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Wittgenstein and Hacker: Übersichtliche Darstellung

Abstract

The concept of *übersichtliche Darstellung* is of fundamental significance for Wittgenstein (PI 122). Hacker translates *übersichtliche Darstellung* as ‘surveyable representation’ and equates it with the tabulation of grammar. He asks what surveyability means, whether examples can be found in Wittgenstein’s work, and why this method characterizes the form of account he gives. Ultimately, however, Hacker is unable to answer these questions and he attributes this failure to Wittgenstein. This paper argues that it is Hacker’s interpretation that fails, and presents an alternate (aesthetic) understanding of *übersichtliche Darstellung*; one that enables us to answer Hacker’s questions in a manner consistent with Wittgenstein’s philosophical practices.

Introduction

Wittgenstein writes that the concept of *übersichtliche Darstellung* is of fundamental significance for him (PI 122). In the 4th edition of the *Investigations*, as well as his extensively revised edition of *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning* (Parts I and II), Hacker translates

übersichtliche Darstellung as “surveyable representation”.¹ He examines this concept in the essay “Surveyability and surveyable representations (§122)” (Hacker 2009c: 307ff.). He argues that a main source of our failure to understand is that we do not have an overview (or surveyable representation) of the use of our words. Relying on geographical metaphors from the 1930s, he defines Wittgenstein’s later method as the tabulation of grammar (Hacker 2009c: 327). This interpretation raises a number of questions (which Hacker himself acknowledges early in his essay):

What exactly is meant by ‘an overview’? Why is our grammar lacking in surveyability? What is a surveyable representation? Where do we find examples of such representation in Wittgenstein’s work? What is an understanding that consists in *seeing connections*? Is the description of intermediate links part of the surveyable representation, or does it merely facilitate the understanding that the latter produces? What is meant by saying that this concept *characterizes* the way Wittgenstein looks at things, the *form* of account he gives? And why does he query whether adopting this form of representation is a ‘Weltanschauung’? These are the questions that must be addressed (Hacker 2009c: 307).

Ultimately, Hacker is unable to answer these questions, and he attributes this failure to Wittgenstein (2009c: 334). In this paper, I will argue that it is Hacker’s interpretation that fails, and I will present an alternate – aesthetic – understanding of *übersichtliche Darstellung*; one that enables us to answer the above questions in a manner consistent with Wittgenstein’s philosophical practices.

Part I

Anscombe translates §122 of the *Investigations* as follows:

A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not command a clear view of the use of our words. -- Our grammar is

¹ For the purposes of this paper, I will refer to the revised edition of *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning* as Hacker’s work alone. Although the original collection of essays was also the work of Gordon Baker, Hacker notes in his introduction: “The interpretation we had given of Wittgenstein’s conception of an overview and of the notion of a surveyable representation subsequently aroused grave doubts and misgivings in Gordon Baker. The new essay supports the old interpretation with detailed evidence from the *Nachlass*” (Hacker 2009a: xvii). For further detail and discussion, see Baker (2004) and Hutchinson and Read (2008).

lacking in this sort of perspicuity. A perspicuous representation produces just that understanding which consists in ‘seeing connexions’. Hence the importance of finding and inventing intermediate cases.

The concept of a perspicuous representation is of fundamental significance for us. It earmarks the form of account we give, the way we look at things. (Is this a *Weltanschauung*?) (PI 122)²

‘Perspicuity’ refers to clarity of expression or style (and is associated with clear thought and logical acuteness). A perspicuous representation is a clear, plain, transparent, or visible representation that can be taken in at a glance.³ The dictionary rendering of *übersichtliche Darstellung* is a ‘clear representation’ (related to concepts of ‘openness’ and ‘clarity’). This is consistent with Wittgenstein’s references to conceptual or grammatical ‘unclarities’ (PI 206/175, BT 409); the ‘transparency of arguments’ (BT 414); and the ‘clarification of the use of language’ (BT 422) (Hacker 2009c: 308-9).

Compare Hacker’s translation of §122 in the 4th edition of the *Investigations*:

A main source of our failure to understand is that we don’t have an *overview* of the use of our words. -- Our grammar is deficient in surveyability. A surveyable representation produces precisely that kind of understanding which consists in ‘seeing connections’. Hence the importance of finding and inventing intermediate links.

The concept of a surveyable representation is of fundamental significance for us. It characterizes the way we represent things, how we look at matters. (Is this a *Weltanschauung*?) (PI 122)

In Hacker’s translation, we lack an overview (not merely a view) of the use of our words. And while Anscombe’s translation indicates

² “*Es ist eine Hauptquelle unseres Unverständnisses, daß wir den Gebrauch unserer Wörter nicht übersehen. -- Unserer Grammatik fehlt es an Übersichtlichkeit. -- Die übersichtliche Darstellung vermittelt das Verständnis, welches eben darin besteht, daß wir die ‘Zusammenhänge sehen’. Daher die Wichtigkeit des Findens und des Erfindens von Zwischengliedern. Der Begriff der übersichtlichen Darstellung ist für uns von grundlegender Bedeutung. Er bezeichnet unsere Darstellungsform, die Art, wie wir die Dinge sehen. (Ist dies eine ‘Weltanschauung?’)*” (PI 122)

³ The opposite of a perspicuous representation is an ambiguous, cloudy (i.e. foggy), confused, incomprehensible, obscure, or unintelligible representation. Hacker notes that Wittgenstein paraphrased *übersichtlich* as “becomes transparent. I mean capable of being seen all at a glance” (TS 226r, §100 in Baker and Hacker 2009b: 207).

that grammar lacks perspicuity (perhaps by its very nature), Hacker's translation indicates a deficiency.⁴ Both translators agree that such representation produces an understanding which consists in "seeing connections." And whether speaking of cases or links, the importance of finding or inventing intermediate connections is emphasized.⁵ In the next paragraph, both translators stress the *way* we look at things (i.e. the *form* of account we give or the *way* we represent things). And finally, Wittgenstein's parenthetical question about a worldview (or *Weltanschauung*) is identical in both translations.

