external world exist?' as similar in form to the question 'Do animals with a single horn growing out of their snout exist?' This of course would be conclusively settled by the production of two rhinoceri. But the bearing of Moore's argument on the philosophical question of the existence of an external world is not as simple as the bearing of the production of two rhinoceri on the other question. For, of course, philosophical doubt about the existence of an external world covers the two hands which Moore produced in the same way as it covers everything else. The whole question is: Do objects like Moore's two hands qualify as inhabitants of an external world? This is not to say that Moore's argument is completely beside the point; what is wrong is to regard it as an experimental 'proof', for it is not like anything one finds in an experimental discipline. Moore was not making an experiment; he was *reminding* his audience of something, reminding them of the way in which the expression 'external object' is in fact used. And his reminder indicated that the issue in philosophy is not to prove or disprove the existence of a world of external objects but rather to *elucidate the concept of externality*. That there is a connection between this issue and the central philosophical problem about the general nature of reality is, I think, obvious.

4. The Philosopher's Concern with Language

So much, at present, for the relation between philosophy and science. But I have yet to show why the rejection of the master-scientist conception of the

philosopher need not, and should not, lead to the underlabourer conception. I have spoken of Moore reminding us how certain expressions are in fact used; and I have emphasized how important in philosophy is the notion of elucidating a concept. These are ways of speaking which *prima facie* fit the underlabourer conception very well. And in fact what is wrong with that conception in general is to be looked for not so much in any downright false doctrine as in a systematically mistaken emphasis.

Philosophical issues do, to a large extent, turn on the correct use of certain linguistic expressions; the elucidation of a concept is, to a large extent, the clearing up of linguistic confusions. Nevertheless, the philosopher's concern is not with correct usage as such and not all linguistic confusions are equally relevant to philosophy. They are relevant only in so far as the discussion of them is designed to throw light on the question how far reality is intelligible[1] and what difference would the fact that he could have a grasp of reality make to the life of man. So we have to ask how questions of language, and what kinds of question about language, are likely to bear upon these issues.

To ask whether reality is intelligible is to ask about the relation between thought and reality. In considering the nature of thought one is led also to consider the nature of language. Inseparably bound up with

[1] I am aware that this is a somewhat old-fashioned sounding way to talk. I do so in order to mark the difference between the philosopher's concern with reality and that of, e.g., the scientist. I take this opportunity of saying that I owe the statement of the philosopher's kind of interest in language, in the next paragraph, to an unpublished talk by Mr. Rush Rhees on "Philosophy and Art".

the question whether reality is intelligible, therefore, is the question of how language is connected with reality, of what it is to *say* something. In fact the philosopher's interest in language lies not so much in the solution of particular linguistic confusions for their own sakes, as in the solution of confusions about the nature of language in general.

I will elaborate this point polemically, referring to T. D. Weldon's *Vocabulary of Politics*. I choose this book because in it Weldon uses his interpretation of the concern which philosophy has with language to support a conception of the relations between philosophy and the study of society, which is fundamentally at variance with the conception to be commended in this monograph. Weldon's view is based on an interpretation of recent developments in philosophy in this country. What has occurred, he says, is that 'philosophers have become extremely self-conscious about language. They have come to realise that many of the problems which their predecessors have found insuperable arose not from anything mysterious or inexplicable in the world but from the eccentricities of the language in which we try to describe the world' (35: Chapter I). The problems of social and political philosophy, therefore, arise from the eccentricities of the language in which we try to describe social and political institutions, rather than from anything mysterious in those institutions themselves. In accordance with the under-labourer conception of philosophy, which Weldon is here faithfully following, he regards philosophy as having a purely negative role to play in advancing our understanding of social life. Any positive advances in

this understanding must be contributed by the methods of empirical science rather than by those of philosophy. There is no hint that discussion of the central questions of metaphysics and epistemology themselves may (as I shall later argue) have light to throw on the nature of human societies.

