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Did Wittgenstein ever take the Linguistic Turn?

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It is generally taken for granted that Wittgenstein figures amongst the most prominent philosophers of the bygone century who executed the Linguistic Turn within Analytic Philosophy, which marked a break with the conception of analysis, advocated e.g. by G.E. Moore and B. Russell. The analysis which he elaborated in his first major work, the *Tractatus*, was *linguistic*. It was analysis not of ideas, as in classical empiricist analysis, or of concepts, conceived of universals that can be inspected by the mind, but of propositions. Hacker lists six different respects in which the *Tractatus* can be regarded as taking the Linguistic Turn¹. First by setting the “limits of language”, that means, determining the “bounds between sense and nonsense”. Secondly, by formulating the positive task for future philosophy, “logical clarification of thoughts” by means of “logico-linguistic analysis of propositions”. Thirdly, through the negative programme for future philosophy, “to demonstrate the illegitimacy of metaphysical assertions” by showing how the incriminated sentences transgress the bounds of sense. Fourthly, by determining the essential nature of the “propositional *sign*”, which was achieved by the elucidation of the “general propositional form”.² Fifthly, through the logical investigation of ‘phenomena’ by “logical analysis of the linguistic descriptions of phenomena”. Sixthly, through the “elucidation of the nature of logical truth”, i.e., their character as mere tautologies.

With the abandonment of much of the *Tractatus* doctrines which imposed a priori restrictions on our use of symbols, Wittgenstein rejected the concept of “new-level analysis” in favor of “same-level analysis”,³ that means, he gave up the idea that the expressions of our language have a hidden logical syntax lurking behind their historico-grammatical surface, acknowledging the fact that our language, as it stands, is in perfect logical order, although sometimes unperceptible, where ‘unperceptible’ simply means that it facilitates the formulation of philosophical questions

¹ P.M.S. Hacker: *Wittgenstein’s Place in Twentieth Century Analytic Philosophy*, Oxford 1996, 37f

² *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, transl. David Pears/ Brian McGuinness, London 1961, section 4.5

³ Hacker (1996) 82

and theses. With this shift, Hacker thinks, Wittgenstein had “completed the ‘linguistic turn’, which had begun with the *Tractatus*”⁴.

Rorty’s story of 20th Century Linguistic Philosophy

The phrase ‘the linguistic turn’ was coined by Gustav Bergmann⁵ but became a slogan only in 1967 when Richard Rorty used it as a title of his famous anthology in which he retraced the decisive steps of what he considered at that time as the “most recent philosophical revolution”, that of “linguistic philosophy”.⁶ The relevant passage in Bergmann runs as following:

All linguistic philosophers talk about the world by means of talking about a suitable language. This is the linguistic turn, the fundamental gambit as to method, on which ordinary and ideal language philosophers (OLP, ILP) agree. Equally fundamentally, they disagree on what it is in this sense a “language” and what it makes “suitable”. Clearly one may execute the turn. The question is why one should. Why is it not merely a tedious roundabout? I shall mention three reasons...

First. Words are used either ordinarily (commonsensically) or philosophically. On this distinction, above all, the method rests. The prelinguistic philosophers did not make it. Yet they used words philosophically. *Prima facie* such uses are unintelligible. They require commonsensical explication. The method insists that we provide it... *Second.* Much of the paradox, absurdity, and opacity of prelinguistic philosophy stems from failure to distinguish between speaking and speaking about speaking. Such failure, or confusion, is harder to avoid than one may think. The method is the safest way of avoiding it. *Third.* Some things any conceivable language merely shows. Not that these things are literally “ineffable”; rather, the proper (and safe) way of speaking about them is to speak about (the syntax and interpretation of a) language...⁷

Although the focus of Bergmann’s talk is methodological reform, which bears some resemblance to Quine’s strategy of semantic ascent, that means, the “shift from talk of objects to talk of words”,⁸ his recommendations betray a deep distaste for traditional modes of thinking, or perhaps even a prejudice against the role of philosophy itself. To execute the Linguistic Turn would be more than simply adopting the new method. One would have to subscribe to a substantial metaphilosophical thesis, namely, as Rorty puts it, “that philosophical problems are problems which may be sol-

⁴ Ibid. 85

⁵ Logic and Reality, Madison 1964, 177

⁶ Richard Rorty: The Linguistic Turn. Recent Essays in Philosophical Method, Chicago 1967, 3

⁷ Cit. in Rorty (1967) 8f

⁸ W.v.O. Quine: Word and Object, Cambridge 1960, 271f

ved (or dissolved) either by reforming language, or by understanding more about the language we presently use".⁹ The divide does not run between adherents of Ideal Language and Ordinary Language but between traditionally minded philosophers and linguistic philosophers. The common ground shared by Ideal Language Philosophy and Ordinary Language Philosophy is, according to Rorty, the preoccupation with a language in which we can say everthing we want to say, but in which we cannot ask any philosophical question or put forward any philosophical thesis. This possibility would be sufficient to show that the traditional view of philosophy was *false*, namely the view that "common sense, and/ or the sciences *present* us with philosophical problems".¹⁰ Rorty's source again is Bergmann who is constructing a sketch of an 'ideal language' without any reference to 'logical syntax' or 'logical grammar' in a technical sense:

An improved language is called ideal if and only if it is thought to fulfill *three conditions*: (1) Every nonphilosophical proposition can in principle be transcribed into it; (2) No unreconstructed philosophical one can; (3) All philosophical propositions can be reconstructed as statements about its syntax... and interpretation.¹¹

To say, on this view, that philosophical questions are questions of language, is just to say that there are philosophical questions we ask, because we speak the language we do. But we do not have to speak the language we do, unless we want to ask philosophical questions. If an 'ideal language', in the Bergmannian sense, could be constructed, we would be freed from the pressure, or temptation, to ask questions we actually do when we philosophize. The traditional philosopher could reply in saying, that the Bergmannian ideal language would not adequately represent reality, on the *sole* ground that one could not philosophize in it. But this would be a feeble argument. On the other hand, philosophers are, at least until now, real. The Bergmannian language would not be fully ideal, unless it permitted us to understand, or to reconstruct, what philosophers want to discuss. Bergmann's third condition is designed to meet this objection.

