

An Antidote to Use

—From Semantics to Human Rights and Back

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I unpack the contents of the motto that “meaning is use” in fivefold fashion and point to the elements it contains, which are open to an ideological exploitation, the main reason for its strong appeal among intellectual circles. I indicate how the sense of it, “where there is use, there there is meaning”, has encouraged *egalitarian* accounts of meaning and truth (In this case, of truth as coherence). I then present and discuss Austin’s distinction between the Sentence and the Statement, which entails the presence of meaning *preceding* the use, and directing it, and offer a new proof that Sentences are impossible to eliminate in any semantic scheme of things. Austin’s distinction, as explained and defended, refutes the contention that “meaning is (just) use”. I proceed to his doctrine of Locution and Illocution, reflecting the previous, indicating by a series of examples, that illocutionary varieties, which are varieties but not *variances* (i.e. semantic mutations), can never extend beyond the se-mantic scope generically contained in the original, locutionary content; that is to say, the Sentence. Those that do, and they are several, violate the rules of sense. I enumerate his vast differences with Wittgenstein, and proceed to *defend* Austin’s noted conservatism against the novelties endorsed by the former and his disciples. Charging Wittgenstein’s private language attack as *circular*, I conclude by marking their further contrast on the actual foundations of meaning and truth.

Keywords: Austin; Meaning; Use; (The Contrast between) Sentence & Statement; Linguistic Conservatism; Speech Acts; Locution; Illocution; Perlocution; Realism

On One’s Preferred Epistemology

To a man such as John Austin it should be no surprise that history has been somewhat unfair. His philosophy never had what it takes to secure for itself a lasting fame in the eyes of the wider public. By contrast, Wittgenstein’s philosophy is not only as alive today as it ever was among the specialists, which could (marginally) also be said about Austin. But it has in addition attracted the vivid interest of nonspecialists, thus perpetually gaining in popularity. And were it not for Alan Sokal’s prank on his philosophical descendants, the cultural relativists, somewhat slowing down the rituals of worship, it would probably reign supreme, eliminating all reservation and opposition, as it has been known to do ever since its first public appearance. Sokal’s trick, operating on many levels, could also operate in the direction of explaining why the semantics of Austin (or, indeed, those of the logical positivists or, even, those of the *Tractatus*) remain notoriously inconspicuous since the sixties or early seventies and why the semantics of the *Investigations* is still regarded by most as something of a bible. Fame is often as

ill deserved, when gained, as it were deserved, when not. And, I would imagine, Sokal’s reply to this inequity, as witnessed by his actions, would be to point to Ideology. The epistemology and the semantics which are most likely to be popular, he’d say, are the ones which are the most readily susceptible to an ideological extension or, which is the same thing, to an ideological exploitation. Later Wittgenstein’s were. Austin’s were not.

The same phenomenon may be detected in the domain of the philosophy of science. People with gaps in their philosophical education too evident to miss, such as Th. Kuhn and P. K. Feyerabend, rose to prominence “not due to their philosophical doctrines but due to their *sociological* doctrines” (Katz, 1978: p. 364) Is it an accident here, that the most popular philosophy of science ever, is at the same time the one most pliant to social theorizing? And the one hardly to be distinguished from the discipline now called “sociology of science”,¹ hence one that should not even belong to the field proper?

When Kuhn and Feyerabend name later Wittgenstein as their source of inspiration, “there’s method in’t”. Kuhnian Paradigms and Feyerabend’s semantic discontinuities both result in incommensurability between competing scientific viewpoints, and thus, in effect, to the conclusion that no *objective* choice can be made between them, since they are essentially incomparable. Conflicting paradigms cannot even be said to be alternative reconstructions of a single reality. Similar symptoms have been attributed to Wittgenstein’s language games. And even were it to be allowed, that doctrines such as these matched the needs of social theorizing through coincidence alone, possibly never intended in this way by their creators, that their unprecedented success was a like product will no longer convince any one.

¹Alongside the discipline called “sociology of science” there is also available the related discipline called “sociology of knowledge”, both a must in Sociology departments and pretty close to a must in most Philosophy departments already. But then science is an *activity*, i.e. ultimately something that people do, of which the sociology is therefore a reasonable study. Yet knowledge is a *state*, of which therefore the sociology is a trifle more radical and daring than that. For it openly implies that *knowing* something is not enough. Its “sociology” is also required, invariably resulting in the suspicion that it wasn’t knowledge to begin with, if it *needs* a sociological account of its acquisition. And this goes a long way, longer than the sociology of science, to be sure.

Before Sokal's intervention we might have thought that the sweeping popularity of such doctrines was due to philosophical merit alone, to the general conviction that they by far surpassed their rivals in clarity, consistency, precision, scope, explanatory wealth and what have you. Now we know better. Now we know that their success was just the product of fanaticism.

Since Sokal's experiment demonstrated conclusively² that faith rather than reason was what really lay behind one's scoring high in the philosophical charts of our times, demonstrating by the same token what correlatively lay behind the continually waning interest of the public in philosophers such as Austin; since, that is, the standard of preference exercised was proven to be purely ideological in both cases, the favourite as well as the underdog, the route seems to be open for reassessing just what it was that went right with Wittgenstein and wrong with Austin, which perhaps shouldn't have, for either of them. That is to say, what specific element present in the philosophy of one man, and absent in that of the other, was responsible for the appeal that one of them exerted and the other failed to. Now Austin and Wittgenstein were far, far more unlike each other than has already been officially recognized and that they really are unlike, it certainly has (Warnock, 1969: p. 11; Urmson, 1969: p. 32). In time I will show how unlike. They held opposite views on meaning, truth,³ criteria, definitions, invariance, descriptivism, context-dependence, inner life and, finally, realism. In a word, the lot.

So it is not an easy matter to isolate the key factor, the catalyst, as it were, that provoked the crowd's enthusiasm for Wittgenstein's later philosophy and their condescension, to say the least, for Austin's. But what did the trick, I would say, was their differences over the relation between Meaning and Use. Austin's Speech Act Theory flatly contradicts the unfortunate slogan that "the meaning of a word is its use" (or, briefly, that "meaning is use") and the general disinterest, or distrust, for Austin's philosophy among certain intellectual circles lies precisely within his resolute reluctance to identify the two. But then, how exactly does the concept of Use lend itself to ideological exploitation more readily than other concepts of semantics might? This is my theory: The slogan "the meaning of a word is its use" actually harbours within it at least five possible interpretations (or senses), only a few of which are ideologically profitable, either in isolation or in the way they blend together. Here they are:

Sense (1): To know the meaning of a word is to know its use

²Briefly, Sokal's manoeuvre was this: He wrote a false paper, titled "Transgressing Boundaries", where he laid down all pieces of intentional rubbish that he could think of, concluding on their basis that contemporary science fully bears out all the claims of cultural relativists, contextualists, subjectivists and the like. He submitted it to a journal he counted on to bite the bait, called *Social Text*, the journal fell for it and the paper was published in 1996. Then he published his real views in another journal, the *Literary Magazine*, exposing, in effect, not just the first journal as such but, indeed, an entire philosophical establishment together with it (See Longino, 1997: pp. 119-120).

³For Wittgenstein truth is (I gather) "the right move in the game". For Austin, characteristically, it is what it always has been for all of us unsophisticated simpletons: correspondence with the facts. (See his "Truth" but, more especially, its follow up contra Strawson, "Unfair To Facts", which leave little room for doubt).

⁴I am constantly baffled by all those who regard Wittgenstein's later philosophy as conservative (if only it were, so far as I'm concerned). The evidence in favour of conceptual inconstancy in it is overwhelming in comparison. I will tackle this issue in the right place, because Austin *is* a conservative and he differs from him even in this.

