

Chapter 1

Realism and the Realistic Spirit

*Not empiricism and yet realism in philosophy, that is the hardest thing.*¹

Wittgenstein directed that remark against F.P. Ramsey, but he was at the same time making a general point about philosophy. That general point is what I shall discuss. My account may also be read as a reply—of sorts—to Saul Kripke.² In recently published works Kripke has expounded a reading of Wittgenstein as formulating sceptical solutions, in the manner of Hume, to sceptical problems.³ In particular he takes Wittgenstein, in his discussion of rules, to be setting forth a sceptical paradox, “the fundamental problem of *Philosophical Investigations*.⁴” But sceptical problems and their solutions (sceptical solutions or those of philosophical realism) are, for Wittgenstein, signs that we have misconstrued our own needs in philosophy. How do we come to do that? That is one of the fundamental problems of Wittgenstein’s philosophy. A discussion of the remark about realism, with which I have begun, can cast some light on it.

“Not empiricism and yet realism”: this may seem puzzling. For whatever exactly we mean by realism in philosophy, we should usually have in mind a view which in some way or other emphasized the significance of what is independent of *our* thought and experience; and whatever exactly we mean by empiricism, empiricism would seem to deny the significance of what is independent of our experience, if indeed it even admits that it is intelligible to speak of such an independent reality at all. So what can be meant by “not empiricism and yet realism”? The suggestion appears to be that empiricism is something we get into in philosophy by trying to be realists but going about it in the wrong way, or not hard enough. But what sort of attempt at realism can empiricism be thought to be?

We can try to answer the question by looking at some of the non-philosophical uses of the term “realism.” We may tell someone to “be realistic,” when he is maintaining something in the teeth of the facts,

or refusing even to look at them. Or again if he knows what the facts *ought* to be, either from a theory or wishful thinking, and will not take the world to be something capable of shaking his belief. We also speak of realism in connection with novels and stories; and here again we often have in mind certain kinds of attention to reality: to detail and particularity. We are not, that is, handed too many characters who are simply given by their labels: a Manchester factory owner of the 1840s, let us say, where the details of the behavior are merely illustrations of the way a person of that type would be expected to behave. We are not given lots of sentences like "Like all Russian officials, he had a weakness for cards."⁴ The weakness for cards of a character in a realistic novel may be shown us, but it will be shown as it is in him, and will not simply be a *deduction*. We expect in a realistic novel something you might call a phenomenalism of character: it is built up out of observed detail, and in a sense there is nothing to it over and above what we are shown. That is evidently an oversimplification. To make it less of one, I should have to say something about how what is said about a character, when it goes beyond what we have been shown, may be tied to what is actually there in the story. I should have to develop the parallel between going on beyond what we see of a character and going on beyond—in the way the phenomenalist thinks we can—what we perceive, in our talk of chairs in an unoccupied room. But that is not my present concern; I want to indicate only that once we look outside philosophy, the idea of connections between what is *there* called 'realism' and what we associate with empiricism becomes less puzzling.

A further characteristic of realistic fiction, which is relevant in the same sort of way, is that certain things do not happen in it. People do not go backwards in time, pots do not talk, elves do not do chores while shoemakers sleep, and holy men do not walk unaided over the surface of lakes or oceans. We all know that if God sells wine in an English village, we do not call the story realistic; and if the devil turns up in a realistic novel, it is within what we can take to be some extraordinary experience of one of the characters, say in a dream or in delirium. Magic, myth, fantasy, superstition: in different ways are terms used in making contrasts with realism. And again with this non-philosophical use of "realism" there is a connection with empiricism, with its characteristic attempts to banish from philosophy (or from our thought more generally) myth, magic, superstition of various sorts, or what it sees as that.

There is a third characteristic of realism outside philosophy, related to both of the others, and this is the significance of consequences, of causation. A man wanting to bring about some social reform will be

said to be unrealistic if he does not attend to how politics *works*; he might be said to be realistic if he gives not just moral arguments but statistics showing that the injustice he is protesting against actually does not pay. Similarly in a novel; it is unrealistic if the plot proceeds by a series of improbable events, incredible coincidences, and the like; rather, in a realistic story, events develop out of each other, characters respond to circumstances and so on: there is operative a conception of how things work in our lives, what leads to what, what sorts of things do in actual fact determine how events proceed. It is connected with this that a novel in which vice is defeated and virtue flourishes in the end is often felt as unrealistic: that is not how things are determined. The duke does not reveal himself, and the king's messenger does not come riding up. I shall show later why this aspect of realism, its insistence on consequences, on realistic coherence, has close connections with empiricism.

We may ask whether it is likely—or even possible—that Wittgenstein had in mind anything like the things I have been talking about when he suggested that empiricism could be taken as an attempt at realism. Here are two pieces of evidence, supporting a claim that it is at least possible.

(1) Although he normally uses “realism” and related terms in the ordinary philosophical way, he did also use “realistic” in the non-philosophical sense. He wrote, in an earlier section of *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*:

The conception of calculation as an experiment tends to strike us as the only *realistic* one.

Everything else, we think, is moonshine. In an experiment we have something tangible.⁵

Later in that passage, he uses “obscurantism” to make the contrast with realism. Denying that a calculation is an experiment (or that mathematics is about signs, or that pain is a form of behavior) seems like obscurantism “because people believe that one is asserting the existence of an intangible, i.e. a shadowy, object side by side with what we all can grasp.”⁶

(2) Wittgenstein’s remark, I mentioned, was directed against Ramsey—who took a view of logic which Wittgenstein rejected, as giving a wrong place to the empirical. Ramsey held that whenever we make an inference (of any sort) we do so according to some rule or habit. These processes by which we form opinions may be criticized: our mental habits are to be judged “by whether they work, i.e. whether the opinions they lead to are for the most part true, or more often true than those which alternative habits would lead to.”⁷ What Ram-

sey calls the general conception of logic is of a science telling men how they should think; i.e., it is engaged in just such criticism of habits of thought, and thus even the principles we use in mathematical calculation and in formal logic can be criticized: do they *work*? If other ways of calculating or other rules of inference turned out to be more reliable, we should have reason to change. For Wittgenstein this was the *wrong* way to show the bearing of empirical data on logic. But, still, granting (as I think is clear in the context) that it is *that* view of Ramsey's that Wittgenstein is criticizing, why should his empiricism be thought of as a kind of realism or an attempt at realism?

It is Ramsey himself who provides an answer. In one of his last papers, Ramsey defended an empiricist view of causality, a view closely related to Hume's.⁸ Part of it is an account of such propositions as "All men are mortal," which he refers to as variable hypotheticals. Ramsey was concerned to deny the intelligibility of two alternative philosophical views about such propositions: one view takes them to express real connections between universals, and the other takes them to express infinite conjunctions (even though if we think of them as conjunctions they would go beyond anything we could express *as such*). What drives people to such views, Ramsey says, is certain misleading analogies, and the emotional satisfaction which they give to certain kinds of mind. He adds, "Both these forms of 'realism' must be rejected by the realistic spirit."⁹ Rejected by the realistic spirit, that is, *for* an empiricist account. We have a picture here of the philosophical 'realist' as someone misled by phantoms, by what appears to make sense but is really nonsense, by what could make no difference to us in any case. Earlier in the paper Ramsey had made the same sort of point in contrasting "All men are mortal" with "The Duke of Wellington is mortal."¹⁰ The latter, which expresses what Ramsey calls a "belief of the primary sort" is

a map of neighboring space by which we steer. It remains such a map however much we complicate it or fill in details. But if we professedly extend it to infinity, it is no longer a map; we cannot take it in or steer by it. Our journey is over before we need its remoter parts.

Considered as a proposition, what it would be saying (if we can make sense of that idea at all) would be something useless to us; and Ramsey then argues for an account of these variable hypotheticals as not strictly speaking propositions at all.

Ramsey's contrast between the philosophical 'realist' and the realistic spirit, the former taken in by illusions which the latter can see to be illusions, irrelevant to any distinction which we might have the

least use for—this contrast may make us think of Berkeley. For Berkeley is concerned to show us that *matter* in the philosophical sense will be seen by the realistic spirit to be nothing but a philosophical fantasy. In the *Three Dialogues*, Hylas is portrayed exactly as someone who has to be brought back to the modes of thinking of the realistic spirit, has to be helped to remove the false glasses that have been so painfully obstructing his vision of reality.¹¹ That image, of glasses which we do not see that we can remove, is in Wittgenstein too,¹² used by him in somewhat different ways, but there are important similarities. Hylas has taken himself all along to be like someone wearing distorting spectacles: he has (or so he has thought) only the dimmest grasp of things as they really are, independent of perception, because he knows them only indirectly, through perception. The removal of the glasses is the recognition, through philosophical discussion, that his perceptions never were something between him and the real: he has all along (unbeknownst to his bemused self) been perceiving what *is* real. With the ‘removal’ of the glasses, he is able to take a totally different view of the reality of what he perceives; he no longer peers vainly for something beyond it.