Rorty, and Bergmann, take the view that philosophical problems are problems of language as the "least common denominator" of the metaphilosophical positions of both camps in analytic philosophy, Ideal Language Philosophy and Ordinary Language Philosophy, sometimes labeled as 'Oxford Philosophy'. The only difference between both camps, "as has often been (somewhat crudely, but fairly accurately) said,... is a disagreement about which language is Ideal".¹² Rorty believes that the proponents of Ordinary Language can easily embrace Bergmann's practical argu-

⁹ Rorty (1967) 3

¹⁰ Ibid. 6

¹¹ Cit. in Rorty (1967) 6

¹² Ibid. 12

ments as adequate reasons for taking the Linguistic Turn, without being forced to construct Ideal Languages. Their refusal to do so “stems from the hunch that ordinary English (or, more precisely, ordinary English minus philosophical discourse) may fulfill Bergmann’s requirements for being an Ideal Language”.¹³ This allegation needs further clarification:

From the traditional logical positivist point of view, the suggestion that ordinary English (or, indifferently, ordinary German, or Greek, or Tagalog) is Ideal sounds absurd, for was it not precisely the unperspicuous character of ordinary English which originally permitted the formulation of the traditional problems of philosophy?... To this, Ordinary Language Philosophy replies, that philosophical problems arise not because English is unperspicuous (it is not), but rather because philosophers have not used English. They have formulated their problems in what *looks* like ordinary English, but have in fact misused the language by using terms jargonistically (while relying on the ordinary connotations of these terms)... If Ordinary Language Philosophy had an explicit program (which it does not), it might run something like this: we shall show that any argument designed to demonstrate that common sense (or the conjunction of common sense and science) produces problems which it cannot answer by itself (and which therefore must be answered by philosophers, if by anyone), is an argument which uses terms in unusual ways. If philosophers would use words as the plain man uses them, they would not be able to raise such problems.¹⁴

The story Rorty tells us here bears strong resemblance to Stanley Cavell’s account of the second phase of 20th century Analytic Philosophy, the turn to Ordinary Language.

Stanley Cavell’s historical sketch of Ordinary Language Philosophy

Cavell opens his portrayal with Russell’s contemporary at Cambridge, G.E. Moore who, neither trained as logician nor as scientist, displayed his sense of humour when faced with a traditional metaphysical thesis, by asking ‘What on earth can anyone mean by saying *that?*’. “If a philosopher were to say, ‘There are no material things’, Moore would consider it enough to show that he *knew* this to be false by saying, ‘Here’s one human hand and here’s another; so there are at least two material things’; or if the philosopher said, ‘Time is unreal’, Moore would be ready with, ‘If you mean that no event ever follows or precedes another event, you are certainly wrong; for

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

*after lunch I went for a walk, and after that I took a bath, and after that I had tea'.*¹⁵ Such responses are not likely to explain the influence Moore had for many years in English philosophy. It was no novelty to point one's finger at the fact that philosophical theses or conclusions often contradict our common beliefs about the world, e.g., denying that we can see physical objects, or ever *know* that other persons have the same feelings and thoughts we do, that we are *not* dreaming or hallucinating our present experiences, etc. Philosophers have always acknowledged the tension between common sense and philosophy, which did not hinder them from embracing 'revisionary' answers at the expense of everyday beliefs. Moore simply shifted the burden of proof from the 'plain man' to 'philosophers'. As Cavell puts it, "what Moore's work began to suggest is that in the conflict with common belief, philosophy is wrong; that instead of philosophy's results overthrowing common belief, an appeal to those beliefs and the language in which they are expressed (ordinary language, the language in which philosophy itself is mostly expressed) shows that the philosopher cannot literally or fully have meant what he said. What on earth can he mean?"¹⁶

After the Second World War philosophers like Gilbert Ryle and J.L. Austin combined Moore's dislike of traditional modes of thinking and a hitherto uncommon skill in describing 'linguistic facts' into a movement known as 'Oxford Ordinary Language Philosophy'. Cavell is suggesting that the term 'ordinary', in their work, meant simply that the words, problems, and examples discussed are not be chosen from the philosophical repertoire. "Instead of rehearsing yet again what the hero of Beckett's *Endgame* calls 'the old questions, the old answers', these philosophers took ordinary questions, with new examples, sensible examples, and gave ordinary, sensible answers to them".¹⁷ What is called a philosophical problem has to be humanly interesting. Philosophy should not think about something other than what ordinary human beings think about, or call into question. No person in his right mind, or in his ordinary frame of mind, asks questions like 'Does the piece of wax in front of me exist?', 'Are the people on the street automatons wearing hats?'. The shift of interest with respect to traditional problems does not imply that Ordinary Language Philosophy was designed to be a defense of ordinary beliefs, such as the belief that there are material objects, other minds, etc. The philosophy of G.E. Moore may be so characterized. But for Austin, and Wittgenstein, a connection between common sense and philosophy is itself an instance of the philosophical prejudice their work is meant to bring to light, because it is a departure from ordinary language to claim either that I do or that I do not believe that there are material objects, other minds, etc. It would thus be incoherent to deliver a defense of such a belief. Our ordinary sayings, and

¹⁵ Stanley Cavell: *Existentialism and Analytical Philosophy*, in: *Themes out of School*, Chicago 1988, 195-234; 210f

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 211

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 211f

beliefs, are equidistant from the theses of Idealists, Solipsists, and Realists¹⁸. However, does that mean that the ordinary, or everyday, is a point of view, and that thinking itself is a philosophical distortion?¹⁹

What philosophers like Austin or Ryle did mean by 'ordinary' is not easy to determine. Hacker points out that Ryle, already in 1953,²⁰ considered it necessary to distinguish between the 'use of ordinary language', the 'ordinary use of language', and 'ordinary linguistic usage', since there can be misuses, but no misusages, "any more than there can be miscustoms or misvogues".²¹ Ordinary language, or ordinary expressions, are to be contrasted with elaborated, technical, esoteric or archaic language or expressions of a language. Ordinary, or natural, language may also be distinguished from formal or notional language. The ordinary, or standard, use of language, on the other hand, rivals with its non-standard, figurative or metaphorical use. And there is no sharp boundary between what is common and uncommon, technical and non-technical, direct or metaphorical.

