

Digging Beneath Wittgenstein's Bedrock: An Attempt to Specify What is Shared in a Common Form of Life

Jonah Goldberg

Introduction

In his later work, *Philosophical Investigations* (PI), Ludwig Wittgenstein points out a number of problems with the notion of rule-following, noting specifically the difficulty of identifying how it is we know what to do (or, indeed, even what it is we are doing) when we follow a rule.¹ He observes that we have a tendency to locate the directing power of a rule in an interpretation of the rule without noticing that the interpretation is just another rule whose directing power still seems to depend on being further interpreted, *ad infinitum*. Wittgenstein thinks that this tendency arises from a mistaken belief that “every action according to a rule is an interpretation,” when in fact, “there is a way of grasping a rule which is not an interpretation, but which, from case to case of application, is exhibited in what we call ‘following the rule’ and ‘going against it.’”² When asked by the text’s interlocutor to specify what this “way of grasping a rule which is not an interpretation” is, however, Witt-

Wittgenstein's response is unsatisfying. He writes, "If this is not a question about causes, then it is about the justification for my acting in this way in complying with the rule. Once 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.'"³ By this, Wittgenstein means that the answer to the question being asked lies beyond a point past which no further analysis can be conducted. That is the sense in which Wittgenstein believes he has reached bedrock.

This remark comes at an awkward point in Wittgenstein's argument. He has demonstrated that the use of formal systems (including language and mathematics) is in some sense strictly underdetermined by the rules that constitute those systems. This leaves it deeply unclear how people can communicate with one another using language at all because it seems as if each individual should not be able to predict how any other individual will interpret and apply any given rule, including, for example, the definitions of words. And yet, evidently, this is not a problem people have. Wittgenstein, then, needs to provide some explanation of what it is that allows that us to communicate with one another in spite of his rule-following considerations. He acknowledges this (obliquely) but pronounces any analysis of what it is that enables our communication to be beneath "bedrock."⁴ He labels this feature we cannot analyze that

makes communication possible a shared “form of life.”⁵ It’s clear in the PI that Wittgenstein envisioned forms of life as being in some way related to customs, conventions, and social practices, but his conception of the precise relation between forms of life and customs seems blurry, plagued by, among other things, a profound ambiguity about where exactly bedrock begins.⁶

In this paper, I will attempt to clarify these ideas. I will use the hints provided in the PI regarding the nature of forms of life to defend the idea that a shared form of life is a shared conception of the terms of a “language-game”⁷ (a use pattern in language) and that this conclusion does not lie beneath bedrock. Rather, the bedrock begins somewhere shortly beneath it. I will then explain how this allows us to specify what precisely Wittgenstein means by his claim that meaning is use.⁸ Finally, I will defend this position against the accusation that it rests on a violation of Wittgenstein’s metaphilosophical commitments, as has been suggested of similar ideas in the secondary literature on the PI.

Communication and Locating Meaning

The basic Wittgensteinian problem is, at its core, the observation that a degree of ambiguity persists in every specification of a rule, and that consequently, no specification of a rule can adequately explain what is to follow or to violate that rule. For example, when we

observe others adding two numbers together, it's impossible for us to be sure whether the operation that they performed was identical to the operation that we perform when we do addition. They may have reached the same sum that we would have, but they might have reached it by calculating $\sqrt{(X + Y)^2}$ instead of merely $X + Y$. Similarly, when we do addition, it's impossible for us to know that the operation that we're performing is, fundamentally, what addition is. This is because even if we read in our math textbook that addition can be fully described in terms of the successor function, a counting algorithm, and we simply perform deconstructed addition using that counting algorithm, we are still employing tacit rules to apply that counting algorithm to the particular sum in question. We are using a translation rule to understand addition in terms of the counting algorithm, and we are using a succession rule to use the counting algorithm itself. To the extent that addition is indeterminate, any decomposition, analysis, or interpretation of addition (or of addition's components) will be similarly indeterminate, *ad infinitum*. Applying this to language, Wittgenstein contends that the meanings of words are really just rules and are thus subject to rule-following paradoxes. For instance, when someone says, "Inside of eggs, there is yolk," she might mean to define yolk only as "that which is inside of an egg" rather than as the yellow stuff that we conventionally understand to be yolk, which is absent from some

