

reply is that we must examine in detail the actual ways in which the key words involved in philosophical puzzlement are used. We run into (at least some of) these puzzles because we misinterpret our forms of speech, because we have a wrong and over-simplified view of the way language works. Such puzzles are resolved by seeing how our words actually do work, what their uses really are.

[Philosophical problems] are, of course, not empirical problems; they are solved, rather, by looking into the workings of our language, and that in such a way as to make us recognize those workings: *in despite of an urge to misunderstand them.* [PI, sect. 109.]

Consider the word 'time,' for example. Let us suppose that we have given way to our craving for unity and have assumed that 'time' has the same kind of use that 'tree' or 'table' or 'river' does. Then it is likely we will be held captive by some picture or other and will suppose—wrongly—that the word 'time' is the name of a peculiar ethereal medium in which events occur, and which flows ineluctably from the future, through the present, into the past. In that case, it can be shown that we fall very quickly into philosophical puzzlement. But if we would only examine the actual situations in which the word 'time' is used and notice how it is used, we would see that it does not function as the name of any kind of ghostly medium. Once we do this, once we "command a clear view" of the uses of the word (PI, sect. 122), our philosophical problems are solved: there is nothing more to do, there is no further problem. There is, in particular, no additional question "But what is *time*?" still to be answered. Indeed, we will realize that the very question is illegitimate, if it presupposes, as it seems to, that time is some kind of *thing*.

Wittgenstein's claim here is not apt to be fully intelligible, much less assessable, however, until we know precisely what he means by a use of words. Hence, we must now turn to an examination of this notion. It is one of the most central, and at the same time one of the least clear, notions in the writings of the later Wittgenstein. From the way I have been stressing the word 'use,' one might suppose that it was the one word which Wittgenstein always employed in this connection; but not so. True, he uses the word 'use' far more often than any other, but he also speaks of the *junctions* of words (e.g., PI, sects. 11, 17, 274, 556, 559), of the *aims* of words (e.g., PI, sect. 5), of their *purposes*. (e.g., PI, sects. 6, 8, 398), their *offices* (e.g., PI, sect. 402), their *roles* (e.g., BB, pp. 103, 108), and their *employments* (e.g., PI, sect. 421). There is no indication that Wittgenstein

10 Uses of Words

When we do philosophy, Wittgenstein has said, we get our understanding tied up in knots, we suffer intellectual cramps—that is, we fall into confusion. We are like flies in a fly-bottle: we buzz around and around in the same confined space, and see no way of escape. Wittgenstein has given us an account of some of the causes of our being in this unhappy state. But we want more than that—we want to be cured, we want to escape. We do, at any rate, if we are at all like Wittgenstein. Some philosophers, to be sure, officially abandon all hope of freeing themselves from philosophical bewilderment. Hume, for example, at the end of Book I of his *A Treatise of Human Nature*, finds himself in the most deplorable state of Wittgensteinian puzzlement, and the only means he can find to relieve it is to dine, play a game of backgammon, converse and be merry with his friends. But Wittgenstein would be totally unsatisfied with this kind of "solution"; he needs to clear up the puzzles and is unable to turn his back on them until he has achieved complete clarity (PI, sect. 133). Telling him to ignore his philosophical problems would be as effective as telling a dope addict that he ought to give up taking drugs. And so if we seek freedom as passionately as Wittgenstein does, we need to know not only why we are trapped in various different fly-bottles, but also how we are to escape from them.

What is your aim in philosophy?—To shew the fly the way out of the fly-bottle. [PI, sect. 309.]

But how? How are intellectual illnesses to be cured? Wittgenstein's

was aware of any important differences of meaning amongst these several terms, or that he would have been interested in such differences had he been aware of them. Although I think this is a mistake, and that there are important differences, I shall not try to argue the point here. Wittgenstein's central concept is clearly that of the *uses* of words, and we can, with reasonable assurance, concentrate on it. Nevertheless, we should bear in mind that characteristics associated with the concepts of function, aim, purpose, and the rest, may well have colored Wittgenstein's thinking about the use of words.

The general notion of the *use* of something is not so simple as it might appear to be. There are, for example, what might be called various different aspects of the use of a thing, and what these aspects are will vary with the kind of thing in question. In the use of a hammer, for example, there are at least the following aspects: how to use it (e.g., how to handle it), what it is used for or used to do, and, more rarely, what it can be used as (e.g., as a paperweight). In the use of olive oil, there are at least the following aspects, which form a different group from the previous one: what it is used in (e.g., in salad dressings) and what it is used for (e.g., for frying). Let us see now what different aspects there are in connection with the use of words, and then try to determine which of these Wittgenstein meant when he spoke of the use of words.

To begin with, there is one aspect that we can mention only to ignore hereafter. Words are used *as* the materials of most of our speaking and writing. It is words which we most often utter and write, when we utter or write something, just as it is foodstuffs that we most often use as materials when we cook. As Eliot's Sweeney so pungently put it for all of us:

I gotta use words when I talk to you.¹

In this aspect of the use of words, all words are identical, and one word, or group of words, cannot be distinguished from another. Hence it is an uninteresting sense of 'use' for our present purposes, and I shall say no more about it.

A more significant aspect, for us, of the use of words has to do with the grammar of the word in question, with the kind of linguistic context in which the word can and cannot occur. For example, in the frame 'I slept in a _____ bed last night,' the blanks can be filled with certain words without linguistic oddity, whereas if they

¹ T. S. Eliot, "Fragment of an Agon," in his *Collected Poems, 1909-1935* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1936).

are filled with other words, or even the same words in reverse order, the result is linguistically odd. Thus the words 'big comfortable' or 'very short' are suitable to fill the blanks, but not 'drink rum,' nor 'short very'; nor even, though to a lesser extent, 'comfortable big.' Knowing how to use a word, in this aspect of its use, includes knowing in what sort of linguistic contexts or frames the word can and cannot occur without grammatical oddity; or, to put it more actively, knowing how to construct grammatically correct word-groups (e.g., sentences) which contain that word and being able to recognize grammatically incorrect word-groups which contain it. Let us call this the *grammatical* aspect of the use of words.

Words are also used to *do* certain things, to perform certain linguistic jobs. It is this aspect which is meant when one says that the sentence 'Get out!' is normally used to issue an order, the sentence 'Is he?' is normally used to ask a question, and the sentence 'He is.' is normally used to state something. When we speak of the use of words in this way, we mean that words are used to perform certain speech acts (such as issuing orders, asking questions, and so on); hence, let us call this the *speech-act* aspect of the use of words.