In Wittgenstein’s use of the image, the philosopher who takes himself to be wearing irremovable glasses does not take these to be *distorting* his view. The ‘glasses’ here are the underlying logical order of all thought, the philosopher the author of the *Tractatus*. Because he is convinced that all thought *must* have this order, he is convinced that he is able to see it in the reality of our actual thought and talk, even though the ways we think and speak do not (to what he takes to be a superficial view) appear to exhibit such an order. (Imagine, for example, a philosopher visiting France, where they draw a line through the name of a town on a sign one can see as one leaves. He thinks “The line is a sort of negation sign, but since one cannot negate a name, what is really negated by

Montélimar

is not the name but the sentence ‘You are now in Montélimar’.” Where in actual use there is a name, he sees there to be *really* a use of an abbreviated sentence.)

What is common to both uses of the image of the glasses is that the philosopher who takes himself to be in them misrepresents to himself the significance of what is before his eyes, and takes himself to be concerned rather with the *real* nature of something, where that real nature is not open to view. The *removal* of the glasses is his being able to see properly what always was before him; what stood in the way

of his removing them was a confused understanding of language. In what sense that understanding of language is ‘unrealistic’ is a point I shall return to. I shall first continue with the characterization of the realistic spirit, as we may see it embodied by Berkeley in Philonous.

A very striking passage in the second *Dialogue* begins

Look! are not the fields covered with a delightful vendure? Is there not something in the woods and groves, in the rivers and clear springs, that soothes, that delights, that transports the soul?¹³

And so it continues. One may say that Philonous, in this and other passages, is *celebrating* the reality of the world of the senses; and this is portrayed as a response from which poor Hylas is quite alienated. Taken in by philosophical principles that “lead us to think all the visible beauty of the creation a false imaginary glare,” he is convinced that there is nothing whose real nature we can know.¹⁴ For him the things we actually experience have at best a merely secondary and derivative sort of reality, where the real reality is something which causes our sensations and whose character—? Well, can we know it? Perhaps we can arrive at it through science, perhaps not at all—who knows? This is the ‘being in pain’ about the unknown natures and absolute existence of things which Hylas ascribes to himself and which cuts him off from the kind of response we see in Philonous. (For an earlier version, in Berkeley, of the contrast between the attitude of the ‘realistic spirit’ to the world and that of the philosophers, we may look at the *Philosophical Commentaries* [517a]: “N.B. I am more for reality than any other Philosophers, they make a thousand doubts and know not certainly but we may be deceiv’d. I assert the direct Contrary.”)

Philonous’s attitude to the world of the senses could be put by paraphrasing a remark of Wittgenstein’s. In reply to the suggestion that one might be said to *believe* of another person that he is not an automaton, Wittgenstein says, “My attitude towards him is an attitude towards a soul (*eine Einstellung zur Seele*). I am not of the *opinion* that he has a soul.”¹⁵ The attitude of Philonous, of the realistic spirit, to the world as he knows it in sense perception is an attitude to the real: to the real real enough that there is no question of something missing from it, no question of something else beyond it in virtue of which it is perception of the real. This *Einstellung zur Wirklichkeit* is inseparable, that is, from the idea that whatever more you might think you wanted would not make any real difference at all. “Whatever more”: and it is indeed left vague. Hylas’s claim is that *matter* is the needed ‘more’, but how exactly that is to be understood is not

something on which he is willing to be pinned down. But whether or no there is such a thing as this 'matter' that he thinks is essential to the reality of what is perceived, *it would make no difference*—or so Philonous believes. Matter, then, has exactly the character of an 'idle wheel', to use Wittgenstein's expression: part of his criticism of the idea that we must keep hold of a mental sample of pain to fix what we mean by the word "pain." But someone who could not keep hold of such a thing might be none the worse for it, might use the word as we all do; and the mental sample, the supposedly crucial thing, has in fact no work to do.

We have there, in Berkeley and in Wittgenstein, a sort of philosophical criticism of a concept, quite different from the criticism based on ontological parsimony which one finds in Russell, for example. The difference hinges on the distinction between *mistake* and *fantasy*. In what I have just called Russell's ontological parsimony, a refusal to accept the existence of entities which one *can* do without is justified on the ground that it is safer; you are diminishing the risk of error.¹⁶ But 'matter' in Berkeley, the 'private object' in Wittgenstein, are not hypotheses which are unsafe and, because also unnecessary, better dropped. Rather, if you think that some significant distinction rests on whether there is or is not something *x*, and you are shown that the presence or absence of *x* *could* make no difference of the sort you wanted it to make, this is puzzling in a way an unnecessarily risky hypothesis would not be; it shows that you were in some unclarity about the distinction that you were trying to explain to yourself,¹⁷ and that you had in a sense substituted a fantasy for the real difference. You *knew* what ought to be, what *had* to be, the basis of the distinction, and so you did not look to see how the distinction actually is made, what that is like.

So much, one might say, for generalities, for the merely suggestive: what does this sort of criticism actually *come to*? I shall try to answer, but before the generalities are over, here is another—about how the terms of criticism I have been talking about differ from Russell's. The idea of the idle wheel is of something trundled onto the stage and said to be what is doing the work, but in fact that is just a label stuck on it; if we were to look behind we should see that the thing had no connections with the mechanism at all. But these terms of criticism, that we have here a fantasy of how things work, not (as in the Russellian criticism) an overelaborate conception of them, belong with ideas outside philosophy of what it is to think or write realistically. In particular, the idea of the idle wheel as a tool of criticism belongs with the third strand in realism that I mentioned earlier: attention to the way things actually do work. It is not unlike, for example, the

idea of the fairy godmother, as used by George Orwell in criticizing some of Dickens's novels.¹⁸ He speaks of the role in these novels of the character of the good rich man as that of a fairy godmother, scattering guineas instead of waving a wand to solve problems; and Orwell's point is that in these novels there is a *fantasy* of what it is to act in such a way as to change a situation or resolve a problem: this in works invoking standards which make such fantasy inappropriate. There is a loss of a sense of the real, of which the writer is not aware. It is important that this is not a criticism of the writer's idea of how things happen, that he is *mistaken* about it, but rather that he has lost hold of the idea that he has to show things being made to happen and not just say that they have been made to. That is, the 'fairy godmother' criticism, like that of the 'idle wheel', depends on the distinction between mistake and fantasy.

To return to the case of matter and the attack on it by Philonous, the realistic spirit. The claim that the absence (or presence) of matter would make no difference at all goes with an attempt to enable us to see how we actually make the distinctions which we called in matter to explain. Take for instance the distinction between what there really is and what is merely chimerical, a product of imagination or whatever. We are in a muddle about this distinction, we misrepresent it to ourselves; and one characteristic feature of the muddle is our belief that the distinction *must* depend on something beyond what we perceive. Berkeley's attempt to deal with the confusion has two parts: description and diagnosis, as it were. The description is meant to show us that exactly where we thought the distinction *could not* be made, it *can* be, and indeed is; and the diagnosis aims to explain how the confusion arises from a fantasy of the way language itself works. (The diagnosis is explicit only in the *Principles of Human Knowledge*, but can be seen to apply to much that is put into Hylas's mouth in the *Three Dialogues*.) There is a similar two-part procedure—of description of the sort of details which we are inclined *a priori* to think *cannot* be what is involved, and diagnosis of why we are inclined that way—in Wittgenstein, when he discusses the problem of the relation between a word and what it stands for. He says that "in order to see more clearly, here as in countless similar cases, we must focus on the details of what goes on; must *look at them from close to*" (§51). He goes on

If I am inclined to suppose that a mouse has come into being by spontaneous generation out of grey rags and dust, I shall do well to examine those rags very closely to see how a mouse may have hidden in them, how it may have got there and so on. But if I am

convinced that a mouse cannot come into being from these things, then this investigation will perhaps be superfluous.

But first we must learn to understand what it is that opposes such an examination of details in philosophy (§52).

The realistic spirit does not then know so well that you cannot get a mouse from rags that it will not *look at* the rags. What I am suggesting is that Berkeley's aim is like Wittgenstein's: to show that philosophers miss the details, the rags, that a philosophical mouse comes out of, because something has led them to think that no mouse *can* come out of *that*. Berkeley's mouse—the one we are concerned with—is the distinction between real things and chimeras. For Hylas, real existence is existence distinct from and without any relation to being perceived; and so if the horse we see (in contrast to the one we merely imagine) *is* real, it is because its sensible appearance to us is caused by qualities inhering in a material body, which has an absolute existence independent of our own. The judgment that the horse is real and not imaginary, not a hallucination, is thus a hypothesis going beyond anything we might be aware of by our senses, though indeed it is clear on Hylas's view that we must use the evidence of our senses in trying to *tell* what is real. Still, it is not what we actually see or hear or touch that we are ultimately concerned with in such judgments; and this because *however* things appear to us, it is quite another matter how they *are*. Philonous, in reply to Hylas's question what difference there can be, on his views, between real things and chimeras, describes how we do tell the difference. The important thing is the general point: "In short," Philonous says to Hylas,

by whatever method you distinguish *things* from *chimeras* on your own scheme, the same, it is evident, will hold also upon mine. For it must be, I presume, by some perceived difference, and I am not for depriving you of any one thing that you perceive.¹⁹

Our actual ways of handling different sorts of perceived differences (e.g., coherence with "the preceding and subsequent transactions of our lives" and lack of such coherence): these are the rags we will not look at, so convinced are we that no mouse can come into being from them.

