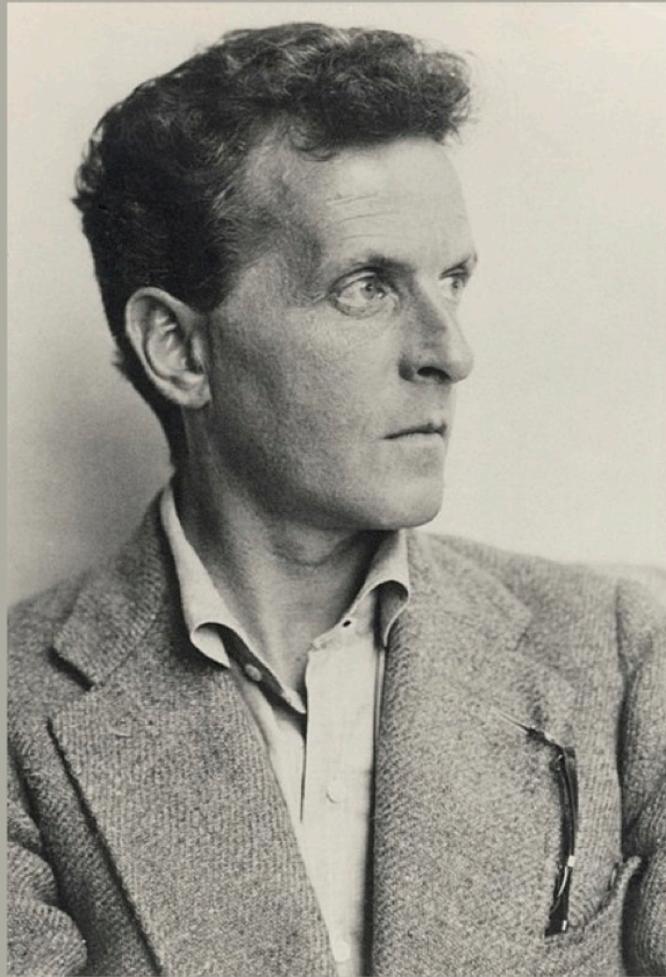


Wittgenstein
and
Forms of Life



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I

"Language, I should like to say, relates to a way of living" (RFM VI 34). It is this relation between language and living that Wittgenstein is concerned with in the concept of language-games. A successful treatment of any aspect of Wittgenstein's later philosophy must include, if not begin with, a well-informed analysis of the analogy between language and games. Languages are not games themselves but they do share some important qualities with games. What I propose to do in this chapter is to point out those aspects of the analogy which are most important for Wittgenstein. While the points I make may seem intuitively obvious, they bear repeating, because so many problems arise in interpreting Wittgenstein by going wrong on the finer points and these mistakes are easily avoided.

There are at least three points to gather from the analogy between language and games. First, language use is an activity. It is important here to stress the active nature of language, which is not simply something we use; it is an integral part of human activity. Second, language is complex. Its complexity is due partly to the fact that it is a uniquely human activity. This complexity is sometimes hidden from us because so much of what we do with language appears similar. Words do not appear differently when they do different work and this leads to problems for those who wish to analyze language. Third, uses of language are not isolated from one another. We do play different language-games and the rules of discourse do change, but not in such a way as to leave us with incommensurable games.

The first point is emphasized by Wittgenstein through several related metaphors. We can see this first in the way Wittgenstein characterizes words themselves. In the *Philosophical Investigations*, they are compared with tools (11), handles (12), and chess pieces (108). Wittgenstein comes to this description early in his writing on language. In the *Philosophical Remarks*, he says that "the question 'What is a word?' is completely analogous with the question 'What is a chessman?'" (p. 61). This comparison with chess pieces also occurs in the *Philosophical Grammar*. Words play a role in what we do in human life and, contrary to some interpretations of language, that role is not passive. Clearly, "language is an instrument" (PI 569) that we use, but, for Wittgenstein, the nature of language goes beyond being a passive instrument.

Wittgenstein stresses this point metaphorically in the miscellaneous remarks published as *Culture and Value* where he says simply that "words are deeds" (p. 46, Cf. PI546). Here the point is that there is a close connection between language and activity. Arguments for Wittgenstein's view often begin with the assumption that, given the dichotomy between language and activity, Wittgenstein says that activity is primary. Though it is clear from the texts that Wittgenstein's foundationalism is grounded in activity, it is not readily apparent that the dichotomy presented is exclusive. There may, in fact, be no sharp boundary between language and activity.

In order to help explicate this view of language, which we have seen expressed metaphorically, I want to draw some parallels between Wittgenstein's view and those of two other writers. One is a biologist, Lewis Thomas, and one is an ordinary language philosopher, John Austin. In his book *The Lives of a Cell*, Lewis Thomas claims that "language is simply alive, like an organism" (p.

133). The analogy he uses, which is natural for a biologist like Thomas, is with natural organisms. Language is, in important respects, one of these natural organisms. Though Wittgenstein does not arrive at this view or one very similar to it until later in his writing an important first seed is present in the *Tractatus* where he says "everyday language is a part of the human organism and is no less complicated than it" (4.002). Already at work here is the idea that language is an integral part of human life and activity.

The analogy between language and organisms brings up the familiar point that language has a way of taking on a life of its own. A parallel example of this phenomenon is the case of language use which John Austin called performative utterances. In such cases, the activity is carried out by the use of language. I make a promise, for instance, by saying "I promise." An additional example of this connection between language and activity, which also relates to Thomas' metaphor, can be seen in our uses of language which take on a life of their own. Insulting is surely one example of a language-game that has this effect. One can always take back an insult, or try to, but even in such cases, the damage is done from the beginning. The activity has a tangible effect that we lose control over once we have entered this particular language-game.

An important aspect of this analysis of language as an activity is present in Wittgenstein's treatment of meaning. Words do not passively have a meaning by being connected with objects in the world. In the *Philosophical Grammar* we are given a curious statement of this position: When one means, it is oneself doing the meaning; similarly, it is oneself doing the moving. One rushes forward and one can't simultaneously observe the rushing. Of course not. Yes, meaning something is like going up to someone (p. 147, Cf. PI 45).

Meaning something is an important activity we perform through language. Wittgenstein recognizes that "for a large class of cases though not for all," meaning is connected with our use of language (PI 43). As we can see, though they are not identical, the two concepts of meaning and use are closely connected.

The second point of analogy between language and games is the complex nature of the activity involved. Here the point is that we must "make a radical break with the idea that language always functions in one way, always serves the same purpose" (PI 304). The idea of the multiplicity of language-games brings to light the complexity of language use. Even the small list of language-games in 23 contains activities that are radically different. Play-acting is a language-game as well as "constructing an object from a description (a drawing)." In an implicit rebuke of his former view of language, Wittgenstein asks us to compare this multiplicity "with what logicians have said about the structure of language. Including the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*" (PI 23). What makes the analysis of language especially complex is the fact that language use is both an activity and part of an activity. The analogy with games is useful here because games are activities that can be part of other activities as well.

Another aspect of the complex nature of language is the character of words. Wittgenstein responds differently to this problem in his later writings, but the diagnosis of the difficulty remains the same. "Language disguises thought" (TLP 4.002). This is so because the "outward

form of the clothing" is the same (TLP 4.002). A similar diagnosis is made in the Philosophical investigations. "It is like looking into the cabin of a locomotive. We see handles all looking more or less alike. (Naturally, since they are all supposed to be handled)" (PI 12). Because of this, we run the risk of drawing what Wittgenstein calls misleading parallels. To avoid these we are asked to carry out grammatical investigations. The purpose of these investigations is to help us see that, although words look like they do the same work in different sentences, the reality is sometimes much different. The analogy between words and tools expresses the problems with analyzing language:

14. Imagine someone's saying: "All tools serve to modify something. Thus the hammer modifies the position of the nail, the saw the shape of the board, and so on." And what is modified by the rule, the glue-pot, the nails? "Our knowledge of a thing's length, the temperature of the glue, and the solidity of the box." Would anything be gained by this assimilation of expressions? The complexity of language use does not allow us to be reductionists in our analysis. This is the purpose of investigations such as the one we are asked to carry out in B'78 of the Philosophical Investigations by comparing knowing and saying. In cases where we use the expressions of knowing and saying there are different criteria in each case for justifying such claims. Thus we see that even replacing the so-called picture theory of meaning with the new view of meaning as use would be wrong if this amounts to a universal claim about language.

