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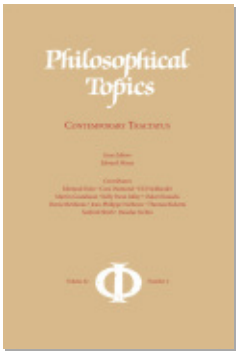

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ABSTRACT. This paper develops an account of Wittgenstein's method of language-games as a method of logic that exhibits important continuities with Russell's and the early Wittgenstein's conceptions of logic and logical analysis as the method of philosophy. On the proposed interpretation, the method of language-games is a method for isolating and modeling aspects of the uses of linguistic expressions embedded in human activities that enables one to make perspicuous complex uses of expressions by gradually building up the complexity of clarificatory models. Wittgenstein's introduction of the language-game method constitutes an attempt to overcome certain limitations of calculus-based logical methods, and to respond in this way to problems with Russell's and his own early philosophy of logic. The method is nevertheless compatible with the employment of calculus-based methods in logic and philosophy, and makes no exclusive claim to being *the* correct method.

INTRODUCTION

In the following I outline an interpretation of Wittgenstein's method of language-games as a method of logic that exhibits both continuities and discontinuities with

Russell's and the *Tractatus*'s conceptions of logic and logical analysis as the method of philosophy. More specifically, the method of language-games is intended to extend logic beyond the limitations of calculus-based methods, while also avoiding certain other problems with Russell's and Wittgenstein's early approach. In this capacity the method constitutes a further development of the broadly Russellian approach to philosophy as logical clarification. I start with some historical background.

Russell characterized the new logic developed by himself and Frege among others as having "introduced the same kind of advance into philosophy as Galileo introduced into physics" whereby the advance is to be conceived specifically in methodological terms (Russell 1914/1926, 68, 69). In this way the nature of philosophical problems is also clarified in that "every philosophical problem, when it is subjected to the necessary analysis and purification, is found either to be not really philosophical at all, or else to be, in the sense in which we are using the word, logical" (Russell 1914/1926, 42). Consequently, through the employment of appropriate logical methods, progress would become possible in philosophy. According to Russell, "the first complete example" of this logical-analytical method was "to be found in the writings of Frege" (Russell 1914/1926, 7; cf. Russell 1910/1949, 111–13).

Among the earliest followers and developers of this approach was Wittgenstein, who in the Preface to the *Tractatus,* acknowledges his indebtedness to both Frege and Russell. In his book Wittgenstein assumes the Russellian conception of philosophical problems as logical ones, holding that they mostly "depend on our failure to understand the logic of our language" (TLP 4.003).[1] Russell also acknowledged on more than one occasion the value of Wittgenstein's early work on logic for himself, characterizing it, for example, as involving "vitally important discoveries" (Russell 1914/1926, 9; see also Russell 1919/2010, 12–13, 34, 139). But although Russell's perception of the early Wittgenstein as a "true philosophical genius" apparently never changed, he was not able to appreciate Wittgenstein's later work from the early/mid-1930s onward. About the latter he wrote: "The later Wittgenstein, on the contrary, seems to have grown tired of serious thinking and invented a doctrine that would make such an activity unnecessary" (Russell 1959, 161). *Pace* Russell, however, Wittgenstein's later work might still be characterized as deeply Russellian in that he never gave up the conception of philosophical problems as logical, to be resolved by means of logical investigation. As he remarks in 1948: "Merely recognizing the philosophical problem as a logical one is progress. The proper attitude and the method accompany it" (Ms137, 104b/LW I, §256).

A possible explanation for Russell's not being able to appreciate Wittgenstein's later work is that he couldn't recognize it as logic. Here Russell wouldn't be alone. The methods Wittgenstein seeks to introduce in the *Philosophical Investigations* have often not been perceived as methods of logic that would exhibit a fundamental continuity with his early approach to philosophy as logical clarification or with the work of Frege and Russell. Rather, it is more common to think that there is a break between Wittgenstein's later and early work as well as Frege and Russell, so that the latter figure in Wittgenstein's later work only or primarily as

targets of criticism, while he himself has moved on to doing something different. If so, his work wouldn't have any direct positive relevance to logicians.[2] Perhaps this perception is in certain ways understandable. Wittgenstein too realized that it might be difficult to recognize his work as logic. As he remarks when discussing the distinction between the notion of experiencing meaning and the concept of meaning: "Strange as it may sound, in all these investigations I'm practising logic. Even if I do it ineptly & the logical significance of what I say is difficult to see" (Ms136a, 72a).[3]

That Wittgenstein later characterized himself as engaged in a grammatical rather than a logical investigation may also have contributed to the perception that he isn't doing logic. However, on many occasions Wittgenstein uses the terms "grammar" and "logic" and their cognates interchangeably, and never to my knowledge attempts to distinguish the two. The close relation between logic and grammar is particularly evident in the years after his return to philosophy (from 1929 to the early 1930s), when Wittgenstein starts to talk increasingly about grammar rather than logic or syntax, while continuing to employ "grammar" just as "logic" earlier. Thus, for example, according to him, grammar spells out logical distinctions, and grammatical rules determine the role of variables (Ms108, 153). Grammar shows what is logically possible (140, 8/Ts211, 244/PG, 45; BB, 56), and clarifies what logically follows from a sentence (Ms109, 15). Logical problems and questions are said to be grammatical ones (Ms109, 224/Ts211, 398; Z §590), and logical analysis is characterized as the clarification of grammar (PR, 51/108, 88/Ts209, 1/Ts213, 417). Wittgenstein sums up his view at this time: "everything that is business in logic must be said in grammar" (Ms109, 122). But he continues to use "grammar," "logic," and their cognates interchangeably later too. There is no textual evidence for a change of mind. (See Ms138, 17b; Ms157a, 54v; Ms167, 26r; Ts233a, 38; Ts245, 310/RPP I §1050.) The use of "logic" is particularly prevalent in *On Certainty,* where Wittgenstein connects his notion of language-games with logic in the following way: "to logic belongs everything descriptive of a language-game" (Ms174, 18/OC §56; cf. §§82, 628).

But even if Wittgenstein's later approach differs from his early one, or those of Frege and Russell, this isn't yet a reason to regard him as not doing logic. Construed as an objection to Wittgenstein, this is like complaining against Frege that he isn't doing logic, because his logic isn't similar enough to Aristotelian logic or to logic before Frege. What is at stake is the identity of the discipline of logic—which certainly was an explicit concern for Wittgenstein (see PI §§89, 108). But logic's identity can't be defined by reference to any particular authorities, and the revolution in logic constituted by the development of mathematical or symbolic logic doesn't exclude the possibility of further revolutions. What matters is whether Wittgenstein's later approach can answer to the kinds of needs that, for example, Aristotle, Frege, and Russell developed their logic in response to. If it can achieve this, this is a reason to regard it as a contribution to logic (irrespective of whether we call it "logic," "grammar," or something else).

As I aim to show, Wittgenstein's method of language-games can be understood as a method of logic by relevant criteria. The method also extends logic beyond logical calculi so as to better suit the analysis or clarification of the highly complex and fluctuating uses of natural language. (Wittgenstein characterizes the method as applicable to languages such as German but also to scientific languages; Ms110, 221.) With respect to the analysis of natural languages and philosophical problems connected with its concepts, it is at best controversial whether the kind of piecemeal but steady progress that Russell declares possible has been made in philosophy (see Russell 1910/1949, 112–13). Wittgenstein comments on relevant issues (in 1946) in connection with a discussion of Moore's paradox, i.e. statements of the type "Things are so and so, but I don't believe it." From the point of view of logic as usually understood, if we assume that contradictions have the form "p and not-p," such a statement isn't a contradiction. But that logic can't recognize such a statement as a contradiction, Wittgenstein maintains, reveals its narrowness. He comments: "This shows serious gaps in logic. It indicates—what so many things indicate—that what we usually call 'logic' is only applicable to a tiny part of the game with language. This is also why logic is as uninteresting as, judging by its appearance, it should be interesting" (Ms132, 119, 120).

Wittgenstein's later work might then be characterized as aiming to fill in such gaps in logic. This requires the introduction of new methods that can handle the complexities of language better than logical calculi according to precise and fixed rules seem able to do. About this he remarks: "Language is much more complex than logicians and the author of the Tract. Log. Phil. have imagined" (Ms152, 47; cf. PI §23; Ms134, 120/RPP I §920). And: "One could say, what we attempt is for the purpose of learning to know the word use in all its complications; in order thereby not to fall into the errors that arise from our thinking for ourselves the word use as more primitive than it is" (Ms157a, 33v, 34r). In this regard it is also noteworthy that, as opposed to the *Tractatus*'s programmatic characterizations of how a symbolic notation enables us to deal with philosophical problems (TLP 3.323–3.24, 6.53), the method of language-games is introduced by applying it to real philosophical problems. Wittgenstein's discussions of problems relating to, for example, meaning, rule-following, or private language aren't mere toy-examples, but merit serious consideration as examples of the application of his method.

However, from the point of view of the proposed interpretation of Wittgenstein's later work as an *extension* of Russellian logic, it is important that his later outlook doesn't contradict or generally exclude the employment of logical calculi for clarification. Wherever they are successfully employed for relevant purposes, there should be no complaint. As explained in sections 5 and 6, this can be understood in terms of Wittgenstein's later account of the role or status of logical descriptions or clarifications which, therefore, is a crucial component of his methodology.

