The Practice of Philosophy

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A picture *held us captive. And we couldn't get outside it, for it lay in our language, and language seemed only to repeat it to us inexorably.*[1]

Introduction

In this paper, I aim to do two things. First, I outline a reading of a key part of Wittgenstein's critique of philosophy in the *Philosophical Investigations* (*PI*). Second, I shall try to show how, despite this critique, Wittgenstein also gives us the tools to understand how the practice of philosophy might nonetheless have a positive use in our lives.

I begin by introducing Wittgenstein's understanding of "language-games". With this in mind, I then turn to section 47 of *PI*, in which Wittgenstein imagines a discussion with the philosopher who is attempting to ask about "the simple constituent parts of which reality is composed." I show that Wittgenstein's objection to the philosopher's question is that, in attempting to speak "absolutely", they are failing to recognize that words only make sense within the context of particular language-games, and that it is these games that determine the meaning of words. I argue that Wittgenstein sees the philosopher as trying to change language by 'purifying' it, and he

[1] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 115

considers this attempt to be misconceived because it involves a misunderstanding of how language works.

Having established this reading of Wittgenstein's critique of philosophy, I then raise a puzzle. Wittgenstein allows that language-games (and thus language generally) can evolve over time. And we see that the philosopher, according to Wittgenstein, is trying (and failing) to change language. Indeed, Wittgenstein insists that "philosophy must not interfere in any way with the actual use of language ... it leaves everything as it is" (*PI* 124). But why must this be so? Couldn't the practice of philosophy itself affect the way language and language-games change and evolve over time?

I argue that it can and does do this. What we learn from Wittgenstein's critique is that philosophy does not change language in the way that it had hoped to. However, the practice of philosophy—the making of philosophical arguments, and the discussions of these arguments that philosophers take part in—changes language by giving us new "pictures" to work with in making sense of our world.

Language-games

In order to understand Wittgenstein's critique of philosophy, we must first understand how Wittgenstein thinks of language, and for this we must establish an understanding of Wittgenstein's term 'language-game'. For Wittgenstein, the concept of a language-game functions to highlight particular ways in which language is used, and how the use of language relates to particular practices. As he puts it, "The word 'language-*game*' is used here to emphasize the fact that the *speaking* of

language is part of an activity, or a form of life" (*PI* 23). Wittgenstein goes on to give some examples of different language-games:

> Giving orders, and acting on them -
>
> Describing an object by its appearance, or by its measurements -
>
> Constructing an object from a description (a drawing) -
>
> Reporting an event -
>
> Speculating about the event -
>
> Forming and testing a hypothesis -
>
> Presenting the results of an experiment in tables and diagrams -
>
> Making up a story; and reading one -
>
> Acting in a play -
>
> Singing rounds -
>
> Guessing riddles -
>
> Cracking a joke; telling one -
>
> Solving a problem in applied arithmetic -
>
> Translating from one language into another -
>
> Requesting, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying. (*PI* 23)

Let us consider two of these different language-games together. First, 'reporting on an event'. The way in which one uses words while reporting, and the way in which another understands those words, is intertwined with the practice of reporting. Now add 'acting in a play'. Not only is what we say when we're reporting (doing the activity of reporting) likely to be different from what we say in other scenarios, such as acting in a play, but also the *same* words have different uses between the

scenarios. Compare a real reporter to someone acting as a reporter in a play. If we have in each sentence: "the killer is on the loose", we should expect very different reactions from an audience to the report and the acted out report. The first will, in all likelihood, inspire great fear and panic, the locking of doors, the implementation of a curfew. The second, while it might inspire great fear, would plainly not elicit the same reaction of imminent danger, for obvious reasons: there is not in fact a killer on the loose. The second may even garner laughs, if the play was comedic; we could imagine the main character being falsely accused of murder in a comedy of errors, in which case "the killer is on the loose" will seem farcical. In any case, in each, "the killer is on the loose" is being used in a different way.

