Is Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy Therapeutic and Does this Mean that it is Anti-Systematic?

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Abstract

The paper takes the word 'therapeutic' that is used by some interpreters of the later writings of Wittgenstein (like McDowell) to characterize its 'unsystematic' side, as a starting point for a discussion of how much 'theory' can be found in these writings despite Wittgenstein's statements that theory has to give way to description.

It takes sides with McDowell (against Michael Dummett) in that it agrees that an axiomatic-deductive type of theory is not feasible for natural languages. But from this it does not follow (as Dummett had feared) that we learn the sentences of our languages one by one. Instead, so the paper argues, we do find a systematic body of insights in the later writings of Wittgenstein that specify *kinds of linguistic procedures* that are not restricted to single cases. The crucial point is that the capacity to invent and understand metaphors is a central ingredient of our natural-language competence and that this ability cannot be captured by axiomatic systems. While Wittgenstein mainly discussed the *pitfalls* resulting from these kinds of linguistic moves, Eugene Gendlin is credited for highlighting the positive side of this competence, including its use in Psychotherapy proper.

Keywords: theory of meaning, Wittgenstein, Gendlin, creativity, therapy

1. Introduction: Therapy and Philosophy

This paper will explore whether Wittgenstein's later philosophy of language can be characterized as therapeutic in a sense that would imply and justify the claim that it (and its subject matter) lacks a systematic character.[1] It will oppose both parts of this claim: The change that Wittgenstein wants to provoke in his readers is different in kind from the change intended in therapeutic encounters. And the picture of language and of linguistic competence that Wittgenstein argues for is a systematic one, in the follow-

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[1] This is a revised version of a paper read at the conference 'Philosophy of Psychotherapy' at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, in July 2011. – I would like to thank Timothy Doyle for correcting my English.

ing sense: For him (as for Gottlob Frege) our advanced linguistic abilities are made possible by our simpler ones; for example, we understand complex utterances by using our understanding of their parts and of the ways in which these parts are related to each other. In the context of a discussion of Frege's work this is known as the 'principle of compositionality'. What is new in Wittgenstein's approach is that he no longer likens the 'deriving' of the complex content from the simple ones to mathematical calculation, but instead draws on other linguistic abilities like our ability to comprehend metaphors. The last part of the paper will briefly introduce some pertinent thoughts of the as yet little known phenomenologist and therapist Eugene Gendlin, because they offer a more positive account of the linguistic competence Wittgenstein has in mind.[2]

In the realm of what used to be called 'psychotherapy', an outsider perceives a new tendency for avoiding this label. And indeed one can ask whether 'health' and 'sickness' are the proper words for the kinds of problems that are 'treated' (in *some* sense of this term) in the mental realm. When psychoanalysis was first developed by Sigmund Freud, dramatic cases directly involving the body seem to have been more common than they are today: a person, who was unable to stand up and walk, would do just that, after having gone through nothing but Freud's so called 'talking cure'. One might think that *because* it was the body that had not been functioning, the problem was perceived to be a medical one. But with many mental problems like fears, guilt-feelings, or shyness, this classification seems less natural. So there might be good reasons for the aforementioned tendency to avoid the term 'therapy' and to speak for example of 'supervision' or 'coaching' instead, or, in certain cases even of some kind of spiritual help being needed.

But if this is so even in the traditional domain of psychotherapy, it is all the more advisable for philosophers to avoid the impression that their work is concerned with health and sickness. Nevertheless we can ask: What could it be in philosophy that might have a 'family resemblance' to what happens in the medical realm?[3] In order to get closer to an answer here, it seems advisable to distinguish two questions. Both concern our understanding of what philosophers can and should do.

The first question is this: should philosophers be concerned with the 'practical' or 'existential' understanding that members of a given culture or sub-culture have of themselves? This domain of 'existential self-understanding' is different from that of psychotherapy. It is smaller insofar it leaves out obvious cases of sickness, but at the same time it is broader insofar it includes the traditional philosophical question what a 'good life' would consist in, whereas psychotherapy, as Freud has famously stated, may be successful in curing your ills, but only to leave you on the level of "common unhappiness" (Freud 305).

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[2] The term 'little known' is true for the philosophical context only. In psychotherapy Gendlin is famous as the inventor of the method of 'Focusing'. For his philosophy cf. Levin.

[3] For a discussion for the positive effects of working with language cf. Purton.

