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# Chapter 1

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## The Augustinian conception of language (§§1–27(a))

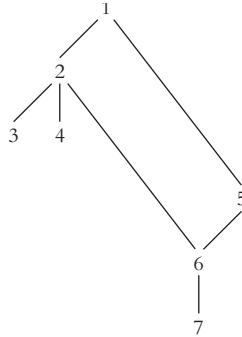
### INTRODUCTION

§§1–27(a) introduce some of the main themes of the book. The central preoccupation of PI is the nature of language and linguistic meaning, and associated philosophical perplexities. The book opens with a quotation from Augustine's *Confessions*, which W. saw as articulating a picture that is a source of important misconceptions concerning thought and language, words and sentences, meaning and use. The purpose of the first twenty-seven remarks is to sketch the ideas that stem from this picture of the essence of language, and to subject it to preliminary scrutiny and criticism.

The 'chapter' divides into three parts.

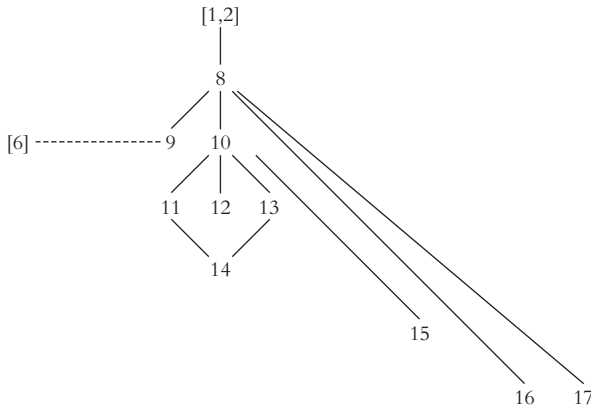
Part A runs from §1 to §7. It introduces Augustine's picture of language: words name objects, and sentences are combinations of words. In this apparently innocuous description one can find the roots of the *idea* (which we shall call 'the Augustinian conception of language') that every word has a meaning, and that the meaning of a word is the object correlated with the word, for which it stands. W. raises a variety of questions concerning: (i) word-meaning; (ii) the word/sentence distinction; (iii) diversity of types of word; (iv) different methods of explaining the meaning of a word (and their bearing on different 'parts of speech'); (v) the nature of understanding and the relation between the meaning of an expression and the criteria for understanding that expression. In each case the Augustinian conception is shown to breed confusion and error. In the course of the discussion various key notions occur, the significance of which emerges only later: the use and criteria of application of words, phrases and sentences, as well as their role and purpose. Key distinctions are briefly introduced: (i) the contrast between training and explanation; (ii) the distinction between ostensive teaching and ostensive definition (exemplifying the first contrast); (iii) the difference between a complete and an incomplete language or language-game. Finally, crucial methodological notions are introduced: the concept of a language-game (§7) and the language-game method of elucidation.

The structure of Part A:



Part B runs from §8 to §17. It opens with an extension of language-game (2) in preparation for examining the idea that the essential role of words is to signify objects. This expanded language-game contains different kinds of word or ‘parts of speech’ over and above the names of building stones in (2): namely, demonstratives, colour-names and numerals. According to the Augustinian conception, every word signifies something, and to know what it means is to know what it stands for. This idea forces the diversity of uses of words into a vacuous strait-jacket (language-game (8) illustrates this point). The discussion introduces the analogies between words and tools, and between words and levers. Finally, *W.* characterizes the logical status of the colour samples in language-game (8), recommending that they be counted as ‘instruments of language’.

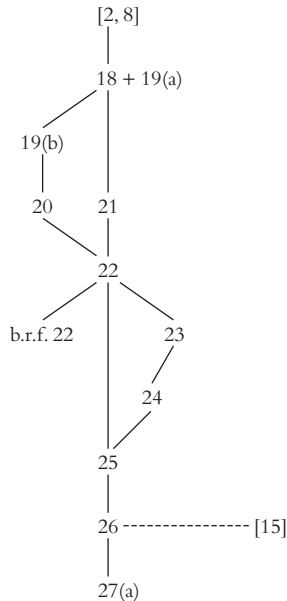
The structure of part B:



Part C runs from §18 to §27(a). It is parallel to Part B and explicitly linked with §§2 and 8. It explores the other main ingredient of Augustine’s picture: namely, sentences. *W.* makes a number of controversial claims: (i) that a language might consist only of commands or questions and answers; (ii) that such

a language would not be incomplete; (iii) that the distinction between assertions, questions, commands, etc. turns neither on the grammatical forms of sentences nor on any mental acts accompanying their utterance, but on their uses or applications; (iv) that Frege's conception of assertion and constituent assumption is mistaken; (v) that uttering sentences and responding to their utterance must be seen as part of a whole pattern of activity; and (vi) that what each of the words of a sentence signifies (if anything) does not fix the use of the whole sentence (as is obvious from considering one-word sentences, which may be used to report, order or query).

The structure of Part C:



§§26 and 27(a) link the preliminary investigation of the Augustinian conception with the more thorough discussion of naming and ostensive definition in §§27(b)–64 (Chapter 2).



*Sources*

The following table of correlations does not itemize individual paragraph correlations within remarks, but only the numbered remarks of PI. Some of the correlations, therefore, are correlations only of individual paragraphs within the numbered remark.

PI§	BT	MS 115 <sup>1</sup>	MS 142§/ TS 220§	TS 226 <sub>R</sub> §	Other
1	25	79f., 118	1–2	1f.	111, 15; 114 Um., 35–7, 179; 140, 40; 141, 1; 152, 38–40, 87; BrB 77
2	25	118	3	3f.	111, 16; 114 Um., 36, 179; 141, 1; 152, 40; BrB 77
3	26r	118	4	5f.	111, 17; 114 Um., 36f.; 141, 1
4	26r–27		5	7	111, 18; 114 Um., 37
5		80, 88, 119, 121	6	8	141, 1; 152, 41
6		118f.	7	9	141, 1; BrB 77
7		118, 126	8	10	141, 1f.; BrB 77
8		120f., 124	9	11	141, 1f.; BrB 79–84
9		121	10	12	141, 1; BrB 79f.
10			11	13	152, 43; BrB 82
11			11f.	14f.	
12		28	12	16	107, 232; 114 Um., 38
13			12	17	
14			12	18	
15			13	19	BIB 69
16		130f.	14	20	107, 226; 141, 3; BrB 84f.
17	29	128	15	21	140, 17; 141, 3; BrB 83f.
18	209		16	22	141, 2; BIB 19
19		88, 119f.	16f.	22f.	141, 2
20		119f.	18f.	23–5	BrB 78; 110, 188
21			20	26	
22	206–9	85–7	21–3	27–9	109, 199; 113, 50r; 116, 345
b.r.f. 22	244–6	58f.			113, 29r; Bi §432

PI§	BT	MS 115 <sup>1</sup>	MS 142§/ TS 220§	TS 226 <sub>R</sub> §	Other
23	208v	87f., 129	24	30	152, 47; BIB 67f.
24		89f.,	25	31	147, 45r–v
25	209	90	26	32	
26	209r–v	90	26	33	
27(a)	202r	90f.	26	34	

<sup>1</sup> MS 115 (Vol. XI), pp. 118–292, dated end of August 1936, is Wittgenstein’s translation and reworking of BrB, which has been published in German as *Eine Philosophische Betrachtung*. Up to p. 117, MS 115 is a continuation of the *Umarbeitung* of BT that began in MS 114 (Vol. X), p. 31v.

## I. The Augustinian conception of language

1. Augustine’s picture
2. The Augustinian family
  - (a) word-meaning
  - (b) correlating words with meanings
  - (c) ostensive explanation
  - (d) metapsychological corollaries
  - (e) sentence-meaning
3. Moving off in new directions
4. Frege
5. Russell
6. The *Tractatus*

## EXEGESIS §§1–27(a)

### SECTION 1

1 The book opens with a quotation from St Augustine, from which W. extracts a ‘particular picture of the essence of human language’. This picture is held to inform philosophical thought. It is the seedbed of the *Augustinian conception* (or *idea*) of the essence of language (see ‘The Augustinian conception of language’, sect. 1). One task of the *Investigations* is to show how it leads to error.

Why did W. choose to open his book with this quotation? The reasons he gave (see 2 below) are that: (a) this pre-theoretical picture is, for most of mankind, the natural way to think about the nature of language; (b) it exhibits the roots from which the philosophical concept and conception of the meaning of a word grow; and (c) it is the source of his own misconceptions about the meaning of words in the *Tractatus*, misconceptions that he took over from Frege and Russell.

The context of the passage in the *Confessions* is as follows:

Little by little I began to realize where I was and to want to make my wishes known to others, who might satisfy them. But this I could not do, because my wishes were inside me, while other people were outside, and they had no faculty which could penetrate my mind. So I would toss my arms and legs about and make noises, hoping that such few signs as I could make would show my meaning, though they were quite unlike what they were meant to mime. And if my wishes were not carried out, either because they had not been understood or because what I wanted would have harmed me, I would get cross with my elders . . . simply because they did not attend to my wishes; and I would take my revenge by bursting into tears. By watching babies I have learnt that this is how they behave, and they, quite unconsciously, have done more than those who brought me up and knew all about it to convince me that I behaved in just the same way myself.<sup>1</sup>

Augustine’s remarks that immediately precede the passage are:

. . . later on I realized how I had learnt to speak. It was not my elders who showed me the words by some set system of instruction, in the way they taught me to read not long afterwards; but, instead, I taught myself by using the intelligence which you, my God, gave to me. For when I tried to express my meaning by crying out and making various sounds and movements, so that my wishes should be obeyed, I found that I could not convey all that I meant or make myself understood by everyone whom I wished to understand me.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk I, §6, tr. R. S. Pine-Coffin (Penguin, London, 1961), pp. 25f.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* I, §8.

Augustine's reflections, of course, are not *recollections* of childhood, but his inferences from his observations of children. These remarks, which W. does not quote, contain the following central points: (i) an 'inner' and 'outer' picture of the mind; (ii) a presumption of pre-linguistic self-consciousness, and a *fortiori* a presumption of the intelligibility of self-knowledge of mental states (sensations, wishes, thoughts); (iii) a conception of language according to which it is necessary only for communication, but not for thinking; (iv) a conception of meaning something that assumes meaning (*meinen*) to be antecedent to mastery of a public language. These, though not mentioned here by W., are later assailed. Repudiation of (i) and (ii) are central in W.'s philosophy of mind (see Volume 3, *passim*). That he associated Augustine with these conceptions is evident in PI §32(b), as well as by a passing jotting in MS 149, 7: 'Augustin [*sic*], about expressing [t]he wishes within him', which is followed by a discussion of whether a child has a private language before it learns our public one. Repudiation of (iii) is a recurrent theme of his philosophy of language. Rejection of (iv) is a *leitmotiv* (§§19, 20, 22, 33, 35, p. 18n., §§81, 186–8, 358, 504–13, 592) that culminates in the last 32 remarks of the book (see Volume 4, 'The mythology of meaning something'). Here, however, he is concerned only with the points explicit in the quotation in §1(a), from which he selects two: (v) words name objects; (vi) sentences are combinations of names.

Augustine makes three further points with which W. must agree. First, he stresses gestures ('ihren Gebärden' is W.'s translation, although the Latin has 'motu corporis', i.e. bodily movements) as 'the natural language of all people', and as a pre-condition of language and language-acquisition, a point W. himself emphasizes (PI §§185, 206–7, etc.). Secondly, he insists that the child's learning required hearing words 'uttered in their assigned places in various sentences', and hence that meaning and understanding generally presuppose mastery of combinatorial possibilities of expressions. Thirdly, he holds that language, although it is learnt in a certain sense, cannot be taught.<sup>3</sup> W. similarly noted that 'Every way of making a language intelligible already presupposes a language. And the use of a language, in a certain sense, cannot be taught' (MS 108 (Vol. IV), 103 = PR 54;<sup>4</sup> cf. PG 40). But W., unlike Augustine, held that this initial language-learning was training.

W. does not take Augustine to be expounding a 'theory', or a philosophical account, of meaning. What interests W. is what he takes to be Augustine's pre-philosophical *picture* (*Bild*) of the working of language. For, as he remarked (MS 111 (Vol. VII), 15), this conception (*Auffassung*) is significant

<sup>3</sup> See the above quotation from *Confessions* I, §8.

<sup>4</sup> This remark is part of W.'s comment on what was right and what was wrong about TLP 3.263. If one explains the meaning of 'A' by saying 'This is A', this can be understood as a statement, in which case it presupposes knowledge of the meaning of 'A'. Or it can be understood as a definition, in which case it presupposes a grasp of the grammatical category of 'A'. In this sense, every way of making language intelligible already presupposes a language. What this amounts to, W. concludes, is that one cannot exit language with language.

for us precisely because it belongs to a naturally clear-thinking person, temporarily far removed from us, who does not belong to our cultural milieu.<sup>5</sup> Whether Augustine's account is as unreflective and pre-theoretical as W. evidently assumes is debatable (for Augustine had various Platonist and theological axes to grind<sup>6</sup>), but of little importance as far as the purpose of the quotation here is concerned.

The picture of the essence of language, extracted in (b) *from the quotation*, involves the following main contentions: (i) words name objects; (ii) sentences are combinations of (such) names. This simple pair of apparent truisms is at the root of a more sophisticated idea or conception (*the Augustinian conception*) according to which, in addition, (iii) every word has a meaning; (iv) a word is correlated with its meaning; (v) the meaning of a word is the object for which it stands. These last three contentions provide the main themes of §§1–59. §§1–27(a) explore (iii); §§27(b)–38 examine the primary candidate for the correlating mechanism of (iv); §§38–59 examine the ramifications of (v). Although the Augustinian conception thereafter sinks from sight, it continues to constitute, as it were, a muted *leitmotiv* throughout the book (and RFM I — originally conceived as a sequel to TS 220). For this conception distorts reflections not only in philosophy of language, but also in philosophy of mathematics and of psychology (see Volume 2, 'Two fruits upon one tree').

In (c), W. notes that Augustine's description fails to distinguish different parts of speech. Its primary focus is upon personal names and common nouns ('table', 'chair', 'loaf' or 'bread'). Names of actions and properties, and other types of words, are neglected. Elsewhere (MS 111 (Vol. VII), 16; AWL 46; MS 141, 1; BrB 77), W. lists other types of words — demonstratives ('here', 'there'), token reflexives ('now', 'today'), connectives and quantifiers ('but', 'not', 'or', 'all'), and modal adverbs ('perhaps') — that must not be assimilated to the category of names. They cannot correctly be deemed to be names at all.