Along with that usage comes the practices associated with that usage; could a reporter decide, live on the air, to simply act, as though in a play, that a killer were on the loose? No; although we might want to call this an experiment, we would not consider it acting in a play. If the reporter tried to claim that they were acting in a play when they made no break from their normal reporting to say that "a killer is on the loose", we would respond with "no you weren't; how could that have possibly been a play?" The reason we would respond in this way is because none of the practices of acting a play were in place; simply saying that one is talking in a certain way does not make it so unless the practices go along with it.

What all of this shows is that what words mean in a given scenario is inextricably tied to how we use our words, and the broader practices that surround our speech. This is, however, not to imply that our usages of words can't change. Wittgenstein writes in section 23 of the great diversity of language-games, but also that "this diversity is not fixed, given once and for all; but new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become forgotten".

This is to say that language-games do in fact change, and the possibility of this change will become important later in this paper. While maybe not likely in our world that we would ever possibly call the practice of the reporter "acting" as though a killer were on the loose "acting in a play", we can imagine a world where that might be the case; nothing precludes the possibility. We may here ask the question: what would be the conditions under which we would no longer object to the reporter who claims that his announcement about the killer was him "acting in a play"? Since it is the practices that we engage in that change our usage of our terms, we could imagine a world where it is very normal for reporters to do this once a day, and that it follows a tradition going back thousands of years to where the theatre included random improvisations over the course of the day. This world might look very different from ours or it might not - but what would be different is that the people's responses wouldn't be the same, because their practices involving reporting and acting are importantly different from ours.

In this section I have tried to establish a working understanding of what Wittgenstein means by 'language-game', as well as explaining Wittgenstein's claim that language-games are not fixed once and for all but can change over time. Having established these points, we may turn to Wittgenstein's critique of philosophy.

A Critique of Philosophy

In this section I am going to argue that Wittgenstein thinks that the problem with philosophy is that the philosopher is trying to speak "absolutely". I will explain what this means with reference to the account of language-games that I have just given. Consider the following parts of section 47 of *PI*:

> But what are the simple constituent parts of which reality is composed? - What are the simple constituent parts of a chair? - The pieces of wood from which it is assembled? Or the molecules, or the atoms? - "Simple" means: not composite. And here the point is: in what sense ' composite'? It makes no sense at all to speak absolutely of the 'simple parts of a chair'.
>
> […]
>
> If I tell someone without any further explanation, "what I see before me now is composite", he will legitimately ask, "what do you mean by 'composite'? For there are all sorts of things it may mean!" - The question "is what you see composite?" makes good sense if it is already established what kind of compositeness - that is, which particular use of this word - is in question.
>
> […]
>
> - Asking "is this object composite?" *outside* a particular game is like what a boy once did when he had to say whether the verbs in certain sentences were in the active or passive voice, and who racked his brains over the question whether the verb "to sleep", for example, meant something active or passive.
>
> We use the word "composite" (and therefore the word "simple") in an enormous number of different and differently related ways.

The passage begins with a voice asking, in the voice of a philosopher, "what are the simple constituent parts of which reality is composed?" Another voice[2] tries replacing this with another question: "what are the simple constituent parts of a chair? We are then given a few possibilities, such as "the pieces of wood from which it is assembled? Or the molecules, or the atoms"? For Wittgenstein, there is a confusion here as to what is meant by simple, how it is to be understood and used. As we saw above in the case of "the killer is on the loose", the meaning of words varies depending on their context, and this is true of the term "simple" that the philosopher is using in their question: "We use the word 'composite' (and therefore the word 'simple') in an enormous number of different and differently related ways." What the philosopher is trying to do here is ask a question that attempts to remove "simple" from its everyday usage (the usage in the variety of language-games we play in our lives). This is what Wittgenstein means when he explains that it makes no sense to speak "absolutely" about "the simple constituent parts of a chair" (and thus also it makes no sense for the philosopher to ask about the "simple constituent parts of which reality is composed"). The philosopher attempts to speak "absolutely" when they try to speak "*outside* a particular game". But outside of a language-game there would be nothing upon which one might understand the terms of the question.