In fact those questions are cavalierly brushed aside in the very statement of Weldon's position. To assume at the outset that one can make a sharp distinction between 'the world' and 'the language in which we try to describe the world', to the extent of saying that the problems of philosophy do not arise at all out of the former but only out of the latter, is to beg the whole question of philosophy.

Weldon would no doubt reply that this question has already been settled in a sense favourable to his position by those philosophers who contributed to the developments of which he is speaking. But even if we overlook the important fact that philosophical issues can never be settled in that way, that the results of other men's philosophizing cannot be assumed in one's own philosophical work as can scientific theories established by other men—even, I say, if we overlook this, the work of Wittgenstein, the most outstanding contributor to the philosophical development in question, is just misinterpreted if it is taken to support Weldon's way of speaking. This is obvious enough in relation to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, as can be seen from two representative quotations. 'To give the essence of proposition means to give the essence of all description, therefore the essence of the world' (36: 5.4711). 'That the world is *my* world shows itself in the fact that the limits of my-

language (of the only language I can understand) mean the limits of *my* world' (*Ibid.*: 5.62).

It is true that these ideas in the *Tractatus* are connected with a theory of language which Wittgenstein afterwards rejected and which Weldon would also reject. But Wittgenstein's methods of argument in the later *Philosophical Investigations* are equally incompatible with any easy distinction between the world and language. This comes out clearly in his treatment of the concept of seeing an object *as* something: for example, seeing the picture of an arrow as in flight. The following passage is characteristic of Wittgenstein's whole approach:

> In the triangle I can see now *this* as apex, *that* as base— now *this* as apex, *that* as base.—Clearly the words 'Now I am seeing this as the apex' cannot so far mean anything to a learner who has only just met the concepts of apex, base, and so on.—But I do not mean this as an empirical proposition.
>
> 'Now he's seeing it like *this*', 'now like *that*' would only be said of someone *capable* of making certain applications of the figure quite freely.
>
> The substratum of this experience is the mastery of a technique.
>
> But how queer for this to be the logical condition of someone's having such and such an *experience*! After all, you don't say that one only 'has toothache' if one is capable of doing such-and-such.—From this it follows that we cannot be dealing with the same concept of experience here. It is a different though related concept.
>
> It is only if someone *can do*, has learnt, is master of, such-and-such, that it makes sense to say he has had *this* experience.
>
> And if this sounds crazy, you need to reflect that the

concept of seeing is modified here. (A similar consideration is often necessary to get rid of a feeling of dizziness in mathematics.)

We talk, we utter words, and only *later* get a picture of their life. (37: II, xi.)

We cannot say then, with Weldon, that the problems of philosophy arise out of language *rather than* out of the world, because in discussing language philosophically we are in fact discussing *what counts as belonging to the world*. Our idea of what belongs to the realm of reality is given for us in the language that we use. The concepts we have settle for us the form of the experience we have of the world. (It may be worth reminding ourselves of the truism that when we speak of the world we are speaking of what we in fact mean by the expression 'the world': there is no way of getting outside the concepts in terms of which we think of the world, which is what Weldon is trying to do in his statements about the nature of philosophical problems. The world *is* for us what is presented through those concepts. That is not to say that our concepts may not change; but when they do, that means that our concept of the world has changed too.)

5.   *Conceptual and Empirical Enquiries*

This misunderstanding of the way in which philosophical treatments of linguistic confusions are also elucidations of the nature of reality leads to inadequacies in the actual methods used for treating such questions. Empiricists like Weldon systematically underemphasize the extent of what may be said *a*

itself exist. [See Durkheim's review of A. Labriola: 'Essais sur la conception materialiste de l'histoire' in *Revue Philosophique*, December, 1897.]

It conflicts too with von Wiese's conception of the task of sociology as being to give an account of social life 'disregarding the cultural aims of individuals in society in order to study the influences which they exert on each other as a result of community life'. (See 2: p. 8.)

