Frege and Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy

Marie McGinn
University of York, United Kingdom

Abstract   Interpreters have tended to focus on the relation between Frege and the early Wittgenstein, but Frege also posed problems for the later Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein's concept of a language-game was inspired by Hilbert's alleged formalism, a view criticised by Frege, and it points to an important dialogue that Wittgenstein engages in with Frege. Wittgenstein expresses formalist views and invokes Frege's critique of formalism at the beginning of the *Big Typescript* and *The Blue Book*. He engages more deeply with the problems posed by Frege and formalism in the remarks collected in *Philosophical Grammar*, where the issues raised set the agenda for the first §§ 242 of the *Philosophical Investigations*. The radical transformation in our understanding of meaning and understanding that takes place enables Wittgenstein to escape the problems which P.T. Geach believes were posed for him by Frege's paper "Thought", concerning first-person thoughts about sensations.

Keywords   Wittgenstein. Frege. Formalism. Meaning. Language-games.

Summary   I. Introduction: Wittgenstein and Frege's "Thought" – II. Kuusela on the Continuities between Later Wittgenstein and Russell and Frege: Language-Games as a Method of Logic – III. Hacker on Later Wittgenstein and Frege on Meaning: The "Disastrous Effect the Preoccupation with the 'Sense' of a Proposition… Has Had" – IV. Wittgenstein's Response to Frege's Attack on the Formalists: Getting Rid of Intermediaries – V. The Paradoxes of PI § 95 and PI § 201: Recognising the Patterns in our Life with Language.

> Something in itself not perceptible by sense, the
> thought, is presented to the reader – and I must
> be content with that – wrapped up in a perceptible
> linguistic form.
> (Frege 1997, 334 fn. D)

> Sense is not the soul of a proposition. So far as
> we are interested in it, it must be completely
> measurable, must disclose itself completely in
> signs.
> (BT, 210)

> I am compelled to occupy myself with language,
> although it is not my proper concern here.
> (Frege 1997, 334 fn. D)

> Everything is carried out *in language*.
> (BT, 283, 286)

1 Introduction: Wittgenstein and Frege's "Thought"[1]

It is hard to escape a sense of dialogue in these paired remarks. Wittgenstein appears, at least in part, to be responding to ideas expressed by Frege. Wittgenstein famously lists Frege as one of the thinkers who influenced him (CV, 16), although it is clearly a matter of interpretation how this influence is to be understood. Interpreters have tended to focus on the relation between Frege and the early Wittgenstein, but the appearance of dialogue above suggests that Frege posed problems that also stimulated the thought of the later Wittgenstein.

In her paper on the Frege-Wittgenstein correspondence, Juliet Floyd records an anecdote related by P.T. Geach concerning Wittgenstein's estimate of "Der Gedanke" ("Thought"), a copy of which he received from Frege when he returned to Vienna at the end of the war, in 1919. Wittgenstein, Geach reported, considered the paper an inferior work – the attack on idealism a particular focus for his criticism – and he persuaded Geach and Max Black not to include it in their collection of translations of Frege's works. However, Geach went on to say that "in spite of Wittgenstein's unfavourable view of 'Der Gedanke', his later thought may have been influenced by it" (Floyd 2011, 99). Floyd quotes Geach's description of one of the influences he believes Frege's paper had:

> Frege affirms (1) that any thought is by its nature communicable,
> (2) that thoughts about private sensations and sense-qualities and

---

about the Cartesian *I* are by their nature incommunicable. It is an immediate consequence that there can be no such thoughts. Frege never drew this conclusion, of course [...] Wittgenstein was to draw it. (Floyd 2011, 102)

Here Geach sees Frege as posing a problem for Wittgenstein: to clarify how our psychological concepts, and the first-person thoughts in general, function, in such a way that the following pictures no longer tempt us:

[I]t [is] necessary to recognise an inner world distinct from the outer world, a world of sense impressions, of creations of his imagination, of sensations, of feelings and moods, a world of inclinations, wishes and decisions. (Frege 1997, 334)

Now everyone is presented to himself in a special and primitive way, in which he is presented to no one else... And only [he] himself can grasp thoughts specified in this way. (Frege 1997, 333)

The question is whether other elements in Frege's way of thinking about thought and language had to shift before Wittgenstein could arrive at the destination Geach identifies for him. And if so, what is the nature of the shift that takes place? Is it, as Peter Hacker suggests, that Wittgenstein's later philosophy "is propounded to a very large extent in opposition to Frege's. They can no more be mixed than oil and water" (Hacker 2001, 219)? Or should the dialogue between the two philosophers be understood in a less oppositional, more constructive way? In *Wittgenstein on Logic as the Method of Philosophy*, Oskari Kuusela argues for a much more positive view of the relationship between Frege and the later Wittgenstein. These are the questions I want to look at in this paper.

