

When a man is sitting
Before the fire upon the hearth,
He says:
"Nature is a simple affair."

Then he looks out the window
And sees a hailstorm,
And he begins to think that
Nature can't be so easily disposed of.

Charles Ives
"Soliliquy" from 114 Songs; 1907

The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something - because it is always before one's eyes). The real foundations of his enquiry do not strike a man at all. Unless that fact has at some time struck him. - And this means: we fail to be struck by what, once seen, is most striking and most powerful.

Ludwig Wittgenstein
Philosophical Investigations - 129

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN and the beginnings of a sociology.

Cornelis Disco

Introduction

In writing this paper I can not help but picture the closed world into which it will make its entry. This imagined audience, it seems to me, influences what I say and the way in which I say it. For a large number of those to whom this is (imaginarily) addressed, the message will seem merely another attempt to obfuscate the true purpose and nature of sociology by philosophizing it into oblivion. These are the pragmatists and social technicians who already have all the tools they need to do their work; they don't need someone to tell them their toolbox may be out of date and the instruments dull. Similarly (I imagine) there will be those who see this as a piece of ideological rhetoric, designed to gloss over the hard realities of social life. Others, though less certain, will nonetheless scarcely welcome yet another inconclusive philosophical critique. "Give us a concrete sociological work program," I can hear them say somewhere in my conscience. And I can agree with these imagined attitudes and certainly also wish the time were ripe for doing; but I am afraid the time for weighing words, for 'casing the joint' as David Reissman used to say, is not yet past.

As a child of the Crisis in sociology, I am finely attuned to the dangers of diving enthusiastically into shallow waters. A certain amount of in-depth investigation (of another sort than diving itself) has become an ingrained habit; a result

Without implicating him in the quirks and idiosyncracies of this paper, I would like to thank Prof. Derek Phillips, not only for first 'turning me on' to Wittgenstein, but also for the many discussions, arguments, and knock-down drag-out fights since. Without these this paper would not be. I also want to indicate my indebtedness to the members of the seminar "New Directions in Sociology" held at the University of Amsterdam in 1973-74.

of injuries incurred in practice. A traditional refuge of those who, like myself, are nursing such intellectual wounds, has been philosophy; sociologists have proved no exception. And Wittgenstein conveniently continues the metaphor for me: "The results of philosophy are the uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense and of bumps that the understanding has got by running its head up against the limits of language. These bumps make us see the value of the discovery." PI: 110 (1)

Our crisis has been well documented by Friedrichs (1970), Gouldner (1970) and many others. It is a crisis within a particular discipline, a particular community sharing a certain special use of language. What has happened, in the most general way, is that we have run afoul of our own procedural rules, our own language has tied us in knots; we no longer know our way about. In such a situation, we cannot simply push ahead and expect automatic illumination; it is more likely that the fog will only thicken. What is needed is another platform, another language structure, from which to understand and untangle our own. Philosophy, correctly understood, presents itself as an obvious candidate; as perhaps does a historical or political economic exegesis. Let this stand, at any rate, as my excuse for philosophizing in the face of sociology.

The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein has given us (in my estimation) the most satisfactory methods of dealing with the malaise consequent on language problems. As with Freud, a by-product of his concern with pathology has proved to be a model of the organism as a whole. Wittgenstein began to look at the way language enters into our lives, both as we unreflexively live it, and as reflected upon. The particular pathology in question, the 'disease of thought' as he himself put it, was the kind of thinking which went into his own early work, notably the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (1918). The central effort of this work was to arrive at an understanding of the way language can be about the world. Its model was the language of natural science: propositions reflect the logical structure of the world. The contingent actual states in the world are but one of the many logical possibilities. True propositions are linguistic reflections of these actual states and the logic of language binds them together true descriptions of the world. Wittgenstein's later work, from about 1928 to his death in 1951, militates against this monothetic conception of language by introducing the essentially sociological concept of agreement, and by differentiating language into zones of practice and meaning called language games. Instead of an a priori requirement (the bane of classical philosophy) that the world be in one particular way, Wittgenstein now demonstrated the variety of perspectives and uses of language. Insofar as the shadow of an outline I have given of the Tractatus reminds us of a popular metasociological vision, it will certainly be worthwhile to see how Wittgenstein solves his own problem and at the same time sheds light on ours.

The paradigm for the new language game philosophy is a methodological and problem oriented one. This is not to say that philosophy is able to deal with problems on a substantive level (e.g. sociological problems) but only that it is capable of bringing to light hidden assumptions and traps on our language of which we were not aware and which give us trouble. It is a kind of turning things right side up, or correcting our vision.

"It is the business of philosophy, not to resolve a contradiction by means of a mathematical or logico-mathematical discovery, but to make it possible for us to get a clear view of the state of mathematics that troubles us: the state of affairs before the contradiction is resolved. (And this does not mean that one is sidestepping a difficulty.)

The fundamental fact here is that we lay down rules, a technique for a game, and that then when we follow the rules, things do not turn out as we had assumed. That we are therefore as it were entangled in our own rules.

This entanglement in our own rules is what we want to understand (i.e. get a clear view of).

It throws light on our concept of meaning something. For in those cases things turn out otherwise than we had meant, foreseen. That is just what we say when, for example, a contradiction appears: "I didn't mean it like that."

The civil status of a contradiction, or its status in civil life: there is the philosophical problem."PI: 125

However, this attainment of "clear vision" on our de-focalized and troublesome language use does not occur according to some arcane or mystical method. The chief technique is the systematic noting of the actual use of language, not the legislation of a correct one. Because of this, philosophy is not (no longer) engaged in language reform, it "leaves everything as it is." (PI: 124) It "... simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything. -- Since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain. For what is hidden, for example, is of no interest to us.

One might also give the name "philosophy" to what is possible before all new discoveries and inventions." PI: 126

Philosophy simply aims at complete clarity, at complete consciousness of the use of language; this is not to say that it can explain the world, social or natural.

The most important concept which Wittgenstein develops and which sets limits for all transcendental and objectivist thinking, is that of 'language game'. It is around this concept that the notions of rule following, certainly, grounds, justification, and nonsense take their form. It is also Wittgenstein's new answer to his old problem about language and the world. The reformulation has shifted the center of determinant gravity considerably over to the side of language; yet in spite of waves of criticism of this irresponsible 'relativism', I will

try to show that Wittgenstein is in no sense a pure 'consensualist'.

Of course, the point is not Wittgenstein, or even what he thought or why. The really difficult questions have to do with the interfacing of linguistic philosophy with sociology. This is not identical with the mainstream of socio-linguistics, which, by and large, employs its own traditional positivistic epistemology to produce its own traditional positivistic results. I see this as the problem, not the solution. What I will try to show is that there are at least three distinct ways in which Wittgenstein's thought empinges, profitably, on sociology.

1) Because of the sociological basis of Wittgenstein's theory of meaning and activity, he resists our urge to keep philosophizing ourselves into the Nirvana of absolute pure conceptualization. He shows that a non-metaphysical philosophy must base itself in concrete human existence, which includes agreement and socialization as basic facts. He thus acts as a boomerang, taking our thoughts in a long sweeping arc through his philosophy and back again to our own proper concerns.

2) Placing sociology itself under the loupe of language game analysis illuminates a dimension of the crisis which might be called the reification rut. By this I mean that one dimension of the crisis results from our looking at the claims of competing theoretical perspectives as based upon factual sufficiency with respect to the 'real' world. We tend to reify our pictures of the world, which results either in an agonizing tentativeness vis à vis the various contenders or in a militant siding with one or another perspective to the exclusion of all others. We act as if "right" and "wrong" were still applicable and as if some hard evidence will some day settle the issue. It doesn't really look that way and an appreciation of the special character of a wissenschaftliche language game shows the essential frame of the discussion.

3) When social action in general is seen as action in the context of some language game, the attempt will be made to ferret out the system of rules and certainties within which the player's world takes on definition. On a more abstract level, networks of interacting language games (or course conceivable as decision-problematics for players operating within such an interaction) may be studied over the long term, to provide models of historical development. The advantage of viewing social action through the language game frame is the close reliance this ensures on understanding the terms in which players act in their world. Within such a perspective it may be possible to untangle the de-focalized (2) systems of assumptions which operate in a social setting and to show how these influence individual activity and historical development.