I begin with the *Tractatus* in order to highlight certain continuities between Wittgenstein's early and later conceptions of logic. I shall assume with Russell that the *Tractatus* indeed is a work in logic and philosophy thereof, and will use

this initial understanding of what logic involves in explaining the sense in which Wittgenstein's later work contributes to logic.[4]

1. THE *TRACTATUS*'S VIEW OF LOGIC

In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein spells out a conception of logic as a study of the formal, structural features of language and thought. In this view, logic differs from the natural sciences in that its statements aren't contentful factual statements concerning reality, but tautologies. According to Wittgenstein, all logical principles as well as valid logical inferences are revealed by analysis to be tautological (TLP 6.1, 6.111, 6.1221, 6.126). Part of this conception of the contentlessness of logic is that logical relations (both between propositional constituents and propositions) are determined by the rules of logical syntax. For Wittgenstein logical clarification therefore is the clarification of logico-syntactical rules that determine what is logically possible and necessary, and in this capacity underlie the possibility of factual statements.

Notably, however, Wittgenstein's conception of syntax differs from the more usual Hilbertian one that was generalized from mathematics to languages overall by Carnap, and is associated with the so-called model theoretical conception of logic. While, according to the latter, the rules of syntax apply to meaningless signs or characters, or to abstract patterns of such marks, for Wittgenstein only signs with a meaningful (sinnvoll) use have syntax. That is, while it is part of the Hilbertian conception to treat signs as meaningless before they are given an interpretation, Wittgenstein's view excludes syntactic characterizations of meaningless signs. Thus, although it is essential for Wittgenstein's account of the formality of logic that syntax is established without any reference to what expressions mean, only signs with a meaningful use (i.e., propositions with a sense, and by entailment their constituent expressions) have a logic or syntax.[5] Accordingly, although logic isn't concerned with meanings, but with forms or rules that underlie the meaningful use of language, and make possible the expression of meanings, it does presuppose the meaningfulness of linguistic expressions (TLP 3.34, 3.341, 3.344, 4.12). As Wittgenstein notes: "The propositions of logic [. . .] presuppose that names have meaning and elementary propositions sense" (TLP 6.124; cf. 6.12).

Wittgenstein's conception of logic and syntax might therefore be characterized by saying that the rules of logical syntax determine or describe the logical role or the use of a sign in language, whereby such determinations are abstractions from meaningful language use. He writes: "In order to recognize a symbol in a sign we must observe how it is used with a sense" (TLP 3.326). By a "symbol" Wittgenstein means a significant or meaningful sign: any part of a proposition that characterizes its sense is a symbol (TLP 3.31). Signs, however, are arbitrary and conventional (TLP 3.315, 3.321–3.322). Consequently, only the use of a sign according to particular syntactical rules allows us to identify it as a symbol. A sign

without use is meaningless (TLP 3.328). As Wittgenstein explains 3.326 to Odgen, the book's first translator: "in order to recognize the symbol in a sign we must look at how this sign is *used* significantly in propositions. I.e. we must observe how the sign is used in accordance with the laws of logical syntax. Thus 'significant' here means as much as 'syntactically correct'" (LO, 59; original italics). And once we understand their use, i.e. how the signs in our propositions signify, we understand their syntax: "The rules of logical syntax must go without saying, once we know how each individual sign signifies" (TLP 3.334). Similarly, only signs with a logico-syntactical use have logical form, by which Wittgenstein means their possibilities of combination with other signs in meaningful use: "A sign does not determine a logical form unless it is taken together with its logico-syntactical employment" (TLP 3.327; cf. NB, 53/PTLP 3.253).

For Wittgenstein the rules of logic or syntax therefore aren't conventional, unlike for Carnap, who regards it as a matter of choice and stipulation how logical calculi used in philosophical clarification are constructed. (See Carnap 1937/1967, 51–52, 186.) According to Wittgenstein, rather than stating conventions, logic seeks to spell out something that different possible languages, and their conventions, presuppose. What interests logic is what is common to different symbols that can express the same meaning/sense, whereby this common something is thought to be what makes it possible for them to express whatever they express. In other words, while it is conventional which sign we use to express ourselves, something non-conventional is assumed by such conventional expressions that makes them possible, Wittgenstein maintains. This is what logic seeks to clarify, and in this sense it is concerned with what is essential rather than merely accidental to language (TLP 3.34–3.3442, 6.124).

On this account, logic then isn't concerned with the particularities of any historical natural languages, but with what is common to all possible languages and makes them languages. Indeed, in the *Tractatus*'s view, logic is only interested in language as a medium of true/false representation. Its concern is to clarify the laws that govern the expression of truth and falsity, and so its descriptions abstract away from anything contingent to true/false representation. The abstraction culminates in the *Tractatus*'s notion of the general propositional form, which is meant to provide us with a rule for the construction of propositions, constituting "a description of the propositions of any sign-language whatsoever in such a way that every possible sense can be expressed by a symbol satisfying the description, and every symbol satisfying the description can express a sense" (TLP 4.5). Importantly, given that, according to the *Tractatus,* language is simply the totality of propositions (TLP 4.001), this provides us with a systematic description of all possible languages, whereby Wittgenstein's rule for the construction of propositions is meant to clarify the kind of unity that the concept of language constitutes. The notion of a general form of proposition also exemplifies the early Wittgenstein's view of logical descriptions by means of variables whose values are possible propositions that contain the variable. The variable is specified by determining the relevant class of

propositions, and in this way the possible uses of the expression are described. All propositions are substitution instances of the general propositional variable (TLP 3.313, 3.316–3.317).

The continuity between Wittgenstein's early and later approaches to logic can now be explained as follows. A path leads from the *Tractatus*'s view of logical investigation as the clarification of the logico-syntactical rules of language use to Wittgenstein's later view of logical investigation as the description of language use (cf. PI §92, 109). Undoubtedly, his later conception of language and its description differs importantly from the *Tractatus.* But rather than merely indicating discontinuities, these differences reveal how the later Wittgenstein seeks to respond to problems with the *Tractatus.* For understood sufficiently generally and abstractly, a main goal of his work is still the same as in the *Tractatus*: to give an account of logic as a method for the resolution of philosophical problems. Here the idea that we can clarify language use in logic by spelling out rules of its use constitutes a bridge between his early and later philosophy, even though stating rules isn't the only method on the later account.

To outline two central points of difference that shape Wittgenstein's later approach, first, in his later work Wittgenstein rejects the assumption that language must constitute a systematic unity definable with reference to something common to all instances of language that constitutes their essence (PI §§65ff., 108). But if language isn't presumed to constitute a systematic unity in this sense, then its description must take a different form from that envisaged in the *Tractatus.* We can't expect there to be a *Tractatus*-style systematic and complete description of its uses. (See section 4.)

Secondly, the early Wittgenstein was of course aware that the conception of language as constituting a systematic unity doesn't conform to appearances. By the looks of it, propositions don't seem to share a common form. Similarly, the *Tractatus*'s conception of propositions as true/false representations and truth-functions thereof presupposes that every proposition has a definite truth-value, and therefore a precise sense. Yet, natural language doesn't seem to be used according to such strict and precise rules as this conception presupposes. So, if there are such rules, apparently they must lie hidden under the surface. Accordingly, Wittgenstein took that which is essential to language to lie hidden "*beneath* the surface" of language, and to be something that "an analysis digs out" (PI §92). Later on, however, he comes to question the postulation of such hidden structures, and the adjacent conception that logic is concerned, not with "the spatial and temporal phenomenon of language," but with something ideal underlying natural languages (PI §§102, 108).

However, problematizing the *Tractatus*'s view on these points raises questions about the discipline of logic. If language has no underlying systematic unity that can be determined *a priori,* must logic be understood as an empirical investigation of the uses of language? And if language isn't used according to fixed and precise rules, isn't it a falsification to present it as governed by such rules, as when using

calculi to describe language? But if so, what becomes of logic's aspiration for exactness and clarity that is part of its identity as a discipline (PI §108)?[6]

Notably, others who, unlike Russell and the *Tractatus,* don't regard logic as concerned with rules that underlie everyday language face parallel problems. For example, Carnap maintains that, although in principle his method of logical syntax as the construction of logical calculi is applicable to the "incredibly complicated" natural languages too, because of their "unsystematic and logically imperfect structure," it is practically impossible to describe natural languages by such means, and their "direct analysis [. . .] must inevitably fail" (Carnap 1937/1967, 2, 8; cf. 312). Here no Russellian/Tractarian assumption is made about underlying hidden structures which the logical calculus would be well suited to capture. But the difficulty of describing natural language that is seemingly averted by postulating such hidden structures now emerges as a limitation of the logical method: the actual uses of language seem too complicated to be captured in terms of calculi. Yet, as long as philosophers continue to employ natural language in their discussions, or seek to understand concepts that originate in natural languages (such as meaning, truth, goodness, and so on), this makes logic of limited use only as a tool for philosophical clarification. Consequently, Russell's dream about philosophy seems to remain unfulfilled. However, the later Wittgenstein may be understood as attempting to show that this needn't be so. Rather than giving up on logic, as Russell suggests, Wittgenstein's later work can be read as a response to these problems. To see how, let's turn to his method of language-games.[7]

2. THE NOTION OF A LANGUAGE-GAME

Arguably, the key to understanding Wittgenstein's notion of a language-game is its methodological character. The notion of a language-game constitutes the core of a method for philosophical or logical clarification. But to begin with a few historical observations, the background to the notion of a language-game seems to be the Hilbertian conception of mathematics as a game according to rules, which together with Frege's criticism of Hilbert's (perceived) formalism, appears to have inspired Wittgenstein's conception of language as a game (Ms106, 139). What, according to Wittgenstein, is true in Hilbert's view is that syntax can always be conceived as a system of rules of a game (WVC, 103–5). A description of language as a game according to rules can therefore always be substituted for a description of it as a calculus, although not *vice versa,* insofar as not all games can be understood as calculi. In this way the conception of language as a game according to rules can be understood as developing out of Wittgenstein's earlier conception of language as a calculus, while also offering a way to extend it. During this transitional period Wittgenstein also talks about "grammatical games" according to rules (Ms108, 178).

