarification it provides turns out to be a mere tabulation of rules that are supposed to be always *there*, ready to be enlisted. The centrality of the notion of rule makes it a privileged notion, and thus, suspiciously metalogical: we have a principle that is always assumed in advance while conducting clarification, that is, language is a normative activity and meaning is constituted by rule governed use. A notion – that of rules – is taken to be in this respect of a different level, hierarchically orientating our investigations of language.

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[44] This idea of a logical topology is analogous to the more famous one of a conceptual *geography*, often present in BaH's commentary too (Baker Hacker 2005a: 284). Brought to the mainstream by Gilbert Ryle, according to this view philosophy is said to draw a map of the relations between our concepts and philosophers are then conceived of as cartographers of the logic of language. Differently from the other Kantian metaphors, this one is present in Wittgenstein's texts: he in fact says that teaching philosophy has the same difficulty of teaching geography to people that have completely distorted ideas about the courses and connections of rivers and mountains (BT 90: 311), or when he explicitly compares grammar to the geography of language, a country we can walk about well but we are led astray when drawing its map (AWL: 43).

The ultimately metalogical nature of NCM is clearly visible in Hacker's words,[45] in the fourth volume of the commentary, where Hacker discusses the Wittgensteinian notion of metalogic while addressing his conception of nonsense. He points out that 'there is no general account of nonsense, for what makes sense and what does not make sense varies from case to case' (Hacker 1996: 240), and he calls the opposite attitude to give a universal account of meaningfulness and senselessness metalogical. There is nothing to object about this characterization of metalogic, as one of the important features of metalogic we have highlighted in the previous chapter was precisely the strive for universal definitions of concepts like sense, proposition and so forth. At most, we can see it is still *partial*, as metalogic also involves the commitment to privileged principles we are supposed to lay down in advance before any clarification can start.

However, probably due precisely to this partial understanding of what metalogic is supposed to be in Wittgenstein's thought, Hacker concludes his argument by saying the following: 'there can be no fruitful, illuminating, general description of breaking rules in game', as 'we can traverse the bounds of sense in indefinitely many ways, as each language game involves different rules' (Hacker 1996: 240). This means that Hacker, despite his claim that we cannot draw in advance a general description of what counts as sense and nonsense, is still fully committed to understand the notion of sense *in the light of* the concept of rule. According to him, we cannot know in advance how the violation of rules might be shaped for every possible language, yet we can certainly know in advance that, whenever there is nonsense, there a violation of linguistic rules *must* be in place. We can see the neat metalogical nature of such a claim: Hacker presupposes that rules *must* always be in place and constituting our language games, so that we cannot determine in advance which rules are at stake from case to case, but we certainly can assume that rules of some sort will be involved. This is metalogic at its purest: we assume that rules need to be *always* present and act accordingly. Another way to formulate this point is the following: according to Hacker, we cannot determine in advance how sense and nonsense always look like, yet we can determine in advance what philosophical *clarification* will always be, that is, the statement of constitutive rules of language. As a consequence, not only meaning defined in terms of rules is taken to be a privileged and hierarchical principle, but also BaH ultimately provide a metalogical understanding of what philosophical clarification must be on the basis of such a principle.

Notably, this conception of clarification pushes NCM closer to the *Tractatus* account of language than what BaH are willing to concede. Both in the *Tractatus* and NCM this conception of clarification rests upon a prior understanding of what language ultimately is: for the *Tractatus*, a truth functional system of propositions; for NCM, a plurality of different language games that are

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[45] Baker had already started rejecting the interpretation he developed and supported together with Hacker by the time the fourth volume was completed and published (1996).

nonetheless all defined in terms of *rules*. Rules are unwillingly taken to be whatever it is *common* to any language as such: they constitute the kernel of language, its *essential* feature. Accordingly, if we adhere to BaH interpretation, we gain a preconceived picture of what clarification consists of, that is, it will *always* be tabulation of rules. We have seen that BaH interpret the passage from the *Tractatus* to the *Investigations* as a transition from globality to locality – and complementarily, from geology to topology – and for this precise reason they overlook the fact that what really Wittgenstein tried - and succeeded - to abandon from the *Tractatus* to the *Investigations* was the constraints of metalogic, understood as a particular activity of clarification that assumes as a necessary condition the formulation of privileged principles valid for *every* case of actual clarification we may be engaging with. By doing so, BaH reduce the difference between the two Wittgenstein to a difference in detail *within* the same conception of philosophical clarification that remains accordingly downright metalogical: according to them, in the *Investigations*, we are *still* applying a preconceived idea of what clarification must be, only, now language is reconceived as a plurality of fragmented and not necessarily related language games whose logic is however fully and always describable in terms of rules.

So, despite their effort to reject any privilege to particular concepts, it is thus clear that BaH interpretation of Wittgenstein is metalogical insofar as the concept of rule is taken to be the lynchpin of a universal account of what logical clarification ultimately must be. We see in it confirmed the three aspects of metalogic as we have quickly sketched them in the introduction: BaH treat the concept of rule as privileged, they base on it a universal account of what clarification must consist of and a preconception of how language ultimately looks like, that is, a collections of rule governed games whose rules is philosophy's task to enlist. Relevantly, the idea of philosophy as a Guardian of Sense – where sense is understood metalogically in normative terms – is thus to be interpreted as a *consequence* of a normativist and metalogical interpretation of Wittgenstein that is nowhere to be supported if we really drop any metalogical assumption in our investigation of language. The abandonment of metalogic has thus also a liberatory function for philosophy's self-understanding: we can get rid of that unpleasant and uncomfortable task to be the *censor* of language.

2. Meaning, Use and Rules

BaH conception of clarification is thus still profoundly metalogical, insofar as it is always preconceived in terms of a restatement of those rules that determine the correct use of words. Such a conception is intertwined with another important assumption, that is, the idea that meaning is rule-governed use. In fact, if nonsense is a kind of violation of rules, then meaning complementarily is to

be conceived as determined by those rules that constitute the legitimate use of our words. Clarification is in this sense seen as a way to remain *faithful* to those rules that determine the correct use of words: we mostly unintentionally violate the rules of language and philosophy is there to restate the power of those rules that determine meaning over our speech.

The idea that in the late Wittgenstein we can find a clearly stated conception of meaning as rule-governed use is however far from being obvious. In the *Investigations*, the only remark that directly addresses the concept of meaning is PI 43, where Wittgenstein writes the following: 'for a *large* class of cases of the employment of the word 'meaning' – though not for *all* – this word can be explained in this way: the meaning of a word is its use in language'. As it can be easily noticed, the remark does not formulate a precise claim about the nature of meaning. It certainly does not lay down an exceptionless definition – it is rather careful to admit and hint at possible exceptions – and, crucially, does not refer to rules while equating meaning and use. BaH, however, interpret this remark as if Wittgenstein narrowed down meaning to a specific *kind* of use, that is, the one that is – unsurprisingly - *rule-governed*.[46] The following quotation sums up what they say about the correct way to interpret PI 43:

> What *is* Wittgenstein's conception of *use of a word* that is in play? Evidently it is the use *as determined by grammar* (in Wittgenstein's sense of the term *grammar*). And that is the use *as given by explanations of how the word is to be used*. So we are dealing with a normative (rule governed) use.[47]
>
> (Baker Hacker 2005: 153).

This passage is interesting as it highlights three main features of the normative interpretation of the equation between meaning and use. First, the kind of use relevant to meaning is rule governed use, that is, to know the meaning of a word is to know how a word *has to* be used to express *that* meaning. If so, to change the meaning of a word is to introduce a *new* rule for its employment. Second, rule governed use is the one determined by grammar. Arguably, grammar here is to be interpreted as a collection of rules for the correct employment of words. Finally, rules are formulated

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[46] This move is shared by a considerable number of interpreters. Severin Schroeder, for instance, defines Wittgenstein's definition of meaning as use as 'a commonsensical reminder' (Schroeder 2006: 169) that nonetheless, however, needs to be worked out a little bit more to neutralize objections to its alleged obviousness: meaning is use only if its use is proper, encoded in the *way* we use words according to certain criteria. Daniel Whiting shares the same view (Whiting 2008), and so do Glock (1996: 378) and Paul Horwich (Horwich 2010, 2012).

[47] In an early edition of the commentary, they even formulate the following stronger claim: "there is no such thing as meaning independently of *rules* that determine how an expression is to be used." (Baker Hacker 1980: 36-37)

through explanations of meaning. This is the gist of BaH normative interpretation of Wittgenstein's conception of meaning, the kingpin of their metalogical conception of philosophical clarification.

2.1 The Textual Evidence for NCM

It might be surprising that, despite the lack of any reference to the concept of rule in it or in its immediate surroundings,[48] PI 43 is interpreted normatively. This is due to some important observations Wittgenstein made in the unpublished writings of the early '30s on the same issue that might appear – *prima facie* - to have a certain normative 'flavour'. The following is an eloquent example, and it is often used to back up the claim that for Wittgenstein meaning is a matter of rules, as BaH do (Baker Hacker 2005b: 121):

> To begin with, I have suggested substituting for 'meaning of a word', 'use of a word', because *use of a word* comprises a large part of what is meant by 'the meaning of a word'. Understanding a word will thus come to knowing its use, its applications. The use of a word is what is defined by the rules, just as the king of chess is defined by its rules. And just as the shape and material of the king of chess are irrelevant to its use, so are the shape and sound of a word to its use.
> I also suggest examining the correlate expression 'explanation of meaning'. This will teach us something about the meaning of 'meaning'. [...] The meaning of a word is explained by describing its use.
>
> (AWL: 48)

Here, Wittgenstein fleshes out the connection he envisages between meaning, rules, and use. Three claims can be spelled out. First, the use of a word is said to partly cover what we mean by 'meaning of a word'. There are thus uses of the word 'meaning' that are not captured by any reference to use (we will see it how in the second part of the thesis) Second, use is said to be defined by its rules. This is made clear by a comparison with chess: what matters for a king in chess in order to be king is the rules of the game, and the king is the king only because of the role it plays in the game. The material aspects of chess pieces, such as their shape, colour, and material, are irrelevant to define their role in the game, that is determined by rules alone. The conception of meaning so introduced can be thus said to be in this sense *formal*, as meaning is fully determined by the formal *role* words play in

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[48] PI 43 is stuck in the middle of a discussion on the meaning of names in relation to their bearer (PI 40 - 45). The fact that Wittgenstein stresses that most of the time the meaning of a word is its use is to be understood as a reminder useful to tackle a particular misconception, that is, the idea that the bearer determines the meaning of names. As such, this contextual reading may be helpful to block any normative speculation about PI43: it was simply not Wittgenstein's point to state any thesis about meaning.

language, whereas its material aspects, such as the sound constituting the signs, are ruled out of consideration.

Third, the concept of rules in language seems to be connected to that of *explanation*. In the end of this remark, Wittgenstein clearly notices how much we can understand of meaning if we look into what we call '*explanation* of meaning'. This was already argued for in the beginning of the *Blue Book*, where Wittgenstein suggests looking for what one calls 'an explanation of meaning' (BB: 1) if we want to clarify the use of the word 'meaning'. The remark is mainly methodological, as it works as an advice on how to approach the question about the meaning of words, and together, avoid frequent misconceptions about it. In fact, if we ask what is the 'meaning' of a word, we are led dangerously into the path of looking for 'substances where there are substantives' (BB: 1), and thus thinking at meaning as if it were a *thing* – a *body* – beyond language. Looking what we call *explanation* of meaning in this sense is a way to dismiss such a temptation, as any explanation is another sign: we thus do not leave language and are not led to believe that meaning is something external to it. We find the same suggestion of looking into the explanation of meaning in the *Investigations* too (PI 560), to avoid the same misconception of meaning outlined in the previous remark (PI 559).

What is important is that in the passage above the explanation of meaning is said to be a description of the use of words, and the use of the word is said to be 'what is defined by the rules'. As a consequence, the passage can be read in this way: an explanation of meaning is a description of the use of a word, and a description of the use of a word is a *formulation* of a rule governing its employment. This last point seems to be further confirmed by several other passages in the *Nachlass,* such as the following: 'We said that by '*meaning*' we meant what an explanation of meaning explains. And an explanation of meaning is not an empirical proposition and not a causal explanation, but a rule, a convention.' (MS 140). An explanation is a convention, that is, it works as a formulation of that very rule that governs the use of words.

The same chain of reasoning is reported even more clearly in the following remark, with an important variation:

> I want to say: the place of a word in grammar is its meaning.
> But I can also say: the meaning of a word is what the explanation of its meaning explains....
> The explanation of the meaning explains the use of the word.
> The use of a word in the language is its meaning.
> Grammar describes the use of words in the language.

<div align="right">(MS 140: 15r/PG: 59 - 60)</div>

Here, again, Wittgenstein draws a connection between meaning, use and explanation. However, he does not talk about rules but 'grammar', and meaning is defined as the place of a word in the grammar of language. If we read this passage together with the one above, the grammar of language has to be interpreted as the set of rules governing the use of language, and describing the grammar is to be conceived then as explaining the use of our words by means of their governing rules.

Now, BaH's normative interpretation seems – at a first sight - to work as a natural summary of these important remarks. All in all, NCM reads these remarks as evidence to support the following three bullet points. They are a substantial restatement of the three main features of BaH normative interpretation of meaning as use, it is however important to reformulate them on the basis of Wittgenstein's quotes:

1. The use of a word is determined by the rules governing its employment.
2. The grammar of a word is the set of rules governing its use.
3. An explanation of meaning is a description of the use of a word that consists in a formulation of the rule governing its employment.

We have already seen that these points are surreptitiously taken as metalogical principles. As such, they set up a certain conception of meaning and use that are supposed to be *always* active while investigating language. There is indeed a concept that is taken to be privileged – meaning – and its meaning is clarified in advance as the foundation of philosophical clarification. If meaning is a*lways* defined by a rule, then the meaning of meaning itself is captured by a rule that has to be formulated. The definition of meaning as rule governed use is thus precisely that 'super-rule' Wittgenstein resolutely denies being needed in his remark on meta-philosophy (BT: 54, see chapter 1.3)

As a consequence of this metalogical outlook, this insistence on the notion of rule to understand meaning leads to a certain picture of language that is supposed to capture what is *essential* in our linguistic practice. Language, in fact, becomes a practice that is always defined by the fact that some rules are preliminarily *set up* ang govern every use of our words. To say that the use of a word is 'defined by its rules' – as Wittgenstein says – can accordingly be interpreted as if a rule must always be in place every time we use a word meaningfully. According to this reading, rules become then *constitutive* of the meaning of words and of our practice with language. The comparison with chess is crucial to picture the constitutive character of rules, as in chess rules are *conventions* laid down in advance before learning how to play the game: rules are then constitutive of the game of chess, insofar as there is no game without some rules being set up; rules determine the practice as such.[49]

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[49] The very idea that language is shaped by constitutive rules is to be found, beyond Wittgensteinian scholarship, in John Searle's *Speech Acts*. Rules are said to be constitutive, when, as in the case of *chess*, 'they

Furthermore, rules can be always mentioned to explain how chess pieces can move and we can mention rules if somebody makes a mistake in the process of learning the game ('no, the bishop cannot move straight, only diagonally'). Crucially, there is no movement on the chessboard that is a move of chess without a rule being already set up. Accordingly, for NCM there is no move in language – no use of words – that is a move in language without a rule governing its employment. In other words, rules are pictured as a *necessary condition* of language and meaning.

Arguably, once we think that rules are constitutive of meaning in this sense and language to be this kind of practice, then grammar consists of the whole set of constitutive rules is philosophy's task to describe, whereas any explanation of meaning comes to be *always* a formulation of the rule governing the words employment. As aforementioned while describing ACM in general terms in the first section of this chapter, rules are here *objects* of description,[50] and grammar consists of their systematic tabulation. These rules might be implicit or unconscious, yet they are somewhere to be found and enlisted as, for NCM, there is no language without rules governing our meaningful use of words.

2.2 A Viable Alternative: Rules as Means of Description

Now, if we want to remain consistent with a non-metalogical account, the definition of meaning as rule governed use cannot be taken as a privileged principle. On the contrary, the paragraphs we have mentioned so far are to be taken as highlighting a certain conception of meaning based on rules that is nowhere taken to offer a universal account of language, of what language is in essential. Such a conception is certainly useful to tackle certain philosophical problems, yet it should not be taken as a universal claim on the nature of language and meaning. The space for alternative conceptions is laid down open. In the next section, we will see that a non-metalogical reading is more plausible, as other remarks and paragraphs can be mentioned to back up our interpretation. Now, I rather want to focus on the status rules acquire once we dismiss NCM as a metalogical claim about the nature of language. We have seen that for NCM rules are the object of description for philosophy, whose aim is to enlist and tabulate those rules that govern our meaningful use of words and language. Now, once

create and define new forms of behaviour' so that 'behaviour which is in accordance with the rule can receive specifications or descriptions which it could not receive if the rule or rules did not exist' (Searle 1969: 33-35). Notably, for Searle 'speaking a language is performing acts according to rules' (Searle 1969: 37) and his whole book is an attempt to describe and *discover* constitutive rules we implicitly follow in our use of language (Searle 1969: 41). Searle's account of language is thus by and large consistent with NCM and BaH's understanding of Wittgenstein's philosophy, so to prove that we are dealing here with a certain conception of language and meaning that goes well beyond the bounds of Wittgensteinian scholarship and involves some common presuppositions of philosophy of language *tout court*.

[50] Mauro Engelmann calls this conception *substantial*, as long as rules are thought to define the very substance of language use (Engelmann 2011: 73). His reference to substance matches my employment of the notion of essence to qualify metalogical thinking. This substantial account, we may add, originates from a metalogical understanding of Wittgenstein's late philosophy.

we drop NCM and explore the possibility to consider meaning outside the constraints of a metalogical account, what space is left for rules in Wittgenstein's philosophy? That is, what is the role of rules once we stop considering them as the object of philosophical description of language?

In the literature, we find an answer in the interpretation Oskari Kuusela developed as an alternative to NCM. He proposes to switch the *role* rules are meant to play in Wittgenstein's thought: instead of being *object* of philosophical description, they can be rather seen as *means* of description and clarification of language. In the former case, we are led to think that rules are *there* constituting our practice: if so, rules are really something followed, they really govern our word use and can *always* be found whenever we use language meaningfully. On the contrary, in the latter case we are not committed to such a vision of language: rather, a rule is formulated only to capture a specific and limited pattern of use, without assuming that such a rule is really followed and truly covers every aspect of the word use. To say it with Martin Gustafsson – whose interpretation is akin to Kuusela's - 'what a grammatical rule does is (not to prescribe but merely) *to register* one pattern of use among other possible patterns' (Gustafsson 2020: 217). The rule is thus a way to delimit a certain area of the word use for clarificatory purposes, and nothing more: nothing is entailed about the nature of nonsense or rule governedness from this methodological employment of rules.

The point is made by Kuusela in the following way:

> The philosopher's object of description when she states a rule, in other words, is not a rule of language. Rather, the statement of a rule [...] is a means of describing a linguistic practice or uses of language. More specifically, to describe the uses of language by stating a rule is to describe instances of language use as conforming to a certain schema, i.e., to organize the uses of language in a systematic way. Here the statement of a rule *articulates* an organizational principle according to which instances of language use are ordered in the sense that out of the numerous regularities that language use exhibits, it brings a certain regularity to the fore and to our attention.

> (Kuusela 2008: 254)

To describe the words use by means of rules – as the philosopher does - does not commit us to a general account of language according to which rules are always governing our word use and every meaningful use is by definition governed by a norm of sort. Only, it helps highlight a certain aspect of the word use – a pattern – that may interest us for clarification or other purposes. We do not *report* a rule that is actually followed, we rather introduce a rule, a definition, through which we delimit an aspect of the use of a word and distinguish it from others. There is no attempt to reduce complexity of use to an overarching constitutive rule of grammar: only, we merely describe and

neatly separate different aspects of the use of a word to avoid possible confusions. The difference is fundamental, as in this way we are not necessarily committed to the idea that there must be always a rule, or a convention laid down in advance governing use in every context of the employment of a word. Rules are thus tools through which we articulate 'an organizational principle' – Kuusela argues – that is, we delimit some patterns of use and neatly distinguish regularities of use that might be confused and generate philosophical difficulties. In this way, meaning is 'defined by the rules', not because rules are set up in language and we need to enlist them: rather, the philosopher describes words use and their meaning by means of rules, with no further claim about the rule governed nature of language, as NCM is committed to.

Wittgenstein's discussion about *family resemblance* can be used to picture what it really means to use rules as mere means of description. In fact, family resemblance concepts outline an obvious case of usage that cannot be reduced to a single rule comprising every instance of application of the word. There is no definition of game available, we do not learn the word through a definition of sort, yet we use it, and we use it correctly. At most, we can enumerate the various things we call game and fix the differences according to different criteria if needed – board games are fairly different from the kind of games children play in a park, after all – but whatever taxonomy we can come up with is always a device for description of our word use, not the formulation of a rule that is actually into play every time we use the words as we do. Delimiting our concept may have different purposes, one of which is to erase misunderstandings or confusions. As Wittgenstein sharply points out, if a friend asks me to show a game to his child and I teach him gambling, it is likely my friend would say that he did not mean that sort of game and would probably introduce a definition – a rule – to clarify what he meant (PI 70). This rule, however, was not anywhere stated before I taught the child gambling: rather, it is a device my friend advocated to reorganize our common linguistic practice and find a new level of agreement between us.

Notably, once we reject the idea that rules are object of description, we also further come to accept the fact thar rules of language are not something *objective* and *independent* we are forced to *undergo* and be subdued to. If rules are rather something we freely elaborate and introduce to clarify our language practice, it follows that it all comes down whether we *accept* those rules as good means of description of language. In a problematic yet intriguing way, Wittgenstein sometimes defines linguistic rules in the terms of the *consent* a speaker is willing to attribute to them:

> One can only determine the grammar of a language with the consent of a speaker, but not the orbit of the stars with the consent of the stars. The rule for a sign, then, is the rule which the speaker *commits himself* to. // This commitment to a rule is also the end of a philosophical investigation. For instance, if one has cleared away the scruples about the word 'is' by making

two or three signs available to a person instead of the one, then everything would now depend on his commitment to this rule: ε is not to be replaced by =.

Strikingly, this remark tells us how the status of grammar is reshaped once we reject NCM. Grammar is no longer a collection of substantial rules constituting meaning we actually and always follow while using language, it is rather a set of rules that are to be accepted by the speakers and *recognized* as fitting descriptions of language use. In an intuitive way, rules do not come *before* language as its hidden governing mechanism – much as the rules of chess do - they rather come *after*, once we are in need to clarify some aspects of word use that is for some reason problematic.

The emphasis Wittgenstein puts on the *commitment* from the speakers to grammar is evident: once we look at rules as means of description and not as objects of investigation, it becomes clear that rules need to be *accepted* by the speakers as good depictions of patterns of use, they need to be recognized as fitting logical tools able to clarify a section of our language use. Without the acceptation of a rule as a means of clarification, there is no rule. This is why, second, the commitment to a rule is said to be the end of philosophical investigation: once we adopt a rule capturing a certain aspect of a word whose use was not entirely perspicuous, we have clarified our linguistic practice and nothing more can be done. On the other hand, if we do not accept a rule as a good means of description, this means only that our confusion is yet to be cleared away. The acceptance – the commitment – to a rule as a tool of clarification from the speaker means nothing more than his confusion is solved, and thus philosophical investigation is over: we can stop it 'whenever we want' (PI 133), nothing more is required.

To conclude, it is important to stress how, first, this account of rules as means of description of language use is equally consistent with the strain of thought we find in the *Nachlass* as much as NCM is. Wittgenstein really suggests looking at use through the lens of rules, however this is not to be taken necessarily as a commitment to NCM: rules can be just a methodological tool, not the object of philosophical description. Second, this account of rules is completely consistent with a non-metalogical method: we use rules to clarify language without the need to back them up with a general theory of meaning as rule-governed use or an exceptionless principle of what a rule ultimately is. Furthermore, nowhere is to be said that rules are *the only* logical tools we may use to achieve clarification. A space for alternative forms of clarification is left open, and this is all we need to avoid metalogic.

3. The Fluidity of Use

It might be objected that this discussion on rules is still too speculative to be seriously attributed to Wittgenstein. After all, the remarks used to back up NCM can be interpreted non-metalogically, as illustrated above. We might wonder then whether Wittgenstein is ever more explicit about the role rules play in his philosophy. In this section, I will analyse more remarks able to back up the idea that rules are stated and formulated to capture some regularities or patterns of use of our words, rather than being those rules that implicitly govern our actual use of language.

Perhaps, the remark that better fits our interpretation comes from the *Blue Book*, where Wittgenstein says the following:

> Remember that in general we don't use language according to strict rules-it hasn't been taught us by means of strict rules, either. *We*, in our discussions on the other hand, constantly compare language with a calculus proceeding according to exact rules. This is a very one-sided way of looking at language. In practice we very rarely use language as such a calculus. For not only do we not think of the rules of usage--of definitions, etc.--while using language, but when we are asked to give such rules, in most cases we aren't able to do so. We are unable clearly to circumscribe the concepts we use; not because we don't know their real definition, but because there is no real 'definition' to them. To suppose that there *must* be would be like supposing that whenever children play with a ball they play a game according to strict rules.
>
> (BB: 25)

Wittgenstein here explicitly states that we do not (always) use language according to rules. It is not even the case that we are always taught to use language through rules either. We do not (necessarily) follow rules *while* using words and we do not (necessarily) learn rules *before* using language as its condition. Furthermore, Wittgenstein believes that most of the time we are not even able to spell out the rules of the words we use: we can use words without being able to explain their meaning or formulate a clear-cut definition (we will see in the next chapter what are these cases of language use where definitions are not formulable). To think that rules *must* be always into place – that every language *must* be a kind of calculus with fixed rules - would be like conceiving every game through chess: as there are plenty of games that do not have any rules set up in advance or while playing, the risk is to distort our comprehension of language and games in its entirety. At most, we can *compare* language with fixed rules, as if it were rule governed, so that we can clarify some aspects of the use of our words, without however concluding that such rules play any constitutive or substantial role in language. The same insight is reported in a crucial remark of the *Investigations*,

where Wittgenstein says that 'in philosophy we *often* compare the use of words with games, calculi with fixed rules, but cannot say that someone who is using language *must* be playing such a game' (PI 81). Looking at language through rules is thus 'one-sided', Wittgenstein says: rules constitute a certain point of view through which we look at language, it regards our mode of presenting the object we want to describe - that is, language – not the object *per se*. The substantial or constitutive take on rules is automatically ruled out here.

The same point is restated in the *Philosophical Grammar*, where use is defined non-normatively as something 'constantly fluctuating':

> If we look at the actual use of a word, what we see is something constantly fluctuating.
>
> In our investigations we set over against this fluctuation something more fixed, just as one paints a stationary picture of a constantly altering landscape.
>
> When we study language we *envisage* it as a game with fixed rules. We compare it with, and measure it against, a game of that kind. If for our purposes we wish to regulate the use of a word by definite rules, then alongside its fluctuating use we set up a different one by codifying a characteristic aspect of the first one in rules.
>
> (PG: 77)

Wittgenstein here does not claim that rules are actually shaping our words use, as it is 'constantly fluctuating', that is, it varies through time and space unpredictably. No commitment to the substantial nature of rules in language is made. Rather, rules are mentioned as instruments *within* the philosophical practice of description of language. Rules can codify in a clear and fixed way a certain aspect of fluctuating use, certainly not its entirety. When we think at language as a game with fixed rules, Wittgenstein says, we do it because we want to draw a certain *comparison* for certain purposes, clarification being one of them.

At last, it is important to quote the context of the remark BaH quote to back up NCM (AWL: 48 above), as it sums up our discussion on rules and use and together it clearly spells out why rules play a dominant role in Wittgenstein's writings:

> We shall compare the use of language to playing a game according to exact rules, because all philosophical troubles arise from making up too simple a system of rules. [...] The only way to correct a wrong rule is to give another rule or set of rules according to which they do play. It is necessary to emphasise this because in discussing understanding, meaning, etc. our greatest difficulty is with the entirely fluid use of words.
>
> (AWL: 48)

This remark explains the very need to appeal to rules in philosophical clarification and together Wittgenstein's own invitation to compare language to calculi played through fixed rules. The need is primarily linked to philosophical confusions, that according to Wittgenstein are rooted into the philosophers' attempts to reduce language to a system of rules that is 'too simple'. The *Tractatus* once again is a good example of Wittgenstein's target here: with its obsession to capture the essence of language, the *Tractatus* developed a conception of proposition and language as a truth-functional system, by so doing overlooking the actual complexity of language use (See chapter 1.5). The only way to dismiss a 'wrong rule' – that is, a rule that generates confusions – is to substitute it with a *new* one. This new rule is not to be taken as the *real* rule that actually governs the word use – this would be what metalogic and NCM make us strive for. Rather, the new rule or set of rules so introduced are better insofar as they are more *apt* and suitable to clarify language by solving actual confusions. Everything comes down to how we employ rules as means of description of language, an employment that does not require any claim or metalogical presupposition about the rule governed nature of language and meaning. Notably, rules then do not have any privilege in Wittgenstein's philosophy. They are only appealed to insofar as they can contribute to the solution of those problems that are rooted in the philosophical – metalogical – tendency to look for fixed rules as constituting the essential structure of language.

3.1 Rules in the *Investigations*: A Grammatical Description

All the remarks quoted so far are mainly rooted in the writings of the early' 30s, together with those about metalogic we have already addressed in the previous chapter. How about the *Investigations*? As in the case of the remarks on metalogic, these issues are mainly indirectly addressed in the *Investigations*, yet they are consistently present throughout the book. We have already mentioned PI 81, where it is said that language can be compared to calculi with fixed rules as a means of clarification. However, the *Investigations* most precious contribution to the discussion on the role rules have in language and philosophy comes from within a detailed discussion of what we ordinarily call 'rules' in every-day language. As we shall illustrate in a moment, the description of the grammar of the word 'rule' comes to include the very distinction between rules as object and rules as means of description. What in the previous sections we have described as an abstract theoretical distinction, in the *Investigations* it is presented as the result of Wittgenstein's application of his own method to clarify the use of the word 'rule' itself.

So, a detailed sketch of the grammar of rule is outlined in PI 54 in relation to a more general discussion on rules in games. Accordingly, as games are compared to language, we can use the various kinds of rules in games to be a model of what we call 'rules' in language:

The rule may be an aid in teaching the game. The learner is told it and given practice in applying it. – Or it is a tool of the game itself. – Or a rule is employed neither in the teaching nor in the game itself; nor is it set down in a list of rules. One learns the game by watching how others play it. But we say that it is played according to such-and-such rules because an observer can read these rules off from the way the game is played – like a natural law governing the play. – But how does the observer distinguish in this case between player's mistakes and correct play? – There are characteristic signs of it in the players' behaviour.

(PI 54)

Three different cases of rules employment are outlined. First, rules can be *aids* in teaching. A definition, either verbal or ostensive, is an example of this kind of rules: we formulate a rule to explain meaning and see whether the learner got it by observing how he uses the word so defined. When it comes to language, these rules are rather frequent in theoretical contexts where definitions are introduced *ex novo* and technical jargon is employed, especially in traditional philosophy. These rules, importantly, are not present *in* the every-day practice of the game. At most, they function as its historical condition: we learnt the words through them and that is it. As such, these rules have a different role from those that work as *tools* constituting the ordinary functioning of the practice itself, the second case enlisted in the remark. An example of these tools in use might be charts and tables we look up while doing specific activities, such as, for instance, mixing up specific shades of colours for which we need a table to consult (This is Wittgenstein's example: PI 53).

Finally, rules as aids and rules as tools in use are distinct from those rules we make up to describe an activity where set of rules are nowhere to be found. It might be the case of an explorer that tries to understand a language of an unknown tribe by observing their linguistic behaviour and laying down rules for their language. These rules are akin to natural laws, as they attest a certain regularity from the outside of the linguistic practice they describe: these rules in fact are not known by those villagers that speak the language in the first place, neither as aids in teaching nor as tools in use. Same goes with speakers of our own language: most of the time, we do not have in our mind an implicit formulation of the rule governing the use of our words, especially of those that interest philosophers the most (do we really need a rule spelled out in our mind to use the word 'knowledge' or 'world'?).

All in all, the moral of this remark is the following: we call 'linguistic rules' different things with different roles in language, so that we should be careful to distinguish them to avoid confusion. Tools in use are constitutive of their practice, insofar as we cannot play it without relying on their rules. Tools in use are, in fact, a model for NCM: they really are rules constituting our practice, without which there is no practice at all. On the contrary, rules as aids and rules akin to natural laws

are not constitutive of their practice in this sense: in the former case, we can play the game without appealing to those rules trough which we learnt the game, whereas in the latter rules function specifically as means of description of a practice that is substantially independent from such a rule formulation. We should then avoid conflating tools in use with the other two, especially with the rules of the third kind: if we do so, we risk interpreting every rule in language as if it has to be always present as constituting the practice they inform, exactly what NCM tends to do.

This quick discussion is further developed in another point of the *Investigations*, where Wittgenstein addresses the case of the meaning of proper names and points out that the explanation we give of them may vary according to the knowledge we have about their bearers. As this knowledge might change in time and things we believed to be true may turn out to be false, we use proper names, Wittgenstein says, 'without a *fixed* meaning' (PI 79), that is, we are ready and not bothered to change the things we say to explain their meaning. Definitions might fluctuate without this to be a problem for our use of names. In this context, Wittgenstein reformulates his analysis of the concept of rule and writes the following:

> What do I call 'the rule according to which he proceeds'? – The hypothesis that satisfactorily describes his use of words, which we observe; or the rules which he looks up when he uses signs; or the one which he gives us in reply if we ask him what his rule is? – But what if observation does not clearly reveal any rule, and the question brings none into light – For he did indeed give me an explanation when I asked him what he meant by 'N', but he was ready to withdraw this explanation and alter it. – So how am I to determine the rule according to which he is playing? He does not know it himself.
>
> (PI 82)

Here we find a fourth case added to the ones pointed out above. We find rules as aids to teach, those rules we can appeal to if we want to explain somebody the meaning of some unclear words; rules as tools in use – that is, rules that we look up at while using language – and rules as the regularity we observe in others' behaviour. The case of the meaning of a proper name, however, does not fit in any of these alternatives. It is hard to detect any uniformity in the explanations we can give, as we tend to change the ways we explain the word and the things we say to determine its reference. Regularity is nowhere to be detected, and the explanations we give can as well fluctuate. There is no way to determine the rule according to which the name is used because primarily the speaker himself is not able to spell it out. Yet the word has an uncontroversial use in every-day life: it is hard to see how we actually *follow* rules in this case.

