

**THE CONCEPT OF A NON-RATIONAL FOUNDATION OF MEANING WITH REFERENCE TO THE  
PHILOSOPHY OF LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN**

**MPHIL THESIS**

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife Yukiko for her never-ending belief in me and her firm encouragement. And to my two children Joshua and Lilly-Rose who give me daily inspiration and love. Without their support, encouragement and understanding this work would never have been completed.

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## Introduction

The *Notebooks 1914-1916* record Ludwig Wittgenstein's preliminary writings in preparation for the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921) and offer an excellent insight into the so-called 'early period' of his thought. The writing carefully documents the extraordinary way in which the philosopher grappled with the problems current at the time with Logicism and how he married the main questions and issues with all manner of extended philosophical enquiries which included aesthetic, ethical and spiritual matters. It showcases a philosopher in the midst of understanding and creating the essential main arguments of a first great work and drawing on all of his personal experience and understanding of his world to do so. A great starting point for understanding the basis for Wittgenstein's seminal work, it also contains the raw material for the ideas that were to come in his later writings.

Among the entries for May 1915 there are writings which show Wittgenstein at a crucial stage of his work; searching for a way to adequately define the essential or general form of propositions, he tackles the problem of creating an explanatory bridge between signs (identified inscriptions<sup>1</sup>) and their correlating objects in reality<sup>2</sup>. Motivated by the pioneering work of his predecessors Frege and Russell, one of his goals was the creation of a method of explaining the mental connection of word and object; a way to elucidate the understanding that seems to underpin the form of symbolic representation. Among the diary entries Wittgenstein foreshadows his conclusion of this problem (and the connection to the mystical aspects of the *Tractatus*) with a statement on the gulf between what science can accomplish and our human yearning for such solutions:

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<sup>1</sup> Proops, Ian, "Wittgenstein's Logical Atomism", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/wittgenstein-atomism/>>.

<sup>2</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, translated by D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1961). [[1](http://philosurfical.open.ac.uk/tractatus/tabs.html)]<http://philosurfical.open.ac.uk/tractatus/tabs.html> (All *Tractatus* quotes are taken from this 'hyper-texted' version) Proposition 3.12

'The urge towards the mystical comes of the non-satisfaction of our wishes by science. We *feel* that even if all *possible* scientific questions are answered our problem *is still not touched at all*. Of course in that case there is no more questions anymore; and that is the answer.<sup>13</sup>

The italics in this entry are his own and, it can be said, show the emphasis Wittgenstein was already putting on the *ineffable* aspects of expressing the relationship between ourselves and our reality, and the non-satisfaction of a failure to elucidate these aspects. When Wittgenstein addresses the underlying problem of symbolic representation he asserts that what he and others at that time in logicism were trying to do in trying to produce a way to perfect a definition of the connection between word and object was futile, a move that was in fact impossible, concluding that he was trying put into words *precisely* that which could not be. He understood that the underlying goal of the Logicism of Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell was to provide the essential self-contained axioms and truths of logic was impossible to attain beyond the intuitive level<sup>4</sup>. if we tried to stand outside language and try to describe it's limits and rules, as Russell attempted with the Theory of Types, we would perpetually run into similar unsolvable paradoxes. Wittgenstein shows that to speak of the essence of language using language itself meant to try to move further beyond that which is self-evident: the presupposition of understanding that lies within the use of language. Russell had tried to draw up rules for our intuitive understanding of concepts but as Wittgenstein indicates in the *Tractatus* this is superfluous as any description already presupposes any rules. The correct way to show the limits of language and eliminate paradoxical sentences would be a correct account of logical syntax – the structure of how language functions.

Referring to the impossibility of defining anything further than the surface signs of objects he wrote:

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<sup>3</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig *Notebooks 1914-1916* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Chicago 1984) p51e

<sup>4</sup> In his paper 'Frege and Wittgenstein on Elucidations' P.M.S Hacker shows how Wittgenstein, took over from Frege and Russell the problem of 'indefinables' and created a solution which enabled him reclassify the troublesome concepts and to ultimately accept the role of pre-ratiocinative thinking in the *Tractatus*. Hacker, P.M.S. *Frege and Wittgenstein on Elucidations* Mind LXXXIV: 601-609

'But how am I to explain the general nature of the proposition now? We can indeed say: everything is (or is not) the case can be pictured by means of a proposition. But here we have the expression "*to be the case*"! It is just problematic.

Objects form the counterpart to the proposition.

Objects I can only *name*. Signs go proxy for them.

I can only speak of them, I cannot express them.<sup>5</sup>

It was as though the initial 'grasping', so to speak, of the sign— the moment of comprehension of its logical and relational form to the object — was impossible to describe, inexpressible, although the *understanding* of it was a requirement for that comprehension. It was impossible to say what it is, define it, express it, but it is obviously, *necessarily* apparent. This realisation, that the formal connection between representative names or signs and the 'real' objects they represent in reality is impossible to completely explain — to fully define — meant that Wittgenstein would ultimately move on from the roots of his research — the mandate to unravel the essential, logical origin of meaning to create a logically perfect language given to him by Russell — and marked the beginning of an acceptance (or it could be said the realisation, and even resignation) that language (even a 'perfect' one) in itself can only go so far in providing coherent definitions or reports about the processes of its own creation. Wittgenstein's solution is, of course, to work within language but to focus on what *can* be said by creating an account of logical syntax and to then put language to work in as much as possible to bring clarity. In the *Tractatus* this solution is laid out by having the world (The totality of facts that consist as states of affairs) as a representation of elementary propositions that must be tested for their truth value to find the limits of what can be meaningfully talked about (this of course Wittgenstein attempts with his 'truth tables').

Wittgenstein asserts in proposition 6.1 that the 'truth' of logic is merely the presentation of tautologies<sup>6</sup>; the actual 'grasping' of meaning then must be a *further* action on an intuitive level.

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<sup>5</sup> Notebooks 1914-1916 Wittgenstein, Ludwig 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Chicago 1984) p51e

We can hold language right up to nature in the same way we could see a reflection in a mirror, however we cannot use the language to point at something further - the necessary existing relation between the two. It can be concluded then that the very nature of language prohibits expression of its essential structure, and that agreement of form, logical relations, semantics, the internal properties and relations of things and situations were apparent truths that cannot be stated but are nevertheless asserted or 'shown' by the language itself.

Wittgenstein provides some mechanics to flesh out some of the claims we have stated above and these are found in the *Tractatus*. Of course one of the most significant ideas in the *Tractatus* and which develops from this idea that what a proposition has in common with reality but cannot be said was the picturing relation or 'pictorial form':

'2.17 What a picture must have in common with reality in order to be able to depict it - correctly or incorrectly - in the way that it does, is pictorial form.'

Arguably a quasi-Platonic idea the pictorial form is not to be isolated and expressed in any way but in actuality refers to or describes an ability which enables us to imagine a mental connection between language and world. It was a mechanism which rests on something *relational* without reverting back to an earlier philosophy of metaphysics that relies on something *essential*. The key thing to understand here is that Wittgenstein is enabling philosophy to elucidate on the back of something that cannot be or doesn't have to be said - an intuitive idea which seems to operate before language (*it is inexpressible*) and therefore before ratiocination (we require language for rational thought). We can progress in philosophy without having to forge any first principles or essential foundations that are presented in verifiable clarity<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> 'The propositions of logic are tautologies.' proposition 6.1, Wittgenstein, Ludwig *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, translated by D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1961).  
[\[1\]http://philosurfical.open.ac.uk/tractatus/tabs.html](http://philosurfical.open.ac.uk/tractatus/tabs.html) (All *Tractatus* quotes are taken from this 'hyper-texted' version)

<sup>7</sup> Wittgenstein saw philosophy as primarily a critical activity and above all a force for elucidation. This was in contrast to earlier thinkers who saw the discipline as a 'march of reason' to some essential truth.



Wittgenstein limits what *can* be said to simply tautologies in logic, meaning something either is or not the case when compared to the actual existing world. Nothing further can be sought outside of these tautologies but at the same time they are necessarily and logically true. The logical tautology enables us to say something about the essential nature of language and its relation to reality but stops short at giving us any concrete *verifiable* proof about that reality itself:

2.21 A picture agrees with reality or fails to agree; it is correct or incorrect, true or false.

Later in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein creates a clearer idea of the internal relations between proposition, language and reality and confirms the picturing relation in greater clarity:

4.01 A proposition is a picture of reality.

The internal relation between the picture and reality is greater emphasized and made clearer through an analogy with different mediums of music:

4.014 A gramophone record, the musical idea, the written notes, and the sound-waves, all stand to one another in the same internal relation of depicting that holds between language and the world. They are all constructed according to a common logical pattern. (Like the two youths in the fairy-tale, their two horses, and their lilies. They are all in a certain sense one.)

Then, the *intuitive* connection of proposition and reality by way of the picture theory is later hammered home:

4.021 A proposition is a picture of reality: for if I understand a proposition, I know the situation that it represents. And I understand the proposition without having had its sense explained to me.

The mirroring part of the use of logic *presupposes* a viewer who is able to make the connection between language and world. It is clear here that we are witnessing Wittgenstein's early influences at work - the engineering theorists Hertz and Boltzmann. These pioneers were studied by Wittgenstein in his formative years and were influential in bringing a strong Kantian-

like thrust to science and removing the obscure metaphysical elements. However the most important concept that was influential to Wittgenstein we could argue was the notion of introducing a way of referring to an 'invisible' element to an equation; the use of the notion of 'force':

'Both [Hertz and Boltzmann] espouse a fundamentally Kantian view of the nature and method of philosophy. In *Principles of Mechanics* Hertz addresses the problem of how to understand the mysterious concept of 'force' as it is used in Newtonian physics. Hertz proposes that, instead of giving a direct answer to the question: 'What is force?', the problem should be dealt with by restating Newtonian physics without using 'force' as a basic concept. 'When these painful contradictions are removed', he writes, 'the question as to the nature of force will not have been answered; but our minds, no longer vexed will cease to ask illegitimate questions.'<sup>8</sup>

Not only does Wittgenstein's emphasis on the 'internal relations' between object and sign find significance from these ideas but also the famous final proposition 7 of the *Tractatus* 'Whereof one cannot speak thereof one must remain silent' is an echo. The influence of Hertz and Boltzmann can be felt in the *Tractatus* as a whole gamut of ineffable 'unsayables' are presented which include propositions of value, aesthetics and philosophy etc. Wittgenstein famously walked away from philosophy for a time after the *Tractatus*<sup>9</sup> having thought to have laid to rest all of it's problems in the pages of the book. Scholars of Wittgenstein had looked back to the *Tractatus* often as a completed, isolated work that was self-contained in the sense that it presented it's arguments and propositions in the most succinct matter possible accepting the idea that ineffable concepts can be 'shown' but not said. However there is a crucial line in the *Tractatus* which has proven to be problematic for readers and commentators in recent years and which has meant the *Tractatus* cannot be taken simply as a work which highlights the ineffable nature of our ability to express the nature of our reality. Proposition 6.54 'Anyone who understands me finally recognises [my propositions] as nonsense.' Has led contemporary

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<sup>8</sup> Monk, Ray. *Ludwig Wittgenstein The Duty of Genius* (London 1990) Vintage Books, p 26

<sup>9</sup> Wittgenstein returned to philosophy writing 'Some Remarks on Logical Form' in 1929. This return was prompted Frank Ramsey's Criticism of the *Tractatus* and the interest of the Vienna Circle.

philosophers to argue exactly what was meant by this and how it potentially undermines certain positions taken on reading the *Tractatus* (Including the position I am taking in this paper). These problems I shall explore in depth below.

Later as Wittgenstein moved away from his Russelian analytic philosophy roots and developed his famous 'anthropological' perspective, he completely dropped a central mission of Logicism – to provide an underlying essential cartography of the logical structure of language – going further by redefining philosophy itself as a discipline no longer required to 'discover' hidden fundamental essences (a cause reserved for human sciences) as this, he believed, would be a fruitless endeavour and in effect both paradoxical and in fact superfluous<sup>10</sup>. Wittgenstein believed that philosophy was slavishly following the route and momentum of science with its 'craving for generality'. With the publishing of Wittgenstein's later writings, lectures and conversations, we see that he regarded contemporary philosophy to be too preoccupied with science and the scientific method.<sup>11</sup> Wittgenstein tried to show that many different fields, aesthetics, mathematics, psychology etc. were each affected by the cultural bias toward science and the scientific method:

'Our craving for generality has another main source: our preoccupation with the method of science. I mean the method of reducing the explanation of natural phenomena to the smallest possible number of primitive natural laws; and, in mathematics, of unifying the treatment of different topics by using a generalisation. Philosophers constantly see the method of science before their eyes, and are irresistibly tempted to ask and answer questions in the way that science does'<sup>12</sup>

In the *Blue and Brown books* (and through his later work) Wittgenstein shows that philosophy itself must return to its more traditional Socratic role as a tool of *clarification* but that the notion of 'truth' should be redefined to something other than a hidden universal essence.

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<sup>10</sup> The most stark example of this is in the *Philosophical Investigations* paragraph 139 when Wittgenstein criticizes his earlier picture theory.

<sup>11</sup> See 'Culture and Value' (University of Chicago Press 1980) for extended thoughts on the contemporary world and its scientific outlook.

<sup>12</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig *The Blue and Brown Books*, (New York 1960) Harper & Row, p 18

(Later Wittgensteinian scholars such as D.Z. Phillips introduced a style of philosophy based on Wittgenstein's writings which emphasized the importance of 'contemplative thinking' with the intention of not allowing personal prejudices to interfere into the investigation of a topic. (See below)

However Wittgenstein didn't completely reject the idea that there existed some kind of central form in language (Although the picture theory would be completely dropped) but that this form couldn't be pinned down to something *essential* – it was ever-changing, elastic, something akin to a 'form of life'<sup>13</sup>. Wittgenstein felt that the point and aim of a fruitful, functional philosophy should only be to elucidate; to allow access to, if not to explicitly 'define' the 'truth' by unravelling the puzzles and problems that philosophy itself creates. Positively, this means that the philosopher is truly a 'citizen of no community'<sup>14</sup> as she is free to unravel problems from an outside perspective and bring to those puzzles the liberating philosophical instrument of 'perspicuous representation'<sup>15</sup>. In avoiding the mistake of believing that philosophy could 'discover' theories, the thinker would no longer risk creating further clouding and puzzlement through the development of ever more complex 'theory'. One of Wittgenstein's central missions in the later work was to look at the way our language operates and how investigating concepts and ideas within language is problematic and can lead to confusions as language tries to look at itself.

Amongst his later writings (and especially his work that would not be published until long after his death) Wittgenstein also looked at culture in general applying his meaning in grammar principles, language games and 'forms of life' to religious themes, ceremony and mythology. The concept of an underlying, ineffable, non-rational foundation that stretches from the 'primitive reaction' of a basic religious ceremony to highly developed cultural output such as

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<sup>13</sup> Biletzki, Anat and Matar, Anat, "Ludwig Wittgenstein", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/wittgenstein/>>.

<sup>14</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig *Zettel* Edited by G.E.M Anscombe and G.H. Von Wright University of California Press (California 1967) Paragraph 455

<sup>15</sup> Ben-Moshe, Nir On Wittgenstein's Notion of a Perspicuous Representation: Freud, Frazer, Art and Rule-Following < <http://cas.uchicago.edu/workshops/wittgenstein/files/2011/05/Ben-Moshe.pdf>>

mathematics is most stark when bringing together the different stages of Wittgenstein's philosophical output and comparing the main themes.

Philosophy then should not worry itself with questions of an ultimate source for truth, and progress from the traditional problems of accounting for the fundamental possibility of human knowledge. Or should it? Even accounting for Wittgenstein's freeing of philosophy from the hunt for elusive essences, and accepting the later turn toward linguistic solutions to philosophical problems that turn away from a fundamental underlying theory, there still remains however this unchallenged acceptance of this ineffable 'presupposition of understanding' that seems to lie at the base of language and knowledge and stretch throughout the different forms of cultural and creative output. If it is no longer the case that a definition is sought for the 'grasping' (for want of a better word) of the form, function and meaning of signs etc., should this essential, ineffable and intuitive feature of knowledge be 'passed over in silence'? There is an *assumption* at work within knowledge; that we hold an unique ability to comprehend the foundations of information of our world *tacitly* before full-blown rationality, but Wittgenstein's work seems to demand this ability cannot ever adequately be clarified or defined (or that it is superfluous to do so). But just because we cannot directly define it is it unreasonable to ask to what extent the different uses of such an ability could be elucidated, collated and presented as a coherent view? Also I do think that on the contrary there is something worthwhile about looking at how all forms of knowledge can be linked by a single existing intuitive foundation. That this foundation is inexpressible does not lessen it's importance and it's necessity. There is at least, an opportunity to present more coherently how the ineffable aspects of knowledge underpin the entire human cultural output from science to art.

I claim that Wittgenstein's greatest overall accomplishment throughout his philosophy is the powerful elucidation of 'frameworks' within which experience can be described or expressed. These frameworks are governed by 'language games' and cover different areas of human culture e.g. Logic, science, aesthetics, ethics, spirituality, creative enterprise etc. These different frameworks are linked by an aim of clarification which manifests itself through the

disentangling of problematic language and what is revealed is the common basis of all human expression. My thesis is that there exists then an underlying commonality between all frameworks of understanding and forms of knowledge, even those which appear to be diametrically opposed in their purpose, aims and methods, for example religion and science to name two. This commonality I claim is the universal access to an underlying ineffable, 'intuitive' (the word is itself problematic) understanding of language and therefore all of meaning itself. And what is more, I claim this understanding operates before ratiocination or is in fact 'non-rational'. I claim that throughout Wittgenstein's philosophy, from his early work on logical pictures of facts, through to the emphasis on grammar and 'forms of life' there has been a constant implicit referral to this foundation and I aim to highlight the various occasions in which the philosopher has pushed it to the fore. To support my thesis a greater explanation and definition of this commonality is warranted and it is the job of the writer to provide enough description to satisfy the reader. This I will endeavour to do.

I believe enough adequate description could be collated by contrasting Wittgenstein's earlier work in Logicism with the later 'anthropological turn' and by presenting a clear bridge between the phases and providing examples in which Wittgenstein refers (implicitly or explicitly) to the ineffable foundation underlying understanding. It is my intention to provide enough evidence to satisfy the claim that Wittgenstein's work, as a whole, includes references to a 'non-rational' foundation to all language, knowledge, creativity and meaning. Finally I will explore the concept of a non-rational foundation and its relationship with the ineffable and mystical in greater detail.

My dissertation will consist of three parts:

**Part one** of this paper will consist of an analysis of the 'early Wittgenstein' and focus on the *Tractatus*. How Wittgenstein treats the ineffable in the early work is crucial to understanding the intuitive foundational link that can be traced throughout his work. With this in mind, my investigation will address the so called 'Resolute reading' controversy (the problem with proposition 6.54 as mentioned above) as my thesis presupposes that the *Tractatus* must be

read 'traditionally'. This means that although there is an apparent paradox within the heart of the work, however we accept this as the themes and points made in the work in a sense override this problem. Also because we are dealing with the ineffable and it's necessary existence, the so called 'resolute' reading is clearly dismissive of this fact. This investigation, I believe, would help provide enough evidence also to highlight the important references to the ineffable in the early work that link with the later and defend my central thesis of the non-rational foundation for meaning.

**Part Two** will continue the investigation into an underlying ineffable foundation but will pick up the strand from the move, by Wittgenstein, from 'logical form' to 'grammar' and the 'primitive reaction' in the later writings. I will highlight that while still working from the idea of a central form, the foundations of meaning in the later work find Wittgenstein moving away from atomic fundamental concepts to something more fluid. There will be a special emphasis here on how, although the investigation can move from the limits of what can be verified, there still can be a strong scientific outlook in that we are not retreating to the realms of something completely mystical. At this point I will then formally introduce the concept of a non-rational foundation to meaning, bringing as complete a definition as possible. To support this new idea I will present the ideas of Michal Polyani and the concept of 'Tacit' knowledge in support, as I believe his ideas are the closest to the concept as possible. I will also look at Wittgenstein's idea of concept formation through language as a 'form of life' and I will show how this new anthropological emphasis allows the investigation of the 'ineffable' roots of human expression to progress into the creative and cultural products of civilization.

**Part three** will focus on an exploration of the non-rational foundation of knowledge and its relationship with the ineffable. I will look at the inability to express the ineffable in terms of knowledge, religious belief and the sublime and how this in the end is a superfluous idea. Looking at key Wittgensteinian thinkers such as D.Z. phillips I will argue for the 'contemplative' approach to philosophy which eschews the idea of a final goal and the inclusion of personal interests. I will argue how this would fit neatly with Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy. I will then approach the very concept of the ineffable through Wittgenstein's ideas. I will also

argue that the frameworks of different times of discourse that are seemingly at odds with each other such as religion and science do in fact share a underlying 'ineffable' structure at their formation - the non-rational foundation of meaning. Finally I will present a conclusion to discuss what such a 'shared' underlying structure means for philosophy and the various expressions of human knowledge of the world.



## Part One

### Why the Ineffable is Key to understanding Wittgenstein and the Non-rational Foundation of Meaning

As stated above If we are going to link all of Wittgenstein's work with a view to finding a common underlying concept of the origin of language, knowledge and therefore meaning then we must deal with what has been called the 'resolute reading' controversy. By 'resolute' the supporters of this reading (among them the so-called 'New Wittgensteinians') understand that the *Tractatus* must be read taking proposition 6.54 firmly into account:

'My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.)

He must surmount these propositions; then he sees the world rightly.'<sup>16</sup>

By reading the *Tractatus* 'resolutely' the 'New Wittgensteins' are maintaining that Wittgenstein is stating without question, via proposition 6.54, that his entire work is 'framed' within the only writing that can be taken a face value, i.e. the introduction and proposition 6.54. These, according to the resolute reading advocates, are the only writings that convey any real meaning and that they alone set up the true purpose of the entire work. The propositions in between are then considered quite literally 'nonsense', and nonsense meaning a garbled set of words with absolutely no meaning at all. It could be argued then as a result of this that 'resolute' readers maintain that in a sense there is no 'early' and 'later' Wittgenstein - everything that the later Wittgenstein says is already manifest in the *Tractatus* for he is already making the break from an investigation of Logic to the investigation into everyday language usage that was a feature of the later work. For supporters of the resolute reading you cannot have your cake and eat it so to speak; proposition 6.54 means that the whole of the work is nonsense and it is wrong to highlight any of the propositions that supposedly point to any 'ineffable' truths. The idea with

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<sup>16</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* Online Version <<http://people.umass.edu/phil335-klement-2/tlp/tlp.html>> (Ogden translation) Throughout this paper we will be using the Ogden translation.

the resolute reading is that you are 'seduced' into reading the work at the beginning with an aim to show how propositions relate to reality but then as the *Tractatus* unfolds we are then shown the world as it should be in a kind of 'therapeutic' exercise. For the thesis of this paper this of course a terrible blow because the 'resolute' reading excludes any of the references to ineffable insights which are a key feature of the existence of a non-rational foundation of meaning. The aim of this section of the paper is to show how the resolute reading is flawed and that the *Tractatus* does, in fact, allow for ineffable insights. I intend to show the *Tractatus* should be read 'traditionally'.

The resolute reading has a relatively recent history and can be traced back to an essay by Cora Diamond in 1988: 'Throwing Away the Ladder: How to Read the *Tractatus*'<sup>17</sup>. Later James Conant collaborated with Diamond to produce two works related to the resolute reading. The main debates on the reading however raged in the Nineties<sup>18</sup> with several major commentators giving endorsements of versions of the arguments. The resolute reading continues to be debated and it can be argued has played a major part in Wittgenstein scholarship in the last two decades.

The main arguments of the 'resolute' reading of the *Tractatus* revolves around the treatment of proposition 6.54 in relation to the rest of the work. Diamond and others insist that 'traditional' readers are not correctly interpreting this proposition when they allow for any ineffable insights in the *Tractatus* to be conveyed by any of the propositions:

'According to Conant and Diamond, this remark is interpreted in an "irresolute way" way whenever a reader thinks that the elucidatory propositions of the *Tractatus*, even though "strictly speaking" nonsensical, are nonetheless capable of conveying ineffable insights into the nature of reality thought and language'<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Bronzo, Silver *The Resolute Reading and Its Critics: An Introduction to the Literature*, Wittgenstein-Studien, Vol 3, 2012, p2.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p4

They insist readers literally be 'resolute' and remember that 6.54 is quite plainly telling us that the propositions in the *Tractatus* are nonsense, and are simply there to help them to realise this. There can be no recourse to the propositions to elucidate any metaphysical or spiritual 'truths', there are no theories of meaning and definitely no 'varieties of nonsense' in which some nonsense is more equal than others.

It can be argued that the different 'readings' of the *Tractatus* can be divided roughly into three varieties. There is the 'traditional' reading in which ineffable truths are claimed to be elicited, the more 'neo-positivist' reading (the initial reaction to the *Tractatus* by Ramsey, Russell, the Vienna Circle etc. Plus more modern readers who share similar traits) and then the relatively recent 'resolute' reading with its claims to there being no 'ineffable' insights in the *Tractatus*. We will now take a closer look at these three readings and lay out the strengths and weaknesses of each. Finally we will conclude with which reading is the most convincing.

### **1) The 'Neo-Positivist' readings.**

We can argue that the first substantial and textual reaction to the *Tractatus* came from Wittgenstein's one time mentor Bertrand Russell in the form of his introduction to the book. Russell helpfully provided the introduction to the *Tractatus* in order to support its publication. The introduction acted as a guide to understanding the difficult text but also included a 'suggestion' to investigate a possible hierarchy of languages to attest for the problem of a securing the internal structure of language:

'These difficulties suggest to my mind some such possibility as this: that every language has, as Mr Wittgenstein says, a structure concerning which in the language, nothing can be said, but that there may be another language dealing with the structure of the first language, and having itself a new structure, and that to this hierarchy of languages there may be no limit.'<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Russell, Bertrand *Introduction to Ludwig Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.  
<<http://www.bazzocchi.net/wittgenstein/tractatus/eng/introduzione.htm>>

The 'meta-linguistic' take on the *Tractatus* is an idea that was dismissed early by Wittgenstein as he reacted angrily to Russell's introduction.<sup>21</sup> However, apart from Russell's helpful or otherwise review and introduction, the most engaging and longer lasting reactions came most famously from the Vienna circle and also Frank Ramsey, who was an early admirer and student of the *Tractatus*. They seem to receive the *Tractatus* as a catalyst for promoting and continuing Logical Positivism and as a guide for the creation of the verification principle. Pointedly choosing largely to ignore proposition 6.54 and the 'mystical' aspects of the work, the positivists continued with the traditional mission to have philosophy link its clarifying work with that of the scientific method. Roger White in his guide to the *Tractatus*, argues that Ramsey gained much insight for his work from discussions with Wittgenstein and reading the *Tractatus* and simply ignoring 6.54:

'Ramsey was aware he was not straightforwardly interpreting the *Tractatus*, but simply profiting from Wittgenstein's ideas where he could. What his example suggests is, however, the possibility of an exegesis of the *Tractatus* that simply ignores 6.54. There have certainly been many commentators who, while not explicitly saying that this what they are doing'<sup>22</sup>

White goes on to argue the main reason why this reading took off was because it seems so readily possible and there might even be reason to believe that an earlier version of the work might have existed that stopped at proposition 6 and not 7; that all of the mystical aspects of the work were 'tacked on' to a more straightforwardly logical positivist work.<sup>23</sup> The 'saying and showing' distinction (the key concept that propositions can point to or 'show' meaning rather than trying to spell out or 'say' meaning) of which marks out the requirement to accept that there exist ineffable truths is simply ignored according to White<sup>24</sup> and while this is problematic in not presenting the full picture according to Wittgenstein, it seems to have been accepted on the basis that what was philosophically interesting has been worked on and added to.