I. Language Games 1

Wittgenstein comes out of a long philosophical tradition of ontology and epistemology in which variations on the theme of Nature versus Spirit have been the dominant melody. Mind vs. Body, Theory vs. Fact, Heaven vs. Earth, Words vs. Deeds etc. are all particular aspects of the larger split in the philosophical and everyday consciousness of Western man. There is a notion of a concrete reality, pre-human, constant, unchangeable, the world an sich which is set against an ever changing, almost fickle, representational and motive force which resides in the mind of man or some surrogate.

This way of conceiving the world, which runs like a de-focalized chasm along all the paths of our consciousness, has given rise to great philosophical debates which have occupied the intellectual lives of a good number of philosophers; I can think here of at least Leibniz, Hume, Kant, Schopenhauer, Descartes, Plato, Aristoteles, Bacon, Russell, and perhaps Hegel. Wittgenstein, with the Tractatus, certainly began his philosophical career in the pale of this problématique. He had tried there to define the essential form of a proposition, to define, by implication, the specific and unitary method by which language was related to the real world of Sachverhalten. His later work rejects not only the solution advanced in the Tractatus, but the very legitimacy of the problem posed there. Wittgenstein became aware of the imprisoning character of a particular use of language; he began to understand how positing certain problems inevitably leads to certain conclusions:

(Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, 4.5): "The general form of propositions is: This is how things are." -- That is the kind of proposition that one repeats to oneself countless times. One thinks that one is tracing the outline of the thing's nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it. PI: 114.

"A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably." PI: 115.

What was needed, clearly, was to break through this historically imposed use of language. And, even more fundamentally, to reject the notion that language had only one use: to describe the world. For, once we thus radically dichotomize mind and matter, we instantly plunge into the thick of the struggle around truth. And because language was held to be a reflection of the order of the world (in the Tractatus) questions of truth had to be resolved by modifying language to correspond to the prior (and, as it were, more real) status of the world. This led to a barefaced kind of empiricism with all its associated paradoxes. Wittgenstein, in calling this a 'disease of thought', emphasized that 'slow cure is all important'. (Z: 382) Now, he says, denouncing this metaphysics, "We want to replace wild

conjectures and explanations by quiet weighing of linguistic facts." (Z: 447)

This weighing of linguistic facts, the examination of language as it is actually used by humans in concrete situations, led him to reconsider the question of the essence of language:

"But how many different kinds of sentence are there? Say assertion, question and command? There are countless kinds: countless different kinds of use of what we call 'symbols', 'words', 'sentences'. And this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types of language, new language games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten. (We can get a rough picture of this from the changes in mathematics.)

Here the term 'language game' is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life." PI: 23

This citation provides a number of take-off points, but I want to deal with it first as a preliminary step away from the radical opposition of Nature and Spirit. The relativization of Spirit to time and place is the first step in its disestablishment. We see that the manifestations of Spirit (i.e. language, among others) are multiform and that they appear and fade into forgetfulness in an ongoing flow. But the most significant turn here is the conceptualization of language as part of an activity, as part of something called a 'form of life'. This grounds Spirit in Nature, not in terms of a mathematico-logical correspondence theory, but much more nearly as a unitary process of activity and meaning - that is, as life.

II. Forms of Life - Facts of Nature

What is mysterious is not how the world is, but that it is. (Tractatus)

If we can, for the moment, hold in abeyance the further specification of the nature of language games and regard them as complexes of human activity, meaning, and communication, which for some purpose are seen as bounded or discrete, I would like to develop their grounding in 'forms of life' and what Wittgenstein calls 'facts of nature'. This will establish, at any rate, the kind of union which Nature and Spirit achieve in language games.

In a replay of the 'existence precedes essence' argument, Wittgenstein asserts that 'form of life' precedes 'language game'. Now in spite of the current vogue of the concept 'form of life' among those who speak of Wittgenstein, he himself uses it only five times in the course of the Philosophical Investigations and a couple of times elsewhere. Arguments as to its meaning, which we will reduce to the use Wittgenstein makes of it, have

run high and low: (Hunter; 1971) (Zabeeh; 1971). I personally prefer the interpretation, advanced by Hunter, that 'form of life' is to be taken in an organic sense, that it is used, literally, to denote the differences in biological and mental properties among different organisms. Consider, for example, this use:

"One can imagine an animal angry, frightened, unhappy, happy, startled. But hopeful? And why not?

A dog believes his master is at the door. But can he also believe his master will come the day after tomorrow? -- and what can he not do here? -- How do I do it? -- How am I supposed to answer this?

Can only those hope who can talk? Only those who have mastered the use of a language. That is to say, the phenomena of hope are modes of this complicated form of life. (If a concept refers to a character of human handwriting, it has no application to beings that do not write.)

'Grief' describes a pattern which recurs, with different variations, in the weave of our life. If a man's bodily expression of sorrow and joy alternated, say with the ticking of a clock, here we should not have the characteristic formation of the pattern of sorrow or of the pattern of joy." PI: p. 174

It is clear that the intent here is to describe a certain infrastructure of species-specific potentialities and proclivities which fundamentally limit the kind of concepts which can occur.

"What would a society all of deaf men be like? Or a society of the 'feeble-minded'? An important question! What then of a society that never played many of our customary language games?" Z: 371

"One imagines the feeble-minded under the aspect of the degenerate, the essentially incomplete, as it were in tatters. And so under that of disorder instead of a more primitive order (which would be a far more fruitful way of looking at them).

We just don't see a society of such people." Z: 372

And further:

"Sufficient evidence passes over into insufficient evidence without a definite borderline. Shall I say that a natural foundation for the way this concept is formed is the complex nature and the variety of human contingencies.

Then given much less variety, a sharply bounded conceptual structure would have to seem natural. And why does it seem so difficult to imagine the simplified case?" Z: 439

Form of life, then, is used by Wittgenstein to stress that our bodies enter into the possibilities of our consciousness in a very concrete way. They are grounds for our languages

as well as bounds on their possibility. Our form of life is the contingent factual being in the sea of pure possibility. Things could have been otherwise.

But nature, for Wittgenstein, is certainly not limited to the kinds of animals we are, to our form of life. There is an entire realm of 'things' with which we interact as organisms which also produce, maintain, and bound our language. Wittgenstein calls these 'Facts of Nature'. Lest the use of the term 'fact' arouses the hobgoblins of logical empiricism, let me hasten to circumscribe the intent of the term. It is, primarily, not intended to refer to the systems of scientific logic in which certain physical facts correspond to elements of a special language. Thus, while for some the task of physics is to order the 'facts of nature', those are not the facts with which we are concerned at present - or at least we are not concerned with them in the same way, at the same level of analysis. Physics, for example, is a technical language game in which 'fact' has a particular use (a very central one); we let the use teach us the meaning.

Wittgenstein's 'facts of nature' are the unanalyzed and largely unnoticed ways in which 'the world is'. Forms of life move within this contingent 'factuality' of nature and themselves become part of it. Now I am aware that there are considerable epistemological problems associated with any assertion that "the world simply is such and so" without further ado. But I think it would be a mistake to accuse Wittgenstein of such a tack. What he is asserting is only that the language in which his thought is cast leaves him no room to doubt the existence of a material world with certain properties (outside of pure solipsism, which he regards as at least an unassailable position). In a philosophical way, idly as it were, one is free to doubt everything; but for any real human being, moving over the paths of his life, and taking his language absolutely for granted, the world exists palpably as a collection of relatively invariant properties. These are Wittgenstein's facts of nature. The distinction between a philosophical and an everyday use is brought home by the following remark from On Certainty (467):

"I am sitting with a philosopher in the garden; he says again and again "I know that that's a tree", pointing to a tree that is near us. Someone else arrives and hears this, and I tell him: "This fellow isn't insane. We are only doing philosophy.""