The predicament is, as Cavell puts it, that 'ordinary' has no standing, or obvious, contrast: "Ordinary as opposed to what - if not to scientific or religious or ethical or literary?" In his reading of Austin's work - Cavell passes over Ryle - "the contrast is with the philosophical (what Wittgenstein calls the metaphysical)... The errors or discrepancies or follies his appeals to ordinary language immediately counter are ones that philosophizing is apt to produce."²² The term 'ordinary' in 'ordinary language' or 'ordinary contexts' seems to be tantamount to "nonphilosophical language" and "nonphilosophical contexts".²³ Rorty is following in Cavell's wake when imputing to Oxford Philosophers the view, as we have seen, that philosophical problems arise not because (ordinary) English was unperspicuous, but rather because philosophers have not used English. What is in question are two modes or realms of discourse, the Ordinary and the Philosophical (in Wittgenstein's terminology: the Metaphysical). But this way of putting things is erroneous since it insinuates that the Philosophical were a discourse at all, pursuing interests of its own, as science, religion, art, politics, etc., are doing. For Austin and Wittgenstein, according to Cavell, "the philosophical is not a special mode of discourse... It has no interests of its own,... or it ought not to have. So its departures from the ordinary are not into specialties but... into emptiness. Compared with Wittgenstein, Austin has no account of this emptiness."²⁴

¹⁸ Cf. Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Philosophical Investigations*, transl. Elisabeth Anscombe, Oxford 1953 (abbreviation: "PI"), section 402

¹⁹ Cf. Stanley Cavell: *This New Yet Unapproachable America. Lectures after Emerson after Wittgenstein*, Albuquerque 1989, 35

²⁰ Gilbert Ryle: *Ordinary Language*, in: *Collected Papers*, vol. 2, London 1971, 301-318

²¹ Hacker (1996) 160

²² Stanley Cavell: *The Politics of Interpretation*, in: Cavell (1988), 27-59; 37

²³ Cavell (1988) 217

²⁴ Cavell (1988) 37

Wittgenstein as a philosopher of Metaphysical Language

The last remark is apt to reveal a difference between the central figure of Oxford Philosophy and Wittgenstein. As Cavell puts it, "Austin... has no theory of the origin of the metaphysical, of the human restlessness in the ordinary and its attraction to the beyond, not to mention the before. Wittgenstein can be said to have such a theory... [He] may accordingly be labelled as a philosopher of metaphysical language as accurately as a philosopher of ordinary language. Neither label, aimed at him, is accurate without the other...".²⁵ Cavell diagnoses in Austin's work a blindness to the depth and power of the issues traditional skepticism raises, and of the metaphysical attempts to contain it. In Wittgenstein's later thought similar limitations are absent. The *Philosophical Investigations* can be read as "providing a theory of the drive to metaphysics and of the possibility and necessity of skepticism".²⁶ In that book Wittgenstein says, "What we do is to bring back words from their metaphysical to their everyday use".²⁷ He obviously felt that in philosophy words were strayed into metaphysics, unhinged from their context, somehow, 'away' or lost, as if in exile, since the word seeks its *Heimat* - the "language-game which is its original home". It becomes a problem for him how this could happen, why it happened, and what there is about philosophy that allows it to happen. "None of the criticisms of the tradition produced by Moore or the Oxford philosophers or the positivists seemed him to be right, to do justice to the pain, the pervasiveness, even the mystery of that conflict."²⁸ Any partiality in that conflict would simplify matters since it is very unlikely that traditional philosophers 'have played tricks on us', that they have misused ordinary words of their language or changed the meanings of their words, that they have not meant quite seriously what they say. If one thinks that there is something wrong with the very way of philosophizing one has, at least, to acknowledge a dimension of the mind which insists on philosophy no matter how often its arguments have been proved senseless or void.

Kant was probably the first who made the diagnosis of reason's failures an internal feature of reconstructing reason's powers, developing terms of criticism that show reason to be subject to 'dialectical illusion'. In the preface to the first edition of his *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant speaks of the peculiar fate of human reason being "burdened by questions which, as prescribed by the very nature of reason itself, it is not able to ignore, but which, as transcending all its powers, it is not able to an-

²⁵ Stanley Cavell: What did Derrida want of Austin?, in: *Philosophical Passages*. Wittgenstein, Emerson, Austin, Derrida, Oxford 1995, 42-65; 61

²⁶ Cavell (1995) 78

²⁷ Section 116. The complete remark reads: "When philosophers use a word - 'knowledge', 'being', 'object', 'I', 'proposition', 'name' - and try to grasp the *essence* of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language-game which is its original home? - What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use."

²⁸ Cavell (1988) 215

swer”.²⁹ Wittgenstein is radically Kantian in this respect, but his modes of criticism are, as can be expected, specific to the kind of ‘unavoidable illusions’ he is absorbed with. Cavell uncovers in Part I of the *Investigations* a wide variety of “miniature dialogues” between its author and “nameless interlocutors who manifest over and over, from every direction and in all moods, those temptations or dissatisfactions or compulsions which drive ordinary men away from the everyday world and out to philosophy”.³⁰ Wittgenstein’s later thought aims at understanding what motivates ordinary human beings, say the philosophizing part of us, to speak ‘outside language games’ and to risk emptiness, violence and boredom. It becomes doubtful whether the problems philosophy is haunted by are merely problems of language, doomed to be solved, or dissolved, by understanding more about the language we presently use. We would consequently be mistaken in ascribing to Wittgenstein the view that language was the subject-matter of philosophy. As Moore, who took notes from Wittgenstein’s lectures in the early 30’s explains, “He did not think it was...He discussed [these issues] only because he thought that particular philosophical errors or ‘troubles in our thoughts’ were due to false analogies suggested by our actual use of expressions; and he emphasized that it was only necessary for him to discuss these points about language which, as he thought, led to these particular errors or ‘troubles’.”³¹

The vision of language in the *Philosophical Investigations*

What are the problems Wittgenstein thinks our mind is preeminently, or inevitably, preoccupied with? Pivotal notions of his later thought are, doubtless, the notions of ‘grammar’ and ‘criteria’, normally understood as the normative basis of our linguistic practices. According to different philosophical sensibilities one might be inclined to define the basis of language in its exchange between talkers, or in its relation to things of the world.³² It is still a philosophical task to account for a connection of both aspects, or dimensions, of our talk, say, the ‘cultural’ and the ‘objective’. Those in a relativist or behaviorist mood will be satisfied with a contingent explanation of this connection. But if one is biased towards some form of necessity, or *a priori* status, both in the ‘exchange of words’ and in the ‘relation to the world’, one will be perplexed at the possibility of a connection between both ‘necessities’. If such a per-

²⁹ A VII

³⁰ Ibid. 216. - In other texts Cavell speaks of different voices which fill the space of the *Investigations*, “the voice of temptation and the voice of correctness” (The Availability of Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy, in: *Must We Mean What We Say?*, Cambridge 1976, 44-72; 71); “the voices of melancholy and merriment, or of metaphysics and the ordinary” (Cavell (1995) 136); “voices... [that] do not exhaust the space of the Investigations” (Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome, Chicago 1990, 83). About this space says Cavell, “[it] is... not party to the struggles of the sides (I do not think of it as a further voice) often containing its most rhetorical or apparently literary passages...” (Ibid.)