(... how to use it).

Sense (2): The meaning of a word is its use-*S*.

Sense (3): There is no *more* to meaning than use.

Sense (4): It is not meaning that determines the use, but *use* that determines the meaning.

Sense (5): *If there is use, then there is meaning.*

Now to comments. Sense (1) is the obvious, if not indeed the trivial, sense of the motto: To know the meaning of a word *is* to know how to use it, no question about it. This is definitely *not* the sense intended by Wittgenstein himself, if for no other reason, then simply because in this unprocessed form it is indiscriminately accepted by any semantic theory available, that of the *Tractatus* itself no less (Baker, 1986: p. 207). In plain words, there is hardly a second opinion as far as this Sense of the motto goes. However, although this was not Wittgenstein's actual sense, it went a long way in promoting its popularity and, indeed, its acceptance even among the neutrals. As Findlay points out the use of "use" characteristic of the later writings of Wittgenstein is utterly remote from the humdrum and ordinary, and has won its way into the acceptance of philosophers largely because it has *seemed* to have the clearness and the forwardness of the ordinary use (Findlay, 1976: p. 118; italics in the original).

This is a helpful point on many scores. Not only does it set the record straight on several issues but, in addition, it forces out the suspicion, how truly unlike, namely, how *unclassical* Wittgenstein's semantics of the later period is, when compared with other standard forms available (Baker, 1986, pp. 203-205), including Austin's. Sense (1) of the motto is therefore classical and we must look for nonclassical senses instead.

Sense (2) is certainly far less classical than (1). Classical semantics had naturally assumed that the meaning of a word is *the* meaning of that word (the *Tractatus* playing a key role in this tendency, which is not to say that the *Tractatus* was itself a classical theory). It is now one of the central themes of the *Investigations* to undermine this conviction, namely, that there is a *single* meaning attached to a word, as it putatively results from its (latent or overt) definition. In other words, Sense (2) is the sense connected with "family resemblances". The actual use(s) of a word are observed to go way beyond the barriers raised by its claimed definition, even in the cases where there *is* such a definition to begin with (Which fact Wittgenstein disputes at any rate [See 1978: p. 25]). For example, the use of the word "democracy" in the Soviet Union, where there was only a single party to vote for, should have been drastically excluded by the available definition. However, to a semantic *descriptivist* (as good a time to introduce the term as any), who is committed to recording *actual* use as it occurs without being "judgemental" about it, this use is as legitimate as that of the use in countries with more than one party to vote for (and more than one paper to read).

In this way comes about the correlative doctrine of Meaning *Variance*, alias, the so-called "extension of a predicate", if the more innocent looking, qua more technical, term be preferred. This, in other, and more unpretentious terms, is the doctrine that meaning changes, the immediate consequence of family resemblances⁴ (or absence of definitions). Yet a reminder to descriptivism at this point. Insofar as plain description of people's linguistic practices go, the descriptivist cannot afford to say that *meanings* change. For actually meanings do not change by themselves. It is people, who change them, actual people, if descriptivist standards are adopted, and, I might add, not always changed with the purest of intentions. Returning to

the word “democracy” once again, is it accurate to say here that the meaning of the *word* has changed, as if by its own devices, or that certain people have *seen* it (by force) and for reasons too obvious, and too dishonest, to deserve a comment? If so, then semantic change could well be due to fraud or propaganda (Midgley, 1974: p. 233), when not to illiteracy or ineptitude, as when the appropriate word missing from a certain user’s limited vocabulary, is replaced in haste by the closest that comes handy to him.⁵ Hardly a subject worthy of a philosopher’s attention in either of these cases. Meaning-variance theorists, without having said so explicitly, blame Meaning for its intrinsic(?) instability, as if the changes it suffers are, somehow, inevitable. Yet if, as it frequently turns out, it is not Meaning as such, but people, who are actually to be blamed for this phenomenon, then change of meaning is not inevitable at all and, in point of fact, on the basis of the previous remarks, it shouldn’t even *be* there, if left alone. Meaning change is contrived. Not essential. This should make some difference to the meaning-variance thesis.

Leaving Sense (3), a blood relative of Sense (4), for later, I will presently concentrate on (4) and its own way of being non-classical. In the interests alone of exhausting all possible senses of the motto, however weird, the following sense eventually suggests itself: “*Use* determines the meaning; not meaning the use”. This would be a sense too scandalous to even contemplate proposing without some outside help or encouragement. But the outside encouragement is not wanting. This thesis actually belongs to D. Bloor (1983: p. 25), stated without any qualms or hesitation, so I am exonerated.

There are clear and specific ways in which this Sense connects with Sense (2). If definitions are out, leaving behind only the vague instructions afforded by family resemblances, then in

⁵This is what Chomsky has called an “ungrammatical use”, namely, an issue of Performance; not one of Competence. The active vocabulary of the average person ranges between 2 - 3000 words, when the English language, with its unending loans from all the other European ones, numbers around 400000! No wonder there will be “family resemblances”, if it all comes to that. For then the average person will have to speak of cases provided for by a vocabulary of 400,000, and therefore cases comparably rich with it in number, by whatever actual expressive means he possesses, i.e. no more than 2000 words for *all* of them. Then, for 200 different cases he will have to use a *single* word, based on whatever fleeting trait is common to all, through sheer ignorance of the total vocabulary of his own language (Austin says almost same thing. [1976: p. 125]). And then the discovery that “family resemblances” is a phenomenon essentially due to illiteracy or poor education would be the anticlimax of the century. It would, in short, be a phenomenon other than those belonging to Philosophy.

⁶Many have argued, and with good reason, that family resemblances result from the use of one and the same word within two or more different language games, the vagueness of the resemblance being *due* to the diversity of the games. My point above, however, shows that the converse procedure is equally available. If a familiar word is now being used “in the dark”, as it were, (e.g. the word “art” for single colour “paintings”) and this catches on with certain people, then consensus to speak thus from now on, has in effect introduced a new language game.

⁷This has also been called the “translational” theory of meaning. I translate my inward picture into verbal symbols, you retranslate them into a picture of your own. If our pictures coincide (which was later to be called a chimera) we have communicated.

⁸Consider all the possible interpretations to which his later views are open: Are language games an instance of strict conformity to rules, or are they the epitome of verbal anarchy as Feyerabend and J. Genova read them? [Genova, 1987: p. 65] Do they combine local linguistic determinism with global linguistic indeterminism? Is or isn’t a language game of evident self-confinement a definite sample of a private language? [Downing, 1972: p. 40] Can vague resemblances really live together with “drawing *boundaries* when we want to” [Wittgenstein, 1968: p. 33e]? For if they can, and we can, why bother with them in the first place?

many, if not indeed in most, of the cases to be encountered by the ill equipped speaker, the latter will have to make a literally *ad hoc* decision, whether or not to apply the concept to the instance, and pronounce the word. If he will, then the theory predicts that he will do so in *terra incognita*, in a literal linguistic vacuum, thus inaugurating a novel use of the word for himself and all the rest that care to follow.⁶ In this particular case, Senses (2) and (4) merge into one: The meaning of a word will be its use-s, since applied far beyond the confines of currently recorded practice, thus adding to the long list of its recipients, which is what family resemblances are all about, namely, Sense (2); and, at the same time, in the said absence of a prior rule to guide the novel use, the use itself is a primitive here, and hence precedes whatever rule, or meaning, is to subsequently, and derivatively, follow from it; that is to say, Sense (4): The use determines the meaning and not conversely. Senses (2) and (4) are birds of a feather.

