

MEANING AND (ANTI-)THEORY IN WITTGENSTEIN'S LATER PHILOSOPHY OF
LANGUAGE

by

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I, David Christopher Chandler, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated.

David Christopher Chandler, 1st September 2024

Abstract

Does Ludwig Wittgenstein offer us a theory of meaning in his later masterpiece, the *Philosophical Investigations*? This thesis proposes to answer this question in the negative (i.e., there is no such theory to be found therein) through a close reading of the text. Such a reading considers three related sub-issues. The first of these sub-issues is whether the opening inclusion of a passage from Augustine's *Confessions* was intended to establish a theoretical target for the criticisms that follow, with this target belonging to Augustine himself. Contrary to some commentators, I argue that Wittgenstein was not interested in a particular theory that was defended by Augustine, but rather, in a possible (mis)understanding that could arise out of (mis)reading his words. On Wittgenstein's interaction with Augustine, the second sub-issue that I address is whether the remarks on meaning and use contained in the former's criticisms of the latter amount to the statement or defence of a use-theory of meaning. I strive to show that the idea that Wittgenstein was offering some kind of general definition of meaning *as* use collapses in on itself once we recognise that these remarks are problem-relative, being intended only to resolve a specific philosophical confusion. But the resolution of such confusions consists not in the explanation of how language works at a deeper level; instead, the task is to describe what is already open to view—it is this preference for description that lies at the heart of the later Wittgenstein's proclaimed aversion to philosophical theorising. And so, the final chapter of this thesis endeavours to make this aversion clear through the re-orientation of Wittgenstein's conception of his own later philosophy as not a logical investigation but a grammatical one.

Impact Statement

Admittedly, this thesis deals with a topic that is perhaps too familiar to many working in the field of Wittgenstein scholarship, so much so that I fear that I will fail to arouse much in the way of a renewed sense of excitement around it. Nevertheless, the real impact of the proceeding chapters lives and dies with their ability to demonstrate the importance of context. Considerations of whether Wittgenstein offered a theory of meaning in his later philosophy of language tend to begin with the statement of a certain remark, done so in isolation from the discussion in which it originally appeared. In my humble estimation, this is what is really responsible for the confusion that we see crop up in certain pockets of the literature. Therefore, I hope to dispel this confusion by returning these remarks to where they belong; namely, as part of an intricately interconnected philosophical treatment of language.

To Marlene

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction	9
Chapter Two: Augustine	12
2.1 Theories of Meaning	13
2.2. Referentialism	15
2.3. Oehl's Reading	19
2.4. The Earlier Wittgenstein	22
2.5. Innocence	24
2.6 Conclusion	26
Chapter Three: Meaning and Use	28
3.1. Of Shopkeepers and Builders	29
3.2. Uniformity	33
3.3. Of Swords and the Recently Deceased	36
3.4. Meaning <i>as</i> Use?	38
3.5. Conclusion	43
Chapter Four: Description Alone	44
4.1. Simplicity	46
4.2. Analysis	51
4.3. Essence	54
4.4. Hertz in the <i>Blue Book</i>	57
4.5. Conclusion	61
Chapter Five: Concluding Remarks	63
References	65

List of Abbreviations

AWL	<i>Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge 1932-1935</i>
BBB	<i>Blue and Brown Books</i>
BT	<i>The Big Typescript: TS 213</i>
DPS	<i>Ludwig Wittgenstein: Dictating Philosophy to Francis Skinner – The Wittgenstein-Skinner Manuscripts</i>
NB	<i>Notebooks 1914-1916</i>
MS	Manuscripts as collected in <i>Wittgenstein's Nachlass: The Bergen Electronic Edition</i>
PG	<i>Philosophical Grammar</i>
PI	<i>Philosophical Investigations</i>
PPF	<i>Philosophy of Psychology – A Fragment</i>
TLP	<i>Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus</i>
Z	<i>Zettel</i>

In notes, examples and similes are always useful. If I could give you enough of them, that would be all that would necessary. Usually we think of similes as second best things, but in philosophy they are the best thing of all.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Pink Book*

Chapter One

Introduction

Does Ludwig Wittgenstein offer us a theory of meaning in his later masterpiece, the *Philosophical Investigations*?¹ This thesis proposes to answer this question in the negative (i.e., there is no such theory to be found therein) through a close reading of the text. Such a reading considers three related sub-issues. The first of these sub-issues is whether the opening inclusion of a passage from Augustine's *Confessions* was intended to establish a theoretical target for the criticisms that follow, with this target belonging to Augustine himself. Contrary to some commentators, I argue that Wittgenstein was not interested in a particular theory that was defended by Augustine, but rather, in a possible (mis)understanding that could arise out of (mis)reading his words. On Wittgenstein's interaction with Augustine, the second sub-issue that I address is whether the remarks on meaning and use contained in the former's criticisms of the latter amount to the statement or defence of a use-theory of meaning. I strive to show that the idea that Wittgenstein was offering some kind of general definition of meaning as use collapses in on itself once we recognise that these remarks are problem-relative, being intended only to resolve a specific philosophical confusion. But the resolution of such confusions consists not in the explanation of how language works at a deeper level; instead, the task is to describe what is already open to view—it is this preference for description that lies at the heart of the later Wittgenstein's proclaimed aversion to philosophical theorising. And so, the final chapter of this thesis endeavours to make this aversion clear through the re-orientation of Wittgenstein's conception of his own later philosophy as not a logical investigation but a grammatical one.

Moreover, it should be said from the outset that this thesis will not determine whether Wittgenstein's reasons for not advocating for a particular theory of meaning are correct in the sense that we too should not offer theories when we personally reflect on language in a philosophical capacity; for

¹ I will add letters to my references to sections from the *Investigations*. The reason for this is that such a practice allows for the division of these sections into their respective paragraphs (e.g., 'a' being the first, 'b' the second, and so on). This should, in turn, permit a more granular analysis of the relationship between the parts of a given section. For a nice example of this practice being put to good use, see Jane Heal's discussion of the importance of dialogue to the *Investigations*, where letters are used as a way to distinguish between the different 'voices' that she sees in the text (cf. Heal 1995). Additionally, when referring to items from Wittgenstein's *Nachlass* (Wittgenstein 2000, 2015-), I follow the practice of using the numbers assigned by G.H. von Wright. For an explanation of this system, see von Wright's original paper on the subject (von Wright 1969, 483-503).

our purpose is not to evaluate Wittgenstein, but merely to understand him. Perhaps there are those who would find this lack of a critical edge to my exposition of the *Investigations* a little unsatisfying. To them, my response would be that criticism can only be fruitfully raised once a sufficient level of understanding has been achieved. Thus, the kind of critical project that some may want from me is one that necessarily comes after my own and not before.

A further note on restrictions. This thesis primarily, if not exclusively, concerns the topic of meaning. Meaning was, of course, not the only pre-occupation of the later Wittgenstein, and I do not want to assign it an undue level of importance within his philosophy, nor do I want to present him as a particularly single-minded thinker. I concede, therefore, that the question of whether Wittgenstein provided a theory of some other notion—say, of perception, of the mind, etc.—is potentially just as important to the more general project of coming to terms with his distinctively anti-theoretical attitude. Nonetheless, the reason that I have decided to concentrate on meaning in what follows is that it is a topic in which I find this attitude to be easily recognisable. There are several possible explanations as to why this is the case. Most simply, the sections of the *Investigations* which set out how Wittgenstein conceives of his later philosophy happen to sit in close proximity to his remarks on language and meaning, a fact which I intend to exploit to my full advantage. Hence, my concentration on meaning is both pragmatic and philosophically prudent.

Additionally, while the title of this thesis suggests that I intend to comment on Wittgenstein's later philosophy of language in its entirety, and here I am referring to not just the sorts of topics that are discussed, but also the texts in which these discussions take place, the reality is that I am only considering their appearance in the *Investigations*. Even then, I am restricting myself to specific sections, most of which are to be found very early on in the text. Thus, though perhaps I *should* in some sense, I will say almost nothing about the significance of what Wittgenstein went on to write after the *Investigations*. Maybe his anti-theoretical attitude softened in the final phase of his life; or maybe he remained steadfast in this regard. Whatever is the case, I am unable to accommodate for the writings of the post-*Investigations* Wittgenstein in this thesis.

I will, however, be consistently referring to what came before the *Investigations*. One crucial comparison that this thesis routinely makes is between the *Investigations* and the defining work of Wittgenstein's earlier philosophy, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Aside from the *Tractatus*, there will also be a few minor comparisons, with the *Blue Book* receiving the lion's share of attention in that it features in the arguments that I make in both the third and fourth chapters of this thesis. These comparisons are something which I would imagine Wittgenstein as being sympathetic to given that we can find many of the concerns that were addressed in the *Investigations* elsewhere in his writings. Naturally, there are things which are new, but there is also a great deal that is familiar in that the points raised as well as the

conclusions reached display a surprising sense of continuity in Wittgenstein's later philosophy of language. And yet, the final iterations of these familiar points are often strikingly skeletal in presentation, lacking much of the context and framing that once made them so convincing. Thus, our comparisons will attempt to reattach the muscle onto the bone so as to restore their strength.

Chapter Two

Augustine

Allow me to continue by introducing a narrative about the development of Wittgenstein's later philosophy of language that this chapter seeks to undermine in one way or another. As Alice Crary neatly summarises, “[t]he standard narrative proceeds by telling us that in his post-*Tractatus* writings Wittgenstein turns on his theory of meaning and rejects it in favour of a very different kind of theory.” (Crary 2000, 2) Hidé Ishiguro describes this narrative tendency in similar terms, remarking that “the picture theory of meaning of the *Tractatus* [is often contrasted] with the use theory of meaning in the *Philosophical Investigations*.” (Ishiguro 1969, 20) Though Ishiguro doesn't proceed to name names, Crary does. Crary attributes this narrative to the likes of Michael Dummett and Saul Kripke (cf. Crary 2000, 17, fn. 1). And it is not particularly difficult to see why she does. Here's a revealing line from Kripke. Kripke writes that “§§1-137 [of the *Investigations*] gives Wittgenstein's preliminary refutation of the *Tractatus* theory of language, and suggests the rough picture he intends to put in its place.” (Kripke 1982, 78; cf. Dummett 1991, 301ff.) Notably, a few pages earlier, Kripke aligns what he calls the “*Tractatus* theory of language” with the “alternative picture of language [that] is already clearly suggested in the very first section of the *Philosophical Investigations*”, referring to this alternative picture as “the Augustinian conception of ‘object and name’” (Kripke 1982, 75).

Essentially, the narrative that Crary and Ishiguro describe, as exhibited by Kripke, has two features that are of interest to us in this thesis. These are: first, that the Wittgenstein of the *Investigations* was rallying against the theory of meaning that he once espoused in the *Tractatus*; and second, that in rallying against this theory, he supplants it with something new. Per Ishiguro, this ‘something new’ is a use-theory of meaning. This chapter concentrates on the first of these features such that the question of whether the later Wittgenstein advocated for a use-theory of meaning is left to the next chapter. And the exact way that I want to concentrate on this first feature is by spending some time thinking about the opening section of the *Investigations*. More precisely, I want to reflect on the reasons that Wittgenstein may have had for including a passage from Augustine's *Confessions* in that section. This reflection leads me to submit an argument against theoretical readings of this inclusion.

To borrow from David Stern, a theoretical reader sees the inclusion of Augustine in terms of the fact that it is supposed to “set out a quite specific philosophical theory, the topic of the opening sections of the book.” (Stern 2004, 76) The comments from Kripke included above would place him in this camp;

for he not only sees Wittgenstein as being engaged in a protracted criticism of his earlier theory of language and meaning, but that such a theory is introduced to us in the *Investigations* through Augustine. But I am not interested in the details of Kripke's account in particular. Indeed, the sort of theoretical reading that I am challenging in this chapter is not championed by one specific author; instead, it is a sentiment that pervades certain areas of the literature on the *Investigations*. At least as it is described by Stern, I don't disagree with this sentiment wholesale. After all, the next chapter of this thesis considers Wittgenstein's immediate criticisms of Augustine, and this consideration requires that I cover a large portion of the first forty-or-so sections of the text.² Rather, what I am resisting is that this inclusion sets out a specific philosophical theory.

Naturally, Stern's description of theoretical readers invites two further questions. First, if Augustine's words are supposed to set out a specific philosophical theory, then what exactly is it a theory of? And second, to whom does this theory belong? In this chapter, I am going to prioritise this second, who-question as opposed to the first, what-is question. The reasons for this deliberate prioritisation are numerous; foremost amongst them, given that the focus of this thesis is on theories of meaning, and whether Wittgenstein provided one as part of his later philosophy of language, I am only really interested in the extent to which this theoretical target can be understood as a particular theory of meaning. Now, as to what it means for someone to provide a theory of meaning in the first place, I will say more about this in the next sub-section.

In response to this who-question, then, the reading that I want to consider in this chapter holds that Augustine's inclusion sets out a specific philosophical theory, with this theory belonging to, or being advocated by, Augustine himself. There is a variation of this reading which says that the theory does not exclusively belong to Augustine, but rather, Augustine's words are used to remind us of the earlier Wittgenstein—this is indicative of Kripke's reading. I will say something about this variation later, but for the moment let's focus on those who concentrate their attention directly on Augustine.

2.1. Theories of Meaning

As with almost every topic of philosophical discourse, the question of just what it is that we mean by the terms that we employ therein is one that provokes an array of different albeit competing responses. The fear that this represents in this chapter is that one could wholeheartedly agree with the claim that

² I qualify my consideration of Wittgenstein's criticisms to his "immediate criticisms" so as to remain cautiously neutral on this topic of whether the interaction with Augustine acts as a constant *leitmotiv* throughout the text as opposed to just these early sections (cf. Baker and Hacker 2005a, xv-xvi; cf. also Baker and Hacker 2005b, 50).

Wittgenstein does not offer a theory of meaning in his later philosophy of language, with this notion being understood in one particular sense, but insist nonetheless that he does, in fact, offer a theory of meaning, so long as this notion is understood strictly in another sense.

In fact, these fears have already been realised in the work of Hans Julius Schneider. Schneider, building on Dummett, marks a distinction between a “modest” and a “full-blooded” theory of meaning. First, here’s an example of how Dummett originally draws this distinction. A theory of meaning “may either attempt to explain what it is to have the concepts expressible in a particular language (*full-blooded* theory), or merely to associate concepts with words in that particular language (*modest* theory).” (Dummett 1996, 1, original emphasis) And second, here’s what Schneider says about Wittgenstein with this distinction in hand. He not only argues that the account of meaning that we find in Wittgenstein “must be termed “full-blooded””, but also that “we indeed find important contributions to a “theory of meaning” in this broader sense: we get a substantial, systematic, and detailed picture of the workings of natural language and of the *kind* of competence that is involved in mastering it.” (Schneider 2014, 177, original emphasis)

It is not my intention to directly criticise what either Dummett or Schneider are saying. Though I am going to eventually deny the presence of a theory of meaning in Wittgenstein’s later philosophy of language by the end of this thesis, I don’t think that it is wrong *per se* for Schneider, or indeed anyone else, to say that we can *find* “contributions” to a theory of meaning in said philosophy, so long as these contributions are deliberately measured against the fact that Wittgenstein himself might not have seen them as such. On the contrary, the reason why I mention both Dummett and Schneider in this regard is to hint at the sheer diversity of opinion that emerges once we start to think about what we might mean by the phrase ‘a theory of meaning’.