Another grammatical investigation that reveals the complex nature of language is given in *Zettel*. "Compare: inventing a game; inventing language; inventing a machine" (327 Cf. PI 492). The misleading picture of language here is connected with the view of language that Augustine gives us at the beginning of the Investigations. We are tempted to think that the history of language could have begun with someone naming objects. One person, as it were, could have invented language. The complexity at work here involves more than the fact that we do many things with language. Rather, it is connected with the fact that language plays such an integral role in our lives. By making this point Wittgenstein does not intend to say that people can only communicate with language. The statement is descriptive; this is what we do: 491. Not: "without language, we could not communicate with one another" but for sure: without language, we cannot influence other people in such-and-such ways; cannot build roads and machines, etc. And also: without the use of speech and writing people could not communicate. The complexity stems from the relationship between language use and the rest of our lives. "Language just is a phenomenon of human life" (RFM VI 47). Additionally, there is the always-present possibility of shifting from language-game to language-game, not unlike the possibility of shifting games (Cf. PI 83).

This leads us to a third point of analogy between language and games. Different uses of language are not isolated from one another. The lack of sharp boundaries is a recurring theme in much of Wittgenstein's writing on language. This is an especially important point to stress with regard to language-games. Taking the analysis of language-games too far can lead to an extreme relativism which is not at all present in Wittgenstein. The idea that different uses of language have different contexts and rules of application leads us mistakenly to this view. We conclude from this that

each type of discourse is incommensurable with all others. The scientist and the theologian, for example, cannot resolve their disagreements because they are playing radically different language-games. We can distinguish between different uses of language, but as Dallas High has pointed out "they are not, Wittgenstein bids us notice, hermetically sealed against one another" (p. 88).

The temptation to see language-games as isolated from each other is a risk inherent in analysis and is expressed by the interlocutor in 100: "But still, it isn't a game, if there is some vagueness in the rules." Wittgenstein responds by asking whether this really does prevent it from being a game. "We misunderstand the role of the ideal in our language" (PI 100). To say that language is governed by rules does not mean that there is no vagueness in the scope of these rules. "It is not everywhere circumscribed by rules, but no more are there any rules for how high one throws the ball in tennis, or how hard; yet tennis is a game for all that and has rules too" (PI 68).

One might interpret this line of reasoning as advocating a radical hands-off approach to language. We ought to leave it alone and not reflect upon it at all. At points in the text, Wittgenstein seems to advocate this stance with his claim that philosophy "leaves everything as it is" (PI 124). Examining language in a particular way does lead to problems "The more narrowly we examine actual language, the sharper becomes the conflict between it and our requirement" (PI 107). That language-games have "blurred edges" is not a plea for clearing up these blurs. After all, the indistinct picture is "often exactly what we need" (PI 71). But this claim is not an argument for unclear thinking nor, I want to argue, is it an admonishment of all analysis. While philosophy "can in the end only describe" language (PI 24), this description is an important function of philosophy and one worth carrying out. In these critical comments on philosophy, Wittgenstein is concerned mainly to warn us against pursuing a wrong method of analysis. We ought not to postulate how things are or ought to be, we should look and see how words are actually used. This is what it means to "bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use" (PI 116).

This examination of language-games serves two purposes. First, it gives us a foundation on which to build when we analyze the concept of "form of life." Secondly, it allows us to examine the relationship between the two concepts: language-games and forms of life. This second point is what I want to address here. There have been some interpretations of Wittgenstein's concepts which lead to the conclusion that language-games are themselves forms of life. I think this represents an incorrect reading of the texts and it seems appropriate to dispose of this problem here before directly addressing the notion of forms of life. Thus we are beginning with a negative definition of forms of life. To be sure, the concept does build conceptually on language-games. However, language itself, that is to say, language use, is not a way of living.

To see the root of this faulty interpretation we need only look at two passages from the Investigations. These passages are important to commentators because they are two of only five references to the concept "form of life." I believe that these five references are given inordinate weight in the overall analysis of the concept and, as such give rise to many misinterpretations of

Wittgenstein's thinking. To avoid this problem one must look first, to other texts, and second, to other formulations to construct a solid interpretation. Simply accounting for all the citations of "form of life" does not constitute a thorough understanding of the concept.

The first passage worth examining occurs in the first paragraph of 19:

19. It is easy to imagine a language consisting only of orders and reports in battle. Or a language consisting only of questions and expressions for answering yes and no. And innumerable others. And to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life. Here we are tempted to think that each language-game we imagine is a form of life. Part of this temptation is rooted in Wittgenstein's formulation. The claim is that we can imagine languages consisting only of very specific functions. We are encouraged not to feel troubled "by the fact that languages (2) and (8) consist only of orders" (PI 18). Saying that these languages are incomplete seems to imply that we think our language is complete, which it is not. However, it seems to be an open question whether we can really imagine that these primitive language-games are all a group of people do with language.

Many commentators are baffled by exactly what Wittgenstein finds so easy to imagine here. Raimond Gaita sums up this confusion by saying that "few people would deny Wittgenstein meant what he said but few would be untroubled by it, in itself and by the fact that he said it" (p. 102). Gaita goes on to point out that the argument against this being a language is that it must be invented and natural languages, at least in Wittgenstein's analysis, are not invented. "Anything whose nature is as unrelievedly and transparently purposive as the vocal activities of the builders is likely to be an invention" (p. 102). Wittgenstein himself seems to affirm this dislike of invention in a passage in *Culture and Value*:

Esperanto. The feeling of disgust we get if we utter an invented word with invented derivative syllables. The word is cold, lacking in associations, and yet it plays at being a "language". A system of purely written signs would not disgust us so much (p. 52).

A related point that Gaita agrees with is that the use of words in language-game (2) cannot be a language because the words have no use or sense outside this one restricted context. Language, then, by definition must have a wider application, even on Wittgenstein's analysis, than is given here.

Does Wittgenstein really mean to suggest that we can imagine a group of people whose lives revolve around what they do in this language-game? Can we imagine the builders in language-game (2) only building? This seems to be what we are committed to if we say that forms of life are identical to language-games. On the other hand, if we see language as a part, albeit a very important part, of the way a group of people live, we can understand how this might be their sole use of language. This would not mean that outside this use of language they did not communicate with one another. The textual evidence for this is scant but, as we have seen in at least one passage, Wittgenstein does not claim that we can only communicate through language.

"Not: Without language, we could not communicate" (PI 491). In this previously quoted passage, Wittgenstein goes on to say that without language we could not influence one another or get certain things done, for example, building.

The flaw in this argument, if there is one, concerns the route Wittgenstein took to imagine language-game (2) as complete. I can imagine that monks in a monastery only use language to communicate with God through prayers or hymns. In all other activities, they remain silent. The criticism here may be relevant to Wittgenstein's formulation as well because what I have imagined is a contraction of the use of language. That is, in many different ways, in a context where language is used I have imagined a community that restricts the uses of language to only a few activities. While this may be possible, it perhaps does not address the concern that one could have a language that begins with and goes no further than, one specified use. It seems highly unlikely that a society could have a very long history where its use of language was so restrictive. The point to stress from this passage, the current debate notwithstanding, is that for people with restricted uses for language, the activity of language plays less of a role. Because of this, we say that our respective forms of life are very different. However, the fact that we play more games with our language does not mean that we have more forms of life.

A second important passage that sheds light on this issue occurs in 23 where Wittgenstein introduces a partial list of language-games. The important portion says: "Here the term 'language-game' is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life." Given what we have just said this should make the relationship between the two concepts clearer. Language use is an activity. However, more often than not, language use occurs within the context of other activities. In the *Philosophical Grammar* the idea arises in connection with the concept of meaning defined as use. "Is meaning then really only the use of a word? Isn't it the way this use meshes with our life? But isn't its use a part of our life?" (p. 65). This helps support the contention that language-games stand in need of a context. Dallas High stresses a similar point in his book *Language, Persons, and Belief* by saying that the analogy between language and games "serves to remind us that talk about language is also about action or a form of life" (p. 98). However, this does not imply an equivalence between language-games and forms of life. A more important point is that language qua language (as distinguishable from a mere notation system) is in part dependent upon the 'backing' of human action or a form of life" (p. 98).

Beyond these two important passages in the *Investigations*, there are a group of references to language-games that bear looking at because they also give rise to the temptation to identify forms of life with language-games. The source of this temptation seems to arise through a particular interpretation of the concept of "form of life" as being foundational for Wittgenstein. This subject will occupy most of Chapter Three, but here I want to bring up the connection with language-games to further justify the claim that the two concepts are not identical.