eggs.⁹ When cracking eggs that lack this yellow stuff, we would disagree with our interlocutor about whether or not they contain yolk. In such cases, we cannot properly say that our interlocutor is wrong. At most, we can say that her use is atypical.¹⁰

This observation makes it unclear why we are able to communicate with one another with so little difficulty. In explanation, Wittgenstein suggests that interpersonal communication is made possible by a shared "form of life," that this is what enables us to predict how other people will interpret and apply rules in language so that the words we say can have public meaning.¹¹ Accordingly, that which is shared within a common form of life must be the source of the demands that rules seem to place on us with respect to how they should be followed, for it is by referring to these demands that we predict how others will follow rules. We assume that they feel the normative push of the same demands that we do. In cases when this assumption is correct, communication is possible. Therefore, speech has meaning when (and because) the demands the speaker felt (the applicable) definitional rules placed on her in speaking are similarly felt by the listener in listening. The demands must be, so to speak, mutually legible. If to understand what someone is saying, one must understand the demands she feels the rules of her speech place on her, then the status of demands in speech is consistent with what we

conventionally call "meaning." One understands what someone says when one understands the demands in her language; one understands what someone says when one understands the meaning of her language. Meaning, like these demands, is that which is understood in language that is understood.

As noted above, the source of the demands that a particular set of rules seems to place on us with respect to their execution must be the thing that is shared in a common form of life. The question, then, is: What is that source? We have already seen how that source cannot be mere interpretations of the rules at hand, for in an interpretation, "one expression of a rule is substituted for another."¹² Maybe, however, these demands could emerge from a mental state, like, for example, a person's intentions. Wittgenstein, however, disagrees. The most obvious problem with this view is that mental states are not publicly observable. This, on face, makes them a difficult place to locate the source of meaning because it is so easy to misidentify them in others. Some people betray little of what they are thinking on their faces; others engage in deliberate deception about the content of their thoughts. Surely it cannot be the case that the factor by virtue of which we understand each other's language lies locked inside our heads, hidden entirely from others' view.¹³

The larger problem with locating the source of meaning among mental states, however, is that for Wittgenstein, it's not clear that even we ourselves can correctly identify our own mental states. Part of the problem here relates to Wittgenstein's doubts about whether our concepts of mental states are consistently and coherently specified in the first place. He offers the following analogy to illuminate this concern:

Suppose that everyone had a box with something in it which we call a "beetle." No one can ever look into anyone else's box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle is only by looking at his beetle. – Here it would be quite possible for everyone to have something different in his box. One might even imagine such a thing constantly changing. – But what if these people's word "beetle" had a use nonetheless? – If so, it would not be as the name of a thing. The thing in the box doesn't belong to the language-game at all; not even as a Something: for the box might even be empty. – No, one can "divide through" by the thing in the box; it cancels out, whatever it is.¹⁴ In short, Wittgenstein believed that our mental states are subject to the exact same problem of underdetermination as any other lens through which one might offer an analysis of a rule because their private content can neither clarify nor justify the public meanings of our spoken words. The fact that we feel we know what we mean when we speak offers no es-

cape from his rule-following paradoxes. He even goes so far as to claim, analogically, "If God had looked into our minds, he would not have been able to see there whom we were speaking of."¹⁵