(d) illustrates differences between nominals by highlighting different ways in which one might operate with three kinds of word, each of which *can* be called 'a name': a common noun, a colour-adjective and a number-word. 'Five', 'red' and 'apple' are words each one of which belongs to a type the use of which is fundamentally different from that of the others. To say that 'apple' is the name of a fruit, 'red' the name of a colour, and 'five' the name of a number is not incorrect (cf. PI §§28, 38(b)) — 'we call very different things "names"; the word "name" is used to characterize many different kinds of use

<sup>5</sup> Malcolm reports that W. told him that he had decided to begin the book with the quotation from Augustine, not because he could not find the conception there expressed as well stated by other philosophers, but because the conception *must* be important if so great a mind held it (N. Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, 2nd edn. (Oxford University Press, London, 1984), pp. 59f.).

<sup>6</sup> See M. Burnyeat, 'Wittgenstein and Augustine *De Magistro*', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, supp. vol. 61 (1987), pp. 1–24.



of a word' — but it masks important logico-grammatical differences beneath superficial similarities. So even when we restrict attention to expressions that can be called 'names', and disregard the multitude of expressions in a language that cannot be so called, we have still not penetrated to the 'essence of language' by claiming that individual words of a language name objects, since the differences between these kinds of name are great, and they cannot all be said to stand for an object.<sup>7</sup> These differences are made salient by the distinct operations carried out in each case, and the ordering of the operations. First, objects of a given type (apples) are identified; subsequently, a sensible characteristic (red) is matched with a sample; finally, a 1:1 correlation of objects and number-words is carried out. It would be senseless to recite the series of number-words before identifying a range of objects. Now it is evident that calling all these words 'names', and saying that naming is the essence of language, tells us nothing about the fundamentally different *uses* of these distinct parts of speech (sortal noun, colour-adjective and number-word).

Each of the three words in 'five red apples' has a different use, and this can be described without answering questions such as 'Of what is "five" the name?', 'What does "five" stand for?', or 'What is the meaning of the word "five"?' — where 'meaning' is conceived to be a correlative entity. There is no need to answer what, on the Augustinian conception of language, is the fundamental question (cf. PLP 156–8).

Note that it is unimportant that greengrocers do not actually go through this rigmarole, red items being identified without the aid of a sample, and small numbers such as '5' being applied visually. What matters is that the different operations illuminate the categorial differences between sortal nouns, colour-predicates and number-words respectively. W.'s description deliberately highlights the greengrocer's operations in order to drive home the point that the different parts of speech fulfil different functions, and are integrated in different ways into human action. It would make no difference to the tale (but only complicate it) if the order were for 25 reels of ultramarine cotton thread or 17 swatches of eau-de-nil silk (here the colour identification would typically require a colour chart, and the number requires counting).

How the shopkeeper knows what operation to carry out in each case is brushed aside as irrelevant. W.'s typical grounds for this move are twofold. First, that genesis of knowledge, as of any ability, is a matter of empirical fact. Being contingent, it stands in no logical or normative relation to exercise of the ability or manifestation of the knowledge. Second, justifications come to an end somewhere: *this* is what is called 'red', *the number of these* is called 'five'.

<sup>7</sup> Regarding the term 'object', W. held it incorrect to characterize colours (MS 111 (Vol. VII), 113) and numbers (MS 117 (Vol. XIII), 197) as objects, and thought that Frege's willingness to call the simultaneous occurrence of an eclipse of the moon and a court case 'an object' was misleading (MS 107 (Vol. III), 14).

- 1.1 (i) The German translation of the Latin quotation appears to be W.'s own.<sup>8</sup> It is a very free translation, with an informality that W. needed in order to convey the idea that Augustine's ruminations are autobiographical reflections rather than philosophical speculations. It is important to be aware of the fact that W. is not *criticising* Augustine for mistakes. Had he wished to do that — which he did not — he could and should have looked elsewhere for Augustine's philosophy of language, for example in *De Magistro*, where a quite different picture is to be found. What W. used the quotation for was to impress upon the reader just how natural it is to think of language acquisition as a matter of learning names and their sentential combination, and then using those names to express one's wishes. If a mind as great as Augustine's could naturally entertain such ideas, then the misconceptions which they readily imply when elaborated in what we are calling the Augustinian conception of language are surely of great importance.
- (ii) 'Wortarten': W. preferred 'parts of speech' (TS 226<sub>R</sub> §1; PG 56n.). See Exg. §17.
- (iii) 'No such thing was in question here': W. corrected this to read 'There was no question of such an entity "meaning" here' (TS 226<sub>R</sub> §2). This makes it clear *what* concept of meaning is under attack.

- 2 (i) W. considered various ways of opening his second book. On 19 June 1931, when writing his notes on Frazer's *Golden Bough*, he contemplated beginning his new book with remarks about metaphysics as a kind of magic. The depth of magic would have to be preserved. 'Indeed, here the elimination of magic has itself the character of magic.' Importantly, he then alludes to the *Tractatus*: 'For, back then, when I began talking about the "world" (and not about this tree or table), what else did I want but to bind something higher in a spell' (MS 110 (Vol. VI), 177f.; PO 116f.).

He rapidly abandoned this idea in favour of something much closer to talking about 'this tree or table'. On 30 June, he wrote that he should begin his book with an analysis of an ordinary sentence such as 'A lamp is standing on my table', since everything should be derivable from this. This idea, he adds, expresses something he has long felt: namely, that he should start his book with a description of a situation from which the material for all that follows can be obtained (MS 110, 243).

He did not do so, however, in *The Big Typescript* and its redraftings. It opens with a discussion of understanding, which emphasizes that meaning something (*meinen*) drops out of consideration, and that understanding is the correlate of explanation. The concept of meaning (*Bedeutung*) is only broached in Chapter 2, the first section heading of which is 'The concept of meaning stems from a primitive philosophical conception of language [var.: 'a primitive philosophy of language']', alluding to the philosophical conception of the meaning

<sup>8</sup> E. von Savigny has checked all the German translations between 1840 and 1940 (see his *Wittgensteins 'Philosophische Untersuchungen': ein Kommentar für Leser*, 2nd edn, vol. 1 (Klostermann, Frankfurt, 1994), p. 36.

of a word as a correlative entity. The section opens with a discussion of Augustine's description of language-learning (BT 25). This ordering is maintained in the *Umarbeitung* (MS 114 Um.) and the *Grosses Format* (MS 140). It is only with the Brown Book and its reworking (EPB) that the discussion of Augustine's picture of language shifts to the beginning of W.'s projected book. It remains in this position in MS 142 and all subsequent drafts.

(ii) Why did W. choose this passage from Augustine as the opening of his book? He made various revealing remarks about it.

(a) For most of mankind the conception articulated by Augustine is the most natural way to think about the nature of language (MS 141, 1). Presumably this is because it reflects a prominent aspect of teaching children to speak, and incorporates the most common auxiliary device: namely, pointing at something and saying 'That is . . .'.

(b) In the rough notes of redrafts in MS 152, 40, W. remarks that Augustine's words are a picture of the approach in which the 'meaning of words' is seen as the foundation of language. This concept (or conception) of the 'meaning of a word', as we attempt to use it in philosophy, or — this philosophical concept(ion) of the meaning of words — is seen as the foundation of language. On p. 87 W. has 'the philosophical idea of the meanings of words'.

(c) Why that is important is stated in MS 111 (Vol. VII), 18: Augustine's description of learning a language can show us from what primitive picture or 'world-picture' (*Weltbild*) this conception of language derives.

(d) This primitive picture informed W.'s own conception of language in the *Tractatus* and that of his predecessors (Frege and Russell). MS 114 (Vol. X) Um., 35, immediately prior to the examination of Augustine, has: 'The philosophical concept [or conception] of meaning that I took over in my philosophical discussions derives from a primitive philosophy of language' (emphasis added).<sup>9</sup> 'Bedeutung', W. notes, comes from 'deuten'. Augustine, when he talks of language-learning, talks only of how we assign names to things, or understand the names of things. Naming appears here to be the foundation and essence of language.

In BT 27 (derived from MS 111, 19, and repeated in MS 114 Um., 38), immediately following the discussion of Augustine, W. writes: 'Here also belongs the following', and interpolates a discussion of the roots of his own misleading expression 'a fact is a complex of objects' [more accurately, 'a combination of objects'] — see Exg. §4.

AWL 43 notes that the word 'meaning' plays a great role in philosophy, as is evident in discussing the nature of mathematics. So, Frege ridiculed people for not seeing that what is important is the *meaning* of numerals and number-words, i.e. something they stand for and that corresponds to them, as Smith corresponds to the name 'Smith'. The question 'What is the number 1?' is

<sup>9</sup> Apropos the error of identifying the meaning (*Bedeutung*) of a name with its bearer, Waismann remarks (PLP 313) that 'Wittgenstein, in the *Tractatus*, took over this opinion of Frege's'. It is unlikely that he would have written this unless he heard it from Wittgenstein.

misleading. It is correct to say that there is no object corresponding to ‘1’ as Smith corresponds to his name; but then we look for an object in *another* sense. So, when [like Frege] we confront the question ‘What is a number?’, we are prone to think of an aethereal object. We should not try to give a definition, and should avoid such talk of meanings. Rather, we should investigate the *uses* of words. (It is striking that in the corresponding discussion in BB 4, W.’s criticism of Frege focuses on his conception of sense, as giving life to a sign (rather than of meaning, as an entity corresponding to the numeral).) In similar vein, W., in a dictation to Waismann (VoW (F 94)), remarked:

We shall see that Frege’s definition of number does not at all capture the concept of a number. But now we grasp what dragged him into his mistaken line of enquiry. The question ‘What is a number if it is not a sign?’ arises from a mistaken grammatical background; for to this ‘What?’ we imagine a ‘This’, or we expect some ‘This’ in answer. Even the tone of the question recalls the tone of Augustine’s question ‘What is time?’ A substantive misleads us into looking for a substance.

The Russellian association with the Augustinian conception is evident in PI §46 (cf. BrB 81).

MS 156b, 33v–34r, notes that our philosophers say that things are classes of sense-perceptions, as if one could define ‘table’ as a class of sense-impressions. They imagine that if there is a connection with sense-impressions, it can be only that. For they do not think of the *use* of words in their countless forms, but only of a word as the name of a thing.

2.1 (i) ‘picture’: elsewhere ‘idea’ (*Idee* (MS 140, 40)), conception (*Auffassung* (MS 111 (Vol. VII), 15f.; MS 141, 1)) or ‘approach // way of considering things’ (*Betrachtungsweise* (BT 25)). MS 152, 38, says that Augustine’s words are a picture of an approach (*Bild der Betrachtungsweise*) that conceives of the meaning of words as the foundation of language.

(ii) ‘picture of the essence of language’: MS 111 (Vol. VII), 15f., states that Augustine’s conception makes it appear as if naming is the foundation and essence of language (‘Hier scheint also das Benennen Fundament und Um-und-Auf der Sprache zu sein’). This, W. continues, is equivalent to the conception according to which the form of explanation ‘This is’ is conceived to be fundamental.

BT 25 notes that when Augustine discusses language-learning, he speaks exclusively of how we *assign names to things* or *understand names*. Here naming appears to be the foundation and essence of language.

(iii) ‘primarily of nouns’: MS 111, 16, links this to Plato, who, W. notes, said that sentences consist of nouns and verbs (cf. *Sophist* 261–2).

(iv) ‘operates with words’: BB 16 uses the same green grocery example in order to sidestep the unhelpful question ‘What are signs?’ (Presumably to avoid the answers: ‘They are marks or sounds with meanings’ or, even worse, ‘that have meanings associated with them’ or ‘attached to them’.) Instead W. examines this simple case of ‘operating with words’.

BrB 79 elaborates the introduction of numerals into this game. It stresses the different *training* and *method of application* of each type of word. Mastering the use of numerals from 1 to 10, unlike learning the use of the words ‘brick’, ‘cube’, ‘slab’, etc., requires learning an ordered series by heart. As with other words, teaching is demonstrative; but the same numeral, e.g. ‘3’, may be taught by pointing to slabs, bricks or columns. On the other hand, different numerals will be taught by pointing to *different groupings* of stones of the *same shape*. The demonstrative gesture and uttering of the word are the same in all cases. But the way the gesture is used differs, and the difference is not captured by saying ‘In the one case one points at a shape, in the other at a number’.

## SECTION 2

1 The philosophical conception of the meaning of a word as an entity correlated with it is rooted in a primitive (i.e. crude) idea, or picture (TS 226<sub>R</sub>), of the functioning of language: namely, that words are names, and sentences combinations of names. A primitive idea, in this sense, is one that oversimplifies the phenomena. But, ‘one can also say that it is the idea of a language more primitive than ours’. To shake the grip of the picture, and to demolish the philosophical misconception of meaning, W. describes such a language more primitive (i.e. simpler) than ours. Its further exploration will show that this concept of meaning (i.e. the concept rooted in Augustine’s picture) is worthless.

(b) describes a language (subsequently referred to as a ‘language-game’) for which Augustine’s *description* (as W. interprets it) of the way he learnt to speak Latin (viz. ‘I gradually learnt to understand what objects [the words] signified, and . . . I used [the words] to express my own desires’) is apt. The words are indeed all names. The building materials severally correspond to the names. To understand a name is to know what object corresponds to it. The speaker uses one of the four expressions to express his desire for one of the materials. The assistant responds with understanding (cf. PI §6(c)) in handing the speaker the right object. Note that it is *not* contended that *the Augustinian conception* of the nature of language (i.e. the conception rooted in Augustine’s picture) is right for this proto-language (see 1.1(i) below).

The description of the language specifies a context (building activities), speakers (builder and assistant), a vocabulary (‘block’, ‘pillar’, ‘slab’, ‘beam’), criteria of understanding (bringing the requested stones in the appropriate order), and a use of the vocabulary (the words are called out when the corresponding stones are wanted). However, the ‘language’ (i) has no syntax; (ii) contains no rules for sentence-formation, *a fortiori* none for formation of complex sentences (and so no logical connectives); (iii) is incapable of expressing generality; (iv) has only one discourse function, namely: ordering. But W. tells us to conceive of it as a *complete* primitive (i.e. proto-) language.

Is *W.* right to call this ‘a language’? One might think that syntax is essential to language, since it is a prerequisite for the creative powers of language that distinguish arbitrary signs from symbols in a language. Equally, truth and falsehood are often supposed to be essential to anything that can be deemed a language, but are absent here. Philosophers frequently assume that assertion is the most fundamental speech-function, and that non-assertoric speech-functions must be explained in terms of the assertoric. But this ‘language’ contains no possibility of assertion. It is held that the distinction between sense and nonsense is essential to language, but it has no grip here. Finally, one might suppose that it is essential to language that it express thought.

