DISCUSSIONS:

Philosophy in Question:
Philosophical Investigations 133

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1. The focus of this paper is section 133 of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. It is my contention that this section has been universally misinterpreted. The 'discovery . . . that gives philosophy peace' has been read as an allusion to some sort of 'end of philosophy'. I will argue that a concern with the end of philosophy, even when it is a concern to play down the importance of that notion, distracts us from the true import of the passage in question. Rather than discussing the 'end of philosophy', this passage is far more intelligible once we recognize that its subject matter is metaphilosophy, understood as the attempt to state what philosophy essentially is. This interpretation demands of us a profound reorientation of our view of Wittgenstein's metaphilosophical remarks.[1]

Section 133 is one of the most perplexing passages in the *Philosophical Investigations*:

> It is not our aim to refine or complete the system of rules for the use of our words in unheard-of ways.
> For the clarity that we are aiming at is indeed *complete* clarity. But this simply means that the philosophical problems should *completely* disappear.

The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to. – The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* in question. – Instead, we now demonstrate a method by examples; and the series of examples can be broken off. – Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated), not a *single* problem. There is not *a* philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies.

The consensus of opinion seems to be that Wittgenstein's obscurity is at its deepest in the third paragraph. What does Wittgenstein mean by '[t]he real discovery'? What is it to 'bring philosophy peace'? In setting out my answers to these questions, I shall initially contrast my interpretation with that put forward recently by Kelly Dean Jolley.[2] Jolley reads these sentences as a description of a goal which one might pursue but which Wittgenstein believes cannot be attained. The goal in question is an end of philosophy and Wittgenstein believes this goal cannot be achieved because he believes that the time will never come when philosophical problems no longer arise.

While avoiding a crude 'end of philosophy' reading, Jolley nevertheless lets that issue obscure the import of PI 133. My claim is that, although Wittgenstein does indeed take the supply of philosophical problems to be inexhaustible,[3] *this is not what PI 133 is about*. Nor is it about any other 'end of philosophy'. What it is about is the end of metaphilosophy, understood as the renunciation of the attempt to formulate a final and exact account of the nature of philosophy.[4] What these sentences say is that the 'real discovery' is the discovery which would allow me to stop searching for the essence of philosophy. It is the discovery which ends philosophy's self-questioning, terminates the effort to state what *philosophy itself* must be.

Jolley makes much of the use of 'Instead'. She reads it as contrasting 'Wittgenstein's method with the real philosophical discovery'.[5] My proposal is that the 'Instead' also marks the contrast between the philosophical questioning of philosophy and Wittgenstein's

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1. The following abbreviations (followed by page or section number as appropriate) are used in referring to frequently quoted works by Wittgenstein: PG – *Philosophical Grammar*, R. Rhees (ed.), A. Kenny (trans.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974). Ph – 'Philosophy: Sections 86–93 (pp. 405–35) of the so-called "Big Typescript" (Catalog Number 213)', H. Nyman (ed.), C.G. Luckhardt and M.A.E. Aue (trans.), *Synthese* 87 (1991), 3–22. PI – *Philosophical Investigations*, G.E.M. Anscombe and R. Rhees (eds.), G.E.M. Anscombe (trans.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967). Z – *Zettel.*, G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright (eds.), G.E.M. Anscombe (trans.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981).

2. Jolley, K.D. 'Philosophical Investigations 133: Wittgenstein and the End of Philosophy?', *Philosophical Investigations* 16 (1993), 327–32.
3. The Big Typescript clearly states that philosophical problems will continue to arise '[a]s long as there is a verb "to be" which seems to function like "to eat" and "to drink", as long as there are adjectives like "identical", "true", "false", "possible", as long as one talks about a flow of time and an expanse of space, etc., etc.' (Ph 15).
4. The importance of this definition will emerge later.
5. Op. cit. p. 329.

demonstration of his philosophical method by way of examples. But can such things contrast? In what respect could they be seen as rivals? If there is no one thing that philosophy is, that is to say, if '[t]here is not *a* philosophical method' and philosophy is not constituted by 'a *single* problem', a definition of 'philosophy' will naturally take the form of a set of examples. One may feel that a request for a definition could never be satisfied by a set of examples. There are, however, few conclusions that one could draw that would be more unWittgensteinian.