The Private Language Argument

Wittgenstein provides a systematic analysis of why this is the case in his Private Language Argument (PLA). In the PLA, Wittgenstein argues that private ostensive definitions are impossible, so the definitions of words must begin and end in their public use.¹⁶ The argument begins by proposing the notion of a private language, a language that, in principle, could be understood by just one individual and no others.¹⁷ The conclusion of the private language argument is that such a language is inconceivable. The crux of Wittgenstein's thought on this topic revolves around the notion of private meaning. Wittgenstein viewed private meaning as nonsensical in concept, positing instead that meaning must necessarily arise from public criteria of justification. Accordingly, words that, for one reason or another, cannot possess public criteria of justification cannot mean anything. Wittgenstein offers the example of a person who decides to name a particular recurring sensation. He writes, "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 first want to observe that a definition of the sign cannot be formulated.”¹⁸ At the simplest level, the reason the individual in question fails to define S as the sensation at hand is because merely associating the symbol S with this sensation repeatedly over time fails to produce any means of justifying whether any particular experience of a sensation is a case of S. As Wittgenstein puts it:

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 by 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 an independent authority — “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 correctly, and to check it I call to mind how a page of the timetable looked. Isn’t this the same sort of case?” — No; for this procedure must now actually call forth the correct memory. If the mental image of the timetable 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.)¹⁹

Wittgenstein’s point is that attempting to confirm that a sensation is S by comparing it to one’s memories of

previous times one wrote down S in one's calendar is mere "ceremony," as it requires one's memories of previous cases of S to be true cases of S and thus valid bases for comparison.²⁰

The problem with this is not merely that one's memory may be unreliable. Let's say that one defined S for the first time (establishing its true definition) at 2:00 pm, and now, at 2:10 pm, one is experiencing another potential case of S. Surely, in this instance, one can trust one's memory of the base case. However, even in this instance, one cannot be justified in writing down S in one's calendar, for even in this instance, one has no means of specifying what about one's present sensation makes it a true case of S. By virtue of what quality or characteristic does it acquire its S-ness? Clearly, it isn't identical to the base case sensation in every respect; at a bare minimum, they occurred ten minutes apart. How can one be sure that the rule by which one is defining S sensations does not entail that they take place only at 2:00 pm? One might insist that one did not intend to define S sensations to include only examples of S that take place at 2:00 pm, but what exactly would one mean by "intend" here? Perhaps, one would mean that one did not predict that all future cases of S would take place at 2:00 pm. This prediction, of course, could be wrong. If it were wrong, would we not say that taking place at 2:00 pm is a defining characteristic of S? If we

would not, what exactly would it be that would make a characteristic of S a defining characteristic? If a given sensation shared only half of its characteristics with the base case of S, but the characteristics it shared with the base case included all of the characteristics that we judge to be essential to the base case, would we be correct in calling it an S? If so, we must ask what it is that makes a given characteristic of S "essential" to it. The obvious answer is: "These are the characteristics by virtue of which S sensations are S sensations," in which case we must admit that the reason we feel we are justified in calling the sensation in question an S is because some of its characteristics are characteristics that make us feel justified in calling sensations S. The circularity here is clear. As Wittgenstein put it, "'I commit it to memory' can only mean: this process brings it about that I remember the connection correctly in the future. But in the present case, I have no criterion of correctness. One would like to say: whatever is going to seem correct to me is correct. And that only means that here we can't talk about 'correct'."²¹

It is in this sense that the PLA is a special case of the rule-following paradoxes described earlier in the PI.²² In the case of a rule-following paradox involving public language, however, the paradox alone is manifestly insufficient to deprive the language of its meaning. We know this because we succeed in understanding

the speech of others all the time. It must be the case that our words mean something, and so there must be something by virtue of which others understand them.²³ To Wittgenstein, that "something" must be able to serve as a public criterion of justification, and it is because a hypothetical private language would (by definition) lack any such public criteria of justification that it could not exhibit meaning. The criteria of justification must be public in order to produce meaning (even meaning to oneself, if such a notion can be considered coherent) because only public criteria allow one's justification to appeal to something independent of that which is being justified.²⁴ Recursive appeals back to one's own feelings or judgments, as in the case of a private language, cannot produce justifications for one's own feelings or judgments.