2 Kuusela on the Continuities between Later Wittgenstein and Russell and Frege: Language-Games as a Method of Logic

According to Kuusela, the break with his early philosophy begins with Wittgenstein's disappointment with the limited capacity for calculus-based approaches to the task of logical clarification to capture the complex and fluctuating uses of the expressions of natural language. He came to see that the major obstacle to progress in philosophy is the assumption, shared by Frege, Russell and the early Wittgenstein, that behind the messy, surface phenomena of natural language there is an ideal, abstract system of propositions. It is this conception that allows philosophers to conceive of logic as the laws

of thought, as what is common, or essential, to everything that can be called thought or language. The idea of logic as a precise calculus or system of rules and the conception of propositions as ideal entities of which linguistic expressions are only the impure manifestation go together. This is the picture Frege expresses in "Thought"; it is how Kuusela understands Wittgenstein's shift away from it that we are interested in.

The root of the problem, according to Kuusela, lies in the idea that logic requires us to speak of language in a purified or idealised sense. We are driven to this by the conflict between logic's aspiration for exactness and the actual vagueness of everyday language: everyday language is not, on its surface, a calculus operated according to precise rules. Since everyday language does not appear to meet the ideal, it must be met at an underlying level: we are led to reify the ideal. This constitutes a fundamental misunderstanding of the role of the ideal. And for Kuusela it follows that to understand the shift Wittgenstein makes means understanding how the role of the ideal is reconceptualised.

The shift, as Kuusela understands it, is fundamentally a methodological one. The ideal calculi which logicians construct with the aim of clarifying how expressions function are no longer to be considered as something with which reality must correspond. There is no single system of propositions and one cannot assume that the same logical laws apply irrespective of the objects of thought. However, we can treat these precise calculi as objects of comparison, which may be useful for shedding light on a particular aspect of how an expression of natural language functions, with the aim of clearing up particular misunderstandings. The ultimate aim is to clear away misunderstandings, by describing aspects of the complex, fluid, dynamic uses of linguistic expressions. But there should be no expectation that these descriptions will cover all the varied cases in which we use an expression, or that they are in any way definitive. Putting the ideal in its proper place means we can acknowledge without falsification the complexity and diversity of the uses of the expressions of everyday language: our ideal descriptions are merely approximate descriptions of reality, which we construct for a particular purpose.

The break with Frege is not, on this understanding, an outright rejection of his conception of logic, but a repositioning of it. This is how Kuusela understands Wittgenstein's idea that "[t]he *preconception* of [the] crystalline purity [of logic] can only be removed by turning our whole enquiry around" (PI, § 108). It means putting the ideal in its proper place, as an object of comparison, and at the same time reorientating our attention towards the actual use of expressions within our everyday lives: towards "the spatial and temporal phenomenon of language" (PI, § 108). However, it is crucial that Wittgenstein's philosophical aims remain unchanged: "[T]he inquiry must be

turned around, but on the pivot of our real need" (PI, §108), namely, the logical clarification of the functioning of expressions as a means to resolve philosophical problems. It is within the context of this understanding of important continuities between Frege, Russell and the early Wittgenstein that Kuusela understands Wittgenstein's introduction of the idea of language-games. Kuusela sees the concept of a language-game primarily as a method for describing the use of expressions in a way which extends the capacity of calculus-based methods and overcomes their limitations.

Kuusela sees Wittgenstein's development of the method of language-games as amounting to a Kuhnian paradigm-shift, in the sense that, while it can handle the cases that calculus-based methods (which it absorbs as a special case) can handle, it vastly extends the possibilities for describing the uses of the expressions of natural language. At the heart of the method is the idea that it is in the use of expressions as it is interwoven with human activities that their specific roles are revealed. The method of language-games – a method for describing the scene of language-use – is devised as a means for studying the functioning of expressions within the context of the activities of the life into which their use is interwoven. If in logic we are trying to clarify the use or logical function of words, and their use is embedded in our life, then it is our life with words and the different circumstances of their use that reveals their function, and which we need to describe.

