**Blind Obedience**
**Paradox and Learning in the Later Wittgenstein**
by Meredith Williams, Routledge, Abington, 2010, pp. 340, £ 70.00
ISBN: 978-0-415-55300-1 (hardback)

*Reviewed by Derek A. McDougall*

Those who are already familiar with the work of Meredith Williams will quickly detect, despite obvious differences of emphasis, the degree to which her new book builds upon her much admired *Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning: Toward a Social Conception of Mind* (Routledge, 1999). Indeed, what is presented within the new work as the basic philosophical problem Wittgenstein is attempting to solve throughout the *Philosophical Investigations*, is already clearly highlighted in the Introduction to the earlier one:

> Wittgenstein's critiques of denotational theories of meaning and the
>
> Cartesian theory of mind identify a single deep philosophical problem -
>
> 'the problem of normative similarity, ' as I call it. It concerns our most
>
> basic judgments of identity and reidentification over time. It emerges
>
> in three forms in Part I of the *Investigations*, giving rise to the three most
>
> discussed passages and arguments in Wittgenstein's work. These are the
>
> semantic role of ostensive definition and so reference more generally; the
>
> interpretation of rules and so rule-following more generally; and finally
>
> the identification of sensations and so consciousness more generally. Seeing
>
> these as forms of the same problem enables us to recognize that Wittgenstein
>
> develops a distinctive new method of argumentation in dealing with them.
>
> (*Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning*, 3.)

The emphasis in the new book is very much on developing what that method of argumentation is. Whilst it almost goes without saying that the consequences of Wittgenstein's work for those nativist theories of rules, concepts, and beliefs with which she is concerned in the earlier Preface, and in the

earlier book generally, remain as important as ever, both her interest in cognitive science (Fodor, Chomsky) and in certain overtly psychological theories (Vygotsky, Schutz) play a far less significant role in the new work. Yet the 'nativist' elements which characterise cognitive science appear under a different guise at the very beginning of the *Philosophical Investigations* with the first appearance of Augustine's child who in § 32 can '*think*, only not yet speak'. The *apparent* effectiveness of ostensive definition for Williams, rests in what she refers to as the 'cognitive capacity' of this novice, who exhibits the uncanny ability to 'grasp that the baptismal object (or property of an object) is the examplar that functions as the standard for correct application of the term uttered' (*Ibid*., 78). Yet the range of properies that can be distinguished by pointing alone is indefinitely large, and although this indeterminacy can be resolved by the introduction of a sortal term (*Ibid*.), this merely serves to illustrate the role of Augustine's child as someone who is already pictured as having a grasp of the different *kinds* of items in the world around him, prior to attaching a *name* or *label* to them.

It is important to recognise that in those ordinary contexts in which linguistic mastery has already been achieved, this kind of talk is quite unproblematic. A biologist discovers a new species of mammal deep in the jungle and decides to attach a name (sortal) to it; or a person experiences a new *kind* of sensation for the first time, one so unusual that he provides it with a label, keeping a note of its recurrence in his diary. As a way of illustrating just how easy it can be to attempt to unwittingly extend this way of talking beyond its normal circumstances of application, the following examples reveal its evident prevalence, even today, in the secondary literature. All of these, incidentally, are responses to what their authors understand to be the point of the 'private language argument', and will assume additional relevance later when discussing Williams on §§ 243 - 315. Firstly, Saul Kripke is puzzled by the importance Wittgenstein attaches to 'public criteria' for the use of sensation terms:

> Readers, my previous self certainly included, have often been inclined
>
> to wonder: 'How can be prove private language impossible? How can I
>
> have any difficulty identifying my own sensations? And if there were a
>
> difficulty, how could 'public' criteria  *help*  me ? I must be in pretty bad

shape if I needed external help to identify my own sensations ! ' (1)

Secondly, here is A.J. Ayer replying to David Pears in a classic final expression of his answer to Wittgenstein's apparent denial that we can 'identify our sensations'. Ayer explains what he means by his 'primary recognition', which incorporates the conceptual resources available to his linguist, but the existence of which he takes Wittgenstein to neglect:

> The recognition consists in treating whatever it may be as an instance
>
> of its kind, as being *'the same'* as a previous specimen which, if no label
>
> has yet been applied to it, may itself be remembered simply as being, in
>
> a more or less shadowy context, the same as *this*. If the kind has been
>
> labelled, the disposition to apply the same label enters into the process
>
> of recognition......(2)

Lastly, here is Scott Soames, making it clear that individuals, prior to any acquaintance with a public language acquired in a social setting, have the 'innate' resources enabling them to adequately identify and re-identify colours in their surroundings:

> Nothing in the *Investigations* rules out the possibility that perception
>
> provides the agent with representational content. We know that
>
> pre-linguistic agents can distinguish different colors.......But if the
>
> agent already has something - a part of his visual system - that
>
> represents things as being red - then it doesn't seem to be a huge
>
> step to suppose that he could introduce something else - a word -
>
> with that same content. (3)

In all three cases, it is simply taken for granted that certain 'conceptual resources' are naturally available to the agent, allowing him to attach a name to an object or sensation in isolation from learning a language in a public context. This leads to an infinite regress. Naming (§ 31) in practice is a highly sophisticated procedure that cannot fix meaning *on its own,* in the absence of 'a great deal of cognitive and contextual stage-setting' (*Ibid.*, 78 *et seq.*)  which must

already be presupposed.

On this assessment, Wittgenstein's view would be that Soames's 'representational content' is not 'ruled out' only insofar as this seems such a *tempting* way for the philosopher to proceed. Wittgenstein is implying, in effect, that what these quoted philosophers are 'tempted to say' is yet another example of something for philosophical *treatment* (§ 255), because what they are claiming *as* philosophers is really parasitic on their prior acquaintance with the public language which they have themselves acquired through the normal process of training central to the account Williams provides of Wittgenstein's methodology. Nevertheless, Wittgenstein is not offering a knockdown *argument* with his implication that it is only because philosophers stare at these abilities in isolation from the normal contexts in which conceptual resources *are* acquired, that they allow themselves to arrive at conclusions of this kind. He is instead looking at things in a new light, *via* a methodology that positively invites a re-examination of the circumstances in which the child *in fact* learns a public language.

But is that all that he is doing ? For if he is merely drawing our attention to the circumstances in which we *in fact* acquire a public language, solely in order to *remind* us that we are deluding ourselves should we become party to the misleading pictures in question, then he is not describing these *facts* in the course of offering any alternative, positive account of language learning of the kind that Williams evidently believes that she can extract from the textual evidence provided by the *Investigations*. Indeed, in reminding us in § 6 of the important role that what he calls 'ostensive teaching' is playing in the process of training that will eventually allow the child to actively participate in the normative practice of speaking a language, he stresses that this role is important 'because it is so with human beings;  not because it could not be imagined otherwise.' Yet what can be *imagined* here could surely involve our considering the child as an individual born with precisely these conceptual resources that he could be understood to bring to his understanding of a public language; and this takes us round in a circle.