It must not be supposed that the grammarians' rough classification of the grammatical moods of sentences corresponds in any easy, straightforward way to the various kinds of speech acts; that, for example, declarative sentences are always used to state something, that interrogative sentences are always used to ask questions, that imperative sentences are always used to issue orders, and so on. It would be a mistake to give in to our craving for unity in this way; for while the number of possible grammatical moods is small, the number of possible speech acts is very great indeed, and sentences of the same grammatical mood can be used to perform many different speech acts. Consider declarative sentences, for example. There is some truth in the claim that they are commonly used to "state that something is the case" or to "state something." But two points need to be borne in mind if we are to appreciate *how* much truth there is in it. (1) 'Stating something' is a highly general, abstract term with little content. It covers a multitude of more specific speech acts which are all different and which may be performed when one uses a declarative sentence—e.g., describing something, identifying something, commenting on something, reporting what one sees (hears, feels, and so on), pointing out something to someone, and so on. And (2), declarative sentences are very often used to perform speech

acts which are not species of stating something at all: to issue commands (captain of a ship to one of his subordinates: "You will see that the job is finished by six o'clock tonight."), to request something ("I would like to see the manager."), to swear ("I'll be damned."), to recommend things ("I think this is the one you should buy."), to express emotion ("I wish I were dead!"), to make promises ("I promise to meet you there."), and to do any number of other things as well.

Consider, too, the variety of speech acts which can be performed with the following interrogative sentences: "Isn't it a lovely day?" "How do you do?" "Won't you help us?" "May I have the sugar, please?" "Are you out of your mind?" "How can you possibly believe that?" "Why did I do that?" "Isn't she pretty?" Confronted with examples like these, one sees at once the utter absurdity of assuming that whenever an interrogative sentence is uttered, the speaker is always simply asking a question.

The topic of speech acts is a highly complex and subtle one, and cannot be treated here in any detail.² Still, one important distinction ought to be made, even if only sketchily. It is the distinction which may very roughly be characterized as that between speech acts that are successfully performed in the mere act of saying certain words in the appropriate circumstances and speech acts that are not successfully performed unless the speaker's words produce some additional effect, normally an effect that concerns his hearers. Austin calls the former *illocutionary acts* (speech acts performed *in* saying something) and the latter *perlocutionary acts* (speech acts performed *by* saying something). Examples of illocutionary acts are such speech acts as describing something, issuing an order, asking a question, greeting someone, announcing an intention, making a promise, and so on. They are illocutionary acts because, in order to perform them successfully, one need only say certain words in the appropriate circumstances; there is no need that the saying of the words should produce some effect in the hearer or anywhere else.³ Given the appropriate condi-

² The interested reader should consult J. L. Austin, *How to do things with Words* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1962). Austin, White's Professor of Moral Philosophy at Oxford University from 1952 until his untimely death in 1960, was a powerful leader of English philosophy after World War II. His influence, indeed, rivaled that of Wittgenstein.

³ This is debatable, however. Austin claims that an illocutionary act will not be "happily" or successfully performed unless a certain minimal effect is achieved on the hearer—namely, his hearing the words and understanding their

tions, to say "Get out!" *is* to issue an order, to say "It is an impressionistic painting mainly in greens and blues" *is* to describe something, to say "Where did John go?" *is* to ask a question, and so on. Examples of perlocutionary acts are such speech acts as persuading someone to do something, upsetting someone, pleasing someone, cheering someone up, confusing someone, shocking someone, amusing someone, and so on. To perform one of these speech acts, it is not enough that certain words be spoken; in addition, some effect must be produced. For example, if you want to perform the speech act of pleasing your wife, you may say to her "You look lovely in that white dress." In saying this, you are complimenting her (*illocutionary act*), with the intention of pleasing her. But your intention will not be realized, and you will hence not succeed in performing the speech act of pleasing her, unless your words actually do please her—that is, unless they have that effect. Thus, pleasing someone is not an illocutionary, but a perlocutionary speech act. (Whether or not a perlocutionary act *can* only be performed by means of the performance of an illocutionary act is but one of the innumerable questions which we cannot try to answer here.)

When we speak of using words to perform speech acts—i.e., illocutionary or perlocutionary acts—we are concerned with the use of words to do, to accomplish, one thing or another. The use of words to do something ought to be distinguished from the use of words *in doing* something—by that I mean their use *in the course of* activities like telling a joke, relating an experience, instructing a student, presenting a report, and so on. It is normally not the case that the use of an individual sentence is by itself enough to do these things; relating an experience, for example, normally requires the utterance of several different sentences. Instead of our saying, then, that the sentence 'S is P' was used to relate an experience, which would be odd, it is more natural to say that the sentence 'S is P' was used *in the course of*, or *in*, relating an experience. (Analogously, instead of saying that a hammer was used to build a house, which would be odd, we ought rather to say that the hammer was used *in*, or *in the course of*, building meaning and force. "I cannot," he says, "be said to have warned an audience unless it hears what I say and takes what I say in a certain sense" (Austin, *op. cit.*, p. 115). If Austin's claim be admitted, a slight reformulation of the way I have drawn the distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts would be required, but this could easily be done.

⁴ Or, some effect over and above the minimal one of the hearer's hearing the words and understanding their meaning and force. See the previous footnote.

the house). To mark the distinction between, on the one hand, the linguistic jobs which individual word-groups, primarily whole sentences, can be used to do (viz., perform various speech acts) and, on the other hand, such larger-scale jobs as relating experiences, presenting reports, and so on, which normally require the use of several sentences, we may call the latter *speech activities*. Let us confine the label 'speech activities' to those activities which, like relating an experience, are carried out entirely, or almost entirely, in words. This will serve to distinguish them from such other activities as harvesting a crop, building a bridge, and so on, which involve a great deal more than the use of words, although they usually do, as a matter of fact, also involve the use of words.

The distinction between speech acts and speech activities is only a very loose one. Most words or phrases that designate speech activities—e.g., 'describing something,' 'giving a report'—can also designate speech acts; descriptions can be made and reports given in a single sentence, in which case describing and giving the report are speech acts, not speech activities. If it requires 20 or 50 sentences to give a report, then there is no question but that the speaker uses each individual sentence while engaging in the (one) speech activity of giving a report, and that he does not use each one separately to give the report, i.e., to perform the speech act of giving a report. At the other extreme, if it requires but a single sentence, then the speaker no doubt uses the sentence to perform the speech act of giving a report, and does not use it "while engaging in" the speech activity of giving a report. But there will not be, in general, any definite place between these two extremes where the speech act of giving a report becomes the speech activity of giving one. Still, a distinction which is not absolutely clear-cut is nevertheless a distinction, and this one will prove to be important for our purposes.