This indicates the way in which Wittgenstein's method is connected with a particular conception of language. Wittgenstein has clearly rejected the picture of language as a mental phenomenon hidden away in our minds. When the investigation of language takes the form of an investigation into how human beings operate with signs within their everyday, active lives, then we are regarding language in a particular way, as constituted by a form of life in which speakers employ expressions in ways that are governed by certain rules. Kuusela raises the question whether this means that Wittgenstein's method is based on a conception of the nature of language and whether this is compatible with his claim that he is not putting forward any philosophical theses. Kuusela argues that, properly understood, Wittgenstein

> is not committed to such theses […] the method of language-games eschews commitment to philosophical theses about language, including the thesis of language use as embedded in actions or language as a form of life. (Kuusela 2019, 169)

Kuusela argues that Wittgenstein's method only depends upon "*comparing* language with a game according to rules, or regarding it as or describing [it] in the form of such a game" (Kuusela 2019, 170).

Kuusela's emphasis here is on the idea that the use of a word may be something constantly fluctuating, yet for purposes of clarification, and for a specific purpose, we may find it useful to envisage its use as a game with fixed rules. We can capture an aspect of its use by means of an ideal use regulated by a definite rule which we set alongside the actual, fluctuating use. His point is that there is "no claim that such a description captures language use in all its actual complexity" (Kuusela 2019, 171) and hence, by implication, no claim that language *is in its nature* a language-game played according to precise rules. Kuusela's focus here is solely on the issue of whether the use of an expression is essentially governed by rules that can be made fully perspicuous. He wishes to acquit Wittgenstein of dogmatism in this respect and in that he is surely entirely correct. However, the foundational conception of logic was dependent on a conception of propositions which conceived of the sense of a proposition as something that was instantaneously grasped by the mind. This is the position Frege expresses in "Thought":

> The grasp of a thought presupposes someone who grasps it, who thinks. He is the owner of the thinking, not of the thought. Although the thought does not belong with the contents of the thinker's consciousness, there must be something in his consciousness that is aimed at the thought. (Frege 1997, 342)

Kuusela has said very little about the nature of Wittgenstein's shift away from this position, although the shift to a method that is open to the dynamic and fluctuating nature of the use of the expressions of natural language has also, clearly, made a shift away from that conception of sense.

The claim that "nothing is hidden" (PI, § 435), that "everything lies open to view" (PI, § 126), that we are concerned entirely with "the spatial and temporal phenomenon of language" (PI, § 108), essentially amounts to the claim that we are concerned with *signs* and their use. This marks a major shift away from Russell, Frege and the early Wittgenstein, insofar as it abandons the idea of the instantaneously meaningful symbol, and accepts that all there is are signs whose use is extended in time. Kuusela notes that Wittgenstein's concept of a language-game was inspired by Hilbert's alleged formalism – the idea that syntax can be conceived as a system of rules for a game – a view criticised by Frege. Clearly, this might be seen as an indication of another important dialogue going on between Frege and the later Wittgenstein. Here the question is not merely whether the rules governing the expressions of natural language are determinate and can be made fully perspicuous, but whether logic can be preserved without the concept of meanings, understood as something distinct from the sign and graspable by the mind in an instant. Kuusela does not directly address

the issue of signs and their use versus meanings as a focus for understanding the transformation from the early to the later philosophy. Yet it is one of the questions that preoccupies Wittgenstein in the first 242 paragraphs of the *Philosophical Investigations* and it is central, I should argue, to the shift away from the ideas of Frege in "Thought".