In reflecting on this remark, Hacker describes Wittgenstein's philosophy as "conceptual geography". Consequently, "philosophy aims to attain an overview of a conceptual field, [and] to arrange grammatical data so that the manifold relationships become perspicuous" (Hacker 2009b: 284). Quoting Wittgenstein, he notes that a philosopher wants to master the geography of concepts; to see every locality in its proximate and its distant surroundings (Hacker 2009b: 284).⁶ In a 1931 lecture, Wittgenstein remarks:

One difficulty with philosophy is that we lack a synoptic view. We encounter the kind of difficulty we should have with the geography of a country for which we had no map, or else a map of isolated bits. The country we are talking about is language and the geography its grammar. We can walk about the country quite well, but when forced to make a map, we go wrong (AWL 43 in Hacker 2009b:284).

Hacker connects this passage with a similar remark from 1939. Wittgenstein tells his students:

I am trying to conduct you on tours in a certain country. I will try to show you that the philosophical difficulties which arise in mathematics or elsewhere arise because we find ourselves in a strange town and do not know our way. So, we must learn the topography by going from

⁴ Later in his essay, Hacker also refers to passages in which "the grammar of our language is *lacking* in surveyability" (MS 108 (Vol. IV), 31; BT 417) (Hacker 2009c: 325) (emphasis added).

⁵ Neither 'cases' nor 'links' is a direct translation of *Zwischengliedern*, which signifies intermediate limbs or joints. The term suggests movement, a connotation missing from both translations. For related remarks, see Z 6 and 425.

⁶ See MS 137, 63a; cf. MS 162, 6v; MS 127, 99; MS 137, 63e quoted in Hacker 2009c: 310n.

one place in the town to another, and from there to another, and so on. And one must do this so often that one knows one's way, either immediately, or pretty soon after looking around a bit, wherever one may be set down.

This is an extremely good simile...The difficulty in philosophy is to find one's way about (LFM 44 in Hacker 2009b: 284-5).⁷

Before examining philosophy as 'conceptual geography,' it is important to note that in neither of the above quotations does Wittgenstein advocate map making. In the first remark, we have no map (or only a map of isolated bits) and when *forced* to make a map, we go wrong. In the second remark, we learn the topography of a town by going from one place to another (and from there to another, and so on). In both passages we walk (perhaps with Wittgenstein as a guide) until we know our way about (either immediately or after looking around).⁸ In the *Investigations*, he writes that "a philosophical problem has the form: 'I don't know my way about'" (PI 123). And in the preface to the *Investigations*, he characterizes the philosophical remarks in his book as a number of sketches of landscapes made in the course of long and involved journeyings. He suggests that if we look at these sketches, we will get a picture of the landscape. Thus, he describes the *Investigations* as an album (PI ix). Nowhere does Wittgenstein suggest that he is mapping (or even attempting to map) the landscape, nor that a map (understood as an overview or surveyable representation) might address or resolve philosophical problems.

In his essay on surveyable representation, Hacker writes that:

an overview is something one *has* when one can see across a landscape from on high -- or across a wide field of concepts and their connections. When one has an overview, one can say how the things that are in view stand in relation to one another (2009c: 309-10).

Consequently:

⁷ This quotation suggests that philosophical difficulties arising in different disciplines are like finding ourselves in a strange town rather than in the countryside.

⁸ Wittgenstein writes: "It could very well be imagined that someone knows his way around a city perfectly, i.e. would confidently find the shortest way from any place in it to any other, -- and yet would be quite incompetent to draw a map of the city. That, as soon as he tried, he produces nothing that is not completely wrong" (Z 121).

When one has attained an overview, when one has a clear grasp of the terrain, one can represent what is then in view in the form of a map -- or, less metaphorically, in the form of a description of the salient grammatical features of the problematic expression or segment of language (Hacker 2009c: 310).

Hacker does not walk in a landscape, he views it from on high. But if language is a country and grammar its geography, we are in the midst of language and it is not immediately clear how to conceive of a view from on high (or across a wide field of thought). According to Wittgenstein, grammar lacks such a bird's eye view (PR 52). Hacker's interpretation neither demonstrates nor explains how to attain such an overview, nor how to represent what is seen in the form of a map. It also remains unclear what a description of the salient grammatical features of a problematic expression or segment of language would be, and how such a description would be akin to a map.