The second question is the following: In case we give a *positive* answer to this *first* question, is it a part of what a philosopher should do, not only to *talk* and *write* about such ways of self-understanding, but also to practically shape the view someone has of himself and thereby shape this person's character? Would we want to call this a *philosophical*, or rather a *psychological* task? Applying this to the philosopher himself and speaking with Wittgenstein: Is it the case that "working in Philosophy ... is really more a working on oneself"? (Wittgenstein, "Culture and Value" 16e). And how would this kind of work relate to language? Does it imply what some interpreters of Wittgenstein's later work, most notably John McDowell, have called a 'therapeutic' understanding of what philosophers do?

We can imagine quite different responses to these questions. Richard Rorty, for example, certainly had a point when he remarked many years ago that practitioners of Analytical Philosophy would see themselves as specialists for intellectual puzzles. For those who take this as a definition of the *whole* field of philosophy, even the realm characterized in the first question above would have no place in it: trying to spell out the existential self-understanding of your time is no intellectual puzzle. But even a philosopher, who accepts the activity mentioned by the first question as legitimate in philosophy, might refuse to discuss his *own* life. The 'working on himself', that he might indeed be engaged in, for example when he tries to get rid of an addiction to a medication, is – he might say – of no concern for any outsider. It has nothing to do with philosophy as a discipline and when his colleagues and students hear about it they have no right to mention it to someone else.

What did Wittgenstein then mean by the phrase 'working on oneself', what kind of work did he think of? A number of authors have contributed highly interesting and convincing considerations about this question, most extensively perhaps Eugen Fischer ("Therapie"), who investigated, among other things, Wittgenstein's use of Freud's expression 'drive' and the relation of Wittgenstein's thinking to antique conceptions of philosophy as a 'form of life' (as put in focus by authors such as Pierre Hadot). Also one should mention here the work of Stefan Majetschak ("Psychoanalyse") about similarities and dissimilarities in the methods of Wittgenstein and Freud.

In the given context, a proposal of a minor modification must suffice. It seems to be preferable not to use the term 'drive' ('Trieb') in a philosophical context. Although Fischer ("Therapie") carefully explains his use of the expression 'cognitive drive', sticking to this expression still invites misunderstandings. According to the ordinary understanding, drives are *biological* forces; we are born with them, and we know that they will break their way through to their respective goals, even if this will be in a distorted form. The process of socialization is unable to eliminate them. This has the consequence that they will show up in many unexpected places where it is sometimes hard to identify them. The psychoanalytic treatment is an attempt to detect these hiding places (as far as they produce suffering), and bring them out into the open.

So to signal a clear distinction, it seems advisable to use the term 'inclination' instead of 'drive' (Wittgenstein uses both terms). We have the *inclination* to misunderstand the workings of our language, and this is a *cultural*, not a *biological* fact. It will later be shown that the roots of this inclination can be found in the workings of language structures and that this inclination has also positive effects. Its occurrence shows that in choosing our words we have a degree of freedom, which permits good and bad uses. In order to understand the kind of problems we sometimes get into when using language, according to Wittgenstein, it is important to see that its acquisition is not a step in our biological, but in our cultural development.

It is true that the inclination for misunderstanding is not the result of a decision; one follows the inclination without thinking. It is possible to express this by saying that one is *not consciously* acting in this way. But allowing this does not mean speaking of 'the unconscious', in Freud's sense. Therefore Fischer certainly is correct when he states that 'philosophical therapy' (if we want to call it so) is of a special (non-medical) kind. It does not touch on the very early settings of the agendas for our lives, the revision of which requires access to what governed life at the time when language had not yet been acquired.

Thus, it emerges that we have reasons to keep separate philosophy, on the one hand and the medical context of illness, on the other. But this does not mean to suggest that in our discussion of Wittgenstein we are allowed to lose sight of what was above called our practical or existential self-understanding and also the personal activity of 'working on oneself'. I think that, as philosophers, we should cling to both of these aspirations, and that it is up to the profession of psychotherapy to decide where it wants to situate itself in this context. A tendency of some of its members seems to be to stick to the medical realm and the realm of science. Here some people seem to have great expectations about the future of brain research. The other tendency is to stay close to philosophy.

