Wittgenstein, Winch and Sociology

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This is part of a very early draft for a monograph on the implications of the thought of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Peter Winch for sociology which was written in the early 1980s. The text presented here has only been lightly edited to remove egregious errors caused by the scanning process. Although the monograph was never finished, many of the ideas in it found their way into other publications.

PART ONE: WITTGENSTEIN'S METHOD

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This is the first and most basic part of what will probably be a mammoth task, that of persuading sociologists that the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein should matter to them much more than it currently does by demonstrating the ways in and the extent to which it could affect the things they do.

This is the first and most basic part because it involves only the outlining, in clear and elementary fashion, of the general shape of the ideas that make up Wittgenstein's 'later work.' We shall emphasise that there is no substitute for trying out Wittgenstein's method, applying it carefully, thoughtfully, at length and, above all, slowly. What we are trying to do is to show that any serious claim to understand Wittgenstein must be tested against the capacity to apply his policies and that, therefore, those who would genuinely debate with Wittgenstein will need to go much further to meet him than they have ,hitherto, been prepared to. Anything more than the most superficial grasp of Wittgenstein's thought requires that we go into cases and that we go into them thoroughly but this is quite impractical in a book like this. The most we can realistically hope to accomplish here is to encourage a much greater degree of willingness of consider cases important and a much greater degree of patience in their examination. In other words, we might be able to argue that cases do matter and to show what their importance is.

Though this book is oriented to sociologists it gives great emphasis to the philosophical nature of Wittgenstein's reasoning. Whilst the philosophy of social science has been an area of intense activity in recent years it has- or so we would argue- been true that the philosophical character of the issues involved has (oddly enough) been under-emphasised, so much so that it is thought that one can make judgement on something like Wittgenstein's work and its relevance to sociology with only the faintest appreciation of what, in philosophy, Wittgenstein was about. There is a tendency to give 'philosophy of social science' a prominent place in sociology without taking into account the obligations that this places one under. Wittgenstein is a most suitable philosopher to occasion thought about these, for his work bears very much on questions about the relation of philosophy and science, though it does so because of his reflections on the nature of philosophy itself rather than because he has engendered some 'philosophy of science' of his own. Thus, our book is addressed to sociologists,

trying to persuade them that they should take Wittgenstein more seriously, and that this means that they should take him much more seriously as a philosopher.

In this we differ from most of those who have tried to make Wittgenstein more appealing to sociologists. They think this is best done by making Wittgenstein out to be a sort-of-sociologist (if anything, one handicapped by his continuing attachment to philosophy). They emphasise the extent to which his ideas have resemblance to those of one or other of the great sociologists or to which they are congenial to conceptions now current in the discipline. Those who try to show Wittgenstein as a friendly character show - in some ways - rather less of an understanding of his work than do those sociologists who reject his work, for they can recognise an opponent when they see one. Wittgenstein was not a would-be sociologist and had only the most remote interest in sociological topics. Those ideas which he has which parallel those which may be found in sociology were not developed as part of any sociological scheme but were formed in and for philosophical investigations. Unless the way those ideas are linked in to the philosophical work is understood, then the extent of any similarity they may have to sociological ideas will be misapprehended - superficial likenesses will be mistaken for real and deep similarities. In short, trying to see Wittgenstein as a sort-of-sociologist will not just fall short of full understanding, it will actively contribute to misunderstanding.

This book will be very much about Wittgenstein as philosopher. How, then, will it show its orientation to a sociological audience? We have some leading objectives for this exposition.

We want

(1) to dissociate the real philosopher Wittgenstein from the mythical creature who appears in much of the sociological literature and, unfortunately, bears the same name;
(2) to give a clear idea of the views that the real Wittgenstein holds; to show something of the inner coherence of those views,
(3) to show that they have been very much thought through and that they hold together in a strong way;
(4) to show that - rightly understood his views are not vulnerable to the criticisms recurrently made of them and to show that such responses as sociologists have made to the questions Wittgenstein's work poses for them have not begun to come near to answers to them.

We shall be further attending to the interest of sociologists by pi voting our presentation of Wittgenstein 's philosophy around the issues that worry sociologists most. Thus, we begin with a chapter on philosophy and science since there is a concern that Wittgenstein and Winch) intend to make a philosophical take-over bid for (at least) social science. In moving on to describe Wittgenstein's views on meaning we shall be sensitive to the nature of the importance that 'ordinary language' is to have in his thought, for it is widely believed amongst sociologists that he is illegitimately reliant upon and defensive of ordinary language and of the prejudices that permeate it.

In the discussion of 'magical practices' we will be dealing with that theme which has dominated the sociological discussion of Wittgenstein's work, has been the topic of a long debate initiated by Peter Winch's introduction of the case of Azande oracular practices into the argument. We refer, of course, to the controversy about 'rationality.'

Whilst we will bias our presentation towards the interests of sociologists we will sometimes talk about topics which are normally a long way from the (at least overt) focus of sociological attention, just to give a forceful reminder that Wittgenstein's own attention was on other things than the issues of social science, that there were very low on his list of priori ties. Thus, we will use Wittgenstein's philosophy of mathematics as materials in our first chapter to illustrate the nature of his views on the role of philosophy vis-a-vis science and, more specifically, sociology.

One thing that we may do here, in parentheses, that will help get many things in to perspective is to point out that if the work of Wittgenstein and Winch is thought to comprise a major Wittgensteinian offensive against it, then such an impression is entirely wrong. This is why our opening remarks were that we face a mammoth task in bringing out the scope and force of the implications of Wittgenstein's work for sociology, for that will involve immensely more work than the little that has so far been done in that direction. Wittgenstein's own direct consideration of social science was provided in some marginal notes on a book (The Golden Bough) and comments in relatively casual conversation of psychoanalysis. Winch's The Idea of Social Science and Its Relation to Philosophy and the accompanying paper 'Understanding a Primitive Society' are pretty isolated contributions in the Wittgensteinian tradition, well away from the mainstream which has shown a much more intense concern with 'philosophical psychology'. Winch's own writings hardly comprise a thorough and worked out statement of the position, for they give only brief, compressed and sketchy statements of the barest outline of the positions involved. Far from comprising the opening of a major front, these amount to only exploratory probings.

Our task is not only large, it will be uphill. Trying to persuade people to reopen a case they thought closed always is. It is not as though Wittgenstein and Winch have been ignored. They have been much talked about. Many will think that they have been talked about quite long enough, that what they have to say is well understood and that the faults in the reasoning have been clearly identified. We need to reverse that judgement. One symptom of how poorly Wittgenstein is understood in the sociological community is in the way that his more distinctive expressions - 'form of life' and 'language game' are seized upon as if a familiarity with these would ensure a comprehension of what Wittgenstein might mean to sociology. Though these phrases do play an important part in his work, it is only when their place within the complex web of reflections which make up the whole body of his thought is appreciated that they can be said to be understood. Someone for whom - as with Wi ttgenstein - we have much more time than do most sociologists, is Harold Garfinkel: he too awaits just recognition of the power and depth of his thinking. In Garfinkel's case one also sees the tendency to latch on to key words - indexical, reflexive in his case - but in a way which shows no

comprehension of the rest of the work from which they are taken and which means, therefore, that even those key words are not, themselves, properly understood. 'Form of life' and 'language game' are not what Wittgenstein's philosophy amounts to, and without some grasp on what the philosophy is doing there can be no real grasp on the meaning of 'form of life' and 'language game'.

We are not accusing those who misunderstand Wittgenstein of stupidity (though in one or two cases that accusation might well be just) because we recognise that writers like himself and Garfinkel are difficult to understand. They do not write in a way which makes their meaning readily accessible. They are often hard to follow because they 'come around' at problems, rather than taking them on directly. They both tend to take the intractability of some stock problems as a sign that the difficulties with them are more than technical, that there is -perhaps -something wrong with the whole way the problem is thought about. Consequently, they will take on the problem in a what must seem a very indirect way, talking about things which apparently have no significant consequences, let alone radical implications for the central assumptions of philosophy or sociology, though this is just what they do have. This kind of 'Trojan horse' reasoning means that many will find it very hard to make out what they are doing and why they are going at things in the way they are.

A more important difficulty with people like Wittgenstein and Garfinkel is that they are 'off the map'. The positions that they take do not fall within the range of intelligible alternatives that are conventionally recognised to be available. It is, that is, assumed that you just <u>can't</u> say the kinds of things that Wittgenstein or Garfinkel do appear to say, and so attempts to make better sense of often involves trying to place them in or close to one of the standardly acknowledged options, to find somewhere on the map that they can go. But this is trying to contain them within coordinates that they do not fit, that their views are not <u>meant</u> to fit. Thinkers like Wittgenstein and Garfinkel are interested in much more than having the map redrawn, they want to restructure the principles of cartography.

This is the most serious obstacle to comprehension. To try to make sense of Wittgenstein or Garfinkel in the terms available to sociology is inevitably to distort what they have to say, for it requires that this be stated in the very terms that they want to question. It is a matter, then, of on whose terms understanding is to be sought? Getting an understanding of what they mean by what they say ought to be the first consideration. After that is obtained, then questions as to whether these views are foolish and mistaken can be raised. It ought to be, then, very much on their terms that we first approach people like Wittgenstein and Garfinkel and the more that the things they have to say seem bizarre or wrong, the more wary we should be of the possibility that we are being imprisoned by our own preconceptions. Wittgenstein and Garfinkel both invite people to think differently, not least to ask themselves whether the limits which they see to rational inquiry are either fixed in the places or inflexible in the manner they have been assumed to be. Some preconceptions are held because it is thought that they must be accepted but they may not represent

the outer limits they are being taken for. It is not, then, a prima facie objection to Wittgenstein or Garfinkel that they run up against what many take to be the limits of reasoned argument since it *is* their intention to show that these have been too narrowly drawn. Insisting that no one should transgress them is hardly the best way to test such a contention, doing that requires that someone tries to go beyond them.

The disposition to force Wittgenstein and Garfinkel into the coordinates that they will not fit is the most severe difficulty *in* disseminating their thought within sociology. It manifests itself in the persistent efforts to classify them as 'idealists.' The current influence of Marx's work on sociology ensures that idealism is in bad repute and that the moment of his overthrow of Hegelianism is the decisive movement in the history of philosophy. The issue in sociology now, as it was in philosophy in the 1830's, is materialism against idealism. Since materialism is identified with something akin to Marx's doctrines and Wittgenstein plainly does not offer anything like those, he cannot be a materialist and must, by elimination, be an idealist.

This is quite wrong. Treating Wittgenstein this way supposes that he was entangled with the problems that exercise both materialists and idealists together. His philosophical problems were different to those, having nothing whatever to do with arguments about whether 'matter' or 'ideas' were the constituents of reality. Though Wittgenstein was not engaged in solving the materialists and idealists problems it does not follow that he is now open to the criticism of being silent on them, of having left them untouched and unresolved. Wittgenstein sought to reconstruct the conception of philosophy in such a way as to show that the issues confronted by 'materialism' and 'idealism' among other doctrines, were not problems at all. If his arguments succeed, then there is no need to take an idealist or a materialist position nor to contrive some third position as an alternative to both of them.

Wittgenstein aims at ending the philosophical tradition of taking positions, aims at eliminating all the isms idealism, materialism, Platonism, empiricism and the rest. Insofar as they sought to say 'what there really is' then Wittgenstein argued that it was outside of the province of philosophy to try to do this and the fact that he lacked any doctrine of his own on this cannot signify that he was in need of one (nor does it allow the inference that lacking any distinctive position of his own he must, therefore, unwittingly subscribe to one of the others, that he must be either materialist or idealist).-

We make these introductory comments to draw attention to the degree to which we are dependent on the goodwill of the reader. We think we can do much to show interest and significance for sociologists in the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein and in its application, through the work of Peter Winch, to the problems of sociology, but our ability to show this requires, very much, the reader's willingness to look and, in doing so, to adopt a very different frame of mind to the one to which he is accustomed.

1.2 Science, Philosophy, Sociology.

One of the very earliest of Wittgenstein's recorded remarks is to the effect that philosophy can neither confirm nor confute pictures of reality. Creating and appraising those is the business of science (or, more broadly, of factual discourse) and since philosophy is distinct from these, it cannot engage in that business. Whatever subsequent vagaries, revisions and developments Wittgenstein's thought may have seen there can be no doubt that through them all he remained faithful to this fundamental conviction. There is a sharp distinction to be made between science and philosophy and it is one that must always be respected if intellectual trouble is to be avoided.

In the previous chapter we said that Wittgenstein would reject the choice between materialism and idealism and the reader can perhaps now see, from one of his first and most basic premisses, why he would do so. Materialism and idealism both seek to give pictures of reality, to say what, in most general form it consists of and the construction of such pictures is, Wittgenstein thinks, wholly improper to and impossible for philosophy.

It would be against the spirit of this enterprise and of Wittgenstein's own work to argue by authority. We do not endorse things just because Wittgenstein says them and there can be no suggestion that philosophy is distinct from science in this respect just because Wittgenstein demarcates them in this way. However, the purpose of this discussion is primarily expository and the presentation of what Wittgenstein thought (for good or ill) is the task in hand. We begin, then, with Wittgenstein's insistent separation of philosophy from science because it is from this that many of his arguments follow. Whether he is justified in making that separation is another issue, and we shall, over the course of the following chapters show some of his reasons for thinking that he was. For now, never mind whether it is right to separate philosophy from science thus, it is enough to bear in mind that this is how Wittgenstein thought it should be done.

If philosophy cannot give some general picture of reality, then what can it do? What is the good of it? If Wittgenstein is right we shall be left with a philosophy that is good for nothing. Insofar as sociology is to be absorbed into philosophy (if that is the fate Wittgenstein would have consigned to it) then so far must it too be useless.

We have said why it is difficult to get sociologists to understand Wittgenstein and Winch, though nothing so far about how much more difficult it will be to persuade them to accept what they have to say. One of the great reasons why this is so hard is because the attempt to explain Wittgenstein to them is apt to throw them, right away, on the defensive. They will hear him as being 'against sociology', as trying to make a nonsense of the whole idea of studying human life. He appears to be making a takeover bid for sociology on behalf of philosophy, something that must be - to the working sociologist - both unjustified and regressive. Sociologists are, after all, usually encouraged to think that progress comes through breaking away from philosophy, replacing its speculative constructions by those developed in and founded on empirical research. It is only by

turning their backs on philosophy that other sciences have managed to progress so we 11. Wittgenstein and Winch would take sociology back into philosophy, moving in entirely the wrong direction.

There is more, for most sociologists will see Wittgenstein's philosophy taking them in directions they do not wish to go, towards conclusions they are most reluctant to draw. Wittgenstein and Winch meet with quick and firm rejection from sociologists. They can't be right. They are obviously wrong. Their conclusions are completely unacceptable.

If anything, sociology is much needed. There is a great need to further social progress and scientific knowledge of social organisation is indispensible here. Wittgenstein and Winch are trying to reverse an almost inevitable progress and must, therefore, be recognised for what they are, the expression of the reflex reactions of the obsolescent ideologies that are threatened by the progress of sociological knowledge. If anything, sociology must take over more and more from philosophy, for though the speculations of the latter may be interesting, they are only fancies and need to be replaced by ideas that will put us in touch with hard 'realities. If anything, there is a need to affirm and develop sociology's capacity for action, its ability to tell us what to do to control our destinies, whilst Wittgenstein and Winch invite us to give up a (potentially) powerful and effective position for one that is isolated, passive, impotent.

Even if a line of thought does take us toward conclusions we are loath to reach the fact they do so does not comprise a telling objection. Even if Wittgenstein and Winch were saying that things often attributed to them, it is no real condemnation of their views to say that they are unattractive. As Tom Wolfe might ask -what if they are right? If, of course, they are saying the things attributed to them. Wittgenstein 's philosophy appears to be one which is entirely inconsequential and its application to sociology would make that the same, a situation which - for many sociologists - is greatly to be feared and hardly to be borne.

Confirmation of these fears can easily be found in Wittgenstein's own remark that philosophy leaves everything at it is, a comment which can be cited as proof of his defeatist outlook and of the socio-political conservatism which follows from it. It is, however, entirely possible and very likely that Wittgenstein intended this remark to cover philosophy's relation to such things as mathematics, logic, science and ordinary language, to express his view that philosophy cannot interfere with these.

If we think we are making things better, we may well be making them worse. If philosophy is useless in telling us about the nature of reality,if it cannot provide us with a basis for socio-political action, then the least that might be expected of it would be that it would sharpen up our tools of

thought- things like maths, logic, science, our ordinary language- but now we are told that even that is out of its reach. What can it do?

This is the kind of protest that one gets against a philosophy of this sort:

{{insert quote from Campbell}}

and one finds a similar dissatisfaction expressed by Michael Rosen, who can't accept that philosophy is incapable of intervening in science:

{{insert quote from Rosen.}}

Rosen does not attribute the view he decries to an identifiable group, though Campbell clearly identifies Wittgensteinians as the target of his complaint. Whether or not Rosen does offer them as a characterisation of a Wittgensteinian position does not matter, for he does concisely give an account of what is often thought to be that position. It is a conception of philosophy which - if they held it -would not be new with the Wittgensteinians but would be the latest manifestation of a long standing tradition, known as the 'under labourer conception.'

Having identified it thus, we can now draw attention to the fact that one of the first moves Peter Winch makes in *The Idea of a Social Science* is to reject the under labourer conception. Since Winch is intending to follow in Wittgenstein's footsteps, then perhaps the latter's ideas do not inexorably lead in the direction they are thought, inevitably, to go. Perhaps Wittgenstein's idea of philosophy is neither so passive nor despairing as it is made out. Perhaps 'Philosophy leaves everything as it is' fails translate exactly into 'Philosophy makes no difference.'

Wittgenstein certainly thought that philosophy mattered. He had little hope that his own would make the right sort of impact, that it would do what he thought desirable and was resigned to the likelihood that it would have bad effects rather than good. He feared that he would only leave behind a jargon. that some of his ways of speaking might be perpetuated though their meaning would be lost and the spirit that the expressed be forgotten. To see this as a sign of facile defeatism is mistaken, for it was a product of the recognition of just how far removed his own outlook was from that which prevails in the modern world, how thoroughly at odds with the overwhelming inclinations of our way of life. So much so that he could hope to make only the tiniest impression on it. (That Wittgenstein's philosophy enjoyed something of a boom and has certainly made itself felt in philosophy does not prove him wrong in his expectations - these, we think, have been fulfilled.)

Wittgenstein 's philosophy was intended to do something. It was intended to keep alive a particular kind of spirit in a time that was most inauspicious for it, to sustain an alternative outlook which the prevailing mentality would otherwise entirely obliterate.

{{Quote from FOREWORD TO PHIL GRAMMAR}}

Here there will be a great gulf between Wittgenstein and contemporary sociologists. The spirit which moves his work is so different from that which animates sociological thought. The two are - in vital respects - antithetical to each other. From Wittgenstein's point of view, sociology - however much it might pride itself on its oppositional role - would appear much more as an integral part and fulfilment of the prevailing ethos than as any alternative to it. Which is not to pass comment of what sociology must inevitably be like that, or whether it has just taken that particular turn in our civilisation). Wittgenstein's outlook, viewed from sociology, is apt to seem just that reactionary one which sociology has dedicated itself to eliminating, a way of thought beyond which sociology has itself progressed and one beyond which sociology has the responsibility of encouraging the rest of us to move. We shall not continue this provocative line of thought now but will take it up again for lengthy and leisurely contemplation in the discussion of 'magical practices' where, it will be seen, such examination is best located.

We have been insinuating into our comments something which needs to be said outright. The idea that the conflict between Wittgenstein's philosophy and the mainstream sociological outlook is confined to disagreements about specific sociological hypotheses or theories is utterly mistaken. It is much more problematical than that. It is a clash of mentalities, the collision of quite different ways of thinking, the discrepancy of drastically different sensibilities. The invitation that Wittgenstein can offer to sociologists is not to modify some, even most, of their favoured theories but to transform their entire way of looking at things, to change their whole idea of how becoming self-conscious about the organisation of social life might fit into things.

We are aware that this brief comment leaves much to be desired and we will expand on it at length at the proper juncture. We introduce it now because it indicates that philosophy can make a difference to sociology, even on a Wittgensteinian dispensation, and a considerable and far reaching one at that. The need, now, is for us to explain how a philosophy that leaves everything as it is can make that kind of difference.

1.3 The Effect on Mathematics.

Wittgenstein did not write much about sociology but he did have a great deal to say about mathematics and it is possible to extrapolate from some of the things he did say about them to some of those he would have said about sociology. Wittgenstein insisted that he was a philosopher

and not a mathematician. What he wrote on mathematics was composed in his role as a philosopher and did not, itself, comprise mathematics of any sort. He was not doing mathematics, but seeking to clarify what was involved in doing mathematics. Though Wittgenstein cannot -as philosopher - interfere in mathematics, and is convinced that philosophy is 'an idleness in mathematics' this does not deprive his remarks of all consequence.

Putting things very crudely, Wittgenstein sees that there is a difference between doing mathematics and talking about mathematics - he spoke of the latter as a kind of prose accompaniment to mathematics, distinct and best kept separate from it. One of those two activities - doing mathematics- can result in contributions to mathematical knowledge, the other cannot. Philosophy is the 'talking about mathematics' and it is in this sense that it is an idleness in mathematics, it cannot add to or detract from mathematical knowledge.

Doing the mathematics involves making use of the mathematical symbolisms, carrying out calculations, and it is through that that one can extend or revise mathematics, make a real difference to it. Without engaging in this properly mathematical practice one cannot, on Wittgenstein's estimate, alter the mathematical results, one cannot change an equation, confirm or undermine a proof, rework a result.

Note that Wittgenstein is a long way from sanctifying the status quo in mathematics. He is making the point that intervention in mathematics means participation in mathematics, that transformation of mathematics is something that takes place 'internally' through further mathematical reasoning. Mathematics can be altered, but it is up to mathematics how it is to be changed and no 'external' authority can legislate this.

Doing mathematics is one thing, talking about it another. The latter is what philosophers do. Beware! 'Philosopher' and 'mathematician' are not being used here as occupational titles, such that a philosopher is one who works in a philosophy department, a mathematician, someone employed in the school of mathematics. It is not that something is said by someone who is a mathematician-by-trade that makes it mathematical, for mathematicians-by-trade can also act as philosophers, can say philosophical things which are not part of mathematics proper, which are not said by them actingin their capacity as mathematicians.

What do we have in mind as exemplifying 'talking about mathematics'. The classical example is: does someone who makes a contribution to mathematics make an invention or a discovery? Put another way, what kind of knowledge does mathematics provide? Does what mathematicians do involve finding out things which antedate their discovery (in the way that the continent existed before Columbus came upon it) or does it involve them in creating something that did not exist before (as the invention of television did)?

This is not a trivial and transient problem for it has a long history and has been regarded as mightily important to understanding the nature of mathematical truth. Are they really as objective as the truths of science, guaranteed by their correspondence with externally existing and immutable circumstances or are they, somehow, just fancies of the human mind, backed up by nothing outside themselves? And before one supposes that this is all too remote from sociology ever to be relevant, remember the worry that has been caused the Sociology of Knowledge by the problem of what to say about the simplest of mathematical truths - 2+2 = 4. Is that an eternal truth, which must be exempted from theses about the social determination of knowledge or can it, somehow, be encompassed by them?

Note that these matters are ones which can be discussed with little more knowledge of mathematics than an acquaintance with its more elementary formulae, like 2+2=4. Discuss ion of them will not lead to revisions of mathematical formulae - even if it is decided that 2+2=4 is not an eternal truth it will not lead to the conclusion that 2+2 now equals 3 or 6 or any number you care to think of.

The kind of thing that would be involved, from a Wittgensteinian angle, in the attempt to deal with the issue of mathematical truths, at least in respect of their allegedly eternal character would be to point out that 2+2=4 would not be an 'eternal' truth because it is not really a temporal statement at all. The mistake is to think of 2+2=4 as being the equivalent of '2+2=4 now and has always done so and will always do so through the foreseeable future into the endless aeons of time, times without number, amen. ' '2+2=4' doesn't say that or any comparable thing. It doesn't, that is,say, between the fifteenth century and the twentieth, in Western Europe, 2+2 did equal four, but in Malaysia at the same time it equalled seven. '2+2=4' is a timeless, rather than an eternal truth if it is a truth at all. It lacks temporal specification of any kind. If one did want to specify limitations on its truth, Then one would more usefully do this by reference to the kinds of arithmetic in which it is involved. Thus, in ordinary arithmetic, 2+2 = 4 but in modular arithmetic it need not do this - it might, for example, equal 3.

The realisation that 2+2 = 4 applies only in certain circumstances does not make it a false equation, for in our regular arithmetic 4 is what two plus two does equal. Ordinary arithmetic is just as sound as it has always been but what has been realised is that there is more than one way to do arithmetic, and the regular kind is only one variety of these. It is in these other sorts of arithmetic that two plus two will yield different results than four. It is the mathematical work of creating new varieties of arithmetic that has made these realisations possible, and philosophical argument about the kind of truth mathematical equations can have may benefit from these innovations but cannot, itself, produce them. Though the development of the maths may change

views about what the nature of mathematical truth is, views about the nature of mathematical truth will not modify mathematical equations.

Wittgenstein, as philosopher cannot contribute to mathematics. In that sense, his work must leave mathematics as it is. Does it follow that philosophy is without any consequences whatsoever for mathematics? Hardly.

Wittgenstein makes an analogy with the effect of exposure to light on potato shoots - in a dark cellar they grow yards long. Philosophy can have similarly catalytic effects on mathematics. If the mathematics as by definition it must be, unchanged, what then can be altered?