Linguistic Communities and Language-Games

Because the source of meaning cannot be a mental state, whatever is shared in a common form of life must consist only of information that can be displayed publicly. Perhaps what is shared in a common form of life is something like a culture; maybe the information in question is information about a linguistic community. This seems plausible but ill-specified. To isolate exactly what within a linguistic community must be shared in a common form of life in order for that form of life to give rise to meaning, we can consider Wittgenstein's re-

mark: "If a lion could talk, we wouldn't be able to understand it."²⁵ The question of what it is that this lion lacks as a result of which we could not understand it gets right to the heart of the issue. To untangle this, imagine a linguistic community of humorous mathematicians in which two language-games comprised all communication: telling jokes and factoring polynomials. If you just dropped the lion into this linguistic community and let it watch the mathematicians go about their factoring, it's difficult to imagine that even a lion with human-level intelligence would be able to predict how the mathematicians would factor a given polynomial merely by watching them factor a few dozen. This seems like it would remain true even if the lion had spent a good bit of time in human linguistic communities before. Remember, Wittgenstein's lion can talk; we imagine that in its head, it has a complete English dictionary. The issue is not that of a conventional language barrier. The barrier lies in its grasp of the terms of the language-game.²⁶

Now, imagine that the highly intelligent, English-speaking lion were also a mathematician with lots of experience factoring polynomials. If such a mathematician lion were to immigrate from a community of similar lions into this community of humorous, human mathematicians, it seems likely it would be able to correctly factor polynomials alongside the human mathematicians without much difficulty. After all, in Wittgenstein's words, "Math-

ematicians don't in general quarrel over the results of a calculation."²⁷ In fact, it seems as if it would be able to factor polynomials with them (and produce the same answers they did) even if it didn't speak English. It would still know the terms of the relevant language-game, and that's what matters. However, it also seems clear that this lion, for all its knowledge of the English language and all of its mathematical ability, would nonetheless be unable to understand the human mathematicians' jokes, much less come up with jokes itself that would make them laugh. This is the result of its failing to grasp the terms of the relevant language-game. If it entered their community after working for several years as a writer for the comedy show *Saturday Night Live*, on the other hand, we would not expect humor to cause it any difficulty.

It should be clear from this example that the information about a linguistic community that must be shared in a common form of life in order for that form of life to give rise to meaning consists only of the terms of the relevant language-games, not anything about the community itself or its culture, *per se*. The terms of the relevant language-games alone constitute the source of the demands that the rules at hand place on us with respect to their execution. What, then, are these terms? Obviously, it can't be the case that they are rules themselves, and it further can't be that they are interpreta-

tions of rules. If that were the case, then a shared form of life could not serve as a foundation for meaning because it would offer no resolution to the problem of the infinite regress of interpretations. Relatedly, Wittgenstein suggests that when we “grasp” a rule, when we follow a rule with confidence in our way of execution, we necessarily do so “without reasons,” that we “[‘exhaust’] the justifications,”²⁸ at which point we are “inclined to say, ‘This is simply what I do.’”²⁹ In light of that, we must understand the terms of language-games not as rules or interpretations of rules but as the living practices that constitute the language-game, such that to grasp a rule is nothing more or less than to do those living practices, to play the language-game.³⁰