Thus, to curtail this diversity to something more in line with the relatively simple objectives of this thesis, we need to establish a baseline for how we are to understand the term in the context of the *Investigations*. To establish this baseline, let’s appeal to David Lewis. Lewis reminds us that we should “distinguish two topics” in our philosophy of language. These are “first, the description of possible languages or grammars as abstract semantic systems whereby symbols are associated with aspects of the world; and second, the description of the psychological and sociological facts whereby a particular one of these abstract semantic systems is the one used by a person or population.” (Lewis 1970, 19) But what is the relevancy of Lewis’ reminder to the purposes of this chapter, or indeed to this thesis as a whole? As Jeff Speaks explains, “[c]orresponding to these two questions are two different sorts of theory of meaning.” (Speaks 2024, para 4) The two sorts of theories that Speaks identifies are what he calls “semantic” theories, on the one hand, and “metasemantic” or “foundational” theories of meaning, on the other.

Like Speaks, Margaret Cameron, through reading the above passage from Lewis, sees “each type of theory of meaning [as asking] a different question: [a semantic theory] asks *what* the semantic value of an expression is; [a metasemantic or foundational theory] asks *how, or in virtue of which facts*, the linguistic expressions have their semantic values.” (Cameron 2012, 343, original emphasis) What’s more, in addition to Lewis, Cameron also cites Robert Stalnaker as he too marks a similar distinction in questions and theories. The kinds of questions that are asked in the process of giving a “foundational semantics”, something akin to the metasemantic or foundational theories that Cameron and Speaks single out, are “about what the facts are that give expressions their semantic values” (Stalnaker 1997, 903).

The reason why I only quote this part of Stalnaker’s discussion is that, while it is unclear whether Wittgenstein would have been amenable to a distinction between semantic and metasemantic or foundational theories of meaning, what is clear, however, is that both sorts of theories that are considered in this thesis—that is, the referentialist theory which is often considered to be Wittgenstein’s opponent as well as the use-theory that is attributed to him by some readers—are instances of metasemantic or foundational theories of meaning. According to a referentialist theory of meaning, it is because of the fact that a word is correlated with a particular object that that word has the meaning that it has. Conversely, a use-theorist would say that a word has the meaning that it has because it is used in a certain way. These are both answers to the question of which fact(s) about expressions give them the semantic values that they have.

Here’s an example to consider. Paul Horwich, in an attempt to defend a use-theory of meaning, begins with the very same question(s) that the authors cited above have associated with metasemantic or foundational theories of meaning. That is, “[h]ow should we go about identifying the particular non-semantic property of a given word that is responsible for its meaning? And what sort of property will that turn out to be?” (Horwich 2004, 351) The answer that he gives on the next page is that “[t]he meaning of a word, *w*, is engendered by the non-semantic property of *w* that explains *w*’s overall use.” (Horwich 2004, 352) Horwich’s actual answer to the questions that he raises at the start of his paper are obviously more complicated than the one sentence that I have just quoted, but the point, again, is to notice the nature of the questions that he chooses to start his defence of a use-theory of meaning with.

Therefore, I propose that when we are talking about theories of meaning in this thesis, we understand these theories as being indicative of metasemantic or foundational theories of meaning. Of course, it remains to be seen whether Wittgenstein himself would have understood this notion along such lines. But Wittgenstein’s personal understanding of what giving a theory of meaning amounts to will be made clearer as we continue; especially in the fourth chapter of this thesis when his stated aversion to philosophical theorising is explored in greater detail.

2.2. Referentialism

My first move against the theoretical reader would be to remind them that the *Confessions* was largely an autobiographical and not a philosophical work. Most, if not all, of its chapters are characterised by the fact that they refer to particular moments or phases within Augustine's life. The chapter that Wittgenstein cites in the opening of the *Investigations*, as one might have already guessed, concerns his childhood. In fact, as evidenced in the below, it immediately proceeds the transition from infancy to boyhood, which Augustine sees as being caused by his learning to use language:

The next stage of my life, as I grew up, was boyhood. Or would it be truer to say that my boyhood overtook me and followed upon my infancy – not that my infancy left me, for if it did, where did it go? All the same, it was no longer here, *because I ceased to be a baby unable to talk, and was now a boy with the power of speech*. I can remember that time, and later on I realized how I had learnt to speak. (Augustine 1961, I, 8, emphasis added)

Needless to say, Wittgenstein omits these sentences from the *Investigations*. “In doing so,” Kenneth Gallagher complains, “he omits some very significant preceding sentences, which *really* state Augustine's mind on the subject he is treating.” (Gallagher 1982, 462, emphasis added) I think that Gallagher is justified in lodging this complaint against Wittgenstein, not in the sense that Wittgenstein himself was unaware of the context that these sentences provide (surely he was), but that in omitting these sentences from his quotation of the *Confessions*, he leaves the reader of the *Investigations* a little in the dark as to what Augustine was doing in that passage.

With or without these preceding sentences, it is clear Augustine was discussing language-learning. But there are those such as Herbert Spiegelberg who see “the *Philosophical Investigations* [as] start[ing] out with Augustine's theory of language-learning.” (Spiegelberg 1970, 325) And yet, based on the additional context that the sentences quoted above give to this passage, it is evident that, contra to Spiegelberg's reading, Augustine is not giving a *theory* of language-learning, but rather, he is offering a rationalisation or reconstruction of what he believes, from the perspective of his adult self, his learning to use language as a child consisted in. This is how that reconstruction plays out:

When grown-ups named some object and at the same time turned towards it, I perceived this, and I grasped that the thing was signified by the sound they uttered, since they meant to point *it* out. This, however, I gathered from their gestures, the natural language of all peoples, the

language that by means of facial expression, and the play of eyes, of the movements of the limbs and the tone of voice, indicates the affections of the soul when it desires, or clings to, or rejects, or recoils from, something. In this way, little by little, I learnt to understand what things the words, which I heard uttered in their respective places in various sentences, signified. And once I got my tongue around these signs, I used them to express my wishes. (PI §1a, original emphasis; cf. Augustine 1961, I.8)

Through arming oneself with the context granted to us by the sentences that precede the above, our perception of this passage shifts from seeing it as an abstract, once-and-for-all account of language-learning to something more personal—it is Augustine’s reconstruction of how *he* learned to use language during *his* childhood.

Another reason why this context is so significant is that often authors will point to other areas of Augustine’s philosophy to justify the claim that his theory of language and meaning is more fleshed out than Wittgenstein allows for. Patrick Bearsley reasons that “[e]ven a casual reading of Augustine’s *De Magistro* (for example) would give the lie to any impression that Augustine was naive when it came to appreciating the complexities of language.” (Bearsley 1983, 229) Bearsley cites the following remark from *Philosophical Grammar* in which Wittgenstein’s portrayal of Augustine is somewhat reductive if not negative. He says of Augustine’s account that “[n]aming here appears as the foundation, the be all and end all of language.” (PG, 56, original emphasis; quoted in Bearsley 1983, 229, fn. 2) And a version of this claim is repeated both in the *Investigations* as well as in the *Brown Book* (cf. PI, §1c; cf. also BBB, 77). Regardless of whether it’s true that Augustine’s theory of language and meaning are more complex than Wittgenstein allows for, to use William Eastman, “it would not follow that Augustine should be taken as a theoretician in THIS crucial passage at issue.” (Eastman 1969, 111) Thus, the philosophical or theoretical complexity of, say, Augustine’s *De Magistro*, and the influence that it may have on us, needs to be kept separate from our consideration of the *Confessions*.

But does this mean that theories are already completely out of the picture? Perhaps not; for Michael Morris insists that Augustine’s reconstruction, however personal, could only have been “made in the light of some general theory.” (Morris 2006, 294) Now, Morris is not following authors like Spiegelberg in saying that the passage from the *Confessions* that Wittgenstein quotes contains Augustine’s theory of language-learning. What he is saying is that this account of language-learning is informed by a theory of language or meaning that is hidden in the background. It is only once we read between the lines that this theory comes into focus. Lars Hertzberg has a similar yet different opinion to Morris. Hertzberg denies that Augustine is recounting from memory in this passage; instead, he sees him as “expressing a commonly held view of the way we learn to speak.” (Hertzberg 2010, 41) Given what was said a paragraph or two

ago, I would disagree with the first part of what Hertzberg is saying in so far as Augustine is indeed recounting from memory what his learning consisted in.

I agree nonetheless that Augustine is expressing a commonly held view about the way we learn to speak, it is his commitment to this view which informs the details of his reconstruction. Perhaps what Hertzberg has in mind when he says that Augustine's account is not from memory is what Myles Burnyeat has said about this passage. Burnyeat articulates that the "account of language learning in *Conf. I viii 13* is neither a simple memory nor an empirical psychologist's conjectural hypothesis, but a highly self-conscious contribution to theological understanding." (Burnyeat 1987, 4) Without even broaching the subject of what is achieved by describing Augustine's contribution in theological terms, notice that Burnyeat isn't saying that Augustine is *not* recounting from memory, just that he is not *simply* doing so as if all that he is giving is a memory. Whatever the case, since Hertzberg doesn't make this clear in his paper, I won't speculate further. Rather, what's important is that both Morris and Hertzberg, to use the latter, would assent that "the central idea here [in the passage of the *Confessions* that Wittgenstein quotes in the *Investigations*] is that the child learns to recognize an object and to associate a word with it." (Hertzberg 2010, 41)

What reason, if any, do we have to say that Augustine's reconstruction was informed by a "general theory", as Morris does, as opposed to *merely* a commonly held view about the way we learn to speak? Why think in terms of theories? The answer, to my understanding, is that the particulars of Augustine's explanation can themselves be explained by a commitment to familiar philosophical theories (of meaning). Both Christopher Kirwan and John Lyons, for example, see Augustine as having adopted, if not pioneered, a referentialist semantics or theory of meaning. "As far back as we can trace the history of linguistic speculation," writes Lyons, "the basic semantic function of words has been seen as that of naming." "St Augustine's discussion of the acquisition of language by children, in his *Confessions*," he continues, "is based on the same notion" (Lyons 1977, 215-216; cf. Kirwan 1989, 49). All of the words that Augustine learns to use in that passage he does so by coming to learn the particular objects that they stand for (that they name). That much is true. But is it true that in this same passage Augustine was saying, to use Lyons' phrasing, that the basic semantic function of words is to name things? Using Cameron and Speaks from earlier, would Augustine answer the question as to in virtue of which fact(s) do our words have the meanings that they have by reference to their relationship with objects?

Moreover, Lyons states that Augustine's discussion was "quoted and criticized by Wittgenstein" (Lyons 1977, 216). While it is undeniably true that a segment of this discussion was quoted in the *Investigations*, in what sense was it criticised? As mentioned, the next chapter of this thesis fully explores Wittgenstein's immediate criticisms of Augustine, but for now I just want to concentrate on the extent to which Wittgenstein attributes the idea that the basic semantic function of words is that of naming *to*

Augustine in his criticisms of him. Again, Lyons clearly sees Wittgenstein as criticising Augustine on the basis that he advocates for this notion. But Lyons is not alone in his reading. Tamer Nawar states that “[a]ccording to one widespread view, Augustine endorses a referentialist semantics according to which every word [...] is a referential expression whose extension is its meaning or signification.” Writing further that “[s]uch an interpretation of Augustine is famously articulated by Wittgenstein in the opening of his *Philosophical Investigations*” (Nawar 2021, 597). Like Nawar, David Zoolalian formulates that “Wittgenstein regarded Augustine’s theory of language as the paradigm of the naïve theory he was refuting.” (Zoolalian 1978, 38) Criticisms have even been made against Wittgenstein on the grounds that he articulates this particular interpretation of Augustine. Bringing Bearsley back into the fold, he writes that “Wittgenstein is quite right to link [the view that the meaning of a word is the object for which it stands] with Augustine, but he exaggerates when he says that that is all there is to Augustine’s theory of language and meaning.” (Bearsley 1983, 229)

2.3. Oehl’s Reading

Did Wittgenstein actually interpret Augustine as endorsing a referentialist semantics? Thomas Oehl certainly doesn’t think so, and I think that it would be illuminating for this discussion should we explore the details of Oehl’s reading. The reason that Oehl finds himself on the other side of the debate from Lyons, Nawar, and Bearsley is his concern that “in crucial pieces of the literature the structure of Wittgenstein’s wording [in the opening section of the *Investigations*] is not scrutinised in detail, but rather summed up in quite condensed paraphrasings” (Oehl 2023, 1076, fn. 13). Throughout his paper, Oehl cites a variety of authors who he sees as having failed in this regard, but here’s three telling examples. Stern says that “Wittgenstein’s first sentence tells us that the opening quotation from Saint Augustine *contains* a definite picture of the essence of language” (Stern 2002, 435, emphasis added). Marie McGinn writes that “Wittgenstein’s initial response to the passage from Augustine is to focus on a view of the essence of language which he finds *expressed* in it.” (McGinn 1997, 37, emphasis added) And Warren Goldfarb says that “Wittgenstein begins, as is well known, with a passage from Augustine’s *Confessions*, and tells us that the passage *expresses* a particular conception of the essence of language.” (Goldfarb 1983, 267, emphasis added) As indicated by the words that I have chosen, following Oehl, to emphasise in the above quotations (e.g., “contains”, “expresses”), what unites these examples is how they understand what Wittgenstein is saying in §1b in relation to or about §1a:

These words, it seems to me, give us a particular picture of the essence of human language. It is this: the words in language name objects – sentences are combinations of such names. – In this picture of language we find the roots of the following idea: Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands. (PI, §1b)

As an overview, Stern, McGinn, and Goldfarb all read the first sentence of the above as Wittgenstein saying that the passage from the *Confessions* “gives us” a picture of the essence of human language in the sense that Augustine shares in, sketches out, promotes, this picture. Likewise, Lyons and Nawar would not only read the final trio of sentences as being an expression of a referentialist semantics or theory of meaning, but that since this “idea” is something that we “finds the roots of” in the picture of language that Augustine is supposedly giving to us, this trio is to be seen as evidence of the fact that Wittgenstein is interpreting Augustine as defending this particular semantic understanding.

Oehl would contest how Stern and company understand the sense in which Augustine’s words “give us” the picture of the essence of human language that is described in §1b. Accordingly, their understanding “suggests that [Augustine’s] words themselves *impose* the ‘picture of the essence of human language’ on us, by ‘giving’ it to us.” (Oehl 2023, 1075, original emphasis) Oehl proposes that instead of reading “give us” in the sense of Augustine forcefully imposing a particular picture on us, as if we have no other choice, we should read the original German (“wir erhalten”) more literally as “we get”. In doing so, we could alter the phrasing of the first sentence of §1b from “These words, it seems to me, give us a particular picture...” to something like “From these words, it seems to me, we get a particular picture...” Translated this way, the contributions of Augustine’s words to the picture that we see in §1b are more indirect if not passive.

In this same spirit, Oehl invites us to recognise the “three-level structure” of §1a and §1b (cf. Oehl (cf. Oehl 2023, 1072ff.). He is not alone in this invitation. We can look to Michael Luntley as well as Gordon Baker and Peter Hacker in their commentaries on the *Investigations* as authors who have also recognised this structure. The distinction they all make is between the “picture” and the “idea” (or conception) that we see in §1b. It is this idea of the Augustinian picture as being a distillation from Augustine’s words, alongside the idea that the Augustinian conception is a further distillation not from Augustine’s words but the picture that is distilled from them, which informs Oehl’s reading. Indeed, Baker and Hacker speak about how “[f]rom Augustine’s non-philosophical picture Wittgenstein extracts a particular *philosophical* conception of linguistic meaning” (Baker and Hacker 2005b, 8, original emphasis; cf. Luntley 2015, 4).

We shall return to the distinction between the philosophical and non-philosophical that Baker and Hacker make shortly when I discuss the extent to which we should view Augustine as being

“innocent” in relation to the confusions that his words *can* generate, but let’s present the levels of Oehl’s reading, and let’s do so alongside the sort of schematisation of §1b that authors such as Thomas McNally offer since I think that this makes the differences between these levels even clearer (cf. McNally 2017, 8ff.):

- (Level 1) Quotation from Augustine’s *Confessions* (i.e., the entirety of §1a).
- (Level 2) Picture (reference to (Level 1)): “These words, it seems to me, give us a particular picture of the essence of human language. It is this...” = i. “the individual words in language name objects”; ii. “sentences are combinations of such names.”
- (Level 3) Idea (reference to (Level 2)): “In this picture of language we find the roots of the following idea...” (i.e., the remainder of §1b) = iii. “Every word has a meaning.” iv. “This meaning is correlated with the word.” v. “It is the object for which the word stands.”