In talking about consistency proofs Wittgenstein says 'my aim is to alter the attitude to contradiction and to consistency proofs. (Not to show that this proof shows something unimportant How could that be so? (RFM, 213.) These words clearly exhibit his conviction that whilst it is both illegitimate and impossible for him to assess the maths as maths it is still both legitimate and possible for him to modify the way in which the mathematical achievements involved are viewed. Wittgenstein thought that philosophers had a rather, a very, superstitious attitude toward contradictions which led them to vastly inflate the dangers that followed from them and thus to exaggerate the importance of the need to avoid them. He sought to induce in them a much more relaxed attitude to such things.

The possibility that some area of mathematics might house a contradiction was treated as though it signified the coming of the apocalypse. If, say, arithmetic were discovered to have a contradiction at its heart then that would - it was thought - mean the end, the complete discrediting of arithmetic and the ruination of all that has been built on it. Since a great deal of mathematics is built on arithmetic, a great deal of mathematics would be under threat.

No contradiction has shown up, but what if one is there anyway, waiting to be revealed. The doubt is introduced, it cannot now be dismissed. Can we be sure that arithmetic is free of contradictions and, if we cannot, how can we go on relying on it when it may be fundamentally faulty?

In such a context, a proof of the consistency of arithmetic would seem to be one of the most urgent and necessary of tasks and success in it will comprise more than just a contribution to maths in the form of a particular technique for testing consistency in mathematical systems. It will ,rather, provide a foundational contribution to maths, something that will shore up the entire edifice of mathematical knowledge?

Or will it? Wittgenstein did not think so. Without denying the mathematical skills involved in and the mathematical value of a technique for assessing formal systems, Wittgenstein could have reservations as to whether anything other than a piece of ordinary mathematics was going on here, whether any real contribution had been made to 'shoring up' the whole. He was altogether less anxious than others about the consistency of arithmetic. He was not prepared to admit the intelligibility of the idea of 'hidden proofs'· He was less than convinced that consistency proofs could answer the problem that called them up.

The idea of a hidden contradiction at the heart of arithmetic is a thrilling and fascinating one in the unnerving way that ghost stories and horror films are, but Wittgenstein wonders if it is really a meaningful one? Arithmetic is something with which we have immense and longstanding practical familiarity, which is employed in many contexts of our lives for a very wide range of purposes hence the prospect of a contradiction bringing all that down, as well as mathematics itself, is too awful to resist contemplating.) Where are the signs of a possible, serious and disabling contradiction? They are not on view, a thorough acquaintance with arithmetic has failed to show any? Why then fear their presence? Just because we cannot rule out all conceivable possibility of them? That is not a reason for thinking that there are any present in arithmetic. They are only imaginative possibilities and there is no evidence whatsoever of their actual existence.

Even if we did discover a contradiction Wittgenstein is doubtful if we should react the way philosophers think we might. Would we really lose all faith in arithmetic and other mathematics, even to the extent of giving up employing them in all the practical contexts in which they have found use. Again, Wittgenstein things not. He cannot agree that we would give up our scales, clocks, calculating machines, age grading arrangements at school, salary payment arrangements, vote counting procedures etc etc just because someone has found a contradiction. The arithmetic works, practically speaking, just fine and we would not give it up that easily. If a contradiction is feared, what use can a consistency proof be in reassuring us?

Those who worry about contradictions in arithmetic desire consistency proofs to show that these do not exist, that will show that arithmetic is internally consistent. If, however, they can be uncertain of something as basic as arithmetic, hen how can their anxieties really be stilled by proofs that rely upon more sophisticated and complicated mathematics and logic. How can one be confident that the consistency proofs are themselves free from serious flaws, sure that they do not reproduce just the inconsistency that one is trying to guard against. If we cannot just trust arithmetic, then we cannot be soothed by consistency proofs for they will beg, rather than solve the question.

Though consistency proofs may have all sorts of value in checking out mathematical systems, including arithmetic, they do not provide mathematics with any sounder, firmer foundation than it possessed before they were developed for such proofs presuppose the viability of the mathematics which they are -supposedly- establishing. Doubts that can affect arithmetic like that would be corrosive of the whole of arithmetical reasoning, including that involved in giving consistency proofs.

If Wittgenstein was successful in making his case (and it does not matter to us whether he was or not, that is a side issue from our own) then what he would have changed would be attitudes to contradiction and to its importance, alleviating the feeling that it presents especial, deep and

disturbing problems, particularly the fear that the sudden appearance of a contradiction is going to bring the whole thing down. As a result, the need for consistency proofs evaporates, the sense of urgency and importance which attaches to their construction dissipates. If there really was a threat to the whole of mathematics, a genuine danger that it might at any moment fall in on us with chaotic aftermath for the whole of our lives then there could be nothing more necessary or important than finding out how real this risk was, meaning that work on consistency proofs should precede apace, drawing upon an immense amount of mathematical effort, having prior claim on resources (in a dark cellar, potato roots grow yards long).

If, on the other hand, such a threat exists only in the fevered imagination and if it there acquires distorted proportions, then there is no special need for consistency proofs. They might be things worth producing just because mathematics has been without them, filling in a gap in the things mathematics can do,and they might be of real use in mathematics and so it might be worth some mathematicians' while to work on such things but they will not - if Wittgenstein has his desired effect - work on them because they feel they have to before they can go on to anything else.

Wittgenstein's contribution to the topic of consistency proofs is a liberating one, designed to dispel certain anxieties and compulsions, leaving the mathematician free to decide what to do on the basis of mathematical interests and priorities, rather than being directed by superfluous philosophical worries.

Applied to a whole range of issues across the philosophy of mathematics Wittgenstein could have similar effects and it is conceivable, therefore, that his work could indirectly transform the landscape of mathematics itself, not through engagement in mathematics itself, but by the disconnection of mathematical from philosophical problems.

The same arguments will do for science. Just as mathematical work is exempt from philosophical interference, so too is bona fide scientific research. Scientific theories and findings can be challenged on scientific grounds, through other scientific work. As with mathematics, though, there are plenty of people (scientists and philosophers) eager to talk about science, to say what it means, how it works, what it can tell us about reality and, in so doing, to form attitudes towards science, attitudes which are not integral parts of the body of scientific knowledge itself, but which are nonetheless powerful influences on thought and which can affect the ideas scientists have about what is worth doing, what is important about what they do and which can, thereby, shape the direction of scientific development.

The difference, here, is between saying things as part of scientific work, such as $E=MC^2$ and those which are about that work, such as that, say, Einstein has given us a new concept of space. A Wittgensteinian could not, as philosopher, dispute the former contention but could certainly feel justified in looking very quizzically that the latter.

Because mathematics and science are held up as the very paradigms of a rationally organised activity, many do seem to believe that these are pursuits which are conducted in clear awareness of their goals and methods, and of the relation of ends to means, and that they cannot go forward if there is not the requisite clarity. Thus, if one gets disputes and confusions there can be no real progress until these have been resolved, and that the appearance of philosophical problems provides obstacles to the forward movement of knowledge - until these have been eliminated the way is blocked. Wittgenstein and his followers, on the contrary, see that maths and science do go on quite successfully without clarity on or resolution of many problems and confusions - solution of philosophical problems will not make the mathematical and scientific situations better or worse that they are though it may - if applied in Wittgenstein's way - show that a sense of dependence on philosophical answers is needless.

Science, too, can be affected by Wittgenstein's method, again through the inducing of changes in attitude where these are permeated with philosophical opinions. It is simply false to say that Wittgenstein -and after him - Winch are anti-scientific in spirit. It would be overdoing it somewhat, though not all that much, to say that the essence of their position is that logic, science and maths have no significance beyond themselves, that they have no philosophical significance, neither requiring nor dictating any general philosophical views.This is a very different attitude from characteristic of many philosophers who seek either to (a) recommend a set of philosophical views because these are the ones essential, foundational, to science - science must presuppose these things, must be able to presuppose these things, or it cannot go on, cannot be accepted or (b) recommend a set of philosophical views because recent developments of scientific knowledge entail just such conclusions. Others treat logic in much the same way, thinking that only views

which are compatible with the requirements of formal logic can be accepted and looking forward to the time when new developments in logic will solve many of philosophy's most awkward problems.

There is nothing 'anti-scientific' in thinking that science's jurisdiction does not (and should not) extend outside its own boundaries. Science has a great deal to tell us about innumerable things, and what it tells us is unquestionably of interest, often of importance, and sometimes of great consequence for our lives but this does not mean that it should be the touchstone of everything that we do. What Wittgenstein and his followers are skeptical about is not science itself, but a particular kind of philosophical outlook, a metaphysic which identifies itself as 'the scientific world view'. In the light of what has been said so far, it should be all clear why such a position would invite the opposition of Wittgenstein.

At the very beginning of his *The Idea of Social Science* Peter Winch makes it entirely plain that he has no intention of criticising science, that it would be wholly inappropriate for him to do so. Indeed, as we have been arguing, he is in no position to do so unless he is prepared to enter directly into the realm of scientific controversy itself. He distinguishes criticism of science from criticism of certain attitudes toward science, particularly those which make a shibboleth or superstition of it.

The target of criticism is, then, the alleged scientific world view, which seeks to extrapolate science's findings and theories beyond the point at which the sciences themselves take them and, thus, beyond the point to which they can legitimately go. It is a body of philosophical doctrines that is under attack and it is because they present themselves as an extension of science that they can convey the (misleading) impression that disagreement with them is tantamount to an attack upon science itself. If the independence of science and philosophy that we have argued for above is recognised then it should be apparent that a thoroughgoing assault on the philosophical position can be conducted without casting any comment whatsoever on the soundness and worth of science itself. Elimination of this metaphysic will not materially affect a single one science's findings.

Since superstitious attitudes toward science are widespread and have deeply penetrated our culture it is clear that Wittgenstein's arguments could have far reaching effects on our thought and life. Be cause those superstitious attitudes are interwoven with many of practices the consequences of a revaluation (not a devaluation) of science could ramify and produce perhaps in all sorts of unforeseeable ways) changes in our whole way of life. Wittgenstein's philosophy could make a considerable difference. That it is unlikely to do so has more to do with the impossibilities of stopping or redirecting a moving juggernaut than with some intrinsic passivity in Wittgenstein's intellect or philosophy.

1.4 WHAT THEN OF SOCIOLOGY?

Being against the inflated pretensions of science differs from being against science in the way that campaigning against alcoholism differs from being opposed to drink . Those who propose to criticise Wittgenstein and Winch often see themselves as defending science but in this role, we say, they are redundant. As we shall see, the claim that Wittgenstein could see no difference between the geocentric and heliocentric conceptions of the solar system is utterly spurious, though this and similar suggestions are used to insinuate that his outlook is hopelessly and unrealistically devoted to at least discounting, if not reversing, the growth of scientific knowledge.

It has, further, the added advantage of conveying the (misleading) impression that taking up Wittgenstein's philosophical position will require more of us than just the ingestion of his difficult ideas. It implies that accepting Wittgenstein's philosophical views will require of us that we believe absurd, incredible things - that, for example, we reject the heliocentric theory and accept one we know to be false, that we believe in witches and similar unlikely things.

This is good propaganda against Wittgenstein but that is all it is. We should not, however, let those who argue thus use science in the way that small boys use the threat of their big brother's intervention to menace other children. We should not be intimidated by this kind of bullying, by the invocation of the immense authority that science posesses amongst us - especially when the question is whether some people are only too inclined to give much more authority to science than it is really entitled to?

As far as sociology is a science about its own business, then so far is it outside the scope of Wittgenstein's philosophy. A sociology going about its scientific business would be creating (for want of a better expression) 'pictures of reality'. We have said that Wittgenstein was consistently insistent that his philosophy neither confirmed nor confuted these. Another way of putting this same point is to say that Wittgenstein sees the business of science as being with factual matters, whilst philosophy has no serious concern with those, therefore a sociology engaged in factual inquiries would be something other than Wittgenstein's philosophy could be interested in.

Trying to counter Wittgenstein on the ground that he is against science generally and against social science in particular is ineffective and the conclusion that Wittgenstein must deny a 1:1 value to sociology is false. Wittgenstein would be 'for' sociology as the descriptive study of human practices and institutions.

Being 'for' sociology in that sense is not likely to be anywhere near enough for many sociologists. They have a much grander vision than that. Some of them are unlikely to be satisfied by anything so modest as the suggestion that sociology is only one discipline amongst others, no

more nor less deserving of a place in the educational institutions which house them. For them it will be inadequate to say that sociology is another academic discipline, just as legitimate (though without greater importance than) botany or classics. For many sociologists, sociology must be something exceptional and privileged, enjoying a distinctive place amongst the disciplines and comprising a new and momentous occurrence in the history of human thought.

Auguste Comte, the man who gave sociology its title, even if he did not exactly found the discipline, set a good precedent for this. He argued that sociology was to be 'the queen of the sciences', the culminating contribution to the evolutionary development of human knowledge and the foundation of a new and general religion of humanity.

Though Comte's specific ideas are no longer reputable and appear quite quaint, his attitudes are still current, and his conviction that sociology is an out-of-the-ordinary kind of knowledge persists, as does his view that it is sociology's duty to inaugurate and disseminate a new kind of consciousness. By virtue of the character of his knowledge, the sociologist has a special position and a special responsibility toward society.

These are what we shall henceforth call 'metasociological' matters, which is a way of re-invoking the earlier distinction between 'contributing to science' and 'talking about science'. We can separate 'doing sociology' from 'talking about sociology' and it is the latter kind of pursuit we dub 'metasociological'.

It is our claim that arguing about whether sociology is a new form of consciousness is no more a sociological task than arguing about the nature of the truth of 2+2=4 was a mathematical task or than debating why the laws of physics hold and what they represent is work in physics. All of these are what Wittgenstein would characterise as philosophical controversies and they are ones in which he could, therefore, quite legitimately intervene. How the distinction between scientific and philosophical issues is actually made is one we shall go into further.

Since, if we are right, Wittgenstein thinks that science has no significance beyond itself, then it is more than likely that he would have been doubtful of the idea that the development of sociological science does comprise a kind of cataclysmic shift in history.

A New Galileo.

It is hard for Wittgenstein and Winch to escape the charge of making illegitimate interventions in science. We might note, in passing, that their critics will put them in a heads-I-win/tails-you-lose situation - if they can be defended against charges of illicit interference in science, they will promptly be accused of criminal passivity and intellectual despair for trying to prevent philosophers putting scientists right.

The kind of arguments just given are likely to be understood as an attempt to rule out the possibility that sociology might have its Galileo (or its Newton or Darwin.) Who are we to say that sociology cannot have its own Galileo.

The claim that sociology may reasonably expect its Galileo can be argued on two quite different levels. On the first level, one sees Galileo as the man who took decisive steps in the creation of the kind of science that we now have, who put the study of physical nature on a scientific footing, and the expectation of his sociological equivalent is, then, for someone who would likewise produce a decisive change (improvement) in the quality of sociological work. In Thomas Kuhn's terms, this kind of expectation is for someone who will form sociology's first genuine paradigm.

On the other level, however, Galileo is conceived as the man who, by putting the study of physical nature of a scientific footing, set into motion the great upheavals that turned our intellectual and social world upside down.

As far as putting sociology on a changed, and much improved, intellectual footing is concerned it seems reasonable enough to live in the hope that someone will be able to do this. Certainly, there is nothing in Wittgenstein or Winch that would give anyone a basis to prejudge this matter. Saying that sociology might have its Galileo is expressing a pious hope, making only the vaguest speculation as to whether someone might come along and shake up the whole discipline. It would be foolish of anyone to deny that ingenuity can knock shape into the most chaotic and disparate of pursuits and even though sociology is such a confused and varied enterprise that fact alone should not tell against the possibility of someone finding a unity for it. What someone might have to do to do this, and with what consequences their success would be followed, is something about which we cannot really even speculate. Sociology might have its Galileo but there is little to do except wait for his appearance.

Of course, there is room for argument as to whether there is reason to expect that a sociological Galilee will follow quite closely the model of the original, whether he will transform sociology into a kind of 'Galilean science' i.e. one permeated by mathematical technique and dominated by general theory? One introduces, in this connection, the familiar dispute about natural science versus social science. This is not, however, the dispute that we want to follow through now.

The issue about Galileo's possible sociological equivalent has a more important aspect, at least for present concerns, and it is this: must a sociological Galileo turn things upside down? The capacity for sociology to have someone making a path breaking contribution akin to those made by Linnaeus in botany, Mendel in genetics, Wilson in sociobiology or Marshall in economics seems

entirely open. However, the question is not 'Can sociology have its Mendel or its Marshall?' but, instead, 'Can it have its Galileo or Darwin? ' because these latter names have a cachet the former do not. Galileo and Darwin have done more than transform their disciplines, they have created our modern consciousness, transformed our whole outlook. Their names are associated with the great watersheds of human thought, for they showed us to be fundamentally mistaken about certain things and, by doing so, shattered traditional world views. The demand for a sociological Galileo, if it is meant to carry the implication that a comparable sociological figure would inevitably have the same kind of war ld-shaking effects, is a different proposition altogether. If the supposition is that just as we have been shown to be mistaken about fundamental natural facts then so too shall we be shown to be in error about basic social ones, that future developments of sociology will show us to be pre-scientific in our contemporary thinking, then the matter is much more contentious.

Who is to say that a sociologists cannot have the same extensive effects as Galileo, Darwin, Freud? Anyone who tried this would, presumably, be attempting to foresee what can happen and to rule out possibilities, to say in advance what scientists can and cannot do, what they should and should not try for. This is intervention in science, and of the most illegitimate kind, forbidding scientists the capacity for unconstrained questioning to which they are entitled. It would, again,be foolish for anyone to claim superior prescience here, to pretend to be able to see better and further into the future and to say with any confidence what it might bring.

Is the argument about the future? If it is, then there is only one thing to do. Wait and see. Of course, if the argument is not really about the future then there are some things which can be said now and which do not call for anyone to claim superior prescience. As an argument about the future, the argument about the prospect of a sociological Galileo is only over the very vague and harmless proposal that something very big might happen in sociology. In its more interesting form the question has immediate application. If it asks 'Are we now living in a pre-scientific condition, as regards our understanding of social and psychological matters?' then it asks a question about how things now are, rather than about the unforeseeable future. If it is being said that we are now in the same position in this connection as people were in respect of the understanding of nature before the coming of Galileo, Newton and Darwin, then it deals with historical and contemporary matters: what sort of difference did Galileo, Newton and Darwin make? In what ways is our understanding of social and psychological matters being compared with the understanding of natural phenomena ? Could someone make, to our social and psychological understanding, the same kind of difference that Galileo and the rest have made?

If we are being asked to acknowledge that we are living in a pre- scientific situation, that all our most cherished ideas and beliefs are up for questioning, and that we have better begin to prepare now for the corning of a sociological Galileo by adopting a much more tentative and

reserved attitude toward established ways and outlooks, pending their confirmation or displacement by a properly scientific practice and theory, then there is room for much more effective questioning of the idea that a sociological Galileo could possibly deliver what it is hoped he will bring.

The issues have ceased to be about whether philosophers can dictate to scientists and about what the future course of sociology's development might be. They are shown to be about the understanding of contemporary and historical matters, about the understanding of (for example) the relationship between what science tells us and what we already know (or thought we knew) and these are, very much, the kinds of questions that are philosophical in nature. They are not, questions about the factual course of science's development and of the course of social history after these momentous scientific changes had taken place. These facts may be in varying degrees problematical, but it is not upon them that the arguments that are relevant here depend, for they are disagreements about what kind of knowledge science provides, and whether that is a qualitatively different thing that 'common sense understanding', about what it is that gives science such superiority over common sense as it may possess, and so on.

The idea that sociology must have a transforming effect on our consciousness often involves a number of suppositions such as:

(1) that the impact of scientific achievements on our way of life come as a result of our being shown to be mistaken, through the replacement of false hypotheses with true ones. It is thought, then, that science is the proper and effective performance of a task that we all, in practice, devote our lives to, namely the acquisition and accumulation of knowledge and that, therefore, in a pre-scientific condition we have an abundance of hypotheses but lack the right methods to test them. It is only when we have come into possession of a sound scientific method that we shall be able to see if our traditional hypotheses may stand up. The fact we are attached to them will count for nothing, and if our hypotheses are shown to be mistaken, then we should give them up, along with any practices founded on them
(2) that our beliefs take the form of hypotheses, and that they are capable of being shown to be true of false;it is their being hypotheses created by amateurs which creates the expectation that professionally developed ones will come to displace them;
(3) that our institutions are founded in beliefs and that, therefore, the falsification of the foundational beliefs equates to the invalidation of the institution;
(4) that a comprehensive displacement of our ordinary ways of classifying and categorising things will also be needed. Our ordinary language has been built up gain by scientific amateurs) in an wholly haphazard manner. The words which make it up have not been coined with the needs of science in mind (or even with regard for the most elementary requirements of systematicity) and they will therefore have to give way to a scientifically contrived and thoroughly systematised conceptual scheme.

To our list of scientific path breakers we added, a page or two back, the name of Freud. We included him in a somewhat belated way because his achievements are still controversial in a way that those of Galileo and Darwin are not. However, we added him because he is a figure who might, within the domain of the human sciences, be credited with Galilean achievements. Though some would claim that Freud is, at best, pseudo-scientific, we shall (for the sake of argument) credit him here with a genuinely scientific achievement.

Freud is the sort of figure who might, then, be claimed to have obviated our entire vernacular psychological vocabulary. Freud's discovery of the unconscious is regarded by its admirers as as profound a finding as any in the natural sciences. Before Freud we were, flatly, just wrong about the way the human mind worked and about the way human doings were to be explained. Now we are possessed of a correct understanding and a genuinely explanatory apparatus: the discovery of the unconscious means that we shall need to abandon our old fashioned apparatus of psychological distinctions and replace them with new ones, derived from the language of psychoanalysis.

Who says that our vernacular psychological vocabulary has the same role as Freud's technical scientific one, that our everyday explanations of human actions and the words we give them in are meant to explain in the same way that Freud's theory and jargon are? Who, indeed, has established that our everyday psychological locutions have solely, or even primarily, a cognitive or explanatory use and where has it been demonstrated that we should not,in giving up our colloquial psychological vocabulary in favour of one derived - however impeccably and systematically from Freud's - have lost more than we have gained?

Arguments can be given against all the above assumptions. Though we concede that science's development can give us new and true hypotheses , can extend our language through the provision of terms of technical origin and can modify some of our important beliefs and affect our practices we need not suppose that this is done by replacement. It is not compulsory that we accept that science's new hypotheses automatically obviate old ones; that the incorporation of scientifically originated expressions into our colloquial speech is a step in the progression from an 'ordinary' language toward one comprised solely of the technical expressions of science. It is not, most importantly, necessary for us to accept that our current ways of acting, talking and thinking pervasively embody hypotheses of any kind, good or bad. If we do not accept that, then we can accept that science may indeed show some of our present convictions to be, in the required sense, pre- scientific without having to fear that everything we say and do is potentially mistaken.

Accusations about a desire to obstruct the legitimate development of science are, in the case of Wittgenstein and Winch, entirely out of order. What they take, and quite legitimately take,

exception to are unrealistic expectations about what such development can and perhaps must mean. Their objection to this are not premised in anything as shaky as a clairvoyant capacity nor, even, their limited knowledge of what science does do and is practically capable of. It is founded, instead, in their understanding of the commonplace practices of the ways of life amongst which they find themselves, and on the conviction that those who invest great hopes in the coming of a sociological Galileo do so on the basis of serious misconceptions of the nature of our ordinary ways of talking and thinking.

The idea that their desire to obstruct science is made manifest in their attempts to restrict the development of 'technical terminology' ,their insistence that our ordinary vocabulary is quite adequate and that science can add nothing to it is also ill founded. It gains its purchase from things like the situation vis-a-vis psychological vocabulary, as outlined in the case of Freud. However, it does stretch credulity to propose that rejection of the suggestion that Freud's work requires the abandonment of the whole of our ordinary psychological language is the same as denying Freud's right to carry out some terminological innovations if these are indeed indispensible to his work and if that does indeed have a genuinely scientific character. Even allowing the soundness of Freud's theories, we may still find that we only called upon by them to abandon very few, if any, of our (allegedly) pre-scientific expressions.

We have conceded much to Freud that we need not have done so. It is possible to contest the claim that he has discovered the unconscious, by arguing that he makes it sound at though he has made a variety of factual findings when, in truth, he has engaged in conceptual manoeuvrings. (This is what T. Szasz notoriously argues.) We could continue to argue that the conceptual innovations he makes are not legitimate ones, that he has misunderstood the ordinary use of the expression 'unconscious' and now consistently abuses it in employing it in the way that he does.

Even mounting those objections does not signify opposition to 'technical vocabularies' but only a requirement that they be genuinely necessary, that they have a role to fill.

The impression that Wittgenstein would oppose technical terminology is perhaps created by the fancy that he is a philosopher of 'ordinary language' and, that this expression is used in contrast to 'technical' or 'scientific' language. It is not, as we shall show, used to make that contrast at all, and hence Wittgenstein can countenance the introduction of technical terms wherever they needed without any difficulty at all. Why should anyone object to the giving of Latin names to the plants we call 'rose', 'buttercup' and the like, if this is useful to the botanist? Why get excited about this, one way or the other?

The canard that Wittgenstein is anti-scientific is hard to dispose of. He is credited with a prejudice against generality and since, at least on some views of it, generalisation is the essence of

scientific thought, then he must seem to be prejudiced against science. This also helps to allow the rejection of Wittgenstein without much argument against him, for if he is prejudiced one way, then it is wholly reasonable for other people to have their own prejudices and to go the other way. Since Wittgenstein's own stand is unreasoned, it need not be answered with reasons. His being 'against generalisation' in this way means, also, that his views are antithetical to those who conceive sociology as a 'generalising science'.

Once again, though, it is wrong to accept the popular and superficial view of what Wittgenstein says. The idea of him as a man determined to go against the glaring and obvious facts, willing to disregard - even rule out of existence - the real and actual achievements of people has little to do with his case. The very idea of him being for or against generalisation in this (generalised) way is so at odds with his entire way of thinking and working. If sociology is, indeed, a genuine science, that proceeds by way of generalisations, then Wittgenstein cannot comment, positively or negatively, on this. The argument with such generalisations would have to be a sociological argument about whether these were the right generalisations or not, whether there were crucial facts telling against them and so forth. To such argument, Wittgenstein's philosophy is just irrelevant and Wittgenstein himself would be the first to stress that this was so. He constantly reminds himself, what he does is philosophy, not science.