The 'real discovery', which lets us stop searching for 'the nature of philosophy', spans the ambiguity which characterizes so many of Wittgenstein's uses of 'philosophy', that between 'philosophy', the form of thought Wittgenstein wishes to combat, and 'philosophy', the form of thought he wishes to encourage.[6] 'Philosophy' here stands for both a set of overlapping questions *and* their solution by disparate but overlapping means. Wittgenstein shows what he understands 'philosophy' to be by presenting a series of examples. As a series of *problems solved*, he also 'thereby demonstrates [his own philosophical] method'. A consequence of this approach to the general idea of 'philosophy' is that the '*complete* clarity' which Wittgenstein seeks does not stem from the solution of '*the* philosophical problem', using '*the* philosophical method'. This notion of completeness in philosophy derives from a concept of 'philosophy' that Wittgenstein rejects. The only way in which the Wittgensteinian philosopher can hope to complete his philosophical tasks is by making his particular philosophical difficulties 'completely disappear'.[7]

According to Jolley, '[t]he only real difficulty' which her interpretation faces is that of explaining 'Wittgenstein's comment that the series of examples he is going to provide "can be broken off"'.[8] Jolley interprets this troublesome turn of phrase as prompted by the fact that '[p]hilosophical problems are (at least in principle) conceptually isolable'.[9] Jolley's approach here embodies three related errors.

6. When it is necessary to disambiguate, I use 'traditional philosophy' to refer to the form of thought that Wittgenstein wishes to combat and 'Wittgensteinian philosophy' to refer to the form of thought that he himself employs.
7. According to the metaphor of Z 447, the philosopher can completely resolve the difficulties of a particular 'cross-strip' and only craves a solution to the infinite, 'longitudinal' task because of a confused conception of 'philosophy'.
8. Op. cit.
9. Ibid. p. 330.

Firstly, the claim of 'conceptual isolability' is an over-statement. Nevertheless, it picks up on an important aspect of what I suggest is the main point of PI 133, namely that we should not expect to find a set of determinate, essential characteristics which make philosophical problems 'philosophical'. Jolley's second and more important mistake is her failure to reread the section as a whole in the light of her interpretation of this sentence.[10] 'Conceptual isolability' is a crucial aspect of the 'real discovery' sentences but Jolley misreads these sentences as Wittgenstein's confession that 'what he has to offer falls short of the best that could be offered'.[11] This mistake is encouraged by Jolley's third error, her failure to recognize the allusive significance of the finite series of examples. This is a notion which, throughout the *Investigations*, snaps at the heels of a certain philosophical notion of what definition is. If philosophical problems are 'conceptually isolable', it should indeed be possible to solve such problems in isolation from one another. But why describe this fact in terms of a 'series of examples [that] can be broken off'? The answer is that this turn of phrase alludes to issues of definition. In this case, it alludes to the issue of the definition of 'philosophy' (to the 'questions which bring [philosophy] *itself* in question'). Failure to note this allusion also underwrites Jolley's overstatement in labelling philosophical problems 'conceptually isolable'. If they were genuinely conceptually independent, of which *concept* would a series of such problems provide instances? A sequence of unrelated examples cannot serve to define any kind of concept. However, a series of *conceptually overlapping* examples can serve to define a family resemblance concept and this, I wish to suggest, is how Wittgenstein conceives of 'philosophy'.

Further support for my reading can be derived from an examination of the discussion going on in the sections adjacent to PI 133. The preceding passages are devoted to the rejection of certain pictures of what Wittgenstein's philosophy is, in particular, the suggestion that 'our task' is 'a future regularisation of language' (PI 130, 132). Wittgenstein seeks order in language's apparent disorder, but it is only 'one out of many possible orders; not *the* order'

10. It strikes me that most of the ideas upon which I am drawing can be found within Jolley's account, only there they are misapplied or occluded by irrelevant additional thoughts.
11. Ibid. p. 329.