In other words, Philonous takes Hylas to have a picture in his mind of what is involved in telling honest things from chimeras (a picture which leads Hylas to think that Philonous is in no position to tell the difference), and contrasts it with the methods, whatever they may be, which Hylas actually uses. Describe any procedure that you ac-

tually use—and of course Philonous can use it too. And what then is it that he was supposedly *unable* to do, not picturing the difference as Hylas did?—The philosophical technique is one of great power, which surprisingly is often missed. That is, a philosopher will make a claim open to the kind of attack Philonous makes, without seeing the necessity to protect himself on that side at all. C.S. Peirce, for example, argues that unless we suppose active general principles in nature, we have no way to distinguish a mere coincidence from a uniformity on which we can rely, on which we can base a prediction. The reply of the realistic spirit is that an active general principle is so much gas unless you say how you tell that you have got one; and if you give any method, it will be a method which anyone can use to distinguish laws from accidental uniformities without having to decorate the method with the phrase “active general principle.” Peirce of course knows that there are such methods, but assumes that his mouse—properly *causal* regularity—cannot conceivably come into being from the rags: patterns of observed regularities.²⁰

At this point someone might wish to raise an objection. I have called attention to Berkeley’s technique, exemplified in the reply to Hylas about how things may be distinguished from chimeras, and have described it as powerful. *But*—this is the objection—what is this technique but the familiar verificationist technique of challenging anyone who comes up with some distinction between A’s and B’s to say how it is established that something is an A and not a B? What in our experience—the verificationist asks—counts as establishing such a claim? For if the question cannot be answered, then—the suggestion is—the claim lacks cognitive content; and whatever cognitive content it has is to be seen in the ways its truth or falsity can be settled.

And—the objection now continues—if there is a resemblance between things in Wittgenstein and this element in Berkeley, is that not simply a reflection of the fact that there is a verificationist streak in much of Wittgenstein’s post-*Tractatus* writings? Does this not explain the resemblance without there being any need to appeal to a notion of realism which has to be explained by reference to literary and other non-philosophical talk of realism? And, finally, is it not extremely misleading, to say the least, to take this element of verificationism in Wittgenstein and the empiricists and start calling it—of all things—realism? Given, that is, the established philosophical uses of that term, which have in common (if anything) a spirit opposed to just exactly what you have been calling the realistic spirit and what would better be called the reductivist spirit?

To which my reply is: Wait a minute.—That objection came as an interruption. I had been in the middle of Berkeley's discussion of the distinction between real things and chimeras. He describes roughly how we do distinguish them; and it was my account of that that led to the objection just now. But he is also concerned with *what* stops us looking. And what I want to do is leave the objection temporarily and turn to what I have called his diagnosis.

Berkeley conceives our state of mind here as more or less like this. What we are *doing* is not attending to our actual ways of telling what is real—which do not involve an *idea* of being real. We look *past* the variety of different ways of handling experiential data, because we take ourselves to be on to something beyond it, beyond anything as muddy and untidy as that.²¹ We think that our practice—whatever it is—is just a way of getting at something we have an idea of: what really *is*, what really is out there and independently real; and it is that notion of reality that we call in matter to explain. That is, the not looking at the details of our methods of judging what is real goes with the idea of something that we are really after, whatever the details may be of how we try to get *it*. The details appear irrelevant, because we think we can make out something *else*, which, if we did not have it or at least believe that we did, would make pointless our actual practices of using evidence as we do in judging what is real. To think, though, that we are on to something else here, that we have an idea of what it is to be real which is what guides us in our practice—this is to think that the term “real” means something besides what we should see if we looked at how we tell real things. To conceive the matter in this way reflects, Berkeley thinks, a fundamental confusion about language, about what it is for a term to be kept to a fixed meaning, for there to be anything guiding us, constraining us, in our actual use.

A diagnosis of the same kind could be given of the passage I quoted in Peirce. Peirce thinks that we must suppose there to be “active general principles” in nature if we are to distinguish causal from accidental regularities. The practices of distinguishing as we do, of making predictions in the case of some regularities and not in others, must reflect a conception of something over and above the regularities. We have to believe in something *real* to which the formula we use in making a prediction *corresponds* (it is Peirce who uses italics on these words); else we should have to regard *all* observed regularities as equally due to chance. Any observed regularity might be mere accident, a weird coincidence not to be betted upon to happen again; to take it to be *not* that, as we do in predicting, is to believe in something

else, the connection underlying the observed regularity. The “real generals” (or “active general principles in nature”) to which our formulations of natural law correspond play the role for Peirce that matter does for Hylas; because he is so convinced that we need them in order to distinguish as we do, he is convinced that he is aware of them, and that no one who was not could reasonably believe that the next stone he dropped would fall. Without matter, we should have—it seems—to take all appearances as equally *mere* appearances, without “real generals,” all regularities as equally mere chance. In all this, Peirce shows himself—from the point of view of a Berkeley—a sufferer from the disease Belief in Abstract General Ideas. Its most characteristic symptom is his way of conceiving the connections between events. The only reason there can be for accepting a prediction is belief in a connection supposed to be *real*, in the sense of independent of our thought,²² and for which the observed regularity is evidence. But “real connection,” as thus conceived, is as much an abstract idea (in Berkeley’s sense) as “absolute existence” is in Hylas.

Berkeley, I said, thinks that the source of the disease is a wrong idea of what it is for a term to be kept to a fixed meaning. That wrong idea leads us to think that we need something that we do not need: matter or whatever it may be; it also leads us to think that we have *got* what we need, in order to be making sense, when we do not. We use a word as if it had a meaning, whereas in fact we have not specified any. Our view of what meaning is stops us from noticing that the word is actually floating free: we have only the surface of sense. We so far impose upon ourselves, Berkeley tells us, as to imagine that we *believe* all sorts of things about matter, when we are merely repeating sentences empty of meaning.²³ That we can be taken in in such a way by misunderstandings about language, can *imagine* ourselves to believe something—this in Berkeley should be compared to Wittgenstein, to his reply “You do indeed *believe* that you believe it!” to the man who takes himself to have had again Something, of which he has given himself a private definition.²⁴

I want to say more about this last point, to show its connection with realism—realism, that is, in the sense in which I have been using that term. I want to take the conception of language which Berkeley says is to blame for our philosophical difficulties, and to suggest that his criticism of that conception of language comes to saying that it is a *fantasy* of how words work. In short: a fantasy of what it is for a term to mean something is what leads us to philosophical fantasy about what we are getting at when we distinguish the real from the chimerical, or the causal from the coincidental, or about what length or motion or color is, and so on. So we have a structure here: of unreal-

ism in discussing some philosophical question having its source in unrealism about language or meaning. Can such a relation be made out? And what exactly has it to do with what we call unrealistic outside philosophy?

Take, to start with, an example of a mode of description of the world—medieval hagiography—which does not attempt to be realistic. Its not being realistic is partly a matter of the kind of events described; but I want to look at something else, the style of description common to ordinary and extraordinary events in such narratives, taking *The Little Flowers of St. Francis* as an example.

First, an extraordinary event. We are told that in an ecstasy Brother Pacificus saw the soul of his brother ascend direct to heaven at the moment it left his body.²⁵ We are told that that is what he saw, but we are not told at all what it was like to see such a thing. In fact we do not have any idea what he saw and how he knew it was his brother's soul. But in the context of the narrative, that is not something that is felt as an omission. I do not mean that there is nothing that we could imagine here if we were asked to fill in the story, but simply that what we have is a narrative style, a texture of story, in which such gaps are not felt as gaps. (Cf. also the story of the miraculous transportation of St. Clare from her cell to church and back to her bed.²⁶ What is it *like* to be miraculously transported?)

There is something similar in the narration of perfectly ordinary events. We are told of St. Francis that he "did his utmost" to conceal the miraculous wound in his side, and are told of the ways in which some of the friars nevertheless got to see or find out about the wound.²⁷ The methods of discovery were not very ingenious, and anyone who was so easily found out as St. Francis appears to have been cannot very well be described as having tried his utmost to conceal his wound. Now although it would seem that the words "St. Francis tried his utmost" would have to be withdrawn or modified, in the light of what follows in the narrative, unless some explanation were given how someone trying his utmost could so easily have been found out, the difficulty is simply not noticed by the writer. But his not doing so is no slip; it is rather a characteristic of the texture of the stories that realistic coherence is not demanded, and its absence is not felt as a fault.