The Real Appeal behind the “Use”

I finally come to Sense (5), the sense italicized, because of its central position in the plan I’m executing. Given its importance for my case, it deserves separate treatment. For it is primarily Sense (5), “if there is a use, then there *is* a meaning” (no matter what the experts have to say!), which has raised Wittgenstein to the heights of his fame and popularity among subjectivists, relativists, social anthropologists, Marxist contextualists, sociologists of knowledge, Gadamerian hermeneuticists and the like. Namely, all those who do semantics and epistemology with an eye for humanitarianism. For this is the spot where the hitherto suppressed *equalitarian* connotations of the slogan “the meaning is the use” make their entry and take the scene. And the spot where semantics yields its place to human rights.

The widely discussed and highly controversial topic of the so-called “religious language game” is typical of the tendencies prevailing in this last, but not least, frame of the motto. Early Wittgenstein would have flatly rejected any thought of granting the meaningfulness of religious talk, even when cast in the most cautious and unpretentious of terms. There is no picture of God to be furnished, as theists themselves were the first to stress, and to a picture theory of meaning such as that of the *Tractatus*,⁷ that inherent flaw would suffice to brand the linguistic practice in question meaningless, given that God is the central figure of all religion.

Yet observe now the tolerance emanating from the frame of Sense (5), a tolerance that has since given Wittgensteinians tormenting philosophical headaches, dividing them among themselves in two belligerent camps. One side swears that religious talk is as legitimate as any other game on the fundamentals laid down by the *Investigations*, *The Blue and Brown Books* and *On Certainty*, the other side tearing their garments that nothing of the sort ever follows coherently therefrom (Sherry, 1972; Downing, 1972). Regrettably, I must choose the former camp. I have always seen in Wittgenstein’s later period something of a super market, selling goods to please the tastes of everyone.⁸ This, besides, is what semantic descriptivism is all about. It’s there, so it’s valid, no matter *what* it may be.

Hence, on the basis of the motto as delivered via Sense (5), if talk about religion does occur, and if it shares all the outer features of any other form of verbal communication, i.e., consistency in the common use of the lingual terms peculiar to it (e.g. God), such as application, when application is warranted,

and withdrawal, when withdrawal is warranted, if, in a word, its users exhibit a comparable conformity to a finite set of rules, then these users *are* communicating with one another within the frame of the parlance in question and, therefore, what they say to each other *has* a meaning. Whereupon it would simply be arrogant presumption to suppose that their parlance lacks a meaning because it happens to signify nothing to an outside observer, on the basis of whatever other rules of meaning *he* would deem preferable. This, I trust, sums it all up: What has a use *has* a meaning, “and there’s an end on’t”, as Dr. Samuel Johnson would have put it,⁹ which is chapter one of the language-game bible, and, at the same time, a meaning other than the one demanded by the said, fastidious observer. For if this observer charges with meaninglessness something which does have a meaning, he can only be thinking of his *own* rules of meaning. And different rules of meaning designate different languages. Which is chapter two of the language-game bible.

Thus by unfolding Sense (5) of the motto piecemeal, we smoothly arrive at the notion of language games. And since the outside, fastidious observer is rebutted by the remark, that the speakers of that other language only do in its frame what he does in his own, namely, display a comparably rule governed, internally consistent behaviour fully matching and emulating his own, the instrument of his rebuttal turns out to be the appeal to a principle of *equality*. Thus, Sense (5) of the motto leads to equalitarianism as much as it leads to language games, knitting the two together in a bond of kinship, as the sole fountain from which they commonly spring forth. Last chapter of the bible. We began doing semantics and ended up with human rights. (End of story.) It is the age old dream of social anthropology, and its varieties, come true and that, believe it or not, from the lips of a source that was the least expected. So to Wittgenstein’s own responsibilities:

Our mistake is to look for an explanation, where we ought to look at a “proto-phenomenon”. That is, we ought to have said: *this language game is played*. The question is not one of explaining a language game by means of our(!) experience but of *noting* a language game. (1968: p. 167e; all italics except last the author’s).

So note it we will. Notebook entries will henceforth be the arbiter of Meaning (Though why exactly *they* are to be preferred over the negative comments of a sensible critic, flatly dismissed seconds before on a principle of equality, is by no means evident). Note then the following also, for those who still have a mind to do more than note:

Is it wrong for them to consult an oracle(!) and be guided by it? If we call this wrong aren’t we using our language game as a base from which to *combat* theirs? (1977: p. 80e; italics the author’s).

All this, of course, is concisely enveloped within the all embracing wrapping of the dominant thesis:

Philosophy may in no way interfere with the *actual* use of language; it can in the end only describe it. It leaves everything as it is (1968: p. 49e).

⁹“Sir, our will is free and there’s an en on’t” he is reported to have ... argued.

¹⁰Weinstein refers to them by the name of “Marxist Contextualists” [1988: pp. 2-4]. My own essay [Antonopoulos, 1997], mounting as austere a criticism against this trend as a philosopher using words could ever hope to muster (as opposed, that is, to a physicist using deceit), was submitted a year or more before Sokal’s pseudo-paper first appeared and was written in ignorance of it. It made just as much impression to the public, as the words of any philosopher are ever expected to. Less, actually, since those of an unknown one on top of it.

(And just takes notes. Philosophy, if you please). The offspring of such magnanimous tolerance, and the puzzling nature of their dogmas and their practices (until Sokal turned puzzle into certainty), can be witnessed below, in the words of a known champion of the trend, unsuspectingly writing but a handful of years before Sokal’s epoch making exposure and, no doubt, partly provoking it:

Foundationalism is out and there are no “timeless” answers. There are no ahistorical standards of rationality and objectivity. [But this] does not imply that there are no historically determinate reasons which, *relative to a distinct cultural and historical context*, cannot be established to be good reasons for doing one thing rather than another (Nielsen, 1987: p. 5).

This is because:

Criteria for validity and rationality are in the first-order discourse of our distinct language games which in turn are embedded in our forms of life. What is given there are a complex of *social* practices. It is these practices and the first-order discourses which are part of these practices which set our functioning criteria of rationality and validity. There can, Rorty argues, be *no context-independent* criteria for rationality and validity (Nielsen, 1987: p. 9).

Rorty argues and, in other places, Wittgenstein argues. The author simply quotes. So who should I address this comment to? To all three, more like it: If I ask a top class sprinter, why he failed to take part in the Athens Olympics of 2004, where he was sure to win a medal, and he replies, “because I lost my left leg from the hip down in a car accident”, in what precise sense is this a *context-dependent* justification, valid only in some contexts but not in others, or only for some historical periods, but not for others? Would it be any less rational a reply, if given by an athlete of the 450 BC Olympics? And what *is* the “context” here? If context-dependence means having to say “yes” in one context, but not having to say “yes” in another, in what particular context would we say *no* to him? A man with one leg *necessarily* cannot run, not just the 100 meters dash in the Olympics, but merely cross the 20 paces to his own bathroom. What other form of “rationality”, what other form of life, would this be, in whose “context” his reply would not be received as the only possible course of action? And as the only possible reply?

Well, come to think of it, for other forms of life, I’m not all that sure, quite honestly. For they could indeed say anything they pleased. But for other forms of rationality I entertain little doubt nor should the two be joined as one, as the tacit practice of all equalitarians¹⁰ has it. No rational entity would deny this athlete’s reasons as the best of reasons. Explanations of the sort “I did not take part in the crossbow competition because both my hands were severed from the shoulder” are necessary reasons for the action ensuing, and their rationale a *universal truth*. There is no workable, worse, no coherent alternative to them. They are necessary. Contextualists may have spent hours exchanging profound intimations over tea and biscuits on how “all justification is context dependent” (Nielsen, 1987: p. 5), but never actually consent to pinpoint this context in answers such as these: “Can’t you read the bloody sign?” “No; I’m blind”. And, let there be no mistake, it is those justifications alone that really count. If, then, there is a context somewhere, anywhere, where this reply would not be admissible, now is the time to produce it. They must either put up or step down.