Like technical vocabulary, generalisation is something to be assessed on its merits, generalisations being legitimately employed were they have a role, where they are what is needed. Wittgenstein has his doubts that they are needed in philosophy, however appropriate they might be in science.

In its simplest and most condensed form, Wittgenstein's argument about generalisation in philosophy goes something like this: if generalisations are means of explanation, if that is their role, then they are out-of-place in philosophy, because philosophy's problems are not ones that require explanations for their solution. Even if they look as if they do.

We have already made an analogy with campaigns against alcoholism and have said that they differ from opposition to drink. Campaigning against alcoholism one condemns a pathological craving for drink, rather than the drinking itself. Wittgenstein sees a pathological craving for generalisation as one of the pathologies of our culture and it is the disposition to insist everywhere, and without regard for the specific issues, on the necessity for generalisation that he opposes. Generalisations are certainly useful and valuable but they are not the universal panacea.

As to philosophy, Wittgenstein thinks that many of philosophy's problems arise from a misplaced desire for generalisations. Far from being the answer to philosophy's problems, the search for generalisations is a source of them and, therefore, a way out of those problems is to be

found by giving up the desire for them. Seeing that generalisations are not appropriate here is a large part of the solution of some philosophical problems.

It is at this point that Wittgenstein's mentality departs from that which dominates sociology and many philosophers. His method in philosophy favours a case-by-case approach. The craving for generality goes along with a contempt for the particular case, or so Wittgenstein maintains. Since the examination of particular cases provides the way out of the problems of philosophy, a contempt for the particular case can only mean a refusal to examine any in other than the most mechanical and perfunctory way - looking at this case, then at that will be a complete waste of time to those determined and eager to get the argument to a general level.

Wittgenstein's case-by-case method will prove all the more frustrating to those urged on by the craving for generality when they realise that there is no expectation that it will, eventually, result in generalisations. There is no end to the prospect of examining cases. Completion of this one will only lead on to consideration of that, and then to the next and so on, ad infinitum. The consideration of cases is conceived as propadeutic to the desire for generalisation, is not intended to satisfy it but to eradicate it. If one undertakes the careful, thoughtful, thorough inspection of relevant cases one will find that the fact that they do not issue in a generalisation will come as no disappointment for it will have engendered an understanding of the cases and a concomitant realisation that a generalisation would not have helped with this.

Anyone in the grip of the craving for generality will find the whole idea of Wittgenstein's method point less. What use can something be that does not produce any real results, that does not give rise to some general conclusion? Before reacting in this way, the reader might care to reflect on Wittgenstein's view of his method as therapeutic and make some analogy with psycho-analytical practice. That too involves a case-by-case approach, inevitably so since it is meant to treat the specific problems of particular cases through in-depth examination of them. It works (if indeed it does) by being a personalised therapy and it can - as clinical practice - be nothing other than the treatment of an endless succession of cases. To tell a psycho-analyst that there is no end of work for him is hardly to show him the pointlessness of his efforts. To the contrary. Likewise, to complain that Wittgenstein's methods cannot lead to a conclusion is equally irrelevant to their purpose.

Though the issue of whether sociology is or is not a generalising science does arise in this context, it does not appear in the quite the usual form, for the argument is not, now, directly about this but is, instead, about the nature of the conviction that sociology must be a generalising pursuit. Have those who insist that sociology must be a generalising science really shown that its generalisations - if produced - would provide solutions to the problems to which they would be

offered as answers or are they insisting on this because they are infected by the obsession with generalisation?

The issue of whether sociology can or must be a generalising science is itself a metasociological one. It is not about the factual character of social life, but about the nature of the study of social life, and as such is a legitimate object of examination from a Wittgensteinian point of view. There is no trespassing on factual matters involved in discussion of it and, therefore, no direct interference with the business of science.

More than this is probably needed to still the fear that it is the ultimate objective of this kind of approach to turn all of sociology into a philosophical pursuit, to deny it any empirical content at all. This is what Peter Winch appears to do, when in *The Idea of Social Science*, he proposes that philosophy make sociology its foster child. In making this proposal, Winch thinks that he is simply regularising an existing situation. He does not see himself as asking sociology to give up on a set of empirical projects in order that it may turn its attention to philosophical matters but maintains that he is asking sociology to change the auspices under which it does the things it is now doing and, thus, to gain a clearer view of the nature of its difficulties and their possible solution. He argues that sociologists are mainly engaged with metasociological issues rather than with sociological ones and that they are, therefore, by definition, involved in philosophical rather that scientific activities.

Winch's claims will not be refuted by a demonstration that there are sociologists who do make factual inquiries. The burden of the Wittgenstein/Winch position is not that factual inquiries into society are impossible or impractical. Their point is, as we have tried to show above, that much more is expected of such factual inquiries than can legitimately be hoped for. Surely enough, there are many sociologists who make studies about, for a very few examples, the connection between kinship relations and economic activities, about religious affiliation and social class, about organisational size and the structure of information flows, about the career ambitions of working scientists, about the impact of spatial proximity on face-to-face relations. If inquiries into these factual matters are conducted in a properly factual manner, then there would be no desire on Winch's part to deny that they should be made or to suggest that they should be incorporated into philosophy.

Winch's argument is not about the totality of the things sociologists do but about what he sees as the central, core things that they do and these, he maintains, are philosophical rather than factual. The problems which are considered most important by sociologists themselves are one which are metasociological rather than sociological, which are 'conceptual' or 'grammatical' instead of factual.

How is the line between 'conceptual' and 'factual' to be drawn? There are a number of ways in which this can be done, but one which is germane at this point would be in this way: it is a factual question to ask 'what are the facts.....' but a conceptual/grammatical one to ask 'what does it take to qualify as a fact?'

The applicability of this distinction to sociology can be easily shown by appeal to an important and notorious case, that of Emile Durkheim. In his *Suicide* Durkheim does have an interest in factual questions about the relation between rates of suicide and various kinds of social affiliation, to church, family, occupation etc. Conceptual questions are, however, prominent in and crucial to that study, and he is much concerned to define the term 'suicide', to answer the question 'what is it for something to be a suicide.' In his *The Rules of Sociological Method* by contrast, conceptual questions are the overwhelmingly important ones: the central one is 'what is it for something to be a social fact?' and it is Durkheim's main effort there to specify criteria which say what can qualify as a social fact.

Durkheim's is a notorious and still live case, but the example is an old one. Is sociology still dominated by conceptual matters in the way that it was then? Judgements as to the overall state of sociology are complex and there will always be room for argument about them, especially when the question has to do with what, in essence, the discipline is about. We will argue no more than that Winch's claim that the essential issues of sociology are conceptual is a plausible one. The existence of a large body of factual inquiries is no objection to it, for these are largely routine and humdrum investigations which receive little general attention even within sociology.

What we need to consider are the works which do gain attention, which seem to be important and which seem to express something about the nature of sociology itself. These are still much closer to Durkheim's Rules of Sociological Method than they are to his Suicide and they are, in fact, works which are typically about the nature of sociology, the nature of its subject matter, particularly what the criteria are for something to be a social fact, what it is for something to be counted a social reality. Consider the books that have created a stir in sociology (and why they have done so) in recent years. There has been, of course, Winch's own *Idea of a Social Science*, Aaron Cicourel's *Method and Measurement in Sociology*, Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Berger and Luckman's *The Social Construction of Reality*, Louis Althusser's *Reading Capital*, Harold Garfinkel's *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, Anthony Giddens' *New Rules of Sociological Method*. This is just to name some of the most prominent. Ask, now, what connects this diversified collection, and the thing that will unify most of them is that their primary topic is 'the nature of social reality' and it is this ,Winch contends, which marks them out as having a primarily philosophical character.

Argument about 'the nature of reality' is conceptual: is argument about what kinds of things can conceivably exist, about what kinds of things can be counted as factual and what not and it is argument about just this kind of thing which philosophy has traditionally engaged in under the heading of 'epistemology'. It is argument of just this kind that sociologists are even now extensively engaged in, under the impression that they are carrying on scientific work. They are doing epistemology, but it is - in Winch's words- misbegotten epistemology because it is done under the mistaken impression that it is a factual kind of inquiry. Were philosophy to adopt sociology, then, it would -as we have said -be regularising the situation that exists. It would do more than that, it would improve the situation for the realisation that there were philosophical topics would lead to the adoption of more effective methods for handling them. Instead of trying to solve them by inappropriate means of scientific inquiries, one could tackle them with the right tools, the ones suited to the nature of the problems, those of philosophical inquiry.

The acceptance of this line of argument would also have an effect, a diminishing one, on the standing of factual sociological inquiries. It does not, as we have tried to show, in any way outlaw these but it does make them seem less significant than they have done. The humdrum factual inquiries of sociology do not, even to most sociologists, seem very important in themselves but they do seem to be invested with significance by virtue of their relation to the central issues of the discipline - the making of them might contribute to the solution of some of the deep and difficult problems of human thought.

If Winch is right, and the problems of sociology are indeed of a conceptual kind then factual inquiries are irrelevant to their solution. The whole point of Wittgenstein's differentiation of science from philosophy, of the factual from the conceptual, was to show that much trouble and confusion results from the attempt to solve one sort of problem by the means suitable to the solution of the other. It is easy to mistake conceptual for factual questions and to seek to tackle them with the resources of science, but conceptual problems cannot be solved by factual methods and therefore the problems will just seem much tougher, deeper and more intractable than they need.

This would mean that though sociology's factual inquiries were legitimate enough they would lack any significance outside themselves, could not comprise even eventually contributions to the solution of the traditional problems of philosophy. This, as we have said, is the real sticking point for many sociologists, the acceptance that factual sociological inquiries are in order but the denial that they possess any kind of exceptional significance. Insofar as sociology can lay claim to a direct connection to the long standing and seemingly profound problems of philosophy it can do so not because it has broken with philosophy but because it is continuous with it, perhaps reproducing all the old mistakes.

There are real difficulties in continuing discussion beyond this point because the truth is that the only real test of whether Wittgenstein's method does work is to try it out.

Wittgenstein tries to get us away from arguing the pros and cons of general positions and into the study of cases. Those who are impatient with cases will want to argue about whether Wittgenstein's method can possibly work, they will want to argue about it in general terms just when the futility of going on in that way is what has been suggested. They will be reluctant to try out the proposed method, and if they can be tempted into it at all it will be without much enthusiasm, trying it in the mechanical and perfunctory way which, we indicated above, is not really a test of it at all. The craving for generality and the resistance to the particular case are, if Wittgenstein is right, very deep in our dominant ways of thinking and Wittgenstein is, therefore, asking people to go right against the grain of their entire outlook. Wittgenstein's method cannot be casually experimented with, its proper use requires time, care and patience and persuading people to use it involves more than just getting them to do something they don't want to, it means getting them to go far and seriously into something that lacks all appeal for them.

Beyond a certain point general argument in principle about the viability of Wittgenstein's therapy becomes fruitless and if one is unwilling to give a lot of attention to the method then one might as well abandon controversialising with him. Again, it is necessary to go well over onto his ground in order to understand and see the force of what he is doing.

1.5 CONCLUSION.

We have been critical of the idea of Wittgenstein as a sort-of- sociologist because we think that looking at him in that way focuses attention in the wrong place. It makes it seem that Wittgenstein would differ with other sociologists over specific sociological hypotheses and that the question would then be, who is right about the facts. We have stressed that Wittgenstein's real disagreement with sociologists would come somewhere else than over specific hypotheses, that it comes - in effect- over the role that hypotheses can play in improving our understanding of the problems that animate much sociological inquiry. Wittgenstein's view - in many important cases - would not be that sociology had the wrong hypotheses and that it needed better ones but that it was wrong to think that hypotheses were what was needed.

We recognise that this point will not be very easily taken, and it is for that reason that we have tried, also, to show that Wittgenstein's work would give every reason to expect strong resistance to it, for if Wittgenstein is right about the pathological craving for generality, that craving is very deeply rooted in the dominant mentality and firmly entrenched in sociology itself. It would, therefore,be unwise to expect that the argument so far will have done much to shift or dislodge such convictions in the reader. The most we would hope to have convincingly established

to this point is that Wittgenstein is not to be dismissed on the grounds that he represents an unenlightened anti-scientific prejudice which clings to its unreasoned distrust of generalisation. We can fairly claim to have shown that Wittgenstein's views are too complex to allow that kind of generalisation, and that it would be best to refrain from calling them either anti-scientific or pro-scientific. Wittgenstein certainly concedes the legitimacy of science's jurisdiction over its own affairs but does take a different view than many philosophers as to what the extent of that jurisdiction actually is.

From early on, Wittgenstein expressed a conviction that philosophy was an activity, rather than a body of doctrine, and in his later writings he came to consider it as a kind of therapy. That this is so reinforces the suggestion that such disagreements as he would have with sociologists would be 'methodological' rather than substantive, over the ways of going about things rather than about the specific theories put forward. Wittgenstein saw the purpose of factual inquiries as that of providing us with knowledge, with improving our understanding by adding to the information available to us. He did not, however ,think that increasing our knowledge was the only way of improving our understanding. He thought, instead, that an important contribution could also be made by clarification and it was this that his philosophy - through its therapeutic method - was meant to supply. We are not only afflicted by ignorance, to the correction of which new information can provide a corrective, but also by confusion, where new information may not help and may even hinder, and where a sorting out of what we already know and understand may be just what we require to clear things up.

Here, then, is the great difference. Sociology is often thought necessary because of our ignorance. It has to be a science because we need to know more and the scientific method is the one proper to the conduct of factual inquiries. By comparison, Wittgensteinians think that many of the important and serious problems in understanding human life result from our failure to take proper account of the things we already know, that they are less problems resulting from ignorance than those arising from the failure to clearly appreciate the nature and import of things that are under our very noses. This does not mean that the problems are much less difficult than had been thought, only that the means required to tackle them will be very different from what has been imagined.

PART TWO: LANGUAGE AND REALITY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This part will be unified by the theme of language and reality. That was one of the themes which was both prominent in and continuous through Wittgenstein's thought. It is also one which is important to many contemporary sociological controversies.

Wittgenstein is a writer who requires much interpretation. The things that he writes are often very puzzling, and there are different possible ways in which they could hang together. The Wittgenstein industry is now enormous and we cannot seriously contemplate presenting the range of alternative interpretations possible. We can identify two very broad options and indicate briefly why we have chosen one rather than the other.

One way to treat Wittgenstein is as either a constructive or an unconstructive thinker. The choice is sometimes spoken of as one between a 'right wing' and a 'left wing' Wittgenstein in that the latter is more radical that the former (though only in a philosophical as opposed to a political sense.) The unconstructive, or left wing, Wittgenstein is the more radical because he does not put forward any philosophical doctrines at all. The other is less so because he does put forward doctrines. Though these might be quite radical as philosophical doctrines go, they are nonetheless ones which follow the conventional practice of putting forward and arguing for theses.

Both ways of interpreting Wittgenstein can be fruitful. One can extract various theses from his writings and these have the merit of being often) at least as defensible as those to which they can be seen as alternatives. However, Wittgenstein himself seems to think it important that philosophers in general, and himself among them, should refrain from trying to advance philosophical theses. He insists that he does not have any philosophical doctrines of his own and seems to think that this is an important fact about his work. Though one can find that he does put forward some theses, this may show only that - like anyone - he is occasionally inconsistent to his own principles.

His view that he should not produce philosophical theories is one which is interrelated with the whole body of his work. His conviction that one should avoid doing this is not independent of his other thoughts and one cannot dispense with it without also affecting the understanding of what he is doing in his work more generally.

Wittgenstein thinks that the most fundamental mistake a philosopher can make is to try to say something. To want to say what cannot be said, to say things that it makes no sense to say. He maintains that the solution to the problems of philosophy can only come from the elimination of the desire to say such things. The proper role of philosophy is to dissolve, rather than resolve, philosophical problems, to dissipate the impulse to philosophise rather than to give full rein to it.

The unconstructive reading of Wittgenstein makes we think more sense of his work than can otherwise be done. It makes a very different thing of his arguments and addresses them to very different problems than does the constructive interpretation. That is why we shall pursue a more 'leftwing' course. At the very least it requires us to treat more seriously some aspects of his work, particularly those emphasising philosophy as therapy than do those which simply set aside Wittgenstein's insistence that he has no theories by pointing to the ones they take to be his. They do not have to puzzle about why Wittgenstein thought it important to make these noises against philosophical theorising.

One specific reason we have for taking this line is that it accords with what we have said about the changes that might be wrought by his philosophy. We have said that it alters attitudes, rather than doctrines. One attitude which Wittgenstein does try, very much, to alter is that which supposes that one can only reject a theory if one has one which is better to put in its place. Wittgenstein certainly wants to modify this attitude, to get acceptance that in certain places one can give up a theory without having to put anything in its place. In giving up some theories, those of a philosophical sort, one is not giving up anything of real value and no alternative can really improve on that, therefore the whole aim is to dismantle certain theories and to show that one can do, altogether, without a theory here.

The constructive reading of Wittgenstein may give intelligent and interesting interpretations of his texts but it does unquestioningly perpetuate the attitude that Wittgenstein thought undesireable. The unconstructive one can be just as faithful to the letter of his writings and equally faithful to their spirit.

2.2 Language, Meaning and Reality

Sociologists have at least two great (and often closely related) interests in the problem of the relation of language to reality. One is methodological,the other substantive. It is this which ensures that there will be some conflict between their views and Wittgenstein's, especially when the latter is understood as a protagonist of 'ordinary language.'

The methodological interest arises from a concern with the role of language in the acquisition of knowledge. Language is not thought of as a passive medium for l,lse in the accumulation of knowledge and there is, therefore, a concern to ensure that the effects it has on the work of finding things out will be such as to promote, rather than hinder, the process of accumulation. The methodological interest in language is, then, precisely about the issue of its relation to reality:how does language allow or prevent us from saying true things about how reality is?

The language that is available to us - the vernacular - has poor repute amongst methodologists. It is looked upon as quite unsuited to the acquisition of knowledge, of correctly identifying, specifying and communicating the facts about how things fundamentally (orobjectively)are. It is deemed insufficiently precise,clear, well organised and stable to fulfill the exacting tasks involved in systematically and explicitly describing the informationengenderedinproperscientificinquiry.

It is thought that the words which make up our ordinary language are vauge and ambiguous in their meanings,that they have been assembled in a completely haphazard way without a single thought for the part that they would have to play in any thorough and integrated classificatory scheme. Furthermore, there are not strict and explicit rules governing the use that ismade of them and nothing to ensure that they will be used consistently by any one speaker or between speakers and to prevent them being employed in accord with the idiosyncratic preferences and under the influence of the subjectivetheoriesoftheirusers.

This casual and unreliable way with words is out of place in the life of science. There expression must be lucid and exact, and understanding must be unequivocal and standardised. There can only be a genuine consensus on how reality is if the language which communicates the findings and theories is disinfected of those idiosyncratic and subjective elements and this requires that the symbols which make it up be used according to explicit and rigidly applied codes. This calls for the creation of technical language, distinct from that in use amongst the masses, and preferably for communication through logico-mathematical symbolism.

The verdict on ordinary language is, then, that its meanings are obscure and loose, and that, therefore, it is impossible to determine what is said in it, or to employ its expressions in any context in which there is a premium on sharpness, regularity, consistency and systematicity of discrimination; and thatwhatordinary language cansay is, inany case,very likely tobe untrue for the language embodies too many ill informed opinions (notto say prejudices) about the way that reality is. It arises from and expresses pre-scientific conceptions about reality and,

consequently, must share the deficiencies that those conceptions will likely, or have already been show to, have.

Methodologically, then, sociologists are characteristically concerned to identify and avoid the deficiencies of ordinary language. They think that the most elementary requirements of rigour demand that they take a critical interest in it, being eternally alert to its capacity to falsify, confuse and mislead.

If someone, as Wittgenstein appears to, says that our ordinary language is perfectly in order as it is, then he is more than likely to be looked upon as perverse, and as attempting to deprive the sociologist of a virtual birthright. Believing that ordinary language is perfectly in order would mean the stifling of that essential critical awareness that the sociologist must have.

That ordinary language is held to be inadequate to objective knowledge means that it acquires a substantive interest in addition to its methodological one. The role of language seems to be that of giving us a comprehension of reality and allowing us to communicate that comprehension. If ordinary language does not do that, does not put us into contact with reality, then what does it do? What is its role? Could the mistake be to think that ordinary language fails to show us how things are? Perhaps it succeeds in obscuring objective reality, perhaps its role is to misrepresent the facts, to frustrate true perception. Perhaps, putting it in so many words, it serves an ideological function.

Confirmation of such suppositions would cast suspicion on someone who - like Wittgenstein - appeared to hold that we could not want anything better than the ordinary language that we have so and who made out that ordinary language shows how things truly are. If the function of ordinary language truly is an ideological one, then work like Wittgenstein's must be that of an ideologue, someone who aims to distract our attention from the failings of colloquialisms and to reinforce their distorting effects by preventing them from being recognised.

The idea that ordinary language is in need of an ideological critique involves the supposition that it is limited, that it only says some of the things that could be said. The fact that any ordinary language is limited can be shown by simple indication of their diversity. One language allows the saying of something that is not possible in another. However, those who aim to make an ideological critique are not normally interested in recommending the superiority of one ordinary language over another ordinary language but in appraising the cognitive adequacy of such languages against reality itself. Ordinary language can be limited, then, not just by comparison with another such but in terms of its capacity to enable apprehension of reality. It may be such as to allow us only to say certain sorts of things and, thus, impose on us the necessity to say false things or deprive us of the ability to say certain sorts of true things.

Both the grammar and the vocabulary of language may be, from this point of view, limited. The grammar may embody certain assumptions about the nature of reality, thus inducing in its speakers the conviction that these assumptions are natural and exclusive and requiring them to 'force' into the mould of that grammar everything that they want to say. They are confined into saying only things which concur with the 'metaphysics' (the theory of reality) built into the language.

Likewise, the vocabulary may be seen as restricted, providing the speaker with a collection of words which will dispose them to notice and identify only certain things ram amongst those they could theoretically notice and identify) and providing them with the linguistic resources to express only certain kinds of conceptions 0ut of all the possible conceptions that, again theoretically, would be possible for them).

If the language is thought of containing an in-built theory, its own metaphysic, then that particular theory will have the appearance - to the language's speakers -of an indubitable truth. It will be something of great familiarity to them and its organisation will be such as to prevent them from being aware that there are intelligible alternatives to it. It will, thus, seem obvious, unquestionable, natural. It will seem like 'common sense'. The ideological critique will see the critique of ordinary language and common sense as the two sides of the same coin: accepting the practices of the former virtually means condoning the prejudices of the latter.

Someone like Wittgenstein, who appears to approve of what we say in our ordinary language, also seems to be endorsing the common sense of our time and place, protecting that from questioning by insisting that we cannot criticise the language which is its incarnation. Since the *raison d'etre* of sociology is, in the eyes of many, just to disturb the complaisance of common sense this is the resignation of the discipline's key purpose.

There ought to be some warning bells ringing when such characterisations of the weaknesses of Wittgenstein's supposed positions are given. If Wittgenstein is saying, or implying, the kind of things that he has been indicted with over the last few paragraphs then he is just flying in the face of facts of which he must, himself, be fully and forcefully aware. It is entirely clear to him the human languages are various and that they are also historically varied. If he is trying to pull the wool over our eyes by trying to convince us that the idioms of the Oxbridge common room (or the Clapham omnibus) say all and everything that a language could aspire to, then he is making neither a sophisticated nor an effective effort at this, especially as he himself emphasises the possibility of radically different conceptions to those we now possess and seeks, rather doggedly, to convince that even those of our conceptions which might

seem more inflexible and unavoidable - those of mathematics - are contingent and could well be radically otherwise than they are.

Wittgenstein does indeed insist that we cannot exceed the limits of our ordinary language but when he does so he has other problems in mind than those which animate the ideological critic and he is talking about very different kinds of limitations than they understand. Saying that we cannot exceed the limits of our ordinary language does nothing to deny that we can alter that self -same language or to maintain that its character is essentially unchangeable.

If Wittgenstein thinks that it just unsatisfactory to take up philosophical positions and that, for example, the idea of materialism-versus- idealism offers a pointless option he is not going to be all that happy to be drawn into a controversy between absolutism-and-relativism. If it is the very setting up of philosophical issues into those kinds of controversies than he takes exception to, then it will be as unacceptable in the one case as in the other.

Before making efforts to say how Wittgenstein stands on these issues it might be wise to look to see why he should think it undesirable to take stands on them and what steps he might take to avoid being compelled to do so.

One further consequence of the nature of sociology's interest in ordinary language is that Wittgenstein comes to be looked on as -inevitably- a relativist. Either one must accept that one language is in accord with reality or, it seems, one must be driven to relativist conclusions. If one supposes that a language must either say how reality is, or not, then if one accepts that languages do say things which conflict with one another, then only one of those languages can be right. If one is, then, the others must be wrong. If the language of science says how reality is, and if it conflicts with what other languages say, then that language must be right, the others wrong. Wittgenstein appears to want to deny this. He wants to say that ordinary language is right, but since ordinary languages conflict with each other and with science, he is presumably trying to say that they can all be right, that truth is relative to each language and that, therefore,each language is right on its own terms. Those who are not interested in charging Wittgenstein with ideological offences often think they have caught him in an elementary philosophical one - relativism is an incoherent and indefensible position

Whatever the merits of those views about language and reality which we have shown engender doubts about the value of Wittgenstein's views, there can be no denying that they do vindicate him on one important point,the claim that philosophical problems do matter in sociology.