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<sup>21</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig *Notebooks 1914 - 1916* University of Chicago Press (US 1984) p131

<sup>22</sup> White, Roger M. *Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London 2006) Continuum p124

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p125

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p124

The neo-positivist reading is set apart from any other reading in that they seem to accept that the 'saying and showing distinction' a way in which Wittgenstein can 'have his cake and eat it' and live with a paradox of his own creation. They see the *Tractatus* as a purely theoretical book in which the limits and boundaries of sense are drawn. Meaningful propositions are sorted out from nonsensical propositions and the saying and showing distinction is merely a device which is appealed to in order to get around the paradox. Also in a sense this problem is further 'solved' with an appeal to the meta-structure of language; the idea introduced by Russell in his introduction (see above).

Another point which is firmly related to the acceptance of the saying and showing distinction is how the Neo-positivists seem to offer some concession to the ineffable in the way they treat 'nonsense'. There is a differentiation between what is called 'mere' and 'substantial' nonsense, referring to how ineffable truths can be conveyed through propositions that are technically 'nonsense'. Bronzo, in his introduction to the history of the resolute reading controversy, neatly describes the difference:

'It [substantial nonsense] is supposed to consist in syntactic constructions that turn out to be nonsensical in virtue of the meanings that have been assigned in their constituent parts, whereas mere nonsense arises when a string of words does not convey any content because we have not assigned them any determinate meaning. As a matter of fact, therefore, the neo-positivist readings share ineffabilist readers' commitment to the idea that some nonsensical propositions express 'illogical thoughts'<sup>25</sup>

Although it is recognized that a proposition is nonsense it is 'substantial' in that it has a certain cohesion in syntax but it's 'constituent parts' do not have any 'determinate meaning'. We could point to Chomsky's 'Colorless green ideas sleep furiously' sentence is an example of this. Although there are no obvious grammatical problems with it - it's syntax is sound - there are semantic problems in that the words taken as a whole sentence seem to carry no actual

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<sup>25</sup> Bronzo, Silver *The Resolute Reading and Its Critics*. An Introduction to the Literature Wittgenstein-Studien, Vol. 3, 2012 p.11

meaning and are therefore nonsense. Bronzo goes on to argue that the neo-positivists are bringing to the table a theory of meaning which, the resolute reading supporters argue would move them firmly into the infabulist reader's territory:

'...by attributing to the *Tractatus* a theory of meaning, the neo-positivist interpretations end up assuming a substantial conception of nonsense- thus converging, on this point, with the infabulistic interpretations.'<sup>26</sup>

The idea being that although certain propositions do not make logical and syntactical sense - they are nonsense, they are not considered nonsense in that they are gibberish, but hold meaning that is not conveyed directly or 'said' - the meaning is shown. Thus we have a distinction between 'mere' nonsense (gibberish) and 'substantial' nonsense (a sense that is conveyed through 'showing' not saying).

The idea behind this distinction is that although 'substantial nonsense' propositions might fail a verifiability test and in the strictest terms be labelled 'nonsense', there is still a 'sense' conveyed through the words in some fashion. This, the resolute readers take issue with. We could argue that this concept is only strange because we are looking at language in the 'philosophical' setting, or in a strict 'scientific' context. In the world of poetry and art in general it is clear that words are deliberately experimented with to bring forth ineffable meaning which seems such a clear and major part of our lives. One example would be Haiku poetry in which a simple collection of sentences are supposed to bring with them a whole weighty amount of meaning.

Here is an example from Natsume Soseki:

The crow has flown away:

swaying in the evening sun,

a leafless tree.

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<sup>26</sup> Bronzo, Silver *The Resolute Reading and Its Critics. An Introduction to the Literature Wittgenstein-Studien*, Vol. 3, 2012 p.11

Syntax and semantics involved here are arguably sound but we are not invited to read the poem simply for its literal visual picture. There is a deeper meaning in which emotional reactions are ignited within the poem's few words. The meaning of the poem is contextual and the context is reliant on human experiences that relate to the poem's few words. We can claim there is 'substantial nonsense' going on here in that there is no attempt in the poem to describe or signpost the poem's deeper meaning. However the readers who are moved by the words would say it is most certainly there - there is something more than the literal description.

But philosophy cannot be written in haiku form and Wittgenstein only has meaningful propositions with which to use to get over his argument. In a nutshell here we have the problem of philosophy, and in particular Wittgenstein's philosophy, trying to present something which has crossed the limits of what can be presented.

The real argument here is that of course the 'silence' in the final proposition 'Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent' is actually bursting with meaning. We must remain silent because our words cannot abide by a certain strict logical code of meaning. The neo-positivist interpretation of the *Tractatus* would argue strongly against this idea and argue that we can only speak of things coherently or not at all. The point at which they converge with the 'traditional' or 'ineffabilist' readings is that they accept the notion of the saying and showing distinction in order to make up for the shortcomings which are manifest when the work falls into paradoxical self-refutation. In fact it is this paradox - that proposition Wittgenstein states in 6.54 that his propositions are nonsense - that is the key for understanding the different readings. The biggest problem for the neo-positivist readings is that they seem to accept the paradox through attributing to the *Tractatus* a theory of meaning (through the idea there is a meta-structure) and a substantial conception of nonsense accepting the saying and showing distinction. To summarise, the neo-positivist reading allows for the self-refutation of the *Tractatus* through the saying and showing distinction. It overlaps with the traditional reading as it accepts a certain level of ineffable meaning because there is much in the *Tractatus* that is of use to Logicism. Also accepted is the notion of substantial nonsense which is the understanding that language has more meaning than simply its syntactical structure and symbols.

Let's look at the strengths and weaknesses of the neo-positivist position in point form:

Strengths:

- The *Tractatus* is taken as a catalyst for further research in the field of Logicism and leads to the verification principle and Logical Positivism
- Allows the mystical aspects of the work and 'saying and showing' distinction to enable the reader to move past the paradox of proposition 6.54
- Has a concession to 'substantial nonsense'

Weaknesses:

- The early commentators seem to be mistaken or misguided about the possibility of a 'meta-language'.
- Posits a 'theory of language' which is rejected by both Wittgenstein and the resolute readers.

In conclusion, for the neo-positivists, the *Tractatus* is the basis for a movement of philosophy through which language is to be intimately examined using tools of verification taken or inspired by the work. Early readers like Russell and Ramsey praised the book and the Vienna Circle and the later Logical Positivists adopted those tools to continue what they considered was Wittgenstein's purpose and goal for the work. However, paradoxically they accept the 'challenging' aspects of the work which seem to break the essential rules to which they would use to do so. Simply ignoring or developing another theory (meta-language) to seal the ineffabilist holes leads the reader who is comparing different approaches to the *Tractatus* wanting to question why they would accept these challenging parts. In this sense they are in a far weaker position than the resolute readers whom are, at least, taking the work more straightforward and have, as we will see below, arguments for why the 'ineffabilist' elements are left intact.

## **2) The Resolute Readings**



According to the research by Bronzo there are three fundamental differences between 'irresolute' and resolute readings of the Tractatus.<sup>27</sup> The resolute reading must agree:

- The propositions of the book that the reader is asked to recognise as nonsensical do not convey ineffable insights.
- No theory or meaning is advanced in the book. No such theory is required to achieve the aforementioned recognition.
- The book rejects any substantial conception of nonsense.

Regarding the first point of the conveying of 'ineffable truths'; if we are to believe that the Tractatus is capable of conveying these truths we must, as readers, confront a few of the 'inconvenient' things that are stated in the work.

In his book *Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* Roger M. White gives three quotations from Wittgenstein which neatly presents the paradoxical situation and form 'an inconsistent triad which seem to be the heart of all the issues':

In the Preface, Wittgenstein makes two claims about the Tractatus:

'In it thoughts are expressed . . . The truth of the thoughts communicated here seems to me unassailable and definitive'

At 4, we read:

A thought is a significant proposition.

And at 6.54:

Anyone who understands me finally recognises [my propositions] as nonsense.<sup>28</sup>

This triad is extremely useful when looking at the different interpretations as it captures 'in a nutshell' the problems that relate to them. A resolute reader can confront the paradoxical issue

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid p.11

<sup>28</sup> White, Roger, M *Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London 2006) Continuum p119.

head on and highlight that if we discount the middle quotation (a thought is a *significant* proposition) the triad would make complete sense and the paradox resolved; the technical process of interpreting a thought into a proposition is at the heart of what is problematic in the *Tractatus*. However, a 'traditional' reader might argue that the tension between the quotations has to be lived with and is simply part of the paradoxical nature of an attempt by Wittgenstein to try to show how language runs up to the walls of reality. Finally a 'neopositivist' might argue that it would be best to ignore the final quotation (these are merely Wittgensteinian flourishes) and stress the importance of the middle one as the technical aspects of the work are what are the most important and useful.

White then bases this chapter on a discussion of the various interpretations and readings analyzing them in turn. To read the *Tractatus* 'resolutely' one must take proposition 6.54 as being the most important proposition as it is saying what has come before it is nonsense, and therefore as nonsense it is meaningless and the majority of the book is. And 6.54 is stating that 'Anyone who understands *me*', Wittgenstein not the book, recognises the propositions as nonsense. This would seem to indicate further that Wittgenstein is, so to speak, lifting the reader's eyes away from the book and giving further weight to the notion that the work is 'therapeutic' in the sense it has to be read to then be seen as nonsense. However It is a very curious notion to argue that Wittgenstein might have been leading the reader along through what is a carefully constructed set of technical arguments and processes to then announce boldly that we have been strung along and they are than all to be discounted. Whatever the case may be it would be equally absurd to argue that Wittgenstein had purposely made such a great mistake; this tension is obviously deliberate and reflects the problems that arise when Wittgenstein is trying to show the structure of language (and the wider reality) using language.

The biggest support for the resolute reader's interpretation is the preface's statement that the 'truths' communicated are unassailable and definitive, This would seem to make the interpretation the most obvious because of proposition 6.54's weight in relation to the whole of the work. However as White and others argue there is a lot going on with regards to the chatter surrounding the work and no less by Wittgenstein himself. The most famous of which is from

Wittgenstein himself to the publisher Von Fricker when he argues that the most important thing about the Tractatus is what *isn't* said:

'I wanted to write that my work consists of two parts: of the one which is here, and of everything which I have *not* written. And precisely this second part is the important one. For the ethical is delimited from within, as it were, by my book; and I'm convinced that, strictly speaking, it can ONLY be delimited in this way. In brief, I think: All of that which many are babbling today, I have defined in my book by remaining silent about it.'<sup>29</sup>

Then, in the same letter Wittgenstein mentions the foreword and the conclusion to emphasize them, I believe, in exactly the opposite manner in which the resolute readers do so:

'Therefore the book will, unless I'm quite wrong, have much to say which you want to say yourself, but perhaps you won't notice that it is said in it. For the time being, I'd recommend that you read the foreword and the conclusion since these express the point most directly.'<sup>30</sup>

Wittgenstein can only be here emphasizing the importance of what *cannot* be said here, the saying and showing distinction. The resolute readers' point to the foreword and conclusion to support their point of view as they believe it clearly dismisses any signals towards 'ineffable' truths. However, in this letter Wittgenstein is plainly pointing towards those ineffable truths (he very distinctly says what is important is what isn't written). This is echoed in the preface of the Tractatus where Wittgenstein famously writes: 'Perhaps this book will be understood only by someone who has himself already had the thoughts that are expressed in it – or at least similar thoughts – so it is not a textbook.' This passage can easily be interpreted as an emphasis on the importance of the reader to rely on their own insight rather than to be told how to engage with the text?

Also there is correspondence between Wittgenstein and Russell which make it difficult for a resolute reader to maintain their position when there is such a great emphasis on the importance of the saying and showing distinction regarding the work. White gives an example

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<sup>29</sup> Monk, Ray Ludwig *Wittgenstein The Duty of Genius* (London 1990) Vintage p178.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

of this in his book on the *Tractatus* when Russell argues that 'it is necessary also to be given the proposition that all elementary propositions are given', Wittgenstein replies:

'This is not necessary because it is even impossible. There is no such proposition! That all elementary propositions are given is *shown* by there being none having an elementary sense which is not given.'<sup>31</sup>

Here, clearly again Wittgenstein himself is referring to the importance of the saying and showing distinction within the context of the *Tractatus*. It is clear then that Wittgenstein held great importance for the saying and showing distinction in the wake of his book. It is also clear that this distinction brings us the importance and reliance on ineffable truths in the *Tractatus* and that this is in obvious opposition to the resolute reading of the text.

Going back to the points above that deal with the main agreements that the resolute readers must share, with the second point, of there being no theory of meaning nor doctrine advanced in the book, we can look to the pages of the *Tractatus* itself to answer this. In proposition 4.112 Wittgenstein states 'Philosophy is not a doctrine but an activity'. This is a very important proposition because it arguably side-steps the resolute readers' position but it also sets up some of the main themes of Wittgenstein's overall approach to philosophy that he had not only at the time of writing the *Tractatus* but also throughout his life. It also goes a long way, I believe, in resolving the resolute reading issues. First of all it seems that this is a debate on semantics for only meaningful sentences can be expressed in a 'doctrine'; by firmly stating that philosophy is an activity, Wittgenstein is then discounting that his work be read as a doctrine at all and this sets him free from the aims of Logicism, as his overall goal is rather one of clarity and elucidation. Wittgenstein also stated in the preface that the *Tractatus* (or at the very least the thoughts expressed in it) were 'unassailable and definitive'. If we follow this to the letter but read the *Tractatus* in the 'Traditional' way then he seems to argue the questions of logic in the only possible way by breaking the boundaries of sense - the saying and showing distinction is

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<sup>31</sup> White, Roger, M *Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London 2006) Continuum p127.

required. P.M.S Hacker in his essay 'Wittgenstein, Carnap and the New American Wittgensteinians' neatly addresses the issue of proposition 6.54:

'Tractatus 6.54 does not speak of 'clarifications' or 'elucidations', but merely says that 'my sentences clarify', in as much as someone who understands their author will eventually recognise them as nonsense... ..They are the self-conscious attempts of the author to say what can only be shown, and which is shown by the well formed propositions of language. They transgress the bounds of sense, but in so doing, they gradually bring the perspective reader to the correct logical point of view.'<sup>32</sup>

Hacker clearly says there is room for the reader to accept that Wittgenstein is trying to present, logically, that which transgresses logic. Wittgenstein must rely on a perceptive reader as the conclusions cannot be laid out in front of them; there is no promise that his propositions will spell out his ultimate conclusions as this is impossible. The reader must 'understand the author' and his intentions. It seems almost too obvious here that the *Tractatus* cannot be what the resolute readers claim; a device in which the reader can read and then throw away as it is 'nonsense'.

Resolute readers seem unable to accept that the *Tractatus* can be two things at once: a logical cartography of the nexus of language, as well as being a work of philosophy which shows us the limits of presenting that nexus by having to transcend those limits. That later Wittgenstein abandons the central arguments of the *Tractatus* (the picture theory for example) this does not mean that he was setting his readers up for this in the *Tractatus* for this beforehand. The change in thinking was gradual and over a period of many years. (The *Tractatus* was published in 1922 and it wasn't until 1929 does he start to revise his position on logical form). We could argue that at the time of writing the *Tractatus* and after it's publication Wittgenstein was still firmly in the Logicism camp and did not expect readers to follow him beyond the limits of that philosophy. Wittgenstein wanted solutions to the problems of philosophy and I believe

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<sup>32</sup> Hacker, P.M.S *Wittgenstein, Carnap and the New Americans* The Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 53, No 210, January 2003

expected to find them within the limits of logical positivism (and by showing those limits). The fact that he had to transgress those limits in order to delineate what could be presented of the world logically did not mean that he was abandoning his mission in Logicism.

Hacker also states in his paper 'the task of indirectly signifying what cannot be said is one that philosophy will achieve (in the future), by presenting clearly what can be said (whereas the *Tractatus* endeavours to say what cannot be said).'<sup>33</sup> Wittgenstein, we can argue, quite clearly has a future in mind for logical positivism, at least at the time of writing the *Tractatus*, his invention of the truth tables (as a mechanism for continuing the search for an ideal notation) bears this out (not to mention that the prefaces specifically asks for others to continue the work: 'May others come and do it better'). The fact that his ideas changed over time doesn't mean that this change was already there in the pages of the *Tractatus*.

Throughout the philosophical work of Wittgenstein especially from the time of the publication of the *Tractatus* until the time he wrote the first remarks that would go on to be the *Philosophical Investigations* there is a recognised transitional 'middle period' in his philosophy. It would be difficult for a reader of the *Tractatus* on its publication to anticipate the great changes that would occur in Wittgenstein's thinking and to argue that these changes are already evident in the early work. It wasn't until 1931 nearly ten years after the *Tractatus* is published does Wittgenstein begin to reject some of the work's terms and start to develop a different style of philosophy altogether. It would be a mistake to believe that Wittgenstein walked away from the *Tractatus* immediately after writing it because he specifically believed the entire purpose and process of logical positivism was nonsense (rather he walked away because he felt he had finished with the problems of philosophy). As Hacker states in the quote above the penultimate proposition in the *Tractatus* does not simply state directly that the propositions in the work are 'nonsense' he says quite clearly that 'he who understands me' finally recognises them as nonsense'. This means there is a great scope for understanding what understanding Wittgenstein means in this context. We must remember what proposition comes next, the final proposition states 'Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent'

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid p21

if we read the *Tractatus* resolutely does this mean that this is also nonsense and therefore paradoxical? 'He who understands me' is a phrase which must be key here. Is Wittgenstein saying a) only someone really clever can understand what I have written. Or b) understanding here means that we have gone beyond the limits of logic and therefore points to the ineffable. Finally perhaps c) it is a reference back to the preface, it is difficult or impossible to present these propositions in full clarity and a reader must have has similar thoughts to Wittgenstein to truly understand them? I am inclined to opt for the latter conclusion.

The third point on the resolute reading is that the book rejects any 'substantial' conception of nonsense. This is the idea that some of the 'nonsensical' propositions in the *Tractatus* do in fact convey or express 'illogical thoughts' so in a sense have a substance to them. This attack from the resolute readers finds particular aim at the neo-positivist readers as they - the neo-positivists - argue that the *Tractatus* conveys a theory of meaning and by doing so overlaps with the ineffabilists' reading. Bronzo succinctly presents this:

'Moreover, by attributing to the *Tractatus* a theory of meaning, the neo-positivist interpretations end up assuming a substantial conception of nonsense - thus converging, on this point, with the ineffabilistic interpretations. This is because the kind of nonsense that arises from the transgression of the theory of meaning putatively specified by the *Tractatus* is assumed to be different from mere nonsense: it is supposed to consist in syntactic constructions that turn out to be nonsensical in virtue of meanings that have been assigned to their constituent parts, whereas mere nonsense arises when a string of words does not convey any content because we have assigned them any determinate meaning.<sup>134</sup>

This argument I have touched on above and is really one above the power of expressions of thought which can carry meaning. 'Mere' nonsense is extremely straightforward in that literally no sense can be sought from it. It would be as if the *Tractatus* (to be fair the resolute readers argue that the introduction and the last two propositions are the only to be taken into

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<sup>34</sup> Bronzo, Silver *The Resolute Reading and Its Critics. An Introduction to the Literature Wittgenstein-Studien*, Vol. 3, 2012 p11,

account) were a flurry of made up words that hold no meaning whatsoever. As a resolute reader we would have to throw away all the delicate work taken by Wittgenstein, including the ground-breaking truth tables and concepts such as the picture theory and throw them away completely. And we must remember, we should be looking at the *Tractatus* in the context of when it was written and not with any hindsight allowing for Wittgenstein later change of direction.

Roger White in his book *Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* touches on an argument that attacks the resolute readers main theme of therapy (The resolute readers' claim is that the work is to be read, at first, straightforwardly but then to realise by proposition 6.54 that the work, in fact, was a kind of 'therapy' designed to help them to escape a certain way of thinking). Wittgenstein is of course famous for creating a model for philosophy that moves it on from earlier ideals as a practice searching for a hidden absolute truth. Rather Wittgenstein presents philosophy as a process wherein problems are unraveled to dissolve them so to speak. Wittgenstein famously stated that in paragraph 109 of the *Philosophical Investigations* that 'Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of our language'. This quote is often used when describing Wittgenstein's position on philosophy in general and the rest of the paragraph tells us a lot about Wittgenstein's later thought. The paragraph explicitly attacks the idea that philosophy should be 'scientific':

'It is true to say our considerations could not be scientific ones. It was not of any possible interest to us to find out empirically 'that, contrary to our preconceived ideas, it is possible to think such-and-such' - whatever that may mean. (The conception of thought as a gaseous medium.) And we may not advance any kind of theory. There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. We must do away with explanation, and description alone must take its place.'<sup>35</sup>

This passage certainly tells us much about Wittgenstein's later philosophy, the idea that philosophical ideas are firmly linked to grammar and the need to unravel the questions of

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<sup>35</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig *Philosophical Investigations* Blackwell (Oxford 1953) p47e



philosophy that are found or even created from misunderstanding of language. It also tells us a lot about why philosophy should be thought of as 'therapy' in which we can release ourselves from problems rather than investigating them for a single definitive answer. In his 2003 paper 'On the Resolute Reading of the Tractatus', John Koethe intimates the new view among the 'New Wittgensteins' that the 'early' and 'later' Wittgenstein's are not actually that far in opposition:

'The upshot of the resolute reading would be to forge a close affinity between the two phases of Wittgenstein's work, an affinity assigning nearly the entire importance of Wittgenstein's thought to its antiphilosophical tendencies.'<sup>36</sup>

The new thinking on Wittgenstein seems to state that the *Tractatus* already has the later thought apparent within the early thought and the *Tractatus* should be regarded as an earlier work that is a kind of 'therapy' in which after reading through the work we are taken through a series of arguments by which end we realise what we were concerned with is 'nonsense'. The therapy being achieved by the work showing us the way out of the 'fly-bottle' and causing us to realise the whole of the early work was written to move us on to another way of thinking.

However I would argue that the resolute readers are presumptuous in their thinking that Wittgenstein had already reached his conclusions about the nature and usefulness of philosophy at the time he was writing the *Tractatus*. As I have already mentioned above the *Notebooks* present Wittgenstein's active grapple with the main contentious issues in the philosophy of his time and when reading the book one is impressed with the intensity of that engagement. The many different features and problems of the *Tractatus* are featured within the pages as live day to day battles with Wittgenstein against himself. To argue that the outcome of all this work being carefully set up and arranged in the *Tractatus* to then only be dismissed as nonsense seems highly unlikely.

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<sup>36</sup> Koethe, John. *Philosophical Investigations: On the 'Resolute' Reading of the Tractatus* University of Wisconsin. 2003 p.188 <<http://philosophy.uchicago.edu/faculty/files/conant/koethe%20-%20On%20the%20Resolute%20Reading%20of%20the%20Tractatus.pdf>> retrieved 21/01/2016

There is another straight forward argument about the resolute reading that which could alert us that it is mistaken. The resolute reading's interpretation of proposition 6.54 we could argue, is too simplistic. The reading manages to quell many of the questions that are associated with the *Tractatus*, which we could argue are there in fact simply to make us think. Wittgenstein's brevity is remarkable but we could argue is not utilized deliberately to obfuscate. His propositions are 'unassailable' as the final paragraph in the preface claims:

'On the other hand the truth of the thoughts communicated here seems to me unassailable and definitive. I am, therefore, of the opinion that the problems have in essentials been finally solved. And if I am not mistaken in this, then the value of this work secondly consists in the fact that it shows how little has been done when these problems have been solved.'

And he argues that the problems of philosophy have finally been solved. It is a bold claim to then add to this that the reason the problems have all been solved relates to the fact that the entire work is to be summarily dismissed as an exercise of therapy and all the key concepts and ideas to be completely disregarded as nonsensical.

Let us summarise below the strengths and weaknesses of the resolute reading:

#### Strengths

- Keeps Wittgenstein's philosophy firmly grounded in logic and avoids the issues that come with allowing for ineffable truths.
- There would be no paradox and reading the work more straightforward
- Agrees with much of the later work and the eventual move away from logicism
- Moves away from the questionable idea of ineffable truths and the saying and showing distinction

#### Weaknesses

- Discounts a great deal of the seemingly carefully constructed work in the *Tractatus* including truth tables etc.

- Completely discounts any references to ineffable truths which are a feature of Wittgenstein's correspondence about the *Tractatus* at the time.
- Implies that Wittgenstein had already made the move to ideas and concepts which become a feature of his 'later' philosophy
- Although the reading references to the 'frame' of the *Tractatus* as being the only parts that are not to be 'thrown away', there are propositions inside the body of text that are also vital.

## Conclusion

The resolute reading is a bold attempt at re-examining the *Tractatus* from a new point of view. It seems to address head-on the difficulties commentators have had since its publication in that it seems to contradict itself if read 'traditionally'. The resolute reading offers a 'clean' take on the *Tractatus* and avoids the challenges of accepting the references to the ineffable. This 'clean' take however dismisses that which, I claim, is the most important part of the work - its connection with the ineffable. Wittgenstein is self-consciously breaking his own rules to highlight the limits of logicism in the background of reality. To dismiss this crucial point is - to a certain extent - to misunderstand Wittgenstein.

### 3) The 'Traditional' Reading

The 'traditional' reading is so-called solely due to the necessity of calling it so with the advent of the 'New-Wittgensteins' and the 'resolute reading' controversy (plus the fact, obviously that is was the most accepted). At the heart of the traditional reading is a call for the reader to readily accept a seemingly paradoxical situation: to fully understand the main points of the *Tractatus* the author himself needs to break his own rules and transcend the limits of sense in order to show the limits of sense. There are two main points that are to be covered here if we are to fully 'defend' the traditional position in the shadow of the resolute readings. First of all understanding of the 'saying and showing distinction' and then what Wittgenstein means by 'nonsense'. Roger White isolates and tackles these issues in his book *Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Regarding nonsense, White returns to the argument we have touched on

above about the different degree of nonsense. In this context (that there exists 'significant' nonsense) he argues:

'Certainly no one, or practically no one is going to say that there is significant nonsense, so the accusation must be that that is what they are tacitly maintaining, whether they realize it or not. Here we need to keep firmly in mind the distinction between the meaning of a sentence and the use we make of it. The issue is not: 'Does a nonsense have a surreptitious meaning?' But 'Can we use a sentence that is confessedly nonsense to communicate something?' The bald answer to the second question is undoubtedly 'Yes': we can, under appropriate circumstances, use almost anything to communicate something'<sup>37</sup>

Here White is tacitly claiming that Wittgenstein is already employing some of the central ideas of his later work - meaning is use and the study of the grammar of words - in the *Tractatus* (or at the very least some of those concepts are finding their roots) but he makes an excellent point which is persuasive in that meaning is certainly conveyed without the need for strict rules on syntax or even, we could argue, verbal communication itself (he gives an example of physical communication). However, as White later indicates, the communication in the *Tractatus* is certainly verbal and asks how then is a nonsense statement capable of communicating something? We have mentioned the Haiku poetry above as an example of 'nonsense' sentences carrying meaning and White quotes Dickens to indicate a similar figurative example of the use of words to communicate something while seemingly has zero *literal* sense.<sup>38</sup> White later argues that in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein is trying to communicate that which cannot be communicated and that 'his words fail to capture what he wishes to communicate'. However the point is in the way in which they fail. The failure of the words to bring about the most clear version of what is trying to be communicated shows the point which is trying to be made. He has run up against the barriers of sense in order for us to understand where those barriers are<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> White, Roger, M *Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London 2006) Continuum p131.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. P132,

<sup>39</sup> It seems then the debate as to the value of different types of nonsense is superfluous. The point trying to be made is that language has limits and by going over them with 'nonsense' is already proving that point.