The crucial question here, of course, is how far any sense can be given to Durkheim's idea of 'the manner according to which associated individuals are grouped' *apart* from the 'notions' of such individuals; or how far it makes sense to speak of individuals exerting influence on each other (in von Wiese's conception) in abstraction from such individuals' 'cultural aims'. I shall try to deal explicitly with these central questions at a later stage in the argument. At present I simply wish to point out that positions like these do in fact come into conflict with philosophy, conceived as an enquiry into the nature of man's knowledge of reality and into the difference which the possibility of such knowledge makes to human life.

8. *Rules: Wittgenstein's Analysis*

I must now attempt a more detailed picture of the way in which the epistemological discussion of man's understanding of reality throws light on the nature of human society and of social relations between men. To that end I propose to give some account of the light which has been shed on the epistemological issue by

Wittgenstein's discussion of the concept of *following a rule* in the *Philosophical Investigations*.

Burnet spoke of the mind's 'contact' with reality. Let us take an obvious *prima facie* case of such contact and consider what is involved in it. Suppose that I am wondering in what year Everest was first climbed; I think to myself: 'Mount Everest was climbed in 1953'. What I want to ask here is what is meant by saying that I am 'thinking about Mount Everest?' How is my thought related to the thing, namely Mount Everest, about which I am thinking? Let us make the issue somewhat sharper yet. In order to remove complications about the function of mental images in such situations I will suppose that I express my thought explicitly in words. The appropriate question then becomes: what is it about my utterance of the words 'Mount Everest' which makes it possible to say I *mean* by those words a certain peak in the Himalayas. (I have introduced the subject in this somewhat roundabout way in order to bring out the connection between the question about the nature of the 'contact' which the mind has with reality and the question about the nature of meaning. I have chosen as an example of a word being used to mean something a case where the word in question is being used to *refer* to something, not because I assign any special logical or metaphysical priority to this type of meaning, but solely because in this case the connection between the question about the nature of meaning and that about the relation between thought and reality is particularly striking.)

A natural first answer to give is that I am able to mean what I do by the words 'Mount Everest' because they have been defined to me. There are all sorts of

ways in which this may have been done: I may have
been shown Mount Everest on a map, I may have been
told that it is the highest peak in the world; or I may
have been flown over the Himalayas in an aeroplane
and had the actual Everest pointed out to me. To
eliminate further complications let us make the last
supposition; that is, to use the technical terminology of
logic, let us concentrate on the case of *ostensive*
definition.

The position then is this. I have had Everest
pointed out to me; I have been told that its name is
'Everest'; and in virtue of those actions in the past I
am now able to *mean* by the words 'Mount Everest'
that peak in the Himalayas. So far so good. But now
we have to ask a further question: What is the connec-
tion between those acts in the past and my utterance
of the words 'Mount Everest' now which now gives
this utterance of mine the meaning it has? How, in
general, is a definition connected with the subsequent
use of the expression defined? What is it to 'follow' a
definition? Again there is a superficially obvious
answer to this: the definition lays down the meaning
and to use a word in its correct meaning is to use it in
the same way as that laid down in the definition. And
in a sense, of course, that answer is perfectly correct
and unexceptionable; its only defect is that it does not
remove the philosophical puzzlement. For what is it
to use the word *in the same way* as that laid down in
the definition? How do I decide whether a given pro-
posed use is the same as or different from that laid
down in the definition?

That is not a merely idle question, as can be seen
from the following consideration. As far as immediate

external appearances go, the ostensive definition
simply consisted in a gesture and a sound uttered as
we were flying over the Himalayas. But suppose that,
with that gesture, my teacher had been defining the
word 'mountain' for me, rather than 'Everest', as
might have been the case, say, had I been in the process
of learning English? In that case too my grasp of the
correct meaning of the word 'mountain' would be
manifested in my continuing to use it in the same way
as that laid down in the definition. Yet the correct
use of the word 'mountain' is certainly not the same
as the correct use of the word 'Everest'! So apparently
the word 'same' presents us with another example of
systematic ambiguity: we do not know whether two
things are to be regarded as the same or not unless we
are told the context in which the question arises.
However much we may be tempted to think otherwise,
there is no absolute unchanging sense to the words
'the same'.