However, although the conception of language-games as games according to rules is central to Wittgenstein's early employments of the game analogy, and

remains part of the comparison between language and games, he also develops the notion of a language-game in a direction where the emphasis isn't on the rules of language but its embeddedness in actions and activities, or language being part of a form of life. Thus, while it is an essential part of the conception of language as a game according to rules that it can be described by means of statements of a rule (like rule-governed games generally), when the notion of a language-game is introduced in the *Investigations,* the idea of language or games as rule-governed isn't explicitly invoked. Rather, the emphasis is on the point that, like playing a game, speaking a language is an activity, or part of an activity/activities in which the use of words is embedded: "the term 'language-*game*' is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life" (PI §23). "I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the 'language-game'" (PI §7). And: "to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life" (PI §19). In conformity with this view of language as part of a form of life, Wittgenstein, for instance, introduces in the *Investigations* a conception of certain language uses as an extension of pre-linguistic natural behavior (see PI §244). Here a description of language use is given by means of, so to speak, a natural historical picture of humans and their form of life, whereby rules seem to play no role. For to characterize the function of an expression in terms of an account of its acquisition is not to state a rule for its function. But however §244 should be interpreted,[8] clearly at the heart of the notion of language-games is the idea of studying language in the context of activities in which it is embedded. This, Wittgenstein maintains, makes it possible to achieve clarity about the uses of language, because it is in the context of those activities that linguistic expressions have determinate uses (see section 3).

The method of language-games, therefore, can be characterized as a method for studying the functioning of linguistic expressions in the context of activities and life of which they are part. Crucially, however, such contexts may be extremely complicated and far from perspicuous. Thus, merely characterizing language as part of a form of life and embedded in activities doesn't yet explain how to approach the task of the clarification of language. Nevertheless, another feature of language-games that is crucial for their employment for logical or philosophical clarification explains just this. This feature, which figures equally prominently in their introduction as the embeddedness of language in activities, is their simplicity or primitiveness. Wittgenstein writes: "[Language games] are ways of using signs simpler than those in which we use the signs of our highly complicated everyday language. [. . .] The study of language games is the study of primitive forms of language or primitive languages" (BB, 17; cf. PI §§5, 7). He explains the methodological import of the primitiveness or simplicity of language-games as follows:

> If we want to study the problems of truth and falsehood, of the agreement and disagreement of propositions with reality, of the nature of assertion, assumption, and question, we shall with great advantage look at primitive forms of language in which these forms of thinking appear

> without the confusing background of highly complicated processes of thought. When we look at such simple forms of language the mental mist which seems to enshroud our ordinary use of language disappears. We see activities, reactions, which are clear-cut and transparent. On the other hand we recognize in these simple processes forms of language not separated by a break from our more complicated ones. We see that we can build up the complicated forms from the primitive ones by gradually adding new forms. (BB, 17)[9]

What Wittgenstein describes here is explained by means of examples and comments on them in the opening of the *Investigations,* albeit with reference to a different example: the concept of meaning.

As is well known, the *Investigations* starts with a discussion of the idea that the meaning of a word is something it refers to, whereby the function of words is understood as naming something: abstract or concrete objects, properties, actions, events, states, and so on. This conception of word-meaning Wittgenstein regards as simplistic, and begins explaining his reservations by means of an example of someone being sent to buy apples equipped with the slip "five red apples." The example illustrates the different function of each of the words by describing the shopkeeper's understanding of them as a matter of him acting differently in response to each of the words. This is how the shopkeeper is imagined to act: "[he] opens the drawer marked 'apples'; then he looks up the word 'red' in a table and finds a colour sample opposite it; then he says the series of cardinal numbers—I assume that he knows them by heart—up to the word 'five' and for each number he takes an apple of the same colour as the sample out of the drawer" (PI §1). What the example illustrates is three different ways of using words: (1) apples, i.e. relevant kinds of objects (not pears or bolts) are identified by a label, a name tag on the drawer where they are kept; (2) red, i.e. a quality, is identified by reference to a sample with which the objects are compared for similarity and apples with the right color are selected; and (3) numerals are used as a kind of non-tangible measuring rod, i.e. a requested kind of object is correlated with each numeral recited in order.

That the clarification of these differences is the point of language-game §1 is explained a few remarks later:

> If we look at the example in §1, we may perhaps get an inkling how much this general notion of the meaning of a word [that their function is to name objects] surrounds the working of language with a haze which makes clear vision impossible. It disperses the fog to study the phenomena of language in primitive kinds of application in which one can command a clear view of the aim and functioning of the words. (PI §5; my square brackets)

So, what the shopping example is meant to achieve is to draw attention to differences in the use of words, or to there being different word kinds, which the general characterization of all words having a meaning, signifying or naming something obscures (cf. PI §10, 17). In so doing the example also illustrates a method of studying words in primitive kinds of application, where we have a clear view of

their functioning. For it is precisely due to its simplicity that the example can bring to view so plainly the differences in the use of relevant words.

Furthermore, in order to clarify these differences Wittgenstein also employs another simple language-game, the so-called builders' language-game. This is a game to which, he says, the description of words as names fits. It consists in one player calling different building materials by name in order for the other to bring them to him. In this language-game we have four words, but all of them used in the same way: as labels for specific object kinds (PI §2). This is another way to draw attention to differences in the use of words highlighted by language-game §1: language-game §2 does this by way of its contrast with the shopping game, i.e. by illustrating what a language would be like for which the characterization of words as names is true. Clearly, such a language would be quite primitive, and this is something that the contrast with the shopping example partly helps to see. For while the use of words in the shopping game is itself something very simple, the builders' language is even more limited, due to the absence of different word kinds or different types of use (cf. PI §17). (I address the question whether it is really appropriate to characterize the builders' language-game as a language in section 4.) Thus, both language-games are employed in slightly different ways for the same purpose of the clarification of the concept of word-meaning, and in this capacity also to illustrate the method of language-games itself.[10]

Wittgenstein sums up the idea of the method of language-games and what he sees as its benefits by remarking: "The advantage of the examination of language-games is just that they let us see *gradually* what otherwise we only see as a *whole,* and that is, as a tangled clew [verworrenen Knäuel]" (TS 228, 177; cf. Ms162b, 52v, 53r; italics in the original).[11] This can be explained as follows. Language-games in the capacity of primitive and simple forms of language use can be used, so to speak, to isolate and study specific aspects of the functioning linguistic expressions. Hence, they can be characterized, in a certain sense, as a tool by means of which the logic of language (or the function of expressions) can be analyzed. By means of simple language-games we can abstract from and take apart complicated uses of linguistic expressions with the purpose of clarifying their specific aspects. The shopping language-game can be used to explain the sense in which we might speak of an analysis here.[12]

Part of this example is a particular description of the use of numerals. This is specifically designed to illustrate their difference from names in the sense explained. However, of course Wittgenstein isn't claiming that the use of numerals in the shopping language-game would be the only way we use them. That would be ludicrous, given that the shopkeeper, as far as we are told, isn't even able to do the simplest arithmetic. (He is merely correlating objects with numerals. Adding and subtracting may be regarded as further techniques of the use of these signs, and of course these techniques, the possibility of adding and subtracting, is an important part of our concept of a number.) What the example therefore presents us with is only one aspect or facet of the much more complicated actual use of numerals.

What we call "the concept of number" might be said to comprise the different techniques of the use of numerals. The shopping language-game, however, isolates one such facet for us to consider, without assuming as its background this much more complicated whole, and abstracting from it. Consequently, the example shows us something clear-cut and simple, as opposed to the actual use of numerals which, if we try to study it as a whole—all its aspects at once—isn't easy to get hold of, but appears like a tangled clew. Nevertheless, from this isolated facet we might gradually build up something more complicated, adding other facets to the model in order to come to understand better the complicated actual use of numerals and how the different uses we make of them relate to one another. In *Investigations* §8 Wittgenstein adds in somewhat this manner other expressions into the builders' language-game (numerals and the indexicals "here" and "there"), extending it gradually. Here the extension consists of the addition of different word kinds, represented by different words, to the game. But one might equally begin with one simple use of a particular word and then add further uses of the same word, thus complicating and extending the language-game as a model for actual use.

To further characterize the language-game method, let me comment on two other examples of language-games in the *Investigations.* A famous example concerns a person asked to continue an arithmetical series which Wittgenstein employs in his discussion of rule-following. When introduced, this example is explicitly presented as a language-game: "Let us now examine the following kind of language-game: when A gives an order B has to write down series of signs according to a certain formation rule" (PI §143). Evidently, the example is intended as a simple language-game to be used for clarificatory purposes, and Wittgenstein then goes on to employ it just the way he describes the use of primitive language-games, when introducing them.[13] That is, he uses the language-game of continuing a series to discuss the much more tangled or foggy concept of rule-following, where various readily available explanations of rule-following may lead us to what Wittgenstein perceives as philosophical dead ends. For example, we might try to explain knowledge of how to follow a rule in terms of the presence of a mental state or as a mental event or in terms of dispositions, but as Wittgenstein shows with the help of his simple example, none of these accounts captures what knowledge of how to follow a rule generally consists in. (See PI §148ff.)