3 Hacker on Later Wittgenstein and Frege on Meaning: The "Disastrous Effect the Preoccupation with the 'Sense' of a Proposition… Has Had"

Peter Hacker sees Wittgenstein's revisionary thoughts concerning the concepts of thinking, meaning something and understanding as the main pivot of the transformation of his philosophy in the early 1930s. He writes:

> It is no coincidence that the opening chapters of the *Big Typescript* are concerned with the investigation of understanding, meaning, and explanation, for it is this that signals the transformation in Wittgenstein's conception of language and representation. (Hacker 2001, 229)

However, Hacker does not focus on Wittgenstein's engagement with Frege's critique of formalism, but sees the dispute between the two conceptions of sense as one that Wittgenstein settles by appeal to the tribunal of ordinary language:

> For the thought that a speaker might know or understand what an expression that he uses correctly means, but be altogether incapable of saying what he means by it, is incoherent. (Hacker 2001, 229)

With this, and a series of other observations about what it makes sense to say, ordinary usage is taken to settle the matter:

> The meanings of words are not entities correlated with the words by 'a method of projection' (as had been argued in the *Tractatus*) or by the abstract machinery of 'senses' (modes of presentation of a meaning – as Frege had argued). To know what a word means is not to 'grasp' an abstract entity, a sense, which is associated with the word, nor to know what entity the word stands for, but rather to know its use. The meaning of an expression is best conceived as its use – that is, the manner in which it is to be, and normally is, used. (Hacker 2001, 229)

Wittgenstein invokes Frege's critique of formalism in the opening paragraphs of both the *Big Typescript* and *The Blue Book*, both of which

originated at about the same time, in 1933-34. In the *Big Typescript*, the reference to Frege is prefaced by a remark in which Wittgenstein appears to express his commitment to a version of formalism:

> It can also be put this way: If one always expresses oneself in a system of language and so uses only propositions of this system to explain what a proposition means, then in the end meaning drops out of language completely, and thus out of consideration; what remains is language, the only thing we can consider. (BT, 3)

He then goes on to make his fundamental objection to Frege's attack on formalism:

> When Frege argues against a formal conception of arithmetic he is saying, as it were: These pedantic explanations of symbols are idle if we understand the symbols. And understanding is like seeing a picture from which all the rules follow (and by means of which they become understandable). But Frege doesn't see that this picture is in turn nothing but a sign, or a calculus, that explains the written calculus to us. (BT, 3)

He makes the same point against Frege in the opening pages of *The Blue Book*:

> Frege ridiculed the formalist conception of mathematics by saying that the formalists confused the unimportant thing, the sign, with the important thing, the meaning. Surely, one wishes to say, mathematics does not treat of dashes on a bit of paper. Frege's idea could be expressed thus: the propositions of mathematics, if they were just complexes of dashes, would be dead and utterly uninteresting, whereas they obviously have a kind of life. And the same, of course, could be said of any proposition: Without a sense, or without the thought, a proposition would be an utterly dead and trivial thing. And further it seems clear that no adding of inorganic signs can make the proposition live. And the conclusion which one draws from this is that what must be added to the dead signs in order to make a live proposition is something immaterial, with properties different from all mere signs.
>
> [O]ne is tempted to imagine that which gives the sentence life as something in an occult sphere, accompanying the sentence. But whatever accompanied it would just be another sign. (BB, 4-5)

Despite the sureness of his response to Frege, there is a clear sense that Frege's belief that the domain of language is not on its own enough to understand the nature of the proposition posed a problem for Wittgenstein, a problem about which he was led to think very

deeply. It is the issue that sets the agenda for many of the first 242 paragraphs of the *Philosophical Investigations*, where Wittgenstein's engagement with it is the occasion for a transformation in our understanding of the nature of meaning and understanding that is more radical than Hacker can allow. And it is one in which the idea that "the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life" (PI, § 23) serves as part of a picture that is intended to guide us from error to truth. The nature of Wittgenstein's engagement with Frege here is complex. For while he wants us to "appreciate what a disastrous effect the preoccupation with the 'sense' of a proposition, with the 'thought' that it expresses, has had" (BT, 210), what he ultimately wants to show is that "Frege's basic idea in his theory of sense and meaning [is]: that the *meaning* of a proposition, in Frege's sense, is its *use*" (BT, 210). The deep engagement with Frege is, in the end, intended to bring about a solution to the problem Frege posed – "What makes a sign a proposition?" – and in such a way that Frege himself would have recognised it as a solution.