Why, then, are intellectuals like Nielsen thus attracted by contexts, games, forms of life, games viewed as *social* practices

(this especially) and all the rest that is relative to them? In the concluding pages of his article we are revealed the secret: He is, in fact, a Marxist (op.cit, 28) (See also 1985). And though perhaps some would feel that this self-contented declaration of ... dependence might be lacking in good taste a trifle more, as it were, than even the rest of his article, it is nevertheless quite valuable in its frankness. Now we know. All that lay behind the worship was another worship.

For its sake Nielsen is now prepared to go to extremes and make concessions, if not indeed sacrifices, which would have seemed unthinkable to a Marxist a few years back. He teams with theologians (of all people) in his search for allies to combat the common enemy, "traditional, perennial philosophy or programmatic analytic philosophy" (Nielsen, 1987: p. 26), that is, philosophy conducted in Austin's way, overcoming his inhibitions of the past (Sherry, 1972: p. 22), as any true relativist should: "If they [philosophers] really think that [that they can do better than theologians], then they must confront Wittgenstein's and Rorty's probing about how anything like that could be possible", he says (Nielsen, 1987: p. 6). Perhaps Nielsen is right, after all. Contradicting Wittgenstein or Rorty takes an awful lot of guts, so laying down their names is the ultimate argument (Other types are missing in this place as much as elsewhere).

"Sir, *this* language game is played, and there's an end on't!", as Dr. Johnson would exclaim in joyous, paternalistic dismissal. But is there "an end on't", were we only reckless enough to battle wits with authority? For in my recklessness I've not yet run out of questions reflecting the methods of this very practice that was a dying creed to Nielsen in those days,¹¹ when still unsuspecting of the storm soon to befall his own. Here is one: Can God, who is omnipotent, create a stone so heavy, that even He cannot lift? If he can, he is not omnipotent. And if he cannot, he is not omnipotent. God and Omnipotence are not moves in my game. They are moves in the theist's. And it is he who defines God by a self-contradictory predicate; that is to say, by none at all.

Here is another.¹² God either cannot stop evil, or He will not. If he cannot, he is not almighty. If he will not, he is not all kind. Omnipotence and Kindness again conflict for the theist in the most embarrassing of ways. In the former case the theist assigns to God a self-contradictory predicate. In the latter, a pair of incompatible predicates, assigned to him simultaneously and for all time. Is this understanding of God, as produced by the theist, *any* understanding of him? Omnipotence, on the one hand, and Omnipotence *cum* Divine Kindness, on the other, are a cornerstone in his system of beliefs. He knows when to say the words, he has studied with extent and profundity their ramifications, he can make himself fully understood by all the other participants in this form of life, when he pronounces them. In short, he is in full command of handling all the relevant, appropriate conventions. But he may yet have no idea whatsoever, what he is really talking about in spite of everything.

This language game *is* played, no question about that. But is the *factual* presence of this language game, *thus* played, sufficient for earning it a place in our "notebooks" of meaning? To a semantic descriptivist, abandoned in the hands of Sense (5), it has to be, if only for plain consistency. And to a contextualist, no less abandoned in its hands because his equalitarian senti-

ments compel him to, it has to even more, if only for the glory of human rights. Thus, note this game we shall. But it can't always be the one side that does all the noting.

What Nielsen has to say about language games viewed as social practices, Feyerabend repeats about language games viewed as science:

Unanimity of opinion may be fitting for the church; a method that encourages variety is also the only method that is compatible with a *humanitarian* outlook [Feyerabend, 1968; all italicized in the original (just in case one missed the point)].

Yet once turning to scientific matters in this connection, it is primarily the element of conceptual *change* that gains prominence, considering that contemporary science is the scenery of nearly all the revolutionary ideas currently available. (The language of theologians and Christians, on the other hand, is nothing of the sort. The latter never introduce incommensurable uses, even if they do introduce uses without substance). Conceptual change results to incommensurability and the latter to Paradigms, which are an instance of the language game idea when extended to science:

The progress of our knowledge may lead to conceptual revisions for which no direct observational reasons are available. The *occurrence* of such changes obviously (!) refutes the contention of some philosophers that the invariance of usage indicates invariance of meaning and the superficiality of all scientific change [Ibid: p. 34].

But it is by no means the superficiality of scientific change, that I am interested in establishing at this point. It is the contrary, in fact, namely, how disturbingly *profound* such change can sometimes be. For ringing the alarm bell, is what I'm currently after. Consider therefore the following passage, belonging to a critic of the view presented:

[This] is very different from the kind of expansion one would get if the universe originated in an explosion into *pre-existing*, empty space. This is because the big bang is an explosion *of* space and time, not an explosion *in* space and time. (Van Flander, 1994: p. 24; italics in the original).

If you're looking for conceptual revision to rock you in your boots, look no further. If the big bang was an explosion *of* space, rather than one *in* space, then space itself exploded into being *no sooner* than the Bang. Therefore the "Bang" cannot have occurred *at* a place. And if it was an explosion *of* time, rather than one *in* time, then time itself exploded into being *no sooner* than the "Bang" also. And therefore the "Bang" cannot have occurred *at* a time either. This, therefore, is an explosion that occurred neither *at* a place nor *at* a time. Nevertheless, it is an explosion and it has, nevertheless, occurred. The scientific term "explosion", Feyerabend would say here, as well as the scientific terms "space" and "time" themselves, have undergone a profound semantic change, when imported in the context of the universe expansion theory. Other than that, all is well. (*This* language game is played.) Regarding, on the other hand, the universe expansion phenomenon *per se*, this is how matters stand, as now presented by a defender of the idea: "In modern cosmology, the universe does not expand in space. It *consists* of expanding space." (Harrison, 1993: p. 30).

If space expands, that is to say, if it grows, space takes up more of *space*, than it previously did. Yet if space has only grown so far as it has, up to now, for it certainly cannot have grown more than it has up to now, there is as yet no space to *be* taken (by ... space!) into which it can expand and grow, unless of course, space is taken as larger than it is. These conceptual

¹¹"There is very little left of the programmatic sort in the tradition". [Op.cit., 2]

¹²Quoted in *The Presumption of Atheism*, by Anth. Flew [1976: p. 81].

revisions are anything but superficial, as Feyerabend worries they'll be received by some philosophers supporting meaning invariance. (His worries are without basis. There are no philosophers supporting meaning invariance.) These conceptual revisions are very much severe indeed. And they rock the very foundations of our thought. Feyerabend, the reformer, however, wholeheartedly welcomes them:

Such criticism silently assumes the principle of meaning invariance, that is, it assumes that the meanings of at least some fundamental terms must remain unchanged in the course of progress of our knowledge. It cannot therefore be accepted as valid (Feyerabend, 1968: p. 38).

But I have voiced no criticisms. I have only unpacked some contents and drawn their necessary conclusions for making it patently evident, *what incommensurability really is*. It is, in addition to the previously noted large scale revisions, also a defense. "Such criticism" says Feyerabend to which I take exception "silently assumes the principle of meaning invariance", and this much I grant I have done. "It cannot therefore be accepted as valid", he continues, in case such criticism were voiced. And why not? Because "the occurrence of such changes" and that occurrence alone "obviously(!) refutes" the invariance of meaning principle. Isn't this obvious? It's there, it's *done*, so it's meaningful. This is semantic descriptivism at the true height of its powers. The *factual* presence of these changes suffices to establish that all physicists who assert, 1) that the 'Bang' *created* space (and therefore cannot have occurred *at* a place), 2) that space must take up more of *itself*, if to grow (and therefore *be* there, before it is), they all know perfectly well, what they are talking about. *This* language game is played.

