

Jesús Padilla Gálvez, Margit Gaffal (Eds.)  
**Forms of Life and Language Games**

# **APORIA**

## Απορία

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**Volume 5**

Jesús Padilla Gálvez, Margit Gaffal (Eds.)

# **Forms of Life and Language Games**



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# Forms of Life and Language Games

## An Introduction

Jesús PADILLA GÁLVEZ and Margit GAFFAL

Nobody would doubt that the debates raised by Ludwig Wittgenstein have inspired contemporary philosophical thinking. His writings have stimulated scientific investigations and have advanced many issues that had been addressed by traditional philosophy. Consequently, many classical questions have become subjects of debate in which intellectually respectable philosophers participated actively. In fact, the questions raised by the Viennese philosopher initiated debates on a reconsideration of philosophical terminology. It appears as if we realized after a careful reading of his arguments that we are beginning a new field of reflection.

Something very similar happens with a term that has generated at least three significant controversies since its creation, and will probably generate more disputes in the following years. This concerns the German expressions “*Lebensform*”,<sup>1</sup> “*Lebensformen*”<sup>2</sup> and “*Form des Lebens*”,<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 124, p. 212 f.; Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 180a, *Notizbuch*, p. 5r; Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 142, p. 13; Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 220, p. 10; Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 227a, p. 16; Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 227b, p. 16; Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 235, p. 8; Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 239, p. 11; Wittgenstein, PU, 23 (Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 142, p. 18 f.; Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 220, p. 16; Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 227a, p. 21 f.; Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 227b, p. 23; Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 239, p. 16); Wittgenstein, PU, 241 (Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 227, p. 159; Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 227b, p. 159; Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 241a, p. 5 f.; Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 241b, p. 5 / 6b; Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 242, p. 1); Wittgenstein, PU, Teil II (MS 144), <i>, |1|, p. 993; Wittgenstein, PU, p. 174/489. (Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 144 p. 1); Wittgenstein, MS 137, 59a; Wittgenstein, MS 176. Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 176, *Notizbuch*, p. 51v.; Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 175, *Taschennotizbuch*, p. 55v.; Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 165, *Taschennotizbuch*, p. 110 f.

<sup>2</sup> Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 119, Vol. XV, p. 147 f. / 74v; Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 129, p. 35; Wittgenstein, PU, Teil II (MS 144), <xiii>, [99], p. 1082; Wittgenstein, PU, p. 226/572; Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 229, p. 333; Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 245, p. 245; Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 160, p. 26r / 26v.

<sup>3</sup> Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 160, p. 26r / 26v; Wittgenstein, *Eine philosophische Betrachtung*, p. 202; Wittgenstein, *BEE*, Item 115, p. 239 (108). Vol. XI. “*Philosophische Bemerkungen*”; “*Philosophische Untersuchungen*”; Wittgenstein,

which is translated into English as “form *or* forms of life”. Although L. Wittgenstein mentions the term no more than a dozen times in his writings, the way he used has provoked controversial discussions among philosophers. Therefore it seems appropriate to present a brief summary of the arguments proposed by Wittgenstein and other scholars in the context of form of life in this introduction.

First, I will make reference to the time at which the term was first introduced and entered philosophical discussion. It is important to keep in mind that the meaning of “*Lebensform*” in the nineteenth century was very different from that of the beginning of the last century. The first two entries on ‘form of life’ can be found in the dictionary of the Brothers Grimm in 1838. The first entry addresses the physical condition of the heavenly bodies and its corresponding forms of life, which reads as follows:

“*Lebensformen, f.*: die physische Beschaffenheit der Weltkörper und die auf denselben möglichen Lebensformen.”<sup>4</sup>

The second entry is a rather abstract description in which forms of life are characterized as a kind of poetry of mental urge, upheaving and rounding off:

“...eine Poesie des geistigen Drängens und Gährens, des emportreibens und abrundens der Lebensformen.”<sup>5</sup>

More specifically, two different themes are mentioned in these quotations: on the one hand it brings up the idea of the physical texture of the world and possible forms of life that are related to it. On the other hand, it introduces a poetic concept of intellectual excitement whereby forms of life are inspired.