The Augustinian picture that these authors describe is indicative of (Level 2) or claims (i.) and (ii.), whereas the Augustinian conception represents (Level 3) or (iii.) through (v.) And what happens as we move from one level to another? The first transition—that is, from (Level 1) to (Level 2)—“consists in an abstraction from *persons* and their *use* of words [...] between saying that *persons* name objects (in their stream of life and for certain ends) and saying that *names* (or words) name objects.” (Oehl 2023, 1073, original emphasis) In the passage from the *Confessions*, Augustine does not explicitly say that names or words name objects; instead, he begins by noticing that *adults* name objects as part of their everyday activities. Once he understands what it is that these words refer to, he uses them as a way to express and satisfy his *own* wishes. Nowhere does Augustine make a claim on par with (i.) in terms of generality, nor does he say anything about the nature of sentences à la (ii.). The reason that we do not find these claims therein is because it is not Augustine that is speaking on (Level 2) but Wittgenstein. Notice what Wittgenstein leaves out. He says nothing of the “bodily movements” that Augustine mentions, nor how they represent “the natural language of all peoples” (cf. PI §1a). Thus, the move from (Level 1) to (Level 2) is not only that of abstraction or distillation, but also that of simplification.

The transition from (Level 2) to (Level 3) follows a similar pattern in that it continues to abstract away from the literal contents of Augustine’s words, but this time it introduces a further philosophical notion; namely, meaning. And the fact that this notion is *only* introduced at (Level 3) is something which

many authors overlook. According to Charles Hardwick, “[t]he example from the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine in the opening section of the *Philosophical Investigations* presents what Wittgenstein considers to be the traditional conception of meaning” (Hardwick 1971, 40). Katherine Rudolph also says of this passage that it “clearly functions in the *Investigations* as an example of traditional accounts of meaning.” (Rudolph 2005, 327)

Let’s assume that by “traditional conception/account of meaning” both Hardwick and Rudolph mean the sort of referentialist semantics described by Lyons and Nawar. This conception or account is only (fully) expressed, if anywhere, on (Level 3). Hardwick and Rudolph, to appropriate a charge that Oehl levels against Goldfarb, have “illegitimately jump[ed]” from (Level 1) to (Level 3) by accusing Wittgenstein of having used Augustine’s words as an example of a particular account of meaning (cf. Oehl 2023, 1076; cf. also Goldfarb 1983, 268). This particular account of meaning is indeed extracted from a certain picture of language, and this picture is itself extracted from Augustine. But that doesn’t mean that such an account is ultimately Augustine’s nor that Wittgenstein sees it as such.

2.4. The Earlier Wittgenstein

The fact that the Augustinian conception is removed from the words of Augustine in this way such that it is no longer straightforwardly reflective of them leads me to discount (but not entirely dismiss) the suggestion that, as R.M. Berry contends, Augustine’s words “do imply, at least in rudimentary form” the theory of meaning presented in the *Tractatus* (Berry 2013, 618, original emphasis) Indeed, as Christina Erneling summarises, “[t]he usual reconstructions of Wittgenstein’s criticisms of Augustine’s view of language focus on the implicit account of meaning—that is, the picture theory which Wittgenstein took Augustine to have in common with his own earlier views in the *Tractatus*.” (Erneling 1993, 341) In the previous sub-section, we challenged the idea that the view of language that Wittgenstein was criticising was Augustine’s. But there are those who would follow Berry in blurring the line between Augustine and the earlier Wittgenstein.

At the start of this chapter, I mentioned Kripke to this effect. Two other prominent examples are Robert Hanna and George Pitcher. Hanna claims to have identified a “philosophical living picture of Pure Referentialism that is etched into the Augustinian theory of language”, with this same “Pure Referentialism” being one of the “overlapping theories of meaning” in the *Tractatus* (Hanna 2010, 15-16, 23). Pitcher reflects that “the idea that the meaning of a word is the object for which it stands”, something that many authors see as being indicative of Augustine’s view of language, is “an idea to which Wittgenstein himself yielded in the *Tractatus*” (Pitcher 1964, 249). And there are certainly reasons to believe

Berry, Hanna, and Pitcher; for the following two propositions from the *Tractatus*, when taken together, appear to present the earlier Wittgenstein as being committed to a referentialist semantics:

The simple signs employed in propositions are called names. (TLP, 3.202)

A name means an object. The object is its meaning. (‘*A*’ is the same sign as ‘*A*’.) (TLP, 3.203, original emphasis)

In fact, these propositions read almost identically to (i.) and (v.) from McNally’s schema of §1b. But almost is as close as it gets; for the earlier Wittgenstein’s commitment to a referentialist semantics as described in the *Investigations* must be partial, otherwise we encounter a problem regarding the consistency of this semantics with the philosophy of the *Tractatus*. Robert Fogelin declares that “[w]e need only recall that it was one of the leading ideas of the *Tractatus* that certain signs (e.g., logical constants and numerals) do *not* go proxy for objects.” (Fogelin 1995, 109, original emphasis) A similar complaint has been made in this vein by Goldfarb. Goldfarb says that “to attribute [a referentialist] conception to the early Wittgenstein is to miss what he himself calls his *Grundgedanke*, that the logical constants do not stand for anything” (Goldfarb 1983, 267) What both Fogelin and Goldfarb are rightly referring to is the following proposition from the *Tractatus*:

The possibility of propositions is based on the principle that objects have signs as their representatives. My fundamental idea [*Mein Grundgedanke*] is that the ‘logical constants’ are not representatives; that there can be no representatives of the *logic* of facts. (TLP, 4.0312, original emphasis)³

Consider the following reconstruction of Wittgenstein’s thought in the above remark which I have adopted from Laurence Goldstein. Take the sentence ‘There is a shirt and a sock in the drawer.’ In order for this sentence to be true, there would have to be two objects in the drawer; namely, a shirt and a sock.

³ This remark from the *Notebooks* makes the same point as the one from the *Tractatus* although it more closely matches Fogelin’s language: “The possibility of the proposition is, of course, founded on the principle that objects have signs as GOING PROXY for objects. Thus in the proposition something has *something* else as its proxy. My fundamental thought is that the logical constants are not proxies. That the *logic* of the fact cannot have anything as its proxy.” (NB, 37, original emphasis)

If the sentence was false, there could be just one of these objects—say, just a sock. “But there is nothing in this, or any,” Goldstein replies, “possible situation corresponding to ‘and’; the word ‘and’ does not represent anything; the drawer does not contain a shirt, a sock, and an ‘and’.” (Goldstein 1999, 506-507) Or to use a line from Guido Bonino, we can say that Wittgenstein’s general conclusion about logical constants is that they are “not an object of any kind; [they do] not concern the world, but only the way language works.” (Bonino 2008, 124) How is this inconsistent with the view of language that we see in the *Investigations*? That view not only holds that the meaning of a word is the object for which it stands, but that *every* word acquires its meaning in this way. The Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* would likewise agree that the meaning of a word is the object for which it stands (see TLP 3.203 quoted above, for example), but he would mark an exception: there are some words, namely logical constants, that do not stand for objects, and so could not possibly acquire their meanings in this way. Thus, to draw on Fogelin again, we can say that “[t]he view of language developed in the *Tractatus* is nowhere as simple as the picture of language that Wittgenstein here invokes [in the opening of the *Investigations*].” (Fogelin 1995, 109)⁴

If it was truly Wittgenstein’s intention to set out a specific philosophical theory (of meaning), and this theory belonged to either his earlier self or to one of his contemporaries, then why not just say so? Why begin with Augustine? Why not start with a proposition from the *Tractatus* such as the ones used above? Perhaps in some sense all I am doing here is shifting the explanatory burden away from myself and onto the theoretical reader. But it is by no means difficult to find instances in the *Investigations* of Wittgenstein criticising other philosophers out in the open. Consider the inclusion of a passage from Plato’s *Theaetetus* in §46, where Wittgenstein alludes to both Russell and his earlier self (cf. PI, §46c). Why does the opening section lack a similar allusion if its aim was also criticise a specific philosophical theory, i.e., referentialism in the §1 and logical atomism in §46?

2.5. Innocence

Are we, to use a phrase from Charles Travis, to believe in “the innocence of Augustine’s words”? (Travis 2006, 10) According to Travis, “Augustine states banalities [...] which, in philosophy, invite misreadings

⁴ Indeed, the same problem described in this sub-section repeats itself in relation to the contemporaries of the earlier Wittgenstein—that is, Bertrand Russell and Gottlob Frege. Goldfarb writes that “[t]o say that Frege takes the meaning (in the ordinary sense) of a word to be what it names is to misread him blindly.” (Goldfarb 1983, 267) Peter Geach also says that “[i]t is easy to show that Frege was so far from thinking every word *named* an object” (Geach 1993, 71, original emphasis) As to Russell, Nicholas Griffin writes that he “*never* held that all symbols (simple or otherwise) were names, though this view has often been attributed to him (perhaps by confusing his version of logical atomism with Wittgenstein’s).” (Griffin 2020, 2, fn. 4, original emphasis) I don’t want to explore these criticisms here. Rather I just want to note that they have been made.

[...] That misreading is Wittgenstein's target." (Travis 2006, 10) And here he cites the following remark that appears much later in the *Investigations*, which I shall quote alongside something similar from the *Nachlass* in order to relate it directly to Augustine:

When we do philosophy, we are like savages, primitive people, who hear the way in which civilized people talk, put a false interpretation on it, and then draw the oddest conclusions from it. (PI, §194c)

And what Augustine says is important for us because it is the conception of a naturally clear thinking man who, being far away from us in time, certainly doesn't belong to our particular intellectual milieu. (Ms 111, 15-16)

Applying these remarks to the opening section of the *Investigations*, Augustine's words in the *Confessions* represent that of a civilised person. All he is doing is offering a reconstruction of what he believes his learning to use language as a child consisted in. This reconstruction is indeed full of banalities. Of course adults use the names of objects to refer to them. Of course when we learn to use language as a child we come to learn the names of the objects around us. But the philosopher, for whatever reason, is not satisfied by this banal description. Why, they ask, does the learning of how to use particular words involve learning the object that it refers to? One answer that they could give is that that object is the meaning of the word. Since this explanation seems to hold for the activities that Augustine mentions, the philosopher feels inclined to extend this explanation to other areas of language, to other kinds of words, so as to arrive at the conclusion that *every* word functions in this way. In doing so, they feel as though they have uncovered something like the "essence of human language". But these philosophical notions ("meaning" and "essence") were introduced to us not by Augustine, but by a philosopher—that is, by Wittgenstein. So the misreading that Travis claims is Wittgenstein's target is not Augustine's words, but either the picture or conception that we have described as "Augustinian".

Oehl would agree with how Travis locates Wittgenstein's real target, but he would disagree with him when it comes to Augustine's innocence in the *Investigations* in that he sees him as being minimally responsible for the transition that the philosopher makes from (Level 1) to (Level 2), and so from (Level 2) to (Level 3)—that is, from reading the *Confessions* to forming a "particular picture of the essence of human language" and the philosophical notion of meaning that one derives from it. To demonstrate this responsibility, Oehl contrasts the description of language-learning that Augustine gives with the list of fifteen different "language-games" in the *Investigations*. We need not be distracted by the use of this term;

for, as John Hyman reminds us, “[a] language game is simply a human activity involving speech or writing in which a distinctive range of concepts is employed.” (Hyman 2015, 105) More on this in the next chapter. But here’s just five examples from this list: giving orders and acting on them; describing an object by its appearance or measurements; constructing an object from a description; reporting an event; speculating about the event (cf. PI, §23d). None of these activities appear in the passage from the *Confessions*. To be sure, the process of learning the name of an object or person so as to express your wishes towards that object or person would not look out of place as but an additional entry on this list.

The diversity of this list dwarfs that of Augustine’s description. Oehl’s point is that if Augustine gave something more reflective of this diversity “[t]hen there would be no temptation to think that the essence of language consists in a relation between words and objects” (Oehl 2023, 1090) “But by exclusively focusing on the case of ‘naming,’” he writes on the next page, “[Augustine] actually *tacitly suggests* (intentionally or not) that this is how language works and that there is nothing more to it.” (Oehl 2023, 1091, original emphasis) Be that as it may, seeing Augustine as less-than-innocent does not mean seeing him as espousing a particular theory of meaning. Gerald Watson is very helpful in this regard. On his reading, “Augustine is describing how a child learns the simplest things first and these tend to be the names of objects, animals, people he wants or which please or displease him. But he is not setting out in the *Confessions* to give a general picture of language.” (Watson 1982, 20) Watson is right; for that “general picture” (or the essence of language) is only given expression in §1b and not in the passage quoted in §1a. Moreover, Watson includes a line at the end of his discussion from the *Investigations* that perfectly explains how this picture arises:

A main cause of philosophical diseases – a one sided diet: one nourishes one’s thinking with only one kind of example. (PI, §593; quoted in Watson 1982, 20)

The idea that “philosophical diseases” are caused by concentrating on only one kind of example—say, on the short description of language-learning provided in the *Confessions* which emphasises the importance of naming—is the perfect jumping-off point for the next chapter’s consideration of Wittgenstein’s immediate criticism of Augustine since this takes us beyond the opening section of the *Investigations*.

2.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I tried to put pressure on the idea that Wittgenstein included a passage from Augustine’s *Confessions* in the opening section of the *Investigations* in order to set out a particular theory of meaning, with

this theory belonging to Augustine himself. The sort of theory under consideration was a referentialist theory of meaning, according to which the meaning of a word is the object for which it stands. I argued that Wittgenstein did not interpret the passage from the *Confessions* as either a defence or statement of a referentialist theory of meaning. Rather, the referentialist picture of language that we see in the *Investigations* is something that is abstracted from Augustine's words, with the conception of word-meaning associated with it being a further abstraction.

Someone might agree with my position that the target Wittgenstein sets up isn't a theory defended by Augustine or the early Wittgenstein, but resist the conclusion that this means he isn't setting out any theoretical target at all. My response would be to notice the way in which Wittgenstein handles Augustine's words and what this says about the character of his philosophy, something which I have tried to clarify in this chapter. I think that learning more about this character as we continue will increase the pressure on the theoretical reader.

Chapter Three

Meaning and Use

What would it mean for Wittgenstein to be a use-theorist in the *Investigations*? William Alston provides a list of those whom he considers to have advocated for a use-theory of meaning (cf. Alston 1963, 107). Here's two examples of the kinds of claims that Alston bases his attribution on, first from Peter Strawson, and then from G.J. Warnock. Strawson says that “[t]o give the meaning of an expression (in the sense which I am using the word) is to give *general directions* for its use to refer to or mention particular objects or persons” (Strawson 1950, 327, original emphasis). Along such lines, Warnock thinks that “to know the meaning of a sentence is to know how to use it, to know in what circumstances its use is correct or incorrect.” (Warnock 1951, 318) To this list, we can add Horwich's line from the previous chapter that the meaning of a word is the non-semantic property of that word which explains its overall use.

Does Wittgenstein identify the meaning of a word with its use? There are two answers to this question that I want to consider in this chapter, one of which has already been partially mentioned. That is, there are those who would want to say that through his immediate criticisms of Augustine, Wittgenstein clears the way for a use-theory of meaning. Garth Hallett, Robert Arrington, and Hanna defend some version of this claim. Hallett suggests that a use-theory is “implicit” in the *Investigations* since use “is untouched by the arguments against objects or mental states and shadows” as possible candidates for the role of which fact about a word determines its meaning (Hallett 1967, 76).⁵ Arrington also wants to say that “[t]ime and time again Wittgenstein shows that these proposed items will not do the job required of them and that we must fall back on use.” (Arrington 2006, 240) And Hanna contends that part of Wittgenstein's approach towards establishing a use-theory of meaning lies in “specifically display[ing] the inadequacies of the classical theories of meaning.” (Hanna 2010, 15) By “classical theories of meaning”, Hanna surely has in mind the sort of referentialist theory that he saw not only in the *Tractatus*, but also in Augustine's *Confessions*.

