

Aleksandra Derra

WITTGENSTEIN'S LATER WORK'S INFLUENCE ON THE METHODS OF LANGUAGE RESEARCH

Originally published as "Wpływ późnego Wittgensteina na metody badań nad językiem," *Studia Semiotyczne* 27 (2010), 353–373. Translated by Lesław Kawalec.

The presentation of the basic principles of Wittgenstein's methodology of language research has two objectives. First, his discussion of language and meaning only becomes intelligible in a broader perspective of the assumptions adopted concerning research methodology. Second, the assumption of some propositions in contemporary theories on the categories of use or the notion of rule that involves accepting or rejecting some more general claims on language. On account of the vastness of the material, ambiguity in Wittgenstein's thought but also the complexity of the issues, means not all the principles of Wittgenstein's later philosophy will be investigated. Only the contexts (of grammar, use and practice) that are vital from the perspective of philosophical dissertations on language will be presented in three steps.

The Context of Grammar: Language-Games and Rules

Using a given linguistic expression occurs in language, which to Wittgenstein is a set of language-games. Along with the methodology he had adopted, the author of the *Investigations* chooses not to provide a strict definition of a language-game, but he explains it. It is made up of language and the activities into which it is implicated (Wittgenstein 1998, #7). As mature users of language, we participate in a lot of interwoven language-games and we hardly ever encounter their simple forms. But even in the case of simple

forms, there is nothing external (other than a game) that would delineate the essence of the language-game, and hence the essence of the meanings of the expressions we use within it. In his attempt to persuade us to the autonomous quality of language-games, Wittgenstein seeks to prove that there is no such determinant. It cannot be said what a language-game is in general, but examples of language-games can be provided. These include: describing an object, resolving a puzzle, solving a task, thanking, greeting, speculating, or singing in a dance parade (Wittgenstein 1998, #23). In admitting the existence of innumerable linguistic uses, Wittgenstein also permits the existence of countless language-games. Language constantly changes, some games disappear, new ones emerge; so, even the multitude of language-games is nothing constant and cannot be defined once and for all.¹ No two Language-games share the same patterns, but they make up a set thanks to their generic similarity: "they are [...] variously AKIN to one another" (Wittgenstein 1998, #54; Wittgenstein 1969: 44).² This affiliation can be indicated only by investigating specific games and abstracting similar activities, which Wittgenstein would do in his later philosophy. This similarity that all games share must be treated in special ways. Wittgenstein uses the metaphor of fiber to elucidate on what exactly he means. No single fiber goes all along throughout the thread, and what particular lengths of thread share is single fibers (Wittgenstein 1998, #67).

Language-games are defined by rules (Wittgenstein 1998, #567). The rules do not play any one single part but various roles — depending on the game (Wittgenstein 1998, #53). They function as a signpost, as it were, thanks to which it is clear how to act in a specific game. The metaphor of a "signpost" in the description of rules does not appear in *Investigations* by accident. Wittgenstein wants to make us aware that the rule itself leaves a number of doubts, as does a signpost, which of itself does not "say" anything to us, only where we need to go (its arm or the opposite). A relatively clear and unambiguous interpretation is arrived at thanks to practice (to be discussed later). One can say that a signpost sometimes leaves doubt, and sometimes does not, depending on how deeply its users are involved, immersed in some practice of referring to it, reacting to it; depending on how much the practice seems obvious to them. The latter statement is an empirical

¹Baker demonstrates that the very treatment of use is for Wittgenstein a matter of theoretical negotiations, which is yet another way of emphasizing the pluralistic character of his later philosophy (Baker 2004: 277).

²Elsewhere I argue that the idea of similarity does not perform an explicative function to Wittgenstein (Derra 2006).

proposition to Wittgenstein, rather than a philosophical proposition, though (Wittgenstein 1998, #82-85). Playing a specific game, we learn which rules are important and which are not. So, in chess it is crucial that the figures move in some specific ways, but it does not matter, what fabric they are made of and what size they are. In another game, though, it would be a significant trait — in tennis or football it does matter what the balls are made of and how big they are. Games, then, have some rules and a sense, which might be understood as some order of rules and a hierarchy (along with the distinction: relevant/irrelevant) within a language-game (Wittgenstein 1989a, appendix I, 20).

Consider an example, often brought up by Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Grammar*, where an idea of a linguistic rule is discussed in teleological terms (Wittgenstein 1989c, 184-195). One can judge the rightness of the application of the rules of cooking by making a reference to the purpose they serve, which is external to those rules — obtaining tasty or at least edible food. This purpose can be indicated without discussing the means by which it is attainable or attained. It is not so as regards the constitutive rules of language-games. A language-game cannot be subjected to a value judgment by such means as reference to the category of communicativeness because a game deprived of this purpose ceases to be a language-game. Associating the notion of the language-game with communication has a conceptual nature. The latter is no tool thanks to which the usefulness of the former can be judged. Cooking, as a result of which one obtains a soup that is hard to swallow does not cease to be cooking — it is just bad cooking. A language game cannot be incorrect due to its uncommunicativeness as without it there would be no game of a linguistic kind. If we applied rules other than those of chess, we would not just be playing incorrectly — we would not be playing chess. Language has inner goals, although the results one gets thanks to it might be external (Wittgenstein 1998, #64, Wittgenstein 1989d, point 320) (cf. Glock 1996: 47; Arrington 1993: 72).