In discussing the grammatical aspect of the use of words, I noted that individual words and phrases regularly occur in certain linguistic frames, that word-groups are normally put together in certain ways and not in others. There is another important aspect of the use of words that is concerned not with the immediate linguistic frame of individual words or phrases, but rather with the wider conditions—both linguistic and nonlinguistic—in which word-groups (including whole sentences and individual words) and even morphemes are normally used. It is what I shall call the *semantic* aspect of the use of words. (Though it is different from the grammatical aspect, the two

are not, of course, unrelated.) A given word-group (e.g., a given sentence) is normally used only when certain conditions, which may be called semantic conditions, obtain—for example, when certain events have taken place, when the speaker is in a certain kind of situation, when a certain kind of object is present, and so on. To say this is to say that there are semantic regularities associated with the utterance of a given word-group. If two people, A and B, are having their dinner, with all the usual items on the table and with the salt-cellar near B, A can say "Please pass the salt" without the least oddity, without deviating from any semantic regularities, for this is the kind of situation in which those words are generally uttered. But under these same conditions A cannot say to B "Look out for that horse!" without deviating from semantic regularities, although he *can* say it without oddity—for example, if he says it playfully as part of a game they play at dinner, or if he says it in the course of telling a story to B over their dinner. So though the words "Look out for that horse!" can, in special cases, be used without oddity when there is no horse present, still *in the standard case*, when those words are uttered, there is a horse present, and the speaker is in fact warning the hearer about the horse. And so there are—indeed, must be, if there is to be a language at all—correlations, although not perfect ones, between the use of certain words and the existence of certain semantic conditions. Words normally "go with" certain semantic conditions, and do not "go with" certain others.

Semantic conditions sometimes include other utterances. For example, the words "No, he isn't here" are normally used only if a question has previously been asked (such as "Is Mr. Smith at home?"); one would be puzzled if the first thing one's wife said to him in the morning were "No, he isn't here." Words like "Fine, thank you," "I certainly will," "Did he?" and many others are also normally or regularly used only when there has occurred, immediately preceding them, another utterance of a certain type.

The foregoing brief remarks about the semantic aspect of the use of words have simplified things that are not simple, have glossed over many difficulties. But for our present purposes, which are extremely broad and general, they may, hopefully, suffice. The reader who is interested in pursuing these matters should read Paul Ziff's excellent *Semantic Analysis*,⁵ from which my remarks and most of the terminology in which they are couched were drawn.

⁵ Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1960.

Having made this survey of the various aspects of the use of words, let us return to the question of what Wittgenstein means by their "use." The way to escape from philosophical puzzlement, he has told us, is to abandon our a priori, over-simplified picture of the use of words, and look at the actual use of words to see what goes on.

One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to *look at its use* and learn from that. [PI, sect. 340.]

(Compare his remark about games: "To repeat: don't think, but look!" [PI, sect. 66].) But the question now is: At *what* precisely are we being enjoined to look—at the grammatical, semantic, or speech-act aspect of the use of words? Or perhaps some other? In short, which aspect or aspects of the use of words did Wittgenstein intend? He never explicitly tells us; we must ferret it out for ourselves. I shall now try to show that Wittgenstein touches on all of the different aspects of the use of words we have distinguished: in some passages he stresses one aspect; in others, another; and sometimes he refers to all aspects collectively. But I shall also try to show that there is one aspect of the use of words he strongly emphasizes and to which he devotes his attention above all the others.

It is safe to say that Wittgenstein, in this "escape-from-puzzlement" phase of his philosophy, is almost totally unconcerned with what I have called the grammatical aspect of the use of words. To be sure, there are a few references to it, e.g., in PI, sects. 496, 558, and 664. But on the whole, Wittgenstein has practically no interest in purely grammatical considerations. Indeed, we know from our discussion of the sources of philosophical puzzlement that Wittgenstein considered the grammatical behavior of words and the grammatical structure of sentences to be among the main things that lead the philosopher astray. It could, I think, be argued with justice that it is mainly those with a superficial knowledge of grammar that are led into confusion by it, and that a more careful and detailed attention to grammar would help show them the error of their ways. But Wittgenstein's attitude seems rather to be: Grammar is dangerous, so avoid it!

We must not be misled by the following passage, which seems on the face of it to contradict what I have just said:

Our investigation is therefore a grammatical one. Such an investigation sheds light on our problem by clearing misunderstandings away. [PI, sect. 90.]

Wittgenstein is not using the term 'grammatical' here in the restricted

sense it normally has; he is using it in an extremely broad sense, to mean simply *linguistic*. That is, the passage claims merely that he is investigating the use of *words*; it does not limit the investigation to what I have called the grammatical aspect of that use. In another passage, he distinguishes between surface grammar and depth grammar, and clearly implies that the former is highly misleading.

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

Wittgenstein's "surface grammar" corresponds roughly to my "grammatical aspect of the use of words." In urging us to examine the use of words, he is not referring to this aspect. He is, in fact, determined to rise above it (or delve beneath it, at any rate). On the other hand, he is concerned with depth grammar; this, however, has to do not with the grammatical aspect of the use of words, but with one or more of the other aspects.

The semantic aspect of the use of words is one on which Wittgenstein places some importance. If we are troubled about the meaning of a word or group of words, he often urges us to look at the actual circumstances in which they are used. Here is one example:

... Let us see what use we make of such an expression as "This face says something," that is, what the situations are in which we use this expression, what sentences would precede or follow it (what kind of conversation it is a part of). [BB, p. 179.]

Again, suppose I give someone the order "Figure out the values of y when x is given the values 1, 2, 3, . . . in the formula $y = x^2$," or the order "Add 3 to the number 1, then add 3 to the result of that addition, then add 3 to that result, and so on." These short instructions each determine, potentially, an infinite number of separate steps; the orders could never be completely carried out, yet given any step in the process of carrying them out, the orders uniquely determine what the succeeding step must be. And this may strike us as mysterious, may puzzle us. How can all those steps be already contained, in germ, in the original order? In some sense or other, it seems that I have issued an infinite order. And not only that, it seems that I have also somehow already anticipated each of the uniquely

determined steps which must be taken if the order is to be obeyed. For example, in the second order, I meant my hearer to say '1003' after '1000,' '1006' after '1003,' and so on.

Here I should first of all like to say: your idea was that that act of meaning the order had in its own way already traversed all those steps: that when you meant it your mind as it were flew ahead and completed all the steps before you physically arrived at this or that one.

Thus you were inclined to use such expressions as: "The steps are really already taken, even before I take them in writing or orally or in thought." And it seemed as if they were in some *unique* way predetermined, anticipated—as only the act of meaning can anticipate reality. [PI, sect. 188.]

The pit of philosophical puzzlement yawns before us. To avoid it, Wittgenstein tells us, we ought to look at the sort of conditions which exist in the world when we say "The steps are determined by the formula _____"—i.e., look at the semantic aspect of the use of those words.

We use the expression: "The steps are determined by the formula. . . ." *How* is it used?—We may perhaps refer to the fact that people are brought by their education (training) so to use the formula $y = x^2$, that they all work out the same value for y when they substitute the same number for x . Or we may say: "These people are so trained that they all take the same step at the same point when they receive the order 'add 3.'" We might express this by saying: for these people the order "add 3" completely determines every step from one number to the next. (In contrast with other people who do not know what they are to do on receiving this order, or who react to it with perfect certainty, but each one in a different way.) [PI, sect. 189.]