In the context of the discussion of rule-following another simple language-game is also used, comparable in its fictitious and unusual character to Wittgenstein's example of buying apples. This is the example of reading and our using people as reading machines, whereby reading is understood as "the activity of rendering out loud what is written or printed; and also of writing from dictation, writing out something printed, playing from a score, and so on" (PI §156). Obviously, this isn't what we usually understand by reading. It is a simplified construction that leaves out cases we would normally include under the concept and includes cases we normally wouldn't. Undoubtedly, Wittgenstein is aware of this. Of the actual use of the word "reading" he says: "The use of this word in the ordinary circumstances

of our life is of course extremely familiar to us. But the part the word plays in our life, and therewith the language-game in which we employ it, would be difficult to describe even in rough outline" (PI §156). Nevertheless, as the discussion that ensues testifies, Wittgenstein clearly believes that it is possible to clarify aspects of the complicated actual use with the help of the artificial simplified language-game. For example, he seeks to clarify in this way the issue of what it is to attribute the ability to read to someone. The discussion of reading also contributes to the clarification of the broader concept of rule-following. Notably, however, in these discussions he doesn't show the slightest concern for the accuracy or realism of his definition as a characterization of our actual concept of reading, just as realism doesn't seem an issue in the shopping example. (The reasons for this will become apparent in section 5.)

Here it is important to observe the following. As the last quote exemplifies, Wittgenstein does also refer to actual uses of language (and relevant actions and forms of life) as language-games. However, to speak of language in these terms doesn't as such yet illuminate anything much. For example, to characterize reading as a language-game doesn't tell us anything about reading specifically. Nevertheless, to envisage reading as a language-game isn't without significance. This is to adopt a particular view of the task of its clarification. It is to understand the use of the word as interwoven with activities and as part of a form of life. From this point of view we can then approach the clarificatory task by applying the method of simple language-games to it. This is where the work of clarification begins.[14] Next, however, in order to further clarify the method of language-games, let me say something more about the idea of studying the uses of language in the context of activities and forms of life with which it is interwoven.

3. LANGUAGE-GAMES AS THE CONTEXT OF THE USE OF WORDS

We have reached a point where we can understand Wittgenstein's view that activities and forms of life into which language is woven constitute a context for its use, and that the clarification of language use should be understood as the investigation of language-games in this sense. The methodological significance of this idea can be outlined as follows.[15]

Firstly, to adopt the conception of language as different language-games suggests a change of orientation from Wittgenstein's early outlook in the sense that, if we don't assume that the function of all words is always to refer to something, it becomes a live possibility that a word's use might be something quite complex (cf. PI §23). More precisely, this is to regard such complexities as irreducible to underlying reference relations or the function of referring, in the style of the *Tractatus* or Russell's theory of descriptions. Rather, the use of a word may be made up of different components or facets that together constitute its use in language,

without the different components or facets being reducible to some basic or fundamental linguistic function. This is exemplified by numerals, if we regard counting objects and adding as two facets of their use: whoever can use numerals to count objects isn't thereby already in command of the technique of adding, but adding extends the use of numerals and joins a new strand to it. From the point of view of clarificatory methodology this means that, whenever a word has such a complex use, it can't be assumed that it is enough to comprehend its role in language to look at only one kind of occasion of its use. This might not alone exhaust its use—like the use of numerals isn't exhausted by what the shopkeeper does. Rather, to understand the word's role, and the concept its uses make up, we need to comprehend its uses more widely. This may be Wittgenstein's point when he says: "One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to *look* at its use and learn from that" (PI §340).

Although the following characterization doesn't fit numerals, Wittgenstein's view of the complexity of use might be characterized by comparing the role of a word in a language-game with the role of a piece in an imaginary version of chess, where the rules governing the movement of a piece vary depending on the position of the piece on the board and its relation to other pieces. Now not just one but many rules govern the movements of a piece, depending on the situation in the game. (This is reminiscent of castling in standard chess, but now such circumstance-bound rules would be a norm.) The same may hold for a word in a language-game. This is exemplified by the use of the word "pain" (assuming Wittgenstein's account of it). While "He is in pain"—a third-person pain statement—has the role of a true/false description, "I'm in pain" may sometimes function as an expression or manifestation comparable to a cry or a moan, rather than description. In the case of a manifestation, considerations of truthfulness, not truth as opposed to error, apply to the utterance. Thus, while the third-person statement is a true/false knowledge claim, a linguistic manifestation in the first person isn't. (See PI §244, 246, PI II, 222.) The word is used in two distinct ways, depending on who is speaking and whose pain is spoken of, as if relative to where we are in the game, different rules governed the use of the word "pain."[16]

Notably, when describing matters in this way, we are speaking, as it were, from the direction of the object of investigation. We envisage the actual use of the word as a language-game, but a complicated one. It is in this sense that Wittgenstein remarks about reading that the actual language-game with the word is used would be difficult to describe even roughly (§156). Alternatively, however, looking at the issue from the point of view of the method of primitive language-games, such a complex case might also be described differently. We might say that the word "pain" is used in more than one language-game, i.e. in those of expression and description, whereby the term "language-game" is now used in the sense of simple language-games employed to isolate for study the two mentioned facets of the use of "pain." Here one is speaking from the direction of the method, as it were. Both ways of speaking are possible.

The significance of the notion of language-games can now be explained as follows. In order to understand a word's use on a particular occasion, when its use overall is something complex as if made up of different facets of use, we need to get clear about what language-game is played with it. According to Wittgenstein, this can be settled with reference to the circumstances of use, the actions and activities of which the word's use is part. He writes: "We play many different games with the words 'sentence' & 'rule', as with 'good', 'beautiful', 'plant' etc. In every case of the actual linguistic use of the words the circumstances reveal which game we play" (Ms145, 26). Thus, one might say that for the later Wittgenstein the use of a word is something circumstance-bound in the sense that identifying what use is made of the word requires taking into account the circumstances of use. An example he mentions is the word "thought" by which we may mean alternatively the sense of a sentence, a psychological (objective) phenomenon or a conscious (subjective) event (Ms145, 25). This example seems particularly suggestive as an illustration of how philosophical confusions might arise from failing to distinguish between different uses of a word and running them together, perhaps trying to explain one facet of use in terms of another one or to reduce them all to what is considered the central case.

In this section I have outlined certain ways in which Wittgenstein's conception of activities, actions, and forms of life as the context for the use of words is relevant for logical or philosophical clarification. The point might be put like this: to the extent that the function of linguistic expressions is bound with conjoined activities, it is by reflecting on what we *do* with words, i.e. what sort of activities the words are part of and what their role is in those activities, that we can get clear about their function (see PI §10). Put differently, if in logic we are trying to clarify the use or function of words, and their uses are embedded in our life, then it is that life with the words and its different circumstances that reveal the words' function or use. As Wittgenstein also remarks: "The concept of pain is characterized through a specific function in our life" (Ts233b, 32). And as he elaborates the point, the concept (or the technique of using the word) is embedded in our lives in a particular way so that it has certain definite connections with other things in that life. In the absence of those connections it wouldn't be the concept it is, just like, he says, a chess king is only a chess king in the context of the game (RPP I §§150–51). Thus, to have a perspicuous view of the concept of pain we need to understand its role, part, or function in our lives or the language-games we play with it, and this is what the method of primitive language-games helps us to do.

This indicates how Wittgenstein's conception of clarification is connected with a particular view of language. Characteristic of the conception of language as language-games is that language isn't regarded as a mental phenomenon hidden away in our minds (like the *Tractatus*'s strict and precise rules would be). Rather, when we regard language use as interwoven with actions and forms of life, the investigation of its logic takes the form of an investigation of the forms of human behavior, action, and life (cf. PI §§435–36). As Wittgenstein also says: "To describe

a language-game is to describe the *actions* of human beings" (Ms119, 147r; cf. 148r). This isn't to deny that language use involves mental abilities or capacities. But it is to say that a logical investigation of language isn't the investigation of anything stocked away in the mental sphere. To investigate the uses of language is at the same time to investigate the activities in which those uses are embedded.

Let me now raise some questions about things said so far for discussion. (1) If logic is understood as the description of language use in Wittgenstein's sense, how can logic still be understood as a discipline aspiring for exactness, given that language seems often not used according to precise or strict rules? (2) Given that human forms of life are an empirical, natural historical phenomenon, how does Wittgenstein's conception of language as a form of life and interwoven with activities avoid the collapse of logic into an empirical, natural historical investigation? (3) With regard to the consistency of Wittgenstein's philosophy, he insists on not putting forward any philosophical theses, but in what sense is the conception of language as a form of life not a thesis about the nature of language? As I will explain, all these questions can be answered on the basis of what turns out to be a single line of thought concerning the status of logical models of language use. The answer will be outlined in section 5. But to work our way toward it, let's examine more closely Wittgenstein's statement that more complicated forms of language can be built up from simpler ones. This brings to view a fundamental difference between his early and later approach, and further clarifies the idea of his method.

4. THE NOTIONS OF COMPLETENESS AND SYSTEMATIC THEORY

At the end of the long quote from the *Blue Book* in section 2, where Wittgenstein explains the idea of the language-game method, he says that the primitive forms of language (i.e., language-games) which he proposes we study aren't separated by a break from more complicated ones, but more complicated forms can be built up from the primitive ones by "gradually adding new forms." It is quite clear from what he says about his approach and the role of language-games overall that his view isn't that we could construct, through such a process of building up from primitive forms, a theory of language whose goal would be to give us a complete account of the possible uses of language, such as the *Tractatus* aspired to do. Indeed, Wittgenstein rejects the goal of giving such complete accounts even in the case of particular expressions.[17] As he responds to the objection that his descriptions of language-games don't cover all uses of a term: "the simple language-games play a quite different role. They are poles of a description, not the ground-floor of a theory" (RPP I §633/Ts229, 334/Ts245, 246). How should we understand his rejection of the aspiration to construe a theory of language that accounts for all possible uses, and what is the relevance of this for the method of language-games?