Certainly, what Wittgenstein *can* be taken to be indirectly drawing our attention to here is

the important role that what we *imagine* often plays in this particular context, and it is evident that Augustine's child is a classic example of something that we do indeed, and quite unreflectively *imagine* in the course of considering how a child comes to understand a language. Here it would appear that we almost inevitably regard the child as someone who is conceptually aware *prior* to his attaching labels to items of the different kinds he naturally encounters in his environment. Yet it would be difficult not to agree with Williams that the entire point of those early sections of the *Investigations* is to lead us to see that this is no more than a misleading *picture*, and that the notion of *ostensive teaching* is introduced in order to show how this is so easily conflated with *ostensive definition*, something which in practice requires proper linguistic mastery through training as - at least initially - a form of stimulus-response conditioning. Nevertheless, as Williams puts it, in the course of training the 'child's utterance is treated as a full-fledged judgement or request, as it were, by courtesy', as part of a process in which his 'actions are described only in terms of what is correct or incorrect, appropriate or inappropriate' (*Ibid*., 80 *et seq*.), so that those actions, as the child's verbal responses, *become* part of a normative social practice.

In itself, this may not seem in the least contentious, and it has the appearance of a *descriptive* account that captures one important facet of those early sections of the *Investigations*. What may appear much more contentious is the claim Williams makes that *how* we learn, as we are initiated into a practice, is constitutive of *what* we learn (*Ibid*., 21), a genetic thesis that Williams takes to reflect that *blind obedience* forming the title of her book. Here we are to think of the training allowing a child to be initiated into the practice of speaking a language, as providing a background of bedrock skills and judgements 'that constitute the hidden medium in which we engage in our various linguistic activities (*Ibid*.).

To many it will seem even more contentious that on her account, these activities are *essentially* social, although in claiming this there is no suggestion that the now prevalent idea of a born-Crusoe involves some form of *logical* contradiction. There is in fact some evidence that Williams is rather inclined in her new book to be at least a little less forceful in promoting this

idea in the strident form in which it appears in her earlier presentation:

> Genuinely normative practices, that is, practices that are not causally
>
> necessitated but are structured by, and admit of evaluation by reference
>
> to, a standard, norm, or rule, are social. Thus, no individual in radical
>
> isolation from all social practices can engage in actions that are correct
>
> or incorrect. A period of training or learning is required to become a
>
> practitioner. (*Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning*, 215).

The point remains that in taking issue with Baker and Hacker amongst others over the question whether § 199 points solely towards the rule-governed practice of an *individual* over a period of time, as distinct from the practice of a *community*, she adopts the latter view primarily because what *counts* as corrective behaviour for, say, an imagined born-Crusoe, can only be what we ourselves in a social context understand corrective behaviour *in fact* to be:

> The dispute between the individualist view and the social view is
>
> whether this necessary affinity between ourselves and another is to
>
> be explained in terms of the autonomy of grammar which is applicable
>
> to individual or community alike; or whether Robinson Crusoe's
>
> behaviour must be explained in terms of his nominal membership in
>
> our community, that is, his assimilation to our practices. (*Ibid*., 205).

Williams finally concludes that any attempt to regard the born-Crusoe's behaviour as exhibiting a normative practice faces what she refers to as a trilemma:

> Either we give Crusoe nominal membership in our practice (an
>
> imaginative exercise only); or we smuggle some form of objectified
>
> meaning or interpretation back into the picture (by way, e.g., of a
>
> master-pattern); or we are left with mystifying phrases like 'grammar
>
> is autonomous'. (*Ibid*., 209)

But here it is arguable that Williams is attempting to provide a *philosophical* thesis when

the evidence actually points in several different directions without implying that we ought to follow any particular path. Indeed, it is not even certain that the path she wishes to follow is directly opposed to the Backer-Hacker line, for on their view, *viz*., that we can form an innocuous distinction between the genesis and the exercise of an ability, and that it is the exercise of the ability alone that is important, we are perfectly free to imagine born-Crusoes indulging in rule-following behaviour as complex as you please, without in the least worrying how the individual in question comes to *acquire* the capacity to exhibit it. On the Humean principle that whatever is conceivable is possible, where what is possible is what we can readily *imagine*, as distinct from what may be (causally) possible as a matter of empirical fact, B & H argue that there is no real issue at stake. Again, as Williams admits in reminding us that the cognitive and linguistic deprivation consequent upon actual social isolation from birth, is well documented (*Ibid*., 210), these are *empirical* matters, so that there 'is no a priori argument for the sociality of language' (*Ibid*.). At another point, reminding us that we *in fact* become participants in concrete, particular language-games through a process of learning, she even quotes (*Ibid*., 234 and Footnote 13, 262) classic examples of waifs who have become feral, wild and wolf-like: they are in fact more likely than not to behave (inappropriately in our eyes) like wolf cubs than like normal acculturated children. But what have these empirical facts got to do with a *philosophical* account of linguistic competence ? (*Ibid*., 210).

The answer, of course, is that by introducing us to Augustine's child, the Wittgenstein that Williams is promoting is doing considerably more than drawing our eyes away from a misleading *picture*, which on a minimalist reading of these early passages is *only* what he is doing. Indeed, on such a reading the very idea that Wittgenstein could have any truck with the thought that language is in some sense 'essentially social' would be quite out of keeping with his methodology. It is not even clear what this notion can be taken to mean. On the one hand, it has the appearance of an empirical hypothesis, and as such the evidence of feral and wolf-children indicates that it may have something going for it. Yet at another level, it appears to be a philosophical thesis of some kind telling us what *must* be so, when Wittgenstein has actually reminded us in § 6 that although ostensive teaching *is*

an important part of training for human beings, this does not mean that it could not be *imagined* otherwise; and in this sense there can be no *must* about it. But now it would appear that we are once again tending to go round in that circle from which we may not be able to break free.

What Wittgenstein *is* undoubtedly suggesting, is that philosophers are just muddled when they claim that their experiences, say, have Soames's *representational content.* Wittgenstein issues them with the *reminder* that their prior acquisition of a public language, upon which *in fact* their adoption of this thesis is actually parasitic, is what is leading them to think that they can look at objects or experiences as items which are in this way intrinsically meaningful, outwith those ordinary contexts in which we do talk unproblematically about coming across new items and attaching labels to them. The question facing Meredith Williams is whether we can go beyond this to the point at which we might wish to see Wittgenstein presenting a positive philosophical *account* of the nature of language acquisition; because this would always seem to once again lead us round in a circle. The proposals that Williams presents, whilst undoubtedly interesting, appear to hover in that no-man's-land between the conceptual and the empirical. She simultaneously appears to be issuing a philosophical *account* of language learning with her claim that *how* we learn is constitutive of *what* we learn, yet this is an account which, paradoxically, cannot help but remind us that Wittgenstein's *avowed* aim is to offer *descriptions* of what we are doing in the hope *only* that these descriptions will enable the philosopher to be released from the misleading *pictures* which are holding him captive.