When we now turn to some aspects of our linguistic competence as we find them discussed in the later work of Wittgenstein, the aim is to show that this competence is *systematic* in character. In trying to show this, the paper is opposing readings of Wittgenstein that claim that there are no systematic insights about language to be found in his later work and which are using the term 'therapeutic' to characterize their understanding of what Wittgenstein is doing and of what it means to work in his spirit. According to this reading, the philosopher can do nothing but 'treat' every upcoming problem separately from all others. Accordingly, expressions like 'philosophy as therapy' are used to express the opinion that systematic thinking should not be seen as a virtue in the philosophy of language. This is what the current paper opposes; it tries to show that this view is mistaken (even if restricted to a hermeneutical claim about Wittgenstein) and it recommends that philosophers should not see themselves as doing therapy in this sense. It advocates the view that on the contrary it is essential for an understanding of Wittgenstein's work to see that there are *ways* in which we 'make moves'

in language games. And where we have *ways* of doing something there necessarily is more involved than just single cases.[4] The claim is that to understand these 'workings of language' it can be helpful if we try to engage in the "working on oneself" that Wittgenstein demands from the philosopher. This view will now be spelled out in five more specific claims, which will be argued for in the next sections.

1. Our inclination to make use of *misleading analogies* (analysed in detail by Eugen Fischer in his paper "Philosophical Pictures") is not a matter of individual mistakes, stemming from personal deficits. Instead, its basis is a systematic procedure in language itself. Its negative sides have been widely discussed in philosophy. But it should be acknowledged that it is at the same time the source of linguistic creativity, of our ability to linguistically open up new territory. This second point plays a major role in Eugene Gendlin's philosophy.

2. If one were to name a single main insight that distinguishes Wittgenstein's later from his earlier philosophy, a good choice would be what he has described as a reversal of the direction of projection in his treatment of the relation between the 'world' and language. Metaphorically speaking, it is not that the structure of the world sends its light-rays to language and thereby determines its structure, but it is the other way around. *We* are projecting given structures of language into ever new areas of experience, and somehow our hearers manage to understand us in many cases, although strictly speaking (i.e., from the perspective of how language had been used up to this point) these results of projection are devious.

3. Some philosophers (notably Gottlob Frege and Rudolf Carnap) thought it would be possible to avoid such devious projections by devising means to express the 'real logical structure' of the case at hand. Thus it seemed possible to improve language in such a way that clinging to 'logical grammar' would guarantee remaining in the realm of meaningful utterances. Wittgenstein has shown that this is an illusion. To understand the systematic character in the workings of *natural* language means to see that the idea of such a 'logically correct' language makes no sense.

4. But from this impossibility of an improvement of language that would guarantee the meaningfulness of our utterances 'once and for all', it does not follow that language has no important systematic aspects. The very principles and procedures that make possible complex speech and new insights also invite combinations of words that can turn out to be nonsensical.

5. It is true that the later work of Wittgenstein does not supply us with an *axiomatic-deductive* theory of meaning as Michael Dummett (What is a "Theory of Meaning" I, II) had projected it. On the contrary, Wittgenstein supplies good reasons for us to understand why such a project cannot be realized. Also, we do not find in Wittgenstein

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[4] For a more detailed exposition and justification of these claims see Schneider, *Wittgenstein's Later Theory of Meaning.*

an empirical theory. What we do find, however, are detailed and interconnected ob-
servations about the workings of natural language. Wittgenstein was not opposed to
systematic thinking; his work is more than a collection of aphorisms.

2. Can there be a Theory of Meaning (M. Dummett vs. J. McDowell)?

For substantiating these claims, a good starting point is the following quotation from
Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (quoted in the following text as 'PI' with the
paragraph number of part one):

> The real discovery[5] is the one that enables me to break off philosophizing 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, a method is now demon-
> strated by examples, and the series of examples can be broken off. – Problems are
> solved (difficulties eliminated), not a single problem.
> [There is not a single philosophical method, though there are indeed methods,
> different therapies, as it were.] (PI § 133)

Here, the ability to break off philosophizing when one wants appears as a result of
having at one's disposal a plurality of *methods*, as they are exemplified in Wittgenstein's
book. These are capable of bringing peace. Immediately before the quoted sentences,
Wittgenstein has characterized his goal as complete clarity: "…the clarity that we are
aiming at is indeed *complete* clarity. But this simply means that the philosophical prob-
lems should *completely* disappear." (PI §133) This harmonizes with a sentence from *Cul-
ture and Value* (43e) in which Wittgenstein says: "Thoughts that are at peace. That's what
someone who philosophizes yearns for." What is at stake here is a modification of the
attitude the philosophizing person has towards philosophical problems and (one could
expand) to life in general; it is not that only one particular problem is solved or resolved.
What now does it mean when Wittgenstein speaks of methods, of paths one is
not walking only once, paths he can exemplify and communicate to the readers of his
book? How does this kind of generality relate to passages in which Wittgenstein dis-
tances himself from scientific procedures? One such passage is the following:

> There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. All *explanation*
> must disappear, and description alone must take its place. And this description
> gets its light – that is to say, its purpose – from the philosophical problems. These

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[5] The word 'discovery' has to be taken here with a grain of salt: Something is 'discovered' that has,
  Wittgenstein thinks, been visible all the time, but has still not been seen.

are, of course, not empirical problems; but they are solved through an insight into the workings of our language, and that in such a way that these workings are recognized – despite an urge[6] to misunderstand them. The problems are solved, not by coming up with new discoveries,[7] but by assembling what we have long been familiar with. Philosophy is a struggle against the bewitchment of our understanding by the resources of our language. (PI §109)

Negatively Wittgenstein here says that his aim is not to explain something by forming a hypothesis about something happening behind the public phenomena of speaking. As an example of such an explanatory way he mentions the attempt to form a hypothesis about a hidden world of 'thought' consisting of some kind of 'meaning bodies'.[8] Such an approach might try to explain why certain sentences make sense and others do not by referring to the characteristics of these hidden entities: some of them fit together, others do not. This is not Wittgenstein's way. But what does he propose in a positive vein?

In the quoted passage he speaks of an *insight*, i.e., something that can be stated in a sentence, and he calls it an insight "into the workings of our language." And now he stresses an important opposition between an urge to misunderstand the 'workings of our language', on the one hand, and the insight into the ways in which language really works, on the other. If one has seen how language really works, it is exactly this insight that makes it possible to escape the bewitchment of one's understanding. So an adequate understanding should free us from an acute case of bewitchment *and* should help to stay clear (or get out) of these traps in future cases, even if it cannot guarantee for it.

This opposition between a correct and an incorrect understanding of language's workings Wittgenstein also expresses in his well-known picture that language would sometimes work (as it should), but would at other times 'go on holiday', i.e., it would not work. In the second case, an expression would be like an idle wheel, unconnected to the other wheels of the mechanism of which it only *seems* to be a working part. When we accept what this picture is meant to express, this includes that we are able to distinguish the two cases. And this means that when Wittgenstein in other contexts states that philosophy would leave everything as it is, the scope of *this* remark has to be restricted to the cases in which language *works*. When for example in PI §124 we find him saying, "Philosophy must not interfere in any way with the actual use of language…", then what here is called 'the actual use' can only be a case in which language works. The same is true when two paragraphs later he says:

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[6] The German word here is 'Trieb'.

[7] See above, fn. 5.

[8] Wittgenstein describes the position he criticizes in terms of the following picture: "words fit together in the sentence, i.e. senseless sequences of words may be written down; but the meaning of each word is an invisible *body*, and these meaning-bodies do *not* fit together". ("Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology", 10)

Philosophy just puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces any-thing. – Since everything lies open to view, there is nothing to explain. For what-ever may be hidden is of no interest to us.

The name 'philosophy' might also be given to what is possible *before* all new dis-coveries and inventions. (PI §126)

So we can say that Philosophy is a critical reflection on our own linguistic activ-ities, the goal of which is to substitute a wrong understanding of the workings of our language by a correct one. But what is needed here is nothing but mindfulness; it is not any new discovery (of the kind known in the sciences).

The next questions now have to be: Can an account of the workings of language be systematic? More sharply put: Will such an account take the form of a 'theory'? What kind of 'theory' could this possibly be, if we accept Wittgenstein's point that philosophy is an activity that is different in kind from science? There has been a long controversy about these questions, and no consensus has yet been reached. It has a sequel in our days in some aspects of the controversy between 'traditional' and 'resolute' readers of Wittgenstein, as exemplified in the book by Crary and Read. The situation is quite com-plicated, but the following paragraphs will try to provide a fair sketch of its outlines. In this context, the current paper will agree with some of the points made by the resolute readers, but it will be critical of defenders of the 'therapeutic' view when they claim we would have to leave the philosophy of language to the followers of Donald Davidson.

The most prominent advocate of a systematic account of language in the spirit of Gottlob Frege is Michael Dummett. He thinks that without such an account, no un-derstanding of our linguistic competence is possible. But Dummett reads Wittgenstein as denying this possibility, and he thinks that accepting this denial would force upon us an absurd consequence, namely the claim that we must learn each individual sentence of our language.