⁵ In the sections of the *Investigations* that we are considering in this chapter, we only get Wittgenstein's objections to conceiving of the meaning of a word in terms of its relationship with an object. And so, I am only going to focus on objects (or reference to them). There is a brief mention of mental states when he talks about sentence-meaning (cf. PI, §§18-27a). But “shadows” are more readily discussed in, say, the *Blue Book* as opposed to the *Investigations* (cf. BBB, 32ff.).

It is true that there isn't much in the way of a positive argument for such a theory in the text; especially in the early sections that we are considering. But there is one remark that potentially fits the bill—that is, §43. As Paul Livingston canvases, this section “has usually been taken to commit [Wittgenstein] to a “use theory of meaning.”” (Livingston 2004, 62) The reason for this is that we seem to find an identification of meaning with use therein: “the meaning of a word *is* its use in the language.” (PI, §43a, emphasis added) Taken as is, this would not stand out amongst Strawson, Warnock, and Horwich. Thus, as Craig Fox writes, “[o]ne often sees allusions to [Wittgenstein’s philosophical legacy] in the form of a single phrase such as “Wittgenstein’s definition of meaning as use” or “Wittgenstein’s use-theory of meaning”” (Fox 2010, 27).

Because such a line would not look out of place amongst these authors, there are those such as Pitcher who would want to say that, against a referentialist semantics or theory of meaning, “[the later] Wittgenstein asserts the opposing claim that the meaning of a word is its use in the various language-games in which it plays a part.” (Pitcher 1964, 249) Notice how Pitcher’s words remind us of the narrative that was described at the start of the previous chapter, which holds that the later Wittgenstein sought to exchange one theory of meaning for another. Indeed, Hallett outlines that “[t]he two definitions of words’ meaning—as their referents [referring to the *Tractatus*], then as their uses [referring to the *Investigations*]—belong to two periods in Wittgenstein’s philosophical activity.” (Hallett 1967, 3)

The understanding that this chapter wants to defend is succinctly captured by Austin Quigley. That is, “Wittgenstein’s concern is not so much with the theoretical correctness of an alternative theory of meaning but with the intractability of certain presuppositions about the ways in which our language functions.” (Quigley 1988, 214) Two of these presuppositions will be considered: first, that (all) words name objects; and second, that (proper) names signify simples. In tracing how Wittgenstein uncovers and ultimately unravels these presuppositions, an argument will be made against seeing him as advocating for a use-theory of meaning, whether positively or negatively.

3.1. Of Shopkeepers and Builders

Whilst the idea that the words of our language name objects seems unproblematic for terms like ‘table’ or ‘chair’, there are cases in which this doesn’t quite capture what is going on when we use language. Wittgenstein demonstrates this by asking us to consider the situation of someone handing a shopkeeper a slip, which has the phrase “five red apples” written on it:

He takes the slip to the shopkeeper, who opens the drawer marked “apples”; he looks up the word “red” in a chart and finds a colour sample next to it; then he says the series of elementary number- words – I assume that he knows them by heart – up to the word “five”, and for each number-word he takes an apple of the same colour as the sample out of the drawer. (PI, §1d)

What this example is supposed to show is something like the following. The phrase “five red apples” which is marked on the slip is comprised of three different kinds of word. Words like ‘apple’ could be said to be indicative of common nouns, these are words for things, people, or places; ‘red’ is a colour- word (or even more broadly we could just say that it is an adjective); and, as mentioned in the example itself, ‘five’ is a number-word, belonging to the set of other elementary number-words that are used in counting.

There are those who, despite the differences between them—that is, the differences between the kinds of words being displayed in this example—would be tempted to see ‘apple’, ‘red’, and ‘five’ as names. ‘Apple’ is the name of an object, ‘red’ the name of a colour’, and ‘five’ the name of a number. However, the problem that Wittgenstein foresees with this temptation is that it is simply incorrect to say that ‘red’ is the name of a colour or that ‘five’ is the name of a number in the same sense as ‘apple’ is the name of a particular object. (Whether it is wrong to say that ‘red’ is the name of a colour or that ‘five’ is the name of a number *simpliciter*, I remain silent.) To see why it would be incorrect to say as much, we need to consider how the shopkeeper actually carries out his activity in response to being handed the slip with the phrase “five red apples” on it.

First, the shopkeeper identifies the fact that an object of a particular type is being requested. We could imagine that the shop in which he works sells a number of different items, all contained in different little drawers. Should the shopkeeper have been handed a slip which made a different request—say, for “five red strawberries”—he would have visited a different drawer, perhaps located somewhere else in his shop, than the one containing apples. After identifying the kind of object that the customer wants—that is, apples and not strawberries—the shopkeeper now has to match the item in the drawer with a colour sample. He needs to find the word ‘red’ on his chart and use the sample next to it to discern whether the apples that he has pulled out of the drawer are the right colour. As before, to make this example a little more useful, we could imagine that the drawer containing apples is, in fact, made up of a bunch of different coloured apples. There’s green ones, yellow ones, etc. Hence, the shopkeeper has to carefully use the word ‘red’, in conjunction with his colour chart, to select the ones that the customer asked for. Finally, there is the process of correlating the amount of apples taken from the drawer with the number-word indicated on the slip. To do so, let’s say that he utters ‘one’ when retrieving the first apple, ‘two’ upon the second, and so on until he reached ‘five’ with the fifth. In reaching this number-word in tandem with his action, he knows that he has taken out the correct number of apples per the customer’s request.

I appreciate the fact that my explanation of this example is a little overkill. But the reason for this over-explication is to show that, as Robert Allen Goff recaps, “the meaning of the request “Five red apples” is not to be found by locating an object-reference for each of the words, “five”, “red”, “apples”.” (Goff 1968, 448) It is right to say that the meaning of the word “apples” is to be found in locating an object- reference for the word. This is precisely what the shopkeeper does, he goes to the area in his shop in which he will find the very thing that the word on the slip refers to. But our explanation should show that the meaning of the other two words on that slip, ‘five’ and ‘red’, is not to be found in such a way.

Recall our schematisation of the referentialist conception of word-meaning from the previous chapter. The shopkeeper example does not undermine either the fact that every word has a meaning or that this meaning is correlated with the word but like with the *Tractatus*’ discussion of logical constants, it challenges the idea that the meaning of a word is the object for which it stands in virtue of that fact that the meanings of two of the words in this example, these being ‘five’ and ‘red’, are not to be explicated in terms of the objects for which they supposedly stand. Indeed, it is unclear as to whether they stand for any objects at all.

Does that mean that Augustine is wrong (from Wittgenstein’s perspective)? Erika Kidd summarises that “[t]he Augustine passage has been read as a bad theory, as dangerous picture, and as sloppy overgeneralization” (Kidd 2018, 38) Hardwick, who we discussed in the previous chapter, acts as an example of this since he understands Wittgenstein’s attitude towards Augustine as being that he “incorrectly pictures language.” (Hardwick 1971, 40) Wittgenstein himself, however, makes his attitude towards Augustine clear in conceding that “Augustine, we might say, does describe a system of communication; only not everything that we call language is this system.” (PI, §3a) This concession is defended by “imag[ing] a language for which the description given by Augustine is right” (PI, §2b). He continues:

...the language is meant to serve for communication between a builder A and an assistant B. A is building with building stones: there are blocks, pillars, slabs and beams. B has to pass him the stones and to do so in the order in which A needs them. For this purpose they make use of a language consisting of the words “block”, “pillar”, “slab”, “beam”. A calls them out; B brings the stone which he has learnt to bring at such-and-such a call. (PI, §2b)

The example of the shopkeeper shows that the picture of language extracted from Augustine’s words is limited. This limitation is to be seen as ultimately artificial or unnecessary; for there are numerous words that we use in everyday life, the meanings of which cannot be explained by pointing out which object that

word is supposed to refer to. But the introduction of the builders' language shows that there are some words, some situations, that we use in language for which this conception is correct. And yet, the description derived from Augustine only applies to a particular area or sub-section of language.

Again, does that make Augustine wrong about language? No. And Wittgenstein is consistent about this throughout his writings. In the *Pink Book*, for example, he presented himself with a choice between saying that Augustine was wrong and saying that he describes something simpler than what we would ordinarily call 'language' or 'the whole of language'. "We do the second thing. We give simpler structures and put them side by side with language." (DPS, 107) In the *Investigations*, this choice is no longer presented; instead, Wittgenstein jumps straight to saying that Augustine's idea of language "is the idea of a language more primitive than ours." (PI, §2a)

Wittgenstein still follows up on the insight of the *Pink Book* in so far as he does give simpler structures, placing them alongside language. The builders' language is one such structure and it is placed next to the example of the shopkeeper. Why? Because, as Arif Ahmed elaborates, "[i]t is easy to see why one might say of *this* primitive language [here referring to the builders] that all of its expressions were names, if one meant by this that they function in the same way." But he continues, "[t]here is no clear sense in which the grocer does the same with the referent (whatever it is) of 'five' when he sees the word on the slip as he does with the referent of 'red' when he sees *that* word on the slip." (Ahmed 2010, 13, original emphasis)

The example of the shopkeeper showed that there is not a uniformity in the function of our words, so long as that function is to be conceived of in terms of words naming or referring to objects. And so, one would rightly be inclined to say that what is important for us to attend to in this example, and indeed the example of the builders' language, is the way in which words are used. Wittgenstein all but confirms this when he says that "[i]t dispenses the fog if we study the phenomena of language in primitive kinds of *use* in which one can clearly survey the purpose and functioning of the words." (PI, §5a, emphasis added) The purpose and functioning of the words in the example of the shopkeeper was so that the customer could order the items that they wanted and so that the shopkeeper could respond to this want. The individual words within the written phrase "five red apples" each had their own use, represented by the various ways in which the shopkeeper acted upon them, but all contributed to the wider goal of that particular language- game: to satisfy a request. Similarly, the purpose and functioning of the words in the builders' language was to have B bring A the correct materials in the order needed for their construction project.

3.2. Uniformity

Wittgenstein further refines his argument relating to the perceived uniformity of the function of the words in our language by offering an expansion to the builders' language (cf. PI, §8ff.). To this language, he adds three features: first, a sequence of words represented by the letters of the alphabet that are to be used as number-words in the same way as "five" was used in the shopkeeper example; second, the demonstratives "there" and "this", which are to be used in connection with a sort of pointing gesture; and third, a series of colour samples, something also familiar to us from the shopkeeper example.

How does the introduction of these features *expand* the language? Previously, A communicated his desire for a particular material—say, a block—by calling out the word that both A and B had come to associate with that material—that is, "block". Contrast this with the increased complexity of the communication between A and B due to their widened vocabulary. Wittgenstein imagines that A could give an order such as "d-slab-there" while showing B a certain colour sample before then gesturing towards a specific location on their building site. B here proceeds much like how he does in the first iteration of the builder's language, but his conduct is now much closer to that of the shopkeeper. When faced with the pile of materials, he recalls the colour sample that was shown to him, and discerns between the slabs that do not match the colour of this sample so as to begin to collect the ones that do. He then collects the number of slabs requested, each time calling out the number-words that he has learned until he gets to "d". Instead of bringing them directly to A, as we might have assumed he had done before, he places the materials that were requested at the location which was gestured to him upon initially being ordered to retrieve the slab.

With respect to the expanded version of the builders' language in §8, Wittgenstein asks the following question. "Now what do the words of this language *signify*?" (PI, §10a, original emphasis) His answer, as one would expect from what has been said in both this sub-section and the previous is that: "How is what they signify supposed to come out other than in the kind of use they have?" (PI,10a) As I see it, the point is that the question 'What do words signify?' is to be answered not just by stating which particular objects they name. We have already seen how this can go awry in so far as there are words which do not obviously name objects, nor are their meanings to be explained on the grounds of reference. Rather, what we need to do to answer this question is to describe the kinds of use that they have.

Admittedly, Wittgenstein wants to say, there are cases in which it may prove helpful should we elect to abbreviate our descriptions of the use of certain words to merely saying that this or that word signifies something. Take, for instance, the word "slab". We can clear up some of the misunderstandings that we may have around the use of this word, and others like it, by declaring that it refers to a particular kind of building material. Equally, with the number-words seen in the expanded version of the builders'

language such as “a”, “b”, etc., it would be helpful to say that these words do not play the same role in the language-game as words such as “block”, “slab”, and “pillar”. We could certainly say that they *signify* different things, remembering of course what it is that we mean by this. But Wittgenstein closes §10 by making the point with this sort of explanation, as useful as it may be, clear: “making the descriptions of the uses of these words similar in this way cannot make the uses themselves any more like one another! For, as we see, they are absolutely unlike.” (PI, §10d)

He drives this point home with two analogies. First, there is that of the toolbox in §11; and then there is the case of someone looking into the cabin of a locomotive in §12. Within a toolbox, as one might expect, there is normally a series of different tools. There’s a hammer, pliers, a saw, a screwdriver, a ruler, and so on. Although all of these items are collected together in one place, and all broadly serve the same purpose (e.g., to help someone repair or modify something), there is a diversity to their individual use and function that must be appreciated. “A screwdriver looks similar to an auger,” Baker and Hacker explain, “but one makes a hole, the other screws into a hole.” “Both are connected with screws (screws cannot be used without screwdrivers,” they continue, “but their roles are quite different.” (Baker and Hacker 2005b, 64-65)

This also applies to Wittgenstein’s second analogy. Within a cabin, one will notice that there is a series of handles. One handle is the crank, which can be moved continuously in the same way that a tap can be shifted from ‘hot’ to ‘cold’. Another is the handle of a switch, which is like a light switch in that it can be positioned to be either ‘on’ or ‘off’. Finally, there is the brake handle. There is no definite position for this handle; for the harder that someone pulls on it, the harder the locomotive will break. Each of these handles are meant to be handled, that much is true. But their functions, and how they are used, are completely different from one another. The message, then, of these analogies is clear; namely, “what confuses us is the uniform appearance of words when we hear them in speech, or see them written or in print. For their *use* is not that obvious.” (PI, §11b, original emphasis) This mirrors what Wittgenstein says in the *Yellow Book*. Words “are brought together in a dictionary like tools in a box, and like the tools, which look pretty much alike, they have enormously different uses.” (AWL, 46) That is, we misunderstand the diversity of function to our words because they all possess a similar appearance. But it is only when we actually set about using these words do we pierce through the veil of appearances to unravel that they are, in fact, different in much the same sense that we would only recognise that an auger is the wrong tool for the task of screwing a screw into a hole when we actually tried to do so with one.

Therefore, “[i]f we say, “Every word in the language signifies something”, we have so far said nothing *whatever*, unless we explain exactly *what* distinction we wish to make.” (PI, §13, original emphasis) And what kind of distinction are we trying to make? There is, of course, the previous example of distinguishing between words like “slab” and “d” in the expanded builders’ language of §8. But

Wittgenstein gives a further example of someone distinguishing between the words of said language and that of one of Lewis Carroll's poems. More precisely, consider Carroll's "Jabberwocky", which is a nonsense poem. Some of the words of this poem, such as "vorpal" or "Bandersnatch", lack any explicit meaning. It is possible, then, to say that the words of the expanded builders' language signify something, whereas the words of "Jabberwocky" signify nothing. But applied to just the builders' language, to say of this language that its words signify something is not false. Rather it is more accurate to say that such a statement is empty; for it would be the same as saying "*All* tools serve to modify something." (PI, §14, original emphasis) A hammer modifies the position of a nail, a saw the shape of a piece of wood, and so on. But nothing would really be gained from assimilating these expressions in such a way.