Wittgenstein does this sort of thing over and over again in his later writings: if we want to know what 'certainty,' 'understanding,' 'expectation,' 'thinking,' 'proof' mean, he tells us to examine the sort of situation to which these words apply. Examine the semantic conditions of their use.

Wittgenstein does not often appeal to the speech-act aspect of the use of words; this aspect plays only an insignificant—indeed, almost no—part in his philosophy. The reader of the *Investigations* may be misled on this point by the fact that in an early section of that work, Wittgenstein compares words to tools.

Think of the tools in a tool-box: there is a hammer, pliers, a saw, a screw-driver, a rule, a glue-pot, glue, nails and screws.—The functions of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects. (And in both cases there are similarities.) [PI, sect. 11.]

(The term 'function' here is unfortunate; tools *per se* do not have functions. Wittgenstein is obviously using 'function' as if it meant the same as 'use.' In general, it must be acknowledged that Wittgenstein is not nearly as careful in his choice of words as one could wish.) Tools are used to do things, to perform certain acts; hammers are used to drive nails, screw-drivers to drive in screws, and so on. Hence, in comparing words and their uses to tools and their uses, Wittgenstein clearly has the speech-act aspect of the use of words in mind. But after paying lip-service to this aspect, he thereafter virtually ignores it in his actual practice. In the rare passages in which speech acts *are* mentioned, it is almost never illocutionary acts which are involved, but rather perlocutionary acts—that is, he speaks of using words to produce a certain effect in the hearer (see, e.g., PI, sect. 6). And even then, such acts are mostly treated slightly, as being of little importance.

We come now to the aspect of using words that plays by far the most important part in Wittgenstein's later philosophy—namely, their use in what I have called speech activities. When Wittgenstein speaks of the use of words, it is usually this aspect of use that he has in mind. Even the important semantic aspect is largely absorbed into the general framework of speech activities, the semantic conditions being viewed as the conditions under which speech activities of various sorts can be engaged in. Accordingly, we must now examine speech activities, and Wittgenstein's conception of them, in some detail.

Wittgenstein's name for what I have called a speech activity is 'language-game,' and I shall henceforth use that expression rather than 'speech activity.' In point of fact, however, Wittgenstein uses the term 'language-game' much more broadly than I defined 'speech activity.' He includes among language-games pure speech activities—that is, activities which involve little, or nothing, except the use of words—such as telling a joke, reporting an event (PI, sect. 23), describing a room (PI, sect. 290), and giving an account of a dream (PI, p. 184). But he also includes such activities as constructing an object from a description, obeying orders, and play-acting (PI, sect. 23) which involve certain modes of nonlinguistic behavior as essential components, and not just as mere idle accompaniments in the way that gestures with the hand, say, figure in most (pure) speech activities. The following kind of activity, engaged in by a builder A and his assistant B, is a clear example of what Wittgenstein calls a language-game:

A is building with building-stones: there are blocks, pillars, slabs and beams. B has to pass the stones, and that in the order in which A needs them. For this purpose they use a language consisting of the words "block," "pillar," "slab," "beam." A calls them out;—B brings the stone which he has learnt to bring at such-and-such a call. [PI, sect. 2.]

It might be thought that in such activities as these, one ought to distinguish the linguistic from the behavioral aspect, and to refer to the former alone as a language-game; but Wittgenstein states that the nonlinguistic behavior is also to be included in the language-game.

I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the "language-game." [PI, sect. 7.]

Let us call the former kind of language-games (i.e., those which consist entirely, or virtually entirely, in the use of words) *pure-language-games*, and the latter kind (i.e., those which include non-linguistic behavior as important, or even essential, parts) *impure-language-games*. The difference is one of degree only, and there will not, of course, be any hard and fast line separating pure- from impure-language-games. And the term 'impure' is not meant to have the slightest pejorative force. In fact, as I shall try to show, Wittgenstein considered impure-language-games to be, in an important sense, basic and held that pure-language-games are parasitic upon them in a crucial way.

Wittgenstein was impressed by the fact that to speak a language is to behave in certain highly complex ways—ways, furthermore, which require skill, and which can be rightly or wrongly, correctly or incorrectly, done. To speak a language is to exercise certain techniques, to behave in ways which exhibit various abilities. And speech behavior is not an isolated, hermetically sealed mode of behavior, entirely separate from other modes. Linguistic and nonlinguistic behavior are woven together into an intricate organic whole. Consider what is involved in a child's learning the meaning of a new word—let us say, the word 'ball.' It is not enough that the child be able simply to make the sound 'ball' or even to write the word 'ball'; a parrot or an idiot could do that, and not have the slightest notion of what the word meant. What more is required, then? Well, what has the child learned when he has learned the meaning of the word 'ball'? To begin with, he has learned to behave in certain ways; he has learned, for example, to reply "Ball" if someone, pointing to a ball, asks "What is this?" And when he himself points to a ball, he again says "Ball" or, even

better, "This is a ball." It might be thought that this is enough. To see that it is not, we must consider the notion of an ostensive definition.⁶

Many, but by no means all, words—and these mostly names—can be given ostensive definitions. This kind of definition contrasts roughly with a verbal definition, such as one found in a dictionary. Consider, as an example, the names of kinds of physical objects. An ostensive definition of such a term consists in pointing to an example of the sort of thing named by the term, or perhaps a picture of one, and saying something of the form "This is a(n) _____" or "This is called 'a(n) _____.'" Thus an ostensive definition of the word 'ball' would consist in pointing at a ball and saying "This is a ball" or "This is called 'a ball'" or something of the sort. It is natural to suppose that such a definition uniquely determines the meaning of the word 'ball,' and hence that the child, in being able to repeat the maneuver, must know what that meaning is. But Wittgenstein shows that this supposition is false. In pointing to a ball, one is at the same time pointing to a round thing, to a thing of a certain color (e.g., red), to a thing of a certain size, to a thing of a certain weight, to a thing belonging to a certain person (e.g., Johnny), to *one* thing, to a thing made of a certain material (e.g., rubber), and so on. Hence, the ostensive definition, by itself, does not uniquely determine the meaning of the word 'ball,' and the child, in repeating it, does not necessarily know what that meaning is. As Wittgenstein says: "An ostensive definition can be variously interpreted in every case." (PI, sect. 28). The child, for instance, may think the word 'ball' designates the red color, the round shape, one of Johnny's toys, anything made of rubber, this particular bit of rubber, and so on. This is not to say that ostensive definitions are worthless; on the contrary, giving such definitions is one important way we have of teaching people what words mean. But they do not in themselves guarantee success; for they must in every case be properly construed, properly interpreted, properly understood. And the behavior of the child described at the end of the last paragraph is not nearly enough to show that he has interpreted the definition properly.

