

Wittgenstein as a Common-Sense Realist

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1. Introduction

Philosophical Investigations, Part II, section xii, offers a uniquely felicitous point of departure for the argument that the Wittgenstein of the late 1940s indeed tended to be a realist philosopher.¹ In section xii – or, properly speaking, on that loose sheet of three paragraphs in manuscript MS 144 – Wittgenstein in the first paragraph begins by writing of “facts of nature”, “very general facts of nature”, facts that “mostly do not strike us because of their generality”. Wittgenstein is definitely implying that there *are* facts of nature (significantly, in the second paragraph, in the phrase “such-and-such facts of nature”, the expression “such-and-such” is an inserted addition by him), and in the third paragraph ends by comparing concepts to styles of painting (*Malweisen*), suggesting that our given “style of painting” is not arbitrary: “Can we choose one at pleasure? (The Egyptian, for instance.)”² Crying out to be seen side by side with sect. xii are two passages from sect. xi. The first one is where Wittgenstein says that it is singularly natural to us “to represent what we see three-dimensionally, whereas special practice and instruction are needed for two-dimensional representation, whether in drawing or in words. (The oddity of children’s drawings.)”³ The second one is preceded by Wittgenstein’s observation (an observation he repeatedly makes in MS 144) that there are pictorial meanings we grasp without having to interpret them, pictures we react to *directly*. “Could I say”, Wittgenstein then asks, “what a picture must be like to produce this effect? No. There are, for example, styles of painting which do not convey anything to me in this immediate way, but do to other people. I think custom and upbringing have a hand in this” (*PPF*, p. 201e / § 168). To this passage let me add a third one, a notebook entry composed some two years earlier. Hypothesizing about some possible ways a tribe imagined by him might think, Wittgenstein writes: “To this people certain gestures, certain images, & so also certain words, are natural. And some of this is tradition, some are / original / reactions which were not (or at least not directly) given rise to / caused / by the influencing of the child on the part of the adults”.⁴ Gestures and images are primary – natural – carriers of meaning, some of our core vocabulary derives from them, but handed-down conventions still do have a bearing on how we use those gestures and images.

I believe a successful philosophical strategy for common-sense realism, the only realism worthy of the name, is not feasible without a commitment to the essential cognitive role of the

¹ I have attempted to sketch such an argument in my recent paper “Wittgenstein and Common-Sense Philosophy”, in András Benedek – Kristóf Nyíri (eds.), *Beyond Words: Pictures, Parables, Paradoxes*, Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang Edition, 2015, pp. 231–243.

² Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), 2nd ed., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958, transl. by G. E. M. Anscombe, p. 230e, compare the revised 4th edition by P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, §§ 365–367. In the latter edition, MS 144 is published under the title “Philosophy of Psychology – A Fragment”. I will in the present paper refer to MS 144 as *PPF*, giving the page number of the 2nd edition of *Philosophical Investigations* and the paragraph number of the 4th edition.

³ Cf. *PPF*, p. 198e / § 148. Wittgenstein’s “Es ist uns einzig natürlich” is correctly translated by Anscombe as “The only thing that is natural to us”, the Hacker–Schulte version “It is altogether natural to us” appears to me as aiming to make Wittgenstein’s at first sight quite baffling assertion less difficult to swallow. Further below I will argue that seen in context, the assertion is not at all baffling. Anscombe had “queerness” for “*Sonderbarkeit*”, I think Hacker–Schulte’s “oddity” is the better choice.

⁴ The words “on the part of the adults” crossed out. MS 133, p. 41r, entered on Nov. 17, 1946. My translation.

visual, and I think that MS 144 offers useful pointers for such a strategy. MS 144 has a unique place in Wittgenstein's *Nachlass* on the one hand because this is one of the rare pieces by him with a sustained focus on the visual and pictorial. On the other hand, carefully put together in 1949 for Norman Malcolm and presumably his students, MS 144 (or the typescript TS 234 based on it, now lost) is a text we might regard, similarly to earlier lectures and dictations, as a form of "publication" by Wittgenstein,⁵ a designation that cannot be straightforwardly applied to the edited notes *On Certainty* and *Remarks on Colour*. Even "Part I" of the *Philosophical Investigations*, I would stress, is an unfinished compilation.⁶ But of course there are innumerable obvious continuities, from the point of view of our present topic, too, between all these phases and chapters, as well as other phases and chapters, of Wittgenstein's *Nachlass*.

2. Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Pictures

Wittgenstein was a visual thinker both in the sense that he had a visual mind, with a gift for similes as well as an aptitude for thinking in images and a talent for committing those images to paper, and in the sense that, especially in his later years, he strived to gain a philosophical understanding of visual thinking, of how words, images, and emotions intertwine, of pictorial meaning and pictorial communication. He did not succeed in giving a finished account of, or in any way rounding off, his philosophy of pictures, but it is in MS 144 he came closest to doing so. MS 144 takes up a train of thought Wittgenstein first embarked upon in *The Brown Book*, and the two works should indeed be studied together.⁷ An important third piece we should take into account here is the edited text of Wittgenstein's 1939 lectures on the foundations of mathematics. In these lectures Wittgenstein again and again points out, as he of course does in the early parts of the *Philosophical Investigations*, too, that the meaning a given picture has for us is not independent of the way we are customarily *using* that picture. However, in the 1939 lectures Wittgenstein seems to lay greater stress than he does in the *Investigations* on the fact that human beings display an overwhelming uniformity in how they generally use and understand pictures.⁸ The reason for this uniformity, Wittgenstein appears to imply here, as he did already in *The Brown Book*, is that pictures characteristically have an unmediated effect on us. This is the implication he then spells out in MS 144. Let me refer to just some of the most significant passages. Wittgenstein introduces the concepts "picture-object" and "picture-face", giving a drawing of the latter, and writing: "In some respects I

⁵ Cf. Norman Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, London: Oxford University Press, 1958, p. 56. See also the "Introduction" to *Wittgenstein: Lectures, Cambridge 1930–1933 – From the Notes of G. E. Moore*, edited by David G. Stern, Brian Rogers and Gabriel Citron, New York: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming in 2016; the main author of the "Introduction" is David Stern.

⁶ Compare the masterly essay by Joachim Schulte, "What Is a Work by Wittgenstein?", in *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*, edited by Alois Pichler and Simo Säätelä (Working Papers from the Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen, no. 17, 2005), pp. 356–363, see esp. pp. 362. Schulte does apparently not share the bias I seem to have for MS 144, or e.g. for *The Blue Book*.

⁷ See my paper "Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Pictures" (2001), in *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*, edited by Alois Pichler and Simo Säätelä (Working Papers from the Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen, no. 17, 2005), pp. 281–312, cf. esp. pp. 296–299 (reprinted: Frankfurt/M.: ontos verlag 2006, pp. 322–353, cf. esp. pp. 337–340). See also my "Pictures as Instruments in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein" (2001), in *Wittgenstein and the Future of Philosophy: A Reassessment after 50 Years*, edited by Rudolf Haller and Klaus Puhl (Wien: öbv&hpt, 2002), pp. 328–336, esp. 332 f., as well as my more recent summary "Image and Metaphor in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein" (2010), in R. Heinrich et al., eds., *Image and Imaging in Philosophy, Science and the Arts* (Proceedings of the 33rd International Ludwig Wittgenstein Symposium, vol. 1, Heusenstamm bei Frankfurt: ontos verlag, 2011, pp. 109–129), repr. in my volume *Meaning and Motoricity: Essays on Image and Time*, Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 2014, pp. 73–91.

⁸ *Wittgenstein's Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics – Cambridge, 1939*, ed. by Cora Diamond, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976, cf. e.g. pp. 81, 182, 194.

stand towards it as I do towards a human face. I can study its expression, can react to it as to the expression of the human face. A child can talk to picture-men or picture-animals, can treat them as it treats dolls.”⁹ Some pages later Wittgenstein asks: “When I see the picture of a galloping horse – do I merely *know* that this is the kind of movement meant? Is it superstition to think I *see* the horse galloping in the picture?”¹⁰ A related remark: “When should I call it just knowing, not seeing? – Perhaps when someone treats the picture as a working drawing, *reads* it like a blueprint.”¹¹ Blueprints are *interpreted*, as it were read, but when it comes to paintings or photographs, we *view* them “as the object itself (the man, landscape, and so on) depicted there”.¹²