This fourth case is thus meant to undermine even more clearly the idea that fixed rules are *always* detectable as informing the use of our words. Here, it seems, it is not only that rules are used to describe a linguistic behaviour with no commitment whether those very rules are followed or not by the speaker – as in the case of rules attesting regularities: rather, it seems that Wittgenstein found a case of language use where following rules has no place at all. We can see how complex Wittgenstein's attitude towards rules and normativity is: in what it looks like a pluralistic and thoroughly non-metalogical account of what we call 'rules' in our life with signs – no case is privileged, no definition of rule is put on a different level than the others - Wittgenstein describes different cases of language activity that waver between, on one hand, a constitutive or substantial take on rules, and on the other hand, a conception of rules as means of description. In addition, we have a fourth case - on proper names – that is meant to directly challenge our preconception about any inner normativity of language.

Notably, the fact that there are cases of language where we would not say that we are following rules as attested by the case of proper names does not mean that they cannot be *described* by means of rules. That is, even though constitutive or substantial rules cannot be found, yet we can use rules to describe and thus clarify bits of our language practice. This is suggested by the following remark in the *Investigations* through a comparison with games:

> We can easily imagine people amusing themselves in a field by playing with a ball like this: starting various existing games, but playing several without finishing them, and in between throwing the ball aimlessly into the air, chasing one another with the ball, throwing it at one another for a joke, and so on. And now someone says: the whole time they are playing a ball-game and therefore are following definite rules at every throw.
> And is there not also the case where we play, and make up the rules as we go along? And even when we alter them – as we go along.

> (PI 83)

In front of such a chaotic activity, we can well say that the players are following definite rules at every throw of the ball. This may help a random observer to understand and analyse parts of the game. The appeal to rules, in this case, consists in a way to describe this particular activity: we can thus introduce rules as mere means of description. No commitment to the fact that rules are actually followed by the players is made: only, we describe the activity by isolating the bits of regularities we find in the players' behaviour. As these bits may vary in time, it follows that these descriptive rules do not aim to capture the nature of the activity as a *whole*: rather, we formulate them to clarify

aspects of an otherwise too complex game. To use the vocabulary from PG: 77, a fluctuating activity is compared to something more fixed for the sake of clarification.

It is perhaps useful to compare this interpretation of PI 83 to the one BaH gave in their commentary. BaH in fact interpret this passage as a criticism to the philosophical prejudice to find a unitary account of an otherwise chaotic activity, according to which 'everybody is following definite rules' (Baker Hacker 2005b: 184).This unitary account is however delusional, as the rules we might formulate are not really intentionally followed, BaH argue. In other words, according to BaH the target of Wittgenstein's remark is the philosophical idea that language is a calculus governed by fixed rules: that is a mistake, as rules are rather 'fluctuating' and 'flexible', as the example of PI 83 is taken to show (Baker and Hacker 2005b: 184). Crucially, according to BaH what is at stake here is just how to conceive the status of the rules we follow when we use language, not *that* there *are* cases of language use where rules are not to be followed that we nevertheless can describe by means of rules. They are necessitated to do so, as they still cling on the metalogical prejudice that rules have to be a necessary condition of language and meaning. In a way, they take Wittgenstein's reference to the fluidity of use and project it at the level of the rules we follow, that are said to be indeed flexible. Notably, it is however hard to see how a rule can be said to be flexible. Flexibility concerns more the *application* of a rule, if the rule allows for a margin of discretion, not the rule *per se*. A rule can be vague or ambiguous if it leaves some questions undecided, in that case we change it or modify to make it more focused, yet even a vague rule can be said to be inflexibly applied. Besides, and this is crucial, if rules are flexible how can we rely on their formulation to clarify our own practice? How can we make our mind if we do not know their range of application? These troubles arise as BaH implicitly take the example of PI 83 as an instance of a motley of games that, even though irreducible to a unitary normative account, yet can be all described by means of constitutive rules, though flexible and fluctuating, whatever this might mean. On the contrary, we are free to take PI 83 differently, as an instance of a fluid activity that develops and grows with no rules really followed, that yet can be described by means of fixed rules. All in all, BaH interpret PI 83 as if Wittgenstein were introducing a controversial *claim* about the nature of rules, whereas the interpretation proposed here has the advantage to leave any claim about rules aside and focus on their role in philosophical clarification.

Thus, to conclude, through a comparison with games, Wittgenstein points out the status and the limits of rules used as means of description, in philosophy as well as more generally in other descriptive activities: we use them to clarify definite uses, without with this being committed to the claim that, first, such rules are constitutive of our practice and second that they can capture and regiment the totality of use words can display. As such, even in the case of proper names rules can be

employed to fix and clarify aspects of their use. As the last paragraph of the remark above stresses, we can well admit this feature of rules as means of description without speculating about the normative nature of our practice: primarily language is an activity, sometimes we follow rules while speaking, sometimes we make the rules up as we go along, sometimes we alter them; sometimes they constitute our practices, sometimes they do not and yet we can use them as means of description. No metalogical uniformity can be found out, neither in language nor in Wittgenstein's own words. Crucially, the very distinction between rules as object and rules as means of description is thus included within Wittgenstein's very application of his own method.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have shown that a normative interpretation of Wittgenstein's philosophy is by and large incompatible with Wittgenstein's rejection of metalogic. We have first outlined BaH's most influential interpretation of the *Investigations* and shown that it is still profoundly metalogical, insofar as it pervasively relies on a definition of meaning as rule-governed use that cements their conception of logical clarification and philosophy's task as the guardian of the 'bounds of sense'. Second, we have explored the textual evidence BaH mention to support their interpretation of Wittgenstein and argued that we can rather advance another interpretation of the function of linguistic rules in language, that is, rules can be seen more as means of description able to capture a precise aspect of a word use rather than norms that are actually followed while using language. This way to approach rules in Wittgenstein's philosophy has the advantage to be both compatible with non-metalogical method and Wittgenstein's own treatment of the grammar of rules in the *Investigations*.

3. Primitive Cases of Meaning as *not* Rule Governed Use

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we have shown why NCM is a metalogical account of meaning that should not be attributed to Wittgenstein and that there is an alternative way to conceive the role of rules in philosophical clarification. In fact, once we dismiss any metalogical claim about rules as constitutive of any meaningful linguistic practice, rules become rather a means of description to single out and capture aspects of use, those aspects we need to distinguish and separate if we want to avoid certain confusions while doing philosophy. If so, meaning defined in terms of rules is not the lynchpin of a universal account of language, it is not the logical equivalent of propositions in the *Tractatus*. Rather, the very definition of meaning as rule-governed use is a means of description whose aim is to capture a certain aspect of the use of the word 'meaning'. Once we refuse to consider this definition as a metalogical principle, we are not bound to think that meaning must *always* be a matter of rules constituting our use of language. In other words, if rule-governedness is not the essence of meaning, we are free to think that there might be different conceptions – *alternative* to NCM – that might catch different aspects of the concept. 'Ten or twelve different pictures that are similar to the actual use of the word' can be drawn, Wittgenstein tellingly says (AWL: 48). Though exaggerating a bit, yet it is clear that Wittgenstein does not want to reduce his take on meaning to a single conception – or picture – based on rules *alone*. Rather, different alternatives can be explored.

In this chapter, I will outline a basic account of such alternatives in Wittgenstein's own text. The chapter both anticipates some aspects of the discussion on rules and experience in the second part of the thesis and together ties up our discussion of NCM by showing the kind of difficulties its metalogical presuppositions lead their proponents into when it comes to understand specific borderline cases of word use. The chapter then works as a *bridge* between the general discussion on metalogic and meaning of the first part and the actual application of Wittgenstein's method to cases of meaning that require more than rules to be understood, of the second part.

More specifically, I will sketch alternative models to rule-governedness by focusing on *meaning-explanation*. I will follow Wittgenstein's suggestion itself, as he says that we should rather focus on the meaning of what we call 'explanation of meaning' (PI 560). Notably, once we get rid of the idea that rules *must* be constitutive of meaning as we have done in the previous chapter, we are free to

investigate what we call 'explanation of meaning' without assuming that explaining is always a matter of stating a rule or a convention governing the use of words. 'We call all sort of things an explanation of meaning' Wittgenstein notices (BT: 30). We should then not assume that such a variety can always be reduced to a single explanatory principle, may it be rules or others. As such, the investigation of what we ordinarily call 'explanation of meaning' allows us to give *positive* substance to the idea that meaning is not a metalogical concept, that is, its meaning is not captured by an exceptionless principle that works as a necessary constituent of any clarification of language. If we follow the suggestion that the meaning of 'meaning' should be investigated by looking into what we call 'explanation of meaning', and if we find out that there are indeed different *kinds* of explanation that are difficult to reduce to a unitary principle determining what an explanation of meaning always must be, then this logical pluralism should be supposedly mirrored into our concept of meaning itself. The emergence of a pluralistic account of meaning, that is, an account that is not based *only* on rules to capture what we call the 'meaning of words' in our language, is ultimately a consequent outcome of a non-metalogical method.

I will thus explore different cases of what we call 'explanation of meaning' and show that rules are not the only thing that matters when we explain word use. First, I will generally address Wittgenstein's general treatment of explanation. We will see that, as usual, there is no univocal definition of what an explanation must be. Second, I will move forward by discussing cases of words that cannot be explained through a formulation of a rule of any sort. As a result, I will argue that the meaning of meaning, within a thoroughly non-metalogical account of language, is not reducible to an easy all-encompassing principle. Rather, it needs to be seen through a plurality of different lenses, as there are multiple ways to capture aspects of the use of the word 'meaning'.

1. Meaning and Explanation

In the *Blue Book* Wittgenstein proposes to clarify the concept of 'explanation' through the concept of definition. He says that - 'very roughly' - an explanation can be either ostensive or verbal a *definition* (BB: 1). In the former case, we explain the meaning of a word by pointing – colour words are an obvious example - whereas in the latter we provide a string of words that counts as an explanation of meaning.

It might be noticed, however, that the very word 'definition' is no way less in need of clarification than the word 'explanation' is. We call all sort of things 'definition'. If we look into a regular dictionary, we find that defining a substantive, for instance, is not the same thing as defining an interjection, an adverb, or a logical connective. A dictionary is by definition a collection of descriptive rules, as a dictionary's aim is to describe a language by capturing regularities of the use of

words. It works as a tool of clarification, insofar as we consult it to clear away linguistic confusions if any. In this sense, then, definitions in a dictionary can be seen as means of description of language. We do not need to suppose that these rules are actually *governing* our life with words, as if they were constitutive of our linguistic practice. This because, we already know, rules as means of description are not required to be actually *into play* in our practice of language.

It is thus no surprise that most of a dictionary's definitions, especially regarding connectives and words that are not substantives, are quite artificial and certainly do not inform the ordinary way through which we explain the meaning of our words. I can well define 'but' as an adversative, but this definition makes sense only if we already *know* the meaning – the use – of this very word. The same cannot be said for the substantive 'alpaca': a definition looks here like a *convention* introducing anew a term in my vocabulary. Notably, the conventional character of definitions regarding substantives became in BaH the model of what they call the 'standard form' of explaining meaning (Baker Hacker 2005a: 154). It is the one fully operative in logic and mathematics, the kind of explanation of meaning reducible to the form of 'X means a Y that is F', used mainly to explain the meaning of substantives. This kind of definition is arguably functional to NCM and its conception of substantial or constitutive rules of language: like rules of chess, they can be appealed to and mentioned if somebody uses a word incorrectly and can be formulated as a tool of teaching to make somebody learn the meaning of a word. Substantives are in this sense rule-governed insofar as they can be introduced through a convention and explained through a definition of sort.

If we however drop any constitutive take on rules and grammar, we might wonder how explanations in the practice of language really look like, without falling into easy simplifications. This is what Wittgenstein does in the *Big Typescript*, where he offers a more nuanced an account of what counts as an explanation than the one sketched in the *Blue Book*:[51]

> How can someone ask for an explanation of a word's meaning? – Like this, for instance: "Which colour is called 'violet'?", or "Which note is called C with three lines?"; but also like this: "What does '*nefas*' mean?".

> The first and second questions will be answered by pointing, and that is what the questions had anticipated. One could answer the third question by translating the word into English (or also by giving examples of its usage). – But what if someone who had no previous mathematical training were to ask "What does the word 'integral' mean?". One would probably

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[51] The roughness of the *Blue Book* is justified if we considered the philosophical target of that part of the book: Wittgenstein's intent was confined to the deconstruction of a particular misconception according to which meaning is a thing in the world. In such a context, what really matters is to show that ostension, that is, explanation by pointing, is still part of language in a way analogous to the statement of a verbal rule of sort: no more elaboration is thus required to achieve this goal.

have to answer: that is a mathematical expression that I won't be able to explain to you until you understand more mathematics.

As a child I once asked about the meaning of the word "something" (or was it "perhaps"?). I was given the answer: "You don't understand that yet". But how should it have been explained! By a definition? Or should it be said that the word was indefinable? I don't know how I learned to understand it later; but probably I learned how to use phrases in which the word appeared. And this learning most closely resembled training [being trained].

(BT: 31)

Here we have five different examples of meaning explanation. Explaining the meaning of a colour word or the name of a particular sound defined by a certain note are for Wittgenstein examples of *ostension*, whereas a translation is a kind of *verbal* definition. A mathematical explanation – of the word 'integral', for instance – is a verbal definition too, yet it is different, as it requires a whole background of mathematical knowledge to be understood. We can see then that to merely say that explanations are verbal or ostensive definitions is not by itself enough to capture all the differences between kinds of explanations. This is even clearer if we focus on the last example, the one involving the adverb 'perhaps'. Wittgenstein – by recalling his own personal experience - doubts whether such a word can be learnt through definitions. Rather, it is likely to be acquired through a process of learning that involves the broader context of its employment in meaningful sentences, a process that Wittgenstein calls 'training'. Training, for Wittgenstein, is involved in the early phases of acquisition of language, where we are not even able to *ask* what the meaning of a word is: we are rather drilled to use it how it should be used (PI 6).

The case of 'perhaps' is particularly important. It reveals that not all words are expected to be explained through a definition, surely not through the standard form BaH talk about. In fact, Wittgenstein goes back to talk about this particular word in the *Philosophical Grammar*, where he points out the following:

What does it mean to understand the word *perhaps*? – Do *I* understand the word *perhaps*? – and how do I judge whether I do? Well, something like this: I know how it is used, I can explain its use to somebody, say by describing it in made up cases. I can describe the occasions of its use, its position in sentences, the intonation it has in speech.

(PG: 64)

In the case of 'perhaps' – and, we might add, of many more *adverbs* and *connectives*, such as 'but', 'yet', 'up', 'maybe' and so forth - the explanation is a complicated practice in which different things

can be done to make others understand the meaning of the word. We can for instance describe the broader context of its use, maybe making up imagined cases of use where the meaning is somehow displayed. We can mention its function, as it is a word used to express doubtfulness. We can also focus on the different shades of meaning the word acquire when used to express a doubt or to introduce a hypothesis, by exemplifying the different intonation the word has in different cases, and so on. All these things count as an explanation of the meaning of the word, and it is unlikely to consider these activities as statements of rules of any sort, as no conventions are stated. BaH themselves are forced to admit the word to have a meaning, even though its explanation does not conform to their standard (Baker Hacker 2005a: 154).

So, the case of 'perhaps' and other adverbs or connectives is important as it challenges some normativist preconceptions about how an explanation of meaning must look like. To interpret the case of learning through training as a case of following a rule or an explanation through examples or gestures as a statement of a rule is, to say the least, vacuous: we simply lose what it means to state a rule in ordinary language. However, normativity looks intuitive and somehow obvious an option to interpret these cases of language use, as long as we can still talk about *correct* use, that is, as long as we can rightfully question whether an adverb or a conjunction is used correctly or not. If we use a conjunction as an adversative, or an adverb of time as an adverb of space, maybe while learning a foreign language, it is easy to see that in those cases we use the word incorrectly and such incorrectness is rooted in the fact that we did not understand their meaning. This incorrectness still assumes the form of a *violation* of a rule, a grammatical rule of the kind we find in grammar books, for instance. Although it is not necessary to know it while learning these words or explaining their meaning, yet it can be mentioned to signal a mistake in use or simply used as a means of description of its meaning (this is what grammar books do, after all). In the next section, we will explore other cases of language use where the appeal to rules and correctness fades even more.

2. Natural Reactions and Expressions

Let us examine the case of primitive *interjections* such as 'boh', 'meh', 'oh' 'Hurrah!' hum, and so forth. Wittgenstein addressed such uses in the mid '30s, in some remarks composing the typescript called *Philosophical Grammar*. Among them, one is worth quoting:

> I said that the meaning of a word is its role in the calculus of language (I compared it to a piece of chess) [...] but think of the *meaning* of the word 'oh!'. If we were asked about it, we would say 'oh!' is a sigh. We say, for instance, things like 'Oh, it is raining again already'. And that would describe the use of the word. But what corresponds now to the calculus, the

complicated game we play with other words? In the use of the words 'oh!', 'urrah!' or 'hm' there is nothing comparable.

(PG: 67, my italics)

In this remark, Wittgenstein assumes that these words have a meaning. They have a use that can be explained, by offering an example of a sentence where the words play a part. We can for sure explain 'oh!' by saying it is a sigh, but it would be misleading to think that this is enough for the word to behave like a substantive and this explanation like an ostensive definition where the object involved is sorrow. This because, arguably, the word (mostly)[52] works as an *expression* of sorrow, it is not its name, in the same sense as 'red' is a name for a colour. Wittgenstein points out this distinction few lines afterwards, when he says that 'hm' is 'not a name for dubiousness, but its *expression*' (PG 67: 31).

When we say that 'oh' is a sigh then, we are not naming anything. Rather, we are stating that the word primarily has an expressive function in our life that makes it ultimately *be* what we call a sigh. Consequently, the word is akin to a *natural reaction*, as much as sighs are, that is, it is part of the natural behaviour that no one really teaches us to acquire, as much as no one teaches us to cry when as toddlers we want to express fear or disappointment. Crucially, Wittgenstein concludes the remark by saying that the use of interjections is hardly comparable with the model of use of a calculus or a game of chess. This means that the normative conception based on rules is useless for understanding these cases of word meaning: at best, it can be employed to highlight what meaning in these cases is *not*. It is indeed difficult to see how rules can play any role in the use of these words. Differently from the case of substantives, there is no explicit convention or stipulation laid down in advance establishing their use. In most cases, as for 'hm!' or 'oh!', the use of the word comes naturally along with language when children are learning it. As aforementioned, no one trains us to its use, as much as no one trains us to react to the gesture of pointing with the hand by looking in the direction from wrist to fingertip,[53] or to cry when we are sad or scared, and so on.

Yet, despite the difficulty to understand the use of interjections through the lens of rules, Wittgenstein is willing to talk about their meaning. Interjections are thus instances of language use that cannot be subsumed under the definition of meaning as rule-governed use. We can talk about their meaning inasmuch as they have a use that is embedded in our natural reactions and is part of our expressive behaviour. The concept of understanding here shifts accordingly: to understand a

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[52] Mostly, because the word can be uttered also as an expression of *surprise* ('oh, you are already here').

[53] This example comes straight from the opening passage of the rule following discussion in the *Investigations*, where Wittgenstein depicts as a possibility the fact that the recalcitrant pupil, unable to understand and follow the rule of adding 2 in a series of cardinal numbers after a certain point, is simply reacting *naturally* in a way that does not come naturally *to us* (PI 186).

shout of pain as an expression of pain or more generally to read particular states of mind within interjections does not require an acquisition of a rule or a convention of sort, rather it presupposes a belonging to a certain community of language users who share the same natural reactions and physical constitutions. The concept of naturality involved here is not (only) biological, it can be as well cultural: it designates the whole set of immediate reactions to expressive words and gestures we acquire as community members. As such, naturality here corresponds more to *immediacy in use* rather than to biological facts, and immediacy can well be culturally induced.

The fact that interjections and general expressions of feelings and emotions are not rule governed and are rather grounded onto our natural reactions is clearly manifested by the fact that is really hard to even conceive how *correctness* in use looks like here. There is no rule governing when a pain expression is to be correctly used, we simply *use* it when we are in pain. Can I be *mistaken* in my use of such expressions? The question does not seem to make much sense. Let us try to think of a possible misuse of an interjection, such as 'urrah!', an interjection mainly used to express a full and sudden enjoyment or excitement for a certain event. How might misuse would look like here? An intuitive example might be the case of shouting 'urrah' at the news that a dear friend's father just died. We can clearly see that something is wrong here: my expression is not in a way consistent with our expectations about what 'being friends' and 'reacting to a mournful news' actually mean. This inconsistency might be explained in two different ways. On one hand, if I know how to use the word - if I really *mean* it - I am probably a wicked person that for some reason is enjoying a disgrace happened to a poor friend. In this case, I am not really misusing the word, quite the contrary: I am rather fully expressing my enjoyment, as the word allows us to do. At most, I might be said to be improper, or indelicate, or simply tactless or wicked. On the other hand, I might really do not know how to use it. This lack of understanding, however, would affect my life in a way that cannot be reduced to a simple misunderstanding of the use of that specific word. It is a misunderstanding that looks more like a symptom of *estrangement* - or *divergence* in life: the radical incapability of reacting to pain expressions as others do, the inability to play their games and react as they do, to 'read' excitement and enjoyment within the word itself, and so forth. This because the word 'urrah!' has a meaning only in the broader context of what we call 'happiness': we shout it, we are excited, we smile after saying it, and so forth. Being unable to understand this word would then be akin to an incapability to be attuned with the whole emotional world that word belongs to. Thus, either we know the meaning of the word and use it accordingly, or we do not, and in that case misuse looks

more as a case of divergence in our natural reactions and broader cultural context. In any case, no rule is involved in determining its use or sanctioning its misuse: we simply use it or fail to use it.[54]

It is important to stress an important analogy between this line of argument and Wittgenstein's discussion of sensations language in the *Investigations*. At the very beginning of what has been named as the private language argument, Wittgenstein writes the following:

> [...] How does a human being learn the meaning of names of sensations? For example, of the word 'pain'. Here is one possibility: words are connected with the primitive, natural, expressions of sensation and use in their place. A child has hurt himself and he cries; then adults talk to him and teach him explanations and, later, sentences. They teach the child new pain behaviour.
>
> 'So, you are saying that the word 'pain' really means crying?' – On the contrary: the verbal expression of pain replaces crying; it does not describe it.
>
> (PI 244)

In order to understand the kind of connection between the word 'pain' and the feeling, Wittgenstein offers an option. As such, this option is not an empirical description on how we acquire our pain vocabulary and behaviour. Rather, it works as a logical possibility[55] to tackle the preconception that there is indeed a referential connection between an inner state called 'pain' and our public word, that should then work as a name for it, and together, to clarify some aspects of the use – or meaning - of the word 'pain'. This possibility then conceives our pain behaviour as the result of a training that *replaces* our natural reactions with some pieces of language that nonetheless maintain their same purpose. More specifically, Wittgenstein suggests seeing a sentence like 'I feel pain' not as a description of an inner state, rather as a linguistically driven reaction to express pain, an *avowal*, as a cry is.

In the so-called second part of the *Investigations*, the same point is framed in the following way:

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[54] The same conclusions are easily extendible to other particles and interjections. As Daniel Whiting correctly points out in the case of 'hm', for instance, there is no way in which 'um' is to be used: 'Should one litter one's talk with instances of 'um', it would no doubt be irritating but one would not be making a linguistic *mistake*; one would not be conflicting with its correct use, as none has been laid down for it' (Whiting 2008: 6). As a normativist, after this conclusion he quickly dismisses such a word as meaningless (Whiting 2008: 5). We should not however be so dismissive, as we have no metalogical prejudice and are willing to accept cases of language use that are not rule governed and yet make sense. A person which litters his talk with 'hm' might not be committing mistakes, yet he would probably have a different understanding than ours about what 'doubt' and 'doubtfulness' mean and are manifested in our life.

[55] Oskari Kuusela argues that PI 244 is an example of what he calls Wittgenstein's *quasi-ethnological method*, that is, 'the use of real and fictional natural history with the purpose of clarifying aspects of the actual use of words' (Kuusela 2019b: 183). As these natural historical remarks are used as modes of representation to clarify the grammar of specific words, they are not to be taken as *empirical* statements.

A cry is not a description. But there are intermediate cases. And the word 'I am afraid' may approximate more, or less, to being a cry. They may come very close to one, and also be *very* far removed from it.

We surely do not invariably say that someone is *complaining* because he says he is in pain. So the words 'I am in pain' may be a cry of complaint, and may be something else.

(PPF 83, 84)

Although a cry is not a description, yet there are cases – '*intermediate*', Wittgenstein calls them – where something that resemblances a description might be as expressive as a cry is. The very sentence 'I am afraid', for instance, can be either used to express the way we feel in certain circumstances – let us think of a child telling his parents that he is afraid after waking up from a nightmare – or we can use it when we describe our feelings as a form of complex *justification* or *explanation* of our actions – 'I do not do x because I am afraid of y'. The former case is very similar to a cry, whereas the latter has a completely different function, related to different – more complex - language games. The very same sentence – and more generally, every first person ascription of feelings and emotions – has thus a *variety* of different uses that cannot be single-handedly reduced to a univocal picture.

In this context, we can now see why it is useful to compare pain expressions to interjections and avowals. Despite several important differences are there to be noticed - the word 'pain' used as an expression is not immediate and natural – in this sense, *primitive*[56] - as we learnt it and are trained to use it (in this respect, words like 'oh' and 'hm' are closer to cries and other natural reactions than our pain vocabulary is, insofar as they do not substitute natural reactions, they rather *are* such reactions) - still, a similarity is there to be caught, and so it might be useful to compare pain behaviour to the case of interjections to highlight this important aspect of the use of the word. As the paragraph above points out, this by no means suggests that every first sentence attribution of pain always work as a complain. Only, *sometimes* it does, and can be reminded every time we are tempted to conceive of emotions and feelings as a *something* – a *thing* - our sentences are supposed to describe. All in all, we can conclude that the case of interjections represents a primitive model of language use that is not rule governed and helps us elaborate a primitive conception of meaning based on *expression* that can be used to capture the grammar of important uses of words in our every-day life.

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[56] The concept of *primitiveness* is introduced by Wittgenstein to describe the nature of the Augustinian conception (PI 2). As such, it too can be used to clarify certain limited aspects of the use of words, only it cannot constitute a universal account of language. In the *Last Writings*, Wittgenstein indeed notices that the conception of meaning based on the explanation through pointing - that is, the Augustinian conception - is *primitive*, and brings about troubles if expanded to the totality of language (LW I 332). Baker and Hacker somehow overlook the meaning of primitiveness in the *Investigations*, and misleadingly interpret LW I 332 as if Wittgenstein were merely saying that meaning is a non-technical term (Baker Hacker 2005a: 154).

3. Purpose and Instrumental Words

Finally, there is another kind of word use that is not compatible with a conception of meaning as rule-governed use and whose explanation is not a statement of a rule. It is the kind of meaning explanation based on the *purpose* of words. The purpose of an instrument, such as a hammer, concurs in constituting the object for what it is, and a description of the use of an instrument relies on what the object is used *for*. Can we think that there are analogous cases of use description also for words? In the *Philosophical Grammar*, we find a clear one. It is the word 'hey!', a word whose purpose is to alarm the person spoken to, or to call one's attention. Wittgenstein addresses this case, and concludes:

> It might be said that the purpose of the word 'hey!' in our language is to alarm the person spoken to [...] One may now say that the purpose, the effect of the word 'hey' is the important thing about the word; but explaining the purpose or the effect is not what we call explaining the meaning.

> (PG: 69)

Wittgenstein admits that the purpose of the word is the important thing about the word, that is, its use is characterized by its purpose. The notion of purpose is here connected to the *effect* that a word such as 'hey!' might cause. It might seem that we are dealing with another kind of explanation of the use of words and thus with another alternative conception of meaning, that consists mainly in a *causal* account of meaning: meaning is determined by the effect that a word brings about. However, Wittgenstein promptly remarks that an explanation of the purpose is not an explanation of meaning. It is intuitively easy to see why: we can always use words to achieve some effects, but this does not imply that any effect is essential in defining their meaning. The connection between word use and effects achieved is in this sense *external*, it might obtain or not according to different factors quite independent from the meaning of the words involved.[57]

There are, however, reasons to question Wittgenstein's categorical dismissal of these cases of language use as meaningful. Overall, Wittgenstein's opinions about what we can call *instrumental* words is more nuanced and hesitant, especially in the *Investigations*. If we look first at the context of the remark above, we find Wittgenstein saying that 'we consider language from one point of view', that is, the point of view of rule-governedness (PG: 32). Notably, this point of view is not said to be the only legitimate. In the remark quoted above, Wittgenstein uses again the first person plural to

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[57] In PI 498, Wittgenstein points out that we can make people puzzle by uttering a nonsensical sentence like 'Milk me sugar', but puzzlement is not exactly what defines the meaning of a sentence that remains (American slang not withstanding) nonsensical.

discard the explanation of the purpose as an explanation of meaning, so it might be that - in this context - he is just saying that considering the purpose of words is irrelevant for his present discussion. If it is so, we do not need to attribute to him an explicit refutation of instrumental uses as legitimate cases of meaningful words.

Nevertheless, this argument is not conclusive. Admittedly, Wittgenstein's text can be still legitimately interpreted as if Wittgenstein is really denying that descriptions based on purposes are in any relevant sense descriptions of the meaning of the word. If we grant the validity of this interpretation, then we need to try and argue that Wittgenstein simply changed his mind between the time he composed the *Grammar* and the *Investigations*. We can actually do it, as long as it can be argued that Wittgenstein changed his mind about the role of instrumentality in language overall. As Oskari Kuusela exhaustively demonstrated (See Kuusela 2008: 168-171), it is easy to see how Wittgenstein's view changed through the years. In a manuscript from 1930-31, we find the following:

> To invent a language does not mean to invent an instrument for a particular purpose on the basis of the law of nature (or consistently with them) .... Also, the invention of a game is not an invention in this sense, but comparable to the invention of a language.

> (MS 110: 199-200/ TS 213: 193)

Here, Wittgenstein resolutely denies that there is any connection between the invention of a language and that of an instrument. The only comparison that makes sense to draw is with games and their rule-governed nature. At this level then, Wittgenstein is still dogmatically clinging onto NCM, as he conceives of language as a plurality of games whose purpose is internal to their rules, so not depending in any way or form from the external world and its physical attributes. As such, any instrumentality is banned as not really part of meaningful language. If we then read our remark on the purpose of 'hey!' in the light of this passage, we can concede that Wittgenstein was really denying any meaningfulness to instrumental uses *tout court*.

Nevertheless, this remark is an early version of another one that ultimately ended up in the *Investigations*, that clearly manifests a change of attitude in Wittgenstein's thought:

> To invent a language could mean to invent a device 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.

> (PI 492)

Clearly, Wittgenstein is here accepting the possibility that sometimes we can invent a language according to a particular purpose and the laws of nature. With this more liberal approach in the background then, we can simply accept the case of 'hey!' as a legitimate example of language, in no way less important or worth discussing than rule governed ones.

To the eyes of scholars, this concession to instrumentality might be rejected as an unbearable relapse into those causal theories of meaning that Wittgenstein targeted in the writings of the early'30s. According to such theories, understanding is the *effect* in the mind of the hearer caused by linguistic signs. Glock sums up the history of such theories this way:

> Such causal theories had been developed in the twenties by Russell on the one hand, and Ogden and Richards on the other. For Russell, speech is a means of producing in our hearers the images which are in us. The connection between a word and its meaning (an object, or a mental image of it in the case of memory statements) is a causal one. One understands a word actively if suitable circumstances make one use it, passively if hearing the word causes one to behave in suitable ways. Ogden and Richards held a similar theory: the meaning of a symbol is the thought which hearing it causes or which causes the uttering of it.

> (Glock 1996: 379)

If we accept such theories of meaning, Glock argues, 'we cannot do justice to the logical nature of intentionality, cannot do justice to the normative aspect of meaning, and obliterate the distinction between sense and nonsense' (Glock 1996: 379). Glock is of course right, in the obvious sense that we cannot clarify rule governed uses of language by reducing them to instrumental or causal accounts of meaning and understanding. Nevertheless, what is wrong about such accounts is rather their ambition to reduce *every* instance of meaning and understanding to causal factors. In other words, their problem is mainly a matter of *metalogic*, as they are indeed *theories* about the ultimate nature of meaning that as such clash inevitably against other cases of use and meaning. To avoid such an outcome, it is enough to *weaken* our (and Wittgenstein's) position and say that there are cases of language use that can be clarified through a *comparison* with instruments and tools rather than rules of a game, without further implying that this comparison is for this reason fundamental or the ultimate explanation of the nature of *everything* we call 'meaning'. Complementarily, we need to be careful to say that the comparison with rules and games is not fundamental either. This move is implicit in a non-metalogical account of meaning and language, less so if we are still trapped into a metalogical perspective that is looking for the essence of meaning. A move that Glock is not really keen to do, when he defines meaning as rule governed use and rules as a *necessary* condition of meaning (Glock 1996: 378).

However, even though we come to accept this instrumental account of language as a legitimate model for linguistic clarification, it can still be objected that, although PI 492 allows to consider cases like 'hey!'[58] as legitimate examples of *word* use, this does not necessarily mean that they have a *meaning*. For sure, instrumental uses are not rule governed. There is no convention governing the use of the word 'hey!' laid in advance. What makes the word effective to accomplish its purpose is something that has to do with its sound (it needs to be said out loud, and not, for instance, written on paper) and involves the way we naturally react to unexpected calls (like looking towards the source of the noise, for instance), as in the case of expressive words. Furthermore, and this is crucial, there is no way to talk about correctness in their case. At most, these words can *fail* to achieve the goal they are uttered for, or they may be more or less effective. It is even hard to talk about 'understanding' in any conventional sense here. The purpose of the word is to call somebody's attention, plausibly but not necessarily an interlocutor, and it is really hard to concede that the interlocutor, in order to be called, needs to understand the word. A man shouts 'hey!', a reaction immediately follows. At most, he needs to understand that the call is directed to *him*, but this presupposes that we know already that 'hey!' works as a call.