³¹ George Edward Moore: Wittgenstein’s Lectures in 1930-33, in: *Philosophical Papers*, London 1959, 252-324; 257

³² The following argument is Cavell’s, cf. Cavell (1989) 49f

plexed sensibility shares Kant's idea of the *a priori* as the possibility of language, it has to tolerate two of Kant's intellectual costs, first, the 'thing in itself' as a remainder, or excess, as Cavell puts it, beyond the categories of the understanding, secondly, the (Aristotelian) table of judgments as the key of the completeness of those categories. To begin with the second point, Wittgenstein may be rightly taken as radicalizing Kant's idea of the constitutive part of concepts, "so that not just twelve categories of the understanding are to be deduced, but every word in the language... Where Kant speaks of rules or laws brought to knowledge of the world by Reason, a philosopher like Wittgenstein speaks of bringing to light our criteria, our agreements..."³³ Wittgenstein's concept of grammar, as entrenched in the ordinary use of words and revealed by a 'grammatical investigation', may be regarded as an inheritor of what Kant called 'Transcendental Logic'. When he writes, "our investigation... is directed not towards phenomena, but, as one might say, towards the '*possibilities*' of phenomena",³⁴ he is evoking a notion of 'possibility' which is traceable to Kant's saying: "The term 'transcendental'... signifies [only] such knowledge as concerns the a priori possibility of knowledge, or its a priori employment..."³⁵ With respect to the first point, where the issue was the 'thing in itself', Wittgenstein is no less radical. To his mind, it would be equally an illusion to claim that we know things in themselves, and to claim that we do not, crudely because the expression 'knowing something as it really is', taken as a general concept, has no clear application, - it has no contrast. What would it amount to saying, 'Sometimes we succeed in knowing things as they really are, and sometimes we do not'? The more we understand that it is unintelligible to say, 'We know things in themselves', the less plausible would it be to say 'We never know things in themselves'.³⁶

In combining both 'necessities', the 'cultural' and the 'objective', Wittgenstein is following Kant's path without buying the 'costs', the loss of the world, and the dogmatism of a fixed system of categories. Cavell takes the idea of a criterion as a pivot between the "necessity of the relation among human beings",³⁷ what Wittgenstein calls "agreement... in a form of life",³⁸ and the "necessity in the relation between grammar and world", what he characterizes as telling "what kind of object anything is,"³⁹ where this telling expresses the "essence".⁴⁰ The talk of 'essence' is apt to conjure up pre-Kantian metaphysics, harping on the idea of founding concepts on the nature of things. But it should be clear beforehand that the necessity Wittgenstein has in mind lacks any foundation in Being, or in a thick transcendental structure of

³³ Stanley Cavell: *In Quest of The Ordinary. Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism*, Chicago 1994, 38

³⁴ PI, section 90

³⁵ Critique of Pure Reason, B 80f/ A 56

³⁶ Cf. Cavell (1976) 65

³⁷ Cavell (1989) 49f

³⁸ PI, section 241

³⁹ PI, section 373; the complete remark reads: "Grammar tells what kind of object anything is. (Theology as grammar.)"

⁴⁰ PI, section 371: "Essence is expressed by grammar."

Reason. On the other hand, his sense of conventionality, or arbitrariness in our language, should not be overemphasized, as Baker and Hacker, the most influential commentators on Wittgenstein's late work, are wont to do.⁴¹ Our psychological talk, for instance, does not rest upon the agreement, or presumption that the other has a soul. We have not chosen, or made up the rule, that we treat others as living beings, and not as robot slaves, aliens or sophisticated machines. It is part of our language-game that I, now and then, believe that the other is suffering. But that does not imply that I believe that he is *not* an automaton. As Wittgenstein puts it, "I am not of the *opinion* that he has a soul".⁴² And he could have said in the same vein: I am not of the opinion that the world exists, or that there is a God. The existence of the world and of myself and others in it, and if you like, the existence of God, are neither contingent facts, nor useful projections we have made up in order to secure the proper functioning of our language games. They are, on the other hand, for Wittgenstein no candidates for unassailable truths. We cannot know, with certainty, of the existence of the external world or of other minds.

Our criteria for someone's being in pain, or more generally, for a thing's being so, do not tell us of a thing's existence, but of its identity, or as Cavell says, "not of its *being* so, but of its being so... Criteria do not determine the certainty of statements, but the application of the concepts employed in statements".⁴³ Criteria are, as he puts it in another passage, "disappointing... They do not assure that my words reach all the way to the pain of others. They just do not do the very thing they were meant to do".⁴⁴ The moral which can be drawn from that observation is, according to Cavell, "that Wittgenstein's appeal to criteria, though it takes its importance from the problem of skepticism, is not, and is not meant to be, a refutation of skepticism".⁴⁵ Cavell is contradicting the view that Wittgensteinian criteria are designed to establish the existence of something, say an inner state, with certainty, a view he is calling the "Malcolm-Albritton view".⁴⁶ This view takes Wittgenstein to be addressing the threat of skepticism, as if his relation to skepticism were one of refuting it, or trying to refute it, whereas, in Cavell's eyes, Wittgenstein rather affirms the skeptical conclusion, or

⁴¹ G.P. Baker/ P.M.S. Hacker: Wittgenstein. Rules, Grammar and Necessity. An Analytical Commentary on the Philosophical Investigations vol. 2, Oxford 1988, 329ff. Wittgenstein's alleged conventionalism is supported by remarks dating back to the early 30's, a period of transition, when his mature thought was not yet fully emerged, e.g.: "Grammar is not accountable to any reality. It is grammatical rules that determine meaning (constitute it) and so they themselves are not answerable to any meaning and to that extent are arbitrary." (Philosophical Grammar, ed. Rush Rhees, transl. Anthony J. Kenny, Oxford 1974, 184).

⁴² PI, part II, 178

⁴³ Stanley Cavell: The Claim of Reason. Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy, New York/ Oxford 1979, 45

⁴⁴ Ibid. 79

⁴⁵ Ibid. 45

⁴⁶ Ibid. 37; cf. Norman Malcolm: Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations, in: George Pitcher (ed.): Wittgenstein. The Philosophical Investigations, Notre Dame/ London 1966, 65- 103; and Rogers Albritton: On Wittgenstein's Use of the Term 'Criterion', in: The Journal of Philosophy 56 (1959) 845-857

takes it, at least, as undeniable. If his vision of language is correct, the vision according to which the criteria we share, or have established, form the condition under which we can think and communicate in language, then skepticism is a permanent threat, a natural possibility, of that condition. The appeal to criteria against skepticism cannot overcome skepticism but merely beg its question. This paradoxical result needs further clarification.

