



## Wittgenstein's Grammatical-Emprical Distinction

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# THE JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

## WITTGENSTEIN'S GRAMMATICAL-EMPIRICAL DISTINCTION

A VERY important distinction in *The Blue and Brown Books*<sup>1</sup> and the *Philosophical Investigations*<sup>2</sup> is that between an "empirical proposition" (*Erfahrungssatz*) and a "grammatical proposition" (*grammatischer Satz*). Wittgenstein's "*Therapien*" often involve mustering examples which remind us that a given statement, though it "tempts" us to take it as an empirical one, is really a grammatical one. His "fight against the fascination which forms of expression exert upon us" (BB 27) is often a fight to keep us from mistaking a grammatical proposition that is only loosely *analogous* to an empirical one for one that is actually empirical. And in waging this battle he draws a sharp distinction between the two sorts of assertions.

Some superficial critics of Wittgenstein have accused him of rejecting certain statements simply because they are "queer," different from ordinary usage. But to do this is to lose sight of three important facts about his later philosophy: (1) What Bouwsma in his review<sup>3</sup> of *The Blue Book* has called "quicken[ing] the sense of the queer" (150) is only one aspect, or what Bouwsma calls one "phase," of the Wittgensteinian approach; he is doing a great deal more than simply pointing out extraordinary usage and condemning it for being extraordinary. Wittgenstein wants also to find "the origin" of a queerness he has pointed out in linguistic usage, and that origin often—indeed, usually—lies for him in a faulty analogy between the two sorts of propositions I have been mentioning. (2) Ordinary language or the "established forms of expression" (BB 43) each taken in isolation are among the causes of the very troubles Wittgenstein is trying to cure. It is not only that separate sentences in ordinary language do not give us perspicuity into the rules of language; they can be downright misleading or tempting as far as helping us talk nonsense is concerned (PI 49; BB 41, 52, 55, 58-59). Wittgenstein is no worshipper of

<sup>1</sup> Oxford, 1958; hereafter referred to as BB, with page numbers.

<sup>2</sup> Oxford, 1953; hereafter referred to as PI, with page numbers.

<sup>3</sup> This JOURNAL, 58, 6 (Mar. 16, 1961): 141-162.

"the actual use of language" just because it is "ordinary" or not queer. (3) His is not a philosophy whose main purpose is to slap the wrists of people who talk extraordinarily; it is usually a practical philosophy trying to keep the engine of language from idling, from going on holiday, from confusing our thinking and hurting our communication with each other. He wants us to use propositions that are either plainly grammatical or that cog into, engage us with, the facts insofar as those facts are empirically, publicly discoverable. If he were *simply* a conservative grammarian who couldn't abide queerness, he would have to attack the languages of the sciences: surely the language of the infinitesimal calculus or of chemistry is as non-ordinary as any other kind of queer talk. But what he says early in the *Philosophical Investigations* about these two languages and others like them is that they are (8)

. . . so to speak, suburbs of our language [*Vorstädte unserer Sprache*]. . . . Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses.

These "*Vororte mit geraden und regelmässigen Strassen*" are not left standing by Wittgenstein by special dispensation, or despite their queerness; they are left standing because they have "straight regular streets," because they are not involved, as is psychology, according to Wittgenstein, in "conceptual confusion" (PI 232) (*Begriffsverwirrung*). They are orderly, and this means, among other things, that they do not (37) "prevent you from seeing the facts." In fact, says Wittgenstein, in a different connection (37),

. . . Say what you choose, so long as it does not prevent you from seeing the facts. (And when you see them there is a good deal that you will not say.)

The reason he does not reject certain sciences is that they do not obscure the facts.

No, when Wittgenstein praises ordinary language it is usually either in order to criticize the "ideal languages" that some logicians have proposed as "normative" for plain talk or as part of the project of helping us to clear away the linguistic-conceptual blocks that "prevent you from seeing the facts." And this clearing away often involves breaking down misleading analogies between grammatical statements and empirical ones.

Now the purpose of this paper is to suggest an important fault in the way Wittgenstein makes the distinction between grammatical and empirical claims. That fault is typified in paragraph

295 of the *Investigations*, shortly after the "beetle and the box" passage (100):

. . . what kind of proposition is this meant to be at all? An experiential one? No.—A grammatical one?

