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NOTES

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at referring to times in this sense is *not* like referring to
criptions. I would argue that even dates do not refer in
y refer – and sentences do not even need to have dates

t irrelevant uses: the historical narrative, which is not
ch, and the intentional. The latter permits the speaker
mbedded clause's 'state of affairs') is relatively certain:
g Bambi tomorrow, but Supergirl will come to the
s with most 'reduced future' uses, such as the illustra-
President next year".

'Time') argues in a different context for a view similar
cheerfully allow reference to events, including speech-

gart's views on time in his *Examination of McTaggart's*
pecially pp. 277–281. Since McTaggart's version of
nce is introduced only to show how absurd it really is,
ts the notion of becoming as qualitative change.

low for this suggestion.

le', pp. 204ff.

possibilia for this and similar purposes form a large and
henbach, Whitrow, McCall, Rankin, Thomason, and
ose who do not actually want to give an account of
possibilia, including possible worlds, to analyze tempo-

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THE CONCEPT OF LINGUISTIC CORRECTNESS

(Received 18 August, 1975)

In a certain very fundamental sort of case, a speaker of a language takes note of some item in the world or of some feature of an item in the world. Confronted by some item or feature of the world, he says in words what it is, that is, he uses a kind-term (common noun) or qualitative (adjectival) predicate to classify or describe the item or feature which he confronts. Thinking of such an occasion of use of a kind-term or qualitative predicate by a speaker as a linguistic response elicited by a non-linguistic stimulus, I shall speak of a *responsive using* of a general term.¹ A responsive using of a term is one very elementary sort – perhaps the most elementary sort – of application of descriptive or classificatory language to the world.

Like any such application, a responsive using admits of evaluation. It can be either correct or incorrect. I want to investigate in what the correctness or incorrectness of a responsive using consists. I take this to be *the* main theme of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, the skeleton upon which all else in that inexhaustible book is hung, although it is not an exegetical thesis which I wish to establish here. While the proper method in philosophy may, in the end, be to advance no theses, I believe that the *Philosophical Investigations* embodies a thesis concerning the correctness of a descriptive application of language – a thesis which is central, radical, and arguably right. It is that thesis which I hope in this essay to articulate and secure.

Like my thesis, both my strategy and my arguments will be drawn from Wittgenstein. In that sense, then, this essay contains nothing new. Yet when, after several years, I finally succeeded in rethinking what Wittgenstein had thought through for us, when I was finally able to appreciate and assimilate what the *Philosophical Investigations* has to tell us about linguistic correctness, I was vastly surprised by it. Nor could I recall having encountered an effective formulation of the point in what is by now a vast secondary literature. And so I resolved to try my hand at it. Perhaps, then – if I am right and if I am successful – this essay can, in another sense, contain

something new — a new understanding of a thesis and an argument which, as I sadly know from my own experience, can be encountered a dozen times without being understood.

In contrast to that of the *Philosophical Investigations*, my own approach will be systematic, the tracing of one reasonably well-marked path — by no means the only one — across the philosophical terrain which Wittgenstein traverses and retraverses. In the process, I shall continually be stumbling across the signposts which he set for us. But since I am following a marked trail to high ground, where Wittgenstein was a nomadic explorer, I shall not encounter them in the order in which he set them. Since exegesis must be responsible to structure as well as content, if I were doing exegesis, this fact would be troublesome. So it is important to stress again that it is not an exegetical thesis which I shall attempt to establish.

I shall begin with a single responsive using of a general term T, by a linguistic solipsist — an individual who, *de facto* or *de jure*, is linguistically isolated, insulated from the possibility of establishing a consilience or lack of consilience of his responsive usings with those of others. I shall first argue that no distinction between a correct and an incorrect responsive using can be drawn for this setting. Then, by systematically enriching this initial setting, I shall attempt to ascertain at what point such a distinction can be well-founded. In this way, if successful, we can isolate the *locus* of the concept of correctness of linguistic application, determine in what such correctness consists.

Suppose, then, that, confronted with an item in the world, our speaker, S, responsively utters 'T'. Have we here the makings of a well-founded judgment of correctness? A natural reply is that we do not, but that this is only because I have failed to tell enough of the story. The correctness of a responsive using, it may be proposed, consists in its fitting the facts, and what I have neglected to specify in my stage-setting is whether the item which S confronts is or is not, in fact, a T (or a T item). The item is correctly called a T if and only if it *is* a T. Correctness, on this view, consists in a *synchronic correspondence* of the utterance to the world.

But if we were to grant this point, would it offer any real advance on our original question? In what does the item's being or not being a T consist? The world, after all, does not come labeled. (And even if, *per impossibile*, it did, we should still have to ask whether it is labeled correctly.) We must not forget *how impoverished* this initial setting is. We are inclined imaginatively

to substitute for the dummy vocable 'T' some feature of language — a term which designates some kind of feature — and then straightaway to conclude that S's response is correct if what he confronts and linguistically responds to has (or has not) that feature (having that feature).