Yet from a wider perspective, what Williams is saying assumes an importance in a quite different context, one in which the distinction between the conceptual and the empirical becomes decidedly hazy. Take for example, Wittgenstein's apparent implication in § 32 that it is wrong to assume that Augustine's child can *think*, only not yet speak, a claim that can lead, and has led philosophers (4) to say that prior to learning a language Wittgenstein seems to be saying that a child cannot *think* at all. Quite apart from its failure to recognise that *thinking* is a widely ramified concept (*Zettel*, § 110), so that the child can be said to be thinking in these circumstances - where thinking is expressed in behaviour - even although it has not yet acquired the conceptual

capacities which accompany linguistic acquisition, Williams reminds us that in the course of providing a legitimate *empirical* account of language learning, we are not duty bound to regard the mind as a *tabula rasa* : 'Ostensive teaching requires the learner to have certain behavioral and perceptual capacities and abilities; otherwise the training will fail.' (*Ibid*., 105)

What Williams is of course pointing towards here is her opposition, and what she inevitably takes to be Wittgenstein's implicit opposition to those nativist theories which would ground learning the use of a word in the confirmation of a hypothesis about its translation into a 'language of thought', instead of into the association of the word and an object (*Ibid*.). Her novice begins with the capacity to learn a language, certainly, and it would normally be taken for granted that there are features of the human brain upon which this capacity is causally dependent; but those normative regularites she takes to be necessary to human life are on her view nevertheless *socially* sustained (*Ibid*., 106).

Whilst this smacks of an empirical account of what it is to learn a language, it would be a mistake to assume that there are no philosophical questions in the neighbourhood, because the nature of any 'structures' posited within the human brain are obviously going to determine what it is that a scientist thinks that he is setting out to *explain*. The claim, for example, that a great deal of cognitive structure must be innate (*Ibid*., 107), may amount *in practice* to no more than our ability to confirm experimentally that the role of the human brain in accounting for the possibility that human beings can learn a language is far greater than we can have imagined. It need not embody any assumption to the effect that the human brain itself 'harbours' what for want of a better phrase has been called a 'language of thought'. Indeed, insofar as the brain is first and foremost for the scientist a physical *mechanism*, there may well be neuroscentists who would treat ideas of this kind as excessively naive, and who see *their* task as one of correlating various kinds of human behaviour with activities in different parts of the brain. This would be with a view to constructing a satisfactory *picture* of the causal role played by the brain in *accounting for* those language-learning abilities with which Williams is concerned. From this point of view, her 'bootstrapping' problem involving the

ability of the linguistically naive to become linguistically competent cannot be independent of these *philosophical* considerations, so that 'how much cognitive structure is innate, how much is acquired, and in what sort of order' (*Ibid.*) are issues which themselves presuppose ways of looking at the matter that may be open to question.

Wittgenstein in fact draws our attention in § 149 to the idea that knowing the ABC is a state of the mind, an idea which conjures up a mental *apparatus*, with perhaps a physical correlate in the brain, one that explains the *manifestations* of that knowledge. Yet despite the fact that there are circumstances in which the search for accounts of this kind can be entirely legitimate, Williams sees Wittgenstein opposing them when they fail to contribute to our understanding of how linguistic competence is manifested in the practice of speaking a language. These accounts are empty insofar as they are irrelevant to what, for example, 'reading' is, so that the attempt to locate *reading* as a process in the human brain is 'a form of account that is very convincing to us' ( § 158), yet one which goes nowhere in its neglect of the fact that reading is *manifested* in behaviour.

This for Williams is a pointer to the plain fact, one opposed by those who would argue that what scientific investigations reveal are genuine *replacements* for our ordinary concepts, that discoveries about the neural correlates of understanding are not discoveries about its *real* nature, because the scientific investigation is itself parasitic on the ordinary application of the concept. This is a familiar point (*Ibid.*, 153) and leads on to her consideration of the rule-following passages, the second of the three most discussed sections of the *Investigations* in the secondary literature which she understandably regards as central to our understanding of Wittgenstein.

The long discussion of rule-following which Williams begins in Chapter 5, 'Rules and the Paradox of Interpretation', extends throughout Chapter 6, 'Normativity and the Threat of Regularism', and it is arguable that it does not really reach its final conclusion until the end of Chapter 7, 'Necessity and the Threat of Psychologism', where she adds to *stage-setting* and the *exercise of technique* a third dimension that is part of any language-game, the *certainty and trust*, that which is not 'open to doubt', characteristic of those 'bedrock certainties' to which we are introduced

in *On Certainty*, a work in which she takes the distinction between novice and master to have a highly significant role to play. Her final 'answer' to the rule-following paradox, and to the question she asks at the beginning of Chapter 6, *viz.*, 'What is the "way of grasping a rule which is not an interpretation" (PI § 201) ?' is arguably supplied later in that Chapter:

> In sum, to participate in a normative practice is a matter of establishing a second nature by being initiated into pattern-governed behaviour through training in which the cognitive and normative labour is divided between the novice and the master. Grammar is not independent of our lived practices, of our harmonious agreement in action and judgement. But the community is not required in order to police the actions and judgements of all members, but in order to sustain the articulated structure within which understanding and judging can occur and against which error and mistake can be discerned. (*Ibid.*, 219)

In the course of discussing the paradox of rule-following, Williams almost inevitably takes issue with the 'constitutive' view of rule-following she attributes to Saul Kripke. Whilst admitting that the Kripkean viewpoint is not identical with any crude 'majoritarian' claim that 'red' *means* 'whatever the community says is "red"', it nevertheless collapses as Williams sees it because it is subject to three major criticisms: a) that the paradox of interpretation arises at the level of the community just as it does for the individual; b) that it does not allow for the possibility that the individual can be right whilst the community is wrong, and as such is highly conservative; and c) that it fails to capture our ideas of genuine normativity because the idea of 'going out of step' with fellow-citizens provides merely an illusion that we express and entertain meanings.

Naturally, we can take it that Kripke would hardly be likely to agree with this, so that no matter how 'sceptical' his 'solution' may be in fact, he goes out of his way to indicate that it does capture what we would ordinarily wish to say about the normativity of rule-following: that we *automatically* calculate new addition problems without feeling any need to check with the

surrounding community, that the community naturally feels entitled to correct rare deviant calculations, and so on. Indeed, the expression of his view that Robinson Crusoe as a radically isolated individual can be thought to follow rules only if we take him into our community and apply our criteria of rule-following to him - since what we understand to *be* rule-following is presumably manifested in the circumstances in which we apply the term - sounds suspiciously like the account of Crusoe that Williams herself provides. This has the paradoxical consequence that if we do as individuals *automatically* calculate new addition problems without feeling the need to check with the community, we are already allowing for the possibility that a bright mathematician can as an individual show the community in certain circumstances to be in the wrong provided that the community as a whole can come to see that its calculations in *this* instance are deviant; and by what criterion could this be determined other than by its members coming to *agree* with the mathematician that they had collectively made certain *mistakes* ?  This is reflected in Kripke's final claim, one which has at least the appearance of being rather disingenuous, *viz.*, that what follows from these considerations is not after all that the answers provided by the community to addition problems are *by definition* correct, but just that if, platitudinously, everyone agrees on a certain answer - including in *this* case our bright mathematician - then undoubtedly no one will feel in the least justified in calling that answer wrong. (5)