Now a fundamental idea Wittgenstein strives to convey in MS 144 is that for pictures to have a direct effect on us we have to be as it were prompted by them to respond with immediate gestures and facial expressions. “If someone sees a smile and does not recognize it as a smile, does not understand it as such, does he see it differently from someone who understands it? – He mimics it differently, for instance.”¹³ The same point made in a more radical way, in the next remark: “Hold the drawing of a face upside down and you can’t recognize the expression of the face. Perhaps you can see that it is smiling, but not exactly what *kind* of smile it is. You cannot imitate the smile or describe it more exactly. – And yet”, Wittgenstein emphasizes, “the picture which you have turned round may be a most exact representation of a person’s face” (*PPF*, p. 198e, § 150). These two remarks are preceded by a passage from which, in section 1 above, I have already quoted the concluding lines on the naturalness of three-dimensional representation. And this is the way the passage begins: “How does one tell that human beings *see* three-dimensionally? – I ask someone about the lie of the land (over there) of which he has a view. “Is it like *this*?” (I show him with my hand)” (*PPF*, 198e / § 148). The three-dimensional representation Wittgenstein here talks about is, then, a representation by gestures, and it is obviously true that our gestures – many of them spontaneous and natural, some conventional and acquired – occur in three-dimensional space. By contrast, drawing in two dimensions requires special practice.

Not all drawing happens in two dimensions. Early in MS 144 Wittgenstein touches on the problem of pictorial likeness, mental image, and imagination, and asks: “Suppose that while imagining, or instead of imagining, someone were to draw, even if only in the air with his finger. (This might be called ‘motor imagery’.)”¹⁴ Now let us recall that mental imagery, the “motor sense”, and even the significance of drawing in the air, have been central topics for Francis Galton,¹⁵ a half-cousin and early advocate of Darwin. Wittgenstein’s writings and lectures contain references to Galton, to Darwin’s theory of emotions and facial expressions, and he frequently refers to William James, who in his 1890 *The Principles of Psychology* of course discussed in detail Galton and the issue of the motor dimension. The themes of motor experience and motor activity were important ones for I. A. Richards, a significant figure in

⁹ *PPF*, p. 194e / § 119, Hacker–Schulte has “engage with it” for “ich verhalte mich zu ihm”.

¹⁰ *PPF*, p. 202e / § 175, Hacker–Schulte is right in changing Anscombe’s “merely” to “only”, the German expression is “nur”.

¹¹ *PPF*, p. 204e / § 192, Hacker–Schulte translation.

¹² *PPF*, p. 205e / § 197, Anscombe translation. Wittgenstein in the next paragraph adds that this “need not have been so. We could easily imagine people who did not have this attitude to such pictures. Who, for example, would be repelled by photographs, because a face without colour, and even perhaps a face reduced in scale, struck them as inhuman.”

¹³ *PPF*, p. 198e / § 149, Hacker–Schulte translation.

¹⁴ *PPF*, p. 177e / § 18, Hacker–Schulte translation.

¹⁵ Cf. Francis Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development*, 1883, 2nd ed. 1907 (London: J. M. Dent & Co.).

Wittgenstein's life. Wittgenstein refers to Richards several times in his manuscripts.¹⁶ He also mentions him in a class he gave in 1938.¹⁷ In the same class he said: "I remember walking in the street and saying: 'I am now walking exactly like Russell.' You might say it was a kinesthetic sensation. Very queer. – A person who imitates another's face doesn't do it before a mirror".¹⁸

3. Realism and Drawing

It is in acts of drawing that the pictorial and the motor most obviously meet. MS 144 has numerous references to drawing, several of them I have already quoted here. Let me list some others. Early in the manuscript Wittgenstein suggests that it is possible for one "to visualize a face, and even to draw it", without one's knowing whose face it is or where one has seen it¹⁹ – the implication being that drawing is a particularly robust way of visual recall. Meditating on the use of the word "see", and on what it means to see a likeness in two faces, Wittgenstein writes that "one man might make an accurate drawing of the two faces", and another "notice in the drawing the likeness which the former did not see" (*FPP*, 193e / §§ 111 f.). An accurate drawing preserves objective similarities. Some pages later we are given the example of a case where someone might not be able to properly describe an "unfamiliar shape", yet still draw it (*FPP*, p. 197e / § 142). Drawings can come to grips with reality where words fail. On the other hand there are drawings we need words, practice, and training to be able to interpret. Such are, for instance, drawings in descriptive geometry. These we do not see, at first, three-dimensionally. "What convinces us that someone is seeing the drawing three-dimensionally", Wittgenstein remarks, "is a certain kind of 'knowing one's way about': certain gestures, for instance, which indicate the three-dimensional relations – fine shades of behaviour."²⁰

