

ON WITTGENSTEIN: THE LANGUAGE-GAME AND LINGUISTICS

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Many Wittgensteins currently encountered in journals are straw men used for fodder. The greatest difficulty, then, in dealing with Wittgenstein is to find the real Wittgenstein in the haystack. In this paper I attempt two things: (A) I try to determine what Wittgenstein believes ought to be the proper object of philosophy. This involves, perhaps, more elimination of misconceptions than identification of proper conceptions of what Wittgenstein actually advocates. (B) I make an effort to elucidate two points of Wittgenstein's philosophy [as understood in (A)]; to this end, I consider the views of linguists, particularly Noam Chomsky and Benjamin Whorf.

(A) Wherefore Philosophy

For the ancients, the world was prior in existence and conception to the philosophers' explanations of the world via language. But the ability of human reason to discover the fundamental nature of the world was never doubted. It was supposed that man could know (or at least, come to know) with certainty whether--put simply --being was one or many, whether instantiations participated in transcendent, eternal forms as Plato held, or whether every individual's form was an innate aspect of itself (as in Aristotle's account). With Kant comes the shift away from metaphysics as formerly conceived. Since the necessity and universality of human knowledge had been severed from the "real world" by Hume's critique of causality, Kant sought to establish a guarantee for rational necessity and universality in the a priori structure of reason. The emphasis becomes not the world, but man: it is man's understanding which organizes whatever realities it encounters.

It is for Wittgenstein to bring even greater specificity to the Philosopher's task. Wittgenstein makes a case (in the Philosophical Investigations and his later works) for recognizing that it is only a particular aspect of man's rational nature, a particular "form of life," which is really accessible to the philosopher, viz., language. But "language" takes on a much broader meaning for Wittgenstein than it has had in previous

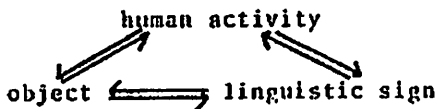
philosophies, as we shall see. The purpose of the present section is to try to reach conclusions about Wittgenstein's philosophy which are not inconsistent with the text of that philosophy; this we shall do by first "defending" Wittgenstein against various misinterpretations of his doctrine, then by building a coherent explanation of what his system actually demands.

Wittgenstein as nominalist or realist.

"The Tractatus advocates realism. Wittgenstein rejects this position in the Philosophical Investigations and becomes a nominalist in disguise."--Those who hold that he is a nominalist claim that, for Wittgenstein, language itself imposes a structure upon the world (on reality) which men further interpret by describing language with language. To say, "Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language" (PI # 109), is important for the nominalistic interpretation in that it is not only the bewitchment but the battle which is modified by the phrase "by means of language." Reality is understood as having no distinguishable aspects apart from those gained by the imposing of language upon it. Wittgenstein's own rejection of nominalism at Philosophical Investigations # 383 ("Nominalists make the mistake of interpreting all words as names, and so of not really describing their use, but only, so to speak, giving a paper draft on such a description.") is passed over with the explanation that nominalism need not be described so narrowly; for, ultimately, how does Wittgenstein describe the use of words except by the use of more words ("names")? At least two mistakes are made by those who maintain that Wittgenstein is a nominalist: (1) They fail to understand the way in which language-games function in Wittgenstein's system; and (2) they erroneously suppose that the Philosophical Investigations constitutes an outright dismissal of the Tractatus. Let us first consider the former.

(1) "Two positions: either the world exists in itself prior to language, or language is the stuff out of which the world is made."--When one understands the language-game metaphor, one is freed from the mistaken (nominalistic) view that Wittgenstein's acceptance of the second clause implies his rejection of the first. In fact, as we shall see, Wittgenstein takes no position on the first, for it is not possible to move beyond speculation there. But his embracing of the second involves more than the simple assertion that language "creates" the world. The language-game which Wittgenstein describes involves three distinct but interrelated