According to Wittgenstein, the problem with theory construction in the relevant sense is that it leads to doing injustice to the phenomena of language, or more precisely, to a dilemma of dogmatic injustice and emptiness of the philosophical account. He remarks about this with reference to Russell and Jean Nicod in an early (1933) version of what later becomes PI §§130–31: "When I describe certain simple language games, this is not in order to construct from them gradually the processes of our developed language—or of thinking—which would only lead to injustices. (Nicod & Russell.)" (Ms115, 81). The *Investigations* explains the role of simple language-games as follows:

> Our clear and simple language-games are not preparatory studies for a future regularization of language [. . .] . The language-games are rather set up as *objects of comparison* which, through similarities and dissimilarities, are meant to throw light on features of our language.
>
> For we can avoid injustice or emptiness in our assertions only by presenting the model as what it is, as an object of comparison—as, so to speak, a measuring-rod; not as a preconceived idea to which reality *must* correspond. (The dogmatism into which we fall so easily in doing philosophy.) (PI §130–31)

What Wittgenstein means by "future regularization of language" would be a complete description of its possible uses.[18] An example of such a description in the case of a particular expression would be a Tractarian complete analysis intended to determine all possibilities of the use of the expression, whereby a framework for such analyses is laid down by the *Tractatus*'s notion of the general propositional form. (See section 1; TLP 3.201, 3.25, 4.26, 4.5.) Why Russell is mentioned in the earlier version of §130 now becomes understandable. As Wittgenstein explains (in another manuscript of roughly the same time), Russell's notion of an atomic proposition and the idea of definite descriptions were the inspiration for his early conception of analysis (Ms116, 80, 81/PG, 211). Thus, Russell's approach to logic too seems to fall under Wittgenstein's criticism because of their shared assumption of the possibility of complete analyses that terminate in logical simples. Although it would require discussion how exactly the criticism would apply to Russell, the earlier remark indicates that Wittgenstein considered his later approach as a response also to problems he associated with Russell.

Importantly, the possibility of complete analyses presupposes that language constitutes a systematic unity. A complete Tractarian analysis of the function of an expression is possible only if language constitutes a system where the function of each expression and its relation to other expressions is definitely determinable. In particular, without assuming systematicity, it isn't possible in principle to know whether all the possibilities of the use of an expression have been accounted for, because there is no definite way to ascertain the completeness of a collection or an aggregate or a description thereof.[19] Now, provided that the possibility of complete analyses thus presupposes the systematicity of language in this sense, we can single out more abstractly as the target of Wittgenstein's criticism the view that language

must be taken to constitute such a system, and that a general systematic theory of language is required as the basis of an account of logic as the method of philosophical clarification.[20]

But as Wittgenstein explains in the *Investigations,* it isn't necessary to assume that there should be necessary features (such as the general propositional form) common to all instances of language by reference to which the possible uses and bounds of language can be determined. The unity of (the concept of) language can be accounted for in a different way too. Alternatively, we might think of language as a collection of various uses or techniques of language, or a motley of language-games, related to one another so that, schematically, while language-game A might share features with language-game B, and language-game B with language-game C, A and C need not have any common features, while still being part of the same whole or unity (PI §65ff.; PG, 75). But if it isn't necessary to assume that there is something common to different instances of language that makes them parts of language, then it is problematic to assume that all instances of language use ought to fit some general theory that circumscribes the possible uses of language with reference to such a common feature.

According to Wittgenstein, it is just this requirement that leads to the dilemma of dogmatic injustice and emptiness or vacuity. We encounter the horn of injustice, if we require that all instances of language use must fit some general theory of the essence and function of language. The risk is that our theoretical requirement leads to a failure to do justice to the manifoldness of language, whereby we wrongly exclude, due to their mismatch with the theory, cases from language that should be recognized as its instances. A possible way to respond to the problem of injustice is to say that the theory isn't meant to apply directly to what we understand by "language" in everyday life, but to something that underlies the phenomena of language familiar to us. However, now the theory risks becoming empty in that to regard logic as an abstract theory about underlying structures of language makes it less clear how it applies to languages we actually speak. Due to the distance between the theory and the phenomena of language it becomes unclear how logic can help to understand and clarify the uses of language. (See PI §§38, 89; Ms152, 82, 83; Ms183, 164; Ts213, 71v; and Kuusela 2013 for discussion.) Alternatively, in response to the problem of injustice, one might make the theory more accommodating so that it is easier to match instances of language with the theory. But again logic risks vacuity: it might no longer unjustly exclude cases that belong to language, but at the risk of becoming too inclusive. (For discussion of the dilemma, see Kuusela 2008, 126ff.)

For present purposes it isn't necessary to discuss this dilemma further, however, or whether Wittgenstein is right that any general, systematic theory of language leads to it. What is important is that his alternative account of the unity of language in terms of criss-crossing similarities switches the burden of proof to the philosopher who claims that language has or must have a common essence determinable in terms of systematic theory. It is now up to her to show that we

must assume this. Meanwhile, Wittgenstein is entitled to try to demonstrate the advantages of his approach.[21]

These points about the possibility of a systematic theory of language bear importantly on the method of language-games. For if we grant them to Wittgenstein, we can't object generally to his primitive language-games that they are defective or incomplete as examples of language, because they fail to meet something essential to language. In other words, there is then no overall objection to the study of language by means of primitive language-games that rejects the method on the basis of some general theory of the essence of language—or because Wittgenstein's approach doesn't assume language to constitute a system or adhere to the requirement of the systematicity of logical descriptions. Granted this, the appositeness of any primitive language-game as a model for language is to be judged individually and in its own terms: as long as a primitive model isn't wrongly claimed to capture something that it does not capture, everything so far is fine.

But concerns might also be raised about Wittgenstein's primitive examples on the basis of our pre-theoretic understanding of what language is and what cases qualify as instances of language, without making any reference to a general theory. Can the builders' language-game, for instance, really be understood as a language? If not, how can it be relevant to the study of language? Questions of this sort have been raised, for example, by Goldfarb (Goldfarb 1982, 270–72).[22] How should one respond to this version of the objection against language-games?

Goldfarb is right that we shouldn't take the builders or shopping examples uncritically as examples of language.[23] Nevertheless, ultimately the worry that if the builders' language-game isn't really a language then it can't help us in the study of language seems based on a failure to fully appreciate the point and purpose of Wittgenstein's examples. What Wittgenstein presents us with in those examples, as explained earlier, need not be seen as proper full-blown languages, but abstractions from language or analyses: the examples isolate and bring to focus specific facets of the more complicated use of words in our language. Accordingly, Wittgenstein himself is willing to merely call the builders' language-game "a system of communication" (PI §3; Ms141, 2). It is plausible that this is meant to address the worry at hand. The point is that for Wittgenstein nothing depends on whether we acknowledge his primitive language-games as proper languages, as long as we accept that those systems bear enough similarity to actual language in order for it to be compared with them to clarify its particular aspects.[24] Only this—that there is a recognizable similarity between Wittgenstein's primitive games and the actual language uses we wish to clarify—is needed to get the method of language-games off the ground (cf. Ts213, 238).[25] This dissolves the objection that language-games aren't really examples of language.

We are finally also in a position to see the importance of the so-called Augustinian picture of language for Wittgenstein and for the introduction of the language-game method. Contrary to what is often assumed (e.g., by Baker and Hacker 2009, 60), Wittgenstein doesn't merely set up the Augustinian picture as a target of criticism,

using the builders' language-game to demonstrate how simplistic this view of language is. Rather, the Augustinian picture also plays an important positive role in that it illustrates the very possibility of the language-game method itself, as can now be explained.

According to Wittgenstein, the problem with the conception that every word names something is that presented as a general thesis about the function of words in language it is confusing (it "makes clear vision impossible"; PI §5) and unjust (it ignores many word kinds). Nevertheless, it is crucial for the method of language-games that the Augustinian picture too can be said to capture "a system of communication" or a primitive language, and that it is correct if we restrict its use to examples like the builders. What is of great interest here is the general possibility to "rectify your explanation by expressly restricting it" to particular kinds of cases it does fit (PI §3), whereby we refrain from putting forward the explanation as a totalizing philosophical thesis. This possibility of correcting an otherwise simplistic characterization by restricting its scope illustrates the very idea of the language-game method. That it is possible to understand the conception of words as names as a description of a particular primitive language, rather than a primitive description of language in general, exhibits the possibility of using simple models to capture and clarify specific aspects or facets of language use.

But if Wittgenstein's method only assumes that language-games must be similar enough to actual language to be compared with it, why does he nevertheless ask the reader to conceive the builders' language-game as a "complete primitive language" (PI §2), claiming that we could imagine this language-game to be their "*whole* language" (PI §6)? Why does he say more generally that we should regard language-games as complete or self-standing (see BB, 81)? The short answer is that the possibility of using language-games as clarificatory models depends on this in that a clarificatory model must be something understandable by itself or complete in itself. To elaborate, on the proposed interpretation the basic idea of the method of simple language-games is this: We use simple perspicuous cases of language to clarify its complicated and foggy uses by comparing the latter with the former, and by trying to capture aspects of the latter in terms of the former. But if this is the idea, it would be problematic, if the models had hidden dimensions on which their comprehensibility as examples of language or as comparable to language depended. An example would be that the recognizability of the builders' language-game as a "system of communication" would require us to tacitly attribute to them linguistic abilities that aren't part of the description of the example. Here the comprehensibility of the model as an example of language would tacitly assume the speakers to be operating another inner language that made their overt building-talk possible. But if this were the case, the alleged clarificatory model would involve hidden, unrecognized assumptions on which its use depended. In this case the model wouldn't be perspicuous after all, and it would fail as a clarification.[26]

The point about the completeness of primitive language-games therefore is methodologically important. Wittgenstein's rejection of general theories of language

is also connected with this. As explained, insofar as Wittgenstein successfully problematizes the necessity of assuming that language constitutes systematic unity, and that a general systematic theory of language must be given, any objections are deflected that seek to show on the basis of such theories that Wittgenstein's language-games fall short of being languages. Notably, Wittgenstein does also discuss an empirical objection to the completeness of his simple language-games. But as he points out by asking whether our language was incomplete before the incorporation of the symbolism of chemistry and the notation of the infinitesimal calculus, it would seem arbitrary to refer to any specific, historically contingent forms of language as the measure of the completeness of a description or a language. If so, it isn't a sign of incompleteness either, that the builder's language-game only consists of commands, i.e. names of objects to request building materials (PI §18).[27] Hence, both the *a priori* and the empirical objection to primitive language-games as languages, or something comparable to language, have their answers. But understanding how these objections can be answered is important for clarity about the presuppositions of the method of language-games.