What sort of behavior on the part of the child will show that he has interpreted the definition aright, that he knows the meaning of the word 'ball'? All of the following are certainly relevant: if asked

⁶ In what follows, I shall ignore Wittgenstein's distinction between ostensive teaching and ostensive definition (PI, sect. 6), because it is not relevant to our present concerns.

to fetch a ball, he brings back a ball; if asked to draw a picture of a ball, he does so; when asked which of several objects is a ball, he picks the right one; he speaks in appropriate ways—e.g., he says such things as "This ball is green and bigger than Suzy's" and does not say such things as "That is very ball—much baller than Suzy's." If he behaves in these and similar ways, we say that he has learnt the meaning of the word 'ball,' that he knows what a ball is. We may, of course, be mistaken. It may happen, for instance, that he behaves in all these right ways inside the house, but when he first sees a ball outside the house, asks "What is that?" In such a case, we might say that he had thought the word 'ball' meant a small spherical object in a house. This misconception can be removed by suitable instruction—i.e., training. But others may yet reveal themselves. There is no specific point after which it will be absolutely certain, without any possibility of being proven wrong in the future, that the child knows the meaning of the word 'ball.' But after observing his behavior in a variety of situations over a certain period of time, we can be reasonably certain that he does. (See *PI*, sect. 145.)

What seems to emerge from all this is that speaking a language, which of course includes understanding things said in it, is a matter of being able to *do* a variety of things, to act or behave in certain ways—and to do so under the appropriate conditions. Some of these skills are purely linguistic: a person unable to construct grammatically correct English sentences could not be said to speak English. But others are nonlinguistic—or, rather, are at once linguistic and nonlinguistic—in that they involve an interaction between using words and behaving in nonlinguistic ways. In our example, we saw that if a person is to be said to know the meaning of the word 'ball,' he must be able to do at least some of the following: to fetch balls, to draw pictures of balls, to distinguish balls from other things, and so on—and he must know when to do them, in what circumstances. If a person does not know how to act in at least some of these ways, he does not know the meaning of the word 'ball.'⁷ And the same goes for

⁷ This brief sketch is meant to apply at most only to the normal or central cases; it would have to be considerably expanded and qualified in various ways to cover all possible cases. For example, a paralyzed person might perfectly well know the meaning of the word 'ball' despite the fact that he cannot fetch balls, draw pictures of them, and so on. But even here, one could plausibly argue, there is a conceptual connection with modes of behavior; for it seems reasonable to suppose that if such a person does know the meaning of the word 'ball,' he must know what it is to do some or all of those things.

other words as well. Consider the word 'time,' for example. Suppose a person claimed to know the meaning of the word 'time,' but was unable to tell time; had no idea how to measure a time interval (e.g., to determine how long the cake had been in the oven); when told always to do one thing, *a*, at a later time than another, *b*, he sometimes did *a* first, sometimes did *b* first, and sometimes did them simultaneously, despite the fact that he was trying to follow the instructions; and so on. No one would grant that the person knew the meaning of the word 'time,' for to know the meaning of that word *is*—apart from being able to construct grammatical sentences containing it—to be able to determine what time it is, to be able to measure time, normally (e.g., when not being perverse) to do one thing at a later time than another when told to do so, and so on.

So speaking a language—i.e., speaking and understanding it—is engaging in certain modes of behavior that exhibit a variety of abilities or skills. It is to engage in what Wittgenstein calls "forms of life" (*PI*, sects. 19, 23, p. 226). This explains Wittgenstein's provocative remark:

If a lion could talk, we could not understand him. [*PI*, p. 223.]

We could not understand a lion because even if he could utter grammatically correct sentences, his behavior would presumably be too radically different from ours. For example, suppose a lion says "It is now three o'clock," but without looking at a clock or his wrist-watch—and we may imagine that it would be merely a stroke of luck if he should say this when it actually *is* three o'clock. Or suppose he says "Goodness, it is three o'clock; I must hurry to make that appointment," but that he continues to lie there, yawning, making no effort to move, as lions are wont to do. In these circumstances—as suming that the lion's general behavior is in every respect exactly like that of an ordinary lion, save for his amazing ability to utter English sentences—we could not say that he has *asserted* or *stated* that it is three o'clock, even though he has uttered suitable words. We could not tell what, if anything, he has asserted, for the modes of behavior into which his use of words is woven are too radically different from our own. We would not understand him, since he does not share the relevant forms of life with us.

It is primarily because he deems modes of behavior to be so vitally important in the use of words—and behavior, moreover, which exhibits certain skills—that Wittgenstein compares the using of words

to the playing of games. (See *PI*, sect. 23.) Using language, for him, is playing language-games. Malcolm reports:

One day when Wittgenstein was passing a field where a football game was in progress the thought first struck him that in language we play games with words. A central idea of his philosophy, the notion of a 'language-game', apparently had its genesis in this incident.⁸ It is noteworthy that in another incident, years earlier, a central idea of his early philosophy had occurred to Wittgenstein in a flash of insight. In looking at the diagram, it had struck him that a proposition is a picture of reality (see p. 78f.). And later, in watching the football game, it had struck him that using words is engaging in language-games. These flashes of insight exerted a powerful influence on Wittgenstein's thought—perhaps too powerful a one. Instead of thinking that they had provided him with useful and illuminating analogies, he seems to have thought that they had revealed to him the true nature of language. Thus in the *Tractatus*, the elementary proposition is not merely like a picture of the state of affairs, it is a kind of picture of it; and in his later philosophy, we do not merely engage in activities like games when we use language—we actually play kinds of games. This is remarkable, coming from a man who was well aware of the philosophical dangers of taking an analogy too seriously, and who was even concerned to warn us against doing so.⁹

For the later Wittgenstein, at any rate, words are not pictures, but pieces used in various language-games. And just as the significance of a piece in chess depends on its "role in the game" (*PI*, sect. 563)—i.e., how it can be moved, how one behaves with it—so the meaning of a word is its role in the various language-games in which it figures, the kind of behavior that surrounds its use, the kind of behavior in which its use is embedded. An expression only has meaning in—indeed only gets its meaning from—these modes of behavior. As Wittgenstein himself once put it:

An expression has meaning only in the stream of life.¹⁰ Words have meaning only as "pieces" in the language-games which are their "original home[s]" (*PI*, sect. 116).

⁸ Malcolm, *Memoir*, p. 65.

⁹ In *The Brown Book*, Wittgenstein wrote: "[Language-games] are more or less akin to what in ordinary language we call games." (*BB*, p. 81.) But later he seems to have thought that there is a more intimate relation than mere kinship between language and games.

¹⁰ Malcolm, *Memoir*, p. 93.

If we forget this fact, says Wittgenstein, if we forget the intimate connections between language and behavior, and try to treat words in isolation from the actual practical situations in which they are used, we end up in puzzlement.

The confusions which occupy us arise when language is like an engine idling, not when it is doing work. [*PI*, sect. 132.]

. . . Philosophical problems arise when language goes on holiday. [*PI*, sect. 38.]