In an attempt to answer these questions, Hacker traces §122 back to the *Big Typescript* (and ultimately to a remark on Frazer's *Golden Bough*) (2009c: 327). He notes that the heading under which the remark is found in the *Big Typescript* reads: "THE METHOD OF PHILOSOPHY: THE SURVEYABLE REPRESENTATION OF GRAMMAR // LINGUISTIC // FACTS. THE GOAL: TRANSPARENCY OF ARGUMENTS. JUSTICE" (BT 414).⁹ Hacker connects the concept of surveyable representation with the next remark in the typescript:

A proposition is completely logically analyzed when its grammar is laid out completely clearly [*vollkommen klargelegt*]. It might be written down or spoken in any number of ways.

Above all, our grammar is lacking in surveyability (BT 417).¹⁰

⁹ Hacker explains justice in terms of "doing justice to" (rather than distorting) grammatical facts. In the preface to *The Blue and Brown Books*, Rhees quotes the following remark from one of Wittgenstein's notebooks: "When I describe certain simple language games, this is not in order to construct from them gradually the processes of our developed language -- or of thinking -- which only leads to injustices (Nicod and Russell). I simply set forth the games as what they are, and let them shed their light on the particular problems" (BB x).

¹⁰ It is worth noting that in *Philosophical Remarks* Wittgenstein writes that 'a proposition is completely logically analyzed *if* its grammar is made clear: no matter what idiom it may be written or expressed in' (PR 1) (emphasis added).

This remark contrasts the *form* of logical analysis found in the *Tractatus* (the discovery of something hidden), with the *form* of logical analysis found in the later writings (grammar laid out completely clearly). It suggests that the grammar of a proposition can be laid out completely clearly, although grammar may be lacking in surveyability. In other words, clarity may be distinct from surveyability, and may refer to forms of representation (which can be written down or spoken in any number of ways).¹¹ Wittgenstein writes that “clarity, perspicuity are ends in themselves” (CV 7). The passage from the *Big Typescript* refers to the complete logical analysis of a single proposition when its grammar is laid out clearly. This is distinct from the surveyability of grammar as a whole. The heading under which these remarks are found refers to the surveyable representation of linguistic facts and to the transparency of arguments (both plural).¹²

Hacker equates the surveyable representation of the use of words with *tabulating* grammar, but it is unclear what this means (2009c: 327). Faced with this difficulty, he remarks:

It appears evident that Wittgenstein was fairly relaxed about his (rare) use of the expression ‘a surveyable representation [of the grammar of a word]’. It evidently allows for a descriptive grammatical interpretation -- as a specification, typically by means of grammatical propositions, of the salient rules (those necessary for the dispelling of specific conceptual difficulties) for the use of a given problematic expression in a manner that enables one to take them in, organized for the purpose of shedding light upon particular philosophical confusions. But perhaps it also allows for a comparative morphological interpretation [like Goethe’s] and for a comparative language-game one. These alternatives should not be seen as exclusive (Hacker 2009c: 331-2).

While Goethe’s morphology and Wittgenstein’s use of language games may not be mutually exclusive, they are incompatible with the interpretation being presented by Hacker.¹³ For Hacker, a

¹¹ For further discussion see Part II.

¹² Transparency (of argument) is more closely related to concepts of clarity, openness, and perspicuity than to surveyability.

¹³ In this paper, I will follow Wittgenstein’s practice of not hyphenating the term ‘language game’. (See, for example, quotations from *The Blue and Brown Books*.) For further

description of the use of words involves specifying or stating how words are actually used. According to this interpretation, “usage sets the standard of correct use; so the investigation is a *normative* one. We must remind ourselves how we use the problematic expressions... so we are in effect stating *rules* (or fragments of rules)” (Hacker 2009b: 291).¹⁴ Among the activities involved in achieving an overview, Hacker identifies the examination of false analogies, misleading questions, the normative status of grammatical propositions, and misleading pictures embedded in language (2009c: 326) However, he cautions that “it is clear that not anything that helps one to attain an overview is a surveyable representation of the grammar of an expression” (Hacker 2009c: 328). For example, he dismisses the use of good similes, comparisons, and invented or simplified language games, although they may enable us to get an “instantaneous overview”.¹⁵ Hacker equates a “descriptive grammatical interpretation” with the tabulation of rules.

He continues by suggesting that the tabulation of salient grammatical rules allows for both a narrow and a broad interpretation. The first involves a few grammatical propositions that shed enough light on the matter at hand to dispel illusions, and to highlight the grammatical category or role of the expression in question. The second involves a synopsis of grammatical rules for the use of an expression (Hacker 2009c: 332). This raises several

discussion of Goethe’s comparative morphology and Wittgenstein’s use of language games see Savickey 1999 and 2011. Hacker also writes that it is not clear whether such comparisons count as part of a perspicuous representation or only as auxiliary to such representations. He concludes that “nothing of importance turns on this” (Hacker 2009c: 332). In fact, Hacker’s entire interpretation turns on this. For further discussion, see Part II.

¹⁴Hacker writes that “occasionally, Wittgenstein makes remarks that are epitomes of lengthy grammatical investigations, which typically *intimate* rather than *state* grammatical rules, e.g. ‘It is in language that expectation and its fulfilment make contact’ (PI 445)” (Hacker 2009b: 291). It is unclear what grammatical rule is being intimated in this example and how, returning to the geographical metaphor, a map is normative. Wittgenstein challenges the emphasis placed on rules throughout his later writings. For further discussion see below.