But we and our shared language are not yet at the point of a distinction between a correct and an incorrect responsive using. A well-founded distinction between a correct and an incorrect responsive using, if at all, wholly from elements contained in the setting, is a distinction between the confronted item's being correctly used and not being correctly used. A well-founded distinction between a correct and an incorrect responsive using, if at all, wholly from such elements. For there is a difference between a T and not being a T if and only if there *is* a difference between a responsive using being correctly responsively used in that setting and not being correctly responsively used in that setting. The ground of these putatively two distinctions will ground the ground of the other.

Our setting, indeed, is even more radically impoverished than is far recognized. We do not yet have sufficient data to isolate a *term* designating a kind of item or feature of item which can be supplied by way of a setting, 'T' from the lips of a speaker, rather than is a shriek or a sigh or a sob. All we are entitled to suppose is an audible response elicited from S by the world, which is a response as linguistic and the utterance as the world. We have set out to stack the cards in a way which precludes the possibility of what we have set out to discover, for a term precisely is a distinction between correct and incorrect application, the presupposition of which is to isolate. Given only a single utterance by a speaker, we have yet anything to distinguish a term which is — a term which is applied by him from a cry which is wrung from him. We are not yet intelligibly think of there being a fact which is a T in that case can we suppose that there is a kind of item which is of the confronted item in that kind serves as a ground of correctness. Items which evoke a shriek or a sob, or a speaker do not — except perhaps accidentally — sobs, and sighs, and sobs are not, even in some attenuated form. (Cf. #199-#202)

We need, then, to enrich the original setting, and to indicate what direction such an enrichment must take, for

standing of a thesis and an argument which, as I experience, can be encountered a dozen times

Philosophical Investigations, my own approach of one reasonably well-marked path — by no means the philosophical terrain which Wittgenstein set for us. But since I am following a marked path which Wittgenstein was a nomadic explorer, I shall not follow in which he set them. Since exegesis must be done as content, if I were doing exegesis, this fact is important to stress again that it is not an attempt to establish.

The responsive using of a general term T, by a speaker, *de facto* or *de jure*, is linguistically possible of establishing a consilience or lack of consilience with those of others. I shall first argue that a correct and an incorrect responsive using can be distinguished by systematically enriching this initial setting. I shall then ask at what point such a distinction can be well-founded. If successful, we can isolate the *locus* of the concept of linguistic correctness, determine in what such correctness

is grounded with an item in the world, our speaker, S, and we have here the makings of a well-founded judgment. The reply is that we do not, but that this is only the beginning of the story. The correctness of a responsive using, proposed, consists in its fitting the facts, and what is at issue in my stage-setting is whether the item which S is using is a T (or a T item). The item is correctly called a T, on this view, correctness, on this view, consists in a *synchronic* fit to the world.

At this point, would it offer any real advance on our inquiry does the item's being or not being a T consist? The item can be labeled. (And even if, *per impossible*, it cannot be labeled correctly.) We must not ask whether it is labeled correctly. We must not ask what the initial setting is. We are inclined imaginatively

to substitute for the dummy vocable 'T' some familiar term of our everyday language — a term which designates some kind of thing (or feature of things) — and then straightaway to conclude that S's responsive using of 'T' is correct if what he confronts and linguistically responds to is a thing of that kind (or having that feature).

But we and our shared language are not yet in this picture. Just as the distinction between a correct and an incorrect responsive using of 'T' must be grounded, if at all, wholly from elements contained in the initial setting, so the distinction between the confronted item's being and not being a T must also be grounded, if at all, wholly from such elements. For these, in fact, are not two distinctions but only one. There is a difference between the item's being and not being a T if and only if there is a difference between 'T's being and not being correctly responsively used in that setting by S. Whatever grounds one of these putatively two distinctions will ground the other, and so neither can be the ground of the other.

Our setting, indeed, is even more radically impoverished than we have so far recognized. We do not yet have sufficient data to determine that 'T' is a term designating a kind of item or feature of items at all. For all I have so far supplied by way of a setting, 'T' from the lips of S might no more be a term than is a shriek or a sigh or a sob. All we are entitled so far to posit is that 'T' is an audible response elicited from S by the confronted item. To class the response as linguistic and the utterance as the using of a term is already to stack the cards in a way which precludes the possibility of discovering what we have set out to discover, for a term precisely is something which admits of correct and incorrect application, the presuppositions of which we are seeking to isolate. Given only a single utterance by a speaker in isolation, we have not yet anything to distinguish a term which is — correctly or incorrectly — applied by him from a cry which is wrung from him. Only if 'T' is a term can we intelligibly think of there being a fact which it may fit or fail to fit. Only in that case can we suppose that there is a kind of item such that membership of the confronted item in that kind serves as a determinant of linguistic correctness. Items which evoke a shriek or a sigh or a sob from a given speaker do not — except perhaps accidentally — form a kind. And shrieks, sighs, and sobs are not, even in some attenuated sense, correct or incorrect. (Cf. #199-#202)

We need, then, to enrich the original setting, and we can perhaps discern what direction such an enrichment must take, for we can immediately see

that S's *diachronic* behavior with regard to utterance of 'T' is crucial. At a minimum, there must exist a *practice* of responsively uttering 'T' – when confronting things of some one kind (or having some one feature) – of which S's utterance in our original setting is a manifestation. Could S, linguistically isolated, establish such a practice? Let us have him try.