The facts of nature, asserts Wittgenstein, are to be rediscovered in our everyday language; this includes as well those specifically biological facts, our form of life. In a very dialectical way, this suggests the shape of the interaction among human animals, inanimate nature, and the symbols by which these animals make sense of and manipulate each other and the rest of nature. Language is simultaneously a product

of human activity in the world and a producer of meaning and new forms of activity. This leads Wittgenstein to remark of his philosophy:

"What we are supplying are really remarks on the natural history of human beings; we are not contributing curiosities, however, but observations which no one has doubted, but which have escaped remark only because they are always before our eyes." PI: 415

In the same way that we do not see our eyes when we look at the world, or even the outline of our field of vision, so we do not see our language (and the facts of nature embedded within it which give it shape and make it work) as we live our lives and signify things to ourselves; as we produce Human Nature.(3)

It is fairly evident that Wittgenstein intended the concept of facts of nature as a prior grounding for language; something to restrict, as it were, the viability of extreme forms that it could (logically) take.

"It is as if our concepts involved a scaffolding of facts." This would presumably mean: If you imagine certain facts otherwise, describe them otherwise, than the way they are, then you can no longer imagine the application of certain concepts, because the rules for their application have no analogue in the new circumstances." Z: 350

But Wittgenstein is extremely careful here: he does not want to say either that facts of nature completely determine language or that facts of nature are totally creations of our everyday language game; that they exist, as it were, only in human consciousness. For Wittgenstein facts of nature palpably exist: We say "It's raining." without bothering about the reality of wet and cold. To deny this basis of language would be to take the completely solipsist position (on a collective level) that the world is the creation of language. Such a position relativizes all statements about the world (including these about language) to the speaking subject. The paradox is evident; the realm is that of pure Spirit. On the other hand, to say that the shape of language is uniquely determined by external facts of nature (of which one speaks, by the way, with language) is to deny any emergent properties of language; it is to say that language necessarily restricts itself to reflecting the world. It is to say that Spirit is the mere product of Nature; it is to effect a mechanical and crass Marxism, which has reduced dialectical interaction to a steam hammer.

Wittgenstein's position is a balance between these two; it is wishy-washy if you will - but with good reason.

"We have a colour system as we have a number system. Do the

systems reside in our nature or in the nature of things? How are we to put it? - Not in the nature of numbers or colours." Z: 357

"Then is there something arbitrary about this system? Yes and no. It is akin both to what is arbitrary and to what is non-arbitrary." Z: 358

The arbitrary, the freedom which language has to express that which is not in nature, is emphasized in the following discussion of a language game involving: name two colours which this is betwee.

"These people are acquainted with reddish green - "But there is no such thing!" -- What an extraordinary sentence --- (How do you know?)" Z: 362

"Let's just put it like this: Must these people notice the discrepancy? Perhaps they are too stupid. And again: perhaps not that either. ---" Z: 363

"Yes, but has nature nothing to say here? Indded she has -- but she makes herself audible in another way. "You'll surely run up against existence and non-existence somewhere!" But that means against facts, not concepts." Z: 364

Concepts, linguistic entities, do not determine existence. But put in this way, the statement is crude, not yet precise enough. Nature, it seems (i.e. physical nature and our nature) does not speak directly in our language; it is, after all, possible to say (it is meaningful to say) "reddish green" within a certain language game. Does this exist? Well, yes and no. Yes it does, as a rule-following statement in a particular language game. And, no, because we cannot imagine what would have to occur in Nature for us to be able to say 'That is reddish-green.' Nonetheless, there may well be a society in which a certain region of the spectrum is denoted by 'reddish green' and where it is obvious that this color lies halfway between red and green. Thus, the freedom which language has to create its own reality is evident. Nonetheless, both physical nature and our nature lie at the foundation of the entire language game involving colors. Clearly, if there was no light or if there was no light or if we had no eyes to see, our concept of color would not exist. This is running up against facts. "It is always by favor of nature that one knows something". (OC: 505)

I have extended this discussion because Wittgenstein is often misrepresented as something of a simple-minded relativist. This is basically the criticism advanced by Roger Trigg in his Reason and Commitment where he tries to establish a transcendental platform for reason over against the sheepish slavery of mere commitment. Such incompetent attacks, in my view, are based on a hurried and prejudiced reading of 'relativism'.

A patient appreciation of the way in which Wittgenstein fights the Nature-Spirit splits is important for the understanding of language games and certainty.

III. Language Games 2

The grammar (4) of the word 'game' suggests the variety of kinds of language use which we are to subsume under the concept 'language game'. Indeed, the main difficulty in talking about language games in general, is their concrete diversity - from all specific perspectives. What we would want to do is to construct an anatomy of a language game so that we know where it begins and ends, so we know what it does and how it does it, and so that the functioning of the parts becomes clear. We want to study it as if it were a particular species of animal. But the concept 'language game' is more akin to the concept 'animal' than, say, 'crocodile'. What one says of one animal may not be true of another; most general statements get lost in their own exceptions. Are we then to say that the concept 'animal' is useless? No. of course not, but we must be reconciled to a lack of detail if we want to talk about it. When we use it we have good reason for the vagueness - it is precisely what we want.

We should not, moreover, expect a single, objective taxonomy of language games; as there is, indeed, no limitation on the number of ways to classify animals. One can classify by sameness in shape, size, weight of the brain (if any), type of food, mating habits (if any), presence or absence of feet (how many?), number of hairs (if any), and so on. The important thing is that there be a rule which specifies what is to count as the 'same'. (Winch; 1958) All classification rests on this principle. The delicate balance which must be maintained here, of course, is what we mean when we refer to some classifications as more 'natural', more 'obvious', or oriented to more 'significant' samenesses. We feel as though nature coerced us into saying a crocodile is more like an alligator than a fly. Though, of course, this is only relative to a rule and we could be perverse enough to invent a rule which would make a crocodile and a fly very similar indeed. And what we would be fighting against here is common sense, the categories and rules of ordinary language. It is not possible to specify, in general, where the coercion arises, whether in pre-linguistic nature or in our own language. It is, nonetheless, obvious that we are the agents of this coercion - we force one another to certain conclusions within the terms of our unseen agreement.

Wittgenstein's use of the concept 'language game' is neither always consistent nor very specific. At one point (particularly in the Blue and Brown Books) they are restricted to elementary components of real language, such as the games children

play when learning their natural language. At other points they seem to refer only to the special technical languages people learn above and beyond this basic natural language. And, still elsewhere, Wittgenstein speaks of the "everyday language game". These usages are more or less chronological, and the meaning in the Investigations seems to combine all three. All language is now language in use, language in the context of some actually played game.

As it emerges through examples and almost offhand remarks, the notion of hierarchy in language games takes on the character of Chinese boxes within boxes. For certain purposes, the whole of everyday language can be considered a unitary language game; for others, more discrete (almost ethnomethodological) components are invoked - joking, telling a story, giving orders, making a drawing, doing addition, and all kinds of technical operations. In addition, extraordinary languages (or components thereof) are also considered language games: thus, philosophy, physics, plumbing, navigation, mathematics, and sociology. This leads to the notion that language games can never be reified, they can never be regarded as fixed and visible (objective) entities. This is especially so for the specification of boundaries between language games, for the boundary of a language game is always a matter of the application of a rule for sameness. Such a rule is perspective determined. Is telling a joke like telling a story? Sometimes, for some purposes.

What this points to is the possibility of hierarchy among language games. We can break up regions of meaning-activity into relatively big chunks or smaller ones. The smaller regions fit together to form the larger. But this is still a little simplistic; the topology of language games is not planar. For example, sociology (which we may comfortably refer to as a language game) can be said to be compounded of large numbers of intersecting, supporting, and conflicting language games. To name but a few: giving orders, following rules, mathematics, 'body language', suppressing pain, positivism, eating, expressing emotions, suppressing emotions, flirting, Marxism, fashion, and so on. Now none of these are really peculiar to sociology; some of them, in fact, undergird almost all human activity. And yet, there seems to be a unique combination (which certainly does not exclude internal conflict) which results in a concrete language game called sociology, with a history and an internal dynamic. Thus, language games share relatively elementary components with each other and divide more complex games (e.g. mathematics, philosophy) among themselves according to their own grammars. The geometrical picture which now emerges is one of very odd three dimensional shapes which twist in and out of one another, varying in boundary sharpness (from a given perspective) from the vagaries of fashion to the crystalline gems of logic and mathematics. This gruesome spectacle is seen very differently according to the platform chosen and is animated by a

constant change in boundaries and content.