Let's turn next to other issues relating to the status of language-games as clarificatory models for actual language use in order to answer the questions raised at the end of section 3.

5. THE STATUS OF LANGUAGE-GAMES AS MODELS FOR LANGUAGE USE

In the preceding I have spoken of language use as governed by rules, but have not discussed the status of this conception of language or the status of Wittgenstein's descriptions of language use in terms of rules. Is he committed to a philosophical thesis about the nature of language use as rule-governed? And does the method of describing language as a game according to rules presuppose such a thesis as its foundation? The discussion of this issue helps to explain also more generally how the method of language-games eschews commitment to philosophical theses about language.

It is certainly part of Wittgenstein's comparison between language and games that we can regard language use as a rule-governed activity in the manner of games. But it wouldn't be correct to interpret this as indicating that Wittgenstein is committed to a conception of language as governed by fixed rules, or that the method of language-games assumes language users to follow such determinate sets of rules in speaking a language. As he remarks in the *Investigations*: "in philosophy we often *compare* the use of words with games and calculi which have fixed rules, but cannot say that someone who is using language *must* be playing such a game" (PI §81).[28] But this raises questions about the method. Given that a description of language by means of rules must in any given case describe its use in terms of some specific rules (otherwise the description is indeterminate), what

is the justification for such a description in cases where language use is fluid and speakers aren't following any determinate set of rules?

An example of such a fluid use is "Moses" as described in the *Investigations*. Here the speaker uses the name without settling on any particular definition (Russellian definite description), and therefore according to no stable, determinate or fixed set of rules. The question is: Is the method of describing language as a game according to rules unusable in such cases or bound to falsify matters (PI §§78, 82–84; cf. Ms112, 95r, v)? Or as Wittgenstein formulates the question in *Investigations* §82: What does it mean to describe language use as rule-governed in such a case, when neither an observer nor the language user can state the rules? He writes:

> Doesn't the analogy between language and games throw light here? We can easily imagine people amusing themselves in a field by playing with a ball so as to start various existing games, but playing many without finishing them and in between throwing the ball aimlessly into the air, chasing one another with the ball and bombarding one another for a joke and so on. And now someone says: The whole time they are playing a ball-game and following definite rules at every throw.
>
> And is there not also the case where we play and—make up the rules as we go along? And there is even one where we alter them—as we go along. (PI §83)

Here the activity of playing isn't governed by any specific definite set of rules, and sometimes apparently by no rules at all. Nevertheless, even when there isn't any definite set of rules that governs the use of an expression, it is still possible to describe it by means of rules, as Wittgenstein explains. The same goes for describing language as a game according to rules. He writes (in the context of an earlier draft of relevant remarks): "while it is possible to give a rule for every action [move] which it corresponds to, we must in certain cases describe the use of language as a continuous change of the game (schedule of rules) [. . .]. So that we must say we view language *in the form* of a game, of acting according to a schedule of rules" (Ms112, 95r, v; cf. Ts211, 492). Or as he explains this method in his lectures: "To show what we do in philosophy, I compare playing a game with rules and just playing about, or playing in a way that is a transition between the two. What we are looking at is the use of language as compared to a game played according to rules" (AWL, 71; cf. 47–48, 81).

Wittgenstein's point can be explained as follows. There is no need to claim that the use of language is actually governed by determinate, fixed rules, or that it must be, in order for the method of describing it as a game according to rules to be applicable to it. Even when language isn't used according to such rules, we can still describe it in such terms for clarificatory purposes, in order to draw attention to and make perspicuous particular aspects or facets of its use that are relevant for particular clarificatory tasks. However, it is crucial that now the rules are part of the clarifier's *mode of presenting language,* and to keep this distinct from any claims/theses about actual language use. Rather than claiming that its use is really

governed by definite rules, Wittgenstein's method consists in *comparing* language with a game according to rules, or regarding it as or describing it in the form of such a game. To paraphrase his explanation of this point from the early 1930s: although the actual use of a word is "something constantly fluctuating," "for our purposes" of philosophical clarification we can set up against this something more fixed (like a "stationary picture of the constantly altering face of the landscape"), and compare the actual fluctuating use with or "*envisage* it as" a game with fixed rules. Thus, we can "codify one of its characteristic aspects" by constructing an ideal use regulated "definite rules" which we "set alongside" the actual fluctuating use (Ms140, 33, 34/PG, 77; cf. Ms140, 18/PG, 62, 63; AWL, 48).

Here the same point emerges as in section 2: the method of language-games (including the variant that consists of describing language as a game according to rules) is a method for isolating and describing particular aspects or facets of language use for the purpose of philosophical clarification, but it involves no claim that such a description captures language use in all its actual complexity. Hence, even if language users aren't using language according to a determinate fixed set of rules, one can still clarify particular aspects of the actual use of words by describing idealized rule-governed uses with which actual use is compared.[29] Indeed, here no assumption need be made that such characteristic aspects of fluctuating uses would be neatly identifiable as threads in the tangled clew that a complicated use of a word makes up. As Wittgenstein explains by means of another comparison (also first formulated in the early 1930s), the situation may be like describing the shape of a color patch with blurred contours by means of a sharply drawn picture, whereby it isn't obvious where the contours should be drawn, but there are several equally justified possibilities. Consequently, although a concept with sharp contours bears a certain relation to the actual concept with blurred contours, it isn't the same concept. "The kinship is just as undeniable as the difference" (PI §76; cf. 77; Ms140, 32/PG, 76). Or as Wittgenstein explains in his lectures: "But when we use a word without strict rules and later lay down strict rules for its use, its grammar cannot be entirely like that of its former use. It would be similar in the way a figure drawn with sharp outlines and a blurred figure are similar" (AWL, 48; cf. Ts213, 258).

Wittgenstein's conception of the status of language-games as models for language use seems therefore quite accurately summarized by his characterization of them as objects of comparison (PI §§130–31; quoted in section 4). However, in this capacity language-games can be employed for the purpose of clarification in more than one way. As §130 says, language-games aren't meant to throw light on the features of language or linguistic relations by way of similarity only, but also dissimilarity. As noted, the latter is exemplified by the builders' language-game, whose dissimilarity to actual use is intended to illustrate the manifoldness of actual language (sections 2 and 4).

The clarificatory use of language-games can also be explained with reference to their employment as what Wittgenstein calls "centres of variation." When used in this capacity, a language-game isn't intended to capture generally all the uses of

a word as the expression of a particular concept. Rather, such centers of variation are exemplary or prototypical cases that the varying actual uses of an expression can be related to in order to achieve perspicuity or create order into our knowledge of actual use (cf. PI §132). Wittgenstein's example is the concept of punishment: rather than there being a single common essence of punishment, the nature and purpose of punishment can be understood in several ways, as exemplified by the conceptions of punishment as revenge, reform, and deterrent. Furthermore, these forms of punishment combine into various mixed forms with no clear identity. Nevertheless, the uses of the word can be clarified by selecting certain examples as points of reference of which other cases are then seen as variants (Ms115, 221–22; cf. Ms152, 16–17). Similarly, according to Wittgenstein, the uses of sentences can exhibit variation and fluctuation: "Sentences are often used on the borderline between logic and the empirical, so that their meaning changes back and forth and they count now as expressions of norms, now as expressions of experience" (RC, 6, 7). Here too perspicuity can be created by taking certain uses as paradigmatic, and using them as reference points that actual fluctuating uses are related to and compared with.

It is plausible that the preceding is also what Wittgenstein means by saying that language-games are intended as poles of description rather than the basis of a theory (RPP I §633/Ts229, 334/Ts245, 246; quoted in section 4). Rather than capturing all the uses of an expression in some particular sense like a general theory would do, the purpose of language-games is to provide us with points of reference for the description of actual fluctuating uses by way of comparison. A Wittgensteinian pole of description is therefore meant to capture some characteristic aspect of the use of a word that actual use exhibits in many variations. In so doing it provides us with something fixed that enables us to perceive the dynamic, complicated patterns of actual language use as something orderly, but without the risk of falsely presenting the variant uses as more fixed and static than they are, as when asserting that they really correspond to a model such as a language-game or a calculus. Notably, if the actual uses are fixed that poses no problem for the method. This just means that their degree of variation is zero.

Let's now return to the question, whether the method of language-games involves or presupposes a thesis about language as rule-governed or a commitment to always describing it as rule-governed. Very importantly, as can be explained by reference to the status of language-games as objects of comparison, the answer is negative (cf. Ms112, 96r/Ts211, 517/Ts213, 254r). A fundamental point here is that the possibility of describing language as a game according to rules doesn't as such imply that this is the only possible method for clarifying language, i.e. a method that *must* be adopted if we are to clarify language at all. To infer from the possibility of describing language as a game according to rules that language by its very nature is rule-governed is to relapse to just the kind of thesis about what language must be that Wittgenstein rejects as leading to the dilemma of injustice or emptiness (section 4). What is a characteristic of the model to be used as an object of comparison—

the conception of language as a game according to rules—is here transformed into a claim about the nature of the object of investigation itself in forgetfulness of the model's role as an object of comparison.[30] Accordingly, the method of describing language as a game according to rules constitutes a particular method of clarification among many philosophical methods, not *the* method (cf. PI §133).