It will be my contention that he has dichotomized too sharply in making that distinction: he too often puts a proposition in one *or* the other category. Grammatical propositions are not always, as he claims, "utterly different" from empirical ones; and this absence of a sharp distinction has a great deal to do with the correctness of Wittgenstein's way of using predicates like "*sinnlos*" and "*unsinn*". What Wittgenstein sometimes designates as "plain nonsense" (PI 48) because, among other things, it is empirically empty is sometimes not empirically empty at all; I shall try to show that a grammatical recommendation or proposition can be both a grammatical proposition and an empirical one and, therefore, not "*sinnlos*" or "plain nonsense." Wittgenstein has not, at least in one important exemplar case, proved that a sharp dichotomy holds here.

#### THE DISTINCTION

What then, briefly, is the distinction between grammatical and empirical claims? Consider the following three assertions:

- (1) Only one person can play Patience.
- (2) Only one grown person can sit on a bench six inches wide.
- (3) Only one person can feel one's pain.

Now (1) is a pure example of a "grammatical proposition"; that is, it lays out or helps to lay out a rule for using such words as 'plays' in the context of the word 'Patience'. That is, it tells you something about how the word 'Patience' is used. Now if you came across two people playing cards and they told you they were playing Patience with each other, this situation would not refute proposition (1): you could refer to the ordinary usage (as described by Patience buffs and rule books) of the word 'Patience', and you could possibly prove to them that they were not playing Patience. But, and this is the crucial point, what if they turned on you and asked you why you followed tradition and the rule books; what if they asked you to prove, let us say, the value of playing Patience that way? Well, you would be stymied; not exactly stumped, because there are no facts that you are ignorant of; you would be stymied because the request that you prove a certain usage of a certain word to be true or false or right or wrong is a puzzling

request. All you can say in "answer" to it is what Wittgenstein says (PI 85):

. . . I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. . . . "This is simply what I do."

Language, says Wittgenstein (PI 113) is "founded on convention." And the word 'Patience' is no exception: the way we do things and the way we have done them are the bedrock. We can learn that way by habituation; but we cannot "prove" the "truth" of that way. And it is not that these conventions are arbitrary in the sense of capricious; they are pretty solid; it is just that they are our way of doing things, our very forms of life, or *Lebensformen*; they are ours and they are ourselves. Wittgenstein condenses this into an epigram, with his characteristic reticence in talking about such matters (PI 226):

What has to be accepted, the given, is—so one could say—*forms of life*.

And so a grammatical proposition like (1), when indeed backed by convention, when the "*Institution ihrer Anwendung*" is not lacking (PI 117), is in a sense deeper than proof, and certainly irrelevant to it.

When an impatient "Patience" player asks you to prove why it is right to play the game like that, he is acting as if there were a *decision* involved in following tradition and the rule books, a choice based perhaps upon empirical evidence of some sort. But when I am dealing with an *institution*, when I am dealing with basic conventions, with "*Gepflogenheiten, Gebräuche*," when I am obeying a rule in making a grammatical proposition (PI 85),

. . . I no longer have any choice. The rule, once stamped with a particular meaning, traces the lines along which it is to be followed through the whole of space. . . .

When I obey a rule, I do not choose. I obey the rule *blindly*.

A practice, a way of life, "*customs, uses, institutions*" (PI 81) are involved, not deciding, not even thinking about obeying a rule.

Now look at proposition (2), the one about only one grown person being able to sit on a bench six inches wide. If I present this one to you, you can quite reasonably say: "No, wait a minute; let me see if you're right." You can get a bench six inches wide, invite all the narrow-hipped adults you can find to try to sit side by side upon it, and then, having failed, you can choose on the basis of evidence to say, "Why, I think you're right. Only one grown person *can* sit down on such a bench." A decision between two live possibilities, a real choice made on empirical grounds, this is what is involved in stating and assessing an empirical proposi-

tion; and all this is precisely what is *not* involved in stating or obeying a grammatical one.

Of course, Wittgenstein is not saying that there are no connections between empirical propositions and grammatical ones. After all, we have to learn to use the words we employ in empirical propositions; there have to be basic "*Gepflogenheiten, Gebräuche*" in any use of words. This, I think, is part of what Wittgenstein meant when he wrote in the *Philosophical Investigations* (136),

Justification by experience comes to an end. If it did not it would not be justification.