Much of the problem seems to arise because of the claim that "what has to be accepted, the given is-so one could say-forms of life" (PI p. 22n). This passage is rightly regarded as evidence that Wittgenstein viewed the concept as an important foundation for his philosophy. However, when

contrasted with several other citations, it is tempting to think of forms of life as language-games. The passages have in mind here are 654-656 of the *Philosophical Investigations*. Here Wittgenstein asks us to "look on the language- game as the primary thing" (656). Before this, he seems to give quite a lot of conceptual, not to mention foundational, weight to the concept of language-games:

654. Our mistake is to look for an explanation where we ought to look at what happens as a 'proto-phenomenon'. That is, where we ought to have said: this language-game is played. The temptation, though not well-founded, is to see the claims as equally foundational. If both concepts are foundational, this provides more evidence for the claim that they are identical. As we will see in subsequent chapters, the status of forms of life as a foundation for Wittgenstein depends on the distinction between language-games and forms of life. This necessity, moreover, does not arise because of the requirements of this interpretation. Rather, the necessity inheres in Wittgenstein's own use of the concepts and his arguments surrounding them.

To conclude this chapter I want to consider briefly some aspects of the secondary literature on this question of forms of life and language-games. In the most comprehensive treatment of forms of life thus far, Gertrude Conway criticizes several interpretations of forms of life for identifying the concept with language-games. J. F. M. Hunter is sanctioned for his contention that "a form of life is the same thing as a language-game" (p. 43). S. Stephen Hilmy and Kai Nielsen are also guilty of this misinterpretation. The problem with all of these accounts, as Conway points out, is that they do not consider that language-games require a context in order to make sense. That is to say, for example, there "is no such thing as simply praying or requesting. Prayers and requests have to be about something, to some being, from someone; they must be situated in a relational setting" (p. 44). Language-games operate in the context of various forms of life. While the concepts do overlap, "the range of each concept is different" (p. 44). On the whole, language-games are narrower and forms of life are broader.

In a recent treatment of the subject of forms of life, Newton Garver concurs with this conclusion. "Although there is some intimate relation between *Sprachspiel* and *Lebensform*, Wittgenstein cannot be thought to have identified the two in these passages, much less to have used the terms interchangeably" (p. 245). While Garver's main point is to show that there is only one human form of life, a point I will contest later, his conclusion on the identity problem is soundly based on the texts. In an interesting parallel to the *Tractatus* Garver suggests that "rather than identifying forms of life with language-games, it would be less misleading to think of 'form of life' as analogous to what Wittgenstein called 'the whole of logical space'" (p. 246). Language-games in this analogy are like *Tractarian* propositions which "can determine only one place in logical space: nevertheless the whole of logical space must already be given by it" (TLP 3.42). This interpretation works to illustrate the fact that forms of life are broader than language-games but does break down inasmuch as we are led to conclude that, just as there is one logical space, so too there is only one human form of life.

Language-games are, in at least one sense, pedagogical for Wittgenstein. As such we should always be wary of concluding too much from our inability to find corresponding examples in the world to all of Wittgenstein's examples. In the Blue Book Wittgenstein says that language-games "are ways of using signs simpler than those in which we use the signs of our highly complicated everyday language" (p. 17). We look to these to rid ourselves of the "mental mist" which enshrouds our thinking about language (p. 17). Wittgenstein is here imagining cases like my silent monks; that is, cases that contract our ordinary uses of language. In many such cases, then, to look for a form of life that relates to the language-game may be a wrong-headed use of Wittgenstein's method.

My treatment of language-games here has not been comprehensive. In particular, a complete account of rules and family resemblance is lacking. What I have been concerned to do is to draw out of the concept some important analogies between language and games. It is this connection with language and human activities that Wittgenstein means to illustrate with forms of life and so it is to the analysis of this concept that we now turn.

II

Commenting on the difficulty of the concept of a form of life, E. F. Thompkins claims that much of the confusion arises from thinking that Wittgenstein uses the phrase at all. In fact, he never uses the term "form of life," and, further, he did not even write the *Philosophical Investigations*. Instead, Wittgenstein used the term "Lebensform" in his work called the *Philosophische Untersuchungen*. This rather jejune statement begins an analysis of Wittgenstein's work that, for the most part, leads to some fairly traditional views on this aspect of Wittgenstein's philosophy. Because of the outcome, reaching the conclusions using this line of reasoning is rather cumbersome. He does, however, provide us with the service of rendering the term "Lebensform" into a more appealing translation than "form of life," namely "patterns of living. Additionally, one problem that Thompkins raises, though unintentionally, is worth addressing. As I mentioned in Chapter One, too much emphasis is placed on five occurrences of the term "form of life" in the *Investigations*. No five sections in the entire book can tell us anything of substance about Wittgenstein's philosophy, yet because this expression only appears five times, it is assumed that these remarks must be all Wittgenstein has to say about the concept. Nearly every commentary begins with the five passages which contain the expression "form of life." Doing this has led critics such as Max Black to conclude that there is nothing here but a cryptic metaphor that cannot tell us anything of philosophical value.

I deliberately begin with these remarks in order to warn against a particular way of thinking about forms of life that will if followed, inevitably lead us astray. Because of the sparse textual basis, one has to take care, in analyzing the concept to follow two approaches. First, within the *Investigations*, we have to look beyond the famous five passages to other themes and metaphors Wittgenstein uses to elaborate on the form of life concept. Second, we have to look to other texts for additional references to the expression "form of life," and for additional themes to connect with the concepts of the *Investigations*. Following this methodology will lead us to conclude that the concept operates on two levels in Wittgenstein's philosophy, and, in the end, serves as a foundation for much of that philosophy. This chapter will provide the two-level interpretation of forms of life. Chapter Three will explore foundations.

The analysis of forms of life here will consist of two parts. First, I will outline the two aspects of forms of life. This interpretation of Wittgenstein's concept is not original. In her comprehensive work on forms of life, titled *Wittgenstein on Foundations*, Gertrude Conway provides a similar reading of forms of life which is an invaluable contribution to the literature. Secondly, I will address problems that arise in the secondary literature as a result of this interpretation. The most important of these concerns the possibility that there can be many human forms of life.

Broadly speaking, forms of life distinguish two categories of differences. First, Wittgenstein differentiates the human form of life from other non-human forms of life. There are certain characteristic human traits and activities which separate human beings from cats or fish or any other animals. These features make up our human form of life. "Forms of life" also refers to

differences within the human form of life. Making the concept work in this dual role helps us to understand two facets of human beings. The former distinction, between human and non-human forms of life, stresses what is common among human beings, whatever their differences which arise because of some non-essential, accidental features. The latter distinction, among human forms of life, stresses precisely these differences, which can, at times, be very great. As we will see, in some cases, the differences can be so great that we are unable to find much in common at all with other groups of human beings.

The broadest of the two distinctions which the concept form of life makes is between human and non-human forms of life. A clear example of this use occurs in part two of the Investigations (p. 174):

Can only those hope who can talk? Only those who have mastered the use of language. That is to say, the phenomena of hope are modes of this complicated form of life.

This passage can be seen as the culmination of a theme that begins early in the Investigations, with the use of another important concept, natural history. Wittgenstein says that "commanding, questioning, recounting, chatting, are as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking playing" (PI 25). Here our natural history is what we share in common with all human beings. These abilities, which for Wittgenstein are paradigmatic of the ability to use language, distinguish us from animals who "simply do not talk. Or to it better: they do not use language" (PI 25).

The point to stress here is not that animals do not communicate. After all, dogs bark, and whales use a complex system of songs. The point is more subtle than this. There qualitative difference between what animals do when they communicate and what we do when we use language. Part of the difference lies in the fact that we can take our ability to communicate much further. "A dog believes his master is at the door. But can he also believe his master will come the day after tomorrow? And what can he not do here?" (PI p. 174). This "what" is the complicated part of the analysis of forms of life. It does not seem to be the case that the dog simply lacks either the language or the mental capacity, though to be sure the dog does lack both. This is why I say the difference is qualitative.

Consider the case where the animal has language. Presumably, to have language means to have at least a minimal level of mental ability. But Wittgenstein claims that "if a lion could talk, we could not understand him" (PI, p. 223). Here the barrier of language is overcome, and yet, we still cannot understand the lion's form of life. We cannot communicate with him. I do not think this means that we cannot understand anything at all about the lion's life, but much will remain a mystery because of the vast differences between lions and humans.

An important aspect of this qualitative difference has to do with the generative capacity of our language. Our ability to communicate differs from other animals in that our language is open-ended. We are not restricted to a set of communicative signals. Animals who systematically communicate with each other do so with set patterns. Our human language is characterized by

the ability to use words in new ways, construct new phrases and sentences out of old words and even coin new words. Yet even here, as elsewhere in Wittgenstein's work, there is no sharp boundary between the types of communication. In many ways, the builder's language is more like animal communication than human language. This language seems to lack the generative capacity. This perhaps accounts for our difficulty in imagining it as the only use of language for a group of human beings.