Does the fact that it is impossible to strictly determine what a rule is authorize us to say that one cannot speak of anything like this? One can speak of rules, but one must abandon the classical understanding of "ideal" and "boundary." Classical philosophy required definitions which outlined "boundaries," determined what the object of interest was and how it could be recognized. For Wittgenstein an "ideal" is not something we pursue, it is not a hidden essence of the thing one needs to get closer to; an ideal is an inevitable form, a module in which language is received by us (such as a general form of logical judgment). Wittgenstein would not see "boundary" defined the way

it is done in logic. In logic one can speak of it only when one understands it as clear-cut, with clear boundaries. Its boundaries might not be fully defined and their shape can leave doubt that needs interpreting but one can speak of a boundary none the less. The doubt that arises when discussing rules does not make rules disappear or cease to be applicable. (Wittgenstein 1998, #100-105; Wittgenstein 1989d, #441-445). They cannot be made absolute, but this does not mean they are non-existent. Wittgenstein does not want to consent to a peculiar metaphysical-teleological understanding of boundary as we do not always know why we set out such a boundary. One can be established only in a broader context; such as in the case of a fence, which is put up for various reasons, and it is only its use that will help determine whether it has been made in order to prevent someone from entering or for the sake of someone entering or maybe so that one can jump across it. (Wittgenstein 1989a, I, 116; Wittgenstein 1998, #499; Baker, Hacker 1983: 56).

In the description of rules, Wittgenstein always makes use of the plural (playing a game WE learn), which is not accidental but a consistent observation of one's methodological principles. "Being guided by a rule," "abiding by a rule" or "understanding a rule" cannot be applied to one man. None of these activities can be done once, either. It cannot in the sense that what will be done cannot be named with a Wittgenstein's term "rule," "abiding by a rule." These are habits, customs, institutions that by definition are shared, collective and pertain to a group of people (Wittgenstein 1998, #199; Wittgenstein 1989d, part VI, 21). Language is definitely such an institution; understood through language-games, it is defined by means of the category of "rule." Wittgenstein clearly distinguishes between two layers: the stratum of being guided by rules (practical, recognizable by the way in which language is used) and the layer of judging that we are guided by rules. In order to be guided by rules, it does not suffice to think that one does that — one needs to do that in practice, indeed. Thinking that one is guided by a rule may be in a way personal but compliance with a rule cannot be private or individual in nature (Wittgenstein 1998, #202).³ Somebody may be taught rules and orders only by way of exercise and example, provided long enough for the learner to attain the right competences. The attainment of such competences by means of appropriate training manifests itself as a habit and practical activity, when these become obvious and necessary

³This privacy is understood by Wittgenstein in a peculiar manner. Judging is private in that it is a numerical property of some subject but judging occurs in language, which by definition is a social phenomenon.

enough to be called natural. When the teacher has a math task solved, such as $2+3=?$ the student is able to solve it because by following exercises they have been able to internalize the rules of addition and now they know how to go about doing the task. There is no space for the interpretation of the instruction as it was already done the moment rules were established concerning what to do in such a situation. Going by a rule is a practice but the settlement that $2+3=5$ IS INTERPRETATION. The settlement is arbitrary in the sense that there is no reason from outside the language-game why such and such behavior should be called addition (the game is rooted in some essential or metaphysical truth about the subject it concerns). It could be called "pulsating" and it would not change the essential understanding of the regularities and following of the rule (Baker 1981: 64). But when it is constrained by rules, arbitrariness disappears and, alongside with it, the possibility of interpretation. One cannot answer the question why I have to go by this or that rule if I want to add, but it can be stated in full confidence how I need to behave for my actions to be called addition. Wittgenstein says "you follow a rule blindly," without contemplating its steps (1998, #219). If I am not forced by a rule to some specific activity, it cannot be ascertained that we are dealing with the following a rule at all. (Wittgenstein 1989a, VI, point 47).⁴ I can justify the subsequent stages of my actions, but they are also established as permissible transitions in some game. In the order of my justifications I finally reach the moment when apparently only one answer can be given: "This is simply the way I act." (Wittgenstein 1998, #219), unable to point to some ultimate reason. Emphasizing the validity of a language community is not tantamount to formulating a "social" theory of rules. Consensus, agreement between users of language is key for the sake of communication, rather than for the sake of rule observance (McGinn 1984: 89-90).