parts: linguistic sign, object, and human activity.¹ Nowhere does Wittgenstein explicitly make this categorical statement about language-games, but his explanations of language-games in both The Blue and Brown Books and the Philosophical Investigations provide illuminating insights. Wittgenstein describes the linguistic sign in relation to language-games in The Blue Book (pp. 16-27). Although language-games "are ways of using signs," our inquiry will result in confusion if we demand a precise conformity of these signs to a particular set of definitions, i.e., a "standard of exactness." Similarly, the object which in part makes up the language-game cannot be narrowly construed as a preconceived, independently existing object-in-the-world to which linguistic signs necessarily correspond. Human activity: at Philosophical Investigations # 7, Wittgenstein says, "I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the 'language-game.'" Action, human activity, is essential to the language-game because the rules of the game involve action. Linguistic rules mediate, as it were, between all three parts of the language game:



Consequently, to misuse grammar is to misunderstand the relationships between any of the parts of the language-game.

The language-game allows considerable variation among particulars and cannot be narrowed sufficiently to conform to the nominalistic expectation that language give form to an otherwise indistinguishable reality. Language does construct the world, but not language as previously conceived. Although we may say that language (with its original connotation) participates in the formation of objects, we must understand that it is the linguistic sign, in combination with human activity and the object, which makes up the language-game (and is therefore involved in the construction of the world). The inseparability of the three is responsible for its being impossible for the linguistic sign to be the "cause" of the object. As Wittgenstein demonstrates, it inevitably leads to nonsense that we separate these three and force grammar into an improper use. To understand the world as created by language "nourishes one's thinking with only one kind of example" (PI # 593); and this is the mistake of the nominalist.

(2) Certainly there is a great deal of difference between the Wittgenstein of the Tractatus and the Wittgenstein of the Philosophical Investigations; but this does not mean that the two are completely incompatible. The realism advocated in the Tractatus succeeds into the Philosophical Investigations in the following way. The language-game metaphor gives us the "proper" way to see the world; but it incorporates previous views of reality, including that of the Tractatus. Each of these previous views offers a limited interpretation of the world; only the language-game allows the variation necessary to broaden our perspective. In other words, realism (and, in fact, any previous view) commits the believer to a particular ontological view as well. Only the language-game allows us freedom from presupposing an ontological starting point. So there is no sense in which the realism of the Tractatus is wrong; it is simply limited in what it can yield ontologically.

Let us be careful, therefore, that our pulling Wittgenstein out of the nominalist's camp does not land him in that of the realist. The discussion in (2) helps to show the limitation of the realistic approach, but there is more to the problem than this. There is perhaps a more subtle way in which Wittgenstein could be accused of being a realist--even in the Philosophical Investigations. Granted, it is not the case that Wittgenstein claims that language corresponds to some underlying reality. (The language-game metaphor gives equal footing to all three of its components, whether or not there is anything "underlying.") Yet for Wittgenstein, philosophy rests on everyday language. And any description the philosopher may give of the world must conform to use in everyday language (PI # 120). It might be argued that Wittgenstein is a realist on grounds that everyday language has taken the place of "reality," demanding conformity of every possible intelligible use of language. Here again, it is a misunderstanding of the language-game metaphor which causes the mistake. Everyday language both is involved in and is the result of the tripartite structure of the language-game. Furthermore, the language-game not only is not static itself, but no language-game is the only language-game, or even the most basic language-game.

One last word concerning nominalism, realism, and Wittgenstein's avoidance of both extremes: the most important single factor in the Philosophical Investigations which serves to carve a path down the middle is the concept of linguistic rules. If Wittgenstein were a nominalist, then the rules would be arbitrary, left

to the discretion of any individual user of the language. Certainly they are not arbitrary, as Wittgenstein demonstrates in his arguments against private language.² On the other hand, if Wittgenstein advocated realism, then the linguistic rules would follow some given structure of the world. As we have already noted, Wittgenstein does not commit himself to some prior structure of the world to which language simply corresponds. And even the correspondence of concepts to facts of nature is placed in the realm of natural science.³

Philosophy as the investigation of words.