Well, it is, no question about it. But does it have a meaning because of it? Another physicist, of a different persuasion, may help us understand:

In cosmology lectures by Drs. Edward R. Harrison and William J. Kaufmann, I have heard each say that the galaxies are not moving apart. They are *stationary*. The space between them is expanding. I asked each of them how to do an experiment to *differentiate* between the two possibilities; galaxies moving apart or the space between them expanding. *Neither person could answer and I suspect the question had not previously entered their minds* (Epstein, 1987: p. 970).

Neither could, for neither *knew*. But both knew how to *use* whatever words were there to be used. And there are more participants in this form of life: "The galaxies" *real* motion is in the literal expansion of the space between them" tell us again Odenwald and Fienberg (1993: pp. 31-35). But the galaxies as such have not moved. For if *they* had, only their distance would have grown. Not space. So these other two cannot afford to assert anything, save what they do assert. And of what they do assert, they do not grasp even the rudiments. Therefore, they cannot know what it means. But they do have a use of it, a rule governed use. They can teach their students everything about it; they can discuss it with them afterwards in all desired detail and answer questions, even if only *some* questions; they can do the same with their colleagues; they can publish papers about it (look above), having satisfied their referees, proposing new developments and new applications of it. And yet they do not have the first idea of what it really means, as nor did the other two participants, formerly mentioned.

"After all", Feyerabend contends, "the meaning of every term we use depends upon the theoretical context in which it occurs" (Op.cit.: p. 33). It does not depend on whether or not

the people who use it, actually realize what it means. Theirs is a use, a uniform and rule directed use, *without* a meaning. Hence, there has to be more to meaning than use, or else self contradicting use is irrelevant in deciding, whether or not it is meaningful. Somehow Wittgenstein was able to discern this part at least of an important truth: That there can be a system of communication, manifesting all those requisite properties of a language that were repeatedly referred to, *without* having to mean anything at all.

In short, having established the possibility of such a language, in the form of a specific "game", one has not *eo ipso* established either Sense (3), or (4) or, much less, Sense (5) of the motto "the meaning is the use". Nor that that language has a meaning to its speakers. Theists and cosmologists were shown to have a use for several key terms in their games, yet not a meaning for them, to their own frank admission. So I suppose that the use is not the meaning and there can be the one without the other. I will now turn to Austin's philosophy to corroborate this conclusion.

The Sentence, the Statement, and Sense (3) of the Motto

In what is perhaps the focal point of his entire philosophy, his paper "Truth", Austin lays down the rudiments, and far more than that, of a thorough going separation between Meaning and Use, (whence the "uselessness" of his position to descriptivists, contextualists, relativists and the like), mediated through a distinction of paramount importance. "I say 'this is mine' and you say 'this is mine'" he starts. We have said the same thing. Yet we have also said opposite things. "We use the same *sentence*, to make incompatible *statements*", he explains. "You say 'this is mine' and I say 'this is yours'", he continues. We have used *different* sentences to make the *same* statement, he explains (1976: p. 120). Once this distinction is established, and its foundations warranted, the rest of the route for proving that meaning is distinct from use is merely a matter of correctly unwrapping the package. Austin unwraps it to a considerable extent but does not go all the way. He does stress that it is statements, and not sentences, which are the carriers of truth and falsehood, and he does stress that, as a consequence, sentences are merely *meaningful* (ibid). But he offers no further demonstration of these points, except for the one that is already implied in the deep structure of the distinction itself, which does of course pave the way.

However understandable the implication, we need solid proof. The proof, therefore, that only statements are the carriers of truth and falsehood, and sentences only the carriers of meaning, goes like this: When I claimed that "this is mine" and you claimed the same, we have said incompatible things. But one and the same string of words, "this thing is mine", cannot be incompatible to itself. It is therefore the things we *assert* by it, which are. And since it is those units of speech, that are incompatible, which have opposing truth values, opposite truth values are ascribed only to the things we assert, that is to say, our statements. Not to the sentence *used* in making them.

Apart from being a demonstration of where the ascriptions of truth and falsehood properly belong, the previous argument is also an indirect proof, of where the *meaning* is to properly belong. The semantic elements involved in this speech episode are Meaning, Truth, a Sentence and our Statements. Since the sentence is not permitted to receive the truth values, and since the

statements, which are, are *a fortiori* also meaningful, there is nothing left for the sentence to be ascribed to, if it is not to stay idle in the process, except a meaning. Hence, sentences are meaningful, though only the statements are actually made. And, it goes without saying, it is the statements which set the *context*, that is to say, our disagreement of ownership. Therefore, there is a meaning beyond the use as much as there is one beyond the context.

The direct proof, containing various elements from the former, “truth-falsehood” strategem, has as follows. By virtue of the same, underlying sentence, say the sentence, “this gold coin on the table is mine”, I can perform three distinct speech acts. I can assert, that this gold coin is mine, I can ask, “is this gold coin mine?” or I can wish “were this gold coin mine!”. But all three said uses of the sentence are incompatible to one another in a variety of ways. I cannot be asserting that the coin is mine, when I am asking if it is, nor far less, asserting that it is mine and wishing that it were. Nor, finally, asking if is, when I wish it were. Since, therefore, it cannot be that one and the same string of words, “this gold coin ...& c”, is incompatible to its own self, what is thus incompatible is something *other* than the said string of words itself. Hence, if that string of words has a meaning, *and* if the incompatibility in question is not to be found anywhere in *it*, the incompatibility is to be found in something *other* than it and its meaning. That is to say, in its uses. For if it cannot be incompatible to itself, and if it has a meaning, the incompatibility noted must lie beyond itself and its meaning. That is to say, in its uses from which it was now shown to be distinct.

The foregoing proof, however, has its limitations and does not eliminate the rival alternative. For it works to the extent that there *are* sentences and hence that they have a meaning (which then, of course, is a tautology). Then it can proceed to demonstrate that *all* they have is a meaning. If the premise is disputed, and sentences are either denied an existence altogether, or an existence separate from their uses, which amounts to the same thing, the conclusion will not follow. It is only binding for those who are already committed to the separate existence of sentences. So we must do even better. This will involve a full length utilization of Austin’s distinction, to be introduced at the closing stages of the argument, and an interjection of Sense (3) of the slogan.

Since our statements are incompatible, only one of them can be true, say, mine. I have the titles of propriety of this house and you don’t. So when you were asserting that it was yours, you were saying the wrong thing. The right thing, “this is yours”, was never said. Therefore (trivially) never *used*. Now introduce Sense (3) of the slogan, “there is nothing *more* to meaning, than use”, implying a total meaning-use identity. Then, what is not used, cannot have a meaning. And then, since the right thing to say, “this is yours”, was never used, it cannot have a meaning either. But then, only the thing *said* has a meaning, and that thing was the wrong thing to say. How then, could you *avoid* saying the wrong thing, if only that thing has a meaning, except by saying nothing? Are we to suppose then, that, upon the basis of Sense (3), when something wrong *is* said, it thereby turns out to be the *only* thing that has a meaning, and so (retrodictively) the only thing that could be said, the thing left unsaid, which is the thing that *should* have been said all along, having none? Then how could the right thing ever get to be said? This is a patently absurd conclusion, derived strictly on the basis of Sense (3).