This uniformity-argument shows that we are prone to confusion should we understand the function of every word in terms of that word's ability to refer to some object. It would be equally as confused to understand the meaning of every word as being the object to which it refers: either because some words do not obviously refer to something; or because, even if they did, there are numerous differences between them, which obsessively concentrating on the relationship between name and object would force one to overlook. And I would agree with those who would suggest that Wittgenstein finds this attention to the various ways in which we actually use the words of our language to be deficient in the passage from Augustine's *Confessions*.

What I want to resist, however, is the suggestion that this same uniformity-argument amounts to a negative defence of a use-theory of meaning. According to Hallett, as Wittgenstein moves through his criticisms of Augustine, he removes objects, or rather reference to them, as a candidate for the fact that explains the meaning of a word. But use is left untouched by this criticism. To be sure, from what we have discussed in this sub-section and the previous one, use is definitely pushed to the forefront of our considerations. But just as Wittgenstein emphasised a need for us to not enforce or impose an artificial uniformity in function upon the words of our language predicated on the idea that words refer to objects, the same could be said of their use. The expressions "All words signify something" and "All tools modify something" were considered to be true, but vacuous nonetheless.

I'm not saying that if one was to defend a use-theory of meaning then you would have to say that there is a *single* way in which words are used—this would render such a theory completely and unfairly unattractive. What I am saying is that Wittgenstein is encouraging us to reflect on the diverse ways in which language is used. And saying that the words in our language are used for specific purposes invites the further question of what those uses actually are. It is that further question which ultimately captures Wittgenstein's attention. Thus, I don't think that he is wading through potential candidates for which fact about a word determines its meaning. If that fact, as we shall see in the remainder of this chapter, turns

out to be its relationship with an object, then so be it. Rather than rely on our presuppositions about language, the point is to do the legwork for ourselves.

3.3. Of Swords and the Recently Deceased

Another aspect of the *Investigations* to consider when thinking about the extent to which there is a negative argument for a use-theory of meaning is Wittgenstein's discussion of proper names. This discussion is intimately connected with the supposed definition of meaning as use, the topic of the next sub-section, because the section which contains this definition is to be found amongst the remarks on proper names. Therefore, to understand whether Wittgenstein defines meaning as use, let's shift away from talking about shopkeepers and builders to swords and the recently deceased. In §39, Wittgenstein introduces the idea that "*a name ought really to signify a simple.*" (PI, §39, original emphasis) The initial justification for this idea, as he proceeds to elaborate, is as follows. Suppose that the word "Nothung", the name of the sword belonging to the character of Siegfried, is a proper name. The meaning of a proper name is its bearer, i.e., the object to which it refers. The sword Nothung consists of a number of parts that are combined in a particular way, e.g., a blade, a hilt, a gemstone which adorns the hilt, etc. We would be inclined to say that if these parts were combined in a different way, or not at all, then Nothung would cease to exist. Perhaps this is because we've come to know Nothung as the sword with a distinct crossguard. Removing this crossguard would cause us to view what's left as an entirely different entity.

However, the sentence "Nothung has a sharp blade" has a sense, irrespective of whether or not the sword Nothung has been broken into pieces. But if "Nothung" is the name of an object, then this object is said to no longer exist when the sword has been shattered since there is no object that would correspond to that name. The lack of correspondence between name and object would mean that "Nothung", conceived of as a proper name, no longer has any meaning. Furthermore, the sentence "Nothung has a sharp blade" would now contain a word that has no meaning, rendering it senseless. And yet, this sentence does have a sense, and so there must still be something that corresponds to its constituents. Thus, the word "Nothung" can be analysed into that which names simples, and it is these names which we are to call real or proper names.

Moreover, in §40, Wittgenstein attacks one of the premises of the above argument; specifically, that a name has no meaning if there exists nothing for which it stands. His response to this premise is direct; for he says that "it is a solecism to use the word "meaning" to signify the thing that 'corresponds' to a word." (PI, §40) But why exactly is it a mistake to use this word in such a way? We know from the previous sub-sections how this may go wrong, but what's happening here in particular? He explains that

to do so would be “to confound the meaning of a name with the *bearer* of the name.” (PI, §40, original emphasis) Wittgenstein shows how this is the case through the example of the death of Mr N.N:

When Mr N.N. dies, one says that the bearer of the name dies, not that the meaning dies. And it would be nonsensical to say this, for if the name ceased to have meaning, it would make no sense to say “Mr N.N. is dead”. (PI, §40)

The thought is that it would, in fact, make sense to say “Mr N.N. is dead” after he died. As a parallel thought, we don’t, after having read the obituary section of *The New York Times*, suddenly decry its contents as thoroughly nonsensical upon learning that the people to which it refers are all recently deceased. Wittgenstein further stresses this point in §41 by offering a variation on the example in §15, which we have yet to discuss. And so, here’s the two passages together:

Suppose that the tools A uses in building bear certain marks. When A shows his assistant such a mark, the assistant brings the tool that has that mark on it. (PI, §15a)

Now suppose that the tool with the name “N” is broken. Not knowing this, A gives B the sign “N”. [...] What is B to do when he is given it? (PI, §41)

“Has this sign a meaning now,” Wittgenstein asks, “or not?” (PI, §41) On the one hand, we could say that “N” has become meaningless since there is no object to which this name or mark refers. Because there is no object to which “N” refers, there is no longer a place for it in the communicative interplay between A and B unless it is given one, e.g., should it become the name of a different object. Even then, “we could also imagine a convention whereby B has to shake his head in reply if A gives the sign for a tool that is broken.” “In this way,” Wittgenstein continues, “the command “N” might be said to be admitted into the language-game even when the tool no longer exists, and the sign “N” to have a meaning even when its bearer ceases to exist.” (PI, §41) Further to this, we could imagine that B responds to the request “slab” by shaking his head in situations when they have exhausted their resources. The point is that, though they have gone through their supply of slabs, the word “slab” itself does not lose its meaning simply because there are no remaining things to which this word could refer.

As an advancement on §41, the next section (i.e., §42) examines the question of whether a name which never had a bearer can be said to have a meaning. Here’s the example. A gives “X”, a sign which

has never been used in their language, to B. This leads B to shake his head in the same way that A shook his head when asked to retrieve the tool marked "N", or when he was asked to go fetch some slabs after they had ran out. Suppose that A was to shout out the name of a material that they did not have at their disposal. B would shake his head, but he would nonetheless understand what it was that A meant by this request. If B did not understand what it was that A requested, then he wouldn't have been able to refuse such a demand on the grounds that they did not have this particular material to hand. In each case, they do understand one another without there being a bearer for the names or words that they use in their communication.

The discussion of proper names, therefore, is yet another refutation of the conception that every word has a meaning, with this meaning being conceived in terms of the relationship between name and object. But the examples discussed in this sub-section show that not only is it a mistake to see the bearer of a name as the meaning of that name, but that there are words which have a meaning in certain language-games despite there being no object to which they refer. Because of this, it is easy to see how this may fit into a negative argument for a use-theory of meaning. But to see why it would be a mistake to understand Wittgenstein as using this discussion for such a purpose, we need to move onto the supposed identification of meaning with use.

3.4. Meaning *as* Use?

As mentioned, some read §43 as containing Wittgenstein's identification of meaning with use (or as a definition of meaning *as* use). This section is embedded in the discussion of proper names set out in the previous sub-section. Here's how it literally reads:

For a *large* class of cases of the employment of the word "meaning" – though not for *all* – this word can be explained in this way: the meaning of a word is its use in the language.

And the *meaning* of a name is sometimes explained by pointing to its *bearer*. (PI, §43a-b, original emphasis)

Notice that this section contains two sub-sections: §43a and §43b. The apparent identification of meaning as use occurs in the former, but that does not mean that the latter is unimportant to understanding Wittgenstein's intentions in this section. But I'll start out with §43a. The idea that (proper) names need a bearer in order to have a meaning was something that was scrutinised from §39 through to §42. Indeed,

§40 says that referring to the bearer of a name as its meaning reflects a misunderstanding of the workings of language. Sympathetic to this misunderstanding, however, Wittgenstein goes about trying to appreciate why one might nonetheless have been misled in this way in both §41 and §42.

What happens in §43, as Eike von Savigny explains, is that we are given a “therapeutical suggestion” directed at the cause of this misunderstanding, something which “loses its epigrammatic pep in paraphrase”. Per this suggestion, we are not to think of the bearer of a name as that name’s meaning simply because we can point out its meaning through pointing to its bearer. Rather, “[w]hat we explain, in such cases [e.g., when we point to the bearer of a name] is to whom to call that name, i.e, how to *use* the name in the language.” “But you would not,” von Savigny continues, “for this reason, mistake the name’s bearer for the name’s use; then why for the same reason mistake it for the name’s meaning?” (von Savigny 1990, 242, original emphasis) And once we realise the force of that final sentence, that it would, in fact, be a mistake to equate the bearer of a name with its meaning, we are freed from the fear that if the bearer of a name was to cease to exist then that name would no longer have a meaning.

Timothy Binkley’s reading would agree with von Savigny in that he too says that “if we are to understand §43 we need to see clearly what problems it relates to: we need to look at its context.” (Binkley 1971, 430) And so, he also places this remark amongst the discussion of proper names. But Binkley goes a step further by noticing that there is more to be said about Wittgenstein’s “method of treatment” in relation to whether he is giving a theory of meaning in this section. According to this method, “we would expect him to propose “reminders” or “descriptions” by way of setting out an escape route.” “But theories and definitions are neither reminders nor descriptions,” Binkley writes, “so we should expect to see §43 as something other than a definition.” (Binkley 1971, 430) There is a lot to break down here. Binkley is clearly drawing on Wittgenstein’s remark that “[t]he work of the philosopher consists in marshalling recollections for a particular purpose.” (PI, §127) But this idea of “descriptions” being integral to Wittgenstein’s method is something that we have yet to discuss.

I would suspend our consideration of this notion until the next chapter of this thesis; instead, all we need to concentrate on for the moment is the sense in which, to use Oskari Kuusela, what Wittgenstein is saying here is “problem-relative”. Kuusela is trying to highlight is the fact that “what is relevant for the solution of a problem depends on what the problem is” (Kuusela 2019, 146). The problem, as Stefan Gieseletter captures, is that “we are unwittingly hovering between two uses of ‘meaning (of a name)’.” (Gieseletter 2014, 78) In §43a, Wittgenstein is not offering an explanation of meaning in terms of its use in language á la some sort of theoretical definition, i.e., $A = B$. Rather, what he’s offering is an explanation of how we use the word “meaning” itself. (Just notice where the speech marks are placed in the section!) That explanation says that we explain the word “meaning” as in phrases such as “the meaning of a word” through explaining the use or role that that particular word plays in our language. As Donald Gustafson

articulates, this explanation “is “not a thesis about “the meaning of a word”; it is a reminder for a particular purpose of what we can and do do in some occasions in which we talk about the meaning of a word and explain what is the meaning of a word.” (Gustafson 1967, 255) And this reminder helps us recall that when we are pointing to the bearer of a name, we are explaining how that word is to be used, i.e., “Roland’ is the name of *this* person’, etc.

This shifting between the question “What is the meaning of a word?” and “What is an explanation of the meaning of a word?” can also be found in the beginning of the *Blue Book*. There, as if anticipating the kind of confusion that motivates the discussion of proper names in the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein writes that “[s]tudying the grammar of the expression “explanation of meaning” will teach you something about the grammar of the word “meaning” and will cure you of the temptation to look about you for some object which you might call “the meaning”.” (BBB, 1) This is advice that is repeated in numerous places throughout Wittgenstein’s writings. In *The Big Typescript*, for example, he says: “Let’s not ask what meaning is, but instead let’s examine what is called the “explanation of meaning”.” (BT, 29) Moreover, we find it much later on in the *Investigations* itself in that he says that “if you want to understand the use of the word “meaning”, look for what one calls “an explanation of meaning”. (PI, §560) And here’s the opening remark from a lecture that Wittgenstein gave in the Michaelmas term of 1934 in Cambridge which speaks to this, but also connects us back to the idea that what he is saying in §43a is only relevant to a particular philosophical problem:

The question has been raised how far my method is the same as what is called description of meaning by exemplification. That sounds as if I had invented a method, a means of giving a meaning which is *just as good as* definition. The point of examining the way a word is used is not at all to provide another method of giving its meaning. When we ask on what occasions people use a word, what they say about it, what they are right to substitute for it, and in reply try to describe its use, we do so only insofar as it seems helpful in getting rid of certain philosophical troubles. (AWL, 96-97, original emphasis)

The discussion of proper names was motivated by the fear that if the bearer of such a name was to cease to exist, then that word would become meaningless. Fearing this, one might be led to believe that names signify simples, and by this they mean something that cannot cease to exist. To unravel this confusion, Wittgenstein reminds us that we need to look at what happens if we were to explain the meaning of such a name. Prior to this explanation, we might have conceived of the meaning of that name as *being* the object that it names. But this was shown not to be the case since, although when we come to explain the meaning of a name we would point to the object that it names, the object itself is not its meaning, but it was the

fact that that name is *used* to refer to that object which determines its meaning. And Wittgenstein showed not only that this object can go out of existence without affecting the meaning of that name, such as in the event of Mr N.N.'s death, but that a name can have meaning without there ever being an object to which it refers, such as in the case of "X".

Once appropriately contextualised, §43a becomes relatively banal. "To say that the meaning of a word can sometimes be explained by describing how the word is used," Andrew Lugg sketches, "sometimes by pointing to an object, hardly adds up to a philosophical view, let alone a theory of meaning." (Lugg 2004, 83) Lugg would surely agree that to say that the meaning of a word can sometimes be explained by describing how the word is used is not Wittgenstein's attempt at answering the type of questions (i.e., in virtue of which fact does a word have the meaning that it has) that one encounters when giving a metasemantic or foundational theory of meaning. And saying that the meaning of a word can sometimes be explained by describing how the word is used is no less banal than the sorts of things that Augustine said in the passage from the *Confessions* that Wittgenstein quotes in the opening section of the *Investigations*. It's true that, as children, we come to learn the names of objects. If that same child was to try and explain to me what the meaning of one of the words that he was using consisted in, they would tell me that they use that word to refer to such-and-such an object. What, if anything, would be controversial about that explanation?

Perhaps one could say that this explanation doesn't hold for all words—this is the same kind of objection that Wittgenstein raised against Augustine's description of language-learning in that not every word refers to an object. But Wittgenstein notes an exception to his own explanation. And the details of this exception are made clear to us through understanding the relationship between §43a and §43b. What the argument in the previous sections of the text showed us was that proper names can be used in the absence of their bearers without a loss of meaning. Nonetheless, what Wittgenstein wants to say in §44 is that we can imagine a series of expressions which would undeniably be counted as proper names, and yet could only be used in the presence of their bearer.

Though Wittgenstein does not really give us an example of a language-game in which this is the case in the *Investigations*, we can find one in the origin manuscript of the text (cf. Ms 142, §42). Suppose that we are watching a screen on which there are three coloured dots that are moving around while also gradually changing their shape—say, from something vaguely square- like to something half-way triangular. Further suppose that we name these dots 'P', 'Q', and 'R'. With these names, we can describe the changes that occur to these dots as they move about. Moreover, the names of this language-game are effectively just synonyms for the demonstrative "this" familiar to us from the expanded builders' language introduced in §8. Such a demonstrative would normally be used in tandem with a pointing gesture, which in this case we would imagine as being directed at the screen. The thought is that, should one of the dots

vanish from the screen, then we can't say 'Q has disappeared' any more than we could say '*This* has disappeared'.