(PI 132). This pluralist picture of philosophizing is clearly in line with the account I have given of PI 133.

It is, however, the subsequent sections which provide the most striking support. PI 133 has typically been seen as marking the end of one 'chapter' of the *Investigations*.[12] This belief in an apparent change of subject-matter and the failure to recognize the concern of PI 133 with metaphilosophy are mutually-supporting, in that this failure renders invisible the thematic continuity of PI 133–35 and a recognition of this continuity highlights this failure. The two sections immediately after PI 133 concern the family resemblance of concepts, and take as their example the concept of a 'proposition', that is, *the* concept which gave unity to Wittgenstein's early philosophy. In 1915, Wittgenstein stated that '[m]y *whole* task consists in explaining the nature of the proposition'.[13] By the time he comes to compose the *Investigations*, this one-time 'super-concept' (PI 97) has fallen to earth:

> But haven't we got a concept of what a proposition is, of what we take 'proposition' to mean? – Yes; just as we also have a concept of what we mean by 'game'. Asked what a proposition is . . . we shall give examples and these will include what one may call inductively defined series of propositions. *This* is the kind of way in which we have such a concept as 'proposition'. (PI 135)

Belief in the existence of the 'general form of a proposition'[14] had at one time underwritten Wittgenstein's belief that the whole of philosophy was the attempt to solve a '*single* problem'. Wittgenstein's progressive recognition of the flaws in his early monistic account of language lead to its replacement by an account which acknowledged the existence of different systems of propositions with different logical characteristics. The later work retains a revised form of the earlier hope that one might 'express in an appropriate symbolism

12. Cf., e.g., Jolley, ibid., Genova, J. 'A Map of the *Philosophical Investigations*' (in S. Shanker (ed.) *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Critical Assessments* Volume 2 (London: Croom Helm, 1986)), Baker, G.P. and Hacker, P.M.S. *An Analytical Commentary on Wittgenstein's* Philosophical Investigations, Volume One (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984) and Hallett, G. *A Companion to Wittgenstein's* Philosophical Investigations (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).
13. *Notebooks 1914–16*, G.H. von Wright and G.E.M. Anscombe (ed.), G.E.M. Anscombe (trans.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979), p. 39.
14. *Tractatus Logico-Philosphicus*, D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness (trans.) (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), proposition 4.5.

what in ordinary language leads to endless misunderstandings'[15] but it abandons the hope that this might be done wholesale, the reason being that one can no longer depict philosophical propositions as violating *the* logic of meaningful discourse if one rejects the idea that there is such a logic. As a result of this rejection of the 'general form of a proposition', Wittgenstein abandoned a vision of philosophy oriented to a 'single problem', that of elucidating *the* nature of the proposition. Jolley's 'boundary' separates what I would suggest are a statement regarding the possibility of a unified definition of philosophy (PI 133) and a discussion of the internal heterogeneity of the concept that Wittgenstein once thought gave his philosophy unity (PI 134–35).

My interpretation of PI 133 implies that should Wittgenstein's attention be turned to the specific idea that there is *a* particular thing called 'philosophy', one would expect him to be critical and in the *Philosophical Grammar*, this is what we find. Wittgenstein endorses an explicitly nominalist view of 'philosophy':

> [P]hilosophy isn't anything except philosophical problems, the particular individual worries that we call 'philosophical problems'. Their common element extends as far as the common element in different regions of language. (PG 193)[16]

But despite this nominalism, isn't Wittgenstein here tying the nature of philosophical problems to something about language? The mistake underlying this question is the assumption that anti-essentialism regarding 'philosophy' is a denial that there are similarities that hold 'philosophy' together. 'Philosophy' is a family-resemblance concept and what connects the problems, claims, arguments etc. that we call 'philosophical' are 'a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing' (PI 66).[17] The problem of metaphilosophy that