The criticisms which Williams makes of the Baker and Hacker 'individualist' standpoint fall into a different category.  Agreeing that many of their outbursts against Kripke's version of the community view strike home, she nevertheless regards their tendency to emphasise the exercise of an ability at the expense of its genesis, as a way of reading the adult back into the child in the way expressed by Augustine's picture of learning. Indeed, by treating the relation between concept or rule and behavioural regularity and training as *external*, she claims that they fail even to allow that a natural born child could  *become* a user of language (*Ibid*., 181), because their presentation leaves us with the impression that these capacities are already native to the new-born child. This has the unexpected consequence that Williams succeeds in criticising B & H in terms of a central

plank of their own platform in favour of Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, his rejection of the all-powerful and all-consuming 'Augustinian Picture'. But her main criticisims are actually directed at the wide, and on her assessment indiscriminate use B & H make of the not entirely perspicuous concepts of *grammar* and *internal relations*:

> So internal relations are 'the product of grammar' and 'what is laid down in grammar' are internal relations. We seem to be going round in a rather tight circle. It is not clear how the appeal to grammar gets us any further than traditional appeals to acts of meaning, which in some mysterious way encompass their objects. If Wittgenstein's critique of acts of meaning is successful, just why doesn't a similar critique apply to the appeal to internal relations ? Unless the notion of grammar is spelled out, it threatens to become another candidate for a 'philosophical superlative', the quest for which Wittgenstein seeks to undermine....(§ 192) (*Ibid*., 179).

Yet if we take the claim that grammar is autonomous not as some kind of *philosophical* superlative, but as a reminder of 'how we go on' which is not answerable to anything but itself, then we gain a clearer perspective of how it accurately represents Wittgenstein's approach even through the distorting lens of a rather theoretical presentation. If to begin with the concept of the born-Crusoe is understood to be representative of the meaning-determinism rejected by Kripke, a rejection which leads to the associated rule-following paradox because anything one does at *this* point can be in accord with the rule, then we gain a superior vantage point from which to understand Wittgenstein's approach if we see these as two opposing poles, each of which provides a source of *philosophical* misunderstanding in relation to the circumstances in which we *in fact* acquire and employ a language.

So how does Wittgenstein's approach differ from Kripke's ? Wittgenstein's paradox results from staring at the ordinary application of a rule in isolation from its context in those practical affairs in which it finds its normal expression, just as, and at the other extreme the concept of the

born-Crusoe takes the exercise of the rule to be pre-determined (the Kripkean meaning-determinist *picture*) by Crusoe's possession of a capacity operating in isolation from the social background against which we come *in fact* to understand both how it *is* acquired and how it manifests itself in practice. Yet in the *philosophical* attempt to abandon this Platonist picture of the born-Crusoe who magically encompasses within himself the capacity required to master a rule in its infinite number of applications, the temptation is to retreat to a single point in time. But this leaves one with the problem of having to *decide* to go in one direction rather than another as a way of *interpreting* the rule, when *anything* that one does can then be understood to be in accord with it. One then becomes victim to the rule-following paradox, because what one has to do at *this* point has the character of making a stab in the dark.

But this retreat to a single point in time at which a *decision* must be made, immediately takes what one has to do at *this* point in following the rule out of context when, ordinarily, what one has to do in following the rule is *not* a matter for decision at all. One follows the rule *blindly* (§ 219), *i.e.*, with the unreflecting confidence characteristic of those circumstances in which the rule has *not* becomes severed from the background in which (§ 201) our grasping a rule *is* exhibited in practice in the quite ordinary way in which we talk about 'obeying the rule' and 'going against it' in *actual* cases. The emphasis Wittgenstein places in *Investigations* § 199 on what Colin McGinn once called 'the multiple application thesis' (6), and which led to his puzzlement over what Wittgenstein could possibly be getting at in suggesting that it is not possible that there be only a *single* occasion of rule-following, is no more than a reminder that if we insist when doing philosophy on taking our understanding of what it is to follow a rule out of its ordinary context within the framework of shared - and on occasion unshared - responses in which we obey rules and go against them, then the sceptical paradox will be unanswerable. Indeed, it is unanswerable on Wittgenstein's assessment if we insist on staring at the picture in which it seems that we can give 'one interpretation after another', almost as if 'each one contented us for a moment, until we thought of yet another standing behind it.' (§ 201)  The way forward lies in turning our eyes away from the picture, for if we fail to

do so then we will in this philosophical context be caught in a classically insoluble dilemma, continually oscillating between the adherence to an unacceptable concept of a Platonist born-Crusoe at one extreme, and the retreat to a point in time at which one has to make a stab in the dark in the course of following *no-rule at-all* at the other.

The idea, therefore, that one should require a *solution* to the paradox rests on the false premise that Wittgenstein could grant to the meaning-determinist *picture* the role in our thinking that would make mandatory the search for one. Wittgenstein's appeal to the circumstances in which we in fact follow a rule is not intended to provide an *answer* to a 'sceptical paradox', when it is quite clear that adherence to a misleading picture cannot allow of the kind of answer a *philosophical* solution to the paradox would appear to require. The idea of training into a practice instead provides a new way of countering the born-Crusoe - by drawing our eyes away from the picture - just as a call to return to the contexts in which a rule is actually applied ( § 198 and § 201) reveals how easy it is for the philosopher to become victim to a picture he finds it impossible to relinquish. This is a *minimalist* assessment of the rule-following passages which would obviate the *need* for the adoption of *either* an 'individualist' *or* a 'communitarian' viewpoint. These viewpoints are consequent upon misunderstandings resulting from the appeal of a *picture*, and this assessment of what these passages are about can be taken to be in accord with the tendency encountered when discussing Wittgenstein's initial critique of Augustine, to go round and round in a circle. Meredith Williams by contrast provides a much more positive *account* - based on her distinction between master and novice within a practice - of what she takes Wittgenstein to be about:

> Believing with certainty is unavoidable and should not be mistaken
>
> for our being irrational or gullible. We cannot be anything but subject
>
> to norms including Wittgensteinian certainties. The alternative is
>
> literally death or madness. Becoming subject to norms and certainties
>
> in initiate learning *is* to depend on, and thereby trust, the support of
>
> others within the community. As we have already seen, this is not just

a matter of the child's biological weakness, but, even more importantly, of her cognitive and psychological dependence. So, how we come to accept background certainties reveals much about the ways in which they are held. Exemplary judgements are precisely of the sort that are explicitly used in teaching children language. *(Ibid.*, 255)

This passage occurs in her discussion of *On Certainty*, and as examples of those judgements, she offers 'that's a zebra' or 'that's a towel'. In *this* context these are intended to be examples where 'mistake is not possible, doubt cannot be entertained, and evidence is not required' (*Ibid.*, 254). This is not the kind of context in which 'that's a zebra' is uttered with reference to an animal a quarter of a mile away that might turn out on closer inspection to be a horse, or in which 'that's a towel' refers to something at the far end of the garden which might a la Austin turn out on getting a closer look to be a pillowslip. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to conclude that those judgements 'that look like ordinary empirical claims but are not' (*Ibid.*) should be construed *either* as framework propositions - setting a priori constraints on what moves can be made within the game - or as foundational propositions - providing the epistemic base for moves within it (*Ibid.*, 259). Williams importantly draws the conclusion that the hinge analogy used to capture the *certainty* to which Wittgenstein is referring, is in the final analysis more the expression of an *attitude* which is tied to the notion of a *form of life*, thereby severing any connection which might wrongly ally it to the concept of *knowledge*.