In questions such as "What makes this or that behavior compliant with a rule?" the assumption is, apparently, a kind of separation of the rule from an array of its possible applications. It is customary that in order to establish whether some behavior is compatible with a rule, it is indispensable to appeal to some external properties which will determine the possible consequences of applying the rule in individual cases. This is however not the way Wittgenstein understands the rule. Nothing external determines its correct applications. We only express those things in language that could be imagined in other ways too (Wittgenstein 1989b: 54). When we make use

⁴Wittgenstein thinks that it is extremely interesting that people fix rules and then in fact follow them, sometimes doing it for pleasure, like in chess.

of it, it is subject to rules, and the concept of rule observance contains, as it were, a conception of what conduct is right and which is wrong (Bolton 1981: 160).

This example is directly related to the concept of meaning. When a user of language is asked about the meaning of the phrase "nice cat," they will probably start pointing to objects (nice cats) that are labeled this way, demonstrate contexts in which the term "nice" is used of cats. They will say sentences in which this expression can legitimately be uttered. However, when asked why the phrase "nice cats" means nice cats, all they can do to answer the question is appeal to practice: this is so in the language I use. This much about a linguistic rule. It could be a different one — there is no logical necessity in this — but it is the way it is. One could imagine that "nice cats" might mean rabid dogs if this was practiced in the language. Yet, language is language thanks to rules, which are originally defined by the convergence of actions; in light of this, the term "nice cats" is applied to nice cats. The phenomenon of language is built upon such relationships (Wittgenstein 1989a, VI, 39).

The requirement of descriptiveness, or doing philosophy descriptively, rightly attributed to Wittgenstein becomes better understood in the light of these deliberations, as does the famous Wittgenstein's statement from #124 of *Investigations*:

Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it. For it cannot give it any foundation, either. It leaves everything as it is. (Wittgenstein 1998, #124).

Philosophy, including the part made up of research in meaning, does not consolidate the meaning; it describes it instead. In this sense also, it cannot change the received use — it can only describe it in numerous arrangements. This sort of description is supposed to perform an ordering function to our knowledge of language. The point is not the establishment of order in general; it is always about a specific language-game, a local rather than global order. The description discussed here does not set out to gather a complete set of forever binding rules concerning each and every use of a word. What it attempts to do is "compare and contrast" language-games, describe them, emphasize similarities and differences that are obtained between them (language-games can be compared by treating one as a variant of another)

(Wittgenstein 1989a, II, # 49). In this description, sentences should be treated as tools, and language as something we can use thanks to years of training that has allowed us to learn the appropriate rules.

Grammar, an investigation completely different from traditionally understood logic or from one Wittgenstein postulated in the *Treaty*, becomes key for answering the question of what language is. Also, this is something that distinguishes the philosophy of *Treaty* from the philosophy of *Investigations*. Grammar begins in the same place as language does in human actions (Wittgenstein 1989c: 135; Bolton 1981: 125). Wittgenstein's theses on truthfulness will serve as an example. Sentence p, if true, "corresponds" to facts in some ways: it asserts how things are (they are p). This is happening not because the logical structure is reflected in language, but because what we call the "structure of reality" is only a shadow cast by grammar (Hjacker 1996: 49). How should that be understood? It is not an empirical fact that we call some things "objects" and some "colors" and yet others "relationships;" it follows from the way in which language expressions function. What we are doing at the moment is explaining their meanings. A major lesson that can be drawn from Wittgenstein's discussion is that language (which has deep grammar) is an autonomous structure. In the theory of meaning, understood classically, the starting point was attributing to language the property of representing or describing the world (language reflecting the world), which was also treated as its constitutive quality. In over-reliance on some terminology, it could be said that deep grammar of language exposes a structure that gives us a possibility of a cognitive approach to the world without being a reflection of this world (Glock 2001: 299-302). The rules of language-games not only regulate the permissible moves in some game, but they are also constitutive. Wittgenstein writes:

The steps which are not brought into question are logical inferences. But the reason why they are not brought into question is not that they "certainly correspond to the truth" [...] There is not any question at all here of some correspondence between what is said and reality; rather it is logic antecedent to any such correspondence; in the same sense, that is, as that in the establishment of a method of measurement is antecedent to the correctness or incorrectness of a statement at length. (Wittgenstein 1989a, part I, section 156)

Grammar cannot collide with the reality as it does not concern something. Grammar determines, in a constitutive manner, the structure of the reality, with the rules of this grammar being arbitrary. Without saying anything about facts, it does not establish what is true and false, either. An answer to the question of what it means that "judgments correspond to some fragment of reality" is valid, but this "correspondence" does not determine what the truth is. In playing a "true-false" language-game and accepting a sentence as true, we also accept it asserting that things are the way they are, which we could simplify as "correspondence" with reality — in a banal sense meaning that the truthfulness of the sentence "It is raining" depends on whether it is raining. This, however, does not entail any metaphysical consequences. In other words use, seen as a key to describing linguistic meaning, cannot be brought down to a generalization of specific language uses of a word or phrase. The essence of language cannot be derived from use, just as language use cannot be justified by a reference to a world external to it. The so-called world and language are interconnected in much more subtle and complex ways than it could be suggested by the classical principle of representation (Canfield, Shanker 1993: 78).