For Cavell our ‘agreement in criteria’ and our ‘agreement in language’ are facts on the same level: “Appealing to criteria is not a way of explaining or proving the fact of our attunement in words (hence in forms of life). It is only another description of the same fact; or rather, it is an appeal we make when the attunement is threatened or lost”.⁴⁷ Our agreement in language, that Cavell pictures as *attunement*, “of being in agreement throughout, being in harmony, like pitches or tones, or clocks, or weighing scales, or columns of figures”,⁴⁸ does not possess, or stand in need of, any philosophical explanation, say, in terms of meanings or conventions or criteria. Eliciting criteria in the course of an investigation, Wittgenstein calls grammatical, simply means to remind us of our agreements we act upon, that means, our “agreement in judgments”.⁴⁹ Nothing is deeper than the fact, or extent, of that agreement. It is not “agreement in opinions but in form of life”.⁵⁰ Now the whole thing looks backwards, says Cavell. Criteria were introduced as grounds (features, marks, specifications) on the basis of which certain judgments could be made non-arbitrarily. But in Wittgenstein it looks as if our capacity for stating criteria depend on a prior agreement in judgments.

In order for anything to show itself as a criterion of pain, e.g., we must already be within what Wittgenstein calls the ‘paradigm of pain’.⁵¹ The behavioural criteria of pain which tell us whether a given stretch of behaviour is expressive of pain, and not of joy, e.g., will not enable us to determine whether the manifested behaviour is expressive of pain, because nothing in the organism’s behaviour will count as a criterion of pain, unless I am antecedently prepared to regard the thing before me as expressing pain. “Our attitude to what is alive and what is dead, is not the same”, says Wittgenstein. “All our reactions are different”.⁵² That we react in the one way, or the other, that means, that we are apt to apply our criteria, or to withhold them, cannot be settled by appealing to criteria. It is therefore deceptive to think that criteria provide judgments with certainty. Their role, says Cavell, is to call to consciousness the pervasiveness and highly structured character of our agreement in language, in other words, “that language is *shared*..., that when I say what we ‘can’ and ‘cannot’

⁴⁷ Cavell (1979) 34

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 32

⁴⁹ Cf. PI, section 242

⁵⁰ PI, section 241

⁵¹ PI, section 300: “It is... not merely the picture of the behaviour that plays a part in the language-game with the words ‘he is in pain’, but also the picture of the pain. Or, not merely the paradigm of the behaviour, but also that of the pain...”

⁵² PI, section 284

say I am indeed voicing necessities which others recognize... and that our uses of language are pervasively, almost unimaginably, *systematic*".⁵³ It is often felt that Wittgenstein's teaching makes language too public, and that it cannot do justice to the innerness and privacy of human intentionality. But Cavell finds in Wittgenstein's view of language quite the reverse, so that it is, in his eyes, worthwhile wondering how we do arrive at the relatively stable edifice of shared language "from within such apparently fragile and intimate moments - private moments - as our separate counts and out-calls of phenomena, which are after all hardly more than our interpretation of what occurs, and with no assurance of conventions to back them up".⁵⁴

Conflicting readings of Wittgenstein's philosophy of language

Cavell's reading of Wittgenstein on grammar and criteria conflicts with the received view, propounded by Baker and Hacker, according to which "speaking a language is a many-faceted rule-governed *activity* or set of activities".⁵⁵ This view takes it for granted that Wittgenstein conceived of criteria as being determined by conventions, not discovered in experience by means of inductive reasoning. The speakers of a language fix criteria by laying down grammatical rules. That *p* is a criterion for *q* is a grammatical proposition which expresses a rule for the use of words. We stipulate, for instance, that a certain behavioural repertoire counts as criterion for being in pain. 'Being in pain' does not mean 'behaving in such and such way', but behaving such and such *justifies* one in saying that somebody is in pain. It determines the correct use of 'being in pain' and contributes to an explanation of its meaning.⁵⁶ Criteria, taken as rules, 'determine', 'fix' or 'govern' the meaning and the use of each word of our language by determining what it is for anything to fall under a given concept and to constitute an instance of the relevant sort. This approach, interpreting criteria as linguistic rules, provides an explanation of what Cavell thought that it would not permit, namely the pervasiveness of our mutual attunement in language, the highly structured character of that agreement, and the normativity of our judgments. It presupposes a "two-tiered account"⁵⁷ of language and the ground of our mutual intelligibility. Language, and intelligibility, it is thought of, cannot have their ultimate basis or ground in nothing but the contingent agreement among our individual reactions and responses to the world, because these individual reactions and responses lack any normative dimension and cannot, properly speaking, be understood as judgments. It is solely the reliance on a framework of rules which carries the normative dimension

⁵³ Cavell (1979) 29

⁵⁴ Cavell (1979) 36

⁵⁵ Baker/ Hacker (1988) 38

⁵⁶ Cf. P.M.S. Hacker: *Insight and Illusion. Themes in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, Oxford 1986, 310f

⁵⁷ Cf. Steven G. Affeldt: *The Ground of Mutuality: Criteria, Judgment, and Intelligibility* in Stephen Mulhall and Stanley Cavell, in: *The European Journal of Philosophy* 6 (1998) 1-31; 7

of speech, and within which intelligibility is possible and outside which nonsense prevails.

Cavell's work on Wittgenstein is significantly informed by the insistence, that "everyday language does not, in fact or in essence, depend on such a structure and conception of rules, and yet that the absence of such a structure in no way impairs its functioning..."⁵⁸ Cavellian, or Wittgensteinian, criteria must not therefore be fashioned after the model of rules, or conventions, constituting the grammatical framework of language. According to Cavell's understanding of the relationship between criteria and judgment, there is no conception of criteria as functioning as the basis for judgment. There is no sense of what our criteria are which reaches beyond what is revealed as our criteria in our particular judgments, that means, our agreement (attunement) in our individual reactions and responses to the world and to each other. Cavell sees Wittgenstein's efforts in showing how inessential the appeal to rules is as an explanation of that agreement. What has to be 'explained' is our ability to 'project' words into hitherto unknown contexts:

We learn and teach words in certain contexts, and then we are expected, and expect others, to be able to project them into further contexts. Nothing insures that this projection will take place (in particular, not the grasping of universals nor the grasping of books of rules), just as nothing insures that we will make, and understand, the same projections.⁵⁹

That on the whole we do, cannot be explained. It is the modern wonder Wittgenstein wishes to make us more sensitive to by eliciting 'our criteria'. His vision of language permits of making sense, making ourselves mutually intelligible, without the support of frameworks, rules, conventions, mental objects, or universals. It is, as Cavell puts it, "a vision as simple as it is difficult, and as difficult as it is (and because it is) terrifying".⁶⁰ Language, and intelligibility, have their ultimate basis in nothing but the contingent 'agreement in our judgments' which is "not agreement in opinions but in form of life".⁶¹ In acquiring a native language we do not simply learn words and sets of rules. We acquire language by following the examples and the responses ('judgments') of others. We have to become, in other words, "initiate[s] of the forms of life"⁶² which give those words and phrases the point and the shape they have in our lives. But then we have to continue for ourselves making new applications of a word or a concept under conditions which were not in sight when we introduced, or were introduced into, the language-game with the relevant term. There are always new contexts, new needs, new relationships, new objects, new experiences to be met.