To illustrate the philosopher's confusion, Wittgenstein draws an analogy to a child who is asked whether "verbs in certain sentences were in the active or passive voice," and who then "racked his brain over the question whether the verb 'to sleep', for example, meant something active or

[2] It is not clear whether or not this voice is distinct from the one asking the question. Wittgenstein uses dashes in multiple ways, and even though I here read this as clearly intending another voice, as an em dash would not otherwise fit in the context, the reason for the different voices is not altogether clear; I take it to be simply another voice at the dinner table, so to speak, under the same spell of language as the questioner Wittgenstein is rejecting, as he clearly rejects these answers *qua* absolute.

passive". What this analogy is intended to bring out is that we understand words in their usage, in their contexts; when we take a word like an infinitive verb and ask whether its passive or active it clearly makes no sense as it hasn't been conjugated. Similarly, in philosophy, we can fall into this pitfall as well, thinking that we can say what 'simple' or 'composite' mean, outside of the contexts that make these words meaningful, and thus thinking that we can ask and answer questions that will allow us to gain some absolute, metaphysical, knowledge about the way the world is.

Wittgenstein ends passage 47 with a parallel question to that of the chair: "To the *philosophical* question "Is the visual image of this tree composite, and what are its constituent parts?" the correct answer is: "That depends on what you understand by 'composite'." (And that, of course, is not an answer to, but a rejection of, the question)". Wittgenstein here rejects the question on the terms just established: there is no way to understand "composite" outside of some particular context that would give it meaning, and so philosophy's assumption that there could be an answer to this question (and, more fundamentally, to assume that this question is legitimate on its own absolute terms) is misguided. Because the 'correct answer' to questions that attempt to speak "*outside* a particular game" is really a rejection of the question, Wittgenstein is indicating that we need to ground our terms in language-games, and that the philosopher thinks that they can do that. So, Wittgenstein's critique of philosophy here is a critique of philosophy's attempt to speak in an absolute manner, ignoring the role of language-games in making our speech meaningful.

In attempting to speak absolutely, the philosopher hopes to give their own philosophical speech a special kind of authority or priority over other more ordinary uses of language. Wittgenstein points towards this feature of philosophy in section 100:

> "Still, it isn't a game at all, if there is some vagueness in the rules." But is it really not a game, then? - "Well, perhaps you'll call it a game, but at any rate it isn't a perfect game." This means: then it has been contaminated, and what I am interested in now is what it was that was contaminated. - But I want to say: we misunderstand the role played by the ideal in our language. That is to say: we too would call it a game. Only we are dazzled by the ideal, and therefore fail to see the actual application of the word "game" clearly."

Here two voices are talking about our use of the term 'game'. We may see the first voice as attempting, in the mode of a philosopher, to give an "absolute" account of what 'game' means. This voice rejects the idea that something can be a game if its rules aren't sharply defined. In doing so, this voice also proposes that all uses of the word "game" have a common thread between them, namely here that all games have sharply defined rules. When confronted by the voice I take Wittgenstein to be occupying (the voice that rejects philosophical lines of thought via pointing out the everyday use of words in other ways, here "game"), the philosophical voice narrows in and says "it is not a perfect game". Here, the philosopher is attempting to claim a special authority for their philosophical mode of talking; theirs is the absolute meaning of the term, and by contrast other uses are contaminated and not pure.