The extent of Wittgenstein's engagement with Frege is very clear in the *Big Typescript*. He raises the issue of our use of signs – to give orders, answer questions, etc. – and the question of whether something needs to be added to them in order for the mere signs to become *a command*, or *an answer*, again and again. He is constantly working against the "often held view", expressed in the quotation from "Thought" at the beginning of this paper

> that one can show one's understanding only incompletely, as it were. That one can only point to it from afar, as it were, can get closer to it, but can never grab it with one's hand. And that finally what matters must always remain unsaid. (BT,10)

It is this inexpressible thought, we are tempted to think, that fills the gap between an order and its execution, between a wish and its fulfilment. And against this in the dialectic, Wittgenstein over and over again makes the case for his more formalist approach:

> [L]et's not talk about "meaning something" as an indefinite process that we don't know very well, but about the (actual), "practical" use of the word, about the actions we carry out with it. (BT, 157)

Later he acknowledges that his approach is exactly the one that Frege ruled out:

> Here I am touching on the way of explaining signs that Frege ridiculed so much. For one could explain the words "knight", "bishop", etc by citing the rules that apply to these pieces. (BT, 206)

4 Wittgenstein's Response to Frege's Attack on the Formalists: Getting Rid of Intermediaries

The *Philosophical Grammar*, based on manuscripts that were also written in the early 1930s, also begins by invoking Frege's attack on the formalist conception of arithmetic, and Wittgenstein gives the same objection to it: "Frege does not seem to see that such a picture would itself be another sign, or a calculus to explain the written one to us" (PG, 40). And again, the same dialectic ensues, in which Wittgenstein repeatedly affirms the formalist picture:

> I want to say the place of a word in grammar is its meaning.
>
> But I might also say: the meaning of a word is what the explanation of its meaning explains.
>
> The use of a word in the language is its meaning.
>
> The meaning is the role of the word in the calculus. (PG, 59-60)

But then he raises a question:

> But it might be asked: Do I *understand* the word just by describing its application? Do I understand its point? Haven't I deluded myself about something important?
>
> At present, say, I know only how men use this word. But it might be a game, or a form of etiquette. I don't know why they behave in this way, how *language* meshes with their life.
>
> Is meaning then really only the use of a word? Isn't it the way this use meshes with our life?
>
> But isn't its use a part of our life? (PG, 65)

I think that we should see this as Wittgenstein being pushed, through his engagement with the problem posed by Frege's attack on formalism, to notice something about what is involved in our grasp of the use of the expressions of natural language, which leads him to a much deeper understanding of what it is that he is describing. It dramatically shifts the focus away from an impersonal conception of language as a calculus, which can be described by means of a rule for the use of a word, and acknowledges the central importance of the role of the speaker as an agent, whose active participation in a life with language is essential to our understanding of what language is. Wittgenstein immediately goes on to make the point explicit:

> Do I understand the word "fine" when I know how and on what occasions people use it? Is that enough to enable me to use it myself? I mean, so to say, use it with conviction.
>
> Wouldn't it be possible for me to know the use of the word and yet follow it without understanding? (As, in a sense, we follow the singing of birds). So isn't it something else that constitutes understanding – the feeling "in one's breast", the living experience of the expressions? – They must mesh with *my own* life.
>
> Well, language does connect with my own life. And what is called "language" is something made up of heterogeneous elements and the way it meshes with life is infinitely various. (PG, 65-6)

It is important that we should not see this as an attempt on Wittgenstein's part to *explain* what meaning consists in. He is careful to say in a remark that follows closely on the ones I have just quoted that he is "only *describing* language, not *explaining* anything" (PG, 66). There is a danger, in placing the emphasis on the speaker as agent and on our life with language, that it could appear that Wittgenstein is claiming that it is the human agent who uses language who breathes life into the words he utters: "[A]s if one must be doing the meaning of it oneself in order to understand it as meaning", with the result that one would no longer be

> considering it as a phenomenon or fact but as something intentional which has a direction given to it. [And] what this direction is we do not know; it is absent from the phenomenon as such. (PG, 143)

This is a view fundamentally at odds with the idea that "nothing is hidden" (PI, I, § 435), "everything lies open to view" (PI, § 126), and it is not one that Wittgenstein intends to embrace. Our being alive is not used to explain what gives life to language; the concepts of living and the capacity to use language are on the same level; the capacity to use language is one of the criteria of being a living thing. However, these issues lead him into a much deeper engagement with the problem posed by Frege's attack on the formalists and a much more expansive treatment of the dialectic between the opposing views: the question of whether what comes before my mind when I hear and understand a word is the meaning of the word or just the word itself. It leads him to develop an increasingly naturalistic approach to the description of our linguistic practices, as the significance of viewing our practices from *within* is made clear.