At some point or other your standards themselves have no empirical justification, are not in need of them; they are simply our way of life, our way of talking or thinking. And so the bedrock of empirical claims is grammatical ""institutions," where there are no live alternatives to decide or choose between on the basis of facts or on any other basis.

Now consider (3), the one about only one person feeling one's pain. This looks like (2), looks as if empirical findings of some sort had helped one to choose or decide to accept it; but Wittgenstein shows us that it is a proposition more similar to (1) than it is to (2) and that it is disguised as or mistaken for an empirical proposition. (3) involves no plain alternative that we choose or avoid on empirical evidence; in effect it is only a recommendation for using words like 'can', 'feel', and 'pain', this time a recommendation that is not backed up by habits, customs, or conventions (PI 117). It hangs in mid-air, neither an empirical proposition nor a full-blooded grammatical one.

In *The Blue Book* (46) Wittgenstein emphasizes the notion that in such a proposition as (3) no "antithesis" to the claim being made is forthcoming. The antithesis of the six-inch-bench claim is that two or more grown persons can sit side by side upon the bench. But there is no such antithesis to (3). If you say "Two people *can* feel the same pain" and then set up Wittgenstein's famous (BB 54)

. . . wireless connection between the two bodies which made one person feel pain in his head when the other had exposed his. . .

the man who asserted (3) will persist in saying things like "my pain *can't* be his anyway." And here he would be showing his hand; here he would be showing us that (3) is a rootless grammatical claim disguised as an empirical one, an insistence on a way of using words like 'pain', and 'feel' and 'can', a way that involves no checkable or conceivable alternative or antithesis or choice. By

his response he is showing you that he is stating a rule for using words, a rule that is as empirically "blind" or empty as any pure grammatical claim. What Wittgenstein wants philosophers to do is to stop making fools of themselves and of philosophy by confusing an empty, blindly grammatical proposition involving no antithesis and no criterion for choosing between antitheses with an empirical proposition that does have a plain antithesis, does involve a criterion for deciding whether it is true or false, and does "cog in" not only with the rest of the language we learned as children but with the publicly discoverable facts that help us to justify or defend one claim as against another. He wants us to go about justifying the propositions that are in some way justifiable and to leave alone the propositions that are not. Instead of "subliming" our language, we should follow the logic that *Gepflogenheiten* and empirical considerations lay down for it.

#### THE TROUBLE WITH THE DISTINCTION

Unfortunately, Wittgenstein himself blurs this distinction between decisionless grammatical claims and claims involving empirical decision procedures. On page 56 of *The Blue Book* he is seeking what he calls "the origin" of a disguised grammatical claim (I shall use our (3) about the pain instead of the one he uses), And he says that we "decide against using" a proposition like "Two persons can feel the same pain," while at the same time we feel free to talk as if we were making an empirical claim about only one person feeling pain; and we do all this because after all we do say analogous things like "No two grown persons can sit . . .," and such empirical remarks as the latter have a solid home in our language.

And so we must revise our distinction between empirical and grammatical claims: in disguised grammatical claims there *are* decisions between alternatives being made, there are "antitheses," but the choice between them can be made neither on the basis of customs nor on the basis of empirical findings.

But if we choose to utter (3) instead of its contradictory (3'), what is the nature of the "reasons" for our making this particular decision? Or is this a Kierkegaardian "leap," having no "reasons" in its defense? You *will* find in the writings of Wittgenstein elaborate accounts of "the origin," the causes (*Ursachen*) of our feeling free to utter remarks like (3). For instance, on pages 17 and 18 of the *Blue Book* he ascribes our confusion of (3) with the empirical claim (2) to "our craving for generality," our "contentious attitude toward the particular case." In general in

his writings the more immediate or proximate cause of our making a decision to use a disguised grammatical claim lies in a faulty analogy between empirical and grammatical claims, as well as in a "deep" feeling of unrest about the plainly empirical claims we deal with in everyday life. And the philosopher's job is to avoid criterionless squabbling by asking "How far does the analogy between these uses go?" (BB, 23)

But causes or origins are one thing. Reasons for deciding a certain way and not another are another thing. And if you do not think that these two ways of answering the question "Why?" are different, then look at page 15 of *The Blue Book*, where Wittgenstein deftly summarizes the two different grammars or usages of these words. To state that such and such is the cause or origin of a certain action is to make what Wittgenstein calls an "hypothesis" based on our discovery

. . . of experiences which . . . agree in showing that your action is the regular sequel of certain conditions which we then call causes of the action.