The idea that one could, on philosophical grounds, sanction off some uses of the term "game" as "contaminated" or otherwise off, is itself a philosophic claim of the same coin from which it gained authority. The grounds were that language was being used wrongly - because of a failure found by doing philosophy - which implies that uses of language can be shown to be wrong on philosophical grounds. The philosopher claims to have discovered by means of philosophical

argument that "game" has one, absolute, definition, which has priority over the other more ordinary uses, which they can then consider inaccurate. In this way, the philosopher understands themself as in a position to be able to change language in a certain way, namely by purifying it. The philosopher considers themself to have found the absolutely right definition of a term that all rational people will accept

Notice that Wittgenstein says that what the philosopher is doing here is misunderstanding "the role played by the ideal in our language". What Wittgenstein is referencing here is the fact that we *can* meaningfully speak in ways that resemble the philosopher's attempts to speak 'absolutely'. Wittgenstein gives us an example of a way of speaking that mirrors philosophical ways of speaking in absolute ways which does not encounter the same problems that philosophy runs into: a use that we make when we talk in 'ideal' terms in relation to machines (*PI* 193).

As Linda Zerilli puts it in *The Machine as Symbol*:

> "One is not inclined to speak of a perfectly hard machine, whose every movement is determined in advance, that is, when one speaks about real machines, that is, the ones with which one interacts in daily life, and whose parts can break, bend, or melt under certain empirical conditions [...] Here Wittgenstein finds himself wanting to say: "the working of the mathematical machine is only the picture of the working of the machine" (Zerilli, 137)

It is clear that the ways in which we use diagrams of machines, the mathematical and pictorial machines which use idealized forms of machines with which we can calculate infinite rotations of gears or belts do not cause the same kinds of problems in engineering as Wittgenstein understands idealized questions as causing in philosophy. This is because when we make claims about how

machines work using these mathematical and pictorial machines, the use of these pictures is understood as idealized; they are used in particular circumstances. We do not take these pictures to be the end-all-be-all of what it is to be a machine. Rather, they have a recognized use.

> "We talk as if these parts could only move in this way, as if they could not do anything else. Is this how it is? Do we forget the possibility of their bending, breaking off, melting, and so on? *Yes*; in many cases we don't think of that at all. We use a machine, or a picture of a machine, as a symbol of a particular mode of operation ... we are inclined to compare the future movements of the machines in their definiteness to objects which have been lying in a drawer and which we now take out. - But we don't say this kind of thing when it is a matter of predicting the actual behaviour of a machine. Then we'd not in general forget the possibility of a distortion of the parts and so on. - We do talk like that, however, when we are wondering at the way we can use a machine as a symbol of some way of moving - since it can, after all, also move quite differently ... it is quite true: the movement of the machine *qua* symbol is predetermined in a different way from how the movement of any given actual machine is" (*PI* 193).

When we talk about machines *qua* symbol, we in fact understand that what we are doing belongs to a particular language-game that we do not claim has absolute bearing on what machines really do - we are aware of our uses of language in the case of machines. By contrast, in philosophy,

> We want to say that there can't be any vagueness in logic. The idea now absorbs us that the ideal '*must*' occur in reality. At the same time, one doesn't as yet see *how* it occurs there, and

> doesn't understand the nature of this "must". We think the ideal must be in reality; for we think we already see it there. (*PI* 101)

This passage (which comes immediately after the conversation about the meaning of "game", which I discussed above) highlights the way in which the philosopher supposes that they are giving an account of how things really stand in the world. But actually, their theories and definitions (their ideas and ideals) do not describe an absolute reality (just as the machine as symbol does not). Ideals don't uncover any hidden rules about the way our world is. As a result, philosophy does not have the authority and power it thinks it has to change language through a process of clarifying the meaning of terms.

In this section, I have given an account of Wittgenstein's critique of philosophy. I argued that Wittgenstein thinks that the problem with philosophy is that the philosopher attempts to speak 'absolutely', i.e. by removing her terms from any of the particular contexts or 'language-games' that could give these terms meaning. As such, her philosophical questions (and the answers that different philosophers give to those questions) do not really make sense. I connected Wittgenstein's critique of the philosopher's attempt to speak 'absolutely' to the claim that the philosopher thinks that their idealized or purified uses of language reflect something idealized that they sees in reality. Because the philosopher thinks that they are describing reality as it truly is, they thinks that they can offer the authoritative meaning of the particular terms they use. We have seen that Wittgenstein thinks that this is not the case, and that they are mistaken to think that they can change language in this way. However, we also saw that Wittgenstein contrasts philosophy's idealized speech with another kind of speech, namely the use of machines as symbols. In this latter use of language, we make use of

'ideals', and speak in ways that may sound 'absolute', but here we understand the nature of what we are up to, and we also understand the limitations of this kind of speech. Later in the paper, I will turn to this parallel case in order to show how we can use Wittgensteinian insights in order to offer a rehabilitation for philosophy and philosophical modes of speech as things that can have a use.