In the first decade of the last century the interested reader came across the term “*Lebensform*” in several books that were published in Austria and Germany. These works emerged probably because the study of

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BEE, Item 115, *Philosophische Bemerkungen*, p. 239; Wittgenstein, VB, 62, C&V, 31, MS 118: 17r (17.8.37); Wittgenstein, BEE, Item 118, *Philosophische Bemerkungen*, p. 17r / 17v; Wittgenstein, MS 127, p. 128; Wittgenstein, BEE, Item 127, *Taschennotizbuch F. Mathematik und Logik*, p. 128.

<sup>4</sup> Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, *Lebensformen*, *Jenaer litt.-zeitung* 1838, no. 179 s. 468. See: *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*. 16 Vols. S. Hirzel: Leipzig, 1854-1960.

<sup>5</sup> Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, *Lebensformen*, *blätter f. litt. unterhaltung* 1846 s. 163. See: *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*. 16 Vols. S. Hirzel: Leipzig, 1854-1960. Vol. 12, Spalte 439.



forms of life allowed a detailed analysis of the techniques that are involved in social structures.<sup>6</sup> Form of life seems to be a relevant means to establish a link between cultural development and the application of social abilities.<sup>7</sup> There is a certain affinity between forms of life on the one hand and abstract concepts, such as “civilization”, “village” or “religion” on the other hand.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, several authors established a relation between the semantic field of “form of life” and notions such as ‘culture’ and ‘social order’. We shall analyze this relation in more detail.

The first author who used the term “form *and* forms of life” in 1905 in an extensive monograph entitled ‘*Lebensform: Anmerkungen über die Technik des gesellschaftlichen Lebens*’ was Alfred Wechsler who wrote under the pseudonym W. Fred.<sup>9</sup> It was probably due to this monograph that the term “form(s) of life” became known in the german-speaking world. Apart from the fact that Wechsler had coined a new expression, two aspects shall be highlighted in this context. First, the expression is used to point to the notion of style of life. And the second aspect has to do with the subtitle of the book, which indicates that the author attempts to give a detailed explanation of the various techniques underlying social life. More specifically, the author provides a scrupulously precise description of the peculiarities and regularities of everyday life and establishes guidelines that appear in modern societies.<sup>10</sup>

In this outstanding book A. Wechsler gives a detailed description of the techniques that sophisticated people used during socializing. These include such topics as forms of social life and sociality, appearance and reality, the role of fashion in society, ways of entertainment and leisure time activities, the relation between men and women, and manners and formalities, to name but a few. More than seventy years later, H. v. Hofmannsthal wrote a book review of A. Wechsler’s monograph which he

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<sup>6</sup> W. Fred (Alfred Wechsler), *Lebensformen. Anmerkungen über die Technik des gesellschaftlichen Lebens*. Georg Müller, München, Leipzig, 1905.

<sup>7</sup> E. Spranger, *Lebensformen. Geisteswissenschaftliche Psychologie und Ethik der Persönlichkeit*. Niemeyer, Halle a. S., 1921.

<sup>8</sup> O. Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*. First Edition: two vols. First volume: *Gestalt und Wirklichkeit*. Braumüller, Wien, Leipzig, 1918; 3rd ed. Beck, München: Beck, 1919; Beck, München, 1923. Second volume: *Welthistorische Perspektiven*. Beck, München, 1922.

<sup>9</sup> Fred, (Alfred Wechsler), 1905.

<sup>10</sup> These aspects are systematically examined in the contributions of M. Gaffal and N. Abreu e Silva Neto.

had entitled ‘Lebensform W. von Fred’.<sup>11</sup> And it seems that it was due to this review that a broader readership became familiar with the monograph.