As there is no clear answer whether we can really say this kind of words to have a meaning, we might say that they are *borderline cases* of language, put in this regard in its periphery. What is crucial to accept, however, is that sometimes the concept of purpose constitutively concurs into building up the meaning of more complex words, even though never *exhaustively*. The use of proper names to call up somebody in the street, for instance, is akin to the function of some pure instrumental words like 'hey!'. Differently from 'hey!', proper names are embedded in a complex conventional web of practices that makes their use far way more multifaceted: names are not only vocative, they presuppose an act of baptism of sort, they are also and mainly used in descriptive talk, and so forth. Nevertheless, we indeed use names to call out people, and this capture an important aspect of their use, without which the role of proper names in our language changes considerably. Same goes for other examples, such as *derogatory words*. Insults are defined by their offensive character, they are used to achieve a particular effect, to make people offended and react consequently, in a way that we can admit that some words *encode* in themselves their original purpose, somehow independent from the speaker's intentions. This is to say that some words, for

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[58] It is relevant to notice that in the manuscript at the base of *Philosophical Grammar*, Wittgenstein had a different example, that is, the word 'boo' we use to give somebody a fright (MS 140: 24). It is not clear why he changed the example. Possibly, it concerns the fact that 'boo' has an element of *conventionality* the 'hey!' does not possess, as there is a convention establishing *that* a particular word is to be used to cause a fright (the same effect could be achieved, for instance, by a mere shout, or by the word *roar*, and so on). Strikingly, John Searle in his defense of the conventional nature of meaning and speech acts had to rule this kind of conventionality out: in a society of sadistic people used to shout 'bang' in each other's ears to cause pain, a convention governs this practice, yet 'the conventional device is a device to achieve a natural effect' (Searle 1969: 39). *Pace* Searle, the natural effect is precisely what interests us here as a source of linguistic meaning.

historical reasons, are always offensive, and should be consequently always avoided, as we cannot just use them for other purposes.[59] Crucially, to admit purpose in our explanation of the meaning of these words does not deny that these words are also rule governed, that can be learned or introduced by means of conventions and rules and that they need to be understood to get offended, differently from the rudimentary case of 'hey!'. Still, words might show the trace of a *history* that significantly affects their meaning independently from our intentions, and this phenomenon cannot be captured by rules alone.

Relevantly, as in the case of interjections and their comparison with the word 'pain', we can use the example of 'hey'! - and pure instrumentality more generally - as an example to clarify pieces of language that might cause philosophical perplexities. In the literature, a rather discussed example is the one of 'tallyho', a word used by fox hunters in Britain to signal that a fox has been sighted. This is clearly a case of a word used as a signal. BaH, as they move from a normative conception of meaning based on explicit definitions of the form 'X means Y', write with a certain hesitancy the following:

> Tallyho' does not readily lend itself to explanation in the form of "Tallyho" means . . .', and one cannot say that the meaning of 'Tallyho' is... One would indeed explain how 'Tallyho' is used by foxhunters: namely, as a cry to indicate that a fox has been sighted. Does this mean that it has a use but no meaning? That would be too swift. For one would be loath to say that it is *meaningless*. We might say that it has meaning but not *a* meaning.
>
> (Baker Hacker 2005a: 155)

BaH's analysis is by and large correct. 'Tally-ho' does not have 'a use but not a meaning', as for example Daniel Whiting, rather daringly, is ready to claim, when he says that the word, as long as it has only 'a perlocutionary function', is not normative and thus meaningless (Whiting 2008: 7).[60] However, we should not be hesitant and rightfully claim that the word has *a* meaning, and thus refuse the further distinction BaH introduce between having meaning and having *a* meaning. Such a distinction is not even correct, as we can say that things have meaning for us in our life - a gift from our partner, or a belonging of our now past grandfather, or a poem – not single *words*, at least, not in the way intended by Baker and Hacker. They are so careful because they are looking at this instance of language use from the lens of meaning as explained by a definition of the form 'X means Y', that they assume as the paradigm or the standard of what explaining meaning is, but there is no need to share the same assumption. Rather, 'tallyho' is a word that behaves similarly to 'hey!', as both their

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[59] I believe the N word can be easily advocated as a striking example here.
[60] As in the case of 'hm' above, Whiting dogmatically refuses to consider meaningful whatever falls outside his normative conception. The aim of this thesis is to refuse exactly this very attitude when it comes to understand meaning.

uses are described by mentioning their purpose, that consequently concurs into defining their meaning. 'Hey!' is much simpler, as it is spontaneous and immediate, whereas 'tallyho' is not, and its use is grounded onto a linguistic convention, as the word was chosen for that purpose and is valid only within a specific hunting practice. As such, it can be misused, if we use it, for instance, to signal a rabbit. The conventional nature of 'tallyho' implies that the word needs to be understood, whereas, as aforementioned, we cannot really talk about understanding in the case of 'hey!' With 'tallyho', then, both conventions and purpose concur into determining the meaning of the word. With no prejudices driven by a single conception of what meaning is supposed to be, we can simply *accept* it, and move on.

4. From Metalogic to Logical Pluralism

All in all, we can say that if we approach to meaning explanations non-metalogically and see how they usually look like, we find out different cases of language use that are hard to be described – totally or partially – in terms of rules. Most word uses are explained in terms of definitions, either ostensive or verbal, and most of the latter are understandable in terms of rule statements. However, we should not assume that this is always the case for every instance of language practice. We have seen that all those uses that are tethered into our immediate or natural reactions – interjections, expressive words – are not learnt by conventions or, at most, do not rely on rules alone to be employed. Same goes for instrumental words, whose nature is even rougher: they are defined by their effect and purpose, we use them as tools whose purpose can also depend on natural features of the word itself, such as its sound.

On one hand, we have *rules* and *conventions,* on the other, *expressiveness* and *purpose*: we have thus outlined the grammar of the concept of meaning advocating *pluralism* over reduction and rigidity, insofar as these four attributes are all employed for its clarification. Crucially, these features are not *antagonistic*: we can well admit that sometimes meaning can be a matter of purpose without denying that it can be a matter of rules, or the other way around, otherwise we would be – once again – playing metalogic. We have seen metalogical resistance in the hesitancy BaH manifest for determining whether 'tallyho' can be said to be meaningful or not, or in the categoricity Whiting shows in claiming that 'tallyho' is not meaningful because perlocutionary and 'hm' has no meaning because there is no rule governing its use. To avoid dogmatism and metalogic means also and primarily to avoid this sort of biased automatism in excluding or condoning examples of language use according to specific metalogical assumptions. Furthermore, these conceptual features can be employed even *simultaneously* to clarify the meaning of some words, as the examples of 'tallyho', 'pain' and derogatory words have shown: sometimes expressiveness can be well captured by

conventions and instrumental words have an effect in virtue of the convention through which they are introduced. The conceptual features we may employ to clarify the meaning of 'meaning' are thus, ultimately, *plural*, *non-antagonistic* and *non-exclusive*.[61]

Overall, we have thus outlined what it means to be non-metalogical when it comes to meaning. In the present account, no concept is privileged, no definition is taken to work as a universal principle: rules, even though greatly important, do not constitute a lynchpin for a general account of meaning and language and NCM has no grounding role in Wittgenstein's philosophy. Moreover, we have shown how much a non-metalogical approach, in virtue of its rejection of any universal and single principle, directly implies a pluralistic account of the grammar of meaning: in fact, once we assume that we are not required to pursue any chimerical exceptionless metalogical principle to capture every instance of meaningful use, we are well ready to admit that language and meaning, as complex as they are, may require more than just one single conceptual resource to be clarified.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have explored whether we can formulate alternatives to rules in clarifying the concept of meaning by focusing on the different ways we explain our words use, and we found – with the help of Wittgenstein's text – expressiveness and instrumentalities as further aspects of our concept of meaning. We thus gave a little substance to a non-metalogical approach to meaning that, as long as it does not rely on any single principle to capture the totality of instances of certain concepts, opens the space to allow different cases of language than the ones governed only or mainly by rules. In the next chapters, we will develop further this point by focusing more on expressiveness, the area of understanding and meaning that is thoroughly and obsessively explored by Wittgenstein's later phase of his thought. We will see that Wittgenstein believed that the experience we have of words is an unavoidable feature of our life with language, and together, it works as an insightful feature to test and question the supposed metalogical privilege normativism attributes to rules to account for meaning and understanding.

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[61] My interpretation resemblances here Gordon Baker detailed analysis on the concept of *picture*, or *conception* (Baker 2004: 266-269). My perspective is by and large consistent with his, with an important caveat: Baker believes that conceptions are 'locally exclusionary', that is, we cannot use them *together* to investigate the same aspects of language (Baker 2004: 268). We have however seen that we can indeed use different conceptions – rules and purpose, rules and expressions - to capture the actual complexity of words' use.

Part Two

Beyond Rules: The Case of Experiencing Meaning

> The words are like the acorn
>
> from which an *oak tree* can grow
>
> CV: 60

4. Meaning and Experience: A Wittgensteinian Reappraisal

Introduction

In the previous chapters, we have discussed Wittgenstein's rejection of metalogic and explored its significance to understand both Wittgenstein's late philosophy and his approach to the concept of meaning. Furthermore, we have seen that if we fully embrace a non-metalogical method we might come to sketch a pluralistic account of meaning where rules do not constitute an overarching principle. Interpretatively, the opportunity that lies open to view is now considerable: we have the chance to read Wittgenstein's remarks more freely, without the urge to find any normativist insight in everything he says. Now, in the second part of this thesis, I will further develop this point by reconsidering Wittgenstein's lengthy discussion about the concept of *experience* in relation to meaning. I will argue that Wittgenstein's interest in experience is genuinely motivated by the fact that experience sometimes *can* be advocated to capture some aspects of our concept of meaning, beyond and against any normativist temptation of reduction.

The reason why we need to take this option seriously is because Wittgenstein himself did so. In a striking passage from the *Big Typescript*, we find Wittgenstein willing to admit that there are *uses* of the word 'meaning' that seem to designate a particular *feeling* going on in our mind. The passage is the following:

> What do we want to understand by the 'meaning' of a word? A characteristic feeling that accompanies the uttering (hearing) of the word? (James's and-feeling, if-feeling). Or do we want to use the word 'meaning' completely differently; and say, for instance, that two words have the same meaning if the same grammatical rules apply to both? We can do as we like, but we must be aware that these are two completely different uses (meanings) of the word 'meaning'. [...] If meaning is a feeling, then meaning isn't established by the explanation, but it is brought about by it, say as an illness is by certain kind of food.
>
> (BT: 29/PG: 60)

Here Wittgenstein detects two uses of the word 'meaning', and together, two distinct conceptions: on one hand, meaning can be said to be a feeling accompanying a particular word, on the other hand, meaning can be defined through the rules for the use of our words. Garth Hallett, one of the

few that noticed this plurality in the concept of meaning in Wittgenstein, calls these conceptions *operational* and *mental* respectively (Hallett 1967: 94). We are surely familiar with the former option, insofar as it is the one that concurs into shaping the normative conception of meaning we have addressed in the previous chapters. Less so in the case of the mental conception, according to which meaning is substantially related to a sort of mental, psychological content - or *feeling*. It is important to stress that this option is not immediately discarded as false or nonsensical. Rather, Wittgenstein invites us to 'do as we like': he seems to have no preference on which one is better or more correct as a conception of meaning. Only, we should be aware not to *mix them up*. Wittgenstein's point then is that there might well be a problem, a problem that however is not related to the idea that meaning can be a feeling, that sometimes we use the word 'meaning' to talk about our inner experiences, but rather to the fact that we can fall into confusion if we are not careful enough to separate these two conceptions from each other.

The plausibility of this insight is however thwarted by both the general vagueness of the remark – what feeling are we talking about precisely?[62] – and its infelicitous characterization of this type of understanding in strictly *causal* terms. It is indeed hard to think of understanding as an *effect* of sort, equivalent to a food poisoning – in Wittgenstein's example – or to the psychotropic effects of a drug. We have seen in the case of instrumental words that their value lies precisely in their peripheral and borderline nature: it is hard to talk about understanding when we turn our head in direction of a call. We might understand things better under hallucination - about ourselves or our lives - but it is just nonsensical to think that a *linguistic* content can be transmitted via chemical or physical means. It is then not a case that Wittgenstein simply dropped this causal account. Nevertheless, he did not abandon the idea that understanding might well be described in mental terms. There are other remarks and passages from the early '30s to prove it. In the *Philosophical Grammar,* Wittgenstein says that 'in certain of their applications the words 'understand' and 'mean' refer to a psychological reaction' (PG: 41). In Ambrose's notes, Wittgenstein is reported to say that 'there may be a sense of 'understanding' in which the word refers to a state of mind' (AWL: 49), straight after he remarks that he wanted to draw 'ten or twelve pictures of the use of the words 'understanding and meaning' (AWL: 48). Understanding as a state of mind is arguably one of such pictures. Finally, in the *Brown Book*, Wittgenstein opposes meaning as a state of mind to meaning as the role of a word in the language, without opting for any of them (BB: 78). None of these passages seems to be dismissive on the idea that meaning might be a feeling or a state of mind of some sort. It can be argued then that in the early '30s Wittgenstein had two conceptions of meaning in mind: one based on rules and

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[62] The quoted remark mentions in brackets James theory of the hypothetical feeling accompanying the use of our words. We will encounter James again while addressing more generally the notion of atmosphere of words. See in particular note 8.

conventions, the other apparently *mentalistic,* with meaning figuring as a mental reality of some sort.

In the *Investigations*, things are not so clear-cut and get more complicated. As a matter of fact, there is no direct mention to experience as an alternative conception to rules for meaning and understanding. Nevertheless, how to conceive the relation between our inner world, meaning and the objectivity of language and thought remains an undeniably pervasive theme throughout the book. The fact that familiar words do acquire a sort of experiential or psychological tone is represented – we shall see – by the concept of the *atmosphere* of a word. In the second part of the *Investigations* – and generally throughout the entirety of his late production – Wittgenstein keeps investigating, almost obsessively, what he calls the experience of the meaning of our words, a concept explicitly introduced as a corollary of the discussion on aspect-seeing (PPF 261). However, compared to the writings of the early '30s, he seems to be far way more hesitant to depict these cases of language experience as examples of an alternative conception of meaning not based on rules. He also ends up saying that his interest in the concept of experience is not related to the concept of meaning (RPP I 358). This is by no means conclusive, as it all depends on *which* conception of meaning Wittgenstein is referring to in that particular paragraph. Yet, it clearly shows how much Wittgenstein's writings might be elusive regarding this topic.

As a matter of fact, what can be seen as a sort of exegetical *indeterminacy* of Wittgenstein's writings about experience and meaning contributed to cement those interpretations that are totally hostile to any concession to experience in the explanation of linguistic meaning. In fact, to the ears of most interpreters the reintroduction of the mental into the domain of meaning was seen as an intolerable relapse into *mentalism,* that is, the idea that meaning and understanding are reducible to mysterious – inner - mental entities. Anti-mentalism, equally supported by Frege and the early Wittgenstein[63] – in a certain sense a grounding milestone of early analytic philosophy[64] - is somehow intuitively justifiable, insofar as reducing meaning to the mental seems to threaten the very possibility of communication: in fact, if meaning is something mental - thus subjective and idiosyncratic - we can never know whether other people mean the same while using the very same words. Wittgenstein's alleged anti-mentalism is best represented by Baker and Hacker's commentary, where it is argued that understanding has nothing to do with experience and inner processes; rather, it is *an ability,* the capacity of using words correctly according to rules (Baker

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[63] Anti-mentalism and its broader twin, anti-psychologism, is introduced by Frege in the introduction of his *Foundations of Arithmetic,* where it is argued that mathematics and logic are not part of psychology and psychological observations and methods cannot define logical objects (Frege 1980: x). Wittgenstein, on the other hand, is clear in ruling out psychology from his own philosophy in the *Tractatus* (TLP 4.1121).

[64] Analytic tradition as well as phenomenology, we may add. Husserl, in his *Logical Investigations*, inaugurates his own philosophical system by dismissing psychologism as a viable theoretical option.

Hacker 2005a, Ch. XVII). This line of interpretation is perfectly summed up by Hanjo Glock in his *Dictionary*:

> Wittgenstein's later approach [...] develops a non-psychologistic account of understanding. [...] Understanding an utterance is not having an experience, nor is it anything else which happens in the hearer's mind. Rather, it is an ability, which is manifest in how the hearer reacts to the utterance.
>
> (Glock 1996: 73)

Psychologism and mentalism are thus avoided, insofar as understanding is taken *ultimately* to mean to be able to use words according to specific rules, and to react accordingly if needed. There is no space left for experience for our concept of understanding. In addition, the fact that Wittgenstein – in the early '30s - seemed to flirt with the idea that understanding might be conceived of as a family of cases among which experience can play a part is downgraded by these authors as an exaggeration that was successively abandoned (Hacker 1996: 335, Glock 2006: 374).

Notably, this line of reading – shared, *mutatits mutandis*, by many other interpreters, such as Bouveresse or Schroeder (see Bouveresse 2007 and Schroeder 2010) - frames the problem of experience and meaning in the terms of what I believe to be a *false dichotomy*. This quotation from Glock perfectly describes it:

> Experiences of meaning are not essential to linguistic understanding [...] Wittgenstein does not intend to reinstate the idea that understanding a word is a mental episode. And while experiences of secondary meaning raise intriguing philosophical puzzles, they hardly constitute the core of linguistic meaning and understanding.
>
> (Glock 2016: 82)

While denying that experience is not essential to linguistic understanding – it is not a condition of possibility of meaning and thus it does not play any foundational role - Glock explains that there is no space in Wittgenstein to conceive of understanding as a mental episode. As a matter of fact, Glock conflates experience with its mentalistic interpretation, according to which experience is a mental episode that explains every case of linguistic meaning and understanding. In this lies the false dichotomy: according to Glock, either we introduce experience – *and thus* mentalism – in our account of language, or we do not, and once we see that mentalism is untenable, we should expunge experience from our account of understanding and meaning. However, we can easily point out that there might be still a space for experience in the description of language and meaning, without relapsing into mentalism and its foundational demands. According to the pluralistic – non-

metalogical - account of meaning we propose in this thesis, we can well concede that there are aspects of its concept that can be indeed captured by a conception based on experience rather than rules, without being committed to the mentalist claim that experience is an essential feature of everything we call 'meaning'.

The aim of this chapter and the next will be to give substance to this interpretative line. All in all, we have two problems relating to the general topic about experience and meaning in Wittgenstein. First, we need to prove that in his late philosophy there is a positive account of experience that is related - but not reducible to – his well-known distaste for mentalist reasoning. Second, we need to understand how, and in which sense these experiential phenomena can be instances of understanding and meaning. The former problem is addressed in this chapter, whereas the latter will be the object of the next. What is at stake in these chapters may be also called - in Wittgensteinian terms – an investigation about the grammar of the concepts of meaning, understanding and experience. As such, it is important to notice that it is not only the meaning of the concepts of meaning and understanding alone what is put into question: the concept of *experience* itself needs to be clarified accordingly, as it is not immediately clear what we mean when we say that an experience of sort might be involved in understanding language.

This chapter has the following structure. First, I will examine Wittgenstein's argument against mentalism. There is indeed a strong anti-mentalist view throughout Wittgenstein's late philosophy. However, I will show that mentalism is conceived as a misleading picture of meaning and experience that is rooted in particular expressions whose grammar is at first unclear. Wittgenstein *negative* attitude towards mentalism cannot then be understood without a corresponding *positive* account of such a grammar. This account will then be the object of the second section, where I will illustrate all the shapes and different characterizations Wittgenstein's discussion of the role of experience in language use assumes. We will thus have all the elements to wonder, in the next chapter, how and in which sense meaning sometimes can be understood in terms of experience.

1. The Negative Side: Wittgenstein's Dismissal of Mentalism

Wittgenstein's dismissive attitude towards mentalism is resolutely present throughout his late writings. His aim is not only to discard mentalism as an implausible theory of meaning – a theory that commits to mental entities accompanying the use of our words as an explanation of their meaning – rather, he tries repeatedly to show *why* we tend to relapse into mentalism every time we come to investigate language and the role experience might play in understanding. Mentalism is thus conceived as a determinate *picture* of meaning which is insidiously appealing, an appeal that is rooted in a misunderstanding of the logic of certain expressions that we mostly use to describe – we

shall see - our relation to language and certain words we are familiar with. It is then important to notice that there is no dismissal of mentalism without a contemporarily *positive* account of the logic of those incriminated expressions whose misunderstanding makes us relapse into mentalism in the first place. As such, in this thesis these two moments – the criticisms of a mentalism and the positive account of the expressions in which it is rooted – are treated separately only for a matter of clarity in the exposition, even though in the texts they are mostly investigated and developed together.

This section is organized as follows. First, I will discuss some interesting remarks throughout Wittgenstein's late writings that clearly show how much for him mentalism is the result of a tendency to misinterpret the logical status of certain expressions. This allows to sketch a possible *genealogy* of mentalism, that is, a plausible account on how mentalism originates and acquires a grip on us. Second, I will illustrate a passage in the *Nachlass* where Wittgenstein elaborates a way to avoid any mentalistic temptation in the description of the meaning of expressive gestures. The result of this discussion already anticipates an important aspect of meaningful experience: the fact that the experience certain word uses – or gestures – evoke in us is *immanent* to them.

1.1 The Genealogy of Mentalism

In the early '30s, immediately after the so called phenomenological phase attested in the *Philosophical Remarks*, Wittgenstein started being interested in the grammar of the concepts of meaning (*meinen*) and understanding. The first sections of both the *Big Typescript* and the *Philosophical Grammar* are devoted to clarifying their grammar, and together, to dismiss any mentalist temptation.

The following passage is particularly eloquent in highlighting the strategy adopted by Wittgenstein against mentalism:

> Is it legitimate to ask here: 'What did you mean?'. This question is answered by a proposition. If this kind of question is not legitimate then meaning is – so to speak – amorphous. And then 'I mean something by the proposition' is similar in form to: 'This proposition is useful', or 'This proposition affects my life'.

> (BT: 5)

When we ask somebody what he meant with a certain proposition we are usually asking for an *explanation*. Such an explanation consists of nothing more than *another* proposition that shall help dissolve the misunderstanding. This constitutes the legitimate use of the question 'what do you mean?' However, according to Wittgenstein the question can be illegitimate - and the use of the verb 'meaning' called *amorphous* - when there is no misunderstanding to solve and we are rather looking

for a mental *content* added to the propositional sign that makes it meaningful. The only meaningful use such a question might have in this second case is then equivalent to that of asking whether the proposition has actually a use in the life of the speaker, whether it affects his life in a way or the other.

Wittgenstein's aim in this passage is thus clear: his target is a preconception of meaning as a posited mental act or content *beyond* the proposition and *external* to language – 'an amorphous[65] sense' (BT: 21) - able to make the propositional sign meaningful. This preconception is rooted in a misunderstanding of how the question 'what do you mean by the proposition?' – and its complementary assertion, 'I mean something by the proposition' – actually work. Either if we ask for another proposition as an explanation of what the speaker means or if we want to state generally that the proposition is meaningful as much as it is useful and affects our life, there is no need to step *outside* language and look for mental *things* to make sense of meaning and understanding. So, the discussion shows that a certain mythology concerning meaning and understanding – the one according to which meaning is a *thing* accompanying signs - is rooted into familiar expressions whose use philosophers tend to misrepresent. As such, this mythology is by definition *mentalistic*, insofar as it takes the act of meaning something as a mental mysterious act conferring meaning to signs. We then start to envisage that mentalism, according to Wittgenstein, is not a thesis that crops out of nowhere, it is rather a misunderstanding of some ordinary expressions whose use is not totally perspicuous.

In the *Investigations,* we find the same strategy against the idea that words have always an *atmosphere* accompanying them and constituting their meaning. In fact, Wittgenstein defines the conception of a psychological atmosphere in clearly mentalistic terms as something that needs to be *added* to the sign to make it alive (Z 128) and he describes it as 'fishy' (Z 27). In PI 117, the tendency to think of meaning as an aura - an atmosphere – surrounding the words we are familiar with is directly opposed to Wittgenstein's suggestion that we should rather focus on how the words are used in the context of their significant employment.[66] The fact that mentalism can be formulated through

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[65] It is unclear why the sense in question is labelled as amorphous. Plausibly, as it means literally *shapeless*, the term wants to evoke a sense of immateriality and abstractness – something ethereal, gaseous, hard to fix by means of language as it is meant to be the condition of language itself. The term, however, was dropped in the later writings.

[66] PI 117 is discussed by Stefan Giesewetter as a remark where Wittgenstein challenges and dismisses what he indeed calls 'the atmosphere conception of meaning' (see Giesewetter 2018). The aim of Giesewetter paper is to preserve what he calls 'therapeutic readings' of Wittgenstein, such as Diamond's, from an apparent paradox, that is, the one according to which the conception of meaning as use is to be assumed as a leading principle for the clarification of language, despite the fact that these readings deny that such leading principles are actually at work in Wittgenstein's philosophy. I do not want to discuss in further detail the whole point of Giesewetter discussion. Only, I shall point out that there is no evidence to think that PI 117 suggestion to look for how sentences are used is to be considered as a direct criticism to the 'atmosphere conception', as Giesewetter

different expressions or images should not be surprising. As the following remark effectively points out, mentalism covers a cluster of seemingly different expressions we formulate to pin down the fact that words and propositions have a meaning in our language:

> 'But the words, significantly uttered, have, after all, not only a surface, but also a dimension of depth!' After all, something different does take place when they are uttered significantly from when they are merely uttered. – How I expressed this is not the point. Whether I say that in the first case they have depth; or that something goes on in me, in my mind, as I utter them; or that they have an atmosphere – it always come to the same thing.
>
> (PI 594)

This passage is important for two main reasons. First, it makes clear that the psychological atmosphere is the same picture as the one according to which words are said to have a dimension of *depth* – expression already found in the *Big Typescript* (BT: 7) – or that according to which words are to be accompanied by a process in us. In other words, these are different ways to phrase and formulate the same philosophical picture, the one that conceives of meaning as something extraneous and added to the dead signs to make them meaningful, that is, mentalism. This picture is so attractive, Wittgenstein notices, that we are tempted to 'fabricate an atmosphere apropos everything' (PI 609). Second, it draws a sort of *genealogy* of mentalism, insofar as the interlocutor argues that there is a difference when we utter words significantly from when we do not, parrot-wise for instance, or as a joke. This point is stressed even more in another paragraph, where Wittgenstein says that 'the picture of a special atmosphere forced itself upon us' once we think that we can say sentences as quotations, as jokes, as a practice in elocution, and so on, so that we are convinced that we really *meant* our words in a special way (PI 607).

Mentalism, thus, is genealogically rooted in the fact that we can use words and sentences to do different things and in different ways, so that we are led to think that when we mean our words to be serious, and not as a joke or ironically, this difference needs to be projected onto the level of our minds, a deeper grounding level. What is crucial is that this difference can be (apparently) *described*, we can use sentences to express it – for example, when we say 'I mean it', as in the case discussed above from the *Big Typescript* – and it is precisely *this* that leads us astray and makes us fall into mentalism, our ordinary employment of expressions whose grammar is unclear. The aim of philosophy will be then to clarify the use of these sentences to block any mentalist temptation. Notably, it is important to stress that according to this perspective the word *atmosphere* is not by

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assumes. Furthermore, the dismissal of such a conception requires more than a simple appeal to the ordinary use of our words, as the following discussion shows.

itself *defective*, as if it has no other meaning than the one it acquires within the mentalist picture. If it were so, we should expunge it from our vocabulary – from our language – once we become dissatisfied with mentalism. Wittgenstein's view is however different: the word indeed has a proper use, only, it is not the use the mentalist believes it has. This is revealingly shown by the way Wittgenstein ties up his discussion on the atmosphere of words with this comment: 'the description of an atmosphere is a special application of language, for special purposes' (PI 609). In the next section, we will see what use it ultimately has.

So, we have quickly outlined an account on the genealogy of the mentalist picture: it embodies the tendency to project the difference between different language games – or speech acts – such as using words seriously, as jokes, as mere quotation, parrot-wise, ironically, and so forth - on the grounding level of the mind, once we are misled by some expressions whose grammar is not for us immediately perspicuous. At this point, we might now ask why mentalism is for Wittgenstein problematic: why should we avoid any mentalistic interpretation of understanding and meaning? Wittgenstein's argument against mentalism is quite traditional[67] and can be summed up this way: if we reduce meaning to the domain of the mental, as long as the mental is private and thus *idiosyncratic*, it cannot be intersubjectively shared. As such, we could not explain communication.

Let us see more precisely how Wittgenstein frames this point. After introducing the concept of atmosphere as 'a corona of its past uses' and exhorting to 'take it seriously', he promptly comments that 'it cannot explain *intentionality'* (*Intention*, in German). What he means with that is explained in the subsequent lines:

> If the possible uses of a word are before our minds in half-tones as we say or hear it – this goes just for *us*. But we communicate with other people without knowing whether they have these experiences too.
>
> (PPF 35)

This means that whatever kind of associations with past uses words might have for us, this does not constitute a necessary condition for communication to be successful, as the experiences others may associate with the same words is never into question. Few paragraphs later, Wittgenstein remarks this point by saying that 'meaning is not an experience we have while hearing or uttering a word' (PPF 37).

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[67] We find an analogous distaste for experience in Frege's *Das Gedanke*, where the privacy of inner representations is quickly dismissed as a model to understand the objectivity of thought. Among other things, Frege claims that every idea has only one bearer, and thus cannot constitutively be shared (Frege 1956: 299-302).

Once again, it is important to notice that he by no means denies that words *may* have an atmosphere – whatever it might be – or that we should discard its very concept as a sort of philosophical delusion or sophistry. His point is rather narrower: whatever function the atmosphere of words might have, this is not related to the condition of possibility of communication, associated by Wittgenstein more to what he famously calls 'an agreement in the form of life' (PI 241). Mentalism, in this regard, tends to *explain* communication by reducing its condition of possibility to the realm of the mental, but this is misleading, as the success of communication would then be bound to whatever goes on in our mind or in the others' mind when we speak and hear. Our talk about the atmosphere words evoke in us then makes good sense: only, we should not think at the atmosphere as a sort of experiential condition of communication, as a metalogical principle over which grounding a theory of intentionality and meaning.

1.2 The Immanence of Meaning

In the preceding section, we have sketched a genealogy of mentalism and argued that it is rooted in a substantial misunderstanding of words and expressions whose use is hard to describe and thus risks being misleading. These expressions are those like 'I really mean it', 'This word has a particular atmosphere for me', and so forth. These expressions, we might say, are conceived by the mentalist *dualistically*, that is, they are used to give expression to the idea that meaning is something mental *attached* to the sign and *accompanying* its use. Meaning as an atmosphere of sort is thus split from the sign and projected at the level of the mind. Now, I want to show that one of Wittgenstein's strategy to avoid mentalism is to refuse any dualistic way to frame the relationship between words and the experience they express.

This strategy is shown in the *Big Typescript* and the *Philosophical Grammar*, while addressing the semantic nature of what in the previous chapter we have called *expressive* words. Wittgenstein seems to think that sometimes gestures and words acquire a specific meaning when they are used *expressively*, that is, when they become expressions of particular feelings or sensations. Let us think at those words we use almost exclusively to express our feelings, such as 'oh' or 'hurrah'. As we have seen already in the third chapter (see chapter 3.2), when we use these words we certainly are not *describing* our sensations or feelings, nor we are *referring to* them. Rather, feelings and sensations can be read *within* the words we use to express them and in this lies their being *meaningful* in our life. This is, ultimately, Wittgenstein's point when he says that 'oh' does not really *mean* a sigh, it actually *is* a sigh, it is what we call a sigh in our language (PG: 67). However, it can be still said that the expressive power of these words lies more on the *tone* or *intonation* we 'load' them with, or the gestures, cries and facial expressions usually accompanying their utterance. This solution, however,

is discarded by Wittgenstein as it still presupposes a *dualistic* conception of the relation between the feeling expressed and the words we use to express it, with the risk of relapsing into mentalism. According to this conception, the feeling is thought to *accompany* the latter and is identifiable *independently* of its verbal expression. In other words, this would mean to admit that the relation between the experience - or the feeling – and the words we use to express it is *external*, and this is exactly what Wittgenstein wants to question in the following passage:

> For my purposes I could replace the sensation the word is said to express by the intonation and gestures with which the word is used.
>
> I might say: in many cases of understanding a word involves being able to use it on certain occasions in a special tone of voice.
>
> You might say that certain words are only pegs to hang intonations on.
>
> But instead of the intonation and the accompanying gestures, I might for my own purposes treat the word itself as a gesture.
>
> (PG: 66)

Here Wittgenstein draws a sort of step by step strategy to dismiss the dualistic conception framing any form of mentalism. As a matter of fact, our talk about experiences, or, in the case of primitive examples like 'oh', about sensations, suggests that idea that there is something *underneath* the sign that *accompanies* its use and makes it meaningful. This idea renders meaning a sort of double by splitting the phenomenon of significance in two parts, the shadowy meaning on one hand and the inert sign on the other. The first move to stop this tendency is to dismiss our talk about sensations and replace it with a one based only on *intonations* and *gestures* the word is used with. Gestures and intonations accompany, for instance, the reading of a poem, which can be more or less expressive according to the tone of voice and the whole context of facial expressions and body language that accompany the reading.

Nonetheless, even this formulation is residually dualistic, as we might than say that the expressive meaning of the word and its peculiar understanding resides in the accompanying gestures or in its tone. Rather, we should say the word *itself* is a gesture. As such, Wittgenstein gets finally rid of any duplication. The expressivity of certain words, like gestures, is inscribed directly *within* their use, in an important sense it is totally *immanent* to it. In the *Big Typescript*, this point is even clearer when Wittgenstein notices that the word 'not' does not make a rebuffing gesture, rather it *is* such a gesture (BT: 37): the impression of a rebuffing gesture is not then *brought about* secondarily by the word, as an *effect* of an independent linguistic cause, but it is rather *read within* the sentence, in an important

and legitimate sense it *makes up* its meaning and our understanding of it. From a two-step conception that detects an experience to associate to a word, Wittgenstein moves then towards a conception of meaning of expressive words where the inner they express - or they evoke in the hearer - is immediately *encoded* in the words themselves. Conceptually, the relation between such words – or gestures – and their experience is *internal*, that is, there is no identifiable inner experience describable independently of the familiarity of the word we use to express it.