Clearly, we are back at the issue of styles of representation. Recall that Wittgenstein does indeed allow for, say, styles of painting which, as he puts it, do not directly convey meaning to him, although they do for people of different upbringing, or for members of other cultures. However, he does not at all regard these different styles as having an equal degree of practical usefulness. Let me here quote a remark written by Wittgenstein some four years earlier: "So drawing could help a man to correctly remember an event. Or the picture of a church, to remember the details of another church by helping us to see how it deviated from the picture. Or the picture of an event, to remember how it really happened; because he now sees how the real event differed from the picture."²¹ Neither the peculiar representational style of the Egyptians, nor those odd drawings by children, meet the realist demand Wittgenstein makes when it comes to pictures.

¹⁶ An entry from Dec. 23, 1947: "I. A. Richards spricht davon, daß beim Verstehen eines Satzes die Bewegungsempfindungen, keimender Bewegungen, ja vielleicht die Vorstellungen solcher Empfindungen eine Rolle spielen" (MS 136, p. 24b).

¹⁷ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, edited by Cyril Barrett (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 37.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁹ *FPP*, 177e / § 17, Hacker-Schulte translation.

²⁰ *FPP*, 203e / § 180, Hacker-Schulte translation.

²¹ "So könnte Zeichnen einem Menschen helfen, sich richtig an eine Begebenheit zu erinnern. Oder das Bild einer Kirche, sich an die Einzelheiten einer andern Kirche zu erinnern, indem es uns hilft, zu sehen, wie sie von dem Bild abwich. Oder das Bild der Begebenheit dazu, sich zu erinnern, wie es sich wirklich zugetragen hatte; indem er nun sieht, wie sich die wirkliche Begebenheit von dem Bild unterschied." (MS 116, p. 338, remark entered in May 1945 or shortly after. Pages 116–147 of MS 116 contain a good many passages which occur towards the end of *Philosophical Investigations*, "Part I". The remark I here quote is not one of them, and is crossed out in the manuscript.)

As a former elementary school teacher, Wittgenstein obviously had some experience with, and was in a position to form a judgement on, children's drawings, and his judgement seems to have been very much in accordance with the views generally held at the time.²² Those views are still today influential, but not anymore dominant. Rudolf Arnheim, in his seminal 1954 book *Art and Visual Perception*,²³ argued that both children's drawing and, notably, Egyptian art, are not failed attempts at realism but successful solutions to problems of depicting a three-dimensional world on a flat surface. Cubism is widely regarded as a similar attempt. Within the Wittgenstein community, Jaakko Hintikka, in a brilliant 1972 paper,²⁴ took up and broadened the interpretation of cubism as a quest for realism. In 1987, discussing the notions of language games and family resemblance, Baruch Blich wrote: "Unless we could ... apply words to pictures, one would not be able to grasp their relevance for reality, and this is true of simple pictures as well as of sophisticated pictures such as caricatures, impressionist paintings, cubist paintings etc."²⁵ In her 2004 book on *On Certainty*, Danièle Moyal-Sharrock, suggesting a parallel between Wittgenstein's own style of composition on the one hand and cubism on the other, characterizes the latter as a "reordering of the object into a 'strange medley of images' which render more of the 'real' object than any single perspective or orderly representation could".²⁶

Now realism in art, and realism in children's drawings, are of course entirely indifferent matters from the point of view of philosophical anti-realism. From the point of view of the philosophical anti-realist, realist art, of whatever variety, can never depict the world as it is, since even if a world in itself should exist, it would be impossible to have an idea of it. But Wittgenstein was not attempting to construct an argument against the anti-realists. He was content to indicate that they were talking nonsense, and to offer them remedy: "The philosopher treats a question; like an illness."²⁷ On the other hand, what Wittgenstein as a common-sense philosopher indeed had to show was, first, that common-sense realism did not involve internal contradictions. Here his efforts to demonstrate the feasibility of a realist approach to pictorial meaning were definitely successful. Secondly, he had to explain how a common-sense view of the world was reconcilable with discoveries in the natural sciences. It is to this explanation I now turn.