> But isn't *the same* at least the same?
> We seem to have an infallible paradigm of identity in the
> identity of a thing with itself. I feel like saying: 'Here at
> any rate there can't be any variety of interpretations. If
> you are seeing a thing you are seeing identity too'.
> Then are two things the same when they are what one
> thing is? And how am I to apply what the *one* thing shows
> me to the case of two things? (37: I, 215.)

I said that the particular interpretation which is to
be put upon the words 'the same' depends on the
context in which the question arises. That may be
expressed more precisely. It is only in terms of a given
rule that we can attach a specific sense to the words
'the same'. In terms of the rule governing the use of

the word 'mountain', a man who uses it to refer to Mount Everest on one occasion and to Mont Blanc on another occasion is using it in the same way each time; but someone who refers to Mont Blanc as 'Everest' would not be said to be using this word in the same way as someone who used it to refer to Mount Everest. So the question: What is it for a word to have a meaning? leads on to the question: What is it for someone to follow a rule?

Let us once again start by considering the obvious answer. We should like to say: someone is following a rule if he always acts in the same way on the same kind of occasion. But this again, though correct, does not advance matters since, as we have seen, it is only in terms of a given rule that the word 'same' acquires a definite sense. 'The use of the word "rule" and the use of the word "same" are interwoven. (As are the use of "proposition" and the use of "true".)' (37: I, 225.) So the problem becomes: How is the word 'same' to be given a sense?; or: In what circumstances does it make sense to say of somebody that he is following a rule in what he does?

Suppose that the word 'Everest' has just been ostensively defined to me. It might be thought that I could settle at the outset what is to count as the correct use of this word in the future by making a conscious decision to the effect: 'I will use this word only to refer to *this* mountain'. And that of course, in the context of the language which we all speak and understand, is perfectly intelligible. But, just because it presupposes the settled institution of the language we all speak and understand, this does not throw any light on the philosophical difficulty. Obviously we are

not permitted to presuppose that whose very possibility we are investigating. It is just as difficult to give any account of what is meant by 'acting in accordance with my decision' as it is to give an account of what it was to 'act in accordance with the ostensive definition' in the first place. However emphatically I point at this mountain here before me and however emphatically I utter the words 'this mountain', my decision still has to be *applied* in the future, and it is precisely what is involved in such an application that is here in question. Hence no *formula* will help to solve this problem; we must always come to a point at which we have to give an account of the application of the formula.

What is the difference between someone who is really applying a rule in what he does and someone who is not? A difficulty here is that any series of actions which a man may perform can be brought within the scope of some formula or other if we are prepared to make it sufficiently complicated. Yet, that a man's actions *might* be interpreted as an application of a given formula, is in itself no guarantee that he is in fact applying that formula. What is the difference between those cases?

Imagine a man—let us call him *A*—writing down the following figures on a blackboard: 1 3 5 7. *A* now asks his friend, *B*, how the series is to be continued. Almost everybody in this situation, short of having special reasons to be suspicious, would answer: 9 11 13 15. Let us suppose that *A* refuses to accept this as a continuation of his series, saying it runs as follows: 1 3 5 7 1 3 5 7 9 11 13 15 9 11 13 15. He then asks *B* to continue from there. At this point *B* has a variety of alternatives to choose from. Let us suppose that he

makes a choice and that A again refuses to accept it, but substitutes another continuation of his own. And let us suppose that this continues for some time. There would undoubtedly come a point at which B, with perfect justification, would say that A was not really following a *mathematical* rule at all, even though all the continuations he had made to date *could* be brought within the scope of some formula. Certainly A was following a rule; but his rule was: Always to substitute a continuation different from the one suggested by B at every stage. And though this is a perfectly good rule of its kind, it does not belong to arithmetic.