¹⁵All of the references given in this paragraph are to Hacker 2009c: 328-9. With the exception of examining the normative status of grammatical propositions, all of the activities listed are aesthetic.

difficulties, however. First, while Hacker claims that the selection of propositions will be guided by our problems, the concept of grammatical categories and roles remains obscure. Secondly, Wittgenstein does not refer to a synopsis of grammatical rules for the use of an expression. In the lectures to which Hacker refers, he speaks of providing a synopsis of trivialities. And as early as *The Blue and Brown Books*, Wittgenstein reminds us that:

in general we don't use language according to strict rules -- it hasn't been taught us by means of strict rules either. *We*, in our discussion on the other hand, constantly compare language with a calculus proceeding according to exact rules.

This is a very one-sided way of looking at language. In practice we very rarely use language as such a calculus. For not only do we not think of the rules of usage -- of definitions, etc. -- while using language, but when we are asked to give such rules, in most cases we aren't able to do so. We are unable to circumscribe the concepts we use; not because we don't know their real definition, but because there is no real 'definition' to them. To suppose that there *must* be would be like supposing that whenever children play with a ball they play a game according to strict rules (BB 25).

Thirdly, Hacker acknowledges that the broad interpretation raises questions (and tensions) concerning comprehensiveness and surveyability. In response, he merely cautions us to be judicious in our selection of grammatical propositions (Hacker 2009c: 332). However, Wittgenstein challenges whether such an interpretation is intelligible: "It is not established from the outset that there is such a thing as "a *general* description of the use of a word". And even if there is such a thing, then it has not been determined how *specific* such a description has to be" (LWPP I 969).¹⁶ Further, Wittgenstein writes of the "infinite variety of the functions of words in propositions", and notes that it is curious to compare what he sees in his examples with the simple and rigid rules which logicians give for the construction of propositions (BB 83).¹⁷ And finally, as Hacker himself acknowledges, the implications of his interpretation are problematic:

¹⁶ Also see *Zettel* 440, 464 and 465.

¹⁷ He also draws attention to many different ways of classifying words (BB 83ff).

It might be objected that construing surveyable representations as tabulating the grammar of expressions in a surveyable manner in order to dissolve philosophical problems has the absurd consequence that something Wittgenstein declares as the hallmark of the form in which he presents his philosophical investigations is in effect barely ever practised (Hacker 2009c: 333).

Hacker claims that (more often than not) Wittgenstein “merely nudges us in the direction of bringing to mind the rules, and differences between rules, with which we are perfectly familiar” (Hacker 2009b: 292). If interpreted in a narrow sense, this is unproblematic. However, if interpreted in the broad sense, Hacker concedes that “it is true that [Wittgenstein] rarely practises what he preaches” (2009c: 333). According to Hacker, with the exception of the treatment of psychological concepts in *Zettel*, Wittgenstein never actually executes his plan, and there are no further examples of systematic tabulations of grammatical propositions. He concludes his essay by asking whether this ‘oddity’ can be explained (Hacker 2009c: 333). Returning to the geographical metaphors of the 1930s, Hacker argues that Wittgenstein was simply not a good guide. In 1939, Wittgenstein remarks to his students:

In order to be a good guide, one should show people the main streets first. But I am an extremely bad guide, and am apt to be led astray by little places of interest, and to dash down side streets before I have shown you the main streets (LFM 44 in Hacker 2009b: 284-5).

While Hacker concedes that Wittgenstein’s writings can have “an unprecedented depth and manifold ramifications”, he concludes that:

they do not give one, or promise to give one, perspicuous representation (in the broad sense) of the grammar of the expressions under consideration. He was too concerned with dashing down the side-streets... However, scattered throughout his voluminous notes we often find numerous grammatical observations that can be used by the judicious cartographer who has the inclination to master the geography of concepts (MS 137, 63e) and to draw such maps as will enable others to find their way around the seas of language and to

avoid becoming stranded on the reefs of grammar (Hacker 2009c: 334).¹⁸

Wittgenstein concludes §122 by asking whether his way of seeing is a *Weltanschauung* (or worldview). In his *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, he writes: “For us the conception of a perspicuous presentation is fundamental. It indicates the form in which we write of things, the way in which we see things. (A kind of ‘*Weltanschauung*’ that seems to be typical of our time. Spengler.)” (RFGH 9e) Hacker connects this concept with the works of Freud, Spengler, Loos, and others.¹⁹ He interprets Wittgenstein as asking whether his quest for a particular form of understanding is akin to a way of looking at things that is characteristic of other leading intellectuals of his time. Hacker responds that it is not, and that Wittgenstein was mistaken (for his concept of representation did not prove to be the hallmark of twentieth century thought) (Hacker 2009c: 320). Unlike Hacker, however, Wittgenstein leaves this question open. In so doing, he asks whether such a way of seeing is a *Weltanschauung* (as Spengler might use the term), not whether this particular *Weltanschauung* is the same as Spengler’s (or other leading intellectuals of his time).²⁰ In other words, Wittgenstein’s question is a conceptual question about the nature of representation itself, rather than a factual question about a particular (historical) *Weltanschauung*.

Hacker notes in his introduction to the revised edition of *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning* that the interpretation he and Gordon Baker gave of Wittgenstein’s concept of an overview and the notion of surveyable representation “subsequently aroused grave doubts and misgivings in Gordon Baker. The new essay

¹⁸ It is interesting that Hacker concludes his analysis with seafaring metaphors borrowed from Hume. But such metaphors are not necessarily consistent with the geographical metaphors used throughout his essay. For example, in what way is grammar (as the geography of a country) similar to reefs in the sea?