Two particularly shallow and misleading interpretations of Wittgenstein run something like this: (1) Wittgenstein sees the object of philosophy as an investigation into the meaning (or use) of words; and (2) Wittgenstein holds that it is absurd to attempt to analyze the meaning of a word.⁴ The former interpretation is misleading in its implication that the sole object of philosophy is the inquiry into the meaning of words, for certainly this is but one object of philosophy. The latter, based on pp. 27-8 of Wittgenstein's Blue and Brown Books, is a misinterpretation of the aim of that short excursion into the difficulty of assigning meaning to words.

(1) It is easy to see how this view (that philosophy's object is an investigation into the meaning of words) could gain a foothold; several paragraphs can be lifted to emphasize Wittgenstein's concern with discovering the meaning or use of words.⁵ However, this view also implies the premise that to understand and report the use of words is (to be able) to do philosophy; and this is not the case! True enough, Wittgenstein says (PI # 264), "Once you know what the word stands for, you understand it, you know its whole use;" but this is not to say that the understanding of use is the sufficient condition for doing philosophy--even if philosophy's primary object is understood to be description. In the first place, meaning is not always to be understood as use: "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" (PI # 43). In this case, it is the phrase "though not for all" that ought to be emphasized. But secondly, description has its limitation as well. Not only does the word "describe" trick us in some circumstances (PI # 290), but philosophy must involve more than description alone. Philosophy's relation to language is a purely descriptive one (PI # 124), but--and

this is important--"descriptions" are instruments for particular uses (PI # 291). Philosophy investigates the meanings of words in order to describe accurately; and those descriptions are used, broadening the scope of philosophy beyond simple description.

(2) Wittgenstein offers the following critique of attempting to find the "real meanings" of words:

Philosophers very often talk about investigating, analysing, the meaning of words. But let's not forget that a word hasn't got a meaning given to it, as it were, by a power independent of us, so that there could be a kind of scientific investigation into what the word really means. (BB pp. 27-8.)

What Wittgenstein is doing here is not negating the possibility of assigning meaning to words, but discussing a particular difficulty with definition: we cannot tabulate strict rules for the use of a word because there may be many overlapping meanings. Still, it is appropriate, when confusion arises in our understanding, to look for clarification by determining meaning or use.

Ontological inquiry as nonsense.

Without doubt the most destructive repudiation of Wittgenstein is the mistaken claim that all ontological inquiry is mere nonsense to him. And the criticism is made much more difficult to deal with because Wittgenstein himself never really makes the move into ontological inquiry. However, this is not to say that the move was not available to him, only that he did not make it, having laid the foundation. First, let us determine what Wittgenstein means by "nonsense"; then let us see whether ontological inquiry will fit neatly into that category.

We human beings share a common language (speaking broadly to incorporate translation) and are therefore justified in calling a use of language "nonsense" when it adheres to no known definition and leaves us with no understanding. When Wittgenstein says, "My aim is: to teach you to pass from a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent nonsense" (PI # 464), he emphasizes the importance of recognizing a use of language as violating the rules appropriate to that use. But one may be mistaken about what is nonsense; that is, one may come to understand what one thought was nonsense.

Explanation is not philosophy, is not even of fundamental interest to the philosopher, but explanation may be prior to our realization that a language-game is being played and may avert misunderstanding.⁶ When conceptual confusion occurs, when language seems to be used nonsensically, the proper remedy is often explanation. In the Blue Book (p. 10), Wittgenstein complains to an imaginary opponent, " . . . to use the expression 'a feeling in my hands of water being three feet under the ground' has yet to be explained to me" (emphasis mine). Certainly the implication is that one may come to understand what at first sounds like nonsense to one. Inquiry does not stop when we interpret something as nonsense; we continue to expect an explanation--at least until we are certain that we have exhausted our real and "extended" definitions and associations for any particular concept.