Consider, for example, the notion of time. Philosophical difficulties begin when we consider temporal words in isolation from all connection with any practical situation. No puzzlement need arise if we ask what is involved in making an appointment for some future time, or if we ask how time is measured, or why time seems to go slower when we are waiting for the green light than when we are reading a good book, and so on. In these questions, the word 'time' is being considered in the context of some actual or possible situation. But we become bewildered if, severing all ties with any conceivable situation, we ask simply "What is time?" This famous example (cited in *PI*, sect. 89) is taken from St. Augustine, who writes:

For what is time? Who can readily and briefly explain this? Who can even in thought comprehend it, so as to utter a word about it? But what in discourse do we mention more familiarly and knowingly, than time? And, we understand, when we speak of it; we understand also, when we hear it spoken of by another. What then is time? If no one asks me, I know: if I wish to explain it to one that asketh, I know not. . . .¹¹

Thus philosophical perplexity arises when philosophers treat words as if they had no essential relationship to any modes of activity, to any kinds of situation in which they are normally used—when they treat them, in short, abstractly.

This tendency to treat words abstractly is actually an unhappy result of that complicated pattern of ways of thinking, discussed in chapter 8, which Wittgenstein held to be a major source of philosophical puzzlement. If the word 'time,' for example, is assimilated to the class of familiar nouns like 'river,' so that one supposes it names some quasi-physical medium, and if, more particularly, one pictures time as a kind of ethereal stream, then he will naturally think that the only philosophical problem there can be about time is that of

¹¹ Edward B. Pusey, trans., *The Confessions of Saint Augustine* (New York: Modern Library, Inc., 1949), p. 253.

discovering what the nature of this stream is. There will then be no need to consider the practical activities in which the word 'time' figures; they will take care of themselves. For example, there will be no call to take into consideration what it is to measure time or tell what time it is, or to determine that two events happened at the same time, and so on. One must simply think about time itself, and discover what its nature is, and the rest will follow easily.

Here an objection might be raised against Wittgenstein: "He makes too much of behavior. Admittedly, words are often used in the context of practical activity, in situations in which nonlinguistic behavior plays an essential part—that is, in what were called impure-language-games. Wittgenstein focuses his attention on such language-games. But words are also—and perhaps most often—used in *pure-language-games*: we commonly use words in mere conversation. What sort of nonlinguistic behavior is supposed to be relevant in these cases? There isn't any. The words that are used undoubtedly have meaning, and yet they are not woven into any pattern of nonlinguistic behavior. So it would seem that Wittgenstein's account is just inapplicable to the use of words in pure-language-games, and hence is of only limited interest."

This objection is based on far too restricted a conception of behavior; it confines behavior to nonlinguistic behavior. But Wittgenstein would certainly not do so, and there seems to be no justification for doing so.

Commanding, questioning, recounting, chatting, are as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing. [PI, sect. 25.]

To talk is to behave in certain ways—in linguistic ways. Often, to be sure, our use of words is embedded in nonlinguistic modes of behavior. But our very use of words is itself always a mode of behavior, even when it is not embedded, or at least not directly embedded, in other, nonlinguistic modes. Such cases can be of great importance, too. Consider the species of language-games of the genus "asking and answering questions" that we play. For example, when asked "What did you say?" we (as a rule) repeat our previous utterance or say something equivalent to it; or, if we consider it unimportant and not worth repeating, we may answer "Oh, nothing"; or, if we did not in fact say anything, we may reply "I didn't say anything." These are the sorts of move we make in *our* language-games. People in other

societies might play quite different ones. If they are asked "What did you say?" they might always repeat the utterance which preceded their previous one; or they might continue just as they had intended to, only in a louder (or softer) voice; or they might answer by saying what they wish they had said, or the first thing that comes into their heads; or they might not be allowed to answer, and only a third person who is present might be allowed to do so; and so on. Each of these possibilities represents a different form of life, and each is different from our own. The differences are in some cases of great significance, and have wide repercussions in the lives of the people concerned. And it would certainly not be implausible to maintain that the meaning of the sentence 'What did you say?' is different in each case.¹²

So both (1) purely linguistic (or almost purely linguistic) behavior, and (2) behavior which is a mixture of linguistic and nonlinguistic behavior, are central to Wittgenstein's conception of a language-game. Still, there is some truth in the claim that he gives a predominant position to nonlinguistic behavior. I shall now try to explain what I take this truth to be. Words can be divided into two classes: a) those which have uses in impure-language-games, and b) those which have uses only in pure-language-games. The overwhelming majority of words fall in the first class, but there are a few—mostly technical terms—which fall in the second. Let us consider each in turn, briefly.

a) Wittgenstein would of course admit that one can sit and talk, thus using words of this first sort in pure-language-games. But he would insist that their use in pure-language-games is dependent on their use in impure ones, in the sense that neither participant could understand what was being said unless he had already mastered the use of the relevant words in a range of suitable impure-language-games. Wittgenstein is not saying that such words *have* meaning only in impure-language-games; he is saying rather that the meaning of these words is *given* in such language-games, is mastered or learned in such games, and is hence essentially involved in them. Only after having once mastered these fundamental impure-language-games can one then engage in the more sophisticated pure ones. One can sit and talk about pencils, for example; describing them, discussing which

¹² This example, modified for my own purposes, is borrowed from Stanley Cavell. See his "The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy," *The Philosophical Review*, LXXI, No. 1 (January 1962), 73.

are the best kind, and so on. But he could not do this if he did not know what it is to write with a pencil, to fetch a pencil, to point to a pencil, to hand over a pencil when asked for one, to distinguish pencils from other things, and so on—that is, if he had not mastered the basic impure-language-games in which the word 'pencil' plays a part. These fundamental impure-language-games "lie in the background" when words are used in pure ones.

This is not to say that the uses of these words in pure-language-games are in any way "reducible to" their uses in the basic impure ones. Their uses in the two kinds of games are quite different. In playing pure-language-games, one behaves in very special ways: one constructs sentences, answers questions, expresses agreement or disagreement with another's remarks, and so on. These are sophisticated modes of behavior which require more skill, more intelligence, the mastery of more difficult and complex techniques, than are required for fetching or pointing to pencils. And Wittgenstein would say that the uses of a word in these pure-language-games add to its meaning, since these are different uses from the ones it has in the impure-language-games. A person who has mastered the uses of the word in both kinds of language-games has a greater and deeper understanding of the meaning of the word than a person who has mastered them only in impure-language-games. The uses of a word in impure-language-games are the *basic* ones, but by no means the *only* ones. And they are basic in the sense that if a word of this sort did not have any use in any impure-language-game, it would not have any play the impure games, and in the sense that if a person did not know how to play the impure games, he could not play the pure ones either.

b) A few words and symbols may have no uses in impure-language-games—e.g., certain special symbols in the higher reaches of logic or mathematics. They may have uses only in pure-language-games—in calculating, drawing inferences, proving theorems, and the like. (But see *RFM*, Part IV, sect. 2 (p. 133).) But there is nothing in this fact to embarrass Wittgenstein: these pure-language-games would be the "original homes" of such words, and their meaning would be given in the parts they play in those games. Wittgenstein could very well insist on this, and it is only by construing 'behavior' or 'activity' in unduly restricted ways that it could be thought that his doctrine of language-games is inapplicable to these cases.