But *reasons* have little to do with "agreeing experiences," little to do with hypotheses, he tells us. Finding the causes of schizophrenia involves conjecturing, hypothesizing on the basis of "agreeing experiences," but finding out the reason why a man decided to cross the street at a certain time, and not wait, involves simply asking the man to tell you "why" he didn't wait. Of course he may answer you with a cause (like "I have a headache, and whenever I have a headache I can't see straight"), but if he gives you a *reason* for his acting that way he will say something like "That car looked as if it was going pretty slowly and was pretty far away." Here he is not conjecturing about "regular sequels" of actions; he is simply reciting what he was thinking at the time (though what he was thinking at the time was "caused" by something, a psychologist could say).

I think there is a lot of truth in what Wittgenstein says here, and so I can say that he has committed a real error when throughout his writings he talks about "the origin," the causes of this "grammatical" decision, and does not consider reasons for making it one way rather than another, reasons that one might recite upon demand. He treats this grammatical decision as if it were a disease (and therefore subject to therapies), not a choice to say certain sorts of things and not say others. He treats it as if it were utterly "blind," without any relevance to stable reasons—bad or good—that one might give on demand. He treats the man who claims (3) in somewhat the same way a psychologist would be

treating a logician in the following sort of dialogue:

Logician: Now the reason for my putting down 'Q' after having put down 'If P then Q' and 'P' is what is called "Modus Ponens."

Psychologist: You put 'Q' down, I suspect, because of habituation to doing this sort of thing, etc.

Logician: I beg your pardon, but I wasn't talking about that sort of thing at all. The *reason* Q goes down there, the justification for it, is *Modus Ponens*.

Psychologist: The reason you put it down there lies in your nervous system, etc.

Now I apologize to our all-too-often maltreated psychologists. This one is fictional—though I have had a psychologist brush aside my reasons as irrelevant, and talk to me only about causes. The point is that Wittgenstein's analysis does not take reasons into consideration, assumes a condition of disease, where only causes are the issue, does not assume a condition of choice or decision where (3) (Only one person can feel one's pain) and not (3') (Two persons can feel the same pain) is chosen for reasons.

Now I contend that this neglect of reasons helps Wittgenstein to describe (3) as grammatical and "utterly different" (BB 56) from empirically grounded propositions. Please notice that I am not trying to belabor Wittgenstein for a momentary misuse of the word 'decision'. If he had never used it, my criticisms would have remained substantially what they are now. Every disguised grammatical claim is a rejection of its (at least implicit) "antithesis" and, therefore, involves some sort of "movement," to use Wittgenstein's word, in one direction in preference to another. For instance, the people who talk in favor of "private" experience claim that experience is *not* "public" or "sharable" in some special uses of these words. They acknowledge that public *communication* occurs, that I can tell you and you can understand that I have a pain in my right leg, just under the kneecap, a pointed, acicular pain, etc. But they reject the claim, they *choose to reject* the claim, that pain is "public" in the sense of 'sharable' (another queer word). If Wittgenstein had not written 'decided against' and 'decide against' on page 56 of *The Blue Book* all of this would still be the case, and my contention that he has given us many causes but no reasons for our making a move or decision like (3) would still hold.

Sometimes he leaves out reasons for making a given assertion like (3), in full realization of the distinction between causes and reasons. Let me quote at some length a very important passage, on page 215 of the *Investigations*, where he is illustrating the origins of disguised grammatical claims, and is deliberately ruling out "reasons" for making such claims (all italics are his).