We must always at points such as these refer ourselves back to the preface of the *Tractatus* wherein Wittgenstein declares that 'This book will perhaps only be understood by those who have themselves already thought the thoughts which are expressed in it -- or similar thoughts. it is therefore not a text-book.'. With this remark we should always remember how Wittgenstein has already declared - with the opening sentence - that he would almost certainly not be able to *directly* convey his most important points. I find this the most crucial element of the work as it was clearly written after the project of the *Tractatus* was finished. It takes into account the struggle of writing the work, it's conclusion and the ethical and spiritual dimensions that feature in the later parts of the book. The introduction is thought provoking and bold, it explains simply that there is something uniquely subjective about the understanding that is required when reading the book. The work which follows it is not only the presentation of the principles of a subject but rather Wittgenstein's own presentation of how his finds the world.

The second most important issue for the traditional reading is the importance of the 'saying and showing' distinction. Bronzo states in his paper which brings together all of the main issues in the resolute reading controversy:

'One of the distinctive features of the resolute reading is its rejection of the idea that the aim of the *Tractatus* is to bring us to grasp a substantial body of philosophical doctrines which cannot be said but only shown - doctrines concerning, say, the necessary structure of language, mind and reality.'<sup>40</sup>

The resolute reading supporters do not necessarily object to the saying and showing distinction in itself but object to the idea that the main point of the work can be presented in this way - an 'ineffabilistic construal'.<sup>41</sup> For many commentators, as Bronzo indicates, this is simply too much as the saying and showing distinction is very clearly a central feature of the *Tractatus*. Bronzo also highlights Peter Hacker's defence of it through his quotation of Wittgenstein himself in his

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Wittgenstein succeeds where Russell failed because he (Wittgenstein) is not attempting to say that which cannot be said, he is proving that if you attempt to do so the result is nonsense.

<sup>40</sup> Bronzo, Silver *The Resolute Reading and Its Critics. An Introduction to the Literature Wittgenstein-Studien*, Vol. 3, 2012 p17.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

letter to Von Fricker that the saying and showing distinction was the 'cardinal problem of philosophy'. The distinction shows in very clearly the problem that has plagued philosophy in the past and Wittgenstein's answer to that problem. Wittgenstein is concerned in the *Tractatus* with language and with the limits of which language can be used to express meaning. It is a departure from traditional philosophy and a focus on the means of expression rather than an external reality because for Wittgenstein the two are not mutually exclusive. For Wittgenstein, language, our means of expression, give us our understanding of the external world.

### Strengths

- Maintains Wittgenstein's 'challenging' style inviting the reader to do some work herself; this style is kept throughout his writing and is certainly present in the *Philosophical Investigations*.
- Is consistent with Wittgenstein's ideas and concepts that are present in correspondence about the *Tractatus* that he wrote about at the time.
- Allows for the saying and showing distinction which is clearly a key feature of the *Tractatus*.

### Weaknesses

- Keeps the apparent paradox that is at the heart of the *Tractatus* and does not adequately challenge it
- With the paradox intact all of the main aspects of the *Tractatus* are left open for criticism (and a charge of obscurantism)

### **The Textual Basis of The Resolute Reading**

One of the main arguments 'for' the resolute reading and the 'austere' view is that there are not different types of nonsense. I have answered this challenge briefly above but I will now again address this view by analyzing a major paper in favour of it. In *Contextualism and Nonsense in Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, Edmund Dain skillfully addresses Han-Johann Glock's arguments for stating that Wittgenstein holds that there exists logically distinct kinds of

nonsense. If there is a textual basis for supporting the view that Wittgenstein allowed for degrees of nonsense then the support beams for the resolute or 'austere' reading of the *Tractatus* would soon collapse. Dain is clearly a supporter for the 'resolute' camp and he lays out his aim very clearly in the introduction:

'I am concerned to defend the attribution to the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* of what has come to be known as the austere view of nonsense (or, as I shall also call it 'austerity').'<sup>42</sup>

Dain then focuses on Glock's analysis of the Tractarian reformulation of Frege's context-principle and that, as Glock has it, Wittgenstein's contextualism does not support the 'attribution of an austere view of nonsense'<sup>43</sup>

The main textual claims are that the Tractarian version of the context principle can be represented in 'weak' and 'strong' forms. These different forms have a major effect on the validity of a resolute or not reading of the *Tractatus*. The strong form has it that individual words can only have meaning in a proposition whereas the weaker form indicates that in actual fact words often have meaning outside of the context of a proposition (for example labels on jars and numbers. Dain writes what is at stake succinctly:

'On the one hand, a strong context principle would provide evidence for Wittgenstein having held an austere view of nonsense, but at the expense of both plausibility and internal (to the *Tractatus*) consistency - with the only reasonable explanation of either the latter incoherence or the former error going by way of notions unavailable to such (Resolute) readings. On the other hand, a weaker version of the context-principle would restore both plausibility and consistency to the *Tractatus* view, but at the expense of any justification for an austere view of nonsense.'<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Dain, E 2006, '*Contextualism and Nonsense in Wittgenstein's Tractatus*', *South African Journal Of Philosophy*, 25, 2, pp. 91-101, Academic Search Elite, EBSCOhost, viewed 6 February 2016.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p94

Dain argues that Glock states there is good reason not to attribute the stronger restrictive context principle and that in actuality Wittgenstein moves away from it already in the *Philosophical Investigations*. The main argument is that 'the restrictive view is at odds with certain other elements of the Tractatus: namely, its compositionality - the idea, expressed for instance in Tractatus 4.024-4.03, that the sense of a sentence is in some sense dependent upon, or built up of, or arrived at by reflection upon the meanings of its constituent parts, the individual words (and together with the structure of their arrangement).'<sup>45</sup> So it would be better that the restrictive context principle made way for the weaker version.

Dain then takes on the major points raised by Glock and addresses them. First of all he provides an argument against the need for a restrictive context principle and presents the case for a third version of the context principle indicating that there are different varieties of context principle and the case is not so clear cut.

Next Dain argues against the claim that the restrictive version of the context principle is wrong and by being so cannot support the resolute reading. Dain shows that wherever there is an attempt to say words that are not presented in a proposition can have 'meaning' that this is a misrepresentation of the *Tractatus*'s propositions and the sense that 'meaning' holds. Glock gives an example of a dictionary entry preceding its definition as an example. Glock is arguing here that the word, not being used in a proposition still holds meaning in this context. Dain's argument against this uses a quote from Cora Diamond which distinguishes the term 'meaning' from the context in which Glock was using. Diamond's and Dain's 'meaning' works on the principle that a word's meaning stands in relation to the proposition it is in. Glock's example is not nonsense but meaningless because it is not fulfilling any logical function in relation to the definition.

Next Dain focuses attention on Glock's view that the restrictive principle is at odds with the Tractatus's compositionality. Compositionality is the view that the meaning of a sentence is determined by all of the meanings of its parts. Glock argues that the restrictive principle (the

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid



strong, restrictive version of the context principle) and the compositionism cannot coexist, that the two views are incompatible. Glock's main point is that the Tractarian reformulation is not taken as literally as the resolute readers suppose:

'On Glock's interpretation, compositionism has the consequence that a word has a meaning independently of any sentence in which it occurs. On another reading, however, it might be taken to entail instead only that when a component of one sentence occurs again as a component of another sentence it must have the same meaning in both occurrences. The second reading would then clearly be compatible with the restrictive view, but it might seem to leave mysterious the very feature of natural languages that compositionism intuitively seems to be required in order to explain: namely, the fact that we can understand sentences we have not previously encountered'<sup>46</sup>

So Dain asks 'Does restrictive contextualism – and the latter view of the consequences of contextualism – then leave this fact a matter of mystery?'. Dain then again refers to Cora Diamond's defence of a strong form on contextualism:

'Diamond's answer, in short, is that we do arrive at the sense of a sentence by means of attributing content to the parts, but that we proceed to an understanding of the sense of a sentence by attributing that content only provisionally, conditionally upon the whole sentence expressing a thought of such-and –such a form. Thus, only if the sentence as a whole expresses a thought of such-and-such a form will the parts have the content provisionally assigned to them'<sup>47</sup>

Dain then reconstructs Diamond's analysis of a sentence which 'proves' that the meaning of a sentence is arrived at compositionally and conditionally and 'because our hypothesis as to what the parts of the sentences mean are conditional on what the overall thought expressed by the sentence actually is, that process is perfectly compatible with even strong contextualism.'<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. p98

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p99.

Thus Dain claims to refute Glock's notion that there are distinct kinds of nonsense and that this would tear away the underpinning of an austere reading of the *Tractatus*

Dain focuses his attack on Glock into three distinct points from Glock's Argument: 1) austerity requires the restrictive principle if it is to receive support from Wittgenstein's early contextualism. 2) the restrictive principle is wrong and 3) the restrictive principle conflicts with the compositional aspects of the *Tractatus*, as well as with compositionism more generally. Dain concludes his paper having claimed to have safely proven that Glock's criticism's of the austere reading of nonsense are not successful.

However, I would say that Dain's criticism of Glock's attacks on the austere version of nonsense in the *Tractatus* suffer from the same shortcoming that affects all of the proponents of the 'resolute reading' fraternity. There seems to be an overriding focus on *individual* propositions within the *Tractatus* to back-up a particular claim rather than a straight-forward reliance on Wittgenstein's over-arching themes that are surely the heart of the work. In '*Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*' Roger White presents the themes from the *Tractatus* in a highly succinct but penetrating work. In the section called 'The 'fit' between language and the world' White explains the necessary gap between language and world:

'When we talk of 'comparing language with reality', we are talking about something that we learn to do when we learn the language, and which is shown by the way that we do in practice compare propositions with the world. But any attempt within language to give an informative description of the relation we are looking for when we seek to verify a particular proposition is doomed'<sup>49</sup>

From this passage I can understand that the issue really is not, or should not be with whether there are different types of nonsense if we are attempting to address the concerns of the resolute reading. Wittgenstein, through the main scaffolding of his first great work is presenting the limits of language's ability to describe the world and crucially our relationship to it. What I believe is being tacitly presented, especially in the later parts of the book, is the importance of

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<sup>49</sup> White, Roger, M *Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London 2006) Continuum p116

the ineffable as a lynchpin for the relation between the human experience and the world. Later in a passage called 'What language has in common with reality' White shows how Wittgenstein intentionally breaks his own rules to be able to let it be shown that which cannot be said:

'... Wittgenstein has apparently been saying things throughout the book which by his own lights cannot be said. The attempt to do so necessarily results in nonsense. In 6.53, he says that 'the only strictly correct method' of teaching philosophy would be a process of Socratic midwifery: you yourself say nothing philosophical, but only attempt to being the pupil to see that they had failed to give any meaning to some of the signs they had used, whenever they tried to say 'something metaphysical'. In the Tractatus, he has, however, clearly departed from this method, and done something that is, on his own account, illegitimate.'<sup>50</sup>

We know from the outset of the work, the illuminating passages from the diaries and the set-up and thrust of the work in the context of the beginnings made by Russell and Frege, Wittgenstein had a monumental task in furthering the logicism cause and at the same time saving it from the paradoxes identified and exacerbated by Russell's solutions. However he didn't such much as solve the paradoxes as find a way around them. The picture theory in itself a mechanism in which Wittgenstein can spare philosophy from the issues of it's metaphysical past by bypassing a concrete definition of how language works with reality. This 'explanation' of language is fine if we take it at its face-value - we are relying on tacit acceptance that the essential part of knowledge itself is beyond a rational definition.

It is not only the mechanisms of language itself which is problematic when it comes to an adequate definition but also there are subject areas which were clearly an issue for Wittgenstein in that he was trying to bring logicism to bear on all aspects of reality and human experience but needed to account for what is 'higher', again Roger White paints a vivid picture:

'The point is not so much that reading these [diary] entries makes the position of the Tractatus itself clear as that they bear witness to the desperate struggle that Wittgenstein engages in attempting to hold together two apparently irreconcilable concerns. On the one hand, the

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 117

central arguments of the *Tractatus* seem to lead to some form of ethical nihilism, but, on the other hand, Wittgenstein wished to take questions of ethics, value and religion with full seriousness. The resulting position is difficult to interpret, and it is open to question whether Wittgenstein succeeds in arriving at a coherent position.<sup>51</sup>

This seems to be one of the main problems with the traditional view – that it is difficult to defend Wittgenstein when the *Tractatus* seems to pass from its mission to create a clear and robust account of language, on to talking about the ineffable and producing a paradoxical ending. However, Wittgenstein is doing both things - he completes the mission of logicism but also in the process shows the gaping whole left after the work is done. In the introduction Wittgenstein makes it clear that the book although it has solved the problems it set out to, he also adds that the 'value of the work' also consists in showing how little has been done when the problems are solved. This to my mind is explaining to a degree that there is *much more* to be done in exploring the experience of human knowledge.<sup>52</sup>

Wittgenstein's impossible task is to completely present the human experience with the world through language, but to set strict rules by which the experiences had cannot be adequately set down into language that has a logical sense. The 'traditional' view seems to mostly rest on the notion that Wittgenstein was running up against the walls of language and sense trying to convey that which could only be shown. I would add that Wittgenstein was also indicating - a foreshadowing of the later work - that there was more to be explored in the complexity of the human experience of knowledge.

## **Conclusion to the Resolute Reading Issue**

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.p113

<sup>52</sup> Later Wittgenstein would change his position in a number of ways and challenge some of his own conclusions in the *Tractatus*. However I would challenge White's assertion that it is open to question that Wittgenstein arrived at a coherent position with regards to ethics in the *Tractatus*. I think the conclusions prove the point that the ethical is 'delineated from within'. The limits of language as to whether they are nonsense raise the character of ethical language because Wittgenstein is showing this kind of moral, ethical language is what is 'higher' or most important to us.

In *Contextualism and Nonsense in Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, Edmund Dain neatly summarises the whole of the resolute reading controversy in a couple of sentences:

'Resolute readings reject the (standard) idea that 'seeing the world aright' involves coming to grasp with ineffable insights of some kind, and they reject the (again standard) idea that Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* lays down a theory of sense, against which his own propositions then fail to measure up. The austere view is then a corollary of that second rejection, and as such is fundamental to resolute readings.'<sup>53</sup>

One conclusion we can make of the Resolute reading issue is that The *Tractatus*, although extremely carefully written by Wittgenstein to avoid it, is it seems, like so many other important philosophical documents still very much open to interpretation, and these interpretations apparently know no boundaries. The points to which the different readings find their differences, rest on interpretations of key conflicting propositions, and this has been seized upon by commentators both resolute and traditional alike. Without the benefit of referring to comments on the *Tractatus* from Wittgenstein (or indeed have him answer our questions) we have to take the text at face value but this not always an easy task as Wittgenstein used brevity to the point of obscurantism.<sup>54</sup> However, as we have a preface and correspondence in which he refers to the work we *do* have the chance to read Wittgenstein's own thoughts and opinions on his own work and it is my claim that for the most part, the most glaring issues are dealt with by Wittgenstein himself.

I believe the preface can answer almost all of the most important questions that relate to the *Tractatus*, it presents the work's aim in a nutshell (To set a limit to the expression of thought), lays out anticipated problems with the reading (Wittgenstein's admission that perhaps only who has had similar thoughts will understand it) and there is also Wittgenstein's comments on the limits of the success of his own work.

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<sup>53</sup> Dain, Edmund (2006). *Contextualism and Nonsense in Wittgenstein's Tractatus*. *South African Journal of Philosophy* 25 (2):91-101

<sup>54</sup> Also it one of the key conclusions of my support of the traditional view is that it is impossible to take the *Tractatus* at 'face value', it is what isn't written that is most important.

In the preface Wittgenstein refers to the work itself and the hope that he has in it:

'First that in it thoughts are expressed, and this value will be the greater the better the thoughts are expressed.'

Wittgenstein continues in the preface stating that he has succeeded in that he put to paper a final conclusion and has finally solved the problems that relate to finding a perfect language and 'drawing a limit to thought':

'On the other hand the truth of the thoughts communicated here seems to me unassailable and definitive. I am, therefore, of the opinion that the problems have in essentials been finally solved. And if I am not mistaken in this, then the value of this work secondly consists in the fact that it shows how little has been done when these problems have been solved.'

However then Wittgenstein, by his own admission, curiously admits that he had failed to a certain extent in the *Tractatus*:

'Here I am conscious that I have fallen far short of the possible. Simply because my powers are insufficient to cope with the task. -- May others come and do it better.'

It seems to me that Wittgenstein, although he may have been hopeful of someone else taking up the challenge to further his work, is well aware that he has created a problematic piece of philosophical writing that, despite his herculean efforts at presenting an absolutely clear and definitive work, has 'fallen short'. This, I claim, is most likely to do with the paradoxical nature of writing about the limits of language using language and an inevitable conclusion of that.

We can argue that the 'resolute' interpretation of the *Tractatus* is flawed simply because it tries to bypass the inherent paradoxical nature of the work, which we also could argue is one of the *central* features. The 'resolute' reading seems to want to find somehow a 'way out' from the issues that emerge from a philosopher engaged in a problem that cannot have an absolutely coherent conclusion. Therefore resolute readers advocate dismissing the majority of the *Tractatus* for the cause of uncovering something more palatable. However this is contrary to

Wittgenstein's style and aims in philosophy. It seems unlikely that Wittgenstein would create a piece of work which first sets out an elaborate mechanism to analyze language only to have this work be dismissed in the name of 'therapy'. The resolute reading seems to dismiss out of hand the ineffable aspects of the *Tractatus* and by doing so the mystical aspects. I want to argue that this acceptance of the mystical as an very important feature of the *Tractatus*.

In *Mysticism and Nonsense in the Tractatus* Michael Morris and Julian Dodd write on the opposing readings of the work but include a further 'traditional view' but with an added emphasis on the mystical. They claim in this section that the point of the *Tractatus* is not that it's readers should come to understand a set of truths, but as the work insists they 'see the world rightly':

'The text is designed to bring us to adopt another perspective on life altogether; and this other perspective, we suggest, is the perspective of mysticism. It is this mystical perspective - not some set of truths - that the text is designed to get us to adopt'<sup>55</sup>

This idea chimes well not only with the preface of the *Tractatus* but also with the supporting correspondence regarding the *Tractatus* made with Bertrand Russell and Von Ficker regarding the point of the *Tractatus* being about ethics. Seeing the world 'rightly' is, in this perspective seeing the world in an ethical sense. Morris and Dodd give justification to this argument by citing Wittgenstein himself from the notebooks:

'The work of art is the object seen *sub specie aeternitatus*; and the good life is the world seen *sub specie aeternitatus*. This is the connection between art and ethics.'<sup>56</sup>

And this entry is linked with the *Tractatus* proposition 6.45 which states that contemplation of the world *sub specie aeternitatus* is contemplation of it as a limited whole - and this feeling is a 'mystical feeling'. What this means is that the 'limits' of the world which is set out in the

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<sup>55</sup> Morris, M, & Dodd, J 2009, 'Mysticism and Nonsense in the Tractatus', *European Journal Of Philosophy*, 17, 2, pp. 247-276, Academic Search Elite, EBSCOhost, viewed 5 February 2016.

<sup>56</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig *Notebooks 1914-1916* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Chicago 1984) p.83

Tractatus point to what is logically possible and impossible. This is nothing but the 'form' of the world in the world. Again Morris and Dodd quote the notebooks:

'The thing seen *sub specie aeternitatis* is the thing seen together with the whole logical space.'<sup>57</sup>

The form of the world cannot be expressed in language but is shown in the world: 'What someone sees when she sees the world as a limited whole is nothing but the form of the world in the world. She sees the world with, simultaneously, a sense of everything that is necessary, possible, and impossible about it.'<sup>58</sup>

Morris and Dodd present the idea then that the point of the *Tractatus* may well be one of 'therapy' but instead of taking the reader through a series of stages in which she realises that, and the point of proposition 6.45 that the intervening propositions were 'nonsense', instead the reader embraces the revelation that what Wittgenstein was in fact doing was forcing the work to 'show' that the logical space exists alongside the world, that the world is a limited whole with its limits visible:

'So the business of the *Tractatus* is that of getting us to see something that escapes philosophy, because philosophy is always concerned to say something. This enables us to understand how the *Tractatus* might get us to see something 'by being silent', where philosophers have been 'just gassing'.'<sup>59</sup>

An objection with this conclusion might be is that it brings us too close to mysticism and away from philosophy. However as Wittgenstein is concerned with elucidation we can say that by uncovering the mystical aspects of the *Tractatus* we did indeed need to present and understand the logical, philosophical aspects. Also we have found a way to read the *Tractatus* and also

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Morris, M, & Dodd, J 2009, 'Mysticism and Nonsense in the Tractatus', *European Journal Of Philosophy*, 17, 2, pp. 247-276, Academic Search Elite, EBSCOhost, viewed 5 February 2016.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.



accept some of the apparent incoherence that is outlined by the resolute and neo-positivist readings.

### **The ineffable and Wittgenstein's Style of Philosophy**

Wittgenstein argues that philosophy is not a choice between theories<sup>60</sup>, with this he makes a marked change from traditional styles of philosophy; previously there had been the idea that philosophy could contribute to a body of knowledge. Reformed as a science, philosophy sought to discover and collect information about the world and the mind. In the many conceptions of philosophy, what united them was the idea that there could be a foundation of truth on which thought could build up a real picture of a functioning universe. Disagreements and arguments in philosophy came to be seen as merely the troubled progress of a great cause; it was necessary in the face of inevitable problems and dead ends that thought should continue its noble path. In his Wittgenstein Dictionary Hans-Johann Glock describes Wittgenstein's philosophy as 'Kantian' in a certain respect as it draws a 'contrast between science, which pictures or represents the world, and philosophy, which reflects on the nature and preconditions of this reflection.'<sup>61</sup> Glock sees Wittgenstein as concentrating on the preconditions of our knowing or experiencing the world. Also in *On Human Nature* the Wittgenstein scholar P.M.S. Hacker explains Wittgenstein's contrary view to the 'philosophy as a science' view that had come before him:

'It was characteristic of Wittgenstein not to take up sides in pre-existing philosophical debates, weighing up the pros and cons of the arguments and siding with the most persuasive. Rather, he strove to uncover the points of agreement between two disputing parties, the shared presuppositions which were taken for granted by all, and to challenge these'.<sup>62</sup>

Wittgenstein understood perceived progress (or the lack of) was illusory because philosophy was trying to uncover or discover elusive truths. For him nothing was hidden and nothing would

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<sup>60</sup> Monk, Ray *Ludwig Wittgenstein The Duty of Genius* Vintage Books (London 1991) p322

<sup>61</sup> Glock, Hans-Johann. *A Wittgenstein Dictionary* Blackwell (Oxford 1996) p293

<sup>62</sup> Hacker, P.M.S. *Wittgenstein On Human Nature* Phoenix Press (London 1997) p.7

be discovered; philosophy could only be a discipline for clarity. Wittgenstein's approach to philosophical problems was much like that of an engineer (his initial training). He saw the classic questions as irritating irregularities within a structure or framework. Identifying the problem was most of the battle, and to be able to identify the problem means being able to see it clearly, much the same as an engineer would pull apart a piece of apparatus to clean or repair it. Wittgenstein often insisted that answers to philosophical problems were close to the surface, that far from being something that is elusive and ethereal, they were open to view and could be reached with effort only. Instead of inventing new terms and systems to cope with increasingly vague or obscure theories, philosophy should instead concentrate on clarity.

The *Tractatus* is a work like no other in philosophy because it undertakes a mission to rescue philosophy from its past mistakes in shifting the search away from the answers that are sought and focuses on questions being asked. This shift in thinking - admittedly in a critical Kantian vein, was original in that it refuses to accept metaphysical aunt sallys (foundational systems of philosophy which offer an objective explanation of the world) as answers to the questions that relate to the ineffable aspects of reality. Wittgenstein acknowledges the ineffable aspects exist but reveals that through a limit in our language we cannot express them. However they are there. This way of thinking allows Wittgenstein to drive hard at a philosophical problem but place identifiable limits that avoid a reference to the 'unseen'.

I argue, as I have already mentioned above, that the ineffable aspects of the *Tractatus* play not only a valuable part but also an *crucial* one. It is clear that the central ideas of the work - the picture theory, the saying and showing distinction - all undoubtedly feature at their heart ineffable qualities. These ideas are all clearly critical to a clear overall understanding of the work. However, as Wittgenstein is bringing a strict verifiability principle he will not, and cannot go further in terms of a definition. This is entirely in keeping with his style of philosophy. We can readily accept the ineffable parts of the work as by being presented they are merely part of the elucidation which is the key to Wittgenstein's philosophy. Later in part three I will touch upon Wittgenstein's relation to Heidegger in terms of their isolating the experience of knowledge and that through an exploration of this process both philosophers promote the

importance of acknowledging the aspects of experience that are prior to knowledge. The *Tractatus*, for Wittgenstein, I claim, concludes the aims of Logicism and stops at the open door for an exploration into the ineffable, however at the time of writing the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein believed nothing further could be elucidated in this line of thought.

In the next part of my paper I will move on from the resolute reading issues as I believe I have safely shown that the 'ineffable' is a central part of the early work of Wittgenstein. Next, I will explore in more detail about central role that the ineffable plays throughout Wittgenstein's philosophical output and how this role might also be understood as the 'non-rational foundation for meaning'.

## PART TWO

### **From a Logical Picture to a 'Form of Life', How the Non-rational Foundation of Meaning is Present Throughout the Philosophy of Wittgenstein**

In this section of the paper I will highlight the 'ineffable' strand that, it can be argued, runs continuously throughout Wittgenstein's philosophy, early until late, and how within this we can posit the concept of a 'non-rational foundation of meaning'. Whereas previous commentators have pointed to a dramatic shift in his thinking from the early to the later work and make contrasts between them, I would like to alternatively link these periods with what I believe connects them, the reference to the ineffable. The inclusion of the ineffable in Wittgenstein's thought, is in keeping with what could be called his pure philosophical heading - a desire to elucidate and unravel philosophical problems whilst taking a complete view with perspicuous representation. Also importantly for our investigation, in this section, I will reference the limits of what can be expressed in Wittgenstein's study of the form and roots of language and its acquisition which should support our main aim.