The Practice of Philosophy

So far, I have offered a reading of Wittgenstein's critique of philosophy. I will now introduce a puzzle that arises out of this critique. Recall Wittgenstein's emphasis on the ability for language to change, as previously evidenced in our depiction of language-games and in passage 23: "and this diversity is not fixed, given once and for all; but new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become forgotten". Wittgenstein also draws upon the idea that philosophy may often be thought of as an attempt to change language as we use it: "we become dissatisfied with what were ordinarily called "sentences", "words", "signs"". However Wittgenstein also insists that philosophy cannot change language at all: "philosophy must not interfere in any way with the actual use of language ... it leaves everything as it is" (124). So we are left with the following situation: on the one hand, Wittgenstein accepts the idea that language changes, and notes philosophy's interest in changing language; on the other hand, Wittgenstein seems to totally reject

the idea that philosophy changes anything. This poses a puzzle for us: if philosophy does not change language, despite all its effort, what *does* change language?

I will argue that, contrary to (what seems to be) Wittgenstein's own claim above, we have actually been given reason to suppose that the practice of philosophy can and does change language. It is just that it does not change it in the way that it conceives itself as doing so. Philosophy's aim is to change language by speaking 'absolutely', using a pure, uncontaminated mode of language with which we can make assertions about the nature of reality that are true without qualification, and in which the terms used have their one true meaning, a meaning that can be separated from any particular domain of usage. However, we should take into account that philosophy itself can be considered as a 'domain of language usage'. That is, we can see philosophy as one more language-game that interacts with other language-games, and through doing so can cause changes within language as a whole.

To make my argument, I will first give a general account of the relationship between changes in particular language-games and changes in language as a whole. I will then explore several parts of *PI* in which Wittgenstein connects the practice of philosophy to metaphors of sight and pictures. I will argue that although philosophy (and especially particular philosophical positions) can lead to us being "held captive" by a particular "picture", the practice of doing philosophy can also serve to help us break free from particular pictures, and furthermore can give us new "pictures" that will enable us to see and understand the world in new ways.

I will now give an account of the relationship between changes in particular language-games and changes in language as a whole. While it's true that all acts of language (speech, writing, and others) have particular usages that are understood relative to various practices and forms of life that

we then come to call language-games (consider again the relation of the practices involved in reporting versus acting as they relate to language), Wittgenstein also says that language-games stand to language as objects of comparison: "Our clear and simple language-games are not preliminary studies for a future regimentation of language - as it were, first approximations, ignoring friction and air resistance. Rather, the language-games stand there as *objects of comparison* which, through similarities and dissimilarities, are meant to throw light on features of our language" (130). When we think about changes taking place within language-games, this suggests that we are changing some self-contained unit, necessarily separated from other language-games in being its own particular game. But in reality, changes in particular language-games creates a ripple (or a tidal wave) in the deep interconnectedness of a kind of ocean of language. Putting the changes into the framework of particular language-games gives us a way to talk about what these changes are in a simpler way: they serve as objects of comparison with which we compare our actual, infinitely complex usages of language.