They do this by showing that methodological and substantive arguments are implicated with attempts to answer that long standing philosophical query about the connection of language to reality. They show themselves to be pervaded by conceptions about what it is to know

something, about what it takes for something to qualify as a true statement, about what it is that gives or denies a language the potential to state facts about reality. They do come into conflict with Wittgenstein's ideas, but not because there is a confrontation of science and philosophy, but because they contain just the kind of philosophical theories that Wittgenstein is trying to dispose of.

2.3 Language and Reality in the Tractatus

We have warned against thinking that Wittgenstein's work can be directly compared with sociological ideas. His views about language, thought, meaning and reality will be seriously misunderstood if they are detached from their setting in philosophy and treated as a quasi-sociological account of the social role of language.

Wittgenstein was motivated by puzzlement about a long standing philosophical problem, that of the relation of language to reality? The question which he posed was: how is it possible for language to relate to reality? This is not the same as [1] how does language relate to reality?

One idea which is an appealing one is that language relates to reality by corresponding to it. When we say something true of the world, then what we say about how it is corresponds to how it is. There is an answer: there is a correspondence between our statements and the facts. Wittgenstein's own ideas in the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus incorporated such ideas as giving a crucial understanding of the nature of truth, but the question of what it was for a statement to be true was only part of his problem.

His problem was, we said, how is it possible for language to relate to reality, not just: how does a true statement relate to that which it was true of? The capacity of a true statement to correspond to the facts raises, rather than answers Wittgenstein's question. A statement is true if it corresponds to the relevant fact(s) but how are we to tell if a statement does correspond to them?

If we want to check whether a statement is true, then we should presumably compare it with the relevant facts, see whether they are as the statement says they are. That, however, gives no indication of how we can make such a check: which facts are we to examine, which facts are the ones that will relevantly conform to or depart from the situation the statement specifies? There is a connection between language and reality which comes before that between a statement and the state of affairs that it applies to. There is that connection which enables us, so to speak, to direct our statements towards states of affairs, which makes it possible for us to say things about the facts.

Let us try to clarify this by presenting it a little less abstractly. Someone says, 'there is a book on the desk'. That statement will be true if the facts are as the statement says they are. Which facts? Which facts shall we check to see if it is true. Shall we, for example, look out of the window and see if the moon has risen? If it has, will that make the statement true? Or shall we, instead, count how many fingers we have and if we have ten will that make it true that 'there is a book on the desk'. A statement is true if it says something about a part of the world that is so but the world has a great many parts (perhaps an infinite number) and we need, if we are to be able to make and assess true statements, to have ways of telling which parts of the world are singled out by statements as being relevant to the truth or falsity of them. We need, after all, not only to know where to look to find the relevant facts (if they obtain) but also how to te11 when failure to find them shows that they do not obtain (that the statement is false.)

There is no real problem for us, if we speak English, in seeing which facts relate to the truth of the statement 'there is a book on the table'. If we understand English then we see, right away, that if someone in this room, with a table in its corner, says 'There is a book on the table' then what is said will be true if there is, indeed, a book on that table. If there is no book there, the statement will be false. We understand, if we speak the language, what the statement means, and we are not - in the ordinary run of things - puzzled as to how to tell if it is true or not.

In the Tractatus Wittgenstein took the view that to know what a statement means is the same as knowing what would be the case if it were true. Thus, our understanding 'There is a book on the table' is the same as knowing that if there is a book on the table, then this is true. The connection between language and reality is, then, built into the language itself, is built into the very meaning of its expressions. To understand an expression is to have an idea of what facts there can be.

This points us toward an answer to the still unresolved question, how can language possibly relate to reality? That answer is given by the now infamous picture theory of meaning.

A picture relates to something in the world, it gives a picture of it. It can succeed or fail in representing the thing it is a picture of. A portrait can look like its subject or fail to do so. If we look at a picture and then at its subject we can confirm if there is a likeness, will see if the portrait really does look like the person. There is a very direct connection between the two. However, it is not the comparison of the portrait with its subject which establishes that it is a portrait of that subject. After all, the picture may not look like the subject hardly at all, it gives an appallingly poor likeness, nonetheless it is of this subject such that it is this person's looks which settle whether this is or is not a faithful portrait. The portrait

may look more like someone else, but that does not make it a portrait of this other person. Hence, we have to be able to tell from the portrait itself who it is a portrait of in order that we can then decide whose looks to examine to see if they are matched by it.

A picture has many respects in which it is like a statement, then. With a statement, too, we are able to see from the statement itself which facts it is about. The facts may be quite otherwise than it says they are but they will, nonetheless, be the ones which the statement is about, for it is their being those that makes them the facts which confirm or refute the statement.

It is not unreasonable, then, to suppose that the relation between a picture and the thing it pictures may in other ways be the same sort of relationship that obtains between language and facts. Indeed, it might even be thought that 'picturing' could be the basis of all systems of representation. This is what Wittgenstein thought. Any systern of representation relates to the world because it involves a picturing relationship to it.

The picturing relationship itself is one of 'correspondence'. A picture can portray something through the combination of its constituent elements. Colours and shapes make up the picture, being laid out in a particular configuration and whether or not they portray the things they are of depends on whether the configuration in which those shapes and colours are deployed is like unto the way in which the constituents making up the thing portrayed are deployed. If there is a correspondence between the arrangements of the elements in the picture and the arrangement of elements making up the thing, then the one does represent the other.

Thus, in a much simplified idea of paintings, if one shows the subject to have blue eyes, grey hair, a small head on broad shoulders and so forth, then if that subject does have, still, head on shoulders, blue eyes, grey hair etc we can see that this is a portrait of that person. If, however, the portrait shows brown hair, fewer wrinkles than the subject has, we shall find it to be an unfaithful portrait though, perhaps, one that flatters.

After the fashion of pictures, then, correspondence is the key to all systems of representation. Note, by the way, that it is with systems of representations (rather than particular representations) that Wittgenstein is concerned. A painting can be a good or bad likeness only against the whole practice of painting and making portraits, only because it works within the context of a quite elaborate set of arrangements for presenting things by daubing colours on flat surfaces. The correspondence is between the structure of the system of representation and the structure of the set of possibilities that it is to represent. It is the capacity of the structure of a system of representation to correspond to the structure of reality itself that makes it possible for the system of representation to state facts about the world.

Any system of representation a tradition of painting, a way of scoring music, a natural language) involves the permutation of combinations of elements. The elements represent things, and their permutation presents the possible arrangements into which those things can go. For very simple example, consider two elements 'a' and 'b'. These elements stand for people and they can be used to represent the spatial relations in which those people stand. They are pretty limited in that they apply only to the relations 'is to the left of' and 'is to the right of'. Thus we can represent two possible situations: 'ab' and 'ba'. The spatial relation of a to b is represented by the spatial relations of the symbols themselves. If the persons are John (who is a) and Bob (our b) then 'ab' says 'John is to the left of Bob' because the symbol a is to the left of b. Putting them around the other way with 'b' to the left of 'a' gives us Bob is to the left of John. Here the spatial arrangement of the symbols, to the right or left of each other, corresponds to the spatial arrangement of the things being symbolised. This is a pictorial arrangement in a relatively literal sense but, of course, Wittgenstein is very far from suggesting that the pictorial capacity of language is of this rather literal kind, that it is from spatial and other aspects of statements that we saw their correspondence to facts.

Consider a slightly more complex case, where the symbols are the same but a new one 'R' representing 'is older than' is introduced. 'aRb' means 'John is older than Bob' because of the way that our symbolism is organised but it does not represent a spatial relationship.

There is some sort, spatial or otherwise, of correspondence between the structure of a system of representation and the arrangement of things it represents. This is the essence of the picture of theory of meaning. A language represents, through the possible combination of its words, the possible combinations into which the things in the world can go. When the combination of words is structurally correspondent with an actual state of affairs, then it states a fact.

We must be careful, however, to appreciate that Wittgenstein's interest is in the capacity of a language to state possible facts. The language, if it is to be able to correspond to any actual fact, must be able to represent not just the arrangements into which things do go, but those into which they can go. The primary relationship between language and reality, for Wittgenstein, is this: that the structure of the possible combinations into which the words of a language can go corresponds to the structure of the possible combinations into which the things that make up the world can go.

This does not mean that one can see what Wittgenstein means by taking our ordinary statements and trying to see how their structure can correspond to the facts. If we tried to do that we should indeed by misled by the ordinary language. The way to see and understand

the structural correspondence of language to reality was by going beneath the 'surface' of that language through a process of analysis which would break it up into its elementary, its ultimate constituents and which would also identify the ultimate constituents of reality itself: it was between these that the structural correspondences would be visible. Our ordinary statements and the states of affairs they are about being compounds of these ultimate constituents do not make perceptible the nature of their structural correspondence.

Any system of representation has permitted and forbidden possibilities of combination. If we take ours which allows 'aRb' and 'bRa': it does not permit 'aRa' and 'bRb' i.e. does not allow 'John is older than himself' or 'Bob is older than himself'• Our natural language likewise does not permit these combinations. It was this which Wittgenstein took to be critical to demarcating the limits of language.

What Wittgenstein wanted to trace in the Tractatus was the boundary that delimited factual discourse. He was, therefore, interested in discriminating those statements which were of a factual kind from those which were not. It is of the utmost importance that it be realised that statements of a factual kind are not those which state how the facts are, but those which are capable of saying how the facts could possibly be. A factual statement, as we are speaking of them here, eauld be either true or false. Thus, there is a book on the table, would be true: there could be a book on the table. It could be false: there could be no book on the table. It does not matter whether it is true or false as far as its factual character is concerned. It is capable of being one or the other because it is about some facts. Those facts, because we understand it, we can identify and see how they bear on its truth or falsity.

A factual statement, then, can be either true or false. A statement which does not single out any possible facts cannot be either true or false and it falls outside of the domain of factual statements. Wittgenstein was looking for a way of drawing the boundary between those statements which are about facts (i.e. identify some possible facts) from those which do not. He has found it in the 'grammar' of the system of representation. Statements which conform to the rules of combination of the system of representation can be about facts, but those that do not so conform cannot.

Thus, if we take 'aRb', John is older than Bob, we have no problem in seeing that this could be either true or false. John might be older than Bob but then again he might not be. We can see how to check this out. A glance at them might be sufficient, or it might take the production of birth certificates to settle it but we can, even so, see that there are ways of deciding this.

What, though, are we to do with 'aRa', John is older than himself. Does this state a possible fact, one that could be either true or false? If it does, then what facts should we look to in order to determine whether it is true or false? There is no answer to this one. No possible facts are identified by this assertion and hence it cannot be tested against them.

Factual statements are importantly to be distinguished from those statements which look like they are factual, as though they say something that could be true or false though they do not. Consider the statements 'Either it is raining or it is not raining' and 'It is raining and it is not raining.' These may look like statements which could be true or false. It will be tempting to think that the first one is (has got to be) true and that the other is as got to be). The first is a tautology, and it is often regarded as being something which is necessarily true, whilst the other is a contradiction and looked upon as necessarily false.

Wittgenstein sees them differently. They are at the boundaries of factual discourse rather than within it. They do not say anything which it would take facts to settle, they do not single out any particular states of affairs as those to which they could correspond. Since they do not say anything about how some facts are, they cannot be true or false.

'Either it is raining or it is not raining' allows the whole range of possible states of affairs, for it must be raining or not raining, but it does not indicate anything about which state of affairs actually obtains, hence it cannot be true of any such state of affairs. By contrast 'It is raining and it is not raining' speaks of a state of affairs that is not possible: it must be either raining or not in any actual state of affairs and therefore, once again, there is a failure to single out facts which could be used to check the truth of a statement. Tautologies and contradictions are not, in Wittgenstein's interpretation, factual statements at all, and cannot therefore be either true or false. They are, in his terminology, without sense.

To say that they are senseless or nonsense is quite different from saying that they are gobbledeygook, something that is obviously gibberish and can be recognised as such on sight. The cases that Wittgenstein is interested in are just those which look very much, very very much, as if they do have sense, as though they do say something factual, though they do not do this. These are the things which, Wittgenstein thinks, philosophers characteristically say.

The importance of Wittgenstein's differentiation of philosophical from scientific statements can now be seen very clearly, if the argument has been followed at all. The things philosophers say fall outside the boundary that delimits factual discourse, whilst the things scientists say fall within that. The things philosophers say are, therefore, without sense: they say nothing that could be either true or false. They are made as if they are factual statements but they violate the rules of factual discourse (its grammar) and therefore do not result in any genuine factual

statement, any more than does 'John is older than himself'· They seem like factual statements, of the most general and fundamental kind but they are not- if Wittgenstein is right - factual statements at all. They are non-sense.

When Wittgenstein says that the characteristic philosophical statement is nonsense, this provokes much incredulity. To say the least, his temerity is shocking. How dare he say that philosophy is just silliness and that there is nothing to it? Plenty of people read philosophy and find a great deal in it. Who is Wittgenstein to tell them that it means nothing?

Wittgenstein is not presuming to tell people that things they have read are utter gibberish, that they have been unable to recognise as such though they certainly ought to have been. He recognises that as they read it they find themselves able to follow it and make sense of what it is saying. When he characterises it as non-sense, it is as the kind of nonsense which it will be very, very difficult to recognise for what it is. It looks an awful lot like sense, so much so that it is a tricky business of telling it from the genuine article.

Whether something has sense is to be settled in other ways than by appealing to our reactions, to our feelings about it and the feeling that one has when reading some philosophy that it not only says something, but says something deep and profound is entirely irrelevant. One feels that a piece of philosophy is telling one something in the sense that it is conveying some sort of factual information, is telling us how reality is. The test of whether it is doing that must be elsewhere than in our feeling. Wittgenstein asks, does it say the sort of thing that could convey factual information to us, does it make a statement which could tell us how reality is i.e. tell us what some state of affairs is? If not, then on the account in the Tractatus it appears to have sense, to have a factual character, but lacks it. The claim that philosophy is non-sense, then, is about the worth of the statements it makes, about whether they are capable of being true or false.

To say that philosophy is nonsense, in such terms, is anything but saying that it is silliness. Wittgenstein himself took philosophy very seriously, struggling mightily, with great patience and for a very very long time with some of its problems. Though he is saying that it involves errors he is a long way from claiming that they are stupid errors, made because of the elementary ignorance or condign folly of those who commit them. They are easily made, they are extremely hard to avoid and appallingly difficult to cure. The confusions which give rise to philosophical problems are ones which are deeply rooted in the characteristic tendencies of human thought and language, are extremely difficult to reveal and near-to-impossible to eradicate. Of course people reading philosophy think it tells them something, for it is more than problematical to distinguish the properly factual statement from that which only looks like it.

If the characteristically philosophical remark has only the outward form of a factual statement, it should be apparent why Wittgenstein thinks that his philosophy should avoid the effort to put forward theses. If he wants to make factual statements he will have to take up science. If he continues to work at philosophy then he will be able to make statements which, at best, mimic the appearance of factual statements but lack the substance of them. Though his philosophical theses may contradict those of his predecessors they will make no improvement over them, for they will no more say anything that could be true or false than did those they appear to contradict. Though he says something different from those predecessors, he will have fallen into the same illusions that they had.

It is the objective of his whole approach to persuade people that they can do without philosophical theories. There is no need for philosophical propositions, Wittgenstein's own or anyone else's, for they cannot by their very nature say anything.

If philosophy is to continue, then, it must do so as an activity rather than a body of doctrine. As Wittgenstein conceives it, its business is that of showing people that they have been misled by the appearances of the language that they speak, have been drawn into confusions, and of showing them how they can escape from that confusion. It has no factual information to give them on its own behalf, nothing to add to the stock of knowledge about reality which they already have (whatever that is). It has something to do, rather than anything to say.

2.4 CERTAINTY: A CASE IN POINT.

We have said that philosophical statements are without sense, that they have the form, but not the nature, of factual statements. Just the sort of thing that will do as an example are the sorts of challenging claims that the skeptic will make. The skeptic will tell us such things as that 'no one really knows anything' or 'no one can ever be really certain of anything.' That certainly looks like a statement that tells us something which we did not know before, which tells us how things are.

It seems clear enough to allow the taking of sides about it. It will certainly strike a chord with some, they will respond every positively: yes, that is right. They may well have had the feeling that there is something unsatisfactory about saying with such seemingly unshakeable certainty that they know this or that because history and their own lives are filled with examples of people who were so confident that they were right and yet were mistaken. We may feel very confident on some occasions that we cannot be making a mistake, but ought we to be as sure as we are, can we really deny all possibility of doubt, all prospect that we might be wrong?

We never really know anything' is an evocative expression, it calls up a strong and positive response in some, crystallises - perhaps - their own feelings of unease about going around saying, without hesitation, we know this, that or the other. It is also a provocative expression. equally strong, but negative reaction. It can stir, in other breasts, responses such as 'We never really know anything' is just false. How can anyone say such a thing? It is quite plain that we do know things, all sorts of things. We know our own names, the faces of our children, the time of the train home, the distance from Manchester to London, the height of Mount Everest and so on and on. What is more, we can prove that we know some of these things: we can look up the time of the train in the railway timetable, we can find the height of Mount Everest in an encyclopaedia, we can take you and show you our children, produce identification documents showing we are who we say we are. If we know anything, then we know these things and we know them with certainty.

Before we take up the arguments around skeptical claims about knowledge and certainty, let us first of all draw attention to the fact that it is not Wittgenstein and his followers who drag 'ordinary language' into philosophical controversies. When we state the skeptical claim 'We never really know anything' then we take it that the reader's familiarity with English means that the statement, word by word, at least, looks intelligible enough. There is no need to turn to dictionaries, books on the history of philosophy or anything else to see what words like 'we' and 'never' and 'anything' and 'know' mean. The statement 'We never really know anything' is plain enough English, so much so that the very suggestion that it is without sense seems absurd: the reader can recognise each word, the sentence is just a combination of such words, therefore the sentence itself is clearly understood.

Our point at this moment is, that it is a perfectly ordinary word, 'know', which is the focus of philosophical discussion, and that it is a host of other, similar words such as 'mind', 'believe', 'true', 'perceive', 'see', 'think', 'real', 'good' which provide the stuff of numerous of the long running and important philosophical rows. Philosophers do introduce some technical terms of their own (and a determined few try to conduct their affairs as much as they can in logical symbolism) but philosophy is, in the main, an ordinary language pursuit: Descartes wrote in Latin, Hume in English, Hegel and Wittgenstein in German, etc.

We have sketched some of the arguments of the Tractatus and have tried to show that it involves the effort to demarcate the boundaries of sense, thus showing that the limits to sense was an early preoccupation of Wittgenstein's and one which was very different from that which would occupy sociologists. We are now undertaking to examine the plausibility of the idea that some statements which look quite intelligible are senseless, but we shall not draw on work from

Wittgenstein's Tractatus period to do this, but on writings from the very end of his career, his notes On Certainty. Though there are great changes in his thought between the time of the first book and the last notes, particularly in the ideas and methods, the problem- as will be seen -has lost none of its fascination.

Reverting to the main business, we have said that the proposal that we never really know anything' looks clear enough to allow disagreement. Those who have heard about Wittgenstein from sociology might well think they can anticipate what his position will be. He will side with those who think that there are things which we do know with the requisite certainty, that there are all sorts of common sense things which are right and which can be pointed to in order to rebut the skeptic. Wittgenstein is thought to be a defender of our common sense knowledge and that, at least, must be thought by him to be real knowledge.

Anyone who has been following our argument, however, should have quite different anticipations. Wittgenstein's claim is that the characteristic philosophical argument is neither true nor false, and since 'We never really know anything' is being put forward as a characteristic philosophical claim, presumably that one can be neither right nor wrong.

Wittgenstein's notes On Certainty are just an attempt to puzzle out what it is that is wrong with the kind of answer that has, above, been set out as one that might be given to the skeptic. Wittgenstein is concerned to identify the inadequacies in the argument of someone who had set out to provide a defence of some of our common sense conceptions and who had sought to refute the skeptic by showing that there are some things that we know. G.E.Moore had sought to show that there are some things that we know by holding up one hand and claiming that he knew he had a hand.

Wittgenstein saw the inadequacy of that move as a response to the skeptic's challenge. It is no good in pointing to cases in which we would ordinarily say that we know things and in which we would ordinarily b judged right when one is arguing with a skeptic.

One of us looks out of the window and says 'I see the tree at the bottom of the garden'. Someone else comes over, looks out and says, 'yes, you are right, that is a tree you see at the bottom of the garden.' In good light, at reasonable distance, with something obtrusive like a tree, the confirmation by someone else is sufficient to back up our claim that it is what we see. Indeed, in ordinary circumstances, if one of us says that we know that there is a tree at the bottom of our garden,that will be good enough for most people, neither they nor we will want anyone else to check up on this to justify our saying that we are sure.

Telling the skeptic that this is so will likely give no surprise to him, but will indeed instance just the kind of excessive complacency, undue confidence, that his skeptical arguments are meant to unsettle. He knows that people say such things to each other and are routinely satisfied by them, and he may even be willing to concede that, in the ordinary sense, they are right to say that they know. That they will think they have done enough
to justify saying 'I know this or that...' is not in question. What is at issue is whether they really have done enough to justify it, are they in fact correct when they say they know something. Do they, that is, really know in an other-than-the-ordinary sense of that word?

The skeptic is not seeking to straightforwardly contradict the things that we ordinarily say to one another, and reaffirming those does not, consequently, comprise a response to his challenge. If someone says, ' I know that there is a tree at the bottom of my garden' the skeptic does not want to say, 'you're wrong, I've checked, and that is just a plaster statue of a tree'. The skeptic seeks to induce doubt, to create some hesitancy about saying 'I know... ' in the first place.

If someone says 'I know..' then the skeptic treats that as a claim to the effect that there can be no possible doubt about what is known and tries to show that there are doubts which have not been disposed of. Someone says 'I know there is a tree at the bottom of my garden' and the skeptic says 'Are you sure, have you checked that it is not a well made, very
successful plaster reproduction of the tree?' The person has not checked: ah,well then, are you certain that someone has not removed the original tree and replaced it with a plaster one?

Of course, going out and checking that the tree is not plaster, but is wood will not satisfy the skeptic. The skeptic, after all, is not out to show that this or that is in doubt, but to show that there always can be a doubt and that no matter how many are disposed of, others will spring up in their place. In short, if saying that we know something means that there is no possible room for doubt, then the skeptic wants to say we can never correctly say we know anything, for there will always be some possible doubt. For very simple example, if we go out and check that the tree is not plaster but wood, the skeptic can then ask, can we be sure that we went out and checked and did not just dream that we went and checked? Can we be sure we were not dreaming, and how could that be so? Even if we propose ways in which we might have checked whether we were dreaming or not we shall be met with the question: did we not dream that we had checked whether we were dreaming or
not. It looks impossible to stave off the claim that we might be dreaming all of it, that we can never be sure we are really doing something or only dreaming it. There are other, some much more imaginative possibilities uch as having our brains controlled by radio waves from other planets) that the skeptic might point to that would likewise seem impossible to answer.

If we cannot preclude these possibilities, then, says the skeptic, we can never really and confidently say we know, that there is no possible mistake. The hopelessness of Moore's proof as a response to the skeptic is apparent to Wittgenstein. If the skeptic is prepared to introduce such doubts, then what good is holding up a hand before him and saying 'I know I have a hand'? This just invites the same kind of strategy that the skeptic always employs: perhaps you do not have a hand, perhaps you are under the influence of a drug which makes it appear that there is a hand where there is only a stump.

The only way to make headway in arguments with skepticism is to try to show that the skepti c does not offer any real challenge to our claims to know this or that, that there is nothing in those challenges for us to answer and so we cannot be found to be without an answer to them. It is something like this like that Wittgenstein takes through a reconsideration of Moore's claim that he has a hand.

In his early days, Wittgenstein was attracted to what is known as the redundancy theory of truth. Thus simply means that the expression 'true' is redundant. Saying 'It is true that it is raining' is the same as saying 'It is raining.' This means that 'It is true that' is redundant. Though Wittgenstein did not hold the redundancy theory in his later work, he does, nonetheless depend upon the element of truth that is present in that theory. It is the case that presented with two sentences like 'It is raining' and 'It is true that it is raining' it is often very difficult to see what difference in meaning there is between them (which is not to say that there would be no difference, but it is one that will not be detected by inspecting the sentences like that).In his later work, Wittgenstein does not hold that 'true' is redundant but he can, nonetheless, make some progress in philosophical debate by showing that it and expressions related to it (like 'know') often appear to be so.

The first question we can ask about Moore's claim that he knows he has a hand, then, is what is the difference between him saying 'I know I have a hand ' and his saying 'Here is a hand' ? Apart from the fact that philosophers have got an argument going about whether we can know anything, which seems to make it important for Moore to say, well here at least is one thing I know, that I have a hand, what need is there to say 'I know I have a hand?'

The redundancy theory of truth would suggest that if we say 'It is true that it is raining' and 'It is raining' we have said the same thing, that the two things mean the same. It would follow then that we could exchange these two ways of speaking in all contexts, that they would mean the same thing. Would they? Does 'know' operate in the same fashion. Let us imagine some contexts in which one says might use these expressions.

Sitting around in someone's garden, carrying on a casual conversation, someone says 'I've always wanted a tree at the bottom of my garden' and someone else says 'There is a tree at the

bottom of my garden.' What happens here is intelligible and smooth enough, people are -as they often do- comparing notes on what their gardens are like. However consider the same scenario with the introduction of 'know': The first says 'I've always wanted a tree at the bottom of my garden' and the other one says 'I know there's a tree at the bottom of my garden.' This is not the same at all, and if it is the case that 'I know' is redundant here it is not because it is unnecessary, but that it is out of place: I know that there is a tree at the bottom of my garden does not, in this context, mean the same as 'there is a tree at the bottom of my garden.'

Let us be satisfied for present purposes that to know what a statement means is to grasp what it is telling us. In our first exchange, in which the speaker tells us that there is a tree at the bottom of his garden, he is telling us at least that he has got the kind of thing we want (which might be a prelude to telling us whether it really is as gratifying a thing to have a we have imagined it to be etc.) In the second case, when he tells us he knows that he has a tree at the bottom of the garden it is far from clear just what he is telling us.