4. Wittgenstein and Common-Sense Philosophy

The work in which Wittgenstein explicitly discusses the issue of common-sense philosophy is *The Blue Book*.²⁸ It is on p. 45 here Wittgenstein formulates his crucial argument. He offers

²² The literature on children's drawing is fascinating, and of course entirely vast. An excellent summary and analysis is Ellen Winner's chapter in the *Handbook of Child Psychology*, 6th edition, vol. 2, ed. by Deanna Kuhn and Robert Siegler, Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2006, see pp. 859–881.

²³ Berkeley: University of California Press.

²⁴ Jaakko Hintikka, "Concept as Vision: On the Problem of Representation in Modern Art and in Modern Philosophy" (originally in Finnish, 1972), in Jaakko Hintikka, *The Intentions of Intentionality and other New Models for Modalities*, Dordrecht: Reidel, 1975. Hintikka quotes Gertrude Stein as quoting Picasso: "I do not paint things the way they look, but the way I know they are."

²⁵ Baruch Blich, "'Natural Kinds' As a Kind of 'Family Resemblance'", in *Philosophy of Law, Politics and Society*, edited by Ota Weinberger, Peter Kollee and Alfred Schramm (Proceedings of the 12th International Wittgenstein Symposium, 1987, Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1988), pp. 284–289, the quoted passage on p. 288.

²⁶ Danièle Moyal-Sharrock, *Understanding Wittgenstein's On Certainty*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p. 5. In a note here Moyal-Sharrock expresses her indebtedness to Gombrich.

²⁷ *Philosophical Investigations*, Part I, § 255, Hacker-Schulte translation. Source: MS 116, p. 323 (May 1945).

²⁸ See *Preliminary Studies for the "Philosophical Investigations". Generally Known as the Blue and Brown Books*. By Ludwig Wittgenstein. Preface by Rush Rhees. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958, repr. 1964.

a kind of parable illustrating the difficulty we are in, and also showing the way out of this sort of difficulty: We have been told by popular scientists that the floor on which we stand is not solid, as it appears to common sense, as it has been discovered that the wood consists of particles filling space so thinly that it can almost be called empty. This is liable to perplex us,

it need however not, since to say that the floor is not solid is simply “to misuse language”. Wittgenstein comes back to this point on p. 48, suggesting that just in the way the popular scientist misuses language, so does, also, the philosophical idealist or solipsist. But in the end so does, too, Wittgenstein stresses, the *common-sense philosopher*. The common-sense philosopher Wittgenstein must have had primarily in mind here was G. E. Moore. With Moore he had a decades-long working relationship, the latter attended his Cambridge lectures between 1930 and 1933, and it was in reaction to some of Moore’s formulations Wittgenstein jotted down, during the last two years of his life, the remarks that became published as *On Certainty*. Now in contrast to the common-sense philosopher, continues Wittgenstein on p. 48 of *The Blue Book*, the “common-sense man” himself “is as far from realism as from idealism”. The common-sense philosopher is indeed a realist, but “the trouble with the realist is always that he does not solve but skip the difficulties which his adversaries see, though they too don’t succeed in solving them”. The common-sense realist philosopher, too, is misled – here Wittgenstein brings into play what is of course the main contention of his later philosophy – by the surface grammar of ordinary language. And so this is how Wittgenstein will, on pp. 58–59, sum up his argument:

There is no common sense answer to a philosophical problem. One can defend common sense against the attacks of philosophers only by solving their puzzles, i.e., by curing them of the temptation to attack common sense; not by restating the views of common sense. A philosopher is not a man out of his senses, a man who doesn’t see what everybody sees; nor on the other hand is his disagreement with common sense that of the scientist disagreeing with the coarse views of the man in the street.