Reaching Bedrock

This intersects rather neatly with a theory of where bedrock begins. Bedrock must begin at the level of the living practices themselves. This is to say that the first concept set in the Late Wittgensteinian scheme of which we can offer no further specification or analysis than is present in its naming alone is that of the living practices that make up the terms of language-games. Concretely, we can offer no complete account of the living practices that make up any single language-game, and we can offer no adequate explanation of the role that any particular living practice plays in establishing a given language-game. The simplest reason why this is

where our analysis must stop is because the structure of living practices is not propositional; it is not the sort of thing that can be fully represented in our language, in the same way that the melody of a song cannot be fully represented with words alone. Importantly, this is a necessary characteristic of these living practices, for if they could be fully represented by words alone, then they could be interpreted as rules, which would render them inadequate for the purpose of grounding meaning. Instead, they allow us to escape from the "inclination to say: every action according to a rule is an interpretation" and see the "way of grasping a rule which is not an interpretation."³¹ From this vantage point, it's clear why this, in particular, is where bedrock must begin, why it's impossible to dig any deeper. We know that articulable rules can't fully describe the terms of language-games because we have observed the persistence of rule-following paradoxes at every level of interpretation; the fact that they necessarily undermine every linguistic description or analysis of a language-game that one could possibly construct demonstrates that the terms of language-games cannot be fully represented in language. Furthermore, in Wittgenstein's words, "Language is itself the vehicle of thought;" what we cannot express in language, we cannot think either.³²

This specification of the relation between forms of life and bedrock lends itself to an elegant interpretation of

Wittgenstein's claim that meaning is use.³³ He writes: "Here the term 'language-game' is meant to bring to prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life."³⁴ This directly acknowledges that forms of life are constitutively similar to activities, which clearly allows for a model in which forms of life consist of the living practices that make up the terms of language-games. He then provides his readers with an especially clear example of just such a living practice, observing that it might "[come] naturally to a person to react to the gesture of pointing with the hand by looking in the direction from fingertip to wrist, rather than from wrist to fingertip."³⁵ "Pointing with the hand" is a language-game whose terms include the demand that the observer to shift her focus in the direction indicated by the fingertip.³⁶ This term is a "living practice" because the demand in question only comes to exist in the actual use of gesture. An image of a hand with a finger extended on its own (without any context) "seems dead [...] In use it lives."³⁷ Wittgenstein puts it in similar terms, writing: "Only in the process of understanding does the order mean that we are to do THIS. The order – why, that is nothing but sounds, ink-marks."³⁸ These remarks establish quite clearly in what sense meaning is use. Use is the process of vivifying a sign such that it becomes the sort of living practice that can make demands on participants in a language-game. Meaning is use in the sense that meaning

emerges directly from that process of vivification.

Addressing Metaphilosophical Objections

Many scholars of Wittgenstein, it's worth noting, would reject any attempt to tie his ideas about forms of life, bedrock, and meaning as use together in this way. They would, in Crispin Wright's words, view it as dangerously close to an attempt to answer "the constitutive question," toward which "his [...] philosophical method seems to be conditioned by a mistrust."³⁹ Or as John McDowell put it:

If one reads Wittgenstein as offering a constructive philosophical account of how meaning and understanding are possible, appealing to human interactions conceived as describable in terms that do not presuppose meaning and understanding, one flies in the face of his explicit view that philosophy embodies no doctrine, no substantive claims. This view of philosophy is what Wright describes as quietism.⁴⁰

The Wittgenstein presented in this paper is without question a slightly more revisionary Wittgenstein, a Wittgenstein with less of an aversion to "substantive claims," than the Wittgenstein McDowell and Wright believe wrote the PI, but the Wittgenstein that McDowell and Wright believe wrote the PI is a Wittgenstein engaged in a fundamentally flawed philosophical enterprise.

McDowell and Wright deny that in the PI, Wittgenstein is endeavoring to provide a theory of meaning and understanding, especially any such theory that attempts to provide a full, positive account of how meaning and understanding are possible. They are correct in observing that the PI does not endeavor to entirely explain how meaning comes to exist. Wittgenstein believed that "Explanations come to an end somewhere."⁴¹ It is misguided, however, to suggest that the PI does not amount to a constructive theory of meaning. While it's certainly true that the theory it presents leaves open some questions about how, specifically, we come to learn a language and to acquire a form of life (addressing them only with underexplored allusions to "training"), it does offer a positive doctrine of what meaning is. Meaning in the PI is that by virtue of which language is understood and that which is understood in that language. It's the reason for the sense we get that we are following a rule correctly that comes embedded in the realization, "Now I can go on."⁴²