One might find this example thoroughly unconvincing, but the point is not how convincing this example actually is, but rather, what's important to consider is that Wittgenstein conceives of the possibility of such a language-game without seeing this conceptual possibility as undermining what he's saying in the *Investigations* (i.e., in §43a). Indeed, in *Zettel* he also conceives of the possibility of such a language-game, writing that "[t]here might be a use of signs made, such that they become useless (they are perhaps abolished) as soon as the bearer ceased to exist." He continues that "[i]n this language-game the name has the object on a string, so to speak; and if the object ceases to exist, the name, which has done its work in conjunction with the object, can be thrown away." (Z, §715)

Again, the conceptual possibility of such a language-game is not a problem *per se* for the account of proper names that was set out in the sections which precede §43b. Beth Savickey believes that "while we *may* acknowledge this picture [i.e., the explanation of the word "meaning" in §43a] of our way of thinking, Wittgenstein always leaves open the possibility of new and different responses." (Savickey 2012, 691, original emphasis) Daniel Whiting likewise writes that "it is clear that Wittgenstein held that for certain purposes the meaning of an expression could profitably be characterised as its use." (Whiting 2009, 114) But Whiting would also acknowledge that it is clear that Wittgenstein held that for certain other purposes the meaning of an expression could *not* profitably be characterised as its use. In those cases, as §43b suggests, the meaning of an expression would be "explained by pointing to its *bearer*." (PI, §43b, original emphasis) Thus, here's Dana Rubenstein's conclusion about the relationship between §43 and the discussion of proper names, something which matches the understanding that we have arrived at in this chapter:

Taken as a whole PI 43 is on the one hand a response to the problems raised by language-games PI 41 and PI 42 while at the same time leaving the door open to an alternative explanation of meaning for language-games such as the one proposed in PI 44. (Rubenstein 2019, 264)

What §43 is not, however, is an identification of meaning with use, nor is it a definition of meaning *as* use. Better yet, to use a phrase from Bruce Wavell, it is not a "straightforward philosophical theory of the nature of meaning" (cf. Wavell 1983, 253).

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter considered the extent to which Wittgenstein advocated for, whether positively or negatively, a use-theory of meaning through his immediate criticisms of Augustine. On the negative side of things, I considered his remarks on the way in which Augustine's description of language-learning imposed an artificial uniformity on the function of words. Wittgenstein sought to remind us that not all words name objects, nor are all of their meanings acquired in this way. Although this reminder emphasised the importance of use, it was not intended as the submission of use as a candidate for which fact about a word explains its meaning. Likewise, Wittgenstein's supposed identification of meaning as use towards the end of these criticisms was shown to be no such thing. Rather, it was a therapeutic suggestion directed at a particular philosophical confusion regarding the meaning of the word "meaning". Even then, the idea that the meaning of a word was its use in language was given an exception: sometimes it is beneficial to explain the meaning of a word simply by pointing to what it refers to. Based on what we have read so far, then, I would object to the claim that Wittgenstein advocated for a use-theory of meaning in his later philosophy of language within the *Investigations*.

Chapter Four

Description Alone

As a consequence of the results of the preceding chapters, someone not yet convinced by my arguments might respond by agreeing that the evidence for Wittgenstein's advocacy of a use-theory of meaning in the sections that we have discussed is relatively thin, though that does not mean that there isn't a much stronger source of evidence to be found elsewhere in the text. Or someone could submit to the claim that Wittgenstein does not advocate for a use-theory of meaning but protest that this does not mean that he does not advocate for a different theory of meaning, or indeed any theory whatsoever in the *Investigations*. These responses raise two important objections. The first of these objections concerns the limited range of sections that we have discussed, whereas the second is in regard to the similarly limited range of topics considered. It certainly seems as though Wittgenstein does not offer a theory of meaning in the sections that we have covered. But so what? After all, there are close to 700 sections to consider when talking about the *Investigations* as a text in its entirety, with the 20 or so that we have considered in any real detail representing nothing more than a fraction of that! It is possible that in what remains we can find either an actual defence of a use-theory of meaning or some other theory. And it's *prima facie* true that one cannot conclude from the fact that Wittgenstein did not offer a theory of meaning that he did not offer a theory of anything else so long as this conclusion is motivated solely by noticing the absence of the former.

Paul Feyerabend, in his detailed review of the *Investigations*, adds in a footnote that "I am inclined to say—and there is strong evidence in favour of this view—that Wittgenstein's theory of language can be understood as a constructivist theory of meaning, i.e., as constructivism applied not only to the meanings of mathematical expressions but to meanings in general." (Feyerabend 1955, 462, fn. 12) Like Feyerabend, Baker would at one time offer an interpretation of Wittgenstein as some kind of constructivist when it came to meaning. Baker writes that "[t]he correct account appears to be that Wittgenstein's later theory of meaning is a generalization of the semantics adumbrated in the Intuitionistic account of the sense of mathematical sentences." (Baker 1986, 250)

The reason that I mention Baker and Feyerabend here is that their readings, notwithstanding the latter's references to the builders' language, incorporate sections of the *Investigations* that lay well beyond the ones that we have managed to cover thus far in this thesis. For example, to support his reading, Feyerabend cites the following from what was then known as "Part II" of the *Investigations*, but has now

come to be seen as a separate work under the title, *Philosophy of Psychology – A Fragment*: “Let the use of words teach you their meanings. (Similarly one can often say in mathematics: let the *proof* teach you *what* was being proved.” (PFF, §303, original emphasis; quoted in Feyerabend 1955, 462, fn. 12)⁶ The same observation can be made about Baker’s reading; for he concentrates on Wittgenstein’s notion of “criteria”, something which doesn’t even appear until §51 and only receives a full treatment much later on in the text. Therefore, to placate both of the objections raised at the start of this chapter, we must read on.

Where, then, should we head next? It’s important to remember that both Baker and Feyerabend would come to see their attribution of a theory of meaning to the later Wittgenstein as erroneous. Already in his review, Feyerabend recognised Wittgenstein’s anti-theoretical streak. He states that “[Wittgenstein’s] position will be formulated as a philosophical theory, *T*, without implying that Wittgenstein intended to develop a philosophical theory (he did not).” (Feyerabend 1955, 449, original emphasis) How we can square this recognition with the comments discussed earlier, I am not entirely sure. Perhaps he saw Wittgenstein as making a number of potentially significant contributions to a theory of meaning similar to how, recalling the first chapter of this thesis, Schneider does. But in his autobiography, Feyerabend admits that he “knew that Wittgenstein did not present a theory (of knowledge, or language), and I did not expressly formulate a theory myself. But my arrangements [referring here to his review] made the [*Investigations*] speak like a theory and falsified Wittgenstein’s intentions.” (Feyerabend 1995, 93)

Rather than Feyerabend’s, I think we should look at Baker’s conversion. Alongside Hacker, he would maintain that “[Wittgenstein] does not offer us a ‘theory of language’, let alone a ‘theory of meaning for a natural language’ – ideas he would surely have repudiated.” (Baker and Hacker 2005a, 14) However, the early Baker already recognised precisely the kind of reading that I am wanting to defend in this chapter and the sorts of issues and sections that one would have to address in order to defend such a reading:

What then is the positive theory of meaning embodied in Wittgenstein’s later philosophy? One popular answer is ‘None’. His view it is alleged, is that philosophy should not construct theories at all; instead, it should be confined to bare description of the phenomena of language. (Baker 1986, 250)

In the previous chapter we saw Binkley mention the importance of description to Wittgenstein’s “method of treatment” regarding the confusions that we experience when doing philosophy. But how does this notion help us with respect to the question of whether Wittgenstein provided a theory of meaning in his

⁶ Given its original position as “Part II” of the *Investigations*, the version of the text that I am quoting from is printed together with the *Investigations*. Nonetheless, the *Fragment* is clearly presented as being a separate thing.

later philosophy of language? Because this interest in description is paired with a disinterest in explanation since explanation is aligned with the process of giving theories. That is, “[a]ll *explanation* must disappear, and description alone must take its place.” (PI, §109, original emphasis) If Wittgenstein deliberately refuses to engage in the explanation of language at one particular point in the *Investigations*, and by this we mean giving a theory of language or meaning, then why should we expect him to renege upon this commitment later in the text? Equally, if Wittgenstein refused to offer a theoretical explanation of meaning, then why should we hold out hope that he might have offered such an explanation as regards some other aspect of language? The answer is that we shouldn’t; hence, we need to come to terms with his preference for description.

The way that I suggest we come to terms with this preference is by drawing a throughline between three areas of the text: first, the discussion of simplicity borne out of the introduction of a passage from Plato’s *Theaetetus*; second, the remarks on logical analysis that follow this discussion; and third, the idea of there being an essence of language and how one might uncover such a thing. I will also make a comparison with the *Blue Book* in relation to the nature and solution of philosophical problems. All in all, the re-orientation in Wittgenstein’s later philosophy that we see in this chapter from a logical investigation towards a grammatical one speaks volumes; for a grammatical investigation concerns itself only with description, and descriptions are not theories.⁷

4.1. Simplicity

The *Confessions* is not the only text that Wittgenstein uses as a way to introduce or suggest a certain picture of language. The other is that of the *Theaetetus*. The *Theaetetus* is different from the *Confessions*, however, in that it is foremost a philosophical as opposed to an autobiographical (or theological) work. And what we see in the passage that Wittgenstein quotes is Socrates’ exploration of the role of what he calls “primary elements” in our language. The need for such an exploration being something that Wittgenstein sees as a potential response to the question of “What lies behind the idea that names really signify simples?” (PI,

⁷ A note on possible alternatives to the reading defended in this chapter. Another revealing distinction that Wittgenstein makes with respect to the nature of his later investigation is between philosophy and science: “It was correct that our considerations must not be scientific ones.” (PI, §109) Such a distinction is also to be found (in some form) within his earlier philosophy: “Philosophy is not one of the natural sciences. (The word ‘philosophy’ must mean something whose place is above or below the natural sciences, not beside them.)” (TLP, 4.111) For our purposes, I think the more useful comparison is between a logical and a grammatical investigation since both are distinct from a strictly scientific investigation (cf. PI, §81a). That doesn’t mean that Wittgenstein’s attitude towards science is unimportant, just that my discussion of Wittgenstein’s aversion to philosophical theorising won’t concentrate on his opposition towards the encroachment of the scientific method on philosophy (his ‘anti-scientism’). Jonathan Beale has a great paper on this aspect on Wittgenstein’s later philosophy (cf. Beale 2017; cf. also BBB, 18).

§46a) Recall that it was this idea that started the discussion of proper names examined in the previous chapter (cf. PI, §39ff.). Moreover, Wittgenstein explicitly proposes to deal with Socrates' conception in much the same way that he dealt with Augustine; namely, by “apply[ing] the method of §2” (PI, §48a) What does he mean by this? According to Stern, this method is comprised of three main “stages”, which can be represented as below (cf. Stern 2004, 10ff.):

(Stage 1) We are provided with a brief statement of a specific position that Wittgenstein wants to oppose.

Normally, this position is identified through a sustained albeit not always entirely obvious engagement with another ‘voice’, to use Stern’s terminology. Stern has argued that “Wittgenstein’s opening [here referring to §1] is best understood as raising questions and introducing us to a number of voices in the discussion that follows.” (Stern 2004, 72) The Augustine of §1a is one such voice, the “Wittgenstein” of §1b—if that is indeed who is supposed to be speaking at that moment—is another. Add to this list the Socrates of the *Theaetetus*, and so on.⁸ The two remaining stages that Stern describes are:

(Stage 2) Proceeding his statement of a specific position, Wittgenstein gives us a description of a precise set of circumstances, usually a language-game, in which the aforementioned position seems appropriate.

(Stage 3) This description is then followed by the recognition of the limitations inherent to these circumstances and how this influences our understanding.

The limitations observed in (Stage 3) are often seen as something that we ought to move past because once we do so, the position that we have been considering in (Stage 1) and (Stage 2) will suddenly strike us as one that is ultimately inappropriate or unnecessarily restrictive. It is important to note, however, that

⁸ Alois Pichler has also offered a reading which runs parallel to Stern’s through an equal emphasis on the idea that there are multiple voices in the text (cf. Pichler 2004). Stern and Pichler are not the only commentators to have highlighted the importance of this notion. A more traditional case can be found in Stanley Cavell with his idea of a “voice of temptation” and a “voice of correctness” being locked in a constant struggle for the reader’s attention (cf. Cavell 1962). If possible, I intend to remain neutral to the idea of whether the *Investigations* was a dialogue or polyphony. This neutrality may be perceived as naïve; for in shutting out the voices of the text I am acting as though they were not really there. I have no real response to this objection other than to say that this is something which should be discussed as a potential continuation to this present project.

the course of Wittgenstein's argument per "the method of §2" is not always linear. Consider how we see it be applied at the beginning of the text. The particular position that Wittgenstein is interested in there holds that all of the words of our language name objects. This position is extracted from Augustine's words in §1a and then given expression in §1b. Hence, taken together, §1a and §1b represent (Stage 1). But §1c and §1d already recognise the limitations of this position; especially with the latter's setting out of the shopkeeper example. That example, as the previous chapter of this thesis stressed, was intended to show that there is not a uniformity to our use of words, i.e., all words are not used to name objects. Thus Wittgenstein's argument moves straight from (Stage 1) to (Stage 3). We are only given (Stage 2) in the next section of the text with the introduction of the builders' language, something "for which the description given by Augustine is right" (PI, §2b). À la (Stage 3), §3 reminds us that "not everything that we call language is this system." (PI, §3a)

How, then, does Wittgenstein interact with the *Theaetetus*? As the question that opens §46 would suggest, the position that he is interested in is the belief that names ought to signify simples. Though this position is introduced to us through Socrates' words, and I say 'introduced' as opposed to 'extracted' due to the philosophical nature of the *Theaetetus* in contrast to the non-philosophical nature of Augustine's words from the *Confessions*, Socrates' need for "primary elements" in his account of language is equated with both Russell's and (the earlier) Wittgenstein's own need for similar elements in their account (PI, §46c). Because of this, it is not uncommon to interpret Wittgenstein's reason for including this passage from the *Theaetetus* being that it espouses a form of logical atomism not too dissimilar from that of Russell or the *Tractatus*. That is, to use Timothy Chappell, Wittgenstein includes the *Theaetetus* because it espouses "a theory which founds an account of propositional structure on an account of the concatenation of simple objects of experience or acquittance" (Chappell 2004, 208). To flesh out what Chappell is saying, here's how Gilbert Ryle describes this atomistic way of looking at language in connection with the figures mentioned:

So a sentence, being built up out of two or more words, signifies apparently some sort of complex or molecule of the atomic objects named by these words. Where there is a statement, true or false, there we have some sort of combination of simple nameables corresponding to the combination of words that is the sentence. (Ryle 1990, 30)

If we were to place what Ryle is saying in the above alongside the passage from the *Theaetetus* that Wittgenstein quotes in the *Investigations*, the resemblance between them becomes clear:

If I am not mistaken, I have heard some people say this: there is no explanation of the *primary elements* – so to speak – out of which we and everything else are composed; for everything that exists in and of itself can be *signified* only by names; no other determination is possible, either that it *is* or that it *is not* ... But what exists in and of itself has to be ... named without any other determination. In consequence, it is impossible to give an explanatory account of any primary element, since for it, there is nothing other than mere naming; after all, its name is all it has. But just as what is composed of the primary elements is itself an interwoven structure, so the correspondingly interwoven names become explanatory language; for the essence of the latter is the interweaving of names. (PI, §46b, original emphasis; cf. *Theaetetus* 202a-b)

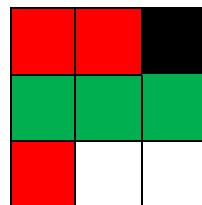
Not only that, but should we then place this passage alongside certain propositions from the *Tractatus*, the idea that they both promote some form of logical atomism, or an atomistic way of looking at language, strikes us as thoroughly plausible:

Every statement about complexes can be resolved into a statement about their constituents and into the propositions that describe the complexes completely. (TLP, 2.0201)

The configuration of objects in a situation corresponds to the configuration of simple signs in the propositional sign. (TLP, 3.21)