To use another quote from *Investigations*:

"'Red' means that which occurs to me when I hear the word 'red'" — would be a *definition*. Not an explanation of what signifying something by a word *essentially* is (Wittgenstein 1998, #239).

Apparently, Wittgenstein tries to show us something very simple, something that we have so far been trying to complicate too much in philosophical tradition — so much so that we have lost the right perspective. "Red" simply means red; we usually associate it with the color of something, of some object, because in practice of the use of this word it usually appears in those contexts, but the significance of this word is specifically independent from the existence of red things — no metaphysical nature to be discovered in philosophical research is attributed to meaning. This could betray some minimalistic approaches by Wittgenstein. When I ascertain the existence of a thing (in the sentence such as *X exists*), I am using an existential sentence which expresses our language use. Obviously, we refer *x* to something that we confer meaning to in our language-game, but in saying that *X exists*, we say nothing about the nature of *X*. *X* does not exist so-to-speak physically as a result; it just exists in the language-game where it is being used (Wittgenstein

1998, #57, 58).⁵ Even if we build a grammar based on an "object-signification" relationship, the first of those categories — despite the previously formulated theories of meaning⁶ — is not indispensable for language to function. How should that be understood? Wittgenstein's famous beetle example might be given here. Imagine we have boxes with "something" inside — that "something" is called a "beetle" but one cannot look into the others' boxes. So, you cannot say that it is impossible that each has a box with something else or something that keeps changing; perhaps there is nothing there and that nothing is called a "beetle?" Everyone knows what a "beetle" is from the sight of the content of their box. With all these circumstances, the word "beetle" is used as a the name of a thing. The thing is irrelevant for the discussion of this use (Wittgenstein 1998, #293).

Research Context: Category of Use

Wittgenstein encourages us to drop the classical metaphysical questions of the kind "What is the essence of meaning?" "What is meaning?" Using the categories of language-games, rules, use, he does not propose that those questions be replaced with another: "What is use?" He recommends that meaning be explained by a description of how the phrase of interest is used. In most plain terms, the concept such as "meaning" is explained by means of the term "use," which is less philosophically marked. Also, the model of explanation fails to settle an ontological issue for Wittgenstein — the relationship between use and meaning. Rather, he postulates some method of investigation: the question of use rather than the question of meaning. In this approach, the resolution of the issue of meaning is not reduced to the proposition "this and that is the meaning of any expression." This is why the question of meaning is transformed into the question of use (data, expressions of interest, rather than the essence of use or use in general) while the answer comes when we consistently perform properly understood descriptions of expression uses (Wittgenstein 1969: 21). One should neither

⁵This formulation of Wittgenstein's later position gives us no right to call it a peculiar linguistic solipsism. Making "existence" dependent on its functioning in a language-game does not deny the existence of a world that is independent from the user of language. The category of existence is treated differently here than in realistic positions, which are profoundly metaphysical. So, it resembles the position of Hilary Putnam, expressed as "inner realism."

⁶I mean a sense of meaning that would be attributed to any object's status. Suffice to mention the concept of J. Locke and G. Frege, phenomenological concepts or some positivist theories.

succumb to the temptation of treating use as a new name only, which veils the same problems, though. Wittgenstein makes changes that entail a completely new understanding of the theory of meaning (Wittgenstein 1998, #191-197; Wittgenstein 1968: 111, 114).

The way Wittgenstein presents it, no sign is significant "of itself", internally, as it were. Wittgenstein writes:

Every sign by itself seems dead. What gives it life? — In use it is alive. Is life breathed into it there? — Or is the use its life?
(Wittgenstein 1998, #432)

We can predicate on the meanings of linguistic expressions thanks to their use. When we ask about meaning, we ask about these, too. #23 of *Investigations*, which initiated a philosophical debate on the category of use, reads that meaning is the use we make of the word. This brief statement by Wittgenstein does not yet make the category of meaning more understood only because it is imperative to explain it with a presumably simpler category of use. Its general rule can be derived from the way in which Wittgenstein describes language. Use is the category by means of which we answer the question of what language is — what one can rightly say is that it is used. Wittgenstein's frequent reference to the fact that activity is prior to any description can be attributed to his deep conviction that even if the category of use were not included in any theory or presented in any description (including his own), people would keep using language. We can say it is what it is because we use it.