Dummett begins with the simple observation that we can infer the meaning of a sentence we have not encountered before on the basis of our knowledge of the mean-ings of its constituent words and of the meanings of the sentence-building devices that are employed in the new sentence (the 'principle of compositionality'). At first glance, it seems convincing to suppose that this inferring process is only possible on the basis of a system of rules that we might not be able to immediately spell out, when asked, but that we nevertheless know implicitly. Consequently, it seems to be the job of the philosopher of language to make this system of rules explicit and thus formulate a theory of meaning.[9]

The 'therapeutic' opposition to this conception, articulated for example by Richard Rorty (257 ff.) and John McDowell, denies that our linguistic competence can

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[9] Note that what Dummett is advocating here is not a *scientific* theory.

be accounted for in a philosophically illuminating way by making explicit an implicit knowledge of a system of rules that would form a 'theory of meaning'. The decisive question of this controversy now is: What exactly is meant by the terms 'system of rules' and 'theory' here? Before taking it up, one should mention that Rorty and McDowell, in attacking Dummett, take sides with Dummett's main target of attack, with Donald Davidson. Although it is true that Davidson and Dummett both see the logician Gottlob Frege as the philosopher who has shown us the way, Dummett demands much more of a philosophy of language than Davidson, and in this point this paper *agrees* with Dummett, against Rorty and McDowell.

From a Wittgensteinian point of view we can say that Dummett's opponents claim that in our attempts to understand the systematic sides of linguistic meaning, we must be content to stay on the level of what Wittgenstein calls 'surface grammar' (PI § 664). This is the level of the *sound* of a sentence, the level we know from the grammar books we used in school. For Dummett (and for Wittgenstein, so it is claimed here) this is not enough. Dummett indicates what he thinks would be missing by calling Davidson's account of meaning a 'translation manual'. More particularly, he demands that a philosophical account of meaning cannot take the traditional philosophical language of 'concepts' for granted and should not restrict itself to describing how 'concepts' are related to the words of a particular language. Dummett asks what the command of a concept consists in and sticks to the old idea that the philosophy of language should be of epistemological relevance.

Dummett's point is echoed in Wittgenstein, first in his many remarks that criticize accounts of meaning that treat it as something 'in the mind' (translation into a 'language of concepts' is of no philosophical use) and second in his contrast of 'surface grammar' with what he calls 'depth grammar', and his special concern with the latter. His reason for making this distinction is that even logic (and logic in particular) treats phenomena as equal that are in fact of quite different kinds. So if the goal is to see the 'real workings of language', we have to give an account of the possibility of this disproportion between the sameness of form (surface) and the difference in content (depth grammar). As has been indicated above, the basic ingredient of such an account is to acknowledge that natural languages work with analogies. Since analogies cannot be deciphered in a mechanical way, i.e., on the level of the forms of surface grammar, we have to turn to depth grammar, i.e., to a level that a theory of meaning of the Davidson type cannot reach. It is no use to repeat the rules of surface grammar in the language of concepts. Instead, we have to understand that, and how, the same surface structures are put to use in categorically different ways. It is true, for example, that our language treats numbers as objects (in sentences like 'seven is odd'). But a philosophy of language that has given up all epistemological ambitions can no longer discuss in which contexts a treatment of 'something' as an object is justified and in which it is not. To answer such a question for Wittgenstein means to give an account of the actual work that (in our

case) numerals do when we use them, an account that can help us to avoid misleading follow-up questions, like asking for the location or the colour of a particular number.

To be sure, the anti-systematic (or 'therapeutic') side in this dispute has some comments on this, but it claims that these necessarily are restricted to the particular case. Speaking with Wittgenstein's well-known picture: for therapeutic readers, every 'bump' that "…the understanding has got by running up against the limits of language" (PI §119), has to be treated separately. There is nothing general the therapist can offer. If this were true, it would mean that a philosophically interesting theory of meaning would be impossible.

3. Reversing the Direction of Projection

We are now in a position to propose a new answer to the questions of this controversy by indicating in what sense one can speak (with respect to the later work of Wittgenstein) of systematic insights into the workings of language that are more than descriptions of the 'physiognomy' of a particular case.[10] Three points should be mentioned. Firstly, Dummett is right in his claim that we should not be content with accounts of meaning that ignore the level of 'depth grammar'. Only if we reach beyond surface grammar can we describe 'the workings of language' in such a way as to be helpful for avoiding philosophical pitfalls.

Secondly, in the writings of the later Wittgenstein, we find more observations concerning the systematic side of language than both Dummett, and the 'therapeutic' readers are ready to acknowledge. Much of what Wittgenstein discusses transcends the respective particular case and so allows us to learn something for future cases. Only if this is the case, can philosophy have the result that 'thoughts are at peace'.