A more complete explanation of the differences between human beings and animals with respect to language may lie in the notion of complexity which becomes possible with the generative capacity. Our complexity of expression thus allows us to have a complicated form of life. This seems to be the significance of pointing to phenomena such as hope. In Volume Two of the *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, Wittgenstein identifies pretending as one of these phenomena:

The question is: When would we say of a child, for instance, that it is pretending? What all must it be able to do for us to say that? only where there is a relatively complicated pattern of life do we speak of pretence (p. 40).

This notion of complexity also appears in Volume One of the *Last Writings*, where Wittgenstein says that "feigning and its opposite exist only where there is a complicated play of expressions. Just as false or correct moves only exist in a game)" (946). A well-known, and fairly humorous, expression of this idea occurs in the Investigations:

250. Why can't a dog simulate pain? Is he too honest? Could one teach a dog to simulate pain? Perhaps it is possible to teach him to howl on particular occasions as if he were in pain, even when he is not. But the surroundings which are necessary for this behavior to be real simulation are missing.

The real point of this passage is the last sentence. Again, this points to the qualitative difference in forms of life. The ability is not necessarily absent in dogs to manifest signs of being in pain, even if they are not in pain. But the important part of the equation, the context, is missing.

This context brings up a distinction that Wittgenstein continuously appeals to, that is, the distinction between the inner and the outer. We can understand the concept of form of life as referring to certain social activities. But in the above example what seems to be lacking is something inner. What the dog lacks is a certain intention to deceive, to simulate. Wittgenstein also uses the notion of form of life to handle this important aspect of human action. Wittgenstein does not deny the existence of the inner (Cf. PI 306-308). However, the inner, certain mental states, get their significance from their place in the context of human social environments. This is what it means to say that "an 'inner process' stands in need of an outward criteria" (PI 580). In Volume Two of the *Last Writings*, which focuses exclusively on the inner and the outer, Wittgenstein expresses this same idea by saying "what goes on within also has meaning only in the stream of life" (p. 30).

Here the concept form of life not only stresses the differences between human beings and other beings but also the similarities among human beings. We all share some basic characteristics which make up what Wittgenstein calls "the common behavior of mankind" (PI 206). It is the existence of these common characteristics which make it possible for us to recognize what other beings are doing with language. This common behavior "is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language" (PI 206). Languages may differ vastly, and yet we can still understand people's activities because we understand this common behavior and natural history.

Much of the *Philosophical Investigations* can be seen in light of the remark Wittgenstein makes concerning this natural history:

415. What we are really supplying are remarks on the natural history of human beings; we are not contributing curiosities, however, but observations that no one has doubted, but which have escaped remark only because they are always before our eyes.

It is appropriate at this time to ask precisely what this commonality is that we share with other human beings. It is surely a complicated mix of biological, as well as psychological, features. As Gertrude Conway puts it, "there is a constellation of natural ways of being human" (p. 60). As we have seen, Wittgenstein interprets certain phenomena as uniquely human. Though he only enumerates a few of these, perhaps he has in mind a rather large set of what he calls "modes of this complicated form of life" (PI, p. 174). These modes do not simply include the language-games we play, although that is a part of this notion. After all, these language-games "are as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing" (PI 25).

Our human form of life, however, goes much deeper than simply using language or playing particular language-games. As Wittgenstein points out in his "Lecture on Aesthetics," "if you came to a foreign tribe, whose language you didn't know at all and you wished to know what words corresponded to 'good, fine, etc., what would you look for? You would look for smiles, gestures, food, toys" (p. 2). It, perhaps, seems curious at first that Wittgenstein includes these last two items, but upon reflection this makes sense. Far from being objective artifacts in the world, these items obtain much of their significance from their context, from how they are used, and, as such, are part of our natural history as well.

We have been discussing the distinction between human and non-human forms of life in order to clarify what traits human beings share. Yet, not everything Wittgenstein says on this subject points to what is common. Many examples hinge on vast differences between groups of human beings. Here the distinction that Wittgenstein wishes to make is between groups of human beings. There is no question, in many of these examples, of the humanness of the subjects. However, they do live their lives differently than we do and, as such, it can be said of them that they have a different form of life.

We discover this in quite ordinary circumstances, for example, when we visit a foreign country. Here the people we encounter share our human form of life, and yet, it may be the case that "we do not understand the people. And not because of not knowing what they are saying to themselves We cannot find our feet with them" (PI, p. 223). This passage reinforces the point that a common form of life includes more than a shared language. We can be lost among these people "even given a mastery of the country's language" (PI, p. 223).

That there are differences in human ways of living is a recurring theme in Wittgenstein's writing. I would contend that part of "what has to be accepted," part of what is given, is the existence of these differences in human ways of living. "For here life would run on differently. What interests us would not interest them" (Z 388). This theme is present in Volume Two of the *Last Writings* as well:

But now imagine you were to come into a society in which, as we want to say, feelings can be recognized with certainty from appearances (we are not using the picture of the inner and the outer). But wouldn't that be similar to coming from a country where many masks are worn into one where no, or fewer, masks are worn? (Thus perhaps from England to Ireland.) Life is just different there (p. 28).

This last statement is perhaps surprising because we tend to think of forms of life as very different. The differences which come readily to mind might be like those between the Orient and the Occident. We are not likely to think of the differences between the English and the Irish as large enough to constitute a difference in forms of life. Here Wittgenstein's example is instructive. The differences which do exist between the English and the Irish may in fact be enough to count each as a different form of life. On this point, Wittgenstein is unclear because he provides us with no sharp boundary. We may, in fact, be unable to draw one here. As Wittgenstein continuously points out, many of our concepts do not have sharp boundaries. In *Zettel*, he says that "heap of sand is a concept without sharp boundaries" (392. Cf. PG. p. 240). In such cases, where no sharp boundary exists, we do not have a paradigm case in mind. There is no one example that best illustrates the concept "heap of sand." We can distinguish heaps of sand from hills of sand, but somewhere in the transition between grains of sand and heap of sand, the distinction blurs. The same is likely true of forms of life.

This is an issue that has perplexed many commentators who are determined to find rigid boundaries between forms of life. It is, admittedly, frustrating to leave the subject without fixing the distinctions more clearly. The temptation in the literature has been to focus on the extremes. One extreme I will criticize below is the idea that there is only human form of life. This has the merit of simplicity, but many defects. Another answer is to multiply nearly to infinity, the number of forms of life. We saw one attempt to do this in Chapter One by equating forms of life with language-games. While this option no longer seems viable, there is still an open question of where to sketch, even very broadly, the cut-off point between the two concepts.

A clue to this elusive line of demarcation can be found in Wittgenstein's writing on religion. For

Wittgenstein people who are religious have a different view of the world as a whole. In the Notebooks, we get a picture of the religious perspective. "To believe in a God means to see that facts of the world are not the end of the matter" (p. 74). The difference between this perspective and the non-religious one can be seen in his "Lecture on Religious Belief:

Suppose someone were a believer and said: "I believe in a Last Judgement," and I said: "Well, I'm not so sure. Possibly." You would say there is an enormous gulf between us. If he said: "There is a German aeroplane overhead," and I said "possibly I'm not so sure," you'd say we were fairly near (p. 53).

The determination of different forms of life is clearly connected to agreement. The question is when do we reach a critical mass in agreements?

Another indication of where we draw the line between forms of life occurs in *On Certainty*. What we take to be certain, as well as what is susceptible to doubt, can be used to distinguish different human forms of life. An important metaphor in this respect is what Wittgenstein calls our "picture of the world." Presumably, we may judge whether a form of life is different from our own by comparing our picture of the world with theirs, as Wittgenstein does in *On Certainty*:

262. I can imagine a man who had grown up in quite special circumstances and had been taught that the earth came into being 50 years ago, and therefore believed this. We might instruct him: the earth has long. .etc. We should be trying to give him our picture of the world. This would happen through a kind of persuasion. For us, statements such as "the earth existed long before my birth" form a particular picture of the world. Doubting one of these propositions would call the entire structure into question. "If I wanted to doubt the existence of the earth long before my birth, I should have to doubt all sorts of things that stand fast for me" (OC 234).

I think it is important to notice that I have avoided equating the line between different forms of life with national or cultural boundaries. This is important because it is precisely these kinds of boundaries that Wittgenstein might criticize as artificial. True, both kinds of boundaries are subject to change, but these changes occur for different reasons. In a sense, the differences between forms of life are more fundamental than those differences which characterize some nations, for example, those in the Balkans or the Middle East. Cultural boundaries present their own problems as well, though intuitively, they seem much more compatible with forms of life.