Can this absurdity be avoided without the rejection of Sense (3)? Let’s see. The right thing to say, one might reply, “this is yours”, *was* there to be said, because it has been used in the past in countless similar situations. Hence, on the evidence of its prior *use*, it does have a meaning, and therefore it was equally available to one to say it now, if one wanted to. No absurdity there at all. The difference is, however, *how* it is made available. It is, because it has been used in *similar* situations, those forming a class, and used sufficient times already to form a *model* for further guidance of usage. But this speech situation is *this* speech situation. A concrete temporal particular. To relate it sufficiently with all the other similar particulars, with which it forms a class, you simply have to abstract and rise above all, to whatever is *common* to them. And thus to appeal to an *invariant*. And if *that* is not a Sentence, nothing ever is. Observe Austin’s words:

There must be two sets of conventions: *Descriptive* conventions correlating the words (=sentences) with the *types* of situation, thing, event, &c, to be found in the world. *Demonstrative* conventions correlating the words (=statements) with the *historic* situations, &c., to be found in the world (Austin, 1976: p. 122; his italics).

So any alternative for escaping the said absurdity cannot but introduce a *type* of situation, the type “This Is Yours”, if to at all stand. And the type of situation introduced is not a *historic* situation, demonstratively referred to, for that demonstrative reference, “this is yours”, was actually never made. The difference between types of situations and historic situations is that, though both in their own sense unrepeatably, they are unrepeatably in very different senses. A historic situation is unrepeatably, because it is *that* historic situation, to be set apart from all the similar ones of the type to which it belongs. There can be five million men growing a beard, each capable of asserting, outwardly or inwardly, “I am growing a beard”. These are separate assertions. Each man makes his own assertion just as much as he grows his own beard. They are all distinct. But the *sentence*, “I am growing a beard”, is unrepeatably, because there is nothing *to* repeat. It is but one sentence slicing through all its millions of uses. It is a stereotype.

Notably, this is the exact same analogue with the function of a general name, e.g. “cat”. There is but one general name for accommodating all the cats, abstract enough to accommodate all cats. This is why it is general, referring to a *type* of animal and not to a historic instance of one—an instantiated cat. When I use the name (again), I am using *one* name, the same name, not a new name for every cat. It is exactly the same with “This Is Yours”, the unrealized possibility. It is itself one, while its actual recipients are many. And when One can apply to Many—the element of generality—it attests to the presence of the *sentence* “This Is Yours”, even if its name is not spoken. In importing past, similar uses matching the case, the arguer is importing invariance, a *type* of situation, not the *historic* situation, to which, in fact, the right thing, “this is yours”, was never correlated. He is appealing to a stereotype, not to its current sample. He cannot escape the Sentence. And once the sentence is admitted, and it has a meaning, *all* that it has is a meaning. Sense (3) cannot keep company with the Sentence. Whence

The reason why it is absurd to tell us *not* to attend to the meaning of expressions but to concentrate on their use, is perfectly simple: it is that the notion of use, as it ordinarily exists and is used, *presupposes* the notion of meaning—in its central and *paradigmatic* sense—and that it cannot be used to elucidate

the latter, and much less to replace or to do duty for it (Findlay, 1976: p. 118; first italics the author's).

So, to Sense (5)'s dismay, there *can* be a use without a meaning, as I have already indicated on several occasions, Lewis Epstein seconding the motion. I have shown Sense (3) to be a falsehood, in fact a logical falsehood. Nor could it be anything else, since it is inconsistent with one of the most elementary facts of semantics, the distinction between Sentence and Statement. And when Sense (3) is refuted, so are at least Senses (4) and (5), the former because it is not use, which determines the meaning, but the converse, the latter, because there can be use devoid of meaning-which *is* a use.

Whatever else relates to these Senses which have just been refuted, though I certainly have a quarrel with, is not a quarrel I care to pursue further.¹³ The essentials of my case have been unveiled and the impact, if there, can be worked out on its own. The quarrel that I will pursue, the last remaining in my list of priorities, is the one dictated by my current focus of attention, Use, in the form, however, of *changing* use. For if meaning reduces to use, and use is variant, meaning is variant. However, if, as argued, meaning does not reduce to use, and use *is* variant, then, not only is meaning *in* variant; but, in addition, variance will no longer keep *up* with the meaning. Variance will be meaningless (though variety will not). In short, if Meaning is distinct from Use and Use subject to incommensurability, incommensurable uses *will* be meaningless.

Invariance and Variety: Locution and Illocution

Consider the following four possibilities:

- 1) *George* borrowed the car yesterday (Not John).
- 2) *George borrowed* the car yesterday (He did not steal it).
- 3) George borrowed the *car* yesterday (Not the motorbike).
- 4) George borrowed the car *yesterday* (Not today).

By suitably shifting the emphasis each time I can produce four definitely divergent senses, modeled upon one and the same "paradigmatic material", as Findlay would call it. Senses sufficiently divergent to allow Dretske to call them contrastive (1972: p. 411ff) but still such, as leading him to conclude that, "a contrastive difference between expressions is not itself a *genuine semantical difference*" [422]. My sentiments exactly. There is, to be precise, no difference to be found in their *sentential content*. They are one and all variations of a single sen-

¹³I care not, because it is pointless. "Language games" is a notion peculiar to the philosophy of one man, not a fact of semantics. Even in the places where it seems useful to introduce it, it is still a *postulate* for explaining certain facts, not itself one. It is far too elusive and intangible to be one and I am not compelled to acknowledge its presence, though I might perhaps "note" it. Diverging uses, resemblances, contexts and incommensurability, on the other hand, are authentic linguistic phenomena, as tangible as hot iron and as hazardous to be close to. These therefore do exist, which is not to say that they should. And when both of the latter obtain, one needs to do something about it. But I can do little with ghosts, such as language games. I could suggest that, if there at all, they could perhaps share a family resemblance(!) with our common language. Or that they are just borderline cases between having a language and not having one, given they satisfy criteria from both ends. After all, meaning may be a *quantity*, rather than a quality, as all semanticists presume, and hence such that there *can* be too little or too much of, rather than all of it or nothing. That idea would unite all these issues and throw them into relief.

¹⁴This sentence comprises the whole point I'm trying to make. The rest are but implied deployments of it.

¹⁵Roughly, because, strictly speaking, sentences are not actually uttered by any one. They are just *there*. They are made actual by the inaugural, locutionary act, which occurs at a post-sentential but a pre-assertive stage.

tence.¹⁴ The (invariant), "George borrowed the car yesterday". And they are one and all jointly verifiable by that *same* state of affairs: George borrowed ... & c. What I have done by shifting the emphasis [Austin, 1986, 74], is to produce different, albeit subordinate meanings, out of it by assigning to each of them a particular, varying *force*. An "illocutionary force", as Austin called it. But before illocution there has to come locution, his primitive point of departure:

We first distinguished a group of things we do in saying something, which together we summed up by saying we perform a "locutionary act", which is roughly equivalent to uttering a *sentence* with a certain sense and a certain reference, which again is roughly equivalent to meaning in the *traditional* sense (Austin, 1986: p. 109).

To perform a *locutionary* act, then, is to "roughly"¹⁵ construct a sentence, already made potentially available by the language. (What Chomsky would call "the logical space of possible senses" [Katz, 1979: p. 362]). The locutionary act is the mediating stage between language, the sum total of possible sentences, and "the *use* of language" (Findlay, 1976: p. 116), when the possibles are turned to actuals by particular speakers in particular speech situations. Then, the next stage appears, the *illocutionary* act, which relates the previous, and thereby indirectly the sentence as such, with the specific needs and requirements of the case at hand, that is to say, "the context". For Austin it is essential for verbal communication to be laid out in the open in all its possible, unveiled senses, how the meaning is to be *taken*, otherwise severe misunderstandings may occur.