In these passages, Williams gestures towards, without actually explicitly agreeing with the viewpoint of Daniele Moyal-Sharrock that these fundamental certainties are not really propositional at all. Her main reason for discussing them here is because 'the epistemically innocent novice requires trust before there can be doubt or questioning, and action before there can be reflection or hypothesis formation.' (*Ibid.*, 260). Her reference to the child's 'range of natural reactions and discriminatory perceptual competencies' as a prerequisite for training, further reinforces in her eyes the belief that the *human* need for what she calls the normative

structuring provided by the child's surrounding linguistic community, is as much a part of our *natural* history as eating or walking.

This in the final analysis is a guide to uncovering what is probably the best way in which to properly understand her claims that *how* we learn is constitutive of *what* we learn, and that language is *essentially* a social phenomenon. These claims play a heuristic role in much the same way that Wittgenstein would have taken Soames's claims about the *representationl content* integral to his experience of the world and *prior to* his acquisition of a public language - claims about his natural ability to attach a *meaningful* word to representations 'with that same content' - as a *picture* which gains what sense it may be thought to have, precisely because it is *already* parasitic on Soames's prior acquaintance with that language. Yet Soames would most probably take his prior knowledge of a public language to be wholly *coincidental* to the cogency of his argument.

This point does not play the role of a *reductio* in Wittgenstein's presentation, because it is an entirely methodological *reminder* that when doing philosophy the tendency always exists to sever what can *appear* to be the innocuous yet valid claim that our sensations are intrinsically meaningful, from the background competencies that provide it with what sense it has. This will be discovered to be central to an assessment of Williams's treatment of §§ 243 - 315. The reason for this is that what she understands, albeit correctly from her perspective, to be Wittgenstein's analysis of privacy based on the notion of a simple object derived from the *Tractatus* - which she identifies as the 'Cartesian' view - seems so esoteric that it hard to see why Descartes or any of the British empiricists - whether of an 18th Century Enlightenment or 20th Century Positivist variety - could have possibly found themselves adhering to the private-object concept that Wittgenstein arguably reveals to have no genuine application.

Her central argument is that the private diarist of § 258 incurs the heavy and unacceptable cost of claiming that because the semantic guarantee supposedly consequent upon the link established between word and world is accessible only to the private diarist, the sensation itself must therefore be indescribable and incommunicable:

> The dispute between the diarist and Wittgenstein is whether it is
>
> possible to *have* a language-game initiated by naming indescribable
>
> objects. Wittgenstein argues that such a game results in paradox:
>
> '..............whatever is going to seem right to me is right. And that only
>
> means that here we can't talk about "right" ' (PI § 258). By eliding name
>
> and descriptor in the interests of identifying absolute simples, true naming
>
> renders impossible the very distinction it is supposed to explain. (*Ibid*., 274)

On this interpretation, it already appears that Wittgenstein has *defined* his concept of a

*private object* in such a way that it can have no conceivable application to our ordinary talk about

our sensations. If naming in *ordinary* practice is only a preparation for description, and if the act of

the private diarist is by definition intended to generate *both* a 'naming' relation between sign and

sensation, *and* a rule for applying that sign to further sensations identical, as Williams puts it, to

the baptismal sensation, it follows that because there can be no distinction between name and

predicate, what is actually intended to constitute the fundamental source of the diarist's semantic

normativity (the 'private ostensive defintion') collapses at the first hurdle because it is clear that no

standard in *these* circumstances can possibly be set to begin with. Here we are being presented with

a *picture* in which we are invited to think of the private diarist as a 'self' who experiences a sensation

which has no qualitative characteristics whatsoever, no 'qualitative feel', so it is hardly surprising

that no standard of comparison can be set which would allow for 're-identification' of the sensation

on any of its supposed future appearances. In short, if we *were* to think of this sensation as enjoying

the 'qualitative feel' referred to, as having Soames's *representational content*, then for Williams it

must follow that the language used in 'referring' to it would be a *public* language, because the

sensation term would then have a proper place in a practice providing the *stage-setting* allowing a

diarist to become freed from the consequences of an isolation in which no normative distinction

between 'seems right' and 'is right' could be made (*Ibid*., 276). On the view advocated by Williams,

this supposed incommunicability of the private diarist's sensation terms is no loss to the 'Cartesian',

who mistakenly believes that the peculiar content of the name-named relation can be upheld because he fails to realise that his belief in privileged epistemic access results from conflating the ordinary, yet wholly different roles that we allocate to names and descriptions.

In reminding us that the 'naming' of the private diarist exploits a concept of a *simple object* that goes back to the *Tractatus,* Williams allows for a reading of the private language passages that sidesteps a great many of the historical criticisms of that argument relying on the premise that since we do and can 'identify our sensations privately' in some generally acceptable sense, the argument is at odds with our 'common convictions' about what we can and cannot do. This criticism becomes irrelevant, as indeed does the equally common assumption that the argument relates not to the initial baptismal act of the diarist, but to his ability to 'reidentify' his sensation on subsequent occasions, an interpretation resulting in the mistaken claim that the issue at stake is one of scepticism about the memory of someone who has already achieved success with his initial baptism. (*Ibid*., 276 and 310, Footnote 8.)  Yet there are aspects of the account that Williams offers which have puzzling consequences. Talking of the act of naming that is supposed to generate the private diarist's ability to apply his sign to further sensations identical to the baptismal sensation, she argues:

> It is irrelevant, from the representationalist point of view, whether
>
> subsequent occurrences are reoccurences of the ur-sensation or
>
> occurrences of ontologically distinct and yet qualitatively identical
>
> s's. This is the way the representationalist *must treat* the apparently
>
> distinct linguistic acts of naming and describing. It is crucial to the
>
> explanatory work that is done by naming that the semantic relation
>
> between particular uses of the sign 's' and particular sensations s be
>
> *the same* whichever ontology obtains. (*Ibid*., 274)

Yet in § 288 of the *Investigations*, the claim that ordinary first person sensation-ascription is criterionless is tied to the idea that our ordinary sensations are *not* private objects, so that we do

not require *criteria* in order to talk of a sensation which is *the same* as one previously experienced. This is a claim about our public language of sensations in which we *do* require third person behavioural criteria for talking about our sensations. Wittgenstein distinguishes clearly between this case of first person sensation-ascription in which 'the expression of doubt has no place in the language-game', and the case of a wholly *private* language as envisioned in § 258 in which, because its use is isolated *in principle* from human behaviour, the private diarist might *legitimately* begin to doubt afresh.