The way Wittgenstein argues makes it impossible to find a definition of use in his flagship texts. If we separate passages from texts where the category of use appears, we do not get a clear and unambiguous description of this concept. It must be investigated alongside categories related to it, analyzed in the context of the methodological assumptions adopted and the objectives we want to meet through this investigation. Below are the relevant quotations from Wittgenstein:

Investigations #10 Now what do the words of this language signify? — What is supposed to show what they signify, if not the kind of use they have?

Investigations #23 There are countless kinds: countless different kinds of use of what we call symbols, words, sentences.

Investigations #43 For a large class of cases—though not for all—in which we employ the word meaning it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language.⁷

Investigations #133 It is not our aim to refine or complete the system of rules for the use of our words in unheard-of ways.

Investigations #421 Look at the sentence as an instrument, and at its sense as its employment.

Investigations #560 [...] if you want to understand the use of the word meaning”, look for what are called ”explanations of meaning.

How can an unclear and complicated category such as use be understood? Apparently, at least five aspects can be identified which — taken into account together — bring us some understanding of what use is. Canfield proposes that this category be discussed in consideration of these problems (Canfield 1981: 72-75; cf. Baker, Hacker 1983: 368-369):

1. The way in which beings are built. In other words, what the backdrop for their formation is, and which we would include in grammatical properties, broadly understood, where grammar is perceived in linguistic terms. Here too are basic syntactic facts, characteristic of some specific language expressions (e.g. the way phrases are built).
2. Circumstances that are external, as it were, in which use is manifested: behavior, the kind of extralinguistic situation. What needs to be considered is the so-called environmental and social

⁷Perhaps the reason why Wittgenstein does not indicate that he means all cases is that in many places he writes that the meaning of a sentence can also be understood as a method of its verification. Also, he precludes such applications of the word ”meaning” as in sentences ”Dark clouds mean heavy rain,” or ”Rubens’s painting has a great significance for its epoch.” (Wittgenstein 1989c, #127).

aspects of meaning. We are investigating what in working terms might be called the most salient practical use.

3. Correctness criteria that can lend themselves to abstraction from the regularities that constitute life. These are investigated in linguistic situations and the extralinguistic situations accompanying them.

4. The roles played by expressions in some specific language-games.

5. Elements of full, deep grammar, whose criteria determine the functioning of expressions in natural language.

All the possible senses of the category of use make up what in theory could be called "meaning," and which can be investigated thanks to this category. Considering the above, this use can be described. For any word, phrase or sentence, there are at least several properties, analyzing them provides us with a picture of their use and affords an explanation of linguistic behavior in regard to this word, expression or sentence. Several levels of this description can be identified; phonological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic. This identification is particularly important when we discuss Wittgenstein's category of use. It is so above all because no concept that Wittgenstein uses (*Gebrauch, Satz, Sprache, Sprachspiele, Objekt, Tätigkeit*), along with his own methodology, have no everlasting established, context-free applications (Baker 2004: 67). Their meanings must be read in some totalities, rather than in detachment from them. The more aspects we take into account in the description of the way a given expression functions, the fuller answer we get to the question of what its meaning is. We can say that, in his attempts to describe the use of selected expressions, Wittgenstein demonstrates that this can be done in a number of ways and using various methods (Wittgenstein 1969: 57).

Social Context: The Role of Practice

Stressing the role of practice is an essential element of Wittgenstein's later methodology and of his approach to language in particular. This is so thanks to some key elements of his later philosophy, and thanks to the strong conviction that this activity is something most primeval, and

thanks to the rebuttal of the traditional two-facet theories of meaning.⁸ The functioning of language-games can be described thanks to the possibility of investigating some specific language practices. Thanks to practice we have access to language as such. The critique of two-facet theories of meaning, where a sign (inscription, sound) becomes separated from this "something" which endows it with meaning (enlivens it), gives rise to a treatment of practice that is different from the traditional approach (Wittgenstein 1969: 24, 67ff). In the classical two-facet theory of meaning (the "enlivening" theory), it was necessary to demonstrate what and how gives meaning to signs. Figuratively, it was necessary to show the sources of the "enlivening." M. Luntley indicates that there are three such sources: beings (senses, ideas) of a Platonic kind, individual language user's mind and also the community of the users of language (social language practice) (Luntley 2003: 9). Therefore, generally speaking, we have Platonic, mentalist and sociocultural approaches to meaning. Some superficial and hasty interpretations ascribe a claim to Wittgenstein which has it that practice is the source of the enlivening of a sign. The result is dubbing his theory of meaning socio-functionalism or extreme conventionalism in the theory of language (Witek 2005). This, however, has no grounds in the light of the methodology of his philosophical investigations presented here. Wittgenstein is an opponent of separating a sign from that which enlivens it because the concept of a symbol is primitive and simple (irreducible into factors) in his philosophy. Both *Zeichen* and *Sätze* are signs and sentences in use. Wittgenstein then does not have to answer the question about the origin of imparting "life" (meaning) on signs. He cannot answer, then, that the source is practice. For the sake of clarity, we might add that he does not treat *Zeichen* as physical sounds or texts (Wittgenstein 1969: 26). Seeking the source of meaning in a community (society, that which is social, shared) is a blind alley also because the community (society) proves redundant as a source of grammar. Assuming that an individual can use symbols as signifying something thanks to the fact that they refer those to the way in which others use it, we assume that the remaining users of language already use symbols as having a meaning. In so doing we assume something we were supposed to justify. If we do not know in what way a symbol that an individual is using receives its meaning, we will not know it either when we assert that it receives it by confronting the symbols with its other users (Luntley 2003: 16). One cannot ascribe to Wittgenstein a