* * *

In section 1 of the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein describes a picture of language (one which he considers to be inadequate and misleading) according to which each word names an object. This picture can give rise to the idea that the meaning of a word is the object for which it stands; an idea to which Wittgenstein himself had yielded in the *Tractatus*, in so far as words are restricted to what he there called names—i.e., logically proper names. We have seen to what difficulties and absurdities this idea inevitably leads. If we abandon it, but still insist on assimilating the noun 'meaning' to familiar nouns like 'tree,' then we may be tempted to think of the meaning of a word as a kind of spiritual halo or atmosphere surrounding the word, which is apprehended by the mind when it grasps or thinks about the meaning of the word. (See *PI*, sects. 117, 120.) Against both these pictures of the meaning of a word, Wittgenstein asserts the opposing claim that the meaning of a word is its use in the various language-games in which it plays a part.

For a large class of cases—though not for all—in which we employ the word "meaning" it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language. [*PI*, sect. 43.]¹³

Notice that Wittgenstein is careful to qualify his claim: "a large class of cases—though not for all. . . ." This is exactly what one would expect from Wittgenstein: just as there are many different kinds of games, so there are many different kinds of meanings, and not all can be identified with the use of the word which is said to have a meaning. Typically, Wittgenstein does not tell us which kinds of cases he would exclude from his general maxim, but from the very wording of sect. 43, as well as from statements elsewhere (e.g., *PI*, sects. 138, 197, 532, 561; *BB*, p. 69) which suggest an unqualified identification of meaning and use, it is clear that he regards the exceptions as trivial and unimportant. (He may have had in mind such examples as the following: the word 'Naomi' means 'my sweetness' in Hebrew, and 'George' means 'husbandman' in Greek. These meanings are not the same thing as—and indeed have little, if anything, to do with—the uses of those names in *English-language-games*.) We

¹³ There are hints in the *Tractatus* of a connection between meaning and use, although what Wittgenstein meant in the *Tractatus* by the use of a sign is of course radically different from what he meant in his later works:

3.326 In order to recognize a symbol by its sign we must observe how it is used with a sense.

3.328(1) If a sign is *useless*, it is meaningless. . . .

may safely ignore the exceptions in the discussion that follows, then, and assert that for Wittgenstein the meaning of a word is its use in the language, although bearing in mind that he considered this to be true only for the most important kind(s) of meaning(s). Wittgenstein speaks not only of the meaning of a word, but also of the sense of a sentence, as consisting in its use (see *PI*, sects. 20, 421).

What were Wittgenstein's reasons for identifying the meanings of words with their uses? Doubtless there were several reasons, but I shall mention two that I take to be as important as any. The first is this. If we are worried about the meaning of some difficult term, like 'time,' 'statement,' or 'truth,' it is foolish to consider it by itself, in complete isolation—i.e., to ask "What does 'time' ('statement,' 'truth') mean?" or "What is time (a statement, truth)?" This tendency to treat words abstractly, as we have seen, is one of the disastrous errors commonly committed by philosophers. What we must rather do is consider the word concretely, in context, in the framework of actual situations in which it occurs. And so it is with the word 'meaning.' It is fruitless to take it out of all context and ask "What does 'meaning' mean?" or "What is the meaning of a word?" These questions only reinforce the illusion that the meaning of a word is a mysterious entity of some sort. We must consider the term 'meaning' more concretely: Wittgenstein urges us to think not of what meaning is all by itself, but of what it is to explain the meaning of a word, to teach the meaning of a word to a child, to know the meaning of a word. (Similarly, not "What is time?" but "What is it to measure time?"; not "What is a statement?" but "What is involved in making a statement?")

"The meaning of a word is what is explained by the explanation of the meaning." I.e.: if you want to understand the use of the word "meaning," look for what are called "explanations of meaning." [*PI*, sect. 560.]

And if we concentrate on these types of situations, as Wittgenstein did, there is great plausibility in the suggestion that the meaning of a word is its use. Consider what is involved in teaching a child the meaning of the word 'ball,' for example (see pp. 240-2). It is natural to think that when we teach a child the meaning of that word, what we teach him is its use—we teach him to play different language-games with it. And if teaching him the meaning is teaching him the use, then must not the meaning of the word *be* its use (or, in case it has several, its uses)? Wittgenstein evidently concluded that it is.

The second reason cuts deeper. Wittgenstein seeks to establish the general thesis that anything which conventionally points or refers beyond itself, anything which has conventional meaning, does so only by being used in certain ways. It follows that words, being of this sort, have meaning only by being used; hence it is natural to suppose that their meaning is their use. The general thesis can be explained by an example. Think of the familiar sign which consists of the initials "W.C.," with an arrow pointing to the right, thus: \rightarrow . We say that this sign means that there is a water closet to the right, that the arrow points in the direction of a water closet. But *how* does the arrow point to the right? In what does its pointing in that direction consist? It cannot do so in and of itself; in itself it is simply a dead arrangement of lines. It points to the right because it is used by human beings in certain ways, because it plays certain parts in their language-games. The most important one is perhaps this: a man wants to visit a water closet, he sees the sign, walks to the right, and finds one. It is solely in virtue of this sort of game, this sort of human behavior into which it is fitted, that the arrow points to the right. If it were used in different ways, if it were embedded in different modes of behavior, the same arrow might point to the left, or straight ahead, or not point in any direction at all. (*PI*, sects. 454 and 495.) The meaning of the arrow and of the sign, Wittgenstein might say, is its use in the language.

Every sign *by itself* seems dead. *What gives it life?—In use it is alive. Is life breathed into it there?—Or is the use its life?* [*PI*, sect. 432.]

Wittgenstein, then, identifies the meaning of a word—and the sense of a sentence—with its use(s) in the language. This identification is, I shall now argue, mistaken, although I do not think that Wittgenstein's mistake here, if it is one, has any very serious consequences for his philosophy. There are, undeniably, some more-than-accidental connections between the meaning of a word and its use. For example, if a word has a meaning, then it doubtless also has a use in the language. And there is a connection between knowing the meaning of a word and knowing how to use it: in most cases, if a person had no idea how to use a certain word, we would not allow that he knew its meaning. But these admitted connections between meaning and use are not strong enough to warrant identifying them, as Wittgenstein does.