But in what could this doubt conceivably consist ?  The answer lies precisely in the point that *by definition* the diarist *now* requires criteria for identifying his sensation *as* a *private object*. In these new circumstances criteria would serve to identify it as *the same* individual private object as one previously experienced. But in ordinary first person sensation-ascription there is nothing that could *count* as 'identifying and reidentifying a sensation according to criteria', because we do not identify our sensations as *objects* at all. The (misleading) model in operation here pictures 'private objects', of which there can be more than one of one kind, appearing and disappearing in some semblance of a mock three-dimensional continuum, a model whose manifest absurdity is something on which Wittgenstein relies when he hints that it cannot properly represent our ordinary sensation talk.

This need not be assumed to be inconsistent with Williams's general point that true subjective names can only name subjective simples. These ontologically subjective simples are what Williams calls 'seemings'. Since the metaphysical characteristic of those seemings is that they indescribable, (*Ibid*., 277, and 310 Footnote 10), this does tend to support her general claim that because the activity of the private diarist is intended to occur independently of any linguistic mastery as ordinarily understood - otherwise the sign referred to in § 258 will not be a sign with a meaning private and incommunicable to others - then to allow a diarist to talk freely of his sensations and their recurrence is *already* to assume that he has *in fact* acquired linguistic mastery against a community background. This background supplies the *stage-setting* in which his first person criterionless sensation-ascriptions allow him to make the distinction between 'seems right' and 'is right', a setting denied by definition to the private diarist who is effectively barred from *identifying* and *re-identifying* his sensations at all.

But this merely serves to remind us that those well-known private-language passages incorporate the notion of a *private object* so *defined* by Wittgenstein that it beggars belief that Descartes and his successors could ever have become party to it. This surely throws doubt on the supposed historical consequences often thought to follow from the 'private language argument', for in the version envisaged by Williams, which is on the whole highly instructive, it must lead us to reflect on the historical fact that the British empiricists, whether in their 17th, 18th, 19th or 20th century guises, began with the idea that our sensations could confer meaning quite independently of our aquaintance with the public language in which we *in fact* talk about them. It matters little whether any chosen philosopher is believed to have adhered to an 'imagist' theory of meaning (Locke probably yes, Ayer as quoted apparently no). The important point is that the Wittgensteinian response to these philosophers does not, and cannot lie in his supplying a *reductio* argument revealing that *their* presuppositions involve some form of hidden internal contradiction. On the contrary, the more common reactions to the private language argument are illustrated *via* the three philosophers already quoted, *viz*., Kripke, Ayer and Soames, and Wittgenstein provides *them* with an entirely methodological response, one which consists in the challenge that their failure to renounce a misleading *picture* results in a natural tendency to stare at first-person sensation-ascription in isolation from its normal surroundings of application.

Williams's appeal to the simples of the *Tractatus,* together with this idea of staring at our abilities in isolation from the circumstances in which they are both generated and manifested, serve to play an important role in her continuing assessment of Wittgenstein on privacy. In her account of the notoriously difficult § 265, which both Fogelin (*Ibid.*, 279 and 311, Footnote 11) and Ayer famously in 'Can There be a Private Language ?' understood to be questioning the viability of memory, Williams turns this interpretation on its head by once again presenting Wittgenstein as arguing, not that whilst there is a genuine *meaning* to remember, we are far from justified in relying on our capacity to remember *what* this meaning is, but that since there is no meaning generated to

begin with, there is nothing that one could conceivably claim to remember. The notion of a final *independent* check allowing one to literally *see* the timetable is central to the argument, and since reliance on memory alone will always be very much a *subjective* second best in *these* kinds of circumstances to this final *objective* form of confirmation - as it would be, for example in a court of law - the unsupported reliance on memory alone cannot *in principle* serve as a *proper* foundation for generating meaning.  §§ 261 - 264 which question the idea of providing a *private* definition of a word in the absence of a proper technique of using it, make essentially the same point.

This point is also central to § 380, and *how* one recognises that *this* is red, where the temptation to look for a justification *via* private ostensive definition is explicitly shown to be empty. Yet in § 384, and more clearly in § 381, it would be an answer to say that I know this colour is red - so that I also know when to say that I am seeing red *again* (*Cf.* § 258) - not because in this case my utterance is subject to  *public* check, but because 'I have learnt English', in which event there is a recognised technique of using the term 'red' and therefore in *this* case no genuinely *recognising* that this is red at all, because first person sensation-ascription is criterionless.

Williams uses § 56 to throw light on § 265, and it is interesting to note that her reference to 'the futile search for that which could secure the "meaning" or content allegedly found in the baptismal object itself' (*Ibid*., 281) has all the appearance of capturing Soames's initial baptism of a colour which does indeed contain the *representational content* whose existence she takes Wittgenstein to deny in the *private* case. But what Soames is referring to is not the private case as conceived by Wittgenstein, but our natural tendency to say that we *know* that this colour is red because it transparently presents itself meaningfully to us *as* red. Yet our tendency to say this when doing philosophy exists in isolation from the important *fact* that what fundamentally allows us to say it at all is that we 'have learnt English'. Once again Wittgenstein's methodology allows him to issue a reminder of the *circumstances* in which we *in fact* learn how to use sensation-terms.

Just as she allows § 56 to throw light on § 265, Williams uses § 50 to throw light on § 293, which she understands to be questioning the ontological subjectivity of sensations in the way that

§ 258 questions their epistemological subjectivity - a claim which surely requires a good deal

of unpacking if it is understood to be stating more than the obvious - although the important

point she wishes to stress is that § 293 involves Wittgenstein's treatment of a view in which

experiences are communicable insofar as there is a shared public language of sensation, yet in

which reference to a private subjective entity remains a feature of this particular language-game

(*Ibid*., 286 and 311, and Footnote 14). Whilst this is also open to question insofar as Wittgenstein

asks only halfway through the passage what it would mean if we were to suppose that the word

'beetle' had a *use* in these people's language, the implication being that this is *not* part of the original

thought experiment, he *then* goes on to make his well-known point that on the model of 'object and

designation', the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant.

Once again, Williams draws upon the conception of the 'beetle' as a Tractarian simple

in order to throw light on § 293, with the consequence that the special metaphysical properties

attributed to sensations by the 'Cartesian' philosopher, *viz*., their self-illuminating states, are

what determines their supposed fitness to play a normative, standard-setting role, a role which

Wittgenstein shows that they cannot by definition play. Whilst this may *appear* to be a feature

of Wittgenstein's argument here, the *real* questioning of Soames's 'self-illuminating states'

has already been shown to be part of a separate methodological presentation. This does not

invalidate William's general claim that 'this appeal to the object of private reference, in a context

of public use, is as vacuous as the appeal to private knowing' (*Ibid*., 285), a point that is central

to passages from § 270 onwards. Here Wittgenstein issues a useful reminder that if there are

circumstances in which one can properly claim that one's blood pressure rises every time

one has, say, a stabbing pain in one's arm, *without* having to check a manometer, then what

*justifies* the claim that one is experiencing this pain is simply that one has 'learnt English'. But

as this 'justification' is criterionless, it follows that there can be no question of *recognising* the

sensation *right* or not, not because it is indifferent what kind of sensation is *in fact* correlated with

the manometer reading, but because in ordinary circumstances there is no question of *recognising*

it at all; and this is again why the private object here as in § 293 'drops out of consideration as irrelevant.'