It may also be the case that we ought not to be looking for an explanation:

Our mistake is to look for an explanation where we ought to look at what happens as a 'proto-phenomenon'. That is, where we ought to have said: this language-game is played. The question is not one of explaining a language game by means of our experiences, but of noting a language-game. (PI ¶s 654-5)

What happens when we "note a language-game?" In the first place, if we recognize something as a language-game, we are not recognizing a misuse of grammar or an example of nonsense. No, we are seeing a composite of linguistic sign, human activity, and object. And, importantly, we thereby gain insight into how to proceed. Imagine a jigsaw puzzle. As soon as I recognize that what I am putting together is, say, a face (or even the boundaries of a single piece), I am better able to fill in missing pieces. I have a general concept which guides me in an indisputable right direction. The pieces fit (or should if I am truly doing my philosophy). This is precisely what Wittgenstein means when he claims that philosophy "puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything" (PI # 126).⁷ What philosophy does is to turn up errors: pieces which belong in some other language game, pieces which do not fit where they are being used; but these realizations occur after we have said, "this language-game is played." It is crucial to see that recognizing a language-game does not necessitate ending an inquiry --not even ontological inquiry; on the contrary, we recognize the language-game and, from there, we know how to go on.

The real object of philosophy.

Wittgenstein's relationship to philosophy is no merely negative relationship which would enable him to be labeled an atheoretical skeptic; there is a positive aspect based on language-games which emerges as the proper object of philosophy. However, the object of philosophy is not merely the recognition or even examination of language-games (the doing of "ordinary language analysis"), as we shall see.

I take sections 109-33 of the Philosophical Investigations to be directly aimed at defining the philosopher's task; and any coherent account of what Wittgenstein advocates for philosophy must certainly consider these. In what follows, I will give a summative description of philosophic problems and their collective solution based on that portion of the text but not limited to it. One small point should be brought out from the beginning, however: it is not completely clear whom Wittgenstein has in mind when he refers to "philosophers." In some passages it seems transparent enough, but in others the reader must wonder whether Wittgenstein means to include himself--or perhaps his unknown opponent, "you"--among philosophers. For example in § 116, the first sentence begins, "When philosophers use a word" The following sentence begins, "What we do" (emphasis Wittgenstein's) which apparently places either Wittgenstein-and-company or Wittgenstein-and-opponent in a sort of contrast to philosophers-in-general. If so (i.e., if this is no accident), then we must be careful not to impute to Wittgenstein what he meant to apply to philosophers, or vice versa, when he later speaks of "us" in sentences seemingly about "philosophers."

A philosophical problem occurs: (1) when language is stretched beyond its limits, (2) when we become entangled in rules which we have laid down but which do not turn out as we expect, and/or (3) when we do not see connections. In all three cases, the effect on us is that we "do not know our way about." There is not one, there are many philosophic methods; and our attempts to solve philosophic problems involve employing various approaches. If the problem has the character of (1) or (2), then we first look at the words which frame the problem and attempt to realize their meanings, their uses. If (3), then we find or invent "intermediate cases," examples. But any attempt to solve a philosophic problem must have the form of non-controversial description of language-games. The function of language-games, i.e., the use to which we put them, is to establish one of many possible orders "in our knowledge of the use of language." This amounts to setting up language-games as

objects of comparison (for similarities or dissimilarities) and, most importantly, enables us to note distinctions. The mistake which is made about language-games is to interpret them as having any of the following relationships to language: to regularize it, to give a foundation for it, to interfere with its use;⁸ for the ultimate purpose of properly functioning language-games is to give us complete conceptual clarity.

The result of our knowing how to approach and dissolve philosophic problems is that at any point, we can stop doing philosophy. That is, since we have clarity at every step, we can cease finding or creating examples and be satisfied. But nowhere do we have to stop; the only "end" of philosophy is clarity, so inquiry can always continue. Roads can lead from grammar to metaphysics, but here is the clincher: we have to stay on the road. As soon as we jump ahead, we forfeit clarity; and that forfeiture creates a new philosophic problem.

Digression: Wittgenstein's lament.

Although it may seem a rather strange claim, it appears that Wittgenstein did not realize the potential for his language-game approach to philosophic problems. His foundation is solid enough for using the method to effect clarity in any realm of philosophy, but Wittgenstein appears to despair of philosophy; he never uses the language-game model for metaphysics or ethics although, I am convinced, it would provide a sound basis for those areas of philosophy. In sections 126 and 129 of the Philosophical Investigations, we get the sense of Wittgenstein's odd lament: "what is hidden . . . is of no interest to us," and, "The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden" So, that which is most important is also of no interest to the philosopher--a disquieting commentary.