¹⁹ He also includes Hertz, Boltzmann, and Ernst on his list (Baker and Hacker 2009b: 260) While the concept of *Weltanschauung* is used extensively by Spengler, Wittgenstein is not uncritical of its use in Spengler’s work.

²⁰ To suggest that Wittgenstein would be interested in the resemblance between his way of looking at things and that of the other leading intellectuals of his time seems incongruous with his claim that “the philosopher is not a citizen of any community of ideas. That is what makes him into a philosopher” (Z 455).

supports the old interpretation with detailed evidence from the *Nachlass*” (Hacker 2009a: xvii). This is worth noting for several reasons. First, Baker himself came to question the interpretation that is now presented in both editions. Secondly, his specific doubts and concerns are neither acknowledged nor refuted by Hacker. And thirdly, while Hacker intimates that it is no longer necessary to address such concerns (because the old interpretation has now been supported by detailed evidence from the *Nachlass*), this is not the case. While new material has come to light over the last few decades, relatively little of this material has been incorporated into Hacker’s analysis. Most of the sources he quotes in his essay are from Wittgenstein’s early lectures and transcripts, and he writes that “trawling through Wittgenstein’s other writings for observations on what counts as a surveyable representation of grammar yields a meagre catch” (Hacker 2009c: 328).

While Hacker acknowledges that *he* continues to support the old interpretation of an overview, he does not make clear what is meant by surveyable representation, why grammar is lacking in surveyability, or how such representation resolves philosophical problems. He struggles to make sense of Wittgenstein’s practices, as well as the emphasis he places on seeing connections or inventing intermediate links. Hacker admits that Wittgenstein does not provide surveyable representations of grammar in his own work, nor does he [Hacker] provide convincing examples of such a philosophical project. The resulting lack of clarity concerning ‘surveyable representation,’ coupled with its conspicuous absence from Wittgenstein’s writings and practices, suggest that Hacker’s interpretation, not merely Wittgenstein’s concept of representation, is open to question.

Part II

Returning to one of the early remarks on which Hacker bases his interpretation and translation, Wittgenstein writes that “a proposition is completely logically analyzed when its grammar is laid out completely clearly [*vollkommen klargelegt*]. It might be written down or spoken in any number of ways” (BT 417). A similar passage in *Philosophical Remarks* states: “A proposition is completely

logically analyzed *if* its grammar is made clear: no matter what idiom it may be written or expressed in” (PR 1) (emphasis added). An idiom may be the use of words pertaining to a particular language (especially if it is an irregularity), *or* the characteristic artistic style of an individual, school, or period.²¹ Both remarks indicate that grammar can be made clear through different forms of representation: i.e. it can be written down or spoken *in any number of ways*.²² This provides a helpful point of departure for a re-examination of the concept of *übersichtliche Darstellung*.

While the expression *übersichtliche Darstellung* rarely occurs in Wittgenstein’s writings (as Hacker notes), there are *hundreds* of remarks concerning the concept of representation itself. These remarks range in scope from various practices in mathematics, algebra, geometry, physics, and mechanics, to the use of similes, metaphors, models, pictures, portraits, paintings, projections, drawings, the plastic arts, film, and theatre. They include numerous techniques that Hacker dismisses in his essay on Wittgenstein’s “descriptive grammatical interpretation” (2009c: 326-328). While Hacker *contrasts* description with explanation, Wittgenstein reminds us that there are many different kinds of description (PI 24). He characterizes descriptions as instruments for particular purposes (PI 291). Further, Hacker equates philosophy with the description of *actual* language-usage, while Wittgenstein writes that “philosophy is not a description of language-usage, and yet one can learn it by constantly attending to all the expressions of life in the language” (LWPP I 121). In other words, for Hacker, the central preoccupation of the *Investigations* is the nature of language (Baker and Hacker 2009b: 43). While for Wittgenstein, it is life (i.e. all the expressions of life in the language). The difference is significant and profound. Hacker presents a philosophy of language and a surveyable representation of grammar that is static. Wittgenstein, on the other hand, presents a grammatical representation of life

²¹ “Every language, more especially English, has its *idioms*, which we should not register with grammarians and lexicographers, among its irregularities, but, with poets and orators, number among its beauties” (Coleman, *The Gentleman* No. 3) (*New Standard Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* 1943).

²² The concept of clarity is here connected with the concept of openness.

that is inherently dynamic (PG 100).²³ In order to understand this difference, it is helpful to compare Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations to improvisational exercises or theatre. This comparison is suggested (and supported) by the expression *übersichtliche Darstellung* itself.²⁴ Although often translated as 'representation' or 'account,' *Darstellung* can also be translated as 'portrayal,' 'depiction,' or 'description'. In German, it is associated with the dramatic or performing arts (*die darstellungen Künste*) and the verb *darstellen* can mean 'to play a role'. Shifting from an account to a depiction (or portrayal) highlights the creative and dynamic aspect of Wittgenstein's concept of representation.

In his introduction to *The Coast of Utopia*, Tom Stoppard writes that a play is a deceptive kind of book:

It is not exactly an eccentric way of writing a story, but rather the transcription of a concrete event in advance of the event. Theatre happens in the wrong order: transcription first, event second. The writer imagines the event and writes it out. Later the event happens, and it is likely to turn out slightly, or more than slightly, different from the one he imagined (Stoppard 2007: xi).