Here, Wittgenstein's likening of language to a city may be of help: "Our language can be regarded as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, of houses with extensions from various periods, and all this surrounded by a multitude of new suburbs with straight and regular streets and uniform houses" (18). If we keep with this analogy, we could think of a change in language-games as adding a new house to this city and then speaking in various ways about the house, such as that it allowed a family to move in, or now their neighbor's view is blocked, or that its construction added X amount of money to the city' economy by increasing the land value and thus the taxes paid on that lot. When we think of a change in language, however, this change seems to correspond in the city example to have to do with *all* the changes to the city heralded by

this new house - speaking about the changes in population, quality of life, or economy are what allow us to speak of these changes, but they anyway don't capture what we feel is a potentially infinitely complicated and unending (but not infinitely large) change in the practices that go on in the city - the building blocks of what make up the *city itself* have changed.

Philosophy as Seeing

In this section I draw out Wittgenstein's usage of the language of images, pictures, and seeing in relation to philosophy. I do not want to claim in any way that philosophy is only pictures, but that the ways in which we understand both philosophy and pictures are similar under Wittgenstein's understanding of how we interpret and speak about the world.

Let us first consider one of Wittgenstein's direct comments on philosophy:

> "Philosophy puts everything in before us" (126)

And consider as well three other remarks that seem to be addressed to the philosopher (including to Wittgenstein himself in his earlier work in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*):

> "We think we already see [the ideal] there" (101)
>
> "The idea is like a pair of glasses" (103)
>
> "A picture held us captive" (115)

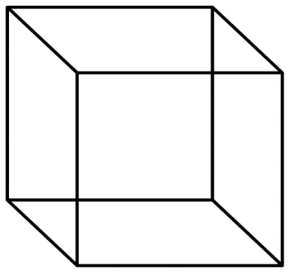
We may make an observation here that will also be of the utmost importance; all of these comments advance understanding philosophy as related to seeing. I will now try to explain the connection between the critique of philosophy developed earlier in this paper about philosophy speaking in

absolute terms, and pictures/seeing. To do so, I will draw on Wittgenstein's discussion of the Jastrow 'duck-rabbit' image, and a related discussion about a diagram of a box.

Wittgenstein, beginning in passage 118 of the Philosophy of Psychology portion of *PI*, distinguishes between "the 'continuous seeing' of an aspect and an aspect's 'lighting up'" in reference to the famous duck-rabbit head. Jastrow's duck-rabbit works by having three typical interpretations, with two being primary, and the third secondary. When one is confronted by the image and asked what one sees, one (most often) says either: "I see a duck" or "I see a rabbit" - the two primary interpretations. Wittenstein here wants to distinguish between "continuous seeing", wherein we just see our interpretation (as Wittgenstein puts it: "the picture might have been shown me, without my ever seeing in it anything but a rabbit"), and an aspect "lighting up" that allows us to see another interpretation of the same image, as when we see the duck continuously until, suddenly, we are able to see the rabbit. The third typical interpretation is then seeing the image as a duck-rabbit, rather than either only a duck or a rabbit. This third interpretation, however, is not a sublimation of the two other interpretations via a synthesis which would allow for seeing each aspect continuously. Rather, this is itself an interpretation like any other. In not seeing just one interpretation, they don't see one aspect light up, and as such, they miss out on that vision of the duck-rabbit as *either* a rabbit, or a duck.

Similarly, Wittgenstein says:

> One could imagine the illustration



> appearing in several places in a book, a textbook for instance. In the accompanying text, something different is in question every time: here a glass cube, there an upturned open box, there a wire frame of that shape, there three boards forming a solid angle. Each time the text supplies the interpretation of the illustration.
>
> But we can also *see* the illustration now as one thing, now as another. - So we interpret it, and *see* it as we *interpret* it.
>
> When we take a single object, like here the drawing inserted into the passage, and then we look at it; in the case of a textbook, the text captioning the image gives us something to interpret the image by. We can imagine a number of different interpretations of the same image, such as a wireframe or an open box. (ibid., 116)