McDowell and Wright deny that this kind of ontological specification of meaning emerges from the PI, except in the most limited, negative sense (i.e. the ontology of meaning can't consist in an Augustinian notion of correspondence). Instead, they would interpret Wittgenstein's positive adumbration of meaning as nothing

more than a conceptual analysis, an inquiry into how it is that we use the word meaning itself. Given an uncontroversial reading of Wittgenstein's views of meaning and use, however, it becomes clear that those views leave no room for a purely conceptual analysis of the word "meaning" without any ontological assumptions baked in. Accordingly, it seems unlikely that Wittgenstein intended to limit his treatment of the concept of meaning to this grammatical investigation alone (though remark 43 makes clear that he did intend to address the grammatical question).

In remark 43, when Wittgenstein does engage in a conceptual or grammatical analysis of meaning, he points out that what we are really looking for when we look for the meaning of a word is very often the way that word is being used in a given context. In this sense, on a purely grammatical level, meaning is use.⁴³ But how are we to understand use? What should we be looking for when we try to identify it? Luckily, precisely this substantive question is the focus of a good portion of the PI. Wittgenstein, as we know, tells us that we are not to look to the mental state of the speaker because the word's intended use is not our concern; instead, we are to analyze the context in which the word was used to identify its actual use. This actual use, we are told, relates specifically to the word's function in the conversation, to the communicative work it performed.⁴⁴ In order to un-

derstand the communicative work a word performed in a conversation, however, one needs to already have a theory of how communication is possible. For this reason, it's impossible to conduct a Wittgensteinian analysis of how a word is typically used without referring to at least a basic theory of how communication works. Without one, the notion of "use in context" itself is incoherent; use to what end? This seems like a very good reason to believe that Wittgenstein intended to provide something like a theory of communication in the PI, if only to enable grammatical analyses.

Conclusion

Wittgenstein spends much of the PI elaborating at length why it should be surprising to us that we can successfully communicate with one another through language in light of the illusory status of the meanings of definitional rules. And when he acknowledges the obvious truth that we can, in fact, communicate with one another through language, he offers little more than the assertion that the phenomenon is, at its deepest levels, inexplicable in concept as explanation. Upon closer examination of the PI, however, the echoes of a more comprehensive model of meaning emerge. Meaning is possible in the presence of agreement on the terms of the relevant language-games; Wittgenstein refers to this as agreement in "form of life."⁴⁵ The terms of language-games escape from the infinite regress of inter-

pretation by being of nonpropositional form; rather, they are living practices. Accordingly, understanding consists of nothing more than playing the language-game at hand, and use involves the vivification of signs into those living practices. Though everything "beneath" this level of analysis must be bedrock because otherwise, the terms of language games would be subject to interpretation, the mere existence of bedrock is no sign of a failed explanatory enterprise. All explanations have to end somewhere, but there is virtue in pressing on as far as one possibly can.

Notes

1. "A has written down the numbers 1, 5, 11, 19, 29; at this point B says he knows how to go on. What happened here? Various things may have happened; for example, while A was slowly writing down one number after another, B was busy trying out various algebraic formulae on the numbers which had been written down. After A had written the number 19, B tried the formula $a_n = n^2 + n - 1$; and the next number confirmed his supposition. [...] Or again, B does not think of formulae. He watches, with a certain feeling of tension, how A writes his numbers down, while all sorts of vague thoughts float through his head. Finally, he asks himself, 'What is the series of differences?' He finds: 4, 6, 8, 10, and says: 'Now I can go on.' Or he watches and says, 'Yes I know that series' – and continues it just as would have done if A had written down the series 1, 3, 5, 7, 9. – Or he says nothing at all and simply continues the series. Perhaps he had what may be called the feeling 'That's easy!'" (Wittgenstein,