Similarly, Wittgenstein's *Investigations* is a deceptive kind of book; it is not the transcription (or tabulation) of language-usage after the event (*pace* Hacker), but the transcription of particular events in advance of those events. Wittgenstein calls these events 'language games'. The *Investigations* is not a script (like Stoppard's *Coast of Utopia*) but, more accurately, a book of improvisational exercises. Wittgenstein imagines a particular event (or language game) and it is then played out. Of necessity, it becomes a creative and collaborative process between Wittgenstein and his readers.

Consider the opening of the *Investigations*. In response to Augustine's description of the learning of human language, Wittgenstein writes:

²³ Hacker acknowledges that the method he describes (as well as the concept of logical or grammatical geography) is "a conceit Ryle was to make famous" (Hacker 2009b: 284). As such, his interpretation more clearly and accurately describes Ryle's work than Wittgenstein's later writings.

²⁴ For a discussion of theatre references in Wittgenstein's writings see Savickey 2011 and 2013.

Now think of the following use of words: I send someone shopping. I give him a slip marked “five red apples.” He takes the slip to the shopkeeper, who opens the drawer marked “apples;” then he looks up the word “red” in a table and finds a colour sample opposite it; then he says a series of cardinal numbers -- I assume he knows them by heart -- up to the word “five” and for each number he takes an apple of the same colour as the sample out of the drawer. ----- It is in this and similar ways that one operates with words ----- (PI 1).

This shopping example is not simply the description of a shopper and a shopkeeper (i.e. the transcription of an event after the event). Rather, it begins with Wittgenstein himself. He addresses us directly, and inserts himself into the text. It is he who sends someone shopping (with a slip marked ‘five red apples’). In so doing, he acknowledges the opening scene *as a scene*. Whereas most traditional philosophical texts present the illusion that what is being depicted or described is real, Wittgenstein’s text presents itself *as* illusion. (It is the transcription of an event in advance of the event.) It is not, however, an act of deception. Rather, it is the acknowledgement of representation *as* representation. It exemplifies the shift that takes place between Wittgenstein’s early and later philosophy; a shift he characterizes in 1929 as a move from questions of truth to questions of meaning. It is a philosophical *and* aesthetic move.²⁵

Hacker has difficulty accounting for Wittgenstein’s shopping example (and subsequent language games) because he approaches them as transcriptions of language usage. He has little to say about the shopping example, although he pauses long enough to note that “it is unimportant that greengrocers do not actually go through this rigmarole, red items being identified without the aid of a sample, and small numbers such as ‘5’ being applied visually” (Baker and Hacker 2009b: 51). He claims that the point of the shopping example is to illuminate the categorial differences between sortal nouns, colour-predicates and number-words (i.e. different parts of speech fulfilling different functions, and being integrated differently into human action). Similarly, when

²⁵ For further discussion, see below.

Wittgenstein asks us to *imagine* a language for which the description given by Augustine is right, Hacker responds:

it is not at all obvious that these simple language-games give us a surveyable representation of the grammar used in our language. They certainly do not fit the original requirement of TABULATING *the grammatical use of words*. Nor can it be argued that the description of a child's use of such primitive forms of language, when the child learns to talk, gives us a surveyable representation of *our* use, even though it may well be highly illuminating to reflect on the primitive case... Finally, the supposition that primitive language-games are surveyable representations of those fragments of grammar with which they are meant to be compared sits rather poorly with the geographical metaphors Wittgenstein commonly employs (Hacker 2009c: 329).

This is true. However, if we approach the language game of the builders as the transcription of an event in advance of the event, it begins to come alive:

Let us imagine a language for which the description given by Augustine is right. The language is meant to serve for communication between builder A and an assistant B. A is building with building-stones: there are blocks, pillars, slabs, and beams. B has to pass the stones, and that in the order in which A needs them. For this purpose they use a language consisting of the words "block," "pillar," "slab," and "beam." A calls them out; -- B brings the stone which he has learnt to bring at such-and-such a call. --- Conceive this as a complete primitive language (PI 2).

In his exegesis, Hacker points out that "in all of the early occurrences of this example, it is not presented as an imaginary language-game... It is only in BrB 77 that Wittgenstein shifts towards an imaginary language-game in an imaginary context" (Baker and Hacker 2009b: 57).²⁶ Hacker uses this fact to equate surveyable representation with the tabulation of actual language-usage. More importantly, however, it signals a shift in Wittgenstein's method of representation; one that enables him to move from the *Brown Book* to the *Investigations* as his philosophical style matures. It is an acknowledgement of representation *as* representation. This is also evident when he introduces the concept

²⁶ Hacker refers to MS 111 (Vol. VII) 16 and MS 114 (Vol. IX) Um. 36.

of ‘language games’, for he writes that he will *call* the following ‘language games’: (i) those games by means of which children learn their native language, (ii) primitive languages, (iii) the processes of naming objects and repeating words after someone (as well as the use of words in games and nursery rhymes), and (iv) language and the actions into which it is woven [such as language (2)] (PI 7). In other words, he is referring to his mode of representation, not to the nature of language itself.²⁷ However, this does not mean that Wittgenstein only refers to words or forms of representation, for grammatical representation is the description or depiction of life (and the world around us).