Wittgenstein's identification is implausible on the face of it. In

nonlinguistic areas, at any rate, things which have uses (e.g., tools, instruments) normally cannot sensibly be said to have meanings. Moreover, things which may sometimes have meanings—or (in case nothing nonlinguistic can be said to *have* a meaning) things which may sometimes mean something—(e.g., black clouds on the horizon, footprints in the snow, the rising pitch of someone's voice) do not, except rarely, have uses. So one would not expect the meaning of a word to be the same thing as its use(s) in the language, and I think it can be shown that it is not. Those connections between meaning and use which were just admitted to hold for words generally, do not hold universally, much less necessarily. Thus although in general if one knows the meaning of a word he also knows the use, and vice versa, still it is quite possible to know the meaning of a word and yet not know its use, and to know the use without knowing the meaning. An example of the former: if someone tells me (a non-Latin-speaker) that 'ultus' means revenge in Latin, I thereby know the meaning of that word, but I have no idea how or when to use it.¹⁴ Two examples of the latter: most people know how to use the word 'amen' and the sign 'Q.E.D.' yet far fewer know their meanings.¹⁵ Furthermore, many words have a use in the language, but no meaning—(and this is not, of course, to say that they are meaningless, either). Most proper names, for example, have a use, but no meaning. One cannot ask "What is the meaning of 'John Paul Jones?'" but only "Who is John Paul Jones?" And in asserting that John Paul Jones was an early American sailor who was captain of the *Bon Homme Richard*, one is not defining 'John Paul Jones' nor in any way giving its meaning—for it has none—but rather identifying John Paul Jones (or describing him or doing something of the sort, depending on the circumstances). Wittgenstein's identification of meaning and use leads him to speak of the meaning of proper names and even of their definitions (PI, sects. 40, 79); but in so speaking, he is simply misusing the words 'meaning' and 'definition.' Those two words are not used, as a rule, in connection with proper names.¹⁶ To be sure, some proper names have meaning—e.g., certain first names, many

¹⁴ The example is borrowed from Ziff, *Semantic Analysis*, p. 189.

¹⁵ It could plausibly be argued that 'amen' and 'Q.E.D.' have no meaning in English; but then they would count even more heavily against the identification of meaning and use, for they certainly have uses in English.

¹⁶ This is not to deny that proper names have connotation, nor that proper names can mean something to someone—but to admit these things is not to admit that they have meaning. On these points, see Ziff, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-97.

American Indian names—but in the overwhelming majority of these cases, the meaning has nothing whatever to do with the use. I think a case could be made for saying that some words other than proper names also have uses but no meaning, but this would embroil us in a long, controversial discussion. There is no need to embark on such a project, for enough has been said already to support the claim that Wittgenstein was mistaken in identifying the meaning of a word with its use in the language.

Wittgenstein seems to have been laboring under the traditional assumption—perhaps a hold-over from the *Tractatus*—that it is the job of the philosopher to give us the real meaning of certain important words; and he is telling us that this meaning is neither the object(s), if any, denoted by the word nor any kind of spiritual atmosphere surrounding the word, but that it is rather the use(s) of the word in the language. What he might better have said, I think, is that it is not the job of the philosopher to give us the meaning of philosophically difficult words, but rather to give us their uses. As Wisdom put it, "Don't ask for the meaning, ask for the use."¹⁷ And this is actually what Wittgenstein himself does in practice: he investigates the uses of words, and is not much concerned with their meanings. That is why I think his error in identifying meaning and use is not of much consequence: it does not seriously affect his valuable practice. It is interesting to note, in fact, that Wittgenstein himself occasionally divorces, at least by implication, the notions of meaning and use. After describing a simple language-game involving the word 'five,' he says:

But what is the meaning of the word "five"?—No such thing was in question here, only how the word "five" is used. [PI, sect. 1.]

In another passage, he virtually says what I have just suggested that he should have said—namely, that the philosopher ought to abandon his preoccupation with meanings and concentrate on the uses of the terms that puzzle him:

If we look at the example in §1, we may perhaps get an inkling how much this general notion of the meaning of a word surrounds the working of language with a haze which makes clear vision impossible. It disperses the fog to study the phenomena of language in primitive kinds of application in which one can command a clear view of the aim and functioning of the words. [PI, sect. 5.]

¹⁷ John Wisdom, "Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1934-1937," *Mind*, LXI, No. 242 (April 1952), 258.

It is Wittgenstein's claim that if we examine the various uses of the words which involve us in philosophical puzzlement—that is, if we examine the variety of language-games in which they play a part—we shall free ourselves at last from bewilderment. We shall no longer be tempted, as we were while under the influence of our craving for unity and of the pictures which are embedded in our language, to think that these words function in one way only—for example, as the name of some mysterious entity, act, process, or whatever. We shall no longer assimilate all words and sentences to a few fixed and familiar standards or paradigms, an assimilation which "had prevented us from seeing facts with unbiased eyes" (*BB*, p. 43). And we shall be free of the "bias, which forces us to think that the facts *must* conform to certain pictures embedded in our language" (*ibid.*). If we look at the language-games we play with the word 'time,' for example—making appointments, telling what time it is, measuring lengths of time,¹⁸ and so on—the temptation to think of time as an ethereal medium or stream in which events occur disappears, and so, therefore, do the puzzles about time which have plagued so many philosophers. This major claim of Wittgenstein is, of course, so far just a claim; it has not been justified. What is needed to justify it are separate detailed examinations of the language-games we play with the words which have proven to be philosophically troubling: 'time,' 'space,' 'meaning,' 'understanding,' 'intending,' 'know,' 'believe,' 'true,' 'beauty,' 'fact,' and the rest. Wittgenstein does this for many of these words in his later writings. And in his examinations of the uses of individual words Wittgenstein's genius shows clearly forth.

¹⁸ The phrase 'measuring lengths of time' is a choice example of an expression into which a misleading picture is built. And see the bewilderment into which the picture casts St. Augustine:

That I measure time, I know; and yet I measure not time to come, for it is not yet; nor present, because it is not protracted by any space; not past, because it now is not. What then do I measure? [*Op. cit.*, p. 264.]

Wittgenstein refers to this passage in *BB*, p. 26.

II Mind and Its Place in Language

One of the truths that were apparent to both the early and the later Wittgenstein is that words and sentences in themselves are dead—they are mere vibrations in the air or marks on paper, and as such have no meaning. In order for language to be the living thing we know it to be—the means whereby we communicate with one another, give advice, ask questions, and so on—something besides air vibrations or marks on paper is required. What seems to be required are various kinds of mental acts or processes. Consider the speaker: if he is actually to *assert* something, for example to say something definite about certain specific objects, he must not only utter the appropriate sounds—he must also mean something by them. If he utters the sentence 'The lion is in the corridor' he must mean by 'the lion' one particular beast, by 'the corridor' one particular place, and so on; otherwise, he will not have made the assertion, not have stated, that the lion is in the corridor, but only made a string of noises. If those same noises had been made by the wind or by a person talking in his sleep, they would not constitute an assertion; for *that*, we want to say, there must be some *thought* behind the words. Consider now the hearer: if the speaker's words are to mean anything to him, he cannot simply *hear* them and no more. Someone completely ignorant of the language can do that, can hear the sounds, but they say nothing