#### **A Logical Picture**

For the *Tractatus*, logic is the basis of and comprises the necessary preconditions of thought and language. To understand a proposition is to know what the case is if it is true. A proposition is still *meaningful* if it is proved to be false (we can still understand a false proposition if it adheres to logical syntax). Logical form and logical syntax are understood through propositions being capable of being compared to reality (the picturing relation). Therefore propositions that cannot be compared cannot be discussed in any *meaningful way*; however their sense is *shown*. An example of this is logical form itself – the understanding of logical form cannot be explained; it simply shows itself through its 'sense'; we recognize (because we have learned it) that there is a pattern or a system of rules when we apply logic. By establishing the concepts of logical

form and logical syntax Wittgenstein has shown how far meaningful language can go – propositions, to make sense have to be capable of being analysed. Being analysed means being able to be compared with reality to establish their ‘truth-function’. Logical form is shown through our understanding of propositions - it is the essence of language and the only true ‘logical constant’. It cannot be described logically, it is *tacitly* known in the acknowledgement of the meaning of a proposition. Wittgenstein states many incidences of this: ‘What signs fail to express, their application shows. What the signs conceal, their application declares.’ (3.262) and: ‘We can see this from that we understand the sense of a propositional sign without its having been explained to us.’ (4.02) similarly: ‘Objects can only be named. Signs are their representatives. I can only speak about them: I cannot put them into words. Propositions can only say how things are, not what they are.’ (3.221)

The distinction between saying and showing leaves a gulf of what cannot be talked about and is tacitly or we could say intuitively known. (this fact in itself we could argue should be enough to silence issues of the ineffable presented by the proponents of the resolute readings) Propositions that deal with the essence of symbolic representation and ‘mystical’ pronouncements about the realm of value are brought together. These expressions are ‘pseudo-expressions’ because they cannot be compared to reality – they are not bipolar (can be true or false) and are nonsensical in logical terms. Also included among the ‘ineffabilia’ of Wittgenstein is the following list<sup>63</sup>:

- (a) The logical form common to propositions and what they depict (inexpressibility of the harmony between thought and reality)
- (b) The meaning of signs and the sense of propositions (prohibition of semantics)
- (c) The logical relations between propositions (no rules of logical inference)
- (d) The logico-syntactical category of signs (formal concepts are pseudo-concepts)

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<sup>63</sup> Reproduced from Glock, Hans-Johann *A Wittgenstein Dictionary* Blackwell Publishers (Oxford 1996) Entry on ‘Saying and Showing’ p331

(e) The structure of thought and world (limits to thought are set from within)

(f) The mystical (the ineffability of value)

Including the 'mystical' propositions, this list clearly covers all the aspects of language, knowledge and the human experience, and although scientific propositions are the only propositions capable of producing 'fact', we could argue that the words, propositions and grammar used to form those propositions are all produced from a language that has an ineffable heart. It is clear then in the early period of Wittgenstein's philosophy, although primarily dealing with bringing logical clarity to language, there remains a strong recognition of the necessity of this ineffable heart - the non-rational foundations of the expression of meaning.

Each of the above 'ineffabilia' have a crucial role to play in producing meaning through language although they lay strictly outside of logical sense. They all deal with the 'internal relations' that are tacit within language and meaning and are inexpressible. As Wittgenstein was writing from a logical, empirical perspective in the *Tractatus*, these 'internal relations' (part of the ineffabilia) are assumed, but also are nonetheless unverifiable. Later as Wittgenstein changes his perspective to an 'anthropological' one with an emphasis on the part the human experience has to play on knowledge and the expression of it, he posits the 'grammatical relations' tag steering even further away from the idea that any of these intuitive relations can be logically isolated or defined. The grammar 'tool' concept (meaning is use) is more helpful when analyzing the 'relation' as it is in a sense easier to grasp the fact that it is unanalyzable - that is the relation is *presupposed* in the grammar - there are no atomic components to investigate. It is far easier to understand that grammar could not be broken down any further than its *use* than for word or sentence be broken down into its atomic elements.

The move by Wittgenstein to a more 'anthropological' way of dealing with philosophical problems is often mentioned when talking about the comparison between Wittgenstein's early and later work. However it must be emphasized more clearly what this actually entails. A key consequence is the fact that, for Wittgenstein, meaning cannot be in isolation in any way.

Language is a human convention and part of a community. This point is highlighted in Ray Monk's biography of Wittgenstein and there is a passage within it that succinctly describes it:

'One of the most striking ways in which Wittgenstein's later work differs from the *Tractatus* is in its 'anthropological' approach. That is, whereas the *Tractatus* deals with language in isolation from the circumstances in which it is used, the *Investigations* repeatedly emphasizes the importance of the 'stream of life' which gives linguistic utterances their meaning: a 'language-game' cannot be described without mentioning their activities and the way of life of the 'tribe' that plays it'<sup>64</sup>

It is vital then to understand when moving on from the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein is shedding the concept that there ever could be a single fundamental idea in isolation or, as he indicates in the private language argument any internal, individual meaning. However we could argue that what is retained is the unspoken, indefinable foundation<sup>65</sup> of meaning that operates before ratiocination. In this space of tacit understanding there is no internalized rationality leading to the mastering of the use of language but more of a 'feel' for it.

## **Grammar**

In what has been called the 'transitional phase', in the *Blue and Brown books* Wittgenstein redefines and remodels philosophy even further away from the conventions of traditional philosophical thought. Rejected is the task of building all-encompassing structures and theories, fixed points of reference or any kind of 'absolute' truths. Gone is the Cartesian legacy of the primacy of reductionism (reducing reality and meaning to atomistic clear and distinct ideas) and the scientific method, also removed is the focus on firm foundations and the 'craving for generality' that characterized the analytic philosophy of Russell and Wittgenstein himself in his early work. However Wittgenstein's greatest change at this time was his turn from trying to find the essential meaning of language to focusing how language is used. As language is the limit of

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<sup>64</sup> Monk, Ray *Ludwig Wittgenstein The Duty of Genius* Vintage Books (London 1991) p.261

<sup>65</sup> Obviously a problematic word to use in a paper on Wittgenstein. I utilise 'foundation' in the sense that it is starting point for knowledge, a theoretical 'space' wherein knowledge begins.

the world, meaning can only be found from an analysis of how it functions (specifically through its use); meaning from use means that the grammar of language holds the key to the possibility of meaning. We cannot as previously thought, (as in the *Tractatus*) 'locate' meaning. In a sense we already have it, because we use language in the ordinary sense that means we tacitly 'know' its meaning (we wouldn't be able to use language if we didn't 'know' its meaning). Think of the differences between native English speakers and non-native when it comes to studying the language. For non-native speakers learning grammar is essential for creating the structure of the language and vital for any hope the student has of being about to understand and be understood. For a native speaker the studying of grammar, although useful, is superfluous for an understanding of the language - the grammar is 'known' in the sense that it used without thought for its mechanics, it has simply been learned through the active use. However despite a clear understanding of our language a further analysis of language allows us the insight to its initial generation and where meaning doesn't occur i.e. in the misuses of language in philosophy.<sup>66</sup>

Wittgenstein shows that the previous idea of words being able to be analyzed for some 'atomic' essence is misguided; words are not used – and have no meaning – in isolation. Language is the result of a convention of understanding generated by a culture. This means the important part of language is not that it is rooted to some essential meaning but that its meaning is apparent in its use; within a particular grammar, the rules for use determine its meaning. Also we could say the grammar is generated primarily as particular signs for particular objects find their meaning in the use of their grammar. Removing the idea of fixed structure and meaning means regarding the meaning in language as ever-changing as it is part of a 'community of ideas'; it is in flux and is termed by Wittgenstein as a 'form of life'<sup>67</sup>. Within culture, language emerges as communication is required and inclusion in this communication means adopting the patterns

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<sup>66</sup> And we could argue that it is not a willful misuse of language. The bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language is something that hasn't been planned.

<sup>67</sup> Wittgenstein makes use of the phrase 'form of life' often in the later work but is most found in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Nicholas F. Gier makes a good study of the references to it in 'Wittgenstein and Forms of Life' p.242 <<http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/Pdfs/GierWittgenstein.pdf>>



and 'rules' for its use, these are what Wittgenstein calls 'language-games'<sup>68</sup>. To understand the rules of the use of language is like understanding the rules of a game; this understanding is an ability that is a natural part of human development. However the production of these games requires a *tacit understanding* between the people in the culture; an agreement of communication.

In the later work, Wittgenstein turned from the essential atomic properties of words to the use of grammar. This enabled him to end the hunt for a fixed universal essence but maintain the focus on a central 'understanding' of what makes language possible. Here in the *Philosophical Investigations* we recognise a theme that was apparent in the *Tractatus* (the inability to express meaning further than the intuitive idea) but has evolved to correspond to grammar rather than a 'picture' of thought:

'The 'internal relations' which are established by grammar cannot be further examined or justified; we can only give examples of where rules are used correctly and where they are used incorrectly, and say: 'Look - don't you see the rule?' For example, the relation between a musical score and a performance cannot be grasped causally (as though we find, mysteriously, that a certain score causes us to play in a certain way). Nor can the rules that connect the two be exhaustively described - for, given a certain interpretation, any playing can be made to accord with a score. Eventually we just have to 'see the rule in the relations between playing and score'. If we cannot see it, no amount of explanation is going to make it comprehensible; if we can, then there comes a point at which explanations are superfluous - we do not need any kind of 'fundamental' explanation.'<sup>69</sup>

Also the idea has evolved to a point in which the internal relations *need no explanation* - there is no point in locating an essential meaning. It doesn't matter how much one could try to explain why a word has a certain meaning by building up a catalogue of definitions; a user of

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<sup>68</sup> Gustafsson, Martin *Wittgenstein on using language and playing chess: the breakdown of an analogy, and its consequences* <<http://cas.uchicago.edu/workshops/wittgenstein/files/2014/01/Gustafsson-Wittgenstein-and-chess-W-workshop.pdf>>

<sup>69</sup> Monk, Ray Ludwig *Wittgenstein The Duty of Genius* (London 1990) Vintage p302

the word must simply understand how it is used. If you cannot see it you cannot use it. In my own experience of language teaching I have observed that often students whose first language is vastly different to English often become 'deaf' to certain kinds of words. For example students from Asia do not use articles and have to learn their rules for the use of them from scratch (A very difficult process as the rules are many!). This takes time and often during a dictation exercise where the student needs to write English sentences that are dictated the student would often simply *not notice* the word being dictated as though it was invisible. The grammar use here is so foreign that it takes much practice for a non-native English speaker to comprehend the word has been uttered. This helps us understand the importance of an initial intuitive understanding and then a developed understanding – learning a language is not about computing the data heard and processing it, it is more like training a muscle and the development of a skill. Rules of use have to be learned *during* use.

However in our investigation we want to explore where this initial understanding of a rule comes from. It is understood that there is no sense in investigating a single definition of a word - it has a rule that is connected tightly with how it is used, and this rule may evolve and change. But, the ability to initialize the understanding of the rule - the very formation of a concept is the area we would like to explore and this we will do below.

### **A Form of Life**

Language games and grammar rules are part of a more fundamental and primitive concept of human creative expression of which Wittgenstein in the *Philosophical Investigations* terms 'a form of life'. The concept is bound with the idea that knowledge and meaning is ever-changing and growing, this as a direct result of the nature of human life itself. In the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy this concept is defined succinctly:

'Forms of life can be understood as changing and contingent, dependent on culture, context, history, etc; this appeal to forms of life grounds a relativistic reading of Wittgenstein. On the other hand, it is the form of life common to humankind, "shared human behavior" which is "the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language" (*PI* 206). This might

be seen as a universalistic turn, recognizing that the use of language is made possible by the human form of life.<sup>170</sup>

Although this is a very detailed definition there is more work to be done in terms of explaining what this 'shared human behaviour' entails and in which different aspects it is determined. In his paper *Wittgenstein: Forms of life*, Nicholas F. Gier studies in depth Wittgenstein's concept of language being a 'form of life'. In a succinct reference he quotes from Hanna Pitkin's book '*Wittgenstein and Justice*' which he states is a 'good summary'<sup>171</sup>:

'Because they are patterns, regularities, configurations, Wittgenstein calls them forms; and because they are patterns in the fabric of human existence and activity of earth he calls them forms of life, The concept therefore contains a formal dimension as well as a lived one'<sup>172</sup>.

Separating the concept of 'forms of life' into two distinct terms unables Gier to further compartmentalize the concept into four descriptive possibilities using a textual analysis written by the Wittgensteinian John Hunter (who did major contextual work). These descriptions allow Gier to push the definition of 'forms of life' even further and enable the reader to be witness to investigation of the concept in it's broadest possible terms. The four descriptive possibilities which are presented are:

- 1) The language game account. This interpretation places great emphasis on the concept of language games.
- 2) The Behaviour-Package view. In this interpretation, 'forms of life' are formalised behaviour 'packages', his means that language is a part of a wider communication which includes facial expressions, gestures and acts etc.

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<sup>70</sup> Biletzki, Anat and Matar, Anat, "Ludwig Wittgenstein", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/wittgenstein/>>.

<sup>71</sup> Gier, Nicholas F. Wittgenstein: Forms of Life Philosophy of the Social Sciences Volume 10 (1980) p244 <<http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/Pdfs/GierWittgenstein.pdf>>

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

3) The Cultural-Historical View. The most closely linked to Wittgenstein's anthropological 'turn', this view focuses its attention on 'the way of life'. Class structure, fashion, value and culture, industry and recreation all have a part to play in the formation of language.

4) The Natural-Historical View. This views 'forms of life' in a very organic way, emphasizing the biological aspect of life. Language is seen 'very broadly in the same class as the growth or nutrition of living organisms'. Language has an organic complexity and can react in a complicated way to the environment.

After regarding all the forms Gier settles on a mix of the biological and historical cultural as he emphasizes the importance of a foundation of rules being created at a very primitive stage. Gier argues that the 'basic nature' of language games is pointed out by Wittgenstein in the *Philosophical Investigations*:

'Our mistake is to look for an explanation where we ought to look at what happens as a "proto-phenomenon", That is, where we ought to have said: this language game is played'<sup>73</sup>

From here Gier argues that the often stated 'panlinguistic identification of being and language' of Wittgenstein is actually a misunderstanding of the philosopher. Although of course the speaking language plays the main role in the creation of meaning and concept, there is the other more primitive foundation that plays a part in conception. Gier again quotes Wittgenstein to support this:

'How am I able to obey a rule? ... If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: 'This is simply what I do'<sup>74</sup>

Here Wittgenstein is quite literally saying there is no further justification for rule following and no greater explanation for rules of language. The 'bedrock' is the lack of further information forthcoming in an investigation. We cannot go any further in terms of defining the foundations

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<sup>73</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G.E.M. Anscombe (Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1963) Paragraph 654.

<sup>74</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G.E.M. Anscombe (Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1963). Paragraph 217

of any rule. Here again we have a demarcation of where rationality reaches; we cannot take logic or reason further into the intuitive foundations of language.

Gier quotes several more passages from various Wittgenstein sources to further support his argument. Among the quotes are notions of 'foundation, ground, and bedrock'<sup>75</sup> that indicate the formal nature of 'forms of life'. He concludes that forms of life go beyond linguistic activities and that: 'It is the language-game and its related intentions, emotions, etc. That are embedded in the human situations, customs, and institutions of forms of life.' So that language and concept formation begins at the level of basic human activity not just the linguistic. They form a part of the wider human life and are formed from a direct relation to our interaction with the world and each other and our being.

Gier continues with his investigation into different interpretations of 'forms of life' by constructing a view of the concept as having different levels. At the bottom we have the biological, the human animal. From here through activities and interaction with environment and other humans we have culture. From this is constructed the socio-linguistic framework. Then the product the word of form of life. The final account of a 'form of life' rests on the biological - the organic - and the socio-cultural and historical. There is no one more important element but each is required. Gier quotes another passage from Wittgenstein, this time from *On Certainty* which seems to summarise the primitive state of human communication:

'I want to regard man here as an animal, as a primitive being to which one grants instinct but not ratiocination. As a creature in a primitive state.'<sup>76</sup>

And this quote is coupled with another (from Zettel) which emphasizes the link between the primitive state and the formation of language through a form of life:

'Our language-game is an extension of primitive behaviour. (for our language-game is behaviour.) (Instinct.)'<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Grier, Nicholas F. *Wittgenstein: Forms of Life Philosophy of the Social Sciences* Volume 10 (1980) p244  
<<http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/Pdfs/GierWittgenstein.pdf>> p247

<sup>76</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig *On Certainty* Basil Blackwell (Oxford 1969) Paragraph 475

So Gier supports very strongly the view that 'forms of life' are the product of a biological but also socio-cultural foundation. Later in the paper he makes some clarifying remarks about how far we can take the meaning of socio-cultural and he states that although 'Forms of life are the formal framework that make society and culture possible'<sup>78</sup> they cannot serve any sociological theory; they cannot answer any why questions and do not contain any immediate facts about humankind's historical past.' Also, although there is a biological element to the formation of 'forms of life' there are no facts contained within the human body that could explain communication in terms of physiology or psychology. 'Forms of life' are not, Gier states 'Facts of life' they are: 'primarily the formal conditions, the patterns in the weave of our lives, that make a meaningful world possible. They are the existential equivalents of Kant's *Bedingungen der Möglichkeit der Erfahrung*. As some commentators have already seen, forms of life perform a transcendental function.'<sup>79</sup>

So language then is not simply reducible to linguistic activities but to something more primitive as well as biological. Although we are certain that language is the result of an expressivist, creative community, we cannot afford to try to identify, to pinpoint where language 'sprouts' from. We are looking at a basic human condition rather than a fundamental beginning of concepts. Language and meaning are born from that condition. The foundations of language and meaning are outside of definition because they are embedded in the human condition; the biological and the cultural.

### **Primitive Reaction**

*On Certainty* (copyright date 1969) is a work which is important for our investigation into the concept of a non-rational foundation of meaning because it discusses the idea that language and the analysis of language work on separate levels and are often incompatible; when using language we do so normally without conscious concern of rule and meaning and analysis of

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<sup>77</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig *Zettel* Edited By G.E.M Anscombe and G.H. Von Wright University of California Press (California 1967). Paragraph 545

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. p257

<sup>79</sup> Ibid

language and philosophy often take words and language out of this context. The main argument in the work is a critical look at philosophy's attempts at securing certainty in experience; a traditional subject for thinkers and heralded as the basis for knowledge since Descartes' Meditations and the *Cogito*. Wittgenstein's take on the argument is to put forward the proposition that philosophers, in the case of examining certainty, take language from its intended position within everyday conversation and 'misuse' it by placing it within propositions of which it is foreign. The famous example is taken from Moore's 'in defence of common sense' where the thinker claims to 'know' a number of propositions to be true (Moore refers to his body and that of common facts of the external world). For Wittgenstein this very notion is problematic and he explains through the sentence: 'I know I'm in pain'. This sentence sounds strange as it wouldn't normally be used in everyday language; there is no need for one to doubt one's own pain (This is an impossibility) and indeed the sentence shows a 'misuse' of the word 'to know'. Philosophy drags words and concepts away from their everyday use and so creates its own problems.

There are several words which taken out of context create problems for philosophers and none more so than 'believe', 'know', 'existence' and 'certainty'. These words of course have an intrinsic link to the focus of an investigation into the non-rational foundation of meaning. Each of the words work on the basis that there is intuitive awareness which rests on assumption about reality. To investigate the validity of the concepts means to willingly abandon or ignore this crucial intuitive awareness. For example in *On Certainty* Wittgenstein tells us that language is forged through *immediate* acts of recognition, adaptiveness and intuitive feeling; children do not consciously know of their language acquisition. They have not yet learned the concept that something can be doubted to exist etc. This concept is something that is arrived at later. Language acquisition begins not with single objects but with the necessity of using words within an environment:

'Children do not learn that books exist, that armchairs exist, etc.,etc. - they learn to fetch books, sit in armchairs, etc.,etc. Later, questions about the existence of things do of course arise, "Is there such a thing as a unicorn?" and so on. <sup>180</sup>

The language of the child learning to speak is restricted to immediate acts and cannot be self-reflective; a child does not consciously check if he or she has a word 'right'; communication comes instinctively. (For example recently my three-year old daughter told me that she had thought of a story to tell me but she used the words 'I have a story in my mouth' to communicate this.) They simply build their language through immediate trial and error. It is impossible for example for a child to think to himself in more complex language than he has learned. Ratiocination is a developed skill which runs parallel with the development of language. If a child were able to reflect in a rational way about their initial language acquisition this would mean that there is such a thing as a private language. Wittgenstein of course critiqued the idea of a private language in the *Philosophical Investigations* and begins by asking if a person's private sensations could be given expression through writing or speech:

'A human being can encourage himself, give himself orders, obey, blame and punish himself; he can ask himself a question and answer it. We could even imagine human beings who spoke only in monologue; who accompanied their activities by talking to themselves... But could we also imagine a language in which a person could write down or give vocal expression to his inner experiences – his feelings, moods, and the rest – for his private use?'<sup>81</sup>

The idea that a person can talk to themselves is easily acceptable and understandable; after the maturation of language a person can then reflect on that language. However if we were to be able to 'look inside' the mind of a person who was without language (e.g. a child in the early stages of language development) would we find any signs or symbols that were representative

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<sup>80</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig, G. E. M. Anscombe, and G. H. von Wright. *On Certainty*. (Basil Blackwell 1969) Paragraph 65

<sup>81</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G.E.M. Anscombe (Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1963). Paragraph 251.



of expression of personal sensations? In answer to this question Wittgenstein provides a thought experiment:

'Let us imagine the following case. I want to keep a diary about the recurrence of a certain sensation. To this end I associate it with the sign "S" and write this sign in a calendar for every day on which I have the sensation. - I will remark first of all that a definition of the sign cannot be formulated. - but still I can give myself a kind of ostensive definition. - How? Can I point to the sensation? Not in the ordinary sense. But I speak, or write the sign down, and at the same time I concentrate my attention on the sensation – and so, as it were point inwardly. - But what is this ceremony for? For that is all it seems to be!'<sup>82</sup>

A definition cannot be formulated as a private sensation and can find no common ground in language; only when we can find empathic qualities in an expression of that sensation that were shared with others could we form definitions. So if the meaning of the sensation is known only to me what good is a symbol which is representative of that sensation? What is more there is a greater problem, as I cannot reference the sensation with symbols which are shared with others' sensations how can I know how to gauge the true nature of the sensation; its intensity and duration etc. The immediate sensation is felt first and then defined later within a convention of language – without language we must use a kind of intuitive feeling that does not have rational or logical meaning.

Meanings and definitions can only occur after the establishment of a language and language (in its initial form) can only be created subjectively and instinctively. Therefore a non-rational foundation of meaning would have to be a central aspect of all language, meaning and definition:

'A definition serves to establish the meaning of a sign. - Well, that is done precisely by the concentrating of my attention; for in this way I impress on myself the connexion between sign and sensation.- But "I impress it on myself" can only mean: this process brings it about that I remember the connexion right in the future. But in the present case I have no criteria for

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid. Paragraph 258

correctness. One would like to say: whatever is going to seem right to me is right. And that only means that here we can't talk about 'right'.<sup>83</sup>

So this means that there must be an *initial deed* in which the source of meaning is 'felt' (as it cannot be rationally internalized). The non-rational foundation works in a kind of 'meaning vacuum' in which an instinct for what is correct must act with accordance with a kind of performance principle that results in an establishment of an agreed meaning for a sign. The development of language is the slow building up of meaning through an instinctual 'feeling' for the correct utterance and then a performance of that utterance culminating in the foundations of a structure of language. Think of a baby learning to use language; there is no setting up for the conditions to learn - the baby must 'feel' for the communication and develop through spontaneous primitive gestures toward language (baby makes sounds and mimics her parents perhaps in a instinctual need to 'belong') and through actions and reactions, trial and error finally the language is developed. We could argue then that there must exist then a no-man's land between spontaneous reaction against external stimuli and the 'joining' of a being to the rest of humanity through the convention of language. Our next question is what can we call this no-man's land and is it possible to define it?

### **The Non-Rational Foundation of Meaning**

As we have seen above, in the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein shows that many of the assumptions and conclusions of the *Tractatus* about logicism were mistaken. One of the most damning criticisms of the earlier work came in the form of the disproving of what could be argued as being a centerpiece of the *Tractatus*, the picture theory. In paragraph 139 Wittgenstein presents his case against the theory:

'When someone says the word "cube" to me, for example, I know what it means. But can the whole use of the word come before my mind, when I understand it this way?'<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. Paragraph 139.

The answer to this question is of course *not*. We cannot 'know' something in the same way as a computer might process recognition. There is an essential 'grasp' of meaning that has come through the knowledge of the use of a word that has, in turn, been formed through the development of language in a pre-rational state .

The picture theory was of course a major part of the *Tractatus's* explanation of the 'mechanism' of language learning and meaning expression. What, in the *Philosophical investigations*, the picture theory gives way to are concepts that pull back from attempts at presenting a 'machine-like' notion of the brain. The concepts are most exclusively 'social' or 'anthropological' in that they move away from an the idea of the mind in isolation. Wittgenstein does not attempt to 'recreate' the mind nor find new language to describe what it does. Instead he focuses on how language is used and moves 'backwards' from there in terms of definition.

So we move then into the rather difficult notion of a 'non-rational' foundation for meaning (NRFM). This foundation, is then the *space* in which the spontaneous initiative is taken when we use our acquired skill of grammar - our knowledge of language-games. We could argue that this intuitive space is sign-posted in various forms in the work of Wittgenstein from the logical form to the 'internal relations' that are required when understanding a rule. Akin with other ideas of a 'pre-rational' nature such as intuition, instinct and the subconscious, we could present the NRFM is a primary mechanism for engaging with the world. In the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein introduces various ways in which humans learn new rules. The sophistication of developing such a skill is the production of a primitive interaction with our environment plus the requirements to form a convention of communication with our fellow humans.

There are three important questions that must be answered if we are going to present any kind of theory and relate it to Wittgenstein. Firstly, and paradoxically, as we are aware from Wittgenstein's middle period his philosophy is distinctly *anti-foundational*. That is he moved on from the Russell inspired absolutism of his early work on the *Tractatus* to the more anthropomorphic, and 'truth as ever-changing' views in the later work. How can we then

present a 'foundation' of meaning at all and relate it to Wittgenstein? To answer this very important first question I want to make it clear here that I define 'foundation' in the loosest possible terms; I understand the foundation as more of a continuing 'condition' than any fixed base or mechanism for meaning. The only thing that is fundamental about the NRFM is that meaning is developed here in conjunction with all manner of human interaction and activity including the biological dimension. The 'foundation' is more of a situation, a situation of the body and also from the 'stream of life' which is the social and cultural dimension from which meaning is developed.

There are still two further questions that now have to be answered if we are to accept the idea of a 'non-rational foundation for meaning'. The most pressing is what exactly do we mean by 'non-rational'? Wittgenstein's later philosophy deals with philosophical problems by unravelling the language used in those problems. All the pre-ratiocinative language used like intuition, instinct etc. gets scant mention in the work and following the methods of Wittgenstein would dictate that we need to shy away from developing language to suit a particular question - we would simply be creating more problems. However, it is, I argue, perfectly reasonable to introduce terms like the NRFM in the name of a search for greater elucidation. 'Non-rational' refers to a pre-ratiocinative, pre-reflective space or state - a 'feeling' for meaning that results in our movement toward meaning from nothing. As we have mentioned above, for Wittgenstein language can be understood as a 'form of life' and one which is embedded in human culture, activity and biology. The development of language is the result of human beings being in a relationship with the environment and each other. The 'non-rational' is the instinctive move from the primitive into the development of meaning. In this space there is no rational or logical thought.

The last question I think it is essential to answer with regards to the NRFM is to ask what exactly is going on then in the mind when this foundation is 'active'? This question is a minefield for the study of Wittgenstein because the issues that arise when referring to language in isolation (for Wittgenstein of course there can be no private language). Here though we are dealing with

something ineffable that is acknowledged by Wittgenstein as the 'primitive reaction' before language. It is neither something that is personal nor something mechanical.

Below I will look at the two questions in turn. To answer them I will use two philosophers Michael Polanyi and John Searle whom I believe have reached conclusions about knowledge and the human brain that will support my concept of the NRFM. The two assertions I will make to answer the questions will be:

- 1) The NRFM is a form of 'tacit' knowing; a type of knowledge before ratiocination and is central to knowledge in general.
- 2) The NRFM is, as well as a conceptual idea, is a spontaneous biological *condition* rather than a fixed physical part of the brain.

### **1) The NRFM is a form of 'Tacit' knowing**

In his book 'The Tacit Dimension' Michael Polanyi explores the notion of a non-rational 'pre-knowledge' that works in harmony with our focused 'attending to' knowledge. Polanyi's greatest claim is that human knowledge and methods of scientific investigation have at their heart, a 'tacit' knowledge which is a fundamental feature of our ability to understand and question the world.