Thirdly, the 'therapeutic' readers, however, are right when they point out that the proper way of taking into account the systematic side of language will *not* result in the kind of theory that Dummett originally had hoped for. Therefore, some people might not even want to call it a 'theory'.

So the position this paper argues for is a middle position that can be formulated thus: On the one hand it is correct to say that the meaning of a sentence we have not encountered before in a certain sense 'flows from' the meanings of its parts and the respective sentence structure. We do indeed use our past linguistic experience when we understand a new sentence; we do *not* learn sentences one by one. But the way in which we arrive at the new meaning, the way it 'flows from' our past experience, is not the way of calculation. Using Robert Brandom's ("Between Saying and Doing", 91, 117) helpful terminology, we can infer that the ability to speak and to understand a natu-

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[10] This is a term used by Wittgenstein, for example in PI §235 and 568.

ral language is not an 'algebraic ability'. It is a 'hermeneutic' one. Therefore it cannot be represented in terms of an axiomatic-deductive theory, but it involves recognizing what Kant had called the 'faculty of judgment' (*Urteilskraft*). In particular, it involves the ability to recognize analogies and to work with them.

For our context the most decisive of the changes leading to the later philosophy of Wittgenstein is his rotating by 180 degrees the direction of projection characteristic for the relation between world and language. This comes into view when we ask: Where does linguistic structure come from? When we acknowledge that we build sentences from single words and that sentences differ from random lists of words in that they exhibit a structure: Where does this structure come from? Frege's answer was that we find it fixed and ready in the realm of 'thought', so he set for his 'concept script' the goal of following this given structure as accurately as possible. In this way, it would capture the structural side of all possible contents. So Frege thought of language as a mirror of a pre-existing order, even if in the case of natural languages the mirror is not a perfect one. Metaphorically speaking, in this conception the rays of projection are going *from* the world of thought *to* language; the structure of language follows the structure of the world of thoughts. It thus appears natural to see in Frege's concept script the core of a theory of meaning for any chosen language.

The decisive step taken by the later Wittgenstein was to turn this picture of projection around, so that now the rays of projection go *from* language *to* the world of thought.[11] In the new picture we have highly specific local structures that we ourselves have developed in the contexts of particular, simple activities, for example the schema of 'actor and action' (like in 'Peter walks'). And these schemata are then projected into many new contexts of different kinds. So the projection goes from locally constructed language structures to ever new realms of our (human) 'world', as it is opened up and developed in the course of history. Accordingly, the generality of these structures, including the logical structures, is the result of our own activity; it is not something we have found in the world. When, for example, we say 'after midnight the fighting stopped', grammatically 'the fighting' appears to be an actor (comparable to what the word 'Peter' designates in the example above), and the stopping (like Peter's walking) appears to be an activity. But both appearances are misleading if judged from a semantic point of view.

This can be expressed by saying that the actor-action-scheme has been *projected* into a context to which it, strictly speaking, does not fit. In this sense we can speak of a metaphorical movement. Since in the given example it was a syntactic structure that has been projected, we can make use of an expression originally coined by Eric Stenius (Stenius 212) and speak of 'syntactical metaphors' here. What does this now mean for

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[11] A quite succinct formulation of this claim is: "The subject-predicate form serves as a projection of countless different logical forms." (Wittgenstein "Philosophical Grammar" 205) For an extended discussion of this claim as well as its bearings for *logical* structures see: Schneider, *Wittgenstein's Later Theory of Meaning*, chapter 5.

Wittgenstein's claim that some philosophical problems (as he had said already in the foreword of his *Tractatus*) stem from a 'misunderstanding of the logic of our language', and what does this mean for his already quoted claim that they "...are solved through an insight into the workings of our language, and that in such a way that these workings are recognized – despite an urge to misunderstand them"? (PI §109)

If indeed, as has been argued here, the reversal of the direction of projection in our picture of language is one of the central steps taken in Wittgenstein's later philosophy, then in it we have an example of a quite general, systematic claim about the *workings* of language, generally, not only about one specific problem. So here we have an important ingredient of a method, which he says he had been demonstrating, that would give "philosophy peace", and which he says enables him "to break off philosophizing when I want to." (PI §133)

Applying this to the aforementioned case of the actor/action-scheme would mean that once we see that its generality is a result of our projections, it is easier for us to raise the question whether in the context of a particular problem it is the subject matter or only the form it has received in our language that is problematic. The sentence 'after midnight the fighting stopped' is of no philosophical interest. But we are entering highly contested territory as soon as we raise parallel problems for verbs such as 'to mean' or 'to intend'. Are they signifying inner ('psychological') activities, as their surface grammar suggests, or are they even standing for brain processes? These are acute problems, getting much attention these days. For example, does it make sense to spend a large amount of money on a brain scanner in order to find out what exactly the 'activity of intending' consists of?[12]

Similar questions can be raised with regard to names. Does the linguistic fact that language allows numerals to take the subject-position in sentences indicate that abstract objects exist? Does the fact that the expression 'God' is a proper name, indicate that speakers using it believe that in the most distant areas of the universe a person could be detected with help of a radio telescope, if only this instrument would be big enough? Are believers entertaining such ungrounded hypotheses, as Richard Dawkins thinks, or does religious language require an understanding that is completely different from understanding the claims of science?