This view about the immanence of meaning of certain expressive words and gestures will become pivotal to understand how and why experience sometimes can be thought as a kind of understanding. In particular, it is a view that tend to capture those cases of language use where meaning, we could say, is pure *singularity*, that is, it is pure expression that cannot be captured by any system of *rules* and thus replicated independently of the very material embodiment – words or gestures – we use to express it. This will be even more evident, we shall see, when it comes to understand what it means to understand *musical themes*. For now, it is sufficient to point out how much this positive view about the relation between meaning and experience in the case of expressive words complementarily crops out of an attempt to dismiss the dualistic frame of mentalist thinking. Again, there is no negative attitude towards experience in Wittgenstein that is not at the same time balanced by a positive account about its role in the functioning of language.

2. The Positive Side: Experience as A Constitutive Aspect of Language

In this section, we will start sketching the positive account of experience Wittgenstein develops in his later writings, in particular in the reflections of the late '40s on the philosophy of psychology. We will first focus on the notion of *familiarity*, a concept that is somehow always in the background every time Wittgenstein addresses what it means for words to be experienced in a certain way. In fact, the experience of meaning is always related with languages that are familiar. Familiarity is particularly important, as it implies that for Wittgenstein there *might* be experience involved for every kind of familiar language use, not only – as in the case discussed in the previous section – for expressive words. Second, I will describe in which sense familiar words may be said to have an atmosphere of sort. Third, I will connect Wittgenstein's discussion of the atmosphere with that on the *character* of proper names. From this discussion, it will become evident that experience of words in Wittgenstein's writings is rather pervasive.

2.1 Familiarity

The positive account of experience Wittgenstein sketches throughout his late philosophy is strongly connected with 'the familiarization with one's mother tongue' we acquire once we fully master it, as

suggested by Carolina Scotto (Scotto 2019: 129). More generally, languages we are familiar with acquire an experiential dimension that foreign languages do not possess. Already in the *Philosophical Grammar*, Wittgenstein tends to stress the difference between familiar and unfamiliar languages when it comes to distinguish two different senses of the word 'understanding':

> In certain of their applications the words 'understanding', 'mean' refer to a psychological reaction while hearing, reading, uttering etc. a sentence. In that case understanding is the phenomenon that occurs when I hear a sentence in a familiar language and not when I hear a sentence in a strange language.

> (PG: 41)

There are certain uses of the word 'understanding' that refer to a psychological reaction, a phenomenon that occurs in us when we hear or pronounce words in a familiar language. Notably, this is one of the few remarks where Wittgenstein seems to suggest that understanding *can* be something mental – or psychological – and this may happen only when we deal with cases of language use we are familiar with. Words to us extraneous are not capable of bringing about any understanding in this psychological – or experiential – sense.

In the *Big Typescript*, we find another reference to the difference between familiar and unfamiliar languages, formulated as a distinction in the way we 'take words':

> Anyone reading a sentence in a familiar language takes the various types of words in different ways even though their appearance and sound don't differ in kind. We completely forget that "not" and "table" and "green", seen as sounds or written images, don't differ from each other very much, and we see this clearly only in a foreign language.

> (BT: 37)

Despite their acoustic or graphic uniformity, when we read a sentence in a familiar language we tend to take words differently according to their type, a phenomenon that does not happen in the case of a foreign language. Arguably, the way we 'take' words while reading is related to the fact that a language we fully master is a language where we immediately recognize words according to their grammatical type. 'Table' and 'green', in the context of a well-formed sentence, are immediately seen respectively as a substantive and as an adjective. This recognition is mirrored in the way we read the words in a sentence, in the tone we use to stress the grammatical distinctions, the pauses between a word and another, and so forth. Crucially, for Wittgenstein, what looks like an ability to distinguish words according to their grammatical types can be described at the same time in psychological terms, as if we really *experience* the words according to the role they play in the sentence syntax.

This reading is confirmed by another remark, in the *Philosophy of Psychology*, where Wittgenstein claims that we can indeed experience words 'substantively or adjectivally', even though, he promptly adds, this experience is not to be confused as a conceptual condition for the word meaning (RPP I 876).

Overall, Wittgenstein seems to believe that after we learn a language and we start successfully using it in the context of our life, the words we use become *familiar*, and this familiarity is manifested in the way we - *sometimes* - experience them. Familiar words acquire an experiential dimension of sort. At this point, it is important to point out that, first, this experiential dimension is not necessarily confined to the specific language games where expressivity is fundamental – such as in the case of expressive words or poetic composition. Rather, it manifests a *generality* comprising every instance of language use where familiarity influences our relationship with language. On the other hand, this generality does not imply *ubiquity*: it is simply not true that such experiences are always present while we speak or read, as Wittgenstein himself is eager to notice (RPP I 324). Carolina Scotto claims that these experiences are only 'potentially ubiquitous' (Scotto 2019: 129), but this would concede too much: as it will be shown in the next chapter, there might well be cases of language games where experience does not play any role, consistently with a non-metalogical account where universality is always to be discarded. More generally, it might be useful to notice the lack of ubiquity of this experiential dimension of language is confirmed by the logic of the concept of familiarity itself: not every familiar thing gives us a *feeling* of familiarity, that is, familiarity is not *always* manifested by a particular feeling, as Wittgenstein writes in the *Investigations* (PI 596).

2.2 The Atmosphere of Words

To describe the experiential dimension that familiar words evoke in us, Wittgenstein uses the word *atmosphere*.[68] In the previous section, we have noticed that mentalism is (also) rooted in a misunderstanding of the employment of this word. Now, it is time to give a positive account of it, as its nature remains *prima facie* rather obscure.

In the *Investigations* and the later writings, Wittgenstein repeatedly wonders what is for a word to have an atmosphere. To talk about the same phenomenon, he also says words to have a *face* (PPF 38, 294), a *character* (PPF 38), an *aroma* (RPP I 243) or a *physiognomy* (PI 568). The famous discussion about the *if – feeling*, that is, that feeling that accompanies the word *if* and functions as a model of its

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[68] Wittgenstein uses two words in German, *Dunstkreis* and *Athmosphaere*. The former is usually translated also as *aura*. There is no constitutive semantic distinction between the two terms, as they are used for the same purpose. If a distinction needs to be drawn, the latter has a more negative employment, as it is mainly present when Wittgenstein wants to target mentalism.

meaning, according to William James[69] - is also brought up to clarify our talk about the atmosphere of familiar words (PPF 39 – 44). It is also worth stressing that the discussion about the if feeling and the atmosphere is linked to the one about expressive playing in music (PPF 44 - 48). More generally, Part VI of the second book of the *Investigations* is revealing in this regard: here the *if* feeling is introduced as a comparison for the atmosphere, and the expression in music is addressed to discuss the same issue as the one of the *if* feeling. We are here dealing with overlapping concepts, more than ever, and it is our aim to untie them and offer a synoptic overview.

If we focus on the notion of atmosphere alone, it is still hard to find a clear definition capturing its nature. Possibly, by giving a definition Wittgenstein was afraid to *reify*, so to speak, this peculiar experience and thus open the space for a relapse into mentalism again, according to which the mental is always a *thing* accompanying our words. On the contrary, Wittgenstein proceeds more than ever rhapsodically, by means of examples and case studies, rather than clear definitions. We can say that the word is used in connection to three main issues: the *picture* familiar words evoke in us, defined in relation to their *use*, the *soul* of expressive words and the *character* of proper names. The notion is thus complex and cover several different topics that at first sight seem hard to connect. However, we will see that it is no coincidence that Wittgenstein keeps using the same word in all these different contexts.

If we look at the few passages where Wittgenstein formulates a rudimentary definition for the atmosphere, it seems to designate a sort of *trace* the uses of familiar words leave in us. The atmosphere is indeed defined as 'a corona of faintly indicated uses' familiar words carry in our minds, the equivalent of 'shadowy drawings' depicting a figure of a painting in different contexts (PPF 35). Furthermore, in the *Last Writings*, it is analogously defined as 'a picture of a word's use' (LW II: 39), even though this picture is not to be conceived as something we necessarily *imagine* while using words (RPP I 243). We can thus have an atmosphere without mental representations. It seems then that Wittgenstein was committed to the following: when a word is learnt to be applied in several different contexts, becoming by this way familiar, it acquires an atmosphere, a sort of psychological *flavour* that captures the many ways we are *used* to apply the word in its varied contexts of use. This atmosphere is not always present in the context of everyday communication, as if it were accompanying *every* word we use. Wittgenstein is indeed generally dismissive when it

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[69] In the *Principles of Psychology*, James argues that there is a *feeling* accompanying the word *if* that is largely overlooked, as we tend to recognize objects as paradigms of meaning only in the case of substantives. He says: 'we ought to say a feeling of *and*, a feeling of *if*, a feeling of *but*, and a feeling of *by*, quite as readily as we say a feeling of blue or a feeling of cold. Yet we do not: so inveterate has our habit become of recognizing the existence of the substantive parts alone, that language almost refuses to lend itself to any other use' (James 2007: 151).

comes to understand whether experience always accompanies our words (PPF 272),[70] as already shown – incidentally - while addressing familiarity. Only, there are circumstances where we talk about the atmosphere of our words and their meaning as something they have *absorbed*, and we need to account for that (PPF 294).

In the *Nachlass*, we also find a remark where the meaning of the expression 'the word has an atmosphere' is directly addressed. This is what Wittgenstein comments:

> 'The word has an atmosphere'. – A figurative expression; but quite comprehensible in certain contexts. For example, the word 'knoif' has a different atmosphere from the word 'knife'. They have the same meaning, *in so far* as both are names for the same kind of objects.
>
> (LW I 726)

The expression we use to say that a word has an atmosphere is *figurative*, Wittgenstein says. It cannot be otherwise, as any literal interpretation of it does not make sense: the planet Earth has an atmosphere, not words. However, this figurative expression is completely understandable in certain contexts, it is not plain nonsense. As an example, Wittgenstein mentions the case of the words 'knife' and its corruption 'knoif': they can be said to have a different atmosphere (the original German uses the words *Saebel* and *Sabel*, meaning *sabre*). The two words have plausibly the same meaning, as they are both names for the same kind of objects. Only, the variation in their spelling (and sound) changes the way we experience the two words. Relevantly, Wittgenstein's example involves a *comparison*: it is easy to get what we mean by using the word 'atmosphere' in the everyday if we compare different words rather than describing a single one.

Now, the easiest way to interpret this difference in the atmosphere of the two words is to conceive it as a difference in the *feelings* they impress into us. That a difference in the atmosphere is a difference in the feelings is confirmed by another remark, where Wittgenstein mentions in brackets a 'sabre' feeling while discussing the possibility that in a particularly expressive poem the if feeling is sensed strongly (LW I: 39). These sketched remarks are important insofar as they show that the notion of atmosphere is related to the expressivity of certain language uses, as in the case of *poetry*. In the *Investigations*, the expressive power of poetic words is named as the *soul* of words (PI 530), and this soul is manifested explicitly while reading or composing a poem. A soul, an atmosphere, a peculiar feeling, a *face*: the feelings our words absorb, Wittgenstein says, are manifested 'in the way we choose and value words' (PPF 294): this is, among other things, a distinctive trait of poetic

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[70] 'If careful attention shows me that when I am playing this game I experience the word now *this* way, now *that* way – doesn't it also show me that in the stream of speech I often don't experience the word *at all*?' (PPF 272)

compositions and our understanding of it. As different words have different faces, or atmospheres, every word can be treated as something *unique*, irreplaceable in certain contexts, as only that word seems to fit our purpose.

It is important to notice that poetry might not be the only case where we choose words according to the way we value and experience them. Let us think of those words that became part of a political ideology, or became tag lines of particular historical events, such as in the case of the German words *Lebensraum* and *Endloesung*.[71] These words have an uncontroversial meaning, they respectively mean 'vital space' and 'final solution'. However, the fact that they have a history - as they are associated to Nazi ideology - undeniably affects their use. As a matter of fact, these unpleasant historical associations make these words acquire a character – an atmosphere - that prevents us to use them freely, according to their literal meaning. Another example where the atmosphere of words affects the use of words might be the case of *derogatory terms*. The word 'donkey' certainly has a peculiar atmosphere that its synonym 'moke' does not have: the word is immediately associated to the possibility of being used as an insult and licenses certain associations – with ignorance, for instance – that are absent in its synonym. Analogously, we can draw the same conclusion about Wittgenstein's quirky example, the two words 'knife' and 'knoif'. As long as they have a different atmosphere and despite the fact they name the same things in the world, their use is not completely captured by the identity of their reference. This is the ultimate sense of the italicized *in so far* in the remark: the words designate the same things in the world and have roughly the same use, in this sense it is plain to state that they have the same meaning, yet there is 'something' more – a face, a flavour, an aroma – that would probably influence our choice of use depending on the contexts of its employment – 'knoif' sounds more working class like, it is class connotated in this way and we can well imagine this would affect its use – and this divergence cannot simply be accounted by the identity of their reference alone.

As we can see, the notion of words having an atmosphere can be fruitfully applied to different cases of word uses, as it is able to capture significant divergences in the use of apparently synonymous words, well beyond the case of poetry. At this point, we have a double characterization of the notion of atmosphere in Wittgenstein's writings: it is defined either as the experiential trace that past uses of familiar words have left on them, or the *soul* of words that conditions the way we evaluate and choose words in specific contexts. These two characterizations are by no means contradictory and give substance to the same insight, that is, the fact that once we acquire confidence with the uses of a word the word itself seems to *encode* in the experience we have of it its immediate associations with the context of its use, its surroundings. The atmosphere, in this regard,

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[71] I borrow these examples from Kuusela (Kuusela 2008: 328n).

is a resultant of past uses that at the same time foreshadows the possible future applications of the word within the range of its meaningful applications. In other words, the way we usually use a word is mirrored in the experience we have of it, and this experience anticipates the possibility of its legitimate application.

Every word or sentence, then, is able once heard to open the *field* – this is a Wittgensteinian term (RPP I 357, 362) - of its possible applications we are familiar with. This idea is evidently related with the Wittgensteinian formula – reported a couple of times in brackets, and as such underdeveloped, in the *Investigations* – 'A multitude of familiar paths lead off from these words in all directions' (PI 525, PI 534). The same thought is expressed by Wittgenstein with the idea that we have 'germinal experience' of familiar words (RPP I 870, LW I 843-845): a word is like a *germ*, as long as it contains in itself the possibility of its future applications, the connections to the contexts of its meaningful use. Again, a sentence - or a word - taken in isolation, without any reference to the context of its use, somehow *incorporates* its possible uses, because we have actually used it before, we are familiar with it, and this is manifested by the fact that we can actually describe with ease the contexts of its employment. This is exactly the point of PI 525, where Wittgenstein asks if we really understand a sentence in isolation, without any reference to any context or surrounding - his example is 'after he has said this, he left her as he did the day before'. If the sentence is part of a tale or a section of a report, our understanding changes significantly, but if we do not know any context of it, still we can say how the sentence might be used or invent adequate contexts for it. As such, we experience the possibility of the sentence to be significant: in this sense, the sentence incorporates the applications of the words we are familiar with, in this sense it can acquire an atmosphere.[72]

2.3 The Character of Proper Names

Now, let us move further in Wittgenstein's characterization of the role of experience in language. Usually, to tackle the problem of what it means for a word to have an atmosphere, Wittgenstein prefers to proceed more obliquely by addressing what he calls the *character* of proper names (RPP I 243). He notices, for instance, that the name *Mozart* and *Beethoven* can be said to have a different character (RPP I 243), a character that can be envisaged also in their portrait or signature ('Goethe's signature makes a Goethean impression', RPP I 336). We can as well say that the name *Schubert* fits Schubert's works and face (PPF 270). It seems then that a proper name has the capacity of absorbing

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[72] We can see the philosophical danger of talking about the atmosphere of the words now and understand why there is an extensive treatment of the temptation to identify meaning with such an experience throughout the *Investigations*. Words and sentences can be said to carry their atmosphere even though they are ultimately *meaningless*, that is, they are used outside the range of their meaningful applications. Wittgenstein's point is precisely that sentences can well be meaningless, even though their atmosphere remains intact. This is exactly the point of PI 117 – already mentioned above – where the 'atmosphere conception of meaning' is mentioned as a danger that hides the actual meaninglessness of words used out of their meaningful context.

the personality and the character of its bearer: it can have an experiential dimension, an atmosphere, and we can talk about it. This experiential dimension is inevitably lost if we switch, for instance, the name with a *number*, a practice in use to register convicts in prisons. In a striking remark, Wittgenstein notices that if numbers are used instead of names we cannot say what Goethe used to say about proper names,[73] namely, that they express the essence of the bearer's personality (RPP I 326). The habit to mark prisoners with numbers, deliberately ignoring their names, is in a way a strategy of *depersonalization* - or even dehumanization, in some cases - of convicts. The numbers marked on the skin of prisoners in Nazi's extermination camps uncannily fit this observation.[74]

Crucially, when a name acquires an atmosphere, the name is said to turn into a *gesture*, as Wittgenstein points out:

> His name seems to fit his work. – *How* does it *seem* to fit? Well, I express myself in some such way. – But is that *all*? –It is as if the name together with these works, formed a solid whole. If we see the name, the works come to mind, and if we think of the works, so does the name. We utter the name with reverence.
>
> The name turns into a gesture; into an architectonic form.
>
> (RPP I 341)

When we feel a name as having a specific atmosphere, the name stops functioning only as an instrument of designation, a mere linguistic device we use to designate a specific thing in the world. Rather, it becomes almost a symbol – 'an architectonic form' - imbued with a meaning it acquires from its context, from the fact that it is related with the works and the deeds of its bearer. Accordingly, Wittgenstein remarks that names in these cases seem to merge with their *surroundings* (LW II: 4). As in the case of gestures, whose meaning is immanent, we read this meaning *within* the name itself, but at the same time this meaning is only possible as an expression of the personal

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[73] This is a common theme in Goethe's work. A straightforward example comes from *Faust*. When Faust meets Mephistopheles for the first time, he asks his name, and when Mephistopheles objects that the name is not important, as it is not able to reveal his inmost essence, Faust cunningly replies: 'Ah, with such gentlemen as you, the name often conveys the essence too' (Goethe 2008: 42). The name absorbs the personality of its bearer.

[74] Primo Levi masterfully describes the dehumanizing symbolism of Auschwitz tattooed numbers as follows: 'this is a permanent mark, you will never get out of here; this is the mark that is imprinted on slaves and cattle destined for slaughter, and so you have become. You no longer have a name: this is your new name. The violence of the tattoo was gratuitous, an end in itself, pure offense: weren't the three numbers of canvas sewn to the trousers, the jacket and the winter cloak enough? No, they were not enough: something more was needed, a non-verbal message, for the innocent to feel his condemnation written on the flesh' (Levi 1991: 89, my translation). The tattoo aimed to dehumanize the prisoners, ripping off their personalities as human beings and their personal history, starting from their names. There was no *specific* atmosphere for the number, as the number itself was precisely meant to eradicate any possible atmosphere.

experience we acquire from our familiarity with the broader cultural context the name is expression of. As such, the atmosphere of the name *Mozart*, for instance, can be described by pointing to the composer's music rather than his portrait, that is, to the name's surroundings that made it so significant for us in the first place, rather than to some generic physiognomic features of his face (RPP I 243). That is to say that the character of proper names can be described, but mainly *comparatively*: we can share it with others and lead others to the same experience of a name by highlighting the connections we envisage between the name and its surroundings.

It is important to notice that this feature of proper names is not necessary and has not to be shared: there can well be people that do not know anything about classical music and the name *Beethoven* does not mean anything to them (or maybe they associate the name to quite a different atmosphere - of reliability for instance, if they are more familiar with those tacky movies of the '90s telling the story of a St. Bernard named Beethoven). However, it constitutes an important aspect of our use of proper names, an aspect that Wittgenstein calls in another remark 'an annex to the concept' of *name* (*Anbau an den Begriff*, in German, RPP II 246): derivative, secondary (as we will see in the next chapter), not essential for communication, but nonetheless covering a specific area of language use suited to describe our relationship with familiar words.

The fact that the name has an atmosphere insofar as it absorbs its surroundings and becomes expressive as a gesture makes it acquire a peculiar 'flavour' – I would say, meaning - that lies *within* the name itself. We are then here dealing with another instance of the *immanence* of meaning we discussed already in the previous section. We cannot separate the atmosphere from its name: the atmosphere is simply *part* of it, as we cannot isolate it without expressing it through its physical embodiment (PPF 48). Accordingly, Wittgenstein remarks that 'the atmosphere is precisely that which one cannot imagine as being absent' (LW II: 4). There seems then to be a strong logical connection between the gesture - or name - and its atmosphere. Once we come to perceive a gesture as fuelled with a particular expression, we cannot imagine the gesture without such an expression, for it would not be *that* gesture anymore. However, Wittgenstein also notices that 'an atmosphere that is inseparable from its object is no atmosphere' (PPF 50). As such, there is an apparent contradiction between these two criteria: on one hand, we cannot imagine the gesture without its atmosphere, so that the atmosphere can be said to be inseparable. On the other hand, the atmosphere must be separable, otherwise it is no atmosphere. An easy way to solve this contradiction is by saying that we certainly cannot feel the atmosphere without its material embodiment – in this sense, it is inseparable – but for sure we can use and encounter its material embodiment without the atmosphere being present – in this sense, then, it is separable. This would also be consistent with the idea that the experiential dimension of language is not always present

when we speak. Also, there is no contradiction insofar as the inseparability is a criterion that works only on the side of the language user in its broader cultural context: the fact that we cannot imagine the atmosphere to be absent reveals something about ourselves, our feelings, and our cultural world, rather than being a logical necessity of some sort. Whoever does not share our broad cultural context, form of life, or even our own personal education has an entirely different relation to those very expressions.

This last point is worth exploring in more detail. Words, names, and gestures can have a soul or an atmosphere only in a specific broader cultural context. We can for instance talk about a 'Goethean impression' while looking at his signature because we are familiar with his work and his prose, as much as we can say that the name Beethoven evokes a particular feeling that matches his compositions only if we are acquainted with his music. This is why we cannot imagine the atmosphere to be absent in these cases: it would mean to think at names independently from the cultural context they are intertwined with and we are familiar with, or with a different context *tout court*. This point is made clear in the following passage:

> I hear that somebody is painting a picture 'Beethoven writing the Ninth Symphony'. I could easily imagine the kind of thing such a picture would show us. But suppose someone wanted to represent what Goethe would have looked like writing the Ninth Symphony? Here I could imagine nothing that would not be embarrassing and ridiculous.
>
> (PPF 51)

If we are asked to imagine Goethe writing the Ninth Symphony rather than Beethoven, which means, to think of Goethe out of its cultural world, immersed into the atmosphere of Beethoven and his Romantic passional spirit embodied by his compositions, we can only laugh. It would mean to *mix up* two different experiences that are strictly intertwined with the things we say about the works of the two geniuses, whose respective spirits can well be incompatible with each other. Wittgenstein's report is personal, and cannot be otherwise, insofar as the atmosphere and its description are always rooted in our education and some idiosyncratic connections with a specific cultural environment. Nonetheless, this example shows precisely why the atmosphere strikes us as something that *cannot* be absent: in order to be absent, the speaker should give up his own cultural connections that brought about the atmosphere in the first place. We can imagine Goethe doing things like Beethoven, but only insofar as it is a good strategy to make people laugh, and the laughter is precisely the result of two atmospheres with their well-established cultural connections coming into conflict, and the ultimate proof that the atmosphere does not have lost its grip on us.

That laughter is rooted into the experience we have of words and gestures is confirmed by LW I 711, where *puns* are said to be understood only if we experience the meanings of ambiguous words. Intriguingly, according to Wittgenstein, understanding puns has something to do with the experience of their meaning: it is not sufficient to know their literal meaning, we need to experience their atmosphere. Notably, in the lectures of the '30s Wittgenstein said: "The question, 'what is the nature of a joke?' is like the question, 'what is the nature of a lyric poem?' (AWL: 32). This means that for Wittgenstein jokes, puns and poems involve a kind of understanding that relies on atmospheres. As long as the atmosphere always consists of a sort of experiential trace of the connections between words and their broader surroundings and cultural context, this gives us a fascinating model to understand the logic of puns: understanding puns – and arguably, making them up – is related to the capacity of human beings of perceiving the context of familiar words within the words themselves, even when such a context is not really present. A good pun then makes us laugh because two different – maybe diametrically opposed – contexts of employment of different words are forced to overlap by the pun trick. As in the case of imagining Goethe playing the Ninth Symphony, words are thus stripped of their atmosphere and switched, so that we are brought into laughter as a consequence. This interpretation of puns is also perfectly consistent with the plain truth that a good translation of a play of words is usually *another* play of words (LW I 278). This is so because different words of different languages have their own connections with their own surroundings. They in fact might be synonymous, however, they do not share the same connections that are precisely what puns and plays of words are based upon. As a consequence, to translate puns and play of words is a complicated practice that requires something *more* than merely knowing the literal meanings of the words involved: it is rather, I would say, a matter of reproducing the *sense* we want to convey that is based on the acquaintance with the experiential world of the whole culture a language belongs to (we could call this, a remark on the grammar of *translation*).

At this point, we might wonder how this further characterization of the atmosphere of words is consistent with the others we gave above. We have now three characterizations: the atmosphere is said to be either the experiential trace different uses of the same word might impress over it, a sort of picture of their use, or the character we associate to proper names once we are acquainted to the personality of their bearer, or the expressive function words can acquire and that is shown in the way we chose and evaluate them – in other words, their *soul*. The affinity between the character of proper names and the other two instances of the concept of atmosphere lies precisely in this: in order to encapsulate a definite character, a name needs to become *familiar*. In this case, familiarity is given by the connection between the name and its broader cultural surroundings. As such, the character is once again, as in the other cases, the experiential trace of particular words that become capable of expressing the connections they entertain with the whole context of their employment. The

Goethean impression of the name *Goethe*, then, is nothing more than the manifestation of our cultural world the name belongs to, as much as the atmosphere is the experiential tag of the immediate connections familiar words encapsulate with the broader context of their use.

Conclusion

As this chapter is thought to be the first part of a broader investigation about meaning and experience, the conclusions cannot be but *provisional*. We have shown that Wittgenstein rejected mentalism, but this is no way conclusive to discard any commitment to a positive account of the role of experience in our language use. The rejection of mentalism, in fact, is complementary to the positive account of the grammar of experience in language. Exegetically, this might be a good interpretative hypothesis to make intelligible the apparently obsessive and rather idiosyncratic interest in the concept of experiencing meaning that Wittgenstein manifested throughout all his later writings. We have seen that the notions of soul, atmosphere and character of proper names are all intertwined concepts Wittgenstein repeatedly strives to describe in order to offer this positive account. These concepts are all related with the idea that familiar words somehow encapsulate the connections with the contexts of their meaningful use: it might the context of their ordinary employments as well as the broader cultural environment certain words, especially proper names, are part of. Experience is thus *immanent* to the words, that is, it is read *within* the words themselves. However, it is never *ubiquitous*, as most of the times in ordinary conversations we do not feel anything while speaking. Immanence and non-ubiquity are consequent with the idea that we are not dealing with mentalism here, as mentalism is exactly that view according to which experiences are *always* accompanying our words use as they ground their meaning. These concepts are fundamental to understand the functioning of very particular language games, as in the case of our employment of ideologically connotated words, derogatory terms, puns, or poetic expressions. In the next chapter, we will see how and in which sense experience, in all these cases, might be a legitimate case of understanding.

5. Non Normative Cases of Meaning and Understanding

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we have sketched a cartography of the many ways experience is present and extensively discussed in the *Investigations* and beyond. Besides to the negative treatment of mentalism, Wittgenstein repeatedly tries to describe the grammar of the expressions we use, whose unclarity is precisely what brings up mentalism in the first place. Concepts like atmosphere, soul of words and character of proper names are thus all notions circumscribing the domain of language where experience plays an important and *legitimate* role.

We have thus started dismantling what we have called Glock's false dichotomy, according to which either experience is mentalistic or there is no space left for experience to be a kind of understanding. We have shown that in Wittgenstein there is indeed a non-mentalistic account of experience, yet it is not clear yet whether such an account is also an account of *meaning* and *understanding*. The case of *puns* might help to envisage how it can be so. It seems obvious to use the word 'understanding' in relation to experiencing the meaning of puns: we laugh at a pun because – in a proper sense – we *understand* it, and we have shown that without the experiential trace of the surroundings familiar words bring with them such an understanding does not really happen. The philosophical point to stress in the case of puns is the following: what we can call the conventional meaning of the words is not *sufficient* to understand a pun. A pun, to be understood, requires more than the capacity to know how to use the words constituting it. This '*more'* in the case of understanding puns is exactly what is covered by the notion of experience as we have described it so far.

The case of puns can be thus taken as a model to frame our investigation in this chapter: there is indeed a form of understanding – and thus of meaning – that cannot be reduced to the level of *rule-governed* use. Without knowing the conventional meaning of the words in a pun we cannot obviously understand it, yet it is not all that matters in such a language game. In this *gap* between understanding and rules lies the possibility to give experience an important descriptive role, and thus to open the space to consider experience as a legitimate conception able to capture an important aspect of the concepts of understanding and meaning, as much as rules are.

I will start my discussion from Wittgenstein's comments on the understanding of music. It is necessary to do so, as Wittgenstein remarks on this topic attests an explicit interest in finding out a way to conceive understanding beyond and *apart* from rules. Furthermore, the discussion about music is strategic, as in the *Investigations* it is the opening move of a series of remarks that clearly thematize the multifaceted logic of our concept of understanding (PI 528 - 532). Second, I shall address the concept of experience again to give a final description of its features when it comes to conceive its role in understanding. This is necessary, insofar as experience itself is a complex and stratified concept and not everything we call so is involved in language use. Third, I will then analyse the criteria Wittgenstein offers to talk about two *senses* of understanding and how they can be fully captured by some primitive models of language. This will give us the conceptual resources to step out of the debate between those interpreters that want to *reduce* understanding and meaning to rules only and those that – on the contrary – want to *explain* meaning in terms of experience, as we will illustrate in the final section of this chapter.

1. The Case of Understanding Music

Plenty of remarks on music can be found disseminated in Wittgenstein's writings.[75] An heir of the old Viennese upper middle-class taste and culture, Wittgenstein wrote many comments about the composers he was familiar with. Brahms, Mahler, Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn, Bach, Wagner: these are recurrent names in his scattered reflections on music. At first, it might seem that these remarks are merely personal notes through which Wittgenstein manifests his musical taste and opinions – he deems Mahler's music to be 'worthless', for instance (CV: 76). This is mostly true, but it should not be taken as a proof that they are philosophically irrelevant. In fact, Wittgenstein's comments about music show that he tended to consider music as a deeply *semantic* phenomenon. He praises 'the strength of the musical thinking' in Brahms (CV: 27), suggesting that music either involves thought or maybe *is* a kind of thought itself. Brahms and Wagner's music were never employed in silent movies, he notices, because the images do not match with their music, we could not *understand* the music from the movie alone, and vice versa (CV: 29). He also says that Mendelssohn is never hard to understand (CV: 27) and that Bach is more like a *language* than Mozart or Haydn (CV: 40). Furthermore, he says that a man with no acquaintance with music can confuse a Chopin phrase as a

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[75] The analysis of the concept of music in Wittgenstein developed in this session heavily borrows some important elements from the works of Paul Johnston and Jerrold Levinson (see Johnston 1993 and Levinson 2003). Aldo Gargani's monograph on music and gestures is another powerful influence (Gargani 2008). The main trait of originality of the interpretation here proposed lies in the fact that Wittgenstein's discussion of music is understood from the point of view of a general investigation about the concepts of meaning and understanding, with no dogmatic or metalogical prejudice about how meaning *must* be conceived.

kind of language, as there is 'a strong musical element in language' (Z 161) and that understanding a musical phrase can well be 'called understanding a language' (Z 172).

This quick survey clearly shows then that for Wittgenstein music has something to do with language and thought and that it can be *understood*. As long as there is no understanding without meaning, we should conclude that for Wittgenstein music has a meaning too. In this section, I will investigate what it means to understand music, in which sense it is a language and what this concession of thinking of music as a language aims at in the economy of Wittgenstein's thought.

1.1 Wittgenstein's Characterization of Musical Understanding

In the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein introduces music to draw a *comparison* with language. He says the following:

> Understanding a sentence in language is much more akin to understanding a theme in music that one might think. What I mean is that understanding a spoken sentence is closer than one thinks to what is ordinarily called understanding a musical theme. Why is just *this* the pattern of variation in intensity and tempo? One would like to say: 'Because I know what it all means'. But what does it mean? I'd not be able to say. As an 'explanation' I could compare it with something else which has the same rhythm (I mean the same pattern).
> (One says, 'Don't you see, this is, as it were, a parenthesis', and so on. How does one justify such comparisons?)
>
> (PI 527)

Here, Wittgenstein describes the understanding of music to highlight through a comparison some features of language understanding. Before wondering about the sense of such a comparison, we then need to clarify what it means for Wittgenstein to understand a piece of music, or a theme.

In this remark, with 'understanding' Wittgenstein seems to refer mainly to the *listener's* reactions to a piece of music. As such, it is left undetermined whether we need to be trained somehow and get a musical education of sort to effectively come up with those very expressions that show our understanding of a musical piece. As listeners, we can be struck by a certain pattern of variation in intensity and tempo, we can say we understand it, in the sense that we feel it is appropriate, that fits the whole meaning the musical theme tries to convey. We can use such expressions to express what we mean, but we cannot offer an explanation in the same way we can when we are asked the meaning of a word we do not know. Yet a form of explanation can be given: we can for instance draw a *comparison* with other passages illustrating the same pattern, or even by other means, such as pictures. We could also *invent* a story that can fit with the particular pattern and thus explain in a

way its meaning: this is what usually happens with musical *soundtracks*, whose spirit is somehow manifested in the scenes they accompany (more frequently, the other way around: the phenomenon is mutual). Wittgenstein suggests something similar while talking about understanding the *smile* of the Mona Lisa: we can make up a story to really understand that smile, we can put some context behind her face so that we can really get the meaning of her expression. In this way, we can feel her smile as enigmatic if we did not before (RPP I 381). Incidentally, this technique to convey a specific understanding of expressions or gestures nowadays is fully displayed in the phenomenon of Internet memes: pictures from movies or videos are taken out of their context and commented in a way that aims to make people laugh. What memes do is mainly what Wittgenstein describes in the case of Mona Lisa: memes *make up* new contexts to make certain expressions meaningful in a new situation.

There is another passage in the *Nachlass* that shows even better what we mean when we say that somebody has understood a piece of music:

> Understanding music has a certain *expression* in listening, playing and at other times too. Sometimes gestures form part of this expression, but sometimes it will just be a matter of how a man plays, or hums, the piece, also now and again of the comparisons he draws and the images with which he as it were illustrates the music. Someone who understands music will listen differently (with a different expression in his face), he will talk differently, from someone who does not. But he will show that he understands a particular theme not just in manifestations that accompany his hearing or playing that theme but in his understanding for music in general.