Wittgenstein had responded to Frege's attack on formalism by pointing out that anything added to a sign would be just another sign. And he suggested that the way out of the difficulty is

to recognise that the sense of a proposition – what gives life to a sign – is its use in a calculus. But now he observes a difficulty with his own solution:

> I imagine the expression of a wish as the act of wishing, the problem appears solved, because the system of language seems to provide me with a medium in which the proposition is no longer dead.
>
> But now someone will say: even if the *expression* of the wish is the wish, still the whole language isn't present during this expression, yet surely the wish is!
>
> So how does the language help? (PG, 149)

Once again, we may feel forced into thinking of the wish as a shadow of its fulfilment, which will admit of no interpretation. The use is something extended in time, yet the wish is surely all there at the moment I have it. Once again, we will be faced with the question of how a wish can prefigure its fulfilment. For whatever is before my mind, can it not be interpreted in many different ways? But then how can I know what it is that I wish?

Wittgenstein responds to these worries as follows:

> I said that it is the *system* of language that makes the sentence a thought and makes it a thought *for us*.
>
> That doesn't mean that it is while we are using a sentence that the system of language makes it into a thought for us, because the system isn't present then and there isn't any need for anything to make the sentence alive for us, since the question of being alive doesn't arise. (PG, 153)

The reason that it does not arise is that the language we are investigating is *my* language, the language I understand and within which I am at home. It is not that in using language I breathe life into dead signs, but in mastering the techniques for employing the expressions of my language, in the way this use meshes with my life in infinitely various ways, those signs are alive for me:

> But if we ask: "[W]hy doesn't a sentence strike us as isolated and dead when we are reflecting on its essence, its sense, the thought etc" it can be said that we are continuing to move in the system of language. (PG, 153)

What becomes clear is that Wittgenstein finds himself drawn more deeply into a dialogue with Frege. What removes the temptation to

look for intermediaries between a sign and its application – for something which cannot be interpreted – is our natural way of responding to the expressions of our language:

> If I see the thought symbol "from outside", I become conscious that it *could* be interpreted thus or thus; if it is a step in the course of my thoughts, then it is a stopping-place that is natural to me and its further interpretability does not occupy (or trouble) me. (PG, 147)

His dynamic solution to the problem of the sense of a proposition that Frege had posed prompts him to reflect, not only on the way in which the different functions of expressions are revealed in their use within our everyday lives, but on how to describe what goes on when I use the expressions of my language and understand them. Can he show, as it were to Frege's satisfaction, that understanding can be understood without recourse to meanings? That turns out to be a question requiring a more protracted treatment than perhaps it seemed at first sight.

5 The Paradoxes of PI § 95 and PI § 201: Recognising the Patterns in our Life with Language

When, in *The Blue Book*, Wittgenstein describes, as "a simple case of operating with words", the case in which "I give someone the order: '[F]etch me six apples from the grocer'", he uses it to present ways of using signs which are simpler than ours. Here, he suggests, "[w]e see activities, reactions, which are clear-cut and transparent", but which we recognise are "not separated by a break from our more complicated ones" (BB, 16-17). This is the aspect of Wittgenstein's method of language-games that Kuusela focuses on. However, when the example appears in § 1 of the *Philosophical Investigations*, a further thought has been added:

> "But how does he know where and how he is to look up the word 'red' and what he is to do with the word 'five'?" – Well, I assume that he *acts* as I have described. Explanations come to an end somewhere, – But what about the meaning of the word "five"? – No such thing was in question here, only how the word "five" is used. (PI, § 1)

It is not only that the way a speaker operates with a sign makes clear what he means by it – whether, for example, he means a colour, a shape, or a number, by a sign he ostensively defines – but that, in the end, a speaker *acts* without guidance from anything we might call the *meaning* of the sign in applying the expressions of his language

in the way he has learned to use them. It is this idea that Wittgenstein returns to in PI, § 138, which marks the beginning of a discussion that culminates in the remarks on the paradox of interpretation in PI, I, § 201 ff. What now seems clear is that the discussion can be seen as having its roots, at least in part, in Wittgenstein's response to Frege's attack on the formalists.