In all these cases, in trying to see the 'workings of language' we have to be attentive to projections, which (for example) bring numerals to the subject-position of sentences and which make us articulate religious experiences in a language of personifications. Both cases point beyond themselves. If we understand reification in the case of numbers, we will understand it also in the cases of concepts, sets, or possibilities; and surely religion is not the only area where personifications can be found. Thus, it is possible to learn a general lesson from a particular case in which we consider the

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[12] For a detailed discussion of some of these problems cf. Hans J. Schneider, „Reden über Inneres".

nature of a problematic way of speaking—to learn something that will be of use for the treatment of other cases. This, however, does not mean that it is possible to handle all the mentioned cases in a strictly parallel way in a sense that would allow us to *calculate*, and to avoid *thinking*. This is why Kant's 'faculty of judgement' was earlier mentioned. Gods and feelings are different from numbers and concepts.

These considerations should explain why the position developed in this paper has been characterized above as a middle-position in the struggle about the possibility of a theory of meaning. We indeed use our past linguistic experience when we succeed in understanding sentences we have never encountered before, but this is not a matter of calculation. In understanding the new sentences we again and again have to comprehend steps of projection and in doing so we have to use our imagination, that is to say, an ability that is completely different from the ability to calculate. So the process of making explicit our implicit knowledge of language, about which Dummett and later Robert Brandom ("Making it Explicit") have spoken, will not result in the formulation of a calculus. Instead, it turns out to be necessary to reflect on other human capacities with a much broader scope. The relevant knowledge here often is a quite particular kind of a linguistic 'knowing how', an ability to find one's way in kinds of situations involving language games. And it should by now be clear that our linguistic competence does have important systematic aspects.

4. Eugene Gendlin and the Positive Side of Projection

So far, in the discussion put forward in this paper, what was treated under the title of 'projection' may have appeared to be something negative, because it easily leads speakers into problems and mistakes. Projection often results in states that ask for correction, for 'therapy'. To quote Wittgenstein again, "Philosophy is a struggle against the bewitchment of our understanding by the resources of our language." (PI §109) This one-sided picture now has to be explicitly corrected by calling attention to the fact that these same activities of projection also have a positive side. For the speaker, projection is a vehicle with the help of which he can raise a new issue, can find words for something outside the normal course of things, indeed for something that has never before entered the 'universe of discourse'. This is true for metaphors and models in the realms of science and technology; such innovative moves are also possible in our use of language in ordinary life and of course in poetry; and also in the realm of therapy, when we attempt to articulate a peculiar personal experience. It is one of the philosophical merits of the therapist and philosopher Eugene Gendlin to have directed our attention to this function of language, not only by talking *about* it, but also by making use of it in his unique way. For readers not yet familiar with his work, here is an illustration. Gendlin begins one of his papers as follows:

This paper will attempt a way of thinking with, and about, that which exceeds logical forms and distinctions. Today it is widely held that any form (rule, pattern, concept, distinction, category .....) always invokes an inseparable so-called excess. It is furthermore held that that excess is chaotic, a limbo. I will show on the contrary that excess is a vital part of thinking, and that it is not chaos but a greater order. (Gendlin, "The Wider Role", 192)

In a footnote Gendlin ("The Wider Role", fn. 1) gives the following comment on the expression in brackets that had paraphrased his word 'form' (by 'rule', 'pattern', etc.): "I often use a string of words instead of just one in a given slot." And about the five dots he had put at the end of his list he says they would "...leave room for other possible words. After the string and the sequence of dots once appear, any one of the words can later say what is meant." In a comment on a similar example we read:

In whatever way I might actually say it, you would let the word work newly and freshly when it comes into a spot like that. All the words can in this way acquire a new meaning, provided of course they're part of the situation, part of a context, part of an interaction. It is right to say that language is inherent in experience, but we have to understand by language this way in which words can work newly in a given spot. (Gendlin, "The Wider Role", 193)