15. 'Some Remarks on Logical Form', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume 9 (1929), p. 163.
16. Compare Wittgenstein's insistence that '[t]here is no such thing as phenomenology, but there are indeed phenomenological problems.' (*Remarks on Colour*, G.E.M. Anscombe (ed.), L.L. McAlister and M. Schättle (trans.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), Part I sec. 53.
17. As Fogelin puts it, 'the doctrine of family resemblance does not leave us with nothing to do; instead it invites us to trace out relationships, and this should be done with whatever degree of rigor the subject matter allows.' (Fogelin, R.J. *Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), p. 138.) In this respect, Wittgenstein is doing metaphilosophy as well as one can and it is only the continuing influence of essentialist expectations which makes this appear a poor substitute.

Wittgenstein wishes to dissolve is an instance of the general problem that can arise when we assume that there must be a single common factor underlying the various instances of a concept. In this case, the concept happens to be 'philosophy', just one more word around which philosophical problems evolve:

> One might think: if philosophy speaks of the use of the word 'philosophy' there must be a second-order philosophy. But it is not so: it is, rather, like the case of orthography, which deals with the word 'orthography' among others without then being second-order. (PI 121)

A second-order philosophy would specify, among other things, a task for philosophy. Familiar examples are the analysis of our concepts, the mapping of the limits of possible knowledge and the discovery of the ultimate constituents of the universe. For Wittgenstein, although philosophical problems share a variety of similarities, philosophy has no one special focus ('[i]t is not our aim to refine or complete the system of rules for the use of our words'), no one task or concept that it is devoted to ('problems are solved (difficulties eliminated), not a *single* problem'):

> Philosophy is concerned with calculi in the same sense as it is concerned with thoughts, sentences and languages. But if it was really concerned with the concept of calculus, and thus with the concept of the calculus of all calculi, there would be such a thing as metaphilosophy. (But there is not. We might so present all that we have to say that this would appear as a leading principle.) (PG 116)

If an underlying commonality united philosophical problems (their shared focus on the concept of a calculus, for example), reference to this commonality would allow one to neatly delimit what is and what is not 'philosophy'. If such a commonality existed, there would be such a thing as metaphilosophy. But, for Wittgenstein, there is not.

2. A problem faced by my interpretation of PI 133 is that many of Wittgenstein's comments on philosophy do sound like pronouncements on its 'essential nature'.[18] Those comments which characterise

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18. Radford, for example, insists that '[d]espite his avowed anti-essentialism, Wittgenstein is an essentialist – about philosophy itself'. (Radford, C. 'Wittgenstein and Philosophy', in R. Haller and J. Brandl (eds.) *Wittgenstein – eine Neubewertung* (Vienna: Holder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1990), p. 253.)

Wittgensteinian 'philosophy' pose greater problems here than those which characterise traditional 'philosophy' and I will deal with the latter first of all. My suggestion is that the claims in question are most easily understood as ideas about the causal origin of philosophical ideas. This is, for example, a natural reading of the claim that philosophy is the result of the 'bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language' (PI 109). There seems little reason to take this suggestion as a proposition about the essence of philosophy. But what of claims such as that 'in philosophy all that is not gas is grammar'?[19] The most obvious readings of such strident remarks take them to be specifications of *the* form philosophical problems take. However, I would again argue that Wittgenstein's position is more easily understood if these remarks are read not as stating an essentialist theory about the nature of philosophical problems but as (in this case, possibly rash) inductive generalizations about what tends to cause philosophical problems. Viewed in this light, Wittgenstein's metaphilosophical claims appear as hunches, confirmed perhaps by experience. Taking the 'gas or grammar' claim as an example, what I mean by 'experience' is that, of the 'philosophical problems' Wittgenstein has examined, what meaning they have contained has been attributable to their expressing grammatical truths in a confused and misleading manner. The unity that these metaphilosophical claims confer on philosophical problems is one of common causal origin, rather than identity of essence.