- Pl: Remark 151)
2. Wittgenstein, Pl: Remark 201
3. Wittgenstein, Pl: Remark 217
4. Ibid.
5. Wittgenstein, Pl: Remark 23, 241
Wittgenstein, PPF (xi): Remarks 341-345
6. Wittgenstein, Pl: Remark 198
7. See Wittgenstein, Pl: Remarks 7 and 23 for characterizations of what constitutes a "language-game."
8. Wittgenstein, Pl: Remarks 1, 43
9. Laskow 2016
10. See, e.g. Wittgenstein, Pl: Remark 151, inter alia
11. Wittgenstein, Pl: Remark 241
12. Wittgenstein, Pl: Remark 201
13. Wittgenstein, PPF (xi): Remarks 328, 333, 336, 355, 357, 362
14. Wittgenstein, Pl: Remark 293
15. Wittgenstein, PPF (xi): Remark 284
16. Wittgenstein, Pl: Remarks 243, 258, 265
17. Wittgenstein, Pl: Remark 243
18. Wittgenstein, Pl: Remark 258
19. Wittgenstein, Pl: Remark 265
20. Wittgenstein, Pl: Remark 258
21. Wittgenstein, Pl: Remark 258
22. Wittgenstein, Pl: Remarks 138-242
23. Wittgenstein, Pl: Remarks 197, 355
24. Wittgenstein, Pl: Remark 265
25. Wittgenstein, PPF (xi): Remark 327
26. I believe that in positing a talking lion, Wittgenstein means

for his readers to contemplate an acknowledged impossibility. Of course, to Wittgenstein, it is a mistake to think any actual lion would employ human concepts. Even to the extent that lions use concepts to communicate amongst themselves, they have no use for any concepts other than their own (and could not acquire alien concepts, in any event). In this remark, however, Wittgenstein means to express more than just that corollary to his broader argument. He tells us his lion can talk. While it is unclear precisely how we ought to interpret its faculty of speech, I prefer the following. We imagine the lion with a list of English words and their definitions in its head (i.e. a dictionary, as in PI Remark 265). Nonetheless, it will never use those words appropriately.

27. See for reference: Wittgenstein, PPF (xi): Remarks 341-345

28. Wittgenstein, PI: Remark 211

29. Wittgenstein, PI: Remark 217

30. Wittgenstein, PI: Remark 23

31. Wittgenstein, PI: Remark 201

32. Wittgenstein, PI: Remark 329

33. Wittgenstein, PI: Remarks 1, 43

34. Wittgenstein, PI: Remark 23

35. Wittgenstein, PI: Remark 185

36. This description doesn't fully capture the "living" dimension of this exercise, but it's an adequate approximation for these purposes.

37. Wittgenstein, PI: Remark 432

38. Wittgenstein, PI: Remark 431

39. Wright 1989, 305

40. McDowell 1992, 51

41. Wittgenstein, PI: Remark 1
42. Wittgenstein, PI: Remark 151
43. Wittgenstein, PI: Remark 43
44. Wittgenstein, PI: Remarks 92, 525, 665
45. Wittgenstein, PI: Remark 241

References

Laskow, Sarah, "Found: An Egg with No Yolk," *Atlas Obscura*, December 21, 2016, <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/found-an-egg-with-no-yolk> (accessed December 2018).

McDowell, John. "Meaning and Intentionality in Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy." *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 17, no. 1 (September 1992): 40–52. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4975.1992.tb00141.x>.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. "Philosophical Investigations," in *Philosophical Investigations*. Revised 4th ed. Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe. Edited by P.M.S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. (PI)

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. "Philosophy of Psychology – A Fragment," in *Philosophical Investigations*. Revised 4th ed. Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe. Edited by P.M.S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. (PPF)

Wright, Crispin. "Critical Notice." *Mind*, New Series, 98, no. 390 (1989): 289-305. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2255134>.