The image chosen here has a number of defects. For one, it tends to reify language games. We must continue to see them only as differentiated and rule-governed contexts of language (or other symbolization) and activity. Such contexts are of necessity limited access contexts - meanings are not democratically available to all who share our form of life. What can be said is that all who share our form of life are (generally) capable of learning the parameters and rules of any language game. Such boundaries as language games do have are boundaries of unintelligibility, partial or complete.

The topological image chosen also fails to express the important primacy of ordinary language, and the language game of everyday life of which it is a part. Now this language is not only primary in our actual lives, in what we know and feel, but it is also the touchstone, the warranting authority, behind Wittgenstein's philosophy. Ordinary language, we feel, is beyond justification; truth criteria cannot apply to it. (Note that this is not the case for statements within ordinary language) As Wittgenstein warns;

"Here we are in enormous danger of wanting to make fine distinctions. - It is the same when one tries to define the concept of a material object in terms of "what is really seen". - What we have rather to do is to accept the everyday language game, and to note false accounts of the matter as false. The primitive language game which children are taught needs no justification; attempts at justification need to be rejected." PI: 200

The everyday language game, and not sense impression or the 'real' state of the world, is the very rock bottom of our knowledge and experience. Any absolute notion of truth presupposes a transcendental criterion; one which is somehow beyond or outside of this language game. Wittgenstein is vehement in his insistence on the impossibility of framing any self-justifying platform outside this 'primitive language game'.

"When I talk about language (words, sentences, etc.) I must speak the language of everyday. Is this language somehow too coarse and material for what we want to say? Then how is another one to be constructed? -- And how strange that we should be able to say anything at all with the one we have! In giving explanations I already have to use language full-blown (not some sort of preparatory, provisional one); this by itself shows that I can adduce only exterior facts about language.

Yes, but then how can these explanations satisfy us? -- Well, your very questions were framed in this language; they had to be expressed in this language, if there was anything to

ask!

And your scruples are misunderstandings.

Your questions refer to words; so I have to talk about words.

You say: the point isn't the word, but its meaning and you think of the meaning as a thing of the same kind as the word, though also different from the word. Here the word, there the meaning. The money, and the cow that you can buy with it. (But contrast: money, and its use)" PI: 120

The everyday language game has, then, an epistemological and ontological primacy. It inerpenerates all other language games played in a society and gives them shape and context. Ordinary language, thus, can be seen as a collection of very complex interlinkages among the elementary and orienting language games. These elementary language games begin with physiological games (eating, defecating, warmth, sexuality) to physiologically based games (color, number, seeing, hearing, music, others, kinship etc.) and through intersections of these and technical language games to more complex structures like trade and barter, art, manufacturing, science, law, medicine, philosophy, sociology, etc. The boundary, again, between ordinary and extra-ordinary language is always vague and must be drawn for the concrete purpose at hand. Think of sociology as an intersection of language games at various levels of complexity; consider the important role of everyday life in the internal and external practice of the discipline.

V. Certainty

If what I have emphasized to this point are the non-arbitrary aspects of language games, their rootedness in the pre-linguistic world, I want now to consider the ways in which they are arbitrary - thus products of human agreement about the state of things. It is this aspect which sometimes gives us the idea that Spirit is a free creative force, that Prometheus remains unbound; that man can create Nature in his own image. But, "Language is variously rooted; it has roots, not a single root." (Z: 656) And humans are not just free to agree that such and such is the case and that all statements to the contrary are false. Wittgenstein's relativism is a grounded relativism.

"So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?" -- It is what human beings say that is true and false; and they agree in the language they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life." PI: 241

Language games, as particular bounded regions of meaning and activity, require a reciprocity of understanding among the players. This reciprocity has several foci, among which are

rules, certainties, and criteria for justification. It is, in fact, these centripetal features of any language game which form its 'hard core' and give it its particular and unique character. Away from this hard core, the language game specific characteristics gradually thin out. The language game is thus identifiable not so much by boundaries within which a certain kind of meaningful activity takes place, as with reference to a certain set of shared rules and certainties around which activity takes place.

The kinds of certainty and the nature of the rules vary, of course, for different kinds of language game. But in general it can be said of certainties that they are the invisible backdrop of primitive beliefs against which meaningful activity takes place. They are the medium in which doubt, if it occurs, can play its game. But these certainties are also not mere isolated statements of matters of fact; the core of any language game is always a system in which one certainty, as it were, props up the others around it.

"Our knowledge forms an enormous system. And only within this system has a particular bit the value we give it." OC: 410

"And now if I were to say "It is my unshakeable conviction that etc." this means in the present case too that I have not consciously arrived at the conviction by following a particular line of thought, but that it is anchored in all my questions and answers, so anchored that I cannot touch it." OC: 103

"I am for example also convinced that the sun is not a hole in the vault of heaven." OC: 104

"All testing, all confirmation and disconfirmation of a hypothesis takes place already within a system. And this system is not a more or less arbitrary and doubtful point of departure for all our arguments: no, it belongs to the essence of what we call an argument. The system is not so much the point of departure, as the element in which arguments have their life." OC: 105

A doubt, for example, that it was possible to swim the English Channel in five minutes rests on the certainties that the English Channel in fact exists, that it is possible for humans to swim, that time is a certain measurable entity, that measurement is possible - with its associated rules and certainties - etc. etc. The important point is that all these assumptions interlock; doubting any one of them would require doubting others.

"We say we know that water boils and does not freeze under such-and-such circumstances. Is it conceivable that we are wrong? Wouldn't a mistake topple all judgement with it? More: what could stand if that were to fall? Might someone discover

something that made us say "It was a mistake"?
 Whatever may happen in the future, -- we know that up to
 now it has behaved thus in innumerable instances.
 This fact is fused into the foundations of our language
 game." OC: 558

"Does my telephone call to New York strengthen my conviction that the earth exists?
 Much seems to be fixed, and it is removed from the traffic.
 It is so to speak shunted onto an unused siding." OC: 210

"Now it gives our way of looking at things, and our researches their form. Perhaps it was once disputed. But perhaps for unthinkable ages, it has belonged to the scaffolding of our thoughts. (Every human being has parents.)" OC: 211

In the everyday language game, the foundations of which we learn quite subconsciously, certainties and rules function as the framework through which we act and see. The agreement which is manifest here is not a product of conscious effort; it is, "agreement in form of life". It is agreement which is to a large degree determined by the kind of creatures we are and the nature of the world we live in. Such manifestations of Nature and our form of life express themselves to us as things which stand fast, which we know, which are certain for us. In addition, we have a 'built-in' repertoire of responses to standard situation which may be expressed as intersubjective rules, the end-products of socialization. The whole notion of "a reasonable person" (as well as of the demented) rests on the acceptance of certain things as obvious, as 'just the way it is' and on accepting certain behavior as natural, as 'the way things are done'.

"The reasonable man does not have certain doubts." OC: 220

"And that something stand fast for me is not grounded in my stupidity or credulity." OC: 235

"What would it be like to doubt now whether I have two hands? Why can't I imagine it at all? What would I believe if I did not believe that? So far I have no system at all within which this doubt might exist." OC: 247

"I have arrived at the rock bottom of my convictions. And one might almost say that these foundation-walls are carried by the whole house." OC: 248

"One gives oneself a false picture of doubt." OC: 249

"My having two hands is, in normal circumstances, as certain as anything that I could produce in evidence for it." OC: 250

"At the foundation of well founded belief lies belief that is not founded." OC: 253

"Any 'reasonable' person behaves like this." OC: 254

In the end, then, Wittgenstein grounds all certainty in the certainties we must accept to lead our lives, which are implied by the very fact of our leading them the way we do.