Let us have S *decide* what kind of thing is to be called by the term 'T'. (For there is no-one else yet in the setting to decide it.) On this view, S's utterances of 'T' can be divided into two groups. Utterances in the first group found a practice. They express decisions, resolves – arbitrary or stipulative definitions – and cannot sensibly be thought of as correct or incorrect. Utterances in the second group, in contrast, continue the practice. They are all subsequent to the utterances constituting the first group and, unlike their predecessors, admit of linguistic assessment. They are correct if they are consistent manifestations of the founded practice; incorrect if inconsistent with it. Where our first proposal held correctness to be constituted by synchronic correspondence with the world, on this view correctness lies in the *diachronic consistency* of a responsive practice. This is precisely the setting of Wittgenstein's 'Diarist' (#258) and a generalized form of the thesis against which the notorious Private Language Argument is directed.

Now what does it mean to speak of S's practice with regard to utterance of 'T' as being or not being consistent? Consider an utterance drawn from the second group. The natural suggestion is that such an utterance is a consistent manifestation of a practice if and only if it is, on that occasion, uttered in response to a confronted item which is of the *same kind* as was confronted in the utterances of the first group.

Now in one sense this is plainly right. A single term is correctly responsively used in application to two confronted items if and only if the two items are correctly classifiable as of the same kind. That is, the judgment that each of two items is (a) T will be correct in all and only those instances in which a judgment that the two items are (of) the same (kind) would be correct. But this only tells us of a pair of judgments that they are correct or incorrect *together*. What it does not tell us is in what the correctness of either judgment consists. This is the point of #350-1. Given that it is five o' clock here, the judgment that it is five o' clock on the surface of the sun will be correct just in case the judgment that it is the same time on the surface of the sun as it is here is correct. Those two judgments are correct or incorrect together, but we do not yet understand whether or how we can intelligibly speak of *either* as

correct or incorrect. It follows from these considerations that the explicate consistency of practice in terms of sameness of kind advances at all on our original question.

We may come at the same point differently. We may distinguish the case in which an item confronted on a later occasion is of the same kind as one confronted in the first group, and which it merely, incorrectly, *seems* to S to be of the same kind. Asking "How are we to distinguish..." I have already noted a possible confusion, for we are not yet in the picture. The distinction between two confronted items' actual sameness of kind, seeming to S to be of the same kind, where that distinction is wholly in terms of those elements which we have identified in our (diachronically elaborated) setting for a later utterance of 'T' by S. And we are not among those who would suggest a way to frame the question, then, is this: Could S, on the basis of merely seeming to him to be of the same kind, draw a correct and non-arbitrary conclusion that one or more of his later utterances of 'T' is a misapplication? Could S have a use for a distinction between items actually being of the same kind as an item previously confronted, and merely seeming to him to be of the same kind?

Well, why not? Why couldn't S at some time later, still later, remember that, on that occasion, the item he was confronting was not, in fact, of the same kind as those confronted on previous occasions?

This proposal demands several responses. The first, that it itself falls within the scope of the concept of correctness, is in consonance of S's present inclination to apply the term 'T'. His present *ostensible* memory of first-group items is correct, and the correctness or incorrectness of usings of 'T'. What is the ostensible memory *itself* be correct. (Cf. #265)

But why, it may well be replied, should there be any doubt about memory in this case? Surely S's memory is more suspect than his memory in general, which is generally supposed to be excellent and reliable. This is the response: The difficulty is not that there is no way to get it right. The difficulty is that we have no way of "getting it right".

The proposal, recall, was that S could at a later time remember that, in some case, the confronted item eliciting 'T' was not of the same kind as the first-group items. Now this proposal only makes sense if there is *already* – in the picture – a distinction between actually being and merely seeming to be of the same kind for 'T'-eliciting items confronted by S. But that is precisely the distinction which the appeal to S's memory was to *supply* for us.

Let me elaborate the point, for it is a subtle one. We originally appealed to S's memory to fund the distinction between an item's actually being and its merely, incorrectly, seeming to S to be of the same kind as one previously confronted by him. Now we note that an ostensible memory at some time may cohere or conflict with an inclination to apply or withhold 'T' for an item confronted at that time. *Prima facie*, there are five possibilities:

- (C1) The memory and the inclination cohere and both are correct.
- (C2) The memory and the inclination cohere and neither is correct.
- (F1) The memory and the inclination conflict. The memory is correct and the inclination incorrect.
- (F2) The memory and the inclination conflict. The inclination is correct and the memory incorrect.
- (F3) The memory and the inclination conflict and neither is correct.