We should see the paradox of both PI, § 95 and PI, § 201 as something Wittgenstein evolves as a way of demonstrating something he has long been committed to: that anything added to a sign is just another sign. The idea of an intermediary between a sign and its application, which settles what counts as a correct application of it – either a shadow (a rule of projection, Frege's sense of a proposition) or an interpretation – is an illusion. As he said in his original objection to Frege's view: any addition "would itself be another sign, or a calculus to explain the written one to us" (PG, 40). The aim of his dynamic conception of meaning was to put an end to temptation to think of meaning as occurring in a peculiar medium, independent of the act of expressing our thoughts. The point of PI, § 1 is that "everything lies open to view" (§ 126) in how the speaker operates with signs. However, PI, § 138 appears to acknowledge that the pressure to introduce intermediaries is not easily removed. The dynamic conception of meaning can seem to exert a pressure of its own to introduce intermediaries and Wittgenstein has to do more work to show, on the one hand, that that idea is an illusion, and on the other, that everything we need to understand language and linguistic mastery lies open to view in how speakers operate with words in the context of their everyday lives.

In the remarks which follow PI, § 138, Wittgenstein uses his interlocutor to pose a series of challenges to his dynamic conception of meaning. How can I know that I mean one series rather than another? How can I know that I have understood the principle of a series when I say, "Now I understand"? How can I say that I meant an order to develop a series in a particular way at the time I gave it? How do I know what I am to do at *this* point, if whatever I do can, on some interpretation, be made compatible with the rule? How am I able to follow a rule if the rule itself does not tell me which way I am to go? What is my justification for my applying a rule in the way that I do? Does his dynamic conception of meaning mean that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?

Wittgenstein's response to all these questions is to describe aspects of our life with signs in a naturalistic manner. We saw him introduce a performative element into his conception of language in PI, § 1: "I assume he *acts* as I have described". The challenges the interlocutor makes to his dynamic conception of meaning provide the occasion for Wittgenstein to explore this performative aspect more fully. In his investigation of "Now I understand", "Now I can go on", Wittgenstein

does not give anything that could be considered even a partial defini-
tion of these words. He compares their use with a "signal" (PI, § 180),
"an instinctive sound, a glad start" (PI, § 323), but clearly does not in-
tend to claim that the words, even on a particular occasion, *mean* a
signal, an instinctive sound or a glad start. The words are, rather, to
be *seen as* a sign, an instinctive sound or a glad start: expressive of
the speaker's confidence that he will go on correctly, if the occasion
arises. It is a description given from within our practice, from the per-
spective of a practioner, and it depends on the person reading it also
being a practioner and recognising the description as apt. It is very
far from a calculus-based method: there is an investigation which is
intended to elucidate how these words are used, but it depends on the
evocation in the reader of one's own life with signs – a way of operat-
ing with them – that is found to be recognisable.

Whether the words "Now I understand" are justified or used cor-
rectly on a particular occasion is another question. Here Wittgenstein
points to the role of the *context* – or the *circumstances* – in which a
speaker says these words, in determining whether they are correctly
used. The tacit conventions by which we judge whether what a speak-
er claims is correct are immensely complex, touching on the speak-
er's past history and training, his established abilities, our confidence
in his capacities, and so on. Our third-person criteria are complex
and involved, but what forms the background to their employment is
an existing linguistic practice and a speaker's manifest possession
of abilities to participate in it. Wittgenstein overcomes the idea that
"Now I understand" must describe a mental state that makes its ap-
pearance in an instant by showing *a pattern in our use of words* when
we speak of coming to understand. Recognising the pattern turns, on
the one hand, on seeing the way in which our employment of expres-
sions displays the first-person/third-person asymmetry that is dis-
tinctive of agency, and on the other, on seeing the way in which our
criteria are responsive to what is revealed over time, to the circum-
stances in which things are said and done. This alternative concep-
tion is not merely being made the methodological basis for a novel
model for how to describe the use of the expressions of natural lan-
guage, it is Wittgenstein's working out of a modified version of for-
malism that meets the objections of his interlocutor.

One of the central questions of the remarks on rule-following is
the one we saw anticipated in *Philosophical Grammar*:

> But that is just what is remarkable about *intention*, about the men-
> tal process, that the existence of a custom, of a technique, is not
> necessary to it [...].