A general reply to these qualms is given in §494. It may be that we would be inclined to withhold the term ‘language’ from this activity. But it is a rudimentary system of communication and is, in important ways, analogous to language. It is a primitive *language-game* (cf. §37). Qua object of comparison it highlights features of language to which *W.* wanted to draw attention. It is tailored to Augustine’s description, so obviously contains no more than is warranted thereby. It is a language-game only of giving orders and obeying them (the first language-game on the list in PI §23) — but that does not show it to be incomplete (PI §18). It must be remembered that this scenario is an expository device constructed for a specific purpose. It is not a piece of arm-chair anthropology.

Other scattered remarks deal with the more specific objections. Whether this language-game lacks sentences, whether ‘Slab’ is a word or a sentence, is raised in PI §§19f. (cf. §49). Absence of syntax, logical connectives and quantifiers no more disqualifies it from counting as a ‘primitive language’ than does the fact that it consists only of orders (PI §§18ff.). In so far as the sense/nonsense distinction depends on transgressing combinatorial rules, it obviously has no place here. But another kind of nonsense *can* be found even here: e.g. calling out the names of building materials when there are none present at all. Z §§98f., MS 132, 204, MS 136, 53a–b, discuss a range of issues. Would one call the sounds produced by the builder ‘a language’ under *all* circumstances? Certainly not. But what makes the context appropriate for calling it a language is *not* that the sounds have a certain mental accompaniment. One might say that language-game (2) describes a *degenerate* language (i.e. a limiting case of a language). Is *W.* just tacitly assuming that these people *think*, that they are like us in this respect, that they do not play the language-game mechanically? If they were just making noises mechanically, *W.* concedes, he would *not* call it the use of a rudimentary language. (So he is *not* viewing this language-game as *merely* causally interactive behaviour, akin to primitive animal cries and causally determined responses (cf. PI §493).) It is true that the life of these men must be like ours in many respects, *W.* continues, and that he had said nothing about this similarity. But the important thing is that their language, and their thinking too, may be rudimentary, that there is such a thing as ‘primitive thinking’, which is to be described via primitive

behaviour. RFM 343 discusses the notion of *explaining* language-game (2), and RFM 433 examines the question of whether it incorporates *concepts*. C §§396, 564–6, discuss the applicability of the concept of knowledge to the users of such a proto-language.

1.1 (i) ‘the idea of a language more primitive than ours’: But the referential conception of meaning is incorrect even for this primitive language. If a pillar breaks, the meaning of a word has not broken, and if all pillars are destroyed, the word ‘pillar’ does not lack meaning (it can be used when new ones are made). Similarly, the conception of the essence of language is mistaken here too. The words are indeed names, but the essential *use* of the names is *to order*.

(ii) ‘a complete primitive language’: not, of course, one that cannot be extended (cf. BrB 77). No language is, as it were, incomplete *from within* — it is what it is. If it provides no means for a certain type of discourse, then so be it. Our language was not incomplete before the introduction of the terminology and notation of chemistry. The fact that an extension of a system of communication is conceivable does not prove that in its unextended form it contains gaps (see also Exg. §18).

2 (i) In all the early occurrences of this example, it is not presented as an imaginary language-game. MS 111 (Vol. VII), 16, observes: ‘this game does really occur in reality. Suppose I wanted to build a house from building materials that another would hand to me . . .’. Here the example is not meant to describe an imaginary speech community or primitive language-game, but merely to isolate a fragment of our own activities. This is maintained in BT and MS 114 (Vol. IX) Um., 36, which notes that the game Augustine describes is ‘part of language’. It is only in BrB 77 that W. shifts towards an imaginary language-game in an imaginary context.

(ii) Z §§98ff. discusses thinking in connection with §2. The builders may do their job thoughtfully or thoughtlessly, for thinking is not an inner quasi-verbal accompaniment of external activity.

2.1 (i) ‘That philosophical notion of meaning’: BT §7, which contains this, has as the section heading ‘The notion of meaning [i.e. as designation and object] stems from a primitive philosophy of language’. MS 152, 40, has ‘the notion of the “meaning of words” as we attempt to employ it in philosophy’, and also ‘the philosophical notion of the meaning of words — as the foundation of all languages’.

(ii) ‘is at home’: AWL 46 observes that we can criticize Augustine’s view of the way he learnt Latin (namely, by learning the names of things) in either of two ways: (a) that it is wrong, or (b) that it describes something simpler. PI §5 explains why W. focuses upon the simpler phenomena.

(iii) ‘more primitive than ours’: MS 111, 16 (and BT) say that Augustine describes the game as being simpler than it is. MS 114 (Vol. IX) Um., 36, repeats this and adds, ‘But the game that Augustine describes is at any rate part

of language'. MS 141, 1, says that one could call Augustine's description incomplete or gappy — akin to describing a forest of deciduous trees, conifers, bushes and ferns as consisting of pines. But it is important that we can think of a language, a system of communication, for which his description *is* appropriate.

(iv) 'a complete primitive language': AWL 46 asserts: 'With language-games such as this there is no standard of completeness, but we may as well say it is complete since we cannot say merely by looking at it that something is lacking. What we are doing is like taking chess and making a simpler game involving simpler operations and a smaller number of pawns.'

### SECTION 3

1.1 'Augustine, we might say, does describe a system of communication': what description is alluded to, of learning a language or of the essence of language? The former (see 2.1 below).

2.1 (i) MS 111 (Vol. VII), 18 (cf. MS 114 Um., 37) follows this with a draft of PI §2(a), and then: '(Someone who describes chess as simpler than it is (with simpler rules) nevertheless describes a game, but a different one.) I originally wanted to say: the way Augustine describes learning a language can show us whence this conception derives. (From which primitive picture, world picture.)' The 'conception' in question is the one spelled out on the previous page, i.e. of language as having its foundations and essence in naming, and of the form of explanation 'This is . . .' as fundamental.

(ii) 'Augustine . . . does describe a system of communication . . .': MS 111, 17, has 'describe a calculus, only not everything we call language is this calculus'. This is later dropped, as the calculus model is rejected.

### SECTION 4

1 The analogy parodies Augustine's picture. The misinterpretation of the script fails to distinguish the radically different *functions* of letters (sounds, emphasis, punctuation). So Augustine's picture assimilates the functions of, e.g., 'red', 'run', 'perhaps', 'three', 'here', to that of words like 'cat', 'table', 'tree'.

2 BT 27 (from MS 111 (Vol. VII), 19) interpolates after this the following (paraphrase): Here also belongs: one can speak of combinations of colours and shapes (e.g. of red and blue with square and circular). Here we have the root of my misleading expression (MS 114 Um., 37, has 'the bad expression ('schlechten Ausdruck')): a fact is a complex of objects. One compares a man's being ill with a combination of two things, a man and an illness. We mustn't forget that it is only a simile. (MS 111, 19, has 'we should beware of this



simile’, and adds ‘Philosophy is rejecting false arguments’). A paragraph later, W. observes that what we call ‘meaning’ must be connected with primitive gesture-language (ostensive language). If I am arranging guests around a dinner table according to a plan, then it makes sense to point at a person when reading out a name. But if I am comparing a description of a picture with the picture (e.g. of two people kissing), I wouldn’t know what to point at as the correlate of kissing. Or, if one person is taller than another, what to point at for ‘taller’. At any rate, I cannot point at anything that corresponds to the word in the sense in which I can point at person A in the picture. Of course, there is such a thing as an act of ‘directing one’s attention to the height of a person’ or to his actions, and in this sense one can also collate the kissing and the relation of size. This shows how the general notion of meaning arises. Something analogous to confusing colour with pigment is going on here.<sup>10</sup> And the use of ‘collate’ is as fluctuating as that of ‘meaning’. Words obviously have altogether different functions in a sentence, and these functions are manifest in the rules for the use of the words.

This discussion too makes it clear that W. was thinking of the errors of the *Tractatus* in connection with Augustine’s picture.

## SECTION 5

- 1.1 (i) ‘the general concept’: i.e. the philosophers’ concept of the meaning of a word as an object correlated with it.
  - (ii) ‘can clearly survey the purpose and functioning of the words’: in the primitive shopping case the different roles of the different kinds of words is evident.
  - (iii) ‘phenomena of language in primitive kinds of application’: see ‘Explanation’, sect. 1, and ‘The language-game method’, sect. 3.
- 2 MS 115 (Vol. XI), 80, has an early version beginning: ‘The word “meaning”, when it is systematically applied, has a dangerous after-taste of the occult. That is why it is good to study the phenomena of language in primitive forms of application of language. In the forms and applications of language as it is used by a child when he starts to talk.’
- 2.1 ‘It disperses the fog’: BB 17 advocates the study of the language-games of children who are beginning to talk, since it disperses the mental mist that seems to enshroud our ordinary use of language. We see activities and reactions that are clear-cut and transparent. These simple forms of language are not sharply separated from our more complicated ones, and we can build up the more complicated ones by gradually adding new forms. This claim is withdrawn in MS 115, 81, which insists rather that we should just let the language-games

<sup>10</sup> An allusion to Frege, BLA ii §150.

stand as they are, and have a clarifying effect on our problems (cf. PI §130 and Exg.).

## II. Explanation

1. Training, teaching and explaining
2. Explanation and meaning
3. Explanation and grammar
4. Explanation and understanding

## SECTION 6

1 §6(a) is connected with the last sentence of §2. Two points are stressed: (i) that the language of §2 can be conceived to be the whole language of a group; (ii) that the use of the four words is integrated into everyday actions and reactions.

§6(b) introduces the primitive correlate of ostensive explanation or definition — ‘ostensive teaching of words’ (‘demonstrative teaching’ (BrB 77)). W. applies the distinction between training and explaining. Ostensive teaching is part of the training in the use of words, but does not amount to an explanation, since the child cannot yet ask for the name.

Ostensive teaching is an important part of training — with *human beings*. It could be imagined otherwise. First, were we born with the ability to speak (as opposed to the ability to learn to speak), ostensive teaching of language would not exist (cf. BB 12, 97; PI §495(b)). But ostensive *definition*, as an explanation of the meaning of expressions, would still obtain in so far as giving an appropriate definition would constitute a criterion of understanding, and agreement in definitions (cf. PI §242) could still be established by ostensively explaining what one meant by a word ‘W’. Secondly, ostensive teaching involves pointing at objects, thereby directing the child’s attention. It is part of our nature to look in the direction of the gesture, and not (like cats) at the gesturing limb (PG 94; PI §185). Were this not so, the instruction would be different. We might go up to the object and tap it, or smell it, etc.; or we might use illustrated tables (cf. PLP 107, in a section entitled ‘Must there be ostensive definition in every language?’). Samples can be introduced other than by pointing, and ostensive definition (as W. terms it) of proper names can be replaced by other kinds of explanation (cf. ‘Ostensive definition and its ramifications’, sect. 2).

Ostensive teaching establishes an association between word and object. But what is the nature of the association? One conception, widespread among philosophers and psychologists, is that hearing the word will, by associative habit, call up a picture of the object in the mind of the hearer. So the training is conceived of as designed to inculcate such an associative habit.

It could be that such associative habits are generated. It could even be that the production of such associations is part of the purpose of an utterance, in

which case uttering words *would be* like striking a note on the keyboard of the imagination. But it is not the purpose in the language of §2, which is rather to produce a behavioural response: namely, to bring a slab or a pillar to the builder, or, if one becomes a builder, to learn to utter these words when one wishes one's assistant to bring the correlated object. Bringing a slab, using 'Slab!' in order to get another to bring a slab (as well as naming a slab, cf. §7 below) are the *criteria* for understanding the expression. (So does 'Slab' here mean the same as 'slab' in our language? — see §20.)

The mechanical analogy of §6(d) emphasizes the fact that ostensive teaching *alone* does not bring about understanding. Only in the context of a particular training and circumstances will it be efficacious. There is a parallel to this for ostensive definition and explanation (and the lever analogy is invoked to illuminate a grammatical, not a causal point (cf. §12; PB 59)).

2.1 (i) 'Uttering a word is like striking a note on the keyboard of the imagination': PG 152ff. (MS 114 (Vol. X) Um., 219) elaborates this metaphor. In NB and TLP language was indeed conceived to mediate between thought and the reality which it is about, and communication was pictured as playing on the keyboard of the mind to produce the appropriate 'psychical constituents' of the language of thought.

(ii) 'It may . . . be discovered': It is an empirical question whether the calling up of mental images is involved in the use of language; also whether mental images facilitate the learning of a language or increase the accuracy with which it is applied. The conclusions of such inquiries would be 'hypotheses' about the psychical mechanism underlying the use of language (BB 12).

(iii) 'given the whole mechanism': PB 59 notes that a lever is a lever only in use, i.e. when connected to the mechanism. This is a gloss on Frege's dictum 'A word has a meaning only in the context of a sentence'.

3 It is striking that Coleridge used a similar keyboard image in explaining what poets mean by 'the soul'. The soul, he suggested, is conceived as a 'being inhabiting our body and playing on it like a musician enclosed in an organ whose keys were placed inwards.' *Letters*, i, 278.

### III. The language-game method

1. The emergence of the game analogy
2. An intermediate phase: comparisons with invented calculi
3. The emergence of the language-game method
4. Invented language-games
5. Natural language-games

## SECTION 7

1 §7(b) introduces the notion of a language-game. The following points are stressed: ‘language-game’ refers to the complex consisting of activity and language-use. The training activity and instruction antecedent to the language-game of §2 is itself a language-game. The use of language in §2 can be considered a form of initial language-learning.

Exploiting the classification of the essay ‘The language-game method’ we can anatomize the language-game of §2. (i) Ordering (in the building activity) and naming or repeating (in the learning activity) are distinguishable. So ‘slab’ has a use as a name in the naming activity and as an order in the building activity. (ii) The context of the game: (a) the participants are builder and assistant, adult and learner; (b) the essential activities are building activities; (c) the essential objects are the building materials; (d) the goal is making buildings (not further specified). (iii) The game is to be considered complete. (iv) The learning and training are described. (v) Other than in teaching, the use of the elementary expressions of §2 is exclusively imperatival.

1.1 (i) ‘the practice of the use of language’/‘the following process’: the contrast is between the use of language in the actual language-game and its similar use in training, where no ‘moves in the language-game’ (other than in the language-game of teaching itself) are effected.