Before considering the secondary literature, and an important criticism of the view I am defending, I would like to discuss another metaphor that is connected with forms of life, but is not widely discussed. The lack of time spent on this image is certainly due, in part, to its cryptic nature. It is mentioned even less than the expression "form of life," and does not appear at all in the *Philosophical Investigations*. However, it does merit examination. In *Zettel* Wittgenstein says "(only in the stream of thought life do words have meaning)" (173). On the surface, this sounds like an elaboration of a theme that is expressed first in the *Tractatus*:

3.3 Only propositions have sense; only in the nexus of a proposition does a name have meaning.

There seems to be a continuity in Wittgenstein's thinking and passages like this can be taken as evidence of it. However, the stream of life is not a derivative concept.

Given Wittgenstein's familiarity with William James, there is some reason to think that the expression may be an oblique reference to James' "stream of consciousness." However, the "stream of life" connects with other themes in Wittgenstein's philosophy that bear directly on the question of forms of life. We can see in the image of the stream of life the historical nature of human life. The remarks on the stream of life are, like many of Wittgenstein's remarks, comments on the natural history of human beings. Forms of life have their own natural history. Our views of the world, which are expressions of the ways we live, are not static. We see many instances of this in *On Certainty*:

132. Men have judged that a king can make rain; we say this contradicts all experience. Today they judge that aeroplanes and the radio etc. are means for closer contact of peoples and the spread of culture.

This spread of culture compounds the difficulties, mentioned above, that we have in distinguishing different human forms of life from one another. For Wittgenstein, we "see life as a weave, this pattern (pretence say) is not always complete and is varied in a multiplicity of ways" (RPP 672). More importantly, this "pattern in the weave is interwoven with many others" (RPP 673, Cf. Z 569).

The stream of life also emphasizes the linear character of human life. We see our history as a development and improvement of previous generations. Perhaps this is a function of our particular form of life. We might say, then, that the stream of life serves as the cornerstone for a particular philosophy of history. Nevertheless, "we believe that the simplest plough existed before the complicated one" (PO, p. 397). This notion of progress is particularly important in our epistemology as we will see in Chapter Three. In any case, the stream of life serves as an additional metaphor that adds to our understanding of forms of life.

I have stressed two roles for the concept "form of life." The human form of life is distinguished from the non-human, and within the human form of life, there are different ways of living that count as different forms of life. Within the different human forms of life, the differences become much more important than the similarities between the various forms of life. Yet, in my treatment, I have left room for both aspects, the differences as well as the similarities. However, my characterization of Wittgenstein's notion of form of life is not universally accepted. I would now like to defend my claims in light of an opposing view.

One criticism of my thesis is offered by Newton Garver in his book *This Complicated Form of Life*. Here he claims that there is only one human form of life. In this interpretation, I am quite correct in making my first distinction between human and non-human forms of life. In other words, my emphasis on human similarities is well-grounded in the texts. However, in making my

second distinction, between different human forms of life, I am quite wrong. My emphasis on human differences goes far beyond the texts. In order to defend my position here, I will have to show that there is adequate textual support for this second distinction. In formulating the criticism of my distinction, Garver uses several kinds of textual evidence. First, he cites the predominance of the singular formulation of "form of life" in the Investigations. He points out, correctly, that only one of the five passages contains the plural form. This one passage occurs late in the text and, according to Garver, was not subject to revision. These problems are compounded by the formulation itself: "What has to be accepted, the given is-so one could say-forms of life" (p. 226). First, it is qualified by the phrase "one could say." Secondly, in German, the phrase is expressed in the subjunctive. For these reasons, Garver hesitates to put too much weight on it.

There are problems with this kind of evidence which I have raised earlier. Focusing on the occurrences of one expression, no matter how important we say that it is, can lead us astray. But, even with these problems, Garver's point can be somewhat neutralized by inspecting other texts. Counting all the references to "form of life," singular or plural, gives us ten citations. It should be noted that I am, somewhat cautiously, including one reference from the "Lecture on Aesthetics:" "in order to get clear about aesthetic words you have to describe ways of living" (p. 11). Of these ten references, five are expressed in the plural. On the surface, then, with the plural form achieving parity, it still seems to be an open question whether Wittgenstein intended one expression to predominate. This merely tells us that evidence of this kind can only be inconclusive.

This way of analyzing the concept is fundamentally flawed because it only focuses on explicit references to one expression. Yet, as E. F. Thompkins warns "there is no need to expect that every expression of the idea 'pattern of living' will be signposted by the word 'Lebensform'" (p. 91). In fact, we learn next to nothing about the concept by analyzing only such occurrences. Garver's discussion is also problematic because he attempts to use Wittgenstein's comments on "form of life" to understand other passages in Investigations, but does little work in the opposite direction. First, one needs to use other passages to understand forms of life. Only then can the concept be useful in understanding other aspects of the text.

Garver contends that these passages are best understood as emphasizing what is common to all human beings as language users. To say that there can be differences among human beings only reinforces this philosophical point. This point is best expressed, in Garver's view, by one central passage from the Philosophical Investigations: Can only those hope who can talk? Only those who have mastered the use of language. That is to say, the phenomena of hope are modes of this complicated form of life (p. 174).

What makes our human form of life unique is that we use language. Given this, it does not matter that there are some differences among language users. These differences are contingent upon the specific language the group is using, whether it be German, French, or English. In the final analysis, Garver estimates that Wittgenstein simply does not make much of these differences. Philosophically, they are not important.

If we restrict our analysis to the explicit references to "form of life" in the texts, this perspective has some validity. Yet, in the overall context of Wittgenstein's philosophy, this view accounts for only one aspect of "Lebensform." Much of what Wittgenstein writes concerns the vast differences between groups of people who share different forms of life. Wittgenstein maintains that it is not only possible to imagine such different human forms of life, but that it is impossible to imagine fundamentally different concepts without positing these differences in patterns of living. Thus, Wittgenstein takes issue with the idea, implicit in Garver's criticism, that these differences between groups of human beings are not very great at all and can be attributed to accidental features. In fact, the differences between human forms of life are fundamental.

One such fundamental difference can be imagined in the realm of mathematics: Well, I could imagine, for instance, that people had a different calculus or a technique which we should not call calculating." But would it be wrong? (Is a coronation wrong? To beings different from ourselves it might look extremely odd) PI, p. 227).

This does not imply that different ways of calculating are themselves different forms of life. Garver rightly criticizes this line of reasoning because it implies that differences in custom indicate different forms of life. In this view Catholics and Protestants must have different forms of life, because they have different ways of worshipping. This brings us back to the difficulty of drawing boundaries between different human forms of life. Communities may have different ways of praying to the same god and yet share the same form of life. However, we are tempted to say that communities that have similar ways of worshipping, at least similar rituals, but worship different gods, have different forms of life. Likewise, differences in calculating highlight this distinction between accidental and fundamental differences. It would require us to think of many important differences in order to imagine a group of people who mathematics in a fundamentally different way from our own. What would it take to imagine a group of people who calculate differently from us? It would take a different form of life. "In fact, this is the only way in which essentially different concepts are imaginable" (Z 388). Now, the question we face with groups like this is their humanness. Garver perhaps would want to say that if these beings are, in fact, that different they must not be human. He might cite, as textual support, such passages as this one from *Zettel*:

390. 'These men would have nothing human about them.' Why? We could not possibly make ourselves understood to them. Not even as we can to a dog. We could not find our feet with them.

But such evidence is problematic because Wittgenstein clearly has in mind here, and elsewhere, differences among human beings. After all, the last sentence of this passage admits that "there surely could be such beings, who in other respects were human" (Z 390).

Rudolf Haller reinforces this point that Wittgenstein makes with respect to tangible differences. "That there are societies which use scales and concepts of colour different from ours, an example Wittgenstein uses often, is an empirically well-established fact" (p. 135). The debate

surrounding forms of life sometimes loses sight of this current in Wittgenstein's thinking. It is without a doubt that this "empirical inclination," which is "often overlooked," has led to misreadings on the subject of forms of life (p. 135).

In the "Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough," Wittgenstein does recognize similarities among groups of human beings, but "what seems to me to be most striking is the dissimilarity of all these rites" (PO, p. 143). Here, it may be objected that the dissimilarities are not enough to constitute a different form of life. Likewise, when Wittgenstein says "'grief' describes a pattern which recurs, with different variations, in the weave of our life" (PI, p. 174), these variations are minimal. While it is true that, compared to non-human forms of life, these variations are minimal, it is not obviously true that they are too minimal to constitute real fundamental differences in human ways of living. To say otherwise seems to indicate an artificial boundary to the concept of forms of life which, in all probability, Wittgenstein would abhor.