Polyani's research was born from his experiences in the Soviet era and are a reflection of the cognitive dissonance of the age - Marxist theory held that the movement of society towards a greater future was inevitable and based on a pure materialist science but at the same time 'science for science's sake' was frowned upon and the 'symptom of a class society'<sup>85</sup>. So Polyani wanted to rediscover the human side to the so-called objective science and show the importance of our tacit awareness and the role of intuition in science.

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<sup>85</sup> Polanyi, Michael The Tacit Dimension, University of Chicago Press, 2009 p.3  
<[https://monoskop.org/images/1/11/Polanyi\\_Michael\\_The\\_Tacit\\_Dimension.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/1/11/Polanyi_Michael_The_Tacit_Dimension.pdf)> p3.

Polyani starts out with a broad and simple claim: 'I shall reconsider human knowledge by starting from the fact we know more than we can tell'<sup>86</sup>. By this he means that our perception and the knowledge collected by our interaction with the world involves a tacit understanding and questioning that is not conscious. In the book he gives two very good examples to explain this. The first is about how we recognise a face:

'Take an example. we know a person's face, and can recognise it among a thousand, indeed a million. Yet we usually cannot tell how we recognise a face we know.'<sup>87</sup> Polyani's solution to this mystery is that we work on two fronts when perceiving the world. On the one hand, the *focus* of our attention, the person's face is before us and on the other hand all the particular pieces of data about the faces we know and how this contrasts. The two fronts come together and we reach a recognition. Another example is about the nature of studying and the art of teaching. Polyani shows that the teacher's efforts to instill information, to be effective, relies on the abilities of the student to process that information:

'A university's great efforts are spent in practical classes to teach students to identify cases of diseases and specimens of rocks, of plants and animals... ..but it can be argued, once more, that the possibility of teaching these appearances by practical exercises proves that we can tell our knowledge of them? The answer is that we can only do so by relying on the pupil's intelligent co-operation for catching the meaning of the demonstration'<sup>88</sup>.

We can present methods and data to intelligent students but no amount of explanation can do the work for them. It's for the students to make that move to knowledge. Awareness and comprehension are skills developed by the individual. It is skills such as these, that relate to active experience, that we can say would be part of the concept of the NRFM.

Polyani's 'tacit' knowing was born from the 'Gestalt' psychology of his time which held that knowledge can be reduced to simple visuals and 'this shaping or integrating I hold to be the

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. p5

great and indispensable tacit power by which all knowledge is discounted and, once discovered, is held to be true<sup>89</sup>.

The practical conclusions to acknowledging a place for intuitive sources in science are already evident. The creative force of humanity has been the backbone for some of the greatest scientific advancements of the modern world. In fact the intuitive element in knowledge and its use in science is easy to identify if we care to take a look. Michael Polanyi explains the importance of the practical application of knowledge which requires the simple input of data; through intuitive awareness combined with the recall of specific data scientists, engineers and doctors make their daily judgements. Polanyi presents the example of a medical student:

'Textbooks of diagnostics teach the medical student the several symptoms of different diseases, but this knowledge is useless, unless the student has learnt to apply it at the bedside. The identification of the species to which an animal or plant belongs, resembles the task of diagnosing a disease; it too can be learnt only by practicing it under a teacher's guidance. A medical practitioner's diagnostic ability continues to develop by further practical experience; and a taxonomist can become an expert, e.g., for classing new specimens of insects (of which 800,000 are known), only after many years of professional practice. Thus, both the medical diagnostician and the taxonomist acquire much diagnostic knowledge that they could not learn from books.<sup>90</sup>

Practical knowledge can only be born out of the application of the theory which requires intuitive, instinctive thinking. Polanyi presents different levels of knowledge and introduces several terms which define types of intuitive knowledge. Above we have already mentioned 'tacit knowledge'; knowledge of a skill such as riding a bike of which we need not focus on while we are riding. Such unfocused knowledge of everyday skill plays an enormous part in our lives. Polanyi stresses that tacit knowledge is not unconscious knowledge but terms it as 'subsidiary'.

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<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Michael Polanyi *Tacit Knowing: Its Bearing on Some Problems of Philosophy Reviews of Modern Physics*, 34 (4)Oct. 1962, 601-616.<<http://www.compilerpress.ca/Competitiveness/Anno/Anno%20Polanyi%20Tacit%20KnowIng%20RMP%201962.htm>> Retrieved 17<sup>th</sup> February 2016

A subsidiary is of course a business term which refers to a smaller business which is controlled by a larger entity. Polyani is here meaning that tacit knowledge; the intuitive knowledge is thought of as not the main focus of attention for the mind. It is as though intuitive knowledge can function away from the main attention of the subject. Polyani adds to the lexicon of intuitive knowledge by including the act of 'subception'; a conscious knowledge but nonetheless not a focal one. Subception represents the active mind working consciously but not focally; as though we are aware on another level but paying no primary attention. This level of tacit awareness is even slighter:

'A skier racing down a slope is intensely aware of controlling every part of his body, though he could not tell by what principles he keeps his balance. By contrast, studies by Hefferline and his collaborators have shown that a human subject can learn to silence an unpleasant noise by a muscular twitch so slight that he cannot feel it at all. When tacit knowing relies on such low levels of consciousness, it becomes unspecifiable in a stronger sense. The experiment I have just quoted is an outstanding example of an inquiry in which an increasing number of experimental psychologists have been engaged in the past ten years and that has aroused wide popular interest - the inquiry into the process now usually called 'subception.' The term was coined by Lazarus and McLeary. A number of nonsense syllables were briefly shown to the subject and certain of these were followed by an electric shock. Presently the subject anticipated shock on the sight of "shock syllables," but, on questioning, he wrongly identified these syllables; this was called 'subception.'<sup>91</sup>

This experiment opens up the idea that there could be layers of unconscious and conscious thought and intuitive reactions. Polyani has given us three examples. 'attending to' tacit knowledge, subsidiary knowledge and a deeper understanding that is isolated to a primal reaction: 'subception'. Polyani continues to describe the effect of subception on rational thinking; how subliminal stimulus can manipulate conscious thought:

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.



'The authors acknowledge similar experiments by earlier authors and they were followed by a number of others demonstrating variants of subception in the anticipation of shock. In all these cases the subjects had acquired knowledge, the particulars of which they could not specify. However, once these particulars were identified, they could be readily observed in themselves. Some subjects of Ericson and Kuethe did in fact consciously avoid shocks, and, in consequence, behaved differently from those avoiding shocks by subception. By contrast, Heiferline's experiments represent a subception of subliminal stimuli. Earlier observations of this type are exemplified by the work of Smith and Henrickson. They exposed the picture of a smiling face so briefly, that it could not be identified, and found that unsmiling faces exposed immediately afterwards (long enough to be identified) were seen as smiling slightly.'<sup>92</sup>

The varieties of types of knowledge detailed above move the concept of a non-rational foundation of meaning into greater illumination, giving us the chance to explore it in greater detail. Polyani gives us much to support the NRFM as the thinker highlights the idea of the depth of 'knowledge' having aspects that are 'more than we can tell'- With Polyani's examples we have already a 'map' of where pre-ratiocinative thought plays various parts in knowledge. We can understand more clearly the part the body plays in knowledge and the experience. Contrary to a Cartesian dualism, the mind works very much with the body in the sense that even the muscles in our body help us with memory. However, we could argue that the examples above with Polyani still cannot bring us no closer to being able to define exactly what 'intuition' or the NRFM strictly defined is. I believe that this is enough however as the examples give the notion of a non rational foundation greater support in general. There is a something intuitive 'behind' knowledge and the creation of meaning that happens before (and *during* if we are counting subsidiary knowledge.) ratiocination.

Also these variants of an intuitive kind of knowledge offer us something more, the move closer to understanding the consequences for science in the aftermath of recognition of place for intuition in language acquisition and meaning. In a positive light we can explore the space between the conscious and unconscious world of knowledge which in turn would give us with

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

greater understanding of the generation of thought itself. The reconciliation of intuitive thought with rational thought can lead to vistas which can produce wider knowledge. Polanyi shows that intuitive knowledge can be explored through scientific investigation but can still hold its indefinable character. Science, respectful of the limits of its search, can produce an inclusive form of research continuing to investigate within its scientific boundaries but also respectful of how intuitive feeling may play a part. In fact for Polanyi, to try and dismiss the tacit aspect of knowledge in favour of a purer, more objective science would be a grave mistake and in fact would damage science:

'We are approaching here a crucial question. The declared aim of modern science is to establish a strictly detached, objective knowledge. Any falling short of this ideal is accepted only as a temporary imperfection, which we must aim at eliminating. But suppose that tacit thought forms an indispensable part of all knowledge, then the ideal of eliminating all personal elements of knowledge would, in effect, aim at the destruction of all knowledge.'<sup>93</sup>

For Polanyi, the body cannot be separated from science or the process of science. Science, no matter how 'objective', produces results that are embedded in human culture because the body – all of the body - has a crucial role:

'Our body is the ultimate instrument of all our external knowledge, whether intellectual or practical. In all our waking moments we are relying on our awareness of contacts of our body with things outside for attending to these things. Our own body is the only thing in the world which we normally never experience as an object, but experience always in terms of the world to which we are attending from our body. It is by making this intelligent use of our body that we feel it to be our body, and not a thing outside.'<sup>94</sup>

Also Polanyi talks about how, if we move away from our tacit understanding and knowledge of the world and instead focus on the particulars of a thing or situation we can diminish our grasp

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid. p20

<sup>94</sup> Ibid p16.

on the structure of the world. Pure analysis of any part of the world could cause us to lose the importance of the tacit grasp:

'We can see now how an unbridled lucidity can destroy our understanding of complex matters. Scrutinise closely the particulars of a comprehensive entity and their meaning is effaced, our conception of the entity is destroyed.'<sup>95</sup>

Then Polyani gives a very familiar example which justifies this idea: Repeat a word several times, attending carefully to the motion of your tongue and lips, and to the sound you make, and soon the word will sound hollow and eventually lose its meaning.' This idea works well with our notion of the NRFM as both are crucial but intuitive, working before ratiocination. The mind and the body are working as one, and if we try to retreat into a 'purer' notion of comprehension – similar to the thought experiments of Descartes - then we are limiting our experience and in so doing producing conclusions which are not the whole picture.

In the paper 'Tacit Teaching' Nicholas C. Burbules talks about how Wittgenstein applied a type of tacit teaching when teaching philosophy. In the introduction Burbules defines it as: 'Tacit teaching refers to the many forms of informal instruction – some intentional, and some difficult to categorise simply as one or the other – by which skills, capacities, and dispositions are passed along within the domain of practice'<sup>96</sup>. Wittgenstein's manner of teaching goes a long way in conveying the importance he obviously believed in allowing the student to 'think for herself'; Burbules cites two examples in which Wittgenstein describes his teaching:

'In teaching you philosophy I'm like a guide showing you how to find your way around London. I have to take you through the city from north to south, from east to west, from Euston to the Embankment and from Piccadilly to the Marble Arch. After I have taken you many journeys through the city, in all sorts of directions, we shall have passed through any given street a number of times – each time traversing the street as part of a different journey. At the end of

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Burbules, NC 2008, 'Tacit Teaching', *Educational Philosophy & Theory*, 40, 5, pp. 666-677, Academic Search Elite, EBSCOhost, viewed 22 February 2016.

this you will know London; you will be able to find your way about like a Londoner. Of course, a good guide will take you through the more important streets more often than he takes you down side streets; a bad guide will do the opposite. In philosophy I'm a rather bad guide.<sup>97</sup>

This quote serves both as a guide to understanding his teaching style but it also complements his writing. Wittgenstein is not giving us an obvious sign to where the truth lies but rather is showing us the outside of it replicating the natural way in which we seem to appropriate knowledge. In another quote it is emphasized that Wittgenstein did not want to have students learn how to think like him but on the contrary think very much for themselves:

'A teacher may get good, even astounding, results from his pupils while he is teaching them and yet not be a good teacher; because it may be that, while his pupils are directly under his influence, he raises them to a height which is not natural for them, without fostering their own capacities for work at this level, so that they immediately decline again as soon as the teacher leaves the classroom. Perhaps this is how it is with me.'<sup>98</sup>

Wittgenstein's style of teaching is very much reflected in his work and Burbules points to the *Philosophical Investigations* in which the philosopher is pointing rather than leading. He is relying to a extent on the initiative of his readers and deals in thought experiments that allow the reader to find their own way. Burbule notes that this style is very different to the Socratic method of leading and encouragement of the reader to a specific path of reasoning:

'The Investigations and later works are full of frequent remarks that begin with asking us to 'imagine', as in 'Let us imagine a language...' (Philosophical Investigations 1 paragraph 2), and elsewhere. At other times Wittgenstein begins a passage with, 'Suppose...' Or 'Think...' Or 'Ask yourself...' And so on. These thought experiments play a crucial substantive and stylistic role in the Investigations, and they are characteristic of a way of writing about philosophy that is more

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<sup>97</sup> Gasking, D.A.T & Jackson, A. C (1967) Wittgenstein as a teacher, in: K.T. Fann (ed.), Ludwig Wittgenstein: the man and his philosophy (Atlantic Highlands, NJ, Humanities Press; Brighton, Harvester Press. p52

<sup>98</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig *Culture and Value*, G. H. Von Wright in collaboration with H. Nyman, eds;P. Winch, trans. (Oxford, Basil Blackwell) p. 38e

oriented to triggering a shift in thought than in demanding a proof; more to showing than to saying.<sup>99</sup>

Burbules uses Wittgenstein's style to contrast the raising status of more instructional modes of teaching seen in contemporary classrooms and indicates the importance of maintaining the legitimacy of different ways of teaching. However for our investigation it helps highlight how Wittgenstein brought forward the importance of the area of knowledge that is non-rational in that it is non-intentional, we are engaging in learning without ratiocination. Burbules cites Polyani:

'As Michael Polyani and many others have explored, a good deal of what we know – particularly in the area of things we know how to do – is tacit in nature. We cannot articulate very fully what we are doing, how or why, even though we are doing it successfully. Grammar is a conspicuous example: most fluent speakers of a language cannot identify all the rules they are following (with all their exceptions and variations), even though they do speak effectively and according to such algorithms.<sup>100</sup>

The grammar rules themselves are identified later. The rules must be learned without the aid of language itself but through doing. It seems Wittgenstein identified early on how knowledge functions, rather a skill that is developed than some kind of computational process. Something rather more organic. A conclusion garnered through the exploration of the limits of language:

'Wittgenstein's teaching and writing present countless examples of what I am calling here 'tacit teaching'. In part, this reflects Wittgenstein's lifelong preoccupation with the limits of language. This is most apparent in his concern in the *Tractatus* with the limits of what can be said, at which point, he says, we must pass over the rest in silence. In his later work this concern shows up in a different way:

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<sup>99</sup> Burbules, NC 2008, 'Tacit Teaching', *Educational Philosophy & Theory*, 40, 5, pp. 666-677, Academic Search Elite, EBSCOhost, viewed 22 February 2016.p668

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. p.669

'I should like to say: you regard it much too much as a matter of course that one can tell anything to anyone. That is to say: we are so much accustomed to communication through language, in conversation, that it looks to us as if the whole point of communication lay in this: someone else grasps the sense of my words – which is something mental: he as it were takes it into his own mind (Philosophical Investigations paragraph 363).'<sup>101</sup>

But of course communication and language represents the meaning that can be expressed but there is more in the sense that humans have a primitive reaction to the environment that is not at first expressible. Tacit knowing is the sphere of knowledge that works before ratiocination and before language itself and the concept of a non-rational space for the development of meaning allows for the transition from the inexpressible to the expressed.

Polyani's work on tacit knowledge is important because it provides us with the concept of a non-rational 'space' in which knowledge occurs; the NRFM finds some support here because there is an acknowledgement of the importance of a human (and the human body) dimension to knowledge in general. Polyani was emphasizing the tendency for science to search for an ever more purer conclusions and a protection from the human element, however there should be a strong realization that with every conclusion there comes a crucial intuitive element that should not be dismissed.

## **2) The NRFM is a spontaneous *condition* rather than a physical part of the brain.**

In his book 'The Mystery of Consciousness' John Searle tackles one of the most enduring ideas that modern thinkers have developed: the tendency to think of the mind as a computer. This curious idea has been developed since the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century when computers first came onto the scene and they started to capture the imagination. Searle states that there is now a real pull towards the computational view of the mind: 'The computer seems to provide, at last, a way of

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid. p671

explaining ourselves that is in accord with the scientific worldview and, perhaps most important, the computational theory of the mind expresses a certain technological will to power<sup>102</sup>

When it comes to understanding language and meaning, there is also a similar tendency to imagine that language is 'stored' in our brains like data in a hard drive and that it would simply be a matter for us to locate meaning in 'files'. Wittgenstein of course has shown that he runs against this current as he quite clearly shows from the *Tractatus* onward that there is more to our understanding than what logic suggests. Wittgenstein's propositions state that which we cannot said clearly must be 'passed over in silence' is not a case for limiting our view of language but rather the drawing a line under what can be explored in logic.

Searle puts his case against viewing the mind as a computer in the conclusion chapter in his book:

'I Believe that the philosophical importance of computers, as is typical with any new technology, is grossly exaggerated. The computer is a useful tool, nothing more or less... ..the idea that computers would provide us with a model for solving our deepest scientific and philosophical worries about consciousness, mind, and self seems to me out of the question.'<sup>103</sup> Searle's greatest argument against viewing the mind as kind of powerful computer is that it is 'antibiological'. He states that as a consequence of following the computational theory of the mind - thoughts and brain processes are formal and syntactical - there is a tendency to think that 'brains don't matter'<sup>104</sup> and are simply the 'hardware' wherein the software is housed. This harks back to a type of Cartesian dualism which Wittgenstein refuted. Searle reminds us that 'brain processes *cause* consciousness' and we are invited to think of consciousness not as a thing, floating in the mind, but a biological process itself like digestion. He makes it clear that dualism when it comes to the mind is seriously misplaced:

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<sup>102</sup> Searle, John R. *The Mystery of Consciousness* Granta Publications (London 1997) p190

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

'What I am trying to do is to redraw the conceptual map: if you have a map on which there are only two mutually exclusive territories, the 'mental' and the 'physical,' you have a hopeless map and you will never find your way about. In the real world, there are lots of territories – economic, political, meteorological, athletic, social, mathematical, chemical, physical, literary, artistic, etc. These are all parts of a unified world.'<sup>105</sup>

When it comes to what the NRFM is, it is clearly part of the reality of the world and the reality of the mind and of meaning itself. But what is it and where is it located? Of course Wittgenstein wouldn't begin to answer this question with a view of pointing to an internal process in the brain, but he would acknowledge that just because it cannot be pinned down with a definition it doesn't mean it isn't a real concept. Searle, although he is admirable in that he will not bow to the pressure of presenting the mind as a kind of powerful computer is nonetheless optimistic when it comes to finding a satisfying 'scientific' answer to what 'consciousness' truly is:

'Among the natural systems, some are living organic systems. They contain carbon-based molecules and have heavy doses of nitrogen, oxygen, and hydrogen. On this earth they are all the result of biological evolution. Some very few of them have evolved nervous systems capable of causing and sustaining consciousness. Consciousness is caused by the behaviour of microelements of nervous systems, and is realised in the structures of those nervous systems. Consciousness is not reducible in the way that other biological properties typically are, because it has first person ontology.'<sup>106</sup>

Searle has laid out in the clearest possible way his view of consciousness. He paints a vivid biological definition of how the brain, as an organic, nervous system has been created out of evolution. However the single biggest notion that sets apart any other is that he is stating that consciousness is self aware. There is a world of difference between programming a computer to think it is human and a human thinking it is human – the human is aware it is human.

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. P.213



The non-rational foundation of meaning we could argue is part of the *condition* of knowledge. In a similar way that consciousness- as Searle claims - is a process rather than a program, the non-rational foundation of meaning is 'working' rather than waiting for information. Similar words which hark to the ineffable side of knowledge – instinct, intuition etc. Seem almost to have a magical quality - a kind of pre-knowledge which resists definition truly but this is simply because, like consciousness itself, it is a process which cannot 'catch itself' similar to 'sight'. We could quite possibly 'break down' knowledge into understandable, effable qualities and philosophers have been trying to do so through the centuries, but the foundations of meaning go beyond what can be defined.

So to conclude, the NRFM is a concept is part of a wider notion of knowledge in general. Including 'Tacit Knowing' it is a wide 'space' of knowledge that works before ratiocination and provides the bridge between the primitive reaction and language and then ultimately to meaning. There may be many layers of knowledge that lay between intuitive knowledge and conscious analytical knowledge, and all are linked to different types of physical and emotional experience and use of the body.

We acknowledge that without language, meaning is impossible but there are feelings and sensations that are inexpressible and are part of our immediate reaction to our environment (primitive sensations). We could present the NRFM as the pool of sensation from which we produce language and so meaning. The foundation itself is not a fixed base of understanding and shouldn't likened to a computer - rather like Searle's notion of consciousness as being a process and a biological one at that we can understand the NRFM in a similar way, as being a *condition* of knowledge in general.

### Part Three

#### Exploring the Non-rational Foundation of Meaning and the Relationship with the Sublime

In the first part of this paper, through an investigation into the 'Resolute reading' issue, I highlighted the importance of the 'ineffable' to an understanding of Wittgenstein's philosophy. Although one of his aims in the *Tractatus* was to remain in the boundaries of logic we can argue that he maintained an inclusive, 'holistic' view with regards to philosophy in general, factoring in all of the 'mystical' aspects of the human experience including what we term as 'ineffable'. I argued above that the concept of the 'ineffable', rather than being a main problem of the earlier work, is in fact *central* to understand how Wittgenstein presents his view of philosophical problems and his philosophical goals and aims. Wittgenstein showed a philosophical problem is to be unravelled rather than solved by way of locating an essential answer; instead of discounting or rejecting concepts that fall beyond the boundaries of sense, these concepts are included in the equation (a move that is sympathetic to Heidegger's thought - see below), and, in the later work, investigated for their use in language. Mystical and religious language, although strictly outside of boundaries of logic are nonetheless part of overall perceptual experience and thus have a major part to play (even if that part is impossible to fully expose) in the formation of knowledge regardless. In the second part of this paper I showed how the 'ineffable' aspects of knowledge have a place throughout Wittgenstein's writings, running through the early work on logic, the picture theory, to the later investigations into the grammar of language and the concept of the primitive reaction. To consolidate these basic premises I have introduced the concept of a 'Non-rational foundation of meaning'; being part of a pool of tacit understanding and knowledge that operates before ratiocination and I have argued that this foundation is at the heart of all human meaning and knowledge and uniting by root all creative output from logic to art. In the final part of my paper I want to explore how the non-rational foundation of knowledge forms an intimate link between our rational selves, our environment and the experience of the ineffable and the mystical.

Firstly I will ask what part does the NRFM play in expressions that transcend the limits of meaning? The answer to this question will go some way in explaining how the ineffable has a significant role in 'filling the gaps' in our expression of our experience with reality. Next I will ask how far does Wittgenstein's view on religion potentially prepare the path for the establishment of the NRFM? The answer to this question should bring us closer to the inclusivity of Wittgenstein's philosophy and how a perspicuous view requires a 'tolerance' of the ineffable within the expression of the experience of reality. Next I will take a closer look at the ineffable itself and ask how it features in the NRFM. To answer this it will be necessary to explore the language role of the ineffable and whether it is possible to apply Wittgenstein's methods to an examination of it. Finally I will explore the link between the primitive reaction and the NRFM through an examination of Wittgenstein's writing on primitive reaction.

### **How the NRFM Finds Meaning with Expressions that Transcend the Limits of Logic**

In 1929, seven years after the publication of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein held a lecture for the 'Heretics' society in Cambridge. In Ray Monk's biography of Wittgenstein he claims that the lecture was set up partly as an opportunity 'to try and correct the most prevalent and serious misunderstanding of the *Tractatus*: the idea that it is a work written in a positivist, anti-metaphysical spirit'.<sup>107</sup> A statement which it seems can counter the idea that the ineffable is not a feature of the work.

In all of his recorded work, the 1929 'Lecture on Ethics' reveals most of Wittgenstein's sense of the importance of the mystical and by association the ineffable in our knowledge of the world. By placing ethics under the banner of 'aesthetics' and arguing that much that we discuss in philosophy is far removed from our predilection for scientific study, Wittgenstein is making a huge statement in terms of acceptance of non-rational concepts within his view of the world. A limit to the explanatory power of science is clearly drawn, and although Wittgenstein acknowledges he is speaking in language that is in his own terms 'nonsense', in having firmly

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<sup>107</sup> Monk, Ray Ludwig *Wittgenstein The Duty of Genius* Vintage (London 1990) p.277

placed a limit to what science can do, we are left with the idea that it is up to our own faith and experiences whether or not we accept what he has to say:

'Our words used as we use them in science, are vessels capable only of containing and conveying meaning and sense, natural meaning and sense. Ethics, if it is anything, is supernatural and our words will only express facts; as a teacup will only hold a teacup full of water and if I were to pour out a gallon over it.'<sup>108</sup>

This remarkable passage clearly shows the problems and the possible solutions for traditional philosophy when it deals with moral and ethical language. In dealing with questions of metaphysics and ethics we often have to use words that are not in the strict sense logical in philosophy, so they are naturally held in suspicion. But in our everyday life there is no such rational judgment; we make remarks of value all the time and live in a world in which the language of morality, beauty, love etc. goes unchecked by scientific rules. This is why Wittgenstein was so attracted to the use of language; it may be possible to collect information enough to bring a greater clarity to meaning via language use in our everyday language.

In turning to ethics, Wittgenstein tries to show his audience (of presumably philosophy scholars) something they can recognize as having been studied academically but crucially is found in everyday lives. Ethical concepts are of central importance to our lives although expression of them is impossible in 'meaningful' terms; trying to unlock their 'essence' via scientific study is misguided. It is in this lecture that Wittgenstein first tries to explain some of his thoughts on religious experience and other subjects that while vital to human life lay beyond scientific analysis. Wittgenstein attempts (he recognizes that such talk is to run along the boundaries of sense) to convey what we see as 'religious experience'. First, he gives a major statement is of his 'wonder at being in the world':

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<sup>108</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, "A Lecture on Ethics" in J. Klaage and A. Nordman (eds.) *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Philosophical Occasions (1912-1951)* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993): 115-155

'I believe the best way of describing it is to say that when I have it I wonder at the existence of the world. And I am then inclined to use such phrases as 'how extraordinary that anything should exist' or 'how extraordinary that the world should exist.'<sup>109</sup>

This highly personal account of wonder of course goes beyond anything that can be defined in language that is in the boundaries of 'sense', but it liberates us to the idea that the human experience is clearly much more meaningful and deeper than could ever be captured in logic or scientific endeavour. Through our inability to describe or define our experiences there lays itself evidence that there is more than could ever be said; it has to be shown (or felt). Here then we touch upon the attractive idea that through art, poetry, music etc. - in short our culture - we can harness a greater picture of the 'truth' of humanity; not by explaining or defining it but by placing a mirror to ourselves in the shape of the emotive images and powerful stories that resonate through the expressive product of our interaction with the world. This idea can be found in Wittgenstein's notes from 1939:

'People nowadays think that scientists exist to instruct them, poets, musicians, etc. to give them pleasure. The idea that these have something to teach them – that does not occur to them.'<sup>110</sup>

It can be argued that the idea that stories, music and pictures are there simply to entertain doesn't do justice to the depth of the exploration of the art in terms of the human spirit and condition. From mythology to film, the creative arts are a way to explore the most important questions we have of our culture and our environment.