Hacker writes that Wittgenstein clearly thought that simplified language games facilitate the attainment of an overview of the grammar of problematic concepts. But he asks, “Are such language-games as (2) or (8) perspicuous *representations* of the grammar of the phrase ‘the meaning of a word’? This, I think, is doubtful” (Hacker 2009c: 332). Similarly, he questions whether finding or inventing intermediate links is an intrinsic part of surveyable representation, or whether these activities merely facilitate such an overview. On his interpretation, only the latter makes sense. It is also difficult for Hacker to approach individual languages or language games as complete in themselves (and not simply as incomplete parts or fragments of language). However, in §122 Wittgenstein writes that a perspicuous representation produces *just* (or *precisely*) that understanding which consists in “seeing connections”. Hence the importance of finding and inventing intermediate cases. He explains that “it disperses the fog to study the phenomena of language in primitive kinds of application in which one can command a clear view of the aim and functioning of words” (PI 5).²⁸ In other words, the clarity or perspicuity Wittgenstein seeks is inherent in the form of representation itself. Simple language games do not facilitate a clear

²⁷ Wittgenstein writes, “our method is not merely to enumerate actual usages of words, but rather deliberately to invent new ones, some of them because of their absurd appearance” (BB 28).

²⁸ “We see activities, reactions, which are clear-cut and transparent” (BB 17).

view of the grammar or use of words; they *are* a clear view of the grammar or use of words.²⁹

This makes sense if we recognize that attending to *all the expressions of life* in the language involves attending to a living language. Wittgenstein notes that every sign by itself is dead, but “in use it is alive” (PI 432).³⁰ Grammar is lacking in perspicuity because (i) it is complex and detailed (and words have *innumerable* different functions), (ii) it is the dynamic *use* of words, and (iii) we (*and* our concepts) stand in the middle of language and life. The challenge is how to *describe* the *use* of words. Hacker provides a transcription of language usage after the event, while Wittgenstein presents a transcription of the event itself. Understanding consists in seeing connections, or inventing intermediate cases, precisely because such moments allow us to see the movement or functioning of words and expressions. In an organic whole (such as a living language), each part supports the whole just as much as it is supported by the whole; the connection between parts is one in which “no part is first and no part last, in which the whole gains in clearness from every part, and even the smallest part cannot be fully understood until the whole has been first understood” (Schopenhauer 1969: xii).³¹ Both Goethe’s morphology and Wittgenstein’s language games attempt to represent such organisms. (They are dynamic modes of representation, not static tabulations or overviews.)³²

This is perhaps best exemplified in the emphasis Wittgenstein places on gesture throughout the later writings. A gesture is an expressive movement or action of the body (often of the hands or face). Wittgenstein’s own move from the *Tractatus* to the *Investigations* begins with a gesture. Monk writes that:

²⁹ Hacker attributes a similar claim to Severin Schroeder (Hacker 2009c: 329).

³⁰ Also see BB 3-5, AWL 43, AWL 48, Z 236, and Z 238.

³¹ Wittgenstein writes that “there is a truth in Schopenhauer’s view that philosophy is an organism, and that a book on philosophy with a beginning and end is a sort of contradiction” (AWL 43).

³² This may also be why analogies, similes, and aspect-seeing play such a dominant role in Wittgenstein’s philosophy. There is movement and multi-dimensionality in such connections.

One anecdote...was told by Wittgenstein to both Malcolm and von Wright, and has since been retold many times. It concerns a conversation in which Wittgenstein insisted that a proposition and that which it describes must have the same 'logical form'...To this idea, Sraffa made a Neapolitan gesture of brushing his chin with his fingertips, asking: 'What is the logical form of *that*?' This, according to the story, broke the hold on Wittgenstein of the Tractarian idea that a proposition must be a 'picture' of the reality it describes (Monk 1990: 260-1).

Not only does Sraffa's gesture break the hold of the Tractarian 'picture-theory of meaning', it sets the tone and scene for the later writings. Wittgenstein first writes of perspicuous representation in his *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*. He characterizes the ancient rites that Frazer describes (and fails to understand) as "the practice of a highly cultivated gesture-language" (RFGB 10e).³³ He also begins the *Investigations* with a quotation from Augustine's *Confessions*, in which the learning of human language is described through gesture; i.e. the bodily movements, facial expression, and tone of voice of his elders (PI 1). Hacker notes that Wittgenstein's translation stresses "gestures" ("*ihren Gebärden*") although the Latin has "*motu corporis*", i.e. bodily movements, as the natural language of all people (Baker and Hacker 2009b: 49). Further, when *imagining* a language for which Augustine's description is right, Wittgenstein includes numerous pointing gestures. In language game (2) (quoted above), training involves a teacher who points to objects, directs the child's attention to them, and utters words (such as "slab"). Wittgenstein calls this the "ostensive teaching of words" (PI 6). In the next remark, a learner names an object when the teacher points to a stone (PI 7). And in the expansion of language (2) in language (8), the words 'there' and 'this' are used in connection with a pointing gesture. In §33, Wittgenstein asks: "And what does 'pointing to the shape,' 'pointing to the colour,' consist in? Point to a piece of paper. -- And now point to its shape -- now to its colour

³³ Later, in *Zettel*, he connects philosophy itself with wrong or inappropriate gestures: "One who philosophizes often makes the wrong, inappropriate gesture for a verbal expression" (Z 450). "(One says the ordinary thing -- with the wrong gesture)" (Z 451). He gives as an example: "Can it be said that I *infer* that he will act as *he intended* to act? ((Case of the wrong gesture.))" (Z 575)

-- now to its number (that sounds queer). -- How did you do it?" (PI 33) In each of these remarks, a pointing gesture is used differently. Wittgenstein notes:

The way such a gesture is used in [various] cases is different. This difference is blurred if one says, "In one case we point to a shape, in the other we point to a number". The difference becomes obvious and clear only when we contemplate a *complete* example (i.e. an example of a language completely worked out in detail) (BB 79-80).