> (CV: 70)

Here, Wittgenstein offers a rather detailed description of one's understanding of music. Notably, differently from the previous remark, understanding is not only a matter of listening, but also of *playing* the music. This however does not mean that being able to play is a condition to understand music even when we listen to it, only that the same sort of understanding requires a *consistency* between what we say of the piece while hearing it and what we *do* when and if we play it. Understanding, as such, has a certain *expression* that is manifested in a plurality of things we do and say: the gestures[76] we accompany the listening or the playing with, the comparisons we draw or the pictures we use to illustrate the music, and so on. The difference between understanding and *not* understanding a piece of music is thus a difference in the things we do and say, a difference that is

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[76] A gesture might also be *grinding one's teeth* while listening to a piece of music. At least, this is what Wittgenstein used to do while imagining hearing a theme: he followed the notes by grinding his teeth (CV: 32). Notably, Wittgenstein adds that without the grinding his experience of music would change: 'then the notes are much more blurred, much less clear, less pronounced'.

also connected with the *other* things we do and say regarding music more generally. This means that understanding is not only constrained to the specific moment we listen to the theme. Rather, it is manifested by our general understanding of music, it is connected with our preferences and all the other reactions we have while listening to the music we like or dislike. Understanding music is thus not an inner experience, something private. Rather, it is manifested in a complex behaviour, a cluster of different things we can do or say to express our feeling – or impression – that a particular musical theme *has* a particular meaning. Intuitively, let us imagine someone listening to Beethoven and moving their head as if he were listening to metal. Even if he moves it in the right tempo, it is still a ridiculous[77] picture, it feels awkward and inappropriate, as different pieces of music requires different understanding that is connected and encoded in a whole cluster of contextual practices that is not *accidental*, rather it defines understanding for what it is.

For Wittgenstein, understanding a specific theme is a sort of epiphenomenon of a capacity, or sensibility, that usually presupposes its surroundings and resonates within 'the whole field of our language games':

> Doesn't the theme point to anything outside itself? Yes, it does! But that means: ---- it makes an impression on me which is connected with things in its surroundings – e. g. with our language and its intonations; and hence with the whole field of our language games.
> If I say, for example: here it's as if a conclusion were being drawn, here as if something were being confirmed, *this* is like an answer to what was said before, -- then my understanding presupposes a familiarity with inferences, with confirmation, with answers.

(Z 175)

When we describe a musical theme by drawing a comparison with features of language that we find fitting to express our understanding of it, we obviously need to be *familiar* with such features. We cannot say that a particular passage in Bach sounds like a conclusion has being drawn, if I do not know what a conclusion is and sounds like. Music is in this sense a *second order* phenomenon compared to language: we need to master the field of our language games first if we want to understand music. There is no musical understanding without such an externality. We should not however be tempted to conclude that musicality cannot influence language itself. The dependency of music of language is together a relationship of *mutual influence*. As Jerrold Levinson puts it, 'music is

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[77] This example intriguingly connects understanding music with puns. Laughter is a symptom of understanding in the case of jokes and puns, as it involves the experiential clash between different atmospheres. The case of headbanging while listening to Beethoven is similar to the case Wittgenstein discussed about Goethe writing the Ninth Symphony (PPF 51): Even in these cases, we laugh because we intentionally mix up our experiences (and we will see, our understanding).

inextricably embedded in our form of life, that is, as it happens, essentially linguistic' (Levinson 2003: 61), in a way that language can acquire musical features too.[78]

In another remark, this reference to the whole background of our language games is defined as a *culture* (*Kultur*),[79] probably to stress the broadest and more general connections our language games have with our life (Z 164). A culture quite different from ours might be full of gestures accompanying music we cannot expect and could not really understand. A curious example Wittgenstein mentions to highlight this point is the one of a culture where music is made only through *carillons* (RPP II 696). In this case, music would be connected with these men's life in a way different – not necessarily more primitive – that it is in ours. We could not plausibly 'find our feet with them' (RPP II 700), they will know gestures and explain music in a way different - maybe alien – to us, and vice versa.

Notably, the fact that musical understanding is logically *dependent* on the broader culture and form of life offers us a *model* to understand how *disagreement* looks like when it comes to understand a piece of music. I can understand a piece as ironic; a friend disagrees because for him it is rather tremendously serious: what kind of disagreement is this? I would say that disagreement here assumes the character of a *divergence* in life, the same kind of divergence we found while exploring the misuse of expressive words and interjections (see chapter 3.2): we understand music differently because our cultural world and reactions are different. This could be because ironic discourse works differently for me and my friend, or maybe it works the same way but my friend is simply not so familiar as I am with the particular tone an ironic statement is charged with that usually distinguishes, for instance, irony from sarcasm, or jokes from seriousness. In the former case, my explanations to lead him to see the piece as ironic are likely to fail, whereas in the latter there is a margin to success, to fill the gap between me and him as speakers of the same language. In both cases, disagreement is the manifestation of a certain divergence in our life and cultural backgrounds.

Finally, it is important to stress that in Wittgenstein's conception of understanding music there is no strict distinction between understanding a piece and our reactions to it: understanding *is* those very reactions, it is expressed and manifested by the whole cluster of things we say and do while playing, listening, humming the piece, and so forth. As such, considerably different reactions would

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[78] An easy example: I am Italian and I am often used to hear people describe my language as 'sing-songy' or 'musical'.

[79] Aldo Gargani argues that this notion of *Kultur* is to be opposed to the one of *Zivilisation* as Spengler conceived them. As such, the expressive dimension of language is always rooted into a *Kultur*, whereas the *Zivilisation* would be the modern industrial society that is increasingly reducing the inherent power of expression in language (Gargani 2008: 13). This reading has undoubtedly the fascinating merit to bring Wittgenstein back to his broader cultural environment and can show how Wittgenstein used concepts and ideas he found in other thinkers to address different issues and problems in philosophy. However, a direct affiliation between Wittgenstein and Spengler regarding this topic remains mainly speculative.

imply a significant difference in the understanding of a piece. This point sounded unlikely to interpreters such as Roger Scruton, who criticised Wittgenstein on this point by saying that we can always share an understanding of the same musical theme and diverge in our reactions, as much as we can understand the same facial expression, recognize it – for instance, 'the grim dissatisfaction of a teenage popstar' – and react differently – we can identify with 'its pseudo-tragic aura', or be repelled by it (Scruton 2004: 5). According to Scruton, Wittgenstein's conception of musical understanding stops at the first stage of *recognition* of a specific expression. However, he argues, something more is required to really talk about understanding:

> Understanding does not and should not stop at this first stage of recognition. The case is similar to that of facial expressions. We do not merely recognize expressions. We look behind them to what they mean. We seek and find character, mood, and emotion in faces, as we do in gestures and words. And if understanding music is like understanding facial expressions it too must admit of this search for a meaning beyond the immediate *Gestalt*.

> (Scruton 2004: 7)

Understanding music, according to Scruton, is analogous to understanding facial expressions. In both cases, understanding is a *two steps* phenomenon: *first* we recognize, for instance, a smile as a smile, and *then* we look for its meaning, we try to give it a sort of psychological interpretation.

However, this two steps move is misleading. A smile is always understood as a specific expression of a feeling or an emotion, may it be happiness, embarrassment, and so on. There is nothing like a smile devoid of its emotional bearing that in a second moment we interpret as expressing a certain state of mind or another. Granted, a smile can be unclear or ambiguous, however this does not show that we register the smile first and we do not know which meaning we should 'attach' to it: rather, an ambiguous smile appears to us *as ambiguous*, that is its experiential dimension. We of course *can* be brought to see a smile, for instance, as enigmatic if we did not see it as such before – think of the Mona Lisa example above – but this does not require our search for a dimension of depth, a meaning that is somehow discoverable beneath the brute expression. Rather, it involves our capacity to see that smile, that face, in a new context, our ability to familiarize with a plausible scenario where we are kin to see that after all that smile is *really* enigmatic. When we start seeing the smile as enigmatic, then our understanding will be manifested in our reactions, in the things we say and the gestures we do when explaining its meaning, and so forth. Scruton's example of the pop star expression is misleading as well. The fact that an adolescent is more likely to associate such an expression to an aura of sort reveals that he *understands* it in a particular way that will be manifested in his reactions – cries, shouts while attending a concert, and so forth – an understanding that is

rooted more generally in his own emotional and cultural world, as such very different (usually and hopefully) from the one of adults. An adult that is repelled from the singer's expression cannot associate that expression to any aura whatsoever: he has a different understanding of it, an understanding shown for instance by his disappointment. The fact that understanding is at stake here is proven, quite naturally, by the fact that we can discuss about it by invoking a divergence in understanding: a son arguing with his father about the power of a particular live performance after a concert would tend to burst out saying that his father did not *understand* the whole point of the music, after all. Their respective cultural worlds in this case diverge significantly, and their reactions really show, *pace* Scruton, that they understood the same performance – the same theme, or facial expression - differently.

1.2 Experience and Understanding in Music

Arguably, the example we used, following Scruton, to illustrate that a father and his son can understand a piece of music in different ways and that this difference is manifested in what they do and how they react could be reformulated and be equally accepted if we talk about *experience* of music rather than understanding. They understand the music differently because they experience it differently, as the very same piece of sounds 'resonates', so to speak, in a different cultural surrounding when heard by the one or the other. There is, indeed, a tendency in Wittgenstein's writings concerning music to merge his talk about understanding with that about experiencing music. For instance, he notices that a difference in the tempi of execution of a musical theme changes the theme's *character*, a word that Wittgenstein uses mainly to refer to the atmosphere of proper names (CV: 84). As shown in the previous chapter, a name acquires a particular character when it starts embodying the cultural feature of its bearer and her deeds. A character emerges always as an experiential marker of the cultural context it belongs to. We can see the analogy with music here: as in the case of grasping the character of a name, understanding music presupposes a familiarity with the broader cultural context of our language games.

As often in the case of Wittgenstein's investigations about the role of experience in language, he is always careful not to look like a mentalist. This, however, should not imply that we can really say that we experience music in a way or in another. The following remark is clear in this regard:

> You might think intensive experiencing of the theme '*consists*' in the sensations of the movements etc. with which we accompany it. And that seems (again) like a soothing explanation. But have you any reason to think it true? I mean, e.g., a recollection of this experience? Is not this theory again merely a picture? No, this is not how things are: the theory is no more than an attempt to link up the expressive movements with an 'experience'. If you

ask: how I experienced the theme, I shall perhaps say "As a question" or something of the sort, or I shall whistle it with expression.

(CV: 59)

Here Wittgenstein targets the mentalist prejudice that the experience of a theme is reducible to – consists of – the sensations we feel while hearing or playing it. Mentalism is in this sense a false theory that gives substance to our tendency to reify experience as a *thing* accompanying our expressive movements and gestures and works as a 'soothing explanation', probably because it satisfies our primal philosophical need to put a substance behind every substantive (BB: 1). If we however put mentalism aside, we can clearly see that we can legitimately ask how we experience a theme, and an answer is legitimately to be expected. We can in fact say that we experience it as a question, or we can whistle the theme with the expression we feel. We can draw comparisons with pictures, movies, and other themes to show the fact that we experience the theme as a conclusion, or as a whole argument between two different voices, and so on and so forth. Notably, all the things we can say are equally valid as an explanation of the experience of the piece as well as an explanation of our understanding.

The fact that the kind of experience we have of music is a kind of understanding is clearly stated in the following remark:

The understanding of music is neither a sensation nor a sum of sensations. Nevertheless is correct to call it an experience inasmuch as *this* concept of understanding has some kinship with other concepts of experience.

You say 'I experienced that passage quite differently'. But still this expression tells you '*what happened*' only if you are at home in the special conceptual world that belongs to these situations.

(RPP II 469 / Z 165)

We can then talk about experience when we understand music. It is not a sensation or a sum of sensations, as we can experience music even without having any particular sensation. Sensations are inner phenomena that usually accompany our speech, as such they are external to meaning and understanding. Yet understanding music – *this* particular case of understanding, not *everyone*, Wittgenstein stresses – can be said to be an experience of some sort. We can well say that 'something happened' in us, even though not in the same sense as when we feel pain or hunger. However, this expression makes sense only if we are at home, familiar, at ease, with the whole background of culture and practices the situation belongs to.

To sum up, while addressing the meaning of understanding music Wittgenstein, more than ever, seems to allow to conceive of this *kind* of understanding as a *kind* of experience. He is careful not to relapse into mentalism, as there is always that risk in the background and this is probably the reason why talking about understanding is paradoxically less problematic and thus preferred by Wittgenstein. However, we can legitimately talk about experience here, we can say that we experience a theme in a way or another insofar as we can give expression to that through our reactions, gestures, facial expressions, attempts of explanations and so forth. It is a *second order* kind of experience that presupposes the whole cluster of our language games and culture.

1.3 Rules and Music

We can now move a little further and point out what I consider to be the gist of Wittgenstein's discussion on understanding music: the fact that understanding and meaning in the case of musical themes are *not* only a matter of *rules*. PI 527 is already particularly telling, as it offers a description of a case of *explanation* of musical meaning that can be hardly interpretable in terms of rules. Not coincidentally, Wittgenstein puts the word 'explanation' in quotation marks to stress this peculiarity. We can be struck by a certain pattern of variation in intensity and tempo and feel – understand – that this has to be so, otherwise the whole theme changes character and loses its meaning. We can well say that the theme has a meaning and we can explain it to others by mean of *comparisons*: this is as if a conclusion has been drawn, these passages sound as a question or an answer, this is as it were a parenthesis, and so on. These comparisons are meant to connect those sounds to their cultural and logical surroundings, to make them resonate within the context of our language games. As such, it is not sure the explanation can effectively manage to convey what we mean: others could simply experience the theme differently because they have a different background. Yet we might succeed: communication here changes aspect as much as explanation does. Few remarks later, Wittgenstein in fact says that explanation here is shown in the way we *lead* people to grasp the sense of a poem or a musical theme (PI 533). By means of comparisons and other sources, we *lead* the other to join our community of experience. Sometimes we do not manage, other times we do, this does not affect the fact that we can actually share our understanding with others.

Explanations in the case of music thus do not involve stipulations of rules and conventions. Rather, they require more a capacity of giving *expression* to our experience by means of comparison with the background features of our life. Rules are obviously required to learn how to play an instrument, however they cannot be formulated to teach somebody to play *expressively*, as Paul Johnston sharply pointed out (Johnston 1993: 106). In the following striking remarks, we see Wittgenstein's argument clearly unfolding:

Soulful expression in music – this cannot be recognized by rules. Why can't we imagine that it might be, by other beings?

If a theme, a phrase, suddenly means something to you, you don't have to be able to explain it. Just *this* gesture has been made available to you.

(Z 156-157)

Another version of the same remark is worth quoting, as it explains what rules might look like in the case of understanding music:

Soulful expression in music. It is not to be described in terms of degrees of loudness & of tempo. Any more than is a soulful facial expression describable in terms of the distribution of matter in space. Indeed it is not even to be explained by means of a paradigm, since the same piece can be played with genuine expression in innumerable ways.

(CV: 94)

We can describe music in terms of its mathematical properties: loudness and tempos come in various degrees that can be codified in a consistent system of rules through which we learn how to play instruments and virtually compose musical pieces. However, these norms cannot capture the *expressivity* of musical themes, they cannot explain why we react a certain way to a theme and not another, why those sounds evoke certain experiences in us, and so forth. Notably, Wittgenstein clarifies this point through a comparison with facial expressions: a detailed and exhaustive description of the physical distribution of matter in space is not – and ever will be – a good description of a sly smile, a threatening smirk, a perplexing gaze, and so on. We cannot explain soulful music or expressions even with paradigmatic examples, as they cannot simply capture all the shades and variations that are still parts of a specific expressive behaviour.

As long as understanding music is not reducible to a system of rules,[80] it becomes clear that it is a kind of understanding that cannot be universally shared and acquired by everybody. This is because not everybody shares with us our same field of experience, that is, our same connections with the whole context of our language games. The case of *twelve-tone music* might be a good example to explain this point. Somebody hears Schoenberg's twelve tone music, and it feels odd: it seems that

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[80] This point is surprisingly overlooked by those interpreters that argue for a formalist reading of Wittgenstein's conception of music. Hanne Ahonen, for instance, claims that 'the meaning of musical expressions, such as chords, cadences and themes, should be taken to be constituted by the rules of music, and the understanding of music to be the ability to follow (conventional) rules' (Ahonen 2005: 520). It is really hard to even conceive how these rules might look like. We know how to play chords according to rules, we do not know how to play them expressively along the same line: this is exactly what is of interest for Wittgenstein. There is simply more than chords and melodies to music.

musical phrases do not *fit*, they are clunky, hard to follow and do not harmonically match each other. A way to overcome this oddity is by looking at the rules of dodecaphony and familiarize with it. Yet this could be not enough to *understand* the music, to really appreciate it, to acquire it as a new form of expression. It is not simply that 'the grammar of twelve-tone music is not a musical grammar', as Scruton claims (Scruton 2004: 4): rather, it would be more correct to say that the system of rules governing dodecaphonic composition is not part of his world yet, it does not resonate within the whole clusters of activities of our form of life, it is not yet felt as an organic *part* of it. Schoenberg's revolution in music is thus to be considered not only as an introduction of a new system of composition, but rather, as a radical attempt to conceive a new form of life where that system can be said to be at home.[81]

Understanding Schoenberg would then mean understanding a form of life. Its meaning can be in a sense disclosed to us, we can grasp it without being able to explain it. A *new* understanding in this case might consist in a sort of *extension* of our form of life, of its expressive capacities. This is ultimately what Wittgenstein means when he says that we come suddenly to understand a phrase in a particular way, and yet we can well be not able to explain it. This only means that a gesture, a *specific* one, in its *singularity* yet to be captured by a rule, as such irreplaceable, as in the case of particular words in the context of a *poem* – whose words, Wittgenstein says, 'can *pierce* us' (Z 155) – has become part of our language and life as a new means of expression. Suggestively, Wittgenstein says that musical phrases can become a gesture and 'creep in our life', so that we make them our own (CV: 83). Understanding music can thus sometimes require an imaginative process of disclosure of meaning, through which we gain and acquire new meaningful gestures and expressive tools in our life.

1.4 Music and Language

Once we have clarified what it means for Wittgenstein to understand and experience music, we can now go back and discuss why Wittgenstein deemed important to draw a comparison between understanding music and understanding language, as he does in PI 527. This comparison, at first, might strike us as *odd*. There seem to be undeniable differences between the two, and we find some discussed in the literature. For instance, Scruton points out that understanding music does not

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[81] Ahonen points out with Scruton that Wittgenstein was a classicist in music, in this sense a conservative whose model of good music was Brahms (Ahonen 2005: 515n). This is true. Wittgenstein once said the 'music has ended with Brahms' (Rhees 1984: 127). As he wrote that he used to approach modern music with 'the greatest mistrust' (CV: 8), it is likely he did not appreciate Schoenberg. However, this by no means works an evidence against my claim here. The fact that Wittgenstein disliked or did not understand dodecaphony reveals only something about *him*, his personality, and his cultural world. As such, this does not work against the philosophical idea that music and its grammar are embedded in a form of life we need to get familiar with and acquire if we want to understand it. Schoenberg is no exception.

require necessarily the ability to play it, whereas understanding a language or word is demonstrated mainly by using it. Furthermore, in music we can talk about *different* understandings of the *same* piece, as long as we can talk about differences in the performances of the same piece of music.[82] These understandings may be perhaps incompatible, yet there might be cases where we do not necessarily have a criterion to discard one as wrong and prefer another. On the contrary, it is hard to point out the same feature in language: if I use the sentence 'It is cold here' to mean the opposite in the context of an ordinary exchange in English, I am simply mistaken.[83] Finally, not understanding a musical theme is often shown by a bad performance – playing 'grotesquely, woodenly, unfeelingly' shows a lack of understanding – whereas in language misunderstanding or not understanding a word is never shown by such features (Scruton 2004:5).[84] Music is also not a means of communication, not in the same sense as language is. This is evident if we think of the example of understanding a theme as a question. We can in fact describe a particular theme as a question, however we cannot make explicit *what* the music is asking: the question lacks a *content* that can be paraphrased. Music in this sense has only the character, or the *physiognomy*, of a question, as Levinson puts it, it is *not* a question (Levinson 2003: 62). To say it with Schulte, differently from music, 'understanding a text is a matter of how and whether I understand its propositional content' (Schulte 1993: 42).

If we accept all of this as incontrovertible evidence of a radical difference between language and music – as we shall see in a moment, I do not – the whole sense of a comparison between the two cannot be but *negative*, that is, music and language are comparable only insofar as the comparison sheds light on what language and music respectively are *not*. This is the strategy adopted by Oswald

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[82] Mistakenly, Scruton here formulates this point in Platonist terms, as he distinguishes a difference in the understanding of a performance from the understanding of the 'piece in itself' that is performed: 'A corny, sentimental or insinuating passage can be performed naively; but another performer, who hears the pretence, will be unable to perform the passage naively' (Scruton 2004: 5). This is misleading: to say of a passage that is corny or insinuating vehicles already a certain understanding of the piece, an understanding we acquire while listening to an actual performance, not to an abstract object – music in itself (it is hard to see how we can *listen* to an abstract object, after all). Whoever plays naively the very same piece that we find insinuating simply does not understand it as insinuating. The tendency to separate the piece from the performances is somehow suggested by the fact that music can be written down and was implemented by the fact that nowadays music can be recorded, giving us the illusion that there is an abstract object with certain inner properties we can understand while performing it or fail to.

[83] Language comes closer to music when it comes to *interpret* ancient texts or fragments of a dead language. In that case, different interpretations can be advanced and sometimes they are all equally valid, as we miss the broader context of the text in question or simply do not know the language in detail. However, here we are talking more about *interpretation* than understanding, and the lack of criteria to choose among different interpretations is rooted more in our ignorance of contextual factors: in music there are simply no such criteria, as different understandings are equally valid.

[84] It might be objected that it can however be rather difficult to understand if someone reads a paper with the wrong intonations or monotonically, and this reveals something about understanding in language. This is undeniably true and anticipates the main insight about understanding in language the comparison with music is meant to highlight, as we shall see in what follows. However, even though a person recites a poem with wrong intonation, clumsily or hesitantly, still we can well concede that he understands the meaning of the words he reads.

Hanfling, who argues that the analogy with music Wittgenstein draws in PI 527 needs to be understood as 'a *negative analogy*' (Hanfling 2004: 153), aiming to highlight the fact that they both are *not* dependent from anything *external* to be understood. This would fully explain why Wittgenstein pairs them up. As a consequence, according to Hanfling, nothing *positive* can be entailed from this comparison, that is, understanding music does not share some features with what we call understanding language. They are neatly distinct phenomena.

A champion of this kind of negative interpretation is Peter Hacker, which interprets PI 527 as an attempt to back up the claim for the *autonomy* of grammar thesis:

> This (PI 527) emphasises again the immanence of meaning, hence too of understanding. The conceptions of meaning under attack are those that conceive of the meaning of a word or sentence as something extraneous to it, something that is correlated with a linguistic sign by convention or by intention, by association or by causation.

> (Hacker 2006: 327)

The comparison with music is taken to have only the specific function to target and dismiss the idea that meaning and understanding are respectively a thing and a process *accompanying* words, something extraneous or external to language. For Hacker, meaning is immanent insofar as it is not explainable by external things words are correlated to. As such, the Hackerian immanence of meaning[85] is to be seen as a counterpart of the thesis that language and grammar are autonomous, that is, not answerable to any external reality. This reading seems to be confirmed by the *Brown Book*, where PI 527 appears almost unchanged but with an important addition in the end, where Wittgenstein notices that 'the content of the sentence is *in* the sentence', despite the tendency to think – misled by a wrong picture – that understanding 'points to a reality outside the sentence' (BB: 167).[86]

However, I do not think this reference to the *Brown Book* is enough to back up Hacker and Hanfling's view. After all, the last part of the remark in the *Brown Book* was omitted in the *Investigations*, not by chance. PI 527 should in fact be evaluated in the light of its context, where

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[85] Crucially, the immanence of meaning Hacker refers to is *not* the same as the immanence I talk about in this thesis. For Hacker, it is only another way to name the autonomy or arbitrariness of grammar.

[86] Wittgenstein compares propositions and logic to music already in his early thought, as in the *Notebooks* he writes that 'musical themes are in a certain sense propositions. Knowledge of the nature of logic will for this reason lead to knowledge of the nature of music' (NB: 40). The comparison here is strictly connected to the point Hacker makes about the immanence of meaning. The idea can be formulated as follows, by appealing to the saying-showing distinction of the *Tractatus*: insofar as we can only *show* the logic of proposition and not *say* it, so music shows its own logic, we cannot talk about it but only see its structure as it unfolds. If music has a meaning then, it cannot *be said*.

Wittgenstein is rather focused on illustrating different cases of what we call 'understanding' (PI 522 - 533). As such, I suggest reading PI 527 as a *positive* comparison between understanding music and language, that is, our concept of language and that of music really share some common features, beyond the mere negative claim that they are both not answerable to external reality. As we have abundantly shown so far, understanding music is a phenomenon that requires more than rules to be explained. It follows that to say that understanding language and music are akin can ultimately be seen as a strategy to highlight the fact that there is a relevant area of what we call understanding in language that is *not* based on rules or conventions. Through a description of what it is to understand a musical theme is thus possible to shed light to some features of what we call 'understanding' – and complementarily, 'meaning' – in particular cases of language uses, and together, question the assumption that understanding and meaning are merely a matter of *rules*.

The differences between music and language with which we opened this section are thus far from being accepted as a proof that the comparison between language and music is meant to be only negative. These differences can be accepted as an undeniable proof of the divergence between musical understanding and language understanding *only on the basis* that language use is to be conceived always and only as rule governed use. It is true that the asymmetry between listening and playing is not valid for a huge variety of language games, especially those whose purpose is to convey information. Analogously, if understanding in language is always a matter of using words according to rules it is clear that a bad performance is no criterion of misunderstanding of the meaning of words: the only thing that matters is to use words correctly according to rules. However, there might well be cases of language games where all those features typical of music can be as well found. It is the case of *poetry*, for instance. Not coincidentally, Wittgenstein mentions poems as an example of language use that is not aimed to provide information – any paraphrasable *content* – even though it is composed in such a language (PI 160). We can talk about the *lack* of understanding of a particular performer as in the case of music – maybe he overemphasizes the wrong words, misses the right tempos, and so on – as well as we can talk about a *different* understanding of the same poetical passage – a difference that will be expressed by the way he recites or reads the poem, the intonation of his voice, and so forth. In a poem, words are mostly chosen for their evocative power and acoustic properties: as in the case of music, a lot is required to compose good poems – starting from a great knowledge of the grammar of a language to the rules of poetic compositions: not everybody can compose poems, as in the case of music – yet when it comes to *understand* a poem, to grasp its expressiveness, we should rather look at our own cultural world and its features than to a system of conventional rules. A poem has always a meaning that transcends the rules of its language. As such, poetry is precisely that kind of language activity that the comparison with music is meant to capture.

The case of poetic language is important also because it connects the present discussion on the meaning of music with the case of expressive – or *soulful* – words we have encountered in the previous chapter while addressing the concept of atmosphere (see Chapter 4.2). This connection was already implicit in the fact that Wittgenstein was willing to describe understanding music as a kind of experience. As such, we are still dealing with the same issues we have set in the previous chapter: for Wittgenstein, a certain kind of second order experience – based on the connection words and sounds have with their broader context and culture – is involved when it comes to *understand* music, soulful expressions and gestures, poetic language, the character of proper names, jokes, puns and so forth. The discussion of musical understanding is thus to be taken as a *case study* for the clarification of the role of experience in language – and complementarily – to explore those areas of language that can be hardly captured by rules and conventions only. We are at this point completely out of Glock's false dichotomy: not only there is an account of experience in Wittgenstein that is thoroughly non-mentalistic; there is also a tendency to consider experience as a rightful case of understanding when it comes to describe music, and, as long as music and language can be positively compared, to consider some cases of understanding *language* as involving experience. In the next section, we will finally sum up the characters of this particular form of experience.

2. A New Sense of Experience

At this point of our discussion we have come the following conclusions. Wittgenstein extensively described the phenomenon of understanding music with the aim of exploring the logic of our ordinary concept of understanding. As such, music plays the role of a case study to circumscribe a form of understanding that is not immediately captured by rules and conventions. Understanding music is also said to be a kind of experience that presupposes a *familiarity* with the whole contexts of our language games, our culture, our form of life, 'our conceptual world'. This important feature connects understanding and experiencing music with the experiential dimensions of language we have illustrated in the previous chapter: the atmosphere of a word, the character of proper names, the face of ordinary words or their soul, they are all cases of experience that stems out from our getting familiar with the context of use of words. We have called these experiences second order because they presuppose this background. We can as well say that they are a *context-relative* kind of experience. It is evident that the kind of experience we are trying to clarify is 'of a different kind from those experiences which we regard as the most fundamental ones – sense impressions, for instance' (PPF 269). Sense impressions are likely said to be fundamental because they are not second-order in this precise sense: culture is not required to see a yellow basket as yellow.

There is a further step to do in order to get an even more precise description of this kind of experiences: we can determine their concept *negatively*, that is, as the opposite of any mentalistic conception of experience. According to mentalism, experience has two features: first, it *accompanies* – or it is *associated* to – every word of language, and second, it accompanies words always and continuously. Mentalism is forced to do so, as its concept of experience is taken to offer an exhaustive model for linguistic meaning in its entirety. Now, we have to think the experience involved in the case of understanding music, puns, and so forth in a diametrically opposed fashion: as 'something' that is not an accompaniment, or an association, and it is *not* always present while using words.

The second requirement is what we have called the *non-ubiquitous* character of experience (see Chapter 4.1.). Most of the time, while speaking, using our language, or even listening to music, we do not experience anything. Experience is non-ubiquitous because it is expressed only in particular circumstances and through specific language games whose aim is mainly to express the relationship we institute with our culture and form of life. For example, If I say that the name 'Schubert' fits its bearer, that the name has a particular character, I am not implying that such a character is always perceived while using the word. Rather, what I do is to express the particular bond I perceive between the composer, its name, and its music, and I would probably go on and describe his music to convey what I mean. In an important sense, while giving expression to the bonds I feel between Schubert and its music I am at the same time revealing something about *myself*, about the role his music plays in my life and cultural world. The kind of experience involved is thus rooted in particular language games whose purpose is to give expression to the connections we feel with our conceptual background: as such, it does not need to be *always* present every time we use language.

The first requirement is even more important. It demands that these experiences are not *accompaniment* or *associations*. Rather tellingly, Wittgenstein notices that he almost never uses the term 'association', insofar as it is often used in a confused way for quite different things (RPP I 356). In fact, we could well say that the kind of experience we are talking about here is in a way associated – sometimes – to some words. The risk is, however, to relapse into mentalism and the particular way it conceives of experience as an accompaniment or association. What is crucial for mentalism is indeed its *dualistic* framework, according to which a mental reality or experience is always distinguishable and identifiable *independently from* the words and signs they are supposed to accompany or be associated with. That is to say, for mentalism experience can be *separated* from words and signs, it exists independently from the sign it accompanies. A way out of this dualistic constraint is what in the previous chapter we have called the *immanence* of meaning of expressive words and gestures (see chapter 4.1.). According to what we can call 'immanentism', the expressivity

of certain words or gestures is inscribed directly *within* the instance of their use, that is to say, the experience in question seems to be encoded into the very material texture of those instances. The experience is bound to the sign, it is not something additional, external to it, that can be removed as we please and be attached to something else.

Now, it is a fact that Wittgenstein mentions musical phrases as examples of this kind of immanence. Wittgenstein underlines this aspect by noticing that when we talk about, for instance, the 'particular expression' a theme seems to have for us, this expression cannot be *separated* by the theme (PPF 48). This means that we do not have an independent concept of such an expression, or feeling, without its physical, material embodiment. This obviously does not mean that *this* expression is always felt by everybody listening to the theme, as music can feel different according to the personal teste and inclinations of the listener. Here, we have the same apparent paradox between separability and inseparability already encountered in the case of the atmosphere of words (see chapter 4.2) Still, the point here is that there is no experience felt without its physical embodiment, the gesture, the word, or the musical phrase that expresses it.

The fact that the experience we are talking about is immanent to the signs themselves and is shown and manifested in the ways we react, the things we say and do is the final determination of the concept of experience we are looking for. This kind of experience is not something fundamental as sense impressions are because it is not *pre-linguistic*: it is second order and context relative because it presupposes our life with language in the background and, as long as it is inseparable and not properly an association of sort, is not something that lies *beneath* language and wait for it to be expressed, so to speak. It is not even something *caused* as an *effect* by the language we speak, as not everybody has the same reactions to the same gestures. Rather, it is something that originates *from within* our linguistic practices, and together, reveals something about the speaker and his familiarity with his own cultural world.

3. Two Senses of Understanding

Now, once we have clarified the concept of experience in question, we can go back to tackle the logic of our concept of linguistic understanding. We know at this point that Wittgenstein developed a comparison between music and language in the *Investigations* with the positive aim to draw our attention to a specific feature of our concepts of understanding and meaning. Understanding music is a phenomenon that cannot be fully captured by conventional rules, it rather requires further considerations about our culture and form of life where experience might be said to play a role. If we accept that, we should then assume that for Wittgenstein understanding a language sometimes takes the form of an experience that presupposes rules but is not captured by them. There is then a space

open to conceive non dogmatically linguistic understanding and meaning, without the need to reduce them to a privileged notion – such as rules – capable of encompassing every instance of their use.