Wittgenstein tries to steer our attention away from questions about whether our claims to know things are right, justified,and toward questions about what they mean, whether they make any sense, and tries to show that the same statement might make clear sense in one context, but fail to do this in another. Thus, Moore's claim to know that he has a hand has no clear sense that would differentiate it from 'here's a hand' when delivered in the course of a philosophical lecture. What is he telling anyone when he affirms that he knows that he has a hand?

In some circumstances, to say 'I know•••X' makes sense, but in others it does not seem to. Thus, two people sit out in the garden, admiring the view and looking at the large tree that dominates the bottom of the garden. Suddenly one of them says 'I know that's a tree'· This is a case in which the statement is unintelligible: what have we been told? The one sitting next to us suddenly puts forward this claim to know that the tree at the end of the garden is a tree: what is the significance of that, how are we to respond? It is very hard to know. On the other hand, somebody says 'What is a redwood?' and the other says 'It's a tree', the first says 'Are you sure?' and the other says, 'Listen, I know that's a tree.' Now, 'I know that's a tree' says something here, it says something like 'Take my word for it' or 'Yes, I am really sure.'

It is a very serious misunderstanding to think that Wittgenstein is here pointing to something like 'conversational redundancy', that he is telling us that there are some things which there is no point in saying because they are obvious and known to the parties engaged in the talk. This is a way in which he is sometimes taken but it is completely wrong and misses the point of the entire argument.

Consider the case in which one of the people in the garden just blurts out 'I know that that is a tree'. It is tempting to think that this is redundant because it tells us nothing that we do not already know, that we know that this person knows that that is a tree and do not, therefore, expect to be told what we obviously already know in common. It is not that 'I know that's a tree' fails to tell us anything because we already have such information as it could convey, viz that the person knows that is a tree.

Wittgenstein's point is more basic than that. It is that we do not know what kind of information it is that 'I know that is a tree' could convey in such a context, that we do not, either, understand what it would be to say 'He knows that's a tree, we know he knows that, and so there is no need for him to te 11 us .' There is a tree at the bottom of the garden, he and the other person can both see it: what is added to that by saying 'they know there is a tree at the bottom of the garden'?

The title of Wittgenstein's notes is On Certainty but our talk, so far, has all been about knowledge. This is as it should be, for the skeptical discussion of knowledge has long connected it with certainty. To know something is to be certain of it, and to be certain is to be in a position in which doubt is impossible. As is well known, when Descartes attempted to identify that which could not be doubted he found that there was very little, only the famous truth, 'I think, therefore I am'. Skeptical doubt is, as we have tried to show, very corrosive.

What Wittgenstein tries to do is to dissociate knowledge and certainty, to show that the connection between these two things has been misconstrued. He tries to demonstrate that knowledge has a constitutional connection not with certainty but with uncertainty. We can only claim to know that which it is possible to doubt. He tries, too, to make a (rather different) constitutional link between doubt and certainty: we can only doubt within a context of certainty.

The link between know ledge and certainty has also been vital to the 'foundational' tendency in philosophical thought. The idea is that a construction is only as good as the foundations on whi eh it is bui 1t: if a body of knowledge is not founded on some certain and unquestionable propositions then it is no more certain than they are is not, on the skeptical conception, knowledge at all.

Wittgenstein's argument is, then, very simply this: that claims to know things make sense only in contexts in which a doubt has been raised. There are some things about which no doubt is possible and which, hough they are as certain as anything could be,are not things which we could say we know.

It can perhaps now be seen why the blurted out claim 'I know that's a tree' is without sense: there is no doubt on anyone's part that this person can see the tree at the end of the garden and therefore no way in which the statement that he knows it is can be a sensible claim. If the 'function• of 'know' is (if we can put it as crudely as this) to deny an uncertainty, then it there is no sign of an uncertainty for it to deny, hence nothing for it to say.

There are things, in our lives, which are the rock bottom certainties of it. There are things like the power of sight. We depend on our capacity to see to a massive extent and our lives are built around it, so much so that those who lack sight can find life very difficult, designed for anything but their convenience. Where people lack sight, we try to provide substitutes for it. As far as getting to know things is concerned, sight is very important again. If we want to know whether there is life on Mars we try looking for it, peering through telescopes and other aids to vision to see if we can detect anything, eventually sending up remotely controlled vehicles that will send back pictures enabling us to look around more closely. That our eyes work is about as certain as anything could be. That our eyes work is a foundation of our way of life, it is something wedded into all of our pursuits, and without this all our ways of doing things would fall into disrepair. Are we right to be so certain?

Against what kind of standard are we to test that question? Could we be more certain than we are about the powers of sight? We said, our confidence in our eyesight is as great as confidence in anything could be, but could there not be something in which we could have more confidence? Could we not seek to make our confidence in eyesight stronger than it is, so that it could match the confidence that is even greater than that we have in our eyesight?

In what do we have more confidence than in our eyesight? And if we withdraw confidence in our eyesight, then what kinds of tests are we going to make to try out its certainty. In many of the contexts of our life it is our eyesight that we use to check things out, t is by looking and seeing that we confirm doubtful matters in very, very many cases. If there is a doubt whether something is a certain thing, then a good view of it in good light is often counted as establishing what it is. If we suddenly decide that we should check out the power of eyesight, what are we going to test it against, what kinds of tests can we construct that won't somewhere, somehow, depend on eyesight? Remember, we are not talking about the individual's power of vision for, of course, we can test that: we test one person's capacity to see against that of others. We are, rather, talking about a test of the power of eyesight in general, which means that everyone's sight is under examination; against what is that to be checked. It cannot be anyone's eyesight.

Of course, the other senses won't do: we are confident in hearing, touch, smell and so forth in the same way as we are in sight, and if we cannot count on sight to give us good results, then

why should we expect that sound, touch (or even reason) would give us any standard to appraise it. It is anything but apparent what it could be to have greater confidence in something than that which we repose in sight. We have built our entire lives around it. It is also highly problematical to know how we could be less confident in sight than we are, to know what kinds of reservations we might introduce about its powers that would lead us to wonder if we should repose in them the trust that we do.

We know, of course, that sight isn't infallible, that people see things that aren't there, that some cannot discriminate colours, that there are visual illusions, that visual estimates of length and distance are often awry, that one thing can misleadingly look like another etc. However, the kind of reservations we are being asked to imagine are those that would apply to sight (again) in general, to suggest that it might not work at all. The problem is that one of conceiving what a serious doubt would be here,rather than that of providing a defence against a certain kind of doubt.

This is a sketch of some of Wittgenstein 's lines of thought and makes no effort to outline a case which would effectively lock the skeptic out. There are, of course, ways in which the skeptic could attempt to cast general doubt on our powers of sight, perhaps by generalising the limited reservations that we have about it starting from the fact we can be deceived by visual illusions to the suggestion that everything is a visual illusion. Such arguments would have to be gone over in their own terms and at a length that simply is incompatible with the space available. It just has to do to say that it is difficult to accept that doubts which might be raised about the power of sight in general are genuine doubts ,and that this can be argued in great detail relative to the supposed doubts that the skeptic raises.

We are very confident in our powers of sight, as is attested to by our life-and-death dependence on them. Do we therefore know that eyesight works. Or might we not know it. It seems as though if we can say 'We know that eyesight works' we shall be putting ourselves in the strongest imaginable position - we will be saying there is no uncertainty here. If, on the other hand, we say that we don't know that eyesight works, we shall sound as though we are putting ourselves in a weaker position, as though we should be much more chary when we use our eyes, much more reluctant to de vi se things that depend on the power of sight, perhaps send all our television sets back to the rental agencies and shops. However, saying that we know eyesight works does not add anything to the fact that we are so solidly reliant on it, nor does saying that we do not know that it works indicate anything that we should do in a more tentative manner than we now do.

It makes no sense to say that we know that eyesight works, or to deny that we know this, though we are as confident in eyesight as in anything. It makes no sense to say that we know it

works, because we have no real idea of how we would check out to see if we were wrong on this. Correspondingly, it makes no sense to say that we do not know that eyesight works because we do not know what we should have to do to confirm that it did. Here is something of which we are certain,but which we cannot (intelligibly) claim to known.

The idea that our knowledge must be founded in some proposition which we know with indubitable certainty is being quietly undermined by an argument of the above sort, the who le 'foundational' picture of knowledge which has had such an influence on philosophy is being discredited. If our knowledge is 'founded' in anything, then it is founded in things of which we are certain, but which we cannot say we know. Our capacity to get to know things is 'founded', if that is the word, in our reliance on eyesight (amongst other things, of course). Thus, we use our eyesight to test out claims to know various things. If someone says that the Picasso on the wall is a fake then someone can go over and look at it very carefully, examine the paint, the style of painting, the details closely and conclude, yes,it is a fake. We now know that that is not a genuine Picasso; we have tested it against criteria of genuineness. In making that examination we cannot make a test of eyesight, for that is the thing that is being used to carry on the test. We could, of course, use a Picasso painting we knew to be fake to test the eyesight and other attributes of someone supposed to know about pictures: if after looking at it closely, they could not tell that this obvious fake was one, we should be able to wonder if their eyes were failing them etc.

In deciding whether a statement is true, then, some things are acknowledged to be open to doubt, they might be so or not, but other things have to be 'held rigid', have to be put outside of doubt if there is to be any test at all. We can use our eyes to check out what the reading on the meter is, and our assertion as to what that is can be right or wrong, to be determined by looking to see where the pointer is. We cannot, however, check out the reading on the meter if we do not accept that looking and seeing where the pointer is is the way to decide what the voltage is, if we cannot accept that an ordinary sighted person can tell where the needle is.

It is against the background of things we cannot doubt that we can begin to make claims to knowledge. Claims to knowledge, as we have stated, are constitutionally connected to the possibility of doubt. It is where there is the possibility of doubt that it makes sense to say that you know something: where there is no such possibility, it makes no sense to say that you know.

Someone says 'Did you know that Jim was in Crete' and you can say 'Is he, I thought he was in Birmingham'. Jim might or might not be in Crete, you might or might not know Jim's whereabouts and in such a case, if asked, you can say 'Yes I did know' or 'No I did not know that.' Here there is a prospect of error, someone might have got something wrong.

You talk to some people in a bar. Someone to whom you have been talking for some time has to leave, and after he has gone the person next to you says 'Did you know that was Jim Fishwick' and you say 'As a matter of fact I did.' The other person has been showing their uncertainty: they did not know if you realised who you were talking to, knew their name or not.

You talk with some friends in a bar. You talk mostly with Jim, your oldest and best friend. He has to leave, and after he has gone, your second best and second oldest friend who has been sitting next to you says 'Did you know that was Jim you were talking to?' What is he saying, what is he asking? He can have had no uncertainty as to who that was, nor about the extent of your familiarity with him. It is because there is no uncertainty that we can identify that we cannot make out what the question asks.

Again, let us stress, that sense of questions about and responses to claims of knowledge requires the identification of the uncertainties that they may indicate or reject. It is in this sense that the link between 'know' and uncertainty is constitutional, that the introduction of the word know indicates that some doubt is being introduced or rejected. Consequently, if no doubt is conceivable, the word knowledge cannot be intelligibly introduced.

Very well, someone says: I know that was Jim. There was a doubt, the questioner was not sure if that one had met Jim before and is reassured that he has, he recognised him all right. Is the one who has said that he knows that was Jim justified in his claim. Is it inconceivable that he was wrong in this. The skeptic will say not, of course, for as we pointed out long ago, that skeptic can always raise new problems for any claim anyone makes. If someone says I know that was Jim, I've known him for years and I was standing two feet away from him, I couldn't be mistaken, the skeptic can invite him to consider the possibility of perfected androids which can be made physically alike unto real people and endowed with their personalities, memories etc. Can the possibility that this was Jim be ruled out? If not, then we have the very doubt that the claim to knowledge appears to reject. Which it wrongly rejects.

The operation that can be carried out in examining how we use the word 'know' can also be carried out with the word 'doubt'. Just as we have wondered whether saying 'I know X' always constitutes a genuine claim to knowledge so, too, we can ask whether saying 'I doubt it' automatically comprises a doubt, whether the things that the skeptic offers are really doubts at all.

First, however, let us see whether commonplace claims to know are attempts to reject all conceivable doubt. If someone says 'I know Joe Smith' are they wrong to say this if it turns out that the person introduced to them was a confidence trickster pretending to know Joe Smith. They were, of course, wrong in thinking that they knew Joe Smith but does that mean that they were wrong to make the claim that they knew Joe Smith when they did, before they knew he was a fake?

There are two different issues involved here, and the skeptic can profit from their confusion. The skeptic makes it sound as if there is something wrong with the way we use the word know. Something wrong with the way all of us use it. We use it to claim a degree of certainty we are not entitled to. The skeptic tries to show how there are possible doubts about things we claim to know. In this, the skeptic benefits from the conflation of the question ere we right in claiming to know that which we claimed to know' (i.e. was our claim to knowledge right?) with the question 'Were we right to claim to know what we claimed to know' (i.e. was it right to make the claim?)

Even more plainly, the skeptic thinks that if it turns out that some claim to knowledge could turn out to be wrong, then we were wrong to make it. However, we are talking about what we claim when we claim to know something and it is clear enough to all of us that we are often wrong in what we claim to know. I can say, with unshakeable confidence, that I know the date of Napoleon's death but, when we look it up in the encyclopaedia it turns out I am wrong. Someone tells us he knows the winner of the two thirty at Haydock but when we check the result in the evening paper, he turns out to be wrong. That people say they are right does not stop them being wrong, nor do they think that it does: though they may be surprised to find out, in some cases, that they are wrong - very badly and distressingly wrong - they do not imagine that because they said they were right, it was impossible for them to be wrong and that they are not, therefore, wrong.

We have said that claims to knowledge relate to uncertainties. This means that they are made where it is conceivable that things might be otherwise than one says they are. Saying that one knows something is so is staking a claim to the worth of the statement one is making. If I say 'I know the date of Napoleon's birthday' then I say 'This is the right date for Napoleon's birthday.' Saying one knows something contrasts, often with saying one thinks or believes it. If one says 'I think Napoleon's birthday was on the 12th June' then one is acknowledging a doubt; it might not be this. The same with 'I think it's the fourteenth of May', again indicating less than full confidence about the information being relayed. It might, that is, be as well to check that against some other source of information as to rely on me. When one says 'I know the date, June 12th' that is saying, do rely on me, no need to check this out.'

What decides whether one is right in what one claims is the facts about which the claims are made. What decides whether one's claim to know Napoleon's birthday is right or not is the date of his birthday which means, in practice, a good history book or encyclopaedia will do the job. What decides whether one was right to make the claim to know? Since the claim that one knows is an assurance about the trust that can be put in what one has to say about the facts, what decides whether that claim was rightly made is the considerations that relate to being confident.

If someone leaves the racetrack after the two thirty race and tells us that he knows the winner, then having just seen the race and heard the result called, he is right to claim that he knows who it was. If it happens that, after he has left the track, a stewards' inquiry is ea lled and the horse that crossed the line first is disqualified, then it turn out that he was wrong in what he claimed to know, but not wrong in claiming to know it.

His claim is not that there can be no conceivable reason to doubt that something is so, but that he is not aware of any actual reason to doubt it. If someone tells us that he knows the winner of the two thirty, having been at the race track, seen the horse cross the line, and heard the result called then he is telling us that as far as he can give us his assurance there is no reason to doubt that the result is other than he says it is. Of course, that there may have been an enquiry called after he has left the track is not precluded by that claim but, from what he could see of the race and the result there is no reason to expect that one has been called.

Claims that we make to know are not, then, about what uncertainties their might be but about whether and which ones we are prepared to acknowledge. The claim to know, as ordinarily made, is not designed to exclude all conceivable doubts, but any actual ones.

For example, if someone says that they know where a particular person lives, that they can give the address, then it is possible that they are wrong, for the reason that unbeknownst to them, the person might have died and, without checking up to see if that person is still alive, they cannot exclude the possibility that this person has died. They are right in claiming to know where that person lives if they can give the address and need not, to be justified in making the claim, have to preclude the possibility the person might be dead.

There might, though, be room for question as to whether they are right to say they know someone's address if they have not been in touch with that person for ten years. People do move house, and it is a very real possibility that in a ten year span someone might have done, so to say you know that is their address is to claim a confidence to which you are not entitled.

The skeptic treats the claim to 'know' as one which maintains the exclusion of all conceivable doubts, but the claims which we ordinarily make to knowledge are not - if we are correct in our discussion - of that sort, they claim only the exclusion of serious, real doubts. When we say we know something, we do not say that we could not conceive of anything that might make us wrong but that we are not aware of anything which might mean that we wrong. If I say that I know Napoleon's birthday, and I check it in the Encyclopaedia Britannica then that settles it: if the date given there is the one I said I am right. Indeed, I might claim to know the date just because I have gotten it from the Britannica. Of course, it is not inconceivable to me that historical researchers may show the date to be different, that there has been a misprint in the encyclopaedia, that there

is a gigantic conspiracy of Martians to deceive us all about the date of Napoleon's birth. These things are not inconceivable, but neither are they possibilities that I need to take seriously because, while they cannot be ruled out, there are no grounds for ruling them in.

'Doubting' is more than conceiving a possibility that we might be wrong. Doubting is identifying a danger that we are wrong, fearing that the thing which we take to be so is not. Doubting, Wittgenstein argues, requires reasons, the worry that something that would make us wrong actually is the case. Thus, if someone leaves the race track and tells us that he knows the winner of the two thirty we might doubt what he says if someone else has just told us that they were in the bookies and heard there was going to be a stewards' inquiry into the two thirty.

The kind of doubts which philosophers offer are not, on Wittgenstein's estimation, genuine doubts at all. They will suggest to us that things are not perhaps as they seem to us because really our brains are being activated by transmitters run from the planet Mars. Pictures are being projected into our heads and we are really only seeing images in our brain rather than the things that we think we see. Can we, they challenge, rule this possibility out?

Even if not, is it one we have to take seriously. Are they seriously suggesting that this is an actual possibility, and if it is, then what basis have they for the suggestion? The onus surely should be on them to give us evidence that such a possibility is other than a figment of their very productive imagination. It is not, of course, a possibility for which they have any evidence whatsoever and it does not, consequently, seem one that we should feel called upon to provide against when we say things like 'I know there is a table in the next room, I'll go and get that' or 'I know when the next train leaves, and we have plenty of time yet'. In such cases we might very fairly be asked to provide against such possibilities as that we have poor memory or poor eyesight but not against the entirely speculative fancies that Martians are making us see tables where there aren't any.

Wittgenstein sometimes speaks of philosophical propositions as being very much like 'free wheels' or handles that don't turn anything. They make no real difference to anything, and though they apparently bear upon the things that we ordinarily do and say they do not appear to make any difference to what, in the end we do and say.

The skeptic wants to say that there is something wrong with our claims to knowledge, that these are not as good as we think they are. One of the things that makes Wittgenstein's arguments with other philosophers uphill work is that they seem to say things which should matter, which - if true- should make a difference to our lives. This seems to be so with the claim that we do not know what we think we know, this should have effects on us and substantial ones at that.

However, Wittgenstein cannot see what those effects are. When someone says they doubt

something it should presumably make some difference to what they otherwise do. If, say, someone says that they know that large quantities of aspirin are the cure for bronchitis and someone else says that they doubt this, then presumably we are being advised to decline the suggestion we take lots of aspirin, to look for some other treatment, perhaps go to the doctor. If someone says they are unsure that the floor is solid, then if they are in doubt they will treat carefully, test it as they go, be poised ready to leap back if it starts to give way.In normal contexts of use, then, claims to doubt counterpose claims to know: claims to doubt indicate a lack of confidence, an incapacity to give assurance. Philosophical doubts are not the same. Though the skeptic tries to get us to doubt whether we know that there are material objects, whether we know any fact and the rest, these doubts, if we take them up, do not appear to alter our behaviour, to make a difference to the things we do and say.

If the skeptic tries to put the power of eyesight into doubt he is not, it seems, quarrelling with our use of microscopes, televisions, spectacles, books, clocks, timetables, road signs, cameras, or any of the other visually oriented contrivances we surround ourselves with. He is not, we noted, doubting that we can, in the ordinary way, say we know this or that, nor is he denying that we can, in the ordinary way, see this and that. Nonetheless, he is trying to warn us that we should - in the ordinary way - have less trust in our eyes and yet shows us nothing that we can do that would amount to this. Just saying 'I see an influenza virus on the slide but I don't know that it is' does not amount to anything, it is just the adopting of a strange ritual, of adding an idle qualification to everything we say that claims or implies knowledge.

Saying 'I see an influenza virus on the microscope slide but I don't know that it is' will be materially the same as saying 'It's an influenza virus'· If we are diagnosing and treating an illness, then we shall treat the case for influenza. Saying 'I don't know if it's an influenza virus' carries no suggestion that we have reason to think its a malarial infection or a syphilitic one, so it does not suggest that we should treat for one of those instead of malaria. This looks like an influenza virus, responds to the treatment we give such viruses and is - in our ordinary way - nothing at all like a syphilitic or malarial one. Danger of confusing one of these with the others is quite absent but we are saying 'I don't know that it is' out of respect for the skeptic's argument. It does not, however, affect what we do or really change the things we say: it has just become an appendix on every factual statement.

We can now come back to Moore's presentation of his hand and his claim that he knows he has it. The nature of Wittgenstein's puzzlement should now be much more apparent. It looks as though Moore is making a factual statement, one which could be right or wrong and which, as it turns out, is right. However, there is a chronic problem in seeing what the uncertainty is that Moore's assertion rejects. Moore has two hands. He has been standing at the front, giving the

lecture with both of them clearly in view for some time - everyone can see the two hands. He is not wearing gloves and prosthetics do not look as realistic as that. Further, as he scratches his nose, turns the pages of his paper, points and gestures, his hand moves with fluidity and flexibility that is well beyond the capacity of even the best prosthetics. The lights are on, the room is small, all have a clear view of Moore. Suddenly he holds up a hand and tells them that he knows he has it. What has he done by holding it up and making this statement, has he added anything to the information or confidence in the possession of those he is talking to, has he disposed of some misconception that they might have had about what he knew or about the condition of his limbs?

He has done none of these, for such doubts and misconceptions were never in the air. He could not be wrong in saying this, either. What would a mistake look like in this context, how could Moore or his audience have come to the conclusion - under these conditions - that Moore was without a hand, a conclusion that would need correction by the holding up of the hand and the accompanying affirming statement? There is nothing we can imagine. Cases of mass hysteria, collective madness and the rest do not going; being subject to delusions is different from making mistakes in important ways. These are reasonable people, considering something in optimal conditions: what kind of mistake might they make.

The statement 'I know I have a hand' can be a factual one, depending on the circumstances in which it is issued, and it can, there, be checked out as either true or false. It is not always so,and when uttered by Moore in the circumstances of his lecture it fails to say anything and consequently cannot be either true or false.

Does this divest it of all point of purpose, make Moore's attempt to tackle the skeptic utterly fruitless? Not, perhaps, entirely. Insofar as Moore tries to contradict the skeptic, then his tactic is ineffective. If Moore thinks that the skeptic is saying 'You cannot know that you have a hand' and is to be answered by saying 'I do know I have a hand' then this perpetuates the impression that this is a kind of factual dispute in which one party must be right. In this respect, Moore's proof that he knows something gives a lesson of the sort Wittgenstein wants to draw about the dangers of disagreeing with philosophers by contradicting what they say.

However, in another light, Moore's remarks are not devoid of significance. They can perhaps be viewed as 'grammatical' remarks, as ones which do not make a factual statement but which show us or remind us of the way in which we use words, which example the way a word is rightly used. Thus, to hold up a hand which is in clear view, for all to see, which is patently a normal human left hand, is to remind people that there are cases where we are entitled to say 'I know this....' If someone had (as the skeptic in a way has) that Moore cannot really say that he knows anything then Moore's holding up of the hand, under those conditions, can remind people

troubled by the skeptical argument, that there are cases in which- under conditions of good visibility, sound information and the rest of it, we are quite in order to say, We have no doubts about this, we know it is so, and that skeptical claims cast no shadow whatsoever over them. If anyone had a doubt that Moore knew he had a hand, his capacity to hold it up before his own and others • eyes and affirm that, despite those doubts, he did know that he had one.

It might still seem that the appeals we have made, here, have been to the things we ordinarily say and that the skeptic has conceded that we can, in the ordinary use of such words, say 'I know that', 'This is true' and so on. The skeptic can say that it is an other-than-ordinary sense of words like 'know' and 'true' and 'doubt' that he is using and that appeal to our ordinary ways of talking will not affect this.

The skeptic's right to contrive words which have other than ordinary sense is not in question, but his capacity to do this is. It is not enough to announce 'I will now use "know" in a way that differs from the ordinary one' to justify a claim that when one says 'No one ever really knows anything' one is indeed making a new and legitimate use of that word rather than (just) misusing it. One has to give that word its sense, one has to find a way of using it which will work and Wittgenstein questions whether, in skeptical arguments, this is in fact done.

Claims to be using words in the other-than-ordinary sense are,further, often made with the implication that they somehow improve upon the deficiencies of that ordinary sense and presuppose, therefore,that the character of that ordinary sense is properly understood and its deficiencies correctly identified. Thus, when the skeptic claims that his notion of 'know' is different than the ordinary one, there is a distinct implication that it is a much more full blooded on. Our claims to know will past the tests that we set each other, but they cannot come up to the standards the skeptic is employing. The skeptic's are not meant to be just different standards but to be stronger, better or stiffer ones.

It becomes, therefore, legitimate to ask whether the skeptic has properly understood the ordinary use upon which he proposes to improve, whether he does indeed appreciate the nature of the claims we make to knowledge in our ordinary exchanges and whether, if he did, he would be able to maintain that such claims leave anything to be desired, whether the kinds of standards he envisages really are stiffer than those that are ordinarily set and met? Such a line of inquiry requires, of course, that we look at both the way in which the skeptic employs the word and the manner in which it operates under conditions of ordinary use and to see if the two relate in the manner the skeptic tries to suggest they do.