⁸In two-facet theories it is assumed that a symbol gains meaning thanks to something that "enlivens" it (called content or sense), as the symbol itself is only something physical (writing, sound) (Wittgenstein 1998, #120, 138).

classical conventionalist position, which is illustrated in the introduction of the categories of form of life to the description of language.⁹ Reckoning with this category, we must admit that practice is constituted by natural human history (a form of life is, in a way, its effect); therefore history determines our linguistic practices. In some sense, we have no choice — certain practices were established over the course of the long history of the human use of language and they are in a way an effect of many accidental events and ties that obtained in this history. It cannot be alleged then that we chose the rules of our language-games in any way. This deep rooting of language practice (and it also concerns the formation of concepts) makes their description a difficult task, the more so that it must be done in language (Baker 1981: 64; Bogen 1972: 198).

What is the role of practice in the context of the categories of use and the language-games associated with them? The category of use involves also such categories as "rule," "language-game" or "form of life." Language functions have a strict association with action, and action occurs in some context (material, conceptual, social or, more broadly, cultural). More precisely still, using a language is some kind of action, and therefore some practice.¹⁰ Language use, which is most conspicuous and recognizable simply when we are speaking, is part of what Wittgenstein calls a form of life (Wittgenstein #23). What exactly is a form of life? It is not too often discussed in *Investigations*: three times in part I (#19, 23, 241) and twice in part II (p. 243, 317). This is a key to understanding what language is for Wittgenstein ("to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life"). The form of life indicates a broader reference for the research itself, which needs to be acknowledged in the discussion. Language renders itself to description and can be imagined only in a broader extra- and supra-linguistic context (Wittgenstein 1998, #19). What would make up such a context? In the first place it needs to be understood that the context is something that is already given to us as users of language (incl. Philosophers). Language is not formed; nor does it function in a limbo, but it develops in relation to the material world (describes and expresses it), historical, changing man and their environment, feelings and experiences that accompany man; it also adapts to the objectives and needs it is used by man for. In learning a language, we

⁹This reasoning does not concern sophisticated conventionalist theories where conventions are understood as something that can be chosen and, to a degree, changed.

¹⁰ Wittgenstein mentions the following examples of actions in an ordinary sense of the term: speaking, writing, imagining, pursuing, attempting to do something, endeavoring. (Wittgenstein 1998, #615).

also learn the accompanying behavior, we recognize the circumstances in which the expressions can be used, and we also learn to express our attitudes towards judgments in the whole range of their possibilities. This all would add up to make a form of life, that is, the context, which in some sense also determines its use, the way it is. Anyway, it cannot be separated from use (Wittgenstein 1998, #241, part II, 243).

Forms of life can be understood in at least two senses — biological and cultural; the distinction into "nature" and "culture" has a conceptual and arbitrary sense here and by no means does it separate the world into two independent and unrelated domains.¹¹ The biological would include the attributes of man as a species; the cultural would include the cultural history and the phenomena that perpetuated the way it has functioned. In terms of biology, we might distinguish between forms of life and mind the differences that determine biological changes. Discussing cultural issues, we pay attention to the differences in cultures that we distinguish from each other along some adopted criteria. The two modules of understanding a "form of life" are not mutually exclusive. They are aspects of investigating the same object — a two-legged language-using animal called man. Let us consider this by use of an example. When we recognize a language as foreign, and a culture we find ourselves in as different from our own, we can do that thanks to some shared human system of reference as Wittgenstein calls it. This is constituted by a form of life. We are able to see cultural differences and make attempts to understand other cultures thanks to a shared human biological endowment (Wittgenstein 1998, #206). In literature, the category of a form of life has been subjected to numerous interpretations. It was understood as a vital element of a language-game (S. Hilmy), a peculiar organic model (J.F.M. Hunter), treated as human nature (P. Winch, N. Malcolm), but it was most commonly equated with a cultural system S. Cavell (Conway 1989: 43). The range of possibilities seems broad; for the sake of this discussion it ought to be kept in mind that this category is a relevant research context that should be taken into consideration in the description of the functioning of language.