The problem, however, is that the resources available in our setting are completely exhausted by the distinction between

- (C) The memory and the inclination cohere.

and

- (F) The memory and the inclination conflict.

The proposal before us is that we nevertheless *envision* the fivefold set of possibilities and, by taking ostensible memory to be decisive, that we *legislate* for (C1) in preference to (C2) and for (F1) in preference to (F2) or (F3). And it is, of course, true that, *if* we do this, we successfully reduce an envisioned fivefold set of possibilities to the twofold distinction which our descriptive stage-setting *genuinely* allows us. But this is a fraudulent victory, for it buys us a surrogate 'correctness' and 'incorrectness' for a present responsive using only at the price of the correctness and incorrectness of a present ostensible memory. By so legislating, we rule that none of S's ostensible memories can fail of correctness. ("Whatever is going to seem right to me is right", #258)

We could, of course, so rule – although we have been hypothesizing that S's memory is generally *epistemic*. Equally obviously, we could alternatively rule that the inclination was always to dominate, mapping (C1) to one of our envisioned fivefold possibilities, rather than (C2). The point is that there is nothing left in our descriptive setting to base a choice between these rulings.

What we, in fact, need for the concept of correctness is that there not be scope here for a *ruling* at all. We have inclinations and ostensible memory conflict, it is sometimes that the inclination is correct and sometimes conversely. The epistemology of correctness is not one of legislation. But when S has discovered a coherence between inclination and memory, there is no discovery – and in our present impoverished setting

Thinking of S's responsive utterances of 'T' as a sequence, we proposed to ground the correctness of some or all of the consistency of the sequence to which it belongs. Is the sequence to be consistent? It is, of course, consistent if the sequence of responsive usings satisfies this condition. The locus of a distinction between correctness and inconsistency is the natural impulse is to insist that the sequence be consistent. The sequence of natural items which evoke S's responsive utterances is to surrender to this impulse is to mislocate the relation between S and the world. The sequence of utterances justifies the interactions between S and those items in the world. The world is what *elicits* S's responsive utterances. They are *responses* to the world, measured against it. It is not an object of comparison.

We may better appreciate this point if we consider S having established in the past a practice of responsive using confronted with certain items and now confronting a new item upon to extend his diachronic linguistic practice. Can he possibly *fail* to do so? Well, S must choose either to apply for this new item or inclined not to apply it. And he may find himself inclined that this new item is relevantly like (similar to,

is that S could at a later time remember that, in item eliciting 'T' was not of the same kind as the proposal only makes sense if there is *already* — in between actually being and merely seeming to be eliciting items confronted by S. But that is precisely appeal to S's memory was to *supply* for us.

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is that the resources available in our setting are the distinction between

and the inclination cohere.

and the inclination conflict.

that we nevertheless *envision* the fivefold set of ostensible memory to be decisive, that we *legislate* (C2) and for (F1) in preference to (F2) or (F3). And if we do this, we successfully reduce an envisioned item to the twofold distinction which our descriptive analysis shows us. But this is a fraudulent victory, for it buys us 'correctness' and 'incorrectness' for a present responsive using the correctness and incorrectness of a present ostensible item. We rule that none of S's ostensible memories can be true if "whatever is going to seem right to me is right", #258)

We could, of course, so rule — although we have come a fair distance from hypothesizing that S's memory is generally excellent and reliable. But, equally obviously, we could alternatively rule that the current responsive inclination was always to dominate, mapping (C) and (F) onto (C1) and (F2) of our envisioned fivefold possibilities, rather than onto (C1) and (F1). The point is that there is nothing left in our descriptive stage-setting upon which to base a choice between these rulings.

What we, in fact, need for the concept of correctness to be well-founded is that there not be scope here for a *ruling* at all. That is, where responsive inclinations and ostensible memory conflict, it should be able to *turn out* sometimes that the inclination is correct and the memory faulty, and sometimes conversely. The epistemology of correctness is one of discovery, not one of legislation. But when S has discovered a coherence or a failure of coherence between inclination and memory, there is nothing left for *him* to discover — and in our present impoverished setting, S is alone.

Thinking of S's responsive utterances of 'T' as forming a sequence in time, we proposed to ground the correctness of some one of them in the diachronic consistency of the sequence to which it belongs. But *with what* is the sequence to be consistent? It is, of course, consistent with itself — but any sequence of responsive usings satisfies this condition, and so that cannot serve as the locus of a distinction between correctness and incorrectness. Our natural impulse is to insist that the sequence be consistent with *the world*, the sequence of natural items which evoke S's responsive utterings of 'T'. But to surrender to this impulse is to mislocate the relation between S's utterances and the world. The sequence of utterances just is the *total outcome* of the interactions between S and those items in the world, *whatever* the items may be or be like. The world is what *elicits* S's responsive utterances and ostensible memories. They are *responses* to the world and so cannot be measured against it. It is not an object of comparison.