Williams next draws our attention to those 'Cartesian thought experiments' which are intended to show, in the case of Descartes' dream argument that there is no difference in principle between the content of our dreaming and waking experiences, and his evil demon hypothesis, used to support the possibility that all experience could be a dream, a hypothesis that would appear to have similar consequences to our contemporary supposition that we may all be 'brains in a vat'. Indeed, Williams emphasises that this tradition of argumentation continues into the present day and into current debates about the nature of consciousness. Stressing that Wittgenstein cannot reject this method of thought experiments because he uses similar experiments himself, she presents us with two favourite examples from the literature. Both utilise the notion of qualia: Mary, raised in a black-and-white environment and who cannot know what red is until she confronts a red tomato for the first time, and the zombie who is behaviourially indistinguishable from a normal human being but who has no conscious inner experiences of his own.

Whilst Williams's treatment of these examples over the next few pages (*Ibid*., 289 *et seqq*.) is detailed and thorough, drawing attention to the consequences of the private language passages, to Wittgenstein's use of the novice-master distincton in the context of training into a linguistic practice, and to the fundamental claim that 'sensation cannot be disassociated from the reactive context in which experience is embedded' (*Ibid*., 291), it is also arguable that as an account of Wittgenstein's direct confrontation with those and similar thought experiments it is unnecessarily convoluted. By contrast, Wittgenstein's own discussions combine simplicity with profundity.

The directness of his approach to these and similar proposals is so startling that it can be only too easily bypassed or dismissed as irrelevant, yet in all cases it concerns our willingness to become victim to the stranglehold of a *picture* that, whilst it may *accompany* our practice, we are unwittingly led to treat as capturing the *meaning* of the concept in question. Highly relevant to the Cartesian dream hypotheses, for example, is Wittgenstein's treatment of the proposal that someone might say

out loud in his sleep 'I believe I am now dreaming'. If he wakes up soon afterwards with the memory of what he had said in his dream firmly in his thoughts, what could it then mean for him to exclaim 'So I was right!' ? If an unconscious man were to say in his state 'I am conscious' would we say that 'he ought to know' ? If someone talking in his sleep says 'I am asleep', ought we to reply that 'he's quite right' ? (*Zettel*, § 396). This sequence of examples is followed shortly after by the question whether the verb 'to dream' has a present tense (§ 399), and the fact that it has no first person present tense application points towards the conclusion that the natural tendency to attempt to make philosophical capital out of the 'plain fact' that the content of our experiences whether dreaming or awake can often appear to be qualitatively indistinguishable, is to sever our concept of *dreaming* from the surrounding circumstances in which we ordinarily have occasion to recount our dreams.

The certainty accompanying our possession of *consciousness* is provided with a similar kind of treatment. One classic example is *Zettel* § 402, where the conviction accompanying this certainty is regarded as a mighty force whose point of application does not move, so no work is being done with it. We are also told that a man can pretend to be unconscious. But what might it mean to say that he can pretend to be conscious ? (*Zettel*, § 395). Another classic example is *Investigtions* § 419, where we are invited to consider the circumstances in which we would say that a tribe has a chief, and surely the chief must have *consciousness* ? This proposal, of course, is a joke, which turns on the point that if we insist on becoming party to the *picture* in which consciousness is regarded as an *accompaniment* to behaviour, then we are halfway to realising the notion of the *zombie* that enjoys no conscious experiences 'behind' its outward facade. But this is to attempt to provide the concept with a bogus *application* (*Cf*. §§ 422 - 425) in which it becomes severed from the surrounding circumstances in which we say that people are either conscious or unconscious depending on whether they are, say, awake or asleep, fighting in the boxing ring or 'out for the count'.

The point is expanded into § 420, quoted by Williams when she claims that the moral

impact of refusing to see pain in the child's weeping is to treat the child as a machine (*Ibid*., 302 and 312 Footnote 27). Whilst this is said in a context in which behaviour can be the expression of a psychological state only if it is constitutive of that state, with the implication that it is a serious error to think of the sensation of pain as no more than a *accompaniment* of the child's behaviour, as distinct from something manifested in the public arena *as* pain-behaviour, it does not follow that any refusal to acknowledge the pain in a child's weeping is literally to treat it as a machine. After all, when we read in our histories that men, women and children were put to the sword, we would find it hard to conclude that those who indulged in this kind of slaughter were always under the misapprehension that they were only killing zombies. On the contrary, our ordinary understanding would be that they were morally indifferent to the suffering of their enemies.

Wittgenstein's point in § 420, on the other hand, is just that the difficulty he naturally encounters in regarding the people around him in quite ordinary circumstances as pure automata, as beings without *consciousness* - and he does *not* say that this picture is senseless - results in his having to think of them as wandering about in a trance, in a state of stupefaction - the kind of state we might normally associate with being under the influence of a hallucinatory drug - in order to make this proposal remotely *believable*. Thinking of them as being in a trance-like state is therefore the *closest* we can come to envisaging the kind of criteria which would allow the concept of a *zombie* to have any kind of *ordinary*, as distinct from a bogus philosophical 'application'.

It is primarily to examples of this kind that we can legitimately apply Wittgenstein's claim in § 116 that he is bringing words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use. In his reference to the philosopher's attempts to grasp the *essence* of the thing, the essence, for example, of dreaming or of consciousness, he is pointing towards his alternative method of rooting out the misleading *picture* that may certainly accompany the practice of talking about our dreams or about when we are or are not conscious. But the philosopher exhibits the tendency to take the *meaning* of the concepts of *dreaming* or *consciousness* to consist in his attempt to *apply* the picture, and it is in the nature of this 'application' that it should be attempted in complete isolation from the ordinary circumstances in which the relevant

concepts are actually used. Gordon Baker is surely justified in his scathing reference to a common understanding of 'everyday use' in this passage as referring to nothing more than 'the standard speech-patterns of the English-speaking peoples', for this makes it look as if the wayward philosopher is attempting to give the relevant words a 'metaphysical use' by in some way breaching the limits set by these speech-patterns, when it may not be at all clear just what it is that he is doing wrong. (7)

Williams draws her chapter on 'The Paradox of Consciousness' to a close with a look at those contexts in which we would justifiably distinguish between circumstances in which human behaviour might be taken as *evidence* for a psychological ascription, as distinct from the primary cases which ultimately grant evidence-based claims with their sense: we normally *see* the pain, grief, or joy of another, as she puts it, without inference  (*Ibid.*, 305) . Quoting the famous nurse and the doctor passage (Part II, v, 179), which Saul Kripke incidentally uses as the basis for an anti-realist assessment of Wittgenstein on other minds (8), Williams by contrast argues *not* that we are to think indirectly of the patient as having a mind *because* of our unthinking attitude or of our behaviour towards him, but rather that the behaviour itself is expressive of the patient's suffering so that the need to supply him with analgesic immediately follows without inference. She concludes by drawing our attention to the indefiniteness characteristic of psychological ascription, an indefiniteness that in the final analysis we may incidentally understand to be at the root of Stanley Cavell's well-known interpretation of Wittgensteinian scepticism, for this scepticism, whatever Cavell may say about it, ultimately makes sense only against the background of language-games which are already up and running, and in which people already participate as individual persons who acknowledge each other's existence. (*Cf.* Williams, 263, Footnote 16). As Williams puts it in her own terms, 'the separation of one individual from another rests on the certainty that we are human beings' (*Ibid.*, 309). This indefiniteness in human relationships generally, which partly involves the possibility of pretence, she refers to as 'the new problem of other minds'.