There is indeed a strong evidence in the *Investigations* that confirms this view. Straight after the discussion on language and music, Wittgenstein writes the following:

> We speak of understanding a sentence in the sense in which it can be replaced by another which says the same; but also in the sense in which it cannot be replaced by any other (any more than one musical theme can be replaced by another).
>
> In the one case, the thought in the sentence is what is common to different sentences; in the other, something that is expressed only by these words in these positions. (Understanding a poem)

> (PI 531)

Here Wittgenstein describes two senses of linguistic understanding, complementarily connected with two different senses of linguistic meaning, as he claims in another remark in the *Nachlass* (LW I 785). The criterion he uses to draw such a boundary is *replaceability*. In fact, on one hand, understanding a sentence is shown by the fact that we can switch it with another set of signs and preserve its meaning. Notably, the meaning of the sentence here does not depend on the *signs* we use to express it. On the other hand, we also speak of understanding in those cases where the signs we use and the positions they occupy in whatever linguistic medium are essential to convey a certain content, making them in this sense thus irreplaceable. It is the case of music and poetry we have discussed above, where meaning is always bound to the particular themes played in a certain expressive way or to the words we carefully chose due to their acoustic or stylistic properties. We may add, it is also the case of puns, where literal translations miss inevitably their meaning as long as they are bound to the words we use and the experience we have of them. Notably, the irreplaceability criterion is another way to formulate the immanent character of meaning: if we switch an expressive poetic word with another one, we lose its meaning, this because its soul, or atmosphere, is not separable, it is completely immanent to it. Once again, the discussion on experience and that on understanding consistently converge upon the same point.

Now, even though Wittgenstein is not explicit about it, we can take replaceability to be a feature of a conception of meaning and understanding exclusively based on rules. In fact, signs are replaceable when they are mostly irrelevant to convey a determinate meaning, and they are so because meaning is conceived as the *role* arbitrary signs play within a system of rules. As long as the role is fixed by the system of rules, we can switch signs with no tangible consequences. If we read PI

531 this way then, we can see its fundamental importance, as Wittgenstein is implicitly telling us that there is more than one way – the normative – to capture the logic of our concepts of understanding and meaning. The result is a *pluralistic* view of our ordinary language where both models – replaceability and irreplaceability, rules and expressions, conventions, and experience – are inextricably intertwined and overlapping in a multitude of different ways. We can, however, single out instances of language games that can be fully described *only* in terms of pure irreplaceability or only in terms of rules. These would be *borderline* cases of language we can lay down for clarificatory purposes, without expecting them to capture univocally the essence of language. As I will show in the next sub-sections, this is exactly what Wittgenstein does in the *Investigations*.

3.1 Two Simple Models of Clarification

After introducing music in the context of his investigation on understanding, Wittgenstein writes the following:

> One might imagine people who had something not altogether unlike a language: vocal gestures, without vocabulary and grammar. ('Speaking with tongues')
> 'But what would the meaning of the sounds be in such a case?' – What is it in music? Though I don't at all wish to say that this language of vocal gestures would have to be compared to music.

(PI 528, 529)

Wittgenstein here quickly sketches a *case*, an activity made up *only* by vocal gestures. There are neither vocabulary nor grammar, so that this activity cannot be taught by means of conventions and rules. As in the case of playing music expressively, this does not imply that this activity cannot be *learnt* at all. We may think that *imitation* here plays a part in what counts as learning a language-like phenomenon of this kind. As we are dealing here with gestures, we can assume we could learn such a language in the same way we learn to recognize a sigh as an expression of pain or sorrow, and so on. The importance of this case lies in the fact that it highlights a *possibility*: it conceives a case of language where we can talk about understanding and meaning *only* in their experiential, secondary sense, insofar as there is nothing here to be recognized as clearly distinct words used according to rules laid down in advance. A language of pure expression, so to speak, that can be used as much as music can to clarify some important aspects of our concepts of understanding, meaning and language.

It is undoubtedly hard to see how this language-like phenomenon could look like. In brackets, Wittgenstein mentions 'speaking with tongues', also known as *glossolalia*, a practice rather common

in early Christian communities – and still present in some forms of the Christian cult – consisting in speaking a language unknown to the speaker but nevertheless 'full of meaning', so that it can pretend to be an actual language[87]. Apart from this obscure example, it is not hard to observe that we can indeed understand anger or kindness within a speech whose language we do not know. As he mentions vocal gestures, another more accessible example might be the word-like sounds exchanged by lovers, a sort of private vocabulary to express their love. The following remark can be interpreted to suggest something along this line:

> Just think of the words exchanged by lovers! They're 'loaded' with feeling. And surely you can't just agree to substitute for them any other sounds you please. Isn't this because they are *gestures*? And a gesture doesn't have to be innate; it is instilled, and yet '*assimilated*' – But isn't that a myth?! – No. For the signs of assimilation are that I want to use *this* word, that I prefer to use none at all to using one that is forced on me, and similar reactions.
>
> (LW I 712)

Here, Wittgenstein describes those words as 'loaded' with feeling, as such completely *irreplaceable*. We are dealing with an example that falls squarely within the second sense of understanding above. As in the case of understanding music, here too Wittgenstein uses the vocabulary of gestures that are 'assimilated' or made 'accessible': to learn these language-like phenomena means precisely to expand or extend the range of our expressive tools, and with them the possibilities of expression of our form of life.

What about the opposite then? Can we conceive a language with only rules but no experiential dimension, a cold system of signs where every word is replaceable with no loss in our understanding? This language would be with *no soul*, a word we have seen Wittgenstein uses to define music: this would be a language with no musicality, where aspects like intonations, sound and pitch do not play any part. Such a language, by contrast, would embed the conception of understanding based on rules at its purest. In the remark following the one just quoted, Wittgenstein writes indeed the following:

> There might be also a language in whose use the 'soul' of the words played no part. In which, for example, we had no objection to replacing one word by a new, arbitrarily invented one.

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[87] The linguist William Samarin defines such a phenomenon as 'verbal behaviour that consists of using a certain number of consonants and vowels (…) in a limited number of syllables that in turn are organized into larger units that are taken apart and rearranged pseudogrammatically with variations in pitch, volume, speed and intensity' (Samarin 1973: 120). As we can see, this definition highlights the role that material aspects of speech, such as pitch, volume and intensity play in glossolalia, those aspects that make it expressive, in an important sense similar to our language and music, and thus *meaningful*.

The remark is rather stark, and it is unclear how a soulless language might look like. A cluster of remarks in *Zettel* offers some options. A language with no soul is a language whose signs we are able 'to take notice of', with no impression whatsoever accompanying. It is a language where every connection between signs and actions is *mediated* by rules and tables: a language purely *operational*, so procedural that we certainly could not employ it to write stories (Z 145). Wittgenstein seems to think that only in these languages a sign can be fully said to have a meaning only in a *system*, where every word acquires meaning thanks to the whole set of rules governing its use (Z 145). Relevantly, a language where meaning is determined *only* and *exclusively* by rules seems the only one, according to Wittgenstein, that can be fully captured and exhausted by the normativist conception of meaning as we described it in the second chapter.

What instances of language can be said to be fully soulless? In *Zettel*, Wittgenstein enlists three artificial examples. We can think of a language where the meaning of expressions changes according to definite rules, like a word having a meaning in the morning and another in the afternoon, or alternatively, a language where words alter everyday according to a specific rule of assembling their letters (Z 148). Here the *mechanical*, procedural aspect is highlighted by the fact that language users need always to rely on tables and rules to apply the words correctly, a case analogous to the one of the tools in use described in PI 53 (see chapter 2. 2). These languages, we could also say, do not come naturally, they feel clunky, *unfamiliar* in an important sense. The feeling of unfamiliarity is the main aspect the last of the three examples wants to illustrate: a language identical to English in terms of grammar and vocabulary, where the words occur in the sentence in a reverse order (Z 149). This language would have the same 'possibility of expression' as English, but it would be without a *ring*, Wittgenstein says, it would lack something. This example is particularly effective as it shows that in our common mother tongues rules are not everything that counts in language use: the artificial language in question is structurally the same as English, yet it is not really the same, as we could not use it easily, we should take our time to reverse the order of the words every time we want to formulate a sentence, and so forth. The language is alien to us, yet it shares the same semantic rules as our familiar English.

If we look at actual languages, Wittgenstein thought *chemical symbolism* to be such a language (MS 161: 6f). Despite the fact that H_2O became a name for water, a universal symbol of life and CO_2 can be well said to evoke unpleasant associations to our minds, considering the climate crisis it is related to, yet *within* chemistry those signs are completely arbitrary and could be easily swapped with another system for practical purposes, whatever it might be. Another example might be the one of a *code* we need to decipher if we want to understand its content that Wittgenstein sketches in the

Big Typescript (BT: 6): in this case every passage is rigidly governed by the rules of decoding that need to be always present and appealed to actually *understand* the code, to grasp its meaning. Finally, it is relevant to notice how much this whole discussion makes Wittgenstein's apparently puzzling remark on *Esperanto* perspicuous. Esperanto, Wittgenstein says, brings about a feeling of disgust, as its words 'are cold, lacking in associations, and yet it plays at being a *language*' (CV: 144). The artificiality of Esperanto makes it a soulless language, with no associations, no grip with our life, an inexpressive and mechanical language.

This property of Esperanto, even more than all the other examples of soulless languages, makes it clear that, for Wittgenstein, words having a soul – an experiential flavour that makes us talk about understanding them beyond the conventions governing their use – is something that goes *beyond* poetry as a language game and other specific restricted expressive or emphatic uses of language. Rather, it is something more general, that can involve ordinary words in our every-day commerce with the world. Again, we find here confirmed the conclusion of our investigation on experience in chapter 4: experience of language is not ubiquitous, not even potentially as Carolina Scotto argues, insofar as soulless languages are always conceivable to limit its universal applicability; in some language games – such as puns and poetry – experience plays a more relevant role. However it is not necessarily confined to them and can be found whenever languages become *familiar*.

To conclude, soulless languages represent, thus, a *borderline case* as much as speaking with tongues does. The concepts of rule and regularity, somehow, feel more like a strong condition for language than that kind of expressivity represented by speaking with tongues. In PI 207, Wittgenstein marks this point by saying that a language with no regularity whatsoever is not recognizable *as* language, *pace* glossolalia. Nevertheless, both these cases are simplifications of the actual complexity of our language, and as such can be used to clarify certain aspects of our concepts of understanding, meaning and language.

3.2 A New Approach to Meaning Blindness

In the preceding subsection we have shown that for Wittgenstein understanding and meaning have two senses. On one hand, we can understand a sentence in the sense that we can replace it according to rules and conventions. On the other hand, the signs and gestures we use are irreplaceable, that is, there is no meaning expression without the specific and singular material way we express it. Replaceability corresponds to a model of understanding that is markedly normative, whereas the other can be argued to be a criteriological expression of a model based on experience. These models are embodied by some borderline cases of language use: soulless languages and soulful vocal gestures.

Now, I suggest that the very conceivability of soulless languages can offer a model to understand what Wittgenstein famously calls *meaning blindness*. A meaning blind person is defined as somebody that can *never* experience the meaning of our words and in his late remarks Wittgenstein continuously tries to describe what a meaning blind person would look like. His aim is merely *conceptual*: he does not want to describe an *actual* defect, rather he wants to understand how such a concept of meaning blindness can be determined (Z 184). Comparatively, the role experience plays in our life with language can be better circumscribed if we wonder how it would be *not* to experience the meaning of our words. Among the many things the meaning blind would not do and understand[88], we then find that he would be a person incapable of understanding our talk about the soul and atmosphere of our words. He would not distinguish names 'by an imponderable Something' (RPP I 243), he would not understand names as gestures, 'a person that we could call *prosaic*' (RPP I 342). As he is excluded by experiencing the soul of words and music, a meaning blind would be also somebody that cannot understand music, or the direction one gives him in playing a piece of music[89] (RPP I 247, 250). He could not even understand *puns* (LW I 711).

It seems then that a meaning blind person would be excluded from a lot of language games where the conception of meaning as an experience plays a role. What the meaning blind *can* do is to use language according to conventions and fixed rules, what he cannot do is to talk about the special meaning a musical theme evokes in him, or about the peculiar character a certain name seems to have, and so on. A meaning blind person would then be a linguistic being playing only *soulless* languages, a language totally devoid of any experiential dimension, similarly to Esperanto once it is totally disconnected from a culture that imbues it with life. This convergence between soulless languages and meaning blindness can be suggestively proved if we look at the ways Wittgenstein tries to describe this phenomenon in general terms. A meaning blind is suggested being akin to a *mentally defective* person, whose difference from us would be shown by the limited amount of language games he can play (RPP I 179). This comparison is meant to draw our attention on the limited *extension* of language games a meaning blind person would be able to play. However, most of the time Wittgenstein describes meaning blindness by focusing more on *the way* a hypothetical meaning blind person would use language. He would in fact use it as 'an automaton' (RPP I 198, Z 178), 'mechanically' (RPP II 706), 'like a robot' (RPP I 324). The mechanical aspect of his behaviour would then be rooted in the fact that that his language and his life within language lack expressivity and soul. A meaning blind would then look like someone using English completely inexpressively, as if it were a soulless language, one of those exclusively operational and mechanical systems of signs

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[88] The meaning blind is said to be unable to understand the order: 'say '*march*' and mean the month!' (Z 184). As Wittgenstein mentions words losing their meaning when we pointlessly repeat them, a meaning blind could arguably not experience this loss (PPF 261, RPP II 464).

[89] As much as its counterpart, aspect blindness, is said to be akin to the lack of musical ear (PPF 260).

that do not require expressivity to be used and can be well played by a robot or an automaton. Suggestively, it is as if Wittgenstein is saying that if we leave experience out of our account of human language, we get closer to describe the behaviour of a machine rather than the complex form of life of human beings.[90]

3.3 Neither Explanation nor Irrelevance: A Third Way

In this final subsection, I will focus on a particular aspect of Wittgenstein's conception of meaning and understanding as outlined in this chapter. We have seen that PI 531 draws our attention on two distinct senses of what we call understanding, two senses that we have seen to be mainly reducible to two different conceptions, one based on rules and the other one based on experience. It is now important to notice that Wittgenstein does not tell anything about how we should conceive the relationship between these two senses: he does not say that the conception based on rules is more fundamental, he does not draw a *hierarchy* between the two in this sense. He does not say that experience plays such a preferential role either. Rather, what we have is just a *plural description* of what we call ordinarily understanding (and meaning) in our every-day life. Wittgenstein does not try to *reduce* the experiential sense of understanding to rules – we know it is not possible – nor he suggests experience should *explain* linguistic meaning, as a grounding notion. Consistently with a conception of philosophy that rejects metalogical thinking, these efforts are incompatible with Wittgenstein's philosophical goals.

Notably, however, in the literature we found both these tendencies when it comes to understand the role of experience in Wittgenstein's conception of meaning: either interpreters tried to confine experience *outside* the domain of linguistic meaning in order to preserve the primacy of the normative conception, or on the contrary they argue for experience to be the ultimate semantic condition able to explain the nature of linguistic meaning once and for all. We shall call the former the *conservative* wing of the scholarship – insofar as they try to preserve the purity of meaning as rule governedness from the stains of experience -whereas the latter can be called *revolutionary*, as they want to reshape radically the mainstream reading of Wittgenstein as an exclusively normative thinker in favour of a rediscovery of experience in language use.

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[90] We can thus leave aside Rush Rhees hesitancy in stating whether meaning blindness is really conceivable within a linguistic practice or not. In fact, Rhees thinks that Wittgenstein left the following questions unanswered: 'If a man were 'meaning-blind', would that make any difference to his use of language? Or does the perception of meaning fall outside the use of language?' (Rhees 19758: XIII-XIV). According to the interpretation I develop here, the answers are clear: yes, there would be a difference insofar as the domain of expressiveness is completely excluded from a meaning blind use of language; and no, experience does not fall outside language, as it is a constitutive feature of a lot (but not all) of our language-games. Rhees hesitancy is arguably still rooted into the metalogical presupposition – analogous to Glock false dichotomy - that – if experience has a role in language – then it must be a condition of possibility of language as such. We can simply reject this misleading assumption.

We have already encountered some conservative interpreters in the preceding chapter. It is the case of Baker, Hacker and Glock, whose claims were used to introduce the problem of mentalism in Wittgenstein's writings. Others somehow close to this interpretative option are Jacques Bouveresse and Severin Schroeder. Generally, we can say that all these scholars tend to downgrade the importance of experience a secondary and irrelevant phenomenon when it comes to investigate the grammar of meaning and understanding.[91] As such, they treat the normative conception as the *only* conception of meaning and understanding, whereas experience, though important, is not considered as a *constitutive* element of such concepts. Bouveresse even comes to *deny* any significant role for experience in understanding, as he considers any concession to the experiential character of words as a relapse into mentalism, what he calls – by paraphrasing Wittgenstein – 'the pneumatic conception of meaning' (Bouveresse 2007: 93). Schroeder is the most charitable with experience within this cohort, as he believes that 'aspect perception may only *help* one's understanding' (Schroeder 2010: 126). This is a huge concession to experience. However, he treats it as a mere instrument for understanding, not an *instance* of it, able to capture and effectively describe those cases of language use where rules are not sufficient to convey what we mean.

Implicitly, at the basis of these interpretations there is always what we have been called Glock's *false dichotomy*: either experience plays a role in understanding as mentalism claims, or it does not. As long as mentalism is untenable, we should conclude that there is no experience in understanding and meaning. As such, the conservatives bound their understanding of experience to that of mentalism, according to which experience is ubiquitous and acquires the form of a mysterious mental accompaniment. It is evident that this conception of experience is to be rejected, but this does not necessarily imply that we should throw the baby out with the bathwater. As extensively shown in this chapter, it is my contention (and, I believe, Wittgenstein's) that a certain non-mentalistic conception of experience is needed to understand fully the expressive potential of our life with language.

On the other hand, conservative interpretations are challenged by the revolutionaries. Scholars such as Eddy Zemach, Laurence Goldstein or Gilead Bar Elli argue that the experience of meaning is fundamental for understanding the workings of language. Zemach, for instance, argues that the experience is the condition of possibility of rule following itself. According to this interpreter, rule following is to be conceived as a '*perceived* interpretation': as such, we should accept that 'there is

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[91] Few words need to be spent about Joachim Schulte's *Experience and Expression*, whose interpretation does not fall squarely within the two sides I am sketching here. In Schulte we find both the awareness that Wittgenstein discussion on music and experience are interwoven and that experience is connected with an activity (Schulte 1993: 37-55) and a discussion on meaning blindness that is substantially consistent with the one advanced here (Schulte 1993: 70-74). However, Schulte never tries to explore how and in which sense experience of meaning or music is a legitimate kind of understanding in its own. This hesitancy pushes him closer to the conservative side of the debate, yet his interpretation is *per se* compatible with my reading.

more to meaning than the use of words, a certain *quale* that echoes the word use' (Zemach 1994: 490). Goldstein argues that the experience of meaning discussion aims at a *revision* of the thesis that meaning is use and represents a sort of third Wittgenstein's conception of meaning he developed after the *Investigations* (Goldstein 2004). Finally, Bar Elli claims that our experiential capacity is 'an ingredient' that is 'vital for the inherent intentionality of language' (Bar Elli 2006: 217). Their arguments, despite some notable differences, all share a common perspective: according to these scholars, Wittgenstein, while discussing experience and meaning, was after a sort of experiential condition of possibility of any possible meaningful use of our signs and of language as a whole. Experience should not then be dismissed, but rather emphasised, as a sort of grounding core able to make language function *as* language. All in all, experience is appealed as the final constituent of Wittgenstein's later conception of meaning: rules and conventions capture only the surface of linguistic phenomena, what truly matters is the experience beneath that makes words really meaningful.

We can quickly see how this perspective is ultimately a wrong interpretation of Wittgenstein's thought. It is not true that the conception of meaning as experience is something Wittgenstein came up with after the *Investigations* to abandon his earlier conception of meaning as rule governed use: we have in fact shown that it was precisely in the *Investigations* that it was formulated (PI 531). Furthermore, despite it cannot be conflated with mentalism, this view shares with it the same assumption that *experience* must be universally always present in every possible word use if we want it to be significant: it needs to be ubiquitous. That is, the revolutionaries conceive of experience as a universal condition of signification that is hardly consistent with the very conceivability of soulless languages as we defined them. The atmosphere of words, the character of names, the meaning of puns and ideological words, the meaning of a poetic verse are not in any sensible way a model to fully capture the meaning of 'meaning' in its totality. To use these instances of experiencing the words we use to prove a *metalogical* assumption according to which *every* meaningful use requires an experience to take place is ultimately dogmatic and misses completely Wittgenstein's efforts of clarification.

To conclude, both factions are misled by the pluralistic nature of our concepts of understanding and meaning: whereas the conservative interpreters *separate* the two conceptions, split up meaning from experience and implicitly advocate for rules as the only valid conceptual condition for meaning, the latter rather *conflate* the two conceptions, making experience the condition for every meaningful use. Both presuppose that either rules or experience *must* be a superior and privilege principle to understand language. However, no such a claim can be envisaged in Wittgenstein investigation, whose aim is thoroughly *descriptive*. As long as the meaning of the word 'meaning' and

'understanding' is to be seen in their use, and as long as we use these words to express ourselves, then it is clear that there are areas of our language – or specific language games – where experience plays an undeniable role and makes up their concepts. No further conclusion about the foundational role of experience or rules can be argued for if we want to remain on Wittgensteinian grounds.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to see whether the discussion on experience held in the previous chapter could have been seen as a Wittgensteinian attempt to explore meaning beyond the constraints of the normative conception of meaning. We used Wittgenstein's remarks on music to substantiate this point. According to Wittgenstein, music can well be seen as a form of understanding, and together, it can be descried as a kind of experience. What is crucial in the case of understanding music is that its expressivity, its being soulful, cannot be captured by rules alone. Rather, it requires the whole contexts of our language games, our culture and form of life we are familiar and attuned with. We described then the kind of experience in question as second-order, context-relative, and thoroughly *immanent* to the things we do and say, our gestures, reactions to the sounds, and so on. Music is also crucial because Wittgenstein used its features to draw a positive comparison with language. Music is then similar to language in the precise sense that sometimes we play some expressive language games – poetry, emphatic words, rhetoric, jokes and puns – that is, all those language games where the experience of the meaning of words plays a constitutive role - where we talk about understanding in a non-normative way. It follows that Wittgenstein had a pluralistic understanding of the concepts of meaning and understanding: these two senses and conceptions – one based on rules and the other based on experience – are not antagonistic, no one is privileged; only, they constitute *together* a more accurate account of our ordinary concepts of meaning and understanding.

6. The Layered Structure of Language: The Case of Secondary Uses

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we have illustrated how much and how extensively Wittgenstein investigates the concept of experience in relation to meaning and language throughout his late writings. His examination of music, soulful expressions, atmosphere of names and words and the meaning of puns makes it clear that there are areas of language where the concepts of *meaning* and *understanding* work quite differently than expected if we dogmatically cling to a picture of meaning based only on conventions and rules. We thus have two conceptions of meaning and understanding, one operational and based on rules, the other experiential, based on the different ways we resonate in language and feel our own community and culture.

We have shown that the theoretical core of Wittgenstein's reflections on experience was an attempt to challenge the normativist picture of meaning and describe language beyond rules. In this chapter, we will further explore this possibility by focusing on a rather controversial discussion Wittgenstein sketched – mainly, but not only, as we shall see - in the second part of the *Investigations*: the case of words used *secondarily*. Differently from the main interpretations we find in the literature, where secondary uses are often interpreted in the light of aesthetics (Tilghman 1984, Hanfling 1991, 2002, Budd 2006), I here propose to read Wittgenstein's discussion on secondary uses of words as an investigation about the concept of meaning itself, as it is precisely designed to show that there are plenty of word uses that are *not* conventional or properly rule governed, and yet make perfect sense. Furthermore, I will show that from Wittgenstein's discussion on secondary uses we can elaborate what I will call *the layered conception of meaning and language*: a picture of language as a shifting and ever-growing system of overlapping language games. I believe the layered conception to be the final outcome of Wittgenstein's investigation on the non-normative cases of language use: as such, this chapter works as the conclusive move of an argumentative thread we have started already in the fourth chapter.

The chapter is structured as follows. First, I will illustrate the logical features of Wittgenstein's notion of secondariness. Through a confrontation with Hanfling's interpretation of secondary uses, I will single out what I believe to be the core idea underneath secondariness, that is, the fact that secondary uses are first and foremost non-conventional uses of words that, however, *can* make

sense. Second, I will show that Wittgenstein believes secondary uses to be rather pervasive in language, an aspect often overlooked in the literature. In fact, according to Wittgenstein we use words secondarily when we talk about our *experience* and feelings, that is - when we use language expressively - when we tell a *dream* or the content of an *hallucination*, or when we make up fantastic or absurdist *tales*. Throughout this discussion we will see that secondariness also gives us the model to conceive the unity of our concept of meaning. In a nutshell, when we use the word 'meaning' to talk about the soul or the atmosphere of words we are using it secondarily. Finally, I will lay down in detail what I believe to be Wittgenstein's conception of language as a layered structure.

1. The Logic of Secondary Uses

Wittgenstein introduces his distinction between primary and secondary uses in the second part of the *Investigations*. There, he sketches three criteria for detecting when a word is used secondarily. These criteria, however, should not be taken as necessary and sufficient conditions of secondariness. If we in fact apply these criteria too rigidly, we extend secondariness to a lot of different words uses that have very few things in common, and by so doing, we risk losing any explanatory efficacy. This is, I believe, Oswald Hanfling's mistake, that completely overlooks the fact that secondary uses are rather and only *non-conventional* uses of words in new contexts. I will first address Wittgenstein's criteria as they are formulated in the second part of the *Investigations* and then I will move further to show where Hanfling is mistaken.

1.1. Wittgenstein's Criteria

Let us start from Wittgenstein's own words about secondary and primary uses of words:

> Giving the two concepts 'fat' and 'lean', would you be inclined to say that Wednesday was fat and Tuesday lean, or the other way around? (I am strongly inclined towards the former). Now have 'fat' and 'lean some different meaning here from their usual one? – They have a different use – So ought I really to have used different words? Certainly not. – I want to use *these* words (with their familiar meanings) *here*. – I am saying nothing about the causes of this phenomenon now. They *might* be associations from my childhood. But this is a hypothesis. Whatever the explanation – the inclination is there.
>
> Asked 'What do you really mean by 'fat' and 'lean' I could only explain the meanings in the usual way. I could *not* point them out by using Tuesday and Wednesday as examples.
>
> Here one might speak of a 'primary' and 'secondary' meaning of a word. Only someone for whom the word has the former meaning uses it in the latter.

The 'secondary' meaning is not a 'metaphorical' meaning. If I say, 'For me the vowel *e* is yellow', I do not mean: 'yellow' in a metaphorical meaning – for I could not express what I want to say in any other way than by means of the concept of yellow.

(PPF 274 - 278)

So, examples of what Wittgenstein considers secondary uses of words are the expressions 'for me the vowel *e* is yellow' and 'Thursday is lean and Wednesday is fat'. Once I know the meaning of regular words like 'fat', 'lean', 'yellow', I can well say that for me the vowel *e* is yellow, that Wednesday is fat or that a particular scale – let us say, d-minor – is yellow, and so on.

In all these cases, I am applying the words differently, in different contexts, to do different things. An old expression is applied in a *new* situation, Wittgenstein says in another section of the *Nachlass* (LW I 61). In the case of the yellow vowel, for instance, it is evident that I am not describing the actual colour of a sound. That would be a category mistake,[92] that is, that particular kind of nonsense we produce when we attribute to a thing an incompatible logical property (tones to physical attributes, scents to sounds, positions in space and time to abstract objects, and so forth). It is evident that these sentences are not meaningless, insofar as we can *agree* as well as *disagree* with the speaker about their content. I personally agree with Wittgenstein on the colour of *e* but not on Wednesday, far way leaner than Thursday to me. In an important sense, we can *understand* such sentences. We are then really dealing with a certainly peculiar use of words that yet makes sense, and we need to account for it accordingly.

According to Wittgenstein, there is an *inclination* to use the words secondarily. It might well be rooted in some associations made in our childhood, maybe while learning the words in question. However, such *causal* hypotheses are of no interest. On one hand, they are incompatible with Wittgenstein's general methodological hostility to investigate the causes of psychological phenomena. On the other hand, and most importantly, if we reduce secondary uses to the psychological associations that prompt them, then we cannot account for the fact that secondary uses can be understood publicly, or that we can, if not always, lead others to understand them. Associations are indeed personal and subjective, and we can never know whether other people share the same associations we have. If understanding secondary uses means sharing the same associations, then we can never say whether others really understand what we say secondarily. I personally agree with Wittgenstein that the vowel e is yellow, but I do not have to share his

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[92] Gilbert Ryle brought the notion to the mainstream, as he abundantly employed it to target the Cartesian conception of mind. His paradigmatic example is the one of somebody visiting Oxford University facilities, and still asking where is after all the university, as if it were some independent further institution (Ryle 2009: 6).

associations, that remain to me as much as to him substantially unknown.[93] This is, after all, another version of the classic anti-mentalist argument we have already encountered in the fourth chapter. Finally, there is also another reason to discard associations: it is unsure what association could be at the basis of my saying that a vowel has a particular colour. It might be because I learnt to write in a handbook where letters were identified by a specific colour (that might work as an association), or rather because the sound itself has a property that reminds me of a colour. In the latter case, no associations can be mentioned. In any case, when we utter such expressions we are surely not talking about our past memories, and this is everything we need to drop associations out of our discussion.

Now, in the second half of the remarks quoted above, Wittgenstein singles out two criteria to detect when we use words secondarily. The first involves *explanation*: we cannot point to words used secondarily as an explanation of their use. This means that if we have to teach the meaning of 'yellow', we almost certainly point to several samples of the colour, maybe some drawings might be involved. Surely, the vowel *e* is not brought up as an example of a yellow object. The fact that words used secondarily do not change the way we explain them is also the reason why we are not inclined to talk about different meanings here: the words 'fat', 'lean', 'yellow' and so on are all explained in their usual way.

The second involves *use*: one cannot use a word secondarily without knowing its primary meaning. We are here dealing with, to say with ter Hark, a form of '*logical dependency* of a use upon another one' (ter Hark 2011: 515). Furthermore, there is also an additional – *negative* – criterion, involving metaphors. The two criteria introduced above - explanation and use - are indeed perfectly extendible to metaphors too. This is why we need to rule them out. The main distinction between metaphors and secondary uses is the fact that the former are mostly *optional* figures of speech that can be explained by paraphrase and thus avoided if they bring about misunderstandings. To use Diamond's example, if I say that 'man is the cancer of our planet', I can rephrase my thought far way less emphatically by stating that mankind is an invasive species that is destroying natural ecosystems (Diamond 1990: 227). This kind of explanation is what is excluded in the case of secondary uses.

It is important to stress that Wittgenstein's point is entirely negative. He is not sketching in this regard a *theory* of metaphor, that is, he is not committed to the claim that every metaphor *must* be paraphrasable and *must* be optional. Only, we need to accept that paraphrasability and optionality capture a good amount of what we consider to be metaphors in every-day life. There might be exceptions, as in the case of *dead metaphors* - the cannon is said to have a *mouth*, the table *legs* –

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[93] Unknown causes of our linguist inclinations might be the object of psychoanalysis. This is what Wittgenstein suggests, when he describes the kind of illusion of having a city on my right while walking in its environs, when actually it is on my left. Here we have no reasons to say so or to have such a belief, yet we claim it, maybe because of our memories or associations that might well be brought to light by a therapist (PPF 268).

that is, metaphors that became part of the common heritage of our language and that, as such, are far from being optional and difficult to paraphrase. The very notion of 'paraphrase' is not that uniform either: in the case of Diamond's example, it is easy to appeal to non-figurative applications of words to convey the same thought, not so for the controversial Shakespearian themed example of 'Juliet is the Sun', where paraphrase is clearly figurative as well. In fact, We can explain that Juliet's role in Romeo's life is a centre of gravity that illuminates and makes his life bright, but these would be again figurative uses of the words 'centre of gravity' or 'illuminate'.[94]

This shows that secondary uses and metaphors are more connected that it might seem and that the distinction between the figurative and the literal should not be taken rigidly, as it is more fluid and varies from case to case. There are metaphors that are paraphrasable through other figurative words, others that are not, others that are not paraphrasable at all as in the case of dead metaphors. This indeterminacy, however, is not an argument against Wittgenstein's point, that remains narrow: the comparison with metaphors aims only to stress the *forced* character of secondary uses and together the fact that they are bound to the primary meanings of their words. As such, in order to convey what I want to convey by saying that *e* is yellow and lighter than *u* I surely can use synonyms if needed, but I would be nevertheless bound to the *meanings* of the words I choose, not so if I want to describe the role of Juliet in my life as a lover or the physical prowess of my friend Jason when I say that he is a bull.

All in all, secondary uses are thus different uses of the *same* word that are logically dependent from another use. On the basis of their primary use, we extend our words in a new context of use. We do it *naturally* and *spontaneously*.[95] This means that the forced character of secondariness, is not to be read as a sort of psychological *compulsion*. If so, we could contemplate alternative forms of expression and not choose them because we feel urged otherwise. On the contrary, there is no

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[94] Intriguingly, as long as this kind of paraphrase sounds ultimate and unparaphrasable, Ben Tilghman comes to suggest that the very words we use to explain the meaning of this metaphor are used secondarily (Tilghman 1984: 164).

[95] I am here using the word 'spontaneous' with the sole intention to stress the difference with psychological compulsion. It is not a Wittgensteinian way to define secondariness. Spontaneity is mentioned in a rather obscure remark in the second part of the *Investigations*, in a way that is however compatible with my use: 'What is new (spontaneous, 'specific') is always a language game'(PPF 335). Notably, spontaneity is connected here with novelty, a distinctive trait of secondary uses (LW I 61). Schulte interprets this paragraph in the context of Wittgenstein's discussion of understanding music as a form of experience, in the following way: What Wittgenstein means by this remark is that a new form of expression requires an adequate and suitable context' (Schulte 1993: 52). Crucially, Schulte connects spontaneity to a defining character of experience of meaning here: its being *second-order*, as it depends on the whole context of its surroundings (see chapter 5.2). Schulte has thus the merit to connect spontaneity to the way we express particular – 'specific' – experiences. As long as secondariness too is connected to our expressive behaviour – as we shall see – this makes spontaneity a constitutive feature of words used secondarily. I think however that Wittgenstein's point in that remark is more literal than what Schulte suggests: he is really just saying that spontaneous expressions and secondary uses are *really* new language games that get established. As we shall see, I call this feature the layered conception of language.

alternative we can envisage when we use words secondarily. There is no other way to convey what I mean by saying that *e* is yellow but *saying* that *e* is yellow - and though forced - the words I apply here feel natural and a spontaneous extension of their use.

1.2 Criteria and Conventionality

Now, the fact that Wittgenstein enlists three criteria to single out secondary uses can be misleading. There are in fact several different cases of language use where we can apply them and conclude that they are all secondary employments of words. The risk is thus losing any explanatory determinacy of the logical distinction. Oswald Hanfling's interpretation follows this line. It is fruitful to analyse it in detail as it may help us further characterize the logic of secondary uses. What Hanfling misses is, I believe, the fact that secondary uses are defined by their *non-conventional* character.