Moore's line of argument with the skeptic may consist in showing that the skeptic is wrong about certain things because our language/and or common sense is right about them. It is

something like this that many sociologists attack under the impression that Wittgenstein is their target. The latter ,however, is following a very different tack. His case is that the philosopher is wrong about the character of ordinary language, has misunderstood this.Questions as to whether ordinary language /common sense are right or wrong about reality do not enter into this. More, the philosopher, because of the misunderstanding of ordinary language, wants to treat certain issues as though they were ones of truth or falsity when they are not, so once again dispute as to whether ordinary language/common sense are right or wrong on them is precluded.

To try to summarise this section: the claim is that a statement like 'we can never really know anything' looks like, but is not a factual claim. At best it could be a grammatical one, setting down a rule for the use of the word 'know', perhaps forbidding us to use it or to employ it in the ritually qualified way we have invented above. As a grammatical rule it lacks justification, being a rather clumsy modification of our ordinary way of using that expression, and one which is proposed without any successful indication of what is unsatisfactory with that ordinary use.

As a factual statement 'we can never really know anything' is devoid of factual content. It has a superficial resemblance to quite factual assertions like 'we can never know whether there was an historical Jesus.' If we are told the latter, then we are able to make out what is being denied: that we can hope for the discovery of enough historical evidence that there was a man who had sufficient resemblance to the one described in the Bible, to whom sufficient of the things said there may be confidently attributed, etc. The events are too remote in time, there is little independent evidence beside the Bible and hopes for more must be very faint, because if there was any it will have rotted, been dispersed, will no longer be recognisable for what it is and so on. We can see, here, what is being denied. Can we when somebody says 'We can never really know anything?'

As we presented the initial skeptical claim we gave it as one to which affirming and rejecting responses would be given and then after that we began to ask what the claim could actually amount to. It is after the denial is made that one begins to give thought to what it could be a denial of and how it might be effective as that. Since the skeptic's claim is that we can never really know anything, then he cannot indicate what it would be for us to really know something and, therefore, he does not ever tell us what it is that we are being denied the power to do. In short, the crucial expression 'really know' is devoid of definite meaning and so the whole contention is empty.

There is no need to mount a defence of what we (think we know) against the skeptic's challenges because these do not produce genuine doubts about what we know. The effect of

Wittgenstein 's strategy is to take the initiative from and to shift the onus to the skeptic. The skepti c has the edge in that he can keep producing imaginative possibilities of how we might be wrong and we cannot set a limit to what he can conjure up. We are, therefore, trying to satisfy insatiable demands, to defend ourselves against problems he has yet to think up. If his questions do not present genuine doubts, however, they fail to give us reason to doubt things that we think we know and we need not take the skeptic's suggestions seriously. The onus is, rather, on the skeptic to provide us with reasons to take him seriously, to take his doubts as genuine ones and this, of course, is difficult for him to do, since his doubts are imaginative possibilities only. This is not to say that there are or can be no reason to challenge things we think we know. Of course there may. It is only to say that they do not originate in the skeptic's suggestion. His questions should not make us feel inadequate because we cannot respond to them.

What we have tried to show in this section is that Wittgenstein's interest in the limits of language is in the limits to what can be said in any language. In the Tractatus Wittgenstein was concerned to say what would make something part of factual discourse and made no comment on the kinds of factual discourse available to different natural languages. There would, presumably, have been nothing whatever in the views in the Tractatus that would prevent recognition of the fact one can make certain kinds of factual statements in one language that one could not make in another - this last we would take to be a trivial truth. The feeling that Wittgenstein's arguments must express a linguistic parochialism may, despite this, persist. Wittgenstein may well think that he is saying things, in the Tractatus which apply to 'language' rather than to languages but he might, despite himself, be a victim of the specific grammar of English -what he things cannot be said can in fact be said in Turkish, Hopi or some other exotic language. It seems, after all, the height of hubris to think that one can tell, from a knowledge of one or two languages - English, German - what it is possible to say in any of them.

There are, of course, cases where a sense which can be conveyed in one language is at least problematical to put in another, cases where one language has words for it and the other does not. It is, however, wrong to think that Wittgenstein is saying that there is a sense which cannot be expressed in English or German and cannot, therefore,be expressed in any other language either. He is, rather, saying that there are combinations of words in English or German which look like they do, but have not, any sense. There is no sense to them and so the idea that that sense could be expressed in some other language is itself without sense.

The problem which held Wittgenstein's attention was very different from that which draws his sociological critics and their criticisms come, very often, to nothing more than that he has given very poor answers to question that were not his own. Having failed to understand how those answers he gives serve as responses to his own questions, his critics compound the

misunderstanding by failing to grasp the implications his answers would have, if properly applied to their questions.

2.5 MEANING AND USE

We very quietly introduced into the preceding section ideas from the infamous 'use theory of meaning.' It is this which is the controversial keystone of Wittgenstein's later work and which gives him the method that he employs in the Philosophical Investigations and On Certainty. There are many continuities between these later works and the earliest one but there are many discontinuities too. One of the main changes is in ideas about meaning. In the Tractatus recall, to know the meaning of a factual statement was to know what would be the case if it was true. To know the meaning of a word was to know what it stood for, what kind of thing it represented. These ideas are dropped in the later work.

One very flip way to rebut Wittgenstein is to say, he is against philosophical theories but he has his own. For example, he has the use theory of meaning. However much Wittgenstein may protest that he puts forward no philosophical theses, he does so. The use theory of meaning is one. This is, we say, a flip response because whilst one might talk of the 'use theory of meaning' that is nothing like the kind of philosophical theories which Wittgenstein criticises. Saying Wittgenstein has a use theory of meaning' is saying something like 'Wittgenstein has a view that the way to understand meaning is to understand use'.

Wittgenstein is against theory and generalisation in philosophy. That is true enough. It is supposed that he is against this because he is against theory and generalisation everywhere but he is not. There are places (in science, for example) where theory and generalisation can be thoroughly useful and where they can do the job they are designed for, that of explaining things we do not understand. In philosophy they are out of place, for there the troubles are with things we misunderstand, as opposed to ones we do not understand. Since we do not need things explaining to us, we need neither theory nor generalisation, description will do what we want. Description, if done carefully and accurately, will clear up the problems, enable us to understand aright that which we have been confused about, have been unable to see clearly. Oversimplifying, Wittgenstein is saying that philosophical problems are of the 'can't see the wood for the trees' kind.

Those who do not much like Wittgenstein's views will accuse him of being prejudiced against theory and generalisation and will complain that he asks us to be satisfied with 'mere description' but, surely, they show only that it is they who are prejudiced, who are so prejudiced in favour of theory and generalisation that they insist on ranking these things, ranking them more highly than description. Because Wittgenstein is prejudiced (as they see it) in favour of description, they think he is trying to re verse their order of ranking, to put description higher than

explanation. Wittgenstein's efforts are to stop this strange kind of ranking, of attempting to see one quite useful thing - generalisation, theory - as 'higher' than another also quite useful thing. It is an absurdity to ask 'Is explanation better than description' without asking 'in what connection?'

It is philosophers who ask questions like 'is explanation better than description? as though there must be some quite general and unqualified answer to it, and it is just this which reinforces Wittgenstein's contention that the questions philosophers ask are not proper ones, are without sense.

Are explanations better than descriptions? For what? For one thing, explanation will be better than description, but for some other it might well be the other way around. Wittgenstein thinks that in philosophy, description is better than explanation. This does not prejudge the question of whether the same is true elsewhere.

The prejudice about explanation is very deep, so much so that Wittgenstein's views are understood as a doctrine of resignation. He is telling is that we cannot have an explanation, that all we can hope for is a description and that, therefore, this is what we must settle for. Built into such ways of putting it are the very prejudice in question: only explanations are worth having, anything less is a disappointment. Descriptions are inferior to explanations and to be limited to those is, therefore, to be left in an unsatisfactory situation.

Wittgenstein's view is quite different to this. It is that explanations are not what are wanted in philosophy. Because we are misled by the appearances of philosophical statements we often think we have a factual problem, a problem of ignorance, and we are led therefore to think that a theory or generalisation is what we need (especially if we are infected with the belief that whatever problem we have, a theory is what we need.) However, a theory is not what we need, Wittgenstein maintains. The problem is not of the sort that a theory will solve, it is not a factual question or a consequence of ignorance. We know all that we need to know to solve the problem, what we need to do is to see is clearly, recognise it for what it is. Describing and appropriately arranging some familiar facts may be all that we need to deal with our problem. We shall have gained, from describing, all that we thought we wanted from theory, from generalisation and it will become apparent that what we thought we wanted from theory it could not have given us. This is not a derogatory comment on theory, as though this were now inferior to description, it is a remark about relevances: there are places where theory cannot give us what we want, but description can, and there are other places where the converse is the case. Which will be which depends on the nature of the cases themselves.

Wittgenstein's use theory of meaning is not best thought of, then, as giving us an explanation of the nature of meaning. It is, rather, best thought of as a methodological doctrine

about how to describe meanings. It proposes that we describe meaning by describing use. This is not itself a wholly transparent remark and a good deal of explication is required to show what it tells.

The most misleading step to take is to think of the use theory of meaning as a kind of proto-scientific theory of any sort, as the beginning of some kind of general linguistic or socio-linguistic account of the organisation of natural languages. Its purpose is philosophical, and its role is to dissuade philosophers from asking certain kinds of questions by persuading them to look more at examples, to look at more examples. It is designed as a corrective to a tendency that philosophers have, meant to get them to do something other than they usually do, and by doing that to show them that many of the things they worry about are not really problems at all.

The sort of thing that can happen which gives rise to philosophical problems is this. Someone considers a perfectly ordinary word, and wonders what it means. They find that though the word is quite familiar to them, they use it all the time still, when they come to it they are quite unable to say what it means. Being unable to say what it means, they then begin to wonder if they know what it means? They seem to use the word a 11 the time without knowing what it means. This seems a strange thing to do. The first thing to do is to get clear on what it does mean, to get into a position in which they can say what the meaning of the word is.

This is not that easy, though. Here is a word, they do not know what it means. They intend to find out what it means. What is it that they aim to find out? What is the meaning of a word, what is it to find out what that is? The problem proves to be more than about the meaning of this word, it is about the nature of meaning itself.

One immensely popular solution to the problem of what meaning is, is to suppose that it is whatever the word stands for. The word 'cup' stands for a certain sort of object, cups,and its meaning is, therefore, its standing for those sorts of things. In order to say what the word means we have to say what it stands for. That is no easy thing to do either. If the meaning of 'cup' is what it stands for, namely cups, then we shall have to say what cups are, what kind of thing a cup is. We shall have to give a definition of what a cup is in order to be able to say what 'cup' means. It is, of course, more than a little difficult to give a definition of cup which will encompass all the things that are called by it. For example, it might be tempting to define a 'cup' as something used to drink from, but how does that apply to those cups which are given as awards in contests and are not used to drink from but are just for putting on display?

How does anyone get to learn the meaning of a word. The idea that words stand for things is an appealing one because that seems to give a very easy way of seeing how words stand for things and a nice simple and strong connection between language and reality). The meaning of a word is

taught by ostensive definition. Someone points to an object, a cup, and says the word 'cup' and our language learner now sees that the word stands for the thing, that cup means that sort of thing. Language and reality are brought into contact here, a word is directly connected with something in reality. However, the doctrine that language is learned by ostensive definition is not really all that consoling, because we cannot be sure that, through it, people learn the lesson they are supposed to.

The essence of a language is that we all mean the same thing by the same word, but skeptical doubts about this can easily be got going. Suppose that we show someone an object like a cup and we say the word 'cup', then we hold up the object and they say the word 'cup'. They understand what the word means. Perhaps not. Can we be sure that they took the right lesson when we gave it to them, can we be confident that they have learned, from our ostensive definition, that 'cup' means cup? How can we be sure that the when they go out on their own they will use the word cup in the way that we intended to teach them. For all we know, they might walk straight away from our lesson into the street and say 'cup' about a car or a cat or a cactus. What is to stop them doing this, just applying the word to all sorts of other things than we intended them to? Even if we follow them about for a bit and they do regularly use the word 'cup' as we meant them too,what basis have we for confidence that they won't, the next time they use the word stick it on something different that we wanted them to?

What, further, about those words which stand for things which we cannot hold up for inspection? Those things which are private, like our sensations. If we want to teach someone the word 'pain', then how are we to do this. We cannot hold up a pain to show them, cannot point to one of those. What we can do is to pull faces, poke ourselves, moan and groan and say 'pain' and perhaps pinch, prick and nip them and say 'pain' and hope they will get the idea. What confidence can we have that they will get the right idea - what real basis have we for thinking we have the right idea? What basis have we for thinking that when we use 'pain' we use it in the same way as anyone else, that it stands for the same thing in our case as theirs?

And what basis have we for supposing that someone to whom we try to teach it will feel the same thing when they say 'pain' as we do, however successful our teaching seems to have been. Perhaps someone else feels a different sensation when pinched or pricked than we do, so that the sensation for which 'pain' is meant to stand is, in their case, quite different from ours. And perhaps this is so for all of us, perhaps everyone has a somewhat different sensation when pinched or kicked to the others, so that to one pain comes to stand for seeing the colour green, to another for tasting fish, to another a burning sensation and so on. What people mean by sensation words just varies so they do not really speak the language. language is private to themselves.

As can be seen, the nature of meaning comes to seem a deep and complex mystery, a tremendous number of complex philosophical problems interlock around it. Let us emphasise, again, that 'ordinary language' is the topic of these philosophical worries, for we began with the observation that it is frequently some quite commonplace expression which creates the difficulties.

A classic philosophical instance is that of 'time'. St.Augustine thought he knew what time was, he used the word often enough and seemed to have no trouble understanding it: people ask him is it time for lunch, what time the sun goes down and what time the service will take today and he is able to answer their questions without problem. Then someone asks him what time is and he finds himself at a complete loss. He has no idea. Now he has a philosophical problem, the nature of time.

Another instance, even more classical. Someone gets into an argument with Socrates. What is justice? gets asked. You tell me says Socrates. Someone gives him an example of a case in which justice was dispensed. Yes, but that does not tell me what justice is complains Socrates, who proceeds to extract another example from his inter locutors, one in which something very different -perhaps even in conflict with the first case - is dispensed as justice. This too fails to answer the question, what is justice and seems to suggest that there those who are giving the examples are confused about this, they contradict themselves and each other. Giving more examples does not say what justice is, it only seems to indicate that they do not know what justice is, have no clear idea of this, something which is clinched by the fact that they cannot do anything but give examples, cannot say in so many words what justice is.

One other, more recent instance. Descartes seeks to know what the mind is. He can see what kind of thing the word 'body' stands for, but he does not know what the word 'soul' stands for and seeks to find something that it could be, concluding that the place in the pineal gland. Descartes gives rise to the chronic modern problem of trying to decide what it is that the word 'mind' stands for and where such a thing can be located. There is nothing that obviously corresponds to the word 'mind' as there is something that corresponds to 'body' so the controversy is as much about whether there are any minds, whether there is anything for the word to stand for, as it is about what kind of thing this would be.

What seems like it should be the easiest thing in the war ld for us to do, saying what we mean by some words that are incredibly familiar to us, turns out to be extraordinarily difficult, and gives rise to some classic philosophical problems such as saying what the nature of meaning is, saying what kind of thing words stand for (are they essences or what?),saying what kind of thing a word like 'mind' could conceivable stand for and judging whether there is anything to skepti ea l doubts that anyone means anything like what others mean by the same word.

Wittgenstein 's Philosophical Investigations seeks to lay all these ghosts. The doctrine of 'meaning as use' is pivotal in this, but its role is to show that these are not real problems, rather than to give answers to them.

Remember how these philosophical problems arise. Someone considers an ordinary word that is normally familiar to them, and for some reason they feel called upon to say what it means, which they find hard to do. This is not the kind of trouble that affilicts someone who comes across an unfamiliar word like 'cynosure' in a text and does not know what it means and then goes to the dictionary and looks it up. The people with our kind of puzzle are not troubled by an unfamiliar word,but by a familiar one. They have been using the word for a long time and now they are called upon to say what it means. Looking in a dictionary won't help because they are likely to find there the kind of thing that they already know. If they go and look in the dictionary they will find ,even in the Concise Oxford a very lengthy entry, occupying a couple of columns ,but it consists in such things as 'duration, continued existence; progress of this viewed as affecting persons and things, more or less definite portion of this associated with particular events and circumstances, historical or other period ...' and so on and on. However, these remarks are helpful to someone who has never come across the word before but say nothing about the thing that troubles the one who wants to know what time is. It says nothing about the kind of thing that time is.

The problem characteristically is, then, to say in so many words what the kind of thing it is that a word stands for and there are felt to be constraints on what kind of definition is satisfactory: it must be the sort for which Socrates is striving, one which is completely general and coherent, which tells us exactly what something must be to be called this and which brings out what is common to all the cases brought under it. The puzzlement about the nature of meaning arises, then, because one is called upon to give, explicitly the meaning of an ordinary word, and to do this in a context in which it is expected that an answer must have a certain character - it must specify the thing the word stands for - and must take a certain form - it must be quite general.

What Wittgenstein does, in one sense, is nothing more than to side with those whom Socrates criticises. When they give Socrates examples of a case in which justice was handed out, then they are giving him an account of the meaning of 'justice'. When Socrates is asking them to give him the meaning of words, he is critical of the capacity of examples to do this, but when it is his turn to specify meaning he resorts to just the same method, does this through the giving of examples. His 'meaning is use' theory is a policy recommendation to employ examples rather than to look for an explicit and general definition.

In his most explicit statement of his views on this Wittgenstein says 'For a large class of cases - though not for all - in which we employ the word 'meaning' it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language. And the meaning of a name is sometimes explained by pointing to its bearer. (PI43)

John Hunter rightly protests that whilst 'we would not go far wrong in assuming that this is an important remark of Wittgenstein's. Philosophers now refer to it very frequently, and not with any expression of uncertainty as to what it means' though 'I do not myself find its meaning in the least very obvious.' He goes on to show that there are problems in demarcating the 'large class of cases' and in identifying what kind of 'use' might be intended amongst others. Hunter's remarks suggest that even if Wittgenstein's formulation did embody a general theory, it would be more than premature of people to say whether that theory was right or wrong when they were far from clear as to exactly what it is.

Hunter's own interpretation, which is one that will serve us well, comes out like this:

> *'I will conclude by outlining briefly some implications of the "meaning is use" thesis as I have interpreted it. It is not very exciting on this reading. It neither tells us how to ascertain the meaning of words nor what form the statement of meaning should properly take, nor does it tell us that we should not talk of meanings but of uses. It simply reminds us of the quite commonplace truth that when we say two words have the same meaning we might alternatively say that where we would use one of them we might equally use the other.'*

The hope that 'meaning is use' might come out as something more exciting or revelatory is one that Hunter maintains he is right to disappoint:

> *'The humdrum character of this point may itself be evidence of the correctness of the interpretation, in view of Wittgenstein's frequent professions not to be telling us anything that is not perfectly obvious.'*

We have played up, in our previous characterisations, Wittgenstein 's insistence that he puts forward no philosophical theses, as these are commonly understood, and have given no attention to his accompanying claim that insofar as he might put forward theses, these would be things that everyone would have to agree with, things that are commonplace and ubiquitously accepted.

Hunter's interpretation of the 'meaning is use' slogan squares with our view that Wittgenstein is very much consistent to his own policies in refusing to put forward conventional philosophical theses. Philosophers show that Wittgenstein's are not conventional philosophical theses by

complaining how dull and uninteresting they are - they say nothing bold, radical or surprising.

Wittgenstein did not mean them to.

Hunter's characterisation of Wittgenstein's remarks will do well for our purposes here. His assertion that it neither tells us how to ascertain the meaning of a word nor what form a statement of meaning is to take he is not pointing to its deficiencies or lacks, for philosophical critics might well complain that Wittgenstein's theory does not tell them how to ascertain and specify meaning. Of course it does not, it is not meant to, for it is Wittgenstein's objective to show that neither of these things are needed, that if one pays attention to the way in which words are used in their ordinary contexts, then one will see that the problems with 'meaning' which we listed above are not real ones. They cannot be solved but they can, perhaps, be made to evaporate.

Hunter's account of the 'meaning is use' slogan is intended only to apply to the formulation of Wittgenstein's that we quoted, it is not meant as a comprehensive characterisation of the various ways 'use' figures in the Philosophical Investigations. When we say that Wittgenstein's policy recommends the paying of attention to the use of words in their ordinary contexts 'use' here amounts to something like 'what can be done with it.' Wittgenstein at one point says 'Let the use teach you the meaning' and Hunter, we think correctly, says that this does not 'mean anything like "First discover the use, and from that infer the meaning" but rather something like "Remind yourself of some actual uses of a puzzling word and then you will be in no doubt about it meaning" '.

The problem other philosophers have is to say what the meaning of some expression is, and they are looking for a method that will enable them to do this. They will very likely look to Wittgenstein's proposal that they look to use in order to understand meaning as a way of enabling them to say what (the) meaning is but it does not do this. They will think that this is a sign that it has failed to do its job, but they have yet retained the assumption that Wittgenstein wants to eliminate, that to know what something means you have to be able to say what that meaning is. Wittgenstein offers the view that to be able to say intelligible things with a word is to know what it means. One can say intelligible things with a word without being able to give any explicit definition of it, and certainly without being able to give the sort of general definition that philosophers think is required. Knowing the meaning of a word just does not require the ability to give a general definition of it, let alone equating with being able to do that.

Wittgenstein 's proposal is that philosophers reflect on some of the things that can (ordinarily)be done with a word, see how it is used to say some of the things that can be said with it and things which seemed opaque will become clear.

This is the point at which to make something important clear. We have talked, throughout, of ordinary language as if it were to this that Wittgenstein's policies would be applied and we have let

that be used in a way which would contrast it with 'technical' language, which is the way that most sociologists - and a lot of philosophers think of using it. This perpetuates, of course, the idea that there is some rivalry of ordinary with technical language and that, wherever this was so, Wittgenstein would side with the former rather than the latter. It suggests, further, that Wittgenstein's work is restricted because - even if right - it can only apply to ordinary language and can say nothing about the technical kind. Now is the moment to point out that Wittgenstein's concerns are wrongly characterised by using 'ordinary language ' in that way. Wittgenstein's contrast is between ordinary and philosophical employments of language and his method would, therefore, be as applicable to 'technical' terms as well as to 'ordinary' ones. The focus on ordinary (as opposed to technical) expressions is a result of the disposition of serious philosophical problems to originate with ordinary expressions.

It is worth remembering the Wittgenstein did show an interest in mathematics and was deeply intrigued by the idea of 'infinity' in mathematics, a technical enough notion surely. What Wittgenstein has to say about 'meaning' and 'use' could as easily be applied to notions from science like 'mass' and 'quark' as to expressions like 'good' and 'mind' from our ordinary language.

The true opposition is between an expression in its ordinary uses and in its philosophical (mis)uses. One would examine technical terms like 'mass' and 'quark' in the kind of ordinary uses that they find amongst physicists as one examines 'good' and 'mind' in the ordinary uses that any person might make of them. The purpose is to contrast what is involved in making ordinary uses of words with what philosophers imagine is involved.

Sociologists are, themselves, often in the grip of the same idea as philosophers, that unless we can give a clear and general definition of a word we do not know what it means. They think, consequently, that before they can undertake empirical studies they must clarify their concepts, must give them a suitable definition. Consequently, there is a feeling that people do not know what a key expression like 'poverty' means and that unless a definition of this is provided intelligible discuss ion of the extent of poverty will not be able to take place.

Consider the following sorts of statements:

1. 'He's very poor, he cannot afford to clothe or feed himself.'
2. 'He's a very poor draughts player, even his children can beat him'
3. 'He's in a poor state, I think he's dying'
4. 'It was a very poor account of the proceedings, I wouldn't believe it'
5. 'It is a poor way to treat someone'.

These all involve the word 'poor', it is used to say something, and what it is used to say is, we think, quite plain in each case. In the first, it is a comment on economic impoverishment, in the second has to do with someone's lack of skill at a game, in the third it applies to someone's condition, to the apparently terminal state of their illness, in the fourth it states the inaccuracy of some description, and in the last it comments on the inappropriateness of someone's behaviour to someone else. 'Poor' is used in different ways, here, sometimes to deal with economic well being, sometimes to apply skill levels, at others to the level of accuracy of things.

No confusion is generated and anyone who speaks colloquial English will have understood what was each assertion says. They would, in the ordinary way of things ,be quite happy to say that they knew what 'poor' meant in each of the sentences in which it figured. Still, in sociology, the dispute is not about these other applications of 'poor' but is about those which have to do with economic wellbeing. Unless we are able to say what it is for someone to be poor we shall not know what 'poverty' means.

If we go back to the list of examples, however, we shall see that though we should - in the ordinary way - understand quite clearly what it meant to say 'It was a very poor account• we should not also claim to be able to say that we could tell what it was for someone to give a poor account, save to say that it is to give an inaccurate one - which, in line with Hunter's interpretation, involves identifying another word we could use there instead. We can understand what is said when someone says 'It was a poor account• without knowing how it was inaccurate and likewise we can understand what 'He is really poor' means without knowing what his poverty is like, what kind of economic deprivation he suffers.

Saying what something means gets identified with being able to say what something is. This is what happens to notions like, 'class' and 'poverty' where people disagree about what demarcates classes or what characterises the poor. Then people think there is a disagreement about meaning here. Though there is not. Understanding what something means is, by our contrasting approach, being taken as 'finding it intelligible', 'seeing what it says'. Thus, someone says, 'You always like to be a cynosure' and we do not understand, cannot say what he means, do not know what 'cynosure' means. Someone else tells us 'cynosure' means 'centre of attention'. Now we know what cynosure means and what the statement means •

Someone says 'You are servile, always strutting about and bullying people.' There is a difference of meaning here: we always mean by 'servile' something like 'grovelling', 'obsequious' but this person does not use it that way, they do not appear to understand by it what we do. We understand their meaning alright, but think they are misusing a word to communicate it.