Another author who used the expression “form of life” in his writings was the psychologist E. Spranger. One of his most important works of the 1920ies was entitled ‘*Lebensformen. Geisteswissenschaftliche Psychologie und Ethik der Persönlichkeit*’<sup>12</sup>. In this book he examined psychological phenomena from a humanistic point of view with a special focus on the ethics of personality. In addition to the mental and physical level, he highlighted the primitive condition and the “ontic” character reflecting the rules and norms that guide a person’s spiritual and intellectual life. Spranger underlined that it is essential to gain an *a priori*-understanding of forms of life.<sup>13</sup> His book is particularly relevant as it analyzes the structures of mental life.

According to his view, soul is the core of spiritual life and a typical feature of one’s inner life is that it follows its own rules, as he calls it. E. Spranger was interested in the relation between the subjective perception of art objects and the objective world. He presupposed certain unalterable and fixed structures in both a person’s inner life as and in human culture as a whole. In this context he speaks of a “collective team spirit”, which is apparent in the organization of each society and is considered an objective spirit. He thought that individual thoughts and actions could only be understood in their cultural context in which they are embedded. Forms of life thus are instruments of knowledge which include aesthetic, religious, social, political and economic aspects of mankind.

The Austrian physician and psychotherapist Alfred Adler used the term “form of life” frequently in his book entitled ‘*The meaning of life*’. From his perspective the expression describes all those learning processes that develop in the human psyche during the first years of life, especially at the age from three to five.<sup>14</sup> He assumed that the form of life shapes a child’s mental prototype and creates a kind of psychological mapping which marks the regularity according to which an individual develops along the rest of his life.

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<sup>11</sup> H. v. Hofmannsthal, Lebensformen von W. Fred, in: *Gesammelte Werke, Reden und Aufsätze (1891-1931)*, Fischer, Frankfurt a. M., 1979, p. 400.

<sup>12</sup> Spranger, 1921.

<sup>13</sup> Spranger, 1921, 33.

<sup>14</sup> A. Adler, *Der Sinn des Lebens*. (1933). Cited from the edition: *Alfred Adler Studienausgabe*, Ed. K. H. Witte, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 2008, 135.

More specifically, the form of life a child has acquired during infancy is the fundamental base on which its capacity to generate new capabilities and skills rests. On the other hand, an infant is constrained in two ways, first, by genetic characteristics and hereditary factors and, second, by its dependence on the environment. In the case of a well-balanced proportionality between wakefulness and sleepiness on the transition from day to night, a person will gain an advantage concerning his or her form of life.<sup>15</sup> An individual form of life unfolds best at times when a person is awake and fully conscious. Nevertheless it must be mentioned that in Adler's writings the term "form of life" is often used rather vaguely and has a plain meaning which serves to describe the general character or qualities under which the child develops. This development proceeds along with the interaction among child, parents and significant others as well as the environment and conditions of life.

The German historian and philosopher Oswald Spengler used the expression "form of life" only rarely in his writings. In the second volume of his book '*The Decline of the West*', subtitled as '*The Prospect of World History*', the author introduced the term "*Lebensform*" mainly in the singular and used the expression only six times. He saw the reason for the creation of the term in as a reaction to the "sudden changes" that had taken place in many people's lives. However, he added that the exact reason remained unclear and put it like this:

"...die Lebensform des Menschen wie jede andre ihren Ursprung einer plötzlichen Wandlung verdankt, deren Woher, Wie und Warum ein undurchdringliches Geheimnis bleiben wird."<sup>16</sup>

Later he mentioned that the individual becomes aware of his own form of life only if he is confronted with another form of life which is very different from the own one:

"Erst an fremden Lebensformen wurde man sich nun der eignen bewußt".<sup>17</sup>

He suggested further that the relation between old and new civilizations tends to be covered by a dense layer of Western European and American forms of life, whereas characteristic elements of ancient civilizations gradually disappear. He explains this in the following quote:

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<sup>15</sup> Adler, 1933 (2008), 146.

<sup>16</sup> Spengler, 1963, Vol. II, p. 592.

<sup>17</sup> Spengler, 1963, Vol. II, p. 594 f.

“Und auch auf jedem andern Formgebiet bestand die Beziehung dieser jungen zu den alten noch bestehenden Zivilisationen darin, daß sie sie sämtlich durch eine immer dichtere Schicht westeuropäisch-amerikanischer Lebensformen überdeckte, unter denen die alte eigne Form langsam dahinschwindet.”<sup>18</sup>.