(B) Wittgenstein in the Linguistic Context

Three points need particularly to be in mind as we examine Wittgenstein's relationship to a current controversy in linguistics. (1) He does not commit himself on the question of whether there is or is not some underlying "reality" to which language corresponds (although he certainly decries as philosophic dogmatism the assumption that there is). (2) He holds that the most important aspects of things are hidden precisely because they are simple and familiar (PI # 129), a theory which Benjamin Whorf shares and elucidates. (3) Wittgenstein recognizes

the importance of differentiating between the "surface" and the "depth" of words and grammar in a way similar to that worked out by Noam Chomsky.⁹ Superficially, we might say that Whorf explicates "background phenomena" in a way which helps us to understand what Wittgenstein had in mind in his discussion of "hidden aspects." Similarly, Chomsky solves a few problems in the misuse of language (pointed out by Wittgenstein) when he works out some grammatical ramifications of surface and deep structures of language. But what makes it interesting philosophically to consider these two linguists is that they are of opposing schools. Whereas the philosophy of Wittgenstein fits neatly with the analysis of language put forth by Whorf, it runs counter to Chomsky's further claim that there must be an underlying reality, a claim based on the surface/depth distinction.

To anticipate the Wittgensteinian objection that philosophy and linguistics have different objects and ought not therefore to be considered together, we are justified in examining the Whorf/Chomsky linguistic controversy for two reasons. The pedantic ground: Wittgenstein says that we call "philosophy" that which is "possible before all new discoveries and inventions" (PI § 126), so if the "scientific" study of linguistics has already proven something to be the case, then we no longer require a "philosophical investigation" into the matter; as philosophers, we can cease to concern ourselves with that portion of Wittgenstein's work. The philosophic ground: if we hope to dispute the primacy of language, then we must begin at the base and ask whether the linguistic turn is a necessary one, and how radically that turn must alter our ultimate conclusions about the nature of man and the world.

First let us mention very briefly the linguistic context from which Whorf's and Chomsky's theories are taken. Lenneberg and Roberts¹⁰ distinguish two basic schools of thought on the subject of the relationship between man's language and the world. The first is represented by Whorf's thesis that not only do speakers of different languages perceive reality in different ways, but the very cognitive structure of an individual is shaped by the language he speaks (that any particular language perpetuates a particular *Weltanschauung*). This stands in opposition to the Chomskian view that language is arbitrary and perfectly translatable from any one language to any other, psychological factors causing no difficulty in translation. Identifying the "deep" aspects of all languages, Chomsky finds it axiomatic that there is an underlying "reality" which accounts for all languages having the same deep structure.¹¹

"hidden aspects" and "background phenomena": Wittgenstein and Whorf.

Wittgenstein says little about hidden aspects,¹² but what he does say (which sounds like a riddle) is suggestive indeed, especially since what is hidden is called "most important for us," and "most striking and powerful." Although these aspects are familiar to us, we do not recognize them. They are the foundation of our inquiry, yet we do not see them. In light of an elaboration of Whorf's analysis of background phenomena,¹³ we will attempt to determine what Wittgenstein may mean.

A linguistic rule is in some sense formulated as a "rule" because it admits of exceptions. A condition which admits no exceptions may never come to be called a rule at all, staying literally "in the background" of our experience, out of our consciousness. These background phenomena, whether they be in the form of rules or not, tend to remain unrecognized by us, at least until we broaden the realm of our experience to include new phenomena which, because of their contrast with the former, allow us to make the relevant distinction for the first time. We are not conscious of background rules, but we may become conscious of them through this sort of special circumstance. Ernst Cassirer speaks similarly of implicit concepts which become explicit through the work of philosophy.

We might hypothesize a race of deaf mutes, isolated from other human beings. They may have determined that a tuning fork, when struck with a certain force, will make a particular number of vibrations per second. They may have developed complex systems of rhythms for dance; but we cannot expect them to have recognized the concept of sound in the way that we know it. They will have no words for "tone," "pitch," "loud," etc. In general, we might say that they have not formulated the rule that they do not "hear." Likewise, a person suffering from extreme color blindness does not determine for himself, "I see only shades of gray; I do not distinguish red, yellow, or blue."