That kind of unrealism in description is in some ways like the case I mentioned at the beginning: "Like all Russian officials, he had a weakness for cards." St. Francis's attempt to conceal the stigmata is a matter of a characteristic which *saints have*: they conceal the signs of divine favor. The phrase, as used of St. Francis, was never arrived at by people noticing something odd in his behavior, guessing that he

was trying to conceal something, and then somehow finding out what it was, and so on. The description has been as it were set free from the kinds of constraints which ordinarily operate, and in virtue of which terms like "trying one's utmost" mean what they do. In this case, the freeing of the term from constraints—from ties to evidence, from the need to consider what counts against its application—means that the apparently contradictory evidence is not felt as something that calls into question the description of St. Francis or as something that requires explanation or even comment.—Indeed the very next paragraph contains another apparent contradiction which also causes no discomfort: St. Francis would grant Brother Ruffino anything he desired, Brother Ruffino wanted to find out about the stigmata, and it appears that that is not something Saint Francis would grant him. This case is like the other two from *The Little Flowers*: it is not a sloppiness in the writer but a style in which our words are in some ways set free from ordinary constraints. Here descriptions of St. Francis's particular activities do not bear on the applicability to him of the general characterization: he would grant Ruffino anything he desired. But we know what it means to say that St. Francis would grant Ruffino anything he desired only if we take it to be called into question by the mention of something which Ruffino wanted and St. Francis seemingly would not give him. *That* has been taken away from us, but how then is the characterization of St. Francis to be understood? What is going on here?

The writing of saints' lives, it has often been said, aims not so much at history as at edification.²⁸ I have been suggesting that that is reflected in a characteristic use of language, distinct from that of ordinary historiography, or indeed of ordinary descriptions of things around us. The language of description is used, but without some of its normal ties: to consequences on the one hand, to evidence on the other. Hippolyte Delehaye compares hagiographers to poets, and more interestingly to painters. He asks us to think of

an old edition of the *Aeneid*; in accordance with the custom of his time the printer has prefaced it with an engraving representing Virgil. You do not hesitate for a moment, do you, to say that it is not a portrait? And nobody will take you to task for so lightly deciding a question of likeness, which calls for a comparison between the original and the representation. You for your part will not say that the man who wrote Virgil's name under a fanciful picture is a swindler. The artist was following the fashion of his time, which allowed conventional portraits.²⁹

In the writing of saints' lives we have just such portraits, constructions of objects for contemplation; and if we think of words and phrases detached from their normal ties to evidence and consequences as linguistic 'surfaces', we may say that these writings are constructions from such surfaces: words without the body of their connections to the world.

Delehaye's remarks suggest a further point. Someone may have a picture of the Baptism of Jesus which shows, besides one man pouring water on the head of another, a dove above their heads, and above that the head of an old man; perhaps there are some people with wings on the sides. For the man who has the picture, it is 'how he pictures the Baptism of Jesus'; but he may never have asked, it has never been a question for him, *how* such a picture would be compared with what it represents. Just as a certain engraving may be for me my picture of Virgil, without my thinking of it as a good or bad *likeness*, the picture of the Baptism may represent the scene for someone who does not consider in what way he takes it to be *like* what he would have seen. Saints' lives, like tales of heroes, may be read or repeated in a similar spirit. And when someone says that such a story is *true*, this sometimes means only that that is his picture of the saint's life. According to the widow Keelan, in Tara, in 1893

St. Columcille never had a father. The way it was was this: St. Bridget was walkin' wid St. Paathrick an' a ball fell from heavin', an' it was that swate she et it all up, an' it made her prignant with Columcille, an' that's what a praste towld me, an' it's thrue.³⁰

But it is *not* true—and even if it were part of the conventional representation of Columcille that he was so conceived, or of Irish saints in general that they were, that would not make it true.—Let me look further at this matter of conventionality and truth. Delehaye points out (using the comparison to the engraving of Virgil) that the saint's life is not a realistic portrait, and that we can recognize that it is not without actually having to compare it with the facts. It is rather a conventional portrait, where this means (among other things) that such sentences as "St. N hid signs of divine favor" may be put into N's *vita* simply because that is how one describes saints. Perhaps the guides for writing saints' lives (it is thought that there were such things)³¹ specified such matters in detail. But now we should note two things.

(1) To say that such a sentence as "St. N hid signs of divine favor" is a *conventional* element in the description of N, that the

rules for writing the *vita* of a saint allow it to be put in without worrying about the facts, is not to say that it reflects a necessary truth about saints, or what was taken to be one, any more than it is a necessary truth, or was thought to be one, that the Virgin Mary wore a blue mantle. It is perhaps worth pointing out that *these* 'conventions of description' are not conventions of the sort Wittgenstein occasionally speaks of in connection with necessity. The rule that you can describe a saint as having or doing such-and-such, that you can just put that into his *vita*, is not like a rule "If someone does *not* hide signs of divine favor, he can be no saint"—which might be used in handling the data, in judging whether someone really *is* a saint. The conventions I am concerned with in hagiography have nothing to do with how we make judgements on the basis of our investigations of the facts. There has been a certain amount of confusion of these very different sorts of convention in some philosophical writings influenced by Wittgenstein.

(2) Someone nowadays who wants to write an accurate biography of a medieval saint may be concerned to sort out what is true in the older *vitae* from what is not. On the one hand, some of what is said may be supported by good contemporary documents; on the other, a *vita* may clearly have been stuffed by its author with (let us say) ready-made descriptions of fantastic tortures undergone by the saint, or with bits and pieces taken from other *vitae*, from folktales or Biblical narratives.³² The point is obvious: what is conventionally put into a saint's *vita* may by no means be true, and we recognize this when we make use, in judging the truth of what is said, of our techniques for weighing and sifting evidence. The fact that these techniques would not have been of interest to the author of the *vita*, who was not attempting to produce an accurate life, nor to his audience, does not mean that our judgments about what is said in the *vita* are in any way out of order or conceptually confused. In dealing with the material in the *vita*, we may perfectly properly adopt a sort of realism: the existence of rules or conventions concerning what may appropriately be *said* and indeed *thought* about a certain matter, here saints' lives, leaves open the question what is *true* about those matters. The practices—here, of embroidering saints' lives in such-and-such ways, of describing them as having certain features, whatever the documents may say, or in the absence of any evidence, or the presence of contrary evidence, of ignoring questions of coherence—are one thing, whether what is said in adhering to these practices was actually true is another. (And

indeed in some cases it may not even be clear what it would be for it to be true.) Our elementary realism (as we may call it) has at its heart that contrast between what is said, adhering to the practices, the conventions, governing the writing of saints' lives, and what the facts were.

Let me indicate briefly why there is nothing confused about the contrast. In connection with *The Little Flowers* I said that we might regard saints' lives as constructions out of what I there called 'linguistic surfaces', sentences used independently of the ties to evidence and consequences which characterize the ordinary application of the expressions which they contain. But if the hagiographer uses sentences with such ties cut, they can nevertheless be used so that the ties are intact, and (in the case of many of them) they can thus be compared with reality; we can use the available evidence to determine whether things were as represented. If it were not for the fact that the hagiographer's sentence about St. Francis (for example), that he "tried his utmost" to hide signs of divine favor, made use of expressions ordinarily tied to evidence and consequences as our English expression is, we could not translate the Italian as we do, we could not take the hagiographer to mean what we should. But it is just such ties then which make it possible for the critical historian, painting a portrait answerable to the facts, intelligibly to ask of things said in an older *vita* whether there is good evidence for them. That last claim would need some qualification and some filling in of details, but I shall instead take up here again the comparison to painting. St. Mark (to use another example of Delehaye's) might be represented in a painting as dipping his pen into an inkwell held by a kneeling disciple as he takes down a sermon of St. Peter's in shorthand.³³ The representation was not meant to be taken as an accurate portrayal of how things were—but because what it shows is indeed St. Mark dipping a pen into an inkwell, we can ask, irrespective of any conventions for representing St. Mark, whether he did actually use such things. Conventions of representation of the sort we have been concerned with, in painting or in writing, do not settle truth; and elementary realism simply expresses that point.

I have dwelt on this at some length because of what I want to show about *philosophical* realism, in contrast with elementary realism. I want to suggest that the philosophical realist attempts to take up a position analogous to that of elementary realism—but confusedly. The philosophical realist's conception of room for a position analogous to that of elementary realism: that is fantasy. And empiricism, often enough, is an attempt to show that it is. We can then see empiricism

as Ramsey does; as putting scare quotes on the “realism” of “philosophical realism,” and as *itself* the expression of a *properly* realistic spirit. That is, it is empiricism (seen as he does) which takes up a critical position *genuinely* analogous to that of elementary realism.