Importantly, such different methods also include (though aren't exhausted by) other variants of the language-game method itself, besides the method of describing language as a game according to rules, i.e. describing it by means of statements of a rule, as when describing a game. It is characteristic of these other variants of the method too that language is regarded as intertwined with actions and activities or as part of a form of life. However, the description of these activities may also assume a natural historical form, whereby it is described, not by means of statements of a rule but in terms of pictures of forms of behavior or forms of life. An example is Wittgenstein's characterization of first-person expressions of pain as the extension and refinement of primitive pre-linguistic pain behavior, whereby linguistic expressions of pain are seen as replacing its primitive pre-linguistic counterparts (see PI §244).[31] Rather than described by means of rules, here the linguistic practice is described as shaped and fixed by natural (psychological, physical, and so on) facts about human beings that constitute the background for the expression's use. The point of evoking such facts in describing the expression's role or function is that it is a part of a life constituted by the facts that the expression has a determinate role in language. Consequently, the facts enable us to render comprehensible its role. (See section 3.) Here the mode of description then is a natural historical picture, not a (set of) rule(s). As this illustrates, the notion of language use in Wittgenstein is broader than that of rule-governed use, and besides rules there are other modes of describing language use. This clarifies the sense in which Wittgenstein is not committed to a thesis about language as rule-governed.

But, one might now ask, how can this natural history-based method be understood as a method of logic, assuming logic is not an empirical investigation? Can such natural history-based descriptions be compatible with the hardness of the logical "must," to use Wittgenstein's phrase (RFM VI §49)? Although a thorough discussion of this issue can't be undertaken here, an answer can be outlined. A natural history-based model, when employed to clarify language use, is not used as an empirical assertion about language any more than a clarificatory rule used for the same purpose is. Rather, to employ a natural historical picture as a clarificatory model is to present the picture as something that actual cases of language use can be compared with in order to bring to focus their specific features or to suggest a way of conceiving their function. Accordingly, the way in which such models are justified as well as their generality differs from the justification and generality of empirical claims. This is exemplified by PI §244. On the one hand, Wittgenstein offers there no empirical evidence in support of the proposed view of how children learn to use linguistic pain expressions. Rather, the justification of the view depends on the clarificatory work it can do in resolving philosophical problems.

On the other hand, unlike an empirical description, the account can then also be extended to other psychological expressions insofar as it brings clarificatory gain. Hence, Wittgenstein can explain in terms of his more general account of the status of logical descriptions as objects of comparison and modes of representing language, how logic in his sense avoids collapsing into empiricism (see Kuusela 2013 for a more detailed discussion).

Still, however, one might wonder, whether the method of language-games in the more general sense that includes the natural history-based variant doesn't constitute a thesis about the nature of language as intertwined with activities, actions, and as part of a form of life. This can be answered as follows. The method of language-games does indeed involve a conception of language as intertwined with actions, and so on. But the point of characterizing language-games as objects of comparison, and "presenting the model as what it is" (PI §131) is precisely that the characteristics of such a model should not be projected onto the object of investigation as a claim about what it must be. The model is a mode of describing the object of investigation for specific clarificatory purposes.

This point is intimately connected with how the justification of the method of language-games should be understood. Arguably, its justification isn't dependent on a foundational thesis about language as language-games. This hierarchical way of thinking leads to a regress where we next ask how the alleged foundational thesis itself is to be justified and whether this involves the employment of the method. If it does, the question about the justification of the method arises again. Alternatively, if the justification consists in appealing to considerations at a different level that doesn't involve the employment of the method, then the justification of those considerations must be clarified. An example of the hierarchical conception is to take the characterization of language as rule-governed as a "super-rule" that justifies the possibility of particular descriptions of language use in terms of rules. But Wittgenstein explicitly rejects this approach (Ts114, 104/PG, 115–16; AWL, 31; cf. PI §122). The problem can be avoided, however, if we understand the method of language-games as self-supporting in the sense that it justifies itself through its applications without appeal to any foundational theses. On this account, the method and the conception of language it embodies is justified insofar as it enables us to achieve philosophical or logical clarity. This provides us also with a way to understand Wittgenstein's statement in the *Investigations* that he is demonstrating a method by examples (PI §133; for discussion of problems with the notion of a hierarchical justification and the regress argument, see Kuusela 2008, chs. 1.5 and 6.1).

6. CONCLUSION: THE METHOD OF LANGUAGE-GAMES AS AN EXTENSION OF LOGIC

The preceding sections have sought to explain how Wittgenstein's method of language-games can be understood as a method of logic that is continuous with his

early work and that of Frege and Russell. To summarize, the notion of a language-game, or the idea of regarding language as a game, provides a framework for the investigation of the functioning of linguistic expressions with the purpose of philosophical clarification. The method enables one to focus on and analyze specific aspects of language use, and to be as precise as desired in characterizing such aspects, independently of whether the actual uses of language targeted are really governed by precise rules. The advantage of this approach is that it makes possible the clarification of complicated and fluctuating uses of natural language whose dynamic character and complexity make it very difficult or impossible to present them in terms of the fixed and precise rules of a calculus. In distinction from an approach that assumes language to function like a calculus, the method of language-games makes possible a more flexible use of logical models. This flexibility allows such models to be used in clarifying particular philosophical or logical unclarities without assuming that answers to those unclarities should be all contained in or derived from one systematic description of relevant uses of language. Examples of such complicated uses of language that can be targeted are psychological and epistemic concepts in whose investigation Wittgenstein himself employs the method, thus illustrating its application and clarificatory power. But nothing excludes the application of the method to scientific languages, and Wittgenstein himself uses it in his discussions of mathematics.

Given that every calculus can be understood as a game according to rules, but not every language-game as a calculus, any calculus can be characterized as a language-game, but not *vice versa.* In this sense the notion of a language-game is broader than that of a calculus, and Wittgenstein's method can be characterized as extending logic beyond calculus-based approaches. It thus extends the scope or reach of logic, and has a claim to being able to fill in gaps in logic that make its employments very limited, as Wittgenstein laments (see introduction). A very important feature of his approach in this regard is its non-commitment to describing language exclusively in terms of rules, and the idea that natural historical descriptions can be used as the basis of clarificatory models. And crucially, because language-games as objects of comparison are put forward as modes of presenting language use, descriptions in terms of language-games don't automatically exclude one another. Rather, they can be understood as complementary insofar as they capture different aspects of the use of expressions. For example, rules and natural history-based models can be employed in this complementary manner, whereby natural history-based considerations might be used to make understandable variations and vagueness in the use of an expression that a rule alone could only register but not explain. In this way we can then build up what might be called "multi-dimensional descriptions" in logic. (See Kuusela 2008, ch. 6.6, and forthcoming for discussion.) A different example of complementariness is the use of different models when addressing different philosophical problems.

As for the continuity of Wittgenstein's later approach with Russell and the *Tractatus,* a bridge between Tractarian syntax and language-games is constituted

by the idea of logic as concerned with the use of language and that use can be clarified by spelling out rules for use. But whereas the *Tractatus* assumes language to be governed by exact and fixed rules that underlie the apparent irregularity and inexactness of everyday language, the later Wittgenstein doesn't assume this. The notion of language use in his later philosophy is also broader, not restricted to rule-governed uses (section 5). Nevertheless, despite this evolution of his view, Wittgenstein continues to hold on to certain Russellian methodological ideas, such as the idea that philosophical problems can be resolved by means of logical clarification. He also retains the Russellian distrust of grammatical form as a guide to the functioning of expressions. It is precisely because of form's potential to mislead that Wittgenstein's directs attention to the use of expressions and develops methods to describe it.

Finally, the following question might be raised: if the method of language-games is to be understood as a method of logic, is it a formal method? Here it is possible only to outline an answer. If the notion of formality is understood in Tractarian rather than Hilbertian terms, the answer is affirmative with certain qualifications relating to the notion of meaning assumed in the *Tractatus.* In a logical investigation in the later Wittgenstein's sense no appeal is made to what the expressions in question speak about, as if one were trying to derive the logic or grammar of expressions from the objects spoken about. Such a methodology, according to which we can come to understand, for example, the logic of psychological expressions by turning our attention to relevant mental states or processes rather than the use of words, is criticized by Wittgenstein again and again as fundamentally confused. By contrast, characteristic of his approach is a strict focus on the use of expressions. (See PI §§314, 370.) Here continuity exists between his early conception of the formality of logic and his criticism of Russell (section 1), and we can say that in this sense, the method of language-games is a formal method. Nevertheless, at the same time Wittgenstein's later conception of meaning as use (for example, as constituted by grammatical rules) suggests a need to rethink the notion of formality, insofar as it is assumed to presuppose a sharp distinction between form on the one hand, and content or meaning on the other, as is characteristic of the Hilbertian conception of formality vs. meaningfulness. No such sharp distinction is drawn from Wittgenstein's later point of view.