Back to the mainstream discussion. Practice is neither a phenomenon nor a homogeneous notion. Notably, stressing its primacy is not tantamount to claiming the supremacy of activity. Apparently, we are not dealing with a doctrine like that in Wittgenstein later period. The description of practice we find in his works does not make up any theory (Stern 1995: 192). In his

¹¹The arbitrary quality of the nature/culture distinction in the later philosophy of Wittgenstein has been noted by S. Cavell (Cavell 1995: 158).

canonical work — *Philosophical Investigations* — practice is drawn upon for the sake of explaining various issues and resolving a number of problems. First, Wittgenstein makes a reference to it in the most natural context of language use practice seen as some unique activity of using words and expressions in order to achieve a desired effect (Wittgenstein 1998, #7, #21, #251, #132). Second, it is treated as an indispensable element of learning, to use when we find out about rules and their applications in language-games. Here, practice lies in watching the player, their behavior and moves when training to apply the game. We will be able to play it thanks to some practiced habits and permanent customs we will internalize (Wittgenstein 1998, #54, #197, #198). Learning a language, or more specifically — rules of conduct in language games, enables Wittgenstein to point to its social, communal dimension. To learn the rules of a game, I must have someone who will be my teacher and will subject me to the training of learning for as long as playing the game has become something natural to me, and the individual moves in it — obvious. So, I cannot learn a language-game on my own: I need a fellowship of players which, thanks to the practice of playing this game will establish the acceptable transitions (Wittgenstein 1998, #243, #275).

The adjective "practical" appears in *Investigations* also for the sake of theoretical distinction between the objectives of classical philosophy and the practical objectives (here seen as every-day ones, accompanying ordinary rites of human day-to-day life) (Wittgenstein 1998, #411). In the philosophy so far, a rationale was required for each step in the theories being formulated. But whereas reasons can be provided as to why such-and-such expressions were used in a given situation, at some point such a rationale can no longer be provided. What we will be left to with will be practice confirming our conviction that we can behave the way we do (Wittgenstein 1998, #217). Stressing the role of practice in using language means the phenomenon of language is treated as some tool which in appropriate situations serves the attainment of (un)intended objectives (Wittgenstein 1998, #421).

Wittgenstein is not in favor of purely social (conventional) understanding of use (meaning). At the same time he does not undermine the role of practice and the broadly understood context, in which language behaviors (forms of life) occur — moreover, their validity is constantly stressed. However, he grants language a uniquely metaphysical status when he develops his conception of grammar. This is to discuss it.

The Consequences for Language Research

I think that the problem of any philosophical theories trying to elucidate on the category of "meaning" can be explained in two ways. First, it used to be insufficiently realized that the explanation of the functioning of language is conducted in this very language. This was related to a phenomenon, detectable in Wittgenstein's writing, of a radical difference between the phenomenon of "grasping the meaning" and the description of meaning and how it is constituted. Using language can be grasped at once, it is a homogeneous phenomenon also of a mental nature, but the explanation of use (meaning) is a complicated and complex philosophical undertaking, made up from a number of theoretical procedures (Wittgenstein 1998, #197). Second, it was believed that explaining the "workings of language" in language must lead to very superficial results. In effect, attempts were made to include meaning to some extra-linguistic categories of being. That describing a linguistic phenomenon is done in language is not a reason to treat it as a weakness. When, within philosophy, we speak of ways in which the term "philosophy" operates, we are not thus building a foundation for the concept to function, at the same time consolidating here some meta-level, second-order philosophy — we keep doing philosophy. Therefore a linguistic "object," which we are investigating, can be transparent (totally accessible and visible) only in a methodological sense. Realizing this leads us to Wittgenstein's conclusions: at first sight all expressions "act" in language in the same way — those derived from everyday language (such as *tables*, *cook*, *falalala lala la la*) and those that have been attributed some philosophical depth (*identical*, *exist*) (Wittgenstein 1998, #11). One needs to take a closer look at the way language functions to see how these expressions really function. One needs to check how they function in specific, ordinary circumstances. It is in these uses that their meaning becomes manifest.

Several methodological clues can be identified, followed in contemporary language research, which use the later philosophy of Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein posits depriving the category of meaning, and hence the language, too, of mystery: the aura that philosophers shrouded it with on their quest for its essence. In Wittgenstein's investigations, both the classical essence of meaning and the postulate of searching for it are rebutted (Wittgenstein 1998, #92, #371). The language under scrutiny is natural language that flesh-and-blood people, biological and social creatures, use. This social and biological endowment needs to be taken into consideration, which is happening in contemporary language research. We break with the Cartesian paradigm in language research and built theories alternative to

the previously widespread two-facet theory of meaning. Meaning becomes demetaphysicalized in contemporary theories and is no longer treated as being; it is usually explained by means of other selected categories.¹² The role of linguistic practice and practice at large is stressed in research. Wittgenstein postulated that language practice not be treated as this sphere of human activity which "reflects" the world of apriorically established meanings. Today, we see practice as a constitutive part of establishing meaning and the functioning of language.