Now that we have (Stage 1), onto (Stage 2). In §48, Wittgenstein imagines a language that serves the purpose of representing various possible combinations of coloured squares on a surface that vaguely resembles a chessboard. Given that there are red, green, white, and black squares, the words of the language will correspond to these colours, e.g., “R” stands for red, “G” for green, and so on. We can use these words to describe a particular arrangement of these squares. The example arrangement that we see in the *Investigations* represents the sentence “RRBGGGRWW”:

R	R	B
G	G	G
R	W	W



The sentence “RRBGGGRWW” is a sentence which is made of a complex of names in that the individual words of this sentence (e.g., “R”) are the names of the differently coloured squares. Moreover, at least in the context of this particular language, these coloured squares might naturally assume the role of the “primary elements” that Socrates described in the *Theaetetus*. But the question remains as to whether these coloured squares are actually *simple*. Again, at least in the context of this language, it certainly seems as much. “But under other circumstances,” Wittgenstein reflects, “I’d call a monochrome square, consisting perhaps of two rectangles or of the elements colour and shape, “composite”.” (PI, §48c) Let’s try to visually represent what Wittgenstein is saying in this reflection since I think that would be the most helpful way to understand the point that he is making. Here’s two figures:



Is the figure on the left, which is indicative of the monochromatic square that Wittgenstein describes, simple? In a sense, no; because it is made up of something else, namely the two rectangles. It seems simpler than the represented arrangement of coloured squares for it lacks the various colours that were seen there. The triangle on the right also lacks colour, and yet it is perhaps even simpler than the square on the left since it is only made up of one shape. But Wittgenstein would insist that there are even circumstances under which we would be led to call that same triangle “composite” or “complex”. Suppose that someone was to (rightly) say that the triangle was made up of three, straight lines, each being of so-and-so a length. These lines would supplant the triangle as what is simple in this case. Leading us to the conclusion that both simple and complex are attributive adjectives. Therefore, the answer to the question ‘Is A simple or complex’, with ‘A’ being the name of any of the arrangements or shapes shown above, will depend on what standard of simplicity or complexity we are using in that instance. The following remark encapsulates Wittgenstein’s argument against absolutist understandings of these standards:

If I tell someone without any further explanation, “What I see before me now is composite”, he will legitimately ask, “What do you mean by ‘composite’? For there are all sorts of things it may mean!” – The question “Is what you see composite?” makes good sense if it is already established what kind of compositeness – that is, which particular use of this word – is in question. If it had been laid down that the visual image of the tree was to be called “composite” if one saw not just a trunk, but also branches, then the question “Is the visual image of this tree simple or

composite?” and the question “What are its simple constituent parts?” would have a clear sense – a clear use. (PI, §47c)

But how does this remark combat the idea that names really signify simples? Because, as we saw with the fear that the meaning of a proper name disappears once the object that it refers to is destroyed, that idea depends on an absolute notion of simplicity. Wittgenstein has shown that such a notion is thoroughly confused; for what we call ‘simple’ and ‘complex’ is determined by the ways in which we use words in particular contexts. What is simple in one context is complex in another without there being any actual change to what that thing is. If I was to show someone the image of a tree and ask them whether that image was complex, they would surely feel compelled to answer positively. Perhaps they would point out that the tree has a trunk, a number of branches, and so on while arguing that these features serve as the simple constituent parts of the complex visual image of the tree. But if I was to show them a zoomed in image of just one of the branches on the tree, asking them the same question as to whether the image that they were seeing was complex, they would again surely answer positively, citing the fact that a branch is made up of stems, twigs, and leaves. Again, what has led to the change in attribution of simplicity does not have anything to do with the branch itself, but rather, with the context surrounding it: a branch is simple in relation to the tree of which it is a part, but it is complex with respect to the various things that make it up.

4.2. Analysis

What does the discussion of simplicity have to do with the goals of this chapter? A little later in the text, in §60, Wittgenstein probes at the idea of logical analysis. This probing is informed by the discussion of simplicity set out in the previous sub-section. As Jason Bridges expresses, Wittgenstein “encourages us to recognize the relativity to interest and topic of our application of the concepts of “simple” and “complex”, and to reflect on the implications of this fact for the nature of the understanding we can achieve by “analysis” [...] of language into “simple” or “primary” elements.” (Bridges 2017, 139) Notice that in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein writes that it was “obvious that the analysis of propositions must bring us to elementary propositions which consist of names in immediate combination.” (TLP, 4.221) Another telling statement was his claim that “we do not infer the existence of simple objects from the existence of particular simple objects, but rather we know them—by description, as it were—as the end product of analysis, by means of a process that leads to them” (NB, 50). He also offers a remarkably clear reflection on this aspect

of his earlier philosophy in an attempted German translation of the *Brown Book*, otherwise known as “Eine philosophische Betrachtung”:

Think of Russell’s notion of an ‘individual’ or mine of ‘objects’ and their ‘names’ (*Tractatus Log.—Phil.*); these objects were supposed to be the fundamental constituents of reality; something that could not be said to exist or not to exist. (*Theaetetus*) What these elements of reality are it seemed difficult to say. I thought it was the job of further logical analysis to discover them. (EPB, 121)⁹

What Wittgenstein is hinting at is that he did not give examples of simple objects in his earlier philosophy. As Malcolm records, “at that time his thought had been that he was a *logician*; and it was not his business, as a logician, to try to decide whether this thing or that was a simple thing or a complex thing, that being a purely *empirical* matter!” (Malcolm 2001, 70, original emphasis) Burnyeat is on the same page as Malcolm. “Like Socrates’ dream [here referring to the passage from the *Theaetetus* that is quoted in the *Investigations*], the *Tractatus* gives no examples of simple objects but is totally confident that we would reach them at the end of a completed analysis.” (Burnyeat 1990, 150) But Burnyeat highlights a vital contrast between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* in that the discussion of simple objects in the latter “is illustrated with examples of all these kinds: bits of wood, molecules, atoms, coloured squares, segments of curves, colours, types of letter.” “But this by way of repudiating,” he continues, “not elucidating, what he meant in the *Tractatus*.” (Burnyeat 1990, 150, fn. 20) Malcolm too writes that “it was clear that [Wittgenstein] regarded his former opinion [about not being required to provide examples of simple objects] as absurd.” (Malcolm 2001, 70)

How does this change in attitude towards simple objects from his earlier to his later philosophy relate to what he is now saying about logical analysis? Wittgenstein considers a statement like “My broom is in the corner”, and imagines a further analysed version of this statement which gives the position of the stick and the brush as opposed to *just* the broom. But why do we refer to the latter statement as a further analysed version of the former? Because, Wittgenstein explains, “if the broom is there, that surely means that the stick and brush must be there, and in a particular relation one another; and previous this was, as it were, hidden in the sense of the first sentence, and is *articulated* in the analysed sentence.” (PI, §60, original emphasis) Against this thought, Wittgenstein counters as follows:

⁹ Note that I am using Ian Proops’ English translation of this passage from the original German (cf. Proops 2001, 394).

Then does someone who says that the broom is in the corner really mean: the broomstick is there, and so is the brush, and the broomstick is fixed in the brush? – If we were to ask anyone if he meant this, he would probably say that he had not specially thought of either the broomstick or the brush. And that would be the *right* answer, for he did not mean to speak either of the stick or of the brush in particular. (PI, §60, original emphasis)

The analysed form of a sentence does not make it explicit just what it was that a speaker who uses the unanalysed form of the sentence meant when using it. Rhetorically, Wittgenstein imagines that someone would respond to another asking them to “Bring me the broomstick and the brush which is fitted on it!” by saying “Do you want the broom, if so why did you put it so oddly?” (cf. PI, §60) He further illustrates the oddity of this request with an example that recalls §15’s language-game of A and B using tools that have been assigned names through the marks that were placed on them. If A wants B to bring him a particular tool, all he has to do is call out the mark that he remembers was placed on that tool.

But in §60, Wittgenstein imagines a new game that has a similar purpose; namely, to have someone bring a particular object to someone else, but he foresees two ways in which this game could be played. These are:

- a. The objects of the game, which are complex (i.e., they are made up of a number of parts deemed to be more simple than the object itself in the context of the game, with the hammer, for example, being made up of a head and a rod), have names.

OR

- b. The parts themselves, as opposed to the objects which they make up, are given names such that these objects are described by calling out the names of their parts (e.g., a broom in this game would be called out by shouting “brush” or “broomstick”, etc.).

Should an order in (b.) be seen as the analysed form of a similar order in (a.)? Wittgenstein is quick to say that an order in (a.) would have the same sense as one in (b.), irrespective of whether someone was following the rules of (a.) or (b.), should the one responding to that order bring the other person the same object. If someone was commanded to bring all of the parts of a broom in their entirety, they would retrieve the same thing as the person who was simply commanded to bring a broom. “To say, however, that a sentence in (b.) is an ‘analysed’ form of one in (a.) readily seduces us into thinking that the former is the more fundamental form,” Wittgenstein warns, “that it alone shows what is meant by the other, and so on.” (PI, §63) Further to this, §64 imagines an alteration of the language-game that we saw in §48. This

time, the words used in the language signify rectangles as opposed to individually coloured squares. Indeed, he imagines that the words (e.g., “U” or “V”) of such a language could be used to represent something like the following arrangement:



In response to the question of whether the language-game in §64 can be replaced by that of §48 through sufficient analysis, Wittgenstein asserts that “[i]t is just a *different* language-game; even though it is related.” (PI, §64b, original emphasis) That is, if we were to ask whether by “V” someone has really meant “GW”, their response would be: ‘No, I wasn’t thinking about these colours individually, but rather, in combination with one another.’ Indeed, Wittgenstein uses the example of the French tricolour as an instance of when we are not thinking about three individual colours, but the “special character” that these colours have once they are arranged in such-and-such a way (cf. PI, §64a). We could imagine someone asking their friend: ‘Are you thinking about the colours blue, white, and red?’ And their response would be: ‘No, I’m thinking about the flag of France!’ Thus, as William Child neatly summarises, “the meaning of an ordinary proposition is not something that needs to be revealed by analysing the proposition into elementary propositions at some lower level.” (Child 2011, 81) And Child’s summary applies not to the position of the earlier Wittgenstein but that of the later.

4.3. Essence

The significance of the discussion of analysis to our question of whether Wittgenstein provided a theory of meaning in his later philosophy of language is revealed to us in §65. In the sections prior, Wittgenstein dismissed two, related answers to the question of what it was that constituted the essence of language—that was the “great question that lies behind all these considerations” (PI, §65a). First, there was the suggestion extracted from reading Augustine that the essence of words was to name objects. And second, there was Socrates’ insistence upon “primary elements”, or what the earlier Wittgenstein would have called simple objects. These objects would be discovered through analysis, by breaking down what is complex into that which is simple or elementary. Wittgenstein dismissed the first of these answers by showing that there was more to words than their ability to name objects. After all, there are words which continue to have a meaning even once their referent has been destroyed, and there are words which never possessed a referent but are still meaningful. In the sub-section preceding this one, we discussed how it would be a

mistake to believe that the analysed form of a sentence was somehow more fundamental than its unanalysed counterpart. Not only that, but what we call simple is a matter of context since there is no absolute standard of simplicity such that it is a question of what something is simple *in relation* to, i.e., in relation to other objects, to the situation that it appears in, etc.

In dismissing both of these answers as to the question of what constitutes the essence of language, one might naturally expect Wittgenstein to supply his own. But, as we shall see, this is an expectation that he proceeds to defy. The reason why one might have expected him to give an answer to this question is that, as Wittgenstein himself notes, it was something that preoccupied him to a large extent in his earlier philosophy. His answer there was given by reference to the idea that there was such a thing as a “general propositional form” with this form being “the essence of a proposition” (TLP, 5.471). If language was to be conceived of as having consisted of the totality of propositions, with these propositions being generated from ones that are more elementary, then we can ignore not only the differences between individual languages (e.g., English, German, etc.), but also the distinct areas of one particular language since *all* language is thought to have the exact same essence; namely, that general form.

Moreover, Wittgenstein’s answer of pointing to the general form of propositions in response to the question as to what constitutes the essence of language is explicitly referred to in the *Investigations*, as his imagined interlocutor scolds him, saying that “you let yourself off the very part of the investigation that once gave you the most headache, the part about the *general form of the proposition* and of language.” (PI, §65b, original emphasis) Again, Wittgenstein does not meet this objection by supplying a new answer, but by rebuking the question. “Instead of pointing out something common to all that we call language,” he responds, “I’m saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common in virtue of which we use the same word for all – but there are many different kinds of *affinity* between them” (PI, 65b, original emphasis). Wittgenstein proceeds to describe these affinities in terms of their being akin to “family resemblances”: “I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than “family resemblances”; for the various resemblances between members of a family – build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, and so on and so forth – overlap and criss-cross in the same way.” (PI, §67a) The notion of family resemblances doesn’t feature in the arguments that I make in this chapter since such a notion is more connected with the positive side of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy of language, whereas I am just concentrating on how he accounts for the absence of a theory of meaning from said philosophy.

Wittgenstein contrasts his own *grammatical* investigation with the kind of logical investigation that he carried out in his earlier philosophy. Recounting the latter, he says that a “logical investigation explores the essence of all things” such that it “seeks to see the foundation of all things, and shouldn’t concern itself whether things actually happen in this or that way.” (PI, §89b) Here’s an example proposition from the *Tractatus* in which this disregard for whether things really happen in so-and-so a way is made clear:

A particular mode of signifying may be unimportant but it is always important that it is a *possible* mode of signifying. And that is generally so in philosophy: again and again the individual case turns out to be unimportant but the possibility of each individual case discloses something about the essence of the world. (TLP, 3.3421, original emphasis)

But the position of the *Investigations* on the importance of these details is the complete opposite to that of the *Tractatus*: “[w]hen philosophers use a word – ‘knowledge’, ‘being’, ‘object’, ‘I’, ‘proposition/sentence’, ‘name’ – and try to grasp the *essence* of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language in which it is at home?” (PI, §116a, original emphasis) And the reason that the earlier Wittgenstein was not concerned with this is that he wasn’t interested in what was incidental to a thing, what was merely on the surface. Rather, he wanted to find what was essential, and what was essential was thought to be hidden, only to be revealed via logical analysis. Consider the following two sections from the *Investigations*, the first offering another summary of his previous attitude, and the second being a statement of his new position:

[A logical investigation] sees the essence of things not as something that already lies open to view, but as something that lies *beneath* the surface. Something that lies within, which we perceive when we see *right into* the thing, and which an analysis is supposed to unearth. (PI, §92a, original emphasis)

...it is rather, essential, to our [grammatical] investigation that we do not seek to learn anything *new* by it. We want to *understand* something that is already in plain view. For *this* is what we seem in some sense not to understand. (PI, §89b, original emphasis)

To bring everything from the previous sub-section and this one together, Wittgenstein admits in *Philosophical Grammar* that “[m]y notion [of logical analysis] in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* was wrong: 1) because I wasn’t clear about the sense of words ‘a logical product is *hidden* in a sentence’ (and such like), 2) because I thought that logical analysis had to bring to light what was hidden (as chemical and physical analysis does).” (PG, 210, original emphasis) We saw this confusion regarding the sense in which “a logical product” is hidden in a sentence manifest in the temptation to think that an analysed form of a sentence is more fundamental than its unanalysed counterpart, as if the meaning of the latter is *revealed* only once we have acquired the former. What’s more, David Pears has a great line on the idea of confusing logical with chemical or physical analysis in this way. Pears submits that “observation establishes that gases expand

when they are heated, but the explanation of this result comes from a deeper level: gases are composed of particulates which requires more space when heat puts them in rapid motion.” He continues that “Wittgenstein’s point is that philosophy does not operate in anything like that way.” (Pears 1988, 202-203) Philosophy does not operate in this way because its explanations, if they can even be called that, do not come from a deeper level, but from what we can already see. And so, they are really *just* descriptions.