(ii) ‘beides sprachähnliche Vorgänge’: W. altered this to ‘both of these exercises already [being] primitive uses of language’ (TS 226<sub>R</sub> §10).

(iii) ‘Spiele’: ‘games’ in English is more restricted, see Exg. §66.

(iv) ‘games like ring-a-ring o’ roses’: W. preferred ‘nursery rhymes’ (TS 226<sub>R</sub> §10).

## SECTION 8

1 The expansion of the language-game of §2 diversifies the parts of speech of the language by adding (i) primitive numerals, (ii) demonstratives, (iii) colour samples. Consequently, a primitive syntax can be built up. Thus, ‘d-slab-there’, uttered while showing a colour sample, and pointing to a place when saying ‘there’, is grammatical. But ‘slab-pillar-a-b-c-this-there’, uttering ‘there’ without pointing, or showing a colour sample when saying ‘there’, is nonsense.

The diversity of parts of speech introduces a further diversity of operations performed by the speaker, i.e. producing samples and pointing. The amplified language-game now contains (i) an enlarged vocabulary; (ii) syntactical structure; (iii) novel activities, i.e. matching objects to samples and pointing; (iv) new instruments, i.e. colour samples, gestures (in BrB 79 numerals are also called instruments). Consequently, there are new criteria of understanding for the new parts of speech and resultant sentences.

- 1.1 (i) ‘“there” and “this” . . . that are used in connection with a pointing gesture’: brings out the interpenetration of speech and non-linguistic activity (cf. §7).  
 (ii) ‘samples’: see ‘Ostensive definition and its ramifications’, sect. 4.
- 2 (i) BrB 79ff.: what in PI §8 is treated in one stage is treated as a series of extensions, and each stage is discussed in detail. PLP 93f. discusses a series of four language-games. The first is the slab game of §2, and the final one corresponds exactly to the extension here.

## SECTION 9

- 1 Parallel to the novel operations in language-game (8) are novel training techniques. So, memorizing the ordered series of number-words is an essential part of learning to count. Is there a role for ostension here? W. distinguishes two cases: first, where the number of objects can be taken in at a glance, and, second, where counting is necessary. In the first case, ostensive teaching of the number-words is similar to ostensive teaching of the names in language-game (2) in so far as pointing is involved, but unlike it in its being indifferent *which* group of *n* objects is pointed at in teaching a given number-word, although *different* number-words will be taught by pointing to groups of the *same kind* of object (BrB 79). In the second case, however, one does not point at a group of objects, but at each object of a kind successively, each ostension being accompanied by utterance of a number-word (in the appropriate order).
- The role of ostension in training in the use of demonstratives again differs, because the ostensive gesture is *itself* part of the demonstrative *use* of ‘this’ or ‘there’, and not merely part of teaching their use (cf. BrB 80). When the child learns the use of ‘slab’, one exercise is to learn to *name* building elements which the teacher points out. But in learning the demonstrative use of ‘this’ and ‘there’, he is not learning to name anything. (Cf. Exg. §38 and ‘Indexicals’.)
- 1.1 ‘Not merely in learning’: W. changed this to read ‘not merely in teaching’ (TS 226<sub>R</sub> §12).
- 2 BrB 79 notes that by introducing numerals an entirely different kind of instrument is introduced into the language. The difference in kind is easier to see in this simple language-game than in ordinary language, with innumerable kinds of words all looking more or less alike in the dictionary.
- 2.1 (i) ‘the first five or six’: PLP 105 distinguishes between the categories of ‘visual number’ and ‘inductive number’, arguing that ostensive definition of numerals is possible only for the first class.  
 (ii) ‘pointing occurs in the *use*’: PLP 95f. notes that ‘the gesture of pointing is part of the expression of the command, it is essential to its sense, i.e.

the words of the command without the gesture would be incomplete'. The words 'a-slab-there!' do not express the whole sense of A's command to put a slab in a particular place.

## SECTION 10

1 The moral of the two language-games is drawn. Augustine claimed that in observing his elders using words, 'he learnt to understand what things they *signified*'. But the question 'What do the words signify?' is answered by describing the kind of use they have, not by citing a kind of entity they name. If descriptions of use are strait-jacketed into the general form 'This word signifies such-and-such', that will create an illusion of uniformity among expressions with wholly different uses. So too one may invoke the general form "'W" is the word *for* this  $\text{☞}$ ', i.e. specifying what the word signifies, saying, for example, that 'table' is the word for (signifies) a piece of furniture of *this* kind, that 'red' is the word for (signifies) *this* colour, that 'however' is the word for (signifies?) expressing a contrast between a pair of successive assertions. But this masks profound differences in the logico-grammatical character of diverse expressions — i.e. differences in their use — under a homogenizing form of representation.

There is, to be sure, a use for this canonical form: namely, to distinguish *between* different types of expression, e.g. "'a", "b", and "c" signify (are words for) numbers not building-blocks', or to distinguish *within* categories, e.g. "'c" signifies 3 not 4'. But in both kinds of case a general grasp of the use of the type of expression is presupposed, and not explained, by the canonical form.

1.1 'so the expression "'This word signifies *that*" would have to become part of our description'; i.e. it would simply be part of the *form* of representation of descriptions of word-use.

2 BrB 82 argues that just as we are tempted by the canonical form 'The word "'W" signifies . . .', so too we are tempted by the canonical form "'W" is the name of a . . .'; e.g. we talk of names of numbers, colours, materials, nations. W. suggests two sources. One is an illusion of uniformity of function — we imagine that the function of every word is more or less like the function of proper names or common nouns. The other, more subtle, stems from noticing the *differences* in function between say 'chair' and 'Jack', both of which are deemed names, and between 'east' and 'Jack', and so noticing the analogy in the lack of analogy, which seemingly warrants conceiving of 'east' as the name of a direction.

## SECTION 11

1 The salient point of the tool analogy is diversity of function, despite similarities and interconnections. A screwdriver looks similar to an auger, but one

makes a hole, the other screws a screw into a hole. Both are connected with screws (screws cannot be used without screwdrivers), but their roles are quite different. So too with words (cf. MS 116 (Vol. XII), 217).

(b) connects §11 with §§10 and 12. The uniform spatial or temporal sequence of written or spoken words makes them look alike, and does not make evident the differences in their use. Contrast this uniform appearance of our symbols with the language-game of §8, or the example of §1, where difference between kinds of word (or parts of speech) *is* manifest in their application (cf. BrB 79 in Exg. §9, 2).

1.1 (i) ‘Werkzeuge’: ‘tools’. It is unnatural in English to refer to nails, screws and glue as tools. Not so in German: to classify e.g. glue as belonging to *Werkzeug* (used as a mass-noun) is quite normal. By using the plural, ‘Werkzeuge’, W. indicates that what is part of your *Werkzeug* is also one of your *Werkzeuge*. He did, however, transfer this German usage to English (LA 1).

(ii) ‘the uniform appearance of words’: e.g. ‘pin’ looks like ‘pain’, ‘true’ like ‘blue’, ‘and’ like ‘sand’, ‘four’ like ‘for’, but in each case the uses are wholly different.

2.1 (i) ‘tools in a toolbox’: MS 114 (Vol. X) Um., 35, remarks of a similar analogy that the toolbox is grammar and its rules.

(ii) ‘uniform appearance of words’: AWL 46 remarks that words are brought together in a dictionary, where they look as similar to each other as [various] tools do in a toolbox. But the uses of words can differ from each other as beauty differs from a chair, and can be as incomparable as things we buy, e.g. a sofa and a right to a seat in the theatre. We tend to talk of words and their meanings as if this were comparable to money and the things it buys, rather than to money and its uses. The thing we buy with money is not its use, just as the bearer of a name is not its meaning. MS 156b, 45v, observes that ‘A sentence consists of nouns, verbs and adjectives’ corresponds to ‘All tools are hammers, nails or pliers’.

## SECTION 12

1 Words are deceptively uniform in appearance. This is comparable to the handles in a locomotive cabin. They look alike, since they are made to be handled, as words are suited to being spoken or written; but their functions differ profoundly, and they are used differently (one is pushed, another pulled, a third pumped back and forth).

2 (i) Other favoured analogies for this functional diversity of words are (a) lines on a map, which may indicate rivers, roads, borders, railways, isotherms, contours, etc., despite the fact that they look alike (PG 58); (b) chessmen, which are all similar pieces of carved wood, but have different roles (PG 59).

(ii) PR 59 invokes the lever analogy (a) to exemplify, as here, the diverse functions of words; (b) to exemplify the contextual dictum that a word has a meaning only in the context of a sentence (a rod is a lever only in use, when connected to the mechanism; cf. PI §6(d)); (c) to illuminate what it is to understand a proposition as a member of a system of propositions.

(iii) PG 58 juxtaposes this with the following:

A man who reads a sentence in a familiar language experiences the different parts of speech in quite different ways. (Think of the comparison with meaning-bodies.) We quite forget that the written and spoken words ‘not’, ‘table’, ‘green’ are similar to each other. It is only in a foreign language that we see clearly the uniformity of words. (Compare William James on the feelings that correspond to words like ‘not’, ‘but’, and so on.)

This latter theme (experiencing the meaning of a word) is deferred in PI. The analogy holds, nevertheless. One might say of the locomotive driver that to him the brake feels different from the pump, the crank, the valve-lever, etc. Not so to the child who clambers up to play. The different experience is an epiphenomenon of the ability to use the levers (words) correctly.

### SECTION 13

- 1 The assertion ‘Every word in the language [i.e. in the language of §8] signifies something’, derived from the canonical form ‘The word “W” signifies such-and-such’ (cf. Exg. §10), is vacuous. No principle of distinction (contrast) is drawn by this statement, unless it is between words of the language of §8 and nonsense words like ‘Tra-la-la’. The assertion is not criticized as false. For the words can be put into this strait-jacket: e.g. ‘red’ signifies a colour, ‘three’ signifies a number, ‘this’ signifies whatever one points at.
- 2 PLP 157 rejects the dictum (taken out of any context) as false, since ‘Oh dear!’ cannot be put into the canonical form, yet it would be false to say that it is meaningless, or has no significance. It is used as a ‘vocal vent’. Similarly, a full stop has a use, but does not signify an object. This reflects W.’s early moves against the calculus model of language (cf. discussion of ‘perhaps’ and ‘Oh!’ (PG 64, 66)).

### SECTION 14

- 1 ‘All tools serve to modify something’ is analogous to ‘All words signify something’. Both are altogether uninformative, and involve the imposition of a form of description of uses that serves only to represent differences in use in the guise of uniformities.



- 1.1 ‘This assimilation of expressions’: the expressions ‘knowing a thing’s length’, ‘keeping the temperature of the glue constant’, and ‘ensuring the solidity of a box’ are incorrectly characterized as ‘descriptions of ways of modifying something’. We use a ruler to find out the length of a thing — but the function of a ruler is misdescribed as being to modify our knowledge (its function is to measure). Analogously, assimilating the descriptions of the uses of words (§10) by imposing the form of description ‘The word “W” signifies such-and-such’ serves only to obscure the diversity of uses of words.

## SECTION 15

- 1 ‘Signify’ is used most straightforwardly perhaps when the sign for a thing is actually written on it. We commonly *mark things* with their name, or containers with the name of what they contain.
- The introduction, into the primitive language-game, of names of tools that are marked on the tool is envisaged (rather curiously) in §41 as introducing proper names into the game. This new instrument enables the builder to give an instruction to his assistant in a new way: namely, by showing him the mark (compare this with the word ‘apple’ in §1).
- 1.1 (i) ‘Am direktesten ist das Wort “bezeichnen” vielleicht da angewandt . . .’: W. translated ‘The expression “the name of an object” is very straightforwardly applied where the name is actually a mark on the object itself’ (TS 226<sub>R</sub> §19).
- (ii) ‘in more or less similar ways’: this kind of naming is one centre of variation.
- 2.1 ‘naming something is like attaching a name tag to a thing’: In BB 69 we are to imagine that ‘objects’ are labelled with names that we use to refer to them. Some of these words would be proper nouns, others would be generic names, others names of colours, shapes, etc. This diversity makes it clear that ‘a label would only have a meaning to us in so far as we made a particular use of it’. But one can readily see that the fact that everything is labelled may so impress us that we forget that what gives the words on the labels their meaning is not that they are stuck on objects, but their use.


## SECTION 16

- 1 This discusses the status of the samples in §8. Whenever A issues an order of the type ‘d-slab-there’, he shows B a colour sample, and B then selects slabs of this colour from the building materials. The samples are used in issuing orders, not to introduce colour-words; indeed, there are no colour-words in this language-game. W. recommends including these samples among the instruments of the language. This is a first step towards undermining the misconception

that ostensive definitions, in explaining expressions by reference to samples, connect language with reality, symbols (signs) with what they symbolize (signify).


In certain respects W.'s proposal is entirely natural. If I send someone a sample when placing an order for cloth of a certain colour, this sample is obviously part of my communication (PR 73). It is a symbol, not something symbolized or described (cf. PLP 109, 277f.). Language-game (8) could be enriched by introducing colour-words explained by reference to samples, and thereafter these words could displace the samples. It would be counter-intuitive to deny that a colour sample is a symbol if it can be replaced by a word without affecting what is communicated. Hence it is natural to call any sample playing a role in communication an instrument of *communication*.

Does this mean that it belongs to the *language* or that it is an *instrument of language*? Of course, colour samples are not words, and words in use are not objects for comparison as samples are. Further, a sample used *ad hoc* for a particular communication is not governed by standing rules. Nevertheless, one might extend the term 'language' to include 'everything that serves the end of expression and communication', hence everything that counts as a sign (PLP 93f., 109). This is apparent in W.'s contrasting language (*Sprache*) with spoken language (*Wortsprache*). Samples are signs used in communication, and are part of the means of representation, not something represented.

W. counters the objection to his extension of 'language' with an analogical argument. We count as a word, and hence as part of a sentence, a *mentioned* word used as a sample sound to be repeated (e.g. 'Pronounce the word "the"'). This argument is not compelling: it shows that a word can function as a sample, but not that something that functions as a vocal sample is therefore a symbol (e.g. 'Say "juwiwallera"'). More compelling is the above consideration that a word can take over the communicative role of a sample. Furthermore, in a more developed language a colour sample, together with a gesture and a 'this colour', can take over the communicative role of a word, as in 'The curtains are *this*  colour'.

- 1.1 (i) 'Zur Wortsprache gehören sie nicht': W. preferred 'they do not belong to our spoken language' (TS 226<sub>R</sub> §20).