Perhaps, in the end, the debate comes to an emphasis on one of the other two aspects of forms of life. Garver chooses to emphasize the similarities and also chooses to restrict his analysis to one text:

The most important conclusion is that there is no warrant for the widespread view that Wittgenstein implies or suggests a plurality of human Lebensformen, in the sense in which the expression is used in the Philosophical Investigations (p. 240).

However, I cannot reconcile this thesis with three reinforcing aspects of Wittgenstein's analysis. First, the differences between human ways of living are quite great and fundamental "We don't understand Chinese gestures any more than we understand Chinese sentences" (Z 219). Secondly, the only way we can even imagine "essentially different" concepts is by postulating different forms of life. This impossibility is reinforced by a third point. Wittgenstein continuously expresses the possibility of imagining these different forms of life:

528. It would be possible to imagine people who had something not quite unlike a language: a play of sounds, without vocabulary or grammar. ('Speaking with tongues').

This idea is expressed early in the Investigations with the builders in language-game (2). The possibility is, at least in part, supported by empirical evidence. I leave my defense of forms of life to rest on these considerations.

However, leaving the concept here will not get us very far in Wittgenstein's philosophy. To say that the concept of forms of life emphasizes the importance of human activity in formulating our concepts is not elaborate enough to capture the depth of analysis Wittgenstein presents. It is only when we put these ideas to use that we see their full impact. This is most eloquently presented in the later writings, especially *On Certainty*, which deals with epistemological issues and foundations.

III

This chapter will connect Wittgenstein's concept of "forms of life" with his work on epistemology in order to demonstrate the important foundational value of forms of life. Wittgenstein's version of foundationalist epistemology is unlike any other formulation in two important respects. First, the nature of the foundation is unlike the knowledge claims themselves. Second, Wittgenstein's foundationalism contains elements of coherentism. These elements are often interpreted as the central core of his epistemology and lead some commentators to conclude that Wittgenstein is, in some varying degrees, a relativist. Wittgenstein faces a second problem which comes from his emphasis on human activity, and forms of life, as a foundation for epistemology. The problem, simply stated, is that if our knowledge claims are based on forms of life, then we are unable to determine a correct form of life. From our form of life, we cannot say, with any meaningfulness, whether another form of life is right or wrong. This is the problem of incommensurability. After reviewing important elements of Wittgenstein's epistemology, I will evaluate these criticisms, and Wittgenstein's possible defense, in order to determine the viability of this theory of knowledge.

Categorizing Wittgenstein's theory of knowledge as either foundationalism or coherentism is difficult because these traditional distinctions do not readily apply. To be sure, there are some similarities between these two theories of knowledge and Wittgenstein's approach. However, it is not correct simply to say that Wittgenstein's view is a hybrid. It is probable that, were he alive today, Wittgenstein would disavow both programs of current epistemology. One important reason for this would be his dissatisfaction with the method which demands that knowledge be defined in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. One is tempted to say, as Wittgenstein does of the concept "game," that our concept of knowledge "is a concept with blurred edges" (PI 71). This does not imply that the search for clarity on the subject is not valuable. However, we learn as much by the discovery that our concepts are blurry as we do by the clarification of them. Most importantly, we learn the artificiality of some forms of clarification. The lack of a sharp boundary is an important concept for Wittgenstein's epistemology and is a recurrent theme in *On Certainty*.

In order to understand Wittgenstein's theory of knowledge, we must examine the relationship between knowledge certainty, and doubt. Knowledge, for Wittgenstein, implies the possibility of going wrong and, thus, presupposes doubt. On the other hand, certainty lies outside the realm of knowledge and is qualitatively different from it. The relationship between these concepts is critical to understanding Wittgenstein's approach because it is through this relationship that we arrive at the end of justification. Beliefs can only be justified so far; beyond this, one must act. Therefore, justification does not come to an end in a set of basic beliefs which act as the propositional foundations for our knowledge. Justification comes to an end in human activity. Wittgenstein's foundationalism differs from others because it is not based on a search for what Avrum Stroll calls "homogeneous foundations" (p. 145). If knowledge can be grounded, this ground will be qualitatively different from the knowledge claims themselves.

Wittgenstein claims that "we just do not see how very specialized the use of 'I know' is" (OC 11). Because of this we mistakenly connect knowledge with certainty. This error leads us to make knowledge claims similar to G. E. Moore's. In fact, according to Wittgenstein, "knowledge and certainty belong to different categories" (OC 308). The difference between the two is the difference between two logical categories. He asks: "When is something objectively certain? When a mistake is not possible. But what kind of possibility is that? Mustn't mistake be logically excluded?" (OC 194). Propositions that we take to be certain, like Moore's, "have a peculiar role in the system of our empirical propositions" (OC 136). Being certain does not mean that we cannot doubt a particular proposition but rather, that doubting has no role to play here.

What is certain lies outside of a language-game and the ability to doubt at all presupposes this certainty. One example Wittgenstein uses to illustrate this point is the language-game of learning people's names. "It is part of the language-game with people's names that everyone knows his name with the greatest certainty" (OC 579). Here we might say that this particular language-game is based on the certainty that I attach to my name. Here doubting seems to be circumscribed, at least under normal circumstances. Likewise, the certainty I attach to the claim that these are my hands is presupposed by the particular language-game where such propositions arise. I am playing this language-game wrong if I do not recognize objects like my hands with certainty (OC 446). Not only does doubting lose its sense outside of the language-game, but within this context, we are unable to doubt everything at once. "If you tried to doubt everything at once you would not get as far as doubting anything. The game of doubting itself presupposes certainty" (OC 115, Cf. OC 354). Our very ability to doubt indicates the existence of a foundation because we, in fact, do need some ground for doubting (OC 122, Cf. OC 458).

It is in connection with this notion of grounding doubt that Wittgenstein introduces the concept of hinge propositions. Here we begin to see the connection between the logical role which doubt plays in our language and the way we act in the world. The work of scientists provides a good example of this because "it belongs to the logic of our scientific investigations that certain things are in deed not doubted" (OC 342). In an investigation of certain logical formations, the geologist will not doubt whether the earth existed long before his birth. We cannot act in the world if we doubt everything. The scientist's work would never progress if each investigation required a reexamination of the foundations. The scientist is working with a "definite world-picture" (OC 167). Wittgenstein uses the term "world-picture and not hypothesis because it is the matter-of-course foundation for his research and as such also goes unmentioned" (OC 167). However, as we will see below, while these foundations go unmentioned they do not necessarily remain unchanged. The point here is that "we just can't investigate everything, and for that reason, we are forced to rest content with assumption. If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put" (OC 343). However, the claim that certain propositions act as hinges does not imply that Wittgenstein is seeking to ground our beliefs in terms of self-justifying beliefs.

The status of these hinge propositions has caused some critics to question whether Wittgenstein is not simply trying to find just such a set of self-justifying beliefs which will ground our

knowledge claims. In an attempt to circumvent this problem, Avrum Stroll points out, in his book *Moore and Wittgenstein On Certainty*, that these hinge propositions are really not propositions at all, at least not in the ordinary sense of "proposition" (p. 146). As Wittgenstein himself points out "not everything that has the form of an empirical proposition is one" (OC 308). These hinge propositions are not ordinary propositions because they are not "subject to evidence, proof, confirmation, or disconfirmation" (Stroll, p. 146). They serve as the ground, but, "the ground is not true, nor yet false" (OC 205). Once again we see that the question of doubting does apply here.

As human beings, we can only doubt so much and continue to act. This is a fact about our life, our way of living, not our theories. We fundamentally go wrong in our theories when we allow them to lead us to the conclusion that we must justify all our claims in the same way. The problem is that this is not how we live our lives. "My life consists in being content to accept many things" (OC 344). However, as we will see below, this does not imply that my way of living cannot be fundamentally misguided. But for the most part, the certainty that we do have is not based on "stupidity or credulity" (OC 235).

What we take to be certain is an integral part of our way of living:

358. Now I would like to regard this certainty, not as something akin to hastiness or superficiality, but as a form of life.

An important part of this notion is the fact that we act in particular ways because, for us, it is reasonable to act in these ways. What counts as reasonable is determined, in particular, by the language-game and, in general, by our form of life. Within a particular form of life, "the reasonable man does not have certain doubts" (OC 220). Entertaining these doubts would force us to change our entire way of life. We can imagine cases where someone would doubt the existence of his hands and want to "make sure it wasn't all done by mirrors," however, "we should not be sure whether we ought to call that doubting. We might describe his way of behaving as like the behavior of doubt, but his game would not be ours" (OC 255). Our doubting only has a meaning in particular contexts.