> But isn't chess defined by its rules? And how are these rules pre-
> sent in the mind of someone who intends to play chess? (PI, § 205)

And again, Wittgenstein uses his naturalistic method to get us to see that it is not a question of what is "present in the mind". As he says at PI, § 199:

> To understand a sentence means to understand a language. To understand a language means to have mastered a technique.

We come back to the idea of a certain pattern in the life of a speaker, understood as an autonomous agent possessing a manifest ability to participate in a practice which provides the context for what he says and does. What is in question here is that the words "I want to play chess", "I meant he should say '1002' after '1000'", are spoken by a speaker who has mastered certain techniques, in the context of a practice which he points to if he wants to specify which game he intends to play, which rule he meant by 'add 2'. The practice depends upon agents' acquiring the ability to act confidently and independently and autonomously – without further guidance – in ways that agree. We resist Frege's temptation to think that ordinary signs need supplementing with super-signs which cannot be interpreted, by recognising ourselves as active participants in a linguistic community in which we are bound together in agreed, regular, stable and established ways of acting with signs that constitute our "form of life" (PI, § 241).

What Wittgenstein has tried to make clear is that the formalist is right: it is not anything that accompanies an act of following a rule that makes it an event that we can, for example, describe as a move in chess, adding 57 and 68, or developing the series +2. It just is a fact about us that, after a certain sort of training, we do for the most part go on independently in a way that sustains our practices. We may, in certain circumstances, give justifications for how we apply a particular rule, but in the end, as Wittgenstein observed in PI, I, § 1, "[e]xplanations come to an end". We come back to the actions of an autonomous agent who applies the techniques he has been trained to use, without guidance, in ways which count as "following the rule".

This shift in how we see language and linguistic mastery is key to Wittgenstein's achieving the solution to the problem Geach held was posed for him by "Der Gedanke". The effect of training in the use of the psychological expressions 'think', 'imagine', 'expect', 'wish', 'intend', etc., is to initiate a speaker into the complex form of human life, whose distinctive patterns are laid-down in the language-games of thinking, inferring, calculating, measuring, imagining, expecting, intending, and so on. As a speaker acquires the capacities of an autonomous agent who operates with words in ways that are characteristic of our complicated form of life, he gradually takes on the form of life distinctive of a minded human being. The ideas of private

objects, an inner realm and of introspection are seen to have no role to play: "everything lies open to view" (PI, § 126) in a speaker's form of life with signs. In the same way, 'I' in sentences in which a speaker gives expression to what he feels, affirms his intention, gives voice to what he believes, expects, wishes, etc., does not function as a name. As Geach says, there are no thoughts of the kind Frege held were incommunicable; it is a matter of describing the distinctive use of first-person present indicative sentences. But seeing this depends on our making a radical adjustment in our conception of the nature of language and recognising that there is nothing to meaning over and above a sign and its use.

References

Floyd, J. (2011). "The Frege-Wittgenstein Correspondence: Interpretive Themes". De Pellegrin, E. (ed.), *Interactive Wittgenstein*. New York, NY: Springer, 75-107.

Frege, G. (1997). "Thought". Beaney, M. (ed.), *The Frege Reader*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 325-45.

Hacker, P.M.S. (2001). *Wittgenstein: Connections and Controversies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kuusela, O. (2019). *Wittgenstein on Logic as the Method of Philosophy: Re-Examining the Roots and Development of Analytic Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wittgenstein, L. (1958). *The Blue and Brown Books*. Oxford: Blackwell. [BB]

Wittgenstein, L. (1974). *Philosophical Grammar*. Edited by R. Rhees, transl. by A. Kenny. Oxford: Blackwell. [PG]

Wittgenstein, L. (1998), *Culture and Value*. Edited by G.H. von Wright; H. Nyman; A. Pichler, transl. by P. Winch. Oxford: Blackwell. [CV]

Wittgenstein, L. (2005). *The Big Typescript: TS 213*. Edited and transl. by C.G. Luckhardt; M.A.E. Aue. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. [BT]

Wittgenstein, L. (2009). *Philosophical Investigations*. Edited by P.M.S. Hacker; J. Schulte, transl. by G.E.M. Anscombe; P.M.S. Hacker; J. Schulte. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. [PI]