We may better appreciate this point if we consider the case in which S, having established in the past a practice of responsively uttering 'T' when confronted with certain items and now confronting yet another item, is called upon to extend his diachronic linguistic practice *consistently*. Could he possibly *fail* to do so? Well, S must choose either to apply or to withhold 'T' for this new item. Now he may find himself inclined to apply 'T' to the new item or inclined not to apply it. And he may find himself inclined to judge that this new item is relevantly like (similar to, of the same kind as) the

pers confronting on the occasion(s) of founding the opposite judgment. If these inclinations withhold 'T' with no feeling of dissonance. Is it consistent or inconsistent with his earlier practice to appeal to answer that question? We would be obviously and presently confronted by S, but *how*. What have they to do with the question of

s, in this connection, as 'ideal observers' lacking dissonance. In the envisioned case, S clearly judges his most (judging) to be a consistent extension of his past (dissonance.) Now we could, in principle, arrive at our ideal standpoint, but only if we could know what kind of thing 'T' properly applies. But, since language, we could only come to know what 'T' is of S's responsive practices, for, since S is, exist, what 'T' means just is what S means by 'T' apart from our observations of his practice. But in no case could our judgment of consistency or divergence from S's own. We may, of course, do as we like — but that could not help us to know anything *relevant* about the item when we know the response 'T' from S. There is no way of knowing the specific empirical character of the function of S's responsive consistency. (Cf. #293 — the

, consider the case in which S's two judgmental. This is precisely the conflict between responsive memory sketched above. What is needed is some way a dispute may be referred for adjudication. Now of appeals which remains in our deliberately world itself, the items previously and presently to way, however, in which the world *can* serve this the dispute is one which breaks out only when S is in business with the world. The world acts and it has made himself in consequence with a certain present

responsive inclination and certain ostensible memories. But it is just these which conflict.

There is no way, then, in which S's extension of his practice can fail to be consistent with the world. The only possible locus of inconsistency is synchronic, in the relation between S's present responsive inclinations and his present ostensible memories, and to such inconsistency the world is irrelevant.

The sequence of S's responsive utterings of 'T' thus can fail of consistency neither with itself nor with the world. But there is nothing else in our setting with which it might be consistent or inconsistent. So it cannot fail of consistency at all. Now our second proposal was that the correctness of a responsive using of 'T' consisted in its being a member of a *consistent* diachronic sequence of such usings. But now we see that *any* such diachronic sequence is consistent — or, more precisely, that no distinction between consistent and inconsistent sequences is yet possible. It follows, then, that we do not yet have a distinction between correct and incorrect usings of 'T'. We have not yet, in other words, found the locus of the concept of linguistic correctness.²

What we need to add to our stage-setting, then, is something against which to measure the consistency of S's responsive practice, some way of marking his usings as being or not being idiosyncratic. We need an adjudicatory standard to which the question of the consistency or inconsistency of S's practice could, in principle, be referred. The world is already in the picture, but it is impotent to serve this function. So we have run out of alternatives. It is time to put *us* (or, at least, to put *others*) into the picture as well.

It is the *mutually consistent* responsive practices of our (or, at least, of some) linguistic *community* which supply the requisite object of comparison against which an individual's practice could be measured. *His* diachronic practice may be consistent or inconsistent with *ours* (theirs).

Wittgenstein's discussions of the practice of continuing numerical sequences (#143ff.; #185ff.) are particularly apposite here. Either we can so train a novice that his practice in such matters coheres with ours or we cannot. Here there is no suggestion of an extra-practical reality to which the student's moves correspond or fail to correspond, and any attempt to introduce such a notion is demonstrably idle. For the only possible measure of such a putative extra-practical correspondence would be precisely the attainable consilience of the practices of diverse individuals.

With respect to public responsive language, we quite naturally have the feeling that we are better off. The world, after all, is a *tertium quid*, and we are inclined to suppose that there is some way of appealing to it which can settle questions of diachronic consistency or synchronic correspondence. But this is an illusion. The mutually consistent shared practices of a linguistic community stand collectively to the world precisely in the relation that our linguistically-isolated speaker's diachronic practice did. As the world was not an object of comparison for him, so it is not one for us. We have no access to the world independent of our collective responsive practices. The only fact of the matter is the attainable consonance of our respective individual practices. We may yearn for some further fact — the correspondence of that collective practice with the extra-practical world — but that notion is again idle. Again, the only possible measure of such a putative extra-practical correspondence would be the attainable consonance of our diverse individual responsive practices. The extra-practical world is *implicated*, of course, but as what elicits those responses, not as something against which they may be checked. There is no way of confronting the world with the question of a putative extra-practical correspondence. The ostensible question again arises only when our business with the world is finished. The world is what our responses are responses to, and hence not something we can subsequently compare our responses with.

A threefold comparison may help us appreciate the point. Wittgenstein envisages (#185-#190) a novice, trained to consonance with our practice in developing the series '+2' (= 2, 4, 6, 8, ...) through 1000, who unexpectedly continues by producing '1004', '1008', '1012', and so on. To our objection "But you were to go on beyond 1000 in the same way", he replies "But I am going on in the same way!" .