'My life consists in my being content to accept many things.'
OC: 344

"You must bear in mind that the language game is so to say something unpredictable. I mean: it is not based on grounds. It is not reasonable (or unreasonable). It is there - like our life." OC: 559

'Grounds' here, of course, refer to logical grounds. Wittgenstein want to make the point that justification comes to an end; that end being the language game in which the justification takes place. More specifically, justification ends when we encounter our fundamental certainties, things which stand fast for us for no good logical reason. And, likewise, things about which we feel we cannot be making a mistake.

Naturally, the less fundamental and natural the language game, the less elementary its certainties will be. Certainty here will become a kind of second-order certainty, assailable because manufactured in accordance with special requirements. I am thinking here of those special language games, the scholarly disciplines, which seek an ordered understanding of some bounded region of the world. And this means, of course, that the attempt is made to construct a language which will describe (or explain) that portion of the world 'as it really is'. Now this attempt is itself based on certain presuppositions (e.g. that language can describe the world, that the world exists, etc.) which are primitive; about which grounds for doubt are lacking in the everyday language game. Moreover, the attempt to construct a descriptive-explanatory language takes on only a very few concrete historical forms. Comte's classification of mythico-religious, metaphysical, and rational scientific world orientations will do as well as any. Each of these sorts of language game is based on different ordinary language premisses - in itself an indicator that ordinary language is a changing (evolving?) symbolic system.(5) These knowledge systems are all variants of the language game "knowing and explaining the world" variants of ordinary language epistemology. It is unclear at this point just what possible other variants there are (thus: other ways of understanding the world) but it seems clear that our form of life, by way of mere animal survival, requires at least some world-orientation which we could call rational-technological, whatever other cosmologies surround it. Anyway, I will restrict the discussion here to the dominant contemporary form of "knowing and explaining the world", which takes its inspiration from enlightenment rationalism (most directly) and is most conveniently rendered by the German 'Wissenschaft'. Its primary institutional base

since the latter half of the nineteenth century has been the university, itself a language game about which more needs to be said.

The essential nature of the various Wissenschaften is their relatively self-consciously constructed epistemologies and ontologies. Such a constructed language game, which is made to float artificially above the world as it were, historically manufactures its own internal rules for creating and warranting knowledge, for discriminating truth from falsehood, and it creates its own certainties, its own certainties, its unquestioned basic principles.(6) (I am speaking here, of course, only about the formal language game of the discipline - its truth calculus, as it were - and not about the actual concrete practice of the discipline which involves competition, cooperation, the struggle for survival, one-upmanship, solidarity, love, hate, jealousy and other trappings from the everyday language game). The 'community of scholars', in agreement about proper procedures and particular items of knowledge, adequately expresses this idea. (Phillips, 1973). But here again, the scope of the possible kinds of agreement, in terms merely of formal possibilities, is a limited one. The basic propositions of logic, for example, seem to exert an inexorable compulsion on all disciplined thinking in the western tradition. Though we are inexorable in demanding one another's compliance with these propositions, Nature seems to leave us little choice.

"Now we talk of the 'inesorability' of logic; and think of the laws of logic as inexorable, still more inexorable than of nature. We now draw attention to the fact that the word "inexorable" is used in a variety of ways. There correspond to our laws of logic very general facts of daily experience. They are the ones that make it possible for us to keep on demonstrating those laws in a very simple way (with ink on paper for example). They are to be compared with the facts that make measurement with a yardstick easy and useful. This suggests the use of precisely these laws of inference, and now it is we that are inexorable in applying these laws. Because we 'measure'; and it is part of measuring for everybody to have the same measures." RFM: 118

Certain of the paths of our thinking, and that means our language (however specialized) seem to be laid down for us in advance. Nonetheless, this is not an iron law: "For we are at one over this, that the laws of inference do not compel him to say or to write such and such like rails compelling a locomotive". RFM: 116. For one thing, different languages (logical calculi) are compatible with ordinary logical inference. Thus, some disciplines rely on a mathematical language, some on other esoteric symbolic notations (also essentially mathematical), and still others on modified

(rigorized) ordinary language. Almost all scholarly disciplines combine these three language forms according to the particular purpose at hand. The important point is the relative freedom which surrounds an eventual agreement as to a proper language - within the dictates of a logical structure.

A very important matter of agreement in any scholarly discipline (as in everyday life) is the form of the language game of 'giving grounds for a proposition'. Associated with this is the whole problem of the warranting of propositions, and the crucial question of truth. The characteristic form which truth warranting takes (i.e. the formal expression) in a Wissenschaft is that of rules of proper procedure and a meta-structure of prohibitions on cheating and other forms of dishonesty. These methodological canons are held to ensure the orderly development of truth and knowledge. Propositions which result from activity in accordance with these canons - and particularly those which logically fit into a pre-existing linguistic system of propositions - are held to be pictures of the actual state of affairs in the world. A theory involving such propositions at fundamental points is held to be a 'true' description of reality. This version of the language game 'knowing and explaining the world' is, of course, roughly that advocated by Logical Empiricism (Radnitsky, 1973). It is also well known that its approximate application in the physical sciences (at least as a satisfactory self-characterization for those playing the game) has led to enormous successes. Natural science theories legitimated by this kind of methodology have indeed appeared as pictures of "the way the world is". They have worked, visibly, in practice. There is, in the everyday language game, no more compelling criterion for truth than mere success. "By their fruits shall ye know them ..."

The whole question of truth, of course (I would say the language game of telling the truth) is the big ogre in all of Western thinking about thinking. The reflexive Wissenschaft of this language game, namely metascience, concerns itself almost entirely (especially in its Logical Empiricist variant) with establishing rules of correspondence between language and the world which will result in true statements. This was the kind of project Wittgenstein attempted in the Tractatus, and subsequently rejected. Logical Empiricism, too, has continually had to dilute its strong program, which unconditionally limited the kinds of propositions which could be considered true statements about the world. (Kunneman, 1974) (Radnitsky, 1973) The same sort of transition has, of course, been visible in sociology, where a degree of methodological self-consciousness has issued in deep criticism of the doctrine of objective truth.

How are we to look at this problem? It would be foolish to assert, as does Paul Feyerabend, that criteria for truth are simply lacking. (Kunneman, 1974) Even in our (non-formal, relatively unsystematic) everyday language game, we use the notion of truth and "telling the truth" without any apparent difficulty. We even base our whole formal system of criminal prosecution on this language game.

"Our mistake is to look for an explanation where we ought to look at what happens as a 'proto-phenomenon'. That is, where we ought to have said: this language game is played". PI: 654

The language game of 'telling the truth' involves a number of possible rule-bound moves. These are but a few of the moves involved in the larger language game of 'relating an event' or 'describing the world'. All kinds of philosophical subtleties are possible here, of course, but when we choose a language game perspective, everything that happens, happens on the surface. Fundamentally the problem is one of noting actual and possible uses of language. It is not a matter of identifying subjective (thus inner) feeling behind the language. Whether one is telling the truth is not determined by one's feelings or by one's own insistent assertions. Note that the response to accusations of lying: "But I am telling the truth!" tells us nothing at all. It is the consensus of one's fellows which determines whether a statement is the truth or not. But, you might object: "Is there then no such thing as telling the truth, regardless of whether anyone recognizes it as such?" To be sure, there might be - but what practical difference would it make?