I understand Wittgenstein as striving to make “the coarse views of the man in the street” compatible with the seemingly contradictory views of the scientist. The task of philosophy, as Wittgenstein saw it, was to enable common sense to integrate the ever-evolving discoveries of the sciences.²⁹ By contrast, Moore more or less held that common-sense truths were so to speak timeless, hardly open to revision by the progress of natural science.³⁰

In Wittgenstein’s discussion of Moore in *On Certainty*³¹ the term “common sense” does not occur, or rather it (and the corresponding German “gesunder Menschenverstand”) occurs only in the editors’ “Preface”. Wittgenstein in his remarks uses the expressions “vernünftiger Mensch” (“reasonable man”, “reasonable person”) and – only once – “gewöhnlicher Mensch”

²⁹ Compare Annalisa Coliva, *Moore and Wittgenstein: Scepticism, Certainty, and Common Sense*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 190 ff. On Wittgenstein as proposing the possibility of an “enlightened common sense” see Renia Gasparatou, “Moore and Wittgenstein on Common Sense”, *Philosophical Inquiry*, vol. 31, nos. 3–4 (2009), pp. 65–75.

³⁰ Cf. John King-Farlow, “‘Common Sense’ and ‘Certainty’: Earlier Moore, Later Moore, and Later Wittgenstein”, *Philosophical Investigations*, vol. 3, no. 2 (1980), p. 80; Avrum Stroll, *Moore and Wittgenstein on Certainty*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 15; and John Coates, *The Claims of Common Sense: Moore, Wittgenstein, Keynes and the Social Sciences*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 53.

³¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Über Gewißheit / On Certainty*, edited by G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, Engl. transl. by Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969.

(“ordinary man”, translated in the English text as “normal person”). As we learn from the “Preface”, Norman Malcolm, in 1949, on the occasion of Wittgenstein’s visit to Ithaca,

acted as a goad to his interest in Moore’s “defence of common sense”, that is to say his claim to know a number of propositions for sure, such as “Here is one hand, and here is another”, and “The earth existed for a long time before my birth”, and “I have never been far from the earth’s surface”. The first of these comes in Moore’s “Proof of the External World”. The two others are in his “Defence of Common Sense”; Wittgenstein had long been interested in these and had said to Moore that this was his best article. Moore had agreed.

From my present perspective I find the 1939 “Proof of an External World” essay more profound than the 1925 “A Defence of Common Sense” one, with this crucial passage especially interesting from a visual point of view:

I can prove now, for instance, that two human hands exist. How? By holding up my two hands, and saying, as I make a certain gesture with the right hand, “Here is one hand”, and adding, as I make a certain gesture with the left, “and here is another”. ... the proof which I gave was a perfectly rigorous one... ... the premiss ... I expressed by showing you my hands, making certain gestures, and saying the words “here is one hand, and here is another”.³²

Some five weeks before his death Wittgenstein wrote: “Haven’t I gone wrong and isn’t Moore perfectly right? Haven’t I made the elementary mistake of confusing one’s thoughts with one’s knowledge? Of course I do not think to myself ‘The earth already existed for some time before my birth’, but do I *know* it any the less? Don’t I show that I know it by always drawing its consequences?”³³ The painful self-criticism here emerging refers to a central point Wittgenstein earlier in these notes raised when discussing Moore: the latter, Wittgenstein suggested, misuses language when he says he “knows” certain basic facts. Yet even though following a train of thought rather different from the one Moore adhered to, Wittgenstein arrived at parallel conclusions. He agreed with Moore that doubt must have its limits: “Doubting and non-doubting behaviour. There is the first only if there is the second” (*OC*, § 354). Or, in Wittgenstein’s own particular terminology: “absence of doubt belongs to the essence of the language-game” (*OC*, § 370). Also: “If you are not certain of any fact, you cannot be certain of the meaning of your words either” (*OC*, § 114).