In the lecture Wittgenstein gives a second example of religious experience that we could say is easily recognisable and understood by most people; that of feeling 'absolutely safe':

'I will mention another experience straight away which I also know and which others of you might be acquainted with: it is, what one might call, the experience of feeling absolutely safe. I

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig *Culture and Value*, translated by Peter Winch (Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1980) p36e

mean the state of mind in which one is inclined to say 'I am safe, nothing can injure me whatever happens.'<sup>111</sup>

Feeling 'absolutely safe' may not be something that most people recognise as religious experience but it qualifies as such because of its non-rational status; there is no *reason* that we should feel safe and we look for none as we fall in the perfectly relaxed state. Another similar state may be that of the athlete who, during a competition has the feeling that he absolutely cannot be beaten and will win no matter what happens.

Wittgenstein continues by saying that although these are both real experiences with real feelings (and say something essential about the world) any words used to express them are naturally a 'misuse of language' (going beyond the boundaries of meaning) and nonsensical in the strict sense. But these are not trivial experiences as they are arguably readily recognizable and shared with much of humanity; we could remark easily out of hand on their general legitimacy. We could also include the uniquely human experience of acknowledging the breathtaking beauty of the natural world, of the creation of art and of the experience of friendship and love. All experiences that start with a primitive feeling and constantly defy rational definition and explanation.

The lecture is stunning because it allows the listener to agree in the sense that although we are dealing with a highly personal account of the mystical and the ineffable it is an account we can feel empathy with. In my own personal life I have felt a revelatory, sublime experience in which I have felt something deeply moving and filled to the brim with meaning although it defies definition. During a train journey not long after my son's birth I looked out at a sunrise over the rooftops of the city of Osaka, Japan. The intensity of the light and the 'realness' of the sun gave me a powerful feeling of understanding that simply cannot be expressed adequately in words. I felt a real belonging to the universe and an understanding of it that no doubt was inspired by my becoming a father but at the same time went further. I believe this type of experience is

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<sup>111</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, "A Lecture on Ethics" in J. Klaage and A. Nordman (eds.) *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Philosophical Occasions (1912-1951)* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993): 115-155

what Wittgenstein is talking about in his lecture. Even writing the experience down here seems to be diminishing it in some way.

The lecture legitimizes the importance of that which cannot be defined as being patently present within that which can be analyzed. Wittgenstein's love of music, poetry and theatre suggests this delight in the idea that meaning can be alluded to only when it is not directly referred to. Philosophy's goal of excavating the 'deeper' reality is misguided in the sense that there is a hope that what is essential can be defined. The limits of language mean that there is a limit to explicit description of all of reality not that reality is limited to the shortcomings of our means of communication. In trying to bring a definite explanation of something like 'beauty' or 'justice' is not only 'scraping the barrel' but also superfluous as being human is enough for us to understand an experience is real – we don't need absolute explanations or definitions.

With the concept of a non-rational foundation of knowledge, we can easily understand that the boundaries of what can be communicated are not necessarily the boundaries of meaning. Take for example expressions of love and wonder at life in general, played out in poems and just simple expressions of love between people, although what we are expressing can be easily judged as nonsensical in the strictest terms, our simple empathy and understanding of them dictates between us there is agreement within the foundation of knowledge. Therefore there must exist this foundation of agreement before rational thought and judgement.

One of the reasons I believe that Wittgenstein turned to the idea of focusing on ordinary language and away from the types of language which is formed from philosophical discussion, is that with everyday communication, there is no mystery waiting to be penetrated and 'solved'. The concept of the NRFM would allow for an acceptance of the ineffable nature of some kinds of language during philosophical investigation. Expressions that transcend the boundaries of rational definition would have their roots within the NRFM and would there could be an agreed terminus for that definition.

## How Wittgenstein's view on religion prepares the ground for the NRFM

To support the concept of the NRFM I want to turn to aspects of Wittgenstein's work. It could be argued that Wittgenstein's views on religion and ritual offer a great insight into how he might be willing to accept the idea of the NRFM. Looking at his writings on religion we can get again a sense of the inclusive nature of Wittgenstein's philosophy of knowledge.

From what we know of Wittgenstein from his writings in *Culture and Value* he seems to have had enormous respect for religion in general. However as we learn from Monk's biography he was also most critical of people who professed to be religious and particularly those who stated that they were interested in a career in the church. Religiousness was a legitimate part of the human experience where, like questions of moral order, there must be the utmost respect given, and so much so that the utmost sincerity was required to follow a career in the church. So when Wittgenstein talks of spirituality and religious experience he does so in a manner that is representative of his views on the lack of definition of religious phenomena and of the wider general experience of 'wonder'. He is not, we could argue, however talking of the organization of a particular organized religious order.

Wittgenstein spent time looking at the origin of meaning as expressed in a wider context; the wider communistic, creative product of a culture. Through commenting on his reading of Sir James Frazer's *Golden Bough* (1890), Wittgenstein challenges the rationalist and 'progressive' values of the scientific method and shows how his views can be applied to different areas of research aside from logic. Frazer's famous piece of anthropological study is tainted with the values of a society that we could say idolizes the scientific method and views 'primitive' ritual culture as a mistaken early attempt at science. Wittgenstein explains how this idea is fundamentally wrong. He states that all forms of religion have worth as they are, developed or not, complex or not, all expressions of beings within the world reflecting their direct participation in it. And by being so are legitimate. Through a closer appreciation of the ritualistic patterns of our lives (developed or not) there is a realization that faith (and its intuitive aspects) and elements of the mystical are embedded in our culture.



Wittgenstein was lecturing at this time on the broad outlook of science and its effect on culture in general. He took a rather negative view of how science has a firm hold on civilization and that there is a strong fixture to the ideal of 'progress'. Science is ever growing and adding, searching outward and even the advancements in its method are simply seen as means to a greater end. Wittgenstein explains his opposition to this way of thinking:

'Typically it constructs. It is occupied with building an ever more complicated structure. And even clarity is sought only as a means to this end, not as an end in itself. For me the contrary clarity, perspicuity are valuable in themselves...

...I am not interested in constructing a building, so much as in having a perspicuous view of the foundations of possible buildings

So I am aiming at the same target as the scientists and my way of thinking is different from theirs'.<sup>112</sup>

Wittgenstein's opposition to the thrust of the scientific revolution which was still in effect was that he wasn't offering 'theories' he was offering the means to escape the need of theory. This meant that Wittgenstein's approach to philosophical problems meant accepting the limits of 'provable' elements. Looking at language, Wittgenstein could see that acquisition and usage contain elements which resist the exacting nature of the scientific method. The syntax and grammar of thought cannot be penetrated in the same manner of a chemical compound or a mathematical equation. Rules often cannot be described they can only be shown. If we cannot see and grasp meaning ourselves (e.g. the rule of 2 plus 2 equals 4), use our own mental ability, then no amount of explanation is going to make it comprehensible. The limit of science is firmly created and our intuitive feeling (or our ability to grasp meaning pre-ratiocination) must fill in the gap. His alternative to a search for a 'theory' was the perspicuous representation and this entailed being inclusive and accepting different approaches to the search for the 'truth'.

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<sup>112</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig *Culture and Value* Trans. Peter Winch University of Chicago Press (Chicago 1980) 7e

'Man has to awaken to wonder – and so perhaps do peoples. Science is a way of sending him to sleep' So Wittgenstein wrote in 1930<sup>113</sup>, this statement included his views about the place of 'magic' within primitive cultures and defending their way of life from criticism that they were practising early forms of science, but he was also pointing to our developed world and accusing us of putting too much stock in the prospects of science to release us from our modern burdens. Wittgenstein toward the end of his life began to despair at the lack of spirituality in the modern world and saw our worship of scientific progress as misplaced and even dangerous. This culminated in him referring to our time as a 'dark age' and that maybe we would be soon engulfed in some kind of apocalypse. No doubt his view was the result of the horror that he and many others witnessed through the first half of the Twentieth Century, what with the tumultuous wars and extremes of ideology, but this does not explain fully how he came to the conclusion that modernity was turning in vain to a scientific escape (A view that is echoed in Polyani's fear that a pure science that turned it's back on the intuitive human element was ultimately doomed).

Among the commentators on culture of which Wittgenstein admired was the German philosopher of history Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) Wittgenstein shared the apocalyptic and pessimistic view of the collapse of civilization found in his work *The Decline of the West* (1918-1922). According to Spengler humankind was on its last legs after entering a degenerate age. What was crucial in this view and what binds Wittgenstein's philosophy with it is the idea that with the pursuit of some improved future, the very essence of our humanity is lost. The core of all human accomplishments – our language and our ability to create – are part of a pan-human, transcultural experience which has at its heart an environmental, primordial, and crucially a non-ratiocinative nature.

From Spengler's work, Wittgenstein gained more than a view which was as dark as his own, he also found in the way Spengler presented history a different view on how to see the patterns and connections in history. Instead of a linear or dialectical presentation, history is shown as having cycles; showing a birth, a prime state and a decline. In addition to this patterns in history

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid. p.5e

are presented through analogy. Resisting the inclination to see a kind of Hegelian 'March of history' in time, Spengler instead highlighted similarities of character and movements in different epochs. Thus great men and events from different times can be compared. For Wittgenstein this was a fairer way to view 'progress' in civilization. To understand that there are various similarities between epochs but these similarities do not point to a future truth. From this Wittgenstein shared the idea that the way to truly understand a concept is to connect different manifestations of it and use analogy; search out archetypes and family resemblances.

Spengler was inspired in his thinking by Goethe's Poem *Die Metamorphose der Pflanze*. In the poem Goethe talks of his search in Italy for a plant which represents the archetype for all the surrounding plants. Seeing connections and resemblances between plants he declared that there must be a single 'urpflanze' (the archetype 'ultimate' plant) that exists. This view Spengler incorporates into his study of history; of how to understand history. For Spengler there were two distinct ways in which history can be recorded: a dead form and a living form. To see 'laws' in history is to concentrate on those elements that have become static and rigid; for example physics and mathematics. The arranging of history according to systems of cause and effect this way is to miss the organic nature of life; to turn life into a mechanistic structure instead of a continuously evolving form of life. But the view is not Darwinian; life should not be traced back through a series of events. Connections should be made on the basis of a perceived destiny. The second 'live' form is a study of art, creativity and history through analogy; taking the connections and links and forming 'morphology' of those links. Wittgenstein's philosophical method was heavily influenced by this concept. He replaces theory with 'the synopsis of trivialities' somewhat similar to Foucault's micro histories in which certain aspects and points in history are side-lined to present the 'bigger picture'. Spengler's view of history could act as a macrocosm for our posit of the NRFM – we are not focusing on a search for something hidden and fundamental but something which presents itself through the natural patterns of nature. The expressions of culture rise up naturally and then we add our fixed structures of meaning to them.

Wittgenstein went against the traditional scientific methods of tracing phenomena back to its origin or source. He saw this as only one way in which to view phenomena. The traditional way of investigation was about the arrangement of series in time, a linear development of ideas tracing back to an origin and leading to fixed point in the future. Goethe's view offered something different; the conception of an 'original plant' is not about a temporal development but is about finding various links and connections via the concept of 'family resemblances'. There is the view that there is a grouping of similarities around a 'natural centre'. That this original plant may or may not exist is besides the main idea that there are threads of similarity running through phenomena; that the 'essence' is not hidden but part of the grouping of the whole. The surfacing of meaning from the spontaneous reaction to nature might reflect how the NRFM would function.

Wittgenstein developed his idea of focusing on language games as a means to understanding how language works. We cannot penetrate meaning (understanding is simply understood or not) what we can do however is show connections. Philosophy had attempted to 'build foundations' but all it really was doing to creating more rules to try to understand the original rules (this goes back to Russell's paradox). So the search for theories have to be abandoned because theories were simply various ways of presenting the same problem and in many cases muddying the waters and creating further problems and confusions as a result of the misuse of language. Understanding is simply about 'seeing connections' and providing clarification. The abandonment of theory meant that Wittgenstein shifted the focus of philosophical questions, turning them in on themselves and showing that the problems themselves were generated by the investigators themselves.

Wittgenstein's examination of Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* gives an example of how the philosopher wanted to shift the focus of philosophical investigation away from providing descriptions or explanation to a more transparent 'perspicuous' representation of problems and how this 'representation' was executed to dissolve the problem. The purpose of Frazer's work was to show a theory of the evolutionary nature of intellect in mankind, he discusses the various tribal rituals and practices of primitive civilizations and suggests that their ceremonies

could be seen as primitive forms of science. Frazer suggests that although the early peoples partake in practices which the modern world might consider illogical or superfluous (the use of a rain dance) or morally reprehensible (the Beltane fire ritual); their thinking shows the admirable seeds of a potential future science. This type of 'look backwards' view is in the spirit of the 19th Century with its optimistic view of the future and triumphant view of its present. The tribal members are portrayed like simple folk who haven't quite worked out how the environment can be manipulated and controlled. Wittgenstein makes harsh criticism of Frazer's work and through doing so promotes the need to look objectively at problems discounting the need for teleological and intentional explanations; the elements that make up the most of modern philosophical investigation. Wittgenstein shows how a commentator (Frazer) seeks satisfaction in what he is investigating through collecting facts and putting them together into a view in which his perspective makes simple. In other words philosophers, like historians, glance at problems with the bias of their own age, failing to see or count significant elements of a problem because they do not fit into their way of thinking. This in turn then confuses the problem further as the ill-fitting facts which stand out from the biased perspective create further questions which need to be satisfied. The NRFM is not as an ultimate conduit of meaning but as a concept through which we can conceive as bring the starting point for the development of meaning.

The fact that Wittgenstein investigates ritual and ceremony and that his conclusion is that such events need not be explained, allows us to further understand his point on language acquisition. That the meaning of language is not something to be traced to an original source but something that was born from a *spontaneous* and *pre-rational* moment. However Wittgenstein respected that Frazer had collected many facts of tribal rites and ceremonies, but he was critical of the fact that Frazer's interpretation of 'magic' was that it was a kind of primitive science. This view just exposed the fact that Frazer was a representative of his age; where science and progress are viewed above religious expression. Frazer tries to 'explain' something deep and turns it into something shallow. For Wittgenstein expressions of culture which manifest themselves in various ways could be seen in the same light as religious culture. Religion in general is to be

respected 'All religions are wonderful, even those of the most primitive tribes. The ways in which people express their religious feelings differ enormously.'<sup>114</sup> Religion should not be viewed in the same way as science. Even to defend religion by producing 'evidence' of any kind (intelligent design etc.) was to fall into a scientific manner of thinking. Religion has no business in the world of science as science does not belong in the realm of religion. The two are exclusive. The scientific outlook reduces phenomena to a single point and religious belief by its nature cannot be reduced to something tangible and definable. However philosophy, if it stays true to its aim of being 'truth seeking' can look at phenomena from multiple angles to produce the perspicuous presentation.

Wittgenstein's *remarks on James Frazer's Golden Bough* shows the reader that he believes that modern (19th century initially but it also seeps into the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21st) thinking has a superiority complex when it comes to matters outside of the scientific process. Wittgenstein's reproach of Frazer's point of view leads us to believe that the philosopher truly is a 'citizen of no community' and is a 'truth seeker'. Frazer, in the work, scrutinises 'primitive' cultures in an effort to interpret them as being part of a wider process or evolution. Wittgenstein takes him to task for transferring the 19th Century belief of a march toward reason onto a people who obviously were unaware of this idea. Frazer calls the early culture's concept of 'magic' an early version of science a 'pseudo-science'; viewing them as if there were children who have a way to go. This condescending view is thoroughly challenged by Wittgenstein who states that the same 'primitive' who might construct an effigy of his enemy to which he could excise his hatred, also quite skilfully constructs his dwelling and other essentials of life in the normal way. The point being the 'magic' of the voodoo doll is not something to be taken literally and is merely an expressive metaphor. Frazer is misunderstanding the role of magic and cannot escape the conditioning of his time when glancing backward at another's. Could it be possible to see science as a similar cultural posit to magic? If this was the case then it would safe to accept that the NRFM, as an idea to explain the role of the mystical in our understanding and production of

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<sup>114</sup> De Zengotita, Thomas. "On Wittgenstein's Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough." *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 4, no. 4, 1989, pp. 390–398. [www.jstor.org/stable/656248](http://www.jstor.org/stable/656248).

meaning as a legitimate concept. It might also be possible to reintroduce the role of revelation into knowledge.

The 'modern' world in philosophical terms dates from Descartes and it is from here we can set a start for the development of reason from revelation. Deductive reasoning in the search for substantives set aside the focus on revelation and so began the process of rejecting the mystical for the empirical. The central place for myth and tradition was usurped by the power of science and the quick results it could bring. Philosophy became bound with scientific thinking and dominated most of the work of the later modern period. Philosophy became inescapably linked with aesthetic ideals that were sought using the cold hand of logic and science.

Wittgenstein's work in logic is a powerful conclusion to the journey that a scientific approach can make to philosophy; namely that there are limits to what can be said or proved.

Wittgenstein was linked to the logical positivist movement but arguably had more in common with continental thinkers in that they still held on to the revelatory aspect of the acquisition of knowledge.

A quote from *Culture and Value* has Wittgenstein commentating on the importance of the underlying belief in god over the intellectual 'proof' of it:

'A proof of God's existence ought really to be something by means of which one could convince oneself that God exists. But I think that what believers who have furnished such proofs have wanted to do is give their 'belief' an intellectual analysis and foundation, although they themselves would never have come to believe as a result of such proofs. Perhaps one could 'convince someone that God exists' by means of a certain type of upbringing, by shaping his life in such and such a way.'<sup>115</sup>

Previously theologians have tried then to intellectualize their belief in god. Rather than producing a ironclad reason for a belief in god, their works justified their own beliefs intellectually. In a way we could argue that all meaning comes more or less in this way. We

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<sup>115</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig *Culture and Value* Trans. Peter Winch University of Chicago Press (Chicago 1980) 85e

have an instinctual understanding and then we hang names on those understandings by way of the convention of language.

The *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough* reveal that Wittgenstein viewed religious rites and ceremonies as incidences of humanity going 'into itself'; either through expressivism or a more thoughtful self-examination of wonder, religious ideas are manifestations of the wonder of existence. Expression of the reflection of being in the world can be seen as religious and that expression need not be something that has to be fixed to a reason or an aim. To understand religion and its place in human culture is not to try to explain it – as a psychological matter for example – but to understand it from a point of view that is pre-reflective. Commentary on religion in the modern western world is either apologetic or negative with different groups lobbying for or against its legitimacy; most adopt a position where religion has to be defended using practical arguments. These methods of argument do nothing to understand the presence of religious thinking and this is because it is not something that is to be broken open to understand:

'What makes a subject difficult to understand if it is significant, important — is not that some special instruction about abstruse things is necessary to understand it. Rather it is the contrast between the understanding of the subject and what most people want to see. Because of this the very things that are most obvious can become the most difficult to understand. What has to be overcome is not difficulty of the intellect but of the will.'<sup>116</sup>

Because of the influence of the scientific method which is ubiquitous in our society, there is a view of religion which places it in a position where must use the tools of science to defend itself. Wittgenstein would like to show that there are many ways to view a subject and religion should be viewed on its own terms and in its context. Any kind of criticism or indeed justification based on ideas which are foreign to religion is to miss the point.

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<sup>116</sup> Philosophical Occasions 1912-1951 (1993) Edited by James Carl Klagge and Alfred Nordmann Ch. 9 : Philosophy, (Sections 86 - 93 of the so called "Big Typescript"), p. 161



Religions of course are various and complex; some religions shy completely away from any rational explanation of their doctrines whilst others contain certain practical justifications for their ideas (often within their sacred text e.g. the Qu'ran's stance on alcohol outlines a rationale for the prohibition: cons outweigh the benefits – no intoxication during prayer etc.), but belief in a personal God or religion need only be justified by the subject and that justification need not be and is often not rational. Looking at how Wittgenstein regarded religion can give us insight into how we might address the consequences of accounting for revelation and intuitive feeling into contemporary religion. And it seems that Wittgenstein regarded religious belief as something which has been misunderstood even by the theologians which have tried to defend it. Wittgenstein was an admirer of William James and felt that James' humanistic approach (taking a wider view of perception which doesn't limit itself to intellect and reason, and includes the wider human experiences) was much more in step with his feeling that religious expression would be better understood if it was left alone by philosophy or science and accepted on its own terms as an expression of the innate spiritual need in humanity.

Wittgenstein famously said that he wasn't religious but couldn't help looking at problems from a 'religious point of view'. I believe this meant that he understood that when viewing a problem it was best to try to understand its historical and cultural basis, what created the situation that led to the problem not the problem itself. Religious feeling and language is the result of trying to express an idea that cannot be expressed explicitly. Religious language is vague because it is trying to capture an essence which can only be felt subjectively. Language is the most successful when it indicates to something indirectly, and that this idea or feeling is understood even though it is not explicitly defined.

After the acceptance of a non-rational basis for all knowledge, religion and religious belief would take on a different character. Today there is a tendency to judge religion in the same light as science (this occurs with believer and non-believer alike) because of the epoch in which we live the scientific method is felt as the most legitimate source of the 'truth', so we find the structure of religion criticised in the same manner as the structure of science. This is obviously a crucial mistake as religion and religious belief should not be seen in the same manner as

science – they are from clearly separate worlds and offer different satisfactions. Consider this remark from *Culture & Value*:

'People who are constantly asking 'why?' are like tourists who stand in front of a building reading Baedeker and are so busy reading the history of its construction, etc., that they are prevented from seeing the building'<sup>117</sup>

Wittgenstein here is saying that people become obsessed with the *purpose* and *explanation* of phenomena and through this obsession lose sight of the natural wonder in front of their eyes; being used to reasons and purpose means breaking down the views into minutiae and not enjoying the simple fact of the whole's existence.

However, a return to the recognition of a non-rational foundation in knowledge does not mean that we would completely embrace religious doctrine and turn our backs on rational thinking in favour of revelation. In many ways organised religion and the scientific method are both systems of belief but they operate in separate realms and so to different sets of rules. Both are institutions that require adherence to sets of laws. Organised religion shows the inadequacy of fastening ridged rule and law to current states of human civilisation and mirrors the shortcomings of science. Forged in their own time and place, religion and religious doctrines reflect the current state of affairs and ruling moral judgement of their age and feature a struggle to pin down a concrete moral certainty designed to either support or counter the views of a ruling class and a ruling moral law. The intuitive feelings that inspire religious belief must be interpreted by the modern age if there are to be made concrete, and hence we have a problem with religion; ultimately conservative in nature it sticks to the moral order of the time it was created only changing in the face of great social upheaval. It is a fundamentalist belief in doctrine and law which marries science and religion.

We could argue that from what we understand of Wittgenstein's views on religious belief, he might argue that there should be a place for religion and religious belief within the manifold expression of human life; a respected position where the greater 'higher' feelings of wonder,

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<sup>117</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig *Culture and Value*, translated by Peter Winch (Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1980). p40e

love and morality also sit. However he might also argue that the place for religious feeling should not interfere with the function of rational thought and criticism for it for these crucial elements that we reached a stage in which we can realise the full extent of human experience (in which intuition is undoubtedly a major factor). In a world where science and reason rule supreme, religions still exist and this is because something important to the human spirit resides there. Dismissing religion because of its vague nature and lack of provable truth is to lose something valuable; we're holding onto religion because there is something essential still to be reached there.

Religion or religious language would also find greater respect in a world which has an acknowledged place for non-rational foundation in knowledge. The doctrines of the world's religions are born from the search for understanding the sense of the ethical and the spiritual that resides in every human heart. Religion – separated from any political meaning – reveals the acknowledgement of spiritual essence; an intuitive, primal instinctive sense of being in the world. Religion attempts to define that essence and of course must fail in doing so completely because what we have is again attempts at explaining that which can only be shown. Paradoxically, intuition seems to only be fully understood intuitively. The most successful religious writings are those which convey the truth we all feel through analogy, simile, symbolism etc. The great stories and myths that are handed down via religion and religious practices contain a truth, but as the truth cannot be explicitly defined it is up to interpretation to be able to share in them. Most Eastern religions avoid the controversy of handing down a definition for the essence of religion by avoiding it; enlightenment – or the realisation of the truth – must be found by individuals and cannot be passed on explicitly. Myth and stories, capable of being applied, last through the ages where historical facts are continually reviewed; they reveal essences of truth that appeal to us through the relation to our lives. Religion lasts because it also captures an essence with which we connect.

So Wittgenstein's view of religion is inspired by his view of philosophy in general – there is a great inclusiveness that acts in the service of perspicuous representation. The philosopher D.Z. Phillips in a collection of essays collectively called 'Wittgenstein and Religion' produces a view

of religion that goes beyond any distinction which can be labelled 'real' or 'unreal'. Through the work Phillips is engaged in focus on a post-Wittgenstein theology in which the emphasis is moved away from any burden of proof to one of the importance of the use of religious language. In the introduction Phillips clarifies Wittgenstein's position with regards to philosophy in general but also how a tolerance for religion influenced that view:

'As we have seen, Wittgenstein's philosophical method is open to believer and non believer alike. We have also seen that it is not a method which appeals to a common assessment, from allegedly neutral evidence, of claims for and against the existence of God. Wittgenstein's method also avoids the totalitarian epistemologies of post-enlightenment thought.'<sup>118</sup>

To answer the question then of how Wittgenstein's view of religion can lay the grounds for the non-rational foundation of knowledge, we can conclude then that in avoiding the 'totalitarian epistemologies of post-enlightenment thought' Wittgenstein's inclusive and tolerant view of religion might allow for the acceptance of a concept of tacit understanding of meaning (our immediate, intuitive understanding of a concept or situation) without the requirement to produce a clear and distinct definition of it. A holistic attitude to the foundations of meaning allow for the revelatory aspects of knowledge and the importance of the ineffable in our lives. Wittgenstein's whole philosophical endeavour can be understood through his view of religion and the mystical in that he refuses to hunt for a single essential answer or theory. He is not interested in religion as religious language and the way in which humans engage in ceremonial behaviour as an immediate expression of our situatedness in the meaning vacuum of our reality. We can argue that a setting up of the NRFM is permissible under this way of viewing the world because we are accepting the innate ability of humanity to bring forth meaning through our spontaneous and primitive reaction with our world.

### **The NRFM and the 'Ineffable'**

As we have laid out above the 'ineffable' has a major part to play in the concept of a non-rational foundation for knowledge and it's feature from logical form to mystical experiences.

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid

But how exactly are we to define what this ineffability is? Is it possible to get a more focused idea on what we might mean by the notion and find suitable definition? Does, by its nature ineffability defy definition? In his paper *Ineffability Investigations: what the later Wittgenstein has to offer to the study of ineffability*, Timothy D. Knepper investigates what he describes as the 'significant implications for the study of ineffability' in the *Philosophical Investigations*. These significant implications rest on the way Wittgenstein 'problematizes' private language and 'emphasizes the description of actual language use'

Knepper rereads Wittgenstein's private language argument – there is not 'private language' as language requires public criteria for meaning – and links this with mystical experiences. He gives a very unique and rational argument which follows from the Wittgensteinian idea that all language requires the public domain to have meaning:

'If mystical experiences are entirely unmediated and absolutely ineffable – as is often argued by their exponents and proponents – then they are essentially (not contingently) private, absolutely (not partially) incommunicable. But if they are essentially private, then they cannot be identified and re-identified as absolutely ineffable, since ineffability is a public category and judgements of ineffability require public criteria of similarity'<sup>119</sup>

So we have a paradox of a kind in which the whole idea of the 'ineffable' by definition, is indescribable, but, keeping with Wittgenstein's notion of there being no such thing as a private language, it also doesn't make sense to say any words can only be known privately. Knepper also refreshes us on Wittgenstein's call to avoid explanation and go with description. Also we must describe the actual use of language to bring words back from their mystical use:

'Instead of trying to explain the experiential foundations of ineffability discourse, instead of attempting to ascertain whether mystical experience is actually ineffable, philosophers of religion should seek simply to describe the ways in which mystics actually speak about

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<sup>119</sup> Knepper, T 2009, 'Ineffability investigations: what the later Wittgenstein has to offer to the study of ineffability', *International Journal For Philosophy Of Religion*, 65, 2, pp. 65-76, Academic Search Elite, EBSCOhost, viewed 5 April 2016.

putatively ineffable objects and experiences.' However there is an issue with the idea of an 'ordinary use' of the word ineffability - this is a contradiction in terms. How do we restore 'ineffability' to ordinary usage?'<sup>120</sup>

Knepper tries to answer the above question by showing us that whilst Wittgenstein was strict about how there were socially established rules for meaning on the other hand Wittgenstein indicates that the rules are not 'rigid and flexible':

'Here lie two more important insights for the study of ineffability. On the first hand, ineffability discourses are governed by socially established rules – rules that, ironically, make it possible to speak about what cannot be spoken about. On the second hand, however, such rules do not straight jacket authors of ineffability discourses such that they are unable to "go against them." In fact, the expression of inexpressibility seems to require at least some measure of rule-resistance.'<sup>121</sup>

Knepper argues that for all the above reasons Wittgenstein most likely thought differently about ineffability. He suggests that this alone should be a good reason to investigate ineffability with Wittgenstein firmly in mind. Instead of asking whether there are ineffable experiences, philosopher would need to ask how the language games of the ineffable are played.