I turn now to a second and highly appealing aspect of my reading of these claims. What is surely one of the strongest reasons for not ascribing to Wittgenstein claims regarding the essence of philosophy is the absence of arguments that would support them. If Wittgenstein suggests that philosophy *is* the bewitchment of our intelligence by language, the obvious questions to ask are: How does he know that? Why should he think that this is true? There are no obvious resources available within Wittgenstein's writings that would allow us to answer this question, *other than the many examples* that he gives of philosophical claims that seem to be based solely on superficial similarities of grammar. That there are essentialist claims at work within Wittgenstein's thought is an opinion which many of his opponents have understandably found appealing. On the basis of this belief, they quite reasonably go in search of a foundation for this claim in, for example, an implicit theory of meaning, thereby

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19. *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge 1930–32*, D. Lee (ed.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), p. 112.

revealing the 'rival theory' that they have for so long insisted Wittgenstein *must* have. It certainly would appear that if Wittgenstein wishes us to accept an essentialist claim regarding, for example, the relation between philosophy and grammar, he must have some implicit theory that he can bring to bear. Were the mystery of the whereabouts of this touted theory to be solved, its problems would only be beginning. It is far from obvious that Wittgenstein can formulate a rigid grammatical/factual distinction without bringing down upon himself the Quinean and Davidsonian wrath that beset the synthetic/analytic and scheme/content distinctions respectively.[20] These considerations suggest that Wittgenstein may be most easily defended by our rejecting the notion that the 'gas or grammar' claim *is* an element in an essentialist metaphilosophy.

I suggested earlier that Wittgenstein's 'real discovery' applied to his own philosophical practice as well as to the traditional 'philosophy' which is his target. What, then, are we to make of those metaphilosophical claims that Wittgenstein makes regarding his own philosophy, his insistence, for example, that it describe and not explain (PI 109)? Surely these are essentialist, it will be suggested. Indeed, certain plausible interpretations of Wittgenstein's comments on his own practice do invite an essentialist reading. To assess such interpretations would require detailed discussion of the remarks in question and a careful examination of Wittgenstein's argumentative methods, tasks which are beyond the scope of this paper. I would, however, like to make two comments. Firstly, we are less likely to make essentialist assumptions regarding Wittgenstein's own philosophical practice than we are regarding traditional 'philosophy', the object of that practice. The latter attracts essentialist confusions which lead us to wonder about the 'nature' of this thing called 'philosophy', in much the same way in which we wonder about the 'nature of thought' or 'meaning'. The same is not true of 'Wittgenstein's philosophy'. This is 'what Wittgenstein did' and, as such, does not prompt interpretation as a 'natural kind', as 'a continuous streak of philosophical ore' running through space and time.[21]

20. Wittgenstein himself is sceptical of broadly similar distinctions. See, for example, his comments on scientific definition in PI 79 and his river-bed analogy in sections 96–97 of *On Certainty* (G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright (eds.), D. Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe (trans.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974)).
21. Rorty, R. 'The Historiography of Philosophy', in R. Rorty, J.B. Schneewind & Q. Skinner (eds.) *Philosophy in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 70.

Secondly, although Wittgenstein clearly had an over-arching perspective on philosophy, according to which it was composed of (possibly profound) forms of confusion, this does not imply that he had a sharply determined notion of 'philosophy' or of what its 'confusions' were. Wittgenstein accuses philosophers of over-extending models, of investing 'meaningless ceremonies' with great significance, of ignoring the role of background circumstances in our practices, etc. Is there a single 'confusion' in which all these philosophical errors partake? They all 'go wrong' somehow but does this claim say more than that 'over-estimation', 'over-investment' and 'ignorance' are each to be avoided? If the answer to this question is 'no', this must surely weaken the notion that Wittgenstein sees a particular, determinate error at the heart of philosophy. Nothing in the later work seems to play the role of 'philosophy's characteristic flaw' (as trying to 'say what can only be shown' did in the *Tractatus*) and again this is not to say that philosophy does not have 'characteristic flaws'. (Those listed above are prime candidates.)