But here I am ahead of the story. What I needed the discussion of elementary realism for was my account of Berkeley. Berkeley, I said, thought that the philosophical belief in matter, as well as other philosophical confusions, depended on misunderstandings about language. I can now try to explain that.

The fundamental point in elementary realism, applied to hagiography, was: whatever may be the practices and conventions of description used in writing saints’ lives, the *truth* about their lives is another matter. However the medieval writer may have been instructed to write up lives in the *Guide for Hagiographers* (if there were such a thing), the *true* description is the one that fits the facts, not the one produced in following the *Guide*.—Philosophical realism about the external world tells us that whatever our actual practices may be—our saying that there are *real things* with such-and-such characteristics, when *appearances* to us have certain features—the truth about real things is another matter, and depends on what is the case independent of the appearances to us. Whatever guidance we may be offered in the *Sense-Data Users’ Guide*, whatever it may tell us that we should say given such-and-such appearances, the true description is what fits the facts, not the one produced in following the *Guide*.

Berkeley’s view is roughly this. The *Sense-Data Users’ Guide* is a guide to thought about reality, more precisely to one of the two main kinds of reality. Elementary realism, e.g., about the writings of hagiographers, could, following Berkeley, be treated as a consequence of what is pointed out in several of the chapters of the *Guide*. There will be a chapter on the use of documents, giving much of the critical apparatus of the historian; there will be a section, a *Guide to Handling Human Testimony*, within the chapter on Human Nature, dealing with such topics as credulity, and the tendency of legends to become more marvelous as they are passed down. There will be a chapter on Logic, A *Guide to Coherence*; for Berkeley thinks that coherence has a central place in our ordinary ways of judging what is real. The *Sense-Data Users’ Guide* thus itself shows us how we can take up a realist view of what is said in saints’ lives.

With *some* of that, the philosophical realist can agree. But he attempts to turn it in a different direction. That is, he indeed insists that the *Sense-Data Users’ Guide* contains in many of its chapters instructions how to correct what the evidence seems to point to: it enables us to distinguish the way things may appear to us from how they are.

There are whole chapters on perceptual illusion and distortions, and how to avoid being taken in by them. Further—and he emphasizes this—it has a chapter How to Establish a Scientific Account of Perception. Whether we depend on the Ordinary Man's version of the *Guide*, or more advanced versions, our application of the *Guide* will lead us to accept that how things appear to us as observers depends on what impinges on our bodies, and how our bodies work.—Having emphasized these points, the philosophical realist will now go on to claim that the *Guide* leads us into incoherence. For it allows us to describe things—like stones—as actually themselves having the qualities, like color, that we are aware of in our experience; it allows us to describe ourselves as aware, in our perceptual experience, of real things themselves. But the chapters showing us how to correct perceptual errors, and the chapters on how to give scientific accounts of perception, make clear that we do not observe stones themselves, but only their effects upon us,³⁴ and that most of the qualities we ascribe to objects they do not themselves really have. We ordinarily ignore the incoherence that following the *Guide* leads us into; we may be just as happy, believing that we actually observe real things and that how things appear to us is entirely determined by what impinges on our bodies and how they work, as hagiographers and their audiences were with the incoherences which the *Hagiographers' Guide* led them to tolerate unconcernedly. But tolerated incoherence is incoherence still; our ordinary practice is no way to the truth.

How does that philosophical view rest, according to Berkeley, on misunderstandings about language? We—philosophers—tend to think that when language is not being used to communicate information about particular matters in the world as we know it in experience, it is used to communicate information about something else: that is one misunderstanding. Further, when we can follow a bit of language, we take it that we must have in our minds an *idea* of what it is the words we understand stand for. The two tendencies can be illustrated by an example of Berkeley's: the notion *force*. The word "force" occurs in propositions and theorems of very extensive use. The doctrine of composition and resolution of forces (e.g.) enables us to arrive at numerous rules directing men how to act, and explaining a great variety of phenomena. By the doctrine of force we arrive at many inventions, and frame engines, by which we accomplish what we otherwise could not; and we can also explain celestial motion. But instead of recognizing propositions about force as guides to action and speculation, we construe them as giving information about facts of a sort not accessible to our senses. Since we understand and use these propositions, we take it that we must have an *idea* of what it is

"force" stands for. Since it does not stand for any idea of a perceptible thing, we ascribe to ourselves an idea of something in reality, distinct from what is perceived. Taking the sentence as conveying information, we generate a realm it reports on; taking words like "force," "mass," and so on to stand for ideas, we take ourselves to have ideas of the items to be found in this realm.³⁵

When the philosophical realist imagines that there is a basic incoherence in the *Sense-Data Users' Guide*, he is subject to the same kind of illusion. There was a section in it: How Things Look Is Not Always The Best Guide to How They Really Are, which Berkeley reads as containing rules guiding us in our expectations. When it tells us that an oar in water may appear bent while really being straight, he reads it as advising us: Don't expect to see a bent oar when you pull it out of the water; don't expect it to *feel* crooked.³⁶ The philosophical realist, though, takes the chapter as conveying information which helps us map the realm of Things As They Really Are, Distinct From Our Perception; he takes himself to have an *idea* of what it is to be Absolutely Real, an idea of Existence independent of being perceived. In a similar way, he misconstrues the chapter on how perception depends on our bodies and their environment, taking it to imply that we do not perceive material objects but only their effects. The objects themselves have not got the qualities that we are aware of, but only the capacity to produce such awareness in us. Here the philosophical realist is engaging in the purest fantasy. He *thinks* he thinks of objects with non-sensible properties and unknown natures, he *thinks* he thinks of matter, a substratum of the objects of sense, but all he has is a construction of *words*, linguistic surfaces, as far removed from any practice of comparison with the world as is the story of Saint Columcille's conception. He has, by mistaking the force of words "framed by the vulgar for convenience and despatch in the common action of life, without any regard to speculation,"³⁷ ensnared himself in a net. Embarrassed by difficulties of his own construction, he cannot see what is before his eyes.

If my concern in this paper were to expound Berkeley's views, I should need to look in much greater detail at his criticism of philosophical thought. My aim, however, has been to explain how empiricism might be taken as an attempt at realism, treating Berkeley as an example, and looking briefly at the account he gives of specific philosophical errors and their source in confusion about language. "Fantasy" is not a term of criticism Berkeley uses, but I have suggested that the misconstruing of language which he thinks underlies philosophical difficulties could be described as a fantasy of how language works. The philosopher who takes himself to believe in a ma-

terial substratum of objects of sense is not so much like someone who has a linguistic construction, with the words in it cut free from the ordinary constraints, for amusement or edification, but rather like someone who puts together such a construction while deluded about what it is he is doing. He takes himself to be offering a realist's criticism of the irresponsible ways of talking and thinking of the vulgar, but he leaves for empiricism—or so the empiricist may see it—the task of genuinely realistic criticism.

In the course of this exposition, I have mentioned an objection, that what I have called realism is really just what we already know as verificationism; and I have postponed replying to it. The objection can be answered in a few sentences, but there is one matter which must be cleared up first. Wittgenstein's remark was "Not empiricism and yet realism in philosophy, that is the hardest thing." The question is: What is wrong with empiricism as an attempt at realism?

One thing wrong with it is that the *Sense-Data Users' Guide*—or, rather, what I have used it to represent—is itself a fantasy. I have used it to stand for a variety of empiricist views, including Berkeley's, which have in common that what is *given*, the basis of our knowledge of the world, is sensible appearances. In Berkeley's case the *Sense-Data Users' Guide* represents what he would himself have thought of as a directory for understanding God's language. The *signs* of that language are such things as the look of the tree from here, the taste of the cherry. To someone who has learned to understand and use these signs, the tree-look suggests "distances, figures, situations, dimensions and various qualities of tangible objects," just as, to someone who has learned to read, the printed characters in a book, which in strictness of language are all that is seen, "suggest words, notions and things." In strictness, I see only the tree-look; if I say that I see a tree ninety feet high, I speak as if I *saw* what is merely suggested to me by the tree-look.³⁸ It would be possible to consider what is wrong with such a view, taken as an attempt at realism, but I shall go another way.

Wittgenstein's remark was, as I mentioned, directed against Ramsey, and I want to indicate what is wrong with empiricism as an attempt at realism by turning back to Ramsey and asking: What is the matter with *his* empiricism as an attempt at realism?

Ramsey thought of philosophy as directed at the clarification of our thought, the clarification of what we mean by the terms and sentences we use. A clarification of what we mean can sometimes proceed by unselfconscious attention to the objects that we are talking about, as for example if we were to ask whether we mean the same or different things by "horse" and "pig." On the other hand, there

are terms and sentences the clarification of which cannot proceed in that way. In order to explain what we mean by a variable hypothetical like "All men are mortal," we must look at the way such expressions are used, where this means looking at our own *mental states*.³⁹ Ramsey means that in such cases we have to look at the relation between things in our experience and the making of such statements, and at the relation between making such statements and our habits of making judgments about further items in our experience.