Concluding this section, I am coming back to what I have referred to above as the main contention of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy: misleading surface grammar as the source of metaphysical delusions. It is in the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein most conspicuously concentrates on this tenet. His direct and indirect references to “ordinary language” (“gewöhnliche Sprache”) here are of course actually references to common sense. So let us list and recall from this very perspective some of the most oft-quoted passages from the later Wittgenstein’s most often quoted work. “[P]hilosophical problems arise when language *goes on holiday*” (§ 38 – manuscript source: MS 142, p. 33, Nov.–Dec. 1936). – “It was correct that our considerations must not be scientific ones. ... Philosophy is a struggle against the bewitchment of our understanding by the resources of our language” (§ 109 – manuscript source: MS 142, p. 102, Nov.–Dec. 1936). – “A simile that has been absorbed into the forms of our language produces a false appearance which disquiets us” (§ 112 – manuscript source:

³² G. E. Moore, “Proof of an External World” (1939), repr. in G. E. Moore, *Philosophical Papers*, New York: Collier Books, 1962, pp. 144 f.

³³ *On Certainty*, § 397, remark entered on March 18, 1951.

MS 142, p. 106, Nov.–Dec. 1936). – “[T]he language of every day. So is this language too coarse, too material, for what we want to say? *Well then, how is another one to be constructed?*” (§ 120 – final source: TS 227b, p. 86a, 1944–45) – “Philosophy must not interfere in any way with the actual use of language, so it can in the end only describe it” (§ 124 – manuscript source: MS 110, p. 188, 1931). – “The philosopher treats a question; like an illness” (§ 255 – manuscript source: MS 116, p. 323, 1945, a striking remark I have already quoted above). – “What looks like an explanation here ... in truth just exchanges one way of talking for another which, while we are doing philosophy, seems to us the more apt” (§ 303 – manuscript source: MS 227a, p. 188, 1944–45). Throughout, Wittgenstein uses the word “philosophy” in two different, opposing senses: in the sense of systematically confused thinking misled by the surface grammar of language; and in the sense of philosophical therapy liberating us from our linguistic perplexities – common-sense philosophy in an acceptable sense of the word.

5. Wittgenstein’s Realism

In the *Philosophical Investigations* there do occur occasional remarks suggesting a tendency towards philosophical realism. Let us note however that these remarks were all written in, or after, 1944. That is, they are closer in time to the composition of MS 144 than to that of the early parts of the *Philosophical Investigations*. Look, for instance, at § 142: “if things were quite different from what they actually are ...; if rule became exception and exception rule ... our normal language-games would thereby lose their point”³⁴, with the insertion: “What we have to mention in order to explain the significance, I mean the importance, of a concept are often extremely general facts of nature: such facts as are hardly ever mentioned because of their great generality”.³⁵ This insertion clearly foreshadows the first paragraph of the set of remarks we are acquainted with as Part II, section xii, of the *Philosophical Investigations* – the paragraph I referred to in the introductory lines of the present paper. Look also at the famous § 242 in Part I:

It is not only agreement in definitions, but also (odd as it may sound) agreement in judgements that is required for communication by means of language. This seems to abolish logic, but does not do so. – It is one thing to describe methods of measurement, and another to obtain and state results of measurement. But what we call “measuring” is in part determined by a certain constancy in results of measurement.³⁶

Or take a related reference, on the one hand, again, to the objective results of measurements, and on the other hand to the partly subjective, but partly also objective status of our concepts, in §§ 596 f.:

³⁴ *PI*, Part I, § 142 – source: TS 227a, 1944–45. Hacker–Schulte translation. The same clearly realist view is succinctly summed up in one of his last notes: “Certain events would put me into a position in which I could not go on with the old language-game any further. In which I was torn away from the sureness of the game. – Indeed, doesn’t it seem obvious that the possibility of a language-game is conditioned by certain facts?” (*On Certainty*, § 617.)

³⁵ Proximate source: TS 228, 1945 or 1946.

³⁶ Hacker–Schulte translation. Manuscript source: MS 129, p. 128, 1944. – Wittgenstein’s reference to “agreement in judgements” might easily call to mind the classical figure in the history of common-sense philosophy, Thomas Reid: “Common sense is that degree of judgment which is common to men with whom we can converse and transact business. ... common sense should mean common judgment”, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785), here quoted from the 2002 critical edition, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, pp. 424 and 427.