I hear that my fourteen year old nephew solved a particularly difficult problem of differential calculus. I say to him, "Tom, how *could* you?!" This may be either an expression of admiration or one of disbelief, i.e. of two very different illocutionary *forces*, that may so far commonly attend my utterance. Unless they are untangled, my nephew won't be in a position to know, whether I'm praising or doubting him. But perhaps, as Russell said, we should be able to do better than just discuss "what silly people say to one another". So here is a case of philosophical significance. We are at the front line of cars at the traffic light, and my wife, sitting next to me, tells me: "The light turned green!". The *locutionary* act performed is just that. Namely, that the traffic light has turned green. But the *illocutionary* act performed is, "start the car!". A tremendous difference, by all accounts. The illocutionary content has now departed considerably from the *sentence*, "the light turned green". Yet just how *far* has it departed? If the "totality of the speech situation", as Austin used to call it, is taken into account, containing all additional nonverbal conventions of relevance, in this case the convention that a green light "means" to start the car, we immediately realize that, if communication is to at all occur, namely, if my wife is to also perform a successful *perlocutionary* act, I must *know* what a green light means. Her illocutionary act will be successful, and will get me to start the car, if her locutionary act is *true*. The light *did* turn green. Hence, despite the transitory leap in meaning, the truth conditions joining the parts of the incident are the *same*:

For some years we have been realizing more and more clearly that the occasion of an utterance matters seriously, and that the words used are to *some extent* to be "explained" by the "context" in which they are designed to be or have actually been spoken in a linguistic interchange [...]. Admittedly, we can use "meaning" also with reference to illocutionary force. But I want to *distinguish* meaning and force (Austin, 1986: p. 100;

quotes the author's).

This is because "the act of saying something in the full normal sense I call the performance of a *locutionary* act." (op.cit. 94). It is the performance of a locutionary act which counts, according to Graham, as "saying something in the *central* and *basic* sense of "say", in the sense that a human being can and a parrot or a tape recorder cannot, say something" (1977: p. 87). And, in designing the topography of the entire speech act landscape, "from the three provinces which constitute the domain of meaning" W. Cerf nominates *locution* as the capital (1969: p. 353). The words of Austin, Graham and Cerf combined is all you need for seeing, what meaning is and what *use* is. The words are to *some extent* to be "explained" by the "context" in which they occur, but there's no way that their meaning can be reduced to it. Use is secondary and subordinate, meaning is primary and primitive. Foundations are out, said Nielsen, the ideological version of later Wittgenstein, and there are no timeless answers, the ones that hurt a servant of History the most. Of course there are not, if you don't listen (Or think).

Variations introduced by context or use, in being *side products*, as it were, of meaning in its central, in its "*full, normal sense*",¹⁶ cannot defy their origin in the ways that we have been accustomed to passively register, or "note", after all the methodic conditioning that conceptual reformists have put us through. They have no life of their own:

No other philosopher maintaining that the meaning of a word is its use has explicitly *equated* the use of a sentence with the set of the illocutionary acts that can be performed by it. I offer a number of considerations which indicate strongly that the claim that the theory of illocutionary acts, unsupplemented by semantic information, can be used to explain the meaning of all, or most, words, is *false* (Holdcroft, 1976: p. 169).

Quite. For what all the previous examples and comments unequivocally establish, is that illocutionary deviations *can never transcend the semantic scope generically contained in the original, locutionary content*. That is, ultimately, the sentence. Innovations may only be *compatible* with the nucleus. If not, they will simply produce nonsense. Side products is all they are, and only the descriptivist bias and its motivations (now known), have raised them to the level of *fait accompli*, like the earth quakes in California, that the natives, us(!), must learn to live with. They are variations, not variances, and far less are they the *mutations* that revolutionaries of all persuasions have hailed them to be.

"The progress of our knowledge may lead to conceptual revisions, whose occurrence refutes the invariance of meaning", says Feyerabend. Just like that. But in order to refute it, it must, first, be incompatible with it. And incompatibility between our views does not *eo ipso* entail that it is your side, which will come out victorious. Occurrence *alone* has been proved tragically feeble to the task (As has the author). His descriptivist "justification" that, after all, the meaning of every word we use depends on the context in which it occurs, has been shown false. It is, in point of fact, the other way round. So what remains is the incompatibility just. The refutation actually goes the other way. If aberrant usage is to produce samples that transcend the limits of the primary, locutionary content, and it does, occur-

¹⁶Notice the similarity of this view, as it has been developed from the words of Austin, with Plato's theory of ideas. Sentences are the perennial prototype and illocutionary deviations their temporal (material) copies.

¹⁷I disagree. Family resemblances are not idle, as she claims. They are lethal. Look at what *she* says happened to a concept but a few words below.

rence and "context" alone will hardly suffice to excuse it.

We do, unfortunately, encounter changes of the kind, "I have discovered a forest with out trees!", triumphantly announced by the putative discoverers (see Epstein's two and their "moving by staying put"), and we encounter them more and more as time goes by. It is the thing of the times. And once we dare presume to point out, that there have to be trees, if there ever was a forest, reformers like Feyerabend come around to remind us that, "forest" actually meant "trees" *before* the discovery was made! Now that it has, it has *obviously* changed these meanings. It's *there*, so it has to be right, and who are we to say any different? For "such criticism silently assumes the principle of meaning invariance and cannot therefore be accepted as valid". His reply, presumably, can.

And so we finally come to conservatism or, what is the same thing, the power of criteria. Here D. J. Angluin holds Austin's "mistake" to be the result of a theory which thinks that all language, if discourse is to have any sense—*is criteria governed* [...], at the expense of understanding how we can change the criteria for a thing's being an *S* through argument. Without this understanding, linguistic change seems to be quite inexplicable, not clearly rational, somehow occurring outside language" (1974: p. 60).

Starting from the end, I would think that it is *change*, if anything, which comes from the outside, not the constancy of language, when not externally challenged. Other than that, Angluin's account of Austin's position is certainly very accurate, independently of the author's private perspective, i.e. whether or not this position is a mistake. And, when compared with my own preceding remarks from the beginning of this section, it testifies to the consistency, if to nothing else, of Austin's position, *plus* to its conditional validity, to say the least: If there *are* such things as criteria (if discourse is to have any meaning), then change *will* appear inexplicable, that is, without any rational justification (See Epstein again). So I guess the whole issue hangs over the question, *whether it is criteria, or the changes, that we really cannot do without*. Yet one thing is certain here. Criteria have a natural resistance to change.

Austin's conservatism has been duly spotted by several commentators, sometimes called conceptual, which it is, sometimes linguistic, which it is as well, sometimes critically, sometimes apologetically, though, predictably, never supportively (See Graham, 1977; Pears, 1969: p. 51, respectively). The same conservatism has been at times attributed to Wittgenstein also, but from what little of him I understand, the appellation can only be marginally defensible in his case, and a marginal defense is tantamount to a practical withdrawal; there is hardly a philosophy without *some* element of conservatism. It would be alien, not just novel, if it had none. By contrast, the evidence for conceptual instability in it is abundant. The idea of family resemblances alone, which licenses the extension of a general name, e.g. "art", over empty frames (Lynton, 1980: p. 332) and single colour surfaces (LucieSmith, 1977: p. 86), namely, objects of visibly antithetic constitution, attests to the fact that it not only encourages radical conceptual change as such but, to some people, changes so vast, that they invite chaos and the downfall of worth. Midgley, viewing these resemblances as "an idle¹⁷ concept, if there ever was one", is led to conclude that, by its mediation, "a concept falls to pieces as, indeed, the concept of Art has already done" (1974: pp. 252-253). It is odd to deny that this scheme of things is any other than revolutionary. And when it comes to a comparable behaviour of language games,

Wittgenstein himself is pretty straightforward of their multiplicity in both space and time and, hence, of their incessant flux. [1968, 11e].¹⁸ Shiner compares Wittgenstein to *Heraclitus*. [1974, 191ff] Austin was a conservative, for, at depth, he was a rationalist (or a Platonist). Wittgenstein was not, because he was not.