O. Spengler's interest was actually mainly focused on Russian culture which marked the starting point of his investigations of various East European countries. He dealt with the discussion on religion in Russia initiated by L. Tolstoy and F. Dostoyevsky. In fact, L. Tolstoy had created a monumental literary description of the idiosyncrasies of Russian customs. In his novels he realistically depicted the situation of people living in a hostile society. He portrayed the nature of the characters revealing their peculiarities using a pure literary style. F. Dostoyevsky, on the other hand, used a kind of extreme realism in his novels to give a detailed analysis of the existential problems and the psychological complexity of his stricken fictional characters. His protagonists are confronted with their fate and their lives under difficult conditions, God and religion and above all their own conscience. Spengler saw the problem in the fact that Russian people did not have any appropriate urban spaces to develop their appropriate forms of life, their own religion and their own history. Thus he says:

“...das stadtlose Volk, das sich nach seiner eigenen Lebensform, seiner eigenen Religion, seiner eigenen künftigen Geschichte sehnt.”<sup>19</sup>

These quotes show that the term “form of life” is linked to a process of sudden change due to a process whereby the individual gradually gains awareness. This development is considered synonymous with “civilization” and “people”. However, all these terms occur in a strictly psychological and sociocultural context. Spengler assumed that two forms of life struggled for primacy<sup>20</sup> and that these forms have a certain inner structure of symbolic character. He considered “*Lebensform*” to have a dualistic nature.

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<sup>18</sup> Spengler, 1963, Vol. II, p. 610.

<sup>19</sup> Spengler, 1963, Vol. II, p. 794.

<sup>20</sup> *In propria vocem*: “Es ist demnach klar, daß auf den Höhen der Geschichte zwei große Lebensformen um den Vorrang kämpfen, Stand und Staat, beides Daseinsströme von großer innerer Form und sinnbildlicher *Kraft*”. Spengler, 1963, Vol. II, p. 1011. See: p. 1013.

Finally, I shall draw your attention to a book that has attracted little attention but is probably relevant because it was easily accessible for L. Wittgenstein in the Cambridge University Library. These are the two volumes on human speech published by Hermann Ammann.<sup>21</sup> The second volume is entitled '*Lebensform und Lebensfunktionen der Rede*' and can be translated as form of life and vital functions of speech. The author starts from the assumption that the nature of proposition is to be determined by the social character of speech acts. He says this of speech acts:

“Die Einsicht in den sozialen Charakter des Sprechaktes bestimmt heute die Auffassung vom Wesen des Satzes.”<sup>22</sup>

In fact, it seems that H. Ammann was twenty years ahead of his time when he explained speech functions and described the mutual relation between speaker and listener. He supposed that describing an event does not only require naming the facts (*Tatsachen*) but rather a depiction of the state of affairs (*Sachverhalt*). It is possible to describe the state of affairs because of the knowledge that one has acquired earlier.<sup>23</sup> The book contains a chapter in which speech acts are compared to forms of life.<sup>24</sup> The author distinguishes different linguistic levels that correspond to dissimilar and sometimes conflicting forms of life.<sup>25</sup> Primitive forms of syntax are part of elemental speech such as, for instance, exclamations. Linked to these are phenomena such as curse, profanity, outbursts, tort, libel, congratulations or blessings.

From the moment at which the speaker drafts a phrase the expression loses its vitality and the statement leaves a somehow rational and unemotional impression in the listener. During the discourse statements acquire their meaning whereby the listener can decode the message.<sup>26</sup> Special attention should be given to those impersonal constructions which are formulated in German by the particle 'es'. These verbs have a minimum logical-conceptual content and have a high sensitivity when applied to a certain context. He examines the transformation of language from subject to predicate.<sup>27</sup> He is interested in the difference of the effect

<sup>21</sup> H. Ammann, *Die menschliche Rede. Sprachphilosophische Einrichtungen*. Teil I (1925) and Teil II (1928). Moritz Schauenburg, Lahr, 1925/28.