But the rules need not be negative. We are governed by rules in all that we do; but we do not necessarily recognize the rules *qua* rules. We speak a language without knowing all the grammatical rules which govern it. We walk long before we formulate the rules of mechanics, and fall before we understand the law of gravity.

The important similarity in these examples is the accessibility of the rule. In every case, it would be possible to educate the persons involved so that what

was once background to their experience becomes conscious to them. But how is this different from, say, education in general? Whorf argues, convincingly, I believe, that certain of these background phenomena may be common to an entire culture and may remain unconscious.

If the case is a language, then linguistic rules (i.e., a grammar) will hold for all those who are involved in the use of that particular language. But not all aspects of a grammatical system are necessarily formulated as rules which are within the immediate recall of even the "learned" speakers of the language. Through the investigation of non-Indo-European languages, for example, even linguists were "educated" in some of the background rules of English: they became aware of the existence of languages with other than the subject/verb framework, which led to the formalizing of the rule that Indo-European languages are primarily subject/verb languages.

The background rule which Wittgenstein has in mind is grammar itself: "The strict and clear rules of the logical structure of propositions appear to us as something in the background--hidden in the medium of the understanding" (PI # 102). It is grammar which expresses the essence of language. "The essence is hidden from us," (PI # 92). The reason that essence, grammar, is hidden from us, the reason it is so difficult to bring to the foreground, is that our own activity, our "form of life," is a part of it. A language-game is being played, a game characterized by human activity bound by grammar to linguistic sign and object. What we fail to realize again and again is that our misunderstandings have grammatical solutions--but "grammatical" in the sense of "essence" which we cannot get at until we first realize that there is a background phenomenon to recognize. It is that to which Wittgenstein keeps pointing.

Surface grammar, depth grammar: Wittgenstein and Chomsky.

It is fundamental in Wittgenstein's philosophy that we conduct grammatical investigations in order to avert misunderstandings "caused, among other things, by certain analogies between forms of expression in different regions of language" (PI # 90); Wittgenstein's own investigations are paradigms. What clarifies this kind of investigation for us (instructs us about the analogies) is Wittgenstein's description of surface and depth grammar, but Wittgenstein does not give us an extensive description.¹⁴ What Wittgenstein does do--the misuses of language which he considers--bears striking similarity to Chomsky's own

examples used in the description of transformational grammar, with its deep structures, to clarify misleading (or wrong) results of the application of other previous grammars (finite state grammar and phrase-structure grammar). Wittgenstein, I believe, would look with approval at the system Chomsky develops, for certainly that system clarifies and turns up misuses.¹⁵

In The Blue Book (pp. 35-6, 55), Wittgenstein considers the analogous forms of expression:

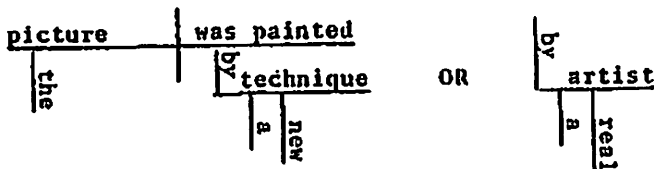
- i. to say something
to mean something
- ii. I expect him
I shoot him
- iii. A has a gold tooth
A has toothache.

His explanation of how these confusions arise (and how they ought to be understood) is directed specifically at his own examples. There is no explicit set of directions on how one should in general resolve analogous but misleading uses of language except--although it does not appear in this context--to "recognize that a language-game is being played." Chomsky's description of deep structures¹⁶ provides a systematic method for getting at misleading analogous expressions.