Knepper then begins his 'Wittgensteinian investigation of ineffability' by referencing a sixth-century Christian Neoplatonist Pseudo Dionysus. Dionysus' work contains, according to Knepper: 'some of the most creative strategies for expressing divine inexpressibility. Knepper starts his investigation by drawing on three sets of linguistic rules:

- 1) John Searle's rules of reference within the speech act
- 2) Searle's rules of illocutionary force at the speech act
- 3) George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's notion of primary metaphors above the speech act.

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid

<sup>121</sup> Ibid

Knepper begins by explaining Dionysus' use of the word 'Hyper' as pre-fix. A Greek word, it is more similar to the English 'beyond'. Used before 'God' it means that the concept cannot be identified as something in particular. Then according to Searle's rule of reference then God cannot be referred to.

Dionysus uses some other techniques in talking about the ineffable which Knepper recounts: The ineffability assertion and the ineffability hyperbole. With the assertion Dionysus in effect 'removes' the references to god when referring to god by using terms such as 'unnamable' and 'unspeakable'. The instances of ineffability assertion culminate in the 'removal of the individual properties from god' simply by denying him. With the ineffability hyperbole: 'the assertion that God is hyper name and speech, hyper position and removal, hyper even ineffability itself – encounters not only this very same difficulty but also an additional difficulty engendered by the ambiguity of hyper. For while the assertion that God is hyper effability probably means that God is beyond effability (rather than preeminently ineffable), the assertion that God is hyper ineffability seems to mean that God is preeminently ineffable (rather than not ineffable.)' The conclusion is that actually the overall meaning is the same: 'God cannot be spoken of since god is on the one hand beyond ineffability, on the other hand preemently ineffable. Knepper then recounts Dionysius' powerful metaphor for describing God which are 'conflictive visual metaphors' and 'Conflictive spatial metaphors'. The first, the conflicting visual metaphor uses darkness to describe the 'inscrutability of God'. However this isn't a metaphor which has darkness as a 'privation of light' but rather an 'unapproachable light' which is so bright that it 'renders unknowable the God who dwells in it'. Knepper then describes this metaphor as powerfully conveying the preeminent unknowability of God - 'unknowing is excessive darkness, and unknowing is excessive light.' The visual metaphor is then mixed with the 'spatial metaphor' of the divine mountain in Christian theology. Knepper recounts the ascent of Moses: 'Moses as one who, having made the ascent up the divine mountain, "enters into the truly mystical darkness of unknowing, in which he shuts out every knowing apprehension" and is "united surpassingly to the completely unknown by an inactivity of all knowledge" The conflict in the metaphor is to do with the contradiction of one travelling up the mountain to attain a

better understanding of what God is only to find, once they've arrived, a stronger type of unknowing.<sup>122</sup>

Knepper then turns to Wittgenstein to unravel the Dionysian grammatical techniques for describing ineffability. He uncovers three rules:

- 1) Identify God as that which cannot be identified. This rule covers reference and predication.
- 2) Speak of God as that which cannot be spoken. This is the level of the speech act, the Dionysian illocution.
- 3) Symbolise God as that which cannot be symbolized. This rule is the Dionysian symbolization.

However, Knepper argues that these rules are somewhat shallow and fail to recognize that the Dionysian God is not simply identifiable. By Dionysius's reckoning, in fact, God is identifiable but only insofar as God is the source of the divine names that process the intelligible properties to beings. After a Wittgensteinian analysis of the grammar Knepper manages to show there is a differentiation in the Dionysian techniques. He states: 'A Wittgensteinian analysis of Dionysian grammatical rules differentiates their respects, distinguishing the ways in which Dionysius' God is identifiable, effable, and symbolizable; is not identifiable, effable, and symbolizable; and is not even unidentifiable, ineffable, and unsymbolizable'. This is the 'Hyper' version that seems to transcend the in/effable binary position. Knepper argues that whilst the move 'functions as a ratcheting up of the dialectic of transcendence' it still moves the technique into the realm of a game that ultimately cannot be won: 'Another way of putting all this is in terms of rule violation and obedience: grammatical techniques that violate certain rules are governed by other rules, which in turn are governed by other techniques, which in turn are governed by still other rules.'<sup>123</sup>

Knepper states that Wittgenstein has it that although all language is rule-governed, this doesn't prevent the 'authors and speakers from going against them, altering them, and making up new

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid

<sup>123</sup> Ibid



rules.' To make an attempt to express inexpressibility every action that goes against a rule invariably creates a new one. Knepper states that 'When Dionysius says that God is hyper ineffable, Dionysius might also be read as saying simply that God is really preeminently transcendent and therefore really unlike anything humans can think or say.'

In conclusion Knepper states that he doubts that Wittgenstein really would have attempted to recover 'ineffability' into ordinary language. However the idea was to attempt at removing philosophical paradoxes in good Wittgensteinian fashion. So he asks 'What are the ordinary uses of ineffability?' And answers with three examples: hyperbolic ineffability – the idea that something goes beyond the ability to measure it; experiential ineffability – the inability to put some of our more intense and deeply felt experiences into words, and the protective ineffability – the idea that If we tried to put things into words we might somehow diminish them. Knepper then asks 'How does this description of the ordinary language of ineffability help dissolve the metaphysical problem of ineffability?' and the answer he gives himself is that it helps us to, in a sense, normalize our sense of ineffability and to avoid moving it to an absolute idea of ineffability. Through the later Wittgenstein's notion of the impossibility of a private language we are forced to concede that any discourse on the nature of ineffability would automatically mean that there can be no such idea as the absolutely ineffable:

'There are the contributions that the later Wittgenstein makes to the study of ineffability – a problematization of mysticism's "private language," an emphasis on the description of ineffability discourse, an appreciation for rule obedience and violation in effability discourse, and a call to return ineffability to the ordinary.'<sup>124</sup>

So, the ineffable would not be able to be explored in Wittgensteinian terms in any strict sense but we are still left with the notion that the 'ineffable' features strongly within our concept of the NRFM. As a part of knowledge the ineffable has a major role to play but is problematic as we cannot point to any 'truths' within it. Our 'ineffable' is a particular 'ineffable' and is held only to account for the pre-rational elements in the NRFM.

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid

In *Ineffability and Religion* A.W. Moore asks 'Are there ineffable truths?' and answers by means of a quote from Donald Davidson which in turns asks 'could there be a language whose sentences were untranslatable into any of ours?' Davidson answers this by taking a 'short line', and arguing that anything that cannot be translated must not be speech behavior. Echoing the argument that thought and language are one in the same.

Moore argues then that there cannot be ineffable truths and does so by firstly hammering out what he means by effable:

'I take something to be effable if and only if, first, it has a content in virtue of which it is either true or false – both my belief that grass is green and indeed the truth that grass is green would be a clear cases in point – and, second, this content is entailed by the content of some possible representation in some possible language which is capable, in principle, of being understood by a finite being.'<sup>125</sup>

Moore considers this definition uncontroversial and begins his argument here. He goes through two steps to clarify his position. Firstly he argues that any truth must be expressible in some fashion. The second that from the first step any truth must be expressible linguistically. Moore's first step centres on the conclusion that to talk about a truth we would need to point to something that is identifiable that can be said to be true. 'In general, given any truth, unless it is already of a kind to testify to its own expressibility... ..then it must be possible for there to be some corresponding independent true thing. But that possibility just is the possibility of the truth's being expressed. Any truth must be expressible in some way or other.'<sup>126</sup> With the second step Moore argues that the expression of a truth must at least be some kind of representation even if it is not linguistic (a primitive animal such as an insect must experience representation of some kind). However for a truth to be communicated it requires an abstraction and sophistication that must be linguistic.

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<sup>125</sup> Moore, AW 2003, 'Ineffability and Religion', *European Journal Of Philosophy*, 11, 2, pp. 161-176, Academic Search Elite, EBSCOhost, viewed 2 April 2016

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

This Moore reaches his conclusion about ineffable truths. However he then argues that we must not give up on ineffability *per se* and says that indeed some things are ineffable. Among these things, Moore claims 'states of knowledge' can be classes as ineffable:

'Very well, then; what can be said in favour of the view that there are ineffable states of knowledge? Well, there are states which have all the hallmarks of knowledge but which nevertheless lack content; they are not representations; they do not answer to how things are. Hence nothing counts as expressing them linguistically.'<sup>127</sup>

Moore then explains what these states need to have to be ineffable. Firstly the state of knowledge must be 'enabling states,; they allow those who are in them to act on goals and aims, and their wants 'in ways that tend to lead to the promotion or satisfaction of those goals etc. Secondly the states allow the subject to 'realize specific possibilities' and to also to 'adapt their activities' in an indefinite way. A final thing is that the states have a place in the 'logical space of reasons.'<sup>128</sup>

These states of knowledge are also states of understanding. To clarify his position Moore gives an example of 'knowing' wherein the truth is not important. The 'enabling' state of knowledge allows for the functioning of the human mind in relation to the environment without the need to be wrong or right. Moore gives the example of 'greenness':

'A simple example is my knowing how to exercise the concept of greenness: my knowing what it is for something to be green. This does not consist in my knowing *that* anything is the case. It is rather a matter of my having the wherewithal to know that various things are the case. For instance, it enables me to know that the leaf I am looking at is green. But it does not itself consist in my knowing that anything is the case because it does not answer to how the world is.'<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

This links nicely back with Polyani's tacit knowing in that there is unverifiable, and non-rational aspect to our perception and overall perceptual experience. The ineffable aspects of knowledge clearly understood within the NRFM but defy any absolute definition. The ineffable plays a major part in the rational processes of the human brain and is responsible for so much of it's output.

### **The NRFM and 'Primitive Reaction'.**

Culture and Value is a collection of Wittgenstein's thoughts on morality, religion and culture. Within it is a tantalizing remark on the essential element of language, the primitive reaction:

'The origin and the primitive form of the language game is a reaction; only from this can more complicated forms develop.

Language – I want to say – is a refinement, 'in the beginning was the deed'.<sup>130</sup>

We can argue that this remark indicates to us more straightforwardly than any other by Wittgenstein that language's primary state is non-rational. The immediate act – the intuitive response – is the basis of language acquisition and this is obvious through the actions of infants developing their language skills. A child cannot be self-reflexive when learning its first words because it does not have the language to be self-reflexive. A successful expression of meaning is successful as a result of an impulsive act. There cannot be internal dialogue for example where a child thinks to itself 'If I say 'milk' I will get milk' because the child has not yet learned this sophisticated grammar and vocabulary. The initial 'deed' is the impulsive instinctual act that is the essential element of language development and as a result lies at the root of meaning itself.

I can now make a couple of assertions: a) that the instinctual act of expression of inward sensations is the key feature of human language and by being so by extension all human civilisation and cultural production. And b) the development of language is the thrust of reason into the environment as with language we can have reflection, meditation and logic. However at the heart of knowledge there is a core of instinct and intuition – to understand we have to at

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<sup>130</sup>Wittgenstein, Ludwig *Culture & Value* translated by Peter Winch (Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1980)

first feel, have intuitive feeling, intuitive knowledge and then finally have reason and rationality once language is developed.

In support of these assertions I can point to the conclusions on Wittgenstein's expressivism made by Brian R. Clack in his work *Wittgenstein, Frazer and Religion*. A key section explores Wittgenstein's thoughts on Sir James Frazer's views on magic in his *Golden Bough*. Here we get an idea of how Wittgenstein views rites and religion as customs that are instinctual responses, often unconscious and the result of a search for satisfaction. This is contrasted with Frazer's view that there is some kind of instrumental purpose for these customs:

'In magic and religion, then, we have utterances which look like enquiries and explanations, but which a fuller analysis reveals to have an expressive character. Thus, Frazer's error is that he occupies himself purely with the surface grammar of magic and religion, and as a result can only see them as misguided attempts to explain and control the course of nature'<sup>131</sup>

The nature of this idea that intuition is the basis for civilisation can be understood in a wider context when we consider human culture in general. Allowing the idea that there is a non-rational basis for knowledge, culture permits the reunion of science with religion in an epistemological sense. If culture is an expression of the instincts and intuitions of humanity living within nature then all the products of that culture have a shared heritage.

A theme that seems to permeate the conclusion that the non-rational plays an essential part in knowledge and the products of that knowledge is that human 'feeling' is an integral element. There is a tacit reliance on intuitive feeling in all areas of knowledge, be it the fundamental aspects of mathematics, scientific method, acquisition of language or the value judgements required for moral law. This at once seems both alien and natural to us as we 'feel' our way into knowledge but also try our best to understand it rationally. We could say even that there are occasions where it doesn't matter if something can be proved or not but whether it is *felt* to be appropriate. For example making a prayer to God might be felt as appropriate regardless if such a being would exist or not. It certainly feels appropriate that intuitive feeling is a major aspect

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<sup>131</sup> Wittgenstein L., *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, Humanities Pr. (1987) p.27

to our lives; feeling being the most appropriate word. We could not take a step, utter a word or solve a complex problem if we have to think about every explicit movement and thought we make rationally. Acceptance of a non-rational place in knowledge comes only after we have to raise the objection of its existence in the first place; after we have manufactured the problem through reason.

The non-rational foundation can be understood in biological and metaphysical terms depending of the point of view. For example for science the mystery of the non-rational foundation might be seen as merely only a currently unanswered question; one day there will be an explanation. But for epistemology, the answer to the mystery is one of clarity; there is a common concept we call 'intuition' and it is part of the process of knowledge but it is challenging to give it accurate definition. In the wake of the scientific revolution, we can argue that philosophy has been influenced and urged to follow the idea that problems must have an essential answer. The fact that science has rewarded us with great advances and technology means that there is the tendency to believe in the inevitability that the whole of the universe will eventually be mapped, coded and reduced to absolute single proofs. We could argue that the non-rational foundation is a terminus, there is a limit of what can be known about it, and this conclusion forces a realisation that all cannot and will never be proved. We have then rescued an element of intuitive feeling in knowledge; rational thought can never in fact escape its intuitive roots.

In *Culture and Value* there is a passage from Wittgenstein:

It is all one to me whether or not the typical western scientist understands or appreciates my work, since he will not in any case understand the spirit in which I write. Our civilisation is characterised by the word 'progress'. Progress is its form rather than making progress being one of its features. Typically it constructs. It is occupied with building an ever more complicated structure. And even clarity is sought only as a means to an end, not as an end in itself. For me on the contrary, perspicuity are valuable in themselves.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig *Culture and Value*, translated by Peter Winch (Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1980). p7e

Wittgenstein might stress the tool-like nature of science and mathematics; a tool has no value within itself and only shows its worth through its application. It should not be treated as a source for value in itself. We can argue that there has been a tendency since the Enlightenment to place on science a reverence that was previously reserved for religious belief; there is a faith in science, science can ultimately solve all our issues. The weight of belief in science means that there comes with the many conclusions and discoveries a feeling of inevitability and solidity in the discipline. However within the structures that we are using to reach for the skies and look within our material bodies, lurk the assumptions based on intuitive reckoning. It mustn't be forgotten that science works for us and we do not live our lives in a scientific manner; being human goes beyond the limits of science and viewing humanity only through science is to seriously limit it.

Wittgenstein's writings are often linked with the post-modern era, a time in which philosopher's move on from a search for universal essences and teleological views on meaning and value. What Wittgenstein gives in this era is more than just an abandoning of the traditional classical and modern philosophies – and in fact in a lot of ways he continues the traditions – he brings a reorientation to philosophy; moving the focus and attention away from single disciplines and back to a wider working. The application of serious rational thought on given philosophical problems should show that rational thought itself isn't the final word; if we think rationally then we can give space for revelation and intuitive feeling for our goals.

In the Notebooks Wittgenstein first writes of his non-dualist picture of the man in the world:

'The World and Life are one

Physiological life is of course not "life". And neither is psychological life. Life is the world.<sup>133</sup>

This description of life as holistic tells us a lot about why Wittgenstein was skeptical about the existence of inner oracle like intuition. As a being whose existence is defined by the actual quality of 'being' within the world it is impossible to imagine a mind that could have thoughts that are

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<sup>133</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Notebooks 1914-1916 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* Ed. G.H von Wright (University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1967)

not generated by an environment. We are the product of environment in intellectual but also primitive terms. By this I mean from our *reaction* (intellectual and instinctual) to our environment, creativity and an accompanying culture is borne.

In his later work Wittgenstein moved further in what we could regard as a kind of progression, or maybe a regression into what we could say the foundations to thought and meaning really are. In the *Tractatus* there is the echo of Descartes and Kant in that the mind is still seen as a logical organ organising the world into what was believed to be a universal order. Then, with the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein emphasises the anthropological importance of language acquisition – the idea that language is an array of creative language games wherein rules were created through the convention language (presupposing other minds). In the later work for example *On Certainty* Wittgenstein shows us that before intellect, before notions of doubt and induction there is the 'primitive reaction'. Having removed the idea that the mind must 'process' information it receives and that our view of the world is filtered through a process of ratiocination, first we have intuitive feeling. Intuitive feeling is a primitive reaction in the sense that it is our immediate reaction to the environment. For example someone shouts from behind me and I immediately turnaround; there is no weighing up of options or rationality here. After being taught for the first time that  $2 + 2 = 4$ , the moment we say we 'know' the rule would be a secondary reflection of an instinctual knowledge of it. In *On Certainty* Wittgenstein makes this idea clear by highlighting the problems that philosophy gets itself into with language. Wittgenstein here shows how the philosopher G.E Moore with his not being able to doubt about certain facts about his existence is making the same mistake as Descartes in that doubt must already presume certainty. The word 'I' must presume the existence of others just as the word 'doubt' mean something can be certain within the world. We are not and cannot have meaning in isolation. This is made most clear in paragraph four of the work:

"I know that I am a human being." In order to see how unclear the sense of this proposition is, consider its negation. At most it might be taken to mean "I know I have the organs of a human"



(E.g. a brain which, after all, no one has ever yet seen.) But what about such a proposition as "I know I have a brain"? Can I doubt it? Grounds for doubt are lacking!<sup>134</sup>

Drawing on the work of Karl Jung and the ideas of the collective unconscious and the theory of archetypes, we can find a sympathetic parallel with Wittgenstein's views on ceremony and culture. Wittgenstein's reflections on the work of Sir James Frazer show him supportive of the idea that rite and ceremony are the result of an immediate expression of the state of being in the world; there is a primordial spontaneous creative expression that is born out of that state<sup>135</sup>. In a work which explores Wittgenstein's thoughts on Frazer, Brian R. Clack brings together various pieces of Wittgenstein's work and summarises his view:

'A conspicuous aspect of Wittgenstein's later work, and indeed one which is manifest in the remarks on Frazer, is his conception of human beings as instinctive animals, and it may be that it is the religious instinct, the ceremonial impulse, which lies beyond explanation'<sup>136</sup>

That these rites are built upon gradually and added to in the light of some reason and rationality does not mean that they lose their spontaneous character; to participate is to re-join that pre-reflective state.

Upon the ceremonies and rites become part of grand mythologies which represent a collective creation from the experiences and instinctual feelings of a whole culture. Mythology then is a refined creative recreation of an immediate action of expressed intuitive feeling. And the refinement does nothing to diminish the spontaneous character of that expression, on the contrary because of the effect of time, the essence of the mythology becomes pronounced and its applicability strong and durable. Intuitive feeling and instinct are embedded in human nature and faith as a concept and theme becomes bound eternally with human culture and creation.

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<sup>134</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *On Certainty* (Blackwell Oxford 1969) Paragraph 4

<sup>135</sup> These views were first seen in 'Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough': Wittgenstein L., *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, Humanities Pr. (1987).

<sup>136</sup> Clack, Brian R. *Wittgenstein, Frazer and Religion* (Palgrave New York 1999) p.81

Wittgenstein understood the value of the creative arts on human civilisation and pointed to the value of art as instruction. It could be argued that a recognition of the valued place of the ineffable in knowledge would create a greater receptiveness for religion and religious language in general; as art is accepted readily to have a central place in our lives – the products of art are frequently made use of to supplement and improve our existence – religious values could well have the same respected position.

### **The Limits of the NRFM**

Through the concept of the NRFM we introduce an idea that all of human culture rests on an intuitive expression of the reaction our immediate environment. Through this expression we develop the various extensions of ourselves through art, science and religion etc. It is tempting, having established this idea, to look upon the NRFM as a kind of catch-all answer to all the philosophical questions that relate to culture – what is the purpose of our being? Where are we going and why? As we know from above Wittgenstein wasn't producing a theory for the meaning of life and did not want to establish any theory at all. The purpose of his philosophy was clarification and elucidation. Given this then it is important to distinguish Wittgenstein from other philosophical or theological views which attempt to provide essential answers through a focus on the ineffable. One such view is the Buddhist perspective and in particular Zen.

In the paper 'On wanting to Compare Wittgenstein and Zen', the philosopher D.Z. Phillips investigates the idea which seems a natural lead on from Wittgenstein's statements about the primacy of the 'deed', a comparison to Zen Buddhism. Phillips focuses on a key paper by Professor John Canfield in which the professor argues that 'For both Wittgenstein and Zen, language and understanding do not require thought.'<sup>137</sup> Canfield compares Wittgenstein's idea of practice overlapping with Zen's concept of 'just doing': doing something with a mind free of ideas or concepts. Canfield interprets Wittgenstein's view of the immanence of 'doing' with

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<sup>137</sup> Phillips D.Z *Wittgenstein and Religion, On Wanting to Compare Wittgenstein to Zen* Macmillan Press (London 1993) p194

prior thoughts. He states that understanding a concept means being able to use words in the language game associated with the concept. Mastery of a concept does not mean having an idea but more like possessing a skill. The words used will do a certain job and there is no need for any mental activity. The overlapping then occurs when this idea is compared with the emptying of the mind when partaking in an activity in Zen. Phillips, whilst agreeing with Canfield's conclusion that these ideas wouldn't mean a resignation to behaviorism, he does take some opposition to the overlapping issue. Phillips, at first, signals that Canfield's claims are relatively modest and a main idea consists in that the *Philosophical Investigations* generates a view that is similar to Buddhist doctrine in relation to thought and understanding. However then Phillips says that Canfield continues with an even stronger claim that it is possible to say that after the *Philosophical Investigations* we can view the phenomenon of language in the same manner as Zen views the Buddhist nature – as an activity without thought. Phillips sees this as a generality which does disservice to both Wittgenstein and Zen. Phillips then addresses closely the claims being made and refers to an example of a fencing master's experience that Canfield himself states. The master seems to have only won his bout when he ceased to think about his tactics. By emptying his mind'. Phillips takes issue with this as a comparison with what Wittgenstein meant:

'The fencer won when he ceased to deliberate about tactics, when he simply gave himself to the matter at hand. He did not think (in the basic sense) about what he was doing.' Phillips indicates what this meant is the fencer rather than not 'thinking' was just thinking too much. However Phillips also argues we can call an action thoughtful even though there were no thoughts prior to the action.

Phillips criticizes Canfield because he seems to think thoughts can then be stripped away so we can see what is left there. He is invoking Wittgenstein's idea that 'nothing is hidden': 'By choosing the example of the preoccupied fencer Canfield provided an example in which thoughts are, even though superfluous, present, in the flow of life... ..but what thoughts are there, in the philosophically pejorative sense, which need to be stripped away, when

thoughtless play does not involve the presence of superfluous thought, or the confusions of mentalism? None at all.<sup>138</sup>

Phillips states that much of what is covered by Wittgenstein's notion 'would not be acceptable as an instance of the Zen ideal.'<sup>139</sup> A final example given by Canfield has Phillips finding a real difference between Wittgenstein and Zen. Canfield states:

'If a man, having lashed two hulls together, is crossing a river, and an empty boat happens along and bumps into him, no matter how hot tempered the man may be, he will not get angry. But if there should be someone in the other boat, then he will shout out to haul this way or veer that. If his first shout is unheeded, he will shout again, and if that is not heard, he will shout a third time, this time with a torrent of curses following. In the first instance, he was not angry; now in the second he is. Earlier he faced emptiness, now he faces occupancy. If a man could succeed in making empty, and in that way wander through the world, then who could do him harm.'<sup>140</sup>

Phillips claims this draws a distinction between 'just doing' in Zen and 'just doing' in Wittgenstein. Phillips states 'Just being angry' or 'just cursing' could never be instances of 'just doing' in Zen. However this is so in Wittgenstein as 'cursing' can be found in a list of language games in paragraph 23 of the *Philosophical Investigations*.

It is tempting to compare Wittgenstein's philosophy with Eastern religion and especially Zen. However the most crucial difference between Zen and Wittgenstein's philosophy is that Wittgenstein was not indicating that there is a possibility of Enlightenment in his philosophy nor presenting a thesis on the nature of reality. It can be argued that Wittgenstein does follow a traditional Western philosophy route in that he is establishing a view of the 'truth' in that he is after clarity and elucidation. However, in his pursuit of this he ultimately shows that there is a limit to what can be 'proved' and therefore strays into areas more traditionally reserved for the religions. By not shying away from this it could be argued that, in a way, Wittgenstein is simply furthering the traditional western philosophical roots. There is a marked difference then in the

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid p196

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. p197

<sup>140</sup> Ibid

purpose of Zen and Wittgenstein's philosophy. What the two do share and how this also supports the concept of the NRFM is that meaning and action can come from a mind that is not focused on rational thoughts.