(ii) '((Remark on the reflexive pronoun "this sentence"))): The reference is probably to MS 107 (Vol. III), 226f. (PR 207f.; Z §691); but see also MS 124, 66 and MS 163, 31. What connection did W. have in mind? There are two clues: first, the phrase 'this sentence', which occurs in W.'s discussion of the Cretan Liar Paradox, and secondly, the context, viz. the discussion of samples and of their being counted as instruments of language. This suffices for a reasonable conjecture.

In language-game (8) A uses colour samples to tell B what colour stone to bring. This language-game might be extended by introducing the demonstrative expression 'this  colour', to be used in conjunction with an ostensive gesture at a colour sample, or by introducing colour-words explained ostens-

ively in terms of samples. In the first case, uttering ‘this colour’, together with a gesture and a sample, takes the place of showing a colour sample in the primitive game. In the second, the colour-words might be said to be *representatives* of the samples (cf. PG 89). To call them ‘representatives’ implies that they can, at least in certain cases, do the job as well as the principal. Conversely, what is represented must be capable of replacing the representative. And so indeed it is with colour samples (together with ‘this <sup>ES</sup> colour’) and colour-words.

W. applied the same idea to the phrase ‘this sentence’. If correctly used, it must *represent* some sentence; i.e. it must hold the place of a sentence, as a card with ‘Mr Jones’ written on it represents Mr Jones by holding his place at a dinner table (PLP 312). Therefore, it must be possible to replace this indexical phrase by the sentence that it represents. In some cases, this is unproblematic. ‘This sentence contains five words’ allows such replacement (‘The sentence “This sentence contains five words” contains five words’) and expresses a truth, and ‘This sentence is written in Gothic script’ does too and expresses a falsehood (B i §735). But what about the paradoxical sentence ‘This sentence is false’? If it has a meaning, then the phrase ‘this sentence’ must represent some sentence and hence be replaceable by it. But what sentence? The answer cannot be simply to repeat that it refers to *this* sentence — it must take the form of uttering a complete sentence which will take the place of the phrase ‘this sentence’ in ‘This sentence is false’ (Z §691). This cannot be done, for in this context ‘This sentence is false’ cannot be substituted once for all for the phrase ‘this sentence’, since the same question crops up again, viz. what sentence is represented in the new, more complex sentence by the phrase ‘this sentence’. The fundamental error lies in thinking that the phrase ‘this sentence’ can refer to a sentence without having to represent it. That idea is comparable to the thought that a sample (coupled with a demonstrative) used to explain a colour-word could not take the place of this word in communication.

- 2.1 (i) ‘It is most natural’: MS 141, 3 (cf. BrB 84) remarks that it is natural for us to count ostensive gestures as introduced in language-game no. 4 of BrB 80, that accompany the use of ‘there’ and are part of the practice of communication itself, as belonging to language. But also the pictures in language-game no. 7 (viz. a table with pictures of a table, a chair, a teacup, etc. with written signs opposite them) — these too are linguistic instruments. Samples and words have different functions. One compares things to samples, but not to words (but if a word is employed onomatopoeically, it could be called a sample). This distinction does not point to an ultimate logical duality but only singles out two characteristic kinds of instruments, between which there is no sharp boundary, from the variety of instruments in our language. ‘One’, ‘two’, ‘three’ are called words, ‘|’, ‘||’, ‘|||’ are called samples; but if a language had the number-words ‘one’, ‘one one’, ‘one one one’, should we call ‘one’ a word or a sample? The same linguistic element can function here both as word and as sample.

## SECTION 17

1 Augustine, in his description of child language-learning, did not speak of there being different kinds of word (or *parts of speech*, as *W.* preferred to say in English), although he was evidently thinking primarily of common nouns and proper names. In language-game (2) all the words belong to the same part of speech (BrB 83). Language-game (8) added new kinds of expression. So here we can distinguish between different parts of speech, such as names of material objects (building elements), numerals and demonstratives, according to their function, which is vividly displayed in this simple language-game. For there are more affinities between the uses of ‘slab’ and ‘block’ than between those of ‘slab’ and ‘d’. But, *W.* stresses, our classification is purpose-relative, and also depends on our inclination.

Elsewhere *W.* notes that this conception is at odds with ‘the simple and rigid rules which logicians give for the construction of propositions’ (BrB 83), and ‘how much less rigid the function of words in a sentence is than logicians for the most part suppose’ (MS 141, 3). Moreover, it is at odds with the standard construction of categories according to the criterion of substitutability *salva significatione* that was presupposed in the *Tractatus* account of formal concepts (TLP 4.126–4.128). Categories so constructed are sharp. By contrast, *W.* now envisages classifying words by affinity of functions. This will allow the shading off of one category into another, i.e. non-transitivity of the relation ‘belongs to the same category as’.

1.1 (i) ‘*verschiedene Wortarten*’: different parts of speech, by contrast with samples, that are instruments of language, but not parts of *speech*.

(ii) ‘different points of view according to which one can classify tools . . . or chess pieces’: chess pieces: by their powers; the directions of their permitted movements; their order of value; their size, constitutive material, colour, etc. (cf. BB 84). The usefulness of a given grouping depends on our purposes and inclinations (ivory chess pieces are more costly than plastic ones). Tools: PLP 97 notes that tools too have different kinds of similarity, and can be grouped differently (the hammer with the nails, or with the axe; the axe with the hammer, or with the chisel, or with the saw; the screwdriver with the screw, or with the auger).

2 BrB 83 (cf. MS 141, 3) notes that what in one language-game is effected by word-order (e.g. ‘Slab, column, brick’) might be effected in another by ordinals (e.g. ‘Second, column; first, slab; third, brick!’). This highlights the variety of functions of words in propositions. If we classify parts of speech according to the similarities of the functions of words, it is evident that many different classifications are possible. One could imagine a reason for not classifying ‘one’ together with ‘two’ and ‘three’; e.g. if only one slab is needed, the builder simply calls out ‘Slab’, and if more are needed, he uses

number-words ‘two’, ‘three’, etc. If he were then introduced to ‘one’, he might well not classify it together with ‘two’ and ‘three’. Compare this with our reasons for and against classifying ‘0’ among the cardinals, or black and white among colours.

PLP 96ff. comments on ‘kinds of words’. The test of substitutability *salva significatione* makes the construction of categories pointless. It has some initial plausibility: e.g. the order ‘Put the  $\xi$  in the corner!’ allocates ‘surface of the table’ and ‘table’ to different categories. But this evaporates once we note that it would segregate ‘black’ from ‘green’, ‘red’ and ‘white’ (e.g. ‘The signal light flashed . . .’), and each numeral from every other (e.g. ‘1’ from ‘2’, ‘3’, ‘4’ . . . by reference to ‘The playground was divided into . . . parts’).

- 2.1 (i) ‘*Wortarten*’: MS 140, 16f., introduces ostensive definition into the language-game, and notes that it can be disambiguated by the supplement ‘This colour is called “red”’ or ‘This shape is called “ellipse”’. The words ‘colour’ and ‘shape’ here determine the way of applying (*Art der Anwendung*) a word, and so too what one can call ‘part of speech’ (*Wortart*). One could distinguish within customary grammar between ‘shape-words’, ‘colour-words’, ‘sound-words’, ‘stuff-words’, etc., but not, in the same sense, between ‘metal-words’, ‘poison-words’, ‘wild animal-words’. It makes sense to say ‘iron is a metal’, ‘phosphor is a poison’, etc., but not ‘red is a colour’, ‘a circle is a shape’, etc. [For, according to W.’s conception, the former pair are empirical propositions the negation of which makes sense. But the latter pair are grammatical propositions, expressions of rules for the use of their constituent terms, and their negations are nonsense.]

#### IV. Descriptions and the uses of sentences

1. Flying in the face of the facts
2. Sentences as descriptions of facts: surface-grammatical paraphrase
3. Sentences as descriptions: depth-grammatical analysis and descriptive contents
4. Sentences as instruments
5. Assertions, questions, commands make contact in language

### SECTION 18

- 1 W. now moves from investigating types of word to types of sentences, from word-meaning to sentence-meaning. This investigation is not *explicitly* linked with the Augustinian conception, but it is arguably implicitly linked with Augustine’s picture of sentences as combinations of names, and the consequent idea that the meanings of names are the objects they stand for.

Why might one be troubled by the fact that the language-games (2) and (8) consist only of orders? The sole reason W. has in mind here is that this seems to show that the languages are incomplete. Language-game (2), which was designed to fit Augustine's description (§1), consists only of orders, and we were told to conceive of it as a complete language. Here the question is opened — and immediately closed. Was our language incomplete before the introduction of the symbolism of chemistry or of the calculus? That a language *can* be extended does not show it to be incomplete prior to its extension. If the possibility of extending a language proved that it was incomplete, there would be no such thing as a language that was not incomplete, and hence the phrase 'incomplete language' would be meaningless.

- 1.1 'the symbolism of chemistry and the notation of the infinitesimal calculus': Clearly, their invention extended our language. It allowed us to frame such questions as 'What is the valency of the  $\text{CH}_3$  group?' or 'What is the derivative of  $\arcsin x$ ?' But this no more shows that our language contained gaps than the fact that it is possible to extend a rook-less form of chess to the usual variety shows that the more primitive game contains gaps. In so far as we are prone to view the unextended language (or game) in its relationship to the extended one, we may be inclined to think that it contains gaps. If the extension is radical (i.e. there is disruption of the previous internal relations), then there are possibilities not permitted in the previous form, but then the disruption of internal relations shows that the language (or game) is simply *different*. And if the extension is conservative, then there is nothing but a further articulation of a pre-existing framework; i.e. antecedent permissions and prohibitions are preserved intact.
- 2 BT 209 compares the relation of a language consisting only of orders to our actual language with the relation of a primitive arithmetic (e.g. the number system '1', '2', '3', '4', '5', 'many') to our arithmetic (of the natural numbers). Just as that arithmetic is not essentially incomplete, neither is this primitive form of language. The completeness of such a primitive number system is an important point (BT 570f.; PLP 78f.; cf. MS 108 (Vol. IV), 152): there are no gaps in such a system waiting to be filled by extending it to include all the natural numbers. Similarly, the natural numbers do not contain gaps to be filled by the rationals, nor the rationals gaps to be filled by the reals, etc. Rather, there are, as it were, no gaps until they are already filled.<sup>11</sup> W.'s view here contrasts with Frege's (cf. BT 570).
- 3 The contention that a language could consist only of orders is a radical one relative to twentieth-century philosophical accounts of meaning that assign a pivotal role to the concept of truth and the notion of truth-conditions (or

<sup>11</sup> See F. Waismann, *Introduction to Mathematical Thinking* (Hafner, London, 1951), pp. 45–7, 61.

assertion-conditions). For the notion of truth (*a fortiori* assertion-conditions) attaches paradigmatically to the declarative sentence (or, more accurately, to what is said by using it). If the meaning of a word is conceived as its contribution to the truth-conditions (or assertion-conditions) of the sentences in which it occurs, then primacy must be attached to the declarative sentence, and the meaning of imperative sentences must be accounted for in terms derivative from the meaning of declaratives (see 'Descriptions and the uses of sentences'<sup>12</sup>).

## SECTION 19

1 §19(a) continues the argument of §18. The imaginary language-games (2) and (8) consisted only of orders. But, W. claims, that is no objection. It is easy to imagine a language consisting only of orders and reports in battle; or only of sentence-questions and yes/no answers; etc. Imagining such languages requires imagining different forms of life — different ways of living, different human relationships, actions, reactions and interactions. A language-game, such as giving orders and obeying them, is part of a form of life (§23).

W. is arguably too hasty here. Is it really possible to imagine a society, and a form of life, sufficiently well organized to engage in battle and to give orders and reports in battle — *and to have no other uses for words?* How would this language be taught to children? How are we to envisage a use for orders or reports in battle, but no use for the same forms of words outside a battle?

§19(b) opens a new argument, that continues through the sequel. Is the call 'Slab!' in §2 a word or a sentence? Why is the question raised? One reason might be linked to Augustine's picture of language: words are names, and sentences are combinations of names. 'Slab' is the name of a building-stone, but 'Slab!' is *not* a combination of names. But W. nowhere mentions this as the motive for this new line of investigation. BrB 77f. introduces this question explicitly as an objection: namely, that 'Slab!' in language-game (2) does not have the same meaning as in our language. And if that amounts only to pointing out that the word, in our language, has other uses than this, then that is correct. But the point of investigating the objection is to show that a question about what an expression means and whether it means the same as another expression is not determined by the state of mind of the speaker, i.e. by his meaning, (mis)conceived as a state of mind, or by what 'is present in his mind' when he utters the sign. To be sure, this too links up with one strand in Augustine's description and conception (see Exg. §1) — according to which

<sup>12</sup> For comprehensive critical discussion of the idea that every sentence, no matter what its discourse type (assertoric, interrogative or imperative) contains, on analysis, a truth-value-bearing sentence-radical, see G. P. Baker and P. M. S. Hacker, *Language, Sense, and Nonsense* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1984), chs 2–3.

what a name means is what the speaker means by it. So, if ‘Slab!’ is uttered as a call for a slab, then, according to the Augustinian conception, what makes it into the order that the hearer bring the speaker a slab is that the speaker means this by his utterance, i.e. that by ‘Slab!’ he means ‘Bring me a slab!’

W.’s response to the opening question is that ‘Slab!’ can be deemed to be a word and also be deemed to be a (degenerate) sentence. It is equivalent to our elliptical sentence ‘Slab!’ (since it has the same function in language-game (2) as ‘Bring me a slab!’ would have in the corresponding fragment of our language). The interlocutor objects to the equivalence on the grounds that our elliptical sentence is an abbreviated form of ‘Bring me a slab!’, and there is no such possibility of expression in language-game (2). W. counters: why should one not think of ‘Bring me a slab!’ as an expansion of ‘Slab!’? This forces the interlocutor to bring up the pivotal issue: if one shouts ‘Slab!’, one really *means* ‘Bring me a slab!’ — it is how the speaker means (*meint*) his words that determines what they mean (*bedeuten*).