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NOTES

1. TLP 4.0031 credits Russell for having shown that the "apparent logical form of a proposition need not be its real one," presumably referring to Russell's theory of descriptions. That the apparent and real logical form of an expression might differ is presupposed by the *Tractatus*'s conception of philosophical problems in that logical/philosophical unclarities could hardly arise if the logic of language was perfectly perspicuous as it is. Another developer of the Russellian approach was Carnap. For illustration, I will occasionally contrast Wittgenstein's views with his. For the relation between the *Tractatus* and Carnap's philosophies of logic, see Kuusela 2012. For discussions of the relation between the early Wittgenstein and Russell, see Hacker 1996, ch. 1.2 and Landini 2007.
2. A fundamental continuity in the intended sense doesn't exclude very radical rethinking of the nature of logic and philosophical methodology. For the continuity of Wittgenstein's philosophy, see also Kuusela 2008 and 2011a. A representative of the discontinuity interpretation is Peter Hacker. See Hacker 1996, 97ff.
3. In the manuscript the quoted remark follows immediately RPP II §245 but is not included in the published volume.
4. For different kinds of *Tractatus* interpretations, and an explanation of how a so-called resolute reading can attribute positive, general logical insights to the *Tractatus,* see Kuusela 2011.
5. Wittgenstein writes: "In logical syntax the meaning of a sign should never play a role. It must be possible to establish logical syntax without mentioning the meaning of a sign: only the description of expressions may be presupposed" (TLP 3.33). Here "meaning" means what sentences describe or what linguistic expressions refer to (cf. TLP 3.203). The *Tractatus* presents the point that syntax must be established without reference to the meaning of symbols as a criticism of Russell's view of logic and his theory of types that, Wittgenstein maintains, involves a problematic appeal to what the signs mean (TLP 3.331). This is intimately connected with Wittgenstein's critique of the idea of logic as a science whose statements have factual content. See Kuusela, forthcoming.
6. Wittgenstein's account of how logic can be understood as investigating forms of actual language use without collapsing into empiricism, and his view of logic as concerned with language as a spatial and temporal phenomenon rather than language as an abstract ideal entity are discussed in detail in Kuusela 2013.
7. The focus of this paper on Wittgenstein's method of language-games is not meant to suggest that this is the only method Wittgenstein has or *the* method. Indeed, the method of language-games itself may be understood as a set of related but not identical methods. (See section 5.) For a list of Wittgenstein's methods (with no pretensions of completeness), see Kuusela 2008, 270, and forthcoming for further discussion of his methods.
8. I'll return in section 5 to the conception of language as rule-governed and its significance for the method of language-games, as well as to the role and relevance of natural historical considerations.
9. I'll return to issues connected with the idea of building up of complicated forms from primitive ones in section 4.
10. This isn't the only use Wittgenstein makes of the builders' example. Later on he uses it also to discuss the issue of postulating hidden linguistic structures in the mind and whether they are needed to tacitly complement the use of words so that these words have a specific sense or meaning. (See PI §§19–20.)
11. The remark is first drafted in 1939–40. The typescript into which it is incorporated is from 1945, i.e. the year in which the first part of the *Investigations* was completed. Apparently, Wittgenstein therefore regarded the remark as aptly capturing the method of language-games in that work.
12. Rhees writes about language-games and logical analysis: "The whole idea of a logical analysis of language, or the logical analysis of propositions, is a queer and confused one. And in setting forth his language games Wittgenstein was not trying to give any analysis at all. If we call them 'more primitive' or 'simpler' languages, that does not mean that they reveal anything like the elements which a more complicated language must have" (Rhees 1958, ix). Rhees is right that the language-game method doesn't aspire to reveal any underlying elements in this sense. But the notion of an analysis need not be understood in this way, even if the *Tractatus* did do so (cf. PI §90).

13. Here it is worth noting one more way in which Wittgenstein characterizes language-games, when introducing the notion: they are the kind of primitive forms to which children are first introduced when they learn language (PI §§5, 7; BB, 17, 81). Wittgenstein's talking about the rule-follower as a pupil illustrates this feature. The theme of teaching and learning is also present in his reading example to be discussed shortly.
14. Language-games lose their clarificatory power relative to increase in their complexity—especially, when this is not a matter of building up complexity gradually. This exemplifies the connection between simplicity and clarity, and the possibility of clarification through simplification. Simplification can cut through complexity to the core of matters. Accordingly, it is no accident that simplification is so central to logic, as exhibited by the aspiration to reduce everything to simple basic notions, and as few of them as possible (cf. TLP 5.4541; the program of logicism instructively exemplifies this, as does the *Tractatus*'s idea of the concept of proposition as the only primitive notion of logic; TLP 5.472). The point is that simplification can serve perspicuity, and this is made use of equally in mathematical logic and by the method of language-games. Nevertheless, the underlying question is: how to put simplicity in the service of clarity and avoid falsifying things through simplification. I will return to this question in section 5. How Wittgenstein answers this question is central to his method. See also Kuusela 2013.
15. The following is only intended to further clarify the method of language-games as applicable to highly complex and multifaceted uses of language, not to address Wittgenstein's views on the significance of context for linguistic meaning.
16. I'm assuming that descriptions such as "This sentence is used as a true/false description" or "This sentence is used as a manifestation" are appropriately characterized as descriptions in terms of rules. Such a description seeks to make understandable the role of a sentence by classifying it as belonging to a particular general category of use. What is done here is analogous to how we might classify words as verbs, substantives, and so on, on the basis of rules constitutive of the system of "school grammar."
17. Rather, according to the later Wittgenstein, the uses of words are only to be described as far as is required for solving particular philosophical problems that are under discussion. For this purpose clarifying particular aspects of the use of relevant terms may be fully sufficient. (Ms121, 59r, v; AWL, 97; see Kuusela 2008, 79ff. for discussion.)
18. Instead of 'future regularization' earlier drafts of the remark talk about "future complete description" (Ms157b 17r, v) and "future complete regularization" (Ms142, 119); a related term is "'complete' grammar" (Ms142, 88, 100) which would give us a complete description of a word's use (Ms152, 95). I'll return to the role of language-games as objects of comparison in section 5.
19. See Kant 1990, A832/B860ff., for a discussion of the notion of a system. Essentially, Tractarian analysis presupposes a conception of language as a calculus, which Wittgenstein later characterizes as "a false and idealized conception of the use of language" (Ms116, 81/PG, 211).
20. On the Tractarian view a complete description of the role or logical form of each expression would be achieved through the application of logic, but this task is not undertaken in the book which only seeks to lay down the groundwork for such future applications of logic (TLP 5.557). The later Wittgenstein is also critical of the assumption that language is used according to definite rules, which is another presupposition of the possibility of complete descriptions (see section 5).
21. One might wish to argue against Wittgenstein that it is essential to logic to treat language (reason or thought) as systematic. However, that this is essential to logic can't simply be assumed. Here it is noteworthy that although the rules of Aristotelian syllogistic logic don't constitute a complete system, this has generally not been taken to contradict its claim to the name of logic.
22. Rhees raises essentially the same worry about the builders' language-game, although in slightly different terms (Rhees 1970, 76–77, 81). I'll leave to the side the question whether these objections aren't tacitly theory based.
23. As Schulte similarly points out, it is probably part of the design of this example that it should lead us to ask whether the builders' so-called language really is a language. (See Schulte 2004.)
24. An example of such a particular aspect is the difference between the correlative use of numerals and labeling use of names. Although the use of names is not exhausted by using them to classify objects, or the use of numerals by correlating objects with them, highlighting this difference may be important for specific philosophical purposes.

25. Similarly, Wittgenstein doesn't insist on using the word "meaning" in connection with the shopping example, but is happy to talk about merely the use of words. Neither does he insist on speaking about "understanding" in connection with his rule-following language-game, but he is willing to settle for the description that the rule-follower has internalized or got the rule. (See PI §§1, 146.)
26. See Ms135, 53aff. and Z §§98–99 for Wittgenstein's discussion of this objection to the builders' game. His response is that, admittedly, in order for this example to be comprehensible as a language the builders need to be recognized as similar to us in some ways, and the example assumes this without discussion. Nevertheless, all that the comprehensibility of the example ultimately requires is that something like "rudimentary languages" exist whose use can be described in terms of conjoined actions or behavior without appeal to hidden thought processes, i.e. that the notion of such a language and description isn't impossible in principle. (See Schulte 2004, 34, for a brief discussion.)
27. Similarly, there doesn't seem to be a non-arbitrary empirical criterion for the completeness of language-games with particular expressions or their descriptions. For example, if a tribe uses natural numbers to count objects, and to add and subtract, but has no conception of multiplication or division, is their use of numerals incomplete? We can say their language-game is more primitive than ours, but it is unclear how the claim could be justified that our current use of numerals provides a measure for the completeness for the language-game with numerals in general.
28. In his lectures he says that to talk about language as used according to fixed rules is "really contrary to fact" (AWL, 47; cf. BB, 25). Thus, the conception of language as rule-governed can't be intended as an empirical claim about language.
29. An example is Wittgenstein's conception of meaning as use. See his explanation of the status of this conception in AWL, 48, and discussion in Kuusela 2008, ch. 4. As Wittgenstein notes, logic can be characterized as constructing ideal languages, though not in the sense that "these languages were better, more perfect, than our everyday language" (PI §81; cf. Ms115, 45–46, 50). Rather, language-games may be described as ideal, for example, because of their exactness and perspicuity. And if logic is understood as setting up an ideal in this sense, as Wittgenstein adds in an early version of PI §81, "then it has to be said that this 'ideal' interests us only as an instrument of approximate description of reality" (Ts211, 490/Ts212, 727/Ts213, 253r). For discussion, see Kuusela 2013.
30. See Kuusela 2008, ch. 4, for a discussion of how Wittgenstein's conception of the status of his clarificatory models enables him to avoid commitment to a thesis of language as necessarily rule-governed.
31. As Wittgenstein explains, "primitive" means here that the way of behaving is pre-linguistic, that a language-game depends on it, and that it is a prototype of a way of thinking rather than a result of thinking (Ms134, 113).

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