But one needs to do better, than just pinpoint and count the differences between them. One needs to give a reason, why conservatism should not be dismissed as madness without its share of a fair hearing. So far as I can see, rigid criteria can be threatened by two factors; one, the *factual* occurrence of a meaning change, which I have already dismissed as sufficient, or plain coherent; two, borderline cases, namely, cases of conflicting criteria, such as, say, a *pyrrhean* victory, which comes close to a defeat. There are countless similar cases, where the integrity and the unity of a concept seem to be immediately called into question. For it cannot be that criteria, especially distinguishing criteria, be reliable, and still fail to do their job, right when they should. But this is only illusory.

For were borderline cases to form the standpoint for launching an attack against criteria, a common fallacy, then the borderline case could no longer be *contrasted* to the two other, typical and antithetic, norms at all, with the immediate consequence of eliminating *all three*. For if criteria are abolished, then the class distinction between A and –A, of which this case *is* a borderline, will cease to exist or, at any rate, cease being sharp enough to *have* a border. A will no longer be A nor –A, –A, if their criteria are tampered with. And then the *border* between them will itself evaporate, taking the borderline case with it. Borderline cases are to be contrasted to the typical cases, if to *be* their border-lines, for they have to be told apart from both, as apart, indeed, as “true” and “false” are to be told apart from “neither”. The occasion of a pyrrhean victory will not go to show, that there are no such things as victory and defeat. In short, erase the criteria behind an antithesis and the entire borderline-case argument could not even be stated.

It would therefore at this point be pedantic to enquire, what each man thought of criteria and their overall survival potential.¹⁹ Characteristically, Wittgenstein notoriously denies that criteria can be effectively distinguished from mere *symptoms* (1978: pp. 24–25) and Austin denies *that very* conclusion, remarking that “to say that we only get at the signs or symptoms of anything is to imply that we never get at it” [1976: p. 107; his italics], that we have no safer access to the nature of things. His view on this is that, “when we talk of ‘signs of a storm’ [...] we do *not* mean a storm on top of us” [106; his italics]. To finally stress that “once you know the murderer, you don’t get any more clues”! [ibid] Those who hurry to use him as a footnote to Wittgenstein’s work are simply victims of their own disinterest in him and so of their ignorance of his real views.

On Realism: Conclusion

Wittgenstein’s dismissal of definitions, leaving the speaker

¹⁸Incidentally, he says some strange things there about *sentences* too, [§23], and in §21 some stranger things yet: “that such-and-such is the case” is *not* a sentence in our language, so far it is not a *move*(!) in the language-game”. The best I can make of this, is that he refuses to regard the sentence as something *separate* from a “move” in a game. i.e. a *use*, and if that’s not a vast difference between him and Austin, and truth, I know not what is.

¹⁹This is Baker’s concept of “defeasibility” [1986, 198: p. 221], the ability of criteria to survive their violations and make a perpetual comeback. The victory of Pyrrhus has survived its own for two thousand years now. And will continue doing so indefinitely.

unarmed in all sorts of linguistic limbo he is then likely to encounter, can only mean that each will solve his resulting speech dilemmas on his own devices. Then the coincidence of his solution with that of the others can only be just that; a coincidence. Now definitions, if available, prevent one thing, if they prevent anything. The *private* reaching of a conclusion on how to speak next. Definitions, if there, are *public*. Family resemblances (by definition) private. And Wittgenstein is said to have demolished the idea of a private language altogether. Is this an inconsistency, or a sign of a deeper plan at work? It is, in fact, a little bit of both. The private language attack has been frequently received as the epitome of objectivism, if not indeed of realism, and, certainly, of “cognitivism” (Lear, 1983: p. 39), a view which is as debatable and risky, as the enthusiasm itself with which the “attack” was greeted.

Wittgenstein’s alleged exposure of the “impossibility” of erecting piecemeal a language of one’s own, consistently naming one’s private sensations without cross-reference with common use (but is this not the very thing, which the “resemblances” above *do* imply?), though certainly a rejection of linguistic solipsism, is hardly a celebration of objectivity, much less of realism. It is, in fact, but a sample of *group subjectivism*. In other words, of the *social* formation of our concepts. Hence, though hardly consonant with his contempt for definitions, this notion is certainly subject to the wider plan at work. According to Kripke (as quoted by Shanker).

First, Wittgenstein unleashes a powerful sceptical attack on the concept of rule-following, and, second, that he does so in order to encourage us to adopt an *anti-realist*, “community-view” of rule following (Shanker, 1986: p. 176).

Precisely. The view is anti-realist *because* it is communal, and vice versa. What Wittgenstein’s said assault essentially forbids, is the possibility of one’s *private contact with reality*. “Reality” is a public affair, thus to be accessed only via a (pre-existing) public language and therefore inaccessible to the private speaker twice over. Once, because, if a private language is dismissed, the already existing public language will inevitably mediate between the speaker and his sensations, thus subduing and assimilating them to an already formed linguistic plan; twice, because it is the public use, which will hence dictate his linguistic decisions. It is therefore anything but a mystery, that Bloor comes to see in Wittgenstein a figure “remorseless in stressing the *priority of society over the individual*(!)” [1983: p. 1], a most astonishing result for any semantic theory, if there ever was one, though certainly revealing. And as one that “treated cognition as something that is social in its very essence”. This is the message of Sense (5) in all its untainted glory, the title itself of Bloor’s book paying tribute to it. This is really the place, where epistemology yields in to social heroics.

For my part, I completely fail to be impressed by this celebrated argument. It is, in fact, one of the surest samples of circular reasoning that one could point to. Why, indeed, cannot the private-language owner *do* follow his self-initiated, private rules of speech and meticulously observe them from now on without so much as a single instant of indecision? Without ever losing track of them? He *could*, if a private language *was* possible, couldn’t he? In fact, were one such possible, he would be in perfect position to accomplish each single one of the linguistic feats, which Wittgenstein (circularly) denies him, in the finest of styles. For, if to have a language is *eo ipso* to know how to obey its rules, to have a private language is, *eo ipso*, to

know how to obey *its* rules. Hence, if he cannot privately follow a rule, this is because he cannot have a... private language in the first place! Which is the very point in question. So much, then, for this unduly glorified piece of circularity, and its alleged refutation of the possibility of one's *bare*, uncontaminated confrontation with the facts (the world), as delivered via his own sensations.

Austin, again at odds with Wittgenstein, is quite straightforward both as concerns inner life itself (Weinzeig, 1977: p. 143; Austin, 1950) and the correlative testimony it affords regarding one's direct experience. He firmly holds truth to be correspondence with the facts, "the rather boring yet *satisfactory* relation between words and world" [1976: p. 133], that coherence theories fall short of correspondence ones [130], and that "the world must exhibit similarities and dissimilarities", for otherwise, "there would be nothing to say" [121], the *world* setting the prototypes of our verbal categories. Finally, that "to say that something is a fact *is*, at least in part, to say it is *something in the world*" [158; first italics Austin's]. This, so far as the natural, uncontrived view of matters goes, and when other priorities do not take over:

Knowledge, as much as its next of kin, truth, is a relation between a statement and the world. Not a relation between *ourselves*. I do not require the presence of other men, in order to make sure that the stone, if unsupported, falls to the ground, unless the stone is assumed to behave differently, when *they* are present. If *that's* what common consensus boils down to, it is best ignored. Cross-reference with their own findings is, at best, a form of intersubjective verification, a securing of its public acceptance. Not a generation by *fiat* of what the acceptance is an acceptance *of*. For if that part were absent, no public acceptance or *fiat* of any kind could put it there.

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