Now B's eventual reaction, and the fact that it would be quite justified, particularly if several other individuals were brought into the game and if A always refused to allow their suggested continuations as correct—all this suggests a very important feature of the concept of following a rule. It suggests that one has to take account not only of the actions of the person whose behaviour is in question as a candidate for the category of rule-following, but also the *reactions of other people* to what he does. More specifically, it is only in a situation in which it makes sense to suppose that somebody else could in principle discover the rule which I am following that I can intelligibly be said to follow a rule at all.

Let us consider this more closely. It is important to remember that when A wrote down: 1 3 5 7, B (representing anyone who has learnt elementary arithmetic) continued the series by writing: 9 11 13 15, etc., *as a matter of course*. The very fact that I have been able to write 'etc.' after those figures and that I

can be confident of being taken in one way rather than another by virtually all my readers, is itself a demonstration of the same point. 'The rule can only seem to me to produce all its consequences in advance if I draw them *as a matter of course*. As much as it is a matter of course for me to call this colour "blue".' (37: I, 238.) It should be understood that these remarks are not confined to the case of mathematical formulae but apply to all cases of rule-following. They apply, for instance, to the use of words like 'Everest' and 'mountain': given a certain sort of training everybody does, as a matter of course, continue to use these words in the same way as would everybody else.

It is this that makes it possible for us to attach a sense to the expression 'the same' in a given context. It is extremely important to notice here that going on in one way rather than another as a matter of course must not be just a peculiarity of the person whose behaviour claims to be a case of rule-following. His behaviour belongs to that category only if it is possible for someone else to grasp what he is doing, by being brought to the pitch of himself going on in that way as a matter of course.

Imagine someone using a line as a rule in the following way: he holds a pair of compasses, and carries one of its points along the line that is the 'rule', while the other one draws the line that follows the rule. And while he moves along the ruling line he alters the opening of the compasses, apparently with great precision, looking at the rule the whole time as if it determined what he did. And watching him we see no kind of regularity in this opening and shutting of the compasses. We cannot learn his way of

following the line from it. Here perhaps one really would say: 'The original seems to *intimate* to him which way he is to go. But it is not a rule'. (37: I, 237.)

Why is it not a rule? Because the notion of following a rule is logically inseparable from the notion of *making a mistake*. If it is possible to say of someone that he is following a rule that means that one can ask whether he is doing what he does correctly or not. Otherwise there is no foothold in his behaviour in which the notion of a rule can take a grip; there is then no *sense* in describing his behaviour in that way, since everything he does is as good as anything else he might do, whereas the point of the concept of a rule is that it should enable us to *evaluate* what is being done.

Let us consider what is involved in making a mistake. (Which includes, of course, a consideration of what is involved in doing something correctly.) A mistake is a contravention of what is *established* as correct; as such, it must be *recognisable* as such a contravention. That is, if I make a mistake in, say, my use of a word, other people must be able to point it out to me. If this is not so, I can do what I like and there is no external check on what I do; that is, nothing is established. Establishing a standard is not an activity which it makes sense to ascribe to any individual in complete isolation from other individuals. For it is contact with other individuals which alone makes possible the external check on one's actions which is inseparable from an established standard.

A qualification must be made here to avert a possible misunderstanding. It is, of course, possible, within a human society as we know it, with its established

language and institutions, for an individual to adhere to a *private* rule of conduct. What Wittgenstein insists on, however, is, first, that it must be in principle possible for other people to grasp that rule and judge when it is being correctly followed; secondly, that it makes no sense to suppose anyone capable of establishing a purely personal standard of behaviour *if* he had never had any experience of human society with its socially established rules. In this part of philosophy one is concerned with the *general concept* of following a rule; that being so, one is not at liberty, in explaining what is involved in that concept, to take for granted a situation in which that concept is already presupposed.