When we take the picture of the box provided, in calling it a box, we are already supplying an interpretation. As Wittgenstein says, it may be a wireframe, or three boards coming to form an angle, neither of which is a box. What Wittgenstein is drawing out here is, however, that what we actually see is itself an interpretation. To help highlight this idea, we may think of the paintings of Giuseppe Arcimboldo. Arcimboldo's paintings operate in a similar way to pointillism - we can easily see, especially from a distance, that they are portraits of people, but upon closer inspection (less close

than inspection than needed in pointillism to distinguish the dots) we can see that the people are made out of fruits, vegetables, flowers, bowls. If we only see the paintings in a glance, we would really just see a person. If asked what the painting was of, we would likely want to say: "it was a portrait". When we actually look at the painting it will clearly be of those fruits and vegetables, but we can just as easily see that it was supposed to look like a portrait, and may very well be a portrait, just a very different one from what one might have thought the portrait understood from the glance to be like. What this example shows us is that what we want to say something is that we are seeing is in fact our interpretation.

With the duck-rabbit we see one aspect of it at a time - seeing it as a duck-rabbit does nothing to change this as one is then seeing it as a duck-rabbit and neither solely as a duck or a rabbit. Similarly, with the illustration in the textbook, "we interpret it, and see it as we interpret it" (116) when we see it as a box, or a wireframe. In each case, what we see as the picture is emphasized. However, we must note an important difference between *seeing* and *seeing-as*.

Consider someone who has not ever seen, or heard of, the Jastrow duck-rabbit. When asked what they see, they would simply report that they see a duck. To them, the picture is just a duck, while we who know more about the image may say they *see it as* a duck. They themselves wouldn't say they see it "as" something. The person doesn't have any reason to qualify their report of their perception.

However, this changes as the aspect of the rabbit lights up for the person. When this happens, the things that were understood in the picture of the duck *qua* picture of a duck that had to (must) be its bill suddenly are what have to be the ears of the rabbit. In the seeing of the aspect, to be sure, the ears of the rabbit must be seen as the ears of a rabbit. But the position that the viewer is

in has changed in an important way: he now also understands that the picture he sees is something that it makes sense to speak of in terms of seeing it *as* something. This amounts to a thought like: "I see these parts as ears of a rabbit, and while I understand that these don't have to be seen as rabbits ears in all cases, that is how they appear to me right now". There is here the idea that "these parts" are not only a rabbit but also must be understood as interpretable as both a rabbit and a duck.

It is tempting to think that once we have seen the aspect of the Jastrow image change from duck to rabbit, and understood the way that it can be both, we have gained an understanding of what the image 'really' is. But what if someone said they saw it as an upside-down foot with a mole, two toes, and an odd tumor on the heel? Now, what we had taken to be an understanding of the plural nature of the Jastrow duck-rabbit as being a duck, a rabbit, and a duck-rabbit, has completely changed. What has happened is that we have had our picture shaken in the same way that the person first encountering the duck-rabbit has their picture shaken.

I want to suggest that this is the structure of philosophical problems generally: when we argue about philosophical ideas, we are able to dispense with what had to have been a wrong picture of the world, and then we assert our own picture as something that will not run into the same problems. Once again, we think that *now* we are in a position to speak absolutely, and give the one true theory of how things are. But when this happens, we have just gotten locked into another picture, and as a result we will turn out to be shocked that we have gotten it wrong in a similar manner to the person who thought he had the Jastrow image fully figured out. What philosophy here amounts to is getting locked into one specific picture of the world, and thinking that one has the correct picture that all must recognize. And we can see how this echoes the critique of the philosopher as trying to speak absolutely.

However, what the example of the Jastrow image suggests is this: although philosophy's attempt to speak absolutely about how things are fails on its own terms, still these attempts do end up changing language in a similar manner to my novel interpretation of the Jastrow image. The practice of philosophy produces new pictures, new ways of speaking about and of seeing the world. This should not be surprising, since philosophy is itself a mode of using language. The problem with philosophy is that it misunderstands what it is up to, *not* that it cannot change anything.

The aspect of the foot simply lights up for me in a flash; although I went out of my way to find another interpretation of the image, I didn't know what I was looking for would look like or be until I suddenly could say that I see the image as a foot - and even if I had endeavored to see it as a foot, I didn't have the impression of seeing it as a foot, how the parts of the image would come together in being a foot, until it struck me. And I anyway would want to say that in looking for the foot, I may have been struck by the lighting up of an airplane in the image - nothing precludes this possibility.