<sup>22</sup> Ammann, 1928, vol. II, 1s.

<sup>23</sup> Ammann, 1928, vol. II, 13.

<sup>24</sup> Ammann, 1928, vol. II, 42 ff.

<sup>25</sup> Ammann, 1928, vol. II, 42.

<sup>26</sup> Ammann, 1928, vol. II, 43.

<sup>27</sup> Ammann, 1928, vol. II, 46 f.

that language produces once we use a noun or a verb. Ammann analyzes what he calls the lively nature of language. Finally, Ammann presents a list of compound terms and underlines that the subject and predicate are constitute the essence of the content.<sup>28</sup>

According to H. Ammann forms of life are primarily expressed by speech acts. As such, a person discloses information through a discourse. In this context the author examines three types of speech, such as first, the monologue as a means of attracting the listeners' attention. The second is the chorus community and the magic and religious function of speech. And third, he considers the verbal clause as "form of life" and speaks of the independent nature of speech by itself (*Eigenleben*).

As is known, L. Wittgenstein used the term "*Lebensform*" in both the singular and the plural. However, the discussion gradually focused on the question whether form of life should be approached from a monistic standpoint.<sup>29</sup> Taking this monistic perspective into account, the singular would prevail over the use of the plural. Therefore it seems natural that there exists a plurality of forms of life.<sup>30</sup>

The second phase of discussion focused on the question whether form(s) of life point(s) to a peaceful coexistence of different cultures or rather a struggle for cultural dominance.<sup>31</sup> Motivated by the debates that

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<sup>28</sup> Ammann, 1928, vol. II, 48.

<sup>29</sup> N. Garver, Die Lebensform in Wittgensteins Philosophischen Untersuchungen, *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, 21, 1984, 33-54; N. Garver, Naturalism and Transcendentalism: The Case of «Form of Life», en: Teghrarian, S. (ed.), *Wittgenstein and Contemporary Philosophy*, Bristol, Thoemmes Press, 1994, 41-69; N. Garver, Die Unbestimmtheit der Lebensform, *Wittgenstein Studien*, 2/95, 1995, Dateiname: 07-2-95.TXT; N. Garver, Die Unbestimmtheit der Lebensform, in: W. Lütterfelds, Andreas Roser (ed.), *Der Konflikt der Lebensformen in Wittgensteins Philosophie der Sprache*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M., 1999, 37-52.

<sup>30</sup> R. Haller, Die gemeinsame menschliche Handlungsweise, *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, 33, 1979, 521-533; R. Haller, "Lebensform oder Lebensformen" – Eine Bemerkung zu N. Garvers 'Die Lebensform in Wittgensteins Philosophischen Untersuchungen', *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, 21, 1984, 55-64; R. Haller, Variationen und Bruchlinien einer Lebensform, in: W. Lütterfelds, Andreas Roser (ed.), *Der Konflikt der Lebensformen in Wittgensteins Philosophie der Sprache*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M., 1999, 53-71.

<sup>31</sup> Lütterfelds, Wilhelm / Andreas Roser (ed.), *Der Konflikt der Lebensformen in Wittgensteins Philosophie der Sprache*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M., 1999. See the following articles: K. Neumer, Lebensform, Sprache und Relativismus im Spätwerk Wittgensteins, in: Lütterfelds, Roser 1999, 72-93; R. Raatzsch, Ketzer und

took place in the nineties of the last century, the issue had mainly an aggressive and war-like connotation. In other words, the fundamental question was whether different cultures are doomed to fight against each other in a struggle for dominance of forms of Western life. Surprisingly scholars neglected a possible peaceful coexistence of forms of life in which people respect each other and tolerate the difference.

Recently, a new work has attempted to show new ways in the discussion pointing to the need of reflecting on the nature of experience.<sup>32</sup> The book seeks to clarify the mutual relationship between the two aspects of attention. As we have seen in the early discussions, the key issue addressed by L. Wittgenstein in his work is the relationship between language and different forms of life have been left untreated.