Meanings are objective for Wittgenstein. This objectivity, a form of strong intersubjectivism, asserts that the correctness of use of a given expression does not depend on individual decisions by a language user. Language is not only autonomous but also social. People may use language incorrectly precisely for the reason that this correctness does not depend on their specific use but is conditioned by rules that are normative and are absolutely binding. Today, language is universally believed to be an element of human evolution that is available to the species rather than an individual (Pinker 1994, Pinker 1997). Moreover, significant links are highlighted between the use of language and the existence of "I" (personal identity, self). In his late philosophy, Wittgenstein urged that psychology be linked to research on language meaning. This connection can be illustrated by stressing that subjectivity constitutes itself thanks to an ability to form judgments, and these can be formed by a meaningful language.¹³

In his later thoughts, Wittgenstein looked at language as an element of the natural history of man. It is like that in the contemporary approaches to language research — language is treated as something natural (rather than non-empirical, ideal). However, a major difference between Wittgenstein's methodology and the methodological recommendations traceable in contemporary theories is these theories glorify the methodology of exact, hard sciences. Research within these specific fields of scientific study (such as developmental psychology, neurobiology) is supposed to make it possible to provide answers to philosophical questions concerning language.¹⁴ Again, Wittgenstein thought that the differences between philosophy and hard sciences are great and fundamental, with even the mere posing of questions

¹²E.g. P. Horwich (1998) explains use by means of the property of acceptance, R. Millikan (2001) — concepts of functions.

¹³Luntley (2003: 67) espouses this interpretation of Wittgenstein's thought.

¹⁴Some commentators go so far as believing that this is a sufficient reason to conclude that nowadays we are not dealing with a continuity of late Wittgenstein's thought (Kelly 1984, vii).

differing between those, and therefore answers cannot be obtained in that manner (Williams 1999: 240-259). It ought to be added, though, that the postulate on refraining from constructing theories of meaning, modeled after theories formulated in empirical sciences, does not close the path of philosophical theorizing. Wittgenstein proposes a theory where we do not use a uniform method allowing an explanation of language facts but, rather, we apply a number of interconnected methods (therapies), leading to the description of language use in all its complexity. For the sake of clarity, it ought to be emphasized here that Wittgenstein's lack of consent to scientificizing philosophy is not an assault on science; it is only a reflection of a certain conviction concerning the shape and functions of philosophy (Conway 1989: 33; Shanker 1997: 9).

Appendix

Wittgenstein's most important passages concerning meaning and language can be presented in the form of simplified propositions. They are as follows:

1. Meaning is no being (neither is it a Platonic idea, mental being or physical being).
2. Meaning has no hidden and mysterious nature, which is only accessible in a deep (classically metaphysical) philosophical investigation.
3. Asking about the meaning of an expression, sentence, we ought to ask about the way it is used.
4. Meaning is not the same as use.
5. The category of use enables us to investigate meaning — it performs a methodological function. Meanings of expressions and sentences are available through the investigation of their uses.
6. Use is not an element of meaning. Meaning is not "something" that accompanies use. Introducing the category of use does not introduce a two-faceted quality in the understanding of meaning.
7. We speak of meaning when there is a use of an expression that is tied to an array of extralinguistic practices.

8. Use is investigated properly only when analyzed in connection with practice.
9. Understanding is a practical skill that manifests itself in a correct application of rules (mastering a technique).
10. Remaining in a specific mental state of a private nature is not the essence of comprehension (argument against the existence of a private language) even though comprehension is accompanied by mental states.
11. The complexity of processes accompanying the comprehension of language calls for wide-ranging research which, other than analyses of use, ought to include psychological research of mental states.
12. Language is a set of language-games, constituted by rules.
13. You can speak of use only within language-games.
14. Thanks to use, the rules of language become accessible to a user of language.
15. The skill of using a language is acquired when training to use everyday language practices.
16. Rules are methods of conduct, fortuitously adopted in language (rather than by someone), which have no rationale and which can only be learned in a language community.
17. Language-games have no shared properties of essence. They are characterized by familial similarities.
18. Language is a natural element of the human world, interrelated with its other component parts into complex relationships (forms of life).
19. Language is a set of tools which serve a multitude of purposes.
20. Language (as an object of research) is not merely an empirical "something," even though it is observable in its functioning.
21. Uses make up the deep grammar of language.
22. Deep grammar allows the explication of the links between language and the world.

23. The creation of an ideal language is not a task of philosophy; it is an elucidation of language use in the language we use.
24. The objective of philosophical analyses is introducing order in the ways in which words are used to learn about their meanings and the existing bonds between these and other expressions.
25. Explication of meaning is neither about supplying empirical explanations of the way language functions nor about the demonstration of causal relationships between language and the world.
26. Learning about the factual role of words in language-games makes it possible to resolve the philosophical paradoxes arising when words and expressions are taken out of their natural contexts of use.

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