. . . I go for a walk in the environs of a city with a friend. As we talk it comes out that I am imagining [*ich mir . . . vorstelle*] the city to lie on our right. Not only have I no conscious reason [*bewussten Grund*] for this assumption, but some quite simple consideration was enough to make me realize that the city lay rather to the left ahead of us. I can at first give no answer to the question why I imagine the city in *this* direction. I had *no reason* [*keinen Grund*] to think it. But though I see no reason still I seem to see certain psychological causes [*gewisse psychologische Ursachen*] for it. In particular, certain associations and memories. For example, we walked along a canal, and once before in similar circumstances I had followed a canal, and that time the city lay on our right.—I might try as it were psychoanalytically to discover the causes [*Ursachen*] of my unfounded [*unbegründeten*] conviction.

We are back to the faulty analogy as the cause or origin of a claim [this time an empirically decidable one, but we can brush this aside for the moment: the “*Täuschung*” or illusion being succumbed to at this moment in the walk is similar to the illusion that leads to making claims like (3)]. And here Wittgenstein explicitly asserts that the conviction is unfounded, has no reasons to support it, only psychological causes that bring it about. A few pages earlier he had said, talking about the way we see some things (206) that “A piece of fancy” ends by making us believe this or that: we experience the “dawning of a point of view” (*das Aufleuchten des Aspekts*—I am retranslating the passage here). A dawn has causes, no reasons, just as an “illusion” does. On page 121 of the *Investigations* he ascribes the origin and strengthening of such a belief as (3) to a “new way of looking at things.” On page 124 he describes such a claim as the result of “logical sleight of hand.” But one of the most revealing metaphors he uses to describe what happens when we come to believe such a claim as (3) occurs on page 121 of that same book. He calls such an assertion “a grammatical movement made by yourself” (*Du habest eine grammatische Bewegung gemacht*). These and other metaphors amount to a description of only part of “why” we make such claims as (3); they are metaphors that reveal us in somewhat the same condition as Locke’s monkey, who is shifting a coconut from hand to hand: he has a deep feeling of unrest perhaps, but there are no “reasons” for his doing so. It is my contention that Wittgenstein has simply burked the question of why, in the sense of *reasons*, one makes such a remark as (3). And he has used metaphors concerning inward shuffling and the confusion of analogous verbal forms to help him to do this.

Of course, before my rather severe asseveration can have much meaning—let alone weight—I must show that reasons do indeed

have something important to do with a remark like (3). And this is what I shall now do.

I think that we may discern at least three broad sorts of reasons for making such a remark as (3) instead of its contradictory. Moreover, and this is, as you will remember, another characteristic of an "*Erfahrungssatz*," if these reasons were *not* the case, I could see myself choosing to believe (3'), "Two or more persons can feel the same pain." Here are the three, and there are others that one could adduce:

*a. The need for divulging feelings.* I observe that people, including myself, sometimes conceal, at other times do not bother to reveal, and at other times positively mislead us concerning the pains they have. At other times, I see people, including myself, struggling to describe a pain, and then giving up in despair. I notice that one says about pain that one "keeps" it private, but has to "make" it public, as if it were my own, and only my own, when I do not do something about it to make it public. Moreover, pediatricians have a difficult job finding out where a pain is, etc., and sometimes call themselves "veterinarians" in contrast to the fortunate doctors whose patients can "make" their pains public. All of these observations lead me to say that pain must be one's own, that it is like something in a box, something that only one can have, though others can be informed about it, or misinformed. Sometimes people take our word for what we show them about our pains; at other times they keep an eye on us to check up on whether we have indeed spoken truly about what is "in" our body. My reason for asserting (3) and not (3'): the importance, even necessity of divulging a pain if we would have others know we have it, let alone if we would have others understand exactly what sort of pain it is.

*b. Skin-boundaries.* I observe that other people are there, not here, are not within the limits of my skin, and so what is happening in my skin is not happening in theirs; what is happening within the boundaries of one person's skin is not happening within the boundaries of another person's skin—they are standing apart from each other, the way others are from me.

*c. Neurological adjacency.* (This reason is another version of 2). Neurologists persist in saying that sensations occur only in regions where organic physiological changes are taking place. A pain that occurs in my body is occurring in the region where neural changes in my body are taking place. Their conjectures or hypotheses that involve claiming this causal connection are so plausible, as far as I can understand neurology, that I claim (3) rather than (3') on the basis of them.