It might also be suggested that these forms of error all instantiate our failure to '*command a clear view* of the use of our words' (PI 122). But is this itself a 'perspicuous representation' of philosophy's errors (PI 122)? For some purposes, it is, such as warding off the notion that these difficulties are to be solved by 'logico-mathematical discovery' (PI 125) or by 'a future regularisation of language'. But I would suggest that Wittgenstein would wish to put no more unifying weight on this notion of a lack of overview than he would on, for example, his suggestion that philosophical errors are of the form: 'I don't know my way about' (PI 123).

The use of highly abstract concepts, as Wittgenstein never tired of telling us, is liable to give matters an inaccurately homogeneous appearance and this, I would suggest, is true of at least some of Wittgenstein's programmatic metaphilosophical statements. To take another example, when Wittgenstein insists that '[w]e must do away with all *explanation*, and description alone must take its place', he immediately reminds us that 'this description gets its light, that is to say its purpose, from the philosophical problems' (PI 109). Since '[w]hat we call "*descriptions*" are instruments for particular uses' (PI 291) and 'many different kinds of thing are called "description" '(PI 24), the 'descriptions' Wittgenstein seeks can be expected to come in a variety of forms:

In philosophy it is not enough to learn in every case what is to be said about a subject, but also *how* one must speak about it. We are always having to begin by learning the method of tackling it.[22]

If I am right in suggesting that Wittgenstein saw traditional 'philosophy' as a complex, internally-heterogeneous array of confusions, there is no reason to think that a single technique can handle everything that this opponent can throw at us. As long as Wittgenstein saw philosophical problems as 'only reflections of the one great problem in the variously placed great and small mirror of philosophy',[23] Wittgenstein could continue to talk of 'the correct method in philosophy'.[24] Open-ended, multi-faceted and sometimes fragmentary, Wittgenstein's later writings do not appear to embody '*a* philosophical method, though there are indeed methods'.[25] According to my interpretation of PI 133, we show what traditional 'philosophy' is by giving examples. Since Wittgensteinian philosophizing 'gets its light, that is to say its purpose, from the philosophical problems' that it handles, we show what 'Wittgensteinian philosophy' is by showing how it is applied to these examples. We can define 'Wittgensteinian philosophy' by reference to 'traditional philosophy' and *vice versa*. But there is no ultimate escape to a metaphilosophy, no escape from the obligation to 'demonstrate a method, by examples'.

3. The issue discussed in PI 133 obviously has implications for the notion of an end of philosophy. Although Wittgenstein frequently talked of his own work in epoch-making terms, his opinion on the idea of an 'end of philosophy' is made clear in a comment in a letter to Waismann: ' "Renunciation of metaphysics!" As if *that* was something new!'[26] Nevertheless, there is the possibility that

22. *Remarks on Colour* Part III sec. 43.
23. *Notebooks* p. 40.
24. *Tractatus* 6.53.
25. Cavell glosses this sentence as follows: 'The sorts of thing he means by "methods" are, I take it, "(imagining or considering) a language game for which (a given) account is really valid"; . . . "finding and inventing intermediate cases"; . . . "(inventing) fictitious natural history"; . . . investigating one expression by investigating a grammatically related expression; . . . and so on.' (*Must we Mean What we Say* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 66).
26. Quoted in Editor's Preface, p. 18, of Wittgenstein, L. *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, shorthand notes recorded by F. Waismann, B.F. McGuinness (ed.), J. Schulte and B.F. McGuinness (trans.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979). Cf. also Ph 9: 'All that