His investigation of the meaning of variable hypotheticals is at the same time an investigation of what we mean by "P is a law of nature," and of what we mean when we speak of an unknown causal law, or of one described but not stated. He reaches this view of what it is for there to be an *unknown causal law*: it is the existence of certain singular facts which would lead us by a psychological law to accept a causal generalization. The generalization must be one which when made would not be misleading: i.e., it must hold within the scope of our possible experience (and that would have to be spelled out, though Ramsey does not go into this, in terms of such things as there not being singular facts which would lead us, through certain psychological laws, to withdraw the generalization). Accepting the generalization is a matter of asserting it and of forming a habit of making certain judgments about particulars. There is a psychological law in virtue of which those judgments would be made: the connection between asserting the generalization and the habit of forming beliefs about particulars depends upon the psychological law which makes the meaning of the word "all."⁴⁰

So there we have an empiricist account of causation (or, rather, a central part of such an account), tied closely to an empiricist view of what philosophical clarification of meaning consists in. (Since for Ramsey explication of meaning is essentially causal, the account of causation itself is not a mere example of philosophical analysis). Why might Ramsey's account be thought not to be genuinely realistic, or not realistic enough? We can answer that by considering an objection that Ramsey himself comes near discussing, and to which he has at least indicated a reply.

Here is the objection. To say that there is an unknown causal law governing the occurrence of such-and-such (connecting people's chromosomes and their characteristics, to use one of Ramsey's examples) cannot be to say that there are singular facts which would lead us in virtue of psychological laws to a generalization, because we need to exclude things like our becoming *unhinged* by our knowledge of the singular facts and in that way reaching some mad generalization. The existence of facts that would lead us in virtue of *some* psy-

chological law to a mad generalization, one which no singular facts within the scope of our possible experience would (given our psychology) lead us to give up, is quite clearly not what we mean by there being an unknown causal law.

Ramsey's reply would be that the psychological laws meant are "the known laws expressing our methods of inductive reasoning"⁴¹: the existence of an unknown causal law is the existence of singular facts which by the known psychological laws of our inductive reasoning would lead us to a generalization that we should stick to in the light of whatever other singular facts there may be that we might actually turn up. But the distinction Ramsey needs to make cannot be made by contrasting the psychological laws, known or unknown, of our inductive reasoning and possible unknown psychological laws of mad generalizing.

It may be puzzling that he should say that the psychological laws in virtue of which we go from singular facts to causal generalizations are *known*. But it should be less puzzling if we note that he does not mean laws belonging to theoretical psychology, which have, he thinks, no place in philosophical analysis. (And in any case the theoretical psychology of inductive inference could not enable us to explain what we mean by the existence of an unknown causal law.) The laws he means he thinks we know, in that we know how we infer and can turn our attention to our own mental states and processes. Indeed, if we can describe some case—some set of possible observations—and say "I should conclude so-and-so," we are relying at least implicitly (he thinks) on a causal generalization about our own inductive reasoning. Ramsey's notion of "known psychological laws," was reflected in something I mentioned earlier, that it is a psychological law which makes the meaning of "all." This, too, is not a law, known or unknown, of theoretical psychology, but one which we know in that we know how we infer from statements using "all" to singular statements.

Wittgenstein's criticisms of Ramsey are directed against such views of his as those we have just seen: Ramsey treats logic as if it were a matter for a kind of empirical knowledge. We know empirically what our habits of thought are, and can then investigate empirically whether these habits are useful or perhaps improvable. But let us leave aside general criticisms of such empiricism and continue. It is plain that Ramsey's account will not do. Even if there are singular facts that might, looked at in *some* way, lead someone, with great insight, to a causal generalization, there need be no reason whatever to think that I or others, given knowledge merely of those facts, would in virtue of the psychological laws (known to us, as he would

have it) of our methods of inductive reasoning, be led to assert anything whatever. When we say that there is an unknown causal law of some sort, we do not mean that we should be able to come to it by knowledge of singular facts and by whatever ways we now know ourselves to be able to move from singular facts to causal generalizations, by—that is—whatever we now take to be our inferential 'habits'. But if we need not be able to find in ourselves knowledge of habits of inference which would take us to *any* as yet unknown causal law, the difference between going to a new causal law by some as it were helped insight from another person and going to a mad generalization through becoming unhinged by knowledge of new singular facts cannot be explained in Ramsey's style: in terms of what we know of our own mental life, in terms of what we are able to observe of regularities in it when we turn our consciousness towards our mental states and processes.

The reference to known psychological laws cannot do what it was brought in to do. It cannot underpin a general account of what we mean by causal terms; it is as much an idle wheel as matter, or the active general principles in nature of Peirce's discussion of causal regularities. Ramsey's account is intentionally realistic in *his* sense, in its rejection of anything like Peirce's 'realism':

The world, or rather that part of it with which we are acquainted, exhibits as we must agree a good deal of regularity of succession. I contend that over and above that it exhibits no features called causal necessity, but that we make sentences called causal laws from which (i.e. having made which) we proceed to actions and propositions connected with them in a certain way, and say that a fact asserted in a proposition which is an instance of causal law is a case of causal necessity. This is a regular feature of our conduct, a part of the general regularity of things . . .⁴²

We make sentences called causal laws—when we have learned to reason inductively. To have learned to do so is indeed to have learned to behave in a certain way, and causal generalizations are what we come up with when we behave that way. But what counts as behaving *that way* is not specifiable in terms of any psychological laws, unless they are specified—totally unhelpfully—as those proceeding according to which is reasoning inductively.

Consider what has led us here. Ramsey has, in what he takes to be a realistic spirit, rejected the idea that what we call causal laws express real connections of universals: that idea depends on misleading formal analogies between the sentences expressing such laws and propositions properly so called.⁴³ The misleading appearance can be

seen to be merely *that*, if we attend, not introspectively to what we take ourselves to mean, but to the *use* of causal terms. But, as we have seen, by attending to the use Ramsey means attending to the causal relations between our experience of the world and our making of general statements, and between our making of general statements and our going on afterwards to form beliefs about other particular items in our experience. This, for him, is what counts as being realistic in our philosophy: clarifying what we mean by the terms that give rise to philosophical problems by showing the causal connections between the utterance of sentences containing those terms and what else goes on in our mental life; sense experience, decisions, habits of expectation and of utterance, and the like. What underlies this conception of philosophical method is the idea that the terms that give rise to problems, like other terms, are used in a *regular* way, and that these regularities in our use are knowable like any others; they are there to be known.

But we cannot, in general, make clear to ourselves what we do in following a rule if we try to do it in terms of a causal generalization which we ourselves are specially placed to know. For, if a rule tells us to do so-and-so in such-and-such circumstances, we shall take ourselves to be following it when we take the circumstances to be such-and-such, and ourselves to be doing so-and-so. And so we can tell ourselves that there is a generalization that we know to fit our behavior: we do so-and-so whenever such-and-such. But *whatever* we do in following that rule, we shall take that generalization to apply. Our 'knowledge' is merely a misleading way of putting the fact that in what we do, we are taking ourselves to be following a rule. The point applies to our knowledge of the psychological laws that—supposedly—make the meaning of our words. Any application of a term that seems appropriate to us will also seem to belong to the regularity that our use of the term exhibits to us, or appears to, when we take ourselves to be attending to our own use as Ramsey does. He thinks he knows such laws because what he takes to be realism requires that there be such laws: causal regularities that the fixity of meaning of our terms consists in; and since "in philosophy we analyze *our* thoughts,"⁴⁴ these regularities are ones open to *our* view of ourselves and not for theoretical psychology to discover.

Ramsey's conception of philosophical method depends on an idea of the *given* that he shares with Berkeley, who said that we cannot be wrong in what we take to be regularities within our own thought. To grasp the similarities and differences of whatever passes within our minds, nothing more is needed, according to Berkeley, than an attentive perception directed towards our own mental life.⁴⁵

Let me make clear what I am suggesting by turning briefly to a different case. Before Hylas was confronted with Philonous, he explained to himself the distinction between real things and chimeras by the mythology of ‘matter’, but what is he supposed to do afterwards? He is supposed to turn his attention to what is open to his own view, and what he cannot be mistaken about: the patterns within his mental life, and the ways in which his expectations of further patterns are shaped by what he experiences. *There* he will be able to see what is involved in the distinction between real things and chimeras.