One person says of someone 'he is really poor' and the other says 'he is not'. The first says 'He has no car, no television, cannot afford to pay for a holiday' and the others says 'Yes, but that is not what I call poor. He has food in his belly, shoes on his feet, somewhere to live.' The temptation is to say that there is a disagreement on meaning, that they mean different things by poor. Do they, however, show signs of misunderstanding each other: does one show that he cannot comprehend any sense in the other's utterance? No. One says 'He is really poor' and the other contradicts him: He is not.

It is plain that the second understands and denies what the first says. Both understand that being poor means 'being in economic want' and it is because the understand the word to mean that that they have a disagreement, a disagreement about what it takes to be in economic want.

Some accuse others of using 'poor' in an absolute way and claim that a relative application is needed. When someone says 'He has food, shoes on his feet, a place to live' he may be accused of using the term in an absolute sense, he means by 'poor' that there is a certain standard of living which comprises poverty. The other claims this is inadequate: someone who has food, shoes etc but lacks car and tv set is poor in a society like ours, where everyone has such things. What it takes to be poor, the latter says, is a relative matter. Is the one who says that 'he has food' etc really using the term in an absolute, rather than a relative or comparative way - or is he using it also relatively, comparatively, but with a different comparison in mind. The one who says 'He has food, shoes etc' may have indeed have a comparison in mind. Relative to the people who lived through the 1930' s and had neither regular food nor basic clothing, this man is not poor. Compared to them he is prosperous. They were poor, he compared to them, is not.' The term applies re lati ve ly if it is used properly - one is 'poor' according to some standard, and if the standards are varied then the judgements will too. Knowing what poor means does not tell us how to find out which people are poor. To do that, we shall have to decide what relevant bases of comparison might be, and on that, of course, there is ample room for disagreement since there are many people, periods and groups with which any lot might be compared.

Wittgenstein's instigation is to simply take notice of things that we can ordinarily say with words, and this is what we have done above with 'poor'. We made a list of the various things that can be said with it and by doing that showed that, in order to grasp what it said, there was no call for the reader to ask 'what does it mean here?' Likewise, in order to explore meaning of 'poverty' further we constructed a small dialogue in which people argued with one another about who was poor. If this is all that Wittgenstein's method consists in, then what may now begin to seem puzzling is: what use can this be to philosophy?

Philosophers know how to speak the vernacular, they know as well as you and I how to make commonplace remarks about 'That was a poor show you put on last night' or 'The Brain of Britain knows a lot about all kinds of things.' What need have they of this method?

It is a method for reminding them of familiar things. Wittgenstein never supposed that this was a way of showing philosophers things about the ordinary language that would come as news to them. It was the essence of the method that it draws attention to matters that are, otherwise familiar and obvious.

Wittgenstein identified several sources of philosophical problems, some of which we have already touched on, others of which we will identify below. One source, he thought, was being in the grip of what he called a 'picture'. By this he meant something like a general idea or a model. One would get a notion of how a certain thing, essentially, works and would then apply it to everything, seeing things through it, trying to make everything fit with it even though it will not easily or naturally do this.

The idea of a word standing for a thing is such a picture, and the hold of them can be powerful. Wittgenstein, in attacking this idea was trying to rid himself of it for it was one which he had held and to which he was strongly drawn. The picture of the word 'cup' being connected by the appropriate pointing gesture is one which gives us an image of an immediate relationship between language and reality. Here they come together with nothing mediating them except the pointing gesture. This is how language relates to reality essentially, through the correspondence of word and thing identified by it.

Such a picture is not developed, in philosophy, by extensive examination of many cases. Another source of philosophical difficulties is that of the 'one sided diet' of examples. Philosophers often use few examples and, when they do so, they tend to use examples of much the same sort, those which fit the idea they are developing. They make no effort to look out a range of examples, to make this as varied as they can. The picture is inspired by one example, reinforced by others which also fit with it: one can easily think of other words that stand for something, as with (say) 'ball' and 'egg'. If there are cases which do not fit the picture, then it is the cases that must give way rather than the picture itself.

It is not that hard to think of cases which do not (apparently) fit the word and object picture. What about, for example, 'yellow' and 'number.' What kind of thing is a yellow or a number. However, if the picture of the word-object relationship is deeply entrenched, then these will not be taken as counter-examples to it. On the contrary, it will be thought that words must stand for something and that, therefore, there must be something for which the word 'yellow' or 'number' stand. The difficulty is to say what kind of objects they are. New kinds of objects- abstract or ideal

ones - are proposed in order that there may be things for which these problematical words can stand.

The philosopher is, as ordinary speaker of the language, as thoroughly acquainted with its locutions as anyone else. When engaged in the pursuit of a philosophical inquiry, guided by such a picture, subsisting on a one sided diet of examples, he can quite leave out of account things that would otherwise be quite taken for granted.

We have already said that Wittgenstein sees philosophical propositions as being idle or useless in practical contexts, as failing to 'turn anything'. Related to that is his view that the ways in which philosophers use the words of ordinary language is one which dissociates them from the parts they play in ordinary sayings. They are put into contexts where they cannot operate properly, attempts are made to get them to do things they cannot do, say things they cannot be used to say. This happens because in the philosophical context they are detached from the constraints that apply to them when they are used in the ordinary sayings of the life that goes on around them. 'Language goes on holiday' is one of the ways Wittgenstein had of characterising the peculiarities of the philosophical way of talking; it was away from its everyday contexts and, like anyone on holiday, free of the tasks it performs there. What someone does on holiday is no guide to what they do when off it and if one based one's idea of what someone was solely on what they were like on holiday, it would be a very unbalanced picture.

These, then, are among the reasons Wittgenstein has for thinking that philosophers who seek to give account of philosophically puzzling expressions are apt to have got a very strange conception of them; they are looking at them in a very odd fashion and from some very limited angles. Little wonder they lose sight of things they could well have kept in mind.

The objective of the method of examining use, then, is to enable philosophers to recall that which they have forgotten, to correct their distorted perspective by putting things back into the contexts in which they are more fully and appropriately seen. If that is done artfully enough it should show that the apparent problems result from a failure to give familiar things due weight rather than from any lack of information or knowledge.

We used the term 'poor' above as an initial example. Let us now give another example, one which has traditionally caused much puzzlement in philosophy as people have tried to say what 'mind' means and have tried to do so by saying what kind of thing a mind is.

We hope that the reader will grant that 'mind' is an expression which has a quite ordinary use, and one to which they themselves resort frequently. They will, we trust, recognise these as some of the things they might use it to say:

1. 'Mind that cat'
2. 'Never mind the quality, look at the price'
3. 'He's got the mind of a five year old'
4. 'The mind of the Nazi's is a great mystery to me'
5. '2001 was the most mind stretching movie I ever say'
6. 'You have a diseased mind'
7. 'Isn't it time we applied our minds to this.'
8. 'My mind is quite made up' and
9. 'You only want my body, you're not interested in my mind.'

The first thing we want to claim for them is that they are intelligible expressions, they are the sorts of things we say with the word 'mind' in our daily lives. Second, that the way the word 'mind', what it means, varies over those expressions. Third, that in none of these cases is the word 'mind' used in such a way that it stands for any sort of thing or object.

'Mind that cat' is a piece of advice. Beware you do not tread on it, or alternatively, don't stroke it because it will bite. The second too, is advice: take no notice of the quality, think how cheap it will be. The third says something about how someone acts. We would expect that the person spoken of thus was not, in fact, five years old but - in all likelihood- older than that. A comment is being made about that person's level of intelligence, attitudes and behaviour - this person behaves inappropriately for someone of their age, as though they were much younger. The comment on the mind of the Nazi's says something about the psychology and philosophy of those who followed Hitler, about the way it puzzles us, that we cannot seem to see sense in it or see how anyone could share it. '2001 was really mind stretching' gives an evaluation of the challenging and exploratory content of the movie, the nature of the experience it handed out. The next two have to do with decisiveness, with- in the first case,-really taking a task seriously and trying to figure out how to do it and - in the second - making and sticking to a decision. Our last example is a complaint, that someone only desires sexual intercourse with the complainant, does not care to talk to them, get to know them, take any notice of them as a person, has not one grain of interest in their thoughts, opinions etc.

The word 'mind' can be used to do all those th1ngs,to give people helpful advice, to appraise character, to characterise films, to formulate political problems, to express complaints about how one is being treated, to show one's intentions to be serious or unbending. These are all the sort of things that we need to do. It can do such differing things because it is used in different senses. When used to give advice it means something like 'take notice or 'be circumspect.' When

used to formulate the complaint it means something like 'me as a person' as opposed to 'me as just an object of sexual intercourse', whilst in the remark about Nazis it means (roughly) 'their culture'.

PART THREE: MAGICAL PRACTICES AND COMPARITIVE SOCIOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Peter Winch dissociates his writings from themes which are often found in them. His argument is not, he says "absurdly, that ways in which men live together can never be criticized, nor even that a way of living can never be characterized as in any sense "irrational'; still less do I argue that men who belong to one culture can "never understand" lives led in another culture".

If Winch is right to reject the characterisation that his critics often give of the positions that he takes, then our account of his views ought to do a little more than try to get them right. It should also make an effort to show just why they are so commonly misunderstood in the way that they are. If we can do that, then we shall have gone a long way to proving that Winch's views are in better shape than the critics reckon.

We have alluded, in the introduction, to one of the big reasons why Winch is thought to be saying things other than he does, and we have traced, through the main line of our argument so far, a second equally big one.

In the introduction we said that one of the responses to those who are 'off the map' of contemporary thought is to try to get them back on it, to try to define their position in terms of its coordinates, however inappropriate they might be delimiting what they are trying to define.Thus, someone like Wittgenstein, and after him Winch, will be seen as being confined by the limits of recognised positions. What they have to say has to fall within this recognised range of options and so, if they are rejecting this one there is no choice but for them to affirm that one. To react in this way, though, is to overlook the fact that the conception of how the options are delimited is just as much part of the controversy as anything else.

The second big reason for Winch's being misunderstood is the prejudice in favour of generality which has been mentioned at various points in the argument. This means that the things which Winch says are understood as being, themselves, generalisations and they are, therefore, projected much more widely than he puts them himself. This may seem like a drawing out of Winch's position, a clarification of what he says, for it takes a partially developed argument and fills it out. It is, unfortunately, a distortion of his views, however, for they are not meant to be generalised in that way, if they are to be any further generalised at all. Thus, at a very simple level, Winch's claim that one cannot criticise this practice in that way is understood to be a general contention that one cannot criticise any practice in any way. It is, however, Winch's claim that one criticise this practice, in that way, and that is quite enough to say. Whether one could criticise this

practice in some other way, or whether one could criticise some other practice, is not to something to be considered on its merits and in its turn.

Winch seeks to make an application of some of Wittgenstein's ideas directly to the problems of sociology and, in doing this, he follows very closely the line Wittgenstein himself takes in his Remarks on Frazer's "The Golden Bough". In doing so he goes against some assumptions which are quite widespread and well entrenched amongst sociologists.

If charges of prejudice are to be bandied about then, we have argued, they are unfairly made of Wittgenstein and with more justice of those who criticise him for it. Wittgenstein is alleged to be prejudiced against generalisation then, we have tried to show, he is anything but. His own objective is to show that this is not a matter of which to be taking sides. He can, therefore, only look prejudiced to someone is more so that he, to someone who is so strongly attached to the presumption that generalisation is all and everything and who will therefore regard the suggestion that it might be a little less than this as the most extreme and unreasoned reaction.

It is not helpful to levy charges of prejudice one way or the other. The aim must surely be to have these things discussed and reasoned about. This will not be achieved in an exchange of 'You're prejudiced' /'No,you're prejudiced'. Let us, then, simply say that there is a serious disagreement between many sociologists who think that it is unthinkable that their science should be other than a generalising one and between Wittgenstein and his followers who, like Winch, think that it need not be. Note, they think that its efforts to be a generalising science make some of its problems worse, rather than better.

Getting those who are attached to the idea of a generalising science to reconsider that idea cannot be easy. It is not just one idea amongst others, but one which is quite basic to their whole way of thinking. If they were to give that up, they would have to give up much else besides; with it would have to go many other things they treasure. Even to get a discussion going they are being called upon to take a more tentative attitude to a basic assumption that they are likely to think suitable. Their idea, for example, of what it is to understand something is so thoroughly tied up with the idea of being able to relate it to a generalisation that it seems to them that, by definition, to understand something just is to show its connection with a general law.

Wittgenstein was under no illusions about the difficulty of disturbing the attachment to generality, nor can Winch be under the impression that dislodging the assumptions he wants to shift can be easy. If we give the impression that we think the views we are arguing with are any kind of pushover then we shall be obstructing our own cause, making it more difficult to persuade those we would like to affect, seeming to insult their intelligence. We do not think it stupid to adopt the

views we think are, nonetheless, mistaken but neither do we think they are so transparent, apt and effective that it is stupid to dissent from them.

Less heat, more light is a major objective for us. The issues involved are important and the consequences considerable but the likely implications and effects of the conclusions that might be reached should, we think, be put right at the back of one's mind whilst the argument proceeds. Let us see what the arguments actually are, let us see what conclusions seem inevitably to follow from them, whether those conclusions are at all defensible or not. Then let us consider whether, those being the conclusions, the price they exact is too great. It does seem to us that in many arguments over these matters people often begin with the conclusions they are willing to accept and then decide the merits of arguments on the strength of whether they fall within the range of acceptability or not.

In discussing Wittgenstein's views about description in philosophy we said that it is easily possible to misunderstand them because one is holding fast to the idea that generalisation is invariably better than description. In discussing Wittgenstein and Winch's argument that explanation/generalisation may not be what is wanted in (some important areas of) sociology it is absolutely essential to refrain from making the same mistake, supposing that they are telling us that we must settle for second best, put up with the fact that we can only describe, not theorise. Though they may be wrong in what they argue, it is sure that what Wittgenstein and Winch do argue is not this. They are, rather, trying to say that -in connection with these issues - description is everything that one could possibly want.

The idea that sociology must generalise is just one of the sore spots that Winch touched. What he had to say about language and reality had a disturbing effect to. He seemed to be saying things which are just absurd, coming close to suggesting that we just make reality up,that what the world can be is whatever we would like it to be. Whether reality is an objective or a subjective matter has come to be one of the focal themes of debate about Winch's writings.

Those who Winch is obviously criticising are apt to regard it as important to insist that reality is objective, and that the test of any way of thinking is whether it conforms to what is 'really out there.' Winch is clearly dissatisfied with their way of putting it and he says things (for example, that the way reality is shows itself in language) which do not square with their views. They conclude, then, that Winch is denying that reality is objective. If he is denying that, then what else can he possibly be saying but that reality is not objective, that it is subjective (for this is all there is left for it to be). Accepting Winch means buying into a set of varieties, negating all that is contained in the claim that reality is objective.

Thinking that Winch must either go whole heartedly along with the 'objectivist' standpoint or fall into rank subjectivism is just the kind of foreclosing of the options we have complained about. It may be that these are the options available but, before deciding that they are we might be advised to see if there are possible alternatives and whether it is just such a one that Winch is trying to formulate. There is at least the possibility that Winch also wants to retain some of the views that objectivists would think incontestable, but to show that this can be done without having to put things as they would like them and without drawing the conclusions they think compulsory. The problem might not be that either objectivism or subjectivism must be right but in seeing the situation as demanding a choice between them in the first place. The 'objectivist' position is firmly held by many sociologists, refusing to subscribe to it will be seen as going directly against it and, therefore, Winch's claims that he is not putting forward any 'subjectivist' doctrine will be disregarded.

As will any protestations that he is not a relativist. Another set of comments by Winch which have stimulated much criticism have been those on the subject of rationality. Some people think that science is the paradigm of rational activity. Being rational means having effective means to ends, having ways of doing things that work. Science is an attempt to find out how reality is and its methods work, they tell us how things objectively are.

Naturally, then, it is the standard for rationality in thought. If people make attempts to find out how reality is, we can tell if they are successful by comparing their results with those of science. If they depart from those, then they are wrong. Whatever way people have tried to find out about reality, if it fails to match up to the results of science then it has failed to achieve the end set for it- has not discerned the nature of reality. Therefore, the means used are ineffective (compared with science) in finding out about reality and, consequently, that way of getting to know about reality is irrational (i.e. does not work.)

Winch has things to say which dissent from the idea that there can be any single standard for rationality and that science can play the role assigned to it. This, of course, starts trouble, for it does seem to be designed to diminish science. Winch seems to be driven into this.

If human beings are seeking to find out about reality, then they must either succeed of fail in doing this. Either science does or does not put us in touch with reality. Some maintain that it does. Winch must either agree or disagree with them.

If he does not agree with them, they what can he be saying but that science does not put us in touch with reality, that science does not work. That would diminish science. If he does agree with them, then he cannot deny that science has a role as a yardstick for judging what it is to know

the nature of reality. Any other way of getting to know reality which deviates from what science tells us must, then, be wrong and must therefore be judged by the standard of science - there is one general standard and this is it.

Failing to accept this means that Winch is in an uncomfortable dilemma. He must say that science is not rational, works no better than does any other way of finding out about reality than any other or he must say that science does find out about reality but that so,too - in their own ways - do other ways of finding out about reality. Either way seems to mean relativism- no way is any better than any other, each way is as good as each other.

Denying that science can play the role of standard of rationality because there is no one general standard of rationality comes out as the view that all standards of rationality are equal. If they come into conflict one cannot say that this is better than the other but must say that both are right. Winch does not just move into relativism but runs right into the worst danger of it,which is that he must accept that statements which contradict one another are both right. This cannot be, contradictory statements cannot both be right, and so Winch's position is itself incoherent for he wants to claim that they must be.

Consider its practical consequences, for it requires us to accept view that are repugnant to us. A great moment in the history of our civilisation was the realisation that our world was not even the centre of the solar system, let alone the centre of the universe. Those who lived before the Copernican revolution thought themselves quite rational to believe that the world was the centre of the universe, Winch wants to say that they were rational. However, we know that the world was not the centre of the universe, that it our earth circles the sun. Winch tell us, it is alleged, that we are no more rational than those who lived in pre-Coperrnican times and whilst we may be right in our terms, they were right in theirs: it is, consequently, no better to believe in the theory that the earth is the centre of the universe than to believe the opposite.

Those of us living now in our civilisation are sure that it is better to believe that the earth goes round the sun rather than the opposite and Winch is asking us to deny what we know, to refrain from saying that something we know is right is right. This is an intolerable position.

Then there is the issue of witchcraft. Some people believe in witches. We do not. There is no dodging a conflict here. One side must be right. Either there are witches or there are not. This is not a relative matter, such we can settle for saying 'Its right for them' because there either are or are not witches: if it is right for them, it must be right for us too. Unless we can say that they are wrong, then we must accept that if they are right, they are right that there are witches. We have to accept what we know is not, cannot be so, that there are witches.

Resistance to these such conclusions is bound to be very strong. It is backed up by much more than views of sociology's character, by the whole disposition of our civilisation. We know that the earth circles the sun and that there are no witches. However plausible Winch's arguments may seem they must be fundamentally flawed if they lead to these conclusions. If they do.

Let us assure the reader that there is no intention on our part to ask them to believe anything that they will have to strain at, nor invite them to revise any basic ideas they have about the solar system or the powers of witches. We do not see anything in either Wittgenstein or Winch that would call for this. We do take note of Wittgenstein's insistence that philosophy does not traffic in 'pictures of reality' and suppose that were Winch (or Wittgenstein) to be recommending one picture against another then he would be wrong to be doing this, regardless of the merits of the picture being preferred. Indeed, we shall be holding that Winch is best understood as an advocate of platitudes.

This is another no-win situation into which we can get. If we portray Wittgenstein or Winch as the protagonist of bold theses we shall be told that these are absurd, if we show that their theses are almost truistic it will be said that they are saying nothing of interest.

We shall, in the main, be trying to argue this: that the focus upon which views of the world are right distracts attention completely away from the problem which Wittgenstein and Winch want to discuss - how it is to understand a view of the world which differs from our own?

3.2 Magic, Religion and Science.

Both Wittgenstein and Winch centre their attention on the problem of understanding a spiritual practice. They have things to say about problems involved in understanding such things and their remarks on this have been taken to indicate general views about what is involved in understanding any social practice, as saying what is involved in understanding a culture that differs from our own.

Wittgenstein and Winch are however very much concerned with the understanding of spiritual matters and are confident that the problems involved with that are peculiar ones and not simply and directly comparable with those involved in understanding all kinds of practices. Religion and magic present a special sort of case, and though the problems involved must be connected with those involved in understanding any practice, they are not just exemplary of the problems that arise in any case.

The case of spiritual practices do present special problems. This is apparent in the treatment they receive from social scientists, who find them to be particularly tricky and

problematic. In one asks, is it problematical to understand alien practices? one can easily see that some alien practices are more troublesome than other, that alien magic, ritual and religion have puzzled anthropologists in ways that others do not. One may find the culinary habits of an alien people quite repulsive, find oneself repelled by even the thought of eating what they swallow down with pleasure but there is no problem in seeing how they can cook and eat the things they do. It is easy to appreciate 'different strokes for different folks' in this context, to recognise that taste in foodstuffs must be very much a matter of habituation; one can, in the right conditions, get used to the idea of eating squid, whale blubber, live ants or whatever.

Religious and magical practices prevent a stiffer problem. There are things people say and do which are hard to swallow. One cannot easily see how anyone could think/say such strange things, one cannot see oneself, in their situation thinking/saying the same things. Worse, some of the things they say seem to border on - even pass over into - nonsense. One can't see oneself saying that in their situation or any other because one can't even make out what it is they are saying. Were an individual to say things like that one might wonder about their sanity, but one appreciates that they are saying that because they are part of the society in which it is accepted. Still, the belief borders on the insane. It is virtually unintelligible.

The problems set by religion and magic are not the same as those set by other kinds of alien doings. If there are going to be limits to our capacity to understand another culture, then they are likely to be at or beyond them. Wittgenstein and Winch are both concerned to show that these practices are intelligible, that we can come to understand them. They try to give instruction in how some of these things can be understood. This means that claims that they are showing the impossibility of understanding another culture just have everything the wrong way around As to the impossibility of understanding another culture, they hold that this is a result of insisting on going about the task in the wrong way (something which they think social scientists sometimes do).

Showing the fly the way out of the fly bottle was what Wittgenstein compared his approach to philosophy to. The fly is trapped in the bottle and it tries to escape through the sides. However mightily it tries it cannot escape in this way but that does not mean that escape is impossible because its greatest effort will not set it free. It can be free and with very little effort, it can fly out through the neck. Whilst it is struggling to escape it cannot see the thing that will give it the way out. It will need to be shown it. Certain methods adopted by sociologists are meant enable us to understand alien practices but they do not succeed in this. They are the wrong means. Trying harder with them will not help us understand better. The fact that we cannot, through them, understand no matter how hard we try does not mean that understanding is so hard to get that it is impossible to have. It might be comparatively easy to get,

but not by persisting with those means. There will be a need to go at the thing a completely different way. This is the burden of the Wittgenstein/Winch position. Whether it is possible to understand an alien practice is never in question, what is needed to do this and what success at it is like is what is under discussion.

Those who are attached to the idea of generalisation will have an idea of what understanding an alien practice will be like. When we can explain it, then we shall understand it. They have, too, an idea of what it will be like to explain a practice: when we can deduce it from a set of general laws which apply to all societies, then we shall have explained it. It is because of such views that we have introduced talk of 'comparative sociology' into the title of this part.

There is a strong lobby for the view that sociology is an irreducibly comparative discipline, that we cannot understand any practice in isolation, cannot understand it except in a comparative context relative to the practices of societies other than those in which it is found. Not only must sociology seek to construct laws but they must be of the same generality as the laws of natural science. They must apply unrestrictedly and consequently to all societies.

It might seem that the way in which Wittgenstein and Winch respond to this challenge is to dispute whether social practices can be the subject of general laws, trying to show that it is not. Their strategy is actually somewhat different and rather more effective. It is to ask what we should have to do to get to laws of this kind and whether, in doing that, we should not have obviated the need for the laws themselves.

Once again, it is most important that we be clear about what is being opposed. If we say Wittgenstein and Winch are against comparative sociology they will seem to be taking an absurd position, namely that we cannot compare one society to another in any way, let alone to the advantage of one against another. They are opposed to a comparative sociology in the sense outlined above, to the idea that this is how comparison must figure in sociological work, but they are not thereby committed to the view that one cannot make comparisons between societies.

They are going to do this themselves. They will both try to improve our understanding of alien magical practices by making comparisons with practices in our own society. As before, the question is about how we are to make comparisons rather than whether we should do so?

Comparisons must presumably be appropriate and in the face of any proposal that we should compare we must always ask: what is to be compared with what? If there is a practice in a particular society which we want to understand (better than we do) and we think that we will do this by comparing it with those of another society, which practices in that other society should we compare it to?

Presumably one of the inspirations behind the idea of a comparative sociology is that the institutions of different societies are quite diversified and that understanding them involves seeing what role they play in the life of the society in which they are located. The role that an institution plays, however, will not be all that apparent and the job of comparison will be to make us aware that an institution in one society which looks quite different from those in another can, none the less, play a very similar role. It seems that only by a comparative dimension can we identify the actual part that an institution can play.

However, this argument - if we are fair in identifying it as one of the notions at the back of the wish for a comparative sociology - just does not work. It makes it sound as if understanding must begin with comparison but actually shows that extensive understanding makes comparison possible.