Language is an instrument. Its concepts are instruments. Now perhaps one thinks that it can make no *great* difference *which* concepts we employ. As, after all, it is possible to do physics in feet and inches as well as in metres and centimetres; the difference is merely one of convenience. But even this is not true if, for instance, calculations in some system of measurement demand more time and trouble than we can afford. – Concepts lead us to make investigations. They are the expression of our interest and direct our interest.³⁷

Let us cast one more concluding glance at Part II of the *Philosophical Investigations*, that is at MS 144. Wittgenstein regards it as an obvious philosophical error when someone “tries to explain the concept of a physical object in terms of ‘what is really seen’” (*PPF*, p. 200e / § 161). This is the error phenomenologists of course regularly make. Wittgenstein’s common-sense realist point is that people learn, necessarily, to handle, and to refer to, physical objects first, and only later come to talk about visual impressions. One should then, Wittgenstein implies, not pretend that seeming is as it were prior to being. “Rather”, Wittgenstein here continues, “the everyday language-game is to be *accepted*, and *false* accounts of it characterized *as false*. The primitive language-game which children are instructed in needs no justification; attempts at justification need to be rejected.” *The everyday language-game is to be accepted* – in a different context this pronouncement might have suggested a relativist attitude. As it here stands, it is a plea for realism. At the same time, let me note, it expresses a kind of social conservatism, as does also, more markedly, the dictum: “What has to be accepted, the given, is – one might say – *forms of life*.”³⁸ As quite often in the history of ideas, in Wittgenstein’s case, too, philosophical realism and social conservatism go together.

Wittgenstein returns to the problem of seeming and being in the notes which have been published under the title *Remarks on Colour*.³⁹ These notes have been written during the last two years of Wittgenstein’s life (together with the notes published as *On Certainty*). Coming to the end of the present paper, let me quote from them four consecutive paragraphs:

Because it seems so to me – or to everybody – it does not follow that it *is* so. – Therefore: From the fact that this table seems brown to everyone, it does not follow that it is brown. But just what does it mean to say, “This table isn’t really brown after all”? – So *does* it then follow from its appearing brown to us, that it is brown? – Don’t we just *call* brown the table which under certain circumstances appears brown to the normal-sighted? We could certainly conceive of someone to whom things seemed sometimes this colour and sometimes that, independently of the colour they are. – That it seems so to men is their criterion for its *being* so. – Being and seeming may, of course, be independent of one another in exceptional cases, but that doesn’t make them logically independent; the language-game does not reside in the exception.⁴⁰

When Wittgenstein here writes that men take *seeming* as the criterion for *being*, he does not at all suggest that people are as it were making a mistake. On the contrary, he assumes the stance

³⁷ *PI*, §§ 596 f. Source: MS 116, p. 315, probably 1944, cf. Georg Henrik von Wright, “The Wittgenstein Papers” (1969), rev. repr. in G. H. von Wright, *Wittgenstein*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982, p. 51.

³⁸ *PPF*, p. 226e / § 345. – On Wittgenstein as a conservative thinker see my essay “Wittgenstein’s New Traditionalism”, *Acta Philosophica Fennica* 28/1–3 (1976), pp. 503–512, as well as my longer study “Wittgenstein 1929–31: The Turning Back” (1982), in Stuart Shanker, ed., *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Critical Assessments*, vol. 4, London: Croom Helm, 1986, pp. 29–59, and most recently my paper “Images in Conservative Education”, in András Benedek and Kristóf Nyíri, eds., *How to Do Things with Pictures*, Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 2013, pp. 191–207.

³⁹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on Colour*, ed. by G. E. M. Anscombe, translated by Linda L. McAlister and Margarete Schättle. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

⁴⁰ *Remarks on Colour*, §§ 96–99. Manuscript source: MS 173, pp. 22r–23r, entered on March 30, 1950, or shortly after.

of the common-sense realist: the world, generally, is what it seems, and if scientists tell us that it is different from what it seems, philosophy should explain in what way they, the scientists, deviate from ordinary linguistic use. Some paragraphs later Wittgenstein makes the remark: “But I have kept on saying that it’s conceivable for our concepts to be different than they are. Was that all nonsense?”⁴¹ Surely it was not all nonsense. But it was a view Wittgenstein often exaggerated. In MS 144, and in the notes he has subsequently written, he came close to recognizing the limits of that view.

⁴¹ *Remarks on Colour*, § 124.