Ramsey's account of philosophical method is not Berkeley's; he does not recommend that we try to consider the items of our mental life “bare and naked,” keeping out of our thoughts the words united with them by constant use. But his picture of what is directly available to us in our philosophical thought is close to Berkeley's. Like Berkeley, he rejects a conception of what it is for the meaning of a term to be fixed, a conception that leads to philosophical ‘realism’, but what is there left then for a genuinely realistic account of meaning to look to? Ramsey takes it that we can explain how we use the terms and sentences of our language by considering what is given in mental life, the graspable characteristics and relations of the items in it; and so, in our example, the distinction between the rules we follow in causal reasoning and our suddenly starting to generalize in a totally unhinged way must lie in psychological laws we know to cover our behavior. These are explanations we can only administer to ourselves, and Ramsey comes closest to Berkeley when he makes clear that if we are thinking of other people's minds we have not got *facts* as we do when we consider our own, but only *theories*.⁴⁶ That means that our philosophical explanations of the terms we use, got by attention to our own use, can be of interest to others only so far as they, making use of their theories, are given hints towards what they can establish through attention to their own thought.

I tried to show earlier that Ramsey's claim that we have knowledge of the psychological laws of our methods of inductive reasoning was empty, and I want now to connect that with the remark that Wittgenstein put immediately after the remark, against Ramsey, about it being not empiricism but nevertheless realism that was the hardest thing.

You do not yourself understand any more of the rule than you can explain.⁴⁷

“Explain” there means explain to someone else, in the ordinary course of things, as when you tell him what you are doing, e.g., in

developing a series, or when you explain how you are using a word. Ramsey thinks that in such cases, our minds work essentially according to what he calls "general rules or habits,"⁴⁸ if we are not proceeding in some merely random way, there is a causal regularity which we ourselves must be able to grasp. I want now to suggest that we can see, in the account he gives of what we mean by an unknown causal law, the way empiricism fails to be realistic.

Ramsey takes us to understand, or to be capable of understanding, *more* than we could in the ordinary sense explain: the *unrealism* lies there. He wants a realistic understanding, to be got by attention to honest facts and honest regularities, attention to something that is there for us to observe. He construes our experience using language, our experience reasoning about the world, as taking place for each of us in a realm open to our observation, containing the honest facts and regularities we need. That he thinks he knows them itself reflects his idea of what kind of understanding philosophy seeks: that is where the fantasy lies.

What I have said certainly does not *demonstrate* that Ramsey's method is not genuinely that of the realistic spirit. I shall not try to prove it, but shall instead ask: If someone were to object to empiricism, in something like the way I have done, that it does not achieve the realism it tries for, what on earth could he have in mind as realistic? What, after all, it might be asked, does Wittgenstein himself do? Does he not simply replace the empiricist's conception of the given with a different idea of the given? Does he not take as the given what goes on in a community's shared social life and customs, where their language is taken to be part of that? And if he simply substitutes what goes on in their social life—as the given—for what goes on in one's own mental life, why should *that* be taken to be more realistic?—What has come to the surface here is the problem I had been postponing, about whether there was any significant difference between what, on Wittgenstein's view (if I am correct), counts as realism and verificationism in its various forms.

Remarks like ". . . the given is—so one could say—forms of life"⁴⁹ have been taken to show that Wittgenstein's dispute with the classical empiricists and their descendants is over what we should understand to be the given, that in terms of which philosophical clarification can proceed. And Wittgenstein's actual methods have also contributed to such a view. That is to say, the attention he gives to what we actually do has been taken to mean that the facts of what we actually do have for him the role that the facts of our mental life have for Ramsey: we should be able to see by attention to such facts what we mean by the terms giving rise to philosophical difficulties.

But the unrealism to which Wittgenstein was trying to draw our attention was not that of failing to see what the given really is, or ought to be for us in our philosophical thinking. The unrealism was in the questions we were asking. We ask philosophical questions about our concepts in the grip of an unrealistic conception of what knowing about them would be. Let me take a short passage from *Remarks on the Foundation of Mathematics* as an illustration of these points.

I can train someone in a *uniform* activity. E.g. in drawing a line like this with a pencil on paper:

- • - • - • - • - • - • - • - • -

Now I ask myself, what is it that I want him to do, then? The answer is: He is always to go on as I have shewn him. And what do I really mean by: he is always to go on in that way? The best answer to this that I can give myself, is an example like the one I have just given.

I would use this example to shew him but also to shew myself, what I mean by uniform.

We talk and act. That is already presupposed in everything that I am saying.⁵⁰

An enormous amount of Wittgenstein's philosophy is there in that passage—if we can only see it properly. In particular, let us ask what the point is of saying that the best answer one can give oneself to "What do I really mean by: he is always to go on in that way?" is an example of a perfectly ordinary sort. For there are very different answers that we might think that we want, and might think that we should be able to get. One sort of answer would indeed be Ramsey's, and it is a natural answer to give if we think of ourselves as empiricists rejecting philosophical 'realism'. Essential to an answer in Ramsey's style is the idea that we are in a position to explain to *ourselves* what it is that we want him to do (we know the psychological laws of our own rule-governed behavior), but can only give *him* examples which will, we hope, cause him to behave similarly. Wittgenstein, in the passage quoted, clearly means to exclude any answer like Ramsey's which implies that we know what we mean by uniformity in a way which goes beyond the explanations we can offer another.

But it might be thought that Wittgenstein himself tells us something like this. One cannot indicate to oneself what it is one means by "he is always to go on in that way" by pointing inwardly. It is *public agreement* which constitutes something as going on *that way*. If within the community in which the teaching goes on it is natural to

continue in a certain way from the example I gave, and if he then does go on in the way the community accepts, his behavior has the uniformity I wanted to teach him. This understanding of Wittgenstein goes a certain distance then with Ramsey: in philosophy we analyze *our* thought. But in such an analysis we look not inwards but towards what the community does.

In reaching such a view of what Wittgenstein holds, philosophers go against the remark about the best answer I can give myself. I want to show (a) that that misreading of Wittgenstein involves unrealism, in the sense in which I have been using that term, (b) what is meant by saying that realism is "the hardest thing" and—very briefly then—(c) why it is not akin to verificationism.

We reach such a reading of Wittgenstein in something like the following way. We say: he teaches us that someone, given just the same examples as were used in teaching, might go on in quite other ways, and yet take himself to be going on in the same way, understanding differently what those examples show. If I recognise that possibility, I cannot explain to myself what I mean by "he is to go on in that way" simply by examples which I know might be taken in a variety of ways. Suppose I draw an initial segment of the line, continue it a bit further, then again, and then again. Each continuation I have made stands in any number of describable relations to what was already drawn; there is no such thing as *the* relation which each stands in to what is already there. I cannot then explain the particular uniformity I have in mind by saying that further continuations should stand in the same relation to what goes before them as *that* relation in which the continuations I made stand to what went before them. Someone who knew only that there is *some* relation which all the continuations he had been shown stood in to what went before, and such that his continuations should stand in *that* relation to what went before *them*, would not yet know what he was to do. My own understanding of what I want him to do cannot then be represented merely by examples of the sort that might be used in teaching, if Wittgenstein is right about how examples may be taken. And it is at this point that we take Wittgenstein as providing, implicitly at any rate, an account of what constitutes going on in a particular way in terms of communal agreement. (This description is based in part on Christopher Peacocke's argument about a related but slightly different case).⁵¹

When Wittgenstein says that the best answer I can give myself to "What do I really mean by: he is to go on in that way?" is an example, he does not mean that although it is the best answer I can give myself in the ordinary way, philosophy can give a better answer, a proper account of what is meant by: he is to go on in a particular way. He

means that the inclination to think that there is some better answer philosophy can give is confused. It is the mouse and the rags again. The best answer we can give ourselves is—this is Wittgenstein's point—one we cannot imagine is an answer at all. What we are concerned with here is his notion of what the real difficulty is in philosophy.

To develop the comparison between *this* case and the mouse-and-rags cases I considered earlier, recall the distinction between real things and chimeras as Berkeley discusses it. Philosophers, Berkeley thinks, are unable to believe that our distinction can be understood by looking at our ways of *using* "real" in some cases of sense perception and not in others (the 'rags') because by "real" they mean (so they would say) something whose existence is wholly independent of appearances to us. They think that they mean something by *that*. In fact the basis of the discriminations we make among sensible appearances—these of real things, those not—is the needs we, active beings, have to form expectations and plans. As philosophers, though, we take those discriminations to reflect beliefs that some of the appearances are and others are not caused in certain ways by things not themselves appearing directly to us; the appearances are merely manifestations of something *else*. So we have then a link between the ignoring of the 'rags', the thinking that they are irrelevant to our *philosophical* needs—and the idea that in our thought about the real we mean something totally independent of what has actually to be watched out for in human life-with-perceptions.