⁵⁸ Cavell (1976) 48

⁵⁹ Ibid. 52

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ PI, section 241

⁶² Cavell (1979) 184

“The ‘routes of initiation’ are never closed”,⁶³ says Cavell. We keep finding new potencies in our expressions and new ways in which objects are disclosed. But although language is tolerant it will not allow just any projection of a given word into any context. What counts as a legitimate projection is thoroughly controlled by our language. An object or activity or event into which a concept is projected, “must *invite* or *allow* that projection”.⁶⁴ If we are uncertain whether a given projection does satisfy that condition we appeal to ‘our criteria’. But since criteria cannot be formulated independently of those judgments upon which we *are* in agreement, we might end up in disagreement or dissent.

Different concepts of criticism

The nature of the vision of language Cavell sees Wittgenstein’s later thought imbued with does not allow a direct, or flat, repudiation of traditional philosophy, where ‘direct’ means something like showing that the traditional philosopher is “traversing the bounds of sense”, “violating rules of grammar”, that her or his words and phrases are “nonsense”, “meaningless mark[s] and sound[s]”, forming no proper part of our language, etc.⁶⁵ The employment of this mode of criticism that Baker and Hacker see at work in the early and in the late Wittgenstein, ratifies a picture of language according to which our linguistic practice is supported by a framework of rules called ‘grammar’. Rules of grammar, it is said, determine the “limits of sense”, and “by carefully scrutinizing them the philosopher may determine at what point he has drawn an overdraft on Reason, violated the rules for the use of an expression and so, in subtle and not readily identifiable ways, traversed the bounds of sense”.⁶⁶ In Cavell’s reading of Wittgenstein there are no rules, or frameworks of rules, at hand which *ensure* the appropriate projection of words and phrases into new contexts, but only our confirmed capacity to speak to one another and make ourselves intelligible. A new projection may be found appropriate or inappropriate. In the case of uncertainty it may be made appropriate by drawing analogies, by giving explanations of how it is to be taken (how the new context is an instance of the old concept). There is, beyond our mutually attributed mastery of language, no authority we can appeal to if we disagree about the appropriateness of a projection. If this is a linguistic conflict, says Cavell, then “one side will win out”. Language does not allow, or license, just any projection. But in the philosophical conflict about ‘what should be said’, “neither side just ‘wins out’”.⁶⁷ Philosophical problems are not fully restatable, and solvable, as ‘problems of language’.

⁶³ Ibid. 180

⁶⁴ Ibid. 183

⁶⁵ Cf. P.M.S. Hacker: Wittgenstein. Mind and Will. An analytical commentary on the Philosophical Investigations vol. 4, Oxford 1996, 238, 240, 243

⁶⁶ Baker/ Hacker (1988) 55

⁶⁷ Cavell (1979) 192

The skeptic's originating question

The disagreements in question Wittgenstein draws on are not those of philosophers with one another, but of philosophers with the linguistic practice of ordinary human beings, properly speaking, with the human capacity for applying concepts of a language to things of a world, "when and as it is humanly done",⁶⁸ by means of "our" criteria.⁶⁹ What is the problem with 'our' criteria? We have already seen that the difference between 'real' and 'hallucinatory', 'real' and 'feigned', 'animate' and 'inanimate' is not a criterial difference, not one of recognition. There are no criteria for something's being a *real* F over and above the criteria for its being an F.⁷⁰ I do not *believe* that the other has a soul, that she is not an automaton, that she is not feigning pain, when I see her suffering. I do not subscribe to a metaphysical thesis, say, that there are physical objects, when I succeed in identifying the bird in my garden as a goldfinch. The skeptic takes this fact about our grammar, our ordinary use of concepts, as a breathtaking discovery. His or her argument might run as follows: 'We don't know, on the basis of the senses, or behaviour, alone. Then do we know? How can we know? What makes us think we might ever know?'. The skeptic takes the existence of the world, and of others in general, to be a problem of knowledge. The concept of knowledge which is at stake here is the concept on which traditional epistemology was focussing, knowledge "as revelatory of the world's existence".⁷¹ Cavell is contrasting this particular concept of knowledge, which forms the basis of the Cartesian project of assessing the validity of knowledge as a whole, with the concept of knowledge "as the identification or recognition of things".⁷² The contrast runs, in other words, between "knowing what a thing is (by means of criteria)" and "knowing that it is".⁷³ It is the concept of 'knowledge of existence' that transforms the problem of knowledge into one of accomplishing *certainty* in our claims to knowledge. The 'quest for certainty' is not forgone, or ridiculed, in Wittgenstein's later thought but formulated under changed conditions, those of a real dilemma or conflict, sparked off by the failure of 'our criteria'. In Cavell's reading of the *Investigations*, there is a sense in which the "complete clarity"⁷⁴ Wittgenstein is after might be understood as a demand for certainty even though the classical routes of pursuing that quest are

⁶⁸ Ibid. 17

⁶⁹ "The criteria Wittgenstein appeals to... are always 'ours', the 'group' which forms his 'authority' is always... the human group as such, the human being generally", Cavell (1979) 18

⁷⁰ That is the tragedy of David, the robot child in Stanley Kubricks and Steven Spielbergs "A.I.". David seeks acknowledgment as a human being, desperately claiming to be a "*real* boy". Although he satisfies almost all behavioural criteria of an eleven year old boy his environment is withholding the longed-for acknowledgment from him.

⁷¹ Cavell (1979) 224

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid. 49

⁷⁴ PI, section 133

blocked.⁷⁵ His quest for a solution corresponds to another way of asking and facing a problem which plays at the same level, and is brought about by “the same experience”, as the problem of the tradition.⁷⁶ To which experience is Cavell alluding to covertly?