Now this would seem to cast truth-telling squarely into the laps of the conventionalists, those who assert that all knowledge about the world is based purely on consensus. But we should remember that we are not talking about some ideal and isolated language, but about language games, language in use. And concrete language, as I have insisted, is always bounded for us by concrete practice, by experience of the world - which reduces ultimately to facts of nature and forms of life. Someone who were to assert that 'The earth existed before I was born' would be accepted as telling the truth under almost all conditions (though perhaps considered a bit mad for feeling the need to assert such a commonplace). In contrast, anyone who asserted the opposite would be considered either crazy or a philosopher. We see that there are constraints prior to mere convention; there is a non-arbitrary element, composed of our certainties. But what about the truth of a statement relating a unique event (e.g. the common one of testimony in a law court)? Would it not be possible for the witness to lie (we understand what this means) while the jury accepted his testimony as true? Wouldn't I then have to say that his testimony was true because his fellows assert it? And if someone was sent to prison for life on account of this false testi-

mony, could I maintain that his 'lying' was of no consequence? This might seem to be a viable argument against the consensus theory of truth, demonstrating that truth and lies are in some way real (i.e. not dependent on consensual judgements) because they have real consequences. But let us admit, in this case, that the jury is incompetent to check the story, that there are no criteria (except the incidental ones of personal appearance, apparent sincerity, etc.) by which to judge the veracity of the witness. It is accepted, though played down for ideological reasons, that a jury is incapable, in such a case, of deciding the question of truth - the decision remains a mere decision, the assignment of truth mere ungrounded consensus. Potentially, however, such a decision is possible on the basis of the shared language game; this is the last and only arbiter of truth. If the members of the jury had also been witness to the event in question, the matter of the veracity of the witness could have been instantly settled. It would still have been consensus, but now a consensus based on the shared symbols and certainties of the language game. (This potential ability to check the rule-guidedness of another's activity is also the basis of Wittgenstein's argument against the possibility of a private language). In this sense, truth telling remains a matter of consensus and a purely external fact of language. But let me again emphasize that consensus is only possible within a concrete language game (which is itself the expression of that consensus), with shared symbols, meanings, and activities; it is this intersubjective system in which any specific question of truth or falsehood has its life and its meaning.

In the Wissenschaften, the question of the truth of an account or a proposition is essentially the same. Generally there is more reflexivity associated with questions of truth and a more elaborate and precise structure of rules for determining it. But the essential argument, that the structure of certainties and rules for action determine truth (through the medium of consensus) holds here as well. But because Wissenschaften are not in any direct way concerned with our lives as organisms (our animal survival, as it were) because they are a kind of superfluous and manufactured activity, the structure of certainty and rules here can show more arbitrariness. The medium, therefore, with which truth can be expressed and adjusted is more variable - more, we might say, is left over to consensus. Of course, I am not saying that this doesn't vary greatly from the natural sciences to such fields as history or belles-lettres. Neither have I the space at this point to consider the nature of this difference.

A word should be said, however, about theory and explanation. These are supposed to be the summa of the Wissenschaften, their whole reason for being. Accordingly, not a little paper has been covered by ruminations on the discrimination of good (true?) from bad (false?) theory. Again, it is somewhat uncomfortable to speak on this point while lumping sociology

and physics into one category, but their common character as constructed language games makes at least the basis of their warranting identical. In everyday life, the correctness of an explanation is adjudged in the final instance on the basis of its utility. Is it useful in predicting the occurrence of some event? Is it useful in allowing planned intervention in some process? At bottom, similar considerations are operative in the Wissenschaften. Although official metascience is anxious to hide any hints of utilitarianism, and plays up the world-picturing function of theory, the latter in one way really boils down to the former. Someone who has an 'accurate' picture of the world also has a powerful one; he himself is also invested with some of this 'power'. This is particularly evident in the natural sciences, where consensus is greatest and the facts seem always to bless one theory in favor of another.

There is, however, a general shift in the referent of "utility" between the everyday language game complex and the Wissenschaften. The Wissenschaften as formal systems are primarily cognitive structures; their official aim is to understand, explain, describe, systematize, etc. events in the world. What is useful in an ideal Wissenschaft is that which allows systematization of propositions about the world in a clear, economical, and precise way. The everyday language game does not have this purist interest in cognition per se; what counts is that some explanation, description, etc. contributes to the manipulation of events to produce a valued outcome. Compare: pure science with technology, or legal theory with courtroom practice. And this is not to assert that Wissenschaften lack any instrumental orientation at all; but the manipulation of events here serves to make the events "show" themselves, to make internal properties manifest (e.g. a scientific experiment). What counts in all these cases as useful is, of course, bounded by the language game which is being played. That this is a matter of consensus and agreement is well developed by Phillips (1973), Bloor (1973) and Kuhn (1970). But I have also tried to emphasize what Kuhn takes for granted and what Phillips and Bloor are indefinite about, namely that Nature is alive and well, and specifies our limits in its own way.

Let me reiterate, however, that neither I nor Wittgenstein (on my reading) take either one of the extremes. Pure consensus is in some way an easier position epistemologically; but it creates grave problems of translation and fails to account for the seeming uniformity of much of human behavior from society to society. (Let an anthropologist deny this last only at grave risk to the very foundations of his practice). (cf. Wilson, 1970). On the other hand, any pure correspondence theory of truth, involving the possibility of

propositions held to be objectively and eternally true pictures of the world, demands a transcendental criterion of truth. It demands some extra-linguistic criterion which can separate true propositions from false ones. The traditional recourse has been to Nature and the assumption has been that Nature speaks unambiguously to us, rather than through us. As Wittgenstein himself had earlier put the matter:

"Propositions can represent the whole of reality, but they cannot represent what they must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it - logical form. In order to be able to represent logical form, we should have to be able to station ourselves with propositions somewhere outside logic, that is to say outside the world." (Tractatus 4.12)

Of course, in those days Wittgenstein's world was withered and shrunken, echoing Hegel's dictum that "The real is the rational and the rational is the real." Nonetheless, his point about the necessity for positing transcendental plat-forms in a correspondence theory is well taken. Such a theory fails, moreover, to explain the historical succession of 'truths' and the changing character of propositions as they successively become embedded in one theory after another. One possible "out" has been the assertion that Ordinary Language is the key to and mirror of reality (The Oxford School of Ordinary Language Analysis), that our common sense somehow expresses the truth about the world. This extraordinary sanctification of the ordinary (often and mistakenly attributed to Wittgenstein) fails to respect the relatively autonomous logics of science, religion, magic, etc. It posits, transcendently, a kind of language-user-in-the-street attuned to cosmic vibrations and preternaturally wise of the world. And, while Wittgenstein's methods consist largely of presenting ordinary language samples, he does this by way of showing how we use language, how it is learned, how concepts result from bounded agreement, etc. He nowhere asserts (it would be a nonsensical, not incorrect, statement for him) that ordinary language is a true picture of the world, and that others are just fanciful distortions. Nature and Spirit are not related in this way. A conclusion not of ordinary language but reachable by the systematic presentation of samples of language use. Such primacy as ordinary language does possess results from its role in the everyday language game as the lingua franca mediating among all the specialized language games played by the members of a society. It is the fundamental organizing symbolic system which allows for and springs from human life in societies.

The conclusion must be that each language game has its own criteria for 'telling the truth', for 'explaining an event'. This is only radically relativistic if we look at particular

language games as creations purely of Spirit and neglect their essential dialectic with Nature. The role of truth and justification in this dialectic is nicely expressed in the following:

"Well, if everything speaks for an hypothesis and nothing against it - is it then certainly true? One may designate it as such. - But does it certainly agree with reality, with the facts? - With this question you are already going round in a cricle." OC: 191

"To be sure there is justification; but justification comes to an end." OC: 192

"What does this mean: the truth of a proposition is certain?" OC: 193

"With the word "certain" we express complete conviction, the total absence of doubt, and thereby we seek to convince other people. That is subjective certainty. But when is something objectively certain? When a mistake is not possible. But what kind of possibility is that? Mustn't a mistake be logically excluded?" OC: 194

"If I believe I am sitting in my room when I am not, then I shall not be said to have made a mistake. But what is the essential difference between this case and a mistake?" OC: 195

"Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end; - but the end is not certain propositions' striking us immediately as true, i.e. it is not a kind of seeing on our part; it is our acting, which lies at the bottom of the language-game." OC: 204

"If the true is what is grounded, then the ground is not true, nor yet false." OC: 205

And the multiformity of language games, the diverse relations of Nature to Spirit, is not a position which we establish a priori (arbitrarily as it were) but a position resulting from a concrete look at language as it is used. This certainly shows that "heavy" here is not the same as "heavy" there; nor is "the same" always and everywhere "the same". If one cannot accept this as grounds, the very language with which one frames the objection becomes null and void.

"If you are not certain of any fact, you cannot be certain of the meaning of your words either." OC: 114

VI. Sociology

At the outset of this paper I noted three ways in which Wittgenstein philosophy might be expected to illuminate sociology. They were: A) The "boomerang" effect of Wittgenstein's ontology and epistemology - the forced return to sociology. B) In-

creased reflexivity - the discipline looks at itself. C) A different perspective on the subject matter of sociology - the world as language game networks.