To go back now to the present case: explaining what I mean by "he is always to go on in that way." I want to explain it—and I do not want, do not think I want, something that would in fact, *does* in fact, *do* to explain to someone how to go on. I know—we may imagine—that I showed someone how to continue performing some uniform activity; I gave him a few examples, he did something, and I was satisfied.—Those are the rags. If I think that no mouse—no satisfactory account, no elucidation, of what I mean by his always going on in that way—can come from them, that is because I take it that a specification of what I really mean picks it out, not as might be for another human being, but in a sense absolutely, from *the* possibilities. If I need to explain something to another person, it is true that *certain* possibilities may need to be ruled out; certain ambiguities will create problems in certain circumstances. There might at some time be a question whether someone is to continue this — • — • in this way — • — • — — — • or in this — • — • — — — — •. But the idea of a philosophical account of what I really mean by "he is always to go on in that way" is of an account addressed to someone on whose uptake,

on whose responses, we are not at all depending.—Or again I might show you why, in some particular case, I had criticized someone for *not* continuing correctly. I might give you the examples I had given him, and then show you what he did: I can give you *that* sort of explanation. But in philosophy I want to know what really justifies any claim I might make that he went wrong. I want something different from anything I might actually give you to justify my remarks in particular circumstances. I want to know what his going wrong really consisted in. *How* was the determination of what I meant him to do such that what he then went on to do was excluded?

The questions that we ask are in fact verbal elaborations of ordinary questions, to which we reject, as inadequate, ordinary answers, in the belief that we are asking something that passes those answers by. An adequate elucidation of what I meant by “he is always to go on in that way” must pick out something in the realm of things-that-might-possibly-be-meant: not possibly-in-human-practice but in some other sense, not dependent on what goes on in our lives. The fact that someone very different from us might take the explanation by examples differently is read as an indication of what there is, absolutely speaking, in the space of things-that-I-might-possibly-mean, so that an adequate account, adequate to represent what I mean, must make plain that those possibilities are excluded. What I do with examples, what I do in explaining, may be essential in making manifest what I mean, but the explanation of what I mean cannot be given by examples, because they cannot adequately represent my relation to what is possible.

Realism in philosophy, the hardest thing, is open-eyedly giving up the quest for such an elucidation, the demand that a philosophical account of what I mean make clear how it is fixed, out of all the possible continuations, out of some real semantic space, *which* I mean. Open-eyedly: that is, not just stopping, but with an understanding of the quest as dependent on fantasy. The purpose of Wittgenstein’s drawing attention to the use of examples is to let us see there, in that use, “explaining what I mean” *at work*, in order that we can see that in philosophy it idles, and that we can learn to recognize the characteristic forms of such philosophical ‘idling’. The demands we make for philosophical explanations come, seem to come, from a position in which we are as it were looking down onto the relation between ourselves and some reality, some kind of fact or real possibility. We think that we mean something by our questions about it. Our questions are formed from notions of ordinary life, but the ways we usually ask and answer questions, our practices, our interests, the forms our reasoning and inquiries take, look from such a position to be the

'rags'. Our own linguistic constructions, cut free from the constraints of their ordinary functioning, take us in: the characteristic form of the illusion is precisely of philosophy as an area of inquiry, in the sense in which we are familiar with it.

One remaining point, about verificationism. *Given* the demand that a philosophical account of what I mean make clear how it is fixed, out of all the possible continuations, *which* I mean, it is indeed natural to read Wittgenstein as saying that communal agreement, or whatever is the natural continuation for members of the community, fixes it. Communal agreement on what counts as continuing in a particular way justifies, underlies, any claims that someone has gone wrong. This reading makes his view analogous in significant ways to verificationism: he shows us that what we mean when we indicate to someone how to go on *comes down really* to facts of some unproblematic sort. The given (on this interpretation) is patterns of communal response; in terms of these patterns of response we can explain philosophically what it is for there to be a correct continuation of some regular activity, and what justifies calling other continuations incorrect. But the hardness of realism is in not asking the questions; and then we shall not see Wittgenstein answering them either.

What about realism in moral philosophy? Might one say: "Not utilitarianism but still realism in moral philosophy, that is the hardest thing." It seems to me a question worth asking.⁵²

Notes

1. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (ed. G.H. von Wright, R. Rhees, G.E.M. Anscombe) (Oxford, 1978), p. 325.
2. I am grateful to Hilary Putnam for pointing out that the paper could be seen as such a reply. It was not written with that intention; I became familiar with Kripke's interpretation of Wittgenstein only after work on the paper was completed. I discuss Kripke's interpretation of Wittgenstein in "Rules: Looking in the Right Place," in D.Z. Phillips and Peter Winch, eds., *Wittgenstein: Attention to Particulars* (Basingstoke, Hampshire, 1989), pp. 12–34.
3. Saul A. Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (Oxford, 1982); Saul A. Kripke, "Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language" in I. Block (ed.), *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (Oxford, 1981).
4. See Frank O'Connor, Foreword to Nikolai Gogol, *Dead Souls* (New York, 1961), p. ix.
5. Ludwig Wittgenstein, op. cit., pp. 201–2.
6. Ibid., p. 202.
7. F.P. Ramsey, *The Foundations of Mathematics* (ed. R.B. Braithwaite) (Totowa, N.J., 1965), pp. 197–8; cf. also pp. 191–6.
8. "General Propositions and Causality" in F.P. Ramsey, ibid., pp. 237–55.
9. Ibid., p. 252.
10. Ibid., p. 238.

11. *The Works of George Berkeley* (ed. A.A. Luce and T.E. Jessop) (Edinburgh, 1948–57), Vol. II, p. 262.
12. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford, 1958), §103.
13. George Berkeley, *Works*, Vol. II, 210–11.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 211, 227.
15. Ludwig Wittgenstein, op. cit., p. 178.
16. Bertrand Russell, ‘The Philosophy of Logical Atomism,’ in Robert C. Marsh (ed.), *Logic and Knowledge* (London and New York, 1956), pp. 221–2.
17. Cf. Rush Rhees, ‘The Philosophy of Wittgenstein,’ in Rhees, *Discussions of Wittgenstein* (London, 1970), p. 52.
18. George Orwell, ‘Charles Dickens,’ in Orwell, *A Collection of Essays* (Garden City, N.Y., 1954), pp. 59–60.
19. George Berkeley, op. cit., p. 235.
20. *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* (ed. Charles Hartshorne, Paul Weiss, Arthur W. Burks) (Cambridge, Mass., 1931–58), 5.93–5.101. Cf. also 6.98–6.100.
21. Cf. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §426.
22. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.93–5.101. On Peirce’s realism, see Susan Haack, ‘Pragmatism and Ontology: Peirce and James.’
23. George Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge*, 54, *Works*, Vol. II, p. 64.
24. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §260.
25. *The Little Flowers of St. Francis* (Baltimore, 1959), chapter 45, p. 125.
26. *Ibid.*, chapter 34, p. 103.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 175–6.
28. See Brian Stock, *TLS* February 1977, p. 224; Hippolyte Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints* (New York, 1962), chapter 1; Paul Maurice Clogan (ed.), *Medievalia et Humanistica*, New Series, Number 6, 1975, preface.
29. Hippolyte Delehaye, *ibid.*, pp. xviii–xix.
30. The story is recounted by J.T. Fowler, in his edition of Adamnán’s *Life of Columcille*, quoted in William W. Heist, ‘Irish Saints’ Lives, Romance and Cultural History,’ in Paul Maurice Clogan, op. cit., p. 38.
31. William W. Heist, *ibid.*, p. 26; cf. also Nora K. Chadwick, *The Age of the Saints in the Early Celtic Church* (London 1961), p. 156.
32. See Hippolyte Delehaye, op. cit., chapter V.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 179.
34. Cf. Bertrand Russell, *An Enquiry into Meaning and Truth* (London, 1940), p. 15.
35. For Berkeley’s general views on misunderstandings about language, see the Introduction to *The Principles of Human Knowledge*, *Works*, Vol. II, pp. 36–8, *Alciphron*, Seventh Dialogue, *Works*, Vol. III, pp. 291–3. For the discussion of force, see *Alciphron*, Seventh Dialogue, pp. 293–5.
36. George Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, *Works*, Vol. II, p. 238.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 246.
38. George Berkeley, *Alciphron*, Fourth Dialogue, *Works*, Vol. III, pp. 154–6.
39. F.P. Ramsey, *The Foundations of Mathematics*, p. 267.
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 240–5.
41. *Ibid.*, pp. 244–5.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 252.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 252–4.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 266.
45. George Berkeley, Introduction to *The Principles of Human Knowledge*, *Works*, Vol. II, p. 39.

46. F.P. Ramsey, *op. cit.*, p. 266.
47. *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (Oxford, 1978), p. 325.
48. F.P. Ramsey, *op. cit.*, p. 194; cf. also pp. 195–6.
49. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 226.
50. pp. 320–1. The passage precedes by a few pages the remark about realism from which I began.
51. Christopher Peacocke, “Reply [to Gordon Baker]: Rule Following: The Nature of Wittgenstein’s Arguments,” Steven M. Holtzman and Christopher M. Leich (eds.), in *Wittgenstein, To Follow a Rule* (London, 1981), pp. 91–2.
52. I am indebted to Hidé Ishiguro and to A.D. Woozley for comments on an earlier version of this paper.