So it is possible for well-known linguistic means to do a new kind of work, if the situation requires it. To succeed in this, speakers and hearers must be able to keep a certain distance to the expressions, to behave freely with respect to them. They do recognize the given expression as one they know from past contexts and are able to use themselves. But in the cases Gendlin has in mind here they are required to grasp that something new is being said, that is only *analogous* to the past uses they already know. The new use is mediated by the old ways of using the words in question (most new poems, for example, are made up of quite familiar words), but at the same time the new use is different from the old one. The hearer must recognize that a projection is taking place (an analogical, metaphorical use of words or syntactic means), and he must guess its meaning, i.e. he must grasp the resulting sense with help of his hermeneutic understanding of the situation. The new meaning cannot be arrived at by calculation, but still the 'new content' in most cases cannot be expressed without using old words.

This tension between the familiar and the unfamiliar is a typical trait of many linguistic jokes. A great part of their charm is due to their creating a *distance* to language, a freedom that lets us feel a margin for play, in the literal sense of 'play'.[13] It is this margin that Wittgenstein, as well as Gendlin, are pointing to. In most cases of philosophical

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[13] A nice German example is: 'Je preiser einer gekrönt wird, desto durcher fällt er.'

commentary, Wittgenstein's concern is seen as one in which we are rescued from a philosophical pitfall. But also for him the loose and humorous aspect of such a distance to language is something he is acutely aware of, as the following remark exemplifies:

> Given the two concepts 'fat' and 'lean', would you be inclined[14] to say that Wednesday was fat and Tuesday lean, or the other way round? (I am strongly inclined towards the former.) Now have 'fat' and 'lean' some different meaning here from their usual one? – They have a different use. – So ought I really to have used different words? Certainly not. – I want to use these words (with their familiar meanings) here. (Wittgenstein, "Philosophy of Psychology" § 274, 227e, = *Philosophische Untersuchungen* / "Philosophical Investigations", 1958, part two, 216e)

In Gendlin's work this liberty in the use of language is employed for helping the client to get a fresh view on his own past in the context of what he still calls therapy, but also for creative work of all kinds. He encourages us to take a positive attitude towards those of our inclinations that offer themselves in such moments of liberty, that come up as respective new steps. This means that we should consider at least the possibility that they flow from a 'greater order', a process that we often grasp intuitively, without (or: without yet) being able to articulate it.

So the inclination to utter a certain linguistic expression is not in itself something that must lead us astray because it is 'irrational' by being nothing better than an inclination. It can also result in new insights, in creative solutions. For this reason the state in which 'thoughts ... are at peace', of which Wittgenstein said it would be 'what someone who philosophises yearns for', seems to a large degree to be made possible by winning such a liberty, a distance towards language, and this in turn can be greatly helped when we appreciate what has been discussed here under the title of a 'projection'. The insight in this particular one of the 'workings of our language' helps that we are 'no longer tormented by questions'. But it is clear that this is not a matter of *knowing that*, but of a very special kind of *knowing how*, and, more than that, of actually acting accordingly. And here the 'working on oneself' comes in, not in the sense of therapy, but rather in the sense of gaining 'peace' in one's thinking, or, in more traditional words, of gaining some degree of wisdom.

5. Conclusions

After it has been argued that the kind of work exemplified by Wittgenstein's later philosophy has its place not on the natural level of drives, health, and sickness but on the

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[14] The German word here is 'geneigt'.

cultural level of language (and hence should not be called therapeutic) the paper examines the character of this work. Does it (in Wittgenstein's opinion) involve systematic relations between partial linguistic abilities (as his expression 'methods' suggests) or does it consist of unconnected remedies, applied as the case may be? The paper shows that it is the first alternative that Wittgenstein is arguing for.

Especially, it is shown that 'the workings of our language' include the use of analogies and metaphors even on a syntactical level, i.e., procedures by which given structures are projected into new fields of application. Understanding the resulting utterances rests on a prior understanding of the involved linguistic means (principle of compositionality), but an understanding of the resultant sentences cannot be achieved by an algebraic type of calculation alone; for this reason, a theory of meaning cannot take the form of an axiomatic-deductive system.

Finally, it is shown that understanding the discussed 'workings of our language' can (and, Wittgenstein thinks, should) result in a relaxed attitude to philosophical problems, it can overcome the 'bewitchment' he is talking about, and it can bring to the reader a state of mind in which 'thoughts are at peace'. Achieving this can be seen as a fruit of a kind of 'working on oneself', but this work is not therapeutic in the strict sense of this term.

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