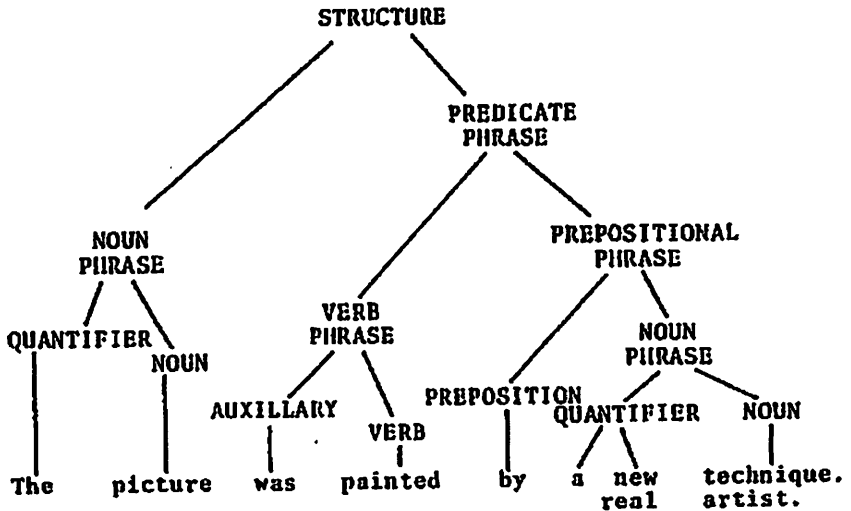
In what follows we will consider three of Chomsky's examples similar in form to those which Wittgenstein uses:

- iv. the picture was painted by a new technique
the picture was painted by a real artist
- v. John is easy to please
John is eager to please
- vi. I expected John to be examined by the doctor
I persuaded John to be examined by the doctor.

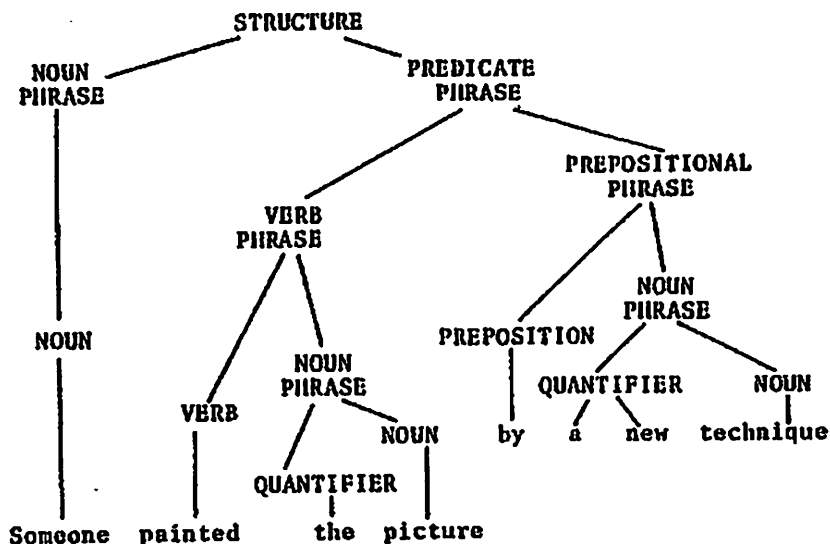
The surface structure of each pair is identical. Traditional grammars (e.g. phrase-structure grammars) would "diagram" the elements of each pair identically. For example:



Using a phrase-marker (tree), the surface structure still appears the same:



What is wrong at this point is that we have no grammatical description (as represented by the two diagrams) which indicates that the grammatical subject of "was painted" in each sentence is different. This is the inadequacy of the traditional system. What the deep structure shows is that whereas there is an understood "someone" who painted the picture in the first example ("by a new technique" tells how), the second sentence is simply the passive form of "A real artist painted the picture" ("by a real artist" tells who). Transformational phrase-markers describe the difference by representing the two ideas of the first sentence on two levels so that the complementary--but essential--idea that "someone painted the picture" is included in the transformed model. The deep structure of this example is described by the following phrase-marker:



The method for discovering the differences which result in the phrase-marker descriptions is an operation similar to that used by Wittgenstein on examples i., ii., and iii., above. The simple operation consists in performing an identical construction on each element of the pair:

- v. John is easy to please me.
John is eager to please me.
- vi. What I expected was for John to be examined by the doctor.
What I persuaded was for John to be examined by the doctor.