This conception is the target of the rapid sequence of five questions. It is the first question that provides the implicit key to the matter: viz. how do you do it, how do you mean this, when you say ‘Slab?’ For it seems as if *meaning something* is a mental act, activity or state — and this is a misconception that W. later assails. Here the ‘liberating word’ is W.’s question in response to the interlocutor’s final move. For the interlocutor insists that the reason he takes ‘Slab!’ in our language to be an abbreviation of the imperative sentence ‘Bring me a slab!’ is that when he utters ‘Slab!’, what he wants is *that the assistant should bring him a slab*. The specification of the speaker’s purpose is an indirect report of an imperative sentence. So surely it follows that ‘Slab!’ is an elliptical (abbreviated) sentence — and hence that ‘Slab!’ in language-game (2) cannot have the same meaning as our utterance ‘Slab!’, since there is no such sentence to abbreviate in that language-game? W.’s response is to query what ‘wanting this’ is supposed to consist in. Does it consist in *thinking* a different sentence from the sentence one utters while one utters it? (The conception of speaking with understanding as speaking accompanied by an inner process of thinking is criticized in PI §§316–62; for discussion of W.’s criticisms of the ‘dual-process’ conception, see Volume 3, ‘Thinking: the soul of language’.)

- 1.1 (i) ‘Lebensform’/‘a form of life’: this expression occurs in PI §§19, 23, 241, pp. 174 (148), 226 (192). There are few other occurrences (see 2.1 below), and the *Nachlass* adds nothing further. A form of life is a way of living, a pattern of activities, actions, interactions and feelings which are inextricably interwoven with, and partly constituted by, uses of language. It rests upon very general pervasive facts of nature. It includes shared natural and linguistic responses, broad agreement in definitions and judgements, and corresponding behaviour. The term is sometimes used so that it converges on the idea of a culture; elsewhere it converges on a more biological notion (see Volume 2, ‘Agreement in definitions, judgements and forms of life’, sect. 3).



(ii) ‘a degenerate sentence’: i.e. a limiting case, as a straight line is a limiting case of a hyperbola or a point a degenerate conic section.

2 BT 201–5 (cf. PLP 285–8) discusses the notion of an elliptical sentence (and the distinction between meaning it as one word or as three). W. introduces a language-game in which the expressions ‘Light’ and ‘Dark’ are taught in connection with turning an electric light on and off, and are then used to say that there is light in the room, or to express the wish that there be light in the room. One could say that ‘Light’ and ‘Dark’ are meant here as sentences. But what makes an utterance a statement or a wish is not an accompanying process of meaning. The discussion then shifts focus in order to criticize the *Tractatus* conception of a proposition’s ‘agreeing with reality’ (irrespective of whether it is true or false) in virtue of isomorphism — and to repudiate the requirement of logical multiplicity on the atomic proposition. For that notion of isomorphism (the ‘harmony between language and reality’) demanded a logical multiplicity missing from a one-word sentence. However, agreement with reality does not consist in the proposition and reality having identical multiplicity, but in the explanation (in language) that ‘This is (is called) “Light”’ (turning the light on when uttering ‘This’). What seemed in the *Tractatus* to be an ineffable (‘metalogical’) relationship of agreement between language and reality is now seen to be an intra-linguistic grammatical relationship. More generally, ‘agreement’ (*Übereinstimmen*) is an everyday expression with diverse, but unproblematic, uses.

2.1 ‘Form of life’: W. also employed the phrase ‘Form des Lebens’ (MS 115 (Vol. XI), 239), and once chose as an alternative ‘Lebensgepflogenheiten’ (customs of life) (MS 137, 59(a)). BrB 134 observes that to imagine a language is to imagine a culture. See also PO 396, C §358.

## SECTION 20

1 §19(b) suggested that the sentence ‘Bring me a slab!’ might be considered a lengthening of ‘Slab!’ If so, one might retort (§20(a)), someone who says ‘Bring me a slab!’ must be able to mean this whole sentence as *one* word corresponding to ‘Slab!’ The rest of §20(a) consists of W.’s handling of a series of questions that grow out of this objection. The point is to establish that the contrast between a person’s meaning ‘Bring me a slab!’ as four words and his meaning it as one word need not consist in anything present in his mind when he utters the sentence. Instead, what is required is his mastery of a language in which this sentence can be used in contrast with other sentences consisting partly or wholly of the same words. Our sentence ‘Slab!’ is elliptical, not because it abbreviates a ‘mental utterance’ of ‘Bring me a slab!’, but because our language contains the possibility of contrasting the sentences ‘Bring me a

slab!', 'Take away a slab!', 'Bring him a slab!', etc., each of which might, in certain circumstances, be shortened to 'Slab!'

§20(b) canvasses an objection: if 'Slab!' in §2 is synonymous with our sentence 'Slab!', and hence too with our sentence 'Bring me a slab!', then it must be possible to specify what the sense is that each of these sentences has, which will show these two sentences to have the same sense. W.'s reply is that the identity of sense of the two sentences consists in the identity of their *use*.

- 1.1 (i) 'he could mean this expression as one long word': here 'mean' amounts to 'intend', unlike 'By "p" I meant "r"' or 'By "p" I meant that r'. It is unclear in what sense, if any, one can *intend* four words to be or be understood as one (long) word.
- (ii) 'Freilich, du *beherrscht* diese Sprache'/'ist dieses Beherrschen': W. amended Rhees's translation to read 'know this language'/'is this knowing' (TS 226<sub>R</sub> §24).
- (iii) 'geht ihnen die Kopula im Sinn ab, oder *denken* sie sich die Kopula dazu': W. translated 'don't they get the full meaning, as they leave out the copula? or do they *think* it to themselves without pronouncing it?' (TS 226<sub>R</sub> §25).
- 2.1 (i) 'Not because it leaves out something that we think': BrB 78 puts matters thus: 'all that is really relevant is that these contrasts should exist in the system of language he is using, and that they need not in any sense be present in his mind when he utters the sentence'. And it draws the moral: our original question about the meaning of 'Slab!' appeared initially to be about the speaker's putative state of mind of meaning his words, but the idea of meaning we arrive at in the end is not that of a state of mind.
- (ii) 'In Russian . . .': MS 110 (Vol. VI), 188, notes that the Russians say 'He good' rather than 'He is good' — but nothing is lost, and they don't add the verb in thought.

## SECTION 21

- 1 W. now turns to language-games admitting contrasting uses of sentences. If language-game (8) is extended to include reports on the numbers, colours and shapes of building-stones, what would distinguish the report or assertion 'Five slabs' from the order 'Five slabs!'?

The answer canvassed is that the difference lies in the tone of voice and facial expression (for, after all, the words are the same). But such differences are not *necessary* — the difference may lie only in what is done with the words. W. does not further clarify this, although it calls out for further elucidation. The implication is that the difference between the report and the order in this primitive language-game is evident from the context, the antecedent and subsequent behaviour of the speakers. It is unclear, however, what W.'s commitments are with respect to our developed language.

The parenthesis canvasses a possibility: we might use ‘assertion’ and ‘order’ merely to indicate grammatical forms (i.e. declarative and imperative sentences) and intonations, just as we speak of rhetorical *questions*, which are in effect assertions. Furthermore, a language is imaginable in which all assertions had the form and intonation contour of rhetorical questions, or all orders were couched in the form of the question ‘Would you like to . . .?’ But this does not mean that all that speakers of this language ever do with words is ask questions.

One might grant this, yet insist, for all that, that our sentential forms indicate the *standard* discourse function: interrogatives to invite an answer to a question, declaratives to say how things are, and imperatives to express a desire. That is compatible with deviations of the kind W. notes. The use of the negative interrogative as a rhetorical question, i.e. implicit assertion, is not arbitrary. ‘Isn’t the weather glorious today?’ is not a request for information, the answer being too obvious. Nor is it simply an interrogative form that is used assertorically; rather, it utilizes the interrogative form to indicate the speaker’s judgement and to invite corresponding assent. Similarly, one could use the form of words ‘Would you like to . . .?’ (Or ‘Would you mind . . .?’) as a standard form for ordering. But it is no coincidence that it is a *polite* form of ordering or requesting, that it *formally* offers the addressee an opportunity to divulge his wishes — unlike the more peremptory imperative form of ordering. The connection between sentential form and standard function is not undermined by these kinds of case.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, W.’s emphasis on function as opposed to form (on not classifying clouds by their shape, as it were) is of the greatest importance.

- 1.1 ‘Verwendung’: W. changed this in translation to ‘what is done with the words “five slabs”’.
- 2 (i) BT 201ff. (cf. Exg. §19), in describing the language-game in which ‘Light’ can be used either to express a desire for light or to report that there is light in a particular room, raises the question whether the difference consists in what is meant in the two cases. Does meaning something consist in particular mental processes that accompany the utterance, or in a pattern of behaviour in which the utterance is embedded? If I say ‘Light’ and somebody asks what I meant, I might reply, ‘I meant you to turn on the light’. But my having meant this does not consist in my having had a particular picture in mind when I said ‘Light’, or in my having said to myself another sentence such as ‘Turn on the light’. That would give a narrow, distorted account of the variety of cases in which it is correct to say ‘I meant . . .’. For meaning something is neither an act nor an activity of the mind.

<sup>13</sup> See B. Rundle, *Wittgenstein and Contemporary Philosophy of Language* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1990), ch. 5.

## SECTION 22

- 1 Together with the following boxed remark (p. 11n.), this criticizes Frege's account of assertion. He held that a declarative sentence used to make an assertion, the same sentence occurring in a conditional, and the corresponding sentence-question have a common content — a thought. This is what is asserted in an assertion, occurs unasserted in a conditional and is queried in a question.

*Background:* Frege's analysis, despite various changes, was guided by three fundamental ideas.

(i) A declarative sentence expresses (has as its sense) a thought. A thought is objective, exists independently of being apprehended, and is the bearer of truth-values. It is what is grasped when an utterance of a declarative sentence is understood and what is believed when various people believe the same thing. As objects, thoughts can be named — the expression 'the thought that  $p$ ' names a particular thought which is its meaning (*Bedeutung*) (SM 37 (166)). But such a name does not itself express a thought. Only a sentence has a thought as its sense (T 61 (354)).

(ii) It is possible to entertain a thought without judging it to be true — as when we raise a question (N 145 (374f.)) or entertain a hypothesis — and to express a thought without asserting it — as when we express a mere supposition (FC 21 (149)). A judgement is the acknowledgement of the truth of a thought. An assertion is the externalization of an inner act of judging to be true (NS 150, 214 (PW 138f., 198)). It is a defect of natural language that it fails clearly to mark assertoric uses of expressions. For the very same declarative sentence can occur on its own as an assertion, and also within the scope of a negation (e.g. 'It is not the case that . . .') or as the antecedent of a conditional *without being asserted*. There is no distinct symbol to signal that a sentence is being used to make an assertion, whose absence would then signal that it is being used merely to express a thought (NS 201 (PW 185)).

(iii) In natural language, Frege held, the assertoric force is carried by the assertoric form of the sentence, is bound up with its indicative mood (NS 214 (PW 198)),<sup>14</sup> and especially well marked in the predicate (T 62f. (355f.); SM 34 (163f.); N 152 (382f.)). Since Frege's function-theoretic concept-script was constructed to replace the subject/predicate form of natural language (and to exclude the defects and limitations of traditional subject/predicate logic), he believed he had to provide an alternative and indeed improved way of symbolizing assertoric force in his notation.

*Frege's assertion-sign:* An assertion in Frege's symbolism is expressed by prefixing the assertion-sign '⊢' to an expression for the content of a possible assertion. The articulation of the symbolism conforms to Frege's analysis of assertion. The expression for the assertion that 2 plus 3 is 5 (i.e. '⊢  $2 + 3 = 5$ ')

<sup>14</sup> Mood, strictly speaking, is a feature of the verb, not of the sentence. The indicative mood is common to declarative and interrogative sentences.

subdivides into the assertion-sign ‘ $\vdash$ ’ and the rest (‘ $\neg 2 + 3 = 5$ ’, i.e. the ‘horizontal’ and ‘ $2 + 3 = 5$ ’). Prefixing the horizontal to the expression ‘ $2 + 3 = 5$ ’ converts the expression of a thought (viz. the thought that  $2 + 3 = 5$ ) that supposedly is *also* the name of a truth-value into an unasserted sentence the closest equivalent of which in natural language is ‘ $2 + 3 = 5$  is the True’. Adding the assertion-sign converts this expression of a thought into an assertion. The assertion-sign itself has neither sense nor meaning (*Bedeutung*), rather it ‘contains the act of assertion’ (BLA i §5). It signals the performance of the interior act of judging to be true the thought whose expression it precedes.

Frege’s ‘horizontal’ or ‘content-stroke’: the horizontal is always used to precede the content of an assertion. ‘ $\neg \xi$ ’ stands for a function whose value is always a truth-value. If its argument-expression designates the True, its value is the True; otherwise, its value is the False. So the horizontal in effect amounts to the formal predicate ‘is the True’. But the resultant expression ‘ $\neg p$ ’ cannot by itself be used to make an assertion. It still merely designates a truth-value. ‘ $\vdash p$ ’, on the other hand, ‘does not designate anything; it asserts something’ (FC 22n. (149n.)).

W.’s criticisms: §22(a) criticizes Frege’s claim that every assertion *contains* an assumption, the assumption being ‘the thing asserted’. If this were so, then analysis of the sentence used to make an assertion should yield a part which expresses the assumption and another part which effects the act of assertion. We can indeed effect such a transformation by rewriting every statement in the form ‘It is asserted that  $p$ ’ (or ‘It is the case that  $p$ ’). ‘It is asserted’ expresses the act of asserting, ‘that  $p$ ’ expresses the assumption. One might link this to Frege’s notation thus:

It is asserted	that $p$
$\vdash$	$\neg p$

The noun clause ‘that  $p$ ’ which, in this transformation, is (or signifies) ‘the thing asserted’ is appropriately thought of as a sentence-radical (b.r.f. §22 (p. 11n.)), i.e. something which may be part of a sentence used to make an assertion (‘It is the case that  $p$ ’) or part of a sentence used to ask a question (‘Is it the case that  $p$ ?’), but which cannot *by itself* be so used.

It now seems puzzling that W.’s riposte is that this noun clause is not a sentence, not something that can be used to make a move in the language-game. For surely the purpose of explicitly segregating an expression of the assumption was precisely to produce an expression which cannot by itself be used to make a move in the language-game? W.’s point is that whatever form of words is chosen as an expression of the assumption *must also remain a sentence*, for it is, according to Frege, the expression of a thought (hence not a noun clause). The two statements ‘ $p$ ’ and ‘If  $p$  then  $q$ ’ contain the same sentence ‘ $p$ ’, once asserted and once unasserted. Hence we cannot replace the antecedent of the conditional by a noun clause, precisely because a noun clause is not a

sentence. Any attempt to represent Frege's claim that every assertion contains an assumption by transformations permissible in language is thus subject to contradictory demands. For the linguistic expression of the contained assumption must both be, and not be, a sentence. The fact is that what we conceive as a declarative sentence is something that *can be* used to make an assertion, but *need not* be so used.