The completeness and clarity to which Wittgenstein refers involve the words and actions of these particular language games worked out in detail (not the surveyability of language or grammar as a whole).

According to Wittgenstein, it is natural to call gestures elements or instruments of language (BB 84). He writes, "consider tone of voice, inflection, gestures, as essential parts of our experience, not as inessential accompaniments or mere means of communication" (BB 182). This is important, not merely because gestures expand our understanding of verbal language, but because understanding or describing the meaning (or use) of gestures is similar to understanding or describing the meaning (or use) of words.³⁴ As such, gestures have much to teach us. For example, Wittgenstein writes:

One says: How can these gestures, this way of holding the hand, this picture, be the wish that such and such were the case? It is nothing more than a hand over a table and there it is, alone and without a *sense*. Like a single bit of scenery from the production of a play, which has been left by itself in a room. It had a life only in the play (Z 238).

Intentional -- unintentional. Voluntary -- involuntary.

What is the difference between a gesture of the hand without a particular intention and the same gesture which is intended as a sign? (RPP II 182)

³⁴ In a similar move, Wittgenstein often writes of gestures in music, and compares understanding a musical phrase to understanding a sentence.

What makes a gesture meaningful (or empty) is not a mental accompaniment that takes place at the time. (Rather, it involves particular circumstances, and the actions that precede or follow it.)

Gestures are not the *mere accompaniment* of verbal language. Wittgenstein writes:

How curious: we should like to explain our understanding of a gesture by means of a translation into words, and the understanding of words by translating them into a gesture. (Thus we are tossed to and fro when we try to find out where understanding properly resides.)

And we really shall be explaining words by a gesture, and a gesture by words (Z 227).

The point is that such explanations go both ways (not gestures and words side-by-side, but one via the other). What makes a particular movement a *gesture*, and what makes it a gesture of kindness or contempt (for example) is a conceptual issue. As Wittgenstein notes, it is important that we can draw fine distinctions. He gives as an example: “You will find that the justifications for calling something an expression of doubt, conviction, etc., largely, though of course not wholly, consist in descriptions of gestures, plays of facial expression, and even the tone of voice” (BB 103).

There is no place for gesture in Hacker’s philosophy of language. How does one *tabulate* a gesture? What would the surveyable representation or overview of a particular gesture be (i.e. the Neapolitan gesture of brushing one’s chin with one’s fingers, or the numerous pointing gestures in Wittgenstein’s language-games)? Are there *rules* for the correct use of such gestures? And are we aware of such rules while gesturing? As Wittgenstein notes, the differences between gestures (i.e. their different uses) become obvious and clear only when we contemplate a complete example (such as language (2)) (BB 79-80). At best, Hacker can only claim that Wittgenstein’s remarks involving gestures *intimate* rather than *state* grammatical rules, or that they merely nudge us in the direction of bringing to mind the rules with which we are perfectly familiar (Hacker 2009a: 291-2). However, the beauty of a gesture is that there is nothing hidden or yet to be discovered. (Think of the Neapolitan gesture that shook Wittgenstein from his logical complacency.) Gestures are, by their very nature, clear or

transparent. They can be taken in at a glance and epitomize a complete ‘instantaneous view’ (while simultaneously exemplifying and expressing the complexity of language and meaning). They are an essential part of language, rituals, and theatre.

Through a simple gesture, Wittgenstein demonstrates the philosophical significance of perspicuous representation. His use of language games (or the transcription of events in advance of the events) is both philosophical and aesthetic. It not only challenges conventional concepts of meaning and language, but alters our mode of representation (the form of account we give, or the way we look at things). Wittgenstein confirms the aesthetic dimension of his investigations when he writes, “I may find scientific questions interesting, but they never really grip me. Only *conceptual* and *aesthetic* questions do that” (CV 70e). Understanding perspicuous representation as a dynamic (or dramatic) form of representation, rather than the static tabulation or overview of actual language usage, enables us to answer questions originally posed by Hacker. Our grammar lacks perspicuity because it is complex and dynamic, and we stand in the middle of language and life. Perspicuous representation is pervasive throughout Wittgenstein’s writings, and it is expressed in a variety of forms and idioms. It produces just that understanding which consists in seeing connections, because connections involve linguistic movement (or all the expressions of life in the language). Such grammatical description *constitutes* perspicuous representation (and does not merely facilitate the understanding which the latter produces). As Wittgenstein notes, clarity and perspicuity are ends in themselves. Contrary to Hacker’s interpretation of ‘surveyable representation,’ *übersichtliche Darstellung* (understood as perspicuous representation) *is* the form in which Wittgenstein presents his philosophical investigations.

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