Wittgenstein believed that he was bringing about something like an 'end of philosophy', understood not as an end to the generation of philosophical problems but as an end to philosophy as a dangerous force, a force we do not know how to handle. Indeed, one way of reading the relationship between the *Investigations* and the *Tractatus* would be to read both as trying to bring about an 'end of philosophy', with the second attempt made in the knowledge that this cannot be done wholesale, that is, after the fashion of the first. Instead, one must perform it piece-meal, modesty preserving one from perpetuating a metaphilosophy. The strategic thought would be that all one can do to 'end philosophy' is to show the true nature of each philosophical venture.[27] However, my reading of PI 133 points to a fundamental difficulty in interpreting the apparently humble exercise just presented as an 'ending to philosophy'. Predictably, the problem concerns how one is to define 'philosophy'. The piece-meal approach may be the only way of achieving this goal but what the goal *is* may be anything but clear-cut. For example, should one find a problem which one cannot dissolve, one might accept that there is no end to philosophy as one had thought or one might deny that it really was a 'philosophical problem' in the first place. It hardly needs saying that this takes our proposal perilously close to vacuity.

There is an unmistakably wistful quality about Wittgenstein's remarks on 'the real discovery', a feeling that this is what he seeks but cannot attain. However, this does not derive from, for example, the fact that philosophical problems are in limitless supply. The problem is not that Wittgenstein has failed to make 'the real discovery'. Rather, it is a peculiarity of 'the real discovery' that Wittgenstein cannot convince his opponents that he has achieved it. It is a discovery which requires something like a *gestalt* shift. '[T]he axis of reference of our examination must be rotated' (PI 108) if we are to see that the question of philosophy's nature cannot be

philosophy can do is to destroy idols. And that means not creating a new one – for instance as in "absence of an idol".'

27. Cavell occasionally comes close to this thought. He suggests that we read Wittgenstein as proposing 'not that in philosophy we struggle to find the way to end all explanation, recover from all losses, but to find places in which, from which, to bring each explanation to its end, to find ourselves, after each spell of being at a loss' (Cavell, S. 'A Conversation with Stanley Cavell on Philosophy and Literature', interview by Bucknell Review, in R. Fleming and M. Payne (eds.) *The Senses of Stanley Cavell* (London: Associated University Presses, 1989), p. 321).

answered in the way we had thought possible. To some, this means that it cannot be answered *at all*. To some, a finite list of examples could never suffice to define any concept and the 'traditional philosopher' is not about to accept this in the case which is closest to home. 'The real discovery' is something of a ruse, in that it is nothing but the recognition of something which, according to Wittgenstein, stares us in the face.

It has been suggested that Wittgenstein's 'demonstration of a method' stands in contrast to 'the questions which bring [philosophy] in question'.[28] It has also been suggested that this 'demonstration' contrasts with 'the real discovery'.[29] Both contrasts are being drawn but not for the reasons that the commentators in question have proposed. Wittgenstein's 'demonstration' is an alternative to 'the questions' because 'philosophy' cannot be defined in the manner implied by questions which ask what the essence of philosophy is. But the 'demonstration' also contrasts with 'the real discovery' because the kind of approach to this problem of definition which seeks 'the real discovery' is the approach most likely to fail to recognize the solution to its problem. The 'real discovery' is the one which allows us to stop looking for the kind of final, all-embracing solution that talk of a 'real discovery' brings to mind. PI 133 illustrates 'the difficulty . . . of recognizing as the solution something which looks as if it were only a preliminary to it' (Z 314).

There is a paradoxical aspect to Wittgenstein's drawing our attention to the question of philosophy's nature only to tell us that the question cannot be usefully addressed. The paradox would be that Wittgenstein is himself saying something about what philosophy itself *is* when he says that there is no one thing that it is (just as his saying that there is no one thing that all games have in common could be read as a statement about what games *essentially are*). The 'real discovery' would be that which allowed us to stop seeing such pronouncements as ill-expressed attempts to answer *the* question, the question of the essence of philosophy. Faced with this problem, rather than giving some sort of formal statement of his position, that is, the kind of statement which is most likely to be misread by (or will appear most paradoxical to) the very people he most needs to

28. Genova, op. cit. p. 67.
29. Jolley, op. cit. p. 329.

reach, Wittgenstein's response is to 'demonstrate a method, by examples'.[30]

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