I want to claim that this same process happens in philosophy. Our impression of the world strikes us with the same clarity as visual impressions ('like a pair of glasses') like the interpretations of the duck-rabbit do. These pictures aren't made by doing philosophy, but, as Wittgenstein said, "philosophy just puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything" (126): in philosophy we describe the world as we understand the way it *must* be. Let us consider Hegel[3], who saw world events as part of a grand scheme coming to a head (*Geist* coming to understand itself). While we may criticize Hegel under the terms of Wittgenstein's general critique of philosophy in trying to assert an absolute picture of the world that one must recognize as being true, I would here

[3] This use of Hegel is in no way meant to be taken as the beginning of a discussion of the details of Hegel's philosophy, but merely a helpful illustration

like to draw attention to the practice of this philosophy, the actual writing of this picture down. My claim is that while philosophy fails to change language on the terms it understands itself in, of finding the way something must be, the description the philosopher provides of their interpretation of the world *does* change language, insofar as that the practice of philosophy is a part of language and the picture provided is a new one that we can speak of.

We may take these philosophic pictures and put them to use as "objects of comparison", which we may put to use in our language, in our practices, to see and say and do new things.

Philosophy, Again

What we have before us now is the following: Wittgenstein's critique of philosophy as attempting to speak in absolute ways, along with his comment that philosophy must leave everything as it is, seemed to mean that philosophy had no potential positive productive element to it, and that the use of philosophy was purely therapeutic; however, Wittgenstein gives us reason to believe that we can affect language through our various practices and actions, of which philosophy seems to be of one kind. This left us with a puzzle: how can philosophy change nothing, while it is itself an activity which Wittgenstein allows may change language? The answer lay in distinguishing between its self-conception of its task as necessitating one single response to a philosophical argument and the actual lived activity of doing philosophy, or (as we might put it), the distinction between 'philosophy' and the 'practice of philosophy'. From Wittgenstein's discussion of seeing, we gained an understanding of the way in which we cannot escape having a particular conception of the world, but also of the plurality of conceptions and creation of new ways of seeing and then speaking about

certain things. This parallels philosophy which offers 'ways of seeing' (this is one way of speaking about philosophy that helps illustrate this point, however, philosophy is in no way beholden to pictures in the Philosophical Investigations, but we are held to be unable to escape having particular conceptions, which are *like* pictures). The task now is to say what this means for philosophy, as a discipline.

I would like to keep the language of the parallel between philosophy and seeing for my purposes; although philosophy need not be limited to being pictures of the world, we may speak about it as though it were and then move on again at a different time and speak about it in a different way while still having gained something from the parallel. It is also simply helpful in its ease.

Having established that philosophy itself cannot change our language, but our practice of philosophy can, we are left with a problem: what are we to make of our previous great commitment to philosophical problems? It may now seem that philosophical problems are just frivolous, since they do not in fact allow us to uncover true metaphysical reality. What's the point in the practice of philosophy if I can't get done what I had originally wanted to get done, despite all my effort?

There are several possible answers to these questions, but *one* which I will propose is that we come to treat philosophy as a game. This is not to say that it can't be serious, for games can be serious (chess). Games can have serious, deep, feelings involved that do invoke a sense of commitment for one's position (chess). But what thinking of philosophy as a game may allow us to do is see the ways in which philosophy doesn't have to have its previous self-conception in order to be worth doing in the first place. This also goes for the idea that one may propose here that philosophy is an art: that philosophy is as much about its reception as a novel is; as in the case of

machines and ideals, it's about how its read and put to use, not its intention to be absolute. The point is here to break the use of "philosophy" out of the dogmatic chains we had held it in: that philosophy *must* do this because that is what "philosophy" *is*; to be a philosopher I *must* do this because that is what "philosophy" *means*.

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