Now these three reasons—necessity for *making* a pain public, out-there-ness of other people, neurological findings—may not be *good* reasons for claiming (3) rather than (3'). But they are reasons, and they are involved with empirical observations on my part, as well as on the part of others. And I am not changing the word 'empirical' in saying this: if none of these reasons held—if there were no such things as concealment, etc., no neurological separation or no spatial distinctness of person from person, I can imagine

myself saying "More than one person can feel the same pain." If one person were related to another in the way the color of a leaf is related to its shape, that is, if we coincided with each other communicatively and neurologically, I could see myself asserting (3') and not (3).

But whether or not this last bit of science fiction makes any sense to you, these are reasons, empirical reasons, why one asserts (3) instead of (3'). If they are *bad* reasons, inadequate, Wittgenstein must show why they are bad, just where, to use Ryle's phrase, "category mistakes" are made in putting them forth as reasons. But Wittgenstein does not take such reasons seriously enough to criticize them. He is concerned only with grammatical "origins," and writes as if, when we claim (3) rather than (3'), our eyes were closed to the empirical world around us while we shuffled or confused similar phrases. On page 113 of the *Philosophical Investigations* he quite revealingly describes such movements as our "deciding against" (3') and deciding for (3) as "a dream of our language." Throughout his later works he treats our "grammatical movements" as if they occurred with our eyes closed to the publicly observable facts around us, as in sleep. And when he does not talk about such movements, he puts the same dichotomy into the distinction between a *Meinung* (an opinion, or belief) that does have reasons and that can be true or false, and an "*Einstellung*" or attitude (PI 178), which involves reasonless grammatical flip-flops that are *sinnlos* (PI 221), senseless even for doubting purposes. But however the dichotomy occurs, between grammatical and empirical assertions, between claims that are *sinnlos* and claims that have *sinn* (PI 178), between *Einstellungen* and *Meinungen*, or between remarks that can't and remarks that can stand up under the question "What observations does this proposition refer to; and what observations would count against it?" (PI 221), it is the same dichotomy.

He has not proved that such facts as the three I have just listed constitute bad reasons and has not proved that they are no reasons at all for making claims like (3). In fact he has no detailed doctrine concerning the relevance of empirical fact to "grammatical" claims, and, having no such doctrine as far as empirical reasons are concerned, he leads us by his own default into thinking that there is no relevance of empirical reasons to statements like (3). This is in part what he means by calling claims like (3) "nonsense," and it is much like the behavior of our fictitious psychologist who, ignoring the logician's reasons for making a move in a proof, asserts that all of the logician's moves are in fact

“logical sleight of hand” caused by habituation, etc. At least such critics should acknowledge the existence of these reasons and show us whether they are bad or good reasons for holding the belief in question.

I know of only one place in Wittgenstein’s writings where what might be called a “reason” for making a claim like (3) is entertained, and that is on page 91 of the *Investigations*. He is asking for a criterion of identity (*Kriterium der Identität*) that will help us decide whether two pains are indeed the same (*genau gleichen*), and he is implying that the word ‘same’ has been sublimed out of all empirical content in such a proposition as (3) (where we rephrase it to read: “No two persons can feel the same feeling.”). Then he writes:

I have seen a person in a discussion on this subject strike himself on the breast and say: “But surely another person can’t have THIS pain!”—The answer to this is that one does not define a criterion of identity by emphatic stressing of the word “this”.

He goes on to say that we are permitted to emphasize the word ‘this’ when we are trying to prove a point only when there is already a criterion of identity and when all we need is to be reminded of this criterion. (“*This* is an orange,” when used correctly, assumes that we are looking at the shape and color, say, of that object, and that these as seen in this way constitute a criterion for deciding what is an orange, as against an apple or a peach. What is assumed is that shape and color looked at casually constitute a criterion of identity for determining what is indeed an orange. But the breast-thumping objector is not using the word ‘this’ in any such plainly decisive context.)

Of course Wittgenstein is right here, especially if you look back at page 21 and agree (as I do) that the word ‘this’ is not a name (because in our language-game a name can be used meaningfully in the absence of the named thing or “bearer,” whereas the word ‘this’ can never be used without a bearer if it is to be used according to our language-game). And so the word ‘this’ uttered emphatically with a thump on the chest is not the name of a fact, involves no criterion of identity, and is only an empty gesture. It certainly does not constitute a good or bad “reason” for believing (3)—the feeling it expresses is just another aspect of the *Täuschung* we are analyzing, another *cause* of the illusion embodied in (3).