4.4. Hertz in the *Blue Book*

Wittgenstein’s new, grammatical investigation does not call for the discovery of previously unknown facts; or rather, the kind of facts that are supposedly relevant to his investigation are ones that simply cannot be discovered by experimentation, analysis, or the construction of theories; for these facts are already out there, existing in plain view waiting for someone to be observant enough to take notice of them. David Gruender insists that “[w]e *describe*, then, because we are not interested in empirical scientific questions to which explanations in the form of hypothesis about causes are relevant, for these are not philosophical questions. [...] Because mistakes about the uses of language are the source of our puzzlement” (Gruender 1962, 526, original emphasis). That Gruender is correct in his understanding of Wittgenstein’s attitude towards philosophical problems or questions can be seen in the below:

[Philosophical problems are] not empirical problems; but they are solved through an insight into the workings of our language, and that in such a way these workings are recognized – *despite* an urge to misunderstand them. The problems are solved, not by coming up with new discoveries, but by assembling what we have long been familiar with. (PI, §109, original emphasis)¹⁰

Nonetheless, I want to say a little bit more about Wittgenstein’s conception of philosophical problems and how one ought to approach them according to him. Doing so will enable us to tie together many of the themes discussed in this thesis. And so, consider the fact that, in §89c, Wittgenstein introduces a further passage from Augustine’s *Confessions* that, I think, really speaks to this re-orientation of interest as it concerns language mentioned in the previous sub-section. The passage is different from the one that is found in the

¹⁰ Here’s a similar remark to §109 in that it makes clear Wittgenstein’s aversion to philosophical theorising by separating description out from explanation: “Philosophy just puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything. – Since everything lies open to view, there is nothing to explain. For whatever may be hidden is of no interest to us. The name “philosophy” might also be given to what is possible *before* all new discoveries and inventions.” (PI, §126a-b, original emphasis)

opening section of the *Investigations*, though it has already been featured elsewhere in his writings; specifically, in the *Blue Book*. Here's how he introduces the problem found in this second passage there:

Consider as an example the question “What is time?” as Saint Augustine and others have asked it. At first sight what this question asks for is a definition, but then immediately the question arises: “What should we gain by a definition, as it can only lead us to other undefined terms?” (BBB, 26; cf. Augustine 1961, XI.14)

The first question—that is, “What is time?”—is something that we believe can be satisfied by a definition. More precisely, a definition of the meaning of the word ‘time’. In providing an answer—say, ‘time is the motion of the celestial bodies’—we are striving to elucidate the meaning of the word ‘time’. But such an elucidation, in order to be effective in its aim, requires that we also make clear the meaning of similarly undefined terms, which is indicated by the second question that appears in the above. Consider that example answer, what do we mean by the words ‘motion’ or ‘celestial bodies’? Therefore, in providing what at first seemed like a relatively straightforward answer to a question of the form ‘What is X?’ by saying that ‘X is a Y’, we have done nothing more than buy ourselves some time; for this manoeuvre invites a further question: ‘What is a Y?’ As Wittgenstein remarks, “[w]e mistakenly think that a definition is that what will remove the trouble (as in certain states of indigestion we feel a kind of hunger which cannot be removed by eating.)” (BBB, 27) How, then, are we to actually go about clearing away our confusions surrounding the meaning of the word ‘time’ if definitions are not going to be of much help to us?

Observe how Wittgenstein carefully describes what he believes to be the cause of Augustine’s confusion. He sees him as being caught up in the grips of the following question: “How is it possible that one should measure time?” “For the past can’t be measured,” he continues, “as it is gone by; and the future can’t be measured because it has not yet come.” (BBB, 26) And the way out “consist[s] in comparing what we mean by “measurement” (the grammar of the word “measurement”) when applied to a distance on a travelling band with the grammar of that word when applied to time.” (BBB, 26) Thus, Augustine’s confusion as to the meaning of the word ‘time’ can be resolved should he be reminded of the ways in which we use the word ‘time’ in phrases like ‘to measure time’; especially in contrast to its appearance in phrases like ‘to measure the length of a line’.

But this kind of resolution is something with which we should already be intimately familiar given the contents of this thesis. What I mean is that Wittgenstein used the example of the shopkeeper to remind someone caught up in the picture that was extracted from Augustine’s words that there are ways in which

we use words other than as things to name objects with. Likewise, he demonstrated that the notion of simplicity and complexity depend upon the contexts in which they are used. And the exact same could be said for Mr N.N. in the discussion of proper names. In each case, Wittgenstein went about describing the details of particular cases (e.g., the aforementioned shopkeeper example, the builders' language, the arrangement of coloured squares, etc.) in which language was being used, and these details were precisely the important thing to consider as opposed to thinking about *why* or indeed *how* language worked in this way.

Furthermore, notice that this section of the *Blue Book* contains an allusion to Heinrich Hertz (cf. BBB, 26). In *The Principles of Mechanics*, Hertz mentions how, at least in the context of physics, the nature of force—represented by questions of the form ‘What is force?’—is something that has been surrounded by a degree of mystery and interest. He observes that the same sort of ‘What is...?’-questions concerning other topics such as the nature of velocity (i.e., ‘What is velocity?’) never seem to garner a similar level of attention. The Wittgenstein of the *Blue Book* also finds the disparity of interest between certain ‘What is...?’-questions strange: “And why should one be puzzled just by the lack of a definition of time, and not by the lack of a definition of ‘chair’?” (BBB, 26) Now, Wittgenstein does not explicitly answer this question, but this is a void that I would suggest the allusion to Hertz is supposed to fill.¹¹ Here’s an illuminating passage to consider:

With the terms “velocity” and “gold” we connect a large number of relations to other terms; and between all these relations we find no contradictions which offend us. We are therefore satisfied and ask no further questions. But we have accumulated around the terms “force” and “electricity” more relations than can be completely reconciled amongst themselves. We have an obscure feeling of this and want to have things cleared up. Our confused wish finds expression in the confused question as to the nature of force and electricity. (Hertz 1899, 7-8)

We speak, for example, of there being such a thing as ‘terminal velocity’, and here we are speaking about the maximum speed that an object can reach when falling. The connection made between ‘terminal’ and ‘velocity’, there, doesn’t offend us, to use Hertz’s words, because we can very easily imagine what it would mean for something to not be able to travel any faster than it already is without some additional assistance from elsewhere. But there are cases in which contradictions in our use arise. Consider the term ‘force’.

¹¹ Another interesting allusion to Hertz can be found in *The Big Typescript*: “A philosophical problem always has the form: “I simply don’t know my way about.” As I do philosophy, its entire task is to shape expression in such a way that certain worries disappear. ((Hertz.))” (BT, 310) Excluding the reference to Hertz, the first part of this quotation is repeated almost word-for-word in the *Investigations* (cf. PI, §123).

We could speak of force in the sense of it being something physical, e.g., the kind of gravitational force that objects with mass readily experience. But there is also a non-physical sense in which we can speak about ‘force’. We could talk about a set of dark, political forces that are at play within a certain government deemed to be corrupt; or we could talk about the sort of internal forces (e.g., our emotions, responsibilities, etc.) that motivate us to do something that perhaps we don’t want to do. Contradictions arise, however, when we attempt to impose one use of the word ‘force’ onto the other, i.e., the physical onto the non-physical, and vice versa. Here’s a further quote from Hertz on this, which I shall include alongside a passage from the *Investigations* that is remarkably similar in spirit:

...the answer which we want is not really an answer to this question [e.g., ‘What is force?']. It is not by finding out more and fresh relations and connections that it can be answered; but by removing the contradictions existing between those already known, and thus perhaps by reducing their number. When these painful contradictions are removed, the question as to the nature of force will not have been answered; but our minds, no longer vexed, will cease to ask illegitimate questions. (Hertz 1899, 8)

A main source of our failure to understand is that we don’t have *an overview* of the use of our words. – Our grammar is deficient in surveyability. A surveyable representation produces precisely that kind of understanding which consists in ‘seeing connections’. Hence the importance of finding and inventing *intermediate links*. (PI, §122a, original emphasis)

Relying on Allan Janik for a moment, we can say that Hertz wanted to show that “alternative modes of presentation of the principles of mechanics could eliminate the difficulties surrounding such problematic notions as “force” in mechanics that tormented scientists and philosophers alike” (Janik 2001, 148). By emphasising these “alternative modes of presentation”, Hertz is not saying that in order to understand what we mean by ‘force’ in the physical sense and in the non-physical sense of the word we need to find some underlying factor between the two. Rather, we can remove the contradictions that exist between these senses by observing that in each case we simply use the word differently. Despite these differences, however, there are still some important connections that exist between them that should be recognised—this is no less a part of our coming to understand the grammar of a particular term. The mistake, as mentioned, is to suppose that ‘force’ is used in the same way in every situation. Moreover, Augustine makes the same mistake regarding the word “measure” as the physicist does with the word ‘force’ since his confusions concerning time are engendered by the fact that he cannot conceive how we would go

about measuring time in the same way that we measure the length of a line, and this inconceivability is due to our “fascination with the analogy between two similar structures in our language” (BBB, 26). Or, as Wittgenstein would later write, these are “[m]isunderstandings concerning the use of words, brought about, among other things, by certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of our language.” (PI, §90b)

Though the passage from the *Confessions* regarding the question ‘What is time?’ doesn’t receive much attention in the *Investigations*, nor is Hertz mentioned when it is introduced, I think that we can plug the understanding that we achieved from considering the remarks that Wittgenstein makes on this question in the *Blue Book* into the picture that we have been painting in the preceding sub-sections of this chapter so as to better appreciate the intricacies of Wittgenstein’s conception of philosophical problems. Indeed, I think that Wittgenstein’s referring back to this passage acts as an invitation for us to do so. Thus, here’s a short statement of what, as far as I see it, this conception means more broadly for his later philosophy of language. Wittgenstein’s method of dealing with Augustine’s question mirrors that of Hertz’ approach to the question ‘What is force?’ in *The Principles of Mechanics*. According to this method, we do not provide an answer to the ‘What is...?’-question that is responsible for our confusion, but rather, we remove the temptation to ask such questions by describing the various ways in which certain, problematic terms are used so as to resolve the contradictions that arise out of our mixing up the different senses of these terms. But this method is fundamentally incompatible with the provision of a theory of meaning because such theories are, at their core, attempts at answering a ‘What-is...?’-question regarding meaning, i.e., ‘What is meaning?’ And the compability of this method with theories of meaning isn’t salvaged should we pivot away from asking simple ‘What-is...?’-questions about meaning to asking, as foundational or metasemantic theories would have us do, in virtue of which fact does a word have the meaning that it has.

4.5. Conclusion

In sum, the reading that this chapter defended demonstrated that Wittgenstein once believed in his earlier philosophy that in order to uncover the essence of language, one must look beneath the surface, lifting the veil that sits over language by means of logical analysis. If we were just able to drill deep enough, then we would be able to uncover that which is common to language, propositions, meaning, and so on such that we could explain both the function and structure of these features. Not only does the Wittgenstein of the *Investigations* refuse to answer the question as to what constitutes the essence of language, but he insists that what is interesting to us is already open to view, it is not hidden, and requires no drilling to be uncovered. This change in interest is reflected in a re-orientation away from a logical investigation into language towards a grammatical one. Since there is nothing hidden, there is nothing to be explained, but

only described. It is this preference for description over explanation that confirms the reasons for the absence of a theory of meaning from Wittgenstein's later philosophy of language; for a theory of meaning is intended to serve as part of an explanation of a certain aspect of language, but Wittgenstein has no such explanatory intentions; hence, there is no theory of meaning to be found in his words.

Chapter Five

Concluding Remarks

What I want to do in these concluding remarks is to give a brief play-by-play of what the individual chapters of this thesis attempted to show and how they each contributed to our attempt to answer the question of whether Wittgenstein provided a theory of meaning in his later philosophy of language within the *Investigations*. The first of these chapters concentrated on a particular, theoretical reading of Augustine's inclusion in the opening section of the text. According to this reading, such an inclusion was intended to set out a specific theory of meaning, one which belonged to Augustine himself. This theory was construed as a form of referentialism—that is, the belief that the meaning of a word is the object for which it stands. I tried to push back against not only commentators who interpreted Augustine as advocating for such a theory, but also those who maintained that Wittgenstein shared in this interpretation. My central argument was that the referentialist semantics which we are given in the opening section of the *Investigations* was not contained directly in Augustine's words, but rather, it was extracted from them by Wittgenstein. This argument placed me in line with a number of authors such as the Baker and Hacker of their commentaries on the *Investigations*, Luntley, and Oehl. Indeed, it was Oehl's reading in particular that I proceeded to champion for the majority of the discussion in this first chapter. Thus, my conclusion was that Wittgenstein's target was not a specific theory of meaning, but a way of misreading Augustine's words, with this misreading being responsible for a series of philosophical confusions.

The next chapter of this thesis considered the extent to which Wittgenstein defended a use-theory of meaning—that is, the view that the meaning of a word is its use in language—through his immediate criticisms of Augustine. I argued that although these criticisms do bring use to the forefront of our considerations about language, all the while petitioning us to rely less-and-less on the relationship between name and object, this does not mean that it was Wittgenstein's intention to simply identify meaning with use. This was no more apparent than in the discussion of proper names. There, Wittgenstein reminds us that when we come to explain the meaning of the word 'meaning', which is not to be confused with the task of explaining word-meaning in-and-of-itself, we often find ourselves explaining how it is that we use that word in our language. This reminder about the meaning of the word 'meaning' comes with a clear caveat. It's true that sometimes, rather than explaining how we use that word, it would be better to merely point to the object that a word names when explaining its meaning. But the conceivability of cases in

which this is true doesn't undermine what Wittgenstein is saying in the *Investigations*. In fact, it reveals that his remarks are problem-relative. He is not giving a general definition or theory of meaning, nor is he talking about word-meaning *simpliciter*; instead, he's considering one of the possible meanings of the word "meaning". And the point of this consideration is to reflect on and ultimately challenge the presuppositions that we (unknowingly) bring into our encounters with language because it is these presuppositions that can get us into trouble when doing philosophy.

The final chapter of this thesis sought to address a pair of objections that could be raised against my reading on the grounds of its limited scope with respect to both topics discussed and sections covered. Thus, these objections rightfully demanded that we read further into the text. And so, I strove to uncover the nature of Wittgenstein's general aversion to philosophical theorising by tracing a throughline in his discussions of simplicity, analysis, and essence in the *Investigations*. I also used a complimentary comparison with the *Blue Book* and its allusion to Hertz as a way to clarify how Wittgenstein understood his own approach to philosophical problems. The crucial thing to take away from this last chapter is how Wittgenstein proceeds to re-orientate his interest away from the kind of logical investigation that was indicative of his earlier philosophy in the *Tractatus*. According to this earlier philosophy, simple objects could be revealed to us through analysis, in turn, revealing the true, hidden sense of propositions. Not only is the absolute sense of simplicity that this conception requires shown to be mistaken, but so is the idea that there is such a thing as a final analysis of propositions. At bottom, there is only different ways of talking, no one is more fundamental than the other, nothing is revealed about an unanalysed statement by considering its analysed counterpart. Thus, at the very heart of his new, grammatical project lies a preference for description over explanation, for the surface over the depths. And it is this preference, both as it is stated and in the way in which it can retroactively be observed in the sections that we have considered throughout this thesis, which confirms the reasons for the absence of a theory of meaning from Wittgenstein's later philosophy of language.

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, however, I have only been able to concentrate on the topic of meaning. Therefore, although a great deal of progress has perhaps been made towards understanding the anti-theoretical attitude of the later Wittgenstein, at least as it manifests with respect to such a topic, this understanding is by no means complete; for there are simply hundreds of sections that we have yet to consider, some of which move well beyond considerations relating to meaning. Thus, the contents of this thesis and the arguments made therein are but a step on the road to something else, something more informative.

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