Cavell is prompting us to take the traditional epistemologist’s original question - ‘(How) do (can) we know anything about the world? (Or about the experience of another person?)’ - with the same seriousness that the Ordinary Language Philosopher wishes us to take any statement of a human being.⁷⁷ The Ordinary Language Philosopher is probably right in his suspicion that normal people in normal contexts do not articulate the skeptical possibilities the traditional philosopher is obsessed with. The question, ‘How do (can) you know?’, presupposes a situation in which there is some reason to think that what you claim may be dubious, that something is amiss or wrong or puzzling and needs therefore an explanation or critical inspection. In such a context there is a clear answer to the Ordinary Language Philosopher’s question, ‘What reason do you have for thinking you may be dreaming, that you are drugged, that you are a brain in a vat, that the creature before you is an automaton?’. The traditional epistemologist cannot help but reply: ‘That is not the point’, ‘I have no reason of the kind you mean’. So the Ordinary Language Philosopher is apparently right in contesting the seriousness or urgency of the other’s cause. To the traditional philosopher, this seems question-begging, because for her (or him) the context is one in which the question of existence or reality has already arisen. Cavell’s major claim about the philosopher’s original question is that it “is a response to, or expression of, a real experience which takes hold of human beings”.⁷⁸ He describes it as the experience of “being sealed off from the world, enclosed within my own endless succession of experiences”,⁷⁹ or with respect to other persons, as one of “feeling them to be closed off from me (within, as it were, *their* own experience)”.⁸⁰ It is the experience of the modern subject fated to live in a groundless world, bearing the marks of metaphysical finitude and separateness.

The weakness of the skeptic’s claim

If there is a fallacy in the traditional way of repudiating knowledge, it is not displayed by a hasty generalization from ‘some’ cases to ‘all’ cases, for instance, ‘because I *sometimes* don’t know or can’t discover, I *never* can’, but by the way in which the philosopher thinks that a claim to knowledge has been raised at all, within a context

⁷⁵ It is the view which takes the existence of the world, and of others, as a problem of knowledge. Confronted with the skeptical threat, this view breaks into different versions of ‘revisionary metaphysics’, say, Idealism, Phenomenalism, Solipsism, Critical Realism, etc., cf. Cavell (1979) 46

⁷⁶ Ibid. 225

⁷⁷ Ibid. 138

⁷⁸ Ibid. 140

⁷⁹ Ibid. 144

⁸⁰ Ibid. 161

he or she considers the “best”⁸¹ case of knowledge (‘I see it just in front of me’, ‘I can grasp how she is suffering’). In the case of the experience Cavell wants us to familiarize with, nothing needs to be argued. The step from the conclusion about a single object, that loses its grip on me, to that about knowledge as a whole is irresistible. “It is no step at all. The world drops out.”⁸² It is this experience which was fundamental in classical epistemology.⁸³ Thrown into a solipsistic mood, I feel myself as outside the world, looking in at it as I would look at some objects from a position among other objects. I am left, in that situation, with my eyes, or more generally, with my ‘senses’, conceived in terms of a geometrically fixed position, that means, disconnected from the body as if I were no creature who must *act*. I am looking at the world as if it were another object on a par with pieces of wax, people on the streets, envelopes, tomatoes, etc. I begin wondering whether anything I see is *real*. I feel myself enclosed within an eternal round of experience, removed from the the daily sphere of activity, from the forms of life which secure, by means of criteria, that words relate to objects. In that way deprived from criteria, I am tempted to reestablish a firm connection with the ‘world-object’ from that “sealed position”,⁸⁴ that means, from within my immediate consciousness. I begin to talk of ‘objects I really see’,⁸⁵ of the “visual room” as an independent reality,⁸⁶ of *sense data* as the “material of which the universe is made”.⁸⁷ I am tempted to say, ‘This exists, because I see it’, as if this were a claim to knowledge, something informative and important for which we can, and must undertake to give a proof. With respect to other minds, I feel compelled to be more cautious, asserting things like these: ‘I know only from my *own* case what the word “pain” means’,⁸⁸ ‘Only I can know whether I am really in pain’, ‘Other people

⁸¹ “Best” means, for Cavell, the situation in which the only relevant knowledge claim applies to, what he calls, “generic” objects, in contrast to “specific” objects (ibid. 52). The ‘best case’ is specific to the traditional epistemologist’s investigation where the only objects he or she uses as examples are ones about which there is nothing more to learn than that they exist, ones about which the only problem would not be to determine *what* they are but to say whether we can know that they *exist*.

⁸² Cavell (1979) 145

⁸³ Putnam contends that the account contemporary Cognitive Science gives of perception parallels closely to the Cartesian account: “Early modern philosophers assumed that the immediate objects of perceptions were mental, and that mental objects were nonphysical... [In] contemporary cognitive science... it is the fashion to hypothesize the existence of ‘representations’ in the cerebral computer. If one assumes that the mind is an *organ*, and one goes to identify the mind with the brain, it will become irresistible to (1) think of some ‘representations’ as analogous to the classical theorist’s ‘impressions’... and (2) to think that those ‘representations’ are linked to objects in the organism’s environment only causally, not cognitively.” (Hilary Putnam: *The Threefold Cord. Mind, Body, and World*, New York 1999, 9f) This disastrous picture makes it impossible to see how persons can be in genuine cognitive contact with a world at all.

⁸⁴ Cavell (1979) 238

⁸⁵ Cf. PI, section 398

⁸⁶ PI, section 400

⁸⁷ PI, section 401

⁸⁸ PI, section 293

may know it, but not with the certainty with which I know it myself'.⁸⁹ I find myself in a position in which I *must* speak 'outside language-games'. I am using certain expressions apart from, and in opposition to, the forms of life which give them the force they have. Under normal circumstances it would be far from my mind to consider the above mentioned cases as ones in which I claim to *know* anything at all, or as Cavell puts it,

no one would have said of me, seeing me sitting at my desk with the green jar out of my range of vision, "He knows there is a green jar of pencils on the desk", nor would anyone say of me, "He (you) knew there was a green jar...", *apart from some special reason which makes that description of my "knowledge" relevant* to something I did or said or am doing or saying (e.g., I told someone that I never keep pencils on my desk; I knew that Mrs. Greenjar was coming to tea and that she takes it as a personal affront if there is a green jar visible in the room...).⁹⁰

The traditional philosopher could insist: 'Perhaps no one would have *said* that you knew the jar was there, but you *did* know it. It makes sense to say you knew it'. One might reply, 'Certainly it makes sense', that means, that it would be easy to imagine circumstances in which it would make sense to say it.⁹¹ But the philosopher feels that she (he) was not thinking of particular circumstances in which it would make sense. She (he) wants to speak 'absolutely',⁹² that means, apart from any circumstances, in which it makes sense, ordinary sense, and in which a particular claim to knowledge was raised.