An important reason why doubting does not make sense in certain contexts is that, if we can really doubt these propositions that we claim to doubt, there is no reason to place confidence in the method by which we intend to assuage the doubt. If I am sitting at a table and my hands are hidden beneath the table, I can claim to doubt that I have two hands. But if I can really doubt, under these circumstances, that I have two hands, what confidence will I have in my method of verification? 250. My having two hands is, in normal circumstances, as certain as anything that I could produce in evidence for it. That is why I am not in a position to take the sight of my hand as evidence for it (Cf. OC 125). In a sense, then, it is not correct to ask for proof of certainty in cases like this. The proof will not be more certain than the original claim. The epistemic regress which continuously plagues foundationalism cannot end by positing a set of conditions for justification.

Each language-game that involves the use of expressions of knowing or certainty has its own criteria for what counts as certain or what fulfills the knowledge claim. However, if skepticism is used as the judge of efficacy for knowledge conditions then no criteria we use will work. If the skeptic can doubt what we truly take to be fundamental then the skeptic can also doubt any evidence we use as justification. Wittgenstein's main point is that for this debate to take place at all, there must be some common ground between the skeptic and the claimant. This common ground involves the use of criteria that serve as a public standard for meaning and justification. This common ground is what brings justification to an end.

The end of justification is where Wittgenstein radically departs from all other varieties of foundationalism. The traditional notion in epistemology is that the grounds for our knowledge must be similar in kind to knowledge itself. However, for Wittgenstein, the ground is nothing like knowledge. The end of justification "is not certain propositions' striking us immediately as true" (OC 204). What grounds our knowledge may, at first, strike us as quite odd because "the end is not an ungrounded proposition: it is an ungrounded way of acting" (OC 110). The same theme is recapitulated in the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* where Wittgenstein warns that "the danger here, I believe, is one of giving a justification of our procedure where there is no such thing as a justification and we ought simply to have said: that's how we do it" (III 74). In the *Philosophical Investigations*, the idea is expressed by the image of the bedrock on which "my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: is simply what I do" (PI 217).

Part of the difficulty, which Wittgenstein acknowledges, is to realize that we are in fact at the ground. Our temptation, when giving justification, is to go as far as possible, but, in going this far, we go too far. "The difficulty here is: to Stop" (Z 314). The problem, which Wittgenstein goes so far as to call "our disease" (RFM VI 31), is our temptation to want to explain, not only our claims of knowledge but the ground on which they are based. "The difficult thing here is not, to dig down to the ground; no, it is to recognize the ground that lies before us as the ground" (RFM VI 31). This is made more difficult by the fact that the ground is not justified in the way that ordinary beliefs are. The nature of the foundation is such that our notions or justification do not apply. Thus the source of our confusion here comes from thinking that we must continue our justification activity beyond its normal application. It is, as it were, "difficult to begin at the beginning. And not try to go further back" (OC 471).

The important consideration for Wittgenstein's epistemology is that it fits in with the rest of our human practices. Here the concept of "forms of life" is paramount. Further analysis will make this clearer, but we have already seen the importance that human activities have with respect to justification. Knowledge, as well as our justification for it, must be integrated with the rest of our human practices. Of course, the specific way this is done will depend on the human practice in question. For instance, scientific investigations will have different criteria for what counts as a knowledge claim. What counts as appropriate justification will differ within each language-game.

But, even in specialized language-games justification which goes too far does not readily fit into the particular human practice. Beliefs are not isolated propositions that demand individual justification, they are connected. Our beliefs, certainties, and doubts are part of our particular form of life. As we have seen, even what counts as an unreasonable belief is determined by the criteria of specific language-games. However, the claim that forms of life serve as foundations can lead Wittgenstein to certain epistemological problems. Before considering these problems we should examine several other aspects of Wittgenstein's theory of knowledge, including the elements of coherentism that it contains.

There is ample textual evidence that supports the claim that Wittgenstein's view contains some facets of the coherence theory of knowledge. In *On Certainty* he clearly has such a view in mind when he says:

142. It is not single axioms that strike me as obvious it is a system in which consequences and premises give one another mutual support. The important emphasis here is on the fact that support is mutual. Propositions that provide support for other propositions must also be grounded. Even learning consists of more than coming to hold single propositions:

141. When we first begin to believe anything, what we believe is not a single proposition; it is a whole system of propositions. (Light dawns gradually over the whole.) Learning involves more than memorizing isolated facts. My beliefs and convictions are structured (OC 102).

This notion of coherence is important in Wittgenstein's epistemology because it makes sense out of the activity of doubting. As Wittgenstein points out, we cannot doubt all the propositions we hold to at once. However, we can doubt any one proposition at a time (OC 232), because, unlike traditional versions of foundationalism, this view does not place special weight on any one proposition. "What I hold fast to is not one proposition but a nest of propositions" (OC 225). Doubting only has meaning within a particular language-game and the language-game, as it were, determines which doubts make sense and which do not. I cannot imagine doubting that I have two hands because "so far I have no system at all within which this doubt might exist" (OC 247). What counts as doubt is determined by the particular system of propositions, the language-game, which is the "point of departure" and "the element in which arguments have their life" (OC 105).

Wittgenstein uses two important and contrasting metaphors to describe his theory of knowledge. In the *Investigations*, the image is that of the bedrock where "my spade is turned" (PI 217). This is echoed in *On Certainty* where he is searching for "the rock bottom of my convictions" (OC 248). However, as Gertrude Conway notes, the metaphor shifts from the bedrock, which is unmoveable, to the river bed which is more fluid. The bedrock itself is no longer unshakeable and sacrosanct because in the same passage he says that "one might say that these foundation walls are carried by the whole house" (OC 248). Here, what we take to be foundational is determined, to a certain extent, by the rest of our convictions. What propositions count as foundational is determined by the number of connections they have with other propositions.

Thus, our belief in history is not "hollow" because "there is so much that this connects up with" (OC 312). However, this connection is not one of logical implication but rather one of justification. This mutual support is an important characteristic of our foundation. Propositions that we hold to are ones that have the weight of evidence, that is what we take for evidence, on their side. An example of this is the hypothesis that the earth existed long before I was born. We accept this because "the opposite hypothesis has nothing on its side" (OC 190).

As noted above, the image Wittgenstein uses changes in his later works to the shifting river bed. This metaphor provides us with the clearest connection, in Wittgenstein's epistemology, between coherentism and foundationalism. Our foundations are no longer immune to change and they do change from time to time. The amount of shift depends on how foundational the belief is. "The bank of that river consists partly of hard rock, subject to no alteration or only to an imperceptible one, partly of sand which now in one place now in another gets washed away, or deposited" (OC 99). While it is true that "the river-bed of thoughts may shift," we must work to "distinguish between the movement of the waters on the river-bed and the shift of the bed itself; though there is no sharp division of the one from the other (OC 97).

In this respect, our knowledge is unlike what previous philosophers theorized that it was or could be. There are, for Wittgenstein, "hard" and "fluid" propositions and the relationship between them can change over time so that fluid propositions could become hardened and hardened ones could become fluid (OC 96). However, as I mentioned earlier, the nature of these propositions, the ones that serve as foundations, is unlike ordinary propositions. As I noted in Chapter Two, the propositions or core beliefs that constitute a form of life cannot be enumerated as a set. It is easy to be misled by Wittgenstein's formulation here into thinking that we can provide, at any given time, a list of both our hard and fluid propositions. This would constitute the set of beliefs that ground our human ways of living. However, propositions that stand fast for us, such as the claim that the earth existed long before my birth, cannot, it seems be listed as a set. In fact, Wittgenstein claims that the expression "I know" is "misused" if we think we can enumerate all the propositions that we know (OC 6). I am aware that certain things stand fast for me but not as propositions. I can formulate them into a set if pressed, for instance when doing philosophy, but even then it is not clear that the set is complete. The best evidence for what I hold fast to is how I live.

Here the connection between certainty and activity is important and this theme appears early in *On Certainty*:

7. My life shews that I know or am certain that there is a chair over there, or a door, and so on. I tell a friend e.g. "Take that chair over there", "Shut the door", etc. Certainty is conceived of as something "that lies beyond being justified or unjustified; as it were, something animal" (OC 359). Justification does not lead us to what is certain and consequently, for Wittgenstein, education is conceived of, not as the acquisition of propositions, but as learning how to do things in the world. "Children do not learn that books exist, that armchairs exist, etc., etc, they learn to fetch books, sit in armchairs, etc., etc." (OC 476).