Now this claim of the novice can be defeated. What is important, however, is that it can be defeated *only* by a recourse to our shared mathematical practices. "That is not what we call 'going on in the same way'." Nothing is served by recapitulating his previous training — it is what has brought him to this point — and there is no sense to be made of the suggestion that we direct his attention to *the numbers themselves*.

Suppose, now, that our linguistic solipsist, initially confronting some item, attempts to found a responsive practice with the resolve "This, and *similar* things (things of the *same kind*), I shall call 'T'." His later conviction that some newly confronted item *is* similar to (the same kind of thing as) those

previously confronted items to which he appeals, for a mathematic novice, is *not* defeasible. For, as with the absence of conflict between his current responses and his current ostensible memories of past confrontations, here for ascriptions of correctness or incorrectness, his testimony because it is not *testimony*. It is not to say.")

In the communal setting, however, we again have the question of defeasibility — and hence for correctness and for the introduction of a novice language-user to our collective practice. "This and *similar* things (things of the *same kind*)" is an innocent later protest, following an idiosyncratic response similar to (the same kind of thing as) the original response. The reply "That is not what we call 'the same kind'" is a protest.

A coherent communal practice of responsive language is an instance of a Wittgensteinian 'form of life'. What is shown is that only in the setting of such a shared practice is the distinction between correct and incorrect linguistic use possible. There is general communal agreement in response to those utterances become descriptive applications of terms. The correct or incorrect usings of terms.

#242: If language is to be a means of communication, there must be agreement not only in definitions (of terms) but also in sound) in judgments.

Surprising as this remark may at first appear, it is an understatement. For it is not merely for communal agreement that judgment (responsive using) is required, but for the language, of performances non-vacuously assessing the applications of words to the world and thus *linguistic*.³

Represent a single responsive utterance of a language on a piece of paper; his diachronic responsive practice is a series of such points. The correctness of the series consist in its synchronic correspondence with the world. *Every* such point represents a vocable *elicited* by the world in further sense in which it may correspond or fail

responsive language, we quite naturally have the
 f. The world, after all, is a *tertium quid*, and we
 there is some way of appealing to it which can
 consistency or synchronic correspondence. But
 usually consistent shared practices of a linguistic
 to the world precisely in the relation that our
 's diachronic practice did. As the world was not
 him, so it is not one for us. We have no access to
 r collective responsive practices. The only fact of
 consonance of our respective individual practices.
 her fact – the correspondence of that collective
 cal world – but that notion is again idle. Again,
 f such a putative extra-practical correspondence
 nsonance of our diverse individual responsive
 d world is *implicated*, of course, but as what
 s something against which they may be checked.
 ting the world with the question of a putative
 ce. The ostensible question again arises only
 world is finished. The world is what our responses
 not something we can subsequently compare our

may help us appreciate the point. Wittgenstein
 vice, trained to consonance with our practice in
 2, 4, 6, 8, ...) through 1000, who unexpectedly
 '4', '1008', '1012', and so on. To our objection
 and 1000 in the same way", he replies "But I *am*

ice can be defeated. What is important, however,
 only by a recourse to our shared mathematical
 we call 'going on in the same way'." Nothing is
 previous training – it is what has brought him to
 sense to be made of the suggestion that we direct
 themselves.

linguistic solipsist, initially confronting some item,
 ive practice with the resolve "This, and *similar*
kind), I shall call 'T.'" His later conviction that
 is similar to (the same kind of thing as) those

previously confronted items to which he applied 'T', unlike that of our
 mathematic novice, is *not* defeasible. For, as we have seen, it expresses *only*
 the absence of conflict between his current responsive inclinations and his
 current ostensible memories of past confrontations. And so there is no scope
 here for ascriptions of correctness or incorrectness. (#386: "I cannot accept
 his testimony because it is not *testimony*. It only tells me what he is *inclined*
 to say.")

In the communal setting, however, we again have conceptual room for
 defeasibility – and hence for correctness and incorrectness. For if we
 introduce a novice language-user to our collective practice with the injunction
 "This and *similar* things (things of the *same kind*) are to be called 'T'.", his
 innocent later protest, following an idiosyncratic application, that the item *is*
 similar to (the same kind of thing as) the original may properly be met with
 the reply "That is not what we call 'the same kind of thing'."

A coherent communal practice of responsive language use is one concrete
 instance of a Wittgensteinian 'form of life'. What the preceding considerations
 show is that only in the setting of such a shared form of life can there *exist* a
 distinction between correct and incorrect linguistic performances. Only if
 there is general communal agreement in responsive utterance behavior do
 those utterances become descriptive applications of language to the world,
 the correct or incorrect usings of terms.

#242: If language is to be a means of communication there must be
 agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may
 sound) in judgments.