9. *Some Misunderstandings of Wittgenstein*

The necessity for rules to have a social setting is particularly important in connection with the philosophical problem about the nature of sensations. For it implies that the language in which we speak about our sensations must be governed by criteria which are publicly accessible; those criteria cannot rest in something essentially private to a given individual, as many philosophers have supposed. Wittgenstein's discussion in the *Philosophical Investigations* is intimately bound up with this special problem. But, as P. F. Strawson points out, Wittgenstein's arguments apply equally against the idea of *any* language which is not, at some point, based on a common life in which many individuals participate. Strawson regards this fact as an objection to Wittgenstein's position for, he alleges, it rules out as inconceivable something we can in fact

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perfectly well conceive. He argues that we can quite well imagine, as a logical possibility, a desert-islander who has never been brought up in a human society devising a language for his own use. We can also, he says, imagine the introduction of an observer (B) of the user of this language who

> observes a correlation between the use of its words and sentences and the speaker's actions and environment. ... Observer B is thus able to form hypotheses about the meanings (the regular use) of the words of his subject's language. He might in time come to be able to speak it: then the practice of each serves as a check on the practice of the other. But shall we say that, before this fortunate result was achieved (before the use of the language becomes a *shared* 'form of life'), the words of the language had no meaning, no use? (32: p. 85.)

To Strawson it seems self-evidently absurd to say such a thing. The persuasiveness of his position lies in the fact that he appears to have succeeded in giving a coherent description of a situation which, on Wittgenstein's principles, ought to be indescribable because inconceivable. But this is only appearance; in fact Strawson has begged the whole question. His description is vitiated at the outset as a contribution to the problem under discussion by containing terms the applicability of which is precisely what is in question: terms like 'language', 'use', 'words', 'sentences', 'meaning'—and all without benefit of quotation marks. To say that observer B may 'form hypotheses about the meanings (the regular use) of the words in his subject's language' is senseless unless one can speak of what his subject is doing in terms of

the concepts of meaning, language, use, etc. From the fact that we can observe him going through certain motions and making certain sounds—which, were they to be performed by somebody else in another context, that of a human society, it would be quite legitimate to describe in those terms, it by no means follows that *his* activities are legitimately so describable. And the fact that B might correlate his subject's practices with his own does not establish Strawson's point; for the whole substance of Wittgenstein's argument is that it is not those practices considered on their own which justify the application of categories like language and meaning, but the social *context* in which those practices are performed. Strawson says nothing to contravert those arguments.

This is well brought out by Norman Malcolm. As he says, Strawson's 'language-user' might utter a sound each time a cow appeared; but what we need to ask is what makes that sound a *word* and what makes it the word for a *cow*. A parrot might go through just the same motions and we should still not say he was talking (with understanding). 'It is as if Strawson thought: There is no difficulty about it; the man just *makes* the mark refer to a sensation' (or, in this instance, just *makes* the sound refer to a cow). (16: p. 554). But this at once raises all the difficulties discussed in the last section; it is precisely the nature of the connection between an initial definition and the subsequent use of a sound that is in question.

A. J. Ayer makes very similar objections to Wittgenstein's position. Like Strawson he is prone to describe the activities of his hypothetical 'unsocialized' Crusoe in terms which derive their sense from a

social context. Consider, for instance, the following passage:

> He (that is, 'Crusoe') may think that a bird which he sees flying past is a bird of the same type as one which he has previously named, when in fact it is of a very different type, sufficiently different for him to have given it a different name if he had observed it more closely. (4).

This of course presupposes that it makes sense to speak of 'naming' in such a context; and all the difficulties about the sense we are to attach to the notion of *sameness* are raised in a particularly acute form by the phrase 'sufficiently different for him to have given it a different name'. For a 'sufficient difference' is certainly not something that is given for one absolutely in the object one is observing; it gets its sense only from the particular rule one happens to be following. But it is essential for Ayer's argument that this should have a sense independent of any particular rule, for he is trying to use it as a foundation on which to build the possibility of a rule independent of any social context.