This notion that the foundation of our knowledge is bound up with our way of living leads Wittgenstein to conclude that there can be many different systems of knowledge. However, this does not mean that knowledge is solipsistic. We participate in a community of knowers so that "what determines our judgment, our concepts, and reactions, is not what one man is doing now, an individual action, but the whole hurly-burly of human actions, the background against which we see any action" (Z 567). Different communities may act in ways very much unlike the ways we act. We would say that "here life would run on differently. What interests us would not interest them. Here different concepts would no longer be unimaginable" (Z 388).

One of the most radical examples of this can be found in Wittgenstein's concept of the foundation of mathematics. Here it is particularly hard for us to imagine that there could be other ways of doing mathematics that would not be wrong. However, Wittgenstein wants to maintain that "I could imagine, for instance, that people had a different calculus or a technique which we should not call calculating.' But would it be wrong? Is a coronation wrong? To beings different from us it might look extremely odd)" (PI, p. 227). This idea also appears in the *Remarks on The Foundations of Mathematics* with the example of the woodcutters. They measure wood differently than we do but, again, Wittgenstein is hesitant to call their actions wrong. He maintains that they use words differently than we do, but they are not wrong in doing so. More precisely, they are not wrong simply because they do their calculations differently from us. If we are to make sense of the claim that they are calculating wrongly, it must be for a more compelling reason than simply their differing from us. This problem will be dealt with below but it is important to recognize that this problem is external to the form of life involved. Clearly, within the form of life of the woodcutters, it will make sense to say that some calculations are wrong based on the process they use. Wittgenstein hints that, for them, the method would seem wrong. Because this example illustrates some of the problems that Wittgenstein's view faces I will present the relevant section:

150. How could I shew them that-as I should say-you don't really buy more wood if you buy a pile covering a bigger area? I should, for instance, take a pile which was small by their ideas and, by laying the logs around, change it into a 'big' one. This might convince them-but perhaps they would say: "Yes, now it's a lot of wood and costs more"-and that would be the end of the matter. Wittgenstein's theory of knowledge, as I have described it, faces two related problems from critics. The first problem is the charge that Wittgenstein is an extreme relativist. It is easy to see how this charge could apply to Wittgenstein, given his use of examples like the woodcutters. I believe such charges of relativism, like the criticism Roger Trigg presents in his book *Reason and Commitment*, cannot be fully supported by textual evidence. As Conway points out, quite correctly, the validity of Trigg's account is "highly tenuous" and Trigg "offers scant direct textual reference" (p. 94). The root of the charge that Wittgenstein is an extreme relativist can be traced all the way back to the equation of language-games with forms of life. Taken to its extreme, this view implies that for every language user there is a form of life. Trigg's account "engenders an uncalculable plethora of narrowly circumscribed forms of life" (Conway, p. 97). This leads to a kind of solipsism that, as I have tried to show, is not present in Wittgenstein's epistemology. In

fact, as Conway notes, "the whole thrust of the Philosophical Investigations in itself, with its continued emphasis on sharing, agreement, and commonality of meanings, moves away from any position of extreme individual relativism" (p. 94). As we will see presently, Wittgenstein's view also moves away from social relativism as well.

A related problem for this theory of knowledge is the charge that different forms of life are incommensurable. This implies first that there can be no significant communication across form of life boundaries and secondly, that the question of whether a form of life is wrong cannot even arise. The first point can be diffused by appealing to the first notion of forms of life given in Chapter Two. One of the uses of this concept is to differentiate between human and non-human forms of life. Doing so implies that there is a certain commonality in the human form of life. Wittgenstein expresses this by claiming that the "common behavior of mankind is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language" (PI 206). It is a question of fact whether there is such a common behavior, but clearly, human beings have enough in common to understand each other despite their different ways of living. This does not mean that we can understand these differences easily. If there is not enough common ground between our way of living and another people's way of living, then "we cannot find our feet with them" (PI, p. 223).

The second aspect of the charge of incommensurability is the claim that we cannot make sense of the possibility that a form of life could be wrong. This charge arises because the criteria of meaningfulness and justification are based on forms of life. Therefore, we cannot criticize other forms of life because our concepts are different from theirs. In an article entitled "Can a Form of Life be Wrong?" Lawrence Hinman compares the claim that a form of life cannot be wrong to the claim that the constitution cannot be unconstitutional. Since the constitution of a country determines the conditions for constitutionality, it does not make sense to say that it can be unconstitutional itself. "In a similar way, a form of life is the ultimate foundation of both meaningfulness and justification; it is, in other words, the given which has to be accepted. It would simply make no sense to claim that a form of life could be wrong" (p. 339).

I do not believe that this charge can withstand textual scrutiny either and there are two possible responses. First, Wittgenstein reminds us that it does make sense to say that certain ways of living are mistaken. We might say, of the woodcutters, that "a society acting in this way would perhaps remind us of the Wise Men of Gotham," a society whose inhabitants were referred to as wise but who were in fact quite foolish (RFM I 151). Again, in *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein compares people who believe that we can go to the moon with others who believe as we do at the time of Wittgenstein's writing and says that "if we compared our system of knowledge with theirs then theirs is evidently the poorer one by far" (OC 286). Our language-games are "conditioned by certain facts" and language-games that go on despite these facts are in some sense mistaken (OC 617). Here we see how Wittgenstein differs even from less than extreme relativists by appealing to facts in the world.

Our epistemology is not simply what we say it is. Though its evolution is not judged from a perspective that is outside our human frames of reference, our knowledge does evolve and grow.

On the question of men and the moon, we clearly know more now than Wittgenstein did when he was alive. This provides us with a second response to the question of whether a form of life can be wrong. Here the claim that a form of life could be wrong means that it could be "held up to another form of life and found wanting" (Hinman, p. 348). Hinman argues from the possibility that our form of life could be wrong to the conclusion that forms of life, in general, could be wrong and thus, be susceptible to criticism from another form of life. While "there is something right-hearted about the claim that forms of life are the autonomous arbiters of meaning and justification," there is also, and importantly, something "wrong-headed" about this claim (P. 348). Hinman uses, as textual evidence, the claim Wittgenstein makes that those propositions which are hardened at one time may become fluid later on (OC 96). We have seen how this provides Wittgenstein with a form of foundationalism. However, the claim can also be seen in light of our present question. While Wittgenstein does maintain that we cannot doubt all our beliefs at one time, Hinman points out that no one belief "is immune from criticism. Indeed this even holds for 'fundamental' propositions in a sense" (p. 346).

What we are left with is the claim that our concepts are fluid, but not fluid enough to evade criticism. This criticism may have two sources. First, it seems that outside facts can cause us to change our beliefs, even those that serve as foundations. We see this often in the case of scientific investigations. Second, other forms of life can cause us to change our beliefs and the ways of living that we currently pursue. While this may not often come easily, as in the woodcutter's case, this change is possible. Wittgenstein sums up his own response to all of these charges in Volume Two of the Last Writings: We are playing with elastic, indeed even flexible concepts. But this does not mean they can be deformed at will and without offering resistance, and are therefore unusable. For if trust and distrust had no basis in objective reality, they would only be of pathological interest (p. 24).

It does not seem to be the case that Wittgenstein has left the objective world behind. To be sure, our relationship with it is not as simple as previous philosophers have made it. This is most evident in Wittgenstein's treatment of knowledge as an activity.

It is with this connection that we are brought full circle. We began this study with Wittgenstein's notion of the language-game, which illustrates the connection between language and the activities we use language in. He makes this point metaphorically by claiming that "words are deeds" (CV, p. 46). Now we see that there is also an important connection between knowing and doing. This is largely ignored in epistemology in favor of an analysis of the propositional character of knowledge. However, we miss something when we restrict ourselves to this one aspect of knowledge because inevitably the different aspects of knowledge are more connected in our lives than they are in our theories. To understand the grammar of "to know," we must look at how we use this expression. This comparative approach is important for Wittgenstein's epistemology and is expressed in the Investigations where we are asked to:

78. Compare knowing and saying:
how many feet high Mont Blanc is-
how the word "game" is used-

how a clarinet sounds-

One obvious problem with applying Wittgenstein's thoughts on knowledge is that he leaves us with the task of comparing. This is true of all his works that were not written: "to spare other people the trouble of thinking" (PI, p. vi). The *Philosophical Investigations* alone contains 784 questions of which only 110 are answered and 70 of the answers are meant to be wrong. We have quite a lot of work left to do ourselves with no clear indication of precisely how this work is to be carried out. While Wittgenstein leaves us little guidance he seems confident that we will recognize his points: I believe it might interest a philosopher, one who can think to himself, to read my notes. For even if I have hit the mark only rarely, he would recognize what targets I had been ceaselessly aiming at (OC, p. 50).

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