It will come as no surprise that Meredith Williams believes that the Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations* provides us with 'a highly structured argumentative text directed to

pursuing a fundamental new problem in philosophy' (*Ibid*., 3). Whilst this has the almost inevitable

consequence that 'some of the most emphasized passages do conflict with Wittgenstein's actual

methods of argument', where we are to understand that these passages occur in §§ 89 - 133, she

nevertheless believes that 'Wittgenstein's arguments are in the service of a theoretical diagnosis

of philosophical error that relies on the careful structuring of Part I of the *Investigations*.'  (*Ibid*.)

This structuring she understands to allow for a specific answer to the textual question why the

famous metaphilosophical remarks occur where they do, the kind of answer which she believes

that neither the wholly constructivist nor the wholly quietist interpreter is remotely able to provide.

The importance that Williams attaches to the distinction between *master* and *novice* in the

process of initiate learning is reflected in the fact that every major problem and line of argument that

Wittgenstein presents begins for her with a description of a child learning. The idea of training into a

practice, initiate learning, assumes a central methodological and explanatory role in Wittgenstein's

philosophy. Claiming that there are six important 'language-games' in Part I of the *Investigations*,

*viz*., the builders' game and variations thereon (§ 2, § 8, and §§ 19 - 22), the colour chart of § 48, the

standard metre of § 50, the pupil learning a number sequence in § 143, the private diary of § 258 and

the beetle-in-the-box of § 293, she argues that whilst the first three provide 'conflation' arguments

confusing the means of representation with what is represented, the second trio provide 'paradox'

arguments revealing that theories guided by bewitching pictures, are ultimately self-defeating. Given

that the methods employed in the *Tractatus* are seen later on by Wittgenstein to encapsulate a picture

that has bewitched Western philosophy, she takes Wittgenstein's later account of philosophical

entrapment to explain why his metaphilosophical remarks are placed in their present position:  at the

point in the text where a shift occurs from conflation arguments directed against grammatical mistakes,

to paradox arguments directed against theories. The methodological remarks prepare the reader for a

double shift in target and argument, a shift in diagnostic target from conflation to paradox, and a shift

towards a novel form of argumentation employing a grammatical method assigning to language-games

the role once played in the *Tractatus* by analysis. (*Ibid*., 19)

28

At a time when the tendency in Wittgenstein interpretation has shifted towards avowedly therapeutic assessments of his entire methodology, regardless of the nature of therapy envisaged, and regardless of whether these assessments are intended to apply to his oeuvre as a whole, the imposition of what many commentators may see as this kind of theoretical edifice upon the text of the *Investigations* will seem totally unjustifed, even if to others it may constitute a breath of fresh air. Far from regarding Williams as elucidating the content of the *Investigations*, they are more likely to see her as reconstructing it to suit the outlines of a theory to which its text may not really do more than gesture in a rather indefinite way. Most current interpreters would return to the 'critical and reactive' assessment of Wittgenstein's method that Williams refers to in her résumé of the 'familiar approach' she associates with the methodological remarks, (*Ibid.*, 4). Here her use of the term 'familiar' can hardly avoid being reminiscent of Russell's use of the term 'metaphysics': it is to be defined as a point of view not held by the present author.

Yet in the final analysis, talking in wholly general terms about Wittgenstein's methodology in isolation from a detailed assessment of what is going on in the six passages referred to, is not likely to provide significant results, and there is simply no doubt that on the whole, this book offers a level of argumentative and interpretative sophistication rarely found in the secondary literature. Brimming over with detailed commentary, there are sections on Quine, Davidson, Dummett, Frege, Brandom and Sellars, illustrating where these authors either approach Wittgenstein or depart from him in their treatment of the relevant issues. Indeed, there are points in the book at which one is given to wonder whether it is not attempting too much, or whether a certain section has not been inserted in the wrong place, *e.g.*, the treatment of Davidson and Brandom from 160 onwards that may to some readers irritatingly interrupt rather than clarify the discussion of following a rule. One virtue of the earlier volume is that because it comprises a selection of largely self-contained essays devoted to individual topics which throw light on each other, it does not give the impression that too much is being crowded into the available space. The final sections of the mostly outstanding chapter on the paradoxes of consciousness have the appearance of being rather rushed, and they do not

consequently deal with the questions raised in the detail or with the flair they genuinely require, so that they do not seem to cohere with the rest of this chapter as one might wish. In addition, each chapter has extensive footnotes - amounting in Chapter 5 to 82 in number - many of which serve to elaborate on points raised in the main text; and whilst this is without doubt a sign of a fertile mind, it raises the obvious question whether a sustained effort to condense a lot of the material in the book might not have helped its organisation and the clarification of its overall goals.

These matters, however, are largely aesthetic, and it would be unfair to end on a churlish note. They do not ultimately bear on the fact that the level of philosophical acumen displayed in this volume enables it to stand above a great deal of what is being published today in what has become a vast secondary literature on Wittgenstein that continues to be added to month by month. Certainly, this literature as a consequence of its sheer volume is becoming ever more difficult to properly survey and assess, so that even the best of it often fails to attract the readership that it deserves. It is all the more important, therefore, that attention be directed towards those works that do add substantially to our understanding of Wittgenstein or, which is often more important, which raise fundamental questions about the nature of his contribution to philosophy. It would not be inappropriate to claim that this new volume succeeds on both counts.

# ENDNOTES

(1) Saul Kripke: *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), 60.

(2) Ayer: 'Reply to David Pears', *The Philosophy of A.J.Ayer* ed. L.E. Hahn
(La Salle Illinois: Open Court, 1992) 403.

(3) Scott Soames: *Philosophical Analysis in The Twentieth Century*, Volume 2, *The Age of Meaning*
(Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003) 37.

4) Scott Soames: *Op. cit.*, 7.

5) Saul Kripke,: *Op. cit.*, 112.

6) Colin McGinn: *Wittgenstein on Meaning*, ( Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 37.

7) Gordon Baker: *Wittgenstein's Method, Neglected Aspects* , ed. by Katherine J. Morris
(Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 93.

8) Saul Kripke: *Op. cit.*, 138.

*As do most philosophers, Derek McDougall fondly remembers the publication of his very first paper. This was in MIND in 1972. He has, however, continued to worry whether Gilbert Ryle's comment that "the matter is stated well and almost interestingly" referred more to the quality of its treatment rather than to Ryle's aversion to the nature of its subject (religious belief). Other papers have appeared in organs including PHILOSOPHY AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH and PHILOSOPHIA. His latest, on Wittgenstein, appears in the 2008 edition of JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH, with a further in PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS January 2010.*