Ayer also argues that 'some human being must have been the first to use a symbol'. He wishes to imply by this that socially established rules clearly cannot have been presupposed by *this* use; and if that were so, of course, established rules cannot be a logically necessary prerequisite of the use of symbols in general. The argument is attractive, but fallacious. From the fact that there must have been a transition from a state of affairs where there was no language to a state of affairs in which there was language, it by no means

follows that there must have been some individual who was the first to use language. This is just as absurd as the argument that there must have been some individual who was the first to take part in a tug-of-war; more so, in fact. The supposition that language was *invented* by any individual is quite nonsensical, as is well shown by Rush Rhees in his reply to Ayer. (28: p. 85–87.) We can imagine practices gradually growing up amongst early men none of which could count as the invention of language; and yet once these practices had reached a certain degree of sophistication—(it would be a misunderstanding to ask *what* degree precisely)—one can say of such people that they have a language. (This whole issue involves an application of something like the Hegelian principle of a change in quantity leading to a difference in quality, which I will discuss more fully at a later stage.)

There is one counter-argument to Wittgenstein's position to which Ayer seems to attach peculiar importance, since he uses it not only in the paper to which I have been referring but also in his later book, *The Problem of Knowledge*. One of Wittgenstein's most important arguments runs as follows:

> Let us imagine a table (something like a dictionary) that exists only in our imagination. A dictionary can be used to justify the translation of a word X into a word Y. But are we also to call it a justification if such a table is to be looked up only in the imagination?—'Well, yes; then it is a subjective justification.'—But justification consists in appealing to something independent.—'But surely I can appeal from one memory to another. For example, I don't know if I have remembered the time of departure of a train

right and to check it I call to mind how a page of the time-table looked. Isn't it the same here?'—No; for this process has got to produce a memory which is actually *correct*. If the mental image of the time-table could not itself be *tested* for correctness, how could it confirm the correctness of the first memory? (As if someone were to buy several copies of the morning paper to assure himself that what it said was true.)

Looking up a table in the imagination is no more looking up a table than the image of the result of an imagined experiment is the result of an experiment. (37: I, 265.)

Ayer's counter-argument is that *any* use of language, no matter how publicly established, is open to the same difficulty; for, he says, even if one's use of a word on a particular occasion is ratified by other language-users, one still has to *identify* what they say. 'No doubt mistakes can always occur; but if one never accepted any identification without a further check, one would never identify anything at all. And then no descriptive use of language would be possible.' (3: Chapter 2, Section V.) Strawson also seems to think that Wittgenstein is open to such an objection for he asks, pointedly, in connection with Wittgenstein's arguments: 'Do we ever in fact find ourselves mis-remembering the use of very *simple* words of our common language, and having to correct ourselves by attention to others' use?' (32: p. 85.)

But this objection is misconceived; Wittgenstein does not say that every act of identification in fact needs a further check in the sense that we can never rest contented with our judgments. That so obviously leads to an infinite regress that it is difficult to imagine anyone maintaining it who did not want to establish a

system of complete Pyrrhonean scepticism such as is very far indeed from Wittgenstein's intention. In fact Wittgenstein himself is very insistent that 'Justifications have to come to an end somewhere'; and this is a foundation stone of many of his most characteristic doctrines: as for instance his treatment of the 'matter of course' way in which rules are, in general, followed. Ayer and Strawson have misunderstood Wittgenstein's insistence that it must be *possible* for the judgment of a single individual to be checked by independent criteria (criteria that are established independently of that individual's will); it is only in special circumstances that such a check *actually* has to be made. But the fact that it can be done if necessary makes a difference to what can be said about those cases in which it needs not to be done. A single use of language does not stand alone; it is intelligible only within the general context in which language is used; and an important part of that context is the procedure of correcting mistakes when they occur and checking when a mistake is suspected.