Surprising as this remark may at first appear, it turns out, in fact, to be an
 understatement. For it is not merely for communication that agreement in
 judgment (responsive using) is required, but for the very existence of
 language, of performances non-vacuously assessable as correct or incorrect
 applications of words to the world and thus properly characterizable as
linguistic.³

Represent a single responsive utterance of an individual by a point on a
 piece of paper; his diachronic responsive practice by a curve drawn through a
 series of such points. The correctness of the single responsive using cannot
 consist in its synchronic correspondence with the extra-linguistic world, for
every such point represents a vocable *elicited* by the world, and there is no
 further sense in which it may correspond or fail to correspond to the world

which elicits it. Nor can the correctness of such a responsive using consist in its being a manifestation of an individual's consistent responsive practice, for no distinction between consistent and inconsistent practice can be funded for an isolated individual. A smooth curve can be drawn through *any* series of points. What is required is a basis of comparison internal to this conceptual space, yet external to the individual's practice, against which it can be measured for consistency. What must be added to our picture if such a basis is to be provided is a *family of parallel curves*, collectively singling out one (complex) *direction* from among the infinitely many possibilities. And what this represents is exactly the consilient responsive practices (the shared form of life) of a community of language-users.

The applicability of the concept of correctness or incorrectness to a single responsive utterance of an individual presupposes the possibility of such a double embedding, temporally in his diachronic practice and communally in the consonance of that practice with the practices of those with whom he shares a linguistic form of life. What is assessible as correct or incorrect is punctiform, synchronic and individual – a single responsive utterance by an individual at a time. But its *being* so assessible requires its embeddability in a two-dimensional conceptual space, one axis of which is time and the other a linguistic community to which the individual belongs. And in any ascription of correctness the existence of such a conceptual space as a whole is presupposed.

The philosophical consequences issuing from recognition of this conceptual connection can hardly be overestimated. Its implications in the philosophy of mind and for traditional questions of skepticism have already been profound. And it is clear, too, that, taken seriously, Wittgenstein's argumentation makes a shambles of classical correspondence theories of matter-of-factual truth. But the resonances of the point reach much farther.

What holds for speech holds, *mutatis mutandis*, for thought. The argument is exactly parallel. If, apart from his membership in a linguistic community, an individual cannot correctly or incorrectly *call* some confronted item a T, neither, in the absence of such a shared form of life, can he correctly or incorrectly *think* it to be, *believe* it to be, *judge* it to be, or *know* it to be a T. The existence of the appropriate two-dimensional conceptual space, both diachronic and communal, is presupposed in any act's being properly subject to semantic or epistemic appraisal. If there are, then, entities who are speakers, thinkers, and knowers, there must be a community of such entities

sharing, at least, those cognitive aspects of entities. *The existence of persons as rational is inextricable from their existence as social beings*.

This, I think, is the deepest and most important insight of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. Its Kantian flavor is less than the essential substructure of a concept of rational nature to his membership in the Kingdom of Ends.

We can look at the *Philosophical Investigations* as a fundamentally Kantian insight, but one which Kant himself never fully grasped. For while Kant realizes and makes fully explicit – the indispensable diachronic embedding – of the subject to rational appraisal as correct or incorrect, this dimension eludes him. (Peirce, on the other hand, grasps the collectivity of rational enterprises – but he still fails to see, in fact, that the *Philosophical Investigations* is fundamentally Kantian in eyes, but that is an exegetical thesis, a point which, on other occasion. Nevertheless, it should not surprise us that, for central to the *Investigations* is Wittgenstein's rejection of positivism, and positivism, we may recall, is the "symbolic logic".

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NOTES

¹ The reader should resist the temptation to import here the concepts of "ocular irradiation patterns", "dispositions to assent to a negative stimulus meaning". By 'responsive', I mean not 'responsive to a stimulus'. On such occasions, what the speaker confronts is a stimulus, and any adequate explanatory account of his saying what he says is among other things – what he was encountering at the time. I am perfectly prepared to admit considerations of set and context, but that the objects of encounter can adequately be described in a quasi-neurophysiological idiom. No adequate account of the account can be given in purely Pavlovian or Skinnerian terms. In fact, the account of my present story.

² It may be helpful to think of my project in this way: I am concerned with *semantic facts*: S correctly responsively uses 'T', S does not. This divides S's responsive utterances of 'T' into two groups: the *semantic* division to which this semantic division

correctness of such a responsive using consist in an individual's consistent responsive practice, for consistent and inconsistent practice can be funded for smooth curve can be drawn through *any* series of basis of comparison internal to this conceptual individual's practice, against which it can be that must be added to our picture if such a basis is of *parallel curves*, collectively singling out one among the infinitely many possibilities. And what consistent responsive practices (the shared form language-users.