There are two institutions in different societies. They are very different ,as different - say - as our science and the magic of a primitive people. Now, let us just say that a comparative sociology might show that these two were very closely relate, that the magic of the primitive society plays a part virtually identical with that of science in our society. We shall, therefore,come to see their magic in a new light, will see it as a kind of science. We might have thought of it as a matter of magic versus science but we shall now see that magic is a sort of science. We would not have seen this without the comparison. Now we understand much better what the role of the institution of magic is in the life of this primitive society. Something we should not have grasped without the comparative reference.

How do we come to this kind of understanding? If the objective of our study is to see what role an institution plays in the life of a society then we cannot establish this by comparative analysis. We shall need to have a great deal of understanding of the role of the institution in order to decide which others have a comparable role in the life of their society. We shall need, for example, to know a good deal about the role of magic in the life of the society that contains it and about the role of science in its society to decide that the comparison of these two is a good one.

Whether it is illuminating to think of magic as the science of a primitive society will depend upon how well we understand the role of magic in that society and how well the comparison with science fits with it. Coming up with or judging the value of the comparison depends upon having or getting a good understanding of the role of each institution in its particular society. Without disputing that comparisons can add to and improve our understanding we can deny that these are indispensible and basic to it and that without them we lack any real grasp on the nature of institutions.

The disposition of social scientists to make science and magic (or religion) objects of repeated comparison betrays inadequate understanding of both, rather than resulting in correct understanding of either - this is what Wittgenstein and Winch imply. It is on the tendency to make this kind of comparison that their attention is focussed and it is on problems specific to the attempt to gain understanding of religion through science that they concentrate. This does not bring out some limit to our understanding, but to the limitations on the capacity for understanding of a certain view of the nature and importance of science.

3.3 THE GOLDEN BOUGH

What are we looking for from an inquiry into a social institution? We are looking for a better understanding of it, but what is this? Some people think that explanation is what we are looking for. We want to know why people do the things that they do and if we can see what makes them act in those ways, then we know why they do it.

Wittgenstein thinks that we are, very often, trying to find out what people are doing, trying to find a way to characterise some institution or practice of theirs. If we are -at any stage- to give an explanation of their actions, practices or institutions, then what task our explanation will have to perform will very much depend upon the way in which we have described what they are doing.

Those who think that the role of the social sciences is to give explanations do not think that the problems of description are very important. Because explanation is the important objective and description a quite inferior thing it is the problems of how explanations are to be given, those of description quite trivial. Even if we did not dissent from the idea that explanation is the overwhelmingly important objective, we could still find that the problems of description have been underestimated. Whether the problems of description are difficult and important to sociology is not to be decided on the basis of the relative importance of explanations vis -a-vis descriptions Description is important to explanation, the capacity to correctly describe the relevant facts is vitally important to the business of explaining, and the difficulties involved in giving good descriptions can be enormous regardless of whether 'ultimately' they matter a lot.

Though someone might think, then, that the important question is 'how are we to explain someone's action, practices or institutions?' that does not mean that they can fudge the question 'how are we to describe the action, practice or intention that we aim to explain? Nor does the fact that the question of how we are to give an explanation has high priority in their scheme of things mean that the business of contriving an explanation can be carried on before that of giving satisfactory descriptions has been dealt with. Explanations are explanations of something, and descriptions specify what there is to explain.

The question of what a good description is cannot be dodged either. Sir James Frazer thinks that the practices of primitive magic can only be understood through comparative and historical studies. Puzzled by one particular ancient practice, the succession to the priesthood at Nemi, he seeks to locate the motive which gives rise to it. He has, however, no evidence as to the specific historical origins of this practice, or of any motive that may have given rise to it. He thinks, then, hat if he can study numerous other instances of the same sort of practice and show that a similar motive lies behind those, then he will have made a good case that this is the motive which explains the practice. He thinks, further, that the explanation of many magical practices must be historical in the sense that they must be survivors of older practices. He thinks, for example, that ceremonies which simulate human sacrifice must have developed, historically, out of real human sacrifices.

Wittgenstein is critical of the explanation of magical practices which Frazer puts forward in The Golden Bough and gives reason for thinking that Frazer's use of comparative/historical studies has handicapped rather than assisted his understanding. He indicates the distance between them:

> *'The very idea of wanting to explain a practice - for example, the killing of the priest-king, seems wrong to me. All that Frazer does is to make them plausible to people who think as he does.'*

The resistance to the desire for explanation is that it leads Frazer into an inadequate conception of what magical and religious practices are:

> *'Frazer's account of the magi ea 1 and religious views of mankind is unsatisfactory: it makes these views look like errors.'*

The reluctance to accept that explanation is called for does not arise from a desire to keep the phenomena outside the bounds of intelligibility, to hold that they are mysterious ones, beyond the range of rational understanding. On the contrary,

> *'I believe that the enterprise of explanation is misguided for the simple reason that all one has to do is to group correctly what one knows and not add anything, and the satisfaction solicited from the explanation ,ensues all by itself.'*

Understanding eludes Frazer not because it inevitably must but because he has sought it by the wrong means.

Frazer's problem looks as if it is a genuinely historical/causal one. What circumstances have brought this practice into being. He thinks that its origin is to be explained in terms of beliefs: having certain beliefs and putting them into practice, people have instituted this practice of having a successor claim the priesthood by killing its occupants.

However, whilst this looks as if it is Frazer's problem it is not really. His real problem is 'what is the nature of a magical practice'? Frazer's effort originates with an attempt to understand how one ceremony has come about but it ends up trying to understand what ceremonies are,how they have their effect, and why people have them at all.

Frazer's theory is, then, about what a magical practice is. It is, in his view, the manifestation of a mistaken attempt at scientific theory. Primitive people seek an understanding of nature toward the end of controlling it. They have ideas about how it works and they premise their actions on those beliefs. Thus, if they believe nature is controlled by spirits and that those spirits can be influenced by human actions then they will take steps to influence those spirits. If those spirits can be motivated or placated by a human sacrifice, then one will be performed. There is, thus, the idea that ceremonial actions can make it rain, improve the growth of the crops, slow down the passage of time.

Such theories are, we know, mistaken. We know that the course of nature is inexorable, that if there are supernatural powers they do not intervene in nature in this fashion, that the performance of sacrifices and other ceremonies has no causal influence on the course of nature.

Ceremonies exercise a potent influence on people, however, we are deeply affected by and respond powerfully to them. This is because the ceremonies repeat actual, real situations, Frazer thinks. If we are terrified by a ceremony in which there is a pretence of sacrificing a human life, it is because this ceremony has descended from one in which real sacrifices took place.

Wittgenstein thinks that Frazer's account of magical and religious practice does more than just make them look like errors, it makes them look like stupid ones, like 'pieces of stupidity.' Frazer's own examples, had he looked at them in the right way would have shown him this:

> *The nonsense here is that Frazer represents these people as if they had a completely false (even insane) idea of the course of nature, whereas they only possess a peculiar interpretation of the phenomena. That is, if they were to write it down, their knowledge of nature would not differ fundamentally from ours. Only their magic would be different.*

They would, that is, show that they have just as strong a grasp on the inexorability of the course of the seasons, of the coming of the rainy and dry seasons, of the succession of night and day. It is just this which makes their practice seem so stupid. Given that night and day succeed one another over and over and that sooner or later the rain comes it seems that people would be stupid not to notice that these things would happen, whether or not they engaged in the ceremonies for daybreak or the rainy season.

Thus, true enough there is

> *'a Rain-King in Africa to whom the people pray for rain when the rainy period comes. But surely that means that they do not really believe that he can make it rain, otherwise they would make it rain in the dry period of the year.'*

It is also the case that

> *'toward morning, when the sun is about to rise, rites of daybreak are celebrated by the people, but not during the night, when they simply burn lamps'.*

These people show an equivalent grasp on the causal connections of nature ,of the need to adapt means to ends in accord with realistic assessments of how things work:

> *'The same savage, who stabs the picture of his enemy apparently in order to kill him, really builds his hut out of wood and carves his arrow skilfully and not in effigy'*

These are the kind of instances which support Wittgenstein's contention that the 'primitive's' understanding of nature would not differ fundamentally from our own.

What Frazer has given us is not, really, an explanation of magical practices but, instead, a conception of what kind of actions they are. He proposes that ,effectively, that there is only one kind of action, and that that is the instrumental kind, the sort directed toward the achievement of some practical object. Some basis for this may be found in the way in which ceremonial actions are performed in conjunction with straightforwardly instrumental ones -the carving of the arrow is accompanied by the casting of a spell to ensure the death of the enemy. It is not, however, a defensible conception of ceremonies, as reflection on our own reactions will show.

> *'When I am furious about something, I sometimes beat the ground or a tree with my walking stick. But I certainly do not believe that the*

> *ground is to blame or that my beating can help anything. "I am venting my anger".*

and

> *'all rites are of this kind. Such actions may be called Instinct-actions. - And an historical explanation, say that I or my ancestors believed that beating the ground does help is shadow-boxing ,for it is a superfluous assumption that explains nothing. The similarity of an action to an act of punishment is important, but nothing more than this similarity can be asserted.'*

There is no need and no justification for assuming that all actions have an instrumental character, and it is more than risky to assume that beliefs about nature can be inferred from any action, regardless of the kind it is, the circumstances in which it is performed, the steps that need to be taken to infer a belief from it.

There are actions which, rather than being oriented to the achievement of any end are just reactions that we produce and their performance is enough for us. Nothing further is required of them. The beating on the ground in anger is one such: for want of anyone to take our rage out on we may take it out on inanimate objects, on the ground, the furniture, trees etc. We do not do this for anything, with any aim in mind, or with any theories about the use or effect of such a deed. We feel better because we have done it, our anger has left us, we have worked it off. Likewise,

> *'kissing the picture of one's be loved That is obviously not based on the belief that it will have some specific effect on the object which the picture represents. It aims at satisfaction and achieves it. Or rather, it aims at nothing at all; we just behave this way and then we feel satisfied.'*

It is just part of our affection for someone that we include within our responses effigies of them and things associated with them. If we were to treat their image with no regard greater than that we extend to that of anyone else or to any mundane thing we should undoubtedly feel bad.

Wittgenstein is suggesting that we see that ceremonial actions are more like these aim-less performances than like practical actions. There ought to be no necessity to do this, but we think we are advised to stress that Wittgenstein is not suggesting that we see outbursts of rage, kissing the photograph of one's beloved as being all the expression of the same kind of emotion, or that he is suggesting that ceremonies are emotional expressions at all. He is making a much more

limited comparison, one which says that these are alike in that they are things which human beings do without reason to do them or without any belief that they will achieve anything. They are enough in themselves.

There is not, Wittgenstein thinks, a lot more to be said than that these are characteristic human actions: 'Here one can only describe and say :this is what human life is like', coming close to the proposal that 'man is a ceremonial animal. That is, no doubt, partly wrong and partly nonsensical but there is also something right about it.'

Wittgenstein says we arrange the facts, see them right and find that the satisfaction wanted from an explanation comes of itself. Many will think that this satisfaction has so far failed to come, that the thing which puzzled Frazer still puzzles them: why do people engage in ceremonies, why does anyone perform actions of that kind?

Wittgenstein by contrast cannot see what could be said that is more effective than, this is what we are like, we behave in both practical and ceremonial ways. Those who think that they would not be satisfied by any response which would appeal to 'what we are like' should ponder for a moment on whether they are or not. They want to know why people perform ceremonial actions but they do not wonder, in the same way, why people perform practical ones. Why does anyone ever do an action for a useful purpose, why does anyone ever bother to feed himself or others? There is no need to say anything more than, this is what we are like, we are creatures who need to feed ourselves, protect ourselves against suffering and discomfort etc. All Wittgenstein is doing is saying that we are also creatures that respond to things in other-than-practical ways.

Think, further, of the examples given, of outbursts of range and displays of affection. Both examples draw attention to the kind of creatures that we are. Behaviour in rage is not within our control, it is almost as if our rage controls us, makes us roar and thrash about. Rage, in other words, comes out and it can be displaced, directed onto something other than the object that provokes it. What more is there to say in this connection than, that is what we are like, we are creatures who experience rage and in us it is the sort of thing that is given physical expression.

Now consider the case of kissing the beloved's photograph. We feel something special not only about the beloved but about all kinds of things that surround and are associated with her, we deal with things which have that association in a way different from that which we treat things without it. In us affection is capable of generalisation, it can be spread from the object of it to things associated with her,it affects our feeling about more than just the person we love.

Consider another aspect of the kissing of the photograph. What has been taken entirely for granted there is that we see a coloured piece of paper as an image of another human being. Why

do we see anything as an image of anything else? Again, this is what we human beings are like, we are capable of catching on, very easily, to the idea of a connection between a human being and some 'likeness ' of them. Not only do we see the connection of likeness that links image or effigy and that which it represents, we also tend to invest that connection with other links such that -for example, the effigy can stand for that which it models, our treatment of the image is akin to our treatment of that of which it is the image.

Another important respect in which Wittgenstein is dissatisfied with Frazer's line of argument is over a matter which is related, in a way, to the connection between humans and effigies of them.

Frazer recognises that ceremonies engender more-than-ordinary reactions in people,that they can create feelings of awe, mystery, inspiration, terror,that there is something of great depth and significance to them. Frazer is not insensitive to this for

> *'when Frazer begins by telling us the story of the King of the Wood at Nemi, he does this in a tone which shows that he feels and wants us to feel, that something strange and dreadful is happening'.*

Frazer is puzzled by the capacities of rites to affect us in these ways but does not see that the answer to the problem is given in his own reaction to the things that he wants to explain. He does not see that it is in the nature of the ceremony itself to induce the disturbing reaction of being in the presence of something 'strange and dreadful'. He thinks that there are two questions to answer, one which asks why do people engage in this activity and ,the other, why does the activity affect them in the way that it does. Wittgenstein thinks that the point of the activity, of the ceremony, is to get people to react in the ways that they do"

> *'But the question "Why does this happen?" is properly answered by saying: Because it is dreadful that is, the same thing that accounts for the fact that this incident strikes us asdreadful, magnificent, horrible, tragic etc, as anything but trivial and insignificant, it is that which has called this incident to life.'*

Frazer, Wittgenstein is saying, has failed to grasp what kind of thing a rite is.

Frazer thinks that the capacity of a ceremony to have an out-of -the- ordinary effect requires a historical explanation. He thinks that the performance of a ceremonial action is to be understood as the historical remnant of a practical one.

Take the case of human sacrifice. Some people engage in a festival in which they pretend to burn a human being, and actually burn an effigy of one. They make as if to throw someone into the fire but do not go through with it, though they do treat the person whom they have 'sacrificed' as though they did not exist (as though they were really dead) for some time after - i.e. ignore them etc. This ceremony is a frightening one, and Frazer is puzzled that, given that no one is really sacrificed, we should respond to it in much the same way as we should if someone really were sacrificed. He explains it by the idea that the pretend sacrifice being historically connected with real human sacrifice, hat these people once did make human sacrifices and the performance of the rite now is a re-enactment of that. Thus, it is affects witnesses with feelings appropriate to real human sacrifice because it replaces such actual sacrifices with a pretend one.

Frazer has things the wrong way around. The ceremony has its effect upon people regardless of any historical associations with previous practices. If the ceremony is a terrifying one, then it is terrifying because of something about the ceremony itself and we can be moved to fright or horror by a ceremony without any knowledge whatever of the history which led to it. Frazer's historical account is not motivated by possession of historical knowledge of the origins of the rite, is indeed partly occasioned by the fact that we have no historical information on the origins of magical practices. It is Frazer's response to the ceremony, it is the nature of the ceremony, which makes gives him the idea of an historical explanation, which makes him think that something of this kind must be appropriate.

If we take a ceremony in which a pretence is made at burning someone, then we shall find that how this ceremony will affect us will depend very much upon the way in which it is organised. If it is conducted with all the seriousness with which a real human sacrifice might be conducted, if it is carried on as though the 'pretend' sacrifice was virtually indiscriminable from a real one, then it will have the capacity to make us feel very much as a genuine sacrifice would. If the participants are deeply serious, surround the deed with doings which invest it with a great aura of seriousness, and if afterward they cast the person who was used in the pretence out from their midst and treat him as if they had disposed of them then we shall feel things appropriate to the deliberate putting to death of a fellow creature.

Consider another ceremony in which a human effigy is burned, the Guy Fawkes night bonfire. Things here are very different, the whole occasion is a piece of fun, people carry on as if they were having a good time and as if nothing a great deal more than the burning of a rather poor effigy of a human being was going on. The occasion is treated as a good time and if small children are disturbed by any aspect of it they will be reassured that it is nothing really, that there is nothing to be frightened of, that it is only a paper doll and so forth. In this case, the bonfire does tie to the

death of a real human being, but the way the thing is carried out divests it of sombre or disturbing aspects and implications.

If we want to understand why the ceremony has the impact that it does, then, the first place to look is at the ceremony itself, t the way it is carried on and the manner in which it presents the events that make it up. If these are presented in a deadly serious, dramatised and intensified way then they will call up strong responses in us for we react to the idea of something in ways closely related to the way we react to the thing itself. We do not just react to the spectacle of the actual burning of a human being and fail to react to the burning of an effigy however potently that is made to simulate the actual burning. We react not just to the burning of real human beings, but to the very idea of burning them, and can be as much repelled by the image of this being done as by the act itself. If a rite can evoke an idea in us, then it can engender a response, regardless of any link (other than the symbolic) with the the actual practice it symbolises. A rite presenting the burning alive of a sacrificial victim can move us because it can evoke our knowledge that this is what people have done to each other, our recognition that this is what they are capable of: if, says Wittgenstein

> *'it were the custom at some festival for the men to ride on one another (as in the game of horse and rider,) we would see nothing in this but a form of carrying which reminds us of men riding horseback; - but if we knew that among many peoples it had been the custom, say, to employ slaves as riding animals, and, so mounted, to celebrate certain festivals, we would now see something deeper and less harmless in the harmless practice of our time.'*

Some ceremonies have the capacity to make us feel that we are in the presence of something deep and age old: they create in us the feeling that we are watching something that has been unchanged for great periods of time, that has been done over and over again with regularity and in the same way. It is this which makes us think that the explanation for the ceremony lies remote in the past, that it is something deep, distant and (perhaps) primitive in history which has created the need for this performance. However, the sense of its age-old character is not something that stems from our knowledge of the prolonged history of the practice but from the character of the practice itself, from the manner in which it projects itself and from the way in which it plays on our ideas of what is ancient, unchanging, deep, primitive and so forth.

English pomp and pageantry has possessed something of that sense of being ancient, as being the continuation of something that has been long lasting, long standing, slowly and little changing,

marked by great continuity, but historians have recently told us that much of this is of recent origin and deliberate contrivance, worked up to call in political loyalty and attachment to the crown.

The disagreement between Wittgenstein and Frazer is not, then, over how rites are to be explained but over what kind of thing they are to be understood to be in the first instance. Frazer sees them as just one more sort of practical action though, as it happens, ones which derive from mistaken theories of nature. This, for Wittgenstein is to overlook the very things which single out such things in the first place, that they are

dramatisations and symbolisations, performances which evoke reactions, that they present things in a striking and intensified way and, thus, give calm, comfort, consolation, confidence, a sense of awe, an awareness of mystery, a feeling for others or any one of the feelings that they are capable of engendering. Once we see these things (and they are fairly easy things to see) then we can also see that they answer the question 'why do people stage ceremonies?'

Wittgenstein's overall verdict on Frazer's explanation, then, is that it is redundant, that it results in misdescription of the available facts and that it results from Frazer's lack of insight into the things he is trying to explain. He shows, on Wittgenstein's estimate, a poorer appreciation of the meaning of the rites he undertakes to explain than do those who participate in them: disparagingly,

> *'What a narrow spiritual life on Frazer•s part. As a result: how impossible it was for him to conceive a life different from that of the England of his time...Frazer cannot imagine a priest who is not basically a present- day English parson with the same stupidity and dullness.'*

If Frazer's explanations do not work ,and if indeed his real problem is that of seeing what kind of activities rites are, then why should it seem to him and others that there is something there to explain and that his way of going about it - if not right in its specific characteristics - is on the right lines as to how this is to be done.

The essence of Frazer's method is that of finding formal similarities, finding ways in which activities without any demonstrable causal or historical connection with each other are alike, and treating those resemblances as if they gave or indicated causal connections.

Wittgenstein makes an analogy: we can get an ellipse out of a circle. We can draw a circle and an ellipse and link them by an intervening series of other shapes which move progressively and by minor adjustments, from the circular through to the elliptical. Thus we can show that an ellipse is a 'squashed circle', we can show the kinship between circular and elliptical

shapes, can show what is involved in seeing one as a modification of the other. We should not, however draw the conclusion that we have traced an historical chain or causal connection, shown that ellipses are produced by squashing circles, for we have not done that. We have only shown that they are shapes related by virtue of resemblance. Frazer is, Wittgenstein thinks, making a similar mistake, making it look, by the way otherwise unrelated practices are shown to have resemblance to one another as though he has done more than brought out a resemblance as though he has shown that they are connected with one another, originating in a common motive, bein linked by causal connection and so forth.

Frazer is no longer accepted as he was and anthropologists have certainly come around to views of rites and magic more like Wittgenstein's than Frazer in the time since the former made his critical notes on the latter. The specific complaints about Frazer's way of dealing with magic may not apply to his successors (assuredly will not apply in just the same way) but the merits of Wittgenstein's views about magic itself are not the reason for our giving an outline of them. The purpose of laying them out was to show what form Wittgenstein's opposition to generality could take, to show that his dissent from Frazer's theory is rooted in thought about what the problem is1whether a theory really is needed to solve it or whether the answer can be sought elsewhere. Frazer's writings give Wittgenstein good reason for his reservations. Other studies might therefore, do so too. Winch finds that some important ones do.

3.4 Understanding a Primitive Society

Edward Evans -Pritchard contributed to the development of anthropological thought about religion and magic beyond the point that had been reached by Frazer and others of his predecessors. Insofar as it had been thought that primitive people had inferior intellects to civilised folk, that they had a much more limited ability to reason, Evans-Pritchard in his study of Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande of the Anglo- Egyptian Sudan had done much to rebut such claims. He gave an account of magical practices which might indeed seem bizarre and illogical to Westerners but which were carried out in as level headed, reasoned and practical a manner as any of us might employ in our own affairs. There was no basis for suggesting that these people were less rational than ourselves.

He found just what Wittgenstein saw that Frazer had over looked, that these people were as well, thoroughly and practically acquainted with the facts of nature as we are, that they understood how events were caused just as we do. Their employment of magic was not premised in a misunderstanding of how natural factors give rise to natural occurrences.

Misfortune is blamed on witchcraft, but the tendency to do this - Evans- Pritchard stressed- does not mean that mystical notions interfere with empirical ones, that the people attribute to witchcraft causation things which should rightly be blamed on natural causation. The two go together, and it is the nature of the practice that it lays the blame on witchcraft only where empirical causation is not sufficient.

Evans-Pritchard shows that the Azande are well aware of the way in which natural events bring things about and that they see perfectly well that droughts and infestations bring about the failure of a crop. They recognise too that human incompetence can figure prominently in the occurrence of misfortune and they do not blame all misfortunes on witchcraft. They blame, rather, those misfortunes which lack natural explanation, the visiting of it in a particular person despite that person's best efforts to forestall it and despite their most competent deployment of such effort. If a farmer takes every efficacious step to protect a crop against infestation and yet such infestation takes place, then there is a reason to lay the blame at the door of a witch.

A witch is someone possessed of (unwitting) power to harm. Within them there is a substance - the witchcraft substance - which gives them this power and it is activated through malevolent feelings. The feeling of hostility or envy toward someone will bring misfortune on them.

Someone who has been affected by or is about to undertake something that they fear will suffer from misfortune can find out if they are indeed bewitched, suffering the effects of someone's hostile feelings. They can consult the oracle.

Consulting the oracle involves the administering to chickens of a poison and treating the responses of the chicken to that as answers to questions. Some chickens die from the poison, others do not. Whether they do or not is taken as giving 'yes' or 'no' answers to the questions that are asked: Am I bewitched, who is bewitching me etc? If a witch is identified, then steps can be undertaken to put an end to the bewitchment, an end put to the bad feeling causing the injury.

Throughout a very long and immensely detailed description of the many practices involved in witchcraft, magic and oracular consultation Evans- Pritchard plays up the extent to which these are treated as entirely natural features of the Azande way of life, dealt with in an eminently sane and calm way, without the fear and hysteria that was involved in the witch crazes of our own history.

In many respects, all that Evans -Pritchard says has the approval of Peter Winch, but there are some brief passages which leave - in his opinion - a great deal to be desired. Winch had said many things in his book *The Idea of a Social Science* which had met with hostile reaction, not least because they had - he thought - been misunderstood. 'Understanding a Primitive Society' was written to clarify some of those misunderstandings, and a few of Evans-Pritchard's remarks were

singled out as exemplary of the kind of mistake that Winch had aimed to correct. By picking those out, Winch put the case of Azande witchcraft at the centre of a protracted and heated controversy.

Let it be noted, most of what Evans-Pritchard has to say about the Azande shows that he understands their magical and oracular practices well enough and that the issue is not at all about the empirical adequacy of his description of their practices. Evans-Pritchard's description of the Azande magical practices and the manner in which they are deployed is a lengthy and detailed catalogue and their is no suggestion that adding to that would in any way help in settling the questions that arise between Winch on the one hand and Evans-Pritchard and many others afterward. Further description of magical instruments, incantations, potions, beliefs about the power of magic and the rest would not change the proportions of the problem in any way.

The offending remarks take up a very small proportion of a large text, but their importance is unrelated to their size. They say something that affects everything else that is said in the book, something which expressed the spirit in which it is written and specifies the attitude that is to be taken to it. They are comments which say how the study as a whole is to be taken.

What are these offending remarks? They are to the effect that 'obviously there are no witches 'and they express the view - outlined by Winch -that 'We know that Zande beliefs in the influence of witchcraft, the efficacy of magic medicines, the role of oracles in revealing what is going on and what is going

[The manuscript breaks off here.]