If we relinquish the noun clause as an expression of the assumption and adopt the transformation 'It is asserted: such-and-such is the case' as a form appropriate for making assertions, it is obvious that the prefix 'It is asserted' is superfluous. For the form 'Such-and-such is the case', being a sentence, is already fully fit for making assertions. If a token-sentence ' $p$ ' is not used to make an assertion (but e.g. occurs as the antecedent of a conditional), prefixing 'It is asserted' to it will not make it so used; if it is used to make an assertion, such a prefix will make no difference.

Frege would object. First, 'that  $p$ ' is not an expression of the thought expressed by ' $\neg p$ '. On the contrary, it names (i.e. has as its meaning (*Bedeutung*)) that thought. Equally, 'It is asserted' at best describes the act performed by prefixing 'It is asserted' to ' $\neg p$ '. Consequently, there is no correct translation of ' $\neg p$ ' into natural language, and no expression synonymous with either of its two constituents 'It is asserted' and ' $\neg p$ '. 'It is asserted that  $p$ ' is but a rough approximation. More accurately, it is a *report* in *oratio obliqua* of what is effected by ' $\neg p$ ' (BLA i §5). Secondly, this untranslatability merely reveals the defectiveness of ordinary language.

This defence against W.'s criticism assumes that Frege's notation for assertion is intelligible. Frege's explanation of the horizontal presupposes an understanding of what constitutes a sentence, but distorts the concept of a sentence. His characterization of expressions of thoughts as names of truth-values and his stipulation that ' $\neg p$ ' cannot be used by itself to make an assertion both reflect and support a misrepresentation of sentences. The incoherence in Frege's conception of a sentence can be highlighted by bringing together two aspects of the grammar of 'sentence'. First, *only* a sentence is the expression of a thought. Secondly, any sentence (expressing a thought) can be used by itself to make an assertion. Frege's explanation of the horizontal is inconsistent with at least one of these. If ' $p$ ' is a sentence with a truth-value, then ' $\neg p$ ' is the expression of a thought; hence, it must *be* a sentence; consequently, it must be capable of being used by itself to make an assertion. Conversely, if ' $\neg p$ ' cannot be used to make an assertion, it cannot be a sentence; therefore, if it does express a thought, the thesis that only sentences express thoughts must be false. Finally, dropping the stipulation that ' $\neg p$ ' cannot be used to make an assertion would render both the horizontal and the assertion-sign superfluous, since ' $\neg p$ ' would just be an idiosyncratic way of writing ' $p$ ' and could be used without the prefix 'It is asserted' to make an assertion. The criticism of §22(a) applies no less to Frege's own notation than to any putative translation of it into natural language.

Not surprisingly, Frege's correlative expression of the assertion-sign is equally defective. His claims that '⊢' contains the act of assertion and that '⊢ *p*' asserts something are confused. A sign *is not itself* a use; it must *be used*. The inscription '⊢ *p*' does not *contain* the act of assertion, and it can only be said to assert something if it is used to assert something. If one writes '⊢ 5 > 4' on a blackboard as an example of a proposition of *Begriffsschrift*, one has not thereby asserted that 5 is greater than 4.

§22(b) reduces the idea that every assertion really contains a that-clause conveying its content to absurdity. Since every asserted sentence '*p*' can be rewritten in the form 'Is it the case that *p*? Yes', we could with equal cogency conclude that every asserted sentence contains a question. Indeed, we could mimic the schema

It is asserted	that <i>p</i>
⊢	<i>assumption (Annahme)</i>

with the parallel schema

Is it the case that <i>p</i> ?	Yes.
<i>question</i>	⊢

§22(c) notes that we can introduce the symbol '⊢' into a sentence as a punctuation mark, parallel to a question-mark, to indicate the use of the sentence to make an assertion rather than to ask a question. This sign would correspond to familiar marks of discourse function (e.g. punctuation marks, intonation contours, word-order and moods of verbs). There is a mistake only if one further thinks, as Frege did, that asserting (or perhaps, better, judging) consists of two actions: entertaining a thought and assigning it a truth-value (which pair of actions must be reflected in a perspicuous symbolism for assertion). According to Frege's account, the act of assertion is the externalization of the interior act of judgement. The symbol '⊢*p*', considered merely as the expression of a thought, corresponds to the act of entertaining the thought that *p*, and '⊢' corresponds to assigning a truth-value, i.e. judging it to be true. W.'s response is compact. Frege supposes that in performing these acts, we follow the propositional sign, i.e. the unasserted proposition, as we sing from a musical score, and then, in addition, we may perform the act of judging it to be true and perhaps exteriorize this act in an assertion. One might indeed compare *reading* a sentence to singing from a musical score. But one cannot compare reading a sentence and *meaning* it (i.e. reading it aloud as an expression of what one takes to be so) to singing from a score *plus* an interior act.

§22(d) notes that Frege's assertion-sign is in effect a form of punctuation marking the beginning of a sentence and distinguishing a whole period from a subordinate clause within it. This is not a criticism of Frege (MS 109 (Vol. VI), 199; MS 115 (Vol. XI), 87). Nor is the idea original with W. — Russell noted

this too (PM 8). The comparison with punctuation is illuminating: we could describe ‘┌’ as having the same use as the full stop at the end of a preceding sentence or the capital letter at the beginning of the sentence (MS 109 (Vol. VI), 199). (A parallel with the punctuation ‘┌ . . . ’ for declarative sentences would be the pattern of punctuation for questions in Spanish: ‘¿ . . . ?’.) In general, declarative sentences are punctuated with full stops and are typically used to assert, while interrogative sentences are punctuated with question-marks and are typically used to question. Comparing ‘┌’ with punctuation marks, however, gives only a partial account of its grammar. It leaves open many questions: e.g. whether the translation into Frege’s concept-script of a declarative sentence used by a fictional character in *The Brothers Karamazov* to make an assertion should be prefixed with ‘┌’ (MS 113 (Vol. IX), 48v–49r).

- 1.1 (i) ‘Annahme’: W. signified dissatisfaction with Rhees’s translation ‘supposal’ and restored Frege’s German term in TS 226<sub>R</sub> §27 (for discussion of Frege’s use of ‘Annahme’, see exegesis of the boxed remark following §22 (previously *Randbemerkung* on p. 11)).

(ii) ‘to distinguish an assertion from a fiction or supposition’: it is doubtful whether there could be a ‘fiction-operator’ or whether the assertion-sign could be dropped from fiction; and suppositions are expressed by incomplete sentences.

- 2 (i) MS 113 (Vol. IX), 48r–49r (cf. BT 206–9) compares assertion/assumption with chess move/illustrating a chess move in a discussion. One cannot utter a sentence ‘*p*’ as an assumption or supposition without a sequel, i.e. ‘Assuming that *p*, then . . . ’ and ‘Suppose it were the case that *p*’ are incomplete sentences.

W. further observes that Frege conceived of the ‘assumption’ as what the assertion that *p* and the question whether *p* have in common. But instead of ‘Is it the case that *p*?’ one can say ‘I would like to know whether *p*’ — and how is this question to be handled?

On p. 50r W. queries whether the Fregean assumption that *p* would not have to be identical with the assumption that not-*p*, just as the question ‘Is it the case that *p*?’ is the same as ‘Isn’t it the case that *p*?’ It is senseless to say (as Frege was committed to saying) that a question is either true or false, or to attach a negation sign to it, or to say that it agrees or disagrees with reality.

Then follows a draft of §22(c), in which performing the putative acts of entertaining and asserting conceived as following the propositional sign is compared with playing the piano from a score. One can compare reading loudly or quietly from a written text with playing the piano from a score, but not what we call thinking [i.e. expressing what we think by an utterance]. If there were, for example, an assertion-sign in the written text, then one would read it with an assertion-*sign* (e.g. in one’s tone or emphasis), but not as if the assertion-sign were present in the sentence, and the meaning or thinking the sentence were in thought. (Cf. MS 113, 86f.: the signs in a sentence are not signals of a psychical ‘mental’ activity of meaning.)



(ii) RFM 116 observes:

The great majority of sentences that we speak, write and read are assertoric sentences (*Behauptungssätze*) . . . these sentences are true or false. Or . . . the game of truth-functions is played with them. For assertion is not something that gets added to the proposition, but an essential feature of the game we play with it. Comparable, say, to the characteristic of chess by which there is winning and losing in it . . .

Asserting something does not contain two separable acts: entertaining a proposition and asserting it. If such a decomposition were possible, then there would be only an external relation between propositions and assertions; propositions could be characterized independently of assertions, and it would just happen that we assert only propositions (and not e.g. WH-questions). The analogy with chess is meant to stress that the connection is internal. Just as we cannot characterize such a game without specifying what counts as winning in it, so we cannot characterize propositions (what are true and false, what we play the game of truth-functions with) independently of assertion. An assertion no more consists in an assumption and the asserting of it than a command consists in a proposal and the commanding of it.

(iii) MS 116 (Vol. XII), 321, notes that it is possible to utter an assertoric sentence (e.g. ‘It is raining’) without making an assertion, e.g. in reading a poem. Whether or not the utterance is an assertion depends on the ‘circumstances (the spatial and temporal setting)’ in which it is spoken (not on whether the speaker performs certain mental acts accompanying its utterance).

2.1 (i) ‘Ungefähr wie wir nach Noten singen’: W. frequently employs the analogy of singing from sheet music to illustrate what he means by ‘accompaniment’ in arguments demonstrating that meaning something by an utterance is not a psychic accompaniment of saying something (BB 35, 42; PG 130).

Imagine people who *sing* all sentences (assertions, questions, etc.) when they *mean* them, and are not only practising their pronunciation, or such-like.

Of the sung sentence they say ‘it is alive’, of the unsung one, ‘it is dead’.

If these men philosophized about the concept of meaning something, they would be inclined to say: ‘meaning something’ means ‘singing (it)’. (MS 116 (Vol. XII), 316)

(ii) ‘It distinguishes the whole period . . .’: MS 115, 86f. (and hence MS 142, §23) continues thus: ‘This is important. For our philosophical difficulties concerning the nature of “negation” and “thinking” in a sense are due to the fact that we don’t realize that an assertion “ $\vdash$  not  $p$ ” or “ $\vdash$  I believe  $p$ ”, and the assertion “ $\vdash p$ ” have “ $p$ ” in common, but not “ $\vdash p$ ”’ (W.’s corrected translation, TS 226<sub>R</sub> §29; see Z §684).

3 Though he derived the idea and the symbolism from Frege, Russell’s explanation of the assertion-sign differed somewhat from Frege’s:

The sign ‘┊’ . . . means that what follows is asserted. It is required for distinguishing a complete proposition, which we assert, from any subordinate propositions contained in it but not asserted. In ordinary written language a sentence contained between full stops denotes an asserted proposition . . . The sign ‘┊’ prefixed to a proposition serves this same purpose in our symbolism. (PM 8)

Russell thus introduces ‘┊’ as a punctuation mark, and he notes its importance by using it to explain what it is to make an inference by *modus ponens* (PM 8). Later he correlated his use of the assertion-sign with an analysis of assertion identical with that criticized in PI §22(a)–(b):

Any proposition may be either asserted or merely considered. . . . In language, we indicate when a proposition is merely considered by ‘if so-and-so’ or ‘that so-and-so’ or merely by inverted commas. In symbols, if  $p$  is a proposition,  $p$  by itself will stand for the unasserted proposition, while the asserted proposition will be designated by ‘┊.p.’. The sign ‘┊’ . . . may be read ‘it is true that’ (although philosophically this is not exactly what it means). (PM 92)

This contains echoes of Frege’s account; it puts forward that-clauses as the proper expression for the content of assertions; and it intimates the reasoning underlying the claim that a proposition (i.e. an unasserted proposition) is an incomplete symbol, completed only by the *act* of judgement (PM 44).

#### BOXED REMARK FOLLOWING §22 (p. 11n.)

- 1 This remark, immediately derived from B i §432, was inserted into TS 227(a) and (b) as a handwritten slip in another hand, on which there is a note ‘Insertion at the end of §22’. None of the earlier versions of this remark contains the last sentence. It was presumably added by W. when he inserted the slip into the (now lost) top copy of the typescript, elaborating Frege’s notion of *Annahme*.

The earlier versions of this remark (MS 113 (Vol. IX), 29r; MS 115 (Vol. XI), 58f. (and the derived TSS versions)) and the correlative introduction of the term ‘Satzradikal’ occur in a different argumentative context: namely, the discussion of what a rule is and how the formulation of a rule differs from a factual proposition (cf. PLP 144). In each case, the discussion of proposition-radicals is separate from the discussion of the distinction between using sentences to make assertions, ask questions, formulate suppositions, etc. The point of the argument is to deny that the formulation of a rule (e.g. the chess rule: ‘Each queen stands on its own colour (in the initial position)’) is, as it stands, an assertion of fact. But this sentence forms a nucleus for constructing sentences that are factual propositions: e.g. ‘In chess each queen stands on its own colour’ or ‘The rule that each queen stands on its own colour was not observed in Norway until 1459’. It is this that W. meant to highlight by the analogy with the picture of the boxer. In isolation a picture *says* nothing; it makes no

assertion. But it can be used to make a variety of assertions when combined with other signs. A rule-formulation is similar: it has no use by itself as an assertion, but may be a part of sentences that do have such a use. This parallel between the picture of the boxer and the rule-formulation is captured in the simile of a radical in chemistry. A sentence-radical cannot be used by itself to make an assertion, but can be part of sentences used to make assertions.

The final sentence gives this old remark a new application: namely, to elucidate one aspect of Frege's conception of the 'assumption' (the thought, the content of an assertion). It is crucial to the rationale of his concept-script that the proper expression of a thought (e.g. ' $2 + 3 = 5$ ') *cannot* be used by itself to make an assertion (see Exg. §22). Consequently, it is an essential part of Frege's conception of assertion that the correct expression of a thought be a sentence-radical, not a sentence. The purpose of this boxed remark is merely to emphasize this point, since it is what is criticized in §22(a).

It would be mistaken to associate this afterthought about Frege's *Annahme* with approval of philosophical attempts to construe sentences as decomposable into a mood-operator (or force-indicator) and content-phrase. The analysis of sentence-meaning by means of mood-operators ('!', '?') and 'sentence-radicals' takes as its model Frege's isolation of the unasserted thought as the common content of an assertion and its corresponding sentence-question. But this is precisely what W. repudiated in §22.

That by itself a picture says nothing, though it can be used together with other signs to make assertions, has a parallel in illustrations of stories (cf. PI §663). What the illustration is an illustration of is determined by the story, not vice versa.