I should like to take up each of these in turn, and very briefly. This discussion is really the basis for (a) forthcoming paper(s).

A) The Return

I think this paper is as good an example of the process as any other I could invent. I set out (following Wittgenstein) doing philosophy, finding out how the world might be regarded and how we come to a knowledge of it. I am told to pay careful attention to the way I speak, to search out the rules implicit in my language, to take account of biological capacities, to look at the various 'games' actually played by people in the world. Above all, Wittgenstein asserts that language games are based on agreement, that meanings and concepts are largely (though by no means entirely) socially determined. That means they are created by people in groups.

This "hermeneutic circle" is particularly powerful in light of the significance which Wittgenstein attached to his later work. He saw it as a rectification, not only of the Tractatus, but of all metaphysical attempts to force language into the doghouse of scientific discourse. This Tractarian emphasis on language-as-a-logic, containing propositions capable of being true or false with respect to a certain state of the "real" world, was only the culmination of a lengthy philosophical tradition. Wittgenstein, in fashioning his perfect metaphysics, had only completed the system in which thought and reality stood opposed in the world. His was the solution for classical philosophy. His rejection of both this radical dichotomy and of the limitation of the "essence" of language to scientific discourse, was essentially a rejection of a whole mode of philosophizing. It was a reassessment of the role of philosophy and of the role of language in defining and describing reality. He could now say: "Like everything metaphysical, the harmony between thought and reality is to be found in the grammar of the language." Z: 55 And this language is pre-eminently a social phenomenon. It grows out of and sustains group life, it is the vehicle which carries much of primary and almost all of secondary socialization, it is differentiated according to social class and ethnic boundaries, and it is the medium in which any reflection about social life takes place.

Wittgenstein implicitly, then, rejects a search for meta-sociological foundations within the classical philosophical mode of discourse. More accurately, his critique forces us to lift our statement of the problem (which at first appears to concern the conditions under which propositions are true pictures of an extra-linguistic reality) to questions of the social bases of language. Not an abstract logic, but concrete human language

games, become primary. If this is not sociology, what is?

B) Increased Reflexivity

"The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something - because it is always before one's eyes.) The real foundations of his enquiry do not strike a man at all. Unless that fact has at some time struck him. -- And this means: we fail to be struck by what, once seen, is most striking and most powerful." PI: 129

When we begin to look at Wissenschaften as language games, many of the most crucial problems festering in meta-sociology and meta-methodology begin to dissolve themselves. The bugbear of validity (or "valiability" (Weigert, 1968)) for example, is now seen as an unnecessary and a priori requirement proceeding necessarily from the choice of a particular language to describe social reality. More generally, the choice of language (the level of rigor, logical consistency, precision, etc.) grows out of the acceptance of a particular model of Wissenschaft, a particular image of the relation of Nature and Spirit. Concretely, of course, I am speaking of the general acceptance of a natural science model of Wissenschaft in the social sciences (logical positivism on the level of metascience). This picture, and its associated level of language, seems to work in the natural sciences and fail in sociology - causing a good deal of grief. Somehow we feel it must work. Why it may not do so is a matter for the next section.

When a particular image of Wissenschaft becomes reified (e.g. through triumphant successes) the discipline ceases to exploit possibility and defines the world within the limits of its use of language. This may cause problems as in sociology, where the very possibility of the correspondence of the chosen language to the world is problematic. But the problem comes from looking at language incorrectly, and from non-reflexivity concerning the nature of Wissenschaft. For Wissenschaft is not seen as the creation of a possible world (one out of numerous possible worlds depending on the language chosen) but as the expression of a real world in terms of a certain definite symbolic logic. (Blum, 1973) It is not appreciated that Wissenschaft is a kind of artificial language game which is quite free - within certain bounds discussed above - to choose the language(s) in which to construct its subject. This may be concretely appreciated by contrasting the image which flows out of a sociology cast in inferential statistical language and that which emerges in, say, a Marxist analysis.

The most characteristic feature of the discussion (insofar as one exists) among the language communities is the militant assertion that there is a correct language (again, according

to transcendental criteria) in which to frame the social world, that there is a language which truly captures the essence of social life in an acceptable wissenschaftliche way. The only "essence" of social life, I would submit, is the existence of different language games, grounded in the meta-level of Facts of Nature. Each choice of language expresses a possible way of constructing the social world, each will show something and hide something, each will speak and have its silences.(7) Some will perhaps say more than others, but an understanding of the foundations of our discipline will preclude the assertion that any one of them is right. The peculiar tenacity of logical positivism can partly be attributed to the fact that while it fosters the imposition of very rigorous (mathematical) language, it simultaneously insists that there is a unique reality to which it could be made to correspond. It not only asserts it is the right language but creates the very idea that being right is a possible condition.(8) It reifies itself.

Validity, then, is not a necessary problem (just like objectivity, value freedom, context boundedness, etc.) but an internal (logical) contradiction inhering in an historically generated artificial language game. One can work out the game (iron out the wrinkles) or throw it out. Gastric ulcers are not necessary either.

C) Another Perspective

"Philosophy sets limits to the much disputed sphere of natural science." Tractatus 4.113

In this section it will sometimes seem as if I am contradicting the epistemological Leveler spirit of the preceding. I want to urge the suitability of a particular kind of language (and an as yet vague theoretical perspective) for sociology. In spite of this, I will not want to assert that it is, according to some necessarily transcendental standard, the correct one, or even a correct one. There are, for example, no logical arguments which will demonstrate that logical positivism, or functionalist grand theory, is wrong for sociology. The only argument is that such a language game results in a particular (and reified) image of the world. The choice becomes one among the suitability or desirability of showing a particular version of the world. Ultimately, such choices are rooted in the values of the everyday language game, in the particular games in which one has been socialized and the orientations these imply. This is a psychological and sociological insinuation. Those who problematize the role of values in sociology; e.g. Weber, Mannheim, Pels (1974), Kunne-man (1974) are speaking already from within a positivistic mode of discourse, at least to the extent that they have an image of possible objectivity and assume that at least some value judgements can be neutered. In my view, this rhetoric-

ally preserves sociology as a science; it denies sociology as a properly human production (thus inherently and unavoidably subject to non-rational influences) and presents it - ideally of course - as a God given doctrine. This obscures the "foundations of our enquiry."

Wittgenstein's case is simply that there can be no rationale given which transcends the context of a given language game. A particular use of language is the most elementary fact of human consciousness. This philosophical solution, which sets the limits on the possible nature of our inquiry, can also form the basis for a model of the social world. If we can agree that it is the business of sociology to illuminate the dark regions of social life, to speak the silence in social consciousness, then we can also agree that concrete analysis of language game networks is a step in the right direction. For the paradigm of non-comprehension in social life is the reification of a constructed reality into an absolute and non-human reality.(9) Durkheim's social facts are only the expression of the coercion which such reified language games seem to exert on us. Thus, religious systems - from our perspective pure (and partly rational) constructions - infuse believers with a world in which real angels and real demons vie for their immortal souls. Rationality consists in seeing this as a language game and of noting its certainties and rules and its relation to other language games. That is to say, rationality consists in making visible the frame through which we look at the world. And this frame is composed not just of values, but of logical propositions as well.

Any of the manifestations of everyday life can be seen and profitably analyzed as language games. This forces us not only to de-reify them (to see them as historically contingent expressions; i.e. it is possible for them to have been otherwise) but also to note their grounding in the human form of life and certain facts of nature and to identify the system of certainties and rules for procedure which lie at their center.