In each case, the result is one grammatical, and one ungrammatical sentence. This result should always alert us to the fact that two analogous sentences have different deep structures.

Conclusions.

What Chomsky further claims--and certainly it is a controversial claim--is that all languages, whether or not they have a subject/verb framework, conform to transformational grammatical analysis, and can be understood in terms of surface and deep structure. Reality is the same for all men; and their deepest ways of expressing that reality are also the same. But this immediately

brings us back to Whorf's opposite view: that one's language perpetuates one's Weltanschauung, that users of different languages have different cognitive structures. We do not find Wittgenstein straddling the issue here. Despite his recognition of deep structure, he certainly does not hold that all men experience the same reality or express that reality in ways which are most basically identical. No, Wittgenstein's discussion of family resemblances (PI #'s 65-108) suggests something much closer to Whorf's view. We should not be surprised if all our investigations lead us to the discovery that grammars--like objects, linguistic signs, and human activity--cannot be forced to conform precisely to some objective "standard of exactness."

Grammar expresses the essence of language; and the essence is hidden from us. What this means is not that it is difficult for a schoolboy to learn the rules of grammar, but that the structure of our language itself hides from us its own deep structure. Old linguistic rules are not enough; they are not powerful enough to penetrate the surface. Recognizing the "background" nature of grammar and adopting the transformational analysis work on sentences, help to clarify, and avert misunderstanding. But that is only a beginning. If we are to be able to do philosophy--and do all types of philosophy--with the clarity we require, then we have to penetrate the whole of the language-game, not just the grammar which binds it together.

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NOTES

¹I am indebted to my colleague, Richard Fleming, for bringing this to my attention.

²Cf. PI #'s 269, 275.

³It is particularly interesting to note the contrast between PI # 415 ("What we are supplying are really remarks on the natural history of human beings; we are not contributing curiosities however, but observations which no one had doubted, but which have escaped remark only because they are always before our eyes.") and PI xii, ("Our interest certainly includes the correspondence between concepts and very general facts of nature But our interest does not fall back upon these possible causes of the formation of concepts; we are not doing natural science; nor yet natural history"). The key to this apparent discrepancy lies in philosophy's role being "to describe," not "to explain" (at least in the PI). The investigations are "doing philosophy," not "doing" natural history (for to do natural history would be to offer explanations, while to describe natural history or "make remarks" about it may fall accidentally within the realm of philosophy).

⁴Chomsky, for one, has this view of Wittgenstein. Cf. Chomsky, "Some Empirical Assumptions in Modern Philosophy of Language," in Philosophy, Science and Method: Essays in Honor of Ernest Nagel, S. Morgenbesser et al., eds. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970), p. 276.

⁵Cf. PI #'s 108, 122, 340, 556.

⁶Cf. PI # 87, and BB p. 164.

⁷Cf. PI #'s 119, 224, 241-2.

⁸Cf. PI #'s 124, 130.

⁹Chomsky's published objections to the philosophy of Wittgenstein are directed to the latter's statements about language acquisition; but this will not concern us here. I believe that Chomsky simply misappropriated a few isolated statements by Wittgenstein and treated them as if they were "Wittgenstein's Definitive Theory

of Language Acquisition" without ever really doing his homework.

10E. H. Lenneberg and J. M. Roberts, The Language of Experience, Indiana University Publications in Anthropology and Linguistics, Memoir 13 (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1956), pp. 1-11.

11It would be philosophically interesting to determine whether what Chomsky views as "underlying" would be closer to Aristotelian or Kantian "categories."

12Almost all of his discussion is contained in three short sections: PI #'s 91-2, 102-3, 126, 129.

13Benjamin L. Whorf, "Science and Linguistics," in Language, Thought, and Reality, ed. J. Carroll (Cambridge, Mass: The Technology Press and John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1956), pp. 207-19.

14The only passages which actually serve to describe what Wittgenstein means are PI #'s 111, 594, 664, and Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics, p. 32.

15Chomsky acknowledges Wittgenstein's description in Aspects of the Theory of Syntax (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1965) p. 91.

16Chomsky, Syntactic Structures (The Hague: Mouton and Company, Inc., 1957).