But I do not think that the three reasons I have given are merely empty gestures like the thump. I think that the first two involve using language in a very plain, correct way, and that the third,

about neurological adjacence, involves using a pretty well-developed scientific language-game, one of the orderly suburbs of plain talk. Let me again say that I am not claiming that those three reasons are good or conclusive reasons; I am simply saying that Wittgenstein never countenances them or anything like them. Rather he resorts to an empty gesture, a straw man easily knocked down by the apparatus of his philosophy; he simply assumes that no reasons are forthcoming. What I am saying is that my three reasons (and some others you will be able to suggest) together may constitute a "criterion of identity" that will help us decide whether two people can have "the same" feeling, and Wittgenstein's sharp dichotomy between grammatical and empirical claims does not allow him to countenance *or criticize* such a suggestion.

#### CONCLUSION

Wittgenstein's notion of "nonsense" is different from what we usually mean when we use that epithet in ordinary conversation. As my friend Abraham Kaplan has pointed out to me, when I say, for example, to my little daughter that it is nonsense to claim that there are goblins in that corner, I mean that if I turn on the lights we will not see goblins there. What we usually mean by 'nonsense' is "false," not "empty or all criteria for deciding on truth or falsity." The notion of nonsense has a great deal to do with empirical fact, except of course for the technical use of the word in such phrases as 'nonsense syllables' and 'nonsense verse'. Usually nonsense involves bad sense, not no sense at all; bad reasons, not no reasons at all. And what I have been suggesting is that Wittgenstein's later philosophy should have taken into account this usual meaning of the word 'nonsense' and should have set about distinguishing bad from good empirical reasons, instead of assuming that we choose to believe certain things for no reasons at all, out of all relevance to the facts.

To put the main point of my criticism in another way, let me quote a passage from page 47 of the *Investigations*:

The problems arising through a misinterpretation of our forms of language have the character of *depth* [*Tiefe*]. They are deep disquietudes; their roots are as deep in us as the forms of our language and their significance is as great as the importance of our language.

Then instead of stopping, or instead of relating that "depth" to the experience men have of the nonverbal world of "bearers," he goes on:

Let us ask ourselves: why do we feel a grammatical joke to be *deep*? (And that is what the depth of philosophy is.)

It has been my contention that some philosophical problems are deeper than grammatical slips or jokes; their roots reach into men's awareness (how fruitfully or how fruitlessly we have yet to determine) of the plainly observable facts of human existence. It is time to start asking ourselves: what relationships do these facts have with those problems? And in answering this question we may find that the distinction between sense and nonsense and between fact and grammar (two different but related distinctions) are not always abysses, but are sometimes bridges, and possibly even good bridges.

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## COMMENTS AND CRITICISM

### FAULTY FORMALIZATION

PROFESSOR R. M. Martin, in an appendix to his *Toward a Systematic Pragmatic*,<sup>1</sup> has tried to formalize the treatment of projectibility in my *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast*.<sup>2</sup> He quotes (page 96) from my text (page 90): "A hypothesis will be said to be *actually projected* when it is adopted after some of its instances have been examined and determined to be true, and before the rest have been examined." He then writes: "To say that a sentence *a* 'is examined and determined to be true' at time *t* we take to mean merely that *a* is accepted at *t*. (No reference to the semantical truth-concept here seems needed. Nor do we need a separate primitive for 'examined')." Actually this policy makes nonsense of his formalization.

His definition of 'actually projected', if we somewhat simplify the temporal clauses to stress the main point, amounts to this: A hypothesis " $(x)(Px)$ " is actually projected when it is accepted while some instance " $Pb$ " is accepted and some other instance is not accepted. Looking back to Martin's treatment of 'accept', we find (page 44, TC9) that every sentence that is not accepted is rejected (in one of two senses of rejection that he defines). Thus actual projection would require accepting a hypothesis while accepting some of its instances and rejecting others. Obviously, projection as I have described it has nothing to do with such inconsistent behavior.

<sup>1</sup> Amsterdam, 1959.

<sup>2</sup> Cambridge, Mass., 1955.