This volume intends to summarize the discussions on the topic “form and forms of life” that are situated on the intersection of language, culture and sociology. We want to show that within these disputes several scholars have ascribed certain positions to Wittgenstein that neither he nor his contemporary colleagues had taken.

The aim of this volume is to present a profound investigation of the related expressions “Lebensform”, “Lebensformen” and “Form des Lebens”. If we analyze the use of the three concepts in Wittgenstein’s works the difference in meaning becomes obvious. This difference has been largely neglected in the secondary literature and has been taken note of.

The present volume is a collection of papers which were read at the International Congress held at the University of Castilla-La Mancha in Toledo (Spain) in June 2011, under the general theme of *Forms of Life and Language Games*. The Congress was attended by specialists of different countries. What we offer here is the outcome of a careful selection of essays. The congress was devoted to Wittgenstein’s thoughts on philosophical anthropology, philosophy of language, cultural studies and psychology. One of the aims of the congress was to consider and carefully

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Rechtgläubig. Narren und Weise, in: Lütterfelds, Roser 1999, 94-119; E. von Savigny, Wittgenstein “Lebensformen” und die Grenze der Verständigung, in: Lütterfelds, Roser 1999, 120-137. C. Sedmak, The cultural game of watching the games, en: Lütterfelds, Roser 1999, 171-189. J. Simon, Lebensformen. Übergänge und Abbrüche, in: Lütterfelds, Roser 1999, 190-212.

<sup>32</sup> António Marques and Nuno Venturinha (Eds.), *Wittgenstein on Forms of Life and the Nature of Experience*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt a. M., 2010.

examine the importance of culture, anthropology and language for philosophical discussion. I would like to thank all the colleagues who accepted the invitation to participate in the congress and thereby contribute to the book. I am indebted to the public institutions that have financially supported the Congress. Financial support was provided by the MICINN, Spanish Government, (FFI2011-12575-E). On this occasion, we benefited not only from the continued and generous support from the Diputación of Toledo and the Obra Social de la Caja de Castilla-La Mancha but also from the University of Castilla-La Mancha and the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences in Toledo.



# Language, Language-Games and Forms of Life

P. M. S. HACKER

## 1. A language-using animal

Our rational powers endow us with possibilities of thinking, feeling, intending and acting that far exceed anything available to other animals. The horizon of thought is determined by the horizon of the behavioural expression of thought. A being can intelligibly (truly *or* falsely) be said to think only that which *can be* expressed in its behaviour. The human behavioural repertoire includes an indefinite variety of *linguistic* behaviour. Consequently, the horizon of human thought is vastly wider than that of other animals. We can speak, and so think, of specifically dated events, of the distant past and remote future. We can speak, and so think, not only of what does exist, but also of what does not. We can think – because we can express – general thoughts, seek for and discover general laws of nature. We can think how things might be and how they might have been. We can imagine – because we can describe – endless possibilities, and we have the power of creative imagination, of pictorial representation, aesthetic appreciation, and a sense of humour. We are self-conscious, i.e. able to *reflect* on – because we can avow or report – our attitudes and affections, reasons and motives, character traits and relationships with others, and take such factors into account in thought, affection and action. We can apprehend and construct truths of reason (arithmetic, geometry and logic). We live in time in a quite different sense than other animals. We are historical beings. We have a history – both personal and social. Our sense of identity and cultural form of life is bound up with stories of the past and of our past, which mould our lives, relationships and values. We can attain knowledge of good and evil, we have a conscience, a sense of obligation, and are susceptible to feelings of guilt, shame and remorse. We are responsible for our deeds.