- 1.1 (i) '(chemisch gesprochen) ein Satzradikal nennen': what W. understood by 'Radikal' ('radical') in chemistry is what is now expressed by the term 'Gruppe' ('group'). These are certain combinations of elements that recur as constituents of more complex compounds although they have no independent existence, e.g. the ethyl group  $C_2H_5$  and the hydroxyl group OH combine together to form ethyl alcohol  $C_2H_5(OH)$ . So 'a sentence-radical' must be a combination of elements recurring as a constituent of sentences though not itself a sentence. This fits rule-formulations. They are not characterizable as 'true' or 'false', they do not express propositions, and cannot be used to make assertions. This would not be true of typical declarative sentences (descriptions). They do express propositions and may be used to make assertions when uttered in isolation. Therefore, the thesis that the content of every assertion is expressed by a proposition-radical requires that the expression of its content be something other than a declarative sentence, e.g. a sentence-question or a that-clause. This is the thesis discredited in §22(a)–(b).

(ii) 'Annahme': In published writings, Frege only once (FC 21f. (149f.)) used the term 'Annahme' in connection with what he initially called 'the content of judgement' and later 'the thought'. However, W. does stick close to Frege's

account. His explanation of *Annahme* as what is common to an assertion and the corresponding sentence-question conforms exactly to Frege's explanation of the thought (BT 207), and W. there adds a bracket after 'Annahme': viz. '(so wie er das Wort gebraucht)' ('(as he uses the word)'). This suggests that Frege sometimes used 'Annahme' as a technical term in the exposition of his conception. So too does W.'s insertion of the German term in correcting Rhees's translation (TS 226<sub>R</sub> §27). The most plausible conjecture is that Frege used this term *in conversation* with W.

Note that W.'s observation does not assert that Frege holds there to be an assumption in common to the sentences 'You should stand thus-and-so', 'You should not stand thus-and-so', and 'B did stand thus-and-so at place C and time D', even though each of these utterances might correspond to one use of the picture of the boxer. There is only an *analogy* between the picture and the expression of Frege's assumption.

2.1 'Annahme': W. gives two other criticisms of Frege's thesis that every assertion contains an assumption.

(i) If we represent the sentence-question corresponding to ' $\vdash p$ ' by the symbol '?  $p$ ', then the assumption that  $p$  is what '?  $p$ ' and ' $\vdash p$ ' have in common (BT 207). But the question '?  $p$ ' is commonly identical with the question '?  $\sim p$ '.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, the assumption that  $p$  must be identical with the assumption that not- $p$  (BT 208; PLP 302, cf. 405f.) — which is absurd. It also conflicts with Frege's thesis that the assertion and denial that  $p$  are the performance of the same act (assertion) on *different* 'contents of judgement' (the assumptions that  $p$  and that not- $p$  respectively) (N 152ff. (382ff.)).

(ii) It is, of course, possible to express suppositions and to argue from them,<sup>16</sup> but Frege's distinction between assumption and assertion misconstrues this. An actual assumption is typically expressed by a sentence of the form 'Suppose that  $p$  were the case'. But such a sentence is incomplete. Someone who makes a supposition must go on to do something with it, to draw consequences from it (BT 208; see Exg. §22, 2(i)). Making a supposition is not something that can be done in isolation from making inferences: *a fortiori*, not something derivable from an assertion by subtracting the act of assertion, as implied by Frege (FC 21f. (149f.)). Moreover, if 'Suppose that  $p$  is the case' is the typical form for expressing a supposition, it is obvious that there is no *supposition* contained in the analysis of an asserted sentence and common to the assertion that  $p$  and the supposition that  $p$ ; nor does a conditional contain a supposition in its antecedent.

<sup>15</sup> This argument is problematic. It is discussed in an early unpublished work by Frege (NS 8, PW 7f.).

<sup>16</sup> A complication: Frege sometimes argues that it is only possible to make inferences from thoughts acknowledged to be true (e.g. N 145 (375)). Hence he treats an argument from an assumption as the assertion of a hypothetical. This complication is ignored here.

## SECTION 23

1 §23(a) opens with the query of how many kinds of sentence there are, and considers the answer: assertion, question and command. This answer is unsatisfactory, since these are not kinds of sentence, but kinds of use of sentences that more or less correspond to the standard discourse functions of declarative, interrogative and imperative sentences. W. too rejects the answer, but not for this reason. His response is that there are *countless* kinds — but he switches from ‘kinds of sentences’ to ‘kinds of uses of sentences’. One may object that these are distinct questions. Furthermore, both are insufficiently determined, since we need to be told what is to count as a kind of sentence, and also what is to count as a kind of use of a sentence.

W.’s answer is rendered even less clear by his response ‘countless different kinds of use of what we call “signs”, “words”, “sentences”’, which rolls together kinds of use of words and of sentences, and so masks the differences between different ways of classifying words and their uses and sentences and their uses. Why ‘countless’? Presumably because the classification (of uses of sentences?) will depend on our purposes — we can classify according to different sorts of similarity and difference (cf. PLP 97, 298). The claim is rendered more unclear by W.’s attempt to explain the variety he discerns by reference to the notion of the ever-changing diversity of *language-games*. For the question of how many language-games there are is not the same as the two questions ‘How many kinds of sentence are there?’ and ‘How many kinds of use of sentences are there?’

§23(c) (the source of which differs from (a) and (b))<sup>17</sup> lists a number of language-games. It is unclear what principle of classification (if any) is employed. It is not obvious, e.g., that requesting and thanking, which are speech-acts, are on the same level as forming and testing a hypothesis or as acting on-stage, which are not.

We are then invited to compare this list with what logicians and the *Tractatus* say about the structure of language. The *Tractatus* was oblivious to uses of language other than assertoric, and mistakenly held that all assertoric uses of language depicted states of affairs and asserted their existence.

- 1.1 (i) ‘how many kinds of sentence are there?’: Assertion, question and command are not classifications of kinds of sentences. These categories are the internal accusatives of the use of a sentence to assert, query or command. But one might classify sentences into syntactic kinds: namely, declarative, interrogative and imperative — these being syntactic kinds with standard discourse functions (not happily captured by ‘assertion, question and command’). But, of course, one can classify sentences into kinds in accord with many different

<sup>17</sup> For §23(c)–(d) see MS 152, 47, and BT 209r; cf. MS 115 (Vol. XI), 87f. The various paragraphs were brought together in MS 142, §24, where there are two drafts.

principles of classification other than syntactic type (e.g. mathematical as opposed to non-mathematical, ethical as opposed to non-ethical, empirical, etc.).

(ii) ‘assertion, question and command’: It is true that the declarative sentence is *also* used for purposes other than assertion, the interrogative for purposes other than questioning, and the imperative for purposes other than ordering. It does not follow that there is not a systematic relation between syntactic type of sentence and standard discourse function (see ‘Descriptions and the uses of sentences’, sect. 4).

(iii) ‘oder eine Lebensform’: W. corrected this to ‘part of a way of living of human beings’ (TS 226<sub>R</sub> §30).

(iv) ‘what logicians have said’: for discussion of Frege and Russell, see ‘The Augustinian conception of language’, sects 4–5. To be sure, the author of the *Tractatus* was committed to the primacy of description and assertion.

- 2.1 ‘the variety of language-games’: the list was carefully worked over (see n. 17), but no clear principle of classification is evident.

## SECTION 24

- 1 Failure to note the diversity of language-games is alleged to incline one to assimilate questions to statements and descriptions. Philosophers have indeed taken the assertoric function as primary relative to other discourse functions. It is not obvious that this resulted merely from failure to attend to the multiplicity of language-games. It often had more theory-laden roots. The standard temptation in the late twentieth century was to assign primacy to the notions of truth and truth-conditions in a general theory of meaning. This idea had its roots in Frege and Russell (see ‘Descriptions and the uses of sentences’, sects 1 and 3).

One might hold that more careful attention to the multiplicity of language-games would make one less tempted to hold that questions are forms of statements or of descriptions. That, however, is unlikely, unless one has already broken the hold of the temptation — which requires an account of why philosophers and logicians are so tempted in the first place.

A question, which is standardly asked by using the interrogative sentence-form, is not a statement of ignorance, or a statement that the speaker wishes to be informed, let alone a description of a mental state. But if, like Frege, one is inclined to conceive of every sentence as containing a sense-conveying, truth-value-bearing sentence-radical, one may think that the role of the force-indicator ‘Is it the case’ is to indicate the speaker’s attitude towards the descriptive content — an attitude of ignorance regarding its truth, or of wanting to know whether it is true, or of uncertainty regarding its truth-value.

W. follows his three rhetorical questions with a fourth, evidently intended to reduce the temptation to absurdity: ‘Is the cry “Help!” also a description

of a mental state?’ Questions are no more statements than pleas are descriptions, although one may make clear how one holds things to be by a rhetorical question.

§24(b) points out that ‘description’ does not signify a uniform use of sentences (cf. PI §291 and Exg.). So even where a sentence can be said to describe, it may nevertheless be doing very different things that belong to distinct language-games (describing a scene, the impression of a scene, how one imagines a scene, how one wants a scene to be painted or built, the scene in a dream, etc.). The assumption that the role of the assertion is descriptive and the assumption of the logical uniformity of description run deep, and characterized the *Tractatus*.

§24(c) makes the point that the possibility of transforming every question into the form of an assertion does not prove that questions are disguised assertions. It no more shows that there is no distinction between these uses of sentences than the possibility of explaining every word by stating what it signifies shows that there are no distinctions between how words function. It is either false or vacuous that all sentences are descriptions, just as it is either false or vacuous that all words are names (cf. Exg. §10). (This is akin to the dilemma facing the solipsist.)

- 1.1 ‘... will become clearer in another place’: This promise is not redeemed (although solipsism is mentioned in §§402–3).
- 2.1 (i) ‘What is a question?’: PLP ch. XX discusses the logic of questions (it is unknown how much of this was W.’s work).
  - (ii) ‘called “description”’: MS 116 (Vol. XII), 216, notes that even what are called ‘descriptions of a house’ may have different applications: e.g. the description of the location and appearance of the house of an actual person, the description of a house in a story, and the description of a house which somebody is to imagine (also an architect’s plan).
  - (iii) ‘the cry “Help”’: BT 202 and MS 115 (Vol. XI), 83, elaborate: if a drowning man cries ‘Help!’, is he stating the fact that he needs help? That without help he will drown?
  - (iv) ‘(solipsism)’: from the 1938 Preface, we know that this was to have been discussed in the book, as it had been in PR ch. VI, BT §§101ff., and BB 57ff. TS 239, §29, has ‘(idealism)’ here, which was changed to ‘(solipsism)’ only in TS 227.

## SECTION 25

- 1 Augustine, according to W., conceived of language as a means for expressing thoughts (see Exg. §1), and of thinking as antecedent to, and in principle independent of, mastery of a language (PI §32). It is in accord with this

misconception that the fact that beasts do not speak is often explained by lack of mental capacity, i.e. an inability to think. This embodies two mistakes: (i) asserting, questioning, etc. are conceived to be consequences of performing a mental act (otherwise the question of mental powers would not arise (§25 is thus linked with §22(c)). (ii) The primary criteria for denying that animals can think other than in the most rudimentary manner is precisely that they do not speak, so the putative explanation that they do not speak *because* they do not think is vacuous. Language is *misrepresented* as a means humans discovered to be useful for communicating thoughts.

Animals do not use language. We do. Using language is engaging in linguistic activities, e.g. giving orders, asking questions, telling stories, chatting, that are features of our natural history. No such language-games are played by animals.

- 1.1 (i) ‘. . . they simply do not talk . . . they do not use language’: This rephrasal emphasizes the integration of speaking with action. MS 115 (Vol. XI), 90, interspersed here: ‘they do not play any language-games’.
- (ii) ‘if we disregard the most primitive forms’: e.g. animal cries of warning (often selective for different kinds of predator), of threat, anger, sexual arousal, etc. To what extent these may, after all, *not* approximate primitive forms of language is touched on in PI §493, see Exg.
- 2 (i) Z §§518 ff. (= MS 136, 128) notes the fact that some concepts are applicable only to beings that possess a language (cf. PI §§250, 650, p. 174/148).
- (ii) PLP 134f. notes that the application of the concept of command becomes increasingly indeterminate the more the organisms addressed differ from human beings.

## SECTION 26

- 1 This extracts from §25 an important consequence for the Augustinian conception. Understanding an utterance requires grasping its use and hence mastery of a pattern of speech and action. Other things being equal, understanding a word involves knowing how it is used in making moves in a language-game. Therefore, grasping the technique of using sentences is fundamental for understanding the meanings of words. The Augustinian conception inverts this. According to it, one comes to know what a word means simply by learning what it stands for. Understanding a sentence is presumed to involve nothing more than knowing what each of its components names (and their mode of combination). This presupposes that the use of sentences flows from correlating its words with things. But, as has been shown, not even one-word sentences consisting of a name of an object (‘Slab’, ‘Slab!’, ‘Slab?’) fit this conception.

Naming something is a *preparation* for using a word (more generally, establishing the grammar of an expression is a preparation for applying it (cf.



PLP 13f)). What is basic to learning language is learning to say things, to query, call, agree, deny, beg, order, etc. (see ‘Contextual dicta and contextual principles’ sect. 4).

### SECTION 27(a)

- 1 (a) continues §26. According to the Augustinian conception, naming is a preparation for talking about, *referring to*, things. W. makes three responses: (i) The possibility of referring to things does not flow from the mere act of naming. We do talk about things; but this is merely one of many speech-acts that must be learnt. Naming is neither a preparation for this alone; nor is learning a name sufficient for being able to talk about something (a baby learns the name ‘Mama’, and learns to call its mother, long before it can *talk about* its mother). (ii) There is no *one thing* called ‘talking about’. Compare talking about how things are, how they seem to be, how they seem to one to be, how they were, how they will be, how they should be, how they might have been, how they would be if . . . , etc. In each case very different kinds of language-games are involved. (iii) The range of speech activities is manifold. This is true even of one-word exclamations. The differences in use patently do not flow from what the words are correlated with, and the exclamations do not refer to objects.

§27(a) and (b) are separate remarks in MS 142 and TS 220. (b) opens the discussion of names and ostensive definition.

- 2 What immediately follows PI §27(a) in BT 209v and MS 115 (Vol. XI), 91f., is PI §257. This emphasizes that the act of naming a sensation makes sense only against a background knowledge of the grammar of sensation-words, i.e. mastery of their uses in the language-game.