concept of correctness or incorrectness to a single individual presupposes the possibility of such a ally in his diachronic practice and communally in ctice with the practices of those with whom he life. What is assessible as correct or incorrect is individual — a single responsive utterance by an *being* so assessible requires its embeddability in a space, one axis of which is time and the other hich the individual belongs. And in any ascription of such a conceptual space as a whole is presup-

sequences issuing from recognition of this hardly be overestimated. Its implications in the traditional questions of skepticism have already clear, too, that, taken seriously, Wittgenstein's rambles of classical correspondence theories of the resonances of the point reach much farther. lds, *mutatis mutandis*, for thought. The argument from his membership in a linguistic community, tly or incorrectly *call* some confronted item a T, such a shared form of life, can he correctly or *believe* it to be, *judge* it to be, or *know* it to be a T. opriate two-dimensional conceptual space, both is presupposed in any act's being properly subject appraisal. If there are, then, entities who are wers, there must be a community of such entities

sharing, at least, those cognitive aspects of their lives. And we are such entities. *The existence of persons as rational beings is thus conceptually inextricable from their existence as social beings.*

This, I think, is the deepest and most far-reaching resonance of the *Philosophical Investigations*. Its Kantian flavor is inescapable. It is nothing less than the essential substructure of a conceptual bridge leading from man's rational nature to his membership in the Kingdom of Ends.

We can look at the *Philosophical Investigations*, then, as the expression of a fundamentally Kantian insight, but one which goes importantly beyond Kant. For while Kant realizes and makes fully articulate the temporal aspect — the indispensable diachronic embedding — of objective judgment, judgment subject to rational appraisal as correct or incorrect, its essential communal dimension eludes him. (Peirce, on the other hand, recognizes the necessary collectivity of rational enterprises — but he shortchanges time.) I think, in fact, that the *Philosophical Investigations* is best read as a whole through Kantian eyes, but that *is* an exegetical thesis, and so to be pursued on some other occasion. Nevertheless, it should not surprise us too much if it is right. For central to the *Investigations* is Wittgenstein's repudiation of Tractarian positivism, and positivism, we may recall, is nothing but "Hume plus symbolic logic".

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NOTES

¹ The reader should resist the temptation to import here such Quinean higher arcana as "ocular irradiation patterns", "dispositions to assent and dissent", and "affirmative and negative stimulus meaning". By 'responsive', I mean nothing more mysterious than this: On such occasions, what the speaker confronts is causally implicated in what he says, and any adequate explanatory account of his saying what he does must thus mention — among other things — what he was encountering at the time. Unlike Quine, however, I am perfectly prepared to admit considerations of set as well as setting, nor do I believe that the objects of encounter can adequately be described, or should be, in a sterilized quasi-neurophysiological idiom. No adequate account of human linguistic competences can be given in purely Pavlovian or Skinnerian terms. Indeed, that this is so is a large part of my present story.

² It may be helpful to think of my project in this way: The well-foundedness of the pair of *semantic* facts: S correctly responsively uses 'T', S incorrectly responsively uses 'T' divides S's responsive utterances of 'T' into two groups. What I have been searching for is the *non-semantic* division to which this semantic division corresponds. So we need an

objective empirical difference between those utterances which are (semantically) correct usings and those which are not. The first proposal – synchronic correspondence – attempted to locate that difference in the relation between S's utterance of 'T' and the confronted item. But all responsive utterances are related to the items which evoke them in the *same* way – as elicited by those items and responses to them. The second proposal – diachronic consistency – attempted to ground a division of responsive utterances parasitically on a division of *sequences* of such utterances. But the division of sequences of responsive utterances into consistent and inconsistent sequences is a *semantic* division, and so we again need an objective empirical, non-semantic, difference between those sequences which are (semantically) consistent sequences and those which are not. The most recent point has been that all *sequences* of responsive utterances are related to the sequences of items which evoke them in the *same* way as well. So the picture I have so far sketched does not yet contain enough empirical resources to impose a *non-arbitrary* non-semantic division on S's responsive utterances. We need to enrich it further.

³ That is to say, such agreement in practice is a *necessary* condition of the existence of language, of 'T's being a *term* which admits of correct and incorrect usings. I here advance no hypotheses concerning *sufficient* conditions, except that pre-language probably grades off into language in such a way that no sufficient conditions of the existence of language *can* be formulated.

POSSIBILITY, EXISTENCE
AN ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

(Received 18 August, 1976)

In 'Why Is There Something and Not Nothing?' (177–181), Fred Sommers presents an argument for the thesis "something is possible, something is actual" (177) by way of *reductio ad absurdum* from three assumptions, since the definition is not wholly unproblematic. The first is an assumption on a par with the other three.

Sommers' three assumptions are

- (A1) "Something is possible" (177).
- (A2) "Whatever is not a categorially possible thing" (*ibid.*).

and

- (A3) There is nothing.

And, taking $\lceil D \rceil$ to abbreviate a monadic genitive, contrary, Sommers' fourth assumption, which is categorical possibility, is

- (A4) "*D*-things are categorially impossible; nothing that is *D* and nothing that is not *D*."

Sommers argues that these four, taken together, (A3) is the most natural premise to reject, and his argument as showing that from the assumption (A1) together with the unproblematic (A2) and (A4), (A3), that is, that something exists. Intuitively, one may view Sommers' argument as going directly from the denial of (A3): If *D*-things are possible [(A1)], they are categorially possible; but by (A4), *D*-things are