We are *rational* creatures. The ability to act *for* reasons is correlative to the ability *to reason*, to derive conclusions from premises, and to make inferences from what we know or think we know. Inferring from available

evidence or deriving a conclusion from a set of premises, are not mental *processes*. To infer is to assert or think one proposition *on the ground of* others, as *warranted* or *well-supported* by others. Reasoning, apprehending ‘therefore-s’ and ‘because-s’ between evidence and conclusion, between propositions and their consequences, is, again, a prerogative of language-users – even though it obviously has primitive analogues in pre-linguistic anticipations of events and apprehensions of causal connections. A dog or a bird may learn that B regularly follows A, and prepare itself for B when it sees A. It may learn that V-ing produces B which brings about C, and so V when it wants C. But that falls short of reasoning from premises to a conclusion, from grasping the ‘therefore-s’ and ‘because-s’ intrinsic to reasoning, and from viewing the truth of one proposition as a warrant or justification for holding another to be true.

Alone among animals, we are born with the second-order ability to learn to speak a language. This is exercised in the early years of our lives, and we acquire mastery of a language. Mastery of a language, exhibited in the stream of life, is a mark of having a mind. Without having learnt to speak and to engage in the endless activities of language-using creatures, we would not be rational animals, would not reason, think, feel and act for reasons, and would not possess the distinctive powers of intellect and rational will that are constitutive of having a mind. Nor would our experience, perceptual, affective, and active alike, be concept-saturated as it is.<sup>1</sup>

To have mastered a language, Wittgenstein argued, is to have learnt a vast range of *forms of action and activity* and of *reaction and response to speech* (and, in literate societies, *to writing*) *and to circumstance* which are constitutive of a human form of life. It is to be able to communicate by the use of language and to respond to the use of language by others. It is to be able to reason and deliberate. But, notwithstanding the claims of theoretical linguists and philosophers of language (including the author of the *Tractatus*), it is not to know *a calculus of language* or a *generative grammar*.

Since the invention of function-theoretic calculi of logic at the turn of the twentieth century, the logical analysis of language has dominated analytic philosophy. Successive generations of philosophers endeavoured

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<sup>1</sup> For further elaboration and detailed defence of these very general claims, see P. M. S. Hacker, *Human Nature: the Categorical Framework*. Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, 2007.

to present the depth-grammar of natural language as consisting of some variant or other of the Frege/Russell predicate calculus. Understanding a language, they argued, consists in tacit knowledge of its depth-grammar and lexicon, from which the meaning of all possible sentences of the language can be derived. Since the middle of the twentieth century, with the demise of behaviourist linguistics, cognitive linguistics (as advanced by Chomsky and his followers) has come to dominate theoretical linguistics and has greatly influenced psycho-linguistics. On this view, mastery of a language consists of non-conscious ‘cognizing’ by the ‘mind/brain’ of the depth-grammar of a language, innate knowledge of the universal grammar of all human languages (according to Chomsky), and possession of a mental dictionary (Treisman) or neural lexicon (Levelt, Coltheart) correlating concepts with words. This is alleged to be what makes it possible for us to interpret the speech of others.

It is not my purpose here to survey the reflections on language by philosophers, psycho-linguists, neuro-linguists and theoretical linguists in the course of the last century. What I shall do is examine the salient notions that form the conceptual framework for reflection on language-users, their linguistic powers and activities. My aim is to provide an overview of the family of concepts associated with linguistic meaning. One of the purposes of this overview is to show how Wittgenstein’s conception of a language-game and of a form of life provide the stage-setting for an integrationist conception of language.<sup>2</sup> This is diametrically opposed to the various forms of truth-conditional theories of meaning that have bedevilled philosophical reflections on language for the last four decades.

## 2. Linguistic communication

To learn a language is to learn a rich and open-ended array of forms of action, the performance of which is integrated with the general forms of behaviour of the linguistic community to which one belongs. A language is above all a means of *communication*, and only secondarily a means of *representation* (not all linguistic communication involves representation). To learn a language is to learn to talk, to speak – and to respond to the speech of others. It is to learn to do a vast array of things with words,

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<sup>2</sup> For integrationism in linguistics, see the writings of Roy Harris and his followers. Harris, however, would not recognise Wittgenstein as advancing an integrationist conception of language.

symbols and gestures. It is to learn to request, entreat and plead, to comply, refuse or complain, to state one's intentions, to express affections, attitudes, desires and aversions, pleasure and pain, to ask and answer questions, to guess and hypothesize, to describe and to learn to respond to descriptions of how things are, were or will be and how they might be or might have been, and so on and so forth through the myriad forms of action and response (both verbal and non-verbal) that the young learn at their parents' knee. The activities thus learnt are intelligible only as strands within the tapestry of human life. For one has to learn the *language-games* in which these manifold forms of behaviour are embedded. In short, to learn a language is to become a participating member of a culture.