### **The NRFM and 'being'**

Key similarities between Wittgenstein and Martin Heidegger are explored in Thomas A. Fay's article 'Heidegger and Wittgenstein: the Inaccessible Unavoidable'. Fay finds much to align the two thinkers and especially intimates the shared link of the acknowledgement of a pre-reflective state in knowledge. Fay talks of Heidegger's primary aim in philosophy to re-address the problem of 'Being'; to move it away from the crosshairs of traditional metaphysics (which is claimed are merely one of many possible epistemes formed from a particular view of thought as a form of science), to a more open doctrine ready to accept wider definitions and expressions. The similarity with Wittgenstein which is most pronounced is the idea that negative expressions (such as non-being) should be included within an elucidatory route for thought rather than a purely analytical one. Fay intimates Heidegger's and Wittgenstein's shared view that philosophy should escape from the confines of its scientifically minded past. Wittgenstein, through marking the boundaries of logic, left metaphysics alone. He pronounced metaphysics as nonsense only when utilized as a tool for a 'scientific' philosophy. Heidegger too was drawn to the question of metaphysics in regard to its traditional association with Aristotelian theoretical science, and attempted to move away from traditional description based theory. The two thinkers mostly align when we highlight their attempts at isolating the experience of knowledge (or Being to Heidegger) as something that is on the threshold of description; it is prior to logic. Wittgenstein's insistence that some things cannot be said and only shown stands well with Heidegger's idea that Being has pre-ontological comprehension. In regarding knowledge both thinkers recognize the process of knowledge has constantly been seen by philosophy and metaphysics as something which is reflective; it misses that before it can be logical, describable it has to just 'be': 'The difference between comprehension that something is, which is prior to

logic, and the ordinary experience of how things are' <sup>141</sup>. With the emphasis on the pre-reflective mode of experience, Heidegger's thought complements Wittgenstein's philosophy and, I believe, supports the idea of a non-rational foundation for meaning by widening the concept. What the traditional understanding of the saying and showing distinction seem to miss is the assertive action of the pre-reflective mode of experience. The creative drive in humans to produce language and meaning work from a position that is a threshold between the external world and our reaction to the world. The saying and showing distinction taps into that threshold; we don't need to be told what the relationship is between a sign and its meaning is because we already make that understanding ourselves. The 'ineffable' in the world is not something that is mysterious and ethereal, it is apparent and necessary and an everyday part of the human experience.

Heidegger's concept of a pre-ontological understanding of being is an acknowledgement of the feature of intuitive understanding. This concept, along with the idea that negative terms be included in elucidations support the concept of a non-rational foundation of meaning. The acknowledgement that comprehension is something that operates from a certain extent before ratiocination could lead to an idea that all the facets of knowledge and all the different frameworks of which expressions of experience can be presented have a commonality and must be regarded in having an equal value. Creative impulses, intuitive feeling, intuitive knowledge and reasoned argument could be seen as equals in the production of human knowledge. What does this mean in practical terms? Well it doesn't mean that humans should abandon reason and the pursuit of truth through science but it does mean that there need not be such a complete separation when it comes to the arts and science and more that there needed be the suspicion of faith that comes from the quarters of the champions of reason and logic. Art can take a respected place in the journey of science through an acknowledgement that creative play can lead to inspiration in the practical world.

A way in which all aspects of culture can be involved in to the search for philosophical 'truth' is through Wittgenstein's idea of perspicuous representation. This method of viewing an issue is a

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<sup>141</sup> Fay, Thomas A., *Heidegger and Wittgenstein: the Inaccessible Unavoidable*, Philosophy Today, 31:3 (1987:Fall)

way of preventing biased presentation of the world through the absence of any kind of agenda. Philosophy becomes truly 'scientific' in that it makes no assumptions about the target of its investigation it gives various perspectives in order to dissolve problems rather than solve them. Philosophy becomes a tool for taking arguments and problems apart; analysis is a process in which nothing is sought but where we learn how something was found.

"Philosophy simply puts everything before us, nor deduces anything. — Since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain" (PI 126). This quote from the *Philosophical Investigations* sums up Wittgenstein's later thought and shows us the challenge of Wittgenstein's philosophy. There is nothing to discover in philosophy; meaning is born from language which is developed by humans in their direct relation to the world. There is no essential, rational explanation for aspects of our lives which are difficult to define because of their ineffability so one shouldn't be looked for. What can be done is an examination into the products of human culture through perspicuous representation so puzzles that are the results of misunderstanding can be resolved. A puzzle like the ineffable is unravelled by examination into its use as a word. What becomes clear when looking at the various uses of the word is that is simply an expression that goes proxy as an explanation for the 'mysteries' of knowledge. A legacy of early rationalism it is an attempt at bringing forth a logical process where before was a void of definition. By avoiding the word or offering minimal definition Wittgenstein is abandoning it. In its place is the 'non-explanation' of a non-rational foundation of meaning. In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein placed 'Logical Form' at the centre of meaning but in the later philosophies realised the limiting nature of this view. The anthropological view of language acquisition and the broadening of the study of human culture to include the origin of rites and primitive reaction shows that Wittgenstein's investigations are not limited by a search for one answer. Instead we get a continuous investigation that brings different views and ideas to show how a particular philosophical problem might be unravelled through looking at it from different views and perspectives. Language acquisition has been compared by linguists as being like a sense or ability akin to sight or touch; it comes naturally but is developed over time. Although it

covers different creative outputs the NRFM could be understood as simply part of this ability.



## Conclusion

### The Consequences of Establishing the NRFM and Towards a Contemplative Philosophy

The aim of this paper was to introduce the concept of a non-rational foundation to meaning. Wittgenstein's philosophy makes a break from traditional philosophy in it doesn't concern itself with investigations into the metaphysical 'workings' of perception. Instead Wittgenstein works with what is apparent: language. The *Tractatus* follows some of the ideas found in traditional philosophy such as a backdrop of the mechanisation of the path to meaning. I mean by this that there is clearly a passion to unveil a complete map of language which hints at the need for some kind of foundational certainty. However the *Tractatus* dispenses with metaphysics in that that which has 'no sense' and cannot be verified cannot be part of the examination when language is examining itself. In the later work the mechanised approach is discarded in favour of a method of unravelling of problems caused by the misuse of language (especially when doing philosophy). Word use is primary and as with the *Tractatus* the non-rational foundation of meaning is immediate in that it is the foundation for language. The later work also builds upon this immediacy notion with 'primitive reaction'. As to the regarding the mind as a machine this idea is still very much with us in the computer age.

With Wittgenstein, we allow ourselves to develop a wider concept of the word which although equally difficult to adequately 'define' nonetheless provides us with a clear starting point for thought, practice and meaning. What we are really getting to in our investigation is the wider idea of a non-rational foundation for meaning and how Wittgenstein's thought reflects such a concept in its conclusions. We wouldn't need to abandon words of a pre-rational nature like 'intuition' but we must accept that our definition of it would be limited to its place as the core notion at the foundation of meaning.

Looking at the central ideas of the *Tractatus*, we can argue that a form of non-rational foundation features at the heart of the picture theory and the idea of the general form. Wittgenstein shows us the inexpressibility of the harmony between thought and reality and the reliance on a non-rational intuitive aspect. That logic and mathematics construct complex self-

contained systems but do nothing to further help us understand the link between reality and meaning. The intuitive connection required to conceive meaning goes beyond our ability to explain what it is and so the 'ineffable' remains an important part of our knowledge of the world. We can know however that such a foundation is there and a crucial part of the process of knowledge and meaning but this knowledge is itself based on an intuitive, pre-rational understanding. After the *Tractatus* we learn that a focus on logic to find an ultimate foundation for meaning is short-sighted and that language and communication in general has an instinctive, non-rational element, at its core. Logic is revealed as simply one of the cultural products of human creativity and that understanding language goes farther than focusing on one idea of language acquisition. The later Wittgenstein, although still looking at language, changes the aim of investigation into philosophy by widening his view, relaxing it from a search for essence to one of a search for clarity. The anthropological turn means that the philosopher stops looking for an 'ultimate' answer and presents the idea that there isn't an essential truth only the different methods of looking for it. Promoting the perspicuous view, Wittgenstein is simply continuing the idea that philosophy is an unravelling of problems rather than a search for solution.

The non-rational foundation for meaning encompasses all aspects of human culture and in Wittgenstein's later writings we see how 'intuition' as it is traditionally conceived, as a faculty for bringing a rational order to sense perception, could be seen as another attempt to smuggle reason into the foundation of the human experience. The 'connection' between humanity as a whole with the environment should be understood as one that is primal and immediate; a primitive reaction. Therefore the foundations for our culture begins with such a reaction and this is shown in rites, rituals and ceremonies which are nothing more than 'dressed up' versions of that initial reaction. They have no goal or purpose except an expression of the meeting between human and world. Thought and language, necessarily connected and being the very basis of meaning according to Wittgenstein are the result of spontaneous reaction as well as consensus among peoples. Reason and rationality is also the development of the primitive reaction. However the foundations are ever-present as we the mind pushes itself into the

future; the whole of the human experience it could be said then rests to a certain extent on a foundation that is non-rational.

Adopting a view of philosophy that accepts the ineffable and does not have an emphasis on the burden of proof allows an investigation into the ineffable foundation of meaning through the products of that foundation. Wittgenstein's later work brims in inclusivity in that differing views of a problem are welcome, presented and investigated. Following the 'contemplative' philosophy would mean an acceptance of the issues that arise from the idea of the ineffable and instead allow for an investigation into the products themselves. We will now turn to the philosopher D.Z Phillips and his groundbreaking concept of the 'contemplative' philosophy of religion which would help our investigation progress.

In his work 'The contemplative Philosophy of religion' the philosopher D. Z. Phillips outlined in clear terms a distinction between the different types of philosophy of religion in contemporary philosophy:

'Those who emphasize philosophy's negative task see the philosopher as an underlabourer (to borrow Locke's phrase), who has no subject of his own, but who has a technique for clearing up conceptual confusions on other people's sites. Those who emphasize philosophy's human significance see it as providing a philosophy for living, a guide for human life. The first conception does too little, while the second attempts too much. By contrast, a contemplative conception of philosophy, in seeking to do conceptual justice by the world in all its variety, does so in the service of philosophy's central concern with the very possibility of such a world'<sup>142</sup>

His view was that a philosophy of religion can follow the lines of the later Wittgenstein thought and concentrate effort of analyzing concepts in such a way as to produce a clearer picture and not to chip away the disagreeable elements. He wanted to take the personal preferences out of the equation and allow the 'perspicuous representation' that would follow such an approach.

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<sup>142</sup> Hertzberg, L 2009, 'D. Z. Phillips' Contemplative Philosophy of Religion: Questions and Responses – Edited by Andy F. Sanders', *Philosophical Investigations*, 32, 4, pp. 381-384, Academic Search Elite, EBSCOhost, viewed 1 March 2016.

At the same time, as the above quote insists, philosophy wasn't to take concepts along for its own sake; philosophy itself is not the central factor.

In *Approaches to Philosophy of Religion: Contemplating the world or trying to find our way home?* M Burley explains (quoting extensively from the *Philosophical Investigations*) in closer detail the Wittgensteinian approach Phillips was making:

'Famously (or notoriously, depending on one's perspective) he declares that the purpose of philosophy is not to explain or deduce anything but simply to describe what is already 'open to view' (2009, §126).<sup>7</sup> 'Philosophy must not interfere in any way with the actual use of language,' he writes, 'so it can in the end only describe it. / For it cannot justify either. / It leaves everything as it is' (§124).'<sup>143</sup>

The idea is to prevent philosophy itself and/or any personal influences seeping into the investigation. Our influences, hang ups or conceits must not influence the philosophical investigation's outcomes. So then we produce a fairer and more open view of philosophical problems and then have the hopeful idea that we don't fall into any of the philosophical traps that such prejudice can lead to.

He continues by clarifying that philosophy shouldn't be about finding any foundations of truth nor about how to live one's life:

'Whether one supposes Wittgenstein to be telling us what philosophy is, or to be offering one possible conception of philosophy, the conception that he is offering is certainly not one according to which philosophy's role is to 'get to the bottom of things'; instead, it is one in which philosophy's role is to observe, describe, clarify. Being clear about things might – incidentally – help one to make certain decisions in life; but that is not philosophy's principal concern.'<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Burley, M. *Approaches to Philosophy of Religion: Contemplating the world or trying to find our way home*. *Religions studies* 51 (2). <<http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/85283/7/burley.pdf>>

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid*

Then Burley quotes the key Wittgenstein remark that redefined philosophy and the view of the philosopher that Phillips takes fully on board:

'Wittgenstein also remarks in notebooks that what makes someone 'into a philosopher' is that he or she 'is not a citizen of any community of ideas' (1981, §455), and describes his 'ideal' as 'a certain coolness. A temple providing a setting for the passions without meddling with them' (1998, 4e).<sup>145</sup>

Phillips follows this description of a philosopher very well in that he places himself 'above the fray' in philosophy's 'cool place' but there is also a caveat in that he is inclusive and does not see himself as the isolated individual:

Phillips characterizes this approach as one whereby we 'seek a perch above the fray' in order to contemplate 'the world from the vantage point which comes from philosophy's disinterested concerns' (2004, 55). There is clearly a respect in which these images of the philosopher standing 'above the fray', inhabiting a cool 'temple', not being 'a citizen of any community of ideas' resemble that of the walker on the mountainside trying to discern through the mist which of several paths would be most efficacious to follow. But there are also differences. To quote Phillips more fully: 'A contemplative conception of philosophy does seek a perch above the fray, but not one from which it arbitrates between our beliefs and convictions in the name of rationality. Neither is it a view from nowhere' (ibid.). Thus, the crucial difference here is that, unlike the solitary wanderer, the contemplative philosopher is not trying to get anywhere. Not only is the philosopher not a citizen of any community of ideas – still less of any particular religious or anti-religious community – but, qua philosopher, she is not seeking to become a member of any community either.<sup>146</sup>

So philosophy becomes a technique and not a means to an end. However there is an aim and that aim is one of clarity over the search for ultimate essences.

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid

<sup>146</sup> Ibid

Phillips appeal to a contemplative philosophy is one that recognises the prejudices one takes into the view but tries to detach itself whilst doing so. Phillips does this as an interpretation of Wittgenstein and by doing so tries to in a way have his cake and eat it. It takes a truly self-aware individual to successfully understand the part his prejudices are playing in the analysis of a subject, and to be able to successfully separate his prejudices<sup>147</sup>. In bringing the concept of a non-rational foundation of meaning to all spheres and cultural endeavors, I would do so in the full knowledge that my actions were part of a particular world view. Although I would subscribe fully to the idea of bringing perspicuity of meaning, I recognise that my particular aims are motivated from a revelatory aspect – I am trying to articulate a view of knowledge and meaning that has at it's roots a spiritual and religious awareness.

In Wittgenstein's *Full Stop* D.Z. Phillips addresses Wittgenstein's change of tack in the later work when he highlights the tendency in philosophy for not knowing when to stop looking for explanations. The techniques of philosophical enterprise overcome the purpose of philosophy itself. Instead of active contemplation of the world, the questioning because the point of philosophy and we begin to ask questions wherein there should be none:

'We want to know how we know that we are seeing a tree when we are directly confronting it, how we know we are in pain while we are experiencing it, how we know that others are happy when we see them smile and laugh, how we know that a certain number will not occur in a mathematical progression, how we know that the colour we see is red and so on. Many commentators on Wittgenstein's work have written penetratingly on these various topics. It is an interesting fact, however, that some of them are strangely silent regarding Wittgenstein's remarks on ethics and religion'<sup>148</sup>

Phillips' work has been a focus on philosophical attitudes to religion and the need for proof etc. taking Wittgenstein's later views of perspicuous representation and the 'contemplative' style of

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<sup>147</sup> I would have to go into this argument in a firmly Nietzschean fashion. We are bringing a whole lot of baggage with us when we do philosophy. Every philosopher in history (including Wittgenstein) has motivations which are reflected in their work. However as long as these prejudices are declared and 'out in the open' there is room for them in the conclusions. To be able to successfully count them out of our equations would be another matter.

<sup>148</sup> Phillips D.Z *Wittgenstein and Religion, Wittgenstein's Full Stop* Macmillan Press (London 1993) p79

philosophy Phillips criticises certain impulses and tendencies within traditional philosophical enterprise:

'It has to do with Wittgenstein's insistence on the hold which certain philosophical tendencies have on us, tendencies to say what cannot be said. The hold of these tendencies is stronger than we realise. Thinking we are free of them we turn to some new field, in which philosophical difficulties arise, only to find that they reassert their hold on us with all their old force.'

So to a certain extent there has to be an examination of our own prejudices with regard to philosophical outlook to assess how we got here. Modern philosophy and culture in general has a tendency to value the scientific method over the revelatory and the aesthetic in establishing clarity of meaning and making judgements. Wittgenstein's philosophy can show us the importance of taking a more holistic attitude to philosophical endeavour.

'The beauty of a star-shaped figure – a hexagonal star, say – is impaired if we regard it as symmetrical relatively to a given axis.'

Culture and Value p71e

The above quote from Wittgenstein, as well as being great example of the power of 'aspect seeing', also shows us the regard he had for the importance of aesthetic beauty. He shows that through drawing our attention to mathematical pattern and geological form and away from the simple beauty of a shape we can almost transform phenomena before our eyes. The idea also allows us to explore the gulf of difference between the everyday world and the action of viewing the world through the lens of rational thought. However, through this demonstration we can also understand the importance of viewing an object or an idea from different perspectives. A great part of the philosophers business should be, Wittgenstein believed, to unravel complex problems that were being created when words are taken from their framework of meaning and applied to another. In the quote above we see how beauty is brought to an object by a certain point of view, a certain state of being and frame of mind. Seeing beauty is subject to our perspective; it might be a 'natural' perspective and Wittgenstein

is clearly saying that the star-shaped figure is beautiful in its first state, but it is nonetheless a subjective state. When it comes to viewing the star from the perspective of the language of science and logic, phenomena can drastically 'change' in appearance.

The beauty of the star represents the viewer's wonderment and passion for exploring the world, the colder logical view is an extension of the former but also diminishes it in particular ways.

By recognising that there is an immediate non-rational part to play in scientific discovery that is shared with all aspects of knowledge I believe that there could be a limited reunion of the scientific to the aesthetic, and ultimately a mutual respect. In the forward to Emmanuel Levinas's 'The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology' (1973) a succinct presentation of the beginnings of modern science is given. Charting its origins in Greek reason and Christian religion the development of science from religious origins is described:

'Husserl has no doubt that science represents the essence, the very spiritual destiny of the west. More than any spiritual adventure hitherto, science has not only changed the world – first Europe, then the whole world, indeed, establishing one world, one universe – it is a veritable world in its own right'<sup>149</sup>

'Born under a pagan sky, science was reborn under a Christian cross. It reappears as another chapter in the older struggle between Athens and Jerusalem, between reason and revelation, between display, physis, and holiness, sanctus.'<sup>150</sup>

There were firm roots of science within the culture of Gods and transcendental realms, but also within the doctrines of the Christian churches. Scientific process was brother to religious thinking as they both were reaching for a vision of what will be. 'Revelation' or we might say the intuitive route for discovery was held in a similar standing to the more practical methods of research and development. However, as science advanced and developed it ultimately turned its back on and broke away from religion:

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<sup>149</sup> Levinas, Emmanuel The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology Northwestern University Press, (Illinois 1995) Forward.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.



'With the rise of science... ...what ends is a millenium-old concordance between Athens and Jerusalem, hammered out first by Philo of Alexander and shattered finally by Benedict de Spinoza. It had been by means of the shared notion of purpose – telos – that Athens and Jerusalem had collaborated. Greek reason and revealed religion were in agreement regarding the fundamental status of final causality as an integral dimension of the true and the real... ...Teleology, then, was the key and the link, making religion a science and science a religion. Theology was not only genuine logos, it was the queen of the sciences. Reason retraced God's footsteps. But modern science destroys that key and hence destroys that link.'<sup>151</sup>

Modern science separates its roots in religion by severing the Telos essence; by eliminating that conceit that there is a goal. This isolation of science marks it out from human creativeness through the idea that it is no longer affected by our emotions, morals and aesthetic ideals; it is its own law. Because of this freedom there is a reverence for it – it is seemingly untouched by human hands – it is seen as holy. Before, revelation worked hand in hand with reason and the ends were reconciled; humanity was to benefit from both and to dismiss one was to simply block a path to a brighter future.

The separation then between science and revelation has the effect of bringing about a disjunction between objective rational contemplation and 'purpose' (telos) in the sense that the motivation for science - the human desire for exploration, for betterment etc. is dampened by the disassociation with revelation. There is then a distinction between the establishment of 'meaning' in the sense of the production of objective facts and of 'purpose' - the origin and goal of humanity. This distinction has the merit of ensuring that science is established through the seeking of hard fact and the collection of pure research etc. However is always limiting in the sense that the whole of human experience is not utilised. With a greater tolerance of the wider human experience in the search for knowledge, (emotional inspiration, dreams, a sense of exploration, escatological motives etc.) but with a full respect for the purity of scientific

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

research, I claim we can not only increase our knowledge but also bring disciplines closer together for mutual benefit.

As we have seen from the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein concluded that the language which is the most important in our lives – the language which deals with morality, aesthetics and spirituality - goes beyond the strict limits of meaning. As a result of this if we talk about morality etc. at all then we must be speaking with a view that there is a convention and a firm position for intuitive feeling in knowledge as a rule. Even if our logic and reason play a part in the organisation of our moral ideas, often (in ambiguous circumstances) we must rely on our intuitive (non-rational) feeling that something is morally right or wrong. We could say that in the instance that an individual breaks away from the deterministic factors of society and enters a process of individuation, our intuitive feelings become prominent and guide us (admittedly with the help of our rational selves) Religions at the very least give us interpretations of the existence of morality but science – by its own admission – cannot.

If the language that is the most important in our lives goes beyond the strict limits of meaning, we might conclude that morality and ethics must lay outside science and that judgements of value are separate from scientific investigation. However, contemporary atheists often connect science with a moral value:

'Science is actually one of the most moral, one of the most honest disciplines around — because science would completely collapse if it weren't for a scrupulous adherence to honesty in the reporting of evidence.'<sup>152</sup>

The problem here is that Richard Dawkins is implying that science is in itself morally valuable (or scientists dealing with science more moral than others for doing so) when the buck must stop with the human agent. Science is a tool to be used by the very human scientist. Science does nothing moral at all; it is a tool for building systems and technologies and for investigating ideas. In writing that science is not a religion because of the lack of a basis in faith (although this is clearly arguable if we look at Hume) when it comes to proof, Dawkins is quite correct but it

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<sup>152</sup> Dawkins, Richard 'Is Science a Religion' <<http://www.thehumanist.org/humanist/articles/dawkins.html>>

does not mean both are not systems of belief. Dawkins later clearly describes the feeling of wonder that comes with scientific progress. He clearly incorporates the kind of language which should be rejected through its lack of evidence in his description:

All the great religions have a place for awe, for ecstatic transport at the wonder and beauty of creation. And it's exactly this feeling of spine-shivering, breath-catching awe — almost worship — this flooding of the chest with ecstatic wonder, that modern science can provide.<sup>153</sup>

So Dawkins can freely talk about wonder and awe in science although such terms are beyond strict logical meaning. It is this kind of reverence for science that Wittgenstein criticised in later lectures<sup>154</sup>. The very act of placing science as the hope for the future is to give it a future which it actually denies itself; science is about the past and the now — it has no goals — it can predict but really operates on the results of actions. If we are to imagine that science gives us hope for the future then what else is this hope but a branch of faith? Commentators who reject religious belief and language cannot afford science with terms that are reserved for faith if they are going to deny that it isn't a faith. Science then must be kept separate from religion completely in the sense that should be recognised as having different 'satisfactions' and to worship it in the manner of some contemporary atheists is to commit an error.

Contrary to atheist thinking, a reconnection with faith and intuitive feeling doesn't have to mean a return to a form of wilful ignorance that we associate with the dark ages and it certainly shouldn't and wouldn't mean the end for science as we know it. Kant wrote 'What is Enlightenment?' (1784) to describe the emergence of civilisation from 'immaturity' and the development of humanity to be think independently. Kant's attack is against a certain brand of laziness of thinking and not against one of faith:

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Monk, Ray *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (Vintage, London 1991) p.405

'It is so easy to be immature. If I have a book to serve as my understanding, a pastor to serve as my conscience, a physician to determine my diet for me, and so on, I need not exert myself at all. I need not think, if only I can pay: others will readily undertake the irksome work for me.'<sup>155</sup>

Enlightenment means taking charge of our own actions and to justify our beliefs to ourselves instead of relying on interpretation from others. The idea being that even for morality we must look to ourselves and our interpretation. Knowledge is the outcome of the vigorous application of the self; no-one can hand us knowledge and this knowledge includes moral knowledge as well as simple arithmetic. The freedom to use reason and the motivation to move beyond lazy thinking does not mean that faith in itself would be abandoned.

As we have seen, Wittgenstein's conclusion comes through the result of continued reason and concludes that there is a limit to what it can provide and supplements the notion that faith in the form on intuitive feeling also resides at knowledge's base. A reconnection with the basis of the non-rational in knowledge would not mean a return to a civilisation run from the doctrine of a centralised theist thinking. The point is that rational independent thinking leads us to the conclusion that there has to be a basis of intuitive feeling in that thinking; not to abandon that rational thinking. Rational thinking will not be superseded as there will simply be a greater respect and understanding for the basis of rational thought in general. In short 'science' doesn't have to change; its place as an essential discipline for the advancement and betterment of humankind isn't and wouldn't be diminished. However it is humbled. Tolerance for the intuitive aspects of perception and knowledge would lead to further understanding and respect of the creative element in the advancement of culture. Wittgenstein tells us that 'wisdom is cold'<sup>156</sup> not because wisdom is bad but because it is complacent; inspiration is required for advancement. Without the passion of humankind which fuels exploration, advancement, and sheer naked desire for knowledge there could be no rational thinking whatsoever. However that desire for knowledge should not lead to the lazy idea that meaning has an essential basis –

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<sup>155</sup> Kant, Immanuel *What is Enlightenment?* 1784 Text Online  
<<http://www.english.upenn.edu/~mgamer/Etexts/kant.html>>

<sup>156</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig *Culture and Value Translated by Peter Winch*, The University of Chicago Press (Chicago 1980) p56e

a single identifiable concrete 'meaning' but be relentless in its search; continually advancing differing perspectives to bring greater clarity.

Above I have argued for a non-rational foundation for meaning; and I have said that it is at the heart of all the varieties of knowledge and at the heart of the production of meaning. Whether it is the essential element of language and communication or the foundation of the concept of numbers, the intuitive leap involved in our understanding of the world around us or the creative instinct at play, this foundation seems both essential and fundamental. The place of a non-rational foundation, verifiable or not, is essential to understanding how knowledge is forged. Spanning the different products of knowledge this foundation is taken for granted, its verifiability is not questioned. Yet it remains a concept that defiantly resists complete, universal or even a simple adequate definition. It cannot be defined but is essential for knowledge. The consequences of acknowledging the essential aspect of the non-rational foundation to meaning is that all the products of human culture although kept separate can be linked. Science, philosophy, religion and art all share a common heritage in it. This means that there can be no hierarchy between the cultural products.

For philosophy it would mean that it would no longer be seen as a discipline in which one would begin in the hope of finding answers – we would no longer ask questions of substantives – but one where we would unravel questions. The inclusion (or acceptance of) a non-rational foundation for meaning would create an atmosphere of receptiveness for creative thinking and analysis. The creative input means that the passion of ideas would return and allow problems to be explored in various ways and not left to singular methods. Philosophy with a place for a non-rational foundation for thought and practice in its investigation would make for a broader examination covering many aspects of human life apart from what can be proved. Although a primary tool for philosophy is rational analysis, a greater toleration for the intuitive aspects of human knowledge would allow for the greater inclusion of creativity, spirituality and moral feeling into investigation. There would also be a return of the concept of 'Telos' and the shared purpose of humankind. Wittgenstein's assertion that 'a philosopher is the citizen of no community' means that there are no disciplinary or discursive restrictions on philosophical

investigation, all avenues are open and if one can get closer to the truth (or a greater clarity of the truth) through the exploration of the creative aspects of human expression then this is entirely legitimate. The 'truth' in this case would mean the greatest possible clarity in knowledge and not some separate objective essence. Having dismantled solipsism through the requirement for meaning to exist only in the convention of language, 'truth' itself cannot be located in isolation. The essence of truth exists in greater understanding between peoples and the science of that truth is the search for greater clarity. Philosophy, leaving the limitation of purely scientific investigation behind it, can continue to clarify through revealing the cause of the problems.

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