As an example of what might be entailed in a language game analysis, let me consider a sociologically well-exploited field, "mental illness". When we look at language in this area - in a very general way - we are first of all confronted with a large number of terms which express a certain human condition. This is a real condition to the extent that people can point at someone and say, "He's crazy." or "This patient is mentally ill." This condition, which social research or treatment facilities call "mental illness" and used to call simply "insane", is also referred to by the words "crazy", "off his rocker", "touched", "lunatic", "flipped", "beserk", "mad", "weird", etc.etc. In addition, we might notice that the rule bound ways of behaving toward

people so-called, tend to vary with the kinds of expression used to describe the condition - and that these expressions, moreover, are linked to membership in rather discrete and more general language games. People who use words like "crazy", "weird", "lunatic", we might find, also have a characteristic way of dealing with those so-labelled (extreme avoidance, hostility, or paternalistic negation). We might dare to suggest that "off his rocker" or "touched", with their greater emphasis on transience and accident, implies a greater degree of sympathy or caring. And the use of "insane" or "mentally ill" we find closely associated with institutional incarceration or treatment. The transition from "insane", moreover, to "mentally ill" (and in the language game of isolation-rehabilitation from "insane asylum" to "mental hospital") marks a change in the diagnostic and administrative apparatus of the language game of mental illness. While the Latin root of "insane" means literally unhealthy (i.e. ill) the emphasis is clearly different than the term "mentally ill." Latin derivatives become their own substantive signs and in this case "insane" as a medical term (framed in the Latin of classification and administration) and its apposite "sane" function to describe and sharply discriminate states of the cognitive functioning of human beings. They do this in the same way that "crazy", "nuts", and "cracked" (cf. Humpty Dumpty) do: as a more or less permanent assignment to the camp of the demented. With the establishment of the language game of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy in general came also the conviction - within the communities of research and treatment - that insanity was less in the order of an incurable disease (closely associated with criminal tendencies) and more like the common cold (innocence itself). As a consequence, the newfound "mentally ill" were nominally treated within the paradigm of the medical language game, as patients for whom there was all hope of recovery within appropriately staffed and constituted mental "hospitals".

While this is as yet a very superficial description, it does show some important elements of the type of analysis I want to support. The first is the reliance on used language as an indicator of socially differentiated realities - it is demonstrable in practice that there is no across-the-board agreement upon a single definition of 'insanity' or 'craziness', nor are there society-wide rules for behaving in the face of it. We sense that many language games impinge here, and a description is possible at every level. Further, some hints have been given on the historical interaction among the language games of criminality, insanity, medicine, and the public institutional treatment of deviants. It appears that the logic of preventative incarceration has been one pole of the treatment of the mentally ill and that of medical caring and curing another. Such tension fields demarcate areas of struggle (involving power conflicts) within a language game in

which different groups use quite different language. Again, it is possible to examine such a relatively long term conflict on a sublevel in quite great detail, by associating various class or occupational groups with different language use. This will be seen, in the context of this paper, as defining language games. Such a concrete examination of language-in-use (thus, not reports about behavior, but behavior itself- which may include the former, of course) will show a continuing dissonance in the acceptance of the ideal medical paradigm by various specific social groups, not the least important of whom may be the staffs of "mental hospitals" themselves. Concrete investigation of the internal language game of such institutions, as in Goffman's (1961) work, may show that the medical paradigm is merely a constructed language used by those in positions of responsibility and power to legitimate themselves within the best traditions of the Western ethical system. We will here be on the frontiers of ideology and the dizzying depths of the language game of deception.

Now I do not pretend that the above sheds an enormous illumination on the sociology of being crazy. But I think it shows some of the directions and connections which a language game sociology might lead us to take and make. Such a view relies at every moment on agreement, on bargaining over definitions, and on the conflict of established pictures of the world, as generators of an ever changing social reality. It wants to show how, while living by implicit and unspoken rules and certainties, humans nonetheless find themselves in contradiction and in battle over their cause, their vision of the world. Such a sociology aims to dig out and display the many levels of assumptions (the system of certainties) which underly any given ongoing organization of human life, any concrete language game. And it wants to do so by looking at social life in terms of the language actually used by people, not by imposing an external and self-reifying artificial language on all the "movin' and groovin'" that make up a world.

Notes

1. References to Wittgenstein's work will be in the following code:

PI - Philosophical Investigations
 RFM - Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics
 Z - Zettel
 OC - On Certainty

- 1a. These will be followed by a ':' and then by a paragraph number. Thus, PH:24. Because the Philosophical Investigations are paginated in the second section and not numbered by paragraph, it will sometimes be referred to by page. Thus PI:p.200.
2. The term "de-focalized" is borrowed from Alvin W. Gouldner. It is designed to express the subjective non-awareness of a state of affairs which can in some sense be said to "be there". It differs from the more usual "sub-conscious" in that it is innocent of psychoanalytical connotations including the burden of repression, suppression and other defense mechanisms. "Non-focalized" thus, has no compulsive elements; it is mere non-awareness.
3. The ontogeny of language differs from, of course, this rather sketchy phylogeny. Each individual learns language from his elders, and, in later life, from those groups on whose borders he finds himself or whose care he is entrusted. What is of most interest here, and most determinant for the shape of the individual, is the learning of the primary, the ordinary language. In Wittgenstein's view, which is rather at odds with Chomsky's "insufficient evidence" hypothesis, this ordinary language is learned in an empirical, almost pragmatic way. It is not a question of the incalculable or expression of rules (by and large) but a question of training, of rote learning, of encouragement, of making and correcting mistakes, of "showing how". Life continues to be a process of expression and action in which the correction of errors by others (or the possibility thereof) is a criterion for correct or proper usage. The more specialized language games which one learns later (say those associated with a particular occupation, or with attending school) also contain this pragmatic pedagogy although the existence of the conceptual basis of ordinary language make conscious attention to rules possible. One now has the concept of a rule, is capable of formulating concrete rules, and is acquainted abstractly and concretely with the process of "applying a rule". The significant peculiarity of the learning of the first language is its de-focalized nature. While everything that happens is on the surface (the interactions associated with learning) the individual is not aware that he is learning a language. This is because he has as yet no concepts with which to grasp that notion. One cannot think thoughts for which no language is available.

"Grammar" here is larger than the usual sort of grammar one learns in, e.g., high-school. Wittgenstein's use has more of a semantic than a syntactical intent. By this I mean that the grammar of a word is the sum of its relations with other words and the actual uses it is put to. Thus, the grammar of the word "game" would be the sum of its contextual uses, including a "game of tennis", "a game of chess", "games are fun", and "this ain't no game, buddy". This kind of grammar, then, is more like what we learn in Grammar School, although it goes by other names.

5. Although I cast this very sketchy development in terms of language - as if symbol generates symbol without respect to any **other** developments - I do not mean to take an idealist position. Anytime I use the concept "language" I intend to imply also the activity and the material world connected with it - the language game, thus. This covers phenomena conventionally included in the Marxist concept "base"; thus social relations and the forces of production. I choose not to use this terminology because it makes very problematic the role of language and of consciousness, in historical development. Beside this, I am not ignoring a social theory here, I am just not concerned with it, i.e. with any such theory.
6. Obviously I am coming close to describing what Kuhn calls "paradigms". I shy away from it largely because of the cloud of misunderstanding surrounding the concept. Otherwise, I consider Kuhn's "paradigms" to be an excellent definition of the nature of natural scientific language games. Great care should be taken however, it seems to me, in transplanting the concept to other contexts. It is too easy to allow this frame to obscure important differences; e.g. between the social and natural sciences.
7. The idea and last form of its expression are A.W.Gouldner's; I have taken the liberty of extracting them from their rather different context in his series of lectures on "Ideology and Intellectuals" given in 1973-4.
8. Of course, the concrete reasons for the advent and ascendance of logical positivism are properly historical ones and have, in the modern incarnation at least, much to do with imagery from the natural sciences. Similarly, the struggles involving other sociological "paradigms", involve questions of prestige, power, access to same, and other political issues. I am only attempting to deny the rhetorical usage which suffuses these intra-disciplinary scuffles. I want to say that while historical contingency may "produce" one or another theoretical-methodological manifestation, none of these will turn out to be the right one - for the simple reason that "right" here is nonsense.

9. The material world is, of course, in itself a pre-human reality. We can, of course, doubt this - but then doubt itself would lose all meaning. What causes the problem is to assume that a particular rational reconstruction of this world really is isomorphic with that world itself. While this may be almost excusable in the natural sciences, any rational system concerning humans (who after all have choice, as rocks and stars do not) must admit its constructed nature; must admit that choices were made.

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