To achieve mastery of a language is to learn to engage in a wide variety of language-games that are part of the form of life of the culture into which one is born. To learn a language-game is to learn to make moves in the game. To use a sentence is to *make such a move*. A large, if indeterminate, amount of common background knowledge, shared background presuppositions concerning regularities in nature and constancies in our own nature, common discriminatory powers and shared primitive responses, provide the framework for human beings to engage in language-games. In the absence of this framework, no communication by means of language would ever take place. A given language-game is played only in appropriate communicative contexts in the stream of life. So too a given move in a language-game occurs only in a certain context within the game. Finally, a word *typically* occurs only in the context of a sentence, which is uttered as a move in a language-game.

A language-game is played with more communicative instruments than spoken words and sentences. Words are uttered with intonation contour, and are accompanied by facial expressions and hand gestures. These are an integral part of the communicative act. Indeed gesturing alone (shaking or nodding one's head, thumbs up or down) may constitute a fully fledged act of communication. In highly literate cultures such as ours, the characteristic features and conventions of writing and reading should not be overlooked. The introduction of script has transformed human civilizations – but not because it maps the sounds of speech onto script (it commonly doesn't) – but rather because it introduces a wide spectrum of novel linguistic possibilities and activities. It has made it possible to make and keep a record of events, to make inventories, to keep accounts, to sign-post, to label, to codify laws, to record trials, to produce and transmit texts, to engage in correspondence, and so on and so forth. It would be mistaken

to restrict our concept of a language to word-language alone, for the very *symbols* that are involved in human communication incorporate more than just words. Samples, for example, are an integral part of our languages. For we often explain words by ostensive explanations that make use of samples (as when we explain what colour-words or measure-words mean). We make use of samples in our actual assertions and orders (as when we tell someone to bring 28 inches [i.e. *this* ☞ — length] of *this* ☞ □ material, in this colour ☞ ■, from the drapers). So too iconic symbols are an (increasingly) important part of our communicative activities. Any attempt to describe the mastery and use of language, and to theorize about language and linguistic meaning that overlooks these facts will be defective.

It is surprising that mainstream reflection by philosophers and linguists on the nature of language by and large sidelined all this. This is primarily because *thought* was generally held to be independent of language. It was held to be an operation with ideas or concepts. The result of thinking was commonly conceived to be the generation of language-independent thoughts and judgements. Thoughts or judgements were conceived to be *representations* or *depictions* of how things are. These *ideational* or *conceptual* representations could then be ‘translated’ into the medium of language for purposes of communication. The primary use of language was considered to be *telementation*. What the others do with the thoughts thus transmitted or induced is another matter. This natural misconception has characterized philosophical reflection since antiquity. If one begins one’s investigations of the nature of language from the primacy of the communication of thought, then all one’s reflections are likely to be distorted. For thoughts – what we think – are typically *either true or false*, and are expressed by *assertoric sentences*. So one will be prone to assign analytic primacy (that is: primacy in the order of analysis) to *representation* and hence to *truth* and *assertion*, and functional primacy to *naming* (the essential function of words is to name or stand for things) and *describing* (the essential function of sentences is to describe how things stand).<sup>3</sup> This is patent in the Port Royal *Logic* and *Grammar* as well as in Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book 3 in the seventeenth century, which books moulded thought and reflection about language for the next two centuries. It is equally patent in Frege’s *Begriffsschrift* and *Basic Laws of Arithmetic* in the late nineteenth century.

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<sup>3</sup> These are two of the pillars of what Wittgenstein characterised as the Augustinian conception of language.