Hanfling's interpretation of secondariness[96] is based mainly (if not only) on those sections of the *Brown Book* where Wittgenstein extensively discusses the preconception according to which every application of a word needs to have *something in common* with all the others in order to be used legitimately (BB: 129-142). The gist of this discussion is present in the *Investigations,* where Wittgenstein lists different examples of our use of the expression 'to see what it is in common' (PI 72), in the same sections addressing family resemblance.[97] We can define 'blue' to be the colour that all its specific shades have in common, but this does not necessarily imply that blue is *a thing* that can be pointed at and recognized before learning and applying the word. One conclusion, reported in the *Brown Book*, is that when we talk about blue as the thing in common among all its shades we are merely saying that we *use* the word in in all those cases, and nothing more: we are certainly not committed to assume a common thing all the shades share that we can point at (BB: 135). In other words, there is no commonality that can be first reported and pointed at and *then* appealed to as a reason for our use of the same word. There is nothing beyond use that can be served as a justification for it: we simply apply the same word to all these shades of colour.

Now, it is in the context of this specific discussion on commonality that Wittgenstein for the first time mentions the coloured vowels: that is, when he describes a language game where players are supposed to arrange a series of objects in order of their darkness (BB: 138-139). If a player starts using vowels as labels of the objects to arrange and these vowels are used by mirroring the darkness or brightness of their objects, it feels natural to justify such a criterion by saying that *i* is really brighter

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[96] Hanfling thesis is developed in two different papers, published 12 years later one from the other (Hanfling 1990, 2002). His views remained substantially unchanged from a paper to the other.
[97] This is no coincidence, as, according to Hanfling, secondary uses are an alternative case to family resemblance where we use words without the need to postulate a commonality of sort between different applications of the same word (Hanfling 1990: 121).

than *u*, after all. We thus extend the employment of coloured words to what looks like sound description. The use of the coloured vowels in the *Brown Book* - where Wittgenstein addresses the problem of the lack of any commonality at the basis of our use of colour words - is thus taken by Hanfling to deny any exceptionality or idiosyncrasy to the examples Wittgenstein elaborates to introduce his conception of secondariness in the second part of the *Investigations*:

> It is clear, however, that Wittgenstein wanted to make a more radical point by means of these examples, and that he introduced them in order to throw light on the question of justifying our *normal* uses of words [...] No doubt, as Wittgenstein points out, 'we may be inclined to treat [the case of vowels] as some kind of abnormality' (BB p. 123), but as far as justification is concerned, this is no more available in the normal that in the abnormal cases.
>
> (Hanfling 1990: 122)

In other words, there is no logical distinction, according to Hanfling, between the sentence 'the vowel *e* is yellow' and ordinary descriptive sentences like 'the shades *a* and *b* are both blue'. In both cases, we employ a colour word without having a reason to do so, that is, without having a clear perception of a commonality that could justify the new use in the new context. At most, the former case can be said to be 'abnormal' - it belongs to the 'margins of language' (Hanfling 2002: 152), he claims, as it is not part of 'a consensus of usage which is an essential feature of language' (Hanfling 1990: 123) - yet it can be used to tackle the problem of commonality as a model for the unity of our concepts and thus of our use of words.[98]

Now, on the basis of this interpretation of secondary uses, Hanfling extends secondariness to a whole new cluster of word uses, well beyond Wittgenstein's examples in the second part of the *Investigations*. The *Brown Book*, again, is the starting point for this interpretative move, as Wittgenstein, also mentions the adjective 'deep', used to talk about wells, as well as sounds and sorrow (BB: 137) as an instance of a word use that does not require a common feature shared by the things it designates, in the very same passage where for the first time he mentions the fatness of the days of the week. Another example coming from Wittgenstein is the word 'bitter', used to talk equally about food and sorrow (RPP I 68). Hanfling goes beyond Wittgenstein and adds some more

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[98] Ben Tilghman argues on the same line that Wittgenstein's examples were idiosyncratic and infelicitous, as they discredit the distinction between secondary and primary uses and its broader – and fruitful - applications to art and aesthetics (Tilghman 1984: 160). These interpreters, more generally, blame Wittgenstein for elaborating the wrong examples to tackle otherwise important issues. I however believe that this blame reveals a substantial misunderstanding of Wittgenstein's philosophical aim in formulating such idiosyncratic examples of secondariness, as we shall see in what follows.

examples along the same line: 'high' is used to talk about sounds as well as objects,[99] we can use the word 'sharp' to describe a knife as well as a sound and children can be well said to be 'sweet', even though we are not actually tasting them (Hanfling 1990: 124-125). In all these cases, it is easy to see that we use the *same* word despite that there is virtually nothing literally in common between wells and sounds, food, and feelings, and so forth. Crucially, Hanfling notices that we can apply the criteria of secondary uses to all these cases. We do not explain the meaning of 'sweet' by pointing to a child, as well as we talk about children sweetness only if we know what a sweet food is. The third negative criterion, according to which secondary uses are not metaphorical, can be accommodated too: when we describe a note as high it is hard to see the optionality and the figurative dimension of this expression. We are rather using the only forms of expression we possess to describe the note.

Should we then conclude that all these cases are instances of words used secondarily, just for the mere fact that their use is not covered by a commonality of sort, as Hanfling concludes? I do not think so. Significantly, the reason why we are not dealing with the same linguistic phenomenon is given by Hanfling himself, when he incidentally points out an important difference between his cases and the examples of the *Investigations*:

> But is 'deep' in 'deep sound' and 'deep sorrow', secondary in the same way as 'fat' when applied to Wednesday? It is true that if we were asked to explain what 'deep' and 'bitter' mean, we could not do it by reference to those secondary uses of them. It is also true that when we speak of a 'deep sorrow' or a 'bitter grief' we 'want to use *these* words here'. But this similarity conceals a difference. For in these cases (unlike those of 'fat' and 'lean') the secondary uses are themselves instances of 'the meaning familiar to us'.
>
> (Hanfling 2002: 152)

Hanfling claims that his cases of secondary use are different from Wittgenstein's, as the former are examples of their familiar meanings. This is however all that matters to realize (and Hanfling does not) that we are dealing here with significantly different linguistic phenomena. In fact, to talk about height for musical notes, depth for human feelings or tastes to describe human behaviour is arguably not a secondary use of language: it rather constitutes our *established* – indeed, *primary* - vocabulary of sound, music, emotions, and expressive behaviour. Significantly, they can be found among the entries of the terms in a good dictionary, and this because they are common property of the speakers of the same language: they do not strike us as odd or unnatural. Besides, the *disagreement* in the

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[99] This point about the use of the word 'high' is mentioned in the *Investigations*, while addressing the possibility that *sameness* can be logically defined independently from the way we use the word 'same'. When we use the word 'high' to talk about what we hear or what we see, we use the *same* word, and it is not a matter of the psychology of speakers if it is so, rather it is a matter of the meaning of the word 'high' itself (PI 377).

employment of a word here significantly differs from the kind of disagreement we find in Wittgenstein's examples: if I describe a certain high pitched sound as deep or low, or I describe a child sadistically torturing a cat for pleasure as 'sweet', it can be said that I am misusing the word, that I do not know the *meaning* of the words I employ, and whoever disagrees with me in my descriptions is right to do so, as this is not how these words *has to be* used. Not so, however, in the case of coloured vowels and days of the week with dietary issues: I can agree as well as disagree if somebody says that *e* is black to him, yet there is no option to determine whether I am right or whether I am wrong. We can understand the meaning of secondary uses or we cannot, nothing follows about our ability to employ words correctly or incorrectly. For these reasons, we can also say that Hanfling alleged cases of secondary use are *institutionalized* as a common heritage of our language: not so in the case of Wittgenstein's examples.

So, Hanfling's interpretation has the merit to show that the distinction between secondary uses can be employed – and Wittgenstein seems to have done it, in the *Brown Book* - to tackle a specific philosophical picture about conceptual unity, that is, the one according to which every instance of a word use *must* share something in common with each other. However, the so-called abnormality of the coloured vowels example is not something that can be easily brushed aside and left without explanation. This abnormality lies ultimately in the fact that we cannot be *mistaken* when we use words secondarily: that is, there is no *rule, convention* or inherited and established *technique*[100] we can advocate to explain or capture our secondary employment of a word in certain circumstances. Wittgenstein's secondary uses are then, in this sense, strictly *non-conventional* applications of words: they consist of an extension of the use of a word that is not established or institutionalized – as Hanfling cases - and that cannot be *taught*, *learned*, or *explained* by a rule of sort. It is a natural extension of the use of a word that no one teaches us, that is not governed by any rule and *yet* can make sense. In this precisely lies its philosophical importance, and this is exactly what Hanfling's interpretation, by conflating different cases of words use, substantially misses. [101]

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[100] In the *Investigations,* the notion of a technique of use and that of rules for the use of words are often mentioned together (PI 125, 199, 232). However, we should be careful not to confuse the two notions. A technique requires rules to be so, yet it cannot be reduced *only* to rules. Not every action that is part of a technique is rigidly rule-governed, as a technique always allows a margin of plastic freedom and personal inventiveness. A technique is established (sometimes, technique is tellingly paired up with 'custom', see PI 205, 337), it requires rules but is not reducible to rules only (expertise has something to do with techniques here). To stress this difference is thus important, as it allows a more fluid description of what is an established use of a word: not every established use has to be in fact rigidly conventional and rule-governed, it might be established as a part of a technique without however being bound to a rigid system of rules. All in all, we can have established uses as parts of a technique without being committed to the claim that such uses must be conventional. Secondary senses are neither established, nor conventional in this sense.

[101] Notably, the non-conventional character of secondary uses makes them also distinct from what Stanley Cavell calls linguistic *projections*. It is useful to draw a comparison here because projections are often mentioned as a case of language use that challenge the idea that language is normative (see Gustafsson 2020: 215, for instance). To explain what he means by 'projections', Cavell makes the example of the verb 'to feed':

Strikingly, the fact that secondary uses are defined by their non-conventionality make them a logical category that depends on the particular *time* in which we investigate language. That is, it might be argued that sometimes a use is born as secondary and then it becomes part of our primary and conventional use: it gets, in a way, institutionalized. After all, it is hard to resolutely deny that a use that is not conventional *now* might become conventional in the future. Among Hanfling examples, for instance, it might be speculated that the word 'deep' to talk about our feelings was once a secondary application of the word that then became common heritage of our vocabulary of emotions. Another example might be the word 'blue' that now can be used as a synonym of 'sad': to say that sadness is blue was once probably not so different than saying now that *e* is yellow. The distinction between primary and secondary uses can be thus seen as historically situated as it defines the status of our language games in a certain moment: there are *no* uses that *as such*, out of any context, can be defined as strictly secondary. Secondariness is not set in stone. Hanfling overlooks this important feature, and by so doing he interprets Wittgenstein's three criteria as a sort of *atemporal* necessary and sufficient conditions that once satisfied can *a priori* determine if a word is used secondarily or not. If you do as Hanfling does, the very notion of secondariness loses explicatory strength and can be stretched enough to include loads of different examples of language uses. By doing so, we lose the specificity and focus of secondary uses and consequently their philosophical interest.

2. Secondariness and Experience

Once we have clarified the non-conventional character of secondary uses, I want now to explore Michel ter Hark's insightful interpretation of secondariness, a reading that is in a way antithetical to Hanfling's and that has the merit to look at secondary uses by considering their *role* as linguistic acts. Overall, ter Hark interpretation is rooted onto the idea that secondary uses of the words 'meaning' and 'experience', as well as 'Thursday', 'yellow' and 'lean', are part of the *expressive uses* of language, those uses that substitute and replace our primitive reactions and natural behaviour (ter

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'We learn the use of 'feed the kitty', 'feed the lion', 'feed the swans', and one day one of us says 'feed the meter', or 'feed in the film', or 'feed the machine', or 'feed his pride', or 'feed wire', and we understand, we are not troubled' (Cavell 1979: 181). Projections are thus spontaneous and natural extensions of words in different contexts as secondary uses are. However, these extensions are for the most part constituting the *primary* meaning of the words themselves. We can talk about feeding a lion even though we learnt the word by talking about kitten, yet this use is fully captured by a convention describing the use of the words. We can indeed explain the meaning of the word by mentioning lions or any animal we wish with no great fuss. In other cases, like 'feed the machine', we are talking about a figurative use that can be paraphrased, whereas in the case of 'feed his pride' we are dealing with an idiomatic expression that as such is part of our linguistic heritage. As important as projections are to question linguistic normativity – no rule stated in advance can in fact capture all these uses - Wittgenstein's secondary uses are not to be confused with them. They have in fact a more radical status of cases of word uses that are neither conventional nor metaphorical: they constitute a domain of sense making that is one of its kind.

Hark 2011: 515). This perspective is actually grounded onto the texts, and definitely captures one pivotal aspect of Wittgenstein's investigations about secondary use, as this passage clearly shows:

> But why do you use just this expression for your experience? – such a poor fit! – That is the expression of the experience, just as 'the vowel *e* is yellow' and 'In my dream I knew that...' are expressions of other experiences. It is a poor fit only if you take it the wrong way.
> This expression goes with the experience just as the primitive expression of pain goes with pain.
>
> (RPP II 574)

The experience mentioned here is the one expressed by orders like 'say a word and *mean* it differently'. This kind of order is frequently mentioned by Wittgenstein of an example of language use for which experience of meaning is required. A meaning blind, let us say, could not understand such an order (Z 174). Crucially, Wittgenstein here clearly states that those expressions like 'the vowel *e* is yellow' or the sentences we use to tell our dreams are used to *express* an experience, and as long as in the first case we deal with words used secondarily, it follows that a secondary used sentence has an expressive function (we will come back to consider the case of dreams later). So, when we use colour vocabulary to talk about vowels we are trying to vehicle - to express - our feeling, in a way not dissimilar to our primitive expressions of pain. If we overlook this important aspect of words used secondarily, we might take it 'the wrong way', that is, as if those words have a different function (a descriptive one,[102] for instance).

One consequence of ter Hark's interpretation is that we never use words secondarily to provide a description. We do not indeed describe an inner experience, as we rather express it, and we do not describe vowels or weekdays either. The reason why we are not dealing here with category mistakes, as mentioned above, is precisely the obvious fact that we do not use these expressions to describe what they apparently talk about. Granted, we can invent some contexts or language games where these expressions actually are descriptions - it is easy to imagine a game for children where every vowel is printed in a textbook with a specific colour; in this case vowels can be described as colourful with no great fuss - but in those contexts the words simply would *not* be used secondarily. If we then do not use these expressions to describe, their role is rather 'to induce the other person to join the

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[102] Importantly, Hanfling's interpretation is particularly vulnerable to take secondary uses 'the wrong way'. His accent on commonality, in fact, does not allow any distinction between the different things we can *do* with words used secondarily. Even though it is true that there is no need to postulate a common element between all the different shades of the *same* colour to be justified in our use of the same word, yet it is rather clear that when we say that a vowel has a certain colour or we claim that a certain week-day is lean or fat we do not describe anything, differently from when we say that this and that objects are both blue. We are indeed *doing* something else, that is, expressing ourselves.

same expression' (ter Hark 2011: 516). The kind of understanding that can indeed be induced in the other person is grounded onto the fact that we tend to react naturally to the same words, to share our basic primitive reactions and ways to express our feelings. As ter Hark suggestively frames it, the person will know what we are talking about because we are 'in tune with the same expression' (ter Hark 2011: 516).

This point is confirmed by Wittgenstein himself, when he says that whenever we talk about a 'sense of unreality', an expression used secondarily insofar as the word 'unreality' is not learnt to talk about feelings, we can be understood by other language users, because they would use the expression the same way. These remarks are rather long; however they are worth quoting because they wrap up our discussion effectively:

> The feeling of the unreality of one's surroundings [...] Everything seems somehow not real; but not as if one saw things unclear or blurred; everything looks quite as usual. And how do I know that another has felt what I have? Because he uses the same words as I find appropriate.
> But why do I choose precisely the word "unreality" to express it? Surely not because of its sound. (A word of very like sound but different meaning would not do.) I choose it because of its meaning.
> But I surely did not learn to use the word to mean: a feeling. No; but I learned to use it with a particular meaning and now I use it spontaneously like this. One might say--though it may mislead--: When I have learnt the word in its ordinary meaning, then I choose that meaning as a simile for my feeling. But of course what is in question here is not a simile, not a comparison of the feeling with something else.
>
> (RPP I 125)

> The fact is simply that I use a word, the bearer of another technique, as the expression of a feeling. I use it in a new way. And wherein consists this new kind of use? Well, one thing is that I say: I have a 'feeling of unreality'--after I have, of course, learnt the use of the word "feeling" in the ordinary way.
>
> (RPP I 126)

We can talk about 'a sense of unreality', that everything feels unreal. This expression is sometimes connected to specific psychological pathologies, as it is used to report a particular feeling of detachment[103] and alienation. Notably, this expression is used *secondarily*, as 'unreality' is not learnt

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[103] Notably, 'detachment' is here employed secondarily, as much as 'unreality' is.

to mean a feeling and we would not mention the sense of unreality to explain its meaning. The use is in a sense figurative, but not metaphorical, nor it constitutes a simile, as long as no comparison is really being drawn. We learn the word in its primary meaning, and we use it unconventionally in a new way, we apply it in a new context in which the point is to express a particular feeling. The word can be seen as 'the bearer of another technique', that is however borrowed or co-opted within another language game whose aim is to express a specific (and quite worrisome) feeling. This extension of its use is *spontaneous* and is based on its primary meaning, not on sound or other exterior properties.

As such, we can attest the satisfaction of the three criteria – we need to know how to use the word 'unreal' first, we do not mention this use to teach its meaning and we are not employing a metaphor (how to vehicle the same content through a paraphrase?). It might be objected, however, that the non-conventional character of such a use is questionable: after all, the feeling of unreality is treated as a symptom, and whoever is familiar with psychology knows that it can eventually lead to diagnose a *derealization disorder*. Within psychology, then, the word has a quite *established* use, as long as it is part of the common knowledge of the discipline and has a definite role in clinical diagnosis. However, this objection misses an important aspect: here Wittgenstein's perspective is not that of a psychologist, it is that of a *random speaker* that happens to express his own feelings by naturally and spontaneously employing those very words he borrows from another unrelated area of language. No degree in psychology is required to naturally extend the use of our words this way: we simply happen to do it, and crucially, *not* on the basis of a preestablished rule or convention.

Furthermore, Wittgenstein tells us this feeling can be conveyed to others, as long as whoever talks about a feeling of unreality uses the same words secondarily as I would. There is no other criterion for understanding apart from our tendency to use the same forms of expression. As such, as usual when it comes to understand our expressive language games, understanding is a manifestation of our belonging to the same community of experience: whoever would not use that form of expression to talk about a feeling thus belongs to a different cultural and emotional background as ours.

All in all, ter Hark interpretation is a close caption of Wittgenstein discussion on secondary uses. However, ter Hark's interpretation is too *narrow* were Hanfling's is too broad, as long as, first, it confines secondary uses to the domain of expressiveness, and second, by so doing, it misses other important examples of secondariness in Wittgenstein's text. It is highly questionable, in fact, that there is no *description* that is secondary, as ter Hark is led to think. We can well think of examples where expressiveness and description are somehow intertwined and overlapping, so that it is hard to deny that we do not describe anything at all by using words secondarily. Let us think about the case of poetic *synaesthesia*, a particular figure of speech where category mistakes are exploited to convey

a specific feeling. An example might be, from Salvatore Quasimodo's *Alle Fronde dei Salici* – a particularly gloomy reflection on the horrors of the Second World War and the incapacity of poetry to express them – to call a particular desperate and mournful scream *black*. Here the category mistake is plain as the poet attributes a colour to a sound, its expressive function is evident, as it aims to bring about certain feelings and ideas through the association between a sound and the colour of death and bereavement, yet we can still say that the synaesthesia in a way describes the sound in question. It is surely not an acoustic description, yet the scream in question is effectively represented in a way that we can well imagine how it could have sounded. We might well say that the word 'description' itself is here used secondarily. As such, the conceptual distinction between secondary and primary uses of words, far from being a way to neatly define our concept of description as the domain of the primary uses of words, can be well applied to the concept itself in order to describe its multifaceted logic.[104]

In section 3 we will outline the further cases of secondariness that Wittgenstein mentions and ter Hark fails to account. First, however, I want to explore further the insight that secondary uses are deeply connected with the expressive uses of language. This feature, in fact, connects Wittgenstein's discussion of secondariness with that on the experience of meaning, and second, can be applied to understand the logic of some applications of the word 'meaning' to talk about experience, atmosphere and soulful uses of words.

2.1 Secondariness and Irreplaceability

We can then move beyond ter Hark's interpretation and argue that secondary uses share the same properties of our expressive uses of language, as we have described in our fifth chapter. Soulful expressions and expressive or emphatic uses are in fact *irreplaceable*: the words we use expressively are a necessary condition for the experience - its meaning - to be conveyed, so that if we switch words or their logical order we lose the experience *tout court*. Notably, the following remark clearly applies the irreplaceability criterion to secondary uses:

> Would it be more correct to say that yellow 'corresponds' to *e* than *e* is yellow'? Isn't the point of the game precisely that we express ourselves by saying *e is* yellow?
> Indeed, if someone were *inclined* to say that *e* 'corresponds' to yellow and not that it is yellow, wouldn't he be almost as different from the other as someone for whom vowels and colours are not connected?

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[104] Descriptions, Wittgenstein points out, are 'instruments for particular uses' (PI 291). There is no univocal model of what a description is and functions, it varies from case to case and depends on the thing we want to do through a description. To think otherwise is still profoundly metalogical.

We get struck by the strangeness of the expression 'e is yellow'. We think that maybe it should be reformulated, as it cannot be that we are really attributing a colour to a sound, as sounds cannot be colourful. So, we might suggest that what we *really* mean is only that the vowel 'corresponds' to the colour. But here lies the double mistake. First of all, the verb 'to correspond' is used as well secondarily (the quotation marks are there to stress this feature). We would not really be moving further, as we would only switch a controversial expression with another one, equally controversial. Second, it is the point of the game that we use the verb 'to be' here, this particular expressive game is bound to the materiality of its sentence. If we change the words we use to express what we mean, with 'correspond', or maybe with the expression 'is *like*' because we think that we deal with a *simile* here, we lose it, we do not play that game. On the other hand, if somebody really tends to talk about correspondence and not about being here, it is more likely that he simply cannot be *attuned* with our forms of expression in this particular case. He would be then closer to those meaning blind that do not see any connection between sounds and colours, in the sense that he would belong to a different community of experience.

Furthermore, it seems that for Wittgenstein the words we use to talk about the character of proper names are themselves used secondarily, as these passages show:

'Schubert' -- It's as if the name were an adjective.
Neither can one say: 'Look at all the things that '*fit*'. For example, the name fits the bearer'.
An addition, after all, would be an extension; and an extension is just *not* what it is found here. For one does not say that something is a 'fit' if *actually* it is no fit at all. As if one were merely expanding the concept. [...] We know very well that the name 'Schubert' does not stand in a relationship of fitting to its bearer and Schubert's work; and yet we are under a compulsion to express ourselves in this way.

The sentence 'The name .... fits ...' doesn't tell us anything about the name or its bearer. It is a pathological statement about the speaker. – One does not teach a child that this name fits the bearer.

When we are struck by the character of Schubert's music, we may come to see this character embodied by his name itself. In this case, we might be tempted to say that after all his name *fits* (in German, *passen*) his works. Now, the use of this verb is clearly secondary. As long as the verb has a

primary use that is rooted into our descriptive talk about physical objects matching each other dimensions – my desk fits the space between my library and my bed, for instance – it is clear that there is nothing *really* fitting when I talk about Schubert and his works. We are dealing here with a case of an *old* word used in a *new* context, what Wittgenstein in another remark calls '*an annex to the concept*' (RPP II 246). We cannot even use such an example to teach the meaning of the verb, nor bring it up as an example of things that fit, yet we *do* use it to express the character Schubert's work as a musician has for us. Intriguingly, the expression is said to be *pathological*, in the precise sense that it is a deviation from the standard of use fixed within its primary meaning. This pathological expression is used to reveal information about the speaker, his experience, and his connections with his cultural world – a pathological symptom, in a way, reveals something about ourselves, after all - certainly not to describe his name, as abundantly shown already in the previous chapters.[105]

2.2 The Secondary Uses of the Word 'Meaning'

In the second part of the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein comes back to address the meaning of the word 'meaning'. These remarks are in fact a thematic continuation of the discussion on the experience of meaning addressed in the previous chapter. After quickly noticing that the sentences of a poem seem to have a different *ring* when read expressively (PPF 264), Wittgenstein comments:

> When I pronounce this word while reading expressively, it is completely filled with its meaning. – 'how can this be, if meaning is the use of a word?' Well, what I said was intended figuratively. Not that I chose the picture: it forced itself on me. – But the figurative use of the word can't come into conflict with the original one.
>
> (PPF 265)

A form of expression we employ to describe a particular soulful use of language is to say that the word in question is 'filled with its meaning'. We then use the word 'meaning' not to strictly talk about the (rule governed) use of a certain word, rather we employ it to talk about its *soul*. We have two different employments of the same word, that, however, do not come into conflict, according to Wittgenstein, as long as the second use is intended *figuratively*. This kind of figurative speech is said to be *forced* on us. This plausibly means that we have *no choice* but to use that form of expression to convey the same thought, and we use it spontaneously, as argued above.

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[105] Another remark attesting a strong connection between Wittgenstein's discussion of experience and secondariness is LW I 726, where Wittgenstein says that the expression 'a word has an atmosphere' is to be interpreted figuratively: the kind of figurativeness here is the one of secondariness, as the word 'atmosphere' is used with no primary meaning and forcefully to convey what we want to say.

We can see already how this way to formulate the problem – a figurative use that is forced on us – reminds us of the logic of secondariness. As in the case of secondary uses, we are dealing here with a figurative use that is not a metaphor, as metaphors, as shown above, have an optional character that makes them replaceable if needed. On the contrary, the expression 'this word is filled with its meaning' cannot be swapped with another one or paraphrased. If we try to switch 'meaning' with 'soul', for instance, just to avoid any ambiguity in our employment of the word 'meaning', we would be in a similar case as switching '*e* is yellow' with '*e* corresponds to yellow': in both cases, we lose its expressive capacity. Coherently to what we have already argued for in the previous chapters, when we use thus the word 'meaning' to talk about the experience, the atmosphere, or the soul of words we are rather *expressing* the way those words affect us in our life, the way we resonate in a language and a culture that use them.

Few remarks after, Wittgenstein elaborates an even more effective way to conceptualize the difference between the two kinds of employment of the word 'meaning':

> But the question then remains why, in connection with this *game* of experiencing a word, we also speak of 'the meaning' and of 'meaning it'. – It is a characteristic feature of this language-game that in *this* situation we use the expression 'We pronounced the word with *this* meaning' and take this expression over from that other language-game.
>
> (PPF 273)

In this passage Wittgenstein appeals to the terminology of language-games to make sense of our use of the word 'meaning' in those contexts where we rather refer to the way words affect us. According to Wittgenstein, in the latter cases we are playing a different game, whose main feature is to *borrow* specific expressions from the language game we play when we talk about the meaning of a word, we explain it, we learn it through definitions and rules, and so on. What is pivotal is that the language game of the experience of meaning is *bound* to the borrowing of the expressions of the other, in a way that there is *no* language game of that sort without this feature.

As much as there is no borrowing without something to be borrowed, the use of the language game terminology perfectly matches another feature of secondary uses, that is, their logical *dependency* from primary uses. The second order language game is thus dependent on the original one in the sense that, *if* we want to play it, we need to borrow other forms of expression from other language games, there is no choice but co-opting other games. What is more, this kind of co-optation is univocal, we do not have really choice between different forms of expression: if we want to convey what we want to, we need to use *that* and *only* form of expression. Again, this feature perfectly matches the non-replaceable character of expressive and secondary uses of words. Not

coincidentally, straight after the quotation above, Wittgenstein introduces the distinction between secondary and primary uses of words and his examples about week-days and coloured vowels (PPF 274-78): the distinction is thus introduced to offer a different but analogous way to conceptualize the logical dependency of a use from another, of a language game from another.

We can thus reasonably conclude that when we use the word 'meaning' to express our experience or to talk about the atmosphere of words we use the word secondarily. As such, when we say for instance that a word, a poetic word, acquire a particular meaning, the word 'meaning' here is used secondarily and expressively, that is, the word does not refer to the word use – that would be its primary meaning – rather it is used to express the feeling a word evokes in us and the role it plays in our life. Those uses that in the previous chapter we have seen to be captured by the conception of meaning as an experience ultimately consist in a collection of secondary employments of the word 'meaning', that is, they are to be conceived as parts of second order language games that are logically dependent from a more basic one: supposedly, that of describing the use of words by stating rules. Concretely, this means that our expressive language games – poetry, emphatic expressions, and so on – are logically dependent from our primary language games governed by rules. There is thus a logical *primacy* of rules over experience, a claim that is both reasonable – you need to know what words ordinarily mean to use them expressively – and consistent with our own description of experience as *second-order* and language *relative*. We can see here how our previous discussion on experience and the present on secondariness are complementary and consistent with each other.[106]

3. Secondariness and Dreams, Hallucinations and Tales

Despite the undeniable importance of expressive uses in connection to secondariness, according to Wittgenstein there are other kinds of language games where words are used secondarily. It is the

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[106] Notably, we cannot easily reach the same conclusion when considering the use of the word 'understanding' to talk about experience. Wittgenstein addresses the status of the concept of understanding only in the following, rather puzzling, remark: "I would rather say that these kinds of use of 'understanding' make up its meaning, make up my *concept* of understanding. For I *want* to apply the word 'understanding' to all of this." (PI 532). The 'kinds of use' are those outlined in PI 530, where the two conceptions of understanding as rules and experience are sketched. Notably, here Wittgenstein formulates his point in a quasi-paradoxical way: on one hand, he claims that the concept of understanding is one but *complex*; on the other hand, he anchors this complexity on his own will to use the same word for a variety of different and apparently incompatible cases. If we stick to the first part of the remark, the actual complexity of the concept makes it akin to family resemblance concepts. He seemed to have thought so in the early '30s (PG 49, 74). For sure, understanding a sentence and understanding a piece of music share some *similarities*, as we have already seen (a certain connection with kinds of explanation, for instance). On the other hand, the insistence on the individual attests almost the forced character of Wittgenstein decision to use the same word for a variety of cases, in a way that reminds us of the forced character of secondary uses. Hanfling in fact claims that the experiential kind of understanding corresponds to a secondary use of the word 'understanding' (Hanfling 1990: 132). As Wittgenstein left the question undecided, we should do the same, and perhaps conclude that the actual complexity of the concept of understanding is also – but not necessarily – rooted in our contingent tendency to extend the use of the word into experiential contexts.

case of telling a *dream*, describing an *hallucination,* and telling a *story*. We have already encountered dreams in RPP II 574, where the expression 'in my dream I knew that...' was paired up with the sentence '*e* is yellow' as an example of expressive uses of language. Perhaps the most explicit passage about dreams is the following:

> Now I am not using the word (meaning) *for* something else; rather, I am using it in a different situation [just as I am not using 'know' to refer to two different things when I say 'In my dream I knew'. CF. also: feeling of unreality]
>
> (LW I 57)

Here Wittgenstein quickly sketches how we can use the example of dreams to clarify our talk of the experience of meaning. When we report or describe the content of a dream it can happen that we say that in the dream we knew something. You can dream, for instance, that you were being chased by some thugs in a corridor, and you *knew* that you had to pass through a certain door to escape. This application of the word 'to know' is non-conventional: we do not learn it to describe dreams, yet we naturally use it this way, we co-opt the word for other means. This 'knowledge' is different from the knowable information we share in the every-day, insofar as it entertains a different relationship with the dreamer: when we report that in a dream we know something, we are not really *committed* to it, we do not really believe that we knew anything; rather, we merely *express* the content of the dream through a description where familiar words are applied in a *new* context. The case is thus analogous to the sense of unreality, as Wittgenstein points out in the end of the remark above.

In another passage, Wittgenstein remarks that we do not call *anything* 'knowing' in a dream, at most we use the expression 'in my dream I knew....' (LW I 63). This is an elegant way to point out that while describing a dream there is no *thing* that we have knowledge about. Rather, we borrow a particular form of expression involving the verb 'to know' to play a different game, that is, describing a dream. Something similar happens in the case of *hallucinations,* that are not by chance compared to dreams:

> Is a dream a hallucination?--The memory of a dream is like the memory of a hallucination, or rather: like the memory of a real experience. This means that sometimes you would like to say: "I just saw this and that", as if you really had just seen it.
>
> (LW I 965)

The memory of a hallucination is analogous to the memory of real experience as well as of dreams: we can use the very same words we employ to tell our memories, we can for instance say that we *saw* something we found out in a second moment it was not real, yet we use the word nonetheless, even

if we did not *really* see anything. The verb 'to see' is here used secondarily, as much as the verb 'to know' when reporting a dream: a natural and non-conventional extension of a word used in a new context, to play a different game.

The cases of dreams and hallucinations are undoubtedly more complex than those in which we express a particular experience by saying that a vowel is darker than another. On one hand, they are similar, insofar as a description of a dream or an hallucination does not have the same role of a description of a real situation in our life: we are not *really* describing anything, rather, we are expressing an experience. On the other hand, they are different, insofar as, while talking about dreams and hallucinations, we have something to *tell*: especially in the case of dreams while using words secondarily, our experience is told as if we were telling a *story*. Nothing of this sort can be said in the case of the coloured vowels. We can say that dreams possess a *narrative*, and the more vivid a dream, the best descriptions we can come out with of the dreamt situation. If I thus dream of a Lovecraftian monster with twitching tentacles and monstrous fangs and you ask me to tell you my dream, I can indeed *describe* it. As in the case of poetry above, we can say that we use the word description secondarily here. What is important is that there is no clear cut distinction between expression and description in Wittgenstein when it comes to understand the logic of secondary uses: there are secondary uses that are expressive, others that are both descriptive and expressive, others that are only descriptive. As usual when it comes to Wittgenstein, it is hard to find in his thought any strict and neat distinction through which classify language.