In Cavell's diagnosis of the conflict between the traditional philosopher and her (his) critics from the camp of Ordinary Language Philosophy - a conflict in which neither side wins out - the appeal to 'what we ordinarily say' adopts a different emphasis. In Baker and Hacker, the emphasis is placed on the question whether the philosopher uses words in accordance with the rules of grammar, in other words, whether she (he) is using, or misusing, language, and therefore transgressing the bounds of sense. In Cavell's reading of Wittgenstein the emphasis is less on the normativity of grammar than on the fact that words, or expressions, "are *said* (or, of course *written*) by human beings, to human beings, in definite contexts, in a language they share: *hence* the obsession with the use of expressions".⁹³ What is left out of an expression if it is used 'outside language-games' is not, according to that

⁸⁹ PI, section 246

⁹⁰ Cavell (1979) 205

⁹¹ Cf. PI, section 278: "I know how the colour green looks to *me*' - surely that makes sense! - Certainly: what use of the proposition are you thinking of?"

⁹² Cf. PI, section 47: "[The Interlocutor's voice:] But isn't a chessboard, for instance, obviously, and absolutely, composite?... [Wittgenstein's voice:] Asking 'Is this object composite?' *outside* a particular language-game is like what a boy once did..."

⁹³ Cavell (1979) 206

reading, what the words, or combinations of words, mean,⁹⁴ but what we mean in using them. The point of our words, of our saying them, is lost.

How does this diagnosis apply to the peculiar use of, 'I know', within the traditional investigation of our claims to know? Cavell's observation is "that no concrete claim is ever entered as part of the traditional investigation". The philosopher's context is a "non-claim context".⁹⁵ She (he) merely imagines a claim to have been raised. This difference is of highest importance. As Cavell puts it,

If the epistemologist were not imagining a claim to have been made, his procedure would be as out of the ordinary as the ordinary language philosopher finds it to be. But, on the other hand, if he were investigating a claim of the sort the coherence of his procedures require... then his conclusion would not have the generality it seems to have.⁹⁶

This plunges the traditional investigation into a serious dilemma: It must be the investigation of a real claim if its procedure is to be convincing. It cannot be the investigation of a concrete claim, otherwise its conclusion would escape the craved-for generality. Accordingly, the traditional epistemologist imagines herself (himself) to be saying something when she (he) is actually not. But this observation, as has been claimed, does not support a direct repudiation of the traditional investigation, where 'direct' means something like showing that the philosopher is 'misusing language', 'transgressing the bounds of sense', etc. The traditional epistemologist takes herself (himself) to be going over an actual situation, giving expression to an experience we are all familiar with, - Cavell speaks of the the experience of a "creature complicated or burdened enough to possess language at all".⁹⁷

The permanence of the skeptic's worries

It is true that we are bothered by philosophical questions because we speak the language we do. But it is untrue, or at least very unlikely, that our skeptical worries may be solved, or dissolved, by understanding more about the language we actually use. The more we understand about the condition under which we can think and communicate in language, the more we will become aware of our human condition. Wittgenstein's vision of language reveals that skepticism is a *natural* possibility of that condition, where skepticism mainly means: rejecting the human forms of life, speaking 'outside our language-games', so that the only antidote would be the return to ordinary modes of speech. But the Ordinary is no point of view. It is particularly unable to still our restlessness, the human drive to transcend what is human. The linguistic

⁹⁴ "...they may mean what they always did, what a good dictionary says they mean" (ibid. 207).

⁹⁵ Ibid. 217f

⁹⁶ Ibid. 218

⁹⁷ Ibid. 140

philosopher's wish to construct, or postulate, an ideal language, where 'ideal' does not mean much more than that it would hinder us from asking questions we do, or stating theses we do, turns out to be just another metaphysical fantasy, an empty promise to free ourselves of the contingency of human existence. Wittgenstein is, in that respect, no linguistic philosopher.

Summary

The conviction that philosophical problems are "problems of language" (Rorty) which may be solved, or dissolved, either by reforming language or by understanding more about the language we actually speak, forms the common ground of otherwise conflicting camps within 20th century analytic philosophy. The refusal of ordinary language philosophers to construct ideal languages stems from the prejudice that ordinary English satisfies all requirements for being an ideal language. If traditional philosophers would use words as ordinary speakers of English do they would not be able to formulate questions, and theses, they are apt to do. They are "misusing language" and "transgressing the bounds of sense" (Hacker). However, ordinary language philosophers like Austin have no theory of the origin of the "metaphysical", that means, the "human restlessness in the ordinary" (Cavell) and the drive to speak outside language-games. Wittgenstein can be said to have such a theory. The vision of language he sketches out in the *Investigations* reveals that skepticism is a permanent threat of communication and thought. A direct (flat) repudiation of traditional themes and modes of thinking is, properly speaking, beyond the reach of linguistic procedures, as Wittgenstein would understand them.

Zusammenfassung

Die Überzeugung, dass philosophische Probleme "Sprachprobleme" (Rorty) seien, die sich entweder durch Sprachreform oder durch Einsicht in das Arbeiten der Umgangssprache lösen bzw. auflösen lassen, eint die ansonsten miteinander rivalisierenden Hauptströmungen der analytischen Philosophie im 20. Jahrhundert. Die Weigerung der Anhänger der normalsprachlichen Richtung, Idealsprachen zu konstruieren, entspringt dem Vorurteil, dass die Umgangssprache den Erfordernissen einer idealen Sprache voll entspricht. Würden Philosophen ihre Termini wie gewöhnliche Sprecher des Englischen, Deutschen usw. gebrauchen, wären sie nicht permanent versucht, Fragen zu stellen, auf die es keine Antworten gibt. Philosophen, die so etwas tun, "missbrauchen die Sprache" und "überschreiten die Grenzen des Sinnvollen" (Hacker). Anhänger der normalsprachlichen Richtung wie z.B. Austin verfügen jedoch über keine Theorie vom Ursprung des Metaphysischen, d.h. der "menschlichen Unbehaustheit im Alltäglichen" (Cavell) sowie des Drangs, außerhalb unserer Sprachspiele zu sprechen. Wittgenstein verfügt über eine solche Theorie. Das in den *Philosophischen Untersuchungen* entworfene Bild der Sprache enthüllt, wie sehr die Skepsis eine permanente Bedrohung unserer Kommunikation und unseres Denkens

darstellt. Eine direkte Widerlegung traditioneller Philosophien liegt daher jenseits der Möglichkeiten linguistischer Philosophie, wie Wittgenstein sie versteht.