A third and final case of secondary use in Wittgenstein's work, not surprisingly, involves *tales*. In the middle of the so called private language argument, while addressing the privacy of pain and its relationship with pain behaviour, Wittgenstein addresses the objection that we can talk about, for instance, *pots* and their feelings in a fairy tale, despite the fact that there is no pain behaviour imaginable for an inanimate object. Here is how Wittgenstein addresses this issue:

> We do indeed say of an inanimate thing that it is in pain: when playing with dolls, for example. But this use of the concept of pain is a secondary one. Imagine a case in which people said *only* of inanimate things that they are in pain; pitied *only* dolls! (when children play trains, their game is connected with their acquaintance with trains. It would nevertheless be possible for the children of a tribe unacquainted with trains to learn this game from others, and to play it without knowing that it was imitating anything. One could say that the game did not make the same kind of *sense* to them as to us).

(PI 282)

The notion of secondary use is here employed to neutralize the objection that, insofar as we *can* attribute pain to inanimate objects, then pain is independent from pain behaviour. Wittgenstein points out that the word 'pain' can be used indeed independently from behaviour, but only secondarily, as its primary use is learnt in connection with pain behaviour and our natural reactions to it (as pitying). If we imagine a situation where only dolls are pitied, we might say that the word 'pain' does not make the same sense as for us. The case is comparable with that of children playing with toy trains, a game connected in our life with real trains: in the case of a tribe of children playing with trains but ignoring this connection, the game would not have the same sense, that is, the same *role* in their life.[107] It would not present the same connections with its context, the things children would say about it would be different, the way the game is played would diverge in significant ways, and so forth.

So, from the remark above we should conclude that there are at least two cases of secondariness involving the word 'pain': when we attribute pain to real inanimate objects - as when children play with dolls - and when we tell *stories* - where it can well make sense that a pot can indeed have pain, talk, walk, think[108]- the word is used secondarily. In the former case, the word is used secondarily insofar as it is a part of a *simulation*: dolls cry and suffer because they simulate *real* people, within the game dolls are representations of living bodies. The child saying that his doll is having a bad day is in a way signalling that he is involved in a certain game with his toy: certainly, he is not committed to any ontological claim about the nature of pain as an inner hidden phenomenon. In the latter case, Wittgenstein seems to be committed to the idea that most of the words we use when we tell fantastic or absurdist stories are used secondarily. In fact, the example Wittgenstein makes about talking pots might be silly, yet we can find a more prestigious example if we think about Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, an eerie novella about a man, Gregor Samsa, inexplicably transformed into a 'monstrous vermin'. This example is not casual, as it struck the attention of Oxford philosophers when considering the statements of attribution of identity, as reported in Isaiah Berlin's memories:

> The principal example of the latter [the problem of identity] that we chose was the hero of Kafka's story *Metamorphosis*, a commercial traveler called Gregor Samsa, who wakes one morning to find that he has been transformed in a monstrous cockroach, although he retains clear memories of his life as an ordinary human being. Are we to speak of him as a man with a

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[107] Hanfling argues that the case of toy trains is an example of a *weaker* form of secondariness, as we can play toy trains without being acquainted to real trains (Hanfling 1990: 127). However, this is misleading. The fact that the whole sense of the game would change means nothing but the fact that we would play a *different*, yet similar, game.

[108] In PI 360, the same sort of observation on secondariness is brought up to tackle the problem of the relationship between mind and body once we conceive of the latter as a *machine* of sort. A machine *cannot* think, and this is not an empirical statement - Wittgenstein observes - as we simply tend to apply the word 'thought' to things resembling our living bodies, such as indeed *dolls*, or even *ghosts*.

body of a cockroach, or as a cockroach with the memories and consciousness of a man? 'Neither' Austin declared. 'In such cases we should not know what to say. This is when we say 'words fail us' and mean this literally. We should need new words. The old ones just would not fit.'

(Berlin 1973: 11)

In Kafka's tale, Samsa is not a man in the body of a cockroach, nor a cockroach with the mind of Samsa: he *is* a cockroach, plain and simple. This strong statement of identity makes sense only within the narrative mechanisms of Kafka's novella, as much as a talking pot within its fairy tale, that is to say, we cannot weaken the identity without losing the *sense* of Kafka's tale, as much as we lose what we want to express with '*e* is yellow' if we rather say that *e* is like yellow or corresponds to yellow. Taken literally, we cannot make sense of this strong identity. We may in fact wonder: what does it mean for a human being to be an insect? Where does a pot have a mouth, how could it express its pain? How can a cockroach be angry, suffering, thoughtful, as Samsa as a human being can be? Yet, in the context of a story telling, all these questions are simply pointless, as much as it is pointless to question whether dolls are in pain or not when a kid plays with them. Kafka's *Metamorphosis* can then be seen as an exercise in secondary language: within a certain narrative, words, such as 'cockroach', are employed in a new context, their use is non-conventionally extended to convey a certain meaning, a meaning that is bound to the specific combination of words we employ to express it. It is not, as Austin suggested, that we lack words to explain Samsa condition and we should invent a new vocabulary to make sense of it. The point is exactly the opposite: to express Samsa's condition we can use *only* those words as Kafka uses them.

4. A Philosophical Distinction

At this point, we have all the elements to provide an exhaustive account of secondary uses in Wittgenstein's thought. Words are used secondarily when they are employed in a new context to play a different language game that cannot be played without those very words used secondarily. Words are used secondarily when they are co-opted or borrowed to play games that are constitutively *dependent* from others. Words are exploited to cross the boundaries of their primary use and employed in a new manner for different purposes. Wittgenstein offers three criteria to identify secondary uses: first, it is a use that is logically dependent from another – primary – one, second, the words used secondarily are regularly explained as we would as if they were employed primarily, and third, secondary use is a figurative use that is not a metaphor, insofar as it is bound to its form of expression and cannot be paraphrased. Secondary uses are *forced* on us – to convey what we want to convey we have to use a specific form of expression and not others – and are *spontaneous*

extension of words use. Furthermore, we have seen that secondary uses are strictly *non-conventional*: they define a domain of language where words are used unbound from a system of rules or conventions by which we learn their primary use. This determines the *historical* dimension of the distinction between secondary and primary uses: once a use becomes conventional it loses its exceptionality and can become part of the familiar meaning of a word.

There is, at last, another important thing to point out. Wittgenstein introduces the distinction between primary and secondary uses as a *tool* to tackle specific philosophical problems. His interest is thus not semantic or taxonomical, it is rather, as usual, *philosophical*. We have seen that the examples of secondariness are employed already in the *Brown Book* to challenge the preconception according to which every instance of the use of a word needs to have something in common with all the others. Furthermore, we can see the philosophical importance of distinguishing between primary and secondary uses when it comes to understand the logic of our talking about hallucinations: if we stress that in this case words are used secondarily, we are then less tempted to consider the report of an hallucination as the *same* as the description of a state of affairs or perceptual reports. On the other hand, the case of telling fantastic stories was originally introduced in the private language argument to tackle the idea that we can detach pain from pain behaviour. We indeed *can* attribute pain to dolls and pots while telling stories, however this is a secondary use that does not reveal anything significant about the primary uses of our pain vocabulary, a vocabulary that we learn in the broader context of our life in close contact with the pain expressions and behaviour of the other members of our linguistic community.

The philosophical interest of the distinction becomes even more evident in the case of meaning and experience. In fact, by stressing that we use the word 'meaning' secondarily while talking about the soul of expressive words, we can weaken the temptation to reify any experience and thus relapse into mentalism. Whenever we talk about words absorbing their meaning, the meaning of music and poetry, the peculiar meaning of a certain pun or joke, and so forth, we are thus never committed to a mentalistic picture of meaning as much as a child does not assume a picture of pain as an inner subjective state when he attributes pain to dolls and action figures. In both cases, we employ words secondarily, and by so doing, we expand their range of use in new context to play different games.

To conclude, far from providing a fixed logical taxonomy, the distinction is mainly *philosophical*, in the precise sense that is employed to distinguish different kinds of uses and thus avoid those philosophical confusions that usually arise when we conflate different word uses together. The distinction between primary and secondary uses is thus substantially problem-relative: it is a helpful tool to distinguish different cases of use and thus clarify those pieces of language that confuse us and lead us astray.

5. The Layered Conception of Language

There is a final, crucial philosophical point that Wittgenstein's discussion on secondariness arises. It is related to the fact that secondary uses are non-conventional uses of words that yet make perfect sense. The moral of the distinction is somewhat the following: words can still be legitimately used and employed in a new way, even though there is no rule laid in advance that covers these new applications. That is, *despite* we use words unconventionally, yet we use them *meaningfully*. If we think of our examples of secondariness, the sentence 'for me Thursday is lean' in fact makes sense, *despite* it is not part of any established or conventional use of our week-days vocabulary. So does our employment of ordinary words in dream descriptions, in making up fantastic stories, in reporting hallucinations or in our attribution of emotions to inanimate objects. As such, secondary uses constitute a domain of language where rules, even though logically *presupposed*, do not *determine* every possible employment of the words they govern. Wittgenstein's reflection on secondary uses should thus be taken as an invitation to conceive language *beyond* the constraints of a rigid normative conception according to which rules always cover every meaningful use of our words. Together and complementarily with his obsessive interest in the experience of meaning, the investigation on secondariness is to be seen as another Wittgensteinian attempt to conceive language non-normatively.

Even though not directly argued for in Wittgenstein's remarks, we can abstract a general picture of language and meaning from these reflections on experience, rules, and secondary uses. I will call it the *layered conception of language*, that can be described as follows: we learn the established use of words according to training, definitions, and rules, and then we *move from there*, expanding the range of their applications through secondary uses. Aldo Gargani can be seen to be after the same point when he considers secondary uses as an integral part of what he calls the 'process of *extension of language*' (Gargani 2008: XVII, my translation). Sometimes figurative and secondary uses may be institutionalized, that is, they can be captured by a convention and become part of our linguistic inheritance (the case of dead metaphors or Hanfling examples), but mostly, what makes a use secondary is the fact that we employ the words we have to extend our expressive capacities – naturally and spontaneously - when needed. Meaning as well as language then acquire in this sense a *layered* dimension: the primary use at its core, learnt mainly (but not only) by means of rules, and the *new* uses around it, the corona of its secondary meanings, or, in analogous terms, basic language games and a cluster of others that borrow and co-opt words from them. The main advantage of the layered conception is that it is able to depict language as an ever-growing and *dynamic* structure: it is an attempt to conceive language by focusing on the ways we spontaneously and constantly expand

our forms of expression and introduce *new* expressive tools by naturally moving from our common heritage.

The normative conception, on the contrary, is in trouble to accommodate secondary uses and the introduction of new expressive tools. If we dogmatically cling to the idea that every new meaningful use presupposes a rule laid down in advance, we simply cannot explain secondary uses, as they are defined as non-conventional applications of words in new contexts. At most, we can come up with a rather artificial account of language according to which using words secondarily is describable *as if* we do introduce a new rule for their use, despite this rule cannot be stated by explanation and we concretely did not stipulate anything about it. The point is that we *can* indeed establish new uses by means of rules. However, this does not happen *every time*, and secondary uses are there to show it.

Consequently, there is in the literature a quite dismissive attitude towards secondary uses. Glock for instance claims that secondary uses are not '*essential'* to the concept of meaning (Glock 1996: 40). Usually, their logical dependency is interpreted as a symptom of *parasitism*: secondary uses are parasitic insofar as they are collateral effect of our word use, whose meaning remains definable only in terms of rules (Hanfling 1990: 131, Baker Hacker 1990: 175). Notably, this way of conceiving secondary use as a kind of *lesser* application of our words is *strategic* if we want to defend a conception of meaning based only on rule-governed use. We can do so if we want. However, the risk is simply to overlook the important *ubiquity* of secondariness in ordinary language. We employ words secondarily when telling our dreams, when reporting hallucinations, while telling stories and fairy tales, while acting and simulating, while explaining metaphors, when producing literature (Kafka's example), while writing or reciting poetry: to confine the domain of meaning only to primary and rule-governed use simply means to exclude all these language games from our account of language.

The layered conception thus conceives of language as a layered structure of overlapping language games, whose reciprocal relation of logical dependency is not (always) normative. We already encountered, in chapter five, an example of an extension of our forms of expression while addressing the meaning of music in relation to our culture and form of life. In an important sense, the layered conception is thus the final conceptual outcome of both our investigations on experience and on secondariness: they are intertwined concepts. Once again, music becomes for Wittgenstein a sort of conceptual laboratory for reconceiving his overall picture of language. The following remark clearly formulates how this process of extension might look like:

"The repeat is *necessary*" In what respect is it necessary? Well, sing it, then you will see that it is only the repeat that gives it its tremendous power. [...] And yet there just *is* no paradigm there other than the theme. And yet again there *is* a paradigm other than the theme: namely

the rhythm of our language, of our thinking & feeling. And furthermore the theme is a *new* part of our language, it becomes incorporated in it; we learn a new *gesture.*

<div align="right">(CV: 52)</div>

We can describe a recurrence of the theme as necessary, as if a rule of some sort is really involved to legitimate the modal here. If we look for a paradigm for this necessity, we cannot find anything outside the theme itself: as we have already seen (see chapter 4.1), meaning is embodied in the symbol itself, and the only externality involved here is our being attuned with the whole cluster of language games and culture we live in.

Notably, what matters here is that this new musical gesture is said to become a *new* part of language, *incorporated* in it. Our language grows by acquiring a new expression, even though such a gesture is no part of an established convention. We can clearly see here outlined the same logic defining secondary uses: the linguistic novelty is *based on* some primary practices, it is logically dependent from them, yet it is not reducible to them. In this way, we have extended our expressive capacity without formulating any rule. If this example from music is still too abstract, let us think of the meaning of human gestures. Paul Johnston makes the example of the V for victory, that acquires a cluster of different shades of meaning according to different contextual factors: ' it may express unthinking self-congratulation or a commitment to keep on struggling, it may be a gesture of individualism or a symbol of solidarity' (Johnston 1993: 108). Words and symbols thus outgrow their established use in their ordinary employment, this is how a language gets alive. Language grows spontaneously through secondariness, which is at the same time a symptom of the fact that we live in our language and react to it, as we are involved in a process of endless change and exploitation of its expressive capacities.

Conclusion

In this chapter we addressed Wittgenstein's discussion of secondary uses of words and show that its importance lies in their being non-conventional applications of our words that make perfect sense, nonetheless. Secondary uses are quite common and present when we use words expressively for particular purposes, when we tell stories and absurd or fantastic tales, when we simulate or attribute emotions and feelings to inanimate objects, when we account for our dreams or report hallucinations. I thus interpreted Wittgenstein's reflections on secondariness as the last piece of a philosophical dialectic against the intrinsic dogmatism of any normativist approach to language, consistent and complementary to his extensive discussion on experience of meaning. The final and resultant picture of language that can be entailed from this is what I called the layered conception of language, according to which language is a dynamic and ever-growing pluralistic structure of

overlapping language games in which new forms of expression are introduced by co-opting words and gestures whose primary use was significantly different.

Conclusion

We have started this thesis by focusing on some apparently minor considerations regarding metalogic as a general method of clarification of language and we have ended up focusing on experience and secondary uses understood as pivotal moves in a broader philosophical strategy to loosen the grip of normativism and rules in our understanding of language. This because, consistently with the thesis grounding presupposition stated in the introduction, it is my contention that we cannot really account for Wittgenstein's conception of linguistic meaning without understanding first his philosophical methodology. Accordingly, I would say that this thesis constitutes an effort to consider Wittgenstein as a *systematic philosopher*, insofar as the treatment of a specific philosophical issue – the grammar of meaning – is here understood *only* within the broader context of his conception of what it means to do philosophy, that is, *only* as a natural consequence of the application of his general methodology. The emphasis on metalogic is indeed crucial, not only because it helps us to understand what to expect from Wittgenstein's reflection of meaning, but also because it allows us to fully understand that a reorientation of our philosophical method discloses new important conceptual *possibilities* in philosophical clarification. Philosophical method does not regard only the form of our thinking - the formal principles governing philosophy as an activity; it has rather substantial implications in the *results* of our investigation, in the things we should expect from that. Metalogic is primarily rooted in our temptation to elaborate a universal account of language, to grasp the intimate and univocal essence of those concepts we are tempted to consider as privileged and pivotal for philosophy. Once we are free from metalogic, we should not only abandon this temptation – this is the negative side of Wittgenstein's method, usually given for granted in the literature – we are also invited to elaborate conceptual *alternatives* to describe language, *if* the resolutions of particular philosophical problems require us so.

This is, in a nutshell, what I argued for in this thesis: once we reject metalogic and drop normativism as a claim capturing Wittgenstein's supposedly univocal conception of meaning, we might look at language and be surprised that experience of words, the character of proper names, expressive uses of language, puns, slurs, instrumental uses of words and secondary uses might contribute to highlight a complex, multifaceted and ultimately *pluralist* account of language, meaning and understanding where rules are important but intrinsically unable to tell us the whole story concerning the way we use our words and inhabit our language. Metalogic is, to say it with a political metaphor, *authoritarian* and *despotic*: certain concepts are deemed to be essentially more

important than others to clarify, certain conceptions are taken to be the only valid, exceptions are suppressed, looked down or simply discarded, pluralism is programmatically avoided, insofar as the only thing that matters is to reconduct every experience to the firm grip of an all-encompassing account of how things *must* be. On the contrary, Wittgenstein's rejection of metalogic is an invitation to avoid any universalist drive, to fight against any reduction to any overarching principle, and together, to embrace and fully consider the pluralism of alternative – yet in no way antagonistic - conceptions through which we describe that fluid and very complicated thing we call 'language'. Wittgenstein's ultimate lesson to philosophers is thus *together* an invitation to fight against metalogic and its dogmatism and a relentless attempt to conceive *alternatives* to any dominant account that might tempt us to fall back into metalogical authoritarianism. Again with a political metaphor, we might suggest that Wittgenstein delivers us an image of thought that is both *revolutionary* – we have to fight against the tyranny of metalogic on us by elaborating alternative conceptions – and profoundly *democratic* – different conceptions can coexist, we need to learn to be tolerant and accept the irreducible variety of models through which we can look at language. From the univocity of *monarchy* to the plurality of a *polyarchy* of principles, this is the 'politics' of Wittgenstein's thought.

Now, in conclusion, I want to focus more on some more implications this thesis might offer, beyond the arguments already addressed in the six chapter. First, I want to sketch a plausible line to further develop a non-metalogical account of meaning, beyond rules, experience and secondariness. As a matter of fact, the thesis has no ambition to exhaust every possible aspect of the concept of meaning: there might be further alternative conceptions, such as the one that understands meaning in terms of *sound*. Second, I want to show how some results achieved in this thesis might contribute to elaborate a more detailed account of a related yet distinct topic - recently discussed in the literature - namely, how Wittgenstein conceives the *sign-symbol relation* in his later thought. Finally, I will spend some words to ponder over the role Wittgenstein's thought plays within the history of early analytic philosophy, in the light of his rejection of metalogic. All in all, I want to show how much the issues addressed in this thesis can fruitfully disclose original perspectives in debates that fall beyond its original scope.

Further Applications of a Non-Metalogical Understanding of Meaning: Sound

In the thesis, we have seen that understanding and meaning sometimes acquire the form of experience and purpose. These concepts help us capture important aspects of our use of the words 'understanding' and meaning' and concur in elaborating alternative conceptions to *rules* to describe meaning. Now, a further domain of application of this general non-metalogical framework – not

investigated in the thesis – certainly involves the symbolic properties of *sound*. In fact, once we drop the conviction that meaning is always codified in the set of rules governing our word use, we are free to look at language by focusing on its *material aspects* – the physical attributes of the *signs* we employ while speaking, such as their *acoustic* properties – to see whether they can actively contribute to fix the meaning of words and our understanding of them.

An obvious example of language where the acoustic properties of words determine meaning that I can quickly mention here are *onomatopoeic words*. Intuitively, onomatopoeias can be defined as words whose sound reminds us of an actual sound in the world they are meant to imitate. *Imitation* is precisely what makes an onomatopoeia recognizable as an onomatopoeic word. Words like 'cough', 'hiccup', 'splash', 'cock-a-doodle-doo' are all onomatopoeias insofar as they imitate actual sounds in the world. This property of imitation can also be called *iconicity*.[109] It is evident that, for an onomatopoeia to be such, its sound *bounds* its use, in a way that the word becomes irreplaceable: if we swap it with another word or a sign we lose iconicity, and with it its very nature as an onomatopoeia. To say it with Oskari Kuusela, one of the few interpreters to write about it in a Wittgensteinian spirit, 'to replace a word with another arbitrary one according to rules is precisely what one cannot do in the case of onomatopoeic words' (Kuusela 2008: 179). As such, the material aspect of its *sound* characterizes the meaning of onomatopoeic words, as sound is exactly what it is lost by swapping the word with another one. In the *Nachlass*, Wittgenstein strikingly stresses this property of onomatopoeic words, when he says that 'in the case of an onomatopoeic word the sound belongs to the symbol.' (MS 109: 109, TS 211: 388).

The fact that onomatopoeias are irreplaceable pushes them on the same side of language of soulful expressions. However, this affinity hides an important difference here. In fact, even though onomatopoeic words are abundantly used in poetry for their sound properties, a poetic verse is irreplaceable certainly not because it *imitates* something in the world. Rather, the meaning it acquires within the poem concerns more the way words and their sounds 'resonate' in us, the feelings they evoke, our reactions to certain sounds, and so on. Same goes for the atmosphere of ordinary words: they are experiential traces that words acquire once they are used in their context of employment, hardly connected to their actual sound. Onomatopoeic words, on the other hand, are irreplaceable *because* they are iconic, that is, their sound imitates another natural sound, and this is what defines them. Their non-replaceability is thus, so to speak, more *radical*, insofar as in the onomatopoeic symbol, described by Wittgenstein as constituted by its sound, iconicity works as a natural *bond*: we are not free to choose the word to imitate a sound, as all that matters is only its actual iconic character.

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[109] Wittgenstein draws a comparison with colour samples to highlight this point (Ms141: 3, BB: 84-85): onomatopoeias are like colour samples insofar as they can be compared with the original sound they imitate.

As such, a proper reflection on sound and meaning might help us make further distinctions concerning what we have called the irreplaceability criterion. There is indeed an irreplaceability rooted into the *experience* we have of words and their conceptual words and an irreplaceability based on the crude symbolic properties of sounds. Arguably, there is no clear distinction between the two, as most of the sounds we employ in language are always heard within the context of a culture and a form of life. Furthermore, it is not immediately clear what makes an acoustic imitation *similar* to the sound imitated. It is likely that what is similar is language-relative, as most languages figure phonetically different onomatopoeic words to imitate the same sounds. This makes onomatopoeias hardly cross-linguistic: for instance, 'bau bau' is the Italian onomatopoeic word for a dog's bark, its iconicity is obvious for any Italian speaker, less so for an English. A further investigation about the differences between the phonology of historical languages is then – I believe - required to have a complete account of the role of sound in language. However, here it is sufficient to stress that a Wittgensteinian outlook can be elaborated to look at the phenomenon of *sound symbolism* anew, beyond the old-fashioned empiricist approach of early 20ᵗʰ century linguistics concerning this topic.[110]

Towards a Reorientation of the Sign-Symbol Relation

A further application of this thesis results might involve another topic. This topic is not directly connected to the investigation of the grammar of meaning, it however implicitly criss-crosses important arguments developed throughout the thesis. The topic is the following: Wittgenstein's conception of the *sign-symbol relation* in his later philosophy. With 'symbol' I mean, quite broadly, any meaningful sign we employ in language, whereas with 'sign' I mean, with Wittgenstein, 'what is sensibly perceptible in the symbol' (TLP 3.32), that is, the *material embodiment* of the symbol.

In the literature, perhaps the most systematic attempt to offer a complete overview of the sign-symbol relation in the *Investigations* is offered by James Conant in a couple of recent papers (Conant 2019, 2020). Conant argues that throughout all his career Wittgenstein consistently targeted a certain conception of the relation between sign and symbol – or sign and its *meaning*, as it is the same – that

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[110] Historically, Edward Sapir was one of the first to investigate the symbolic properties of sounds, that is, phonetic symbolism (Sapir 1929: 226). According to Sapir, the phonetic materials of our words are *inherently* meaningful, that is, certain phonetic combinations of sounds are already as such bearers of a determinate meaning. Although advanced as a mere hypothesis in need of experimental corroboration, Sapir makes the example of the vowels *a* and *i,* whose sounds tend to be associated respectively with *big* and *small* things (Sapir 1929: 227). Even before, sound symbolism can already be spotted in Plato's *Cratylus,* where the conventionalist thesis of Hermogenes about the origin of names is opposed to that of Cratylus. For the latter, names are not conventional as they are construed based on a supposed primary connection between the name's sounds and primitive meanings. Interestingly, Wittgenstein knows Plato's *Cratylus*: in the *Big Typescript,* he says that his conception of the conventional nature of meaning is supported by the way Socrates rejects Cratylus's thesis that the nature of the name is grounded into the *similarity* of its sound with the thing named (*Cratylus* 434a).

he calls *additive*. According to this conception, meaning is something that we need to *couple* to mere inert signs to make them significant. Our symbols are to be thought as mere signs *plus* something: it might be a psychological entity, but also a transcendent object of some kind, or a reference in the world; it might be an interpretation, even a set of rules. A meaningful sign is to be seen as the resultant of a process of *addition* of a sign with a further independent factor. On the contrary, Wittgenstein would have rather developed a different conception – we may call it *non-additive* – that Conant describes as follows:

> The sign, in the logically fundamental case of its mode of occurrence, *is* an internal aspect of the symbol. [...] Conversely, this means that it is essential to a symbol – to what a symbol is – that it have an essentially perceptible aspect. There is no privileged direction of explanatory priority between symbol and sign.
>
> (Conant 2020: 14)

As long as meaning is not to be conceived as a thing to be added up to mere signs, this means that signs and their meaning are given *together*: the meaningful sign is not a result of a process of addition, that starts with the mere sign understood as a mere physical item and ends up with the sign *plus* meaning; rather, the sign as an identifiable unit *begins* together with its meaning, that is, it begins already as a sign in use.[111] Another way to put it is that there is an internal relation between signs and its meaning, between symbols and their signs: the sign is *part* of the symbol, and complementarily, there is no symbol without a sign to express it.

Now, the stark distinction between additivity and non-additivity is an implicit feature of the discussion concerning *replaceability* and the *immanence* of meaning in the present thesis. We have seen that the criterion of replaceability cuts linguistic understanding into two different domains: on one hand, we understand the meaning of a word because we can swap a sign with another without losing its meaning – mainly by means of rules. Soulless languages are indeed described as languages where we can switch words with no consequences, as the signs we use are inessential to convey their meaning. On the other hand, a certain kind of understanding is shown by the fact that we cannot replace the sign without losing whatever meaning we want to convey. It is the case of *soulful uses* of words – emphatic, expressive or poetic uses, plays of words, jokes, even secondary uses of words and onomatopoeias – that are all bound to the specific material sign we use. Their meaning is *immanent*: meaning is to be read within the words we use to convey it, in a way that without those very words

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[111] Silver Bronzo envisages the same conception of the sign-symbol relation in the *Tractatus*, what he calls 'the disjunctivist conception' (see Bronzo 2017). If Bronzo is right, this issue intriguingly draws another important line of continuity throughout Wittgenstein's philosophy, early and late.

we lose that meaning altogether. Arguably, additivity, as Conant defines it, implies replaceability, insofar as meaning, according to this conception, is an *independent* object, autonomous and distinct from the sign we use to express it, in a way that we could theoretically change the sign with no consequences in communication. Mentalism is clearly an additive conception of meaning – in this sense additivity is then a critical target throughout Wittgenstein's writings as much as mentalism is. However, additivity can as well be employed to describe the sign-symbol relation in those borderline cases of language employment where words are said to be soulless: in these language games, the set of rules is what determines the meaning of the word, might it be a string of sign to decipher, a code, or a logical language. Complementarily, non-additivity demands that signs are ultimately irreplaceable, insofar as meaning and sign are given together, not as a result of a process of addition. The meaning of a pun for instance is immanent to its words - if we lose the words and its load of experience we lose its meaning entirely - and this is valid for any other soulful word.

Strikingly, the following remark from the *Big Typescript* connects this discussion on replaceability and expressiveness of soulful words to a general criticism of additivity:

> In the old way of putting it we can say: What really counts is the meaning of a word, not the word. So we can replace the word with another that has the same meaning. A place has thereby been set for the word, as it were, and we can substitute one word for another if we put it in the same place.
>
> But in a poem, can one in this sense replace words with other words? What sort of difference does it make if in an examination of the laws of free fall I say "speed" instead of "velocity", or use a Hebrew letter instead of v? On the other hand, what if I replace a word in a poem by the sign A,
> explaining that A is to have the meaning of the word? That would be like frowning and saying that this is to mean the same thing as a friendly smile.
>
> (BT: 26)

What Wittgenstein calls 'the old way of putting' the relation between sign – the word – and meaning is nothing more than the additive conception: what counts is the meaning, detached from its physical embodiment - we might say in opposition to the immanence that the meaning is conceived as *transcendent*. Additivity is immediately connected with replaceability, and poetry is quoted as an example of language use where replaceability is indeed not valid. Soulful and soulless languages are two polar opposite paradigms of the relation between signs and symbols: on one hand, signs are irreplaceable – in the sense that if we switch the sign with another one the meaning is lost – on the other hand signs are perfectly replaceable with no consequence for our understanding.

To conclude, a general discussion about the concept of meaning (and understanding) is implicitly intertwined with an investigation about the relationship symbols entertain with their signs. The thesis offers thus an important angle from which tackling this issue and provides some tools to both enhance Conant's interpretation concerning the non-additive character of meaning and together to question its supposed universality, as the very conceivability of soulless languages provides us with cases of language where additivity still plays a role to conceive the sign-symbol relation. This because a non-metalogical perspective should be always valid, and its pluralism can be arguably assumed even when it comes to conceive the sign-symbol relation.

Wittgenstein's Place in the History of Analytic Philosophy

Last, I want to draw the attention onto the fact that the non-metalogical outlook developed in this thesis regarding the concept of meaning might be useful to broadly reconceive the status of Wittgenstein's philosophy within the history of *early* analytic philosophy and challenge its dominant historical narrative. This narrative draws back, at least, to Peter Strawson and - lately – was inherited by Richard Rorty. In his 1956 paper, *Construction and Analysis*, Strawson offers an overview of the different methods of analysis Anglo-Saxon analytic philosophy of his time had developed to conduct logical analysis. As such, this paper offers one of the first historical reflection about the nature of analytic philosophy in the early 20th century. Its importance primarily lies in the fact that, first, it defines philosophy in the term of logical analysis, and second, it builds a well-known meta-philosophical account according to which such an analysis can be pursued either by constructing ideal languages or by carefully dissecting the use of our ordinary words. Analytic philosophy is thus conceived as articulating an internal methodological opposition between ideal language construction – the inheritance of its Logical Positivists roots captained by philosophers such as Rudolf Carnap – and Ordinary Language Philosophy.

This narrative became predominant few decades later thanks to Richard Rorty, who edited in 1967 a famous collection of essays of the analytic tradition called *The Linguistic Turn*. In the introduction, Rorty defines 'linguistic philosophy' as 'the view that philosophical problems are problems which may be solved (or dissolved) either by reforming language, or by understanding more about the language we presently use' (Rorty 1967: 3). Notably, both Strawson and Rorty define analytic philosophy through a well circumscribable *goal* – either analysis or dissolution of philosophical problems (that ultimately come to be the same, as analysis is pursued with the aim of solving philosophical problems) – they emphasise the linguistic nature of philosophical investigations and agree that there is a divergence only in methods, between, on one hand, *reform* of language through construction of ideal languages, and, on the other hand, mere description of word use. This is, in

essential, the gist of this supposed linguistic *turn* that involved philosophy in the first half of the 20th century.

Notably, it is however not *prima facie* clear how to pursue the goal of philosophy defined in these terms and how to understand its explicitly linguistic dimension. Strawson tries to circumscribe its general spirit by defining first the *object* of philosophy, in the following terms:

> Maybe it is best to say, as Moore always said, that the objects of analysis were propositions. This answer, whatever its shortcomings, emphasizes, without over-emphasizing, the linguistic nature of the enterprise, the preoccupation with meaning.

> (Strawson 1956: 98)

The linguistic nature of philosophy is here primarily defined in terms of a 'preoccupation with *meaning*'. Instead of looking at the world and *things* and doing metaphysics, philosophy should rather look at the words we use to talk about the world and analyse their *meaning*. According to Strawson, this obsession with meaning is shared by both ideal language and ordinary language philosophers alike, they only diverge in the way such a preoccupation takes form in the attempt to solve philosophical problems.

Now, it is rather difficult to fit Wittgenstein's philosophy within this picture. It is telling that Rorty did not select anything from Wittgenstein's writings in his collection of essays. This might be justified by the unorthodox nature of Wittgenstein's writings - his works, we know, almost never took the form of academic papers. Furthermore, it is likely that Wittgenstein's absence in Rorty's book is motivated by the indifference, if not hostility, his philosophy was welcomed with in the United States philosophical *milieu* in the second half of the century.[112] However, I believe the reason is more substantial than a mere question of style - or historical reception - might suggest. It is true that Wittgenstein was always concerned throughout his career to unveil the nonsensical character of metaphysical discourse and its philosophy is patently committed to a general clarification of our language. This makes his thought, *latu sensu*, a linguistic philosophy as Rorty defines it. Crucially, however, as this thesis abundantly showed while addressing Wittgenstein's rejection of metalogic and the fact that meaning should not be taken as the 'subject matter of philosophy' (AWL: 31), there is no 'preoccupation of meaning' at the base of Wittgenstein's own understanding of his philosophy. That is, meaning is not, for Wittgenstein, a privileged concept philosophy should be primarily engaged to clarify: his own conception of philosophy and method does not revolve around the notion of meaning, whose nature is not a philosophical duty to grasp as a preliminary move in any philosophical enquiry. Accordingly, no thesis about meaning is spelled out, no theory advanced, no

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[112] See, for instance, Tripodi 2011 for a detailed account of the American reception of Wittgenstein.

general account of language is argued for. As such, Wittgenstein falls by principle *outside* the perimeter drawn by Strawson and Rorty in their historical narratives.

To approach Wittgenstein's thought through the lenses of his rejection of metalogical thinking might then be fruitful to revitalize the discussion on the very nature of analytic philosophy, challenge its dominant narrative and question Wittgenstein's place within it. If we take Rorty and Strawson's picture for granted as a good caption of analytic philosophy, then Wittgenstein becomes both an *outsider* and an uncomfortable *guest*, as his own rejection to consider meaning as a privileged notion works as a tool to challenge and question the very presuppositions upon which analytic philosophy rests.

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